



## From product to Person: A cross-national study on packaging personality and consumer stereotypes

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### ABSTRACT

Product packaging is a critical tool influencing consumer perceptions. This study examines how the perceived personality of disruptive products like canned wine links to social stereotypes of their drinkers. Surveying 1307 consumers in Italy, Switzerland, and the UK, we found a significant association between product perception and judgments of the user. Specifically, product Sincerity and Excitement correlated with highly positive views of the drinker, while Ruggedness was associated with negative traits. Theoretically, we propose a 'product-to-person' trait transfer mechanism, extending brand personality theory by showing how product traits act as a heuristic for forming social stereotypes. Practically, our findings identify Sincerity and Competence as key traits for fostering a positive social image. Communication strategies focusing on these perceptions can mitigate negative stereotypes, enhancing the acceptance of sustainable packaging and benefiting consumer social identity.

### 1. Introduction

At the retail point of purchase, product packaging is a critical touchpoint, shaping consumer perceptions and influencing buying decisions often in a matter of seconds (Silayoi and Speece, 2007; Corduas et al., 2013). As the 'silent salesman,' the package communicates a product's identity and is a primary driver of the consumer experience before the product is even used (Barber and Almanza, 2007).

With a growing emphasis on sustainability, alternative packaging options have become central to promoting environmentally friendly consumer behaviour. This shift reflects a broader trend toward eco-friendly consumerism, leading to the emergence of formats like pouches, tetra packs, and cans. However, these innovations present a significant socio-psychological challenge, as their market acceptance is far from guaranteed (Lindh et al., 2016; Ketelsen et al., 2020). Consumers often resist formats that deviate from established norms, particularly in traditional product categories where packaging is closely linked to quality, origin, and heritage (Ruggeri et al., 2022; Mesidis et al., 2023).

In the wine industry, packaging has long been associated with notions of sophistication and tradition (Chamorro et al., 2021). For centuries, glass bottles have dominated the market, symbolizing quality and craftsmanship (Schakelford and Schakelford, 2017; Work, 2018). This

cultural association makes the introduction of alternative formats, such as canned wine, particularly noteworthy. Canned wine has emerged as a convenient and environmentally friendly option, appealing to a younger, more casual consumer base (Villanueva et al., 2023). Yet, despite these advantages, canned wine often struggles to gain acceptance among traditional wine consumers, who may hold preconceived notions about the quality and legitimacy of the product based on its packaging (Orlowski et al., 2022).

This situation highlights a potential issue: social prejudices and cognitive biases may shape consumer attitudes toward canned wine. One possible bias is the status quo bias, wherein consumers tend to resist change and favour traditional formats, such as glass bottles, due to established associations with quality and heritage. This resistance to change might hinder the adoption of new products, even when they offer environmental or practical advantages. Another potential factor is the halo effect, where consumers' perceptions of the packaging could influence their judgments about the product's quality. In the wine industry, where tradition and image play pivotal roles, these biases could be influential. While more empirical research is needed to substantiate these claims, understanding how cognitive biases might affect consumer choices could help in addressing resistance to alternative packaging formats, such as canned wine, and in overcoming broader cultural and psychological barriers.

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A recent systematic literature review (Herczeg et al., 2023) reveals a notable gap in research addressing how alternative, environmentally friendly wine packaging formats, such as canned wine, are perceived and judged. While there has been considerable exploration of consumer perceptions related to sustainability in general (Ketelsen et al., 2020; Lindh et al., 2016), studies specifically examining how consumers attribute personality traits like sophistication, sincerity, or competence to different packaging formats remain scarce. One possible reason for this oversight is that wine is traditionally viewed as a product closely tied to heritage and quality, where packaging innovations are secondary to more established concerns like terroir. This study aims to fill this gap by focusing on the interplay between consumer perceptions of canned wine's personality traits and the social judgments these perceptions generate.

This research applies brand personality theory (Aaker, 1997) to the context of canned wine, exploring how personality traits such as sophistication, sincerity, excitement, competence, and ruggedness are attributed to canned wine across different cultures and demographic groups. Rather than focusing solely on cognitive biases like the status quo bias or halo effect, this study will examine how these personality traits are associated with broader social stereotypes and judgments about consumers who choose canned wine. By investigating these connections, this research provides a novel application of brand personality theory to a non-traditional product format, offering insights into how perceptions of product traits may shape consumer attitudes and social biases.

A key aspect of this research is its focus on the prejudices and biases linked to canned wine. The cultural associations surrounding wine often revolve around elegance, tradition, and exclusivity, which can lead to implicit biases against alternative packaging formats. By investigating how consumers perceive the personality of canned wine and how these perceptions relate to stereotypes about those who drink it, this study seeks to uncover the underlying stereotypes that shape attitudes toward canned wine. Such insights are essential for advancing both consumer behaviour and wine marketing literature, particularly as sustainability and alternative packaging options gain prominence.

While previous work (Depetris-Chauvin et al., 2025a, 2025b) established the existence of these cross-cultural stereotypes and identified their key demographic drivers, the present study advances this research agenda significantly. Here, we investigate the underlying psychological mechanism for the first time by testing the extent to which perceived product personality is associated with these social judgments. By linking personality traits associated with the product to social judgments about its drinkers, this research provides valuable insights into the interplay between product image and social image within a wine culture that has traditionally resisted change. This exploration of how personality traits relate to consumer biases is particularly timely, as the market for alternative wine packaging continues to expand. Although prior studies have focused on sustainability in wine packaging (Barber, 2010; Ferrara and De Feo, 2020; Ferrara et al., 2020), there remains a gap in understanding how consumers perceive canned wine through the lens of personality traits and stereotypes.

This paper makes several distinct contributions. Its primary theoretical contribution is providing the first empirical evidence of a direct association between Aaker's (1997) five brand personality dimensions and the formation of specific social stereotypes about a product's user. By linking the perceived traits of a package to judgments about the person consuming from it, we extend brand personality theory beyond consumer self-concept into the domain of social perception. Practically, the findings provide an evidence-based roadmap for a range of stakeholders to mitigate negative stereotypes and enhance consumer acceptance of innovative, sustainable packaging. Culturally, the study illuminates how wine consumption norms shape these perceptions across different European contexts, offering a deeper understanding of canned wine's role in contemporary consumer culture.

This paper is organized as follows. The subsequent section reviews

relevant literature on brand personality theory and its application to product packaging, specifically in the context of canned wine. Following this, the research aim and methodology are detailed, outlining the specific research questions, design, data collection, and analytical techniques employed to explore consumer perceptions and biases. The results section presents the findings related to the personality traits attributed to canned wine and the variations observed across different cultures and demographics, along with the association between these perceptions and social judgments. The discussion section interprets the findings, addressing their implications for marketing strategies, cultural perceptions, and theoretical contributions to the field. Finally, the paper concludes with a summary of the key insights gained from the study and recommendations for future research in the area of alternative packaging and consumer behaviour.

