

Factors Affecting Brand Identity of Tea Enterprises in Thai Nguyen Province: An SEM Approach

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on tea enterprises in Thai Nguyen province to identify factors affecting brand identity strength (BIS). Survey data of 230 enterprises were analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM) with four factors: Visual identity and packaging, Heritage and geographical indications, Brand story and communication, Product quality and consistency. The results show that all four factors have a positive impact on BIS, of which Visual identity and packaging has the strongest influence. The model explains 56.8% of the variance of BIS. In theory, the study adds empirical evidence to theories of brand identity and signaling. In practice, the results suggest that Thai Nguyen tea enterprises need to focus on packaging consistency, exploiting heritage, building brand stories and maintaining stable quality to strengthen identity and competitiveness.

Keywords: Brand identity, Heritage, Communication, Product quality, SEM

INTRODUCTION

Thai Nguyen has long been considered the “tea capital” of Vietnam, where the unique soil and climate conditions and indigenous farming knowledge converge, creating tea products with unique flavors and aromas, high economic value and closely associated with local cultural identity. In particular, Tan Cuong – Thai Nguyen tea products have been affirmed for their quality and reputation, becoming the pride of local people as well as one of the important specialties of the country (Nguyen Manh Hoang & Pham Thi Phuong Mai, 2022).

In the context of integration and fierce competition, brand identity has emerged as the core foundation to help products differentiate, be recognized – remembered and affirm sustainable reputation. For agricultural products in general and tea in particular, where physical quality is often difficult to distinguish, brand story, origin/heritage – geographical indication, visual identity/packaging, and quality – consistency are the “identity axis” to convert product advantages into brand identity strength in the minds of consumers. Studies have shown that packaging design and visual elements have a significant impact on brand image and purchase intention (Khuong & Tran, 2018), consistent with the results emphasizing the role of visual elements in purchase decisions (Liu, Wang & Zhang, 2025).

At the same time, brand identity cannot be separated from the origin and cultural values. Some studies in Vietnam show that geographical indications contribute to affirming quality value and enhancing the economic value – competitiveness of specialty agricultural products (Nguyen Thi Phuong Hao, 2023). At the international level, brand storytelling and communication have been shown to shape perceptions of brand identity and differentiation (Lundqvist, Liljander, Gummerus & van Riel, 2013; Chaturvedi & Sinha, 2024). In addition, empirical evidence on the relationship between certification/standards and tea farmer income in Vietnam shows that compliance with quality-origin standards is positively related to economic outcomes, thereby providing a basis for reinforcing brand identity based on quality and origin (Tran & Goto, 2019).

However, in reality, many tea production and trading establishments in Thai Nguyen have not yet focused on systematizing brand identity: brand storytelling is still fragmented, heritage advantages - geographical indications have not been effectively exploited, visual packaging is still monotonous, and quality has not been maintained stably to accumulate long-term trust. As Nguyen Thi Phuong Hao (2023) notes, the development of geographical indications in Vietnam is still limited in terms of market exploitation, reflecting the challenge of converting origin advantages into brand strength.

In terms of academics, many works focus on brand value, brand image, satisfaction - loyalty, while brand identity as a fundamental structure has not been fully tested in the context of specialty agricultural products. Recent research directions suggest: the impact of packaging - visual elements (Khuong & Tran, 2018; Liu, Wang & Zhang, 2025), the role of geographical indications (Nguyen Thi Phuong Hao, 2023, but there has been no study that simultaneously tests the four components Brand Story & Communication (BCC), Origin/Heritage & Geographical Indication (HGH), Visual Identity & Packaging (VIP) and Product Quality & Consistency (PQC) on Brand Identity Strength (BIS) in the context of Thai Nguyen tea.

Based on the above mentioned issues, this study aims to measure and test using the SEM model the impact of the four groups of factors mentioned above on the BIS of tea enterprises/cooperatives in Thai Nguyen. Expected contributions: (i) supplementing empirical evidence for the theory of brand identity in the specialty agricultural products industry; (ii) managerial implications for tea enterprises: consistent brand storytelling (BCC), emphasizing origin/heritage – geographical indications (HGH), upgrading identity/packaging (VIP), and maintaining quality and consistency (PQC); (iii) suggesting policies for developing Thai Nguyen tea brand in a sustainable and integrated direction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Brand Identity Strength (BIS)

In the digital and multi-stakeholder context, brand identity is no longer a static construct but is continuously co-constructed between the business and its stakeholders, through interaction and mutual influence (Iglesias et al., 2020; Sarasvuo et al., 2022). This perspective implies that brand identity strength (BIS) is formed by the consistency of brand meaning across touchpoints, accumulated through communication, symbols/identities, and consistent quality experiences over time (Iglesias et al., 2020; Sarasvuo et al., 2022).

