

Beyond Festive Peaks: An Empirical Study of Consumer Behaviour to Develop Strategic Marketing Recommendation for Indonesia's Cordial Syrup Category

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Abstract

Cordial syrup category has been established for a long time in the Indonesian market with high dependency on Ramadhan and Idul Fitri periods. Despite consistently high seasonal marketing investment and strong brand awareness, this category has reached stagnation in consumption rate, indicating that traditional promotion-driven strategies are no longer able to generate sustainable growth. To resolve this challenge, this research was initiated to relook the consumer behaviour of cordial syrup consumers, to deep dive into any untapped insights that can be an opportunity to unlock business growth through consumer-driven activation and/or innovation. The research was conducted using a qualitative research approach through in-depth interviews with a targeted cordial syrup consumer group segment. The interview data collected was analysed with thematic analysis and further synthesized by integrating the results with literature and business context. The research results identify several major themes consisting of emotional, personal, social, cultural, and marketing factors influencing cordial syrup consumption. These factors interact dynamically and shape consumer purchasing decisions. The findings further demonstrate that consumers' expectations have evolved faster than the industry's current marketing strategy. The emerging of healthy lifestyle, greater convenience, creative inspiration, and year-round relevance are the potentially underdeveloped value propositions that can be utilized for a more progressive marketing approach. The most principal keynote is that every product and packaging innovation should be supported with new value creation that can bring consumers to experience better emotional and social fulfilment. From a strategic marketing perspective, this research concludes that to achieve sustainable cordial syrup category growth, it requires consumption expansion, strengthening the emotional and cultural relevance of the brand, and repositioning the brand as an everyday family beverage solution.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Cordial syrup is a concentrated fruit drink often used to add sweetness and flavors, commonly diluted for beverages or various sweet desserts. It typically contains fruit juice and may include herbs, spices, or flavourings, available in thin liquid (squash) or thick syrup form. This product is consumed as home beverages, dessert mixes, served in the food service sector, or used in mixology (cocktails and mocktails).

In Indonesia, the cordial syrup market is economically attractive due to its substantial market size. The data in Table 1 below illustrates the market trend from 2021 to 2024, wherein market value has continuously increased while market volume has continuously declined (Kantar Worldpanel, 2024). The decline in market volume indicates that category growth is increasingly dependent on pricing rather than expanding consumer demand. This pattern is commonly observed in mature stage markets. In this situation, companies need to start generating new sources of growth to sustain long-term growth instead of relying solely on pricing actions.

Table 1. Cordial Syrup Market Value and Volume Trend, 2021–2024

Year	Market Value (IDR Trillion)	Market Volume (Million Liters)
2021	1.80	57.4
2024	1.95	52.3

Source: Kantar Worldpanel (2024)

The retail industry for the cordial syrup category is also highly seasonal. Around 75% of consumption happens during the festive period of Ramadhan and Idul Fitri which then drops significantly outside the festive season, shifting primarily toward the Food Service or Horeca channel (Kantar Worldpanel, 2024).

During Ramadhan, there is a habit for Muslim consumers in Indonesia to start breakfasting with sweets, known as Takjil, making cordial syrup a practical solution for sweet desserts. As Idul Fitri approaches, hamper-giving becomes a strong habit, with cordial syrup being a top choice for bundling with other household products, driving significant bulk purchases.

The market characteristics of this category—challenged by strong seasonality, high market penetration, slowing market growth, price sensitivity, and tight competition—indicate that this category is entering the mature stage (Erguncu & Yildirim, 2015). To sustain business growth of this category that is pushing toward commoditization, an insight-driven marketing strategy is needed to ensure the company stays relevant and does not miss opportunities in new usage occasions or new value differentiation (Kim & Mauborgne, 2005).

