

PROMOTING TRADE PROMOTION ACTIVITIES IN THE NEW CONTEXT

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Abstract: Trade promotion is identified as an important solution to help open and diversify markets, stabilize exports in the context of unstable world trade. In Vietnam, in order to export, trade promotion activities are one of the tasks that state management agencies pay great attention to. The article discusses the overview of trade promotion, the current status of trade promotion activities in Vietnam in recent years, and from there proposes solutions to promote this activity in the coming time.

• Keywords: trade promotion, export markets, FTAs.

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1. Introduction

Promoting trade promotion activities means enhancing efforts to boost the buying and selling, and exchange of goods and services, while also improving the image and reputation of products, businesses, and localities in the market. This includes activities such as promotions, advertising, fairs, exhibitions, and other initiatives aimed at connecting sellers and buyers, expanding the market, and increasing revenue.

In Vietnam, trade promotion activities are one of the tasks that state management agencies pay great attention to. With various innovative solutions, trade promotion activities have achieved many positive results, expanding domestic and export markets. Especially in the early months of the year 2025, Vietnam's socio-economic development still faced many difficulties and challenges. Meanwhile, the global and regional situation continues to evolve rapidly, complexly, and unpredictably; geopolitical tensions and competition between major countries are increasing; the US announcement of high tariffs on its partners poses a risk of global economic recession. This is a major challenge, posing an urgent need to adjust and supplement trade promotion solutions and tasks to improve the economy's adaptability, protect domestic production, develop the domestic market and promote exports, maintain the momentum of recovery and sustainable economic development in 2025 and the following years.

In that context, the Prime Minister has just issued Directive No. 18/CT-TTg dated June 18, 2025, on implementing tasks and solutions to promote domestic and foreign trade to boost trade activities in 2025. Many tasks have been assigned to ministries, branches, and localities to promote trade promotion activities for export, increase the market share of Vietnamese goods in traditional markets and markets with FTA/CEPA with Vietnam, while expanding and diversifying export markets, and reducing dependence on some high-risk markets.

2. Overview of trade promotion

Definition

Figure 1: State management function of the Ministry of Industry and Trade on trade promotion

	State management function
1	Hosting and coordinating with ministries, ministerial-level agencies, relevant agencies, and local authorities to develop and implement the National Trade Promotion Program and the National Brand Program in accordance with the law; develop and organize the implementation of trade promotion activities in accordance with the law
2	Guiding and inspecting the content and conditions of commercial advertising, branding, fairs, trade exhibitions, promotions, displays, and introductions of goods and services domestically and internationally in accordance with the provisions of law
3	Managing and monitoring state budget sources for annual trade promotion activities in accordance with the law
4	Managing and directing the activities of Vietnamese trade promotion offices abroad; managing representative offices of foreign trade promotion organizations in Vietnam according to the provisions of law
5	Establishing, operating, and developing a trade promotion infrastructure system and digital infrastructure serving trade promotion.

Source: Article 2, Decree 96/2022/ND-CP

A trade promotion is a marketing activity that business - to - business companies engage in to attract more customers. These activities can include promotional discounts, financial rebates, and competitions (Indeed, 2025).

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In Viet Nam, trade promotion means activities of promoting and seeking opportunities for the purchase or sale of goods and provision of services, including sale promotion, commercial advertisement, display and exhibition of goods and services, and trade fairs and exhibitions (Article 3, the Commercial Law 2005). The Ministry of Industry and Trade is the agency performing the tasks and powers of state management of trade promotion as prescribed in Clause 21, Article 2 of Decree 96/2022/ND-CP of the Government.

Benefits of trade promotion

In trade activities, trade promotion activities are extremely important. Trade promotion encourages customers to buy products, promotes faster and more purchases. In addition, trade promotion is also used to attract customers to see the difference between the products of the business and those of other competitors. Trade promotion is also a tool used to persuade customers. Trade promotion plays an intermediary role, helping businesses find partners, expand markets, and reach target customers. Trade promotion activities such as participating in international fairs and exhibitions, or surveying foreign markets, can help businesses expand export markets and attract foreign investors. Trade promotion can influence customers' consumption behavior, helping them recognize and choose products/services that suit their needs.

