

How food pairing and leisure consumption occasions shape Sales channel marketing Strategies for Non-Alcoholic Ready-to-Drink Beverages in Vietnam



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ABSTRACT: This paper examines how food pairing consumption occasions (FCO) and leisure consumption occasions (LCO) shape sales channel marketing strategies for non-alcoholic ready-to-drink (NARTD) beverages in Vietnam. By analyzing consumption patterns across two primary settings—at-home (AH) and away-from-home (AFH)—the review highlights distinct channel selection and in-store activation strategies tailored to each context. Product availability and visibility at primary main shelf is crucial. For FCO, effective channel marketing prioritizes in-store activations, including ensuring product availability, cross-displays in food sections, bundled promotions with ready-to-eat meals, and offering single-serve packs for immediate consumption (AFH) or multi-serve/multi-pack options for meals AH. Conversely, LCO strategies focus on promoting single-serve packs for convenience and impulse purchases, leveraging cross-displays in snack zones, and implementing attractive bundle promotions for leisure activities. The findings emphasize the critical role of occasion-based marketing in transforming shoppers into buyers at the point of sale. By aligning channel strategies with specific consumption occasions and leveraging targeted sales touchpoints, brands can enhance consumer engagement and drive NARTD beverage sales. This paper provides actionable insights for marketers aiming to optimize their channel strategies through occasion-based approaches.

KEY WORDS: Non-Alcoholic Ready-to-Drink beverages, occasion-based segmentation, Food pairing occasions, Leisure consumption occasions, retail marketing, channel marketing.

1 INTRODUCTION

In recent years, NARTD beverages have gained significant popularity, carving out a substantial niche within the global beverage market, including Vietnam. This segment shows considerable growth potential, as evidenced by the NARTD sector's value projected \$8.2 billion USD in year 2023 and reach \$11.4 billion USD by 2028 (*Non-Alcoholic Drinks - Vietnam | Statista Market Forecast*, n.d.). Several demographic and economic factors contribute to this expansion such as: a youthful population with the 10 -24 age range comprising 21% of the population, rising personal income, which has increased by 30-40% over the past decade and reached an estimated \$4,000 USD per capita in 2023; NARTD consumption in Vietnam standing at 23 liters per person—well below the global average of 40 liters. However, with intense competition and evolving consumer preferences, success in this market requires dynamic, consumer-centered marketing strategies, one key aspect is understanding the various consumption occasions during which NARTDs are consumed—such as FCO and LCO.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The Non-Alcoholic Ready-to-Drink (NARTD) sector is a rapidly growing segment of the global beverage industry, characterized by its ability to cater to diverse consumer needs. Recent trends show a shift from generic marketing to more nuanced strategies focused on consumption occasions, such as food pairing and leisure activities. These occasions significantly influence consumer behavior and sales channel dynamics, necessitating a deeper understanding of their impact on marketing strategies.

2.1 Consumption occasions

Consumers reach out NARTD for different consumption occasions (Papies et al., 2022),(Rodger et al., 2021) at home and out of home. These occasions are influenced by situational, psychological, and social factors, which help create a more engaging consumption experience (Papies et al., 2022), (Tran et al., 2024).

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2.1.1 Food pairing occasions and consumer behaviors

FCO have been identified as critical factors influencing consumer choices and purchasing behavior. This significantly impacts sensory perception and consumer satisfaction that is known as "flavor synergy," drives not only individual consumption preferences but also group dining experiences (*Food and Wine Pairing*, n.d.). This also makes the sensory experience better than single usage (Lahne, 2018). Consumers choose NARTD to pair with food in family meals at home or dining-out are an integral part of everyday life and local dining culture. Traditional meals—such as pho, *com tam*, or *banh mi*—are typically accompanied by beverages like NARTD, iced tea, or strong coffee, making food occasions a central part of NARTD consumption. NARTD is deeply ingrained in local food cultures and is key to enhancing the overall dining experience (McNaughton et al., 2020). Studies have shown that beverage choice during meals is strongly influenced by both flavor compatibility and convenience (Mueller Loose & Jaeger, 2012). In foodservice settings, where pairing NARTD with meals can enhance the dining experience, brands have found success by marketing drinks that complement specific cuisines or types of food, such as pairing juicy milk or fruit juice with breakfast or carbonated soft drink with fast food as in Comosa report 2022 (*CID-Decision-Coca-Cola-Castel.Pdf*, n.d.) & (Ashdown-Franks et al., 2019). According to (Spence, 2020), it is emphasized that brands must adopt menu-based marketing strategies in foodservice environments to suggest complementary beverages alongside meals. This not only boosts beverage sales but also fosters consumer loyalty by aligning product offerings with specific consumption occasions. E.g., brands like Coca-Cola have used foodservice partnerships with McDonal to encourage the combo of Coke with meals in fast food chains and casual dining restaurants.

For FCO, the idea that combinations of food and beverages go "better" together than separately (Lahne, 2019). In addition, from Euromonitor Internation report in year 2021 for beverage industry, Vietnamese consumers are increasingly looking for beverages that not only complement food but also enhance their overall dining experience.

