



Examining the Vietnamese Attitude towards Purchasing Intention of Dairy Product Brand Influence by Using Brand Mascot as Communication Tool

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of brand mascot dimensions, Brand Awareness (BA), Brand Personification (BP), and Brand Self-Congruity (BSC) on the Purchase Intention of Vietnamese consumers in the dairy industry, with attitude toward the advertisement as a mediating variable. Utilising a quantitative approach with 217 Vietnamese citizens aged 18 and older who had used milk products from brands that employed mascots in their marketing at least once in the past two years. The findings reveal that attitude toward the advertisement significantly mediates the relationship between mascot dimensions and purchase intention. The research results show that attitudes towards advertising play a significant mediating role in the relationship between mascot aspects and purchase intention. Specifically, brand self-congruity has the strongest indirect impact on purchase intention, followed by brand awareness. Conversely, brand personalisation has no significant impact. Furthermore, demographic characteristics such as age, gender, and income do not create significant differences in the purchase intention of Vietnam dairy brands. These insights suggest that to succeed in the competitive Vietnamese dairy market, marketers need to design mascots that strongly align with consumers' personal identities, rather than relying solely on basic brand recognition or human-like characteristics.

Keywords: Brand Mascot, Purchase Intention, Attitude toward Advertisement, Vietnamese Dairy Market

Introduction

In recent decades, Vietnam's dairy industry has currently become one of the fastest growing food and beverage markets in Southeast Asia, with a total market value expected to reach US\$4.2 billion by 2024 and expected through 2029, potentially reaching US\$768.80 billion by that year (Intelligence, 2025). Over the past 5 years, it has been easy



to see advertising policies focusing on brand image. In that situation, dairy companies are trying to build brand image through specialised marketing campaigns and methodical investment, including building brand mascot images. Mascots are an important branding element, which can represent various types of inanimate objects, humans, or animals used as symbols for goods and services as a result of creating a connection with customers (Garretson & Niedrich, 2004; Tek, 2004). In the context of the rapid development of social media, Lourenco et al. (2024) showed that brand personification significantly affects consumer brand awareness and social media engagement. Mascots can represent the voice of a brand that reflects the brand's personality. Research showed that mascot design is not just a visual decoration but also a strategic marketing tool that can meaningfully shape audience engagement (Palladino et al., 2022). According to BAŞFIRINCI and Cilingir, advertising that uses anthropomorphism positively affects customers' attitudes toward specific brands (BAŞFIRINCI & Cilingir, 2015). To continue previous studies, this study explores the relationship between brand awareness, brand personality, and brand self-congruity towards Vietnamese consumers' purchase intention of dairy product brands in Vietnam, influenced by using brand mascots as communication tools in promotional strategies.

Objectives

1. To examine whether brand awareness, brand personification, and brand self-congruity using brand mascots influence Vietnamese people's purchases of dairy products, with attitude toward the advertisement as a mediating variable.
2. To determine whether Vietnamese consumers of different age groups and genders respond differently to dairy brands that use mascots.
3. To identify which factor – brand awareness, brand personification, or brand self-congruity – has the strongest influence on Vietnamese consumers' purchase intention when exposed to brand mascots.

Concept theory framework

This research integrates Anthropomorphism Theory, the concepts of Animism, and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) as the foundational pillars for examining Vietnamese consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions toward dairy products. Animism refers to the belief that inanimate objects have a "soul", "spirit", or intrinsic (Belk, 1988). In the context of brand image building, animism explains why consumers perceive brands as living entities with personalities and the ability to build emotional relationships with the brand itself. Anthropomorphism is the attribution of human characteristics, behaviours, or emotions to non-human objects (Epley et al., 2007). Ajzen (1991) based on the Theory of



Reasoned Action (TRA) (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1977) developed the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) that human behaviour is predicted by three factors: attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control.

