



The purpose of this study was to provide a current state-of-play of available research into alcohol consumption behaviour and attitudes in Vietnam.

To uncover the identified key issues and to propose possible future directions for research.

### The three main issues

Three main recurring issues could be drawn from existing research into alcohol consumption behaviours and attitudes in Vietnam.

- Excess alcohol consumption and its health effects
- Alcohol consumption as a contributing factor to risky sexual activity
- Alcohol consumption as a contributing factor to risky driving behaviour

...of course there are other issues related to alcohol consumption, but these issues have little or no publicly available research coverage at this point.

“Nam vô tửu như  
kỳ vô phong”

“a man without alcohol is  
like a flag without wind”

### When Vietnamese drink

- *Nhậu* (informal social drinking) is commonplace in Vietnam.
- Alcohol is used to celebrate events, to socialise, to drown sorrows and to facilitate business.
- An individual's behaviour is rewarded for engaging in group activities such as social drinking, because collective social functions are encouraged and expected. (Giang *et al.*, 2008; Kaljee *et al.*, 2005; Tran, 2008)
- **87.3% of men** and **10.2% of women** had used alcohol in the last year (Giang *et al.*, 2008)
- Drinking is a predominantly male activity... although this is changing, particularly in the major cities.

### When Vietnamese drink

- There is very little information regarding alcohol consumption patterns and contexts in Vietnam, particularly concerning adolescents and young adults (Tho *et al.*, 2007).
- More recently, Giang *et al.* (2008) and Tran (2008) have provided strong foundation data into alcohol usage.
- However, their research largely focuses on alcohol as a contributing factor to issues such as risky sexual behaviour, rather than the actual drinking attitudes and behaviours themselves.

## Quán Nhậu (Drinking Place)



## The price of beer

- From 9,000 Đồng (A\$0.55) for a domestic beer, such as 333 or Saigon (Green)
- From 11,000 Đồng (A\$0.68) for an internationally branded, domestically bottled beer, such as Tiger or Heineken
- From 3,000 Đồng (A\$0.18) for a glass of *bia tươi* or *bia hơi* (fresh beer - home brew)
- And even less for a shot of rice wine (eg. *rượu đế* or *rượu nếp*)
  
- A can of Coca-Cola starts from 4,500 Đồng (A\$0.28)

### Excessive Alcohol Consumption

- **10.2%** of males can be classed as heavy episodic drinkers.
- **8.1%** of males **18-24 years old** can be classed as heavy episodic drinkers.
- Meaning they consumed five or more standard drinks in one sitting at least once per week.

(World Health Organization, 2004)

- Older men have been found to drink more frequently than younger men. (Giang *et al.*, 2008)

### Risky Sexual Activity

- In a 2001 study, **62%** of female and **70%** of male university students from Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh City felt that alcohol “facilitates” casual sex (Brown *et al.*, 2001)
- **70%** of adolescents in Khanh Hoa province (a rural area) who had engaged in oral, anal or vaginal sex, also reported drinking (Kaljee *et al.*, 2005)
- A study of male youth drinkers in Nha Trang (a major city) found that they were **50 times more likely** to have sex than non-drinkers (Tho *et al.*, 2007)
- ... and nearly **40%** of them did not use a condom in their most recent sexual activity, compared to **4.8%** of non-drinkers. (Tho *et al.*, 2007)
- Often these risky sexual behaviours occur with commercial sex workers, workers in cafes, and at *bia ôm* (“beers and hugs” - a bar where men are served beer and sexual services) (Kaljee *et al.*, 2005)

## 34 percent of road traffic deaths involved alcohol

(Forensic Medicine data, 2001, cited in World Health Organization, 2009a)

- **12,800 deaths** and **10,546 injuries** in 2007 (National Traffic Safety Committee, 2008)
- Estimated to be the **leading cause of death** for those who are **aged 15-30** (World Health Organisation, 2009b)
- Statistical methods used are likely to be conservative.
- The publicly available statistics are scarce.
- Car and motorbike availability and use has increased considerably since then.
- Current rates are likely to be higher.

### Vehicle use statistics

- Motorbike is the primary form of transport for the majority of the population
- **68.6** motorbikes for every 100 households
- **109.1** motorbikes for every 100 **urban** households
- **0.2** cars for every 100 households - but this is increasing by over 15% per year.

(Sources: General Statistics Office, 2006 and World Health Organization, 2009)

There is very little access to public transport in Vietnam



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## Regulations and Public Education Programs

- Drink driving laws were recently tightened to a maximum BAC of 0.05 for drivers (including motorbike riders) (Road Traffic Law 2008)
- Very little enforcement of this law. WHO (2009a) rated enforcement as **3/10** in terms of effectiveness.
- Spirits are banned from being advertised on TV and radio.
- There are very few restrictions on advertising of all other forms of alcohol on all other forms of media.
- These restrictions are only partially enforced (World Health Organization, 2004)
- There have been limited informed educational efforts in Vietnam with regard to alcohol consumption (Kaljee *et al.*, 2009)
- Low awareness, adherence and enforcement of proven risk reduction strategies related to drinking and driving. (World Health Organization, 2009b)

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### Where Next?

- My research focus has turned to drink driving.
- In the process of developing a survey instrument to measure youth/young adult attitudes to drink driving.
- Key considerations:
  - Politically sensitive nature of the research
  - Legal implications of data
  - Privacy and privacy protection
  - Social/cultural sensitivities associated with this type of research
- How to use this research in a way that maximises benefits to the community