

## Who could tie the knot in the Golden Peninsula?

- Southeast Asia (SEA) beer markets are attractive with combined manufacturer sales value of USD22bn and potential for >15% annual volume growth in certain countries for the next 3-5 years
- Armed with minimum USD1bn in capital, global brewers could be keen to invest in SEA to introduce their fresh, aspirational, premium brand portfolio
- Partial partnership is likely the best risk-to-reward entry route for interested brewers with ambitions to gain immediate access to SEA
- [ThaiBev](#) stands out as the most attractive SEA partner; a global brewer partnership could be a major re-rating catalyst

**SEA is a significant beer market with pockets of attractive opportunities.** With combined manufacturer sales value of USD22bn in 2023, equivalent to 40% of China's and 30% of the USA's, SEA is a sizable market. Vietnam and Thailand stand out as the two largest markets, with estimated market sales value of USD6.5bn and USD5.1bn, respectively. Notably, SEA houses some of the few remaining countries in the world with high potential for volume growth, given >15% pre-COVID five-year 2014-2019 CAGR, such as Myanmar and Cambodia.

**Brewers keen to enter SEA are flushed with capital and can bring value with their premium portfolio.** We identified several brewers who could be keen to enter SEA given their interest in bidding for Sabeco (Vietnam brewery) back in 2017 and currently actively looking out for M&A opportunities. These brewers have an estimated investment capacity of USD1.3bn to USD10.8bn, which could be utilised for their SEA entry or expansion. Apart from capital, they bring along a portfolio of premium brands. These brands could be positioned as fresh, aspirational brands to drive the next leg of growth in more mature beer markets like Thailand. In addition, they could expand margins and accelerate profitability growth, as seen in our case study of Heineken-CR Beer in China.

**ThaiBev well-positioned to partner with a global brewer, which will be a major re-rating catalyst.** ThaiBev stands out as the ideal partner with its localised knowledge, established distribution channels and brewing infrastructure in multiple sizable beer markets (Thailand and Vietnam) and emerging presence in fast-growing beer markets (Myanmar and Cambodia). A brewery partnership could likely be well received by the market and revive its BeerCo IPO at an attractive valuation, which could turn out to be a re-rating catalyst for the company.

### Analysts

Zheng Feng CHEE ,zhengfengchee@db.com

Andy SIM, CFA, andysim@db.com

Clement Xu, clementxu@db.com

### STOCKS

	Price LCY	Mkt Cap USDmn	12-mth		Rating
			Target Price LCY	Performance (%) 3 mth 12 mth	
<a href="#">Thai Beverage Public Company</a>	0.51	9,137	0.69	1.0 (11.3)	BUY
<a href="#">Budweiser Brewing Company APAC</a>	9.40	18,610	19.00	(27.5) (55.3)	BUY
<a href="#">Anheuser-Busch Inbev</a>	56.76	120,900	67.00	(2.1) 11.2	BUY
<a href="#">Heineken</a>	94.40	57,360	116.00	9.0 1.6	BUY
<a href="#">Asahi Group</a>	5,865	18,970	6,700	11.2 2.3	BUY
<a href="#">Kirin</a>	2,189	11,440	2,270	6.4 3.8	HOLD

Source: DBS, DBS HK, Bloomberg

Closing price as of 11 Jun 2024

### Summary of key SEA beer market metrics

Country	Value in USD mn	Volume in mn L	Consumption in L per capita	CR <sub>3</sub>
<b>Vietnam</b>	<b>6,462</b>	<b>4,840</b>	<b>43.1</b>	<b>86%</b>
Thailand	5,069	2,017	30.4	95%
Philippines	3,977	2,296	21.5	100%
<b>Cambodia</b>	<b>2,333</b>	<b>1,295</b>	<b>77.2</b>	<b>76%</b>
Malaysia	1,112	210	5.8	97%
Indonesia	930	280	1.1	76%
Singapore	862	136	24.2	73%
<b>Myanmar</b>	<b>747</b>	<b>329</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>66%</b>
Laos	327	393	55.7	100%

