The Discursive Construction of Nostalgic Thai Identity through Thai Television Programmes

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Abstract

Global pop culture and media consumption have influenced contemporary Thai society and its traditionally perceived national culture and heritage. Such cultural impacts are not only from the global trends of Western cultures, but also from the more local influential Asian cultures, such as South Korean and Japanese. In response to this, within a general strategy, Thai television has been utilised as a principal source for promoting a projected contemporary Thai cultural identity. This study examines the discursive construction of nostalgic Thai identity in popular television variety shows whereby a form of integrative cultural identity for the country is envisaged. The research covers processes of production and consumption of certain television texts to provide an understanding of the ways in which this Thai identity is constructed, represented and perceived. It intends: a. to analyse the textual features of the shows (including visuals, language, design, narrative etc.); b. to examine the perspectives of the key figures in the television industry; and c. to analyse and compare the viewership's perceptions of Thai identity representations in the shows in relations to their own lifeworlds. The study adopts qualitative research methods: multimodal discourse analysis, in-depth interviews with key figures in the television industry, as well as focus groups with various viewerships. The study finds that the construction of nostalgia around the perception of Thainess has been at the centre of these particular identity discourses which promote the country's perceived traditional culture and heritage as core identity markers. In this way, the Thai representation in the shows is constructed in line with the reflective nostalgia which focuses on reflecting the nation's past and culture, rather than a restorative nostalgia which relates to total restoration of national past/symbols i.e. an uncompromising return to "origin". In addition to the cultural concerns of the text producers, the television shows have actively been substantiating this notion of Thai identity in line with the government's cultural policy, which envisages contemporary Thai identity as a form of inclusive collective identity incorporating modernism as well as traditionalism, rather than a form of openly nationalistic and exclusionary identity. This representation of Thai identity both arises from and is compatible with the country's socio-cultural and historical circumstances as a way to underpin the maintenance of the traditionality/distinctiveness of Thai culture, while simultaneously integrating a form of multiculturalism. The inclusive vision of Thai identity

construction/representation can also be supportive of the international policies of cooperation and relationships between Thailand and other (neighbouring) countries.

Acknowledgements

Notes on Transliteration and Referencing

This thesis has adopted the Royal Thai General System of Transcription promulgated by the Royal Institute of Thailand to transliterate Thai words to be read with the Roman alphabet. However, to render the Thai authors' names in English, this thesis has followed the authors' preferred spelling of their names in English when known. Besides, this thesis has applied the Thai norm for referring to the Thai authors by their first names instead of surnames. The citation of Thai authors, both in-text and in the references, is therefore shown and alphabetised by the authors' first name.

Contents

List of Figures

Chapter 1. Introduction and Socio-cultural Context of Thai Society

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Background of the study

Debates about the role of television in constructing national identities are familiar ones in Media and Cultural Studies. In Thailand, the significant aspect that needs to be addressed is the issue of how television has been used as a main cultural agent in the construction and representation of national cultural identity. Thai society has developed in line with multiculturalism. Farrelly (2016) claims that globalisation has delivered significant improvements to living standards and introduced new technologies to Thai society. Also, Thailand has allowed large parts of its cultural orientation to accept foreign influences. This has resulted in changes to the lifestyles of Thai people across the entire nation in not only urban but also rural areas.

The cultural influences of foreign cultures on Thai society are also reflected by media culturalism. With globalising media, there has been an increasing trend of popularity of foreign pop cultures among Thais. Such pop cultures include not only the trend of Western cultures which have been already globally popular, but also the influential Asian pop cultures (particularly South Korean pop culture such as television dramas and K-pop music), which have become very popular in Thailand and have had a great influence on Thai (especially the youth) lifestyle and social values (Chutima, 2007; Dissanayake, 2012; Kim and Wang, 2012; Papanggon et al., 2013). Since the widespread popularity of South Korean media products, Thai society has been impacted and embraced these cultural trends. The trend of admiring foreign pop cultures is reflected in not only the media consumption among Thais but also the increasing trend in foreign cultures influencing Thai lifestyle. For instance, Thai fashion trends, language use and social attitudes towards beauty have been impacted by South Korean attributes (see Chapter 2).

Pattana (2010, p. 60) claims that the Westernisation of Thailand "has often incited uncertainty and anxiety among the Thai about the legitimacy and authenticity of their modernizing project." The cultural problem (greatly induced by such media

culturalism) to be addressed here is that whereas there has been a popular trend of embracing foreign cultural forms, there are concerns in some quarters that there has been a concomitant neglect of national culture and heritage among Thais. While the Minister of Culture has tried hard to arrange various cultural projects to encourage the national cultural identity, the fact that Thai youths prefer to focus on adopting modern and foreign cultural forms rather than pay attention to their role in preserving national culture has been a barrier. For this study, this neglect might lead to the collective "forgetting" (Holdsworth, 2011, p. 4) about distinctive national culture and national history among Thais.

According to Thitinan (2007), cultural imperialism in the age of globalisation has played a role in creating a sense of national belonging, which has led to the strengthening of Thai traditional identity. This is in line with Robertson (1992), who notes that a globalisation that facilitates "the universalization of national (and other) particularisms" (Robertson, 1992, p. 155) can play a significant role in the rise of nostalgic inventions of traditions. The fear that "globalization will homogenize and standardize Thai culture into a single, Western-defined mould" (Thongchai, 2010, p. 150) and the fear of cultural problems caused by excessive multiculturalism in Thai society has led to the government, together with media institutions (as one of the main platforms of production and consumption of identity construction), feeling it needs to articulate and propose a form of national identity revivalism. Smith (2010, p. 30) explains the essence of rediscovering and restoring the unique/distinctive cultural attributes of the nation. He suggests that "where such a distinct culture has been 'lost', 'forgotten' or 'submerged', it can be and must be found, remembered and brought to light". Coping with the "fear of forgetting" (Holdsworth, 2011, p. 4), the nostalgic form of Thai representation has been used to highlight the "existing" Thai identity and also to revive the "nostalgic" (or "vanished") ones. Nostalgia - viewed as a way to facilitate a continuity of identity (Davis, 1979; Robertson, 1992; Tannock, 1995; Wilson, 1999; Bergin, 2012; Niemeyer, 2014; Wilson, 2014) - has been an essential element for promoting and reviving national identity and also evoking the collective memories of the nation. In the construction of national identity, the "invention of tradition" (Hobsbawm, 1983, p. 2), in which the establishment of a connection between the past and the present is the key, is used. Indeed, in the construction and representation of Thai identity, the invention of tradition is utilised as

a way to maintain continuity with a desired and suitable historic past, together with the cultural borrowings to develop and (re)construct such identity (this will be discussed in detail in section 1.2).

Focusing on nostalgia media, a process of discursive construction of Thai identity through media has broadly been at work to facilitate the continuity of Thai identity. As Lewis (2002, p. 85) points out, media has been a powerful source of organising the "cycle of remembering and forgetting" in public communication. The crucial role of nostalgia media discourse in constructing national identity and unity is reflected in several nostalgia media products. They not only display the good values of the past life and traditional Thai culture but also represent the national past and history to generate such a discourse of Thai identity. The nostalgic film *Nang Nak* mirrors the vivid vision of past Thai life in the 1870s to represent history, cultural identity and Thai beliefs (Natthapon, 2003; Harrison, 2005). Historical films such as *Bang Rajan, Suriyothai, and Thawiphop* - underlining the role of national heroes and solidarity among Thais to defend the nation from enemies - are "framed with the express intention of generating a sense of national unity" (Harrison, 2010b, p. 117). The state-funded film *The Legend of King Naresuan*, which represents the story of one of "the greatest Thai warriors" (Veluree, 2015, p. 103), also serves this cultural function.

Despite the attempt to construct the discourses of national identity through the nostalgic films referred to above, their short-term period of distribution in the cinemas seems to be a barrier. This might be a reason why television, the most popular medium in Thailand (Itsariya, 2013), has also been used as a principal source for promotion of national culture and history. Holdsworth (2011, p. 4) asserts that nostalgia television has the ability to produce "an abundance of memory in response to the fear of forgetting" and that television memory canons are "particularly significant for certain understandings of national identity - the dynamics of remembering and forgetting are endemic in the stories each nation tells of itself" (Holdsworth, 2011, p. 88). Indeed, the government has used television to support Thai tradition and values (Thitinan, 2007), and many television programme producers have attempted to present a nostalgic identity in order to inspire people to appreciate and encourage Thai culture.

The televisual construction and representation of Thai identity has been substantiated in many forms of television shows, for example period/historical based television dramas, television documentaries, and variety show programmes. The findings of research examining popular television and the construction of contemporary Thai cultural identity (Thitinan, 2007) indicate that Thai television has played a significant role in the construction of a unified and distinctive Thai cultural identity. Thitinan argues that, despite the influence of Western forms of television programmes in format and style of Thai television (for example, the programmes exemplified in *The Weakest Link*, *Who Wants to be a Millionaire*, *Big Brother*, and *Pop Idol*), Thai television programmes, as an "imported cultural form" (Thitinan, 2007, p. 83), have taken on Thai features by creating their own styles as a hybrid of Western genre and Thai specificity. The popular gameshow *The Weakest Link Thailand* is a good example of this. This game show presents the traditional features of Thainess by representing the Thai characteristic of compromising (*Krengchai*), which is a mannerly characteristic among Thais indicating consideration of others' feelings and compels people to refrain from criticising one another. This shows the way in which television discourse is constructed to safeguard a Thai identity which in recent years has been challenged by the influence of western media and the patterns of behaviour they broadcast. "Western" cultures, in the sense of this study, following Stuart Hall's conception (Hall, 1996b), stand for not only European and American cultures but also influential Asian cultures (see Section 1.2).

The interesting point is that Thai television programmes present not merely existing Thai identity, but also the vanished elements and aspects and the perceived positive values and traditions of the past (hence, "nostalgic"). Many television programmes have this focus in their productions. The meanings of such an identity are represented through linguistic and semiotic aspects of the programmes' contents. The *Khunphrachuai (Oh my god)* programme, broadcast on *Modernine TV*, is one of the well-known variety programmes that portray the traditional national culture, past Thai life, and distinctiveness of Thai identity (Chanthana, 2005; Kanittha, 2007). In brief, the contents of this programme focus on encouraging Thainess, including belief in Buddhism, loyalty to the monarch, the Thai language and literature, arts and

music, local games, traditions, characteristics, values, appliances, and costumes (Chanthana, 2005). In addition to its contents, other components of representation also represent Thai identity, such as, hosts who are familiar with traditional culture and guests who are cultural specialists. The scenery, costume, light, sound, and the overall screened pictures also reflect past Thai life and tradition. Another television variety programme called *Talatsot Sanam Pao (The fresh-food market at Sanam Pao)*, broadcast on the *Royal Thai Army Radio and Television Channel 5*, has a similar focus. This programme represents the value of culture through Thai approaches towards food and style of traditional markets, which are hard to find in contemporary Thai society, especially in the urban areas where people tend to be more modernised (Kanitta, 2010). Also, the variety programme named *Chingchasawan (The Ferris wheel),* broadcast on *Modernine TV*, portrays Thai identity towards country music *(Lukthung* songs*)*, which tends to be neglected among the youths and likely soon to be lost if it not preserved by the new generation of Thais. In the face of the popularity of music influenced by foreign cultures, especially Western and Korean pop music, *Chingchasawan* plays a role in encouraging and preserving Thai country music through song and dance contests for young people who appreciate national culture and are keen to preserve it. As outstanding television programmes in the sense of being media products which encourage and conserve the cultural identity of the nation, these three shows have been selected for analysis by this research project.

1.1.2 The current project

Academic studies have examined different aspects of nostalgia through a variety of disciplinary lenses, including studies of nostalgia as feeling or emotion, a kind of (private or collective) memory, and attitudes toward the past and so forth (Sprengler, 2009). Situated within the field of media and cultural studies, this research project is an attempt to gain an understanding of nostalgia television discourse and its role in the construction and representation of Thai cultural identity. A gap between studies of the construction of discourses of Thai identity through nostalgia television and its cultural impacts on audiences prompted this research project. Despite the fact that various forms of Thai nostalgia media have been used to represent a national past and a national culture, scant literature has concerned itself with this phenomenon. Although there have been studies on nostalgia media in the Thai context - on

nostalgic films (Pensiri, 1998; Supa, 2002; Natthapon, 2003), music (Nilobol, 1992), on magazines (Karanik, 2005), on television (Chanthana, 2005; Suwannamas, 2009; Kanitta, 2010; Suwannamas and Sutee, 2010; Suwannamas, 2011a), and a discussion on communication and nostalgia phenomenon (Suwannamas, 2011b) - only a small amount of these studies have focused on the issue of nostalgia media and their role in constructing national cultural identity. Of those that have been done, most of them emphasise the media representation of the past in general.

Focusing on television which has been the most popular medium in Thailand (Itsariya, 2013), whereas several nostalgia television shows have functioned as a source of representing/promoting Thai culture and heritage, a small number of studies are concerned with nostalgia television's role in constructing Thai identity, together with its connection to viewers' cultural attitudes and behaviours. On the contrary, the studies on nostalgia television focus mainly on examining television texts and the way they represent the past in general. Additionally, these studies seem to lack an understanding of "why", which can help to understand the connections between television, culture and society as the main focus of media and cultural studies. The obvious examples are a number of my previous studies (Suwannamas, 2009; Suwannamas and Sutee, 2010; Suwannamas, 2011a), which examined the representation of the past in a particular television show in a very general sense and in a superficial way. That is, they merely provide an answer to "what" and "how" (for instance, what kinds of the past are represented in the text and how they are represented).

As noted, this interdisciplinary research project therefore seeks to fill this gap in research on Thai media and cultural studies by bridging critical analysis of nostalgia television discourse, analysis of the discursive construction of Thai cultural identity, and audience studies. This research project will achieve an in-depth understanding of the construction of discourse of national identity through popular nostalgia television shows and its cultural impact on Thai people as not only an audience but also as members of a nation. Adopting an interpretive paradigm, this study is developed in light of the constructivism assuming a relativist ontology and a subjectivist epistemology and employing a qualitative research methodology in relation to the

critical analysis of media discourse. By employing the framework of critical analysis of media discourse suggested by Fairclough (1995b) as the main approach, the research covers processes of production and consumption of certain television texts to provide an understanding of the ways in which Thai identity is constructed, represented and perceived. In this way, the study adopts qualitative research methods including multimodal discourse analysis, in-depth interviews with key figures in the television industry, and focus groups with audiences. As the contextualisation of the data is crucial to achieving a critical understanding of why things are the way they are (Khosravinik, 2010b), the study draws on the socio-cultural context of Thailand (including the government cultural policy) to explain the way in which such discourses of Thai identity are constructed, shaped, and justified, and how they become influential.

This research project will shed light on the important area of television, culture, and identity studies, specifically aspects in relations between Thai television and the formation of contemporary Thai identity. It draws together media and cultural studies and the study of television in contemporary Thailand. The research attempts to make a contribution to both academic and media professional practices. The results of the research might be utilised by media intermediaries to promote national culture. This can be applied to the design of nostalgia television (and also other kinds of multimodal media texts), which is viewed as a positive contribution to the cultural and national heritage of the country; and to inspire Thai people, especially the new generation, to appreciate their (traditional) Thai identity. Theoretically and epistemologically, the study will examine and incorporate theories and concepts such as the critical analysis of media discourse, media semiotics, the social construction of reality theory, and the concept of nostalgia in the analysis of Thai television programmes. This research will make an academic contribution to the field both in terms of its overall analytical approach to the issue as well as providing a country-specific case study.

1.1.3 Research questions and objectives

This research project is an attempt to achieve an understanding of the discursive construction of Thai identity in contemporary Thailand within its current status of

surrounded multiculturalism. Through the lens of television and cultural studies, this research investigates the way in which television discourse functions as a cultural intermediary to construct and represent the meanings of Thai identity. Additionally, it examines the way television is used to ideologically (re)construct the national discourse of identity in the socio-cultural circumstances of modern Thailand.

The study specifically aims to answer three main research questions:

1. How do the textual features of the shows and talks on Thai television programmes represent Thai identity?

2. What are the perspectives of the key figures in the Thai television industry towards the cultural functions, impact and popularity of Thai identity representation in television programmes?

3. What are the audiences' perceptions with regard to the importance, relevance and value of Thai identity as represented in television programmes?

The research project is conducted with three main research objectives:

1. To analyse the textual features of the shows and talks constructing and representing Thai identity in the television shows;

2. To examine the perspectives of the key figures in the Thai television industry towards the cultural functions, impact and popularity of Thai identity representation in television programmes;

3. To analyse and compare the audiences' perceptions with regard to the importance, relevance and value of Thai identity as represented in television programmes.

1.2 The Socio-cultural Context of Thai Society

This research project focuses not only on an analysis of TV texts, the perspectives of the text producers and the audiences' interpretations, but also the contextualisation of research findings which is central to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in its argument for interconnecting textual practice and social practice (KhosraviNik,

2015a). This section will therefore provide an explanation of the socio-cultural context of Thailand in terms of the history, culture, changes and developments of Thai society to help critically establish such a link.

1.2.1 Construction of national identity: Inventing Thai tradition, nostalgia, cultural borrowing, and (in)authenticity

This section establishes the idea that Thai cultural identity is significantly constructed through a process of cultural borrowing and of "nostalgizing" (Niemeyer, 2014, p. 10) the social past. In this manner of identity construction, various forms of Thai cultural identity, despite being articulated in comparatively modern times (especially in the twentieth century), are a product of what Hobsbawm (1983, p. 2) calls the "invention of tradition". The invention of tradition seeks to establish and perpetuate social cohesion based on a collective identity and shared understandings of a continuous history (Hobsbawm, 1983). It has been used as a way of forming a distinctive identity of a particular community or nation, an "imagined community" (Anderson, 2006), in which the establishment of continuity with the past is central. As a product of the invention of Thainess, numerous forms of Thai cultural identity (which will be discussed throughout this thesis) can be seen as an "invented tradition" (Hobsbawm, 1983, p. 1). As Hobsbawm states:

> "Invented tradition is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past. A striking example is the deliberate choice of a Gothic style for the nineteenth-century rebuilding of the British parliament, and the equally deliberate decision after World War II to rebuild the parliamentary chamber on exactly the same basic plan as before." (Hobsbawm, 1983, p. 1)

Interestingly, several traditions as markers of national identities (including those of Thailand) that are claimed to be old/ancient are actually modern, in the sense that they are recent in origin. Hobsbawm (1983, p. 1) argues that, "Traditions which appear or claim to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented." This is evidenced by the modern form of pageantry/rituals of the British monarchy, implying an ancient history but actually "the product of the late nineteenth and

twentieth centuries" (Hobsbawm, 1983, p. 1). Likewise, the invention of new traditions is reflected in the invention of the Scottishness and highland myth - the "artificial creation of new Highland traditions, presented as ancient, original and distinctive" (Trevor-Roper, 1983, p. 16). The Scottish Highland tradition of wearing a kilt woven in differentiated clan tartans, and the tradition of the bagpipes are, in contrast to widespread perception, actually quite modern. As Trevor-Roper (1983, p. 15) states, "This apparatus, to which they ascribe great antiquity, is in fact largely modern. It was developed after, sometimes long after, the Union with England against which it is, in a sense, a protest." This is a Highland mythology about the antiquity of such traditions. Additionally, according to Morrison (2003), the four styles of Scottish traditional dance - including Scottish Country Dance, Highland Dance, Scottish Stepdance, and Cheilidh Dance - are traditions which emerged in the twentieth century, invented as a manifestation of Scottishness. Symbolising Scotland, these genres of dance have become "markers of Scottish culture and identity" (Morrison, 2003, p. 12).

The essence of invented tradition is its link with a *suitable* past (Hobsbawm, 1983). This can be made through the utilisation of ancient materials/traditional practices adapted to form a new tradition, particularly invented to serve a new purpose. As Hobsbawm explains:

> "…the use of ancient materials to construct invented traditions of a novel type for quite novel purposes. A large store of such materials is accumulated in the past of any society… Sometimes new traditions could be readily grafted on old ones, sometimes they could be devised by borrowing from the well-supplied warehouses of official ritual, symbolism and moral exhortation - religion and princely pomp, folklore". (Hobsbawm, 1983, p. 6)

Modifying the old cultural material, the inventors of the Scottish dances as mentioned above adapted certain elements of prior dances and incorporated new ones to represent Scottish identity. As Morrison (2003, p. 3) clarifies, "Prior to this, dance in Scotland was neither labeled 'Scottish' nor 'traditional'. Communities simply adapted dances and movements, incorporating new ones…, to express their respective cultures".

Focusing on the Thai context of inventing traditions, many forms of Thai culture/tradition as sources of national identity are also modern/recent in origin. Despite being claimed/perceived as long-standing Thai traditions, they are actually recently invented ones which contain references to a selected and desired historic past. The practice of tree ordination, which was especially "invented to save local forests from logging" (Morrow, 2011, p. 53), is one such tradition. According to Morrow (2011), tree ordination was firstly witnessed in 1988, invented by the ecology monk Phrakhru Manas Natheepitak, of Wat Bodharma in Phayao Province, Northern Thailand. It is a tradition in which traditional practices and ideas which had long-standing roots in Thai culture are blended to create new meanings of ordination for new purposes. In this way, the practice of tree ordination employs Buddhist symbols to establish a connection between the idea of forest preservation and Thai beliefs in spirit trees as a response to the need for forest preservation at the time. Despite employing Buddhist symbols, including Buddha images, chanting of scripture, and monastic robes to ordain trees (thing) as monks (human) (Morrow, 2011), it has been claimed that the tradition of tree ordination is not an original Buddhist practice. Rather, it is an invented tradition that has a close connection to prior Thai traditions and beliefs. As Morrow (2011, p. 53) claims, "Tree ordination is not meant to be an original eco-Buddhist invention, but an invented tradition that asserts itself as continuous with Thainess (*khwampenthai*)". This illustrates the function of invented tradition as "responses to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations" (Hobsbawm, 1983, p. 2).

Moreover, the aspect of authenticity plays an essential role in the creation of cultural identities and the formation of invented traditions (Morrison, 2003). Morrison (2003) suggests that investigating how authenticity functions can indicate the way different national identities are constructed. It has been claimed that authenticity means "the original or unaltered" (Bendix, 1997 cited in Morrison, 2003, p. 5) and that authenticity relates to "traditionalism, originality, or reality" (Park *et al.*, 2018, p. 5). Searching for "the authentic cultural experience" is therefore a "search for the unspoiled, pristine, genuine, untouched and traditional" (McIntosh and Prentice, 1999, p. 589). Despite the fact that the "traditional" is defined as one of the features

of authenticity, as noted above, in this thesis it is too ill-fitting to consider traditional Thai culture as authentic. Although many forms of traditional culture of Thailand were formed many centuries ago and have been handed down from generation to generation, the formation of Thai culture has included a form of cultural borrowing since the very beginning (see sections 1.2.2-1.2.4). Hence, this study sees the construction of authenticity as a formation of the original, unaltered, pristine and unspoilt culture(s) rather than of the traditional.

Turning to nostalgia, there is a close connection between this term and authenticity. To construct an authenticity of community/national identity, maintaining the original traditions of a community is the key. Park *et al.* (2018, p. 6)'s investigation of a link between nostalgia and authenticity in relation to tourists' visiting Jidong mural alley in South Korea, where the preservation of the old atmosphere of the alley was made through the creation of a mural project, reveals an interesting causal relationship between nostalgia and authenticity. Park *et al.* (2018, p. 6) claim that "the community constitutes its own authenticity" by combining its original cultural features with the murals, which are considered a recent tradition (this invented tradition was initiated in 2011). Despite a variety of themes on the murals, their most characteristic attributes are connected with a nostalgic depiction of collective memories - "the memories Korean can share" such as the theme of traditional fairy tales (Park *et al.*, 2018, p. 2). Also, the quality of being surrounded by an "old-life atmosphere" (Park *et al.*, 2018, p. 2), in which a traditional market and historic buildings are maintained and highlighted, contributes to the community's distinctiveness from other communities. As a tourist destination where "old community traditions" exist and the nostalgic representation of such a community identity is set, the mural alley has therefore become a place for visitors to recall the past and have a nostalgic feeling (Park *et al.*, 2018, p. 6). This shows the way in which nostalgia is closely connected with the maintenance of a community's original culture/tradition. Indeed, through this process of preserving the original, authenticity is thus already constructed.

In the process of inventing traditions to express a national identity, either authenticity or inauthenticity can be formed. If the authenticity is a key, innovation and change are limited. A study by Morrison (2003) reveals that different invented traditions allow

a different degree of authenticity and innovation. This is reflected in the fact that each of the four Scottish dances allows a different degree of innovation, depending on how identity in communities is preferably established. On the one hand, if the construction of identity in communities focuses on maintaining authenticity/traditionalism, the innovation and change (which can be made through cultural borrowing and adaptation) are limited. As Morrison (2003, p. 19) states, "In those communities where identity is defined by their *traditions*,…, there are few opportunities for innovation. Change is controlled, and the constructed identity maintained through the language of authenticity" (this seems to be in line with restorative nostalgia, which focuses on a total restoration of the past and getting back to the origins - see Chapter 2). On the other hand, in communities where the maintenance of the original and unaltered is not a key, change and innovation are boundless. This is reflected in the idea that whereas the Scottish Country Dance and Highland Dance adhere more to authenticity in terms of following specific codes of dress, movement and behaviour, the innovations in the invention of Scottish Stepdance and Cheilidh Dance are unlimited (Morrison, 2003).

Regarding the construction of Thai identity, it is crucial to consider if it is an attempt to create a sense of authenticity. Following the conception of authenticity as outlined above, it can be argued that the way Thai cultural identity has been constructed is not in line with a total maintenance of authenticity. Despite being perceived as traditional, Thai cultural identity does not always mean authentic. If authenticity refers to the original, genuine, or unaltered, as noted above, and closely relates to the notion that innovation and change are limited/resisted (Morrison, 2003), the construction of Thai identity, in which the cultural hybridisation and borrowing foreign cultural elements are significant, is arguably the opposite. The cultural borrowing that has taken place is an important indicator of this.

In addition to the modification of traditional practices/ancient materials to form a new tradition, cultural borrowing also plays a vital role in the process of constructing community identity. The formation of Islam, which drew upon the Judeo-Hellenic tradition and "borrowed creatively from Christianity" (Said, 1978, p. 74), is one example of this. This way of identity formation indicates the "working together of

cultures that overlap, borrow from each other, and live together" (Said, 1978, p. xxii). In the Thai context, it is evident that national identity is a product of cultural borrowing and cultural hybridisation. The development of the (re)construction of Thai identity explained in this chapter (see sections 1.2.1 - 1.2.3) clearly shows that Thai identity is a product of cultural borrowing, and has been since earliest times. This includes not only its age-old form but also modern form. Understanding Thai identity as hybrid, transformable, changeable, and adaptable, this thesis thus sees it as dynamic rather than static or unaltered. Thai identity is hence not claimed to be original/authentic.

Identity construction/reconstruction as such is shaped by various power relations. Power, evidently, is influential in building national identities. As Foucault (1995, p. 27) contends, "power produces knowledge". Whereas the way Occident sees and explains Oriental cultural entities is claimed to be artificial or man-made (Said, 1978, p. 5), the way Thais see themselves following from the constructed and circulated discourses of national identity can also be claimed to be similar way. Said (1978, p. 5) notes that "men make their own history, that what they can know is what they have made" and that "ideas, cultures, and histories cannot seriously be understood or studied without their force, or more precisely their configurations of power". National identity is therefore a man-made discourse constructed and reconstructed through a web of power relations in a particular society at particular stages in time. The way Thai identity has been constructed is through a process of shaping/governing through various power relations across time. Forms of tradition have been invented, elements of other cultures have been borrowed and adapted, elements of the past or ancient practices have been selected and hybridised with new ones, and so forth, through the choices made by those who possess power in society. This will be explained in the following sections.

1.2.2 Nation, religion and monarch: The national institutions that have shaped Thainess and national ideologies

It is important to account for Thailand as a nation-state, "a hyphenated form, a hybrid creature in which two very different entities reside on either side of the hyphen: the nation and the state", rather than as a "nation" or "state" separately (Reynolds, 2005,

p. 23). Whereas the state is considered as physical, i.e. it "has structure and hierarchy" and "is concrete", the nation "is more amorphous", "has little structure or hierarchy", and relates to the "emotional and nostalgic" (Reynolds, 2005, p. 23). As Anderson (2006, p. 6) argues, the nation is, "an imagined political community" - a community which is not an actual community but a communion of thought and ideology among its members who do not know one another. Reynolds (2005, p. 23) metaphorically states that "the nation is soul, while the state is the body, the container of the nation that provides the armour for its protection", because the nation is connected with the shared feelings and ideologies among the members of the nation that help to facilitate the generation of national harmony.

Thailand, a nation-state officially called the Kingdom of Thailand (Knutson, 2004), is a country located in Southeast Asia sharing land borders with four countries: Burma, Laos, Cambodia and Malaysia (Worldatlas, 2015). Thailand was historically known as *สยาม (Siam)* (Fine Arts Department, 2016, p. 10). The term "Siam" had been used from olden times by other nations, for example "Champa, China, Cambodia, and Vietnam to designate the kingdom dominated by the Thai-speaking peoples of the Chaophraya River valley" (Reynolds, 2006, p. 248). According to the Office of the Royal Society (2011), the term *สยาม* is defined as the official name of the nation in the reign of King Mongkut (Rama IV) (r. 1851-1868), who drove Siam into modernisation (Hoare, 2004). In 1939, the name of the country was changed by the cabinet of the government under Prime Minister Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram from "Siam" to "Thailand" (Hoare, 2004; Reynolds, 2006; Fine Arts Department, 2016), which means "land of the free" (Hoare, 2004, p. 19; Farrelly, 2016, p. 331). As Farrelly (2016, p. 331) suggests, the assertion that "Thailand is the land of the free" emerged from "the country's earlier efforts to remain uncolonized by European powers".

Thailand has a long history[1]. The origin of the Thai people has long been a controversial issue. On the one hand, it has been claimed that Thai people are

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[1] See the list of the key events in Thailand's history, from 4000 BCE to 2001, on pages 205-208 in Hoare, T.D. (2004) *Thailand: a global studies handbook.* ABC-CLIO, Inc.

"descendants of the T'ai people" who originated in the area which is now part of southern China, but then migrated to the area which is now Thailand to settle in the Chaophraya basin in the 13th century (Lewis, 2002, p. 78; Hoare, 2004) (see the extensive debates Lewis, 2002; Hoare, 2004; London, 2008; Pranee, 2014). On the other hand, it is argued that the archaeological findings of *Ban Chiang* history support the claim that the migration as such was merely a return of the indigenous people of "Thai land" (Hoare, 2004, p. 26). In 1238-1350, the *Sukhothai Kingdom* was established, bearing the claim of being "the first truly independent Siamese kingdom" (Hoare, 2004, p. 26). The reign of this kingdom was followed by the *Ayutthaya Kingdom* (1350-1767), the *Thonburi Kingdom (*1767- 1782), and then the founding of *Rattanakosin* Kingdom - the current Kingdom of Thailand since 1782 (Hoare, 2004; Fine Arts Department, 2015).

Despite the diversity among the members of the nation in several respects, such as different ethnic and linguistic (dialect) backgrounds from different parts of the country with their local cultures, social beliefs, lifestyle and political views, Thai people have generally been unified by a shared national culture around the national institutions of Nation, Religion and Monarch ("*Chat, Satsana, Phramahakasat"* in Thai), to which there is a strong allegiance among Thais (Lewis, 2002; Peleggi, 2007). Peleggi (2007, p. 118) points out that "the national community invoked by *chat* transcended ethnic as well as social differences for it was unified by the Buddhist religion and loyalty to the monarch acting according to the dharma (Thai: *tham*), or moral law". One of the most outstanding events showing the power of this unity is the way it facilitated resistance to colonialism. Lewis (2002) claims that:

> "The Thai people's unity made them distinctive. This unity - secured by allegiance to 'Nation, Religion and the King' (*Chat, Satsana, Phramahakasat,* in the formula developed in King Vajiravudh's reign (1910 - 1925) - helped them resist the Western colonialism that overtook all other Southeast Asian states by the end of the nineteenth century." (Lewis, 2002, p. 78)

These national institutions have also been the fundamental basis of the construction and practice of Thainess (Suwilai, 2014). As Pinkaew (2003, p. 157) claims with regard to Thainess: "To be Thai is to be loyal to [these three principles/pillars]". For instance, Theravada Buddhism, as a national religion, has played a major role as a

"spiritual power that links to Thainess" (Veluree, 2015, p. 150). Thailand has a long tradition of Theravada Buddhism - one of the two main schools in Buddhism, spread into Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia and Lao (Erricker, 2015, p. 88) - with a 94.6 percent Buddhist population, 4.6 percent Muslim (primarily in the south and Bangkok) and less than 1 percent Christian (Phillips, 2007). Pinkaew (2003, p. 157) argues that Thainess is a collective identity that is "constituted by shared commonality" of language (speaking Thai is an indication of membership of the nation), religion and monarchy". Likewise, Suwilai (2014, p. 19) maintains that the practice of Thainess normally refers to "the (central)Thai language which is the official/national language used to unify all people into one *nation*, with Buddhism as the *religion* of the majority, under the universal patronage of the *monarchy"*.

Thai national flag[2], called the *Tri-Rong Flag (tricolour flag)* (shown in Figure 1.1), symbolises Thainess and the three national institutions (Peeranat and Kettawa, 2015)[3]. In addition to its function in representing Thailand as a nation state, the three colours of the flag refer to the three highly respected national institutions (Peeranat and Kettawa, 2015). Designated by King Vajiravudh (Rama VI), it was officially interpreted that "the red refers to the nation; the white refers to the religion; and the blue refers to the monarch" (Fine Arts Department, 2016, p. 11). In the article "The Signs of the *Tri-Rong Flag"*, written by King Vajiravudh in 1921 (cited in The Government Public Relations Department, 2013; Peeranat and Kettawa, 2015, p. 44), the meanings behind the tricolours are explained as follows:

> "the red refers to the blood that Thais can sacrifice to save the country; the white refers to the purity of Buddhism and the Dharma (the teaching of Buddhism); and the blue refers to the monarch."

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[2] The *Tri-Rong Flag* was developed by King Vajiravudh in 1917, after the use of previous forms of Thai national flags since the first national flag in the Ayutthaya Era Fine Arts Department (2016) มรดกวัฒนธรรมไทย [*Thai cultural heritage]*. Bangkok: รุ่งศิลป์การพิมพ์ 1977 [Rungsilp Printing 1977].
[3] See further discussion on the meanings of the colours of the Thai national flag in relation to different situations where the flag was used in Peeranat and Kettawa (2015).

Figure 1.1: The Thai national flag, the *Tri-Rong flag* (Association of Southeast Asian Nations, 2017)

There has been a strong top down promotion and ideological construction of national unity, evidenced by the government's promotion of the ideals of nation, religion and monarchy. This has been promoted among Thais in several ways. One obvious practice is the governmental promotion of the *Twelve Core Values for Thais*, in which the idea of upholding the three main pillars of the country - Nation, Religion, and Monarch (Royal Thai Government, 2014) is promoted. This has also been promoted by the education system (Meyer, 2014a), evidenced by a government's educational development scheme that focuses on the enhancement of teaching the national history and civics at every level of education, consciousness-raising about virtue and morality, and the application of the *Twelve Core Values for Thais* to practice (Ministry of Education, 2017). Moreover, such core values have been nurtured in Thai schools through not only classroom teaching but also encouraging students to undertake a particular practice to help to inculcate a sense of Thainess. This is reflected by reciting the core values each morning, singing the national anthem while the national flag is raised, and offering Buddhist prayers in most parts of Thailand (Farrelly, 2016).