Brand Story & Communication (BCC)

Brand storytelling increases the perception of authenticity and brand value when the story is closely linked to the product/category “identity” (Yin et al., 2023). From a communications perspective, a firm’s owned social media channels have a significant positive effect on engagement and business performance, demonstrating the pivotal role of consistent communications in strengthening identity (Liadeli et al., 2023). From a signaling perspective, communications based on trust signals help communicate the unobservable attributes of quality/origin, increase trust, and reduce information asymmetries—thus supporting BIS (Nyagadza, 2021). In summary, recent evidence suggests that relevant stories + consistent communications and trust signals are the foundation for sustainable BIS (Yin et al., 2023; Liadeli et al., 2023; Nyagadza, 2021).

Origin/Heritage & Geographical Indication (HGH)

Origin/Heritage and Geographical Indication (GI) “anchor” brand identity to a specific space-culture, increasing authenticity in consumer perception. In Vietnam, the GI legal framework has been strongly promoted after the EVFTA, but the main challenge is the extent to which GI is incorporated into local/business branding strategies (Nguyen, 2023). In the market, consumers associate GI labels with higher perceived value and are willing to pay more (Rabadán et al., 2021; Yeh et al., 2023). In terms of economic impact, GI product development is positively correlated with increased household income (Li et al., 2024). Implications for BIS: HGH provides “institutional evidence + market signals” to reinforce the meaning and strength of brand identity in the minds of customers (Nguyen, 2023; Rabadán et al., 2021; Yeh et al., 2023; Li et al., 2024).

Visual Identity & Packaging (VIP)

Visual identity and packaging are the tangible “signaling” layer of identity. Recent reviews show that visual elements (color, layout, graphics, logos) directly influence perception and purchase intention (Srivastava *et al.*, 2022). Particularly in the tea bag category, new empirical research shows that visual elements influence purchase intention through brand experience (Liu *et al.*, 2025). This suggests a VIP → experience → BIS mechanism, in which consistent packaging design “encodes” the story and provenance into the brand memory (Srivastava *et al.*, 2022; Liu *et al.*, 2025).

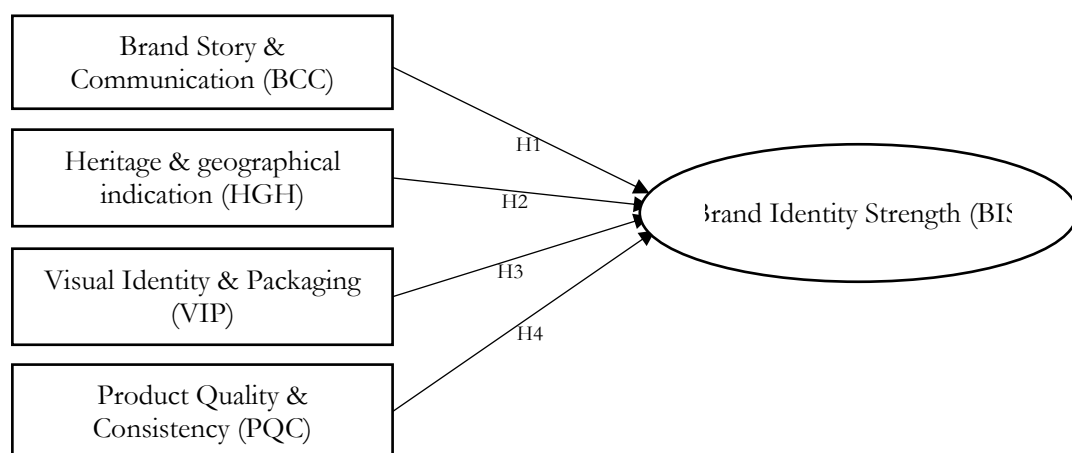
Product Quality & Consistency (PQC)

Quality and consistency are core “promises” of identity; when maintained consistently, they increase trust and the brand’s reputational aura. Recent research on brand trust in the context of sustainability suggests that perceived quality and transparency/standards signals are key factors in building trust (Monfort *et al.*, 2025). At the behavioral level, perceived quality and quality assurance attributes are strong drivers of trust and willingness to pay (Sung *et al.*, 2023). Thus, PQC plays a fundamental role in reinforcing BIS through the mechanism of quality signaling → trust → identity strength (Monfort *et al.*, 2025; Sung *et al.*, 2023).

Proposed Model and Hypotheses Development

To explore the determinants of brand recognition strength, this study develops a conceptual model that integrates four key factors. Specifically, the proposed model demonstrates the direct impact of Brand Story & Communication, Heritage & Geographical Indication, Visual Identity & Packaging, and Product Quality & Consistency on Brand Recognition Strength. Figure 1 illustrates the proposed research framework.

Figure 1: *Proposed Research Model*



Specifically, four independent variables including: Brand Story & Communication (BCC), Origin/heritage & geographical indication (HGH), Visual Identity & Packaging (VIP) and Product Quality & Consistency (PQC) are assumed to have a direct and positive impacts on the dependent variable Brand Identity Strength (BIS). On that basis, four hypotheses are formed as follows:

H1: Brand Story & Communication (BCC) has a positive impact on Brand Identity Strength (BIS).

H2: Heritage & geographical indication (HGH) has a positive impact on Brand Identity Strength (BIS).

H3: Visual Identity & Packaging (VIP) has a positive impact on Brand Identity Strength (BIS).

