

# Policy Impacts of Community Liquor Liberalization: A Case Study of Residents and Entrepreneurs in Ranot District, Songkhla Province

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## Abstract

The study examines public knowledge and understanding of Thailand's community liquor liberalization policy, community expectations of becoming model communities, the association between knowledge and expectations, and the policy's impacts on local communities. The study also proposes guidelines to strengthen the promotion of local liquors as a form of soft power. A mixed-methods design was used, combining survey data from 400 residents in Ranot District with semi-structured interviews involving six purposively selected liquor entrepreneurs and one scholar. The findings indicate a fairly good level of policy knowledge and strong expectations of becoming model communities. A positive correlation was found between knowledge and expectations. The policy affects the community in three key areas: economically, by stimulating the local economy and enhancing quality of life; in relation to natural resources, by improving resource use and management; and culturally, by integrating liquor into tourism initiatives. Promotion should emphasize legal support and public relations, particularly local liquor competitions, to develop liquor as a Thai soft-power product.

**Keywords:** Community liquor, Community liquor liberalization policy, Liquor entrepreneurs, Local liquor, Policy

## Introduction

Thailand permits the production of community liquor, a category of distilled alcoholic beverages manufactured at the community level. The products originate from the fermentation of sugar rich agricultural feedstocks including sugarcane, rice, corn, and palmyra palm and then undergo distillation to produce ethanol. Community liquors carry cultural and economic importance because they are grounded in indigenous knowledge, support rural livelihoods, and express regional identities. Their popularity has expanded across all regions of Thailand, yet producers operate within a complex regulatory environment. The regulatory framework is governed by three main laws. The Excise Tax Act B. E. 2560 (2017) introduces demanding licensing procedures and high excise duties, a condition that has pushed many small producers to stop operations or move into informal production. The Ministerial Regulation on the Manufacturing of Alcoholic Beverages B. E. 2565 (2022) obliges

applicants to register as community enterprises and to comply with strict requirements for distillation facilities, which reduces access for smaller producers. The Alcoholic Beverage Control Act B. E. 2551 (2008) enforces advertising restrictions that limit the ability of community liquors to compete with commercial brands. The accumulation of regulatory constraints has, thus, generated growing calls for policy reform that seek to reduce bureaucratic barriers, strengthen competitiveness, and position local spirits as cultural soft power products for domestic and international markets.

The study examines community produced spirits in Songkhla Province in southern Thailand, where demand has increased in recent years. Production is mainly carried out by community enterprises that rely on local resources and long-standing traditions. Palmyra palm sugar from the Sathing Phra Peninsula is a key input, and the peninsula covers four districts, Krasae

Sin, Sathing Phra, Singhanakhon, and Ranot. Producers and consumers associate the qualities of this palm sugar with a distinctive aroma and taste in local liquors, which supports the reputation of Kriya, a well-known sour liquor in the region. Kriya originally referred to a subdistrict in Ranot District, yet the term is now used more broadly for palmyra palm-based liquors from the peninsula. The phrase “as good as Kriya” signals premium quality and carries cultural meaning within local discourse. Consumers describe these liquors as strongly potent with a sweet aroma, and the preference has persisted across generations. Palmyra palm cultivation remains embedded in the social and economic life of Sathing Phra communities, which explains the focus on Ranot District as the area widely regarded as the birthplace of Kriya.

Ranot District operates as a major center for community liquor production and hosts many recognized enterprises and brands, including Ratchanakarn, Tanode, Oi-ing, Nang Riam, and Chang Klab under the Spirit of Songkhla group. The continued popularity of Kriya liquor elevates palmyra based spirits to emblematic products of the district and a source of local pride. The present study examines public opinion on liberalizing the community liquor policy by probing how residents grasp the policy, what reforms they expect, and how they assess possible outcomes. Expected consequences encompass changes in community livelihoods, wider entrepreneurial avenues, and stronger cultural branding. Effective implementation and enforcement of liberalization could recast the economic landscape for local producers and bolster Thailand’s soft power by gaining international recognition for its community spirits.

Within this perspective, the primary objective of the study is to assess public knowledge and understanding of the community liquor liberalization policy, with attention to how ordinary citizens interpret legal requirements, socio economic opportunities, and cultural implications. An examination of public awareness provides a basis for judging whether communities are sufficiently informed to engage with and benefit from the policy. A second objective examines community expectations about becoming a model community under the liberalization framework, given rising aspirations to use liquor production for economic gain, social identity, cultural pride, and

collective recognition at regional and national levels. A third objective analyzes the association between levels of policy knowledge and the degree of expectation toward model community status to determine whether higher awareness aligns with stronger aspirations and community mobilization. The research also evaluates the impacts of policy liberalization on local communities through changes in economic activity, entrepreneurship, cultural continuity, and social well-being. The final objective identifies practical guidelines for improving policy promotion with a focus on positioning local liquors as soft power products that can enhance Thailand’s cultural image and competitiveness in international markets.

The research offers several benefits for communities and policymakers. An immediate contribution lies in a richer public understanding of the liberalization policy because fresh data will explain how residents currently interpret their rules and promises, a foundation that can encourage wider civic participation in decision making and implementation. A second benefit involves clarifying what local groups hope to gain from model community status, information that will help officials align policy delivery with real needs and build trust between the state and community enterprises. A third benefit arises from a detailed account of socio-economic and cultural outcomes linked to the policy, guidance that can support government agencies, entrepreneurs, and civil society in adjusting strategies for more responsive governance. The final benefit comes from practical guidelines for marketing community liquors within Thailand’s soft power agenda so that local economic growth ties closely to cultural branding and the nation can promote its community spirits as distinctive exports with international appeal. Thailand holds a comparative advantage because many of its agricultural resources can be processed into alcoholic beverages, a situation that reinforces the importance of effective policy design and promotion.