2.1.2 Leisure occasion

LCO, such as social gatherings, outdoor activities, or relaxation at home or out-of-home, are another important driver of NARTD consumption. These occasions are often associated with beverages that provide refreshment or an energy boost, such as soft drinks, bottled water, and energy drinks (Mueller Loose & Jaeger, 2012). As leisure occasions are often spontaneous and social, beverage marketing in this category focuses on accessibility and convenience such as easy-to-carry packaging and widespread availability, is a key factor that drives consumer choice during leisure activities (Gupta et al., 2023). Pairing Pepsi with Rap Viet or Coca-Cola's "Share a Coke" campaign can create an emotional connection with the brand as mediator (Chao, n.d.). The emergence of experiential marketing further highlights this trend. Brands increasingly curate personalized consumption occasions, integrating entertainment, relaxation, and convenience.

For leisure occasions, the convenience of the product, including packaging size, availability and relevant visibility, plays a significant role in shaping purchasing decisions. As consumers increasingly lean toward on-the-go consumption, channel marketers must adjust their strategies to ensure their products are accessible at the right moments, particularly during spontaneous or unplanned leisure activities. This shift in consumer behavior reflects the growing demand for beverages that are easy to consume, portable, and available at various points of sale, from cafes to convenience (Mueller Loose & Jaeger, 2012)

2.2 Key distribution channels that much relevant to NARTD consumption occasions

Choosing the right distribution channel is crucial, according to Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. Sales or channel manager need to understand consumer decision making to meet their demand (Sharma, 2001). The right approach can create customer satisfaction and ensuring cost efficiency (Gea et al., 2024).

2.2.1 Traditional Trade – off premise (TTOFF)

According to Nielsen retail audit tracking, and from McKinsey, Vietnam has around 680,000 offline outlets, 9000 traditional markets (*Entering Vietnam's Retail Market in 2023*, 2023) selling basic food and fast-moving consumer goods. Representatives for this TTOFF are traditional market, Local Groceries (street shop), Mom-and-Pop and Provisions. These are often private sector by family-run stores scattered throughout cities and rural areas. They are a vital channel, as a large portion of Vietnamese consumers still rely on them for daily needs (Kantar, 2023). (*Vn-Cb-Retail-in-Vietnam-2022.Pdf*, n.d.)

2.2.2 Modern Trade – of premise (MTOFF)

According to Fortune Business insight, 2024, key distribution channels for NARTD are Hyper and supermarket, specialty store, convenient store and others. In Vietnam, MTOFF includes:

Supermarkets and Hypermarkets: Chains like Co.op mart, Big C, and Lotte Mart... serve urban and semi-urban consumers. They provide an organized space where channel marketing can promote and position their products.

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Minimart: Chains like Bach Hoa Xanh that is dominant in the Central down south and Win mart+ mass nationwide. Their space is smaller than Hyper and super supermarket, locate in president zones, near wet-markets area and promote daily fill-in convenient shopping, compete directly to local grocery and wet market.

Convenience Stores: Growing quickly with chains such as Circle K, 7-Eleven, GS25, and Family Mart, convenience stores targeting the younger, urban population who seek quick and ready-to-drink options.

2.2.3 Online - E-commerce Platforms

Online platforms such as Lazada, Tiki, and Shopee, as well as the online branches of physical retailers, provide home delivery and subscription options for beverages. Both traditional Private sector and modern trade also operate their own online platforms for direct sales to consumers via livestream, zalo group, Facebook, Tiktok shop The online distribution channel is expected to grow at a high CAGR in the forecast period (Fortune Business Insight, 2024).

2.2.4 HoReCa (Hotel, Restaurant, and Café)

Restaurants, coffee shops, hotels, fast-food outlets and local eating and drinking carry a range of NARTD beverages to cater to on-the-go and dine-in consumers.

2.2.5 Events and Sponsorships venues

Brands also leverage events, such as festivals, sports matches, and cultural celebrations, to create a direct channel to consumers, often through sampling, special promotions, and temporary kiosks. Example of festival booth, trade fair ...in Tết festive, summer beach activations, and a lot of local festivals.

3 METHODOLOGY

This paper utilizes a qualitative literature review methodology, supplemented by personal observations in Vietnam market, to investigate the role of occasion-based segmentation in shaping marketing strategies for NARTD beverages in Vietnam. The review synthesizes existing research on food pairing and leisure consumption occasions, exploring their influence on sales channel marketing strategies. Key questions:

- How do food pairing and leisure consumption occasions impact NARTD consumer behavior in Vietnam?
- How can marketing strategies be tailored to effectively target these specific occasions to enhance consumer engagement?
- What role does channel marketing play in maximizing consumer engagement during these key consumption moments at each key point of purchase?

Search Strategy: A comprehensive review of the literature was conducted, focusing on key search terms such as "non-alcoholic ready to drink beverages", "occasion base marketing," "occasion-based segmentation", "Food pairing occasions", "Social and leisure consumption occasions " and "retail marketing" were used to identify relevant sources. Additionally, marketing book from Phillips Kotler, industry reports from Nielsen, Kantar and Statista provided valuable insights into the NARTD market in Vietnam.

Personal Observations and industry reports: This paper also incorporates personal observations of current marketing practices in Vietnam's NARTD sector. These observations focus on how big brands of NARTD in Vietnam customize in-store activation, recipe-based content, and social media campaigns to engage consumers during food pairing and leisure occasions.

Limitations: The study is based on secondary data from existing literature and industry reports, supplemented by personal observations, rather than primary research. As such, the findings are subject to the limitations inherent in the available literature and market data.