H4: Product Quality & Consistency (PQC) has a positive impact on Brand Identity Strength (BIS).

In summary, the above hypotheses reflect the research logic of the relationships between core brand dimensions and brand recognition strength. This conceptual model is tested using survey data and structural equation modeling (SEM) to assess the fit and confirm the causal relationships between the variables.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study was designed quantitatively, using a questionnaire survey method. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis was applied to test the relationships between independent and dependent factors in the proposed model. The questionnaire was built based on scales that have been verified from previous studies, with a 5-level Likert scale (1 = Completely disagree, 5 = Completely agree). The research design allows for testing the measurement model using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and at the same time evaluating the structural model to test the hypotheses.

Sample and Data Collection

The survey subjects of this study are tea production and trading enterprises in Thai Nguyen province. The convenience sampling method combined with the purposive method was applied to approach enterprises with practical activities in the tea sector. The questionnaire was sent to managers or representatives in charge of the brand of the enterprise. Some 250 questionnaires were distributed, of which 230 valid responses were collected and used for the analysis. The enterprise survey allows to reflect on how tea units are building and implementing brand identity, thereby providing a practical basis for testing the research model.

Measurement Instrument

The variables in the research model are measured using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = completely disagree, 5 = completely agree). The scale is inherited and adjusted from recent international studies, combined with researches in Vietnam to ensure the context suitability.

Table 1: *Constructs, Number of Items, and Sources of Measurement*

Factor/Code	Number of items	Description	Sources of Measurement
Brand Story & Communication (BCC)	4	Measure how businesses build and communicate their brand stories in the modern environment.	Shams et al. (2024); Ashiq et al. (2025)
Heritage & geographical indication (HGH)	4	Measure the level of brand image consistency between products, packaging, and logos.	Shams et al. (2024)
Visual Identity & Packaging (VIP)	4	Measure the extent of exploitation of cultural heritage and origin in brand positioning.	Crespo-Almendros et al. (2023); Shams et al. (2024)
Product Quality & Consistency (PQC)	4	Measures quality commitment and the ability of a company to maintain consistent quality.	Zeithaml (1988); Shams et al. (2024)
Brand Identity Strength (BIS)	3	Measure the clarity, distinctiveness and consistency of brand identity in the eyes of corporate management.	Acar et al. (2024); Shams et al. (2024)

Source: Compiled by the author based on prior studies

Data Analysis Methods

The data collected from 230 tea enterprises in Thai Nguyen was processed and analyzed in a two-step process. First, the data was cleaned using SPSS software to eliminate missing cases, check the reliability of the scale through Cronbach's Alpha coefficient and exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to assess the convergence and preliminary discrimination. Next, the research model was tested using the structural equation modeling (SEM) method with the support of AMOS. This stage includes confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to confirm the scale structure, test the composite reliability (CR) and convergent and discriminant values (AVE, HTMT), then evaluate the overall suitability of the model (CMIN/df, CFI, TLI, RMSEA). Finally, the research hypotheses were tested through structural modeling, and the statistical significance of the regression coefficients was analyzed to determine the impact level of each independent factor on brand recognition strength.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics of Enterprises

Table 2: *Respondents' Profile (n = 230)*

Variable	Frequency	Percent (%)
Type of firm		
Cooperative	91	39.6
Sole proprietorship	83	36.1
Company	56	24.3
Lenght of operation		
Less than 5 years	45	19.6
From 5 years to 10 years	87	37.8
More than 10 years	98	42.6
Number of employees		
Fewer than 20 people	80	34.8
From 20 to 50 people	106	46.1
More than 50 people	44	19.1
Main product		
Green tea	145	63
Black tea	85	37

Major distribution channel		
Traditional trade	74	32.2
E-commerce	110	47.8
Direct-to-Consumer	22	9.6
Export	24	10.4

Source: Compiled by the author

The statistical results show that out of 230 tea enterprises participating in the survey, cooperatives account for the largest proportion with 91 units (39.6%), followed by individual business households with 83 units (36.1%) and companies with 56 units (24.3%). This reflects the characteristics of the Thai Nguyen tea industry, where cooperatives and business households still play a leading role, while the number of enterprises with company models is limited.

In terms of operating time, nearly half of the enterprises have over 10 years of experience (42.6%), showing stability and long-term commitment to the tea industry. The group with 5 to 10 years accounts for 37.8%, while only 19.6% are newly established enterprises under 5 years. This is proof that the Thai Nguyen tea industry mainly consists of units with extensive experience and production traditions.

In terms of labor scale, the majority of enterprises have between 20 and 50 employees (46.1%), followed by the group with less than 20 employees (34.8%), and only 19.1% have more than 50 employees. This reflects the general picture of the tea industry with small and medium scale being the main ones, the number of large enterprises with abundant human resources is not much.

In terms of main products, green tea accounts for an overwhelming proportion (63%), while black tea accounts for 37%. This is a traditional production characteristic of Thai Nguyen, which is famous for its green tea products.

