

# CHAPTER VI

## Conclusion

### 6.1 Conclusion

The increase of alcohol consumption in Thailand is a fact. Moreover the increase is affecting certain groups more than others, mainly the youth and women, who show a staggering rise in the use of alcohol. Trends in alcohol consumption have also seen a huge turnaround in what alcohol beverages the Thai people are consuming, choosing beer rather than traditional spirits. In spite of the increase in alcohol consumption it is important to point out that, a majority of the Thai people are abstainers from alcohol.

An important aspect of this discussion is the correlation between alcohol use and modernity. Is rise in alcohol usage an inseparable variable of the modernization process? The thirteen characteristics of modernization of Martinelli do not imply that alcohol consumption should increase along with the economic growth of nations. Men such as Dr. Richard Smith and Dr. Griffith Edwards have argued that a rapid social change and development should not automatically lead to increased alcohol consumption.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately the experience of most developing countries is on the contrary to their argument.

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Smith. (17. January 1982). Alcohol in the third world: a chance to avoid a miserable trap. *British Medical Journal*, (pp183 -185). Page 184

WHO has repeatedly pointed to the emerging dangers of alcohol consumption in developing societies, which they have described as an epidemic. Almost all developing societies have figures of a large increase in alcohol consumption and an increase in alcohol related problems.<sup>2</sup>

Samlee Plianbangchang, Southeast Asian regional director for WHO, puts most of the blame on the increase in alcohol consumption in the region of Southeast Asia on external marketing forces. He argues that they have been focusing more on pushing their products in developing countries, while the markets in developed countries mainly North America and Europe have been in decline or a status quo position regarding the consumption of alcohol.<sup>3</sup>

Thailand follows another pattern with its alcohol development, where two Thai corporations control the majority of the market. These two corporations have been able to keep a strong hold on the alcohol market, and these two corporations are the two largest benefitters of the alcohol market expansion. It is therefore safe to come to the conclusion that the major determinants of the increased alcohol consumption of the Thai people are internal factors, rather than external factors.

The unconstrained marketing efforts of the Thai alcohol industry are the play a largest role in the increase of Thai alcohol consumption. Even so the Thai authorities have been countering this development the alcohol industry seems to

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<sup>2</sup> David Jernigan. (2002). *Alcohol in developing societies : a public health approach. Summary*. Helsinki: WHO. Page 6-8

<sup>3</sup> WHO. (2006). *Public health problems caused by harmful use of alcohol - gaining less or losing more?* Bangalore: WHO. Page 7

be ahead in the fight, with estimates of a rise in Thai alcohol consumption being between 7-13 percent on an annual basis.

The effects of the ever shrinking globalizing world also play a large role in the increases alcohol consumption by introducing new trends related to the consumption of alcohol beverages. Globalization introduces a lot of other ideas and products to the people of Thailand, than alcohol. But they don't get the same kind of promotion in the mass media and the community. For globalization is merely a bridge of ideas, the Thai people choose what ideas are welcome to adjust to their society. They seem to welcome alcohol for its pleasurable effects, unaware of its consequences.

The largest determinates for the increased alcohol use in Thailand are the fore the ones who benefit most financially form the increased alcohol use of the Thai people, and they do so with extensive marketing.