4 FINDINGS

4.1 Shifting Consumer Shopping Behaviors in Vietnam

Less Frequent but Higher-Value Shopping Trips: According to an internal report from key retail chains, post-pandemic consumers in Vietnam are now shopping less frequently but spending more per trip, with an increasing emphasis on efficiency and the value of each purchase. The increase value per trip can be resulted from premiumization, particularly for health conscious ("Decoding the FMCG and Consumer Trends in Vietnam," 2023) by Nielsen report. This shift has been observed in proprietary reports from Kantar and Nielsen, which are tailored specifically for their clients. As a result, retailers and marketers are optimizing touchpoints, such as clear product messaging, customized pack sizes, and targeted promotions that align with store type. Additionally, providing richer pre-purchase information has become crucial in engaging these more discerning shoppers (*Retail Evolution: Adapting to Dynamic Retail Landscape - Vietnamese - Kantar Worldpanel*, n.d.). This trend is evident in the retail environment, particularly in hypermarkets and supermarkets, where key players like Suntory PepsiCo and Coca-Cola have shifted their focus from single can offerings to promoting multi-pack formats (e.g., 6-packs) to cater to the demand for higher-value purchases.

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Resurgence of AFH Consumption: A report from VN express international year 2023 showed that AFH consumption is on the rise again (VnExpress, n.d.). This is also found as a Nielsen survey conducted in early 2023 (“Decoding the FMCG and Consumer Trends in Vietnam,” 2023). This recovery offers an opportunity for NARTD brands to re-engage consumers with on-the-go offerings or in dining settings, ensuring that their products are present on these increasingly popular occasions. With the impact of Decree 100 on blood alcohol concentration regulations in Vietnam, NARTD has become the leading alternative to wine and beer for out-of-home (Kulbida et al., 2024). In addition, from Vietnam Briefing news website (*Vietnam’s Middle Class*, 2024) and Statista (*Non-Alcoholic Drinks - Vietnam | Statista Market Forecast*, n.d.), Vietnam’s middle class grows and consumer spending power increases, this result in the fact that there has been a shift toward dining out, social gatherings, and leisure activities. Consumers are increasingly spending on cafes, restaurants, and other public spaces where they can enjoy NARTD beverages like soft drinks, juices, bottled water, and energy drinks.

The resurgence of AFH consumption of NARTD beverages in Vietnam reflects a combination of factors such as economic recovery, changing consumer behaviors, the expansion of modern retail formats as in Katar report (*Retail Evolution: Adapting to Dynamic Retail Landscape - Vietnamese - Kantar Worldpanel*, n.d.), and regulatory changes like Decree 100. These developments are reshaping the landscape of out-of-home beverage consumption, with more consumers seeking convenient, healthy, and refreshing alternatives to alcohol. For marketers in the NARTD sector, this offers opportunities to capitalize on the growing demand through targeted product offerings, strategic placements, and partnerships with retail and delivery platforms.

Emergence of Modern and Convenient Retail Formats:

The emergence of modern and convenient retail formats in Vietnam has had a significant impact on the retail landscape, particularly in the NARTD sector (*Vn-Cb-Retail-in-Vietnam-2022.Pdf*, n.d.). This trend is reshaping consumer behaviors, driving innovation in retail marketing strategies, and creating new opportunities for brands in the NARTD category. Here’s how this emergence has influenced retail marketing in Vietnam, especially for NARTD products: Convenience stores and e-commerce platforms are expanding their footprint across Vietnam’s urban areas, reflecting a growing demand for convenience. Top five of convenience store (*Vn-Cb-Retail-in-Vietnam-2022.Pdf*, n.d.) till year 2021 are Circle K, Family mart, Ministop, 7-Eleven, BS’mart, and recently new player with nearly 3000 stores VinMart+, are expanding rapidly and strategically located to meet the needs of busy consumers seeking quick access to snacks, beverages, and ready-to-eat meals. As convenience stores become the on—the-go option for urban consumers, there is an increasing demand for ready to consume products like NARTD. This has resulted in higher sales volumes of NARTD beverages and has led brands to focus on premium, healthier, or innovative options to meet diverse consumer preferences.

From Mckinsey&Company insight report, the rise of e-commerce platforms (*E-commerce keeps booming in Vietnam*, 2024), the international entities such as Shopee, Lazada, and the local one such as Tiki (*The New Faces of the Vietnamese Consumer | McKinsey*, n.d.) has also played a role in the growth of modern retail formats. As in Statista market forecast, estimates that beverage value from e-commerce will be double size vs as in year 2023 (*eCommerce - Vietnam | Statista Market Forecast*, n.d.). Many consumers now prefer ordering NARTD beverages online, particularly through delivery apps and e-grocery services. Digital marketing strategies for NARTD products have become more personalized and data-driven, with brands using targeted ads, promotions, and collaborations with delivery platforms to reach consumers directly at the point of decision-making (e.g., Grab’s Merchant Insights and Shopee’s Seller Success Reports provide data on how NARTD brands target consumers with customized promotions, offering a more personalized experience through digital channels).

4.2 Factors Driving Consumer Preferences for NARTD Beverages

According to report from VN express, many Vietnamese willing to spend more on drinks than on main meals (*Many Vietnamese Spend More on Drinks than Main Meals: Report - VnExpress International*, n.d.). NARTD also has a huge potential to growth by more opportunities to offer consumers more options of drinks to meet their needs that is going beyond hydration (Tireki, 2021).