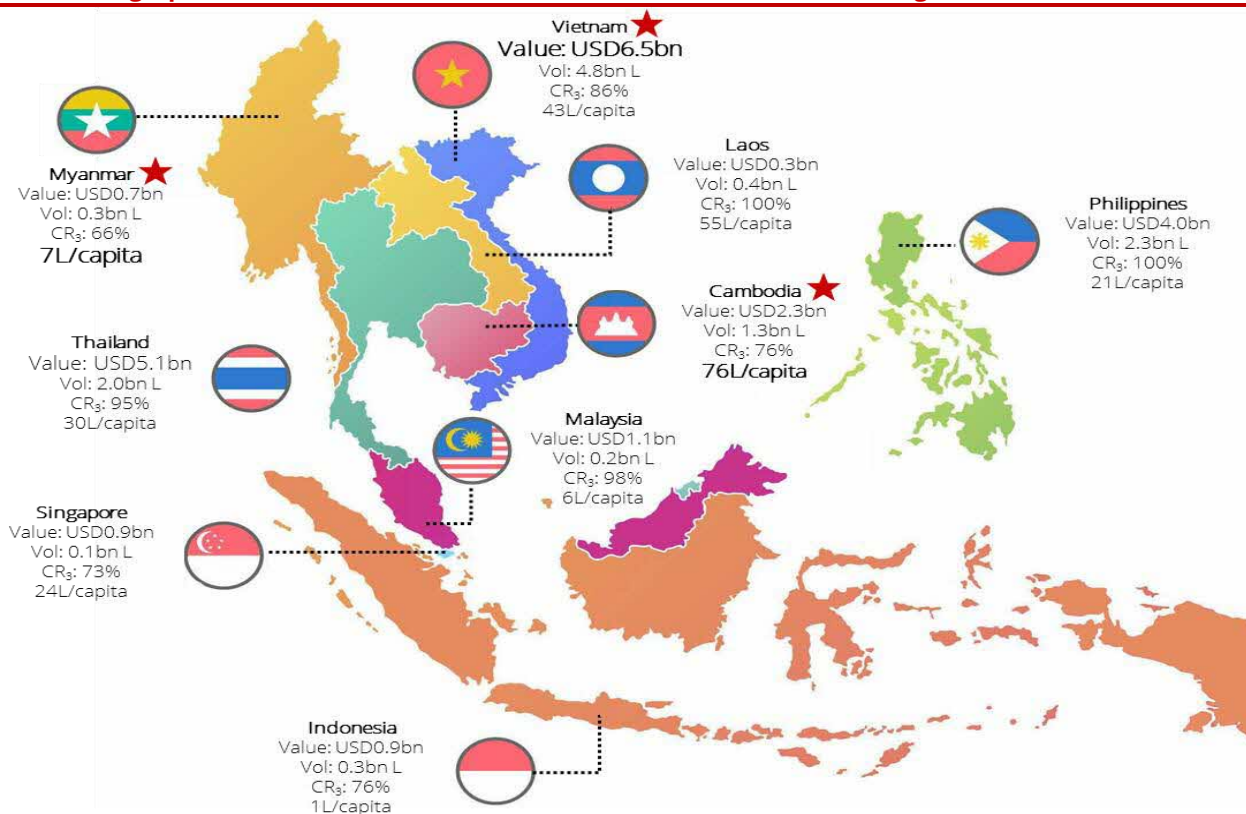
Source: Euromonitor (2023), DBS (note: Value refers to total manufacturer revenue; CR<sub>3</sub> refers to combined market share of top 3 players; attractive markets highlighted in grey)

**What is the current state of the beer market in Southeast Asia (SEA)?**

We believe an attractive market has the following criteria: (i) Significant market size and (ii) potential for fast growth. In addition, we rate monopolistic markets as less attractive given the high barriers to entry due to the initial capital

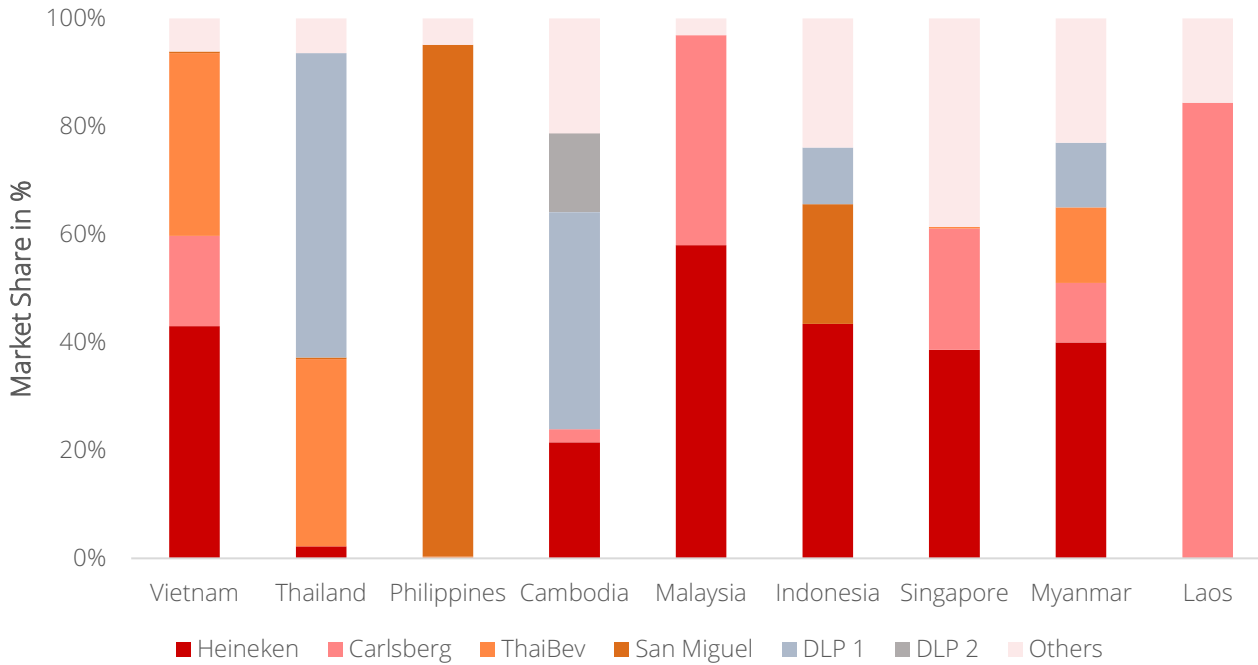
outlay and limited incentive to partner with an outsider. Based on our findings, we identified three key markets in SEA, which would be attractive from the perspective of a new entrant brewer: Vietnam, Cambodia, and Myanmar. We summarise the key highlights of the various markets in Diagram 1, Chart 1, and Table 1

