FutureBridge



THOUGHT LEADERSHIP REPORT

The Occasion Edge

How alcoholic beverage companies can grow value when category boundaries are breaking

From share of category to share of occasion

Consumers are not leaving beverage occasions. They are redesigning what belongs in those moments. The winning portfolio will not be the one with the most SKUs; it will be the one with the clearest role in social, refreshment, wellness, meals, sports, and at-home occasions.

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01

THE ARGUMENT IN THREE MOVES

Executive Summary

This report makes one argument: growth for alcoholic beverage companies increasingly depends on winning occasions, not category share alone – and the growth leaders will redeploy what they already have before adding anything new.

For alcoholic beverage companies, the first problem is not portfolio breadth; it is occasion relevance. The winner is not the player with the broadest SKU base; it is the player with the strongest permission to participate in more valuable moments.

→

THE SHIFT

The competitive set is no longer defined by category alone; occasion context now plays a larger role in shaping choice. Beer, spirits, and wine increasingly compete for relevance within occasions that also include RTDs, no/low, soft drinks, hydration, and other beverages.

A portfolio can hold, or even grow, its category share while missing out on valuable occasions. **Category share shows how strongly the portfolio is competing within its category**; **share of occasion reveals whether it is gaining or losing relevance across the wider set of beverages competing for the same consumer moment**. Leaders need both.

Share of occasion provides the wider lens: where the portfolio participates, where demand is being captured elsewhere, and which valuable moments remain underserved.

This matters wherever consumers have a meaningful alternative – a match, a meal, a quiet night in. Category share shows who wins within a category, not who wins across the consumer's full repertoire of moments.



THE RESPONSE

Closing an occasion gap should start with what is already in the portfolio, before defaulting to new products. The gap may be one of relevance rather than product: an existing asset may be absent, invisible, wrongly framed, poorly formatted, misplaced, or under-activated. **Before adding any new liquid,** diagnose the occasion leakage first, then test five levers – **Reposition, Reformat, Relocate, Bundle, Bridge**.

This changes the starting point for growth. Rather than starting with a launch brief, leaders should ask which existing assets can serve the occasion, what prevents them from winning the occasion today, and which commercial lever could unlock that participation.

THE RESPONSE (cont'd)

New capability is needed only where existing assets cannot credibly close the gap. Where permission, capability, access, or speed is missing, leaders can choose whether to build, extend, partner, or buy. Innovation and M&A therefore become responses to a diagnosed occasion gap, rather than default responses to market fragmentation.

This can also be a more efficient route to growth. Redeploying existing brands, formats, channels, and commercial assets can open new participation without automatically adding the cost and complexity of another product. **The principle is simple: make the portfolio work harder before making it bigger.**

THE PAYOFF

The objective is to turn occasional selection into repeat preference, moving from **presence** → **participation** → **preference** → **ritual** – from being available in a moment, to being chosen, and ultimately to becoming an expected part of it. The more consistently a brand earns that role, the more defensible its position within the occasion can become.

Together, these three moves are the argument of this report: measure what is being won or lost by occasion, close the gap with what the portfolio already owns, and build toward the moments worth turning into habits.

02

WHY CATEGORY-LED GROWTH ALONE IS LOSING POWER

The Growth Reset

The historical alcoholic beverage growth engine relied on category identity, routine frequency, distribution expansion, and premiumization. That engine still matters, but in developed markets it is coming under increasing pressure as moderation, aging and compressed consumption windows reshape established drinking patterns.

In developed markets, the growth challenge is increasingly about protecting, redirecting, and premiumizing participation across occasions – not simply expanding category consumption

What's already visible in the market

Alcohol volume pressure is real

IWSR preliminary data showed alcohol volume and value declined 2% and 4% YoY, respectively, in 2025 across 22 markets – the third straight annual decline. RTDs were the only major category to grow