## 2. Literature review

The concept of brand personality has been instrumental in marketing, offering a way to attribute human-like characteristics to brands, thus helping consumers connect with products on a more personal level. Aaker (1997) developed a five-dimensional framework -sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness-validated through a 42-item scale with a representative sample of U.S. participants. However, the interpretation of these dimensions can be complex. The "Ruggedness" dimension, for instance, presents a potential paradox in certain product categories. While traits associated with ruggedness (e.g., outdoorsy, masculine, tough) may be advantageous for brands of trucks or outdoor apparel, they can conflict with the core attributes of other categories. In the context of wine, an industry built on perceptions of sophistication, heritage, and refinement, ruggedness can be a double-edged sword. Research could explore this tension, where "masculine" or "outdoorsy" brand attributes, potentially conveyed by functional, non-traditional packaging, might clash with consumer expectations of sophistication or responsibility, which are central to the traditional wine experience. While the brand personality framework has been widely applied to various sectors, including nonprofit organizations (Venable et al., 2005), cities (Demirbag Kaplan et al., 2010), universities (Rauschnabel et al., 2016), sports (Carlson and Donovan, 2013), tourist destinations (Hosany et al., 2006; Usakli and Baloglu, 2011), and even African countries (Pitt et al., 2007), its use in examining alternative packaging formats in the wine industry has been limited.

In the context of wine, packaging plays a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions, as shown by Favier et al. (2019), who explored how label design impacts brand perception. Their work suggests that consumers assign personality traits to packaging, which can influence their judgments about the product itself. However, alternative formats like canned wine present a unique challenge. Canned wine, despite its eco-friendly nature, struggles to align with traditional notions of sophistication and quality, historically linked to glass bottles. This disconnect between packaging and consumer expectations poses a hurdle for market acceptance, particularly in a conservative industry such as wine (Orlowski et al., 2022; Ferrara et al., 2020).

Consumers often choose products whose perceived personalities mirror their own, according to Govers and Schoormans (2005), yet defining "personality" for a product remains elusive. Mugge et al. (2009) attempted to address this gap by creating a product personality scale, though it diverged from the standard methodologies used in personality studies, such as factor analysis. Meanwhile, Radler (2018) highlighted that the concept of brand personality lacks consensus, both in its definition and its application to different cultures, an issue acknowledged by Aaker (1997) herself. This cultural variability is particularly pertinent when considering the global wine market, where perceptions of personality traits in product packaging could differ substantially across regions. This highlights a central tension in the literature: while Aaker's (1997) framework provides a valuable and widely used vocabulary for brand personality, its U.S. origins raise critical questions about its

cross-cultural applicability (Radler, 2018). Our study engages with this tension by examining these dimensions in a European context, exploring whether the original structure holds or if perceptions converge differently for an innovative product.

Beyond its agricultural and economic role, wine has transcended its status as a mere beverage to become a symbol of lifestyle, identity, and personal expression. Modern consumers often base their purchasing decisions not solely on taste or price, but on deeper values and social positioning (Charters and Pettigrew, 2008; Demossier, 2010). As a result, wine may increasingly serve as a medium for self-representation that reflects individual identity (Belk, 1988). This makes the study of social perceptions particularly salient. This process of self-representation and social perception can be more formally understood through theories of social cognition. For instance, Signalling Theory suggests that individuals engage in behaviours and make choices, such as selecting a particular type of wine packaging, to convey information about themselves to others (Berger and Heath, 2007). A traditional glass bottle might signal wealth, knowledge, and an appreciation for tradition, whereas a can might signal practicality, modernity, or environmental consciousness. Furthermore, Social Identity Theory (Tajfel et al., 1979) posits that individuals derive part of their self-concept from their membership in social groups. Product choices can thus become markers of in-group and out-group status. A consumer might choose bottled wine to affirm their identity as part of a “connoisseur” in-group, leading them to stereotype a canned wine drinker as belonging to a less sophisticated out-group. This provides a rich theoretical framework for understanding why stereotypes about users of different packaging formats form and persist, as these choices are not merely functional but are deeply embedded in social signalling and group identity.

To explain the link between product personality and user stereotypes, we propose a ‘product-to-person’ trait transfer mechanism, grounded in the literature on Spontaneous Trait Inference (STI) (see Fig. 1). STI is a robust psychological phenomenon where observers automatically and unintentionally infer personality traits from others’ behaviors based on minimal cues (Uleman et al., 1996). The robustness of this effect was recently confirmed in a large-scale meta-analysis (Bott et al., 2022). This process is consistent with classic theories of impression formation, which posit that observers attribute others’ actions to underlying dispositions (Heider, 1958), particularly when choices deviate from social norms (Jones and Davis, 1965), such as choosing an unconventional package for a traditional product like wine. While this trait transfer has been demonstrated from brands to their owners (Fennis and Pruyn, 2007), we extend this logic to the packaging format itself. We

argue that the perceived personality traits of the package (e.g., ‘rugged,’ ‘sophisticated’) provide a readily available cognitive shortcut, or heuristic, for forming a stereotype about the user, filling the informational void. Crucially, our focus is on the observer’s perception, which is distinct from the consumer’s own intent to signal an identity (cf. Berger and Heath, 2007). In this way, Spontaneous Trait Inference can be seen as the cognitive engine that powers the social outcomes described by Signalling and Social Identity Theory; it is the rapid, automatic judgment at the individual level that allows product choices to function as meaningful social signals and markers of group identity at the collective level.

One understudied area is how the social perceptions of product users are influenced by packaging. Recent research on functional beverages, such as bottled water, indicates that consumer choices regarding sustainable packaging often hinge on rational trade-offs between biodegradability, price, and personal green consumption values (Czine et al., 2025). However, unlike utilitarian products, wine is deeply embedded in social symbolism. Ruggeri et al. (2022) identify aluminium cans as an eco-friendly alternative to traditional wine packaging, but the broader social implications remain unexplored. Braun Kohlová and Urban (2020) demonstrated that consuming green products can elevate a consumer’s prestige, but research has yet to examine how packaging shapes bystanders’ perceptions of these consumers. Draskovic (2007) noted that the marketing role of packaging is often overlooked, leaving a gap in understanding the social biases tied to non-traditional formats like canned wine. Research by Pantin-Sohier et al. (2005) found that packaging elements, such as color and shape, significantly affect brand personality perceptions, especially for new products. This finding is consistent with Orłowski et al. (2022), who showed that consumers rate non-traditional packaging, such as cans, less favourably in terms of appeal, taste expectations, and purchase intentions. Their results align with those of Ferrara et al. (2020), who found that Italian consumers view canned wine as unsuitable due to the deep-rooted association between traditional packaging and quality.