**Diagram 1: Geographic overview of SEA beer markets with starred countries being attractive markets**



Source: Euromonitor (2023), DBS (note: CR<sub>3</sub> refers to concentration ratio of top 3 players, which is calculated using the total volume share of top 3 players) (image sourced from Freepik)

**Chart 1: Market share of SEA markets reveal (i) highly concentrated markets (top 3 players having >70% market share), (ii) Heineken and Carlsberg being present in multiple key markets, and (iii) San Miguel and Thai Beverage being the only two brewers with sizable presence outside their home countries**



Source: Euromonitor (2023), DBS (note: DLP refers to dominant local player with >10% market share; Carlsberg's market share in Vietnam includes share of Habeco, which it has a minority stake in; Heineken's market share includes Diageo's market share, as Heineken has a brewing license for Guinness in Malaysia; countries sorted by market size)

**Table 1: Overview of attractiveness of various Southeast Asian beer markets**

Countries	Value CAGR (2014-2019)	Vol CAGR (2014-2019)	Price CAGR (2014-2019)	Attractiveness	Commentary
Vietnam	9.1%	7.2%	1.9%	High	Largest beer market in SEA with decent headroom for volume growth
Thailand	7.3%	2.2%	5.1%	Medium	Second largest beer market, but facing tapering volume growth
Philippines	11.4%	10.7%	0.7%	Medium	Essentially a single-player market, but has strong volume growth to support new entries and/or growth of smaller players
Cambodia	15.3%	15.6%	-0.3%	High	High-volume growth market, albeit with fierce price competition
Malaysia	7.3%	5.3%	2.0%	Medium	~64% Muslim population, prohibited from alcohol consumption
Indonesia	4.9%	3.8%	1.1%	Medium	~87% Muslim population, prohibited from alcohol consumption
Singapore	1.5%	1.6%	-0.1%	Low	Beer brands can easily compete via import route
Myanmar	26.3%	18.9%	7.4%	High	High-growth emerging market
Laos	3.6%	5.1%	-1.5%	Low	Essentially a single-player market

Source: Euromonitor (2023), CIA The World Fact Book, DBS (note: Value refers to total manufacturer revenue and denominated in USD)