Finally, the distribution channels chosen by enterprises are quite diverse. Notably, e-commerce accounts for the highest proportion (47.8%), reflecting the trend of modernization and strong shift to online business. Traditional trade channels still account for a significant proportion (32.2%). Meanwhile, direct sales to consumers (9.6%) and exports (10.4%) account for a modest proportion, showing the potential that needs to be further exploited to expand the market.

In short, the survey sample reflects the characteristics of the Thai Nguyen tea industry: the majority are small and medium-sized enterprises, operating for many years, focusing on green tea production, with distribution channels increasingly shifting to e-commerce.

Descriptive Analysis of Factors

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Factors Affecting Brand Identity of Tea Enterprises

Factor	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)
Brand Story & Communication (BCC)	3.47	0.68
Heritage & geographical indication (HGH)	3.51	0.79
Visual Identity & Packaging (VIP)	3.37	0.76
Product Quality & Consistency (PQC)	3.50	0.76
Brand Identity Strength (BIS)	3.54	0.60

Source: Compiled by the author

The results show that the average score of the factors ranges from 3.37 to 3.54, reflecting a fairly positive but not really high assessment level. In which, Brand Identity Strength (BIS) has the highest value ($M = 3.54$; $SD = 0.60$), showing that businesses are generally confident in the clarity and differentiation of their brands.

In the group of independent factors, Heritage & Geographical Indications (HGH) ($M = 3.51$) and Product Quality & Consistency (PQC) ($M = 3.50$) are highly appreciated, affirming that this is the traditional advantage of Thai Nguyen tea. Brand Story & Communication (BCC) reached 3.47, reflecting a fairly average level of implementation. Meanwhile, Visual Identity & Packaging (VIP) is the lowest ($M = 3.37$), showing limitations in product image and packaging design.

Overall, the results highlight strengths in heritage and quality, while also pointing to the need to improve the visual identity system to enhance brand strength.

Reliability Analysis

Table 4 : Cronbach's Alpha for Factors

Factors	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Brand Story & Communication (BCC)	4	0.834
Heritage & geographical indication (HGH)	4	0.863
Visual Identity & Packaging (VIP)	4	0.881
Product Quality & Consistency (PQC)	4	0.871
Brand Identity Strength (BIS)	3	0.963

Source: Compiled by the author

Table 4 shows that all scales have Cronbach's Alpha coefficients greater than 0.8, demonstrating very good reliability. Specifically, the factor "Brand Story & Communication" achieved $\alpha = 0.834$, demonstrating an acceptable level of consistency. "Heritage & geographical indication" ($\alpha = 0.863$) and "Visual Identity & Packaging" ($\alpha = 0.881$) both have high reliability.

"Product Quality & Consistency" ($\alpha = 0.871$) continues to confirm the stability of the scale. In particular, "Brand Identity Strength" achieved $\alpha = 0.963$, reflecting extremely strong internal consistency. Thus, all scales meet the requirements and can be used for the next EFA, CFA and SEM analysis steps.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

Table 5: *Results of Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)*

Indicator	Value
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin - KMO	.866
Measure of Sampling	2863.343 (df = 171, $p < 0.001$)
Number of Components (Eigenvalue > 1)	5
Cumulative Variance Explained	75.155

Source: Compiled by the author

The EFA results show that the KMO index = 0.866, exceeding the threshold of 0.5, proving that the data is suitable for factor analysis. Bartlett's test has a Chi-square value of 2863.343 with df = 171, $p < 0.001$, confirming that the correlation matrix is statistically significant. There are 5 factors extracted with Eigenvalue > 1, consistent with the proposed research model.

The total variance extracted reaches 75.155%, exceeding the threshold of 50%, showing that the factors explain most of the data variation. This proves that the scale has high generalizability and explanatory power.

Thus, the observed variables are grouped reasonably and can be included in the CFA step to test convergent and discriminant values.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

The CFA results show that the measurement model achieves a very good fit with the survey data. Specifically, the Chi-square/df index = 1.026 (< 3) and the p value = 0.399 (> 0.05) demonstrate that the model does not differ significantly from the actual data. Comparison indexes such as NFI = 0.951, TLI = 0.998, CFI = 0.999 and IFI = 0.999 all exceed the recommended threshold of 0.90, reflecting a high level of fit. At the same time, the RMSEA index = 0.011 (< 0.05) and PCLOSE = 1.000 further confirm that the model has a strong fit. In addition, adjustment indexes such as PNFI = 0.789 and PCFI = 0.829 are at an acceptable level (> 0.5). Thus, it can be affirmed that the CFA model meets the requirements of suitability well, serving as a reliable basis for assessing convergent value and discriminant value in the next analysis steps.

Table 6: *Summary of CFA Results*

Construct	CR	AVE	Conclusion
VIP1234	0.882	.652	Reliable, valid
HGH1234	0.886	.618	Reliable, valid
PQC1234	0.874	.637	Reliable, valid
BCC1234	0.834	.558	Reliable, valid
BIS1234	0.964	.900	Reliable, valid

Source: Compiled by the authors

The CFA results in Table 6 show that all scales have achieved reliability and convergent validity. Specifically, the CR coefficients range from 0.834 to 0.964, all exceeding the threshold of 0.7, demonstrating very good internal consistency. The AVE index of the factors is greater than 0.5, with the lowest value being 0.558 (BCC1234) and the highest being 0.900 (BIS1234).