Wellness and health-conscious trends: In Vietnam, consumption of NARTD beverages is driven by several key factors, including wellness and health-conscious trends and the desire for convenience found from Nielsen report in Vietnam, 2023 (*Vietnam’s Middle Class*, 2024). Furthermore, the expanding middle class, highlighted in the World Bank’s 2023 (*Overview*, n.d.), is contributing to the rising demand for premium beverage options. This trend is especially prominent among younger consumers, who are more likely to seek products that align with global health trends. The availability of healthy food significantly affects the evaluation of the consumption experience (Jin et al., 2017).

Convenience and Accessibility: As reported by the Boston Consulting Group about consumer insight in Vietnam year 2023, it found that consumer now expect for mor convenient and easy to access for food and beverages. While foodservice channels remain important for consumers seeking beverages to pair with meals, retail and e-commerce channels are seeing a growing share of

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NARTD consumption, especially for at-home and leisure occasions. As e-commerce and modern trade channels expand, the ease of access and the convenience of home delivery have become key drivers for NARTD consumption, particularly among younger, urban consumers. In addition, from Vietnam briefing 2023 by Dezan Shira and Associate firm (*Vietnam's Food Delivery Services Sector: An Overview*, n.d.), food delivery services are increasing rapidly, Vietnam is offering the convenience of enjoying a variety of cuisines within the comfort of their homes or workplaces (*Report: Vietnam FMCG Outlook 2024 - Vietnamese - Kantar Worldpanel*, n.d.).

4.3 Demographic and Economic Trends in Vietnam

Youthful population and optimism: The demographic structure of Vietnam plays a pivotal role in the growth of the NARTD market. From The United Nations Population Fund reports, approximately 21.1% of the population is in the 10-24 age group, contributing to an increasing number of young, health-conscious consumers (*Phát triển thanh niên*, n.d.). Vietnamese people have shown remarkable levels of trust and optimism (*Buy and Sell in Vietnam*, n.d.) (*Optimism for Vietnam's Economy Remains High in 2023 | McKinsey*, n.d.). After the Covid-19 crisis, the population quickly back to normal of dine out as pre-covid began spending more on out-of-home activities (*OOH Spend Lifts across Drinks and Snacks – without Harming Take-Home Sales*, n.d.)

Rising income and spending power: Furthermore, with an increase in personal income—reported to have risen by 30-40% over the last decade—the purchasing power of Vietnamese consumers has strengthened, leading to higher spending on beverages, including NARTD drinks, according to UNFPA, 2023)(*Phát triển thanh niên*, n.d.) and Tititada 2024(*Tổng quan thị trường nước giải khát Việt Nam - Tititada*, n.d.). Despite this growth, annual consumption of NARTD beverages in Vietnam is still relatively low (approximately 23 liters per capita), compared to the global average of 40 liters as reported from Tititada academy News(*Tổng quan thị trường nước giải khát Việt Nam - Tititada*, n.d.), this indicates substantial potential for further growth in this sector.

4.4 Consumption Habits and Market Opportunities

NARTD consumption is strongly occasion-driven, and understanding these occasions offers key marketing opportunities.

Social Context and Occasions: Over 70% of NARTD consumers in Vietnam factor in social context when choosing their beverages with family gatherings and social events providing prime opportunities for brands to engage consumers from Statista, 2023. Furthermore, reports suggest that many Vietnamese consumers now spend more on beverages than on main meals, indicating a shift in consumption habits.

Occasion-Based Segmentation: Marketers must identify and target specific consumption occasions—food pairing and leisure—to craft more effective channel strategies and product offerings.

4.5 NARTD Consumption Occasions and Channel Strategies

To optimize channel marketing strategies for NARTD beverages, it is essential to focus on two primary consumption occasions: FCO and LCO. Tailored approaches for each occasion help maximize consumer engagement and drive sales.

Food Pairing Occasions

- **Strategic Product Placement & In-Store Activation:** Product placement is a powerful marketing strategy with great potential to engage dormant audiences (Soba & Aydin, 2013). Placing NARTD beverages in high-traffic areas of supermarkets, such as near meal kits or fresh foods, to encourage pairing during meal planning at home. According to Kantar report in 2023, Tastings and food pairing demonstrations can increase trial and awareness, especially when placed near food sections.
- **Promotions & Cross-Promotions:** Cross-promotions with food products can stimulate impulse buying (Mandolfo et al., 2022), enhance perceived value, and better align the products with specific meal occasions. Bundling beverages with complementary meals—both in-store and online—reinforces the idea of beverages as an integral part of dining
- **E-Commerce Integration:** On e-commerce platforms (e.g., Lazada, Shopee), offer meal pairings through product listings, recipe videos, and bundled meal kits. This approach caters to consumers' preference for convenience and enhances the shopping experience trend, from Statista, 2023.

Leisure Occasions

- **Convenient Packaging & Retail Placement:** NARTD beverages should be available in single-serve, portable packaging (e.g., cans or small bottles) at convenience stores (e.g., 7-Eleven, Circle K) or via vending machines at leisure spots (parks, beaches) for on-the-go consumption.
- **Digital & Social Media Marketing:** Leverage social media platforms (Instagram, TikTok) to promote beverages in leisure settings like picnics or casual outings. Influencer partnerships can amplify brand visibility and engagement during spontaneous, social moments (Agustian et al., 2023).

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- **Partnerships & Event Sponsorships:** Collaborate with entertainment venues (cinemas, music festivals) to offer beverage promotions or exclusive event deals. Co-branded experiences with cafés or restaurants can also boost visibility and emerge brand value as well as personalize brand experience (Hardcastle et al., 2025).
- **Food Delivery Integration:** Partner with delivery platforms (e.g., GrabFood, ShopeeFood) to offer bundle deals or discounts when consumers order meals, making it easy for them to add NARTD beverages to their at-home or office leisure occasions as study from Kantar, 2024.