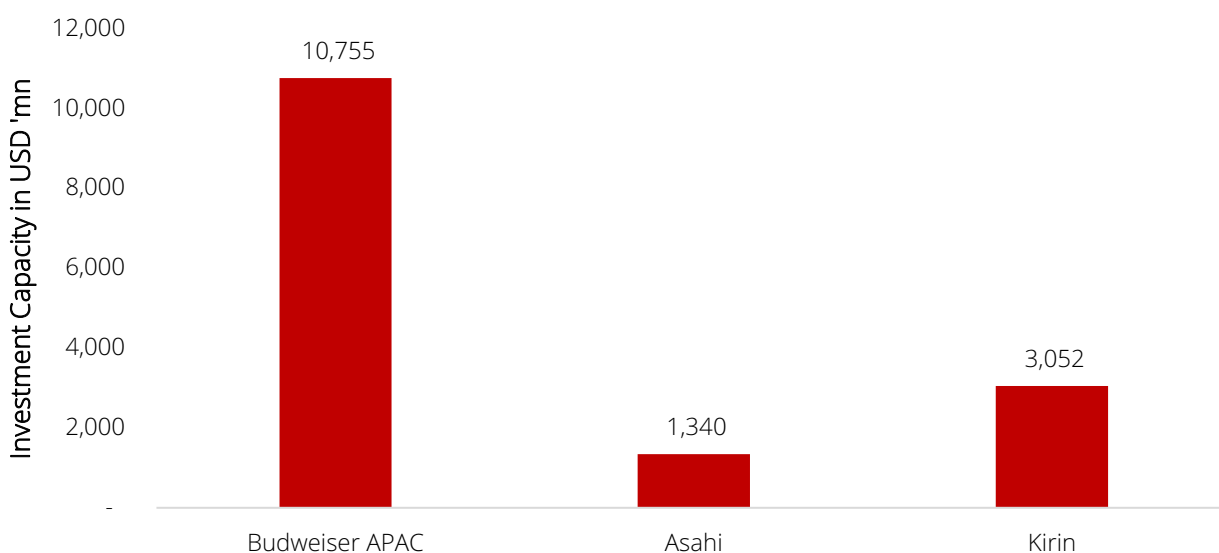
**Who are keen to enter/expand in the SEA markets?**

We looked at the list of bidders for Sabeco (Vietnam brewery) in 2017 to narrow down the global brewers who could be keen to enter the SEA market. We excluded Heineken and Carlsberg given their already sizable presence in the region. The remaining brewers include Anheuser-Busch InBev (ABI), Asahi, Kirin, Boon Rawd, and San Miguel.

By reviewing recent earnings calls and speaking with management to identify interest in merger and acquisitions, we further narrowed the list to three key players: Budweiser APAC (ABI's Asian subsidiary), Asahi and Kirin, who are likely interested in expanding into SEA.

Out of these, Budweiser APAC stands out, with significantly higher investment capacity relative to its peers, a result of net cash position at listing, significant free cash flow generation and no major capex/acquisitions since listing. On the other side of the spectrum, we have Asahi, which has the lowest investment capacity, as the company is still working through the additional debt it took to fund the USD11bn Carlton & United Breweries acquisition back in 2020.

**Chart 2: ABI stands out as the brewer with significant financial muscle while Asahi lags behind, as it levered up significantly to acquire Carlton & United Breweries back in 2020**



Source: Refinitiv, DBS (note: Investment capacity calculated based on additional debt headroom should the company leverage up to 3x net debt to EBITDA)

### What are the potential routes to enter SEA markets?

We believe that there are three key routes to entering a new market: Greenfield, licensing, or brownfield, as summarised in Table 2.

**Table 2: Overview of various strategies of entry into new markets**

Entry Strategies		Pros	Cons	Example
Greenfield	Independent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Ease of decision-making</li> <li>✓ Capture entire pool of profits</li> <li>✓ Cheaper relative to acquiring an established business</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>× Long lead time to secure required regulatory approvals</li> <li>× Uncertain path to profitability on top of significant capex and startup losses</li> </ul>	Bira (India)
	Joint venture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Localised knowledge/contacts to reduce regulatory, distribution, and marketing risks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>× High potential for conflicts</li> <li>× High capex outlay and startup losses, but likely lower relative to independent route</li> </ul>	Heineken-Alliance Brewery (Myanmar)
Licensing	Brew + distribute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Low upfront costs and secured recurring revenue stream</li> <li>✓ More competitive pricing relative to import + distribute route given lack of import taxes and lower shipping costs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>× Slow to scale, profits likely limited to contractual terms</li> </ul>	ABI-Kirin (US)
	Distribute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Low upfront costs and secured recurring revenue stream</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>× Pricing disadvantage relative to locally brewed brands</li> <li>× Slow to scale, profits likely limited to contractual terms</li> </ul>	Carlsberg Malaysia-Asahi
Brownfield	Full control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Greater certainty on sales and growth trajectory and direction with established infrastructure and full control of business strategy</li> <li>✓ Capture entire pool of profits</li> <li>✓ Low potential for conflicts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>× Typically, deal is done at high valuation as it includes control premium</li> <li>× Post-merger integration is key</li> </ul>	Asahi-ABI (Europe)
	Partial stake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Established presence and distribution network</li> <li>✓ More say in overall business strategy relative to licensing in promoting own brands</li> <li>✓ Initial investment outlay lower relative to full control</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>× High potential for conflicts</li> <li>× Typically lower returns relative to having sole ownership, but still higher than licensing route</li> </ul>	Heineken-CR Beer

Source: DBS

### Greenfield – independent

Bira is a case study of a relatively successful greenfield independent venture in India. We believe the key reasons for its successful introduction of a new brand in an oligopolistic Indian market back in 2015 was (i) its unconventional branding strategy, (ii) the muted competitive environment with India being a high-volume growth market, and (iii) abundant investor funding (est. >USD300mn as of 31 Mar 23). The company achieved an est. 5% market share in India as of end-2023.