### Hypothesis

The public’s knowledge and understanding of the community liquor liberalization policy are related to their expectations of becoming model communities under this policy.

## Community liquor policy in Thailand

### The Liberalization of community liquor: Policy and legal context

Liquor in the community is a natural component of the Thai way of life, particularly in rural society. Locally made and sold, it usually depends on local experience and community-based standards of quality. It is central to religious rituals and traditional festivals and, in some contexts, traditional medicine. The core principles of the community liquor liberalization policy comprise two key aspects: 1) To promote and enable cooperatives, farmer groups, community enterprises, agricultural organizations, and small-scale entrepreneurs to apply for licenses to produce liquor for commercial purposes, without imposing discriminatory criteria, unfair economic monopolies, or undue regulatory burdens. 2) To encourage the utilization of domestically produced agricultural products either as raw materials or as ingredients in the production of all categories of liquors. A major shift occurred in the policy context surrounding local liquor in Thailand during the last decade, especially since the Excise Tax Act B.E. 2560 (2017). Policy intent aimed to liberalize community liquor production by creating legal routes for small scale producers, yet implementation has introduced substantial regulatory barriers. All manufacturers must secure licenses and comply with standards set by the Excise Department. Licensing fees, strict production requirements, and complex procedures have led many small producers to shut down, a result that runs counter to the stated goals of liberalization. A clear gap has emerged between policy goals and regulatory conditions, and the gap carries direct consequences for community livelihoods and public health.

Local liquor liberalization has influenced the health of the population in different ways, especially among youth, working-age individuals, and other vulnerable groups with easier access to alcohol. The aforementioned change in policy has also led to the loss of traditional expertise for making high-quality, safe local spirits as some small-scale producers have withdrawn from the market. In others, this transition has been paired with substitutions to industrially manufactured liquors that could contain approved additives or process aids that affect health matters

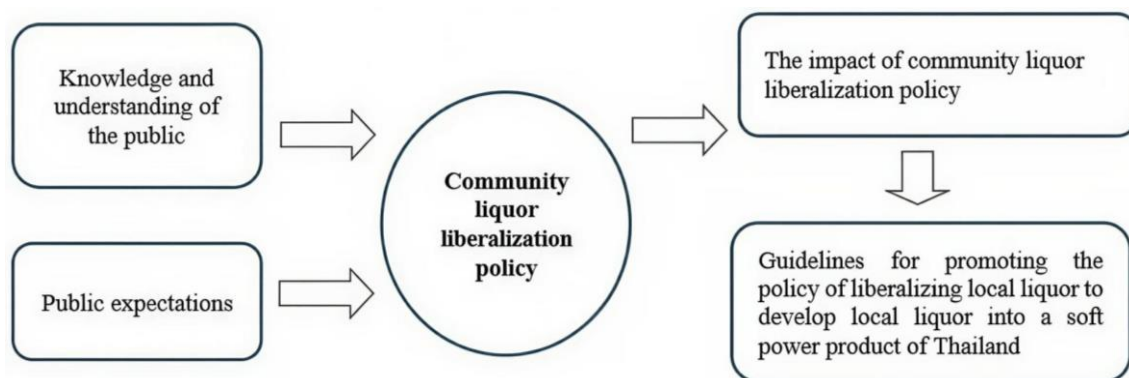
(Bureau of Tobacco and Alcohol Consumption Control, Department of Disease Control, 2021; Chareonphon, 2016; Social Development and Environmental Research Center, 2018).

Most community liquor entrepreneurs are rural dwellers and smallholder farmers who have traditionally derived additional household income from producing traditional spirits manufactured in their respective areas, especially in off-farm agricultural seasons or the dry season. With the new stringent regulatory framework, these entrepreneurs are now subject to the imposition of binding legal restrictions and intense competition from multinational corporations. Overall effects are reduced community income, elimination of traditional livelihood activities, and rural-urban migration.

In essence, Thailand's community liquor liberalization has had far-reaching effects on community socio-economic organization, livelihoods of small-scale producers, and public health. While liberalization can spur economic activity and increase consumer choice, without regulation, it threatens to produce adverse health effects and potentially increase intra-community economic inequality. Therefore, policy-making should balance growth objectives with public health protection by (i) increasing community participation in consumption control, (ii) revising legal frameworks to suit the realities of low-scale manufacturing, and (iii) enhancing public education on the health effects of alcohol drinking.

### Research conceptual framework

Figure 1 illustrates the research conceptual framework for examining the community liquor liberalization policy. The framework demonstrates how two key input factors—knowledge and understanding of the public and public expectations— influence the central phenomenon of the community liquor liberalization policy. The model then projects two primary research outcomes: (1) the impact of the policy on various stakeholders and dimensions, and (2) guidelines for promoting the policy to develop local liquor into a soft power product of Thailand. This conceptual framework guides the research inquiry by mapping the logical relationships between public perceptions, policy implementation, and strategic outcomes.



**Figure 1** Research conceptual framework.

**Source:** Designed by the authors (2025)

### Research methods

This study adopted a mixed-methods design that combined documentary research with field research. Data collection involved the administration of structured questionnaires to residents of Ranot District, Songkhla Province, and the conduct of in-depth interviews with local liquor entrepreneurs.

