OPINION OF BANGKOK PEOPLE TOWARDS DRINKING AND DRIVING

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\begin{abstract}

The objectives of this study were to: explain demographic characteristics, study drinking alcohol behavior and driving behavior, determine media exposure, examine opinion of Bangkok people toward drinking and driving, and determine the relationship between demographic characteristics, drinking alcohol behavior and driving behavior, media exposure and opinion of Bangkok people toward drinking and driving.

Ratchathewi district, Bangkok was selected as location of the study. The sample size was 398 Bangkok people. Data were collected by using questionnaire. Data were analyzed and presented through percentage, mean, standard deviation and Chi-square test at 0.05 level.

Finding revealed that, most of respondents (65.8\%) were male, average age was 31.5 years, graduated bachelor’s degree (40.5\%), the average income was 12,641 baht. Drinkers (61.6\%) preferred to drink beer more than 6 glasses/time and drank 1-2 times/week. Respondents (55.0\%) drove motorcycle and nearly half (48.2\%) had driven after drinking. They received information on drinking and driving from television (42.4\%). The opinion level of Bangkok people toward drinking and driving was at the moderate level (mean=3.63). Hypotheses testing found that, volume and frequency of drinking, and driving after drinking had significant relationship with the opinion of respondent towards drinking and driving at 0.05 level. Media exposure was significantly correlated to the opinion of Bangkok people toward drinking and driving at 0.05 level.

Keywords: Opinion, Bangkok People, Drinking and Driving

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I. INTRODUCTION

Thailand is the country with the large number of the population drink alcoholic beverages. In the year 2004, there were about 16.2 million people that drink alcoholic beverages at the average of 58.0 liters per person per year. In seven years period (1996-2003), the number of young Thai ages 15-24 years that drink alcoholic beverages increased six times. Thailand is ranked 40th in the world for the volume of alcoholic drink consumption. In terms of the volume of distilled spirits being drank, Thailand is ranked 5th place in the world.

The statistic of the traffic accidents shows that in year 1999, there had been 12,040 deaths and 477,700 injured. And in the year 2007, there had been 12,492 deaths and 790,290 injured.

Royal Thai Police reported during the year 1995 – 2002, there were about 105,998 deaths caused by traffic accidents, averaged 13,249 people per year, 36 people per day and 1.5 people per hour. The statistics of Ministry of Thai Public Health, in the year 2000-2002 shows there had been 2,820,600 injured in the traffic accidents, averaged 940,200 injured per year, 2,575 injured per day, 107 injured per hour, and 17 injured per minute. More than 50 percent of all traffic accidents are caused by driving after drinking. Therefore, 6,624 Thai died per year or about 18 people per day because of traffic accidents caused by drunk driving. And there would be 470,100 Thais per year, 1,287 per day or 53 per hour injured because of drunk drivers (Don’t Drive Drunk Foundation, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c).

Driving while either intoxicated or drunk is dangerous and drivers with high blood alcohol content or concentration (BAC) are at great risk of car accidents, highway injuries and vehicular deaths. Every single injury and death caused by drunk driving is totally preventable. Although the proportion of crashes that are alcohol-related has dropped dramatically in recent decades, there are still far too many such preventable accidents. Unfortunately, in spite of great progress, alcohol-impaired driving remains a serious national problem that tragically affects many victims annually (Hanson, 2007).

Thai Health Promotion Foundation (2008) found that traffic accident occurring from driving after drinking is still a serious problem in Thai society. In 2004 around 470,000 Thais were injured due to traffic accidents as resulting to an economic loss of about 122.40-189.04 million baht of which 26 percent was caused by drunk driving. In year 2005, the record shows that the maximum number of 684 deaths in traffic accidents occurred in Bangkok area.

Thus, it is essential to study people’s exposure to mass media used in the campaign and people opinion towards drinking and driving in Bangkok area for knowing the major causes of traffic accidents resulting to injuries or even deaths that might be able to guide authorities in implementing tough preventive measures.