### Greenfield – joint venture

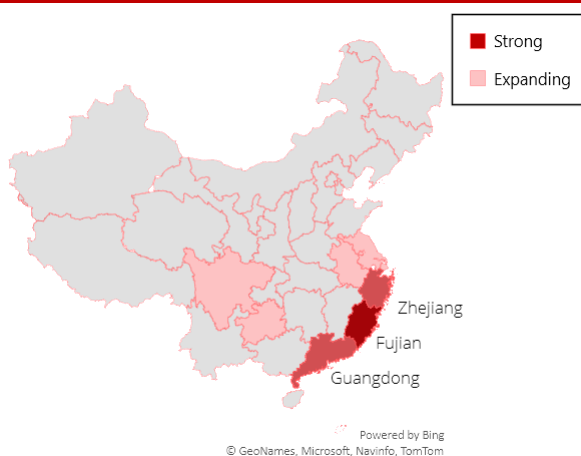
Heineken entered into a joint venture with Alliance Brewery Company Ltd (owned by local businessman) in Myanmar back in 2013. At that time, it committed to invest USD60mn to set up a new brewery. We believe the venture has been highly successful with a leading market share of 40% (Euromonitor, 2023) and likely profitable given the significant scale of operation.

### Licensing

Kirin and Anheuser-Busch (now known as ABI post-merger) have a licensing partnership in the US in 1996. At the time, ABI brewed and distributed Kirin's Ichiban brand beer while Kirin controlled the brand marketing.

After a decade of partnership, Kirin's market share remained low, at an estimated <1% as of end-2016. This prompted Kirin to let ABI handle the marketing and take a larger share of the profits when it came time to renew its license.

**Diagram 2: CR Beer partnership provided distribution access which drove Heineken's growth beyond its core Fujian market**



Source: Company data, DBS

### Brownfield – full control

Asahi's acquisitions of ABI's Europe and Oceania assets are prime examples of success stories. However, ABI's situation was unique in that it came about as a result of a series of unique circumstances, as follows:

- I. Europe business disposal – this was a result of anti-competition regulations
- II. Oceania business disposal – a result of the urgent need to reduce its debt load

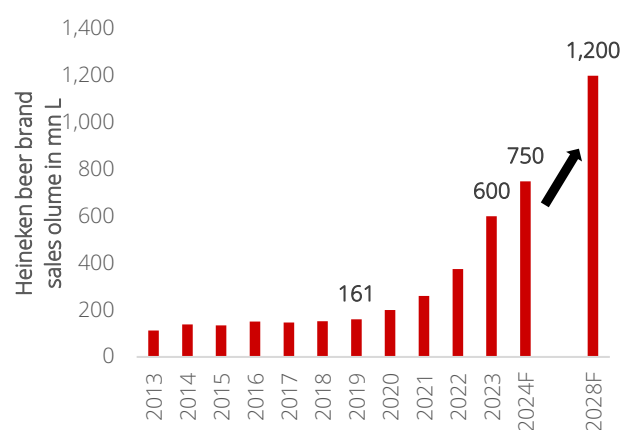
### Brownfield – partial control

CR Beer and Heineken N.V. reached a long-term strategic partnership agreement in November 2018. The partnership included the following transactions:

- 1) Heineken invested USD3bn to acquire an indirect effective partial ownership of 20.67% in CR Beer
- 2) China Beer's parent co-invested USD550mn to acquire a 1% stake in Heineken
- 3) Heineken injected its China operating entities, including three breweries, into CR Beer for USD310mn

The partnership has seen initial success with Heineken's sales expanding beyond Fujian and its volume more than tripling since 2019 (refer to Diagram 2 and Chart 3).

**Chart 3: With the CR Beer partnership, Heineken's volume saw strong growth momentum with goal to double volume by 2028**



