

The Influence of Brand Personality on Purchase Intention: The Case of Belcholat Premium Chocolate

Minh Thu Bui

School of Interdisciplinary Sciences and Arts, Vietnam National University, Hanoi, Vietnam
bui minh thubui@gmail.com
<https://orcid.org/0009-0004-1880-2834>

Thi Thu Huong Nguyen (corresponding)

School of Interdisciplinary Sciences and Arts, Vietnam National University, Hanoi, Vietnam
huong1485.sis@vnu.edu.vn
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7735-3272>

Thi Yen Kieu

School of Interdisciplinary Sciences and Arts, Vietnam National University, Hanoi, Vietnam
kieu yen@vnu.edu.vn
<https://orcid.org/0009-0004-7280-6713>

Abstract

The modern consumers no longer base their purchasing decisions solely on taste or packaging; they also expect brands to embody personalities that resonate with their own identities. This expectation is especially pronounced in the premium food sector, where emotional experiences and intangible values play a pivotal role. Most chocolate brands in Vietnam have yet to fully recognize the strategic importance of brand personality in fostering emotional connections with consumers. This study aims to analyze the impact of brand personality dimensions tested through Aaker's five-dimensional brand personality framework on consumers' purchase intentions toward the Belcholat chocolate brand. The research adopts both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, grounded in Aaker's brand personality model and the self-congruity theory. Findings reveal that all five brand personality traits exert a positive influence on purchase intention, with Sincerity and Competence emerging as the most influential dimensions. This study contributes empirical evidence to the theoretical discourse on brand personality within the premium food industry and offers strategic implications for building high-end chocolate branding in the Vietnamese market.

Keywords: brand personality, purchase intention, premium chocolate, self-congruity.

1. INTRODUCTION

In contemporary marketing research, brand personality is regarded as one of the core instruments enabling firms to create emotional differentiation and achieve sustainable positioning in the minds of consumers (Nguyen et al., 2023). In the context of a rapidly growing and increasingly competitive chocolate market, building a strong brand requires more than just product quality; it relies significantly on the ability to craft a compelling brand image and foster emotional bonds with consumers.

According to Aaker (Aaker, 1997), brand personality not only enhances brand positioning but also facilitates emotional connection, thereby strengthening customer loyalty. Research by Su and Reynolds (Su & Reynolds, 2017) demonstrated that when consumers perceive brand personality

as congruent with their self-image, they tend to develop stronger affective responses, leading to increased repeat purchase intentions. Similarly, the study by Toldos-Romero and Orozco-Gómez (Toldos-Romero & Orozco-Gómez, 2015) confirmed that brand personality, brand equity, and brand authenticity all positively influence purchase intention. Furthermore, research by Nguyen et al. (Nguyen et al., 2023) showed that brand personality has a positive impact on tourists' revisit intentions, mediated by the congruence between self-image and brand image. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of the role of brand personality in shaping consumer purchase intention and the development of an appropriate branding strategy becomes indispensable.

However, Aaker's (Aaker, 1997) the five-dimensional brand personality model was predominantly developed within a Western cultural context. This underscores the need for empirical validation of how each brand personality dimension influences purchase intentions in new cultural settings, especially in Asian markets such as Vietnam, where consumer behavior is heavily shaped by emotional resonance, symbolic value, and self-brand congruity. In Vietnam, previous research has primarily focused on sectors such as services, tourism, or fashion, while premium consumer products like chocolate remain underexplored. Domestic academic studies have largely adopted Aaker's conceptualization of brand personality, with limited efforts to localize or adapt the framework to the Vietnamese cultural context.

In practice, most local chocolate brands continue to struggle with establishing a distinct brand personality and fostering long-term emotional engagement with consumers. Therefore, examining the relationship between brand personality and purchase intention in the context of premium domestic chocolate brands in Vietnam is both theoretically significant and practically urgent. Addressing these research gaps, this paper aims to empirically examine the extent to which each brand personality dimension in Aaker's (Aaker, 1997) model influences consumers' purchase intentions, using the Belcholat brand as a case study.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