Various factors influence consumer preferences for packaging, particularly regarding prejudice and demographics. For example, millennials tend to associate wine with special events but are often deterred by its perceived complexity and outdated image (Thach and Olsen, 2006). Their preference for simplicity in packaging, as highlighted by Kellershohn et al. (2023), underscores a demand for convenience and ease of use, which canned wine could potentially fulfil. Similarly, Chivu-Draghia and Antoce (2016) found that millennials favour packaging that is portable and easy to open, indicating that wine in cans could appeal to this specific market segment. This demographic also

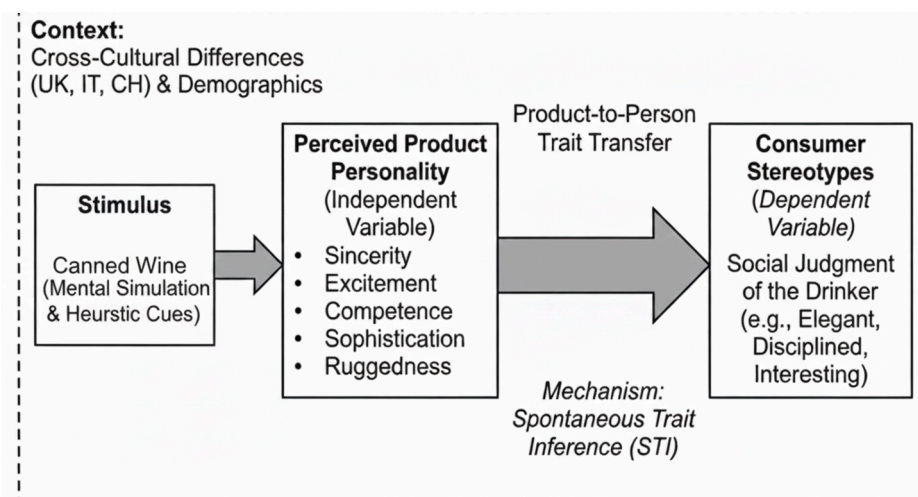


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework illustrating the ‘Product-to-Person’ trait transfer mechanism. The model proposes that perceived product personality traits act as heuristic cues which, through Spontaneous Trait Inference (STI), are projected onto the user to shape social stereotypes.

represents a promising innovation-oriented consumer group, despite being influenced by family and societal consumption habits rooted in tradition and terroir (Castellini and Samoggia, 2018). Additionally, cultural differences play a significant role; Urdapilleta et al. (2021) demonstrated that French consumers exhibit higher levels of involvement and a more structured perception of wine compared to their New Zealand counterparts. The theoretical rationale for selecting Italy, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom for this study is grounded in frameworks that help explain such cultural variance, namely Hofstede's cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 2001) and Rogers' diffusion of innovations theory (Rogers, 2003). These frameworks help pre-emptively explain why significant country-level differences in acceptance might arise. For instance, Hofstede's dimension of uncertainty avoidance is critical. In a culture like Italy's, which scores high on this dimension, there is a strong preference for tradition, established rules, and familiar experiences. Wine is not just a drink but a cultural ritual steeped in history, and a radical innovation like a can introduces ambiguity and disrupts established norms, leading to greater resistance. In contrast, the UK's lower score on uncertainty avoidance suggests a culture more open to novelty, risk, and change. Its import-driven wine market lacks the deep, monolithic traditions of Italy, making consumers more receptive to new formats and less bound by convention. Switzerland presents a fascinating hybrid, where strong local wine traditions coexist with a high societal value placed on innovation and environmentalism, potentially creating a tension between cultural preservation and openness to sustainable alternatives. Italy, with high uncertainty avoidance, represents a context where innovations that deviate from tradition may be resisted (Beckert and Musselin, 2013). Here, wine is deeply embedded in the national identity, with consumption strongly influenced by family norms, reinforcing its role as a cultural heritage symbol (Agnoli et al., 2011). In contrast, the UK, with lower uncertainty avoidance, provides a more innovation-friendly environment where non-traditional formats are more easily accepted (Lockshin and Corsi, 2012; Ritchie, 2007). Switzerland offers an intermediary case, combining strong regional wine identities (Brunner and Siegrist, 2011; Brunner et al., 2023) with a notable commitment to environmental sustainability (OECD, 2022), making it a key context for studying sustainability-oriented innovations. These cultural differences are further illuminated by the concept of wine-related cultural identity (WCI), which moderates consumer acceptance of wine innovations (Reinares-Lara et al., 2023). In regions with strong wine-growing traditions and high WCI, such as those in Spain and Italy, innovations like canned wine can be perceived as a cultural disruption (Gouez and Pétric, 2007), creating significant barriers to adoption.

While packaging innovations have gained some traction in other beverage industries (Borah and Dutta, 2019; Ramos et al., 2015), the traditional nature of the wine market poses significant barriers to adoption. Non-conventional packaging formats like canned wine challenge long-established perceptions of quality and elegance, making them particularly prone to consumer resistance. Although the environmental benefits of such formats are clear, further research is needed to explore how these packaging choices impact social perceptions and whether personality traits attributed to the product can mitigate or exacerbate these biases.

### 3. Aim and methodology

The research aim of this project is to address two critical questions regarding canned wine and its consumer perceptions. First, we seek to understand how consumers perceive the personality traits of canned wine, specifically in terms of sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness, and to explore how these perceptions vary across different cultures and demographic groups. Second, we aim to investigate how these perceptions of canned wine's personality traits are associated with the social judgments and stereotypes formed about the consumers who choose this packaging format.

#### 3.1. Research design and procedure

To address these questions, we employed a cross-national online survey experiment conducted between October 2021 and April 2022. The survey, offered in English, French, German, and Italian, was structured into two principal measurement tasks, followed by the collection of demographic data. To mitigate order effects, the presentation of the two main tasks was randomized for each respondent.

The task measuring social judgments involved an experimental design where participants were randomly assigned to one of four outdoor holiday scenarios: a beach resort, a ski station, a desert safari, or an outdoor party. These settings were chosen as they represent common hospitality and leisure service encounters where packaging innovation is most likely to be adopted and judged. This design, grounded in literature on cultural cognition and situational framing, allowed us to examine the robustness of social judgments across contexts of varying cultural familiarity. We monitored survey metrics across scenarios and found no significant differences in dropout rates or completion times, indicating comparable participant engagement.

To ensure the quality and consistency of the data, the survey instrument was pre-tested for clarity across all four languages (English, French, German, and Italian). A back-translation procedure was employed to confirm that the meaning of all questions and scenarios was equivalent across languages. While formal ethical approval was not a prerequisite for this type of consumer survey, all ethical guidelines were followed. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, informed consent was obtained on the first page of the survey, and participants were free to withdraw at any time by closing the browser. Only fully completed questionnaires were included in the final dataset.