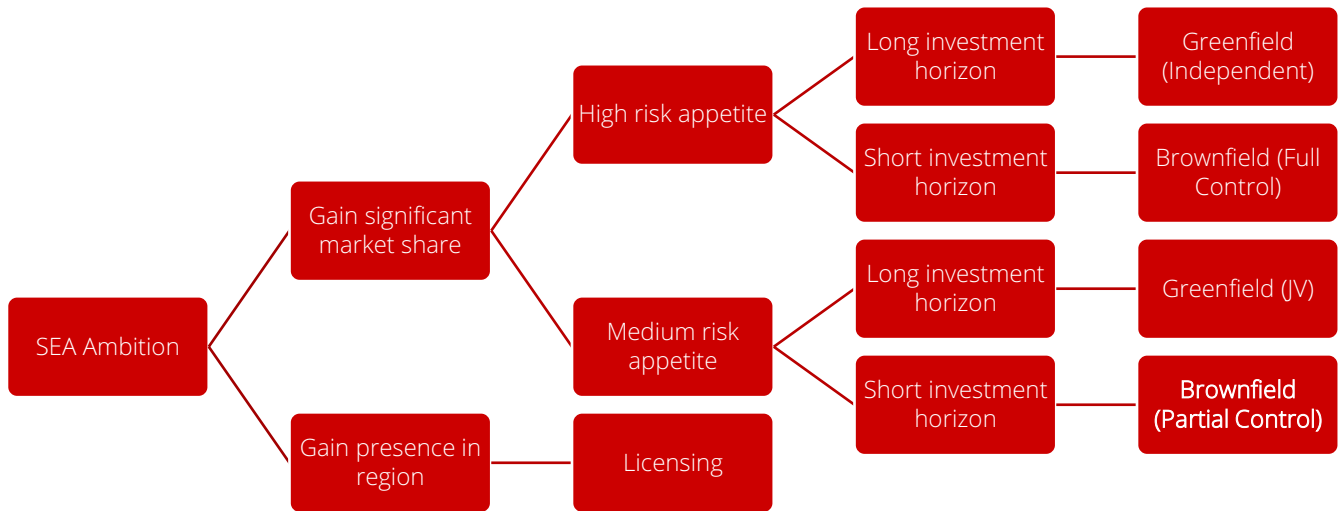
Source: Euromonitor, Company data, DBS

**What is the ideal route to enter SEA market?**

Our view is that there is no one-size-fits-all approach. The right approach is dependent on the risk appetite, investment time horizon, and ambition of the global brewer.

However, based on the decision chart overview (Diagram 2), we believe the brownfield (partial control) route likely provides the most optimal mix of risk to reward.

**Diagram 3: Decision chart to determine ideal route to enter SEA beer markets**



Source: DBS (investment horizon defined as timeline to achieve positive return on initial investment)



### Who are the potential partners in SEA?

We summarised the potential companies that global brewers can partner with in the SEA markets in Table 3. Out

of these, Thai Beverage stands out as an ideal partner, especially for the ambitious brewer keen to gain access to multiple attractive SEA markets in one go.

**Table 3: Overview of local players that global brewers could partner with to enter SEA market**

Company	Current SEA presence	Attractiveness	Commentary
Thai Beverage	Thailand: 35% Vietnam: 34% Myanmar: 14% Cambodia: <1%	High	Likely open to minority partnership; may require a premium over other players given its widespread geographical presence
San Miguel	Philippines: 95% Indonesia: 22% Vietnam: <1% Cambodia: <1%	Low	Minority owned by Kirin (48%), unlikely to be receptive to partnership with new player
Boon Rawd	Thailand: 56% Vietnam: <1%*	Medium	Largely Thailand market access
Khmer	Cambodia: 40%	Medium	Sole market access to Cambodia
Ganzberg	Cambodia: 15%	Medium	Sole market access to Cambodia
Asia Brewery	Philippines: 5%	Low	Sole market access to Philippines; has existing JV agreement with Heineken
Myanmar Brewery	Myanmar: 14%	Low	Sole market access in Myanmar; potential human rights issues due to military government ties
Beverindo	Indonesia: 11%	Low	Sole market access to Indonesia, which is a relatively small market with muted volume growth