4.6 Channel selection for NARTD consumption occasions

Different consumption settings, AH and AFH, require distinct retail channel strategies:

At-Home consumption: Despite high level of optimism, Vietnamese consumers are becoming more discerning and cost-conscious (*Buy and Sell in Vietnam*, n.d.). Thus, for at-home consumption, consumers prioritize bulk buying and cost-efficiency. Main shopping mission for this occasion is to stock up for future consumption at home. Multi-serves (big pack-size) or multi-packs pack type (bundle from single served packs). Key channels focused:

- **Traditional Trade off premise (TTOFF):** Grocery stores, market stalls, and local provisions are important for rural and semi-urban consumers. Despite the rapid expansion of modern trade channel across Vietnam, TTOFF still play an important role in retail market. These channels are enhancing their infrastructure, assortment, and services to meet dynamic customer expectations – from Deloitte, 2020 (*Vn-Cb-Retail-in-Vietnam-2022.Pdf*, n.d.). observation from market on ground, it is found that key players in NARTD such as The Coca-Cola company, Suntory Pepsi Co., or local player like TH, Masan, they invest a lot in the channel to ensure product availability with a lot of trade discount, offer display programs to win share of visibility, as well as run different kinds of retailer loyalty programs to conquer this channel.
- **Modern Trade off premise (MTOFF):** A research showed that consumers select store format based on their shopping mission, more diverse and flexible in how they shop rather than by retailer's intention (Nilsson et al., 2015). E.g., Urban consumers in Vietnam prefer hyper & supermarkets such as Co.op mart, BigC, AEON, Emart and minimart stores Bach hoa Xanh, Vinmart+ ...for their variety and accessibility. Consumers are shifting from Hyper & supermarket to smaller formats such as minimart and Convenient stores – from Vietnam news, 2024 (*Survey Reveals Shifts in Vietnamese Shopper Habits*, n.d.). In addition, smaller store types (e.g., Bach Hoa Xanh, Win mart+) is rapidly expansion not only stores quantity but also streamline portfolio to meet with customized demand in the region (Berman, 2019). With this channel evolution, smaller retails target to compete directly with traditional outlets, they offer personalized deals and affordable package size to flexibility reach daily fill-in demand.
- **E-commerce (E-com):** As e-com expands, consumers now can access a wide variety of NARTD from home with fast services of to-door-delivery (report by NMSC, 2023). E.g., Bach Hoa Xanh offers cold beverages with ice for instant consumption at home via retail E-platform.

Offering engaging content like recipes and meal pairing suggestions strengthens the consumer connection and increases engagement (Romaniuk & Nenycz-Thiel, 2013). These strategies collectively maximize the effectiveness of eCommerce in catering to the growing demand for convenient and enjoyable food pairing experiences at home

Away-from-Home Consumption: From Kantar report, there is a significant trend towards dining out, particularly among middle-class and high-income consumers, which is expected to continue expanding (*OOH Spend Lifts across Drinks and Snacks – without Harming Take-Home Sales*, n.d.). For immediate consumption, consumers spend time cafes, restaurants and fast-food takeaways, and convenience stores called on-premises and on-the-go channels (Cornelsen et al., 2019) that exposure to time savings and convenience (Haddad et al., 2023). This also found that the location of non-home-cooking play a critical role such as near workplace and services of takeout. In Vietnam, key manufacturers in NARTD such as The Coca-cola company and Suntory Pepsi Co., here is the typical channels clustered for setting AFH:

- **Modern On-premises (MTON):** Chain restaurants, high-end cafés, and bars.
- **Traditional On-premises (TTON):** Local eateries and informal drinking spots.
- **On-the-Go Options:** Vending machines, and kiosks, street vendor, Convenient stores and local grocery with cooler installation.

4.7 In-store activation for NARTD beverages in Vietnam

Different consumption occasions of Food pairing and leisure, retail channel marketing need to customize the way of instore activation (e.g, package size, promotion, merchandising) to influent shoppers and turn them into buyers at point of sales (Venkatesan et al., 2015). The consumption of soft drinks has been linked to trait impulsivity and to decision-making (Kulbida et al., 2024). To promote impulsive purchases in store, channel marketers need to offer scarcity promotion with limited-time (e.g. happy hour, only today etc.) (Sun et al., 2023) and limited-quantity (e.g. allocation with time or allocation whatever comes first

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etc.) (Y. Wu et al., 2021). On the other hand, extra products visibility instore can drive more chance of sales increasing (Page et al., 2019). This also plays an important role to trigger impulse purchase that retailers need to transform their on-shelf display (Edirisinghe & Munson, 2023), ensure full assortment and insightful planogram on main-shelf, cross display at relevant categories area to promote right occasions (e.g., Fanta's strategy is to go with snack in fun time, a cross display hanger of Fanta at snack corner in Circle K is to remind student drink Fanta at leisure snack-time. Fanta brand affords an extra payment for this cross area besides sitting on the main shelf of NARTD). Besides of products physical availability, the availability of healthier options promise intervention strategy to support consumption decision of healthy choice, particularly for younger consumers (van Nee et al., 2024). This is evident in the on-shelf display of Pepsi's carbonated soft drinks, such as Pepsi Original, Pepsi Zero Sugar, and Pepsi Light, offering healthier alternatives within the Pepsi brand. Besides, the in-store activation is also customized by FCO and LCO.