#### Population, sample, and key informants

##### *Population and sample*

The study population comprised 48,037 residents of Ranot District, Songkhla Province (2023). Yamane's

(1973) formula, which uses a 5% margin of error, determined that the required sample size was 400 respondents. Stratified random sampling was employed. The population was first partitioned into strata, and proportional samples were drawn from each stratum. Within strata, convenience sampling was used at accessible locations to select respondents. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered to residents (e.g., individuals in nearby households) until the target sample size of 400 was reached. The details of the sample size are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1** Number of research samples in Ranot District, Songkhla Province, Classified by Sub-district

| No.          | Sub-district  | Population (People) | Sample Size (People) | Proportion (Percent) |
|--------------|---------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1            | Ranot         | 4,996               | 42                   | 10.5                 |
| 2            | Khlong Daen   | 3,156               | 26                   | 6.5                  |
| 3            | Ta Khria      | 3,918               | 33                   | 8.2                  |
| 4            | Tha Bon       | 8,090               | 67                   | 16.8                 |
| 5            | Ban Mai       | 4,321               | 36                   | 9.0                  |
| 6            | Bo Tru        | 853                 | 7                    | 1.8                  |
| 7            | Pak Trae      | 5,963               | 49                   | 12.2                 |
| 8            | Phang Yang    | 3,327               | 28                   | 7.0                  |
| 9            | Rawa          | 5,158               | 43                   | 10.8                 |
| 10           | Wat Son       | 1,144               | 10                   | 2.5                  |
| 11           | Ban Khao      | 4,491               | 37                   | 9.2                  |
| 12           | Daen Sa-nguan | 2,656               | 22                   | 5.5                  |
| <b>Total</b> |               | <b>48,037</b>       | <b>400</b>           | <b>100.0</b>         |

**Source:** Researcher (2024)

### **Key informants**

Qualitative research tools were selected based on their capacity to address the research objectives effectively. Kerlinger (1986) argued that sound data collection must align closely with stated objectives, while Miles and Huberman (1994) noted that qualitative samples should consist of participants capable of providing rich and detailed accounts of the phenomenon under study. The researcher applied purposive sampling to select local liquor entrepreneurs in Ranot District, with attention given to producers of well-known local liquors. Five entrepreneurs participated in semi-structured, in- depth interviews designed to elicit detailed experiential accounts. Data collection proceeded until saturation occurred, indicated by repeated responses and the absence of new insights, at which point the inclusion of additional participants was halted.

### **Research tools**

The quantitative component used a structured questionnaire to measure public knowledge and understanding of the community liquor liberalization policy and expectations of attaining model community status under the policy. The qualitative component relied on in depth interviews as the main research tool to examine perceived impacts of the policy across social, cultural, and economic domains and to identify guidelines for promoting the policy in ways that position local liquor as a soft power product for Thailand. Data were collected from key informants with direct experience and practical knowledge of local liquor production and community practices. Participant confidentiality was maintained through the use of interviewee codes rather than personal identifiers or pseudonyms, as reported in Table 2.

**Table 2** Code numbers of informant groups.

| <b>Informant Group</b> | <b>Interviewee Code</b> |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Entrepreneur 1         | A01                     |
| Entrepreneur 2         | A02                     |
| Entrepreneur 3         | A03                     |
| Entrepreneur 4         | A04                     |
| Entrepreneur 5         | A05                     |
| Academic               | B01                     |

**Source:** Researcher (2024)

### **Tool validation**

#### **Content validity testing**

The researcher submitted the developed questionnaire to three experts for evaluation, resulting in a content validity index of 0.93.

#### **Reliability testing**

Revisions based on content validity testing preceded an assessment of questionnaire reliability. The instrument reached a reliability coefficient of 0.98, a level regarded as acceptable given that basic research commonly requires a minimum value of 0.80 as noted by Inyai (2010). Validity testing of the qualitative instrument involved expert review and recommendations through a Content Validity Index assessment. The study followed criteria proposed by

Polit and Beck (2006), which set a quality threshold of 0.80 or higher. Results produced a CVI of 1.00, which supported the use of both interview questions in data collection with community liquor entrepreneurs. The findings indicated perfect consistency for each item with an Item Content Validity Index of 1.00, covering questions on the impacts of the community liquor liberalization policy and on approaches for promoting community liquor liberalization to develop local alcohol as a Thai soft power product.

### **Data collection process**

The data collection process was divided into two components. The first involved quantitative data collection, in which the researcher developed a questionnaire for the sample group and analyzed the

responses using a statistical software program. The second involved qualitative data collection, which was conducted through in-depth interviews with key informants.

### Data analysis

Data analysis employed both quantitative and qualitative approaches in line with the mixed methods design and the selected research tools. Quantitative questionnaire data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize demographic characteristics, identify overall trends, and describe the distribution of responses. The descriptive results provided an overview

of participants' knowledge, understanding, and expectations regarding the community liquor liberalization policy. Relationships among the main variables were examined using Pearson's correlation coefficient to determine whether statistically significant associations existed between policy knowledge, expectations of model community designation, and perceptions of potential impacts. The correlation results support an interpretation of how key dimensions of public opinion relate to one another and contribute to community perspectives on the policy. Pearson's correlation coefficients are reported in Table 3.

**Table 3** The analysis of the relationship among public knowledge, understanding of the community liquor liberalization policy, and public expectations toward becoming a model community in accordance with the community liquor liberalization policy in Ranot District, Songkhla Province.

| Variables                                       | X            | X1           | X2           | Y           | Y1          | Y2          |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| X = Knowledge and understanding                 | 1            |              |              |             |             |             |
| X1 = Information about community liquor         | 0.768**      | 1            |              |             |             |             |
| X2 = Policy and laws regarding community liquor | 0.850**      | 0.319**      | 1            |             |             |             |
| Y = Expectations                                | 0.016        | 0.034        | 0.052        | 1           |             |             |
| Y1 = Becoming a model community                 | 0.073        | 0.051        | 0.065        | 0.830**     | 1           |             |
| Y2 = Management                                 | 0.078        | 0.135**      | 0.002        | 0.576**     | 0.021       | 1           |
| <b>Mean</b>                                     | <b>64.91</b> | <b>64.73</b> | <b>65.09</b> | <b>4.32</b> | <b>4.28</b> | <b>4.37</b> |
| <b>S.D.</b>                                     | <b>0.83</b>  | <b>0.91</b>  | <b>1.12</b>  | <b>0.12</b> | <b>0.20</b> | <b>0.14</b> |