Objective

1. To explain demographic characteristic of Bangkok people
2. To study drinking alcohol behavior and
driving behavior of Bangkok people.

3. To determine media exposure of Bangkok people related to drinking and driving.

4. To study opinion of Bangkok people toward drinking and driving.

5. To determine the relationships between demographic characteristics, drinking alcohol behavior and driving behavior, media exposure and opinion of Bangkok people toward drinking and driving.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Communication

Pearson and Nelson (1997) found that communication comes from Latin word, which means, “to make common”. In addition, the communication is defined as the process of understanding and sharing meaning. It is considered a process because it is an activity, an exchange or a set of behaviors, not an unchanging product. Communication is not an object that human can hold in their hands, it is the activity in which they were participating.

Communication can be divided into 3 types.

1. Action communication could be viewed as one person sends a message and another receive it. The speaker sends the message to the audience as a kind of inoculation in which the message is a short that may or may not take effect.

2. Interaction communication could be viewed as one person sends a message to a second person, who receives it and responds with another message. The speaker and receive take turns being speaker and listener in a linear fashion.

3. Transaction communication could be viewed as communications simultaneously send and receive messages rather than act exclusively as senders or receives. In other words, people are continually sending and receiving message. They can not avoid communication.

Berlo (1960) explains that if we accept the concept of communication process, we view events and relationships as dynamic, ongoing, ever changing, and continuous. When we label something as a process, we also mean that it does not have a beginning, an end, a fixed sequence of events. It is static. It is moving. The ingredients within a process interact: each affects all of the others.

Development Communication

Quebral (1971a cited in Ongkiko and Flor, 2003) defined development communication as “the art and science of human communication applied to the speedy transformation of a country and the mass of its people from poverty to a dynamic state of economic growth that makes possible greater social equity and the larger fulfillment of the human potential.” Development communication requires creativity in communication messages through the use of various communication media and materials. It also uses the scientific method to enrich its own field through research where theories and principles can be derived and applied to development problems. Furthermore, development communication applied systematic methods in making decisions and planning how to efficiently carry out communication interventions.
The key players in development communication are people. We can easily infer that development communication is people-centered as the goal is for people to change people. By all means, its goal is to develop and to uplift people’s lives. Development has three major values that guide the practice of development communication: purposive, pragmatic, and value-laden.

Quebral (1971b cited in Jamias, 1975) stated that first, development communication is purposive communication because its objective is not only to inform but also to influence or motivate the behavior of the receiver to advance development. The communicator already has a desired outcome targets, specific goals, and objectives prior to sending the message. Taking a perspective beyond the liberal milieu, the development communicator sets out with a specific purpose for communicating.

Second, it is pragmatic because it is results-oriented. People in the development communication field focus on the impact they accomplish with accordance to the desired outcome, targets, specific goals, and objectives.

Finally, development communication is also value-laden because the information sources, either consciously or unconsciously, assign values to every message in communication. There is always an attached value in every message that one communication.

**Mass Communication**

Wright (1959) described that mass communication could be defined by three characteristics:

1. It is directed toward relatively large, heterogeneous, and anonymous audiences.
2. Messages are transmitted publicly, are often timed to reach most audience members simultaneously, and are transient in character.
3. The communicator tends to be or operate within a complex organization that may involve great expense.

The Effect of Mass Media, Potter (1998) explained that there are five levels of mass media effect:

1. Cognitive: Media can immediately plant ideas and information into our minds.
2. Attitudinal: The media can create and shape our opinion, belief and values. They can be reinforcing or change attitude.
3. Emotional: The media can make us feel things. They can trigger strong emotions and also weaker emotion. Emotional reactions are related to physiological changes.
4. Physiological: Media can influence our automatic bodily systems, which are usually beyond our conscious control.
5. Behavioral: Media can trigger action. Imitation, activation and habit formation are behavior change by media. Therefore mass media can influence behaviors not just in a specific action, but in a general, long-term manner.