These core values are not new. They are ideas that have existed for a long time, together with King Bhumibol's (Rama IX) ideas of Thai living (National Science Technology and Innovation Policy Office, 2014), especially the King Bhumibol's idea of sufficiency economy which has been promoted as a guideline for Thais to handle the effects of economic crisis and social change (Pranee, 2014). The set of twelve values has been propagated and promoted by the current military government through not only the educational schemes mentioned above but also through media

for mass appeal. This is reflected in the fact that these values have been upheld by television and radio programmes and also the free set of *Twelve Core Values for Thais* Line stickers (Farrelly, 2016), launched in 2014 by the government. As Prime Minister General Prayut Chan-o-cha states, the government's aim is to "define clear core values of Thai people so that we can build a strong nation" (cited in Farrelly, 2016, p. 333). The full list of these twelve values is (Farrelly, 2016, p. 333):

1. Upholding the three main pillars of the country: the nation, the religion and the monarchy;
2. Showing honesty, sacrifice and patience, with a positive attitude for the interest of the public;
3. Practicing filial piety towards parents, guardians and teachers;
4. Seeking both direct and indirect knowledge and education;
5. Preserving Thai traditions and cultures;
6. Practicing morality, integrity, considerateness, generosity and sharing;
7. Understanding and learning true democratic ideals with His Majesty the King as Head of State;
8. Maintaining discipline and respectfulness for laws and the elderly;
9. Being conscious and mindful of one's actions in line with His Majesty the King's royal statements;
10. Applying His Majesty the King's sufficiency economy ideas to save money for times of need, being moderate with surpluses for sharing or expansion of business, while at the same time having immunity to hardships along the way;
11. Keeping physically and mentally strong, unyielding to evil powers or desires and having a sense of shame over guilt and sins in accordance with religious principles;
12. Putting the public and national interest before one's own interest.

1.2.3 Thai identity formation and transformation: Selective cultural hybridisation

Poole (2005, p. 61) suggests "our national identity is the primary form of identity available to us… it underlies and informs all our other identities". Similarly, Thai culture is an essence of the construction of national identity as it has been part of the

collective national memory and has collectively been shared by the members of the nation. Thai culture has hence played a significant role in the construction of a sense of "We are Thai". As Hall (1996a, p. 613) argues:

> "National cultures construct identities by producing meanings about the nation with which we can *identify*; these are contained in the stories which are told about it, memories which connect its present with its past, and images which are constructed of it." (Hall, 1996a, p. 613)

Thai people are proud of "their long history of independence; the country has never been colonised by a European power" (London, 2008, p. 151). This has been considered as the distinctiveness of Thailand. As Benedict Anderson states, "Siam, … , not being ex-colonial, was taken as *ipso facto* unique" (Anderson, 2014, p. 19). Based on the historical background of Thailand, despite the colonising efforts of the European powers in Southeast Asia at the end of 19th century (Lewis, 2002), Thailand is the only nation in Southeast Asia that remained independent from formal colonisation (Lewis, 2002; Phillips, 2007; London, 2008; Käng, 2014) while other countries became European colonies[4]. For example, Indochina (including Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia) was a French colony, while Malaysia, Burma (Myanmar), and Singapore were controlled by the British (Phillips, 2007). However, in considering its cultural forms, Thai identity has nevertheless been influenced by the cultures of "the West". The West, in this sense, does not refer to merely the nations located in the western part of the world. Following Hall's conception of "the West", the West is no longer about geography, but it is "an idea, a concept". It therefore refers to both the European countries/the United States as well as certain Asian countries (although they are geographically in the East), such as Japan, which for some decades now has been a highly developed country (Hall, 1996b, p. 185).

Thailand has a pattern of cultural borrowing and fusion (Jackson, 2008, p. 148). The fact that Thai culture has formed and transformed through a multicultural pattern

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[4] In a wider context, since the late 15th century, the countries in other parts of Asia, such as India, Taiwan, Japan and China were also controlled by European colonialism. See more detail in Widodo, J. (2009) 'Morphogenesis and hybridity of Southeast Asian coastal cities', in Ismail. R., S.B.J.a.L., O. G. (ed.) *Southeast Asian culture and heritage in a globalising world: diverging identities in a dynamic region.* Ashgate Publishing Limited.

probably leads to difficulty in identifying what is purely/authentically Thai. The way in which Thai cultural identity has been formed/transformed is in accordance with what Hall (1996a, p. 598) suggests:

> "identity becomes a moveable feast: formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented and addressed in the cultural systems which surround us." (Hall, 1996a, p. 598)

Despite the fact that Thai identity is selectively culturally hybrid, the way that the identity has been formed, transformed, and invented has contributed to its distinctiveness. Its historical background indicates that Thai identity has shared some cultural roots with neighbouring countries and has borrowed some features of foreign cultures to be integrated/adapted to Thainess through which its own distinctiveness was built. Therefore, arguably, this way of formation and transformation of Thai identity has contributed to what Farrelly (2016, p. 339) calls "unique Thai attributes". The formation and development of Thai identity have been influenced, from the past to the present, by many foreign cultures. These are not only the cultural influences of the neighbouring countries in former times but also "the West", including the powerful Western and Asian cultures, especially the Korean and Japanese pop cultures which have become very popular among Thais in recent years as a result of media culturalism (this will be explained in detail in the Chapter 2). Thai historian Sujit Wongthes (Sujit, 2012b; Sujit, 2012a) explains that there have been many shared cultures among Southeast Asian countries in the period both before and after the advent/adoption of Indian cultural influences in the region. As Sujit points out, in the period before adopting Indian civilisation, before and in B.E. 1000, the people in Southeast Asia collectively shared many cultures and beliefs. These include eating rice as a main staple, living in high pillar housing, believing in supernatural powers and sacrificing sacred animals, and sharing similar gestures in traditional dancing and so forth. Afterwards, Southeast Asian people adopted Indian culture and beliefs and combined these with their traditional cultures. As a result of adopting Brahmanism-Hinduism and Buddhism[5] in the period after B.E.1000, Southeast Asian

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[5] According to Pattana (2012, p.15), "religious hybridization has deep historical roots in Thailand and other countries in the region". Thai religious beliefs and practices have been based on the interplay between Theravada Buddhism and various aspects of beliefs, especially Brahmanism-Hinduism and Supernaturalism (Pattana, 2012; Sophana, 2014). See for extensive debates in Pattana Kitiarsa (2012) *Mediums, monks, and amulets: Thai popular Buddhism today*. Chiangmai and Seattle:

people created their own distinct cultures as influenced by Indian culture, Brahmanism, and Buddhism. These include the creation of local alphabets influenced by the South Indian alphabet, the prostrating and paying respect influenced by Indian culture, Brahmanism and Buddhism, the adoption of Indian painting to local paintings (e.g. *Lai Kra Nok* in Thailand), and Indian-influenced foods such as curries cooked with coconut milk (Sujit, 2012b). Moreover, the adoption of the ancient Indian epics *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* had a great influence on Thai literature (Phillips, 2007; Sujit, 2012b) such as *Ramakien*, the classic Thai story which is "a version of India's Hindu epic *Ramayana*" (Phillips, 2007, p. 45). Phillips (2007, p. 45) suggests that "much of the country's early literature was influenced by Indian traditions, ... Religion tended to dominate early Thai literature until the nineteenth century, because earlier writings were written primarily by and for the aristocracy." Another obvious tradition shared among Southeast Asian countries is the festival of sprinkling water - the *Song Kran* festival - the outstanding traditional festival claimed as a shared culture of the nations in not only Southeast Asia (Sujit, 2012b; Phiphat, 2016) but also some communities in Southern China (Songsak, 1996 and Pranee, 2005 cited in Phiphat, 2016).

Furthermore, the construction of Thainess has been influenced by many neighbouring countries' traditions not only in terms of culture but also other aspects of Thai society. Pranee (2014, p. xiii) argues that "Thai culture, politics, and social systems have been influenced by many neighbouring countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Cambodia, Laos, and Burma". One of the instances is the construction of Thai hierarchical society influenced by both Cambodian civilisation and the Thai way of thought, especially in the Ayutthaya era when the "kings adopted Khmer (Cambodian) cultural influences from the very beginning" (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2017). Another example is social practices which have strongly been influenced and shaped by Theravada Buddhism, which was transferred to Thailand through the Burmese people (Phillips, 2007; Pranee, 2014). In addition to Brahmanism-Hinduism and Buddhism, Thai society also welcomed Islam, which was initially spread through Southeast Asia in the period after B.E.1800 in the region such

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Silkworm Books and University of Washington Press. Also, in Sophana Srichampa (2014) 'Thai amulets: symbol of the practice of multi-faiths and cultures', in Pranee Liamputtong (ed.) *Contemporary socio-cultural and political perspectives in Thailand*. Springer.

as Malaysia (Sujit, 2012b) and also Thailand. This resulted in a diversity of religious beliefs in Thailand. Although Theravada Buddhism is the national religion and the majority of Thais are Buddhist, Thai people are free to follow any religion (Pranee, 2014).

These shared cultures between Thailand and other nations in Southeast Asia indicate that there has been a collective cultural identity among them, despite their own creation of the distinct and unique national cultural identity. This cultural facet might be one of the elements that contributes to the unification of the Southeast Asian countries through the promotion of the *ASEAN Community*, which is comprised of three pillars: the ASEAN *Socio-Cultural Community,* the ASEAN *Political-Security Community,* and the ASEAN *Economic Community*. Focusing on the socio-cultural dimension, the *ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community* is established to achieve the goal of formation of solidarity and unity among ASEAN peoples/nations. To facilitate this, some shared socio-cultural attributes have been forged. As the Association of Southeast Asian Nations states:

> "The *ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community* aims to contribute to realising an ASEAN Community that is people-oriented and socially responsible with a view to achieving enduring solidarity and unity among the peoples and Member States of ASEAN. It seeks to forge a common identity and build a caring and sharing society which is inclusive and where the well-being, livelihood, and welfare of the peoples are enhanced". (Association of Southeast Asian Nations, 2016a)

The relation between Thailand and other countries, reflected by their participation in the ASEAN Community, for example, alludes to the cultural vision and direction of Thailand, which have been in line with multiculturalism. However, together with this goal of development in the international phase, the encouragement of national cultural identity and Thai unity have also been underscored. This domestic level of development is reflected by not merely only the promotion of *the Twelve Core Value*s aforementioned. It is also evidenced by government cultural policy, which emphasises the encouragement of distinctive Thai qualities and solidarity/unity among the members of the nation and the participation in the ASEAN Community at the same time (this will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5).

Apart from the cultural influences of neighbouring countries, the cultural transformation has also been influenced by other foreign cultures for many centuries. In the Ayutthaya period, for instance, Chinese cultures were absorbed into Thai cultural patterns, especially through the Siamese elites. Peleggi (2002); Jackson (2008) suggests that Siam's admiration of Chinese cultural forms is evidenced by the trend of Siamese elites consumption of the luxury goods from India and China in the 17th and 18th centuries, such as silk, silverware and goldware sought by the kings of Ayutthaya at a time when Western luxury goods were ignored.

Moreover, European cultures were also adopted and adapted to Thai culture. A prominent event was the cultural influence of Portuguese - the first European traders that made contact with Ayutthaya, in 1512 (Hoare, 2004) - on Ayutthaya food culture. The localisation of Portuguese desserts to Siamese cuisine occurred in the reign of King Narai (1656-1688) - the period when Ayutthaya began "a golden age of cultural development and international relations" (Hoare, 2004, p. 206). This was introduced by the Portuguese-Japanese woman Marie Guimar, referred to in Siamese as *Thao Thong Kip Ma* (ท้าวทองกีบม้า) (Thairath, 2015) - the "wife of Constantine Phaulkon, the Greek who was a minister in the court of King Narai" of Ayutthaya - who was "the first to make egg-based sweets for the Ayutthaya court" (Cummings, 2000, p. 87). Heavily influenced by this, there have been several Portuguese influenced-Thai desserts, such as the *Foi Thong* (golden threads) which has long been considered by Thais as a traditional Thai dessert and as one of the nine auspicious desserts (ขนม มงคล) - the special desserts presented in Thai ceremonies such as traditional weddings, ordinations and housewarming ceremonies (Nakhon Phanom National Library, 2016).

Figure 1.2: The Portuguese influenced Thai dessert named Foi Thong (Pattariya, 2013; Born and Associated Company Limited, 2017)

Thailand's leaders have played a powerful role in the construction/selective hybridisation of national identity and cultural consumption. The patterns of construction/re-construction of Thainess (in which the invention of traditions was also used) have been greatly shaped by the vision and implementation of the nation's leaders, the monarchs and political leaders, all of whom who have played a significant role in not only "the construction process of Thai nationality and political identity" (Stithorn, 2011, p. 257), but also the selective hybridisation of national identity through the pattern of borrowing from foreign cultures to be adapted/localised to Thai culture. The cultural patterns of selective hybridisation of Thailand have been dynamic. Jackson (2008) argues that the patterns of cultural hybridisation of Thai identity, especially in the *Ayutthaya* Era and the *Rattanakosin* Era, depended on the turns of geopolitical influences of the powerful countries in Thai/Siam society. The dramatic change of Siam's attitudes towards the West happening in the middle of the 19th century is one of these apparent instances. Jackson (2008, p. 157) explains:

> "Historical patterns of cultural hybridisation in Siam/Thailand relate closely to changes in the geopolitical status of different great powers in Southeast Asia and correspond to shifts in the place of these powers in the imagination of Siam's ruling elites." (Jackson, 2008, p. 157)

As Jackson (2008) claims, the change in attitudes to the West taking place in the middle of 19th century is the obvious event showing the transformation of Siam cultural patterns from expressing an interest in Indian and Chinese cultural forms into taking an interest in Western cultures instead. Due to Western power, especially Britain's growing military power in the region from the 1830s, the re-orientation

towards the West changed and a lack of interest in Western culture declined[6] (Jackson, 2008).

The prominent example showing the influence of Western cultures on Thai identity construction is the civilisation of Siam. Thongchai (2000, p. 529) notes that "although not formally colonized, Siam was under the global influence of European colonialism". The re-orientation towards the West was obviously reflected in the construction of discourse of making Siam "*siwilai*", the term referring to civilisation. As Jackson (2008, p. 160) states:

> "Siwilai (from 'civilised') was the name given to the foreign idiom of 'civilisation' as a strategy of rule after it had been made over in the image of the West during the era of absolute monarchy." (Jackson, 2008, p. 160)

In the same sense, Thongchai (2000) clarifies that *siwilai* refers to a wide range of meaning. It refers to "refined manners and etiquette" reflected in "the changing norms of Thai men" to wear shirts in order for becoming *siwilai* like European people. It also refers to the Thai treatise named "*Sombat khong phudee*" (qualifications of gentility), which pointed out the norms and codes of conduct for Thai people. Moreover, *siwilai* refers to the Thai word "*chareon*" (เจริญ) ("developed"), connoting material progress, secular development and technological advance, and also "*than samai*" (ทันสมัย), connoting the status of being modern. The civilisation of Siam was greatly engaged with material progress, including, for instance, the construction of "new roads, electricity, new bureaucracy, courts and judicial system, law codes, dress codes, and white teeth" (Thongchai, 2000, p. 529).

Making Siam *siwilai* is to integrate Siam with Western civilisational patterns, which

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[6] Also, the prominent event that shows the change of Siam's perspectives on the West was the signing of treaties with Western countries, in particular, the signing of the Bowring Treaty with Great Britain in 1855[6], in the reign of King Mongkut (Rama IV), "followed by similar trade and diplomatic treaties with France, the United States, and other Western powers as well as Japan in the following decades" Jackson, P.A. (2008) 'Thai semicolonial hybridities: Bhabha and García Canclini in dialogue on power and cultural blending', *Asian Studies Review*, 32(2), pp. 147-170.

Pattana (2010, p. 66) calls the "*farang*-modelled civilization and modernization" of Siam (*farang* is a term Thais use to refer to Westerners). The outcomes of Siam civilisation following Western patterns as such, according to Peleggi (2002, p. 4), have been evidenced by "the establishment in Siam of administrative, educational, military, and ecclesiastic institutions". Making Siam *siwilai,* led by the Siamese monarchs, has been claimed as the process of "Chakri Reformation" (Peleggi, 2002, p. 4). This began in the reign of King Mongkut (Rama IV, r.1851-1868) (Thongchai, 2000; Jackson, 2008) and strengthened by his son and successor, King Chulalongkorn (Rama V, r. 1868-1910) (Pattana, 2010). Following the direction mapped out by King Rama IV and King Rama V, the westernising civilisation of Siam was continued by King Vajiravudh (Rama VI, r. 1910-1925) and then King Prajadhipok (Rama VII, r. 1925-1935) (Pattana, 2010). Pattana (2010, p. 66) notes that "Siam's last three absolute monarchs [King Chulalongkorn, King Vajiravudh, and King Prajadhipok]…continued Mongkut's initiative to break with Siamese tradition and pursue *farang*-modelled civilization and modernization".

Jackson (2010, p. 196) explains that King Chulalongkorn launched "the state policy of refashioning Siamese institutions and practices along Western lines [which] was labelled *siwilai"* (Jackson, 2008, p. 160). His great accomplishment in civilising Siam has led to the claim that he was the founder of modern Thailand (Wyatt, 1994). His achievements include the establishment of modern law codes, modern accounting, budgeting and auditing patterns, railways, telegraphic communications, a wide range of educational institutions, and modern military and naval forces (Wyatt, 1994). Moreover, Harrison (2010a) claims that King Chulalongkorn's nine-month visit to Europe in 1897 was crucial in the making Siam *siwilai*. As Harrison (2010a, p. 23) explains, "its official aim was to make a positive impression on the West; to assert Siam's significance on the world stage; and to acquire the trappings of *siwilai* in the process". Simultaneously, he also utilised his political knowledge and diplomatic skill to help to maintain the independence of the country during the era of European colonisation (Anderson, 2006; London, 2008). As Anderson states:

> "the long-reigning King Chulalongkorn…defended his realm from Western expansionism… Squeezed between British Burma and Malaya, and French Indochina, he devoted himself to a shrewd manipulative diplomacy rather than attempting to build up a serious war machine." (Anderson, 2006, p. 99)

Despite Thailand's assimilation of aspects of Western civilisation, maintaining Thainess *(khwampenthai)*, "a common Thai nature or identity" (Thongchai, 1994, p. 3) was still at the heart of the Westernisation/modernisation of Thainess. Civilising Thainess in this sense was therefore not a cultural imitation but a selective hybridisation. Such selective hybridisation operated through the process of "appropriation and localization of the ideas and practices of *siwilai*" activated by "Siamese intellectuals and elites" (Thongchai, 2000, p. 529). This indicates the attempt of the Monarchs in constructing civilised Thainess together while simultaneously encouraging the essence of national identity. This also demonstrates their significant role in the construction and promotion of Thai identity in the sense of cultural nationalism (Reynolds, 2006)

The fact that the monarchs "selectively adopted only good things from the West for the country while preserving the traditional values at their best" (Thongchai, 1994, p. 3) might be one of the reasons why the essence of Thai cultural identity has obviously remained in spite of the increasing predominance of the Western powers and their cultures. This is evidenced by King Chulalongkorn's establishment of the Antiquarian Society, whose main aim was to "halt the loss of Siam's historical record in both its textual and monumental forms". More significant shreds of evidence are the establishment of the Fine Arts Department and the Archaeological Service by King Vajiravudh (Reynolds, 2006) as a result of his concerns about preserving the national culture and heritage (Fine Arts Department, 2013). As Thongchai (1994) states:

> "…khwampenthai (Thainess). It is believed to have existed for a long time, and all Thais are supposed to be well aware of its virtue. The essence of Thainess has been well preserved up to the present time despite the fact that Siam has been transformed greatly toward modernization in the past hundred years. Like other nationalist discourse, it presumes that the great leaders (in this case monarchs) selectively adopted only good things from the West for the country while preserving the traditional values at their best." (Thongchai, 1994, p. 3)

A prominent illustration of Thailand's assimilation of Western civilisation is the hybrid Thai-Western architectural features of the *Chakri Maha Prasat* (Chakri Thone Hall),

built by King Chulalongkorn between 1876 and 1880 (Peleggi, 2002; Jackson, 2008). Visually, it was constructed as a combination between Thai and European architectures. As shown in the following picture, the building was presented in the European architectural style (of the era of Queen Victoria of United Kingdom), but the roof was built in the traditional Thai style (The Golden Jubilee Network, 2004). Deliberating the idea behind its cultural hybrid features, Koompong (2006, p. 74) argues that the *Chakri Maha Prasat* Throne Hall "holds more importance than simply evidence of stylistic changes; it is in essence a manifestation of social, political, and cultural awareness, as well as a bearer of national identity".

Figure 1.3: The *Chakri Maha Prasat* Throne Hall, built in the reign of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) (H.H. Prince Dhaninivat Kromamün Bidyalabh Bridhyākorn, 2015, p. 4)

Another illustration of Thai-Western hybridisation was, according to Harrison (2010a, p. 24), the hybrid Thai-Victorian fashions assumed among the ladies of court. Harrison describes this style, seen in the photograph below of Queen Saowapha, the consort of King Chulalongkorn, as a "hybridized fashion combining lacy, high-collared, mutton-leg-sleeved blouses with traditional *jongkraben* pantaloons". This invented tradition has become one of the Thai national costumes.

Figure 1.4: Queen Saowapha dressed in hybrid Siamese-Victorian fashion (Nana, 2006 cited in Harrison, 2010a, p. 24)

It has been claimed that Western influences became more obvious during the reign of King Vajiravudh (Rama VI). Beginning his schooling in England in 1893 (Harrison, 2010a), he was "the first Thai king to be educated in the West and spent ten years in England as a student at Oxford and Sandhurst" (Pattana, 2010, p. 67). Apart from his crucial roles in preserving national culture and heritage, he also sought to integrate Thainess and Western cultural and political forms. Culturally, King Vajiravudh's apparent contribution to Thai-Western hybridisation includes, among other things, adapting the "traditional Thai dance drama (*lakhorn*) into Western-style spoken theatre (*lakhorn phut*)", translating many of William Shakespeare's works into Thai, gaining "the accolade of 'father of Thai detective fiction' thanks to an avid interest in re-scripting *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes"*, and so forth (Harrison, 2010a, p. 27).

Politically, King Vajiravudh's vision of Siam civilisation towards the European civilising pattern was in line with Thai nationalism. Anderson (2006, p. 100) asserts that King Vajiravudh represented himself as "his country's first nationalist". His generation of the Thai nationalist ideology of *Nation*, *Religion* and *Monarch* was a

result of his refashioning and Thai-ification of "the model for patriotism, king, god, and country", which he had learned from his years in England" (Reynolds, 2005, p. 27). Fishel (1999 cited in Pattana, 2010, p. 67) notes that King Vajiravudh "stirred up nationalistic feelings in his subjects, drawing on the West both as inspiration and audience". One interesting point which emerged in his nationalist programme is that he revealed his cautiousness about Western and other foreign influences despite adopting some aspects of Western culture. This was the beginning of Siam reconsidering the inordinate Westernisation of Siam (Jackson, 2010). Pattana (2010, p. 67) affirms that "despite the fact that he himself subscribed to *farang* civilization, Vajiravudh's nationalist vision led him to be cautious of Western and other foreign influences and he warned against imitating the West".

In addition, Jackson (2010, p. 200) demonstrates that King Vajiravudh's questioning and critique of "excessive Westernisation" connoted his awareness of the importance of rethinking the inordinate Western influences on Siam society which he believed had undermined the strength of the country not only in terms of culture but also politics. As Jackson states:

> "Vajiravudh's criticism of what he called the "cult of imitation" (*latthi ao yang*) of the West reflected the fact that by the early twentieth century the state policy of *siwilai* was so successful that it had spawned a popular craze for Western culture that escaped the control of its royal authors." (Jackson, 2010, p. 200)

His repudiation of an excessive adoption of Westernisation was presented in a polemical pamphlet written by him under the pseudonym Asvabahu:

> "Imitation in thought, speech, or deed is a characteristic of a slave (*that*) and so is antipathetic to *thai*-ness (*khwam-pen-thai*). Being free (*itsara*) or *thai*, means that we can choose to think and do as we please. The only restriction is that we cannot use this *thai*-ness [i.e. freedom or independence] in a way that produces evil consequences for our nation and country." (Asvabahu, 1961 cited in Jackson, 2010, p. 201)

It has been claimed that his critiques of "excessive popular borrowings of Western culture" slightly "reflect a genuine anti-Westernness as a loss of control over the extent of Westernization resulting from plebeian challenges to the style dictates of

the ruling classes" (Jackson, 2010, p. 201). However, it could be argued that it largely demonstrates the monarch's role and attempt to construct/reconstruct national identity and build the strength of the nation in response to cultural imperialism. For this reason, King Vajiravudh has been regarded by historians as "the father of modern Thai nationalism" (Reynolds, 2004, p. 99).

After the political reforms of 1932, from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy, the cultural movement of national identity was still being driven by national leaders, but the position of power moved from the Monarchs to the (military) government leaders. The most apparent manifestation of this is the dramatic changes in the cultural movement as a result of the reconstruction of many aspects of national identity features taking placed during the regime of Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram[7] (1938-44 and 1948-57) (Callahan, 2003). Phibunsongkhram's edicts, called *Ratthaniyom*, or "Cultural Mandates, followed the practice under the absolute monarchy of issuing *phraratchaniyom* or royal prescriptions" was launched in response to the national goals of strengthening the nation through the ideological construction of "a sense of collective selfhood" (Reynolds, 2006, p. 248). These mandates promulgated the idea that "Thai national life should be lived primarily for the advantage of the Thais. [The belief that] All Thais had to protect and strengthen the country" was inculcated. The concept of "Thais buy Thai (goods)" was promoted (Thamsook, 1978, p. 236).

It has been claimed that Phibunsongkhram's nationalist movement was a kind of fascism. Reynolds (2004, p. 105) claims that, in a similar way as King Vajiravudh, Phibunsongkhram's study and life experiences in republican France during the 1920s - "an era of extreme ideological contention" - influenced greatly his conception of nationalism. As Reynolds (2004, p. 105) argues, Phibunsongkhram's actions "clearly reveal his attraction to fascism". As a result, this "had a significant impact on Thai society and culture" (Reynolds, 2004, p. 106). His popular slogan "เชื่อผู้นำ ชาติพ้นภัย" (referring to the sense that the more Thai people trust the leader, the more the nation

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[7] Prior to his role as the third Prime Minister of Thailand, Phibunsongkhram was one of the seven leaders of the *People's Party (Khana Ratsadon)* who played a leading role in the political reformation in 1932 (Reynolds, 2004).

is secure) greatly indicated the nationalist direction of nation-building (Northern Thai Information Center, 2008).

During his years as Prime Minister, Phibunsongkhram played a leading role in nation-building and re-construction of national identity following his Cultural Mandates, which created a new image of Thailand as a civilised country and regulated many aspects of civilised national culture. As this was nationalistically regulated and entered into force among the population, his reconstruction of Thainess was politically and culturally a great success. Despite his retirement after two periods in office (15 years in total), several reconstructed elements of Thainess from his project have been handed down from generation to generation right up until the present era (Northern Thai Information Center, 2008). One of the manifestations of his accomplishments is the name-change of the nation from *Siam* to *Thailand*, promulgated in the first *Ratthaniyom*, issued on 24 June 1939 (Thamsook, 1978; Reynolds, 2006). This was a great achievement in the sense that it has functioned as a discursive tool in manifesting Thai "ethnic loyalty(ies)" (Reynolds, 2006, p. 245; Veluree, 2015).

The following figure demonstrates Phibunsongkhram's ideological construction of Thai nationalism through the visual representation of government policy noting how Thais should politically behave and what they should believe.

Encouraging Thais to be in harmony and trust the government and the army

↓

Suggesting that Thais should not mention battle, secret issues about the military, and inauspicious aspects of the nation

↓

Figure 1.5: The example of Phibunsongkhram's ideological construction of Thai nationalism (Chulaphit, 2016)

Phibunsongkhram made a contribution to the modern form of national identity, as an essence of cultural nationalism, in several respects. The Cultural Mandates underscored the reconstruction of some aspects of Thai identity in order to be acknowledged as a civilised nation (Thamsook, 1978; M Thai News, 2014). In this way, several new traditions were invented. His Cultural Mandates imposed a new particular way of Thai values and practices to be followed by populations and stipulated how people should behave. The apparent evidence is a list of Do and Do not in the poster of Cultural Mandates (M Thai News, 2014; Veluree, 2015):

Encouraging Thais to stop wearing traditional costumes

Encouraging Thais to dress in the Westernised style

Figure 1.6: An example of the Ratthaniyom (Cultural Mandates) edicts (M Thai News, 2014)

As illustrated in the figure above, this poster of Cultural Mandates presents pictures and list of clothing for Thais in the form of Do not (อย่าทำ) and Do (จงทำ). On the left, the picture and the statements "แต่งกายแบบนี้ไม่ใช่ไทยอารยะ" (dressing like this is not civilised Thai) and "จงเลิกแต่งกายแบบนี้" (stop dressing like this) indicate that

traditional way of dressing was no longer acceptable. In contrast, the right picture of Western-style clothing proclaims "ไทยอารยะต้องแต่งกายแบบนี้" (civilised Thais must dress like this) and "จงแต่งกายแบบนี้" (dress like this).

In addition, the use of language was affected. Some forms of language use were changed by introducing new terms. For example, introducing the term "Sa Wat Di" (สวัสดี), to be said in Thai greetings, and creating the term adapted from Western style-greetings such as "A Run Sa Wat" (อรุณสวัสดิ์), referring to good morning, and

"Ra Tri Sa Wat" (ราตรีสวัสดิ์) for good night. Moreover, old Thai personal pronouns were changed to modern ones, for example changing the terms "Ku" (กู) and "Kha" (ข้า) to "Chan" (ฉัน), "Mueng" (มึง) and "Eng" (เอ็ง) to "Than" (ท่าน) (M Thai News, 2014).

Moreover, the popular national dish *Phat Thai* was also Phibunsongkhram's invention. In the promotion of tourism in Thailand, *Phat Thai* has been highlighted as one of the country's national dishes. The Tourism Authority of Thailand (2016) notes that *Phat Thai* "was created during the regime of Phibulsongkhram signifying Thai nationalism at that time. *Phat Thai* has been famous since World War II". Although it is not native to Thailand (it was possibly adapted from Chinese noodles, in line with the fact that "Thai food is basically Indo-Chinese in origin"(Greeley, 2009)), *Phat Thai* has been considered by Thais as a national symbol. Its name, with the term "Thai", and portrayed "Thai-style" stir-fried noodles, contribute to its distinctiveness. Over the years it has become popular (among Thais and also foreigners) and part of the national culinary identity of the country, and is often promoted by tourist organisations.

Figure 1.7: The representation of Phat Thai in the promotional spot, Discover Amazing Stories: PADTHAI (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2016)

The case of *Phat Thai* shows the way in which an invented tradition represents its distinctive cultural attributes in order for not only the construction of national identity but also for the national economic development (the tourist industry is a major pillar of Thailand's economy). More distinctive cultural attributes will be discussed in the

following section.

1.2.4 Contemporary Thailand and cultural heritage as a national symbol

Thainess, or *kwampenthai* (ความเป็นไทย), is a common identity shared among Thai people. This national identity "has existed for a long time and has been well preserved until the present time" (Veluree, 2015, p. 34). National identity has continually been utilised as a cultural tool of unification of Thai people as it has helped to create a shared sense of national belonging among the members of the nation, despite the fact that there has been a great admiration for foreign cultures. This is evidenced by many features of contemporary lifestyle and cultural consumption, which have very much emulated and adopted aspects of Western culture, partly as a result of media imperialism (see Chapter 2). As argued above, the creation of its distinctiveness together with the culturally hybridised-formation of Thai culture, have combined to produce a cultural identity of the nation. An abundance of national culture, maintained but not popular, indicates that Thailand is culturally rich, evidenced by various kinds of national culture and heritage which have been claimed and promoted as national symbols.

Despite the continual transformation and selective cultural hybridisation of national identity and the diffusion of multicultural consumption among Thais, the distinctive Thai identity is still very much in evidence. That is, it has been promoted and preserved by the government sector, culturalists, and some Thai citizens while, at the same time, has been neglected by a large number too, especially among the younger generations (see Chapter 2). Thailand's cultural wealth has been evidenced by, at least, the display of national culture and heritage in the museums (which are not very unpopular among Thais) and the Fine Arts Department's campaigns and promotions of national treasures. In its publication *Thai Cultural Heritage*, distributed by the Fine Arts Department (2016), the Minister of Culture demonstrates an abundance of cultural heritage that indicates a long tradition of Thai civilisation. These are generally divided into six main categories: antiquities and artefacts, language and literature, arts, architecture, dancing art and music, and custom and tradition. One of the prominent illustrations is the Stone Inscription, or *Si La Cha Ruek* (ศิลาจารึก), the evidence of the first written Thai script created in the *Sukhothai* era by King Ram

Khamhaeng (Hoare, 2004), as shown in the following pictures:

King Ram Khamhaeng's inscription in details

Figure 1.8: The Stone Inscription of King Ram Khamhaeng, created in the Sukhothai era (Phya Anuman Rajadhon, 2015)

In addition to a wide range of cultural artefacts, many of which are marketed as part of the promotion of tourism (Reynolds, 2006; Farrelly, 2016), Thai ways of thought and social practices also denote the existence of traditional values, transferred from generation to generation, that are still embedded in Thais' minds despite the impact of modernisation. Thai ways of thought and social practices have been greatly shaped by Buddhist ideas. As Natthapon (2003, p. 5) claims, "Thai culture and the beliefs present within society are influenced by primitive ideas of the native, as well as the precepts of Buddhism" such as employing the Five Precepts in daily practices. Similarly, Pranee (2014, p. xiv) argues that "Buddhism has had a deep influence on the Thais' modes of thinking and behavior".