2.1. Brand personality theory

The theory of brand personality is grounded in the psychological foundations of human personality, in which brands are attributed human-like characteristics. According to Aaker (1997), "brand personality is the set of human characteristics associated with a brand" (Aaker, 1997). Based on a quantitative study conducted with U.S. consumers, Aaker developed a model comprising five core dimensions representing brand personality: Excitement, sincerity, sophistication, competence, and ruggedness. This theoretical framework has been widely applied in previous studies to assess the influence of brand personality on various consumer behaviors (Akin, 2011; Bairrada et al., 2019). For instance, the study by Rao et al. (2024) found that the dimensions of Sincerity and Competence positively affect customer loyalty (Rao et al., 2024). Similarly, Yuanita and Marsasi (2022) examined how brand attachment, brand experience, and self-image congruence shape purchase intention toward luxury brands (Yuanita & Marsasi, 2022). In this paper, brand personality theory serves as the primary conceptual foundation and measurement framework for the research model.

2.2. Self-congruity theory

Self-congruity theory posits that consumers tend to select and develop favorable attitudes toward brands that reflect their own self-image (Sirgy, 2018). According to Sirgy (2018), the congruence between self-image and brand image generates a sense of identity alignment, enhances emotional attachment, and positively influences both attitudes and purchase behaviors. Research conducted by Mrad et al. (2025) demonstrated that the degree of congruence between brand personality and consumers' self-image positively influences brand love, which in turn enhances purchase

intention (Mrad et al., 2025). Similarly, the study by Tseng and Wang (2023) found that when consumers perceive a brand as embodying Sincerity or Competence, they develop more favorable attitudes toward the brand, and such attitudes act as antecedents that drive purchase intention (Tseng & Wang, 2023).

2.3. Hypotheses

2.3.1. *The relationship between sincerity and purchase intention*

Brand personality with the characteristic of sincerity is described through attributes such as: down-to-earth, family-oriented, small-town, honest, sincere, real, original, cheerful, sentimental, friendly (Aaker, 1997).

The personality traits belonging to the sincerity factor are all good characteristics, which are common social moral values. In general, most of these personality traits are considered positive. According to Self-congruity theory, consumers tend to be attached to and prefer brands that reflect their ideal or actual self-values (Sirgy, 1982). Therefore, if consumers perceive the brand to possess these personality traits, they will have a self-identification with their own personality or the personalities they aspire to or pursue – when reflected through the brand, this can create a sense of resonance. Thus, if the brand possesses these personality traits, it can increase consumer purchase intentions.

Several previous studies have confirmed the positive relationship between genuine brand personality and purchase intentions: Hu and Shi (2020) explored the psychological mechanisms explaining the difference in consumer purchase intentions for brands with genuine compared to enthusiastic personalities (Hu & Shi, 2020). The results showed that genuine brands were perceived as more psychologically close, thus leading to higher purchase intentions. The research focused on consumer brands with high emotional interaction, where trust and attachment to the brand played a decisive role in driving customer purchasing decisions. The study by Kukreti and Yadav (2025) focused on analyzing the influence of brand personality aspects, especially sincerity, on factors such as brand love, perceived quality, and purchase intention in the e-commerce field (Kukreti & Yadav, 2025). The results showed that sincere brand personality has a positive and strong influence on brand love and perceived quality of customers. Brand love and perceived quality positively impact purchase intention, respectively. Thus, brand sincerity plays an important mediating role in promoting purchase intention through enhancing emotional experience and quality assessment.

Previous studies have shown a positive and significant relationship between sincere brand personality and purchase intention, thereby confirming the important role of sincerity in building trust, enhancing emotional experience, and promoting customer engagement with the brand. However, the majority of these studies focus on the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) or service industries, primarily conducted in developed markets such as China and India – where consumer behavior and perceptions of sincerity may differ significantly from those in developing markets like Vietnam. Based on the above analysis, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1: Sincerity has a positive effect on consumers' purchase intention.

2.3.2. *The relationship between competence and purchase intention*

Brand personality, as expressed by Aaker (1997), includes: reliable, hard-working, secure, intelligent, technical, corporate, wholesome, successful, leader, and confident (Aaker, 1997). The characteristics of the competence factor reflect the operational capacity and professional reputation of the brand. This group of characteristics is often associated with large brands, those with a strong market position and the ability to fulfill commitments to customers. Therefore, if a

brand is highly rated in terms of competence, it will gain customer trust, thereby increasing purchase intention.