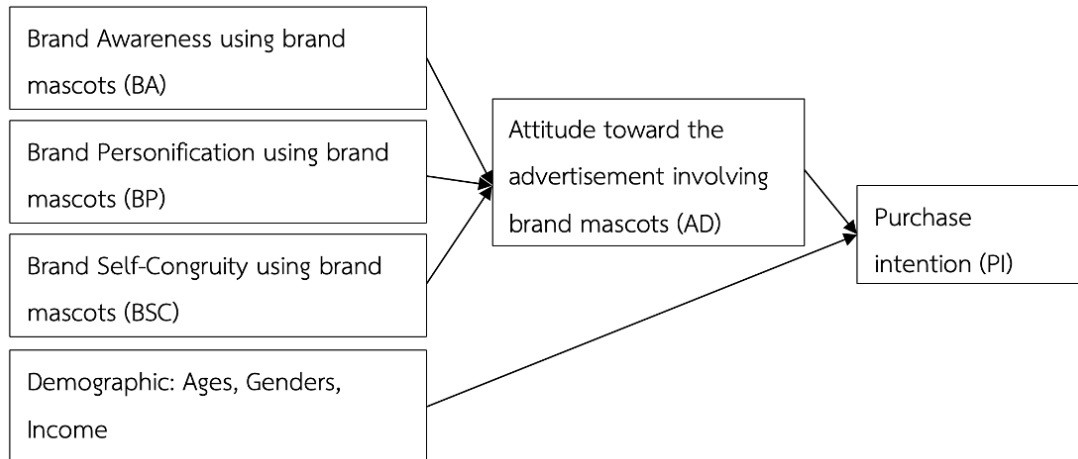


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Materials and Methods

This research was completed using the quantitative approach method with an online survey in English, and the target respondents were Vietnamese consumers. The survey subjects for this research were 217 Vietnamese aged 18 and older who had used milk products from brands that employed mascots in their marketing at least once in the past two years. To ensure higher representativeness of the sample, the study selected samples based on age, income per month, amount of money spent to buy dairy products per month, and gender. Cohen et al. (2013) demonstrated that with a single predictor variable having a correlation coefficient of 0.30 with the dependent variable in the population, 124 participants are needed to maintain statistical power of 80%. With five predictor variables and a correlation coefficient of 0.30 in the population, 187 participants are needed to achieve statistical power of 80%. This research model has 6 predictors, and by standard, would require more than 187 participants. After collecting data, the author gathered surveys from 217 people, which is greater than 187. This survey was conducted online due to its advantages of low cost, speed, and reasonable response rate (Nayak & Narayan, 2019). The survey was presented on Google Forms and then sent directly to respondents via Facebook Messenger, forums, Facebook groups, etc. After collecting data, the researcher used SPSS software for analysing quantitative data of this study.



The questionnaire was adapted from research by Yoo and Donthu (2001), Delbaere et al. (2011), Sirgy et al. (1997), Derbaix and Pecheux (2003), Rodgers (2003). Some modifications were made to include items relevant to the Vietnamese context and to address the research questions. The questionnaire is divided into four parts according to the demographics, independent variable (BA, BP and BSC), mediator variable (AD), and dependent variable (PI). The questionnaire mainly uses a 5-point scale, as follows: (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4) agree, and (5) strongly agree.

Results

Table 1: Demographic data of the 217 respondents

Elements	Item	Frequency	% total respondents
Age	18-25 years old	156	71.9
	26-30 years old	33	15.2
	31-35 years old	13	6
	Above 36 years old	15	6.9
Gender	Male	69	31.8
	Female	123	56.7
	LGBTQIA+	21	9.7
	Prefer not to say	4	1.8
Income per month	Below 5,000,000 VND	80	36.9
	5,000,000 – 10,000,000 VND	44	20.3
	10,000,001 – 12,000,000 VND	12	5.5
	12,000,001 – 15,000,000 VND	20	9.2
	Above 15,000,000 VND	61	28.1

This study included 217 Vietnamese citizens aged 18 and older who had used milk products from brands that employed mascots in their marketing at least once in the past two years. The majority of participants were female (56.7%) and young adults aged 18-25 (71.9%). Regarding monthly income, the largest group earned below 5,000,000 VND (36.9%), followed by those earning above 15,000,000 VND (28.1%). This demographic profile reflects a predominantly young, female Generation Z consumer base, which logically aligns with the high proportion of lower-income respondents who are likely university students or first workers. However, caution should be exercised in interpreting these findings, as the sample may not be fully representative of the broader dairy consumer population in Vietnam, particularly older demographics and males.



Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis Results Predicting Attitude toward the advertisement (AD)

Coefficients					
	Unstandardized	Coefficients Std. Error	Std. Coefficients Beta	t	Sig. (p- value)
(Constant)	1.380	.238		5.807	.000
BA	.171	.050	.194	3.407	.001
BP	.054	.086	.042	.626	.532
BSC	.447	.051	.571	8.809	.000
R Square: 0.505, Adjusted R Square: 0.498					
ANOVA ^a (sig.): 0.000 ^b					
Dependent Variable: Attitude toward the advertisement (AD)					

Table 2 presents the results of the multiple regression analysis conducted to examine the impact of BA, BP, and BSC on AD. The adjusted R Square value is .498. For individual variables, the results show that BSC has the strongest positive impact on AD, with a standardised beta coefficient of 0.571 ($p = .000 < .05$). BA has an impact on AD to a lesser extent, with a standardised beta of .194 ($p = .001 < .05$). In contrast, BP does not significantly influence attitude toward the advertisement, as its p-value exceeds .05 (Beta = .042, $p = .532$). Therefore, only BA BSC are significant predictors of AD within this model.

Table 3: Regression Analysis Results Predicting Purchase Intention (PI)

Coefficients					
	Unstandardized	Coefficients Std. Error	Std. Coefficients Beta	t	Sig. (p- value)
(Constant)	.506	.174		2.904	.004
AD	.872	.047	.788	18.745	.000
R Square: 0.620, Adjusted R Square: 0.619; ANOVA ^a (sig.): <.000 ^b					
Dependent Variable: Purchase intention (PI)					

Table 3 presents the results of the linear regression analysis evaluating the direct impact of AD on PI. The model summary indicates a robust Adjusted R Square value of .619. This demonstrates that 61.9% of the variance in consumers' purchase intention can be explained by their attitude toward the advertisement. The results table shows a positive and highly statistically significant relationship between the two variables. AD



strongly predicts PI, with a standardised beta coefficient of .788 and a p-value of .000 ($p < .05$). The unstandardised coefficient ($B = .872$) indicates that for every unit increase in positive attitude toward mascot advertising, consumer purchase intentions increase by .872 unit.

Table 4: Mediation Analysis Results for the Effects on Purchase Intention

	Indirect Effect				Direct Effect	Result
	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI	p	
BA	.124	.045	.043	.220	.106	Full Mediation
BP	.039	.074	-.102	.188	.789	No Mediation
BSC	.325	.060	.206	.439	.024	Partial Mediation
Mediating variable: Attitude toward the advertisement (AD)						
Dependent Variable: Purchase intention (PI)						

Table 4 illustrates the results of the mediating analysis to examine the mediating role of AD in the relationship between IVs and PI. For BA, AD acts as full mediation (BootLLCI and BootULCI from .043 to .220, containing no 0), but the direct impact loses statistical significance ($p = .106 > .05$). This means that BA must go through AD to generate PI. BP shows no mediating role, as the confidence interval for the indirect effect includes 0 (BootLLCI to BootULCI: -.102 to .188). Finally, AD plays a partial mediating role in the relationship between BSC and PI, as both the indirect effect (BootCI: .206 to .439) and the direct effect ($p = .024$) are statistically significant.

Table 5: One-Way ANOVA Results for Differences in Purchase Intention by Demographic Characteristics

Demographic Characteristics	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig. (p-value)	Result
Age	5.364	3	1.788	2.397	.069	Not significant
Gender	.267	3	.089	.115	.951	Not significant
Income per month	5.160	4	1.290	1.719	.147	Not significant
Dependent Variable: Purchase intention (PI)						

Referring to the Sig. (p-value) column, all values for Age (.069), Gender (.951), and Monthly Income (.147) are greater than the standard significance level of .05. Therefore, the results shown in the last column are "Not significant" for all groups.