1.2 Company Background and Business Context

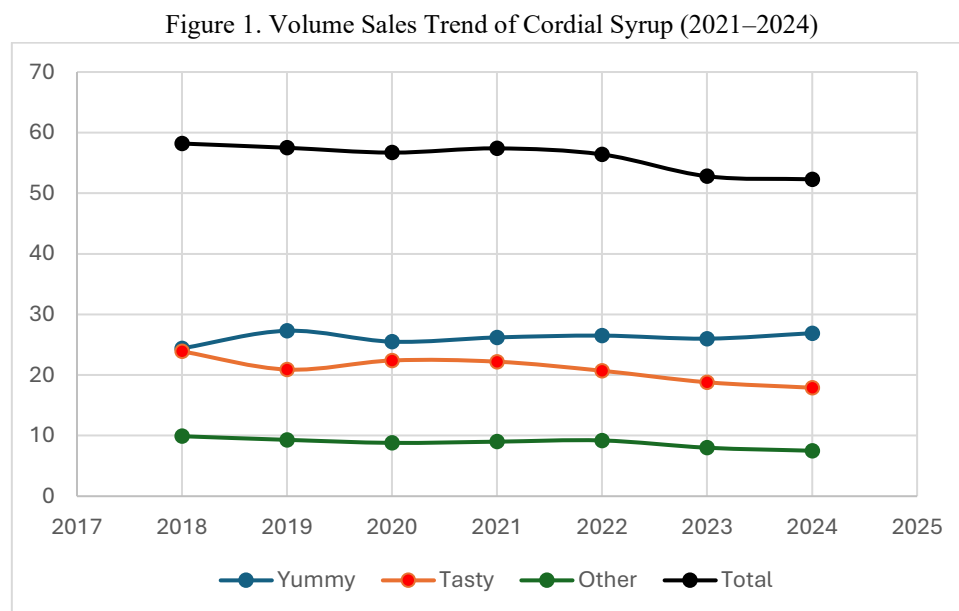
F&B Indonesia is a subsidiary company of The Global F&B Company, based in Jakarta. Previously a local Indonesian family company, it was acquired by a global FMCG company in 1999 and further merged with another global company in 2013. Its main business is in the foods and beverages industry, with two production facilities including eight packing facilities located in West and East Java, supported by extensive distribution networks employing around 3,000 employees.

The biggest brand of F&B Indonesia is Tasty, introduced to Indonesia since 1979 and the largest of The Global F&B Company's business in Asia. Tasty has a wide portfolio available across foods and beverages category. Tasty Cordial Syrup is one of the market pioneers in Indonesia, contributing to 25% of total F&B Indonesia business, available in two product types: squash (thin syrup) and thick syrup (Internal Company Data, 2024).

Historically, Tasty Syrup's sales growth has been associated with seasonal demand generated during Ramadhan and Idul Fitri. Annual business planning, marketing campaigns, product distribution, and promotional investment are largely concentrated around these festive periods. While this approach has successfully captured seasonal demand over many years, it has created substantial dependence on a relatively short selling period, making business performance highly vulnerable to changes in consumer purchasing behaviour during festive seasons.

1.3 Business Issue

Over the past four years, despite consistently making marketing expenditures at levels comparable to previous periods, Tasty Syrup's sales volume has consistently underperformed against internal targets. The brand has experienced a continuous decline in volume, while several competitors have managed to maintain or even grow their sales and volume share within the same category (Kantar Worldpanel, 2024). Figure 1 conceptually represents the volume sales trend comparison within the cordial syrup category.



(Source: Kantar Worldpanel, 2024)

This situation indicates that increasing marketing expenditure alone may no longer be able to stimulate category growth. Furthermore, there has been very rarely demand creation or product-led differentiation launched; the taste, appearance, and packaging of Tasty products have almost never changed since their initial versions. Changes made to product formulation or packaging over time have largely been incremental and operational, primarily intended to achieve cost efficiency rather than to deliver new consumer value or refresh brand relevance. These circumstances highlight the importance of adopting a more consumer-centric approach to defining marketing strategy to sustain business growth. Rather than relying predominantly on tactical marketing activities during festive occasions, Tasty Syrup requires deeper consumer insights to identify emerging market opportunities, develop more relevant product innovations,

and formulate marketing strategies that can increase purchase frequency and consumption occasions throughout the year.

1.4 Research Questions and Research Objectives

Based on the business context described above, this study is focused on the following research questions:

- (1) What factors influence consumer behaviour in purchasing cordial syrup?
- (2) What product and packaging improvements do selected consumer perceive as potentially relevant and what needs might those improvements address?
- (3) What preliminary strategic hypotheses can be derived from the identified consumer insights for subsequent validation?