Moderation is changing the session

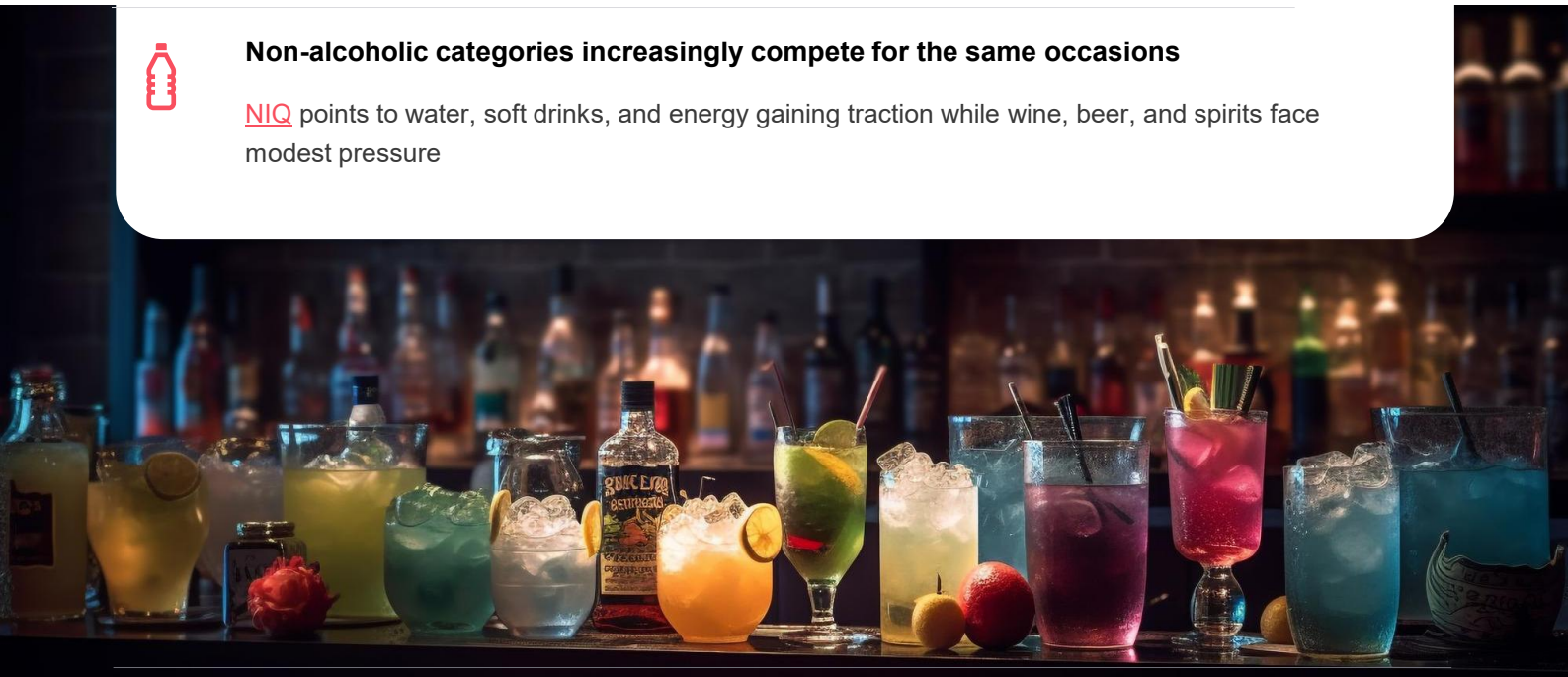
IWSR Bevtrac found average number of alcoholic beverage categories consumed per occasion dropped from 2.4 in 2023 to 1.8 in 2024, with single-category occasions becoming the dominant pattern

No/low is becoming part of the drinking repertoire

Across six major European markets, non-alcoholic beverage sales grew 5.1% while alcoholic beverages declined 1.8% in value (52 week ending August 2025), highlighting the widening set of beverage choices competing for consumer spend

Non-alcoholic categories increasingly compete for the same occasions

NIQ points to water, soft drinks, and energy gaining traction while wine, beer, and spirits face modest pressure



Consumers are increasingly choosing by moment, not only by category identity

THE OLD QUESTION	THE NEW QUESTION
"What do I drink?"	**"What does this moment call for?"**

That change shifts competition from beer versus beer, spirits versus spirits, or soft drinks versus soft drinks to a broader battle for social, refreshment, wellness, meal, sports, and at-home occasions.

This shift is increasingly visible in how beverage leaders themselves describe the growth opportunity, linking occasion expansion to both new profit pools and greater reach for existing brands.

SUNTORY **Building growth around occasion fit**

There's a broader opportunity for the industry, and certainly for Suntory Global Spirits, when we **match the right product to the right occasion**… We're getting into a broader profit pool, competing against beer, when we focus Jim Beam on the refreshment occasion with simple serves like Jim Beam and Lemonade or a Highball

Greg Hughes, CEO, Suntory Global Spirits | WSJ, 2026

ATHLETIC BREWING CO **Taking beer beyond traditional occasions**

Historically, beer was restricted to maybe Friday night, Saturday night, or a Sunday afternoon. What we've done is **unlocked all these brand-new occasions** – weekday lunches, post-workout, working late, or just living an active lifestyle where you want to stay clear-headed

Bill Shufelt, Co-Founder & CEO, Athletic Brewing Co. | WSJ Global Food Forum, 2026

Constellation Brands **Building for where occasions are moving**

I look forward to leveraging innovation to **satisfy more consumer occasions**, while developing new growth platforms that meet the evolving needs of consumers as the landscape continues to shift within the beverage alcohol sector

Nick Fink, President & CEO, Constellation Brands | CEO Succession Announcement, 2026

AB InBev **Making occasions a growth priority**

"**Occasions Development**" is a formal category-expansion lever, focused on **expanding consumption occasions and increasing frequency**. Non-alcohol beer is a key pillar, enabling the portfolio to participate in occasions where alcohol may not fit.

AB InBev Management Commentary | Annual Report 2024

These leadership perspectives reinforce a broader shift: as consumption patterns change, so does the growth equation for alcoholic beverage companies. Five structural shifts are particularly important for leadership.