\*\*  $p < 0.01$

Based on Table 3, the analysis of the relationship between the public's knowledge and understanding of the community liquor liberalization policy and their expectations toward becoming a model community under the community liquor liberalization policy in Ranot District, Songkhla Province revealed that members of the public and local community liquor entrepreneurs demonstrated a relatively good level of knowledge and understanding of the community liquor liberalization policy in Ranot District, Songkhla Province ( $\bar{x} = 64.91$ , S.D. = 0.83). Among the dimensions assessed, knowledge and understanding of policies and legal regulations related to community liquor were rated highest ( $\bar{x} = 65.09$ , S.D. = 1.12), followed by knowledge of community liquor information ( $\bar{x} = 64.73$ , S.D. = 0.91).

Meanwhile, the overall level of expectations among the public and local community liquor entrepreneurs

regarding becoming a model community in accordance with the community liquor liberalization policy in Ranot District, Songkhla Province was found to be high ( $\bar{x} = 4.32$ , S.D. = 0.12). Most respondents perceived the community liquor liberalization policy in Ranot District, Songkhla Province, to be most prominent in terms of management and administration ( $\bar{x} = 4.37$ , S.D. = 0.14), followed by the dimension of becoming a model community ( $\bar{x} = 4.28$ , S.D. = 0.20). The analysis of the relationship between public knowledge and understanding of the community liquor liberalization policy and expectations for becoming a model community under this policy in Ranot District, Songkhla Province, identified a statistically significant association at the .01 level ( $r = +0.128$ ). Examination of individual dimensions revealed that certain variable pairs exhibited correlations, with coefficients ranging from 0.078 to 0.135. Particularly, knowledge about community

liquor (X1) demonstrated a low but significant correlation with expectations for becoming a model community in terms of management and administration Y2) ( $r = +0.135$ ). These results support the research hypothesis, confirming that public knowledge and understanding of the community liquor liberalization policy are significantly associated with expectations for becoming a model community under this policy.

Qualitative data were collected through in depth interviews with key informants from local community members, entrepreneurs, and other stakeholders. Each session was audio recorded to capture participants' accounts accurately and to support careful interpretation during analysis. The interview protocol underwent expert review before data collection to confirm the clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of the questions, a step that strengthened credibility and reduced risks of bias in the interview process. The interview data were analyzed using content analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns across responses. The analysis followed a systematic process of classification, coding, and categorization of textual data to develop themes related to community knowledge, expectations, and perceived impacts of the liberalization policy. The resulting thematic structure provided a detailed account of how people interpret the policy in practice and supported an integrated report that links quantitative trends with lived experiences.

### **Ethical approval of human research**

This study received ethical approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee of Songkhla Rajabhat University, under certificate number COE No. 042/2024, valid from 24 June 2024 to 24 June 2025.

### **Results**

The researchers summarized the results into six main areas, as follows:

#### **General information of the respondents**

The analysis of respondents' general characteristics revealed that the majority were female, comprising 212 individuals (53%). Regarding age distribution, the largest group consisted of respondents aged between 41 and 60 years old (189 individuals, 47.3%). In terms of educational attainment, a significant proportion held a bachelor's degree (140 individuals,

35%), indicating a relatively high level of formal education within the sample.

Occupational data revealed that the largest segment of respondents (115 individuals, 28.7%) were engaged in small-scale trading or freelance work, suggesting that many participants were involved in informal or self-employed economic activities. In terms of income, the majority (162 respondents, 40.5%) reported earning between 30,001 and 40,000 baht per month, representing a middle-income bracket within the local context. Geographically, Tha Bon Subdistrict, home to 67 individuals (16.8%), had the highest concentration of respondents.

Overall, these findings highlight a respondent profile characterized by middle-aged, predominantly female participants with relatively high levels of education, concentrated in small-scale economic activities and middle-income households, and geographically clustered in Tha Bon Subdistrict.

#### **Knowledge and understanding of the community liquor liberalization policy**

Respondents' knowledge and understanding of the community liquor liberalization policy were assessed in two dimensions: (1) general information about community liquor, and (2) knowledge of relevant policies and laws. Overall, the findings revealed that most respondents (64.91%) possessed a fairly good level of knowledge, suggesting a moderate degree of public awareness regarding both the product and its regulatory framework. Nearly all respondents (99.8%) correctly recognized that community liquor must be legally produced in facilities licensed by the Excise Department, reflecting strong awareness of formal production requirements. By contrast, only a small proportion of respondents (32 individuals, 8.0%) demonstrated a low level of knowledge, indicating that knowledge gaps persist among certain segments of the community.

#### **The public's expectations of becoming a model community under the community liquor liberalization policy**

The overall expectation of becoming a model community in line with the community liquor liberalization policy was found to be at a high level ( $\bar{x} = 4.32$ , S.D. = 0.12). This was analyzed across two

aspects: (1) Community Development Aspect: The overall expectation for the community as a model was high ( $\bar{x} = 4.28$ , S.D. = 0.20). Among individual items, respondents rated the contribution of community liquor to managing natural resources for appropriate utilization the highest, with a mean score of 4.85 (S.D. = 0.36). (2) Management Aspect: The overall expectation regarding management was also high ( $\bar{x} = 4.37$ , S.D. = 0.14). For individual items, respondents considered that the community liquor liberalization policy would require support and assistance from various agencies, most importantly, with the highest mean score of 4.93 (S.D. = 0.26).