The corresponding research objectives are:

- (1) to identify factors that influence consumer behaviour in purchasing cordial syrup;
- (2) to examine specific needs and pain points that can be captured as innovation opportunities;
- (3) to formulate strategic marketing recommendations to increase consumption and purchase of Tasty cordial syrup.

1.5 Research Scope and Limitation

This research's scope is limited to consumer and market understanding to be incorporated into marketing strategy. Aspects related to supply chain and distribution factors are being evaluated separately by the company and are not included in this research scope.

METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, assuming that consumer behaviour is socially shaped by individual experiences, perceptions, and cultural values and interactions with the surrounding environment. Unlike the quantitative paradigm that validates phenomena through objective statistical testing, the qualitative approach aims to understand the meaning consumers attach to their purchasing behaviour within their real-life context (Creswell & Poth, 2023).

This selection of qualitative approach is consistent with the research objective, which is not to statistically test predetermined hypotheses but to explore the underlying factors influencing consumer purchase behaviour. As emphasized by Biswas (2025), the qualitative approach delves into the subjective experiences, beliefs, and motivations of consumers, providing a deeper understanding of why consumers behave the way they do. Qualitative methods capture the richness of detail and the complexity of consumer behaviour, offering a holistic view of the phenomena of interest (Levy & Kellstadt, 2012).

The research design (Figure 4) shows the logical sequence of how the study progressed, beginning with identification of business issues, establishing research objectives, comprehensive literature review and conceptual framework development, data collection via In-Depth Interviews, thematic analysis, and synthesis of strategic marketing recommendations.

2.2 Data Collection Method

Primary data was collected as qualitative data from In-Depth Interviews (IDI) with cordial syrup consumers to capture personalized narratives about consumer behaviour in consuming and purchasing cordial syrup and identifying areas for product and packaging innovation. Respondents were initially screened via questionnaire to ensure they fulfilled targeted consumer criteria, including: households who purchase and consume cordial syrup in the last 12 months; purchase decision makers of cordial syrup; users of Tasty brand or competitor brands; women adult household members (22–55 years old); mix of light, medium, and heavy users; mix of socioeconomic classes (SES A–C); and focused on Jakarta and Medan, the two major cities with the highest cordial syrup consumption.

Based on the initial screening, six respondents were recruited and interviewed. The detailed profile of respondents is shown in Table 1. Prior to interviews, ethics and consent procedures were followed, covering the purpose of the interview, voluntary participation, privacy, video recording permission, anonymous reporting, and rights to skip questions or stop anytime.

Table 1. In-Depth Interview Respondent Profile

Respondent	Location	Age	SES Class	Marital Status	Occupation	Brand Usership
Respondent 1	Batu Ampar, Jaktim	34	AB	Married, 3 kids	Housewife	Tasty Squash Orange
Respondent 2	Percetakan Negara, Jakarta Pusat	39	C	Married, 2 kids	Fashion Entrepreneur	Tasty Squash Orange
Respondent 3	Pasar Minggu, Jakarta Selatan	35	AB	Married, 3 kids	Housewife	Yummy Squash Orange
Respondent 4	Kalibata, Jakarta Selatan	35	C	Married, 3 kids	Fashion Entrepreneur	Yummy Squash Orange
Respondent 5	Jl. Sering, Sidorejo Medan	43	AB	Married, 3 kids	Cosmetics Entrepreneur	Tasty Squash Orange
Respondent 6	Jl. Baru, Medan Tembung	42	C	Married, 1 kid	Fashion Entrepreneur	Tasty Squash Orange

Source: Primary Data (2025)

All interviews were conducted offline, video recorded with consent, and transcribed verbatim, with each interview lasting approximately 45–75 minutes. Interview guides ensured coverage of: short introduction and objectives; consumer habit and motivation in using cordial syrup; category perception and brand choice; consumer experience in using cordial syrup; and specific habits and attitudes of syrup consumption during Ramadhan/Lebaran.

2.3 Data Analysis Method

To analyse the qualitative data gathered from consumer IDIs, the transcribed data was analysed using Thematic Analysis. Thematic analysis is suitable for this research as it provides structured and systematic approaches while still offering rich, detailed, and context-rich insights into consumer behaviour, capturing the nuances of consumer sentiments, opinions, and experiences (Bhunias et al., 2025).