STRUCTURAL SHIFT	WHAT CHANGES IN BEHAVIOR	LEADERSHIP ACTION
Mainstream moderation	Consumers are regulating alcohol intake throughout the year, not only during dry months	**Protect the consumer relationship, not only the alcohol occasion** Build full-strength and no/low into one portfolio and activation system so moderation shifts spend within the franchise rather than out of it. Treat no/low as infrastructure for longer, more flexible occasion participation – not a defensive concession to wellness
Compressed consumption windows	Weekday and incidental drinking moments are under pressure as routines become busier and more health-conscious	Concentrate investment in high-value existing occasions, and use them as a base to expand into adjacent ones
Category fluidity (Context-dependent beverage choice)	The same consumer moves between beer, RTDs, wine, spirits, soft drinks, energy, hydration, and no/low depending on context	**Redefine the competitive set around the occasion, not the category** Size growth pools and allocate portfolio investment against the full set of beverages competing for the same occasion, not only traditional category rivals
Wellness as a starting point	Health, sleep, routine, energy, calories, and ingredients increasingly shape beverage choice	**Treat wellness as a portfolio-access question, not an innovation trend** Identify the moments where current brands lose permission, then decide whether no/low, lighter serves, different formats, or selective innovation can reopen them. When innovating, start from the occasion need and not new a liquid, flavor, or claim
Aging and intentionality	Developed markets are aging, and older consumers typically consume with more selectivity and purpose	**Shift from maximizing volume per consumer to maximizing value per occasion** Move premiumization from broad price-tier logic to specific high-value moments – hosting, meals, gifting, sports finals, and planned social occasions

03

THE OCCASION AS A NEW UNIT OF GROWTH STRATEGY

The Occasion Battleground

If the competitive set is increasingly shaped by the occasion, leaders need a way to see where the portfolio participates, where it leaks, and where it can stretch.

Traditional category share only captures performance within that category. An occasion lens reveals the wider set of choices competing for the moment.

An Occasion is defined by a consumer need + social setting + daypart + channel + desired outcome

Occasion leakage reveals what category share can miss

A portfolio can hold its category share while losing ground across the occasions that make up a consumer's day or week. That is occasion leakage: **demand exists within the moment, but the portfolio captures less of it than its relevance or assets could support**.

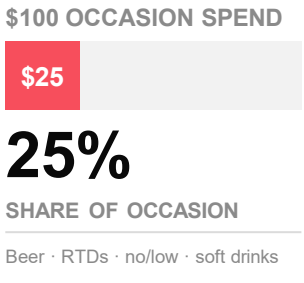
Leakage can reflect a genuine permission or capability gap, or simply that an existing asset is absent, invisible, wrongly framed, poorly formatted or under-activated. Identifying where that leakage occurs is the first step to deciding how to close it.

Share of occasion shows where the portfolio is winning – and where it is leaking

Share of occasion is not a single universal metric. Depending on the commercial question, it can be measured as value share, volume share, choice share, incidence share, or basket share across all beverages competing for the same occasion. It complements category share by showing performance against the full set of choices consumers consider in that moment.

ILLUSTRATIVE VALUE-SHARE EXAMPLE

If consumers spend $100 across beer, RTDs, no/low, and soft drinks during at-home sports viewing, and a company's portfolio captures $25, its share of occasion is 25% – regardless of its share within beer alone.



Comparing shares across occasions makes the white space visible: moments where consumer demand is attractive, but the portfolio captures relatively little of it. The next question is which of those occasions offer credible room for the portfolio to participate more strongly.

HOW TO MEASURE SHARE OF OCCASION



Define the occasion

Specify need, daypart, setting, social context, channel, and desired outcome

Size total occasion demand

Look across all relevant beverages competing for the moment, not just the company's category

Measure captured share

Measure the portfolio's share of choices, spend, volume, or baskets within that full occasion set

Diagnose leakage

Identify whether the gap is permission, visibility, format, price, availability, bundling, channel, or communication

Prioritize the opportunity

Rank occasions by value, momentum, margin, feasibility, and defensibility before selecting the lever

High-potential occasion arenas show where that opportunity could sit

The six arenas below provide a practical starting point for assessing where portfolio assets could participate more strongly. They are overlapping opportunity spaces, not mutually exclusive categories.

The six occasion arenas

Social connection

Belong without overconsuming

REDEPLOY

Core beer · premium beer · 0.0 · RTDs · adult soft drinks

SOCIALIZING WITH DIFFERENT DRINK PREFERENCES

Make full-strength and no-/low-alcohol choices work together so consumers can moderate without leaving the portfolio. Measure success by brand participation, not alcohol volume per session

Daytime refreshment

Refresh without fatigue

REDEPLOY

Light lager · 0.0 · sparkling soft drinks · iced tea · water

BUILD RELEVANCE BEYOND TRADITIONAL DRINKING HOURS

Win lunch, convenience, outdoor and warm-weather occasions through the right format, availability and placement, and defend the job against water, soft drinks, iced tea, sports drinks, and energy

Moderation and alcohol-free choice

Participate without compromising routine

REDEPLOY

0.0 · low-calorie beer · low-ABV RTDs · sparkling water

MAKE MODERATION PART OF EVERYDAY PARTICIPATION

Make existing alcohol-free options visible in weekday social occasions, meals, & events where adults choose not to drink alcohol

Meals

Pair naturally with food

REDEPLOY

Premium lager · wheat beer · cider · 0.0 · wine

RECLAIM THE TABLE

Use food pairing, menu visibility, delivery bundles, and smaller premium serves to fit the portfolio into the meal

Sports and entertainment

Serve different preferences during viewing

REDEPLOY

Mainstream beer · premium beer · 0.0 · RTDs · hydration

OWN THE FULL FAN JOURNEY, NOT JUST THE SPONSORSHIP

Activate across pre-event, during-event and post-event moments, at venues, in bars and restaurants, and at home

At-home hosting

Serve mixed groups easily

REDEPLOY

Beer multipacks · premium beer · 0.0 · spirits · mixers

WIN THE HOST BASKET, NOT THE INDIVIDUAL SKU

Build bundles, multipacks and cross-category solutions around the needs of mixed groups

The economic logic of occasion diversification

Occasion diversification can strengthen growth resilience in three ways: more moments in which to participate, more ways to retain the consumer within the portfolio, and more opportunities to capture value where willingness to pay is strongest.