#### 3.2. Sampling and data collection

A mixed recruitment strategy was employed across Italy, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom, resulting in 1307 complete and valid responses.

- For Italy (n = 394) and Switzerland (n = 795), participants were recruited from nationally representative panels maintained by the Haute École de Gestion de Genève. These panels are regularly updated and designed to ensure demographic representativeness for market research, lending significant credibility to the data from these two countries, which constitute nearly 91 % of the total sample.
- For the United Kingdom (n = 118), a convenience sampling approach was adopted due to practical access constraints. While this limits the statistical representativeness of the UK-specific findings, efforts were made to ensure the subsample remained reasonably balanced in terms of gender and age distribution.

To address potential biases arising from this mixed approach and the non-probabilistic nature of the UK subset, all regression analyses include robust control variables for gender, age, education level, and country of residence. This statistical approach allows us to isolate the relationships of interest while mitigating potential confounding effects from sampling artifacts. The detailed demographic characteristics of the final sample are presented in Table 1.

#### 3.3. Measures

- Dependent Variables: Consumer Stereotypes (Task 1)

In this task, participants were presented with their randomly assigned scenario and informed that an individual within that setting was drinking canned wine. They were then asked to assess the personality of this individual using a set of 16 bipolar attributes on a seven-point Likert scale. The traits assessed were: Undisciplined–Disciplined; Not Health Conscious–Health Conscious; Not Environmentally

**Table 1**  
Demographic characteristics of the sample.

Variables	%
<b>Scenarios</b>	
Beach resort	22.04
Desert safari	32.59
Outdoor Party	22.19
Ski station	23.18
<b>Country of the respondents</b>	
Italy	30.15
Switzerland	60.83
United Kingdom	9.03
<b>Female</b>	
	46.98
<b>Age cohort</b>	
18–29 years old	20.73
30–39 years old	19.13
40–49 years old	17.29
50–59 years old	21.73
60–69 years old	12.85
70 years or more	8.26
<b>Highest level of formal education achieved</b>	
Primary school	1.38
High School	8.03
Tertiary education (technical, vocational)	28.08
University: Bachelor degree	36.11
University: Master/Doctorate degree	26.40
<b>Wine consumption</b>	
Never	6.89
Less than once a month	11.25
At least once a month	18.21
Around once a week	29.69
Several times a week	33.97
<b>Have drunk canned wine</b>	12.24
<b>Number of Respondents</b>	
	1307

Friendly–Environmentally Friendly; Unimaginative–Imaginative; Unpopular–Popular; Boring–Interesting; Unemotional–Emotional; Vulgar–Elegant; Ungracious–Gracious; Dissatisfied–Satisfied; Inverted–Extroverted; Unconscious–Conscious; Low Education Level–High Education Level; Poor–Rich; Ugly–Beautiful; and Bad–Good.

• Independent Variables: Perceived Product Personality (Task 2)

In this task, participants were asked to evaluate a can of wine itself. To focus their attention, they were instructed to imagine finding a can of wine, holding it, and examining it carefully. Following this prompt, they were presented with a list of 20 product characteristics corresponding to Aaker's (1997) brand personality framework. They rated their agreement on a five-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). These characteristics were: Honest, Original, Friendly, Cheerful, Trendy, Exciting, Cool, Imaginative, Reliable, Intelligent, Successful, Leader, Glamorous, Good-looking, Charming, Smooth, Outdoorsy, Masculine, Western, and Daring.

Finally, the survey collected information on participants' leisure activities, wine consumption habits, prior experience with canned wine, and demographics (age, gender, education).

3.4. Data analysis strategy

First, to build the five product personality dimensions, participants' ratings of the 20 characteristics were mapped into the corresponding dimensions: Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication, and Ruggedness. A Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was performed to validate this five-factor structure, indicating an acceptable model fit ( $\chi^2(160) = 1483.08, p < 0.001; CFI = 0.91; TLI = 0.89; RMSEA = 0.080; SRMR = 0.06$ ).

To ensure robust measurement, we assessed the reliability and validity of the constructs. For reliability, four of the five scales demonstrated good to excellent internal consistency: Sincerity ( $\alpha = 0.83$ ), Excitement ( $\alpha = 0.83$ ), Competence ( $\alpha = 0.84$ ), and Sophistication

( $\alpha = 0.88$ ). The 'Ruggedness' dimension showed poor reliability ( $\alpha = 0.60$ ). An item-level analysis revealed that removing any single item would decrease reliability, so the four-item scale was retained, but its results are interpreted with caution.

Furthermore, discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion (see Table 2). The results indicated that while the five dimensions are conceptually distinct, they are not empirically separable in this context, with several inter-factor correlations exceeding the square root of the Average Variance Extracted. This suggests that for an unconventional product like canned wine, consumer perceptions of personality are highly correlated. However, to ensure this did not pose a statistical problem for the regression analysis, a Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) test was conducted. The results showed that all VIF scores for the personality dimensions were well below the common threshold of 5 (the highest being 3.38), indicating that multicollinearity was not a significant concern. This allows for a more confident interpretation of the individual associations of each personality trait in the subsequent models.

Finally, to address potential common method bias arising from the single-source survey data, we employed both procedural and statistical remedies. Procedurally, the presentation order of the independent (product personality) and dependent (consumer stereotype) variable blocks was randomized for each respondent to reduce consistency artifacts. Statistically, we conducted Harman's single-factor test. The results of an unrotated factor analysis revealed that the first factor accounted for only 32.35 % of the total variance, well below the 50 % threshold. Taken together, these measures suggest that common method bias is not a significant concern for the validity of our findings.

The final personality scores were then calculated by averaging the ratings for the traits within each dimension.

Second, to study the association between product personality and consumer stereotypes, we used a series of multiple linear regression models, specified as follows:

$$Y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{kj}ProductPersonality_{ik} + \gamma X_{ij} + \epsilon_{ij}$$

In this equation,  $Y_{ij}$  represents the judgement score for personality trait  $j$  by participant  $i$ ,  $\beta_{0j}$  is the intercept for each of the  $j$  canned wine consumer personality traits and  $\beta_{kj}$  is a vector of  $k$  product personality traits for each of the equations capturing the  $j$  consumer personality traits.  $X_{ij}$  is a vector of control variables including country of the respondent, scenario of consumption of the canned wine, demographic control variables (gender, age and level of education of the respondent) and wine consumption experience, and  $\epsilon_{ij}$  is the error term. The coefficients of interest in our analysis are the  $\beta_{kj}$ , which capture the association between the five product personality dimensions and the judgement of the consumer's personality traits.