Previous studies have shown the positive influence of "Competence" on consumer behavior. According to Aaker (1997), in many product categories, "Competence" is a highly valued factor in building trust (Aaker, 1997). Research of Mamangkey et al. (2018) about the influence of brand personality factors (sincerity, competence, ruggedness) on purchase intention for Nike sports products at Manado, Indonesia (Mamangkey et al., 2018). The results show that competence is the most influential factor on purchase intention, surpassing sincerity and strength. Consumers trust the brand and see Nike as a successful brand, therefore, maintaining competence is an important factor that helps this brand continue to attract customers. Similarly, Satchapappichit's (2020) study on the influence of brand personality and online word-of-mouth (eWOM) on customer purchase intentions at Thai restaurant chains in Bangkok concluded that three brand personality factors: Competence, excitement, and sincerity had a positive and significant influence on purchase intentions. Of the three factors, competence had the strongest influence on purchase intentions (Satchapappichit, 2020).

The research gap lies in the fact that few studies assess the impact of "Competence" in the high-end food industry, where emotional and artistic factors are often prioritized. It is necessary to examine whether in the high-end chocolate industry – with handcrafted and highly creative products – "Competence" still retains a strong influence on purchase intentions. Based on the theories and empirical evidence above, it can be seen that competence has a positive impact, helping to promote consumer purchase intentions. Therefore, this study proposes the hypothesis:

H2: Competence has a positive effect on purchase intention.

2.3.3. The relationship between excitement and purchase intention

Excitement personality is described by attributes such as daring, trendy, exciting, inspired, cool, young, imaginative, unique, up-to-date, independent, and contemporary (Aaker, 1997). Brands with these characteristics often create a sense of novelty, arouse curiosity, and provide an exciting experience for consumers.

From the perspective of Self-congruity theory, consumers with dynamic, adventurous personalities are more likely to feel a connection with brands that have a vibrant, modern style. When a brand exhibits the characteristics of excitement, consumers tend to identify the brand with their lifestyle or personal values, thereby increasing their level of liking and purchase intention.

Riaz et al. (2017), a study in the alcoholic beverage industry, focused mainly on young consumers there. The study concluded that when a beverage brand brings joy, excitement and appeal, consumers feel excited, attracted and tend to make purchase decisions faster (Riaz et al., 2017). Or, the study by Nguyen et al. (2023) aimed to explore how the brand personality of tourist destinations (such as Hoi An, Ha Long, Sapa...) influences tourists' intention to return, through the congruity factor between self-image and destination brand (Nguyen et al., 2023). The results showed that the Excitement factor significantly influences consistent self-perception, meaning that when the destination brand is perceived as exciting, dynamic, and inspiring, tourists will feel that they fit that image.

The gap that needs to be filled is to examine the influence of excitement in the high-end chocolate industry, where traditional values, sophistication, and emotion are often prioritized. Previous studies have focused on the food, beverage, tourism, or other industries, but there has been no in-depth research on the high-end chocolate industry. Combining the element of excitement with a food product, especially one with strong emotional connotations like chocolate, could it make

customers feel excited and increase their intention to buy? However, these are positive characteristics, and based on previous studies, this research proposes the following hypothesis:

H3: Excitement has a positive effect on purchase intention.

2.3.4. The relationship between sophistication and purchase intention

Sophistication in brand personality reflects the level of luxury, class, and style of the brand expressed in characteristics such as: upper class, glamorous, good-looking, charming, feminine, and smooth (Aaker, 1997). Brands with this personality are often associated with trendiness, aesthetic beauty, and differentiation in consumer experience (Keller, 2013). High-end brands in the fashion, cosmetics, jewelry, and high-end food industries often emphasize sophistication to attract target customers (Phau & Prendergast, 2000). Especially for chocolate products, the above personality traits are even more important because, being primarily used as gifts, they greatly influence purchase intentions.

According to the theory of self-consistent personality, customers will choose brands with a high degree of similarity to their own personality. The product studied is high-end chocolate, and the target customer group is also high-end customers; they demand not only quality but also other external and emotional values. In addition, according to the extended TAM (Technology Acceptance Model) (Venkatesh et al., 2003), an important factor influencing purchasing behavior is the perceived value and brand image (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). When customers appreciate the sophistication of the brand, they tend to trust the product quality and feel that the product is worth the cost, thereby promoting the intention to purchase.