The best illustration of values and practices as Thai cultural markers is the traditional gesture of greeting/showing respect, called *Wai* (ไหว้), and the Thai smile, both of which denote the Thai manner and also connote Thai thoughts behind them, despite

the fact that the gesture like *Wai* with a smile can also be seen in other countries. Although it has been claimed that the *Wai* has been viewed as "outwardly… more or less equivalent to a handshake in the West" (Hoare, 2004, p. 242), ideologically, it serves several functions in society. It engages with aspects of national identity, utilitarian, status-marking, personal enhancement, and religious functions (Powell *et al.,* 2014). Regarding the Thai smile, it reflects friendliness, politeness, mildness and so forth. Suwilai (2014) explains the Thai smile together with the *Wai* as follows:

> "Traits such as a friendly smile by Thais, as '*mai pen rai*' (not so serious) attitude and gentle, kind, and generous demeanor are all considered by Thais as characteristics of 'Thainess'. Other cultural markers for 'Thainess', which people are generally aware of, …the ubiquitous "*wai,*" the Thai gesture for greeting and showing respect. …These cultural markers, together with a consciousness of belonging to the same group, exemplify Thai identity..." (Suwilai, 2014, p. 20)

Thailand has been considered and promoted as the "Land of Smiles" (Hoare, 2004, p. 241; Knutson, 2004, p. 151). It has been claimed that the Thai smile is "famous throughout the world" (Hoare, 2004, p. 156). This kind of trait has been highlighted and presented along with the *Wai* as Thainess and packaged and promoted as part of the country's important tourist industry (Farrelly, 2016). The representation of the *Wai*, the smile and national costume as national symbols in the promotional spot of Thai Airways, as shown in figure 1.10, is one of the evidences.
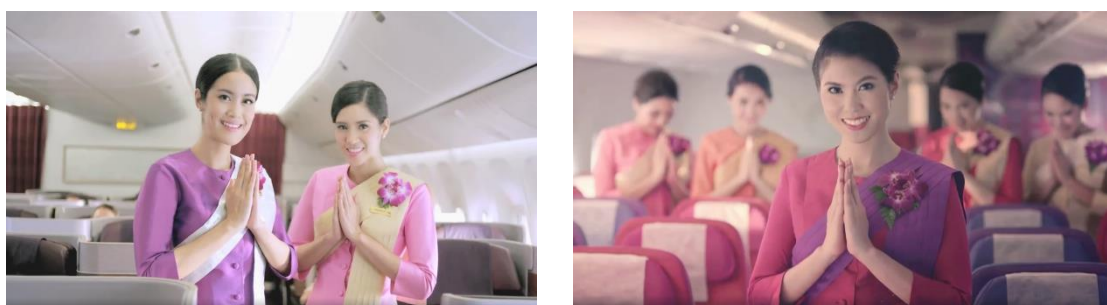
Figure 1.9: The representation of the Wai, Thai smile and Thai costume as national symbols in the promotional spot of the Thai Airways (Thai Airways, 2015)

Additionally, *Khwamkrengchai* (ความเกรงใจ)*,* being considerate of and respectful to other people's feelings and avoiding anything that might cause discomfort and inconvenience (Thitinan, 2007; Songthama, 2012), has also been perceived as a vital Thai trait. Songthama (2012, p. 623) points out that being *krengchai* is not only an

attitudinal expression but also an "institutionalised principle of interaction". Likewise, the oral expression of the phrase *"Mai Pen Rai"* (ไม่เป็นไร), meaning "never mind" or "think nothing of it", has also been perceived as an essential character trait for Thais (Hoare, 2004, p. 156). Arguably, these traits are influenced by Buddhist teachings, in which the concept of forgiveness and avoidance of revenge are emphasised.

The promotion of national cultural identity makes sense in both political and economic terms. On the one hand, the distinctive qualities of Thainess have been inculcated as the essence of the nation for the sake of maintenance of a national culture and formation of national unity (as evident in the government's cultural policy and the promotion of the *Twelve Core Values for Thais*). On the other hand, the global promotion of Thai cultural distinctiveness has been used as a tool for promoting tourism. According to Patchanee (2017), in recent decades the tourism industry has become a significant source of income for both private business and the public purse. The beautiful tourist attractions, along with Thai food and culture, have led Thailand to become a popular tourist destination for a large number of foreign tourists (26.5 million in 2013) from other Asian countries and tourists from Europe and America. Farrelly (2016, p. 339) points out that "unique Thai attributes have been packaged for the global tourist market as the essence of the nation". The Thai smile, accompanied by a bow, is "a gloriously effective greeting" for presenting a hearty welcome. The politeness, respect for elders and avoidance of conflict "give the impression that Thailand is a peaceful and welcoming place". This shows the way in which Thai identity is utilised not only for the domestic purpose of national unity but also for an international reputation that may help to support economic and political goals.

1.2.5 The political/socio-cultural conflicts: Barrier to a unification of Thais

The current Thai government is headed by Prime Minister General Prayut Chan-o-cha, Head of National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) and Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Thai Army. The current political circumstances of Thailand, with the military forming the government administration, stems from a series of unresolved problems, conflicts and tensions. The Prime Minister's speech after the ceremony in which he received the royal command on 25 August 2014 places emphasis on "the

need to strengthen the national administration system in all dimensions; expeditiously resolve immediate and persisting problems; amend archaic laws; and move forward the reform and reconciliation process" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand, 2017). This indicates that the essential goal of the military government is to resolve the conflicts and calm the unrest in the country to strengthen and secure the nation.

Despite the attempts of the government to eliminate the domestic problems, there remain a number of prolonged issues and tensions which undermine national unity. The disputes between the two main political opponents - the *Red shirts* (supporters of the deposed former Prime Minister, Thaksin Shinawatra) and the *Yellow shirts* (protesters against Thaksin Shinawatra) (BBC, 2012) – generated political discord and unrest. The gradual easing of these tensions is an achievement of the current military government. However, other ongoing conflicts endure, notably the prolonged unrest in the five border provinces in the South of Thailand. The key issues of this problem include ethnicity, history and religious beliefs (Pinkaew, 2003; Ministry of Education, 2017). The violent problem has resulted in the death and injury and also affected on the well-being of families (Ministry of Education, 2017). In seeking a resolution, the government has employed religious and cultural policies, coupled with a plan to further the development of the regions affected (Ministry of Culture, 2016). This highlights the government's concern to utilise the cultural dimension as a political tool to unify the disparate and diverse minorities of the nation and secure the country, despite the fact that the performance of the military government has widely been questioned at the international level.

Overall, there seems to be some evidence to indicate that the transformation, invention and development of different generations of Thai identity - i.e. traditional Thai, modern/civilised Thai, and contemporary Thai - reflect one of the key functions of power, namely the production of knowledge. As Foucault (1995, p. 27) argues, "power produces knowledge". The strong top-down discursive practices discussed in this chapter have a substantial and long history and illustrate clearly such power. The ways in which Thai identity is constructed, represented and perceived have been shaped by Thailand's leaders, who have wielded great power in designing cultural

knowledge among the members of the nation along with establishing the national ideologies behind it. Historically, the leading power in constructing Thainess/national identity has changed from the Siamese monarchs to governments, either democratically elected or the current military regime. This change in political administration resulted in changing cultural features in each period, depending as it has on the respective leaders' cultural and political visions. It can, therefore, be argued that Thai identity and its processes of construction/representation have been dynamic, variable and have depended on both cultural and related political movements.

1.3 Outline of the Thesis

Chapter One provides the background to the study and the socio-cultural context of Thailand. The first part of this chapter explains the background to the study, the research questions and objectives. The second part sets the socio-cultural context of Thailand. This provides the overview of the history, sociocultural changes and development of Thailand. This discussion will be linked to the issues of national institutions: *Nation*, *Religion* and *Monarch*, Thai Identity formation and transformation, contemporary Thailand and cultural heritage as a national symbol, and political/socio-cultural conflicts as a barrier to the unification of Thais.

Chapter Two, the literature review chapter, provides the link between television and the construction of nostalgia. The first part draws on a review of academic works along the lines of television and its role in contributing to social changes and developments in many aspects. This covers the topics of television and society, television genres and development in the global context, television discourses, television developments and dynamics in Southeast Asia including Thailand. The second part explains the theoretical aspects of nostalgia, one of the key analytic concepts of the study. The main issues discussed include the definition of nostalgia, the link between nostalgia and identity, and the relation between nostalgia and television as a popular medium used as a source of nostalgic mediation of the past and national culture. Other kinds of nostalgia media are also discussed.

Chapter Three provides an overview of the research methodology of this study. The key issues of this chapter include the background to the qualitative research, philosophical considerations, research methods and data collection including the textual analysis of Thai television programmes, the in-depth interviews with key figures in the Thai television industry, and the focus group interviews with viewers. Research ethics and self-reflexivity are also discussed in this chapter. This chapter also includes the notion of media semiotics and critical analysis of media discourse as the main analytic concepts and theories which inform the study.

Chapter Four explains the findings of the textual analysis of Thai cultural television shows. This includes a discussion of the textual features of the *Khunphrachuai* show as the main television show of this study and the textual ingredients of Thai identity construction in this show, which include three main sets of modes of representations. The main topics include the textual features of the show and a discussion of its textual ingredients, including the semiotics of Thai representations, the genres of Thai representations, and the linguistics of Thai representations.

Chapter Five provides the findings and discussion of the views of the producers of the three television shows on the representations of Thai identity, the link between the shows and government cultural policy, as well as the cultural values and cultural impacts of the shows on audiences and Thai society in the way that it is assumed by the producers. This includes a discussion on popular TV shows as a link to imagined communities, Thai TV shows and government cultural policy, and the cultural values and impacts of the shows from the text producers' perspectives.

Chapter Six: provides the findings and discussion on the audiences' perspectives regarding Thai representations in the TV shows, particularly *Khunphrachuai*, which is the main TV show of this study. This chapter covers the topics of viewership and core Thai values as key cultural markers, a stock of knowledge and interpretations of Thai identity, viewership and nostalgia, and audiences and cultural impacts of the show.

Chapter Seven provides a conclusion and overall discussion of the research findings as well as the contributions and limitations of the research.

Chapter 2. Television and Nostalgia

Introduction

Currently, although the government still has substantial power to form the direction of national identity, i.e. setting the cultural policy and projecting the relevant plans and activities, the mechanisms for promoting Thai identity are discursively driven by the media, especially TV as a necessary cultural intermediary. This is especially important because television has been and remains one of the most popular and influential mass media outlets among Thais. Televisual construction and representation of Thai identity are also related to the processes of remembering the national culture and memories which have played a significant role in the revival of nostalgic national identity. This chapter is a theoretical exploration of the relationship between television and constructing nostalgic cultural/national identity through academic works and relevant studies. It explores the key concepts and theories as well as examines the debates in the field. In doing so, the first part of this chapter draws on a review of academic work on television's constructive role in contributing to social changes and developments in many areas. This includes a discussion on television and society, television genres, television discourses, and television development in Thailand and also other countries in South East Asia. The second part draws on a review of the theoretical aspect of nostalgia, which is the pivotal concept of this research, and its link with the construction/representation of the past and national identity through television and also other mass media.

2.1 Television, Social changes and Developments

2.1.1 Television and society

The statement of Williams (2003, p. 3), "television has altered our world", underlines the significant role of television in society. Williams illustrates many of the ways that television has altered our world. Firstly, television power as a medium of social communication has made alterations to many of our institutions and forms of social relations. Secondly, television as an electronic medium has changed our basic perception of reality and our relations with one another and with the world. Thirdly, television as a powerful medium of communication has resulted in other invented technologies altering the form of our society. Fourthly, television has served to provide a centralised entertainment and formation of opinions and styles of social

behaviour. Lastly, television has served a domestic consumer economy as it is the machine for the home. Some of the functions of television mentioned above underline the power of television in terms of its social impact and change.

Television has been claimed as a shared experience (Wickham, 2007). In other words, it is a mass medium that gives potency to texts and has a capacity to make many people engage in doing the same thing at the same time. Moreover, Wickham argues that television programmes are not only media products; they are also cultural artefacts. In this way, as O'Sullivan (2007, p. 159) claims, television has been a meaningful apparatus in mediating and shaping social values, directions and meanings in the contemporary public sphere.

Even though, currently, television programmes can be watched anywhere via internet-connected devices, the role of television as a domestic medium has still been essential. Focusing on the relation between television and the smallest unit of society, i.e. the home, television as a "domestic medium" is watched at home both in private and with members of family (Silverstone, 1994, p. 24). Silverstone argues that television as a medium bringing the world into the home has both challenged and strengthened the dimension of home, including positive feelings of security and belonging. Television might be watched at home, but home itself both constructs and is constructed through realities that television mediates. In addition, television can provide a link between home and identity in the sense that it provides a resource for individual and domestic identity formation through both its function as a domestic object and its mediation of images for/of home. Morley (1992, p. 202) emphasises the role of television as "part of our socialisation". We learn about others through television and television viewing is related to family attitudes. As the domestic context plays a meaningful role in audience perception, Morley (1992, p. 193) stresses that "studying television as a domestic technology requires a study of the domestic context within which audience's activities in relation to it are articulated and constrained". In addition to that, it is necessary for the analysis of television to account for "similarities and differences between families and households" and also to understand "their place in the wider culture and society, where issues of classes, ethnicity, ideology and power define the materialities of the everyday-life world". This

corresponds with Gray (2002) contention that the cultural study of household television is not only concerned with the activities of the domestic viewer itself, but also the micro-processes of television use in their broader social and cultural contexts.

In a broader context, Lewis (1990, p. 153) notes that television is a part of our social environment as "it guides us into a whole series of different worlds and asks us to position ourselves in relation to them". Lewis (1990, p. 155) argues that television is what Louis Althusser referred to as an "ideological apparatus". That is to say, television is a set of meaning systems influencing the way people think about the world. Furthermore, Fiske (2011b) suggests that despite the fact that television itself is not absolutely a creator of social change, it can be part of that change, i.e. it can provide powerful texts as tools for social change. The power of radical texts in films on audiences shows this function. According to her analysis of radical feminist films, Kaplan (1983) suggests four main characteristics of radical texts that have a power in audiences thinking. Firstly, there is the feature of focusing on the mode of cinematic mechanisms to produce illusions of the real by using televisual process and techniques to make audiences view what they are watching as if it is reality. The second feature is positioning the viewers so that they have to be involved in the process of the film rather than constructing them as fixed viewers. Thirdly, it is about replacing pleasure in recognition with pleasure in learning with cognitive processes. Lastly, it is the feature of mixing documentary and fiction together to create a certain tension between the social formation, subjectivity, and representation. In this sense, Fiske (2011b, p. 46) argues that the characteristics of radical texts in radical feminist films are derived from "a belief in the power of the text to produce a radical frame of mind in the spectator and thus to effect, if not originate, social change". The argument here is that such a mechanism is valid for any kind of television text.

As Caldwell (2004, p. 57) points out, only a few scholars view television as an eye-witness to authentic reality. On the contrary, many scholars view television functions as a mediator of reality rather than delivering authentic experiences. Despite the fact that debates on the mechanism of television as a tool of mediation of reality are still concurrent, in one way or another, arguably television plays a significant role in

constructing social reality through not only non-fiction but also the fictional world of television programmes. Its ability to construct social reality underscores its influence on the way people think about the world. This ability of television can be linked to the issue of its role in constructing communities. Television has been utilised as a tool of constructing what Anderson (2006) calls imagined communities. Specifically, the role of television in the construction of nationhood is one of the main areas of debate in television studies (Pertierra and Turner, 2013).

Another more contemporary debate in television studies is concerned with the possible shift from modernity to postmodernity. According to Barker (1997, p. 10), modernity "is a historical period following the middle ages. It is a post-traditional order marked by change, innovation and dynamism". While modernity is viewed as a period of capitalism and industrialism, postmodernity is a period engaged with the notion that we now live in a post-industrial and post-capitalist order. Postmodernity turns the aspect of universal truth of modernity to an alternative set of beliefs. In the era of modernity, television as an institution of modernity is globalised to serve the goal of capitalism and at the same time to contribute to the globalisation of modernity. Pertierra and Turner (2013) suggest that television is an instrument of modernity and has been part of the formation of modernity. When television appears engaged with global modernity, symbols for wider processes of cultural change emerge. Television set, the satellite dish, and the inclusion of television shows into everyday life are instances of this.

Barker (1997) argues that as a result of certain social and cultural changes we have moved into the period of postmodernity with a postmodern culture, and the institutions of transnational television are now internationalising postmodern cultural forms. Thus, global television turns a global flow of cultural discourses as well as a notion of multiple, shifting, and hybrid identities rather than the modern concept of a nation or national identity. In postmodern culture, consumption and the aestheticisation of everyday life is central. Television functions as a carrier by providing advertising and various lifestyles in a variety of television programmes. Moreover, television is also linked to niche marketing (which Barker claims to be an aspect of lifestyle construction) through targeted advertising, relating products and

images to particular social groups. Ang (1996) notes that the prominent characteristic of living in a postmodern world is living with a heightened sense of cultural contradiction. That is, a way of living in the sense that order, certainty and security of structure and progress has become provisional, partial, and circumstantial. This also reflects on the television audiencehood that is understood as a range of social experiences and practices getting through with the cultural contradiction. Additionally, the notion of audience as active audience within cultural studies is a mark of the cultural turn from the modern to the postmodern sense. The discursive emergence of the active audience can be taken as a sign of increased cultural contradiction in contemporary society. According to O'Donnell (2007), postmodernity has brought people into an era of technology with multiple electronic devices that lead people to experience wider communications and alternative realities. This has altered not only the way viewers use television (for example, changing from watching television programmes at home to watching via other portable electronic devices), but also the way of television's development (for example, the development of hybrid genres which are derived from a combination of various genres have become commonplace on contemporary television).

2.1.2 Television genres

Genre in media refers to types or categories of media products. For instance, soap operas, situation comedies, police series, quiz shows, and news programme are some television genres (McQueen, 2003). In terms of the definition of genre, Neale (2008, p. 5), for instance, raises the question "what counts as a genre?" and "what counts as a genre in television?" This might be answered by Lacey's argument (2000 cited in Neale, 2008, p. 5) that "the repertoire of elements" serving to identify genres consists of character types, setting, iconography, narrative and style. Genre is a link between producers and audiences. According to Fiske (2011b, p. 110), "genre is a cultural practice that attempts to structure some order into the wide range of texts and meanings that circulate in our culture for the convenience of both producers and audiences". In this sense, Forman (2003) explains that television has been built as an industry and as a cultural force. The efforts of producers correspond to their desire to structure an order by creating a system of standards and language to define it. Additionally, Abercrombie (1996, p. 43) notes that "genres are a kind of complicity between producer and audience", that is to say, both producers and audiences of

each programme know what the genre rules are. For instance, viewers generally know what is going to happen in a soap opera and perceive such a programme with a set of expectations set by the soap opera genre, because they know the genre conventions, which link producer and audiences. As McQueen (2003, p. 27) points out, "genres are identified by the particular conventions they use which we come to recognise through regular contact. Conventions are any elements which are repeated in such a way that they become familiar, predictable and associated in their use with a particular genre". Conventions, for television include themes, plot, character, setting, costumes, props, music, lighting, dialogue, and visual style.

Bignell (2013) notes that the study of genre in television regularly adopts the approaches and terminologies used in the study of genre in film, literature, and other cultural forms. The study of genre and television is based on not only the formats and forms of television but also the history of genre as a concept, i.e. the uses it has been put to and the other art and media forms it has been applied to (Feuer, 1992). As Feuer (1992, p. 144) points out, the reason why the concept of genre has figured in the television industry is that "unlimited originality of programming would be a disaster, because it could not assure the delivery of the weekly audiences, as do the episodic series and continuing serial. In this sense, television takes to an extreme the film industry's reliance upon formulas in order to predict audience popularity". It is evident that television has adapted the formats and forms from several different art forms and other media including music, film, written fiction, theatre, journalism and so forth (Neale, 2008). For example, the genre of soap opera derives from radio broadcasting, television drama derives from theatre, and television news shares conceptions of new values and structures of reporters and editors with newspapers and news radio broadcasting (Bignell, 2013).

Television programmes can be categorised into clear generic categories, for instance documentaries, news, soap operas, sitcoms, quiz and game shows, talk shows, and variety shows. In addition, genres can be categorised by considering their narrative structure. As Butler (2007) illustrates, the types of non-narrative television genres include newscasts, sports programmes, game shows, reality television, talk shows, and science programmes. In recent years, television genres and programme formats

have mutated and have been hybridised (Turner, 2008). It is clear that several television programmes have been produced as hybridised programmes, i.e. they are created bearing the main characteristics of its genre along with inclusion of some characteristics from other genres (Fiske, 2011b). This television genres adaptation contributes to the argument viewing the instability of genre and considering the format, which is more stable, instead. Format, according to Bignell (2013, p. 126), is "the blueprint for a programme, including its setting, main characters, genre, form, and main themes. A format is like a recipe, and can be the legal property of its creator so that of another company makes a similar programme". Furthermore, there has been a change in the feature of television genres, influenced by audiences' feedback. Turner (2008) suggests that television producers have changed the features of their programmes in response to the feedback of audiences. Killing off or foregrounding characters and switching presenters out of prime time to late night slots are instances of this change. Moreover, Holland (2000) states that the development of technology along with criticism of more established forms has led to a creation of new genres and a wider range of television programmes.

According to Mittell (2008, p. 11), many scholars have studied "how genres work as part of the system of television production and consumption", investigating "how the practices of audiences and institutions are involved in the process of creating and constituting genres". Additionally, issues regarding the cultural role of genres foregrounding the practices and audiences of the television industry have emerged in the study of television genres. In this sense, genres can be seen as cultural categories circulating around and through television rather being mere tools to be defined, analysed, or interpreted in themselves (Mittell, 2008). Furthermore, the three approaches to genre including the aesthetic, the ritual, and the ideological approach can be used to the analysis of television genres. As Feuer (1992) suggests, the *aesthetic approach* includes all attempts to define genre regarding a system of conventions that permit aesthetic expression. In terms of the *ritual approach*, the genre is taken into account as an exchange, through which a cultural condition is created, between the media industry and the audience. In this sense, television can be considered as a cultural forum that is concerned with the negotiation of shared beliefs and values that help to maintain and continue social order. Genre in the sense of the *ideological approach* is seen as a tool of control at both the industries' level,

whereby genres can convince the promoters of messages they deliver to audiences, and the textual level, in which genre can ideologically serve to reproduce the dominant ideology of the capitalist system expressed in the text.

Television genres are related not only to features of presentation format but also conventions, which are the structural elements of genre shared between producers and viewers. Fiske (2011b) notes that conventions incorporate the ideological concerns of the period in which they are a popular and are pleasurable genre offered to audiences. Genres can be popular when their conventions carry a close relationship to the dominant ideology of the period. Presenting the sense of comedy in the genre of sitcom is an example of this. According to Bignell (2013), the sitcom is a popular television genre conveying comedy to make a sense of funniness engaged with the conventions shared between producers and viewers. Various semiotic resources are used to cue the shared meaning of comedy corresponding to the dominant ideology of what can be funny and what cannot in each period and each society. These resources include, for example, the jokes and comic actions within the programme text, the excessive speech and behaviour of characters designed to express the recognition of social norms, and the comical contrasts between the discourse of one character and that of another providing a comical misunderstanding of interpretation. Different ways of cueing the shared meaning as such might be the answer to why different group of viewers are satisfied with different television programmes. Moreover, it is clear that there are differences within the same genre. Abercrombie (1996) highlights how differences within the soap opera genre are evidence of this. The differences might be attributed to either cultural aspects or types of audiences. Thus, a soap opera might be changed as a result of changing audiences. Abercrombie explains that a higher proportion of men in the audiences of daytime soap operas in the United States can result in a change of soap opera. As shown in the soap operas *Brookside* and *EastEnders*, male characters are treated more sympathetically, and the relationships and actions of male characters are investigated as widely as female characters. This shows the meaningful role of audiences in changing the features of television genres.

The genre of Variety Show

Historically, as Paterson (1998) points out, the variety programme emerged as a result of the fading popularity of certain genres. In other words, the decrease in popularity of certain genres led to the changing of television schedules across the world, especially in more competitive environments. The Variety Show programme format in the early days of television in both the USA and the UK was popular. The popularity of *The Ed Sullivan Show* in the USA and *Sunday Night at the London Palladium* in the UK, both of which presented various kinds of show - including singing, dancing and comedy acts along with moderation by celebrity hosts - are instances of this. Afterwards, in the 1970s, such shows disappeared from American and British television schedules. Nevertheless, the variety programme has stayed on the television schedules of many countries, especially in Europe, Latin America and Asia.

The Variety Show, which is the genre of television texts studied in this research, adapts and combines many prior television genres, for example talk show, game show and talent show, into a genre of variety television programme. The Variety Show programme is one of the television programmes that come under a form called television light entertainment. According to Lusted (1998), light entertainment, including variety programmes, game shows, talent competitions and chat shows, is a global television form found in any nation's television programming. In addition to that, the same programme format can be found in different national contexts, such as the TV dating programme format: *Dating Game* in the USA became *Blind Date* in the UK, *Take Me Out* in the UK was called *Take Me Out* in many Asian countries (including Thailand) and *If You Are The One in* China (Yang, 2017). Newcomb (2004, p. 2427) states that the variety genre, as a spectacular form of entertainment, make a significant contribution to television continuing to be a popular medium. In terms of characteristics of the variety programme, it features diverse shows, such as musical, performance, comedy, acrobatics, animal tricks, magic tricks, and dramatic. It also has the popular celebrities as hosts, for example musical and comedy stars, showing their own talents or introducing other performers as guests. The forms of entertainment in variety programme genre highlight the presentational or performative aspects including immediacy, spontaneity and spectacle through the story line and characters development in the show.

One interesting point behind the popularity of variety programme in recent years, according to Newcomb (2004), is the issue engaged with the power of remote control. That is to say, the viewers can create their own variety programmes by using a remote control to switch from one genre to other genres they prefer to continue. For instance, switching from a stand-up comedy programme to ballet and opera show on another programme and switch to other programmes afterwards. Arguably, this circumstance has challenged the development of television genre in contemporary television world.

Television Genres and Development in the Global Context

It is evident that television genres have developed in terms of both programme format adaptation and global programme distribution. According to Chalaby (2013), the global television format trade has dramatically expanded since the late 1940s and continues to do so now. One piece of evidence for this is a rise in television format adaptation between 2006 and 2008, showing that 445 television formats led to 1262 adaptations in 57 territories.

One issue behind television genre development is the relation between its global and local practices. Chalaby (2013) argues that although television formats are global to the industry, they are always local to the viewers because they apply the transnational rules to create characters related to specific localities. One instance of this is the impact of *Lascia o Raddoppia,* a quiz show aired on Italian television which was adapted from an American quiz show called *The $64,000 Question*, on local culture in terms of national unification linguistically. This indicates that global television genre can make the local visible and the global invisible. Additionally, research by La Pastina and Straubhaar (2005) exploring the separation between telenovelas (Latin American serial fiction) global distribution and local consumption in Brazil and Italy raises the significance of the genre proximity of global television programmes. The research emphasises that the transnational telenovelas, transported from Latin American national media products to global markets, are more attractive than local programmes in Brazil and Southern Italy. That is, the local people in Brazil view a Mexican telenovela as more attractive than national Brazilian

telenovelas. Likewise, local people in southern Italy view Brazilian telenovela about Italian emigration to Brazil as more attractive than Italian programmes. This indicates the role of genre proximity in the sense that television genres can facilitate their ability to be shared across different culture contexts. In addition, evidence of genre proximity can be seen in transnational franchised television programmes. *The Voice, Big Brother, Got Talent, The X factor, and Take Me Out,* are instances of global popular television programmes which have been reproduced in many different countries, including Thailand, and different cultural contexts based on the same format as the original.

Another interesting point is that television genres are adapted in response to the development of communication in a period of modernisation. The research examining the Dutch television genre by Selm and Peeters (2007) indicates that the global advance of communication technology is utilised in terms of genre modification in Dutch television. Television genres in the Netherlands use additional communication channels corresponding to audience age. This includes the short message service (SMS), utilised most frequently for reality programmes and often used for programmes which aim to attract young audiences, emails and websites used for the information genre, teletext used for sports programmes, and merchandising used for the children programmes.

2.1.3 Television discourses

According to Lorenzo-Dus (2009), projects on media in the 1970s focused on language in terms of how media use language, as well as the linguistic ordering of society and consciousness. The work of Barthes on semiotics is one example of this. In the 1980s, the works shifted to focus on the meaning of media texts in the sense of interpretation rather than in the texts themselves. In the 1990s, academic study renewed interest in the spoken discourse of broadcasting. The *Broadcast Talk*, Scannell's edited collection published in 1991, was the first and the most influential academic work focusing on radio and television talk. It was followed by Fairclough's *Media Discourse* in 1995, which considered the importance of media texts. In 1996, Hutchby's *Confrontation Talk* analysing verbal confrontation in radio discourse was published.

In recent years, academic works within a broadcast talks research framework have focused on specific broadcast format e.g. on the format of talk shows and broadcast news, as well as overviews of the discourse of broadcasting. Current studies of television discourse (including this one) draw on and are derived from the linguistic and the textual analysis in television studies which aim to understand the communicated meanings within television texts, focusing on a variety of semiotic resources, including language, images and sound components, as well as the relationship between those components (Bignell, 2013). For Hartley (2002, p. 31), the link between the long tradition of textual analysis in television studies and discourse analysis textual analysis is concerned with genres of discourse in the sense of researchers studying "questions of power, subjectivity, identity and conflict in the context of everyday life, popular culture and disagreement from the official cultures and politics of the day". It can be claimed that discourse in this sense is reflected and substantiated in television texts, and thus the way to understand the social function and signification of a television text is through conducting socially oriented discourse analysis.

Several facets of the study of television discourse have been examined, such as the analysis of discourses within different genres of television programme and ideologically dominant discourses in television texts. These studies show the role of discourses as tools which producers draw on and contribute to in communicating certain structural meanings regarding, for example, identity, politics, gender, ethnicity, leadership and citizenship. The work of Marshall and Werndly (2002) illustrates how particular discourses might be articulated by popular television genres. As Marshall and Werndly explain, television documentaries may articulate discourses of science and nature as facts of the world. Dramas may articulate social discourses about gender, age, ethnicity, regionality, social class and sexuality. Sport quiz programmes may articulate discourses about masculinity. The discourses in a situation or stand-up comedy may be articulated to spoil the effect of serious discourses by satirising or mocking politics.

The study exploring the discursive construction of environmental citizenship in German and British public service television (Inthorn and Reder, 2011) is an attempt to understand how television teaches viewers to be green. The main argument of this study is that television discourses in German and British public service television maintain an approach to environmental politics which is supported by governments. The results of the study emphasise the role of television in constructing a model of citizenship, in this case regarding the environment. Additionally, a study by Tenenboim-Weinblatt (2009) exploring the uses of television dramas in mediated political discourse reveals that fictional events and characters can function as political discourses in the same way as nonfictional people and events. That is, they can provoke political debates, as well as be utilised in several other contexts for uniting political positions, demonstrating political processes, and influencing public opinion. However, the obvious difference between them is that the openness of politically relevant fictional texts functions as a device for political discourses, while nonfictional texts do not serve this function.

Research by Summers (2008) examined the construction of poverty in texts within two television documentaries about homelessness in New Zealand. Using discourse analysis, Summers analyses the way that language is used and television documentary techniques (such as editing and composition) that serve to construct discourses of poverty. This research reports that the construction of poverty in television texts is concerned with the difference and lifestyle to demonstrate the homelessness, rather than being engaged with the structural causes of poverty.

Fiske (2011b, p. 42) argues that reality is "a product of discourse". Corresponding with this, Lorenzo-Dus (2009, p. 189) maintains that "television discourse reflects and constructs particular values and beliefs about different aspects of reality". Lorenzo-Dus' analysis of television discourses indicates that the storytelling in television formats is an effective tool in the construction and promotion of particular values and beliefs. The analysis of daytime talk show storytelling reports that verbal resources are used by ordinary participants to construct their identity by using terms like "*doing being ordinary*". Additionally, the mediatisation of reality can be seen in live television news, with an increased emphasis on speculating about the future rather than

reporting the hard facts, which contributes to debates about what reality news is actually delivering.

2.1.4 Television development and dynamic in Southeast Asia

As a result of uncertain footing regarding the colonial past and slow development in Southeast Asia, television industries, compared with in Europe and North America, developed later to the region. As there are differences in the socio-political contexts between the nations in Southeast Asia, for example diversity in ethnicity, religion, culture, political history, government structure, and the level of economic development, television in the region needs to be considered in particular national contexts (Kuo and Keshishoglou, 2004). However, one general aspect of the context in Southeast Asia is the impact of what Ang (1996, p. 128) calls "cultural imperialism". Ang (1996) notes that cultural imperialism engenders a "process of cultural homogenisation" caused by a "domination of subordinated peoples and cultures by a clearly demarcated powerful culture", generally designated as American, European, or as Western culture. Following Hall's conception, as mentioned in Chapter 1, the West in this sense is no longer about geography, but is an idea/concept (Hall, 1996b, p. 185). Therefore, Western culture can refer not only to the culture of European countries/United States but also to the culture of the powerful Asian countries.

Barker (1997) explains this in terms of media imperialism, which implies both cultural and economic dimensions. In terms of television, Barker argues that this imperialism is the consequence of the domination of local cultures by foreign values, especially the influence of American values which dominate through the purchase of US television programmes, international co-productions dominated by American themes, as well as the US-dominated information services and local adaptations of American formats for domestic consumption. As a result of this sudden increase in both distribution of Western media products and Western-originated media products (a hybrid of Western and Eastern media forms and content in Asian countries), concerns surrounding media and cultural imperialism have been raised in media studies. On the one hand, some arguments emphasise that the increase of Western-originated media products in Asian countries has led to the development of a specifically Asian media, especially the contribution to a high level of media

professional practices, for example the development of television genres outlined above. On the other hand, it is claimed that this has brought cultural disadvantages to Asian countries because it threatens to undermine the cultures and national values of these countries.

The role of television in constructing the nation has been one of the major focuses of research and debate in television studies (Pertierra and Turner, 2013). According to Ubonrat (2000), the media plays a major role in constructing nationalism and a nationalist consciousness in Southeast Asian countries, especially in the former colonised nations. Focusing on television, Banerjee (2002) points out that an increase of Western-originated cultural content in the form of television channels and programmes has stimulated responses from governments, scholars, and institutions in Asia. In particular, television in Asian countries has been linked to state discourses and policies on national identity. This is reflected in the fact that governments in these countries have seized control over national television and have claimed the cultural imperialism as ideological reason for justifying such control. Banerjee (2002) argues that television has a capacity to create a mutual symbolic reference system across various nations, and is thus considered a powerful instrument for the cultural production of a national identity. As a result, governments in Asian countries attempt to control over television. For instance, governments in Singapore and Malaysia - in which the colonial legacy had left a profound diversity of populations drawn from a variety of geographical origins, races, religions, and cultural traditions - attempt to control broadcasting. This includes the control of the nation-building activities and the media's role in the process of construction of the nation.

Focusing on television in Southeast Asian countries, the issues of controlling television and national identity formation/promotion in an era of multiculturalism are hotly debated. Richards (2000b) notes that due to governments' awareness of the consequences of cultural and media imperialism in Asia, television has been utilised to promote notions of national identity. One work focusing on television and nation-building in Malaysia (Nain and Anuar, 2000) shows that television can play a central role in national formation. As a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious country, the state attempts to form and regulate a national identity. In this sense, Malaysian

television dramas are used by the government as a cultural tool for promoting national harmony. For example, the television drama *Angin* (Wind) promotes the ideological message that, "Malaysians of diverse backgrounds must promote and maintain ethnic harmony in the country" (Nain and Anuar, 2000, p. 160), and the television drama *Semalam di Kuala Lumpur* (A Night in Kuala Lumpur) illustrates how the government attempts to promote a positive portrayal of Malaysian characters in order to encourage national community morale.

Behind the attempts of encouraging national identity in response to the cultural and media imperialism, the influences of Western-originated television still remain. While televisions in Malaysia and Singapore have inherited structures along the line set by their British former colonial masters (Green, 2003), television in Philippines, the country that was formerly a colony of the United States between 1898-1946, has been influenced by the American model of television in terms of the pattern of broadcast network as well as the contents. As Richards (2000a) explains, the US model has dominated television in terms of the pattern of Philippines broadcast network. It has been patterned on the US form and content such as patterning the tabloid style journalism to television news and current affairs programmes that have become a combination of celebrity and scandal reported to entertain instead of to educate and inform. The study of Banerjee (2002) reveals that the channels distributed by cable in Singapore and satellite in Malaysia have led to a significant increase in Western contents. Thus, the public service monopoly of broadcasting systems in these countries has been restricted to the flow of Western programming and contents.