4. Results

The analysis of the product personality dimensions associated with wine in cans, as defined by Aaker's typology, reveals some notable insights into consumer perceptions (see Table 3). Overall, the mean scores for the dimensions of sincerity (2.78), excitement (2.57), competence (2.37), and sophistication (2.12) fall below the neutral point of 3. This suggests that respondents generally do not perceive canned wine as possessing these desirable personality traits. Specifically, the lower scores in sincerity and excitement are consistent with the view that consumers may see canned wine as lacking authenticity and appeal, which poses a challenge for marketers aiming to position this product in a more favourable light. Conversely, the mean score for ruggedness is just above the neutral mark at 3.02, indicating some agreement among respondents that canned wine embodies a casual and adventurous persona. This trait could be strategically leveraged in marketing campaigns to attract consumers seeking informal and outdoor-oriented wine experiences.

**Table 2**  
Measurement model reliability and discriminant validity.

Construct	CR	AVE	1	2	3	4	5
1. Sincerity	0.832	0.556	<b>0.746</b>				
2. Excitement	0.825	0.538	0.837	<b>0.733</b>			
3. Competence	0.830	0.553	0.771	0.856	<b>0.744</b>		
4. Sophistication	0.879	0.632	0.678	0.779	0.800	<b>0.795</b>	
5. Ruggedness	0.599	0.248	0.552	0.552	0.591	0.397	<b>0.498</b>

Notes: CR = Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted. Diagonal elements are the square root of the AVE. Off-diagonal elements are the latent variable correlations.

**Table 3**  
Product personality of canned wines.

	Sincerity	Excitement	Competence	Sophistication	Ruggedness
<b>Mean</b>	2.78	2.57	2.37	2.12	3.02
<b>Country</b>					
Italy	2.82	2.40	2.36	2.07	3.06
Switzerland	2.67	2.53	2.30	2.06	2.96
United Kingdom	3.37	3.36	2.91	2.68	3.33
<b>Gender</b>					
Male	2.80	2.55	2.38	2.11	3.02
Female	2.75	2.58	2.36	2.11	3.03
Other	3.00	2.89	2.56	2.50	3.11
<b>Age cohort</b>					
18–29 years old	3.08	2.77	2.58	2.25	3.14
30–39 years old	2.89	2.63	2.44	2.19	3.15
40–49 years old	2.76	2.53	2.36	2.03	3.04
50–59 years old	2.57	2.44	2.25	2.00	2.92
60–69 years old	2.63	2.49	2.24	2.06	2.91
70 years or more	2.59	2.41	2.27	2.16	2.86
<b>Highest level of formal education</b>					
Primary school	3.01	2.67	2.51	2.57	3.18
High School	2.94	2.70	2.50	2.29	3.02
Tertiary education (technical, vocational)	2.65	2.49	2.28	2.07	2.92
University: Bachelor degree	2.82	2.61	2.42	2.15	3.06
University: Master/Doctorate degree	2.79	2.53	2.36	2.04	3.09
<b>Wine consumption</b>					
Never	2.73	2.54	2.39	2.09	3.24
Less than once a month	2.71	2.48	2.31	2.15	2.97
At least once a month	2.78	2.56	2.36	2.11	3.01
Around once a week	2.86	2.66	2.45	2.16	3.05
Several times a week	2.73	2.52	2.32	2.07	2.99
<b>Have drunk canned wine</b>					
Yes	3.19	3.11	2.78	2.57	3.10
No	2.72	2.49	2.32	2.05	3.02

Descriptive analysis of the findings by country indicates variations in mean perception scores. In this sample, respondents from the United Kingdom provided higher average ratings for canned wine across all dimensions, suggesting a potentially more favourable association with its personality traits among this group. This contrasts with responses from Italy and Switzerland, where lower scores were observed, potentially reflecting a more traditional perspective on wine that may reject the notion of canned wine as a legitimate option. These patterns suggest that cultural context may play a role in shaping consumer attitudes, implying that marketers could benefit from tailoring their messaging to distinct market sensitivities.

Gender analysis reveals no significant difference in the mean scores reported by males and females. Age cohort analysis, however, highlights that younger consumers, particularly those aged 18 to 29, report higher average scores for sincerity and ruggedness, indicating a greater likelihood of viewing canned wine positively. This trend is less pronounced among older age groups, who seem more resistant to associating canned wine with these desirable traits. Such differences emphasize the potential for targeted marketing strategies aimed at younger consumers, who may be more open to embracing non-traditional wine formats.

Perception scores also differ significantly by the level of formal education. Respondents who completed primary education rated dimensions like sincerity and ruggedness more favourably than those with

higher educational attainment. This may reflect a broader acceptance of canned wine as an authentic and casual option among less formally educated consumers. Conversely, individuals with tertiary education tend to perceive canned wine as less sophisticated, suggesting a potential barrier for marketing efforts aimed at this demographic.

Lastly, a significant difference in perception is also observed based on prior experience with canned wine. Those who have tried canned wine consistently gave it higher mean ratings across all personality dimensions, particularly in sincerity and excitement. This suggests that direct experience is linked to more positive consumer attitudes, underscoring the importance of encouraging trial among potential customers.

In summary, the descriptive findings highlight a mixed landscape of perceptions regarding the product personality of canned wine. The generally low scores for sincerity, excitement, competence, and sophistication indicate significant challenges for marketers seeking to establish canned wine as a desirable product. However, the positive association with ruggedness and the favourable perceptions among certain demographics, particularly younger consumers and those with prior consumption experience, present valuable opportunities for targeted marketing strategies. By focusing on these aspects, marketers can work to reshape consumer perceptions and enhance the appeal of canned wine in the market.

#### 4.1. Linking product personality to consumer judgments

The product personality analysis not only offers insight into general consumer sentiment but also provides a framework for understanding how these traits may be related to perceptions of its consumers. To explore this relationship further, we turn to regression analysis to assess the association between these product personality traits and the characteristics attributed to canned wine drinkers. This analysis explores the strength of these associations and their implications for the stigma surrounding the product.

The regression analysis explores the statistical relationship between product personality traits and the judgments consumers make about those who drink wine from cans. Each dimension has a unique association with these perceptions, suggesting that higher ratings for positive traits in canned wine are associated with more positive consumer attitudes and social perceptions. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 4.

A perception of Sincerity is strongly associated with a range of positive consumer judgments. Higher levels of perceived sincerity are positively associated with viewing the drinker as disciplined (coef = 0.175,  $p < 0.01$ ), environmentally friendly (coef = 0.154,  $p < 0.05$ ), imaginative (coef = 0.275,  $p < 0.001$ ), and popular (coef = 0.188,  $p < 0.01$ ). Notably, the strongest associations are seen with the drinker being characterized as interesting (coef = 0.345,  $p < 0.001$ ) and satisfied (coef = 0.351,  $p < 0.001$ ). These findings suggest that a perception of sincerity is linked to positive traits in drinkers, indicating that consumers may be more likely to view them as engaged and content individuals.