4.7.1 Food Pairing Consumption Occasions - FCO

Offline Retail Channels: the demand in physical store is more spread out and more product variety than in online channel for popular products (Nakano, 2023) and (Chintala et al., 2024).

- **Cross merchandising at food zone:** Products next to the relevant items encourages good look and feel from merchandising shaping consumer perception that link with their purchase purpose (Biswas, 2019). Clear merchandising identity helps shoppers find a sense of ownership and boundaries (J. Wu et al., 2015). The concept of NARTD beverages is strategically merchandised in high-traffic areas within supermarkets, such as near meal kits, fresh food, or delicatessen sections, e.g., Nutriboost (a product from The Coca-Cola company) is displayed next to bread shelf to promote breakfast bundle, 7up next to fresh food area in supermarket to highlight food at home occasion. That complements their meal, enhancing both the dining and shopping experience.
- **Cross promotion with food:** promotion influences impulsive purchase (Mandolfo et al., 2022) and positively impact on consumer-offtake (Mattheus, n.d.). Cross-promotions (bundle promotion) drives for purchase package increasing in-store (*Customer-Driven Bundle Promotion Optimization at Scale by Ali Fattahi, Yuexing Li, Ozge Sahin :: SSRN*, n.d.). For NARTD, with complementary food products, e.g., bundle with fresh seafood, sandwiches, or fruits, can help drive impulse purchases and reinforce the connection between the beverage and meal experiences. E.g., Coca-Cola shopper promotion: buy any invoice from 200K VND included fresh food and any Coke will get special discount, or in restaurant with any order of a combo of Phở with Coke Zero will enjoy special combo price instead of higher price for single dish.
- **Sampling and Tastings:** Sense impact on consumer decision making (Quan Ng.- ("PDF) The Impact of Senses on Purchasing Decisions," 2024), consumer's perception (Foster et al., 2011), particularly in food and beverage sector. Food and beverages sampling and tastings affect consumer behavior, decision-making, and the overall shopping experience (Krishna, 2012). In-store tastings and food pairing demonstrations are effective strategies for encouraging product trials and boosting consumer awareness. Partnering with leading supermarket chains in Vietnam, including Big C, AEON, and Win Mart, can effectively showcase how NARTD beverages complement meal experiences. Offering free beverage samples alongside food pairings can significantly increase the impact of trial (*Taste*, n.d.) - Kantar, 2023. In-store observation, conducting these demonstrations in high-traffic areas, where consumers are already making food selections, helps them envision the potential of these drinks as ideal meal companions.

E-Commerce Activation: Personalized Recommendations are based on consumer purchase history, preferences, and browsing behavior that can offer bundle NARTD with food to drive sales (Krishna, 2012). E.g., Grab food, Shopee Food, Tiki and Lazada suggest combo pairing based on previous ordered that trigger complementary NARTD alongside meal occasions. Coca-Cola hosted a virtual food festival with recommended combo with a lot of dishes for breakfast, lunch and breaks, via Grab food and Shopee food can directly name customer for each deal. Leveraging **videos recipe** or food pairing guides within online platforms such as YouTube, TikTok and Instagram to influence consumer make final call for beverage pairing with food (Samotyja & Sielicka-Różyńska, 2021). This can be further supported by subscription models that deliver NARTD beverages and curated food pairings directly to consumers' doorsteps, appealing to the convenience-driven shoppers, particularly in urban areas where logistics can support.

Eating Channels and Co-Branding: Strategic partnerships and co-branding with casual dining, quick or full services restaurants and cafés, particularly high-end or fusion establishments that emphasize food pairings, can increase consumer awareness and trial. Co-branding campaigns or special food pairing menus featuring NARTD beverages alongside food can help reinforce brand equity and refresh the brand (Grebosz, n.d.) (Chua et al., 2020). These partnerships position NARTD beverages as an essential part of the dining experience, significantly influencing purchase decisions and enhancing retention intentions (Abdillah & Khaulani, 2020) (Kim et al., 2007).

- **Promotions:** to trigger impulse purchase (Mandolfo et al., 2022) NARTD brands can run special campaigns in collaboration with delivery services. For instance, offering "happy hour" deals, "buy one, get one free" promotions, or bundle offers

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with ready-to-eat food can encourage group consumption and increase average transaction value as well as offer affordable price to consumers (Chua et al., 2020), and even with limited timing and allocation as well (Y. Wu et al., 2021).

- **E-Word of mouth:** Consumers navigate a particular restaurant to dine driven by different factors such as , menu price, brand reputation and word of mouth (WOM) (Chua et al., 2020). Food quality, services satisfaction, atmosphere drive restaurant customers toward electronic WOM (EWOM) (Jeong & Jang, 2011). The WOM or EWOM with negative feedback has strong impact than a positive one (Chawdhary & Dall’Olmo Riley, 2015). This is crucial that need to be focused to build customers perception of values and loyalty (Gruen et al., 2006)
- **Convenient Packaging for On-the-Go with food:** one serving or single serve pack is for one consumption sitting (Poelman et al., 2016) that fit with convenient and on-the-go. **E.g.,** Coca-Cola and Pepsi promote for single serve plastic bottles 300ml – 390ml in the take-away food combo that focus on offering products in easy-to-carry packaging to cater to the convenience needs that is portable and ready-to-consume appeals to consumers when they need it most.