Following the framework introduced by Braun & Clarke (2006), the thematic analysis involves six key phases elaborated by Ahmed et al. (2025): Phase 1 (Familiarization with the

data), where interview data is transcribed and iteratively re-read; Phase 2 (Generating initial codes), where transcribed data is examined to produce initial codes using Delve software; Phase 3 (Searching for themes), where similar codes are grouped into themes and visually mapped; Phase 4 (Reviewing themes), where themes are reviewed for meaningful insight and relevance; Phase 5 (Defining and naming themes), where themes are refined and finalized with concise, evocative names; and Phase 6 (Writing the report), where refined themes are translated into a coherent narrative.

The thematic analysis results were subsequently synthesized further into broader consumer insights by integrating empirical findings with the theoretical literature base. Finally, the synthesized consumer insight was translated into a strategic marketing framework and managerial recommendations, focusing on how consumption can grow through expanding consumption occasions, strengthening consumer value creation, encouraging product and marketing innovation, and reducing dependence on seasonal demand.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Thematic Analysis Results

The In-Depth Interviews were conducted with the screened respondents to gain valuable insights into cordial syrup consumer behaviour. The interview transcripts were analysed through thematic analysis, generating eight key themes from the interview data. Table 3 below provides a summary of the themes and their key behavioural insights.

Table 3. Summary of Key Themes from Thematic Analysis

Theme Category	Sub-Themes Identified	Key Behavioural Insight
Emotional Factors	Act-of-Service; Family Guardian	Preparing homemade beverages is an expression of maternal care and family identity affirmation
Personal Factors	Health Consciousness; Customization; Creativity	Consumers adapt product usage to balance indulgence with health goals and personal creativity
Social Factors	Family Gatherings; Social Lubricant; Hospitality Norms	Cordial syrup facilitates interpersonal interaction and fulfils social obligations
Cultural Factors	Festive Rituals; Intergenerational Tradition; Sharing Blessings	Product is culturally embedded in Ramadhan celebrations and family heritage
Product & Packaging	Sugar perception; Packaging material; Cap functionality	Glass preferred; resealable cap strongly expected; health-oriented formulation desired
Price	Affordability; Value for Money	Price is not a primary barrier; value is assessed through versatility and usage occasions
Place	Supermarket; Minimarket; E-commerce	Pantry presence drives spontaneous consumption; availability is critical
Promotion & Communication	Brand awareness; Recipe inspiration; Festive promotions	Consumers seek usage inspiration beyond awareness; promotion influences bulk buying

Source: Primary Data, Thematic Analysis (2025)

3.1.1 Emotional Factors

The first theme from thematic analysis relates to the emotional factors that motivate consumers to buy cordial syrup and prepare drink applications. As mothers, respondents prefer making drink and sweet desserts at home themselves rather than purchasing ready-made options from outside. Three key emotional sub-themes emerged:

1. *Act-of-Service*

The way mothers serve syrup-based drinks or desserts is one of the ways they fulfil requests from their loved ones (children or husband). Not only as an obligation, mothers also prepare what their family members like without being asked, anticipating situations like overheating and thirst after school. Making the drink and dessert by themselves also allows them to have autonomy to serve the best for their loved ones, adjusting the recipe to family preferences:

"If we buy it out-of-home, we cannot decide what the content of it is. But if we make it by ourselves, we know exactly that it is what our kids and husband like. Out-home-home one might have *kolang-kaling*, *kedondong*, or something that they don't like. But by making it at home, we can choose what we like by kids or husband" (Respondent 3)

2. *Family Guardian*

Another underlying emotional influence is the mother's desire to protect and nurture her family. Preparing homemade syrup-based drinks or desserts is a direct response to maternal anxiety regarding the health risk of children buying unhygienic snacks at school, which mothers associate with various health issues. By making drinks themselves, mothers gain complete autonomy to control sugar levels, add nutritious elements like real fruit or milk, and eliminate the "sugar guilt":

"A lot of young kids need to have dialysis, kidney problems or diabetics. So, I try to be so mindful and try to balance not to have high sugar intake. So better not to eat out of home" (Respondent 3)

The most significant motivation captured is that preparing beverages at home serves as an affirmation of the mother's role. Receiving recognition from the family—"Because my husband and kids say "Yours is more delicious" (Respondent 3)—represents the emotional reward that is the ultimate motivation for cordial syrup usage. This behaviour also occurs at specific occasions: after-school refreshment during weekdays and family bonding during weekends.