In the meantime, it is evident that television in Southeast Asia has culturally been influenced by not only Western television but also other Asian televisions from the East Asian countries including Japanese and Korean television programmes. The study of Dissanayake (2012) examining the dynamic of Asian television illustrates the popularity of Japanese and Korean television dramas in other Asian countries, including in Malaysia and Thailand. In addition to that, the study of Iwabuchi (2004 cited in Dissanayake, 2012) emphasises that Japanese television dramas have a transnational power and appeal in Southeast Asia. To demonstrate the reasons for

this popularity, Dissanayake (2012, p. 192) argues that Japanese and Korean television dramas have been very popular in other Asian countries because they have "the common communicational philosophies and visions that they share". Arguably, what they share in this sense can be considered as the shared culture among Asian audiences. Namely, the Japanese and Korean media products have presented an Asian flavoured Western culture that Asian audiences can share together. Japanese and Korean pop songs and television programmes presented as a hybrid of Asian and Western culture are the evidences of this. This way of presentation can be claimed as one of the reasons why they are popular and impactful in other Asian countries.

In addition to the role of television in the formation of national identity, another important aspect regarding Asian television adaptation in response to globalisation is "glocalisation", a term frequently used by scholars in the area of media studies to explain the way that Asian media have developed in response to globalisation and globalisation discourses. Chang (2003, p. 28) argues that "rather than regarding globalisation as a process that uniformly subverts local imperatives, it is a process of glocalisation in which the local exercises influences in constituting global". This is one of the arguments emphasising an essential dynamic of television in response to the globally changing circumstance of the contemporary media world. Chang (2003)' s analysis of the development of global television broadcasting in Asia, reveals that the global television broadcasting in Asia including *STAR TV*, *MTV Asia*, *ESPN Star Sports*, and *CNBC Asia* are the leaders in programming glocalisation by means of localisation of their television programming. *STAR TV* and *MTV Asia,* for instance, have localised their programming by dividing channels into language blocks as well as providing particular channels with language customisation along with original programming co-produced with the local sectors. The argument here is that it is essential for global broadcasters to adapt their programming to local conditions in order to make the contents more relevant to and interesting for local audiences. The glocalisation of Asian television underscores the meaningful role of media in advocating the idea "think globally, act locally" (Thitinan, 2007, p. 12), which has been adopted in Asian media in these days.

2.1.5 Television in the Thai context

First launched by a government enterprise in 1955, Thailand was the first nation in Southeast Asia to begin regular television transmissions (Kavi, 2002). Current Thai television includes both free TV and Pay TV systems, providing audiences with a wide variety of choices of channels. However, free TV is the most popular. There are six free TV channels, including four commercial free TV channels: *Thai Television Channel 3*; *Royal Thai Army Radio and Television Channel* 5; *Bangkok Broadcasting Television Channel 7*; and *Modernine TV* (Channel 9). Another two free TV channels are *The National Broadcasting Services of Thailand, or NBT* (Channel 11), run by the government's Public Relations Department, and *Thai Public Broadcast Service (Thai PBS channel)*, run by the Thai Public Broadcast Service.

In terms of ownership, since the beginning of television distribution, state agencies have controlled television through concessions (Supinya, 2009). According to Kuo and Keshishoglou (2004), Thai free TV stations can be categorised into three main groups: 1) the state-owned television stations, including *Channels 5, 9* and *NBT*; 2) the private television stations, including *Channels 3* and *7*; and 3) the public broadcast service, named *Thai Public Broadcast Service (Thai PBS).* In terms of television transmission, since the year 2014 there has been a significant change in Thai TV broadcasting in the sense that digital terrestrial television was launched for the public along with the use of analogue terrestrial television transmission (scheduled to be switched off and to be completely replaced by digital television in 2020) (Office of The National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission, 2014). This change in transmission systems might contribute to alterations and the further development of the Thai TV industry and audience consumption in the future. Also, the effect of this change will become a major area of research and debate in and about Thai TV Studies.

It is claimed that political authority blurred the freedom and independence of Thai television in the past. As Supinya (2009) points out, Thai broadcast media, including radio and television, were under political control in the period after the political revolution in 1932, which changed Thailand from a monarchy into a parliamentary democracy (as explained in Chapter 1). During that period, the military, as the

supreme political authority, used radio as a tool for political propaganda, and later used television for the same purpose. This circumstance shows the lack of freedom for Thai broadcast media as a watchdog in reporting political events and information. A period of political liberation in 1973 led by a student uprising, and later an anti-dictatorship movement led by the middle-class in 1992 were meaningful incidents for the liberalisation and democratisation of media regarding politics in Thailand. Although these events did not completely achieve their goals with regard to freeing up the media from state and military control, they led civil society to become concerned about media freedom and aspire to free the media from government control. Finally, an opportunity for this success was provided under *Article 40 of the 1997 Constitution*, which specified that "airwaves are public resources, and should be allocated based on public and community interest, and fair competition" (Supinya, 2009, p. 25). This provides broadcast media in Thailand with more freedom not only in terms of business competition but also in presenting the content and form of media products, following professional media ethics and social responsibility. This development has also led to debates in Thai media studies concerned with media freedoms and social responsibility.

According to Itsariya (2013), television is the most popular medium in Thailand, taking 98 percent of the population access rate and valued at 58 percent of overall advertising income in Thailand (AGB Neilson Media Research cited in Itsariya, 2013). Free TV is the most popular format as a result of its ability to provide a diversity of television programmes which fulfil audience demands, as well as obviously being free to watch and broadly accessible to Thai viewers all over nation. The report into free TV audience share in 2012 by MCOT Public Company Limited (2012 cited in Itsariya, 2013) shows that Channel 7 is the most popular channel, followed by Channels 3, 9, 5, Thai PBS (the only television channel which is intended for public benefit without commercials), and 11. The increasing competition in the television industry has influenced programme scheduling. Most Thai television stations, especially the commercial ones, aim at high ratings, which can provide them with benefits from advertising. Consequently, the programme schedule of these television stations is arranged to serve that goal by putting a large number of entertainment programmes that are very popular among viewers. The apparent evidence is that the majority of television programmes broadcast on commercial television stations

includes many forms of entertainment programmes, for example dramas, variety programmes, talk show programmes, game shows and talent shows, rather than educational and informative programmes. In contrast, *NBT* and *Thai PBS* mainly present programmes concerned with educating, giving information and public service (Aachavit, 2012). However, in recent years, the commercial television stations have tended to be aware of their role in presenting informative/educational content, evidenced in the many shows which combine the contents into several forms of entertainment, such as presenting educational content through the form of variety shows and game shows.

As the majority of Thai viewers consume the television programmes broadcast on free TV, the free TV stations are utilised as a principal source in the promotion of Thai cultural identity. Apparently, Western and other Asian cultures (especially South Korean and Japanese cultures) have emerged not only in Thai people's lifestyles but also in Thai media. American culture has been the main Western culture influencing Thai television and Thai viewers' values. A study by Tan and Kultida (1998) suggests that the American television programmes which were broadcast on Thai television channels (37 American television programmes were at the time broadcast on Thai television channels, and more than 80% of them were dubbed into the Thai language), had an influence on Thai viewers' perceptions of the social stereotypes of Americans. Furthermore, according to Ubonrat (2000, p. 117), in the mid-1980s to the 1990s, prime-time television dramas offer convincing evidence of the powerful influence of Western culture on Thai television. In that period, television dramas developed two additional attributes: "the un-Thainess" of the main characters and "the foreign setting" of the drama. Ubonrat argues that this was a period in which "the twin process of sublimation of un-Thainess and sublimation of Thainess became intertwined at the same instance". The apparent defining event of this cultural change was the promotion of the "imported Miss Thailand" *Pornthip Nakhirankanok,* the half-Thai half-American lady who grew up in the USA and who contributed to the popularity of Western characteristics among Thais. Her acquisition of the 1988 Miss Universe, an even which was highly shown across television media, played a significant role in driving the admiration for Western features in terms of both physical characteristics and social values (Ubonrat, 2000, p. 177). Ubonrat (2000, p. 177) further claims that the presentation of *Miss Pornthip* "sets the tradition of the

globalised beauty in the Thai cultural spirit". Even though she speaks perfect English but poor Thai, she proudly presents Thailand in "the juxtaposition of Thainess and un-Thainess". She has thus been considered the "Thai beauty queen", one who promotes "cultural and aesthetic hybridity" (Harrison, 2010a, p. 31). Consequently, this has been viewed as the event that "provide Thai society with a sense of psychological security in competing successfully in the global arena" (Ubonrat, 2000, p. 177). Also, Harrison (2010a, p. 31) argues that *Miss Pornthip*'s success at Miss Universe "modelled her as signifier of a global recognition of Thailand's aesthetic prowess" and as "symbol of national success on the world stage". As a result of this, a modern form of Thainess as a mix of Thai and un-Thai identity in this sense has been extensively and popularly represented in the Thai media since then. This is evidenced in the emergence of the Western characteristics displayed in Thai television through the presentations of actors/actresses, singers, fashion models and television hosts who have a combination of Asian and Western appearances (Ubonrat, 2000). Furthermore, this seems to have resulted in an increase in the number of half-Thai, half-Western celebrities, or "half-Thai, half-*farang* or *luk-khreung* celebrities" (Harrison, 2010a, p. 31). This indicates the way in which the popularity of traditional Thai characteristics in the sense of both physical characteristics and traditional social values have been blurred.

Contemporary Thai lifestyle and media have been influenced not only by Western but also by other *Asian* cultures. In particular, South Korean pop culture has been very popular among Thais since many versions of South Korean media products, especially Korean songs and television series, were introduced into Thailand. As a result, Thais, especially Thai youths, appreciate South Korean pop culture, not only in terms of media consumption but also lifestyles and fashions, for instance trends of dress, make up, hair styles, patterns of speech and non-verbal communication, and the popularity of Korean food and products imported from South Korea. Moreover, this trend is also evidenced by the fact that South Korea has become a popular and desirable tourist destination for Thais of all ages and even family holidays. This is consistent with the findings of Kim and Wang (2012), who explore the influence of *Daejanggeum,* the Korean period television serial drama which is very popular in many Asian countries, on audiences in Thailand, China, Taiwan, and Japan, in relation to screen-tourism. In Thailand, this drama was broadcast on a prime-time slot

on a popular free TV channel (Channel 3) in 2003. The results of their research show that exposure to the Korean television drama, which portrays the history and past culture of Korea, influences audiences' desires to visit the locations portrayed. As Kim and Wang (2012, p. 437) argue, "the more audiences emotionally engage with a media programme, the more likely they will visit screen-tourism location". This reflects the way that South Korean television products affect Thai audiences' perceptions and behaviours (including the emergence of nostalgia for the traditional Korean culture among Thai viewers, which will be discussed in the section of nostalgia).

Arguably, the South Korean entertainment media products have played a significant role in the behavioural imitation of Korean culture among Thai teenagers (Chutima, 2007; Papanggon et al., 2013). The study of the behavioural imitation of Korean culture from Korean entertainment media products among Thai youths reveals that the most important reason of exposing the Korean media products is the aspiration to follow up the shows of Korean singers and actors/actresses. This study argues that the Korean pop stars are the key factor having a powerful influence on Thai youths' behavioural imitation of Korean culture. The evidence of this is that the popularity of cosmetic surgery among the Korean pop stars seems to play a meaningful role in a change of Thais' attitudes on the cosmetic surgery, from negative to positive attitudes. As a result, there has been an increasing trend of cosmetic surgery among Thais (either among celebrities or Thai people in general) in response to the desire to have the perfect physical features like Korean pop stars (Chutima, 2007). The representation of the Korean cosmetic surgery, as the way that helps to change/modify the abnormal or unpleasant physical figures of Thai people to be a good-looking person, in the Thai Television show *Let Me in Thailand* is one of the shreds of evidence showing this beauty trend and the social values behind it. The values as such include the idea that cosmetic surgery can help to change ones' life in the sense that having the good looks and pleasant personality might provide them with more opportunities of life. The popularity of Korean pop culture among Thais has also influenced the creation of many Thai media products, especially music, films and television programmes. That is to say, they have been produced based on the application of Korean pop style to Thai media, such as many television dramas and

films which have been constructed through the mood and tone and presentation techniques as same as in Korean television dramas.

To cope with the increasing trend in the popularity of foreign cultures, television has been utilised as a principal source in the promotion of Thai cultural identity. The results of the study examining television and the construction of Thai cultural identity by Thitinan (2007) emphasises that globalisation has an influence on creating the sense of nationalism in Thailand that has led to the strengthening of Thai traditional identity. The evidence of this is that the government has utilised television, a powerful mass medium in Thailand, as the instrument to encourage traditional Thai identity. Besides, the study of Hamilton (2002) suggests that the official version of national identity promotion is declared through Thai television such as through the compulsory public broadcasting systems. In this sense, television has been a tool to strengthen Thai distinctiveness and identify the national self-representation in response to the social transformation in the period of globalisation in which new social practices, values and attitudes are being promoted to reach the goal of achieving modernity. For example, the promulgation of national television policy resting on local production has succeeded in creating "a distinctive sense of identity that poses Thai people against foreign others, even while assimilating many stylistic aspects of the cultural forms of those others" (Hamilton, 2002, p. 166).

The promotion of Thai cultural identity has been facilitated through various television programmes. This is illustrated in the results of research by Tapakon and Kanjana (2011), which examines the construction of Thainess through Thai televised animations aimed at children as the foremost target audiences. This research suggests that although televised animations are produced as modern programmes to attract the audiences' attention, they still represent Thainess in the sense of both a traditional Thainess that is in danger of vanishing from contemporary Thai society, and at the same time a modern Thainess. The interesting point Tapakon and Kanjana (2011) articulate is that the form of presentation is one of the effective ways to access to and promote Thainess to the new generation of Thais, and that a crucial contributing factor in the production of televised animations to promote Thainess is the generous support of government funding.

Despite the fact that the promotion of Thai identity has been a concern in the government sector, the evidence of government concerns has mostly shown in television programmes telecasted in two television channels including *NBT* that is executed by the government's Public Relations Department, and *Thai PBS* that aims to provide the programmes for a public service. The problem of this is that both *NBT* and *Thai PBS* are not popular among Thai viewers, compared with the commercial television channels that appeal to a majority of audiences. Thus, the promotion of national identity through *NBT* and *Thai PBS* has not been impactful. However, despite having no government funding, the commercial-free television channels have been distributed in several forms of television shows, especially variety programmes and television dramas concerned with the encouragement of Thai cultural identity. The popularity of such shows helps these platforms while at the same time they contribute to promoting a certain understanding of national identity to viewers. In this way, the nostalgic mediation of a national culture and historic past through popular television shows can play a significant role. This will be discussed in the next section.

2.2 The Construction of Nostalgia

Meanings and functions of nostalgia vary depending on the context of using and constructing it. What nostalgia means in a particular socio-cultural/political context might be different than what it means in another context and society (Sprengler, 2009). The discussion on nostalgia in this section thus begins with a definition, which is then followed by a discussion of the link between nostalgia and identity and the wider links with television and other mass media.

2.2.1 The definition of nostalgia

Nostalgia as homesickness

Nostalgia is a term generally used to describe an emotion of longing for the past and the imagination of the world or past experiences individuals have lost. The term was coined by the Swiss physician Johannes Hofer in 1688, and is a combination of the two Greek terms "*nostos*", which means "to return home", and "*algia*", which refers to "a painful condition" (Davis, 1979, p. 1; Wilson, 2014, p. 21). The original definition of

nostalgia therefore means "a painful yearning to return home" (Davis, 1979, p. 1) or, in other words, extreme "homesickness" (Wilson, 2014, p. 21).

Research into nostalgia has a long history, from the original studies in which nostalgia was regarded as a mental symptom of painful yearning to return home to the later, broader context. Originally, the concept of nostalgia was accounted for by Johannes Hofer through the lens of medical perspectives. In his PhD thesis *"Medical Dissertation on Nostalgia"*, Hofer coined the term nostalgia to indicate the "condition of extreme homesickness among Swiss mercenaries fighting far from their native land in the legions of one or another European despot". The symptoms, mentioned by Hofer and other physicians, included "despondency, melancholia, lability of emotion, including profound bouts of weeping, anorexia, a generalised 'wasting away', and, not infrequently, attempts at suicide" (Davis, 1979, p. 1). This original understanding of nostalgia has since expanded in into a more metaphorical and wider use around different fields and domains.

In the context of nostalgia, "home" has connotations of various nostalgic things. Rather than only referring to the place, the concept of home in nostalgia context has a broader meaning. Wilson (2014) explains that the highly mobile lifestyle of people has brought about a rethinking of the idea of home. Due to the fact that the contemporary world has been in the "postmodern, multicultural time" in which people have become highly mobile and have simultaneously lived in many social settings, it is difficult to define what "home" and "to feel at home" stand for (Wilson, 2014, p. 32). Following the original definition of nostalgia, Wilson (2014, p. 32) poses the interesting question: "Nostalgia as longing for home - but what is home?"
This might be answered by the idea of Boym (2001, p. 251) who explains that "to feel at home" does not merely relate to home as an actual place but also an imaginary moment in relation to the home. For Boym:

> "To feel at home is to know that things are in their places and so are you; it is a state of mind that doesn't depend on an actual location. The object of longing, then, is not really a place called home but this sense of intimacy with the world; it is not the past in general, but that imaginary moment when we had time and didn't know the temptation of nostalgia." (Boym, 2001, p. 251)

It can be argued that "home" in the sense of nostalgia refers to things which people perceive as elements of their reminiscence about the place they consider as home. Therefore, home could mean many things - the community, the town, the nation, the people in a nostalgic social setting (such as close friends and neighbours), and even "characteristic patterns of behaviours, the customs, the attitudes, the beliefs, and the mode of living" (McCann 1940 cited in Wilson, 2014, p. 32). Duyvendak (2011)'s comparison of nostalgia regarding the feelings of home in the Netherlands and the US shows the different conceptions of home. While home in the US is "primarily a protected, private place (home-as-haven)", home in the Netherlands is "the nation as a whole" that is "a public space where shared modern conceptions concerning the good life are nourished (home-as-heaven)" (Duyvendak, 2011, pp. 108-109).

For this thesis, the concept of home stands for not only Thailand as a "home country", but also "culture" that has been embedded in the Thai ways of living which have contributed to the cultural uniqueness of the nation.

Nostalgia as the yearning for a time and place
As nostalgic emotion is related to the past, it is interesting to consider what the past in the context of nostalgia means. It has been suggested that nostalgia is connected with the past both in terms of reality (the real past) and imagination (imagined past). In addition to the original definition as a yearning for the existent past that has vanished from the present world, Wilson (1999, p. 303) asserts that "the longing may be for a past that did not necessarily exist (we do engage in selective memory)".

The nostalgic past has also been considered as a notion of place and time (Wilson, 1999; Boym, 2001; Wilson, 2014). According to Wilson (1999, p. 302), "nostalgia is more than homesickness" and it refers to the yearning for "a time and place" such as individuals remembering when they felt happy/safe and where they lived in. In her more current work on nostalgia, Wilson (2014, p. 22) argues against the view of Morris (2002 cited in Wilson, 2014, p. 22) in terms of "whether nostalgia…relates more to place or to time". Morris, in line with the original definition of nostalgia, claims that "homesickness is the most delicious form of nostalgia" because "we cannot return to the past, but we can go home again" (i.e. we can actually go back to the

nostalgic place). In contrast, Wilson (2014, p. 22) argues that "there is a shift from longing for a particular place to longing for a particular time". This line of thought follows Boym (2001), who asserts that nostalgia is substantially a longing for the time. Boym (2001) states:

> "At first glance, nostalgia is a longing for a place, but actually it is a yearning for a different time - the time of our childhood, the slower rhythms of our dreams. In a broader sense, nostalgia is rebellion against the modern idea of time, the time of history and progress. The nostalgic desires to obliterate history and turn it into private or collective mythology, to revisit time like space, refusing to surrender to the irreversibility of time that plagues the human condition." (Boym, 2001, p. xv)

Despite these differing views, it can be argued that nostalgia is a yearning for both time and place. This is because nostalgia relates to the private and collective memory that contains the stories of the good old times and also remembered place. This will be explained in the following section.

Nostalgia as private and collective sentiment

Nostalgic things could be an element of the past - either the private or social/collective past. Much of the current literature on nostalgia pays particular attention to the link between nostalgia and social phenomena. More than regarding nostalgia as merely the psychological condition of an individual, the concept has been broadly explained through the lens of social science to explain the relationship between nostalgia and society. Among many works on nostalgia, the classic work of Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia,* has been seen as "the first full-length treatment of nostalgia by sociologist" (Panelas, 1982, p. 1425) and as "a useful starting point for conceptualizing nostalgia" (Tannock, 1995, p. 458). Commenting on nostalgia, Davis (1979, p. vii) argues that nostalgia is not only a "private" but also a "social" emotion. Davis (1979, p. 122) distinguishes between two forms of nostalgia: "private" and "collective" nostalgia:

> "…nostalgia, despite its private, sometimes intensely felt personal character, is a deeply social emotion as well. By this I mean that, like many other feelings and thoughts we experience, nostalgia derives from and has continuing implications for our lives as social actors. It leads us to search among remembrances of persons and places of our past in an effort to bestow meaning upon persons and places of our present (and to some degree our future)." (Davis, 1979, p. vii)

From this point of view, nostalgia has therefore been divided into two main types. Davis (1979, p. 122) calls "private nostalgia" and "collective nostalgia". Davis points out that although both kinds of nostalgia "display the same yearning and adoration for some slice of a personally experienced past", they are distinct in the sense that private nostalgia engages with "a particular person's biography" while collective nostalgia relates to "nostalgic feeling in millions of persons at the same time" (Davis, 1979, pp. 122 - 123). Supporting this view, Wilson (1999); Wilson (2014); Dauncey and Tinker (2015) maintain that nostalgia is both a personal/individual and a public/collective experience shared among the members of a particular social group. As Wilson states:

> "Nostalgia may be experienced collectively, in the sense that nostalgia occurs when we are with others who shared the event(s) being recalled, and also in the sense that one's nostalgia is often for the collective – the characteristics and activities of a group or institution in which the individual was a participant." (Wilson, 1999, p. 303)

The semiotic analysis of nostalgia related to products/brands conducted by Kessous and Roux (2008) reveals the connection between two kinds of nostalgic sentiment of individuals, which could be argued as a private nostalgia, with brands and products. This research was conducted in two-stage interviews of males and females aged from 22 to 66 years about products and brands connected to their nostalgic feelings (fountain pens, jewellery, perfume, television, bicycle, car, motorbike, and cigarettes). The results of this study show that "nostalgia connects objects, individuals and events across time and place", as evident in, for instance, seeking for the symbolic reminder that "the memories attached to the objects will remain vivid and real". The two types of nostalgia include the "long-standing nostalgia" associated with individuals bringing back the memories of past happy times (for example, individuals are attached to the brand *Nutella* as it reminds them of their childhood). The other kind of nostalgia is the "first-time nostalgia" - nostalgia for "an initial, significant or unique life event" related to "a unique emotional experience" of one's life. For instance, an individual's nostalgic feeling associated with a specific brand of cigarette (the first cigarette she smoked with her first lover). She thus feels nostalgia for this brand of cigarette and thinks about the first lover every time she smokes (Kessous and Roux, 2008, p. 198). This indicates the way in which nostalgia becomes an

important ingredient of establishing a psychological connection between brands/products (and, indeed, the media representations of cultural and other kinds of products) and consumers.

Nostalgia as bittersweet

Although nostalgia relates to a sense of happiness/pleasure/enjoyment about the past, it is also a reflection of unhappiness. Despite the fact that the nostalgic emotion has generally been seen as a yearning for a positive past (a good old time or place), previous studies have established that nostalgia is the clue to a sense of loss and unhappiness with the present. The ideas of Turner (1987) underline that loss is a key factor of nostalgia. Commenting on nostalgia as "a social and cultural discourse", Turner (1987, pp. 150-151) argues that "the nostalgic paradigm has four major dimensions". These are 1) a sense of "historical decline and loss, involving a departure from some golden age of homefulness"; 2) a sense of "absence or loss of personal wholeness and moral certainty"; 3) a sense of "the loss of individual freedom and autonomy with the disappearance of genuine social relationships"; and 4) a sense of the "loss of simplicity, personal authenticity and emotional spontaneity". These four components of the nostalgic discourse indicate that nostalgia is a link between the yearnings for the sweetness of the past as a response to the condition of loss, namely bitterness. Closely related to this, the study of Kessous and Roux (2008, p. 199) identifies four types of meaningful moments related to nostalgia: the everyday past, uniqueness, tradition, and transition associated with particular brands and objects. The four moments indicate that things connected with nostalgia are not only the past in general (i.e. everyday past and transition associated with particular brands and objects) but also the cultural aspects (i.e. uniqueness and tradition) which can be linked to the issue of identity and loss.

Whereas Davis (1979, p. 14) regards nostalgia as a sweet emotion of yearning for the past, many scholars view nostalgia as bittersweet. For Davis:

> "…the nostalgic feeling is infused with imputations of past beauty, pleasure, joy, satisfaction, goodness, happiness, love, and the like, in sum, any or several of the positive affects of beings. Nostalgia feeling is almost never infused with those sentiments we commonly think of as negative – for example, unhappiness, frustration, despair, hate, shame, abuse." (Davis, 1979, p. 14)

Even though Davis, to some extent, also views nostalgia as "bittersweet" (Davis, 1979, p. 14), he claims that bittersweet nostalgia as such "is a nice sort of sadness". In this sense, Davis explains the results of his interviews as follows:

> "Some will, to be sure, allow that their nostalgia is tinged frequently with a certain sadness or even melancholy but are then inclined to describe it as "a nice sort of sadness" – 'bittersweet' is an apt word occasionally used. The "implication is that the component of sadness serves only to heighten the quality of recaptured joy or contentment." (Davis, 1979, p. 14).

As noted, others argue for nostalgia as bittersweet in the sense that nostalgia, as the recalling of the sweetness of the past, is a reflection of the bitterness of the present. Nostalgia in this sense is "the bittersweet recall of emotional past events" (Mills and Coleman, 1994 cited in Wilson, 2014, p. 23) as it "combines bitterness and sweetness, the lost and the found" (Harper, 1966 cited in Wilson, 2014, p. 23). This view is supported by the current work of Wilson (2014), who maintains that nostalgia for the good old days is a mirror of the loss embedded in the bitter present:

> "While one's nostalgic memories may connote a pleasant or good time in the past, the fact that the individual is removed from that ideal situation can trigger sadness and a sense of loss." (Wilson, 2014, p. 22)

Nostalgia as a sanctuary

Nostalgia functions as a sanctuary. For the nostalgic person, "the world is alien" in the sense that they feel uncomfortable with it due to experiencing "social reality as mere illusion which could not be grasped by language or practice" (Turner, 1987, pp. 148-149). In response to the bitter present, the sweet past is recalled to fulfil the lack and loss. Nostalgia has been claimed as "a response to the uncertainties" (Dauncey and Tinker, 2015, p. 136). It plays a role in creating an emotional safety and comfort in the sense that it "realigns cognition and emotion to produce comfort and security" (Wilson, 2014, p. 23). Comfort and security in this sense may be brought about by evoking a pleasant past. As the pleasant past individuals long for is irreversible, it can therefore be perceived as a "paradise lost" (Amporn, 2003, p. 299) from their current real life. Boym (2001, p. 8) calls this "the edenic (paradisiac) unity of time and space". As Boym states:

"Modern nostalgia is a mourning for the impossibility of mythical return, for the loss of an enchanted world with clear borders and values; it could be a secular expression of spiritual longing, a nostalgia for an absolute, a home that is both physical and spiritual, the edenic unity of time and space before entry into history." (Boym, 2001, p. 8)

The notion of paradise lost, or the edenic world, was also explained by Tannock (1995, p. 456) with the term "prelapsarian world". He notes that nostalgia is "a structure of feeling" which "invokes a positively evaluated past world in response to a deficient present world (Tannock, 1995, p. 454), and that "nostalgia works…as a periodizing emotion: that was then, and this is now" (Tannock, 1995, p. 456). Interestingly, he identifies three key ideas of the nostalgic structure of feeling to illustrate how nostalgic sentiment emerges and evolves. These are "a prelapsarian world"; "a lapse"; and "a postlapsarian world". A "prelapsarian world" refers to a positively evaluated past world, that is, paradise lost. For example, "the Golden Age, the childhood Home, the Country". In the sense of cultural identity, this could refer to an abundance/strength of original/traditional culture. A "lapse" refers to a period of alienation/separation ("a cut, a Catastrophe, a separation or sundering, the Fall" and could be a gradual disappearance of the original/traditional culture). A "postlapsarian world" refers to the present world of being "lacking, deficient, or oppressive". In response to the "overtly fixed, static, and monolithic" present, i.e. the "postlapsarian present", nostalgic individuals may yearn for the "prelapsarian past", i.e. "a past in which things could be put into play, opened up, moved about, or simply given a little breathing space" (Tannock, 1995, pp. 456-457). As Tannock points out:

"The nostalgic subject turns to the past to find/construct sources of identity, agency, or community, that are felt to be lacking, blocked, subverted, or threatened in the present. The 'positively evaluated' past is approached as a source for something now perceived to be missing...." (Tannock, 1995, p. 454)

To sum up, nostalgia is a yearning and desire for looking backwards to the positively evaluated/pleasure elements of the past which have been lost from the current life individuals are in. The paradise lost, whether in the individual or social context, encompasses a wide range of loss including not only the loss of pleasure and beautiful past events/experiences but also the loss or instability of identity.

2.2.2 Nostalgia and identity

Nostalgia is closely linked to identity. If the discontinuity/uncertainty of identity alludes to the bitterness of the present, nostalgia as a search for continuity is thus a means of searching for/recalling the sweetness. Previous studies have established that nostalgia has played a role in facilitating a continuity of identity in response to the discontinuity (Davis, 1979; Robertson, 1992; Tannock, 1995; Wilson, 1999; Bergin, 2012; Niemeyer, 2014; Wilson, 2014). As Davis (1979) claims, nostalgia functions as "the search for continuity amid threats of discontinuity" (Davis, 1979, p. 35). For Davis:

> "Nostalgia is one of the means – or, better, one of the more readily accessible psychological lenses – we employ in the never ending work of constructing, maintaining, and reconstructing our identities." (Davis, 1979, p. 31)

Supporting the view of Davis, Tannock (1995, p. 456) maintains that nostalgia is a response of identity discontinuity and isolation. As Tannock states:

> "Nostalgia responds to the experience of discontinuity - to the sense that agency or identity are somehow blocked or threatened, and that this is so because of a separation from an imaginatively remembered past, homeland, family or community." (Tannock, 1995, p. 456)

Additionally, the crucial role of nostalgia as the search for continuity has been accounted for in relation to the circumstances of identity in the era of globalisation. In his book *Globalisation: Social Theory and Global Culture*, Robertson (1992) makes an important point regarding nostalgia as a response to the impersonal forces of globalisation. He points out that "the universalization of national (and other) particularisms" is a key feature of globalisation (Robertson, 1992, p. 155). He argues further that globalisation has played a significant role in an increase of nostalgic invention of traditions. Robertson claims this phenomenon as "modern wilful nostalgia". As Robertson states:

> "Globalization has been a primary root of the rise of wilful nostalgia. More specifically, it was the take-off period of rapidly accelerating globalization in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that witnesses the flowering of the urge to invent traditions. Wilful nostalgia as a form of cultural politics as well as the politics of culture has been a major feature of globalization." (Robertson, 1992, p. 155)

The response of Japan and China to Western intrusions during the 1850s is an example of this. As Robertson (1992, p. 149) argues, Western intrusions in these countries "created an intense response to the West", for example, the "striking invention of national myths" in Japan, and the "increasing ambivalence and instability" and "concern with tradition and its relationship to civilization" in China. This indicates the role of nostalgia as a source of the return to traditionalism to resist changes stemming from universalisation and cultural imperialism.

Niemeyer (2014, p. 10) claims that nostalgia is nowadays "more often constructive than destructive" in the sense that "nostalgizing would help to develop the feeling of being part of a community or a group". Hence, nostalgia could be a means of national construction, both politically (placing emphasis on nationalist construction) and more culturally (focusing on the (re)construction of national identity). Dauncey and Tinker (2015, p. 137) explain that the uses of the past can be both "personal, regarding the definition of self and individual identities" as well as "political and national" through the mobilisation of collective memories and identities.

For the purpose of the construction of the past, the two types of nostalgia suggested by Boym (2001) can be employed. According to Boym (2001), although these two features are not absolute types of nostalgia, they can be considered as ways of giving shape and meaning to the yearning for/nostalgic returning to the past. The first kind is *"restorative nostalgia",* which is in line with ideas of nationalism as it relates to a political purpose and restoration of the national past. Another kind is *"reflective nostalgia"*, which places emphasis on the reflection of the past and relates more to cultural construction.

The restorative form of nostalgia corresponds with Smith (2010)'s views on nationalism and the restoration of national identity. He notes that "the task of nationalists is to rediscover the unique cultural genius of the nation and restore to a people its authentic cultural identity…" (Smith, 2010, p. 30). As Boym (2001, p. 41) points out, restorative nostalgia focuses on *nostos* i.e. the sense of a return home and "to rebuild the lost home". Restorative nostalgia places an emphasis on characterising "national and nationalist revivals" and "manifests itself in total

reconstructions of monuments of the past". As Boym claims, for restorative nostalgia, the past "is a value for the present; the past is not a duration but a perfect snapshot" and "it has to be freshly painted in its "original images". This kind of nostalgia is thus a total restoration of the national past/symbols and a total return to origins (Boym, 2001, p. 49). As restorative nostalgia sees nationalism and exclusion as sweetness, it could probably be referred to as nationalist nostalgia. Boym explains the link between this kind of nostalgia and nationalism as follows:

> "Restorative nostalgia knows two main narrative plots – the restoration of origins and the conspiracy theory, characteristic of the most extreme cases of contemporary nationalism fed on right-wing popular culture." (Boym, 2001, p. 43)

As Boym (2001, p. 43) explains, conspiracy theory as such places an emphasis on the idea of "an imagined community based on exclusion more than affection… 'They' conspire against 'our' homecoming, hence, 'we' have to conspire against 'them' in order to restore 'our' imagined community." This is evident in twentieth century violence such as pogroms to Nazi and Stalinist terror to McCarthy's Red Scare (Boym, 2001), and the circumstances in nineteenth-century Europe in which "nostalgia was linked to the concepts of chauvinism and nationalism" (Niemeyer, 2014, p. 5). Moreover, Trump's concept of America first, with the goal of exclusion of others, may be the most obvious and current evidence of restorative nostalgia as a connection to a nationalist/political movement. These nationalist characteristics of restorative nostalgia lead to the claim that nostalgia can function as not only a socio-cultural but also a political tool in a way that usually leads to a form of exclusionary and binary national identity construction.