4.7.2 Leisure Occasions

Leisure occasions in Vietnam, characterized by casual, spontaneous moments, require a channel marketing strategy that emphasizes convenience, mass distribution, and digital engagement. Consumers seeking refreshing beverages during their leisure time such as soft drink, Energy drink, ready to drink tea, ready to serve café, bottled water etc., prioritize ease of access and relevant messaging that aligns with their relaxing experiences. The following strategies are effective in targeting consumers during these occasions:

Convenience Stores: Leisure occasions often occur during on-the-go moments, and convenience stores are prime locations for NARTD beverages. Convenience stores with time-saving and distance-minimizing properties of a shopping strip determine customers’ satisfaction (Reimers & Chao, 2014). Observation from Vietnam market, retail chains such as 7-Eleven, Circle K, GS25, and Family Mart are popular for their accessibility in busy urban environments, where consumers look for quick refreshment. Persistent Differentiators, Cleanliness and Safety, Friendliness, Location and Convenience, Speed, Evolving Enablers, Brand Trust are future values pool of convenience store (*The Evolving Convenience-Store Consumer*, 2021).

Vending Machines in High-Traffic Areas: with fast growing middle class, Vietnam is huge potential market for the trend of using vending machines with modern technology brings convenience to users. Strategically placing vending machines at high-traffic leisure destinations—such as parks, tourist attractions, beaches, and near universities or office buildings—can significantly increase visibility and availability of NARTD beverages during leisure moments. Vending machines are an effective channel for reaching consumers who are engaged in outdoor or spontaneous activities and are seeking a quick and convenient refreshment. This channel activation needs to be explored further in the next study.

Entertainment Venues: Brand presentation and customer experience matter to marketing strategy in leisure venues (Hackley & Tiwusakul, 2006). Partnering with entertainment venues like music festivals, sports events, cinemas, and cafés can enhance the visibility of NARTD beverages during leisure occasions. Offering free samples, co-branded promotions, or special beverage menus at such venues can drive consumer trial and awareness. For instance, offering bundled promotions such as "beverage & popcorn" at movie theaters or partnering with cafés to feature NARTD beverages on their menu enhances the consumer experience and encourages consumption. Furthermore, sponsoring local events or festivals can generate positive brand associations by connecting the beverage with enjoyable, social activities.

Digital Commerce: Leverage food delivery apps like Grab Food, Shopee Food, Now, and provides an opportunity to reach leisure consumers when they order food and beverages for at-home or office-based events. NARTD brands can integrate promotional offers, such as bundle deals or discounts for pairing beverages with snacks for breaktime, to drive impulse purchases. Recommend drinks menu that best fit by leisure moment such as breaktime, festive or special personalized occasions. Create engaged digital content to promote product on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and YouTube. Encourage customers to post pictures or videos of them enjoying your product during their leisure moments and offer rewards (e.g., discounts, contests) for the best posts. Offering a digital loyalty program for repeat orders during leisure time (Malthouse et al., 2013).

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Interpretation of Findings

This review highlights the importance of occasion-based consumption in shaping sales channel activation for NARTD beverages. Aligning beverages with specific consumption occasions enhances satisfaction and fosters brand loyalty (Romaniuk & Nenycz-Thiel, 2013), as consumers are more likely to repurchase when products are linked to contexts such as meals or special events (Mulhern & Duffy, 2004). Understanding the motivations behind leisure-driven consumption (e.g., relaxation or socializing) or food-pairing during meal occasions helps to target the appropriate sales channels, which are categorized under two settings: AH and AFH.

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The review suggests that packaging size should be tailored to each setting and occasion. For instance, single-serve (one-serve) packs are ideal for convenience, on-the-go consumption, or pairing with food outside the home, whereas multi-packs or multi-serve packs are better suited for at-home consumption. Moreover, in-store activation strategies should be differentiated between (FCO) and (LCO).

For FCO, key activation strategies include bundling beverages with food (e.g., pairing beverages with ingredients for home-cooking or ready-to-eat meals for convenience), cross-merchandising in food zones besides strong visibility at destination (main-shelf) and offering sampling and tasting opportunities. Additionally, EWOM about menu price, atmosphere, services, food quality, satisfaction, brand equity ...etc. plays a critical role in communication and can significantly influence customer store choices and brand loyalty (Gruen et al., 2006) (Cheung et al., 2008)

For LCO, the focus is more on creating experiences associated with relaxation, uplifting moments, or social gatherings. Bundled promotions with snacks, particularly during breaks at home or at the workplace, could effectively attract consumers at the right time and place. Brand activation in entertainment venues and convenience stores should be complemented by digital campaigns offering targeted promotions or in-app rewards tied to relaxation or social moments (Malthouse et al., 2013).

The increasing role of digital commerce in both FCO and LCO highlights the need for a cohesive and omni-channel approach, where online and offline strategies align seamlessly. This will help brands effectively tap into both the in-store and online shopping experiences, enhancing their overall sales performance across all consumer occasions. (*Understanding Customer Experience Throughout the Customer Journey - Katherine N. Lemon, Peter C. Verhoef, 2016, n.d.*).