Table 6: Comparison and Ranking of Indirect Effects' Intensity on Purchase Intention

Independent Variable	Mediation Path	Indirect Effect	BootLLCI to BootULCI	Intensity Ranking
Brand Self-Congruity (BSC)	BSC -> AD -> PI	.325	.206 to .439	Strongest
Brand Awareness (BA)	BA -> AD -> PI	.124	.043 to .220	Moderate
Brand Personification (BP)	BP -> AD -> PI	.039	-.102 to .188	Not Significant

As shown in Table 6, BSC exerts the strongest impact (Effect = .325), followed by BA (Effect = .124). In contrast, BP has no significant mediating effect, as its confidence interval includes 0. In short, BSC is the most important factor driving customer purchase intention.

Table 7: Result of Hypothesis

Hypothesis	Description	Result
H1	BA using brand mascots has a significant impact on attitude toward the advertisement of Vietnamese customers in dairy industry.	Supported
H2	BP using brand mascots has a significant impact on attitude toward the advertisement of Vietnamese customers in the dairy industry.	Not Supported
H3	BSC using brand mascots has a significant impact on attitude toward the advertisement of Vietnamese customers in the dairy industry.	Supported
H4	Attitude toward the advertisement influences the purchase intentions of Vietnamese customers in dairy industry	Supported
H5	BA, BP, BSC influence the purchase intentions of Vietnamese customers in the dairy industry, with attitude toward the advertisement as a mediating variable.	BSC,BA: Supported BP: Supported
H6	Vietnamese customers in the dairy industry with different demographics (ages, genders, income) have different purchasing intentions with dairy brands using mascots.	Not Supported



Hypothesis	Description	Result
H7	BA, BP, BSC influences the purchase intentions of Vietnamese customers in dairy industry, with attitude toward the advertisement as a mediating variable, with different levels of intensity.	BSC: Strongest BA: Moderate BP: Not Supported

Conclusions and Discussion

In the highly competitive Vietnamese dairy market, where products are similar, creating an emotional connection with customers is crucial, a role that brand mascots play a vital part in achieving (Garretson & Niedrich, 2004). The study evaluated three main objectives based on data collected from 217 respondents.

In the Vietnamese dairy market, with the survey target primarily being Gen Z (71.9% aged 18-25), the results clearly show that self-congruity (BSC) has the strongest impact on purchase intention, Bbrand awareness (BA) is the second strongest, while personification (BP) has no significant impact. This highlights an important management implication for brands: simply making the mascot familiar (BA) or assigning it human personality traits (BP) is insufficient. The core strategy is to design a mascot that reflects the personality and values of the customer, making them feel a deep connection and resonance (BSC). Compared to Reddy and Sathish (2023)'s research in the Indian market, this study shows similarities with the use of brand personification, including BA and BSC through mascots, significantly influences consumer attitudes toward advertising, thus driving increased sales and revenue. The results confirm that AD is a very strong mediating variable. Specifically, AD acts as a full mediator in the relationship between BA and purchase intention, and a partial mediator in the relationship between BSC and purchase intention. However, BP has no significant impact on purchase intention through advertising attitude. This means that a good mascot must first create enjoyment and a positive feeling towards the advertisement to drive actual purchase behavior. Unlike previous studies suggesting that women generally respond better to cute things (Lobmaier et al., 2010; Sprengelmeyer et al., 2009). This study presents ANOVA results showing no statistically significant differences in purchase intentions based on age, gender, or monthly income for milk companies using mascots. While providing valuable insights, this study still has certain gaps due to limitations in the survey sample. The demographic data reflects a predominantly female group of students who are very young Vietnamese (56.7% female and 71.9% aged 18-25). Therefore, this survey sample may not fully represent the overall picture of behaviour in older generations, middle-aged parents, or male customer groups. Future studies should fill this gap by expanding the survey to include larger age groups and more diverse geographic regions. Furthermore, further research could test this mascot model in other service industries, such as technology or F&B, to see the potential of mascots.



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