Frequency resilience

The brand participates in more moments across the week instead of over-relying on fewer traditional drinking windows



Portfolio resilience

Consumers can move between full-strength alcohol, no-/low-alcohol products, RTDs, mixers, and soft drinks without leaving the company ecosystem



Margin resilience

Companies can capture higher margins in specific moments where consumers see a reason to pay more, instead of forcing broad price increases across pressured categories

04

MAKE THE CURRENT PORTFOLIO WORK HARDER FIRST

The No-New-Liquid Growth Play

An occasion gap is not necessarily a product gap. Having identified where the portfolio is leaking occasions, the next question is how much of that gap existing assets can credibly close.

Before launching a new formulation or product, work through five levers to check for redeployment

Test five levers against the existing portfolio first where each one determines whether relevance can be created without new product development.

Can channel placement create new permission?

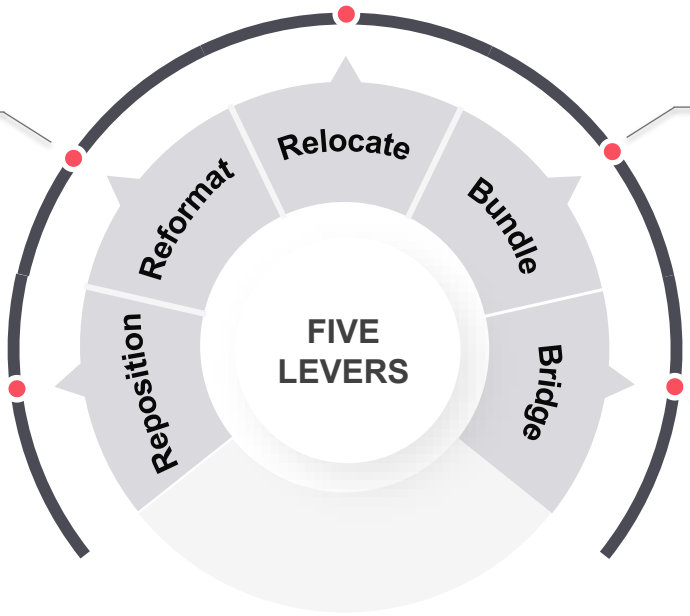
Whether channel, adjacency, or visibility is the real barrier

Can pack size or serve change the use case?

Whether format can make the asset fit the moment

Can attaching to the wider mission unlock a larger basket?

Whether the asset becomes more relevant as part of the total occasion



Can an existing product credibly play a new occasion role?

Whether different framing can create relevance without changing the product

Can no/low keep the consumer within the brand franchise as needs change?

Whether the brand relationship can continue as consumers moderate or change their preferences about alcohol

> **The result is an asset-first growth plan. For each asset already in the portfolio, the table on the next page identifies the occasions it can credibly enter and the commercial changes required to unlock them – the five levers above, applied.**

EXISTING ASSET	WHICH OCCASIONS TO TARGET	HOW TO UNLOCK IT
Mainstream lager	Social connection · Sports and entertainment	**Build around the occasion mission** Use match-day bundles, BBQ and meal adjacency, cold singles and sharing formats to extend relevance beyond the core beer moment
Premium lager	Social connection · Meals · At-home hosting	**Create a reason to trade up in the moment** Use smaller premium serves, food pairing, elevated presentation, and hosting / gifting formats
0.0	Social connection · Meals · Sports and entertainment · Moderation	**Make moderation visible within the core brand experience** Build menu presence, core-brand adjacency, draft visibility, and activation for different drinking preferences
RTD / canned serve	Social connection · Moderation and alcohol-free choice · Sports and entertainment	**Position around convenience-led occasions, not just format** Use fridge placement, party bundles, event-led retail media and occasion-specific e-commerce
Draft	Social connection · Meals · Sports and entertainment	**Use draft quality and presentation to strengthen on-premise appeal** Invest in tap visibility, menu placement, and fresh-pour quality at the point it's ordered
Multipack	At-home hosting · Sports and entertainment	**Design for the whole basket, not the individual pack** Use host bundles, snack attachment, retailer mission displays and occasion-led pack architecture

When redeployment cannot close the occasion gap, the missing capability should determine the entry route

Not every occasion gap can be closed with the existing portfolio. Where the constraint is a genuine gap in permission, capability, access, or speed, leaders need to decide how best to close it.

BUILD



The capability doesn't exist anywhere reachable, and the occasion is durable enough to justify owning it outright

EXTEND



An existing brand has adjacent permission but needs a new format or positioning to credibly reach the occasion

PARTNER



Someone else already has access or the required capability, and speed matters more than full ownership

BUY



The occasion is consolidating quickly, and there isn't time to build or extend into it

The choice is not simply build versus buy. It is about matching the entry route to what the portfolio is missing and how quickly the opportunity is moving.
The right route depends on capability, control, speed, capital, and execution risk and not on a fixed hierarchy of build versus buy.

This isn't hypothetical. Leading alcoholic beverage companies are already using both portfolio redeployment and inorganic moves to access new occasions.