3.1.2 Personal Factors

This theme relates to individual lifestyle, preferences, beliefs, knowledge, and household management considerations. Three sub-themes emerged:

1. *Health Consciousness*

Health consciousness has become one of the strongest personal motivations for consumers to make their own drinks and sweet desserts with cordial syrup. Respondents repeatedly discussed concern about diabetes and children's health. Preparing their own drinks allows them to manage sugar intake and balance nutrition:

"... making it at home is healthier..." (Respondent 1)

Notably, there is a strong perception among consumers that squash type syrup is perceived as healthier in terms of sugar level than thick syrup, influencing product type preference for daily consumption versus special occasions.

2. *Need for Customization and Control*

Beyond health concerns, respondents preferred making beverages at home because they can control sweetness, sugar level, and select ingredients according to family preferences. This customization aligns with both emotional motivations and health consciousness.

3. *Creativity and Self-Expression*

Many respondents enjoy experimenting as a hobby, searching for recipe inspiration through Tiktok, Instagram Reels, and other social media platforms:

“I search the recipe inspiration from Reels or Tiktok. I also like to experiment by myself at home.” (Respondent 3)

3.1.3 Social Factors

The thematic analysis revealed that social factors play a significant role in shaping cordial syrup consumption. Respondents consistently associate cordial syrup with family gatherings, hospitality practices, and community activities. Three sub-themes emerged:

1. *Family and Friends' Gatherings*

Family reunions, religious gatherings (*pengajian*), *arisan*, children's birthday celebrations, and informal weekend gatherings are the most frequently mentioned social occasions for cordial syrup use. Pudding is the most common dish prepared: “When there is *arisan* or Saturday night gathering, or kids’ birthday, I often make pudding.” (Respondent 5)

2. *Social Lubricants and Relationship Building*

Cordial syrup also serves as a social lubricant. Several respondents describe how serving cold beverages to teenage children facilitates conversation, creates a relaxed atmosphere, and encourages family interaction:

“My son is teenager and not so open in sharing something. But while we enjoy refreshing dessert together, the conversation is more fluid, so when I start to trigger, he starts to share what is he feeling” (Respondent 5)

3. *Community Acceptance and Hospitality Norms*

Respondents emphasized the importance of serving products that are widely accepted by guests and family members. Cordial syrup is seen as a "socially safe" choice—familiar, versatile, and broadly accepted:

“It is always totally eaten. Emptied and no food-waste.” (Respondent 5)

Hospitality also emerged as an important driver. Several respondents reported maintaining syrup stock at home to accommodate unexpected visitors:

“Because my husband is *Kepala Lingkungan*, many people come. And when they come, my husband always asks me to serve syrup-based beverage” (Respondent 6)

3.1.4 Cultural Factors

While social factors explain interpersonal interaction, the analysis also reveals deeper cultural influences. Four sub-themes emerged:

1. *Festive Food Rituals and Celebration Traditions*

A prominent cultural theme is the strong association between cordial syrup and Ramadhan and Eid al-Fitr celebrations. Consumption frequency during Ramadhan can reach up to 2–3 times higher than daily consumption:

“I used to stock at least one at home for a week. But in Ramadhan, minimum I need 3 bottles a week” (Respondent 5)

2. *Hospitality as a Cultural Norm*

Maintaining cordial syrup stock at home in anticipation of unexpected visitors is described not merely as a preference but as an obligation associated with being a good host. As part of Indonesian culture, people serve food and beverages for guests as an expression of respect and courtesy.

3. *Intergenerational Traditions and Nostalgia*

Many respondents have consumed cordial syrup since childhood when their parents served it, and they continue the practice within their own families:

“It has been a heritage. I have started to consume it since I was kid.” (Respondent 2)

4. *Sharing Blessings and Collective Values*

In Indonesia, sharing food and beverages as an expression of gratitude and generosity—*berbagi rezeki*—is amplified during Ramadhan and Idul Fitri, where extra income from *Tunjangan Hari Raya* (THR) and practices of *mudik* and *silaturahmi* reinforce collective consumption.