Trade promotion also brings many benefits: Building the image of the company and the product; Finding large and stable customers and markets for the company; Informing about the characteristics of the product; Building awareness of new products; Promoting existing products; Repositioning the image or uses of slow-selling or saturated products; Creating enthusiasm for distribution members; Persuading customers to change products; Promoting customers to buy; Building close relationships with customers; Providing after-sales service to customers; Maintaining brand loyalty; Creating advantages for the company compared to competitors (Le Minh Truong, 2022).

Form of trade promotion

Normally, there are many forms of trade promotion as follows:

- **Advertising:** Advertising is a trade promotion activity of a trader to introduce to customers its business activities of goods and services. Advertising is a form of indirect communication,

carried out through paid media and clearly identifying the source of funding.

- **Promotion:** Promotion is a trade promotion *activity* by merchants aimed at encouraging the purchase and sale of goods and the provision of services by offering customers certain benefits.

- **Trade Fair and Exhibition:** A trade fair and exhibition is a trade promotion activity conducted within a specific time frame and at a designated location where businesses display and introduce goods and services with the aim of boosting sales and seeking opportunities to conclude purchase contracts for goods and service contracts.

- **Display and Introduction of Goods and Services:** The display and introduction of goods and services is a trade promotion activity by traders using goods, services, and related materials to introduce these goods and services to customers.

- **Public Relations:** Public relations is the proactive management by an agency, organization, or business of community communication relationships to build and maintain a positive image of itself.

In Viet Nam, according to the Commercial Law No. 36/2005/QH11, there are many forms of trade promotion activities, as in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Forms of trade promotion activities

Forms	Content
Sale promotion	Sale promotion is an activity of trade promotion conducted by traders to promote the purchase and sale of goods or the provision of services by offering certain benefits to customers
Commercial advertising	Commercial advertising means trade promotion activities of traders aimed at introducing to customers their goods and services
Display and introduction of goods and services	Display and introduction of goods and services means trade promotion activities of traders that use goods and/or services and documents thereon to introduce such goods and/or services to customers.
Trade fairs and exhibitions	Trade fairs and exhibitions mean trade promotion activities conducted in a concentrated manner at particular locations and for given periods of time for traders to display and introduce their goods and/or services for the purpose of promoting them and seeking opportunities for entering into contracts for the sale and purchase of goods or service contracts.

Source: The Commercial Law No. 36/2005/QH11

Methods of Trade Promotion

The methods of trade promotion include: Regular, continuous trade promotion; Periodic trade promotion; Occasional trade promotion; Campaign-based trade promotion.

3. Current status of trade promotion in Vietnam

3.1. Results achieved

Over the past years, with many innovative solutions, Viet Nam's trade promotion activities

have achieved many positive results, expanding domestic and export markets.

- In recent years, the system of legal documents in trade promotion activities has basically ensured state management, created a stable and suitable legal environment and facilitated trade promotion organizations and industry associations to carry out trade promotion activities; thereby, trade promotion activities have developed and contributed significantly to export growth and export market expansion. Through the implementation of trade promotion policies and mechanisms in practice, the Vietnamese Government's supporting role in export activities has been affirmed, improving the capacity of trade promotion organizations, industry associations, enterprises, and cooperatives effectively, contributing positively to building and promoting quality goods in the domestic and international markets. However, the practical application of trade promotion policies and mechanisms in implementing trade promotion activities in recent times has caused problems (Vu Ba Phu, 2025).

- Decentralization, delegation of authority, and simplification of administrative procedures in the field of trade promotion to facilitate organizations and businesses have been implemented synchronously and effectively. Decree No. 128/2024/ND-CP of the Government has simplified 10 administrative procedures on promotional activities and trade fairs, and exhibitions, and is expected to reduce more than 100,000 administrative procedures on promotion each year and cut over 90% of administrative procedure compliance costs for businesses.