05

MARKET SIGNALS OF OCCASION-LED PORTFOLIO EXPANSION

Leaders Are Already Moving

This is already visible in the market. Leading alcoholic beverage companies are increasingly using existing equity and portfolio breadth to reach new occasions before defaulting to incremental SKU creation. The common pattern is not to develop new liquid first. It is existing brand equity plus new occasion framing plus occasion-appropriate format and channel.

PLAYER	SIGNAL	FUTUREBRIDGE INTERPRETATION
AB InBev	Formalized "Occasions Development" as a growth lever; its FY24 update highlighted low-carb, organic, sugar-free, gluten-free, and no-alcohol options, with no-alcohol beer revenue up by a low-twenties rate	**Beer as a flexible platform** Signals that beer is being used as a flexible category platform, not only a full-strength consumption occasion
HEINEKEN	Reported premium volume growth of 5%, beyond beer growth of 4%, and Heineken 0.0 growth of 10% in 2024	**Multi-need orchestration** Signals that premium, beyond beer, and 0.0 are being deployed around different consumer need states
DIAGEO	Its 2024 reporting emphasized consumer occasions and deeper understanding of consumer motivations; Guinness continues to stretch beyond traditional stout occasions through food, sport, and culture	**Broader use of established brand equity** Signals how established brands can stretch into adjacent occasions through food, sport and culture
CARLSBERG BRITVIC	Carlsberg completed the Britvic acquisition in 2025, giving the group direct access to soft-drink, daytime, refreshment, and family occasions	**Portfolio breadth creates more routes in** Signals that owning more of the beverage set gives a company more ways to enter an occasion – the underlying M&A signal explores when that's worth buying outright
Corona Cero	Corona Cero became the global beer sponsor of the Olympic Games through AB InBev's worldwide Olympic partnership	**Credibility at scale** Signals the mainstreaming of no-alcohol beer across major sports and celebration platforms

THE PATTERN ACROSS LEADERS

The occasion changes. Established brand equity can provide the bridge. The recurring growth move is to take trusted equity into a new moment with the right narrative, pack, serve, and channel system

The M&A signal

M&A can strengthen the portfolio when it expands occasion access, not simply category breadth. The strategic question is not only what business is being acquired, but which consumer moments the combined portfolio can now serve more credibly, quickly, or at greater scale than it could before.

Carlsberg's acquisition of Britvic

STRATEGIC RATIONALE

Carlsberg combined beer with a scaled soft-drink platform, creating a broader portfolio capable of serving beverage needs that beer alone could not credibly address

UNLOCKS

Daytime refreshment · Family consumption · Soft-drink missions · Foodservice · Convenience · At-home mixed baskets

Molson Coors' acquisitions of Blue Run Spirits, ZOA Energy, and Atomic Brands (Monaco Cocktails)

STRATEGIC RATIONALE

Rather than expanding deeper within beer, Molson Coors assembled capabilities across premium spirits, functional energy and RTD cocktails – broadening its relevance across distinct consumer need states

UNLOCKS

Premium hosting & gifting · Functional daytime energy · Active lifestyle occasions · Socializing · Convenience-led consumption

Constellation Brands' investment in HOPWTR

STRATEGIC RATIONALE

The move extended the portfolio toward alcohol-free functional refreshment, providing exposure to wellness-oriented occasions that sit adjacent to traditional alcoholic beverages

UNLOCKS

Wellness routines · Moderation · Functional refreshment · Daytime consumption · Alcohol-free social participation

Together, these moves are consistent with a broader shift among alcoholic beverage players toward using portfolio expansion to access occasions beyond traditional category boundaries.

As occasions become more established, the cost of entry can rise as incumbent brands build stronger associations and repeat behaviors. What's still open is how much waiting will cost – and whether a company is willing to pay it.

06

WHEN LATE ENTRY BECOMES MORE EXPENSIVE

Strategic Stakes

The cost of waiting is not just missed growth. It is the rising cost of earning relevance once another brand becomes embedded in the ritual.

ENTRENCHMENT: incumbent positions can become harder to dislodge

First movers are building rituals, not just awareness.

1

Athletic Brewing

has built a $100M+ brand by embedding itself in active-lifestyle and sports-adjacent occasions

Ghia

has built a strong association with the modern aperitif hour for a generation that increasingly alternates between alcoholic and non-alcoholic choices

Olipop

has established a strong position in the "better-for-you social beverage" occasion that many incumbents failed to address

Their advantage was not product differentiation alone. Each developed an early association with a specific occasion and ritual, making the brand increasingly intuitive within that moment. Once consumers instinctively reach for a brand in a moment, later entrants must displace an established behavior rather than simply introduce an alternative.

ECONOMICS: entry gets more expensive over time

2

Emerging occasion Build permission	Established occasion Displace behavior	Consolidated occasion Buy access
Consumers are still open to new choices	Competing against brands they already reach for by instinct	Paying acquisition premiums for what could have been built organically

The longer leadership waits, the growth question shifts from

“Can we build this?” → **“What will it cost us to get back in?”**

LOCK-OUT: the strategic risk can compound

3

Growth pools get claimed

Competitors establish permission in emerging occasions before incumbent portfolios stretch into them

Existing assets remain underutilized

Brands stay concentrated in declining or compressed consumption windows instead of extending into adjacent moments

Innovation becomes more expensive

Companies respond to lost occasions with new products and acquisitions that earlier redeployment might have avoided

Negotiating leverage narrows

Once a competitor is strongly embedded in the occasion, retailers and partners have less reason to give ground on terms, placement, or priority

NONE OF THIS IS INEVITABLE – BUT THE WINDOW IS TIME-SENSITIVE

The implication is not to chase occasions faster, but to choose them more deliberately. That requires a disciplined path from identifying an attractive moment to building repeat behavior within it.