**Opinion**

Maier (1965) defined that opinion was an expression of attitude in one part; the other, was an interpretation of a fact. The interpretation of that fact would be based solely on the interpreter’s part of experience and idea.
Opinion was an expression based on a decision of point of view about a person or things. It was a way to predict a situation by personal belief and feeling. That feeling must be stronger than impression but less than a true feeling (Webster, 1967).

Opinion was the expression of each individual to prove a certain subject. Or the analysis of one thing from a situation or the expression of a person’s thinking about a fact (Kolasa, 1969).

Good (1973) gave many definitions of the word “opinion” as follows:

1. In general definition, it was a belief, thought, analysis and attitude that had not been proven correctly and still needed more evidence and facts.

2. True definition was an analysis or critical thinking with a plan from a believable source.

3. Public Opinion was an analysis by the whole group of people or the society, which had a lot of influence from the mass population.

The definition of opinion was the thought through experience and turn into a thought about the situation in that period of time (Wahlmen, 1973).

Opinion was a verbal expression about belief and feeling of an individual (Best, 1977).

Opinion was a way to express one’s idea about a certain situation. Opinion was also different from attitude because opinion would be only about the subject but attitude was about everything involved with the subject (Isaak, 1981).

The hypotheses of this study were:

1. There was relationship between demographic characteristics and opinion of Bangkok people toward drinking and driving.

2. There was relationship between drinking alcohol behavior and driving behavior and opinion of Bangkok people toward drinking and driving.

3. There was relationship between media exposure and opinion of Bangkok people toward drinking and driving.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used survey research design conducted at Ratchathewi district, Bangkok. Total population of this study was was 78,416 people who live in Ratchathewi district, year 2008.

Simple Random Sampling technique was employed. Yamane formula (1973) was employed to calculate the sample size. A total of 398 persons served as sample of this study.

Research instrument used in collecting data was questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into five parts: demographic characteristics of Bangkok people, drinking alcohol behavior, driving behavior, media exposure and opinion towards drinking and driving.

Data were collected during May 2009 at Ratchathewi district, Bangkok.

Data were analyzed and presented through percentage, mean and standard deviation. Chi-square at 0.05 level was employed to test hypotheses. Opinion was grouped into three levels as follow:

1.00 – 2.33 = Low level of opinion

2.34 – 3.66 = Moderate level of opinion

3.67 – 5.00 = High level of opinion
IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Result of this study found that male drinkers (65.8%) were greater than female drinkers (34.2%). The lowest age of the drinkers was only 15 years old which is considered an under legal age for drinking. Legal drinking age of Thailand is above 18 years old (International Center for Alcohol Policies, 2009). The result was similar to study conducted by The National Statistical Office of Thailand (2007a, 2007b) found that most of drinkers in Thailand were male (84.4%) higher than female (15.6%). The number of drinking drivers was male 92.1% and female 7.9%. The lowest age range of the drinking drivers was 11-20 years old. And this study also found that most drinkers (60.1%) had small amount of income lower than or equal to 11,000 baht/month. This finding was similar to the study of Kanjana Supnui (2007), “Consciousness of social environmental impacts regarding alcohol drinking: A study of drunken driving probationers”, found that more than sixty percent of drunk driving probationers (64.1%) had average monthly income lower than or equal to 10,000 baht.