**The relationship between the public's knowledge and understanding of the community liquor liberalization policy and the public's expectations of being a model community under the community liquor liberalization policy in Ranot District, Songkhla Province**

The analysis of the relationship between respondents' knowledge and understanding of the community liquor liberalization policy and their expectations of becoming a model community in Ranot District, Songkhla Province, indicated no significant overall association. This suggests that, in general, higher levels of knowledge and understanding of the policy did not necessarily translate into stronger expectations of model- community designation. However, when individual aspects were examined, a limited relationship was observed. Specifically, knowledge of community liquor information (X1) was found to be related to expectations of becoming a model community under the liberalization policy in the dimension of community management (Y2). Despite being statistically identified, the strength of this relationship was very weak, with a correlation coefficient of  $r = 0.135$ . This finding highlights that knowledge alone may play only a marginal role in shaping community expectations, and other social, cultural, or economic factors may exert greater influence.

**The impact of the community liquor liberalization policy on the public**

***Economic impact***

Designating Ranot District as a model community for community liquor production is expected to generate

significant economic benefits at both household and community levels. The production and distribution of local liquor can stimulate economic activity, create employment opportunities, and enhance residents' quality of life. By promoting the equitable distribution of income, community liquor enterprises have the potential to establish Ranot as a well-recognized model of economic sustainability. Moreover, with consistent government support, these products could be developed to meet international standards, thereby expanding market access and contributing to Thailand's broader economic and cultural branding.

The qualitative findings reinforce this perspective. One key informant (A04, interview, February 10, 2025) emphasized that the promotion of community liquor has already created meaningful opportunities for local economic development: "Promoting in this way is already beneficial. It creates opportunities for the community to produce and support the village economy. Resources such as the palmyra palm, sugarcane, and other fruits provide income for residents. Community members can gain diverse knowledge and assist each other in developing careers. Each liquor enterprise generates jobs, and we plan to expand sales to other areas to attract visitors and tourists, encouraging them to consume products produced within the community."

This testimony highlights how local resources, particularly the palmyra palm, play a central role in community- based production. Beyond income generation, the process encourages knowledge sharing, mutual support, and entrepreneurship among residents. Liquor enterprises not only diversify livelihoods but also contribute to rural tourism by attracting visitors interested in experiencing locally produced beverages. These dynamics illustrate how community liquor functions as both an economic driver and a vehicle for sustainable local development.

***Impact on natural resources***

Alongside the economic benefits derived from the community liquor liberalization policy, significant impacts on natural resource utilization have also been observed. The transformation of agricultural products into distilled liquor provides a practical means of managing and adding value to local resources, thereby contributing to their sustainable use. Rather than leaving raw materials underutilized or sold at low market prices,

agricultural produce such as sugarcane, palmyra palm, and various fruits are repurposed into higher-value products, ensuring that local biodiversity directly supports community livelihoods.

This perspective was reinforced by an agricultural scholar (B01, interview, January 8, 2025), who emphasized Thailand's exceptional biodiversity, describing the country as "a unique region, abundant in plant diversity and one of the most biodiverse countries in Southeast Asia." He further noted the innovative use of fruits and vegetables in spirit production: "In the past, villagers drank distilled spirits that emphasized the original flavors. Later, they developed additional flavors, incorporating fruits such as cantaloupe, apple, and orange, resulting in a variety of fruit-based spirits. If further development allows for blending, it opens opportunities to create spirits with diverse colors and flavors, similar to the variety seen in cars, different models, engines, and brands, allowing consumers to choose according to their preferences and tastes."

This testimony points out how natural resource use is not limited to traditional production but is evolving through innovation. The diversification of ingredients contributes to sustainable resource management by broadening the range of crops utilized, reducing dependency on a single raw material, and encouraging the cultivation of multiple plant species. Such practices align with principles of sustainable rural development, as they simultaneously preserve biodiversity, enhance agricultural value chains, and expand consumer choice in the marketplace.

### ***Impact on cultural tourism***

The production of community liquor has the potential to significantly enrich cultural tourism by fostering creativity and innovation among the younger generation. Beyond traditional recipes, new flavors and modern presentation styles can be developed, drawing inspiration from practices in other countries where farmers and villagers have successfully transformed agricultural resources into unique, regionally branded liquors. Such initiatives can be strategically integrated with cultural tourism, for instance, by offering community liquor as souvenirs at tourist destinations, creating homestay accommodations for visitors interested in observing or participating in the production process, and designing cultural activities that combine

local traditions with experiential tourism. These initiatives not only highlight local identity but also expand opportunities for communities to capture value from tourism markets.

This perspective was echoed by one key informant (A03, interview, January 27, 2025), who stressed the importance of linking community liquor culture with tourism to stimulate the grassroots economy and provide employment opportunities, particularly for unemployed residents. As the informant explained: "I believe promoting community liquor has many positive effects. Past experiences have shown that it does not have negative impacts on lower communities. It requires a shift from traditional ways of thinking. Many businesses now face new technologies, so we must adapt and develop. Livelihoods, occupations, and consumption patterns have all changed. Modern people need to be self-reliant and make use of the resources within their communities. Unemployed urban residents returning to rural areas often lack salaries, creating difficult situations. By supporting them in their communities, they can sustain themselves, consume locally, and reduce dependence on outside purchases. This helps keep money circulating within the community, reduces debt, and allows people to support themselves and their families. This is highly beneficial."

The cultural value of community liquor as a regional beverage was also highlighted by the same informant, who noted that local liquor should be appreciated as part of culinary and cultural heritage: "Wherever I go, I prefer drinking local beverages rather than famous brands. I enjoy tasting local food and drinks, and I seek out products that are locally produced and of high quality. Local liquor should be appreciated in the same way as Chinese tea, Japanese sake, Western or European wine, or even specialty coffee from another country; it is part of local culture and cuisine. I hope that people and government authorities understand that local liquor is a food or drink, not a vice or merely an intoxicant. It can be promoted responsibly, in moderation, as a cultural and culinary product."