A study by Hagtvedt and Patrick (2008) also indicated that brand sophistication not only affects customers' perceptions of product quality but also impacts their desire to express themselves through that product (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2008). Consumers in the middle class or above, or those who want to express themselves through consumption, will be particularly interested in the brand sophistication factor. When a brand accurately reflects the ideal self that consumers aspire to, they will tend to appreciate, remember, and choose that brand. A study by Adis Puška et al. (2018) showed that positive brand image, especially sophistication and high quality, has a strong impact on customer loyalty in the chocolate industry (Puška et al., 2018). A study by Clarence and Keni (2022) in Jakarta, Indonesia, showed that sophistication in brand personality has a positive influence on purchase intention, especially when combined with premium brand perception and social influence (Clarence & Keni, 2022). Based on theories and empirical research, it can be seen that brand sophistication has a significant influence on customers' purchase intentions. A sophisticated brand not only attracts attention but also helps customers feel they are choosing a product with high value in terms of image and experience. Therefore, this study proposes the hypothesis:

H4: Sophistication has a positive effect on purchase intention.

2.3.5. The relationship between ruggedness and purchase intention

According to Self-congruity theory, consumers tend to choose and be loyal to brands that they feel reflect their self-image, or the ideal self-image they want to achieve. Therefore, if a brand is associated with traits such as ruggedness, courage, and masculinity – this can create visual compatibility between the individual and the brand for consumers who love independence, adventure, or want to assert their distinct personality. The alignment between brand personality and ideal self-image will promote positive emotions, thereby increasing purchase intention.

Several studies have addressed this personality factor. For example, in the study by Sung et al. (2015) in Korea, the authors developed a new scale to assess luxury brand personality, identifying

six dimensions: Excitement, Sincerity, Sophistication, Professionalism, Attractiveness, and Materiality (Sung et al., 2015). The results showed that ruggedness is one of the important factors in building luxury brand image, especially in the fashion, automotive, and retail industries. Bian and Forsythe (2012) compared the influence of brand personality on purchase intention between American and Chinese consumers (Bian & Forsythe, 2012). The results showed that ruggedness has a strong influence on attitudes and purchase intentions towards luxury brands in both countries. From the studies above, it can be seen that ruggedness plays a crucial role in building trust, demonstrating superior value, and driving customer purchase intentions. When a brand demonstrates strength, customers tend to feel more secure in making purchasing decisions and are willing to pay more to own products from that brand. Previous studies rarely focused on this factor, mainly concentrating on the other four factors. There are not many studies focusing on this ruggedness factor, especially in the high-end food industry like chocolate. Similarly, studies focusing on foreign markets have almost completely neglected this personality factor in the Vietnamese market. Therefore, examining the role of ruggedness in the high-end chocolate industry in Vietnam is a valuable and entirely reasonable area to highlight the novelty of this research. Based on the above, this study proposes the hypothesis:

H5: Ruggedness has a positive effect on purchase intention.

The research model of the study is presented in Figure 1.