Similarly, a perception of Excitement is linked to viewing the drinker in a more positive, socially active light. It correlates positively with being disciplined (coef = 0.158,  $p < 0.05$ ) and interesting (coef = 0.342,  $p < 0.001$ ), suggesting that those who associate canned wine with excitement perceive its consumers as vibrant and socially active. Additionally, the correlation with satisfaction (coef = 0.308,  $p < 0.001$ ) further emphasizes that a perception of excitement in the product is associated with higher perceptions of contentment among drinkers.

Perceptions of Competence are linked to judgments of responsibility. This dimension significantly correlates with viewing the drinker as health-conscious (coef = 0.201,  $p < 0.01$ ) and environmentally friendly (coef = 0.230,  $p < 0.01$ ), suggesting that participants who perceive the canned wine as competent also associate its drinkers with conscientious choices.

Unsurprisingly, a perception of Sophistication is strongly tied to judgments of social grace. Higher levels of sophistication correlate with viewing the drinker as elegant (coef = 0.142,  $p < 0.05$ ) and gracious (coef = 0.355,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that when canned wine is perceived as sophisticated, drinkers are viewed as embodying refined characteristics.

In contrast, the Ruggedness dimension presents a more complex, paradoxical picture. A higher perception of ruggedness correlates negatively with disciplined behaviour (coef =  $-0.117$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and health-conscious traits (coef =  $-0.423$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This suggests that consumers who view the canned wine as rugged may stereotype drinkers as less disciplined or health-focused.

It is essential to recognize that while many participants rated canned wine's personality traits below the neutral value of three, there are respondents who do perceive the product positively. The regression analysis illustrates that when respondents attribute desirable traits to canned wine, they also express a more favourable view of the drinkers. Therefore, although the average perception of canned wine is low, the positive coefficients found in the analysis indicate that more positive perceptions of the product's personality traits are associated with a reduction in existing biases against canned wine drinkers and may be linked to greater adoption.

Finally, the control variables show consistent patterns. In line with previous research (Depetris-Chauvin et al., 2025a, 2025b), cultural

background was strongly associated with perceptions, with UK consumers viewing canned wine drinkers more favourably than Italians. Prejudices also appear to increase with age, education level, and wine consumption experience, while the specific consumption scenario had a more limited association with judgments.

## 5. Discussion

The findings of this study provide crucial insights into the social life of products, suggesting that the perceived personality of canned wine is not a trivial marketing construct but is powerfully associated with social perception. This research confirms that despite its growing popularity, canned wine is associated with negative stereotypes. It is the first to show that these stereotypical judgments are significantly linked to the product's perceived traits of sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness. These results have profound theoretical implications for understanding consumer psychology, with tangible consequences for product acceptance, and offer a clear, evidence-based roadmap for marketers aiming to cultivate a more favourable image for canned wine and its consumers.

### 5.1. Theoretical implications

This research makes several important contributions to theory. First, our findings provide a crucial extension to brand personality literature. While previous work has focused on the link between brand personality and consumer self-concept (Govers and Schoormans, 2005), we provide evidence that a product's personality is strongly associated with the social stereotypes applied to its users. This shifts the framework from a purely marketing concept to one with tangible social-cognitive ramifications, where the "personality" of an inanimate object may act as a heuristic for judging a person.

Furthermore, our results allow us to interpret how these associations operate. The measurement model analysis (Table 2) revealed a lack of discriminant validity among the positive personality traits, suggesting that consumers perceive Sincerity, Excitement, and Competence not as separate constructs but as a single, holistic dimension of positive regard. This is a key finding in itself, suggesting that for a disruptive product, the classic five-factor model may collapse. We propose this holistic judgment is a hallmark of the 'product-to-person' trait transfer mechanism, which is consistent with the theory of Spontaneous Trait Inferences (STI). Because these inferences are rapid and based on cognitive shortcuts (Uleman et al., 1996; Bott et al., 2022), it is logical that observers would form a general positive impression rather than a nuanced, multi-faceted one. The strong positive association of the Sincerity dimension with judgments of the drinker (e.g., being interesting, satisfied) is likely related to its ability to counter the core prejudice against canned wine, that it is an inauthentic gimmick, and thus anchor this holistic positive evaluation.

Conversely, the complex associations of Ruggedness align with the "Ruggedness Paradox" outlined in our literature review. While ruggedness was the only trait rated positively for the product, it correlates negatively with stereotypes of the drinker being disciplined and health-conscious. This confirms that brand personality dimensions are not universally positive; their value is context-dependent. In the world of wine, where sophistication and responsibility are prized, ruggedness appears to signal a rejection of these values. However, given the low reliability of the Ruggedness scale ( $\alpha = 0.60$ ), this finding should be considered preliminary and interpreted with caution.

Finally, our results provide clear empirical support for the social-cognitive theories that may relate to these associations. The findings are highly consistent with a model of Signalling Theory (Berger and Heath, 2007). For instance, the significant positive coefficient for the product's 'Sophistication' on the drinker's perceived 'Elegance' (coef = 0.142) and 'Graciousness' (coef = 0.355) is consistent with a direct signalling pathway. This suggests consumers may read the

**Table 4**  
Regression analysis of product personality traits on the judgement of the consumer (OLS regression results).