07

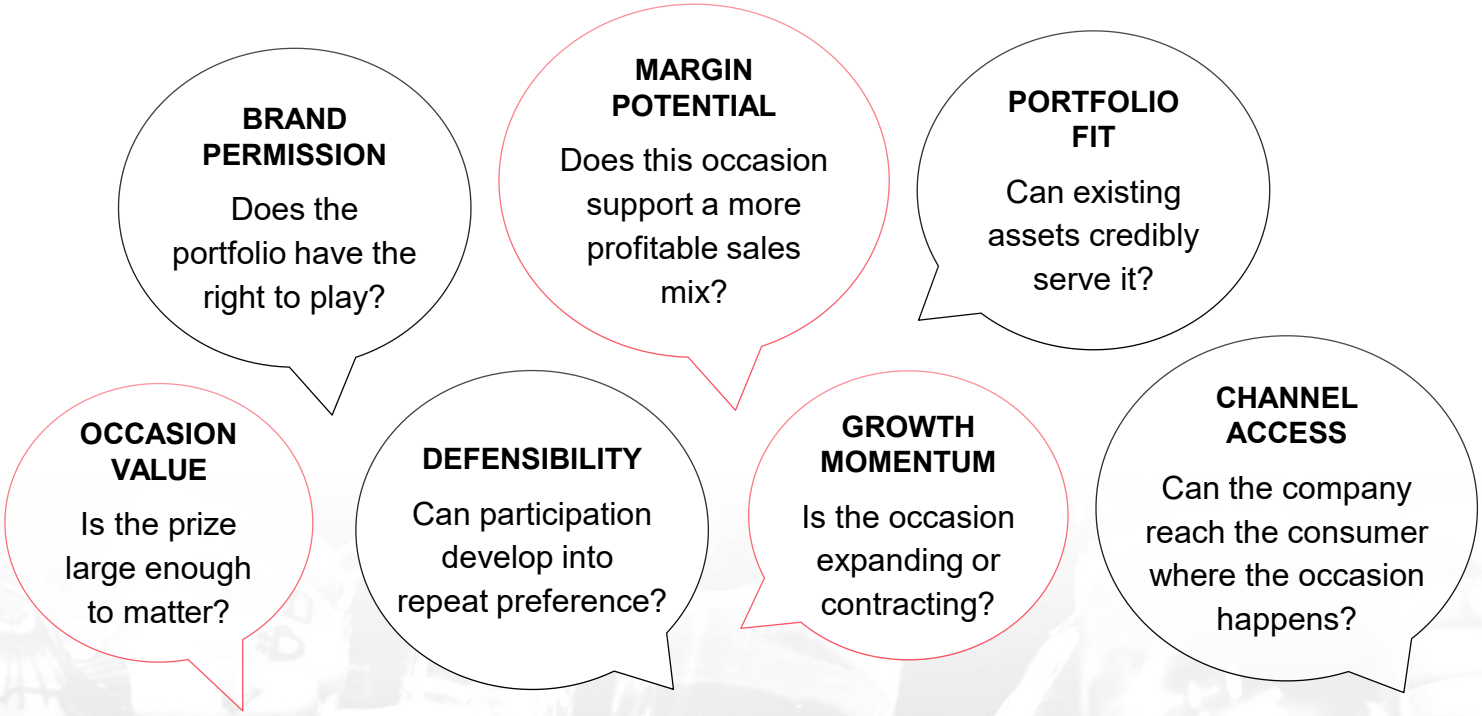
HOW TO OPERATIONALIZE OCCASION-LED GROWTH

Leadership Playbook

Occasion-led growth requires a disciplined sequence: identify the right occasions, choose the right entry route, and build the repeat behavior that can turn trial into durable demand. The goal is not to chase every emerging moment but to identify occasions where the portfolio has credible relevance, the opportunity is material, and the company can build repeat behavior before competitors become embedded in the ritual.

The same playbook applies across markets, but the growth job differs. In developed markets, occasion strategy can protect and extend value as traditional consumption windows compress. In emerging markets, it can help shape expanding repertoires earlier, building brand permission and repeat rituals as new consumption moments form. The framework is the same; what changes is the emphasis – protecting and extending participation in more mature markets, while creating and scaling new occasion behaviors where repertoires are still expanding.

Prioritize the occasions worth owning



Occasion expansion fails when the brand lacks permission, the occasion is too small to matter, activation is not supported by availability and format, or complexity grows faster than demand. The goal is disciplined selection, not chasing every emerging moment.

LEADERSHIP QUESTION	WHAT TO MEASURE
1 Map the true occasion footprint	
Where does the brand show up in the consumer's week?	Occasion volume, frequency trend, absence zones, competitor-dominated moments
2 Separate presence from preference	
Where is the brand the default choice rather than merely an available option?	Emotional preference, search behavior, menu pull, pricing power, consumer expectation
3 Identify the closest adjacent occasion	
Which adjacent occasion can the brand enter with the least friction?	Shared need state, transferable equities, channel overlap, competitor intensity
4 Choose the entry route	
Should we build, extend, partner, or buy?	Brand permission, capability gap, time to scale, acquisition target quality
5 Engineer the repeat ritual	
What behavior do we want consumers to repeat?	Frequency, repeat by occasion, basket attachment, daypart penetration, habit signals

Occasions create trial. Rituals create durable growth.