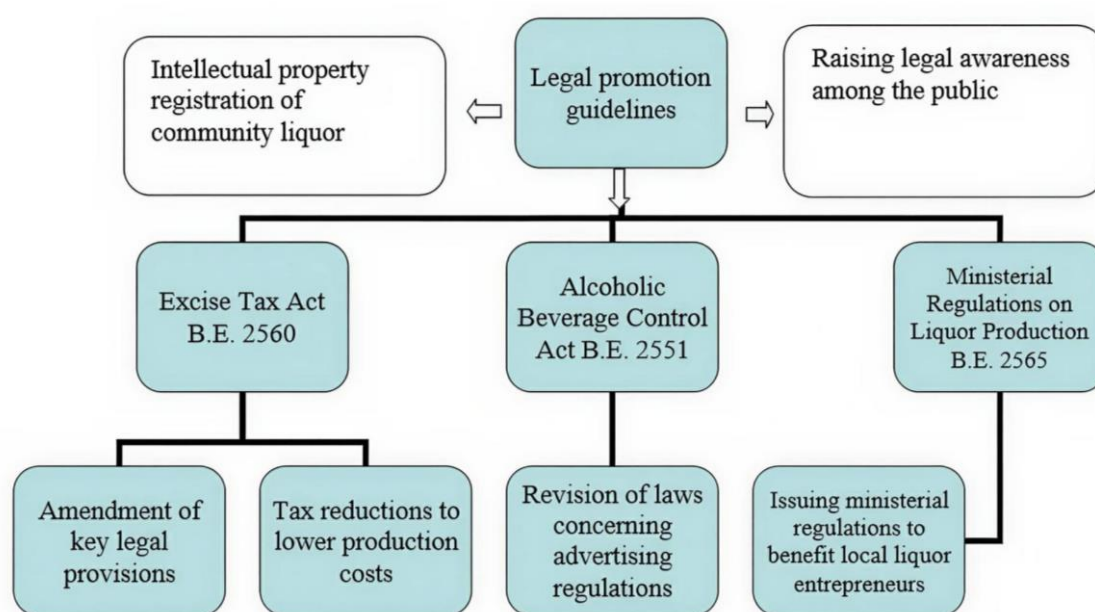
Overall, these insights stress the dual role of community liquor in both cultural preservation and tourism development. When responsibly promoted, local liquor can move beyond being perceived solely as an intoxicant and instead serve as a cultural product that embodies heritage, supports self-reliance, and attracts

both domestic and international visitors. Such an approach not only diversifies rural economies but also strengthens Thailand's cultural soft power on the global stage.

### **Guidelines for promoting the local liquor liberalization policy to further develop local liquor as a soft power product of Thailand**

Legal promotion of community liquor may involve amending key aspects of existing legislation, such as the Excise Tax Act B.E. 2560 (2017) to

streamline licensing procedures, and the Alcoholic Beverage Control Act B.E. 2551 (2008), particularly Section 32, which provides broad guidelines but lacks clear specifications regarding advertising restrictions. This ambiguity has caused confusion and misunderstandings among the public and business entrepreneurs. More precise legislation, including the issuance of relevant ministerial regulations, would enable coordinated action across all sectors and be more supportive of local liquor entrepreneurs (Figure 2).



**Figure 2** Guidelines for legal promotion of community liquor.

**Source:** designed by the authors (2025)

Thai local liquors can also be promoted through intellectual property registration because of their

cultural and economic value to local communities. Recognition of community liquors as a form of industrial property would provide legal protection and support their development. Each community product could be registered under a petty patent, a government issued document that protects practical inventions with limited novelty. Petty patent protection suits community liquor production because the process often involves useful technical knowledge that does not meet full patent requirements while still contributing to technological development in Thailand.

### **Public relations guidelines: Promoting local liquor contests**

Promoting local liquor as a distinctive provincial product can enhance its recognition and appeal. Premium- grade Thai local liquors are increasingly popular among consumers nationwide. Government support and promotion through public relations at the provincial or national level, particularly in conjunction with tourism initiatives, could further increase the popularity and visibility of these products.

## Discussion

The findings were discussed based on the research objectives as follows:

### **Public opinion on knowledge and understanding of the community- liquor liberalization policy.**

The study found that the knowledge and understanding of the community liquor liberalization policy among residents of Ranot District, Songkhla Province, were generally at a relatively good level. This can be attributed to the fact that the district is a longstanding center of community liquor production, where local people have accumulated practical experience and traditional wisdom regarding distillation processes. Such contextual familiarity has contributed to a deeper awareness of community liquor and its cultural and economic significance. This result aligns with Gorddarda et al. (2016), who emphasized that values, norms, and local knowledge play a crucial role in shaping individuals' decisions to adapt to and accept changes within evolving social contexts. In a similar vein, the recognition of community liquor as a distinctive community product demonstrates the community's ability to adapt traditional practices to contemporary policy frameworks.

Nonetheless, the findings also emphasize the continuing need for relevant organizations to strengthen accurate knowledge and understanding of the legal and technical aspects of liquor production, distribution, and consumption. Without such reinforcement, communities risk depending solely on inherited practices that may not fully align with current regulations or scientific standards. Integrating accurate, up-to-date knowledge with traditional wisdom will ensure that production methods remain both legally compliant and culturally authentic, enabling community liquor to develop in a sustainable and responsible manner.

### **Public's expectations of becoming a model community under the community liquor liberalization policy.**

Overall, the public's expectations of becoming a model community under the community liquor liberalization policy in Ranot District, Songkhla Province, were found to be at a high level. This reflects the perception that a model community represents a

successful and exemplary case, capable of serving as a guideline for other communities to adapt and apply in their own contexts. Residents in Ranot therefore anticipate that their community will be granted such recognition, as it would not only enhance local visibility but also contribute to improving the overall well-being of the population through economic and social benefits.