- Many new trade promotion activities have been implemented for the first time, effectively supporting businesses to increase exports in Viet Nam's strong industries. At the same time, contributing to diversifying trade promotion channels to support businesses in promoting, introducing products, and connecting with foreign partners and businesses.

- Promoting brand development, especially national brands. Vietnamese enterprises are increasingly interested in brand development and increasingly improving the quality of Vietnamese products to participate more deeply in the global value chain. At the 9th national brand product selection period in 2024, 359 products of 190 enterprises were recognized as national brand

products, an increase of 10.5% in the number of products and 10.5% in the number of enterprises compared to the 8th selection period (Department of Trade Promotion).

- Trade promotion to promote green economic development has been focused on and implemented through many activities such as: Green Economic Forum and Exhibition 2024 (GEFE 2024) with the theme "Creating a Green Future", Export Promotion Forum 2024 with the theme "Promoting green exports", Ceremony to announce products achieving national brands in 2024 with the theme "Strengthening towards the Green Era"... to raise awareness and contribute to promoting green economic development, green transformation as well as contributing to promoting economic restructuring associated with growth model innovation, in order to achieve economic prosperity, environmental sustainability and social equity towards the successful implementation of the Net Zero target by 2050.

- Market diversification is a strategy that has always been directed by the Ministry of Industry and Trade, and the Trade Promotion Agency has actively coordinated with relevant units to achieve good results, recognized by the business community. In recent times, the Trade Promotion Agency has focused on implementing activities in new and potential markets, such as Latin America, the Halal market, India, Russia, and Middle Eastern countries. This helps reduce dependence on some traditional markets.

- Organizing seminars and training programs to support businesses in understanding the standards and regulations of each market to meet export requirements, especially with markets where Vietnam has free trade agreements (FTAs) to reduce tariff barriers and increase the ability to penetrate international markets.

- The Ministry of Industry and Trade has also actively digitized trade promotion activities. It encourages businesses to apply information technology and participate in cross-border e-commerce platforms (such as Amazon, Alibaba, Shopee) to reach international customers. Organize training programs on e-commerce, digital marketing, and the use of artificial intelligence to improve business competitiveness.

- Promoting green products by supporting businesses in developing products that meet

circular economy and sustainable development standards, especially for markets such as the EU and Northern Europe, which have strict environmental requirements.

- Strengthening international fairs, exhibitions, and trade. In 2024, nearly 6,000 businesses were supported to participate in these activities, and many contracts were signed with values up to tens of millions of USD. The Department also provided more than 500 consultations on markets and industries, helping businesses seize opportunities in new and large markets.

3.2. Difficulties and challenges

Besides the advantages, there are still difficulties that affect trade promotion activities, such as:

- Policies on improving the trade promotion capacity of local trade promotion organizations, associations, and enterprises have not yet met the rapid changes in trade promotion methods in the new situation.

- Limited resources (human resources, finance), lack of funding compared to the required investment level to ensure competitiveness in export promotion activities; lack of infrastructure to organize large-scale trade promotion activities to organize regional, national, and international trade promotion events (Vu Ba Phu, 2025).

- State budget resources allocated for trade promotion activities are still limited, and financial support mechanisms for trade promotion activities have not been adjusted promptly by competent authorities, leading to certain difficulties in implementation.

- The organizational model of trade promotion agencies in localities in Viet Nam is not unified, causing difficulties for trade promotion agencies at both central and local levels in coordinating and linking to implement trade promotion activities, supporting businesses, associations, industries, etc.

- Limited resources of enterprises. Most Vietnamese enterprises are small and medium-sized, lacking the capital and experience to participate in large-scale trade promotion programs or quickly adjust business strategies in the face of tariff barriers.

- Many businesses have not been fully updated on new tariff policies or related regulations (such as the origin of goods, anti-tax evasion). Trade promotion programs sometimes do not provide

in-depth or timely information to help businesses adapt.

- Competition in trade promotion activities in the international market. Countries such as India, Thailand, and Indonesia are also stepping up trade promotion to take advantage of opportunities from the shift of supply chains away from China. This makes it difficult for Vietnamese businesses to retain partners, even with support from trade promotion programs.