On the other side, reflective nostalgia "lingers on ruins, the patina of time and history" (Boym, 2001, p. 41). Whereas restorative nostalgia focuses on *nostos* and "evokes national past", reflective nostalgia places emphasis on *algia* (a painful yearning) and relates more to "individual and cultural memory" (Boym, 2001, p. 49). As Boym suggests:

> "Reflective nostalgia does not pretend to rebuild the mythical place called home… Nostalgics of the second type are aware of the gap between identity and resemblance; the home is in ruins or, on the contrary, has been just renovated and gentrified beyond recognition. This defamiliarization and sense

of distance drives them to tell their story, to narrate the relationship between past, present and future." (Boym, 2001, p. 50)

Rather than being at the core of "national and religious revivals" (Boym, 2001, p. xviii) as restorative nostalgia is, reflective nostalgia focuses on the reflective representation of the past as a link to the present and the future. As Boym explains:

> "Restorative nostalgia has elements of both mourning and melancholia. While its loss is never completely recalled, it has some connection to the loss of collective frameworks of memory. Reflective nostalgia is a form of deep mourning that performs a labor of grief both through pondering pain and through play that points to the future." (Boym, 2001, p. 55).

The distinctions between these two kinds of nostalgia allude to the view that there have been at least two main purposes of nostalgic construction of the past. The first aim is to facilitate a nationalist revival. Another purpose is to reconstruct/represent the past as a virtual reality and as a fragment of individual/collective memory. As a means of nostalgic communication, the media have been an essence of either reflective or restorative constructions and representations of the past. This will be explained in the following section.

2.2.3 Nostalgia and media

The media have played a prominent role in beautifying the present world with nostalgic elements of the past. The progress in media technology plays a role in changing forms of nostalgic representation compared with the past. In the past, the feeling of nostalgia could be normally expressed through both individual forms and the forms of collective activities in a social group. Nowadays, in addition to the private/social forms of nostalgia mentioned above, media practice has been a crucial element of nostalgia (Niemeyer, 2014), evidenced by several forms of nostalgic representation which flourish in media products.

The scholarly explorations of construction of nostalgia in media have focused on two main aspects. The first one is the studies dealing with nostalgia in the sense of media constructions/representations, which recall the past in the collective memories among people. The second direction places more emphasis on the construction of

nostalgia in relation to national identity. Several lines of evidence suggest that the media constructions and representations of nostalgic elements have been featured as either reflective or (more or less) restorative.

Nostalgia has been considered as a reaction to multiculturalism. In global society, in which the integration of different cultures is commonplace, the increase in multicultures may lead to a quest for original/national identity, authenticity and/or unity among nostalgic individuals and social groups. In response to this sense of loss/absence, nostalgic persons may be engaged in symbolically escaping from the real world (Tannock, 1995). As Tannock states:

> "Invoking the past, the nostalgic subject may be involved in escaping or evading, in critiquing, or in mobilizing to overcome the present experience of loss of identity, lack of agency, or absence of community. Some of the key tropes central to nostalgic rhetoric are the notion of a Golden Age and a subsequent Fall, the story of the Homecoming, and the pastoral." (Tannock, 1995, p. 454)

Escapism as such could be provided by "nostalgic communication" (Aden, 1995, p. 35), especially through media, which have played a role as a cultural agent in (re)constructing and/or representing national identity and a collective social past. Aden emphasises the meaningful role of nostalgic communication as a way for the nostalgics to symbolically and psychologically escape from current bitterness:

> "Nostalgic communication provides individuals with a means of symbolically escaping cultural conditions that they find depressing and/or disorienting. Using communication to move through time allows individuals to situate themselves in a sanctuary of meaning, a place where they feel safe from oppressive cultural conditions." (Aden, 1995, p. 35)

The aspect of nostalgia in the media has also been discussed from the postmodern perspective, in which the representation of the past in media artefacts has been claimed as a part of postmodern practice. Fredric Jameson points out that the nostalgia mode emerged in the filmic representation, as a part of the mass culture, is one of the practices of postmodern "pastiche" (Jameson, 1998, p. 7). Jameson states:

> "This particular practice of pastiche is...very much within mass culture, and it is generally known as the 'nostalgia film'…, it consists merely of films about the past and about specific generational moments of the past." (Jameson, 1998, p. 7)

Jameson claims that the "nostalgia film", a "new genre" of filmic representation, has the ability to gratify the audiences' nostalgic desire to return to past experiences. *Star Wars* exemplifies this role of nostalgic film. Jameson (1998, p. 8) argues that *Star Wars* is "metonymically a historical and nostalgia film" as it evokes memories of the "important cultural experiences" of people who grew up from the 1930s to the 1950s" i.e. the experience of the television serial *Buck Rogers*, which represents the type of "alien villains, true American heroes, heroines in distress, the death ray or the doomsday box", and so forth. Due to its capacity for reinventing the experience as such, *Star Wars* thus "satisfies a deep…longing to experience them again" among the audience as a generation who grew up with that experience. As Jameson notes:

> "…it is a complex object in which on some first level children and adolescents can take the adventures straight, while adult public is able to gratify a deeper and more properly nostalgic desire to return to that older period and to live its strange old aesthetic artefacts through once again." (Jameson, 1998, p. 8)

Nostalgia has been one of the main foci of the movie industry. According to Cook (2005), nostalgic movies are related to the process of remembering, which is the connection of the present to the past. The reconstruction of memories and nostalgia informs people about the relationships between them and the past, the link between the past and the present, and the emotional response of people to the past which is reconstructed. The historical period movie is one of the examples that represents the cultural roots transmitted from generation to generation. This allows people to become more aware of and to appreciate their cultural roots, such as traditional lifestyles, national culture and identity, and also beliefs.

Koh (2009) examines the application of the nostalgic mode to the globally popular film *Spider Man,* revealing that the filmic representation of nostalgic elements related to the audiences' collective memory is an essence of the popular nostalgic film. In *Spider Man*, the presentation of the nostalgic mode by replaying the story of the

superhero *Spider man* is engaged with the audiences' memories of the *Spider Man* franchise. This study emphasises that the application of nostalgic modes to *Spider Man* - including drawing back the collective memories of the superhero franchise as well as replaying the concept of the hero's journey – contributes significantly to both the profitable popularity of *Spider Man* at the 2002 Box Office and also the popularity of the *Spider Man* brand across entertainment media. This indicates the central role of the nostalgic narrative of film in the construction and representation of collective experiences which people shared in the past.

Likewise, in the music industry, retro music has become a popular music genre in recent years. Evren (2010, p. 3) states that "retro (which could be retro songs) is a term generally used to describe culturally outdated styles and fashions being used in the present". It may be true that music companies produce many retro songs for the purpose of income. On the other hand, it can also bring audiences back to the aesthetic experience of music cultures of the past. For instance, the collections of popular songs from the past are redistributed to nostalgic audiences once again. Another example is the covered versions of the songs in the style of popular music in the past, such as the rock and roll (a popular music genre of the 1950's), blues (1960's), punk (1970's), and disco (1980's). In addition, the return of popular singers of the past (including *Spice Girls, Take That, Queen,* and the footage of *John Lennon*) to perform their globally famous songs at the London 2012 Olympic closing ceremony is one of the global events drawing on nostalgic songs and the collective memory of fans around the world. The commodification of nostalgia, i.e. the way in which "the past, along with aspirations towards authenticity, heritage and tradition, has been turned into a set of things to be bought and traded", as noted above, has been considered the clearest evidence of the close connection between nostalgia and "capitalism" (Bonnett, 2016, p. 22).

Niemeyer (2014, p. 10) highlights the term "nostalgize" (instead of "nostalgic", which is more passive) to characterise a contemporary nostalgia which is "more active" and "constructive". That is to say, nostalgia is not only "an expression of a feeling" but "an act of speech…that can potentially turn into a pragmatic creative process". Commenting on the role of the media in "nostagizing" the social past and history,

Niemeyer (2014, p. 10) states that "media could become spaces to 'nostalgize'… Nostalgia becomes, consequently, a way to transform the past by imagination." It can thus be suggested that media have become an essential component in the process of nostalgisation. In particular, television and other kinds of visual mass media have been a central source of nostalgisation. Sprengler (2009, p. 33) sees nostalgia as "constructed in and experienced primarily through the visual mass media", and the triggers of nostalgia are mainly "visual in nature and derive from a canon of symbolic material objects, visual tropes and visual styles associated with media representations of the past". Marshall McLuhan's concept of "a car's rear-view mirror" emphasises that media, especially television, have the power to construct views of historical events and the social past (McLuhan, 1964 and 1970 cited in Sullivan, 1998, p. 201). In a similar vein, Sullivan (1998, p. 201) maintains that an understanding of historical aspects has become rooted in televisual representations. Sullivan argues further that, "The 'real' history is both lost, replaced by and translated into the simulated, the imaginary or illusory." Indeed, television is a fine illustration of this.

According to Sprengler (2009, p. 3), nostalgia represents a way of offering people an understanding of the connection between the past and the present. It tells people about their "own historical consciousness", about "the myths" people create and circulate, and about their "desire to make history meaningful" on a private and collective level. As a tool for the social construction of mediated realities, nostalgic mediation of the past on television contains a superimposition of the present onto the past. By connecting the past and historical texts with the present, nostalgia television texts have what Dika (2003, p. 14) interestingly terms "a shifting double exposure", which expresses the social and cultural conventions and ideologies beyond the representations of the past through such texts. Through a shifting double exposure, the opposition between the representation and the real, as well as between the past and the present, is built (Dika, 2003, p. 14). Discussing the fictionalisation and humanisation of the Christ story, such as those in *The Last Temptation of Christ*, Dika explains that while "traditional Christian painting and sculpture" are heavily drawn on, a shifting double exposure is also created by "putting the old generic elements in conflict with the new" (Dika, 2003, p. 190). In this way, *The Last Temptation of Christ* is formed by opposing "the Gospel's essential elements in the

life of Christ" (considered as old/traditional) and the newly constructed narrative of the story in conflict with the old, that is, the representation of "ones that are not true" (Dika, p.190). Arguably, this superimposition as such demonstrates the role of the media in mediating and recreating the past in line with the construction of reflective nostalgia.

In addition, the nostalgic media representations as (part of) the construction of national identity are also outstanding. Lewis (2002)'s work, examining how media play a role in shaping the constructions of national identity in two countries challenged by globalisation, i.e. Australia and Thailand, emphasises the power of media discourse in organising the "cycle of remembering and forgetting" in public communication. Lewis (2002, p. 85) argues that in both countries, the media function as "a channel for debates about national identity" and "interact with the state…to create their own version of the past" which has an "influence on popular memory" (Lewis, 2002, p. 85). This shows that media have been a powerful source for constructing and mobilising discourses of national identity.

Focusing on nostalgia television, there have been many television programmes, across various genres, representing and constructing the meaning of the past and/or national identity, such as television dramas, historical television documentaries, talk programmes, variety programmes, television advertising, and music videos presented in a retro style. The nostalgic mediation of the past on television has been central to audiences and society. Nostalgia television has not only been a communicative tool for commemorating the past, recreating the past worlds, and representing the past ways of life (Sprengler, 2009) but, simultaneously, a response to the fear of loss and uncertainty and anxiety about cultural forgetting/neglect. In this function, television has been utilised as a means for recalling national past and collective memories. Closely related to Lewis's ideas of the dynamics of remembering and forgetting mentioned above, Holdsworth (2011) underlines the significance of nostalgia television in dealing with the fear of forgetting. Holdsworth (2011, p. 4) maintains that nostalgia television "produces an abundance of memory in response to the fear of forgetting". Ott (2007, p. 104) argues that nostalgia television is concerned with "celebrating the past", that is, it aims to "recover and restore

"traditional" values, beliefs, and social relationships". It "says no" to the (socio-cultural/political/economic) changes which can lead to fear and uncertainty about the present. For Ott (2007):

> "The genre of nostalgia television is, in many ways, rooted in fear – the fear of social change, the fear of new technology, and perhaps most of all the fear of loss, loss of innocence, harmony, and safety." (Ott, 2007, p. 104)

For this reason, nostalgia television focuses on creating a sense of safety and stability. Regarding this, Ott (2007, p. 105) identifies three key traits of nostalgia television. The first feature is "purity" which represents "a return to innocence" by encouraging "a sense of simplicity and spirituality". Secondly, "unity" represents "harmony and wholeness through the devices of narrative and community". The last trait is "security", which represents a sense of "safety and comfort through appeals to authenticity and sincerity". The role of nostalgia television in fostering the beautiful past is illustrated in the study of Tinker (2012), which examines the significance of popular music in the construction of nostalgia on French television. The results of the study reveal that television coverage of "popular-music-related nostalgia" mostly generates what Davis (1979, p. 18) calls "simple nostalgia", that is, the nostalgia which "views the past more positively than the present" (Tinker, 2012, p. 249). In creating simple nostalgia, television coverage emphasises the joyfulness regarding the past, rather than the bittersweetness. As Tinker (2012, p. 249) argues, joy in this sense "may serve…to counter social disruption and instability". Also, the representation of a fantasy return to youth, for example an interview with a fashion designer who talks about "feeling 30 years old again", can encourage viewers to experience a sense of "being young again" (Tinker, 2012, p. 244). In forming a sense of unity, French television also promotes a "social connectedness" by continuing "a tradition of promoting social, national and generational cohesion", and creates "a strong sense of French national pride" in line with Boym's concept of restorative nostalgia (Tinker, 2012, p. 245).

Dika (2003) states that the use of nostalgia in media texts provides not only a return of the past but also "a more integrated re-creation of the past works" through remakes and repetitions, such as the remakes of old TV shows (Dika, 2003, p. 205). In addition to its role in narrating the past and historical events, nostalgia television

has also nostalgised its own past. This is evidenced by the recollections and replays of archive footage on television programmes which contain a large amount of collective memories, especially memories of the "televised event" (Sullivan, 1998, p. 202). Television also plays a central role in mediating the past and experiences of the old generation to the younger generation. Dika (2003) affirms the centrality of television as a source for the revival of old media products (which were directly experienced/consumed by the older members of the audience), especially old films and classical musicals, delivered to the new generation of viewers through television reruns. The act of remaking and rerunning in nostalgia television (and also film), indicates "a strongly maintained cultural compulsion to return to a specific historical period" (Dika, 2003, p. 203).

As a result of the capacity of television in nostalgising the beautiful past and memories, nostalgia television has become a creator of nostalgia for the past that people have no experience of and connection with, namely "wilful nostalgia" (Bergin, 2012), or what Niemeyer (2014, p. 9) calls "false nostalgia". As Niemeyer notes, it is "a pleasure-seeking yearning for former times that we have not, in fact, lived". Despite the fact that nostalgia is typically understood as a yearning for the past connected to the experiences and memory of individuals, this alternative form of nostalgia has also been referred to characterise the nostalgic desire of people, especially media audiences, for a past that they have no actual experience of. Thus, this can arguably be claimed as a nostalgia for the paradise which people have never gained and lost. Despite its same name to the wilful nostalgia as Robertson (1992) suggests (as aforementioned), the socio-cultural definition of the wilful nostalgia advanced by Jonathan Simon (1995 cited in Bergin (2012) absolutely differs from Robertson's political definition. In accordance with the idea of Jonathan Simon, Bergin (2012, p. 90) describes wilful nostalgia as "a nostalgia for a past that one has only glimpsed in films and other cultural products, but not actually experienced first-hand (or even second-hand via the stories of one's ancestors)." In her study of nostalgia in the fictional crime television drama *Midsomer Murders,* Bergin (2012) employs the concept of wilful nostalgia to clarify the emergence of nostalgia for Britain's rural past among non-British viewers. The result of the research shows that the global popularity of *Midsomer Murders* is engaged with nostalgia for the rural English landscape, despite the fact that "many global fans have no personal or

cultural connections to England" (Bergin, 2012, p. 90). The overseas appeal of this programme indicates that nostalgia for English rural life has become a global phenomenon. This globalised nostalgia is not based on remembered experiences but on the representation of English life in the media to global fans. The *Midsomer Murders* is therefore a case study of how global popularities of media construction and representation of a particular national past and identity can evoke wilful nostalgia, as a surprising form of mediatised nostalgia, among audiences around the globe. Strikingly, there has been a similar trend of wilful nostalgia for the culture of others among Thai people. Particularly, the emergence of wilful nostalgia for South Korea's past culture as a result of watching South Korean period television serial dramas. Despite having no cultural connections to South Korea, Thai viewers have a sentiment of wilful nostalgia for Korea's past culture, stimulated by the appeal of nostalgic representations of it in television dramas. This is reflected in the increasing trend to admire Korean cultural forms among Thais and the fact that South Korea has become a popular tourist destination for Thais, a place where Thai tourists can directly experience traditional Korean culture such as eating traditional Korean food, dressing in traditional Korean costumes, and visiting the locations portrayed in the dramas.

Conclusion

In the studies reviewed here, television is recognised as a powerful mass medium that has played a critical social role in various ways. Television has become an integral part of society. On the one hand, it functions as a domestic medium which represents and constructs social realities to audiences. On the other hand, it functions as a national medium in the way it is utilised as a tool for (re)constructing and circulating national discourses and ideologies, especially discourses of national cultural identity. Indeed, nostalgia television has significantly played this role. Furthermore, in the international phase, televisual representation has been used to represent the nation and Thainess to the world and, in turn, to represent the social/cultural/political/economical (and so forth) around the world to the members of the nation. The argument here is that despite the changes and developments in terms of broadcasting and transmission systems, such as the change from analogue to digital TV systems and the fact that TV programmes are now watched not only on television itself but also on the internet and personal electronic devices, television still

plays a central role in the social (re)construction of knowledge/realities. Especially, its role as an essential tool for the nostalgic mediation of national past and culture in order for the construction and promotion of national identity is prominent.

Also, these studies provide important insights into the roles of nostalgia in several respects, in particular the role nostalgic communication plays as a psychological/cultural sanctuary. In response to the sense of uncertainty or discontinuity (bitterness), nostalgia can function as an essential facilitator of maintaining/strengthening the continuity of identity. In the event that some distinct facets of identity - especially the nation's unique/distinctive cultural identity - are lost, neglected, or forgotten, nostalgia can help to revive such paradise lost (sweetness). Reviving it or evoking memories of it, the nostalgic forms as "total restoration" or as "reflection" (Boym, 2001) have been selected to construct the past. In terms of the construction of a nostalgic national identity, the use of these choices relies on the direction which the discourse constructors aim at. If the creators (at the national level such as government, or the smaller units of society such as educational institutions and media) focus on the return to origin/authentic roots of the nation, the way in which the past/lost identity is constructed is involved with restoring the national cultural identity and uniqueness. Restorative nostalgia in this sense is therefore claimed as a nationalist way of representing the past. On the contrary, for non-nationalist discourse constructors, the return to the past tends to be engaged more with reflecting a pleasured past. Further, the purpose and direction of nostalgic constructions of the national past and culture seem to depend on the social, cultural, political, economic context of the nation as well as the discourses in place that shape the vision and direction as such.

Chapter 3. Methods and Approaches to Analysis

Introduction

According to Neuman (2003); Babbie (2004), there are three main purposes of the social scientific research: *exploration, description*, and *explanation*. For this research project, the main purpose is *explanation*, as it seeks to understand beyond the explorational and descriptive aspects. Explorational research is normally used when a researcher examines a new interest or when a new aspect of study is investigated. *Descriptive* research focuses on describing how things are (the question of who, what, where, when and how). Running deeper, *explanation* is concerned with the question of why an issue which is already known and described is the way it is. Explanatory research builds exploration and description but seeks to understand why things are the way they are. This corresponds to the emphasis of critical discourse analysis (CDA), which aims to answer the questions of why, by examining not only language use itself but also the social context shaping it - for example notions of ideology, power, hierarchy, gender and sociological variables - for an interpretation or explanation of text (Weiss and Wodak, 2007; Wodak and Meyer, 2009).

This chapter explains the research methodology for this qualitative study in understanding the discursive construction of Thai identity in contemporary Thai television. The chapter begins with a discussion of the philosophical position, followed by methodological considerations. Then, an overview of the qualitative research methods and data collection is provided. This includes a textual analysis of Thai television programmes, the in-depth interviews with key figures in the television industry, and the focus group interviews with the audiences. The semiotic and CDA approaches, as the main analytical concepts and approaches which inform this study, are then discussed, followed by the research ethics and self-reflexivity.

3.1 Philosophical Position of the Study

Doing research is a way to seek the truth by engaging with theory. As Bryman (2012) suggests, conducting research is an attempt to answer the questions posed by theoretical considerations. One of the significant concerns for doing qualitative research is to make certain philosophical assumptions (Cresswell, 2007). Denzin and

Lincoln (2011, p. 12) state that all qualitative researchers are guided by philosophical assumptions - "highly abstract principles" which consist of a stance toward beliefs about *ontology, epistemology, and methodology* (Cresswell, 2007; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011, pp. 12-13), *ontology* explores the question, "What is the nature of reality?" *Epistemology* focuses on "What is the relationship between the inquirer and the known?" *Methodology* asks, "How do we know the world or gain knowledge of it?" The important function of these questions is that they "shape how the qualitative researcher sees the world and acts in it". This is the reason why the ontology, epistemology and methodology need to be clarified.

Cresswell (2007, p. 19) states that philosophical assumptions indicate a certain stance that researchers make when they select qualitative research. After making this choice, researchers then "further shape their research by bringing to the inquiry paradigms or worldviews", i.e. "a basic set of beliefs" that guides the practice of research. Denzin and Lincoln (2011, p. 13) point out that the researcher is bound within the paradigm and that such a paradigm is "the net that contains the researcher's epistemological, ontological, and methodological premises". In terms of this thesis, qualitative research - "a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible" by turning it into "a series of representation" (including interviews, conversations and so forth) - the researcher is bound within the *interpretive* paradigm. *Interpretivism*, in contrast to positivism, is predicated upon the idea that "a strategy is required that respects the differences between people and the objects of the natural sciences and therefore requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action" (Bryman, 2012, p. 30).

More specifically, among several major interpretive paradigms, the paradigm that best fits the aims of this study is the *constructivist (or constructivist-interpretive) paradigm. Constructivism* "assumes a *relativist ontology"*, "a *subjectivist epistemology"* and "a naturalistic set of methodological procedures" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p. 13). Cresswell (2007, pp. 20-21) notes that in this worldview, inquirers seek an "understanding of the world in which they live and work", and they develop "subjective meanings" of their experiences. These subjective meanings are "varied and multiples". Also, they are "negotiated socially and historically". That is,

such subjective meanings are constructed through "interaction with others" (rather than being grounded on individuals) and also "through historical and cultural norms" operating in people's lives. Flick (2004) suggests that even though the constructivist approach has been used for a wide diversity of social science research, they share an important aspect in the sense that they study the connection with reality by using constructive methods of inquiry. The constructivist approach necessitates the processes of interaction among people, i.e. the relationship between researchers and respondents. As Silverman (2006, p. 118) explains, "interviewers and interviewees are always actively engaged in constructing meaning. Rather than treat this as standing in the way of accurate depictions of facts or experiences, the researchers take as their topic how meaning is mutually constructed". This approach emphasises the act of researchers as listening to what respondents say with an openness of feeling and experience (Charmaz, 2000; Cresswell, 2007).

3.1.1 Ontological position

According to Grix (2002), ontology is the beginning point of research. It is important for researchers to identify their ontological position because it guides the way inquirers understand the world around them. Crucially, as Hay (2002, p. 63) points out, "ontology logically precedes epistemology which logically precedes methodology". Ontology relates to the questions of what the nature of reality is (Grix, 2002; Carpentier and Spinoy, 2008; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). Cresswell (2007, p. 16) further suggests that when inquirers do qualitative research, they are accepting "the idea of multiple realities" and the idea that "different researchers embrace different realities". Thus, different ontological positions guide researchers to adopting different research methodologies.

Lincoln *et al.* (2011) explain that constructivists gain knowledge by means of interpreting and constructing views of subjects. Regarding the philosophical position of constructivism, the ontology of this research project is *relativist*. The relativist ontology embraces the idea that "there are multiple realities" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p. 13; Dieronitou, 2014, p. 7) and these realities are constructed by "actors of research" (Dieronitou, 2014, p. 7). This study assumes the constructivist position to understand the reality of the discursive construction of Thai cultural identity through

Thai television programmes. Together with aspiring to knowledge of Thai identity by interpreting the meaningful television discourses, it is recognised that this knowledge is constructed by the interaction between the researcher and the interviewees (key figures in television industry and viewers).

3.1.2 Epistemological position

Epistemology concerns assumptions about how knowledge of social reality is obtained (Grix, 2002). Epistemology focuses on the relationship between researchers and what they know, "whether or how we can have knowledge of reality" (Sumner, 2006, p. 92). In other words, it questions "how we know what we know, and how we can (or cannot) know what is true" (Gomm, 2009, p. 114). Blaikie (2004, p. 309) points out that epistemology provides a philosophical grounding "for deciding how knowledge can be judged as being both adequate and legitimate", and that it is used in the social sciences in the context of determining which procedures can produce reliable knowledge.

As noted, constructivism assumes "a subjectivist epistemology" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p. 13). The epistemological position of this research project is therefore *subjectivist epistemology.* The subjectivist epistemology accepts that "knower and respondent co-create understandings" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p. 13). In this sense, knowledge is formed by "experiences" and "subjects" (Lincoln *et al.*, 2011, p. 104) through interactions between researcher and subjects (Cuba, 1996 cited in Lincoln *et al.*, 2011, p. 104). Moreover, as "the knower and the known are inseparable", research underpinned by subjectivist epistemology is thus "value-bound" (Dieronitou, 2014, p. 7). The knowledge obtained in this research was co-created by me, as the researcher, and the key figures in the Thai television industry (through in-depth interviews) and the viewers of the particular television shows (through the focus group interviews). Also, in terms of both interpreting the television texts and conducting the interviews, I drew on my personal knowledge about televisual representation gained from my prior experiences in producing several Thai television shows (before becoming researcher) - to make sense of the way the text producers produce the show and the way in which the multimodal texts are used to generate a particular television discourse. Additionally, the fact that I am a Thai

national and have been watching a number of Thai television shows for some years helped me to make more sense of what the audiences expressed and why they responded the ways they did in the interviews. In sum, this outlines the reasons that this research is premised on a subjectivist epistemology.

3.2 Methodological Position

After underpinning philosophical stances, the methodological positions are addressed. Methodology underlies how enquirers gain knowledge. It refers to the way in which methods are used in the research process (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Cresswell, 2007; Della Porta and Keating, 2008), including methods of data collection and the form of data analysis in planning and conducting research (Silverman, 2010). According to Silverman (2010), methodologies in social sciences research can be determined broadly as qualitative or quantitative (or more narrowly such as grounded theory or conversation analysis).

As this research aims to understanding not only television discourses of Thai identity per se but also its connection with the processes of production and consumption, together with the sociocultural context that shapes the way such discourses are (re)constructed and represented, a qualitative approach is adopted. A major advantage of qualitative approaches is that they offer an effective way of examining the social processes and cases in specific social contexts as well as facilitating the interpretation of meanings, in particular context through symbols, rituals, social structures, social roles, and so forth, such as investigating social life from several points of view and explaining how people construct identities (Neuman, 2003; Berg, 2009). Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 10) explain that qualitative research is used to seek answers to questions concerned with processes and meanings of social phenomena which are not amenable to quantitative measurement, i.e. "how social experience is created and given meaning". In contrast, quantitative research engages with measurement (based on quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency) and analysis of causal relationships between variables.

In terms of media research, both qualitative and quantitative approaches have been adopted. According to Jensen (2002, p. 4), the quantitative analysis focuses on "the

concrete, delimited products of the media's meaning production" whereas the qualitative approach provides a means of investigating "meaning production as a process which is contextualized and inextricably integrated with wider social and cultural practices". Furthermore, the issue of depth is important in social science research. Qualitative methods are employed to achieve this goal as they can provide a deeper understanding of social phenomena than quantitative methods afford (Berg, 2009; Keegan, 2009). Focusing on qualitative communication studies, Jensen (2012, p. 266) suggests that there are three common features involved. Firstly, the studies "focus on meaning, both as an object of study and as an explanatory concept". Secondly, communication should be studied in the natural contexts which are chosen for particular research aims, such as engaging in "sampling of cultures, communities, locales, informants, periods and practices". The third feature is "the conception of researchers as interpretive subjects". In this sense, the interpretation of typical qualitative research is "a crisscrossing activity that one scholar undertakes on a continuous basis". This differs from interpretation in quantitative research, which engages with a delimited and sequential mode. The combination of advantages mentioned above is the reason why a qualitative approach was adopted for this research project. The research method is a sub-group of an approach; when the approach is determined, an appropriate research method has to be chosen (Omar, 2013). This will be explained in the next section.

3.3 Research Methods and Data Collection

To achieve effective answers to set research questions, selecting the proper research methods is vital. Within research methodology, methods are defined as specific research techniques, such as qualitative techniques (e.g. interviewing) and quantitative techniques (e.g. statistical correlations). In the same way as methodologies, Silverman (2010, p. 110) argues that research techniques are not true or false, but "they are more or less useful, depending on their fit with the theories and methodologies being used and hypothesis being tested and/or the research topic that is selected". Punch (2005) maintains that research design is a link between the research questions and the data, showing how the research questions will be connected to the data. It functions as an overview plan for research, and has four main ideas: the strategy, the conceptual framework, the question of who or what will be examined, and the research methods to be used for collecting and analysing data.

This study employs qualitative methods as a way to gather and explore data to answer the research questions: textual analysis of selected Thai television programmes, in-depth interviews of key informants (i.e. key figures in the Thai television industry), and focus group interviews with Thai viewers. The overall design of the research speaks to three main aspects of critical discourse studies, i.e. accounting for processes of production, distribution and consumption of discourses (KhosraviNik, 2010a). As KhosraviNik (2015b, p. 53) notes, to answer the questions of "who says what to whom, in what manner and why, etc.", it is essential to account for the broad context (the socio-cultural/political context) of a particular society, and also the genre-specific features of the texts. In this respect, the processes of production and consumption/interpretation are shaped by the broad context. The distribution of discourses is engaged with the discourse practices and the institutional aspects of discourses, as shown in Figure 3.1.
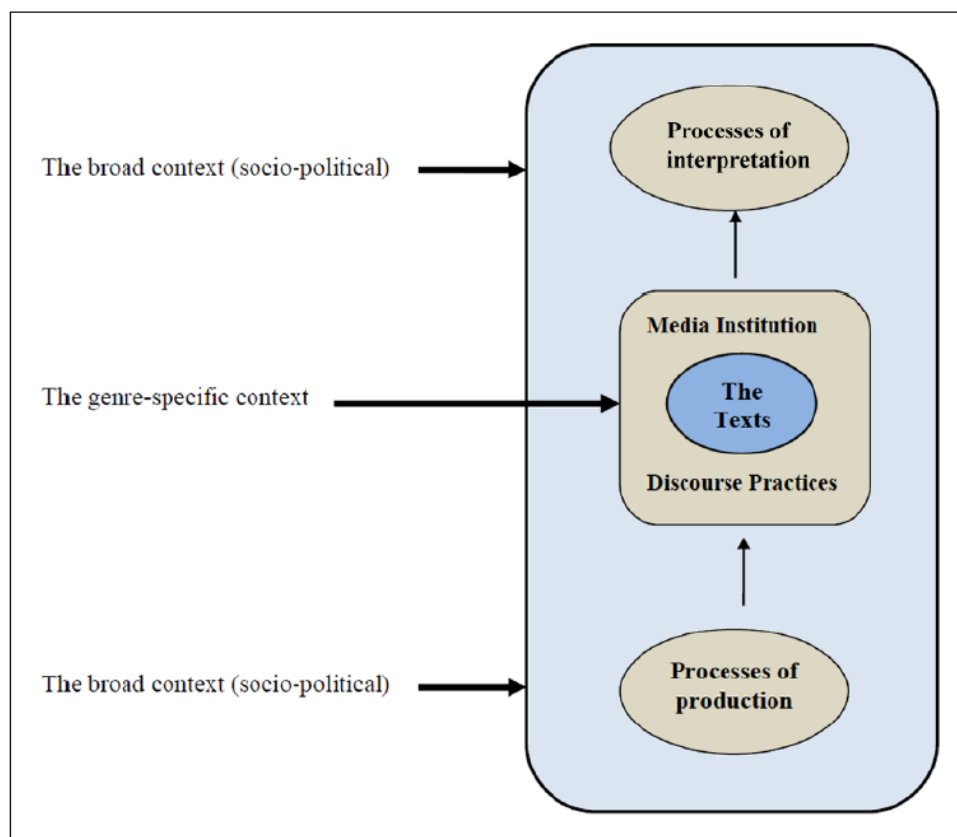
Figure 3.1: Dynamics of discourse, genre and socio-political analysis in critical discourse studies (KhosraviNik, 2015b, p. 54)

Similarly, this study covers the three levels of the discursive construction of Thai identity in Thai television programmes: the level of television text per se, processes of text production and processes of text consumption. This study adopts the *triangulation* - the use of multiple types of method and data sources (Flick, 2014) - as a research strategy to enhance the strength of the research findings. Triangulation is considered "an extension of a research program" in which "the systematic selection" of several methods and "the combination of research perspectives" are included (Flick, 2018, p. 450). The rationale of selecting multiple types of method and data sources is that it helps to "enhance the validity of research findings" (Mathison, 1988 cited in Flick, 2018, p. 446). Additionally, as Flick (2018, p. 450) affirms, the strength of triangulation is that it "becomes relevant as a source of *extra knowledge* about the issue in question and not just as a way to confirm what is already known from the first approach (convergence of findings)".

Knowledge of the three levels of the discursive construction of Thai identity was obtained through different methods (and, hence, gained different types of data). As shown in Figure 3.2, the textual analysis was used for analysing the television text itself. The relation of the television text to the processes of production and consumption was accounted for by drawing on the sociocultural context (as explained in the context chapter), and data from the in-depth interviews and the focus groups, which respectively throw light on perspectives put forward by the key figures in television industry and viewers.

The data collection and analysis of this research began with examining the discourses of Thai identity generated in the television texts. After the analysis of the television discourse finished, an investigation of processes of production and consumption/interpretation was conducted in Thailand as a "naturalistic set of methodological procedures" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p. 13). The in-depth interviews with key figures in the television industry were used to gain a detailed understanding of processes of text production and the reasons behind the way they construct and represent national identity in their television shows. When all in-depth interviews with the text producers had been completed, the focus group interviews

with the viewers were then conducted to explore their perceptions and interpretations of Thai identity representations in the shows.