This shows that the observed variables explain well most of the variance of the latent factor. In particular, the BIS1234 factor has CR = 0.964 and AVE = 0.900, demonstrating very strong reliability and convergent validity. These results also confirm that the scales meet the standards of reliability and measurement value.

Therefore, the factors can be further used in the discriminant validity testing step (HTMT, Fornell-Larcker) and SEM.

Table 7: HTMT Ratios among Constructs

Construct	HTMT				
	BCC1234	HGH1234	VIP1234	PQC1234	BIS123
BCC1234	—				
HGH1234	.271	—			
VIP1234	.154	.547	—		
PQC1234	.028	.176	.190	—	
BIS123	.401	.589	.604	.373	—

Source: Compiled by the authors

Note: All HTMT values < 0.85 (Henseler *et al.*, 2015), confirming discriminant validity.

Table 7 presents the results of the discriminant validity test using the HTMT index. The results show that all pairs of factors have HTMT values less than 0.85, which is within the recommended threshold of Henseler *et al.* (2015). This proves that the research concepts are clearly differentiated and do not overlap.

The relationship between BCC1234 and HGH1234 has HTMT = 0.271, showing a significant difference. Similarly, BCC1234 and VIP1234 only reached 0.154, further strengthening the discriminant validity. Notably, BIS123 has the highest level when compared to VIP1234 (0.604) and HGH1234 (0.589) but is still below 0.85.

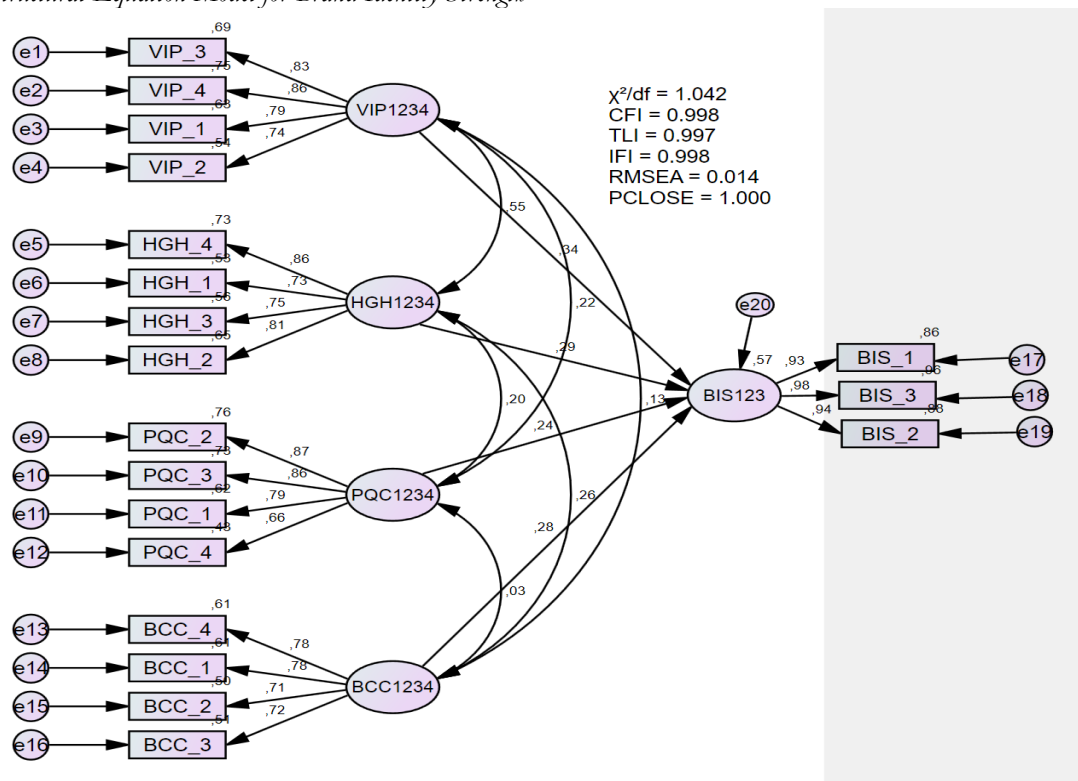
The remaining factor pairs, such as PQC1234 with BCC1234 (0.028) or VIP1234 (0.190), all have very low values. These results show that the model does not have problems with multicollinearity between concepts. Thereby, the discriminant value of the scale is firmly guaranteed. This allows moving to the SEM structural model analysis step to test the research hypotheses.

Structural Model and Hypotheses Testing

Figure 2 below presents the structural equation model (SEM) constructed to test the research hypotheses.