Participation in an occasion isn't a single state – it deepens in stages. A brand starts merely **present** in a moment: available but not chosen for any particular reason. It becomes **participation** once consumers actually choose it there, at least some of the time. It becomes **preference** once they choose it disproportionately over the alternatives competing for that occasion. And it becomes **ritual** once the brand is simply what's expected in that moment, rather than actively selected each time.

STAGE 01	STAGE 02	STAGE 03	STAGE 04
Presence	**Participation**	**Preference**	**Ritual**
Available, not yet chosen	Chosen, at least sometimes	Chosen over the alternatives	Routinely chosen

Brands at later stages are harder to displace: a brand that's merely present can lose the occasion to one promotion or a better-positioned competitor, while a brand that's become ritual requires the consumer to actively choose something different.

KPIs FOR OCCASION-LED GROWTH

Basket attach rate

Is the brand increasing attachment to food, snacks, mixers, soft drinks, or no/low products?

Repeat by occasion

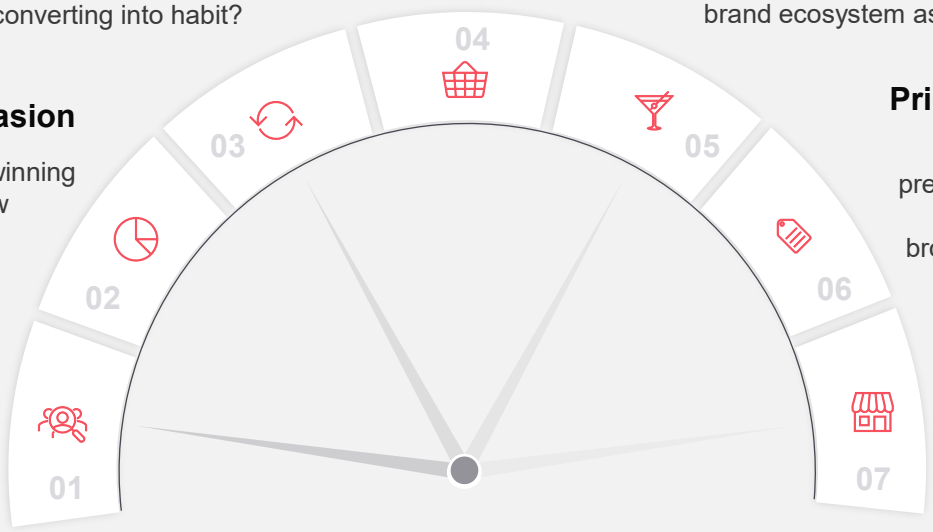
Is trial converting into habit?

No/low cross-purchase

Are consumers remaining within the brand ecosystem as they moderate?

Share of occasion

Is the company winning beyond its narrow category set?



Price per occasion

Is the company premiumizing moments instead of relying on broad price increases?

Occasion penetration

Is the brand entering more consumer moments?

Channel conversion by occasion

Are retail, on-trade, e-commerce, and B2B activations translating into purchases?

The seven indicators track occasion-led growth across reach, competitive position, repeat behavior, and monetization by occasion and not category alone

08

LOOKING BEYOND STRATEGY

What This Means by Function

Occasion-led growth changes decisions across the enterprise, from capital allocation and innovation to route-to-market, pricing, supply planning, and M&A.

FUNCTION	THE SHIFT	WHAT CHANGES
Strategy	**Allocate capital by occasion economics, alongside category performance**	Use the priority occasion arenas to determine where the portfolio has permission to compete, defend, or expand – including through M&A, by screening targets for occasion access rather than category adjacency
R&D / Innovation	**Start with the lever, not the liquid**	Test repositioning, reformatting, relocating, bundling, and bridging via existing assets before greenlighting new product development – many occasion gaps can be closed without changing the liquid
Category / Shopper	**Sell occasion missions, not SKUs**	Build retailer propositions around hosting, meals, sports, wellness, refreshment, and social occasions – linking products into baskets rather than selling them in isolation
Sales / Route-to-market	**Build outlet playbooks around the occasion**	Define the role, assortment, serve, and activation required for the occasions each outlet serves, rather than applying one channel playbook across every consumption moment
Procurement / Supply chain	**Plan supply around occasion-driven demand**	Translate sports calendars, heatwaves, festivals, holidays, and hosting peaks into the packs, formats, and inventory required where demand will occur
Revenue Growth Management	**Premiumize the moment, not the category**	Use pack, serve, and price architecture to capture willingness to pay in premium occasions while protecting affordability in routine ones
Marketing / Insights	**Build rituals, not just claims**	Establish why the brand belongs in the moment and reinforce the cues and behaviors that turn occasional trial into repeat participation

09

THE LEADERSHIP AGENDA FOR OCCASION-LED GROWTH

The Bottom Line

The commercial question is where the portfolio can earn a profitable, credible role – and what has to change for consumers to choose it.