At the stage of reporting and discussing the research findings, the results gained from all data sources (certain television texts, viewpoints of text producers, and perspectives of audiences) were contextualised by drawing on the sociocultural context of Thai society to further elaborate the arguments regarding the way that television discourses themselves - their production and consumption - are shaped by such a broad context. The rationale of the data and overall design of the research are presented in Figure 3.2.
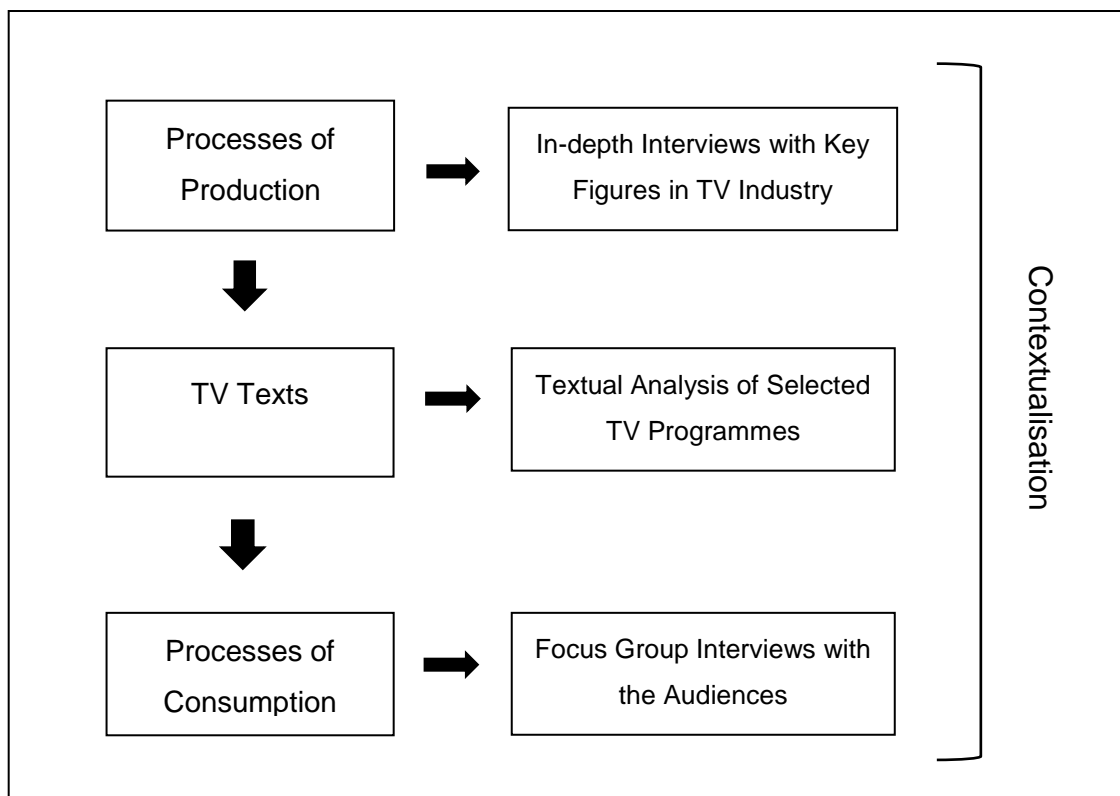
Figure 3.2: The visual representation of the rationale of data and overall design of the research

3.3.1 Textual analysis of Thai television programmes

In analysing television texts, this study combines content analysis with the analysis of meanings generated in the texts. Before thoroughly investigating the meanings of Thai identity represented in the texts, the analysis began with a qualitative content analysis to categorise and count the number of topics of Thai identity represented in

the television contents. Despite the fact that content analysis has traditionally been carried out as quantitative research, it has also been adopted as a qualitative method for analysing texts. In doing quantitative research, content analysis is an approach to the analysis of documents and texts (whether printed or visual), seeking to "quantify content in terms of predetermined categories" (Bryman, 2012, p. 289). It has also been claimed that "content analysis can be effective in qualitative analysis - that counts of textual elements merely provide a means for identifying, organizing, indexing, and retrieving data" (Berg, 2009, p. 343). Schreier (2014, pp. 170-171) provides the essential features of qualitative content analysis: it helps with "reducing the amount of material", it is "highly systematic", and it is "flexible" (compared with the quantitative version).

For content analysis, issues of objectivity, reliability, and being systematic are at the core of the approach. As Berelson (1952, p. 18) notes, content analysis is "a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication". Objectivity in this sense is about "transparency in the procedures for assigning the raw material to categories, so that the analyst's personal biases intrude as little as possible in the process" (Bryman, 2012, p. 289). Being systematic is about "the application of the rules is done in a consistent manner so that bias is again suppressed" (Bryman, 2012, p. 289). Content analysis also engages with the issue of replicability - the most significant form of reliability - which emphasises that "the research techniques should result in findings that are replicable". That is, it should provide the same results when using the same technique to the same data (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 18). This indicates that content analysis aspires to be objective, and it is predominantly preoccupied with a mere description of what is in the text. Unlike some forms of textual analysis which seek to examine the meanings of a particular text in context and are based on interpretation rather than on measurement (Hesmondhalgh, 2006), content analysis is systematically restricted in going beyond the features in the text and provision of social and cultural explanations. This is the reason why this research project combined qualitative content analysis with other methods of analysing television texts.

In the field of mass communication, content analysis has been regarded as "an accepted method of textual investigation" (Silverman, 2011, p. 64). Conducting content analysis in this sense is engaged with the categorisation of texts and counting the number of instances falling into each category established. For critical discourse analysis (CDA), which focuses on interpreting the meanings of text and explicating the link between text and society (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997 cited in Van Dijk, 2001), content analysis is particularly useful. To facilitate insights into the topics of Thai identity which are the ingredients of national identity construction in the television shows, content analysis was adopted to explore and categorise the topics of Thai identity, including the main topics and their sub-topics which the shows cover and focus on.

As CDA is the theoretical lens for this research project, using content analysis provides only the manifest content of the texts. Therefore, textual analysis is also used to obtain a more in-depth understanding of the meanings of Thai representations and the way they are constructed through the shows. After completing a qualitative content analysis of the topics of Thai identity, the analysis then moves on to explore the meanings. This covers the analysis of another two key ingredients of Thai identity construction - the semiotic resources which are drawn upon to construct and represent Thai identity, and the linguistic representations of Thai identity. In examining the linguistic representations, content analysis was also employed to categorise and count the number of particular discourses of Thai identity and the linguistic channels through which those discourses are represented.

Textual analysis has been used as a way to collect data in many research areas, including media and cultural studies. As Peräkylä (2005) suggests, there are many methods of textual analysis. While some are merely fit to the written texts, others are used in the analysis of both written/spoken discourse and multimodal communication. This research employs textual analysis to examine television texts, which are multimodal. Silverman (2010, p. 55) states that having a clearly defined approach is "a toolbox providing a set of concepts and methods to select the data and to illuminate the analysis". The textual analysis of this study is conducted by using CDA as the approach to analyse the construction of national identity through television

discourse. This was adopted to allow a deeper insight into discourses - "the socially constructed knowledges of some aspect of reality" (Van Leeuwan, 2005, p. 94) - which serve the exercise of power in a society given their capacity to guide the ways people talk, think and act (Jäger and Maier, 2009).

The CDA used in this study is conducted following Fairclough (1995b)'s conception of critical analysis of media discourse. Fairclough suggests that the critical analysis of media discourse involves an alternation between the twin perspectives of the *communicative events* and *the order of discourse*. Fairclough introduces the framework for a CDA of communicative events to analyse the relationships between three dimensions of the events: the text itself, discourse practice, and sociocultural practice (see section 3.4). In line with this framework, the analysis of communicative events in this study aims to achieve an understanding of these three dimensions: firstly, analysis of the text itself, i.e. discourses of Thai identity and its meaning represented in television text; second, the discourse practice is examined to investigate how such discourses are created (the processes of text production) and how they are perceived by the audiences (the processes of text consumption/interpretation); finally, the sociocultural practice - i.e. the social and cultural goings-on in which the construction of Thai identity through television is a part of - is explained to help to understand the way in which such discursive construction is shaped by the broad context of society. In relation to this three-dimensional analysis of communicative events, the analysis of the Thai order of discourse was also conducted to examine the order of discourses which the viewers (as the targeted audiences of text) already have in mind when they watch the shows and how they think about the discourses generated in such programmes.

To make textual analysis as a method with detailed data analysis effective, researchers need to have a limited body of data with which to work (Silverman, 2010). Along with two other sources of data collection and research tools (i.e. the in-depth interviews and the focus groups), this study looks at three popular Thai television texts. These are *Khunphrachuai*, as the key television show of this study, *Chingchasawan*, and *Talatsot Sanam Pao* as two supporting shows which have some features that contribute to Thai identity. In selecting the television shows to be

analysed, this study undertook *non-probability sampling.* According to Ritchie *et al.* (2003, p. 78), this is a sampling strategy in which "the characteristics of the population are used as the basis of selection" and the samples are "deliberately selected" to reflect the particular characteristics of groups. This makes them well suited to small-scale, in-depth analyses (Ritchie *et al.*, 2003, p. 78). This study selected these three television shows as they reflect the characteristics of well-known weekly telecast television programmes which can be considered popular and television shows that seek to encourage and conserve the cultural identity of the nation.[8]

The examination of television texts was based on analysis of 50 episodes of *Khunphrachuai*, weekly telecast from January to December 2014. As *Khunphrachuai* was officially uploaded to the Internet by the media organisation that produces and publishes it, it was convenient to access all episodes legally by subscribing to their channel on YouTube. Initially, the 50 episodes of *Khunphrachuai* were downloaded from the *Workpoint Official* YouTube channel published by *Workpoint Entertainment Public Company Limited*. When access was completed, the next step was to watch the 50 episodes in detail and make a detailed transcription of the texts. This was an effective way to conduct a detailed analysis of the television texts. That is, the transcription provided me with the very detailed transcripts of the multimodal texts represented in the show, which is a Variety Show format consisting of not only spoken and written (i.e. the superimposed texts) but also audio-visual texts. When the detailed transcription was completed, the analysis of the texts was then started.

In the process of data analysis, this study employed thematic analysis plus framework analysis. Thematic analysis is "a process of working with raw data to identify and interpret key ideas or themes" (Matthews and Ross, 2010b, p. 373). Closely linked to thematic analysis, framework analysis enables researchers to "manage the large amount and complex nature of qualitative data much more easily" (Rabiee, 2004, p. 657). The main advantage of framework analysis is that it provides

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[8] *Khunphrachuai* has been telecast weekly from 2004 to the present. *Talatsot Sanam Pao* has been telecast from 2005 to the present. Due to being telecast on a new channel since October 2016, its name has been changed to *Talatsot Phra Ram Si. Chingchasawan* was telecasted from 2004 to 2016 (afterwards, some formats of this show were adapted and developed as new TV shows).

the five stages of data analysis clearly. These are: 1) familiarisation of data, 2) identifying a thematic framework, 3) indexing, 4) charting and 5) mapping and interpretation (Ritchie and Spencer, 2002; Rabiee, 2004). Using framework analysis, the data analysis was started with familiarisation with the data by repeatedly watching the shows in detail and reading the transcripts several times. Then, identifying a thematic framework was conducted by writing memos in the margin of the transcripts in the form of short phases. This contained noting the themes, ideas and concepts arising from the texts. At this stage, developing categories was also conducted. In doing so, as a key of thematic analysis, the "initial themes" (Matthews and Ross, 2010b, p. 374) of Thai identity representations in the shows were identified. This enabled me to seek the answers of textual ingredients of the shows in terms of both the main topics per se and the semiotic and linguistic construction/representation. Additionally, the qualitative content analysis was used to analyse the topics of Thai identity and also to analyse the discourses of Thai identity generated in the linguistic channels. Such topics and linguistic discourses were thematically counted in order to seek the frequency and size of each topic and discourse. The next stage was indexing (sifting and highlighting data), followed by charting (managing data and recording them as diagrams, tables and lists of figures). The last stage was mapping and interpreting the data.

3.3.2 In-depth interviews with key figures in the Thai television industry

When the analysis of television texts was completed, an investigation into the processes of text production was conducted. This study used in-depth interviews with the key informants to gain insights into the perspectives of key figures in the television industry, i.e. the text producers of the three television shows. This provided the answers to the "how" and "why" regarding the construction and representation of Thai identity in their shows.

In-depth interviews are a popular type of interviewing. The benefit of this type of interview is that it can be used as a method of data collection whether the research aim is to obtain in-depth data or to gather data for measurement dimensions (Hopf, 2004). Moreover, this method is claimed as "a source of information, with the assumption that interviewing results in a true and accurate picture of the

respondents' selves and lives" (Fontana and Frey, 2005, p. 698). Peräkylä (2005, p. 869) maintains that "most qualitative research probably is based on interviews" because interviews enable researchers to reach an inaccessible reality constructed by people's subjective experiences and opinions. Furthermore, interviewing is a convenient way to gather data over distances of space and time. The instance of this is to gather data regarding the past events or faraway experiences by interviewing people who experienced them. The advantages of this interview method as mentioned above are the reason why it was selected to examine the perspectives of both text producers and audiences.

Interviews are considered a way of co-constructing knowledge between interviewer and interviewee(s). As Miller and Glassner (2011, p. 132) explain, "the interview is obviously and exclusively an interaction between the interviewer and the interview subject in which both participants create and construct narrative versions of the social world". The interaction taking place during interviewing allows researchers to be close to and obtain in-depth data regarding the social reality existing in the social world which interviewees experience. Jensen (2012) emphasises that all statements from either individual or focus group interviews do not totally represent what interviewee(s) think because all interview statements are based on the context originating from the interaction between (or among) interviewer and interviewee(s). Thus, the way people interact with one another within the interview is very significant as it provides not only data but also the interview discourses that are the sources of meaning through interpretation. This study was also concerned with this issue. Hence, the interviews were conducted through certain tactics of communication: using friendliness and drawing together the common experiences and interest among the researcher and interviewers to facilitate openness and smoothness in the interview process (see section 3.6).

In-depth interviews - with their affinity with common conversation in daily living – are essential tools for reaching the viewpoints of media users and media communicators (Jensen, 2012, p. 270). Bryman (2012) notes that there are *unstructured interviews* and *semi-structured interviews*. In *unstructured interviews*, interviewers may ask just a single question and allow interviewees to respond freely. In *semi-structured*

interviews, researchers prepare an interview guide, which is a list of main questions or particular topics to ask the interviewees about. The questions may follow exactly the outlined guide, and they might vary as a result of answers interviewees give. The outstanding feature of this method is that "questions that are not included in the guide may be asked as the interviewers pick up on thing said by interviewees" (Bryman, 2012, p. 471). For this reason, *semi-structured interviews* were used in the in-depth interviews with the text producers. To obtain rich data, the in-depth interviews were conducted by asking the main prepared questions concerning the results from the analysis of the television texts, along with detailed 'follow-up' questions based on the interviewees' answers.

The interviews are conducted face-to-face because detailed in-depth interviewing requires a physical meeting which is flexible, interactive, generative, and which allows for meaning and language to be explored in depth (Legard *et al.*, 2003). The interviews with the text producers were designed to be conducted face-to-face in Thailand at their workplaces. These included the *Work Point Entertainment Company Limited*, located in *Pathum Thani Province*, and the *Polyplus Entertainment Company Limited*, located in *Nonthaburi Province* (these two provinces are located in suburban areas close to Bangkok). The key informants were accessed via my personal/professional relationship with key figures in the television industry who are involved with the production of the television shows under investigation.

The key informants include nine interviewees who are the key figures in the processes of production of the three television shows. These include the top executive of the organisation (*Workpoint Entertainment Public Company Limited*), a leading figure of the *Khunphrachuai* show who originated the main concept of the show and has also overseen the overall representation of the show since its early stages. This interviewee was also asked about the supporting television show *Chingchasawan* as he is also a leading figure in the production of this show. Additionally, the interviewees included the main producers and the creative teams of the three television shows. In the processes of production, the main producers of each television show are the key people who oversee all aspects of the production and shape the representations of Thai culture in relation to the main

aim(s) and the thematic concept of the show. The main producers play an important role in all processes of production. This includes the stage of pre-production, such as seeking information, selecting topics, and writing the television scripts. The next stage is production, i.e. indoor/outdoor shooting, followed by the stage of post-production video and sound editing. Additionally, interviews with the creative teams were conducted to gain rich data regarding their opinions and the way they present Thai culture in the shows. The key informants of the in-depth interviews are shown in Figure 3.3.

The Key Informants of the In-depth Interviews

The text producers of *Khunphrachuai* (key TV show)	The text producers of *Chingchasawan*	The text producers of *Talatsot Sanam Pao*
1. The leading figure in the production of the show	1. The leading figure in the production of the show	1. The Main Producer (also responsible for scriptwriting)
2. The Main Producer	2. The Main Producer	2. The Creative (mainly responsible for searching for information and audiovisual editing)
3. The Creative (mainly responsible for searching for information and scriptwriting)	3. The Creative (mainly responsible for searching for information and scriptwriting)	
4. The Creative (mainly responsible for audiovisual editing)		

Remark: The leading figure of *Khunphrachuai* and *Chingchasawan* is the same person, as both TV shows are produced and distributed by the same organisation.

Figure 3.3: The key informants in the in-depth interviews

Similar to analysing television texts, the analysis of the interview data combines thematic analysis and framework analysis. As both in-depth and focus group

interviews adopted this approach, the processes of analysing data of these two kinds of interviews are hence explained here together. After the completion of all the interviews, a full and detailed transcription of the audio-recorded in-depth interviews and video-recorded focus group interviews occurred. In analysing the data, framework analysis was adopted to facilitate the thematic categorisation of the rich data. This started with a familiarisation with the data through listening to and watching the audio/video recordings and reading the transcripts. This was followed by identifying a thematic framework through taking notes on the key ideas in the margin of the text and identifying the initial themes. Afterwards, the process of managing the data was conducted manually together with using *NVivo* - the qualitative data analysis computer software which enables researchers to create and work with codes through the use of different types of sources, including interview transcripts, pictures, video and audio materials (Matthews and Ross, 2010b). This study used *NVivo* to facilitate a thematic categorisation and organisation of the very rich and extensive text-based data from the transcripts. After the thematic categorisation phase, the analysis moved on to the interpretation of the data to provide a general interpretive and comparative explanation of the connecting themes, arguments, and perspectives in line with the research questions. The initial stage of interpretation is to examine the similarities and differences between the interviewees' perspectives. In analysing the text producer's viewpoints, the interpretation includes a comparison of the answers given by the text producers of the same television shows as well as those among the text producers on different shows. In analysing focus groups, the viewers' perspectives were compared and contrasted in terms of both intra-group and inter-group.

3.3.3 Focus group interviews with Thai viewers

In media research, the method of focus group interview is used together with other methods, especially the analyses of media texts, questionnaires and observations (ethnography) (Hansen and Machin, 2013). Focus group interviews are often used in media research to test and gather perspectives of audiences about pilot episodes of new media products, for example television series, film titles, characters, actors in specific roles and alternative endings (Weerakkody, 2009). In particular, in audience studies, focus group interviews are widely used for studying media audiences in many aspects, such as issues of media influence and effects on audiences'

behaviours and beliefs, media uses, as well as audiences' perceptions and interpretations of media texts (Hansen *et al.*, 1998; Hansen and Machin, 2013).

Focus group interviews are a systematic questioning of many participants in a formal or informal setting. The purpose of a focus group interview is generally to collect data regarding the range of opinions and experiences of participants about specific topics through group interaction, across several groups (at least three focus groups) to compare and contrast the collected data (Kreuger and Casey, 2000; Litosseliti, 2003; Berg, 2009). A focus group is a small structured group of selected participants, led by a moderator. The audience analysis of this study employs the focus group interview method because it provides many benefits compared to other methods of data collection. It allows researchers to collect data from a large number of participants quickly and conveniently (Berg, 2009) and provides an in-depth explanation of what people think and of their experiences (Hollander, 2004). Further, according to Hollander (2004), many scholars consider focus group interviews high in external validity compared with other research methods as they reflect the forms of conversations which participants might be familiar with in their everyday lives. Additionally, this method is appropriate and beneficial for collecting data on the beliefs, attitudes, experiences and feeling of participants, such as in cases when the researcher aims to obtain multiple and different views of participants as well as interaction within particular group contexts, or agreement, disagreement and power differences among participants in groups (Litosseliti, 2003).

Despite the fact that individual interviews can also be used as a way to obtain data about audiences' perspectives, this study preferred to select the focus group interviews. The reason of this is that the focus group interviews have more benefits over individual interviews in terms of it can provide the possible outcome as the groupthink and the results can be generalised validly (Fontana and Frey, 2000). Moreover, this method provides a more natural environment than an individual interview because "participants are influencing and are influenced by others - just as they are in real life" (Kreuger and Casey, 2000, p. 11). Hansen and Machin (2013) note that focus group interviews have an advantage over individual interviews in terms of providing interaction between participants in a focus group that allows

researchers to examine how they respond to one another's viewpoints. As Hansen and Machin (2013, p. 232) state:

> "focus group discussions offer dynamics and ways - not available in individual interviews - of eliciting, stimulating, and elaborating audience interpretations. It is precisely the group dynamics and interaction found where several people are brought together to discuss a subject that is seen as the attraction of this mode of data collection over individual interviews".

Sampling strategies of focus group interviews

Focus groups interviews generally consist of between six to ten participants. However, the size of the group can be minimised to four participants as a mini focus group. Rather than aiming for diversity, selecting the participants for focus group interviews generally aims to find people who share some common characteristics and similar levels of understanding of the topic being investigated (Litosseliti, 2003). In selecting participants, this study used *purposive sampling*, which is a *non-probability* form of sampling. In this way of sampling, as Ritchie *et al.* (2003, p. 79) point out, members of the sample are selected with "a purpose to represent a location or type in relation to a key criterion". In this sense, the samples are selected because they have particular characteristics which will enable the researcher to conduct a detailed exploration and achieve a fuller understanding of what they are examining.

The focus group participants consisted of 32 Thai citizens who live in Thailand and watch the *Khunphrachuai* show. They were categorised by *age group* and *geographic origin*. The participants are divided into two age groups: 16 viewers who are in the 18-25 age group as a sample of the younger generation, and 16 viewers who are in the over 45 age group as a sample of the older generation. Within each age group, the participants were divided into two sub-groups of *urban viewers* and *rural viewers*. The *urban* group refers to the viewers who have grown up and lived in *Bangkok*, the capital of Thailand. The rural group refers to the viewers who have grown up and lived in a rural area outside Bangkok. Therefore, the focus groups included four groups of viewers.

In addition to age and geographic origin, other demographic characteristics such as gender, education level, income and occupation are not of concern here. The reason

for this is that the age and geographic origin of the participants are considered the overriding influential factors, playing as they do a meaningful role in approaches towards a sense of nostalgic Thai identity. In other words, these factors relate to the degree of cultural exposure and familiarity of national culture and heritage which can contribute to a viewer's "stock of knowledge" (Berger and Luckmann, 1996, p. 57) of Thai identity. The assumption here is that age can indicate "how long" they have experienced the traditional Thai cultural identity, and the geographic origin can indicate "how close" they have experienced it. This consideration assumes that those living rural areas have a sustained and deeper experience of traditional Thai culture compared with those who have grown up and lived in the international, modern and cosmopolitan city of Bangkok. The presentation of the sample for the focus group interviews is illustrated in Figure 3.4.

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                      ┌─────────────────────────────┐
                      │   Focus Group Participants   │
                      └─────────────────────────────┘
                           /                    \
              ┌──────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────┐
              │        16        │      │        16        │
              │   Old Viewers    │      │  Young Viewers   │
              └──────────────────┘      └──────────────────┘
                /          \              /           \
        ┌──────────┐  ┌──────────┐  ┌──────────┐  ┌──────────┐
        │    7     │  │    9     │  │    8     │  │    8     │
        │Old Urban │  │Old Rural │  │Young Urban│ │Young Rural│
        │ Viewers  │  │ Viewers  │  │ Viewers  │  │ Viewers  │
        └──────────┘  └──────────┘  └──────────┘  └──────────┘
```
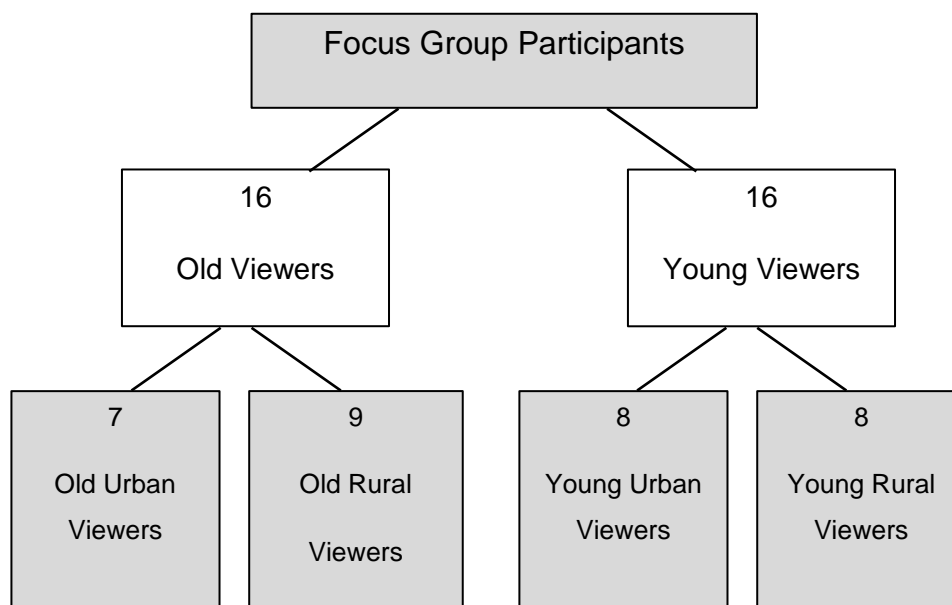
Figure 3.4: The participants of the focus group interviews

In recruiting the participants, the invitation asking for participation was initially posted on a particular academic group's Facebook page and also my personal Facebook page to ask for help from friends to share the invitation. As a result, the invitation was disseminated to those who had watched *Khunphrachuai* and were interested in participating in the focus group. After contacting and securing the involvement of a number of participants, the technique of *snowball sampling, or chain sampling*, was used to find more viewers to attend the focus groups. This technique was conducted

by asking the sampled participants to suggest other people they know who fit the criteria of selection, i.e. those who have the characteristics or have had experiences relevant to the research (Ritchie *et al.*, 2003; Bryman, 2012).

Despite the fact that focus groups are seen as an appropriate way to collect data from a great number of people rapidly and conveniently (Berg, 2009) in ideal case scenarios, for this study there was some difficulty in recruiting participants. Although I was able to find and directly contact a large number of *Khunphrachuai* audiences, gathering them in one place to participate the focus group in the same location at the same time proved to be a serious challenge, as a result of the difficulties in transportation, i.e. the traffic jam and distance. This made the task for the potential participants gruelling and tiresome, both in terms of inconvenience caused and the time spent. As such, the recruitment of participants was therefore remodified by means of recruiting a group of people who matched the criteria of sampling: had lived in the same area; and were able to spend approximately two hours for the focus group interview. Each focus group interview was conducted in a safe and convenient location within their own community.

In particular, the selection of participants from non-urban areas was a challenge. In addition to the difficulties noted above, the necessity to gather rural viewers who have been raised in and have gained cultural experience in different parts of Thailand was also my concern. To achieve this goal, I decided to interview elderly rural audiences in *Ayutthaya*, the province where I was raised and grew up. In recruiting elderly rural participants, I initially asked my parents to invite their friends who had lived in *Ayutthaya* and fitted the criteria to join the focus group. After a number of such participants had been secured, I asked these first participants to suggest other people they knew who matched the criteria and had also lived in *Ayutthaya*. Although the interview took place in *Ayutthaya*, some participants were not native to that area i.e. they had lived in *Ayutthaya* for working/marriage reasons. As a result, the elderly rural viewers included those who were raised and grew up in different parts (provinces) of Thailand, including *Ayutthaya, Nakhon Nayok, Ubon Ratchathani,* and *Sisaket.*

In terms of the focus group with young rural audiences, the interview took place in *Pathum Thani* - a province close to Bangkok where the majority of the young rural participants were living or studying at the time. In recruiting the participants, I began by asking close acquaintance to invite young rural people they knew who matched the criteria to join the interview. After a number of participants had been found, these participants were then asked to suggest others they knew who matched the criteria. The young rural viewers included those who were raised and had grown up in different parts of Thailand, including *Lampang, Nakhon Ratchasima, Samut Prakan, Chantaburi, Krabi, Surat Thani, Nakhon Si Thammarat,* and *Trang.*

To conduct the focus group interviews efficiently, this study was concerned with the interplay between key features of focus groups, as proposed by Krzyżanowski (2008, p. 164), including "the role of moderator, the role of the participants and (their selection), the role of the discussed topics, and the role of the communicative dynamics taking place during the course of the focus group discussions". In the interviews, I played the role of moderator - the person who leads the focus groups and presents the key topics being discussed along with overseeing the development of the communicative dynamics taking place, without taking the leading position (and also without dominating). Additionally, the important role which the moderator has to conduct is to "not only assure that the most outspoken participants do not dominate the discussion, but also seek to encourage contributions from the more timorous" (Kitzinger, 1994 cited in Krzyżanowski, 2008, p. 165). During the interviews, I was highly concerned with the idea that the active listening of the interviewer can provide participants with the freedom to talk and suggest ideas. I was also concerned with the fact that some Thai people might feel uncomfortable to talk or not feel very free to express their opinions when they are in the company of strangers. The appropriate way to achieve healthy data was therefore to use an open-ended interview in an informal setting.

This study is concerned with what Hopf (2004) argues is one of the purposes of focus group interviews: to maximise the scope of the topics and to give participants an opportunity to express ideas that have not been anticipated. At the stage of interviewing, this study conducted *open-ended interviews* - a form of interviews which

can provide interviewers with "rich data" (Silverman, 2006, p. 110). Also, as Litosseliti (2003) notes, using open-ended questioning is appropriate to focus group interviews, rather than closed questions, because they are broad and allow participants to express their opinions and feelings with freedom. Moreover, it does not lead the participants to answer or make responses specifically implied by the question (i.e. it permits more freedom to elaborate and meander).

However, the situation during the focus group interviews did not meet my expectations. After finishing the interviews, I found that the focus group interview method was not quite appropriate to how Thai people usually talk (compared with the in-depth interview method used in my previous audience study). This was reflected in the fact that some participants, especially in the groups of elderly viewers, were reticent and seemed to be shy/feel uncomfortable expressing their opinions openly and freely. It was a struggle to initiate turn taking and maintain the momentum. Whereas some participants talked a lot, some continued to be silent. When the silent ones were singled out (by me, as a moderator) to express their own ideas, the responses were often monosyllabic and/or hesitantly and quietly uttered.

In addition, the most challenging situation was the participants' avoidance of conflict with others. When debatable, controversial, or sensitive issues were discussed, such as political and ideological subjects, some participants (especially among the senior audiences) avoided expressing disagreement. While they showed agreement by openly nodding or adding supporting ideas confidently, it seemed as if the act of being quiet and saying nothing about certain issues, rather than directly expressing an opposite view, implied an - unspoken - disagreement with the ideas of others (see samples of the situations in Chapter 6). This belief was reflected in the fact that when I sensed that their silence was not necessarily the result of shyness, I decided to repeat the question and specifically asked them one by one. As a result, they responded by expressing different/opposite views to those who had previously talked. Arguably, this reticence reflects the Thai character trait of being *Krengchai* and seeking to avoid disagreement/conflict with others - see Chapter 1). To solve this problem, and to avoid domination by certain individuals within a group, when needed, I informed the participants that the way of answering was open, that no answers were

right or wrong, and hence they were free to express their own ideas freely. What was striking about this particular situation was that this problem emerged less often in the focus groups with young audiences. This might be explained by the fact that this young generation of Thais has grown up in and been surrounded by a more modern Thai environment and been encouraged to express their ideas more openly in both daily life and educational settings, whereas the elderly viewers grew up in more conservative environment and have been more engaged with conservative social values.

3.4 Semiotic and CDA approaches

This section outlines media semiotics and critical discourse analysis (CDA), which are the main analytical and theoretical concepts and approaches of the research. This research project focuses on the role of mediated texts in the construction and representation of national identity. It assumes that "the (social) world is socially constructed". Integral to this, along with notions of discourse and representations, there is an emphasis on "the role of texts" (language, visuals, etc.) in the "construction of the social world" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 8).

3.4.1 The social construction of reality

The investigation of discourses of national cultural identities, as social constructs, can be explored through the theory of social construction of reality, first set out by Berger and Luckmann. The social construction of reality carries main basic assumptions regarding "reality" and "knowledge" in that "reality is socially constructed" (Berger and Luckmann, 1996, p. 13) and that "all human knowledge is developed, transmitted and maintained in social situations" (Berger and Luckmann, 1996, p. 15).

The theory of social construction of reality has been theoretically employed in several aspects of studies in other disciplines including education, psychology and communication (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2009b) which involves the studies of discourse and of media in relation to society (which are the main concepts of this research project).

Investigation into the construction of discourses of national identity is therefore tied up with the theory of the social construction of reality. Matthews and Ross (2010a, p. 391) note that discourse study "is theoretically based in social constructionist theory". The theoretical background of discourse analysis relates to the basic assumptions that "our sense of reality is…constructed by the society in which we live" and that "individuals can never be truly objective" as individuals are products of their society. Researchers in this field thus "do not start from a zero position" but they already have "a set of social beliefs, values, and expectations that impact on any research that is undertaken" (Matthews and Ross, 2010a, p. 391).

Despite the fact that the original conception of the social construction of reality did not directly engage with communication process, i.e. it focused on understanding of "the construction of knowledge, not the communication process behind it" (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2009b, p. 892), it has broadly been applied to analysis in the field of media and communication. In the communication fields, according to Leeds-Hurwitz (2009b, p. 892), there are two points which are mainly concerned with the social construction of reality. The first is the assumption that "people make sense of experience by constructing a model of the social world and how it works". The social reality is a result of interaction among people through words and/or actions. As Leeds-Hurwitz argues:

> "Each culture or social group develops its own understandings of the world, creating its own meanings for behaviour and how this is to be understood. People, acting together, develop traditions over time, and then begin to take them for granted." (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2009b, p. 892).

The second point is the stress on language "as the most important system through which reality is constructed", i.e. language has been a tool in which "social actors" use to generate a set of reality (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2009b, pp. 892-893). Hall (2005) emphasises the role of language in constructing/representing realities as follows:

> "Reality exists outside language, but it is constantly mediated by and through language: and what we can know and say has to be produced in and through discourse. Discursive 'knowledge' is the product not of the transparent representation of the 'real' in language but of the articulation of language on real relations and conditions." (Hall, 2005, p. 121)

In relation to this, notion that connects the concepts/meanings of social reality with language is called "representation". As Hall (2009, p. 3) explains:

> "Representation is the production of the meaning of the concepts in our minds through language. It is the link between concepts and language which enables us to *refer to* either the "real" world of objects, people or events, or indeed to imaginary worlds of fictional objects, people and events." (Hall, 2009, p. 3)

Hall (2009, pp. 3-4) points out that meaning is constructed through "systems of representation" involving the "shared conceptual maps" or "shared meanings" and the signs (the words, sounds or images which carry meaning) which are organised into languages. Due to the fact that people who "belong to the same culture" generally share the same conceptual maps, they can hence produce "a shared culture of meanings" and "construct a social world" they live in together, and the meaning of things as such can be represented through the "shared language" among them. As Hall argues:

> "The relation between 'things', concepts and signs lies at the heart of the production of meaning in language. The process which links these three elements together is what we call 'representation'." (Hall, 2009, p. 5)

The shared conceptual maps among the members of the communities/social groups as such closely relate to what Berger and Luckmann (1996, p. 57) call the "social stock of knowledge". They claim that the extent of people's making sense of social reality relies on the degree of "familiarity" and "remotenesss" (Berger and Luckmann, 1996, p. 59):

> "The social stock of knowledge differentiates reality by degrees of familiarity. It provides complex and detailed information concerning those sectors of everyday life with which I must frequently deal. It provides much more general and imprecise information on remoter sectors." (Berger and Luckmann, 1996, p. 57)

Leeds-Hurwitz (2009b) explains that people generate the meaning of a social world through various modes of communication: words, actions and media. In the process of constructing meanings of social realities, media have played a central role as a mediator between people and their sense-making of the social world. Specifically, media normally construct/represent aspects of social realities which have already,

more or less, existed in the society and have been transferred from one source to another through the processes of meaning-making. This is what Silverstone (1999, p. 13) calls "mediation" - the movement of meanings by means of never-ending "intertextualities". Silverstone claims media as "a process of mediation". As he states:

> "Mediation involves the movement of meaning from one text to another, from one discourse to another, from one event to another. It involves the constant transformation of meanings, both large scale and small,…, as media texts and texts about media circulate in writing, in speech and audiovisual forms, and as we, individually and collectively, directly and indirectly, contribute to their production… Mediated meanings circulate in primary and secondary texts, through endless intertextualities,…" (Silverstone, 1999, p. 13)

Fairclough (2014, p. 89) claims that "many texts are mediated by the mass media". Fairclough (2010, p. 73) emphasises the essence of media texts in the circulations/transformations of meanings. He adds that media texts are "a class of texts which are specialised for moving resources for meaning-making between texts, and more abstractly between different social practices, fields, domains and scales of social life".

In the process of interpreting this mediatised reality, the audience might draw on their own stocked knowledge and experiences to decode and make sense of things. In her analysis of the formation of relationships among Chinese youths through the lens of popular Chinese television dating programmes, Yang (2017) points out the crucial role of television in mediating and reconstructing the social meanings among Chinese new generations. Focusing on the most popular Chinese reality TV dating programme *If You Are the One*, which adapts the globally popular format of the British dating show *Take Me Out*, the results of this study found that the TV dating programme, as "a mediated dating text", has a great influence on changes in social values towards dating and relationships in contemporary China. That is, the TV dating programme has functioned as "a public template" in which the subject of love and intimacy "has tended to become a less private and sensitive issue" (Yang, 2017, p. 15). This shows the power of media discourse in transforming traditional social values into a modernised version (which has arguably been influenced by a globalised media format).

As media have become a means of the discursive construction of national identities, investigating how media shape the social world and meanings of national cultural identity and how people make sense of it are an important way to achieve an understanding of the construction of discourses of national cultural identity in contemporary Thai society. This can be explored through the study of signs (media semiotics), and the critical analysis of media discourse.

3.4.2 Semiotics and media construction of meaning

Semiotics has been widely applied to media analysis. The analysis of mass media has been used as a way to achieve an understanding of the socio-cultural aspects within societies, for instance, the analysis of media construction of discourses of identity and/or political ideology. As McQuail (2002, p. 10) argues, when media texts are analysed through the lens of linguistic ideas, "the mass media tend to offer us a preferred reading of social reality along with inbuilt cultural assumptions that are related to the distribution of power, economic, cultural, ethnic, and gender terms".

The investigation of social meaning making in this research is embedded in the social semiotic approach, which focuses on "the way that communicators use semiotic resources to achieve particular goals, to communicate specific ideas, attitudes, values and identities" (Machin, 2014, p. 298). This research project is concerned with the assumption that national identities are "discursively" constructed through "language and other semiotic systems" (de Cillia *et al.*, 1999, p. 153). The concept of media semiotics is thus employed to analyse which contain language and various semiotic resources to be used to generate the contemporary discourses of Thai identity in Thai television texts. This focuses particularly on the analysis of "the sign itself", i.e. the analysis of several different sorts of signs, of different ways they convey meanings, and of the way these signs are connected with the people who use them, together with an investigation into "the culture within" which these signs operate (Fiske, 2011a, p. 38).

The linguistic theory has been applied to media studies since the 1970s (McQuail, 2002, p. 10). Within the field, semiotics is a theory and method of textual analysis which has been used to analyse signs in media and communication and the

construction of meaning through various semiotic resources. Semiotics, according to Fiske (2011a, p. 43), "sees communication as the generation of meaning in messages". It focuses on the investigation of how a particular text (which could be media texts) is used to construct a particular meaning (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2009a) through elements of language (Long and Wall, 2009) and also various kinds of semiotic resources.

The study of signs, called *Semiotics* or *Semiology*, originated in the work of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and the American philosopher Charles Sander Peirce (*Semiology* was coined by Saussure, while the term *Semiotics* was coined by Peirce). Semiotics uses the term "signs" to describe the ways in which meanings are socially produced. It stresses that "our perception of reality is itself *constructed* and *shaped* by the words and signs we use, in various social contexts" (Branston and Stafford, 2003, p. 11). In terms of media, signs would be written or spoken words, images or parts of images (colour, typefaces, representations of people, places), and aspects of sound (Long and Wall, 2009). In terms of television, signs would come in several forms, for instance, spoken words (presented through speech and script narrated), images, and sounds e.g. music.

Despite differences in detail, Saussure's and Peirce's models share certain tenets. They are both concerned with three elements: "(1) the sign, (2) that to which it refers, and (3) the users of the sign" (Fiske, 2011a, p. 39). In Saussure's framework, the sign "consists of its physical form plus an associated mental concept", and is connected with "reality" merely by means of "the concept of the people who use it" (Fiske, 2011a, p. 39). In Saussure's explanation, the relationship between the *signifier* (which is similar in meaning to Peirce's *representamen*) and the *signified* (roughly similar in meaning to Peirce's *interpretant*) is called *signification*. His main concept is that a sign consists of a *signifier* (the physical form of sign) and a *signified* (the mental concept to which it refers). The mental concept as such "is broadly common to all members of the same culture who share the same language" (Fiske, 2011a, p. 42). In Saussure's own words:

> "A linguistic sign is not a link between a thing and a name, but between a concept [*signified*] and a sound pattern [*signifier*]. The sound pattern is not actually a sound; for a sound is something physical. A sound pattern is the

hearer's psychological impression of a sound, as given to him by the evidence of his senses. This sound pattern may be called a "material" element only in that it is the representation of our sensory impressions. The sound pattern may thus be distinguished from the other element associated with it in a linguistic sign. This other element is generally of a more abstract kind: the concept." (Saussure, 1983, p. 66 cited in Chander, 2007, p. 14)