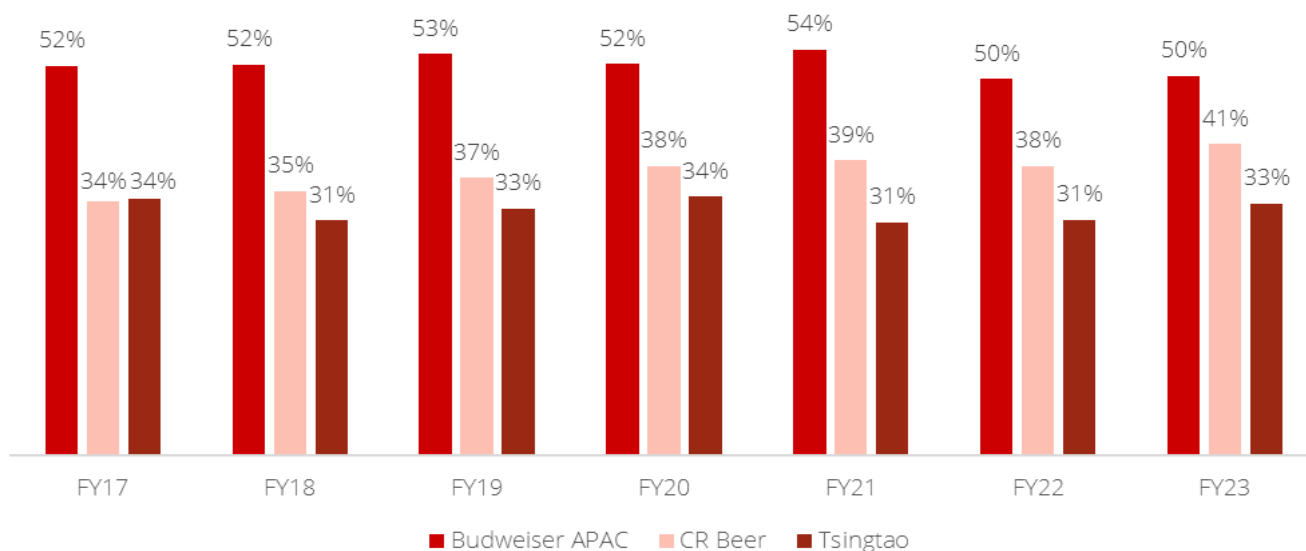
Source: Euromonitor (2023), DBS (\*Minority investment into Masan Consumer Holdings and Masan Brewery)

**What can an interested brewer bring to the table apart from funds?**

Apart from investment, an interested brewer brings along its portfolio of new brands. Its premium brand portfolio could expand margins and accelerate the growth in profitability for its partner brewer (refer to Chart 4).

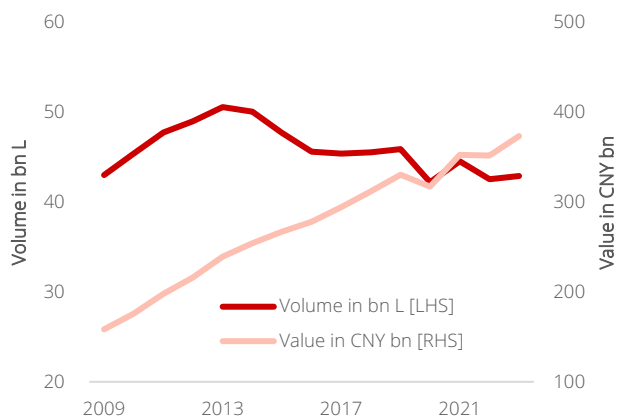
In addition, we believe premiumisation is crucial to delivering the next leg of growth in mature volume markets, like in the case of China (Refer to Chart 5 and Chart 6). This would soon be relevant to markets like Thailand, where volume growth is showing signs of tapering and potentially going into decline.

**Chart 4: Chinese premium brand leader Budweiser APAC's gross margin has been consistently higher than its peers; CR Beer's gross margin has trended higher with inclusion of premium Heineken brand since 2019**



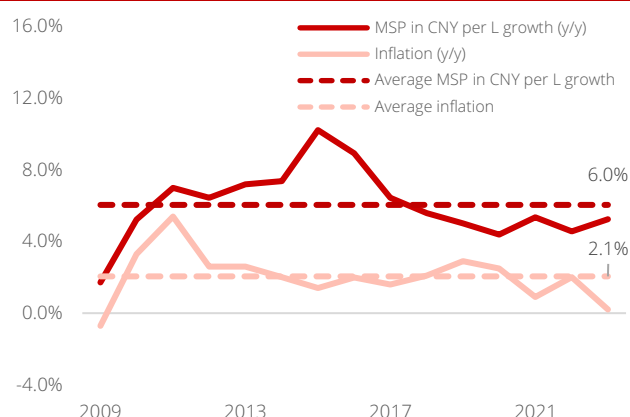
Source: Refinitiv, DBS

**Chart 5: China's beer value continues to grow despite volume decline on continued premiumisation**



Source: Euromonitor, DBS (note: Value refers to total market value based on manufacturer sales price)

**Chart 6: China's beer pricing has been on average 4ppt above inflation, reaffirming premiumisation effect**



Source: Euromonitor, China National Bureau of Statistics, CEIC, DBS

### Summary of potential partnership commentaries

**ThaiBev** – we have a BUY call with TP of SGD0.69. We believe the company will be a key target of equity partnership with a major global brewer, which could lead to the revival of the BeerCo IPO at an attractive valuation and serve as a major re-rating catalyst. While the timeline is uncertain, with it trading at 12x forward PE, -1SD of its five-year average forward PE, we believe the risk-to-reward ratio is tilted to the upside. In addition, investors can enjoy a decent ~5% yield while waiting.