3.1.5 Product and Packaging Features

Consumers intuitively split cordial syrup into two product types: squash (thin syrup) and thick syrup. Squash is perceived as having lower sugar content, making it more suitable for daily family consumption, while thick syrup is perceived as more suitable for larger gatherings and festive events. Both types are used for similar applications: drinking syrup, iced mixed desserts, and pudding.

Key product innovation expectations include additional functional health benefits, such as Vitamin C or honey content, that would align with consumer health consciousness. Packaging insights showed a strong preference for glass bottles, perceived as premium, higher quality, and more presentable as gifts:

“Since long time ago, it is always glass bottle. So, syrup bottle is associated with glass bottle. It feels so sturdy and high quality. If it is made of plastic, it looks like toy. When it is glass, it looks more premium and luxurious when gifting to parents” (Respondent 3)

A significant pain point is the impractical crown cork metal cap on Tasty Squash products, which requires a special tool to open and cannot be reclosed. Consumers strongly expect a functional, resealable cap similar to sauce products:

“Tasty syrup has 2 caps. I would have to have it like the one in condensed milk. After opening, it is easy to close with one hand. Hygienic and just flip – like sauce” (Respondent 5)

3.1.6 Price

Price was not frequently mentioned as either a reason to buy or a barrier. Consumers think that the current price of both squash and thick products is quite affordable and value for money. The shape and quality of packaging can justify a higher price “So even though it prices higher,

then its ok since the bottle looks more luxurious and beautiful.” (Respondent 5). The cordial syrup category appears to operate as a low-involvement and affordable household staple, where value is assessed through versatility and usage occasions rather than price.

3.1.7 Place

Minimarket and supermarket are the most common channels where consumers buy cordial syrup, with e-commerce (Tiktok shop) mentioned specifically due to attractive bundling promotions. Minimarket emerged as an emergency channel when stocks run out between monthly grocery shopping trips. Wherever consumers buy, availability of product stocks at home drives spontaneous consumption, making household pantry presence a critical driver of category usage.

3.1.8 Promotion and Communication

Two brands—Marjan and ABC—are well-recognized with strong market awareness. Brand awareness is built partly through TV advertising, particularly effective during Ramadhan. However, consumers also appreciate recipe inspiration, which they currently find through social media rather than brand advertising: “Maybe on pack recipe inspiration is nice” (Respondent 1)

Promotions including price discounts, bundling, and gimmicks influence bulk purchases during festive periods but are not key drivers in daily or self-use purchasing decisions. The role of promotion and communication has shifted from awareness generation to usage inspiration. Consumers already know cordial syrup; the challenge is creating new consumption occasions.

3.2 Discussion

The eight factors identified from thematic analysis should not be interpreted as independent constructs but understood as how they interact dynamically throughout consumer decision-making processes, aligned with the consumer behaviour framework proposed by Schiffman & Wisenblit (2019). Cordial syrup consumption in Indonesia has extended beyond its functional role as a sweet beverage ingredient to carry symbolic, emotional, and cultural meanings that evolve through repeated consumption experience (Solomon, 2020).

3.2.1 Emotional Drivers Beyond Functional Consumption

One of the most significant findings is that cordial syrup consumption is fundamentally driven by emotional motivation rather than purely functional needs. In the context of cordial syrup, the product functions as an emotional medium through which mothers communicate affection toward family members. Preparing beverages at home becomes an expression of love rather than simply a household routine. This finding suggests that consumers purchase cordial syrup as a tool to express their identities as caregivers, particularly as mothers.

The emotional reward is achieved not through consuming the product itself, but by observing positive family responses after consumption—such as children requesting the drink again. This value proposition is relational rather than transactional, where the emotional reward received by mothers is a more important psychological benefit than product physical attributes. Similar findings were found by Jose & Kuriakose (2021) where emotional factors can matter more than functional factors for consumers buying organic food products.

This finding also complements the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991): mothers perceived preparing syrup-based beverages at home as healthier, safer, and more personalized, reinforcing behaviour through social expectations that mothers should provide nutritional food for their families. Meanwhile, perceived behavioural control is strengthened since the usage of cordial syrup is easy and practical.