```
                          sign
                          / \
                     composed of
                      /        \
    signifier      plus      signified      ——— signification ———     external reality
    (physical                (mental
    existence                concept)                                 or meaning
    of the sign)
```
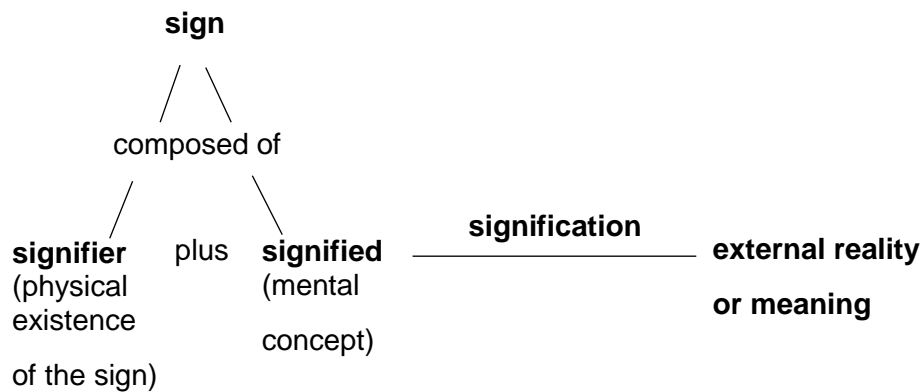
Figure 3.5: Saussure's proposal of the elements of meaning (cited in Fiske, 2011a, p. 42)

Pierce categorises signs into three types: *icon, index*, and *symbol.* Despite being divided into these types, they are "not separate and distinct", as one sign may be formed from several types (Fiske, 2011a, p. 46). Focusing on a *symbol,* it is a sign related to the convention, rule, or agreement among the users who share the same culture. Nearly all words (whether in written or spoken) are symbols (Chander, 2007; Fiske, 2011a). Numbers are also symbols (Fiske, 2011a). It is important to note that the meaning of the symbols varies according to the convention and the rule in each culture. For instance, the shape "5" in the Thai context has been used not only to refer to the number five in general but in another context, especially in internet chatting, it has been used to refer to the sound of laughing in Thai, i.e. "haha".

The approach of semiotics has been utilised to analyse language-based media, image-based media, and audio visual based-media (in which multiple semiotic modes are gathered together). KhosraviNik (2010a, p. 67) suggests that "discourse (or "text") can broadly be defined to refer to a piece of any system of semiosis which is used in a communicative event". A text, in this sense, can be seen as several modes of communication including the "verbal" products such as news articles, the

"visual" products such as photos, or the "multimodal" products such as movies and television programmes. In video presentations, the audio-visual media products that are composed of a variety of signs, the multimodality is a powerful aspect in constructing social meaning.

Multimodality is an approach in discourse analysis which attends to varieties of modalities through which a discourse can be substantiated. It explains the grammar of visual communication that is created and used by "designers" of images (Machin, 2007, p. ix) and of other modes of communication, especially the audiovisual representations through film and television products. For multimodality, social semiotics is about the multimodal nature of communication, which is not only engaged with verbal language but also other modes of communication and signification. Multimodal analysis is concerned with the assumption that meaning is generated not only through verbal language but also through other multiple semiotic modes (Machin and Mayr, 2012). Multimodality is thus about communication-in-use rather than mere language-in-use (the in-use aspect in this sense indicates the emphasis on the social context of communication which has been applied to an investigation of any mode of communication). Machin (2007, p. ix) suggests that the multimodal approach investigates "the way that signs are used in combination". It sees that meaning rarely lies in "the signs itself in isolation" but through "a system of visual grammar" which provides it with the capability of meaning making. The meaning of "the sign" is therefore understood in context through integration of the sign itself and "other signs".

The multimodal approach has been employed to the analysis of representational modes other than speech or writing and sees language not as the centre of all communication (Idema, 2003). Kress (2010, p. 64) points out that "multimodal social semiotics deals with entities in which meaning and form appear as integrated whole, a *sign*". It looks into multiple modes of communication and its meaning making. Kress further explains that multimodal social semiotics is concerned with an issue within all its modes and to the relation between the modes. Mode in this sense is considered as a semiotic resource for making meanings, and can be speech, writing, image, gesture, facial expression, visual expression in video presentation (such as camera

shot), foreground and background lighting, editing techniques, and characterisation, music, and other ways of communication (Kress, 2010; Berger, 2012). Along with this, the way the actors and the actions associated with them are represented is central to the meaning construction. The analysis on representation of a certain group in a film is one of the obvious examples. The analysis as such can examine many categories which are used to represent the actors' characteristics, such as "appearance, dressing, facial features, tone of voice, language and accents, bodily features, physical attributes", together with other representation techniques such as "frequency and quality of absence, close-ups, camera angles and other cinematic processes" (KhosraviNik, 2010a, p. 68). For instance, the filmic processes of "intensification and mitigation" and of "fore-grounding and backgrounding" have been used to emphasise/play down the action and role of the actors as well as the interaction between the actors (KhosraviNik, 2010a, p. 68). The study of the filmic representation of the nostalgic Thai film *Nang Nak* shows the essence of multimodal texts in representing significant Thai cultural beliefs and values - such as Thai historical past and culture, tradition, spirituality and animist beliefs - through nostalgically storytelling the legend of the Thai ghost *Nang Nak* (or *Mae Nak Phrakhanong*), conveying a sense of immortal love myth and traditional way of Thai beliefs, rituals and culture (Natthapon, 2003; Harrison, 2005). Using semiotics as a primary analytic theory in the analysis of cultural beliefs and values and of the filmic elements of the nostalgic Thai film, Natthapon (2003) reveals that nostalgia is one of the five cultural elements that contribute to the popularity of the film. The results of his audience analysis demonstrate that Thai viewers welcome the film *Nang Nak* due to the desire to get back to the simple ways of past Thai life. This indicates Thai viewers' longing to see Thai history and cultural identity in the movies and to immerse in the perceived calmness and beauty of the past. In addition to that, the filmic elements of representation contribute greatly to the attractiveness and huge popularity of the film. These include the manner of visual narrative, lighting and colouring to display the beautiful scenes, film editing and camera angles, music and sound effect, and the costumes and props. This shows the essence of multimodal texts in constructing attractive images and establishing meanings of the past and history, social beliefs and culture.

The mixture of multiple modes in televisual representations has been used to construct ideological discourses, especially for the purpose of building and maintaining a nation, which "requires constantly constructing and consolidating national symbols" (Gorfinkel, 2014, p. 93). This can be formed through a multimodal mediated text. One of the prime examples is the analysis of multimodal constructions of mediated realities about Macau - which had been ruled by Portugal power and were afterwards handed back to the motherland - through China's music-entertainment television shows (Gorfinkel, 2014). This study draws on theories from multimodal and critical discourse analysis, post-colonialism and post-structuralism, and semiotics to examine how Chinese television has re-united Macau back into the national fold. By analysing how visual, musical and spoken discourses work together to produce "a sense of unity and identity" for Macau in relation to the People's Republic of China (PRC) (Gorfinkel, 2014, p. 95), the results of the study report that the programmes uphold the creation at both the domestic and international level of constructing the nation. In other words, the programmes not only underline "messages of national unity" but also promote "China's openness to the world" that is crucial for building the international image of China (Gorfinkel, 2014, p. 106).

In addition to the linguistic and visual texts, audio representations, i.e. music and sound effects, have been beneficial for the construction of particular discourses. McKerrell and Way (2017, pp. 1-2) argue that "approaching music as multimodal discourse" is a current innovation which has also been embedded within *Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).* For CDA, music has been viewed as "a part of communication often inextricably set within a variety of other modes used to articulate ideology" (McKerrell and Way, 2017, pp. 1-2). Using the multimodal approach to examine the meaning making through music and sound in war films, Machin (2014, p. 315) reveals that the war film music, which points to both nationalist armies and individual feeling, is part of the "foregrounding of soldiery and backgrounding the other aspects of war". Interestingly, this study identifies the meaning potential of musical notes. It reveals the use of classical music to communicate nostalgia, i.e. it creates the "sound of pleasurable longing or longing for pleasure". In addition to that, the film music is also used to create a sense of wistfulness, pain, happiness, sadness, and so forth (Machin, 2014, pp. 308-309).

In an analysis of the ideological use of music in the Swedish television reality show *Böda Camping* (Eriksson and Machin, 2017), the *Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis* is employed to examine how music and sound are "deployed to communicate a very specific discourse" connected to "wider socio-political shifts in Sweden" (Eriksson and Machin, 2017, p. 21). The results of this study suggests that music and sound are utilised as part of "the process of ridicule" in the *Böda Camping,* and in "the process of recontextualising" the daily life of a group of campers "to suit particular ideological purposes" (Eriksson and Machin, 2017, p. 27). This study argues that the representations of music in the *Böda Camping* and other Swedish reality shows play a vital role in generating "particular discourses that tend to delegitimise the working classes". In relation to the wider socio-political context in Swedish society, the mediatised discourses as such are part of the broader political circumstance in which the working classes have been "devalued" (Eriksson and Machin, 2017, p. 43). This study illustrates the way to understand how the "d' or the discourses drawn from the data of the (multimodal) texts are linked to the "Big D" or the macro discourses/discourses in place in the wider society (Gee, 2011; KhosraviNik, 2015b).

Modality, according to Van Leeuwan (2005, p. 91), is one of the four main dimensions of social semiotics (incorporating the concepts of "*discourse*", "*genre*", "*style*", and "*modality*") that never appear in separation and play a significant role as being "always all part of every communicative event and every semiotic artefact". Modality is concerned with "the question of truth" (Van Leeuwan, 2005, p. 160). It relates to aspects of representation and also to questions of social reaction. This concept is the key to examining "how people use semiotic resources to create the truth or reality values of their representations, to communicate, for instance, whether they are to be taken as fact or fiction, proven truth or conjecture, etc." (Van Leeuwan, 2005, p. 91). The question regarding this is not about "how true is this?" but rather about "how true is it represented?". The absolute normative truth is not the concern here, but rather the truth as sign producers (speakers, writers, and others sign creators) see" it, and represent it by means of the use of "the semiotic resources". This shows that modality is an aspect of engaging with how the communication is designed by the sign producers, who can make a choice among several modes/styles of communication.

Despite the wide range of media representations as multimodal discourse, the linguistic resource of modality has played a very significant role in society. That is, linguistic resources allow people to create the shared truths to form groups of people who believe in the same thing, and, furthermore, allow people to downgrade the truths of others (Van Leeuwan, 2005). This is evidenced by the media construction of discourses of particular social group/community identities as well as national identities that represent the sense of "self" and "other" (KhosraviNik, 2015a) through "proposals for unfavourable treatment" and "negative other-representation" (Boréus, 2013, p. 294). This sort of meaning can be discursively generated through language use (for example the television hosts' speech and the talk between the hosts and guests), together with multimodal texts which contain communicatively and ideologically powerful audio-visual texts (for example displays of video recorded social events and vox pop).

In terms of visual modality, enlargement or reduction of "the degree to which certain means of visual expression are used" (such as colour and sharpness), show increases or decreases in "as how real" the image should be taken (Van Leeuwan, 2005, p. 166). Further to the first version of their ideas of visual communication in *Reading Images*, published in 1990, Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) provide a broader range of discussion on the grammar of visual designs (which include a much wider range of mass media materials, visual arts, diagrams, maps and charts). They suggest that visual modality can be graded through consideration of its key markers. These visual modality markers include the degrees of *colour saturation, colour differentiation, colour modulation, brightness, depth, contextualization, representation,* and *illumination*. These means of visual expression allow the relevant dimension of articulation to be increased or decreased. Different factors may be increased or decreased to different degrees, resulting in several "modality configurations". The interesting point here is that "these configurations cue viewers' judgements of modality, of "as how real" images (or parts of images) are to be taken" (Van Leeuwan, 2005, p. 167). The difference in degree of modality between newspaper cartoons and news photographs illustrates this. Whereas newspaper cartoons display the "reduced articulation of detail, background, depth, and light and shade, and no articulation of colour and tonal gradation", the articulation of these

same factors in news photographs is more intensified (high modality) (Van Leeuwan, 2005, p. 167). This emphasises that producers can transfer certain judgements and evaluations to the target group of viewers through the choices of modality to generate various choices of meanings. Nevertheless, the relation between modality judgements and points on the scales of articulation mentioned above is not fixed, because the modality value of a given configuration depends on the kind of visual truth preferred in the given context. The context, in this sense, is related to who the target audiences are, and how they may be reading this cue (Van Leeuwan, 2005).

Moreover, the close connection between the ways we present the world and the rules and norms of everyday social behaviour is the core of modality. Van Leeuwan (2005) illustrates that using semiotic modes can present ourselves rather than (only) for representation. Dress code is an example in theatre and film as we use dress to represent, but in everyday life we use it to present ourselves, to say something about who we are and how we want to be seen. This corresponds to Fairclough (2003, p. 166) point that modality is significant in the texturing of both personal identity ("personalities") and social identities in the sense that "what you commit yourself to is a significant part of what you are". Modality choices in texts are part of social processes of constructing and representing self-identity, the process of self-identification shaped by the process of social relation.

Closely related to social semiotics, discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis have been employed in the analysis of media discourses (KhosraviNik 2009, 2014 among many others). This allows researchers to investigate discourses and their established meanings that have been constructed through a variety of media texts. It also allows enquirers to examine the relevant factors that shape and construct the particular social discourses of each society. These theoretical aspects will be explained in the following section.

3.4.3 Textual Analysis (TA), Discourse Analysis (DA), and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Textual analysis

The analysis of texts, in various textual resources, can facilitate understanding of the sociocultural contexts of a particular society. As Kovala (2002, p. 5) argues, "textual analysis is always contextual and thus cultural". Texts are a meaningful element of the construction and representation of the social world. Texts convey meanings, and hence they (especially media texts) have been broadly used as a tool for socially/culturally/ideologically/politically (re)constructing social realities/knowledge. According to Fairclough (2003), texts have a great effect on a change in social knowledge and ideologies. As he explains:

> "Texts as elements of social events…can bring about changes in our knowledge (we can learn things from them), our beliefs, our attitudes, values and so forth… One of the causal effects of texts which has been of major concern for critical discourse analysis is ideological effects – the effects of texts in inculcating and sustaining or changing ideologies." (Fairclough, 2003, pp. 8-9)

Closely related to social semiotics, textual analysis is a methodology used as a way of collecting and analysing information that has played a significant role in social scientific research (Fairclough, 1995a). Fairclough (1995a, pp. 208-209) identifies interesting reasons why textual analysis matters to social science. For theoretical reasons, it is claimed that "texts constitute one important form of social action". Hence, even social scientists who are concerned with "*macro* social interests" (namely, social structures) will never be able to totally substantiate it without considering texts. This is because "social structures…are in a dialectical relationship with social action (the concern of *micro* social analysis)". The methodological reason is that texts form a prime source of evidence for establishing assertions of "social structures, relations and processes". That is, the evidence as such is from the several "material forms of social action, including texts." For historical reasons, it is suggested that "texts are sensitive barometers of social processes, movement and diversity". The analysis of text can hence provide researchers with good indicators of social (and also cultural) change.

Focusing on media texts, McKee (2003) points out that textual analysis is a way of approaching media texts to understand their meanings. Investigating meanings generated in media texts is an essential way to understand the role that media plays

in our lives and how its messages participate in the cultural construction of our views of the world. The work of Hall (2005, p. 119) explores the relation between text producers (encoders) and their audiences (decoders). Through the mediated texts of television programmes, the broadcasting institutions work as discourse producers by encoding the "meaningful discourses" in the text. This indicates the function of discourse as a dominant general meaning established in the mediated texts constructed and shaped by the encoder. Hall (2005, p. 123) claims that "any society/culture tends, with varying degrees of closure, to impose its classifications of the social and cultural and political world". These establish a "*dominant cultural order*" in which we share understandings about the meaning of particular things. This shared understanding imposes an established dominant perspective of how things are and should be, encoded by the producer (Davis, 2004). This means that the audience's interpreting is operating with the *dominant or preferred code"*, i.e. audiences understand and agree with the "*dominant or preferred meanings"* (Hall, 2005, p. 123). However, the way audiences' interpretation might run in contrast to the *preferred meanings* encoded. This position might be the *"oppositional code"* where the dominant meaning is rejected due to the cultural/political/ideological views of the audiences. There can also be a "negotiated version" of decoding, i.e. the *"negotiated code"* which is a combination of "adaptive and oppositional elements" (Hall, 1980, p. 127). The results of the study on the construction of mediatised social realities in Thai films by Supa (2002) reveal the powerful role of the text producers in narrating well-known historical stories/legends. The results of this study underline the role of the films in reconstructing/creating a new version of the key elements of the stories. This is illustrated in the period film *Nang Nak*, for instance, which reconstructs new versions of physical features of Thai females in earlier times. This film features Thai females as very different from the typical characteristics of females in many previous versions of representation - either many versions of *Nang Nak* films/TV dramas per se, or the representations of Thai females in other period/historical films and television dramas. As a result of this reconstruction, the viewers' decoding varies according to their different experiences of the stories/social meanings. There is an oppositional reading among viewers who have direct experiences about the stories. Whereas, the decoding among viewers who only have a mass-mediated experience is polysemy; this includes preferred reading, negotiated reading and oppositional reading.

Discourse analysis

Analysing discourse is a key approach in line with social semiotics conceptualisation. It is a mainly qualitative approach to textual analysis. Discourse analysis seeks to understand how sign systems, for example verbal languages, are central in constructing the social world (Branston and Stafford, 2003). Discourse analysis is an approach that can let researchers see "how macro-structures are carried through micro-structure" (Jaworski and Coupland, 2014, p. 11). It has been widely adopted for investigation into mediated texts as it "provides a way of linking up the analysis of local characteristics of communication to the analysis of broader social characteristics". This approach can let enquirers achieve understanding of the meanings generated in the media discourse itself, and also the wider sociocultural/political context that shapes/controls the way that such social meanings are constructed. This is the reason why the notion of power/control (such as the role of government's policy, for this research project) has usually been drawn to a contextualisation of texts.

There are various versions of discourse analysis. Van Dijk (1997 cited in Fairclough, 2003) suggests that discourse analysis can be divided between approaches which include detailed analysis of texts, and approaches which do not. Fairclough (2003) explains that the analysis of texts is an essential part of discourse analysis, as it connects with theoretical questions about discourse (such as the socially constructive effects of discourse). Jaworski and Coupland (2014, p. 11) point out the close connection between the examination of discourse and the textual data. They claim that analysts "can only access discourse through the textual data that we collect...". The text analysed are thus always "filtered or mediated; they are in themselves a form of social (re)construction". This illustrates why the investigation of textual data is conducted as a main tool to achieve an understanding of particular social discourses and construction of knowledge in the broader context.

Discourses are products of the construction of social realities. Discourse analysis in social research has been "strongly influenced" by the works of French theorist Michael Foucault, who wrote an influential study on the relationship between power

and knowledge, including the power of discourses (Fairclough, 2003, p. 2). Foucault's conception of discourse - "power produces knowledge" (Foucault, 1995, p. 27) - has been broadly adopted in various studies in the social sciences (including this research project which attempt to understand the power/control that shape the media construction of contemporary discourses of Thai identity). Building on Foucault's work (such as 1977), Van Leeuwan (2005, p. 94) defines discourses as "socially constructed knowledges of some aspect of reality". Knowledge refers to "all kinds of meanings that people use to interpret and shape their environment". Discourse analysis is an attempt to identify the knowledges contained in discourse (Jäger and Maier, 2009, p. 34). From the Foucauldian perspective, discourses are constituted social constructions in the organisation and circulation of knowledge (Talbot, 2007). Discourses serve the exercise of power in a society. As Jäger and Maier (2009, p. 35) argue, discourses exercise power because "they institutionalise and regulate ways of talking, thinking, and acting". This indicates that discourses do not only shape but also enable social reality. Additionally, Van Leeuwan (2005, p. 94) maintains that socially constructed knowledges are developed in particular social contexts as well as in ways which fit "the interests of social actors in these contexts" (whether small or large contexts).

Discourse analysis has been claimed as interdisciplinary (Jaworski and Coupland, 2014) as it has highlights "the interdisciplinary nature of its research since its beginning" (Weiss and Wodak, 2007). Discourse analysis has hence been adopted to the analysis of various social/cultural/political aspects. In media and cultural studies, it is the key to explore what values and identities are contained, prevented or perhaps encouraged by practices and orders of a particular discourse. This refers to both verbal languages and visual languages/modes of communication. Discourses can be understood as socially constructed knowledges related to regulated systems of language use. The appropriate statement or language use can socially operate rules, conventions, assumptions, and exclusions. This means that "sometimes single words can highlight the power of dominant groups and their discourses to insist on some meanings and exclude others" (Branston and Stafford, 2003, p. 126).

Fairclough (2003, p. 124) states that **"different discourses are different ways of representing aspects of the world"**. As he explains:

> "I see discourse as ways of representing aspects of the world – the processes, relations and structures of the material world, the "mental world" of thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and so forth, and the social world….Discourse not only represent the world as it is (or rather is seen to be), they are also projective, imaginaries, representing possible worlds which are different from the actual world, and tied in to projects to change the world in particular directions." (Fairclough, 2003, p. 124)

Discourses can be analysed by examining a wide range of texts, generally including documents, transcripts of debates and media content (Scheufele, 2008 cited in McQuail, 2010, p. 349). KhosraviNik (2010a, p. 63) notes that the analysis of text engages with questions of "what" (what is presented in the text) and questions of "how" which examine the qualities of operationalisation of what is presented in the text through linguistic mechanisms/processes. When a discourse is analysed, the researchers may focus on "what types of language are being used", and "what sorts of ideas underlie the text and how those ideas are demonstrated in the language". In addition, some scholars use discourse analysis to study the way in which ideas develop and change through time or different cultural settings, that is, "how ideas are socially constructed through the way people think, speak about and experience the social world around them" (Matthews and Ross, 2010a, p. 391). This alludes to the power of discourse in terms of not only representing/reflecting social phenomena, but also being specific machineries, which Foucault calls "systems of dispersion of discourses", that produce, reproduce and transform social phenomena (Carpentier and Spinoy, 2008, p. 17).

Fairclough (1995b, p. 12) points out that media discourse relates to the aspect of power which focuses on "how the mass media affect and are affected by power relations within social system, including relation of class, gender, and ethnicity, and relations between particular groups like politicians or scientists and the mass of the population". Issues of power have been analysed in media studies in terms of ideology, where the focus is about how media language ideologically works or how social identities are ideologically constructed. Whether it is considered as public, institutional or professional discourse (Fetzer, 2014), media discourse has a great

influence on representing social phenomena and constructing ideological ideas among social groups. Playing this crucial role, nostalgia media have been a tool for constructing/promoting the national culture and a sense of national belonging.

The power of media discourse in constructing the national identity and unity can be affirmed by several Thai nostalgia media which represent the national past and history to ideologically generate a particular discourse of national identity and unity. Prominent examples of this are the historical films *Bang Rajan* and *Suroyothai* and the various versions of reproductions of the novel *Thawiphop*, which are "framed with the express intention of generating a sense of national unity" (Harrison, 2010b, p. 117). The various versions of reproduction of the Thai novel *Thawiphop* include at least three films, four television dramas (Thongchai, 2011) and a musical. *Thawiphop* contains the narrative of romantic love along with the construction of the sense of national belonging through the story of *Manee's* (the main female character) fantasy return to Siam (the previous name of Thailand) in the latter half of the nineteenth century when Siam first encountered Western imperial power (Harrison, 2010b; Meyer, 2014b). It is claimed that *Thawipop* not only represents the aesthetic of the past Thai (Siamese) life or traditional Thai culture, but also foregrounds the sense of national belonging and unity. As Harrison (2010b, p. 113) argues, *Thawipop* underlines the idea that "Siam was saved from colonization by the wisdom of its kings". In her analysis of *Thawipop*, Harrison asserts that a main thematic concern of the film underlines "the definition of what it means in the twenty-first century to be Thai and how the integrity of such Thainess might be maintained as a stable marker of the national self" (Harrison, 2010b, p. 114). The traditional Thai values distinctly spotlighted in *Thawipop* are a sense of *Nam-Jai* (a sense of empathy, compassion, generosity, kindness and consideration), for instance, which "directs the Thais away from conflict and provocation". This is clearly represented in the film *Thawipop* through narrating the idea that "the threat of the aggressive imperial West was deftly diffused by a diplomacy and compromise innate to the Siamese, directing them to bend with the winds of change rather than to brace themselves inflexibly against them" (Harrison, 2010b, p. 113). In a similar vein, in her textual and contextual analysis of the novel *Thawiphop* and its adaptations, Meyer (2014b) claims that various versions of *Thawiphop* indicate the power of media entertainment in representing the national past and fostering a sense of national belonging.

Furthermore, following its nostalgic representation, Meyer (2014b, p. 137) argues that the various versions of *Thawiphop* demonstrate the notion of "nostalgia for the Siamese past". By this, Siam in 1893 is portrayed as "a land where Thai traditions are vigorous and the natural environment pleasant" (arguably, the sweetness). In contrast, the dissatisfaction of the middle class with Thailand's present condition (arguably, the bitterness) is represented through depicting "a society straining under the high speed of modern urban life and suffering from the erosion of traditional family life, which is a mainstay of official ideas of the nation..." (Meyer, 2014b, p. 137). This shows the way that media generate a discourse of nostalgia for the past through contrasting the sweet past with the bitter present, which can help to encourage national cultural identity and at the same time form/circulate a sense of national belonging among Thais.

The conception of discourse is closely linked to the study of the construction of collective/national identity. In analysis of the relationship between (media) discourse and the construction/representation of national cultural identity, critical discourse analysis (CDA) has provided vital insights.

Critical discourse analysis

For critical discourse analysis (CDA), the language use in any modes of communication has been accounted for in association with its function as a tool of domination, and of social construction of reality or ideological circulation of social meanings. From CDA perspective, discourse (language and various semiotic resources) is "both socially constitutive and socially shaped". It examines how discourse "contribute to meaning structures, which in turn construct social, political and cultural realities in society" (KhosraviNik, 2014, p. 283).

Its central role in constructing the realities as such indicates that discourse is not merely concerned with language use itself but with the ideological power and control established behind it. Van Leeuwan (1993, p. 193) points out that CDA "is, or should be, concerned with…discourses as the instrument of power and control", with "discourse as the instrument of the social construction of reality", and with the two aspects of the relation between discourses and social practices. These aspects

include the idea that "there is discourse as itself (part of) social practice, discourses as a form of action, as something people do to or for or with each other". Another aspect, in line with the Foucauldian sense, is about "discourse as a way of representing social practice(s), as a form of knowledge, as the things people say about social practices(s)". Supporting van Leeuwen, Jaworski and Coupland (2014, p. 27) maintain that CDA stresses "its concern with social constructionism and with the construction of ideology in particular". In the same vein, as he held that the term *discourse* is broadly and sometimes "confusingly used in various disciplines", Fairclough (1995b, p. 18) suggests helpful ways to distinguish between the two main senses of discourse. The first facet is central to the studies of language and most closely connected with the "interpersonal function" of language and with the notion of genre. It is the facet of "discourse as social action and interaction, people interacting together in real social situations". The latter aspect, which is predominant in post-structuralist social theory, for example in Foucault's work, is the view of "discourse as a social construction of reality, a form of knowledge". This sense is most closely concerned with the "ideational function" of language and with discourses. Despite the differentiation as such, Fairclough's use of the term discourse subsumes both senses and attempts to tie them together (Fairclough, 1995b, p. 18).

From the perspective of CDA, according to Machin and Mayr (2012), power relations are discursive and power can be transmitted through discourses. Fairclough and Wodak (1997 cited in Machin and Mayr, 2012, p. 4) note that CDA is engaged with "how power relations are exercised and negotiated in discourse". Wodak and Meyer (2009) suggest that CDA sees "language as social practice". One of the popular definitions of CDA among researchers is defined by Fairclough and Wodak (1997, p. 258 cited in Wodak and Meyer, 2009, p. 6) as follow:

> "CDA sees discourse – language use in speech and writing – as a form of *'social practice'*. Describing discourse as a social practice implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s), and social structure(s), which frame it… Discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned – it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people." (Fairclough and Wodak 1997, p. 258 cited in Wodak and Meyer, 2009, p. 6)

Within the definition of CDA mentioned above, the term *discourse* has been "used very differently by different researchers and also in different academic cultures" (Wodak, 2006 cited in Wodak and Meyer, 2009, p. 6). This indicates that the definition and the aspects of discourse may vary across different fields of study. In the field of the critical analysis of media discourse, Fairclough (1995b)'s framework of critical analysis of media discourse has widely been adopted. As Fairclough (1995b, pp. 56-57) points out, the critical analysis of media discourse involves an alternation between the two complementary emphases - the "communicative events" and "the order of discourse" - which are "not…alternatives, but complementary perspectives on the same data which we can shift during analysis". By adopting this, the researcher might be concerned with "particular communicative events" (for example, a particular newspaper editorial and television programme). This way of analysis is always concerned with the consideration of both "continuity and change", i.e. "in what ways is this communicative event normative, drawing upon familiar types and formats, and in what ways is it creative, using old resources in new ways?" On the other side, the researcher might focus on "the overall structure of the order of discourse, and the way it is evolving in the context of socio and cultural changes".

Analysis of communicative events

CDA of a communicative event focuses on the investigation of relationships between three dimensions of that event - *text*, *discourse practice*, and *sociocultural practice*. "Text" refers to written/oral/visual texts (or any other modes and semiosis of communication. This can also be multimodal texts). "Discourse practice" covers the processes of both text production and text consumption. "Sociocultural practice" refers to "the social and cultural goings-on which the communicative event is a part of" (Fairclough, 1995b, p. 57). The analytical framework of the three dimensions of a communicative event is illustrated in Figure 3.6:
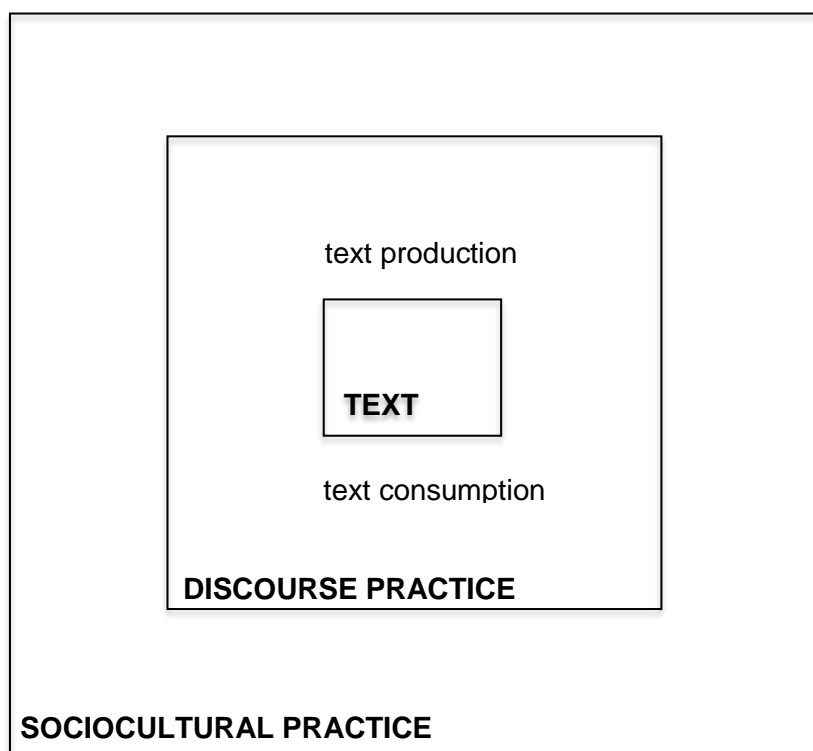
Figure 3.6: Fairclough's framework for CDA of a communicative event (Fairclough, 1995b, p. 59)

Analysis of texts per se is concerned with both the meanings of the texts and their forms. In terms of the analysis of television texts and other kinds of multimodal text, Fairclough suggests that it "needs to be multisemiotic analysis" (namely, multimodal discourse analysis), where a key issue is how semiotic modalities interact with language in creating meanings (Fairclough, 1995b, p. 58). Fairclough sees discourse practice as mediation between text and sociocultural practice. The investigation of the discourse practice dimension of the communicative event includes facets of the processes of text production, for example how discourses related to sociocultural aspects are constructed and presented, and the processes of text consumption, such as in what way texts in discourse are interpreted by audiences. Finally, the explanation of "why" regarding the text itself and its processes of production and consumption can be conducted through an analysis of the sociocultural practice of the communicative event that is the broader context of the society and the culture. In this sense, Fairclough notes that the consideration of three contexts – economic, political (concerned with questions of power and ideology), and cultural (concerned with queries about value and identity) - is beneficial to CDA.

<u>Analysis of the order of discourse</u>

Fairclough (1995b, p. 55) claims that CDA concentrates on examining "the discursive practices of a community - its normal ways of using language - in terms of networks", which he calls "orders of discourse". As Fairclough explains:

> "The point of the concept of order of discourse is to highlight the relationships between different types in such a set (e.g. in the case of school, the discursive types of the classroom and of the playground): whether, for instance, a rigid boundary is maintained between them, or whether they can easily be mixed together in particular texts." (Fairclough, 1995b, p. 55)

Analysis focuses on how the order of discourse "is structured in terms of configurations of genres and discourses", as well as the "shifts within the order of discourse and in its relationship to other socially adjacent orders of discourse" (Fairclough, 1995b, pp. 62-63). Interestingly, Fairclough stresses that the key to understanding the media order of discourse and the "internal relations" between its elemental genres and discourses is accounting for the "mediating position" (i.e. the positioning of the media between public and private orders of discourse) and the "external relations between the order of discourse of the media and socially adjacent public and private orders of discourse". This might be a reason why the critical analysis of media discourse needs not only the analysis of communicative events per se but also the order of discourse that structures and shapes the event.