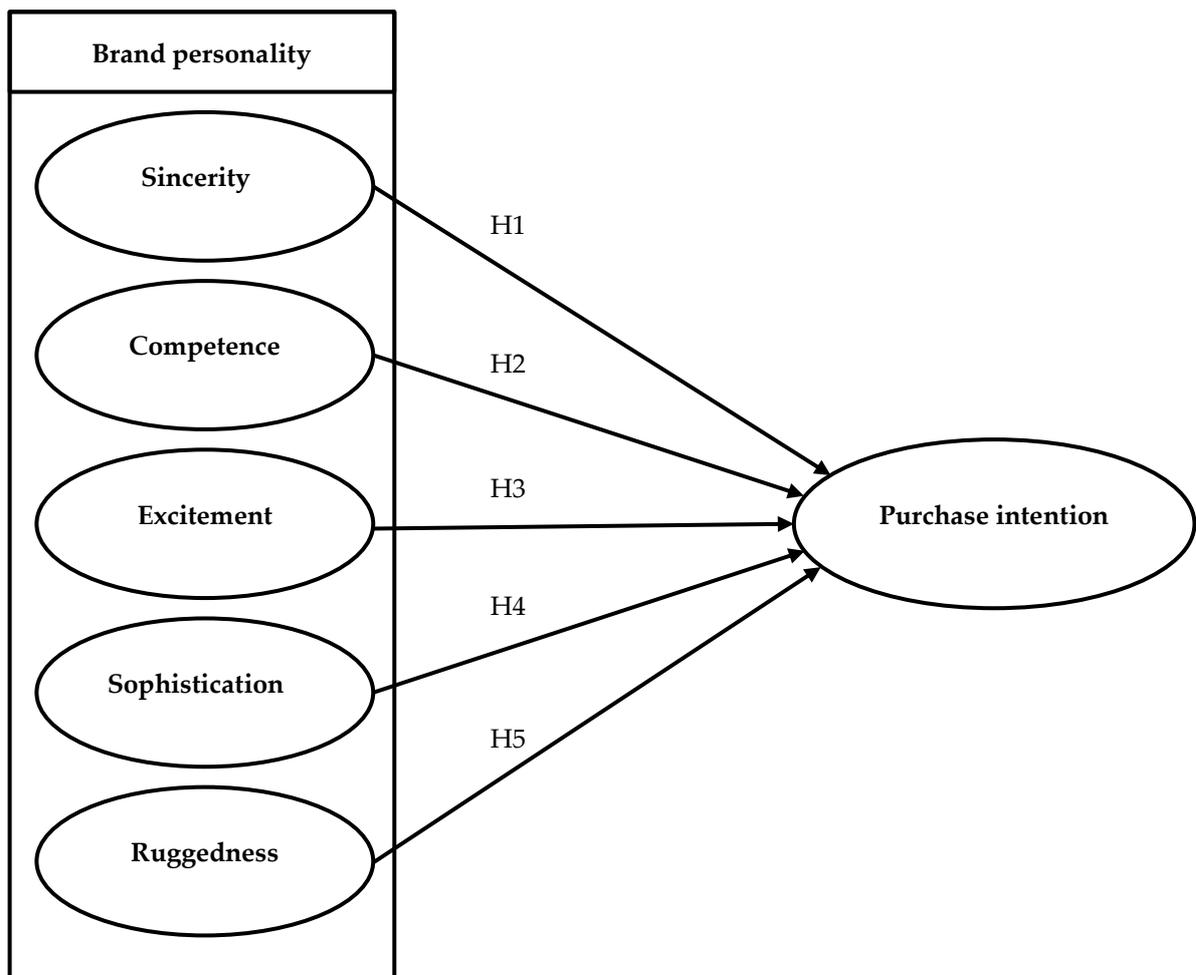


Figure 1. Research Model

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research design

According to Aaker’s Brand Personality framework (Aaker, 1997), the five dimensions encompass 42 personality traits, which were translated into Vietnamese to align with the research context and the focal brand. However, after evaluating the characteristics of the premium chocolate category in the Vietnamese market, several traits were deemed unsuitable due to contextual and cultural misalignment. Specifically, the traits small-town, wholesome, corporate, and western were removed. Consequently, the original 42-item scale was reduced to 38 personality items, all measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.” The questions are indicated, which include 42 personality traits from Huang and Sarigöllü (2012) and a four-item purchase intention scale adopted from Bian and Forsythe (2012) (Bian & Forsythe, 2012; Huang & Sarigöllü, 2012).

A mixed-methods approach was adopted:

1. Desk Research: Collection and synthesis of relevant domestic and international studies to establish the theoretical foundation.
2. Qualitative Research: Expert interviews and refinement of measurement scales.
3. Quantitative Research: A structured survey using a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire.

Data were entered and analyzed using SPSS version 27. The study applied the following analytical techniques: descriptive statistics, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), reliability assessment using Cronbach’s alpha, and multiple linear regression analysis.

3.2. Sample and data collection

Sample Size: A total of 455 responses were collected. After screening and removing invalid questionnaires such as those with uniform responses or inconsistent response patterns, 388 valid responses remained for analysis.

1. Data Collection Method: Online survey.
2. Sample Characteristics: The sample corresponds to the target customer group (ages 18–35) who are familiar with the Belcholat brand.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

		Sample	Rate (%)
Gender	Male	194	50
	Female	186	47,94
	Not specified	8	2,06
Total		388	100
Age	<18 years	28	7,2
	18 - 24 years	73	18,8
	25 - 34 years	198	51

	35 - 44 years	73	18,8
	> 45 years	16	4,1
Total		388	100

4. RESULTS

After running reliability tests and removing problematic items while retaining those with high reliability, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the measurement scales were as follows: Sincerity = 0.832; Competence = 0.879; Excitement = 0.752; Sophistication = 0.717; Ruggedness = 0.727; and Purchase Intention = 0.803.