From a strategic perspective, excessive price promotions may unconsciously weaken long-term brand equity and bring the product to commodity status. Emotional value, unlike price advantage, is considerably more difficult for competitors to imitate and represents a more sustainable source of competitive differentiation (Barrena & Sánchez, 2009). Noble & Kumar (2008) confirmed that emotional focus in value creation is more likely to create desired outcomes such as loyalty, joy of use, and even passion.

The findings also reveal that daily refreshment occasions—particularly after-school and weekend family moments—represent significant untapped growth potential, consistent with Kotler et al. (2022) who argue that mature products should seek growth by increasing usage frequency and expanding consumption occasions rather than relying solely on attracting new users. The relevance of daily refreshment occasions linked with emotional motivation can drive category growth through behavioural education, aligned with Bastian et al. (2019).

3.2.2 Personal Factors: From Functional Benefits to Consumer Empowerment

Health consciousness has become one of the strongest personal considerations influencing consumption decisions. Interestingly, consumers did not perceive cordial syrup as inherently unhealthy. Instead, they perceived its nutritional profile as modifiable to personal preferences. This reflects the consumer behaviour of seeking balance rather than elimination—justifying indulgent products by bundling them with healthy elements (Haws & Liu, 2015). Mothers preferred preparing beverages at home to regulate sweetness, incorporate fresh fruits, and substitute sugar with condensed milk.

Another unexpected finding relates to creativity. Respondents described searching for recipe inspiration through Tiktok, Instagram Reels, and other social media platforms and conducting experiments at home. This behaviour illustrates the growing role of consumers as co-creators of product value, as described by Prahalad & Ramaswamy (2004), where consumers increasingly participate in value creation. Customer co-creation can improve perceived value, satisfaction, and loyalty (Mathis et al., 2016).

From a Product Life Cycle perspective (Kotler et al., 2022), the challenge faced by Tasty Syrup is not low household penetration but that consumption frequency remains concentrated in a limited number of traditional occasions. Communication strategies could encourage consumers to prepare healthier syrup-based beverages, create yogurt-based drinks, develop fruit-infused mocktails, or incorporate syrup into breakfast recipes—each new application increasing product relevance while simultaneously increasing consumption frequency.

3.2.3 Social Factors: Cordial Syrup as a Facilitator of Social Interaction

Beyond individual motivations, social factors have a big influence on why consumers purchase cordial syrup. As Woolley & Lim (2023) noted, food consumption has been a social process for centuries, bringing people together through preparation and sharing. Respondents described preparing syrup-based beverages and desserts for family reunions, weekend

gatherings, birthday celebrations, religious meetings (*pengajian*), neighborhood social gatherings (*arisan*), and informal visits from relatives.

Unlike Ready-to-Drink beverages, cordial syrup is designed for multi-serving purposes, making it a perfect solution for hosting social events due to its economical nature and practicality. Consumers prefer products that are familiar, broadly accepted, and unlikely to disappoint visitors—social acceptance being far more crucial than exclusivity, reflecting the Indonesian cultural characteristic of maintaining harmonious social relationships (Herrada Salazar et al., 2025).

Several respondents also described using beverage preparation as an opportunity to involve children in simple household activities and to facilitate conversation with teenage children who otherwise tended to spend time independently. These findings suggest that future marketing strategies should move beyond product-centred communication toward experience-centred communication, positioning cordial syrup as an essential companion for meaningful family moments and community togetherness.

3.2.4 Cultural Factors: Cordial Syrup as a Cultural Symbol

The findings indicate that cordial syrup has evolved from a beverage ingredient into a culturally meaningful product whose consumption is reinforced through repeated participation in traditional rituals and family practices. The strong connection between cordial syrup and Ramadhan is supported by Niamara et al. (2025), who found that Ramadhan festivity drives communal eating habits and over-provisioning of food. Solomon's (2020) concept of consumption rituals explains how repeated consumption in cultural events transforms ordinary products into symbolic objects.

This seasonal mental association partially explains why demand rapidly declines after Eid despite relatively stable household penetration. The limitation lies not in consumer acceptance of the product but in the narrow cultural frame through which the category is perceived—a direct result of historical marketing that concentrated almost entirely on Ramadhan. As aligned with Product Life Cycle theory, marketers need to break the mental association that cordial syrup only fits Ramadhan by introducing additional culturally relevant consumption occasions.