The result aligns with Intawong (2017), who examined community perceptions of corporate social responsibility programs in beer businesses in Northeastern Thailand. That study reported high community expectations toward CSR initiatives, a pattern comparable to the strong expectations expressed by Ranot residents regarding model community status in liquor production. In both contexts, communities regard the initiatives as pathways for local development and improvements in quality of life.

Nonetheless, achieving and sustaining such status requires proper and transparent management. Without clear regulatory oversight and responsible practices, the development of a model liquor community risks being undermined by negative perceptions of alcohol production as potentially illegal or harmful to consumer health. Therefore, balancing effective governance, community participation, and public health considerations is critical to ensuring that model-community designation yields long-term benefits while maintaining social legitimacy.

### **The relationship between policy knowledge/ understanding and expectations of model-community designation.**

The study revealed that the public's knowledge and understanding of the community liquor liberalization policy did not significantly correlate with their expectations of becoming a model community under the same policy. One possible explanation is that the government has not adequately stimulated the national economy or communicated effectively with grassroots populations regarding the role of local wisdom in shaping soft power development. As Nye (2004) argues, soft power emerges from the ability of local communities to drive change through cultural assets, traditions, and creativity, which, when supported by technology, can enhance the development of arts and culture within contemporary economies. Similarly, Qing and Wong (2024) demonstrated that expectations

act as a mediating factor between product knowledge, food safety, and purchase intention in the context of consumer behavior in China. Their findings suggest that expectations may be influenced by multiple factors beyond knowledge alone, which helps explain why knowledge of liquor policies in Ranot District did not directly translate into heightened expectations of model-community designation.

In examining the impacts of the community liquor liberalization policy, the study found that wider social acceptance of local liquor, combined with stronger government support, could significantly advance the development of Thai liquor enterprises. Media coverage has already highlighted the unique characteristics of Thai liquors, which extend beyond their recreational use to culinary applications and traditional medicinal practices based on herbal ingredients. Nevertheless, restrictive legislation and the monopolization of production by a small number of large companies have constrained the recognition, branding, and distribution of Thai liquors, confining them largely to rural areas and small communities. This limited exposure undermines the potential of Thai liquors to serve as cultural and economic assets on a larger scale.

Community liquor distillation, nevertheless, represents a form of traditional wisdom transmitted across generations, deeply embedded in Thailand's cultural fabric. To transform this heritage into a source of national soft power, substantial legal and policy reforms are required. Existing frameworks, including the Excise Act B. E. 2560 (2017), the Ministerial Regulation on the Manufacturing of Alcoholic Beverages B. E. 2565 (2022), and the Alcoholic Beverage Control Act B.E. 2551 (2008), currently pose significant obstacles to small-scale producers and hinder innovation. Revising these laws to reduce monopolistic control and lower barriers for community enterprises would foster more equitable participation in the market. Additionally, greater efforts should be devoted to enhancing public understanding of relevant legislation, supporting the registration of intellectual property rights for local liquor brands, and organizing competitions to showcase regional liquors. Such measures would not only promote legal compliance and product recognition but also help position Thai community liquors as culturally distinctive products with the potential to

strengthen the country's soft power on both domestic and international stages.

The findings of this study suggest that there should be greater public promotion of knowledge and understanding of government policies, particularly regarding their potential impacts on people's livelihoods and ways of life. With respect to preserving local wisdom in community liquor production, this is consistent with constitutional principles. Specifically, one of the fundamental duties of local citizens is to collectively conserve or revitalize local traditions, indigenous knowledge, and valuable local and national arts and culture, as well as to participate in the management, maintenance, and sustainable utilization of natural resources and the environment in a balanced and sustainable manner. Such participation serves as a fundamental mechanism for enhancing public participation. In relation to the impacts resulting from the liberalization of community liquor, it is essential that local residents are informed of their rights to access information, explanations, and justifications from government agencies before any projects or activities are authorized or implemented that could affect environmental quality, public health, quality of life, or other significant interests of individuals or local communities. Moreover, residents possess the right to present their opinions to relevant authorities for consideration during the decision-making process. These rights form a fundamental basis for enabling the public to understand and exercise their constitutional entitlements.

Moreover, Irvin and Stansbury (2004) argue that a significant benefit of public participation is the distribution of responsibility, which reduces the extent to which government decision makers are solely blamed when decisions yield negative outcomes. To sum up, it is essential that all sectors of society acknowledge the significance of public participation. Public participation is defined as a process in which citizens or stakeholders are given opportunities to express their perspectives and exchange information and opinions to explore alternatives and make decisions about projects that are suitable and mutually acceptable. Consequently, all relevant parties should be engaged in this process from the initial stage through monitoring and evaluation to promote mutual understanding, increased awareness, collective learning, and the collaborative adaptation of

projects. If the government seeks to promote the community liquor liberalization policy to develop local spirits as a form of Thailand's soft power, it is essential that people in affected areas share a common understanding, as such awareness would benefit all stakeholders. Beyond enhancing the prudence of decision-making by project proponents or the government and ensuring closer alignment with public problems and needs, this shared understanding also serves as a mechanism for overseeing government administration, ensuring transparency, responsiveness to public concerns and needs, and accountability to the public. Moreover, participation may thus be particularly important for trust when policy fails. In contrast, when policy is successful, the legitimacy enhancing effect of public participation may be diminished. Although participation is likely to exert a positive influence on trust even when policy outcomes are good, the procedural legitimacy that participation bestows on decision-making may be less salient in these cases (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2002). The author argues that if the policy proves to be beneficial to stakeholders involved in community liquor production, it is highly likely that the policy will receive broad support from all sectors.