**Budweiser APAC** – we have a BUY call with TP of HKD19. The company has repeatedly highlighted M&A in Asia Pacific region as a value driver, especially so with its huge cash surplus. It also has a wide brand portfolio, which a potential partner can leverage on, including Budweiser, Corona, Stella Artois, and Hoegaarden, amongst others.

**Asahi** – we have a BUY call with TP of JPY6,700. While the company has a relatively high debt level, it remains open to acquisitions. With its lower investment capacity, it could be more amenable to a minority ownership, which would work well with ThaiBev.

**Kirin** – we have a HOLD call with TP of JPY2,270. The company has indicated at the allocation of capital for acquisitions, albeit in the health science category. Nonetheless, with its recent Bira investment (est. USD125mn as of Feb 24), we believe the company remains keen to expand in the beer category.

### Overview of financial metrics of select relevant major global brewers

Company	Mkt Cap in USD mn	Forward PE Ratio		Forward EV/EBITDA Ratio		Earnings growth		EBITDA growth	
		FY2024	FY2025	FY2024	FY2025	FY2024	FY2025	FY2024	FY2025
Anheuser-Busch Inbev SA	124,871	18.3x	16.0x	8.6x	7.9x	13.3%	14.3%	6.6%	6.4%
Heineken NV	58,948	19.7x	16.9x	10.2x	9.4x	-0.4%	16.4%	7.5%	7.0%
Carlsberg A/S	19,385	17.5x	15.8x	10.0x	9.5x	3.5%	10.8%	4.7%	6.3%
Asahi Group Holdings	19,047	14.6x	13.6x	10.0x	9.2x	14.5%	7.0%	4.9%	5.7%
Budweiser APAC	16,411	15.9x	14.2x	6.2x	5.4x	9.0%	12.2%	5.1%	10.0%
Kirin Holdings	12,920	13.6x	12.7x	8.7x	8.1x	6.7%	7.4%	-0.9%	6.3%
China Resources Beer	12,999	15.7x	13.5x	6.9x	5.9x	16.3%	16.0%	54.4%	11.4%
Tsingtao Brewery	12,437	14.3x	12.7x	10.3x	9.0x	12.5%	12.4%	12.0%	9.8%
Thai Beverage	9,477	12.4x	11.5x	10.6x	9.8x	-7.9%	7.8%	-4.0%	4.6%
Saigon Beer	3,416	20.3x	18.7x	14.6x	13.2x	-17.0%	8.5%	-2.9%	9.3%
<b>Mean</b>		<b>16.2x</b>	<b>14.6x</b>	<b>9.6x</b>	<b>8.7x</b>	<b>5.0%</b>	<b>11.3%</b>	<b>8.7%</b>	<b>7.7%</b>

Source: Refinitiv, DBS, DBS HK (as of 11 Jun 24) (note: Thai Beverage's financial year ends on 30 Sep)

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**FULLY VALUED** (negative total return, i.e., > -10% over the next 12 months)

**SELL** (negative total return of > -20% over the next 3 months, with identifiable share price catalysts within this time frame)

\*Share price appreciation + dividends

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Sources for all charts and tables are DBS, DBS HK unless otherwise specified.

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### DBS Regional Research Offices

#### HONG KONG

##### DBS Bank (Hong Kong) Ltd

Contact: Dennis Lam  
13th Floor One Island East,  
18 Westlands Road,  
Quarry Bay, Hong Kong  
Tel: 852 3668 4181  
Fax: 852 2521 1812  
e-mail: dbsvhk@dbs.com

#### SINGAPORE

##### DBS Bank Ltd

Contact: Andy Sim  
12 Marina Boulevard,  
Marina Bay Financial Centre Tower 3  
Singapore 018982  
Tel: 65 6878 8888  
e-mail: groupresearch@dbs.com  
Company Regn. No. 196800306E

#### INDONESIA

##### PT DBS Vickers Sekuritas (Indonesia)

Contact: Maynard Priajaya Arif  
DBS Bank Tower  
Ciputra World 1, 32/F  
Jl. Prof. Dr. Satrio Kav. 3-5  
Jakarta 12940, Indonesia  
Tel: 62 21 3003 4900  
Fax: 6221 3003 4943  
e-mail: indonesiaresearch@dbs.com

#### THAILAND

##### DBS Vickers Securities (Thailand) Co Ltd

Contact: Chanpen Sirithanarattanakul  
989 Siam Piwat Tower Building,  
9th, 14th-15th Floor  
Rama 1 Road, Pathumwan,  
Bangkok Thailand 10330  
Tel. 66 2 857 7831  
Fax: 66 2 658 1269  
e-mail: research@th.dbs.com  
Company Regn. No 0105539127012  
Securities and Exchange Commission, Thailand