The intergenerational influence on cordial syrup consumption is also notable. Nostalgic associations strengthen emotional attachment and reduce consumers' willingness to switch brands. For mature brands like Tasty Syrup, this nostalgia represents a valuable strategic asset. Rather than seeing long heritage as evidence of an ageing brand, marketers should reinterpret it as proof of enduring cultural relevance. The concept of progressive nostalgia—maintaining emotional continuity while bringing modern product experiences—can balance heritage preservation with contemporary relevance (Dotson & Hyatt, 2000).

3.2.5 Innovation Opportunities in a Mature Market

All the findings show that the challenge currently faced by Tasty Syrup is not solely about category growth decline but that traditional marketing approaches are becoming less effective. The category has reached a stage where consumer purchasing decisions are heavily influenced by promotion rather than unique product value. At the same time, consumer unmet

needs around healthier consumption, customization, and creative recipe inspiration remain unfulfilled.

This aligns with what mentioned by Kim & Mauborgne (2005), which argues that companies need to go beyond competing and create untouched market spaces through value innovation. Innovation should be assessed according to whether it enables consumers to achieve outcomes that were previously difficult or impossible, rather than solely evaluated by newness. Packaging innovation should focus on experience enhancement: ergonomic designs facilitating one-handed pouring, resealable packaging, measuring caps for dosage control, and digital QR codes providing recipe inspiration and preparation tutorials.

Aligned with the Service-Dominant Logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004a), consumers should be involved in creating value by integrating products into their own lifestyles, experiences, and household routines. Companies may obtain greater returns by facilitating consumer creativity through recipe ecosystems, digital content, influencer collaboration, and interactive cooking platforms. However, Shin (2024) highlighted that radical innovation exposes higher commercial risk, as mature consumers demonstrate stronger habitual purchasing behaviour. Therefore, innovation should follow an evolutionary rather than revolutionary pathway, preserving core heritage while progressively expanding complementary consumer value.

Looking at the Ansoff Matrix framework, Tasty Syrup should pursue a dual strategy that prioritizes Product Development and Marketing Development simultaneously. Product development should focus on delivering greater consumer value through healthier formulations, functional benefits, and experience-enhancing packaging. Market Development should concentrate on increasing consumption frequency by introducing new usage occasions throughout the year rather than relying exclusively on Ramadhan.

CONCLUSION

This research investigated consumer behaviour within the studied consumer segment of mature cordial syrup market using a qualitative approach through in-depth interviews with six screened respondents in Jakarta and Medan, analysed via thematic analysis. The study identified eight major themes influencing purchasing decisions—emotional, personal, social, cultural, product and packaging, price, promotion and communication, and place—that interact dynamically throughout consumers' decision-making processes rather than functioning independently. Emotionally, mothers perceive preparing homemade syrup-based beverages as an expression of care and fulfilment of their identity as caregivers; personally, health consciousness and the desire for customization shape consumption adaptation; socially, cordial syrup facilitates family gatherings, community events, and hospitality; and culturally, its consumption is deeply embedded in Ramadhan traditions and intergenerational family practices. Consumer expectations have evolved faster than the industry's current marketing strategy, with emerging opportunities in healthier formulations, functional packaging, and recipe inspiration representing untapped blue ocean areas. From a strategic marketing perspective, sustainable growth requires repositioning Tasty Syrup from a Ramadhan-centric product to an everyday family refreshment partner, expanding consumption occasions to after-school refreshments, weekend gatherings, and community events, and shifting communication toward emotional storytelling emphasizing family togetherness and maternal care. Practically, this implies introducing reduced-sugar variants without compromising taste, packaging with

resealable caps, and digital platforms providing recipe inspiration. Theoretically, this study proposes a Consumer-Centred Growth Framework extending traditional consumer behaviour models by demonstrating how integrated emotional, personal, social, cultural, and marketing factors collectively sustain purchasing behaviour in cordial syrup markets within the studied segment. Future research should quantitatively validate these findings across broader and more diverse Indonesian consumer segments. This external consumer insight also can be integrated further with internal strategic capability assessment to bring comprehensive evaluation whether the proposed strategies are supported by the firm's strategic resource and organizational capabilities.

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