Although the community liquor liberalization policy may generate positive outcomes for stakeholders involved in local liquor production, such as farmers, community liquor producers, and small and medium-sized enterprises, by increasing income opportunities, it may also give rise to multiple potential adverse consequences due to increased access to liquor. Under this policy, small-scale producers are legally permitted to produce liquor for household consumption and distribute it more easily without requiring large-scale production capacity. Expanded access to alcoholic beverages may pose risks to public health because higher consumption is linked to conditions including liver disease, cardiovascular disease, and cancer. Social safety concerns may also arise through higher risks of crime, verbal and physical violence, and community disturbances. Road safety may decline as increased consumption raises the likelihood of driving under the influence and traffic accidents. Production standards present another concern because small-scale producers may lack sufficient hygiene and quality control, which can place consumer safety at risk. Easier access to

alcoholic beverages may also increase exposure among youth. Issues identified in the analysis indicate a need for careful government consideration of both potential benefits and adverse outcomes prior to policy implementation. Responsibility rests with the state to balance competing concerns in ways that support sustainable social outcomes.

## Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, we have provided recommendations for development to apply the research findings to practice. Our focus is on the potential development of Thai local liquor in accordance with the BCG Model, which promotes an integrated approach to economic growth. This model aims to simultaneously advance the economy across three specific dimensions:

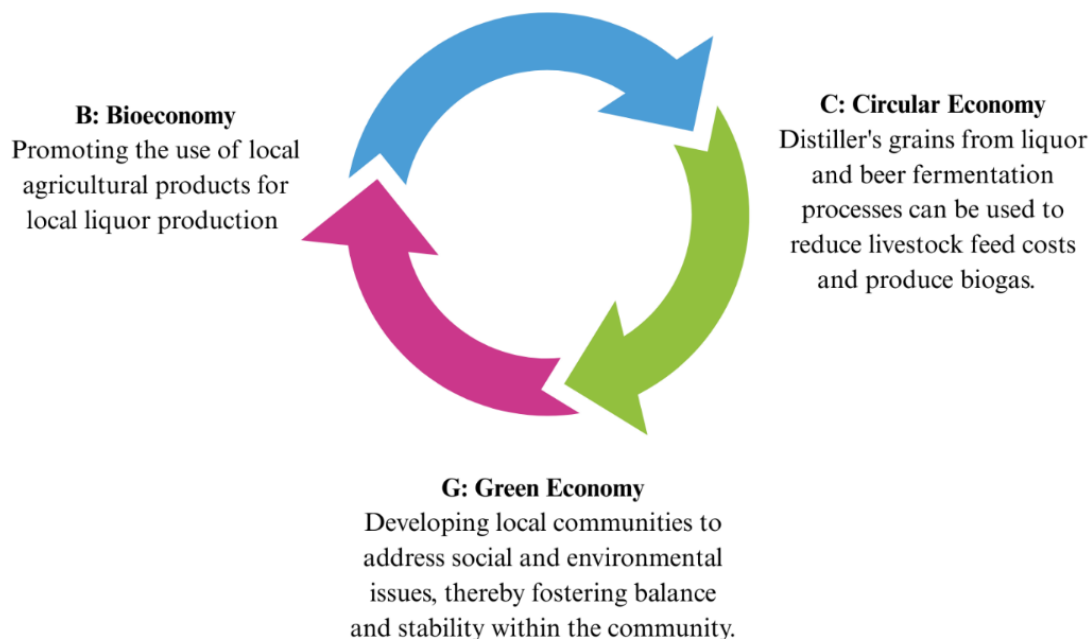
1. Bioeconomy - The bioeconomy emphasizes the use of biological resources to create added value, focusing on the development of high-value products. In this context, palmyra palm is regarded as a key raw material of the Sathing Phra Peninsula, as it has been used in local liquor production. Notably, Kriya" (sour liquor), has been renowned for generations in Ranot District, Songkhla Province.

2. Circular economy - The bioeconomic system is closely linked to the concept of the circular economy, which seeks to maximize the reuse of materials. For example, distiller's grains from liquor and beer fermentation processes can be used to reduce livestock feed costs, produce biogas. In addition, the herbs and spices contained in fermentation starters function to select and inhibit microorganisms involved in rice-based liquor fermentation. Furthermore, spent wash can be utilized for both energy generation and agricultural purposes (Lakool & Phoochinda, 2020).

3. Green economy - The study revealed that liquor production exists across all regions of Thailand, using a wide variety of plants to create diverse flavors of local liquor. This is because Thailand's advantage derived from its biodiversity and cultural diversity can be transformed into competitiveness through innovation, thereby fostering a growing and globally competitive BCG economy. Accordingly, Thai local liquor contributes to income distribution within communities, reduces inequality, strengthens community resilience, and promotes environmental sustainability and sustainable development.

According to the development of the three economic dimensions discussed above, the researcher proposes a model for the development of Thai local

liquor that may be advanced based on BCG model, as shown in Figure 3.



**Figure 3** The development of Thai local liquor under the BCG Model

**Source:** designed by the authors (2025)

### Recommendation for further research

Recommendations for further research include three directions. First, future studies should survey consumers to examine awareness, acceptance, and perceptions of prototype community spirit products. Second, research should analyze management approaches for model communities under community spirit liberalization policies with attention to building distinctive community characteristics that align with local natural resource management practices. Third, studies should investigate development strategies for local spirits across different regions to build a knowledge base that supports the advancement of local spirits as Thailand's soft power commodities.

### Declaration of Generative AI in Scientific Writing

No artificial intelligence or machine learning tools were used in the writing, editing, or data analysis phases of this manuscript.

### CRedit author statement

**Chandaeng, P:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Supervision, Writing- Original draft preparation, Writing- Reviewing and Editing, Project administration, Funding acquisition. **Wattatham, S:** Data curation, Validation, Formal analysis, Investigation., Validation, Resources, Funding acquisition

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