2. Beer (61.6%) and spirit (27.1%) were most preferred alcoholic beverages that respondents drink. More than one third of the respondents (37.9%) drank more than 6 glasses/time or approximately 1.7 liters/time. One standard glass of beer equals 0.285 liters (World Health Organization, 2009). Over half of people (67.6%) drank 1-2 times/week. The majority (86.7%) drank during 18.01-24.00 and nearly half (48.2%) had driven after drinking. For those that drive after drinking more than 6 glasses of beer or having more than 50 milligram percent of alcohol in the bloodstream can lead them to commit illegal driving because the law in Thailand does not permit people to drive after with that high amount of alcohol intake. Ministry of Interior specify that if drivers have alcohol level in blood more than 50 milligram percent which equals to 2 glasses of spirit mix with soda or 3 glasses of beer, they will be imprisoned not more than 3 months or will be fined 2,000-10,000 Baht (Yongyut Karchrontam and Bungon Rittipukdee, 2004). Besides, drinking alcoholic beverages can make other social troubles to the drinkers such as family problems, job dismissals, unemployment, debts, and suicide (Department of Mental Health, 2005). In year 2006, alcohol consumption costs 156,105 million baht or 1.99% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), resulting in approximately 2,391 baht per capita. Indirect cost outweighs the direct cost, representing 95.8 % of the total cost. The largest cost attribute to alcohol consumption is cost of productivity loss due to premature mortality (104,128 million baht, accounted for 65.7% of total cost), followed by cost of productivity loss due to reduced productivity (45,464.6 million baht, accounted for 30.1% of total cost), health care cost (5,491.1 million baht, accounted for 3.5% of total cost), cost of property damage due to road traffic accident (779 million baht, accounted for 0.5% of total cost), and cost of laws enforcement and criminal justice (242 million baht, accounted for 0.2% of total cost), which consisted of court cost (156 million baht) and police cost (86 million baht), respectively (Health System Research Institute, 2008).
3. Nearly half of the respondents (42.4%) received information on drinking and driving from television. They exposed to television to received that information more than 8 times/month (59.6%) and 1-2 minutes/time (40.4%) The result was similar to the study of Parichart Sathapitanon et al. (2006), “Perception, value and support toward measures in decreasing traffic accidents related driving after drinking”, found that people received information about campaign of decreasing traffic accidents related driving after drinking from spot television and talk-show on television at high level.

4. Opinion of Bangkok people towards drinking and driving was at the moderate level which means that respondents tended to cautiously drive after drinking. Some of the respondents believed that drinking and driving impairs ability to drive and they should not drive after drinking alcoholic beverages. They also understood the problem of drinking and driving such as increasing number of accidents, caused to death, loss of assets, disability, and etc. However, they still are not careful with their driving because they are confident that accident owing to drinking and driving are hard to occur, drinking and driving does not lead to higher risk of accident. Further, they still felt that they have ability to drive after drinking alcoholic beverage and driving home after drinking is easier than taking a taxi. This finding was similar to the study of Kanjana Supnui (2007), “Consciousness of social environmental impacts regarding alcohol drinking: A study of drunken driving probationers”, found that almost half of persons under probation (43.0%) had moderate level of awareness towards the effects to the social environment. The probationers informed that they drank to as extent that impaired their driving but did not prevent them from driving.

5. The result of this study showed that the differences in sex, age, educational level, and income of the respondents do not lead to the difference in opinion level toward drinking and driving at 0.05 level of significance. The result was similar to the study of Kanjana Supnui (2007), “Consciousness of social environmental impacts regarding alcohol drinking: A study of drunken driving probationers”, found that gender, graduation level, and income had no significant relationship with the probationers’ consciousness of social environmental impacts.

Drinking alcohol behavior (volume and frequency of drinking) and driving behavior (driving after drinking and driving without drinking) lead to the difference in level of opinion toward drinking and driving at 0.05 level. The result was supported by the study of Parichart Sathapitanon et al. (2006), “Perception, value and support toward measures in decreasing traffic accidents related driving after drinking” which found that there was significant relationship between person who had ever driven after drinking and person who had never driven after drinking with perception of campaign concerning traffic accident in Thailand.

Media (television, print media, and radio), frequencies of television, print media, and radio exposure, and length of time of print media exposure lead to the difference of opinion level toward drinking
and driving at 0.05 level. Oskamp (1977) explained that one of characteristics effecting opinion is mass media - newspapers, magazines, movies, radio, and television. There was no doubt that these media had enormous impact on our society where had been introduced. Marshall McLuhan uses the phrase “the medium is the message” as a means of explaining how the distribution of a message can often be more important than content of the message itself. It is through the persuasiveness of media such as television, radio and print media that messages reach their target audiences (Wikipedia, 2009c).