For leadership teams, **three questions** should now shape the growth agenda:

1 Where are we under-participating in the occasions that matter most?

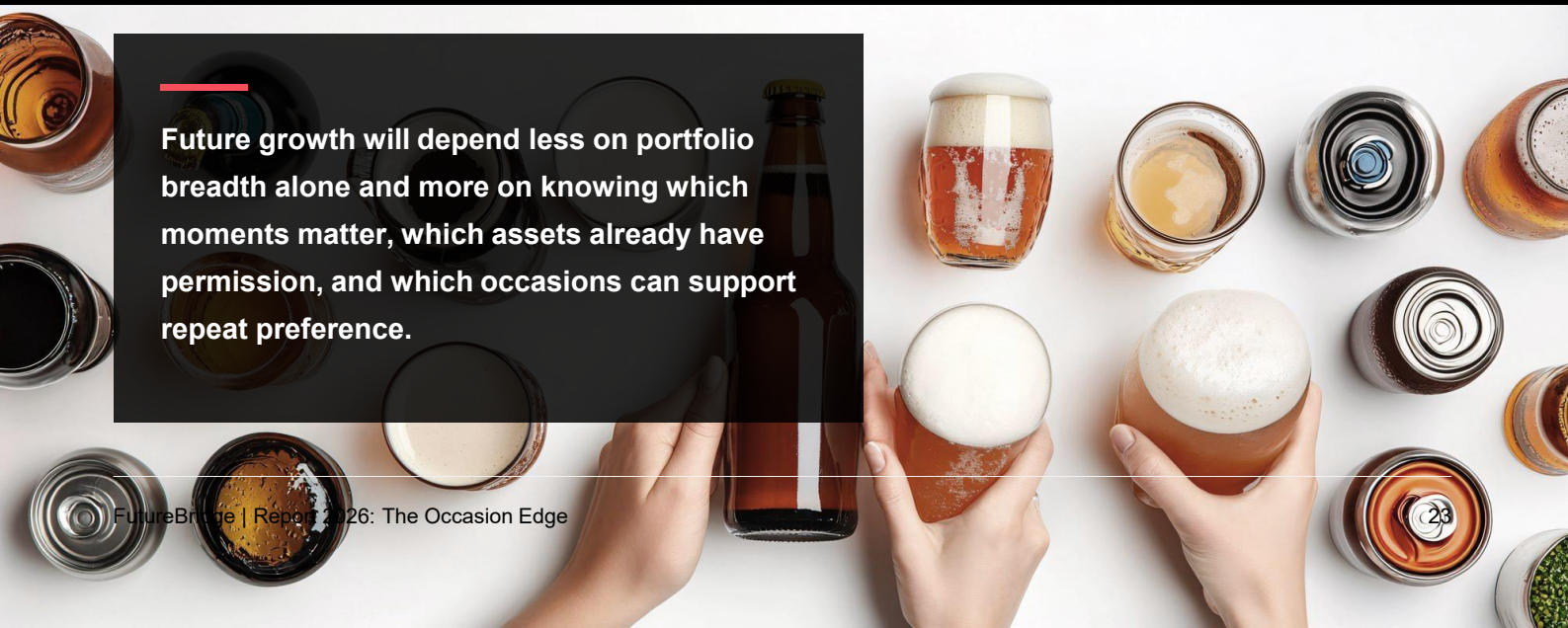
Look beyond category share to identify where consumer demand is attractive, but the portfolio's share of occasion remains low – and distinguish between moments where the portfolio lacks permission to play and those where existing assets are simply under-activated

2 How much of that opportunity can we capture with the portfolio we already have?

Before adding a new formulation or product, determine whether repositioning, reformatting, relocating, bundling, or bridging with existing assets can close the occasion gap – and where a genuine capability gap requires leaders to build, extend, partner, or buy

3 Which occasions are valuable enough to turn from participation into ritual?

Prioritize the moments where repeated relevance can move the brand from presence to participation to preference to ritual – demand that doesn't need to be re-won each time



Future growth will depend less on portfolio breadth alone and more on knowing which moments matter, which assets already have permission, and which occasions can support repeat preference.

How FutureBridge can help

Putting this into practice across every function above starts with the four underlying questions: which moments are growing, which are fragmenting, which brands have permission to participate, and which behaviors can become repeatable rituals.



FutureBridge applies this lens to the behavioral drivers behind demand creation, to identify emerging occasions, and assess which opportunities warrant deeper commercial action.

OCCASION OPPORTUNITY MAP

Identify consumer needs, competing choices, and gaps in the evidence. Distinguish observed demand from hypotheses about future demand

PORTFOLIO PERMISSION AUDIT

Assess which current brands, packs, and formats consumers accept in each setting, and where product, channel, or capability gaps remain

ACTIVATION ROADMAP

Translate the diagnosis into message, assortment, pack, serve, channel, and sales actions, with a defined counterfactual and success measures

M&A / PARTNER WATCHLIST

Screen targets by occasion access, permission, and strength of consumer association

CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

Meet the Authors



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Strategy and techno-commercial advisor to food, beverage and consumer-sector leaders, connecting market intelligence, competitive signals, M&A and future-back thinking to the growth bets and investment decisions that matter.



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Management consultant focused on growth strategy, commercial strategy and go-to-market design, translating complex market dynamics into actionable plans that drive measurable business impact.

Discuss an occasion-led growth question →



FutureBridge is a techno-commercial consulting and advisory company. We track and advise on the future of industries from a 1-to-25-year perspective.

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