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	Disciplined	Health Conscious	Environmentally Friendly	Imaginative	Popular	Interesting	Emotional	Elegant
Sincerity	0.175*** (2.74)	0.0762 (1.18)	0.154** (2.07)	0.275*** (3.71)	0.188*** (2.68)	0.345*** (4.99)	0.228*** (3.29)	0.104 (1.59)
Excitement	0.158** (2.44)	0.104 (1.60)	0.162** (2.15)	0.315*** (4.18)	0.141** (1.98)	0.342*** (4.88)	0.101 (1.43)	0.142** (2.14)
Competence	0.0211 (0.31)	0.201*** (2.90)	0.230*** (2.87)	0.118 (1.47)	0.169** (2.23)	-0.0523 (-0.70)	-0.0952 (-1.27)	0.140** (1.97)
Sophistication	0.226*** (3.76)	0.152** (2.52)	0.0548 (0.79)	-0.00873 (-0.13)	0.163** (2.47)	0.148** (2.27)	0.197*** (3.02)	0.355*** (5.76)
Ruggedness	-0.117** (-2.30)	-0.0423 (-0.83)	-0.00826 (-0.14)	0.0377 (0.64)	0.00270 (0.05)	-0.0381 (-0.69)	0.0748 (1.35)	-0.0839 (-1.61)
Switzerland	0.0625 (0.71)	0.0179 (0.20)	-0.260** (-2.55)	-0.0655 (-0.64)	0.332*** (3.45)	0.331*** (3.48)	0.287*** (3.00)	-0.0484 (-0.54)
United Kingdom	-0.0517 (-0.39)	0.222* (1.66)	0.616*** (4.00)	-0.221 (-1.43)	0.773*** (5.30)	0.456*** (3.17)	0.186 (1.29)	0.118 (0.87)
Desert Safari	-0.252*** (-2.74)	-0.203** (-2.18)	-0.339*** (-3.17)	0.166 (1.55)	0.0551 (0.54)	0.157 (1.57)	0.0459 (0.46)	0.0216 (0.23)
Outdoor Party	0.0904 (0.91)	0.111 (1.10)	0.00317 (0.03)	0.234** (2.02)	0.0888 (0.81)	0.238** (2.20)	0.0129 (0.12)	0.0944 (0.92)
Ski Resort	-0.00390 (-0.04)	0.0379 (0.38)	0.113 (0.99)	0.0214 (0.19)	0.0224 (0.21)	0.107 (1.00)	-0.0868 (-0.81)	-0.0934 (-0.92)
Age	-0.0361 (-1.49)	-0.0542** (-2.22)	-0.119*** (-4.22)	-0.154*** (-5.47)	-0.0405 (-1.52)	-0.156*** (-5.94)	-0.113*** (-4.30)	-0.0653*** (-2.63)
Female	0.0889 (1.29)	-0.135* (-1.94)	-0.234*** (-2.91)	0.0880 (1.10)	0.134* (1.76)	-0.0370 (-0.49)	0.0189 (0.25)	0.0237 (0.33)
Education level	-0.0601* (-1.66)	-0.0291 (-0.80)	-0.00520 (-0.12)	-0.0155 (-0.37)	-0.0276 (-0.69)	-0.0239 (-0.61)	0.0725* (1.84)	-0.0552 (-1.49)
Wine experience level	0.0349 (1.23)	0.0953*** (3.33)	0.0875*** (2.65)	0.0463 (1.40)	0.0806** (2.58)	0.0309 (1.00)	0.0300 (0.97)	-0.0082 (-0.28)
Constant	2.676*** (10.82)	2.030*** (8.15)	2.132*** (7.43)	2.234*** (7.77)	1.480*** (5.45)	2.023*** (7.55)	2.339*** (8.70)	2.041*** (8.05)
N	1306	1306	1306	1306	1306	1306	1306	1306
Prob > F	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)
	Gracious	Satisfied	Extroverted	Conscious	High Education Level	Rich	Beautiful	Good
Sincerity	0.281*** (4.52)	0.351*** (4.77)	0.346*** (4.57)	0.140* (1.75)	0.181*** (2.78)	-0.0030 (-0.04)	0.104* (1.81)	0.227*** (3.79)
Excitement	0.0464 (0.74)	0.308*** (4.13)	0.135* (1.76)	0.0705 (0.87)	0.0231 (0.35)	0.198*** (2.89)	0.148** (2.53)	0.0474 (0.78)
Competence	0.0578 (0.86)	-0.0524 (-0.66)	-0.0403 (-0.49)	0.0650 (0.76)	0.148** (2.10)	-0.0170 (-0.23)	-0.0387 (-0.62)	0.119* (1.84)
Sophistication	0.151*** (2.59)	-0.00445 (-0.06)	-0.197*** (-2.76)	0.281*** (3.75)	0.251*** (4.10)	0.234*** (3.68)	0.311*** (5.74)	0.163*** (2.88)
Ruggedness	-0.0514 (-1.04)	0.0225 (0.38)	0.0728 (1.21)	-0.0543 (-0.86)	-0.00244 (-0.05)	-0.00599 (-0.11)	-0.0405 (-0.88)	-0.0421 (-0.88)
Switzerland	0.193** (2.27)	0.480*** (4.75)	0.519*** (4.99)	0.468*** (4.27)	-0.309*** (-3.45)	0.122 (1.32)	0.269*** (3.40)	0.0118 (0.14)
United Kingdom	-0.114 (-0.88)	0.270* (1.76)	0.568*** (3.61)	0.757*** (4.57)	0.0340 (0.25)	0.414*** (2.95)	0.396*** (3.31)	0.105 (0.85)
Desert Safari	-0.188** (-2.09)	0.0695 (0.65)	-0.0688 (-0.63)	0.00954 (0.08)	0.0313 (0.33)	0.413*** (4.23)	-0.0911 (-1.09)	-0.109 (-1.26)
Outdoor Party	0.0006 (0.01)	0.0630 (0.55)	-0.178 (-1.50)	0.0898 (0.72)	-0.0353 (-0.35)	-0.255** (-2.42)	0.000826 (0.01)	-0.00202 (-0.02)
Ski Resort	-0.156 (-1.63)	-0.109 (-0.95)	-0.0124 (-0.11)	0.132 (1.07)	-0.00325 (-0.03)	0.0365 (0.35)	-0.0705 (-0.79)	-0.118 (-1.27)
Age	-0.0014 (-0.06)	-0.0156 (-0.56)	-0.113*** (-3.93)	-0.0463 (-1.53)	-0.0154 (-0.62)	0.0900*** (3.51)	0.0094 (0.43)	-0.0200 (-0.88)
Female	0.0170 (0.25)	0.0797 (1.00)	-0.0941 (-1.15)	-0.0913 (-1.06)	0.0423 (0.60)	-0.0120 (-0.16)	0.0322 (0.52)	0.0874 (1.35)
Education level	-0.0742** (-2.11)	0.0180 (0.43)	0.0402 (0.94)	0.00522 (0.12)	-0.0885** (-2.40)	0.00519 (0.14)	-0.0366 (-1.12)	-0.0788** (-2.32)
Wine experience level	0.0381 (1.38)	0.0573* (1.75)	0.0702** (2.08)	-0.0317 (-0.89)	0.0221 (0.76)	0.0205 (0.68)	0.0389 (1.52)	0.0142 (0.53)
Constant	2.707*** (11.27)	1.744*** (6.12)	3.121*** (10.63)	2.603*** (8.43)	2.594*** (10.28)	2.070*** (7.91)	2.464*** (11.04)	2.942*** (12.67)
N	1306	1306	1306	1306	1306	1306	1306	1306
Prob > F	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

t statistics in parentheses \* p < 0.10 \*\*p < 0.05 \*\*\*p < 0.01.

personality of the product as a deliberate signal of the user's own traits. The results also align powerfully with Social Identity Theory (Tajfel et al., 1979). The observed variations in perceptions between UK and Italian consumers suggest that product choices may serve as markers of group identity. The apparent resistance from traditional consumers might be interpreted as a dominant in-group policing its cultural boundaries against an innovation perceived as a threat, stereotyping the user of the “out-group” product.

## 5.2. Practical and societal implications

These theoretical insights offer a foundation for concrete, evidence-based strategies for brand managers, public policy makers, and advocates for sustainable consumption.