Table 2. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.793 ^a	0.629	0.624	0.47381	1.861
a. Predictors: (Constant), R, SO, E, C, S					
b. Dependent Variable: PI					

The model summary indicates an adjusted R² of 0.629, meaning that the model explains approximately 62.9% of the variance in the dependent variable (purchase intention) through the independent variables. The correlation coefficient (R) is 0.793, suggesting a fairly strong relationship among the variables. Additionally, the Durbin-Watson statistic is 1.861, which falls within the acceptable range (1.5–2.5), suggesting the absence of serious autocorrelation in the residuals.

Table 3. Anova

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	145.504	5	29.101	129.626	.001 ^b
	Residual	85.758	382	0.224		
	Total	231.262	387			
a. Dependent Variable: PI						
b. Predictors: (Constant), R, SO, E, C, S						

Based on the ANOVAa table, the multiple linear regression model yields an F-value of 129.626 with a significance level of 0.001, indicating that the model is statistically significant and appropriate for analysis.

Table 4. Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	-0.62	0.18		-3.446	0.001		
	S	0.355	0.041	0.312	8.597	0	0.738	1.356
	C	0.307	0.04	0.273	7.66	0	0.762	1.312
	E	0.118	0.038	0.108	3.08	0.002	0.789	1.267
	SO	0.241	0.038	0.226	6.369	0	0.768	1.301
	R	0.221	0.037	0.212	6	0	0.775	1.291

a. Dependent Variable: PI

In the coefficients table, all variables have positive standardized Beta coefficients and are statistically significant (Sig. < 0.005), indicating that they exert a positive and meaningful impact on purchase intention. Sincerity (S) has the strongest influence (Beta = 0.312), followed by Competence (C) (0.273) and Sophistication (SO) (0.226), while Excitement (E) has the weakest effect (0.108). Additionally, all VIF values are below 2, indicating no serious multicollinearity issues in the model.

The Unstandardized Regression Equation is:

$$PI = 0,355*S + 0,307*C + 0,241*SO + 0,221*R + 0,118*E + e$$

During the study, the initial measurement included 42 observed variables based on Aaker’s model to assess the five brand personality dimensions. However, after a preliminary survey, reliability testing, and exploratory factor analysis (EFA), only 24 observed variables were retained to ensure relevance and applicability within the specific research context. The analysis results indicate that all five brand personality dimensions positively influence consumers’ purchase intentions. Among them, Sincerity and Competence exert the strongest effects, reflecting the tendency of the Vietnamese. Consumers prefer brands perceived as trustworthy, approachable, honest, and professional. These two dimensions also facilitate self-brand congruity, a core element explained by self-congruity theory.

5. DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

The results indicate that brand personality serves as a strategic positioning tool for emotionally rich products such as chocolate. The congruence between consumers’ self-image and the brand’s personality constitutes an important mechanism that drives purchase intention (Toldos-Romero & Orozco-Gómez, 2015; Tseng & Wang, 2023). This finding aligns with self-congruity theory and reinforces previous research in the premium consumer goods sector (Nguyen et al., 2016; Yuanita & Marsasi, 2022).

A notable finding in this study is that while the ruggedness dimension does have a positive and significant impact on Belcholat’s purchase intention (Sig. = 0.000), its magnitude is the second weakest (Beta = 0.212), suggesting its role is less prominent compared to Sincerity or Competence. This contrasts with earlier studies, such as (Puligadda & VanBergen, 2023; Su & Tong, 2015), which suggested that ruggedness could contribute to brand differentiation in certain industries. This discrepancy can be explained by the nature of the premium chocolate category, where traits

such as sophistication, sincerity, and competence, which convey trustworthiness and luxury, are prioritized by consumers over the “rugged, edgy” image associated with ruggedness.

Finally, excitement has the weakest effect on Belcholat’s purchase intention. This is understandable, as the traits associated with Excitement are often less emphasized in the premium chocolate context or are less aligned with the typical values sought by Vietnamese consumers in this category. However, excitement still positively contributes to purchase intention.

The study confirms that brand personality is a key driver of purchase intention in the premium chocolate sector. Sincerity and competence emerge as the most influential dimensions, indicating that consumers highly value trustworthiness and expertise in the product. From a practical perspective, companies need to develop consistent brand messaging, optimize emotional experiences, and reinforce a professional brand image to enhance purchase intention.

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