Figure 2

Structural Equation Model for Brand Identity Strength



The SEM estimation results show that the model achieves a very good fit with the survey data. The fit indices all exceed the recommended thresholds: $\chi^2/df = 1.042$ (< 3), CFI = 0.998, TLI = 0.997, IFI = 0.998 (> 0.90), RMSEA = 0.014 (< 0.05) and PCLOSE = 1.000. This confirms that the proposed research model has a high compatibility with the actual data. At the same time, the paths from the four independent factors (VIP1234, HGH1234, PQC1234, BCC1234) to the dependent variable Brand Identity Strength (BIS123) are all statistically significant, thereby providing a basis for testing and discussing the research hypotheses in the next section.

Table 8: *Standardized Regression Weights, Standard Errors, Critical Ratios, and Hypothesis Testing*

Hypo-thesis	Path	Estimate (β)	S.E.	C.R.	p-value	Result
H1	Brand Story & Communication (BCC) → Brand Identity Strength (BIS)	0.276	0.048	4.941	***	Supported
H2	Heritage & geographical indication (HGH) → Brand Identity Strength (BIS)	0.285	0.047	4.300	***	Supported
H3	Visual Identity & Packaging (VIP) → Brand Identity Strength (BIS)	0.335	0.052	5.188	***	Supported
H4	Product Quality & Consistency (PQC) → Brand Identity Strength (BIS)	0.244	0.040	4.680	***	Supported

Source: Compiled by the authors

Note: *** $p < 0.001$; The model explains 56.8% of the variance in Brand Identity Strength ($R^2 = 0.568$).

The results of the structural model testing (Table 8) show that all four hypotheses H1–H4 are supported with a very high level of statistical significance ($p < 0.001$). Specifically, the standardized regression coefficient of “Visual Identity & Packaging” (H3) reached $\beta = 0.335$, the largest among the factors, demonstrating that visual image and packaging factors have the strongest influence on brand recognition strength. Next are “Heritage & Geographical Indication” (H2) with $\beta = 0.285$ and “Brand Story & Communication” (H1) with $\beta = 0.276$, both showing an important role in strengthening brand identity. “Product Quality & Consistency” (H4) has the lowest β (0.244) but is still statistically significant and contributes significantly to increasing brand recognition strength.

This implies that, in the research context, visual and tangible factors (such as packaging, image) have a stronger impact than functional factors (such as product quality) in building a strong brand. However, the difference in β values between factors is not too large, indicating that the factors all have a complementary role and need to be considered in the overall relationship. Furthermore, the model explains 56.8% of the variance of the dependent variable Brand Identity Strength ($R^2 = 0.568$), an acceptable level in social research, reflecting reliable explanatory power. Thus, this result not only confirms the validity of the proposed model but also provides a practical basis for businesses to prioritize brand development strategies based on both image, story and product quality aspects.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study show that Visual Identity & Packaging (VIP) has the strongest impact on brand recognition strength ($\beta = 0.335$). This is consistent with the findings of Srivastava et al. (2022) and Liu et al. (2025) that visual and packaging elements are effective brand communication tools.

At the same time, the influence of Heritage & Geographical Indication (HGH) ($\beta = 0.285$) is consistent with the studies of Erdem & Swait (2018) and Henseler et al. (2015), which suggest that brand heritage acts as a quality signal and reinforces consumer trust.

The results also confirm the role of Brand Story & Communication (BCC) ($\beta = 0.276$), which is similar to the studies on storytelling in brands (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010). This suggests that inspirational brand communication can create empathy and emotional connection with customers.

Regarding Product Quality & Consistency (PQC), although it has the lowest coefficient ($\beta = 0.244$), it is still proven to have an impact. This is consistent with the argument of Schmidt et al. (2013) that product quality is the foundation for maintaining trust, but in the context of a strong brand, image and heritage factors can be superior.

Overall, the model explains 56.8% of the variance in Brand Identity Strength ($R^2 = 0.568$), a reliable level in social research, reinforcing the findings of Rindell & Pinto Santos (2021) on the authenticity and perceived value of heritage brands.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study successfully tested the structural equation modeling (SEM) to analyze the factors affecting Brand Identity Strength (BIS). The results showed that all four independent factors, including Visual Identity & Packaging, Heritage & Geographical Indication, Brand Story & Communication, and Product Quality & Consistency, had a positive and statistically significant impact on brand identity strength. Of which, Visual Identity & Packaging showed the strongest impact, followed by Heritage & Geographical Indication, Brand Story & Communication, and finally Product Quality & Consistency. The research model explained 56.8% of the variance of BIS, an acceptable level in social research.

Theoretically, the study has strengthened the empirical basis for theories related to brand identity and brand signaling theory, and expanded the understanding of the combined role of tangible elements (packaging, image), intangible elements (story, heritage), and functional elements (product quality) in forming a strong brand identity. In addition, the confirmation of the reliability and validity of the scales (CR, AVE, HTMT) provides a useful reference basis for further research in the context of brands associated with geographical indications and cultural heritage.