### - Brand Strategy and Packaging Design

Our results show that product personality is not accidental; it can be strategically managed. The strong, positive association between Sincerity and judgments of the drinker as “interesting” (coef = 0.345,  $p < 0.001$ ) and “satisfied” (coef = 0.351,  $p < 0.001$ ) provides a valuable insight. This suggests that by fostering perceptions of sincerity, brands can help mitigate the core prejudice that canned wine is an inauthentic gimmick. Marketing campaigns featuring “meet the winemaker” content or stories of craftsmanship are therefore data-driven strategies for building trust.

Furthermore, our finding that product Sophistication is significantly and positively associated with the drinker being perceived as “Elegant” (coef = 0.142,  $p < 0.05$ ) and “Gracious” (coef = 0.355,  $p < 0.001$ ) provides relevant guidance for designers. This suggests that using design cues like matte finishes, minimalist typography, and elegant color palettes is not merely an aesthetic choice; it is a meaningful lever to influence the social image of the consumer.

### - Retailing and Consumer Service Applications

For managers in retail and hospitality, the consumption context is key. Our descriptive findings show that Ruggedness is the only personality trait rated positively by consumers (mean = 3.02), suggesting canned wine is already perceived as suitable for casual, outdoor-oriented settings. This insight can directly inform merchandising and service strategy.

- For Retailers: This finding supports placing canned wine in high-traffic, convenience-oriented locations like grab-and-go coolers to frame it for appropriate consumption occasions. Retailers can also leverage our findings on Sincerity by using in-store signage that tells a story of craftsmanship, directly addressing consumer prejudices at the moment of choice.
- For Service Providers: Hotels, resorts, and airlines can leverage canned wine as a service innovation where glass is impractical. Staff can be trained to frame the offering not as a compromise, but as a Competent choice, a trait our results show is significantly associated with being “health-conscious” (coef = 0.201,  $p < 0.01$ ) and “environmentally friendly” (coef = 0.230,  $p < 0.01$ ). This reframes the product as a responsible and modern option, shaping a positive guest experience.

### - Implications for Policy and Sustainability Advocacy

Beyond commercial applications, our findings offer crucial insights for public policy makers and non-governmental organizations advocating for sustainable consumption. A key challenge in promoting pro-environmental behaviors is overcoming non-price barriers, such as the negative social stereotypes identified in our study.

- For policy makers, our research suggests that informational campaigns focused solely on the rational benefits of sustainable packaging (e.g., recyclability, lower carbon footprint) may be insufficient. To be effective, public service announcements and initiatives could benefit from addressing the socio-psychological dimension. By understanding that perceptions of product competence are linked to viewing the user as “environmentally friendly,” government campaigns can frame the adoption of alternative packaging not just as a duty, but as a smart, modern, and responsible choice.
- For sustainability advocates, our findings provide a roadmap for more effective communication. Instead of only highlighting environmental problems, campaigns can proactively build a positive social identity around the users of sustainable products. For example, social media content could feature relatable individuals in authentic, everyday situations (leveraging Sincerity) to normalize the behaviour and directly counter the stereotype that such choices are inauthentic or a gimmick. This shifts the focus from the product's features to the positive identity of the consumer, making the sustainable choice more socially aspirational.

By understanding that the issue extends beyond the product itself to the social identity of the user, marketers, policymakers, and advocates alike can develop more effective strategies to overcome prejudice and unlock the full potential of this growing sustainable market segment.

## 6. Conclusion

This study employed brand personality theory to examine the perceptual and social barriers facing non-traditional packaging in the wine industry. Our analysis reveals that canned wine is predominantly perceived as lacking desirable attributes such as sincerity and sophistication, with ruggedness being its only moderately positive trait. Crucially, these perceptions are significantly linked to the social stereotypes formed about canned wine drinkers. While younger consumers and those with prior experience hold more favourable views, traditional wine drinkers remain sceptical, highlighting the critical need to address these entrenched perceptions to enhance market acceptance.

The findings underscore that as the demand for sustainable and convenient alternatives grows, stakeholders must strategically manage consumer perceptions. By understanding the link between product personality and stereotypes, marketers, producers, and designers can refine their messaging and branding to foster associations with sincerity and competence, thereby mitigating negative associations and improving overall acceptance.

## 7. Limitations and future research

Despite these contributions, the study's scope presents clear avenues for future inquiry. A primary limitation is its cross-sectional, correlational design. While our findings establish a strong and theoretically grounded link between product personality and consumer stereotypes, we cannot make definitive causal claims. Future research should build on our findings by employing an experimental methodology where packaging cues are manipulated to measure the subsequent causal effect on user stereotypes.

Furthermore, our analysis revealed limitations within the measurement model itself, which in turn suggest new research directions. The 'Ruggedness' dimension demonstrated poor reliability ( $\alpha = 0.60$ ), indicating that its constituent items may not form a coherent scale in this context. More importantly, we found a lack of discriminant validity among the other personality dimensions. This suggests that for a disruptive product like canned wine, consumers may not perceive traits like Sincerity, Excitement, and Competence as distinct. Future research could therefore investigate the structure of brand personality for innovative products to determine if a more parsimonious, holistic model (e.

g., a simple “positive/authentic” vs. “casual/functional” evaluation) is more appropriate than the traditional five-factor framework.

Relatedly, while we observed differences in perception across countries, we did not establish full measurement invariance for the personality scales across the three languages and cultures. Consequently, the observed cross-national differences should be interpreted as descriptive associations within our specific sample, rather than definitive evidence of deep cultural divergence in construct interpretation. Future studies employing larger, balanced samples across nations should rigorously test for scalar invariance to validate these cultural nuances.

Building on this, the study's generalizability is constrained by its geographic focus on three European countries and its specific focus on canned wine. Subsequent studies could expand this cross-cultural analysis to markets with different levels of wine tradition and compare various packaging formats (e.g., Tetra Paks, pouches) to understand if the personality transference mechanism operates similarly across different materials and designs.

Regarding sampling limitations, we acknowledge a skew toward university-educated and frequent wine consumers, particularly within the Swiss and UK subsamples. While self-selection is a potential source of bias in online surveys, we argue that this effect is unlikely to vary systematically across countries given the identical survey design. Furthermore, this demographic profile often overlaps with ‘early adopters’ of sustainable innovations, making the sample relevant for exploring reactions to novel packaging, even if it limits generalizability to the mass-market consumer.

Finally, further examination of the role of sensory experiences in shaping and potentially overriding initial perceptions based on packaging could also offer valuable insights. Ultimately, while acknowledging these limitations, this research provides a robust foundation for marketers and researchers, underscoring the critical need to manage a product's perceived personality to overcome consumer biases and foster the adoption of sustainable innovations.

#### CRedit authorship contribution statement

**Nicolás Depetris-Chauvin:** Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Antoine Pinède:** Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Heber Rodrigues:** Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Validation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

#### Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

#### Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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