Hypotheses Testing

The results of hypotheses testing revealed that:

1. There was no significant relationship between demographic characteristics (sex, age, educational level, and monthly income) and opinion of the respondents towards drinking and driving.

2. There was no significant relationship between drinking alcohol behavior (type of alcoholic beverages) and opinion of Bangkok people toward drinking and driving.

There was significant relationship between drinking alcohol behavior (volume and frequency of drinking) and driving behavior (driving after drinking or driving without drinking) and opinion of the respondents toward drinking and driving.

3. There was significant relationship between media exposure (television, print media, and radio, frequency of television, print media, and radio exposure, and length of time of print media exposure) and opinion of the respondents toward drinking and driving. There was no significant relationship between media exposure (internet, frequency of internet exposure, length of time of television, radio, and internet exposure) and opinion of the respondents toward drinking and driving.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

A. Conclusion

More than half of Bangkok people were male. Nearly forty percent of the respondents were in the age ranging from 25-34 years old. The average age was 31.5 years old. Most of people graduated bachelor’s degree and average income was 12,641 Baht.

More than half of the respondents drank beer. Nearly forty percent of them drank alcoholic beverages more than 6 glasses/time or 1.7 liters/time. More than half of the respondents drank 1-2 times per week. The majority preferred to drink during 18.01-24.00 hours.

More than half of people drove a motorcycle and had never driven after drinking. Most respondents had never been in an accident caused by driving after drinking. Nearly fifteen percent had been in an accident and most of them were drivers. Nearly half of the respondents received information on drinking and driving from television. More than fifty percent of those respondents receive the information through television more than 8 times/month and nearly half of them exposed to television to receive that information about 1-2 minutes/time.

Opinion level of people toward drinking and driving in average was at moderate level.
B. Recommendations

1. The Ministry of Public Health, and Royal Thai Police, Don’t Drive Drunk Foundation, Thai Health Promotion Foundation and Accident Prevention Network should formulate campaigns relating to no driving after drinking concentrating especially on male audiences, ages between 25-34 years old and 15-18 years old, or earn a monthly income less than or equal to 11,000 baht.

The organizations mentioned above should also plan a campaign of “don’t drink and drive” emphasizing on bus and taxi drivers in order to create drivers’ awareness of don’t drive after drinking. Because taxi and bus drivers are responsible for all passengers’ safety.

2. The Ministry of Public Health, Royal Thai Police, Don’t Drive Drunk Foundation, Thai Health Promotion Foundation and Accident Prevention Network should continuously launch the campaign concerning drinking and driving to build people’s awareness of the harmful effects and dangers of drinking and driving. However, the campaign should be held along with policies and law enforcements.

3. The Ministry of Public Health, Royal Thai Police, Don’t Drive Drunk Foundation, Thai Health Promotion Foundation and Accident Prevention Network responsible for the campaign “don’t drink and drive” should use media such as television, print, and radio as promoting tools. Especially television and radio should be used as the main media to promote the campaign to provide useful information of drink and drive because it could be accessed by both literate and illiterate groups of people with the use of informal language which could easily be understood. Furthermore, owners of television stations, printing press and radio stations should participate in providing needed resources or sponsorship to push forward the campaign.

4. Drinkers should be more aware of the consequence of drinking alcoholic beverages and the dangers of driving after drinking. And they should take a taxi home if drink out.

5. Royal Thai Police should enforce the law to restrict drinking drivers by increasing sobriety checkpoint on roadways, and frequently checking for alcohol content from drinking drivers in order to decrease the number of drinking drivers and accidents from driving after drinking.

Suggestion for Further Study

1. A study of opinion toward drinking and driving of drivers in other areas which socioeconomic status are different such as Tonglor area, Ratchada district, Pattaya city, and etc.

2. A study of factor affecting drinking alcoholic beverages such as alcohol advertisement, environment, or festival should be conducted.

3. A study of drinking alcoholic beverages’ effects on health problems such as liver disease or heart disease and economic loss should be conducted.

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