Practically, the research results bring some important implications for businesses. First, companies need to invest heavily in packaging design and visual elements, because these are direct brand communication tools and have the greatest impact on brand recognition. Second, emphasizing and exploiting heritage, origin and geographical indications can help increase the prestige, trust and perceived value of the product. Third, businesses should build and tell a compelling brand story, thereby creating empathy and emotional connection with customers. Finally, maintaining stable and consistent quality throughout the product life cycle remains a necessary foundation to ensure brand sustainability. These implications suggest that a comprehensive brand development strategy, synchronously combining all four elements, will help businesses achieve sustainable competitive advantage.

Limitations and Future Research

Despite the positive results, this study still has some limitations. First, the data was collected from a limited survey sample, so it cannot fully reflect the diversity of markets and consumer behavior in other contexts. Second, the study only focused on four main factors, while other factors such as emotional value, digital experience or the impact of technology may also influence brand identity. Third, the quantitative SEM method provides an overview of the causal relationship, but does not deeply exploit qualitative aspects, such as consumers' personal interpretation of the brand story.

From these limitations, some future research directions are suggested. First, further studies can expand the sample scope, including different geographical areas or industries to compare and generalize the results. Second, it is advisable to integrate new variables, such as customer engagement, brand authenticity or digital brand experience, to more fully reflect the drivers of brand identity. Third, combining qualitative methods (in-depth interviews, case studies) with SEM will help to exploit the depth of how customers perceive and interpret brand value. These directions not only overcome current limitations but also expand the premise for future research in the field of brand management.

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Appendice

Appendix A: EFA

KMO and Bartlett's Test			
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin			,866
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi Square	2863,343	
	df	171	
	Sig.	0,000	

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	6,550	34,472	34,472	6,550	34,472	34,472	3,106	16,347	16,347
2	2,797	14,721	49,194	2,797	14,721	49,194	3,019	15,892	32,239
3	2,399	12,628	61,822	2,399	12,628	61,822	2,988	15,725	47,964
4	1,531	8,059	69,880	1,531	8,059	69,880	2,774	14,600	62,564
5	1,002	5,275	75,155	1,002	5,275	75,155	2,392	12,591	75,155
6	,581	3,057	78,212						
7	,497	2,616	80,828						
8	,478	2,515	83,343						
9	,433	2,276	85,619						
10	,428	2,254	87,873						
11	,407	2,144	90,018						
12	,355	1,868	91,886						
13	,336	1,769	93,655						
14	,294	1,547	95,203						
15	,274	1,441	96,644						
16	,250	1,318	97,962						
17	,210	1,104	99,066						
18	,118	,623	99,689						
19	,059	,311	100,000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotated Component Matrix^a

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
VIP_3	,838				
VIP_4	,831				
VIP_1	,806				
VIP_2	,791				
HGH_4		,834			
HGH_1		,793			
HGH_3		,766			
HGH_2		,773			
PQC_2			,868		
PQC_3			,853		
PQC_1			,846		
PQC_4			,794		
BCC_4				,826	
BCC_1				,822	
BCC_2				,790	
BCC_3				,782	
BIS_1					,849
BIS_3					,824
BIS_2					,815

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

Appendix B: Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

Model Fit Summary						
CMIN						
Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF	
Default model	67	145,682	142	,399	1,026	
Saturated model	209	,000	0			
Independence model	38	2955,848	171	,000	17,286	
Baseline Comparisons						
Model	NFI	RFI	IFI	TLI	CFI	
	Delta1	rho1	Delta2	rho2		
Default model	,951	,941	,999	,998	,999	
Saturated model	1,000		1,000		1,000	
Independence model	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	
Parsimony-Adjusted Measures						
Model	PRATIO	PNFI	PCFI			
Default model	,830	,789	,829			
Saturated model	,000	,000	,000			
Independence model	1,000	,000	,000			
NCP						
Model	NCP	LO 90	HI 90			
Default model	3,682	,000	36,393			
Saturated model	,000	,000	,000			
Independence model	2784,848	2612,209	2964,827			
FMIN						
Model	FMIN	F0	LO 90	HI 90		
Default model	,636	,016	,000	,159		
Saturated model	,000	,000	,000	,000		
Independence model	12,908	12,161	11,407	12,947		
RMSEA						
Model	RMSEA	LO 90	HI 90	PCLOSE		
Default model	,011	,000	,033	1,000		
Independence model	,267	,258	,275	,000		

Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)						
		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
VIP_3	<-- VIP1234	1,000				
VIP_4	<-- VIP1234	1,101	,073	15,078	***	par_1
VIP_1	<-- VIP1234	,989	,073	13,472	***	par_2
VIP_2	<-- VIP1234	,928	,076	12,272	***	par_3
HGH_4	<-- HGH1234	1,000				
HGH_1	<-- HGH1234	,839	,070	12,061	***	par_4
HGH_3	<-- HGH1234	,926	,074	12,564	***	par_5
HGH_2	<-- HGH1234	,857	,062	13,881	***	par_6
PQC_2	<-- PQC1234	1,000				
PQC_3	<-- PQC1234	,985	,063	15,682	***	par_7
PQC_1	<-- PQC1234	,907	,065	13,992	***	par_8
PQC_4	<-- PQC1234	,812	,074	10,919	***	par_9
BCC_4	<-- BCC1234	1,000				
BCC_1	<-- BCC1234	,961	,086	11,129	***	par_10
BCC_2	<-- BCC1234	,879	,086	10,198	***	par_11
BCC_3	<-- BCC1234	,844	,082	10,305	***	par_12
BIS_1	<-- BIS123	1,000				
BIS_3	<-- BIS123	1,042	,034	30,856	***	par_13
BIS_2	<-- BIS123	1,081	,040	26,960	***	par_14