- Trade promotion activities are currently scattered, unfocused, lacking inter-sectoral connections, and not long-term. The forms and methods of trade promotion are not diverse and rich, and there are no modern and innovative forms of trade promotion. The scale of export promotion activities is still small, not commensurate with the export potential of Viet Nam's key industries (Vu Ba Phu, 2025).

4. Proposed solutions

4.1. For authorities

- Strengthen export promotion, effectively exploit free trade agreements to diversify markets and supply chains; consolidate and expand market share in traditional markets; create breakthroughs in expanding new potential export markets.

- Diversifying export markets should target a number of "destination" markets. Specifically, for the Asian region, increase exports to India, Korea, ASEAN (such as Indonesia, Malaysia); for the Middle East market (Saudi Arabia, UAE) - markets with high demand for agricultural products, processed foods, and textiles. For the Latin American market, exploit markets such as Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina, where there is great potential but has not been fully exploited. For the Halal market, promote exports to Muslim countries (Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh) with products that meet standards.

- Changing direction to take advantage of FTAs, including using FTAs to help businesses access markets in Canada, Australia, Japan, the EU, China, and ASEAN to reduce tariff costs and access markets with competitive advantages.

- Focusing on promoting imports, diversifying import markets to ensure input supply to serve domestic production development and export.

- Strengthening to consult, provide updated information on the market, changes in trade

policies, standards, regulations, and consumer tastes of import markets. Thereby, contributing to creating a proactive position and improving the competitiveness of Vietnamese enterprises when approaching international markets.

- Continuing to improve business capacity through training activities on trade promotion skills, application of information technology in trade promotion, green transformation, digital transformation, ecological design, circular economy; supporting businesses to develop green economic products, and circular economy to effectively participate in the global value chain.

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- Continuing to support businesses to participate in major fairs such as Anuga (Germany), Sial (France); Canton Fair (China), World Food Moscow, or Trade Expo Indonesia... to find new partners; Organize Vietnamese booths at international events with support in terms of costs and logistics.

- Promoting cross-border e-commerce, developing digital data infrastructure, and expanding the scope of trade promotion support, regardless of the type of enterprise or intermediary organization. No distinction between Vietnamese enterprises or FDI enterprises, as long as they contribute to export, investment, and the national brand.

- Considering policies to directly support businesses participating in specialized fairs and exhibitions in potential markets, helping to approach customers, distributors, and international strategic partners more effectively. Promote and have financial mechanisms and professional coordination for overseas Vietnamese to participate in organizing events, trade promotion programs, and investment and business connections in the host country.

- Supporting businesses in finding partners to move part of their production lines to ASEAN countries (such as Indonesia and Thailand) to take advantage of tariff incentives in FTAs; supporting businesses in finding alternative sources of raw

materials from markets that are not subject to high tariffs.

- Coordinating to review, arrange, and increase financial resources for trade promotion activities, brand promotion for Vietnamese enterprises, and export products.

4.2. For industry associations

- Supporting businesses in responding to tariffs through continuous updates on new tax policies; advising businesses on trade defense measures and how to respond to anti-tax evasion investigation requirements.

- Closely coordinating with the Ministry of Industry and Trade and other ministries, branches, and localities in implementing domestic and foreign trade promotion programs; proactively proposing trade promotion contents according to industry characteristics to integrate into national programs.

- Promoting the organization of market survey delegations, trade exchanges, and connections between domestic and foreign enterprises; preside over or coordinate the organization of domestic and international specialized fairs and exhibitions.

- Actively participating in and promoting digital transformation in industry trade promotion activities, including applying e-commerce platforms, logistics, digital marketing, and data analysis tools to support businesses in effectively reaching customers.

5. Conclusion

Trade promotion is one of the important solutions to boost Vietnam's export activities in the context of international economic integration. Based on the implementation of the above-mentioned solutions, trade promotion activities will certainly continue to be effective, contributing to high growth for Vietnam's economy in the coming years.

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