5.2 Theoretical Implications

This review highlights the significance of occasion-based segmentation in beverage marketing, with a particular focus on food pairing and leisure occasions. Unlike traditional demographic segmentation, which provides limited insight into consumer behavior focuses on the specific moments when consumers are most likely to engage with products, such as enjoying a drink with a meal or relaxing during downtime (Zhuang et al., 2006). This approach enables marketers to target consumers based on context-driven consumption, leading to more effective and relevant marketing strategies. At the same time, sales channel marketing strategy is critical for maximizing engagement during these key occasions and purchase decision, according to Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. 2016. As consumer decisions are highly influenced by situational factors (Wakefield & Inman, 2003), the channel chosen must align with the occasion. E.g., food pairing occasions are best addressed through in-store promotions or recipe-driven content on e-commerce platforms, where consumers are actively looking for products to complement their meals. In contrast, for LCO, such as socializing or relaxing with a beverage, in a convenience store, an energy drink is activated with display next to snack shelf for a leisure occasion during school break time or slump time. By aligning both the occasion and sales channel, marketers can craft emotionally resonant campaigns that increase consumer engagement, drive brand loyalty and purchase decisions.

5.3 Practical Implications

For food pairing occasions, in-store promotions or recipe-based content are likely to be more effective. Offering pairing suggestions both in-store and on product packaging can directly influence purchase decisions (Sook-Fern Yeo et al., 2020). For instance, a beverage brand might suggest specific drink pairings for a popular meal or a seasonal recipe. For leisure occasions, it's crucial to market products that meet consumers' emotional and functional needs for relaxation. By focusing on comfort, convenience, and emotional connections through thoughtful packaging, personalized recommendations, and strategic promotions, brands can increase engagement and encourage purchases (Ge, 2024). Data-driven personalization, powered by AI, can further refine these campaigns by tailoring product recommendations based on individual purchasing behavior, helping brands deliver the right message to the right consumer at the right time (Kumar et al., 2024). According to Phillips Kotler, marketers do not create consumption occasions but need to define them to position products at peak time to maximize engagement level and conversion rate. Seasonal events and special occasions, such as Tet festivals, holiday meals, or family gatherings, present valuable opportunities for limited-time offers, targeted promotions, and enhanced in-store visibility.

5.4 Limitations

This study focuses on a specific FCO and LCO in NARTD beverages, which limits the generalizability of the findings to specific beverage segments that may have different consumption patterns and distribution needs. There are also sub-occasions under FCO and LCO with different behaviors that are not deep dive in this paper. The conclusions may not fully capture the diversity of consumer preferences. The review may not sufficiently address emerging trends, such as the growing impact of sustainability, health-conscious choices, or new beverage categories (e.g., plant-based drinks, functional beverages). These factors could influence consumer decision-making and alter sales channel dynamics but are not fully explored within the review. Additionally,

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while the review highlights the role of omni-channel and phygital experiences, it does not fully explore the integration challenges and effectiveness of these models in the real world. The paper also does not account for factors such as consumer price sensitivity or brand loyalty, which may influence purchasing decisions alongside occasion-based marketing. Future studies could explore these areas in more detail to provide a broader understanding of consumer behavior in NARTD beverage marketing. While the review provides valuable theoretical insights, it may lack empirical data or real-world case studies that test the effectiveness of the proposed strategies in specific market contexts. This could limit the practical applicability of the findings.

5.5 Future Research Directions

Future studies could explore the following areas to expand on the findings of this review: (1) **Diverse Consumer Segments** - Research could examine how different demographic groups (e.g., age, income, culture, regions) influence occasion-based consumption and sales channel preferences in NARTD beverages. (2) **Emerging Consumer and channel Trends** - Investigating the impact of sustainability, health-consciousness, and functional beverages on occasion-based marketing strategies could provide insights into evolving consumer preferences and sales channels activation. (3) **Real-World Application of Omni-Channel and Phygital Strategies** - Further research is needed to assess the practical challenges and effectiveness of omni-channel and phygital models across different sales channels. (4) **Hybrid Sales Channels**: As physical and digital channels merge, research could investigate how hybrid models (e.g., click-and-collect) impact consumer behavior and marketing effectiveness. (5) **Empirical Testing**: More empirical studies and case analyses are needed to validate the effectiveness of occasion-based marketing strategies in real-world settings.

6 CONCLUSION

This paper explored how sales channels marketing activities can be tailored to fit FCO and LCO within both AH and Away-From-Home AFH settings. For AH settings, where the primary goal is future consumption, multi-serve or multi-pack options are ideal for stocking up. In contrast, AFH settings, which more cater to on-the-go consumption, are best served by single-serve packs designed for immediate use. In both settings, factors such as in-store availability, visibility, and customized promotions are critical in driving sales.

For FCO, the focus should be on product visibility in key relevant areas, such as main shelves and food zones, with strategies like cross-merchandising, bundling, and recipe-driven promotions. These tactics align NARTD beverages with consumers' meals, directly influencing purchase behavior. In LCO, which are centered around relaxation or social activities, marketers should provide easy access to beverages through snack combos in convenience stores, vending machines, and event venues. Timing promotions during break periods or social gatherings further enhances consumer engagement. Phygital stores, blending physical and digital experiences, also offer a seamless and convenient shopping experience, encouraging greater interaction. By aligning marketing strategies with these consumption occasions, brands can build stronger connections with consumers, driving both engagement and loyalty. Success lies in selecting the right sales channel—whether physical or digital—at the right time to maximize impact and influence purchasing decisions.

In conclusion, different consumption occasions are essential drivers of effective sales channel strategies in the NARTD beverage market. Marketers who adapt their channel selection to these consumption contexts can create more meaningful consumer relationships and capture value in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

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