Standardized Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)						
		Estimate				
VIP_3	<-- VIP1234	,831				
VIP_4	<-- VIP1234	,865				
VIP_1	<-- VIP1234	,791				
VIP_2	<-- VIP1234	,738				
HGH_4	<-- HGH1234	,856				
HGH_1	<-- HGH1234	,726				
HGH_3	<-- HGH1234	,748				
HGH_2	<-- HGH1234	,808				
PQC_2	<-- PQC1234	,874				
PQC_3	<-- PQC1234	,857				
PQC_1	<-- PQC1234	,786				
PQC_4	<-- PQC1234	,658				
BCC_4	<-- BCC1234	,780				
BCC_1	<-- BCC1234	,780				
BCC_2	<-- BCC1234	,709				
BCC_3	<-- BCC1234	,716				
BIS_1	<-- BIS123	,921				
BIS_3	<-- BIS123	,981				
BIS_2	<-- BIS123	,943				

Appendix C: Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

Model Fit Summary**CMIN**

Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
Default model	65	150,062	144	,348	1,042
Saturated model	209	,000	0		
Independence model	38	2955,848	171	,000	17,286

Baseline Comparisons

Model	NFI Delta1	RFI rho1	IFI Delta2	TLI rho2	CFI
Default model	,949	,940	,998	,997	,998
Saturated model	1,000		1,000		1,000
Independence model	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000

Parsimony-Adjusted Measures

Model	PRATIO	PNFI	PCFI
Default model	,842	,799	,840
Saturated model	,000	,000	,000
Independence model	1,000	,000	,000

NCP

Model	NCP	LO 90	HI 90
Default model	6,062	,000	39,394
Saturated model	,000	,000	,000
Independence model	2784,848	2612,209	2964,827

FMIN

Model	FMIN	F0	LO 90	HI 90
Default model	,655	,026	,000	,172
Saturated model	,000	,000	,000	,000
Independence model	12,908	12,161	11,407	12,947

RMSEA

Model	RMSEA	LO 90	HI 90	PCLOSE
Default model	,014	,000	,035	1,000
Independence model	,267	,258	,275	,000

Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)

	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
BIS123 <--- VIP1234	,271	,052	5,188	***	par_19
BIS123 <--- HGH1234	,202	,047	4,300	***	par_20
BIS123 <--- PQC1234	,185	,040	4,680	***	par_21
BIS123 <--- BCC1234	,235	,048	4,941	***	par_22
VIP_3 <--- VIP1234	1,000				
VIP_4 <--- VIP1234	1,101	,073	15,078	***	par_1
VIP_1 <--- VIP1234	,989	,073	13,473	***	par_2
VIP_2 <--- VIP1234	,928	,076	12,270	***	par_3
HGH_4 <--- HGH1234	1,000				
HGH_1 <--- HGH1234	,838	,070	12,061	***	par_4
HGH_3 <--- HGH1234	,926	,074	12,564	***	par_5
HGH_2 <--- HGH1234	,857	,062	13,882	***	par_6
PQC_2 <--- PQC1234	1,000				
PQC_3 <--- PQC1234	,985	,063	15,681	***	par_7
PQC_1 <--- PQC1234	,907	,065	13,992	***	par_8
PQC_4 <--- PQC1234	,811	,074	10,918	***	par_9
BCC_4 <--- BCC1234	1,000				
BCC_1 <--- BCC1234	,961	,086	11,130	***	par_10
BCC_2 <--- BCC1234	,879	,086	10,199	***	par_11
BCC_3 <--- BCC1234	,844	,082	10,305	***	par_12
BIS_1 <--- BIS123	1,000				
BIS_3 <--- BIS123	1,000				
BIS_2 <--- BIS123	1,000				

Standardized Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)

	Estimate
BIS123 <--- VIP1234	,335
BIS123 <--- HGH1234	,285
BIS123 <--- PQC1234	,244
BIS123 <--- BCC1234	,276
VIP_3 <--- VIP1234	,831
VIP_4 <--- VIP1234	,865
VIP_1 <--- VIP1234	,791
VIP_2 <--- VIP1234	,738

Squared Multiple Correlations: (

	Estimate
BIS123	,568
BIS_2	,878
BIS_3	,965
BIS_1	,858
BCC_3	,513
BCC_2	,503
BCC_1	,609
BCC_4	,608
PQC_4	,433
PQC_1	,617
PQC_3	,734
PQC_2	,764
HGH_2	,653
HGH_3	,560
HGH_1	,526
HGH_4	,733
VIP_2	,544
VIP_1	,626
VIP_4	,748
VIP_3	,690