Using CDA, researchers have been able to achieve an understanding of the discourse of national identities, the way they are constructed in relation to the power and the socio-cultural/political contexts that shape them. The investigation into national identity in contemporary Mexico in the film *Amores Perros (Love's a Bitch)* (Martínez, 2008) reveals a discourse of a changing Mexican society in which the overwhelming influence of Americanisation of Mexico has been continued. Also, the relationship between the US and Mexico has been "strengthening and becoming ever more complex" (Martínez, 2008, p. 114). Martínez claims that this film is an obvious instance of the "complex identificatory interconnectedness" between the US and Mexico. It is not merely the product of private commercial interests, but the evidence of a broader sociocultural circumstance. This study points out that, despite the fact that "there is currently no hegemonic national identity discourse that successfully

integrates what the United States represents for Mexican society", the social events (evidenced by the production and acceptance of the film *Amores Perros, for example)* indicate that "the dynamic of Mexican society implies a close - but not symbiotic - connection with the United States, at least at this stage in history" (Martínez, 2008, p. 114). This shows the way that media discourse ("d") implies the broader social/cultural/political context of a particular society ("Big D").

In CDA, the idea of national culture as a discourse has been articulated. Hall (1996a, p. 613) states that:

> "National cultures are composed not only of cultural institutions, but of symbols and representations. A national culture is a *discourse* - a way of constructing meanings which influences and organizes both our actions and our conception of ourselves... National cultures construct identities by producing meanings about 'the nation' with which we can *identify*; these are contained in the stories which are told about it, memories which connect its present with its past, and images which are constructed of it." (Hall, 1996a, p. 613)

Supporting Hall, de Cillia *et al.* (2013, p. 125) argue that "a nation is a symbolic community constructed discursively". They maintain that the members of a nation are not merely citizens by law; they also "participate in forming the idea of the nation as it is represented in their national culture" (de Cillia *et al.*, 2013, p. 125). In their analysis of the discursive construction of and perception of Austrian identity, de Cillia *et al.* (2013, p. 141) reveal that the meanings of the nation are understood in two different senses. This includes the notion originating from definitions of "citizenship and other legal and democratic institutions". On the other side, the understanding of this notion is connoted by the sense of "traditional culturally and ethnically". Their investigation into perceptions of Austrian identity in both the semi-public and quasi-private contexts found that perception as such includes both "state-specific" and "cultural" elements. This is evidenced by the finding that the majority of participants and interviewees drew on the idea of citizenship and of political and institutional achievements. Also, they drew on language, the idea of the *homo austriacus,* common social and cultural features, and national-cultural achievements. This shows the way that people's understanding of their own national identity can be constructed by not only the political/state-specific but also the sociocultural contexts of the nation. This also underscores the importance of drawing on the sociocultural/political context

in the study of discourse, especially the analysis of the construction of media discourse, which is generally, more or less, shaped or dominated by some culturally/politically/ideologically powerful institutions. This critical way of analysing media discourse has been conducted through CDA.

3.5 Research Ethics

An important concern regarding research is research ethics. Christians (2005, p. 144) points out that in social sciences, the "codes of ethics for professional and academic associations are the conventional format for moral principles". Codes of ethics, according to Christians (2005), mainly include four ethical guidelines for conducting an inductive science: issues of informed consent, deception, privacy and confidentiality, and accuracy.

In terms of ethical approval, this research project has officially been approved by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Ethics Committee before I undertook data collection in Thailand in the year 2015. All processes of this study were conducted with consideration of relevant ethical concerns. Especially at the stages of in-depth interviews with the text producers and focus group interviews with audiences, the issue of informed consent was closely considered. As Christians (2005) suggests, informed consent is concerned with the individual autonomy of the research participants, who have the right to be informed about participation in which they are involved. Generally, there are two main required conditions. One is that participants must voluntarily agree to participate without physical or psychological compulsion. Another is that the agreement of the participants must be based on full and open information about the study they are involved in, such as the duration of their participation, methods used, possible risks, and the purpose of the study. All these issues were included in the *consent form* together with the *information sheets of the study*. At the beginning of each interview, information on the thesis and the principle of informed consent were stated. The consent form was signed by each of the participants. The main issues noted in the consent form and information sheets include the purpose of the research, confidentiality (e.g. use of names, pseudonyms, anonymisation of data, etc.), agreement on audio/video recordings of the interviews, permission to use the data gained from the interviewees, and the right of participants

to withdraw from the interview at any time. This corresponds to ethical research concerns; as Ryen (2011, p. 418) notes, the participants have "the right to know that they are being researched, the right to be informed about the nature of the research and the right to withdraw at any time".

Privacy and confidentiality were highly considered, especially in that all personal data must be secured and be anonymous. The participants were informed that this study would not provide their names and any documents, and all of their data would be anonymous. This was the case with not only the participants in the focus group interviews but also the key informants of the in-depth interviews. The real name of all text producers was thus not mentioned in the thesis.

3.6 Self-Reflexivity

Reflexivity, according to Etherington (2004, p. 19), is the "ability to notice our responses to the world around us, other people and events, and to use that knowledge to inform our actions, communications and understandings". Burnard (2016, p. 20) notes that, "in professional doctorate practices, the researcher is the instrument". Thus, it is important for the researcher to put reflexivity to work and identify herself/himself in relation to the research. Similarly, Hert (1996, p. 5) suggests that "researchers are acknowledged as active participants within the research process." Hence, it is vital to illuminate the researcher's position of self.

May and Perry (2014, p. 110) state that reflexive understanding in social research relates to the issue of "how researchers" praxis and their role and social position related to the product and process of their work". Research reflexivity is "the researcher's engagement" with her/his "own positioning in relation to the world she (or he) is researching" (Gray, 2008, p. 936). In clarifying "researcher identity and stance vis-à-vis participants" (Burnard, 2016, p. 20), researchers need to inquire into the "formative conditions" of researching by clarifying "the researcher's biographical relation to the topic" (Gray, 2008, p. 936), for instance gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status (Burnard, 2016), class, and citizenship/nationality (Hert, 1996). Additionally, it is essential to acknowledge "the levels of privilege and power conferred by personal history" (Burnard, 2016, p. 20).

I had been strongly influenced by CDA, which believes that discourse (language and various semiotic resources) is "both socially constitutive and socially shaped" (KhosraviNik, 2014, p. 283). My methodological position is hence engaged with an investigation into interplay dimensions of discursive construction, i.e. the aspects of the text itself, processes of text production, processes of text consumption, and the sociocultural context in relation to them. According to Etherington (2004, p. 19), to be reflexive the researcher needs to be aware of her/his "personal responses", to have an ability to "make choices about how to use them". Also, it is important to be aware of the "personal, social and cultural context in which we live and work" and to realise how these have an "impact on the ways we interpret our world". My research topic is based on my personal and academic interest in Thai culture and heritage, televisual construction of Thai identity, and the notion of nostalgia. It emerges from my personal experience as a Thai citizen and a critical observer of the changes in representations and discourses among Thai society.

Whereas some scholars have experienced the contradictory of cultures between the researcher and the subjects (Hert, 1996), conducting this research was contrary to those experiences in the sense that I see myself as the insider of what I investigated. At least, I am Thai who is highly interested in Thai culture and heritage. Second, I am a media and cultural researcher who has previous experience, as the ex-creative and script-writer, of many Thai television show production before turning my career to researcher and lecturer. Third, I have been a fan of several genres of Thai television shows which focus on presenting the national past and culture, especially variety show programmes and television dramas. As a result, having the ability to find "common ground" (Hert, 1996, p. 5) with my research topic and respondents was the key factor that facilitated a smooth data collection and interpretation process. In the meantime, throughout this study, I have been keenly aware of the need to keep a scholarly distance from the subject of my study and to follow rigorous scientific guidelines while conducting this PhD research.

After completing my analysis of Thai television texts in the UK, I undertook the fieldwork in Thailand, my home country, in 2015. My interview questions were formed

from the philosophical, methodological and theoretical underpinnings of the research. The prepared questions were created in relation to the concepts and theories, arguments as well as the results of the analysis of the texts. As previously explained, the philosophical stance of this study is *constructivism*, which assumes a *subjectivist epistemology* (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p. 13). Therefore, this study assumes that the knower and the known are inseparable (Dieronitou, 2014, p. 7) and co-create understandings (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p. 13). My prior experiences and knowledge of Thai television production facilitated the process of accessing the text producers through my personal and professional relationships with them. Such personal experience and knowledge were obtained as an ex-member of Thai television show production teams (excluding the production teams examined in this study) and by teaching television studies at university level in Thailand before undertaking this research project. Indeed, my personal knowledge of television production has helped me to make sense of the way in which the television texts were produced as well as the way the producers create the shows and the reasons behind it. For example, when they mentioned the technical terms and all processes of production, I drew on my personal knowledge and experience to make sense of it. Arguably, my common ground with the key informants was essential for gaining in-depth and rich data.

As noted previously, the interviewer and interviewee(s) co-construct the "narrative versions of the social world" (Miller and Glassner, 2011, p. 132) to some extent. Hence, the interaction between the interviewer and interviewee(s) is crucial for obtaining in-depth data. My common ground and shared professional experiences and interests with the respondents contributed to a friendly and relaxing communication setting and openness in the interviews. The interaction between the interviewees/focus group participants and myself was smooth and without tension. The common experiences and interests among the interviewees and between them and myself were embedded in the fact that we share the same nationality, Thai. Particularly in the focus group interviews, the fact that I am a Thai national who loves watching the same shows as the participants highly supported the amiable mood of the interviews.

After I completed my fieldwork, I understood that I had transformed myself from a PhD student - seeing myself as an ex-television text producer who aspired to undertake research as a novel thing - into an academic researcher. The fact that I could draw on theoretical conceptions at both stages of interview and interpretation/analysis allowed me to consider myself a researcher. Using reflexivity in my own study supported me to "find ways of being openly creative" (Etherington, 2004, p. 20) and being aware of bias (both regarding conducting interviews and interpretations). Consequently, this stimulated me to create new ideas and contribute to new knowledge.

3.7 Summary of Methods and Conclusion

As the goal of this study is to answer not only questions of "what" and "how" but also "why", a qualitative research method was chosen. The reason is that it focuses on meaning rather than merely measuring content, that is, it explores questions of what, why and how rather than how many or how much, as do quantitative methods (Keegan, 2009). It also provides the "intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p. 10) in order to gain deep insights.

The method employed in this study included textual analysis of television programmes, in-depth interviews with key figures in the television industry, and focus group interviews with audiences. The textual analysis captured aspects of the television text itself, the processes of text production, and the processes of text consumption. With this focus, CDA based on the three levels framework for CDA of communicative events proposed by Norman Fairclough was adopted. By using this framework, at the stage where the discursive practice was examined, the processes of text production and consumption were investigated. In addition to that, the relevant socio-cultural context was raised when there was a necessity to explicate the "why" questions.

In terms of the processes of production, this study aims to obtain a deeper understanding regarding the viewpoints of key figures in the television industry to be analysed alongside data obtained from the analysis of television texts. Hence, the in-depth interviews with the producers of the three television programmes were used as

a way to achieve an understanding beyond the answer of "what" (which was primarily gained from the analysis of television texts) i.e. the depth of answer of "how" and "why" of the way they construct and represent Thai identity in their shows. This was conducted by using *semi-structured interviews* in which a prepared list of main questions was used during the interview along with additional questions depending on the answers that interviewees responded.

To obtain the data of consumption practices, this study selected focus group interviews as a tool for examining the viewers' perspectives, rather than using individual interviews, which might be more time consuming for collecting data from a large number of interviewees. This was conducted by using the *open-ended interview* because it provides this research with a rich data set from participants who are allowed to talk and express their ideas and feelings freely, along with the active listening of the interviewer. The visual representation of the data sources in relation to the research methods used in this study is shown in Figure 3.7.

Processes of Production	*TV Texts*	*Processes of Consumption*
Research Method	**Research Method**	**Research Method**
In-depth Interviews (Semi-structured interviews)	Textual Analysis (Fairclough's Framework)	Focus Group Interviews (Open-ended interviews)
Data Source	**Data Source**	**Data Source**
The producers of three Thai TV programmes	Selected three Thai TV programmes	32 Thai viewers

Figure 3.7: The visual representation of research methods and data sources of this study

Chapter 4. Discourses of Thai Identity: Textual Analysis

Introduction

The critical discourse analysis aspect of this study looks at the three levels of discursive construction of identity in Thai television programmes, i.e. the level of the television text itself and its relation to the levels of production and consumption, to account for the interplay of textual practice and social meanings. This can be examined by accounting for the broad context, i.e. the socio-cultural context relevant (KhosraviNik, 2015b), focusing on *"Big D" or "Discourses"* in place in the Thai context. This is to explain the links between the macro discourses and order of discourses in Thailand and cultural contexts in relation to the *"Small d"* or the *"discourses"* at the actual level of "language-in-use or stretches of language" (Gee, 2011, p. 34) drawn from the data of television texts. Hence, it is crucial to identify the arguments beyond the construction and representation of Thai identity in the way they are in the micro-dynamic of the programmes. This will be elaborated throughout this chapter.

Answering the first research question, this chapter provides an investigation into the textual features of Thai identity representations through the television shows. This is the textual analysis of *Khunphrachuai* as the key television show in this study to answer the question how the textual features of the shows and talks represent Thai identity. Throughout this chapter, the term "Thai identity" refers to not only the "living" Thai cultural identity that is maintained and promoted but also the "nostalgic" representation of it. The "nostalgic" Thai identity means the distinctive and unique national cultural attributes which have been "lost", "forgotten", "submerged" (Smith, 2010, p. 30) and neglected among Thais, especially the youth and urban Thais.

At the stage of analysing television texts, the analysis started with the topic analysis in order to explore the genres of Thai representations existing in the contents of the show. The analysis then continued by examining the forms of representation to investigate the way in which those genres of Thai representations are constructed through the format of Variety Show - the television format which combines a variety of contents and forms of presentation (as emphasised in Chapter 2, it is a

combination of several prior television formats). Afterwards, an analysis of the linguistic discourses followed to examine the linguistic channels of discourses on Thai representations and the generation of meaning.

The first section of the chapter provides an explanation of the overall textual features of the *Khunphrachuai* show. Then, the key sets of representational modes of construction of Thai identity in the show are discussed. In order to answer the "why" questions - why the show and its features are the way they are - the results obtained from analysing the texts are contextualised to capture the constructed and communicated meanings. This is carried out by positioning the texts within the socio-political/cultural context of society (KhosraviNik, 2015b). Moreover, two other television shows which also have some aspects contributing to national identity are discussed.

4.1 The Textual Features of *Khunphrachuai*

The name of the *Khunphrachuai* show itself includes two levels of meaning referring to Thai identity. At the level of denotative meaning, the term "*Khunphrachuai*" is an old Thai interjection with a similar meaning to "*Oh My God*" in English. Following the theme of the show, the term *Khunphrachuai* stands for an emotional expression of a sense of excitement in response to the spectacular presentations in the programme. Moreover, it is a colloquial term generally used in communities of olden times. Therefore, the name of the show contains a connotative meaning in the sense that it conjures up traditions and olden times in accordance with the key theme of the programme - a television show that has been the cultural treasury and also the theatre of Thai culture and entertainment. The show thus functions as a museum of culture, as a source of education which signifies cultural value as something to be treasured. In the meantime, it functions as a theatre of Thai art, culture and traditional entertainment. Talking about the show, the leading figure in the production remarked:

> "The *Khunphrachuai* presents the old and traditional things… It is like a way of bringing the new generations to visit the grandpa's house where there are the Thai sarongs, the old clocks, the old songs and also the *Li Ke* (Thai musical folk drama)… The show is truly a museum on television." (The top executive of the *Workpoint Entertainment Public Company Limited* and also the leading figure of *Khunphrachuai*, personal interview, 10 September 2015).

Structurally, the show consists of three main sections:

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                        ┌──────────────────────────┐
                        │      Structure of         │
                        │ the *Khunphrachuai* Show  │
                        └──────────────────────────┘
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Section 1	Section 2	Section 3
"Phumpanyathai"	*"Khunphra Show"*	*"Cham-uat Na Man"*
(ภูมิปัญญาไทย)	(คุณพระโชว์)	(จำอวดหน้าม่าน)
Presentation form: Talk between hosts and guests	**Presentation form:** Performances or displays of Thai arts	**Presentation form:** The *Cham-uat* comedy show
Main content: Thai wisdom and culture	**Main content**: Thai arts and entertainments	**Main Content:** Thai lifestyle and thoughts

Figure 4.1: Three main sections of the *Khunphrachuai* show

The first section, named *"Phumpanyathai"*, focuses on educating/giving detailed information about a wide range of Thai folk wisdom and cultural heritage through conversations between hosts and guests (culture specialists). The section named "*Khunphra* Shows" is mainly about shows and performances of various kinds of Thai performing arts. It also displays other kinds of arts and cultural artefacts along with supporting talks between hosts and guests. The section called *"Cham-uat Na Man"* provides a revival of *"Cham-uat"* (จำอวด), the Thai team comedy which was popular among Thais in the reign of King Rama VII (1925–1935). *Cham-uat Na Man* presents several topics about lifestyles and thoughts in a comedic way, i.e. through performances of *Cham-uat*, in which the show of the traditional style of Thai song called "*Phleng Choi"* (เพลงฉ่อย) is the key. Interestingly, the lyrics contain not only jokes but also topics about Thai life and culture. Snap shot examples of each section are provided in figures 4.2 - 4.4:

Supporting guest

Host

Guest as culture
specialist

Host

Figure 4.2: The talk between hosts and guest in the *Phumpanyathai* section

Guests as performer

Figure 4.3: The traditional Thai performance in the *Khunphra Show* section

Well-known comedians as the main performers
of all shows in the *Cham-uat Na Man* section

Figure 4.4: The comedy show in the *Cham-uat Na Man* section

4.2 The Textual Ingredients of *Khunphrachuai*

This study supports Fairclough (2003, p. 8)'s claim that "texts as elements of social events…can bring about changes in our knowledge…, our attitudes, values and so forth". The results reveal the mnemonic power of television discourse to evoke the collective memories of national culture and heritages. Playing the role of "nostagizing" the social past and history (Niemeyer, 2014, p. 10), the nostalgia television show *Khunphrachuai* involves the construction of collective nostalgia (Davis, 1979), i.e. the nostalgia which relates to nostalgic sentiment about public/collective experiences jointly shared (Wilson, 1999; Wilson, 2014; Dauncey and Tinker, 2015) among the members of a nation. It also emerges that the way that the show represents national past and cultural identity is highly consistent with the sense of reflective nostalgia (Boym, 2001), i.e. it focuses on reflecting the past rather than the total restoration of traditional identity and nationalist position (this will be further discussed in Chapter 7). Underlining the sweetness of national identity, the show not only foregrounds the value of Thai identity and its distinctiveness but also evokes the collective memories of national past and culture. As the main producer of the show explained, the primary aim of the show is to remind Thai people of the nostalgic Thai identity:

"We aim to tell all viewers that 'you have Thainess'. Probably, they forget and neglect it. So, we intend to present that 'this is an aspect of Thainess'. It can be either contemporary Thainess or past Thainess. We would like to tell them that 'you have it' and 'when you watch the show, you consequently remember it, think of it, and learn about it... Our primary goal is to ask them *Do you remember this?*" (The main producer of the *Khunphrachuai* show, personal interview, 8 September 2015)

Through its nostalgic mediation of the past and the traditionally perceived culture of the country, the *Khunphrachuai* show involves a form of cultural borrowing and adaptation, evidenced in its representation of Thai identity as a form of cultural fusion. This implies that the cultural direction of the show is allied to the construction of the *inauthenticity* of Thai culture, in which the maintenance of the original and the unaltered is not focused; hence, the changes and innovations are acceptable (see Chapter 1). Interestingly, along with the cultural borrowing and adaptation, the invention of tradition is an integral part of the construction of the inauthenticity of Thai culture in the show. As noted in Chapter 1, the invention of tradition is a cultural means by which continuity with a suitable past (Hobsbawm, 1983) is made through the use of ancient materials/traditional practices adapted to form a new tradition to suit a new purpose. Playing a central role in the nostalgic mediation of the national past and Thai symbols, *Khunphrachuai* displays several topics of Thai culture and heritage. In addition to the traditional/older culture, the show presents *invented Thai tradition(s)* which have already been perceived and promoted as symbols of Thainess. Despite their modern form of Thai culture, such invented traditions contain continuity with the past or traditional practices (Hobsbawm, 1983) and have been fostered and handed down from generation to generation to safeguard them as Thai cultural markers. One of the obvious instances is the presentation of *Cham-uat*, invented in the first decades of the twentieth century, as a modern form of Thai comedy in response to a new Thai way of life at the time (Wankwan, 2014). Also, the show presents *Muai Thai* (Thai Boxing), a name which emerged in 1913, an invented tradition developed from prior non-sporting older and local boxing as a modern national sport (Vail, 2014). Furthermore, Thai country songs (*Lukthung* songs), an invented tradition in which Thai folk music is fused with Western musical elements, is presented as a distinctive Thai performing art. Several more such invented Thai traditions will be demonstrated throughout this chapter.

The detailed and extensive analysis of the contents of the show reveals three main sets of representational modes as key components for the overall discursive construction of Thai cultural identity:

- **The semiotics of Thai representations**, which draws on the forms of presentation through multimodal semiotic resources.
- **The genres of Thai representations**, based on the topic analysis of foci around which traditional Thai identity is represented.
- **The linguistics of Thai representations**, which attends to different channels of linguistic interactions linking to a broad discourse of Thai identity.

4.2.1 The semiotics of Thai representations

Semiotic modes can reinforce the construction of collective/national identity that are attained by several features of the texts (Koller, 2012). Television texts are multimodal. Throughout the form of Variety Show with nostalgic representation of Thai past and culture, several forms of multimodal signs as semiotic resources are drawn upon to construct/represent Thainess. The results of the analysis reveal that *Khunphrachuai* plays a significant role in inventing the new tradition of representing Thainess in the sense that it introduces a more attractive and spectacular form of Thai representation in a cultural television show. Following its Thai thematic presentation, the *Khunphrachuai* show represents distinctive Thai characteristics as the key. Along with this, greatly involving the constructive form of reflective nostalgia, the show represents modified versions of Thai culture which are a form of synergetic identity between "the traditional and the modern", or "the Thai and the foreign" (especially, the Western). In this way, the show depicts a modern and hybridised form of Thai culture by combining the distinctive features of Thai symbols and modern/foreign cultural elements.

Despite consisting of some forms of fusion identity, highlighting the beauty and value of Thai cultural identity is still key. Therefore, the fusion as such can arguably be considered as a tradition based-Thai fusion identity. The show brings visual, audio and linguistic signs together to generate a particular discourse of Thai identity. The key elements include the setting, costume, hosts, guests, music, images and

graphics, and studio audiences. The details of each element will be discussed as follows:

Thai Thematic Setting

Statue of the *God of Arts (Phra Phik Kha Net*)   Logo of the show

Figure 4.5: The typical set and the hosts of the *Khunphrachuai* show

The visual expression is greatly used to articulate the magnificence of arts and culture, especially the set, which is designed to reflect the theme of the show. As shown in Figure 4.5, the typical set ostentatiously represents the key theme of the show as a theatre of Thai arts and culture. The overall scenery of the show is set in a studio. The stage setting is crucial to the visual construction of the Thai thematic scenery through the set together with the props. Despite its Thai thematic concept, it is clear that the set is fused with a number of foreign cultural elements. As the main producer of *Khunphrachuai* explained, the set itself does not entirely reflect Thainess; rather, it includes a wider South-eastern Asian style decoration. For example, the decoration of *Ton Kok* trees in the set is claimed (by the main producer) to be of Indonesian rather than Thai style. Also, the display of the statue of the *God of Arts* (*Phra Phik Kha Net*), prominently positioned at the centre of the set, indicates the fact that Thai culture has been influenced by Indian culture. However, the results of the analysis indicate that the scenery is mainly engaged with the representation of

outstanding features of Thai culture in two aspects. First, the set displays the magnificence of arts. Second, it signifies the traditional way of life.

It can be seen from figures 4.2-4.5 that the set of the show signifies an emphasis on representing Thai arts. The set represents the arts, and is filled with several features of visual arts, especially the Thai style of architecture, paintings, and sculpture. Obviously, the overall feature of the set is based on the Thai style of architecture, in which a traditional wooden building is highlighted. This kind of architecture is hard to find in contemporary society, in which the vast majority of buildings have been influenced by Western styles. Moreover, the set represents Thai paintings through detailed decoration of the set and the logo of the show in traditional fonts along with a Thai lined pattern. The sculpture is also displayed through the statue of *Phra Phik Kha Net*. This not only displays the sculpture itself but also refers to a belief about *Phra Phik Kha Net as* the *God of Arts* that has existed in Thai society for a long time.

Another interesting point is the use of colour as a crucial means of visual expression (Van Leeuwan, 2005). The use of colour plays an important role in creating the spectacular scenery of the show. Particularly, the colour gold is highlighted as the main shade of colour in the show. The set itself, together with the lighting, are mainly designed to be in the gold shade, which symbolises the aspects of Thai culture. That is, apart from its function as an eye-catching colour, the meaning behind the use of gold is that it features prominently in the traditional artefacts in which the use of gold is important. This is evidenced by the national costumes made from silk and decorated with gold details (Chanoknart, 2014) and the use of gold as one of the main colours in traditional architecture and interiors (Nithi and Mertens, 2006). Not only functioning as the colour of artefacts for its own sake, one of the reasons why a great number of traditional cultural artefacts are coloured gold is its connection with the Thai belief in the sacred meaning of the use of colours. For example, dressing in black is normally unacceptable for an occasion of celebration or visiting a sick person because it is believed that black is connected with death (Cooper and Cooper, 1991). On the contrary, the colour gold in Thai belief is thought to be a propitious colour. As Nithi and Mertens (2006, p. 206) argue, "Gold [is] associated with good fortune". This is evidenced by the fact that the use of the colour gold is one of the outstanding features of Buddhist artefacts. Obviously, gold has been used widely as a symbolic

colour of Buddhist artefacts. Buddhist temples, paintings, and statues of Buddha are usually painted in gold (Santi, 2001; London, 2008), as are many kinds of amulets (Sophana, 2014). This is one of the orders of discourses on beliefs in the signified meaning of the cultural artefacts that link to traditional Thai ways.

Figure 4.6: The decoration of the set in *Khunphrachuai*

In addition, the setting connotes the typical characteristics of traditional ways of life: simplicity and being close to nature. In this way, the props are decorated to fulfil a nostalgic representation of Thainess. In articulating the sense of simplicity, the set is decorated with wood, the main material of traditional houses. This reflects the fact that, as Nithi and Mertens (2006, p. 62) note, "the virtue of a traditional timber house interior is simplicity". The props also illustrate simplicity. The decoration of the set with wooden materials, garden trees and other natural materials as props represents the traditional Thai style of home decoration, in which natural materials are used in the main. This connotes the Thai way of life as being close to nature. Particularly, the use of traditional style bench, as a seat for the hosts and guests to sit during the talk, shows the Thai style of furniture/home decoration in which the bench was widely used among Thais before being replaced by Western style-furniture. Further, it implies the traditional daily life in the sense that sitting and talking on the bench symbolises the closeness of family members and friends. That is, the bench is used

as a shared seat for people to sit together, chat warmly and enjoy the surrounding view together. As sitting and talking on a traditional bench has become rare, the show therefore helps to evoke this nostalgic way of life.

Traditional Thai style-bench

Figure 4.7: The decoration of the set in *Khunphrachuai*

The revival of traditional Thai costume

In contemporary Thai society, traditional costume has become an occasional costume. Rather than being used in everyday life as in the past, it can mostly be seen as a costume worn for special occasions, i.e. in shows of traditional performing arts, rituals, ceremonies and festivities. The way of dressing in Thais' everyday life has changed dramatically as a result of a longstanding tradition of adopting Western attire, as discussed in Chapter 1. This trend has intensified with the more recent adoption of Korean and Japanese pop style dressing among young Thais. In order to represent and encourage traditional Thai clothing, the hosts and guests wear different kinds of Thai costume. In all episodes, the typical costume of the hosts, dressing in a white T-shirt and red *Chongkraben* pantaloons, as the uniform of traditional dancing and dramatic arts students, as shown in Figure 4.8, signifies not only Thainess per se but also the idea of learning the national culture. As the text producer explained:

> "The hosts' costume is the costume of students who learn Thai dancing and dramatic arts. The hosts function as students who are learning Thai culture… It is a symbol."

155

Despite signifying Thainess, arguably, the typical costume of the hosts as such is a hybrid version, i.e. a combination between the traditional *Chongkraben* pantaloons with a Western-style T-shirt. The guests' costumes are either traditional Thai or a hybrid/modern version of a Thai costume, which is a combination of traditional style-dressing and contemporary attire. Interestingly, the applied versions are represented through the guests' dressing more than the traditional costume. Apart from the guests' personal reasons for the dressing style, the presentation of applied versions of costume indicate that the show also represents the modern, synergetic Thai identity.

Furthermore, the Thai way of dressing is also represented through the shoeless dressing of the hosts/guests (as seen in Figure 4.8), which was one of the olden Thai features. This demonstrates that the representation of costume is one of the ways which the text producers utilise to recall nostalgic Thai dressing of the past to revive in the present, in which the dressing in daily life has been modernised and the use of traditional costume in daily life has become rare and has been perceived as out-of-date and not practical.

Figure 4.8: Thai costume in *Khunphrachuai*

Thai characteristics of the hosts

The hosts of *Khunphrachuai* include a very popular comedian known as "*Theng Thoet Thoeng*", or "*Theng*", and the well-known television host named "*Phan Phlu Tak*", or "*Phan*". In the show, the hosts present themselves as Thais who love and are proud of the national culture and full of enthusiasm for further learning about it. In addition to expressing their own personal background and knowledge of Thai culture, the hosts' themselves exhibit a number of typical Thai characteristics. Physically, for example, they have typical Thai facial characteristic (*Nathai*) and manners. In addition, accent and language are vital elements of Thai identity. Unlike hosts in most variety shows, the hosts here have a standard Thai accent and use traditional Thai words. The traditional way of language use is becoming a rarer phenomenon in contemporary Thailand, especially among the youth, whose conversational style and language use have been modernised by borrowings from foreign languages. One obvious feature of mixing traditional Thai with un-Thai features (as discussed in Chapter 2) in terms of language use is the cultural borrowing from English and, more recently, popular Korean/Japanese expressions among teenagers. For example, using a hybrid of Thai accent with foreign language terms and creating a new way of chatting/writing as a combination of Thai and English/Korean/Japanese languages. Therefore, use of a standard Thai accent and traditional Thai words is a way to evoke nostalgia for Thai identity to the viewers, especially the new generation, by encouraging people to value and use the national language.

Moreover, the representation of Thai etiquette, as explained in Chapter 1, can be seen in the hosts' manner. In greeting and thanking the guests and audiences, distinctive greetings are always presented through the *Wai* together with a broad smile and saying the word "*Sa Wat Di*" (Hello) and *"Khop Khun"* (Thank you). Another obvious etiquette feature in the show is avoiding controversy, being polite, showing respect to more senior people, and showing a sense of humour in the appropriate way.

Another interesting point is the cultural background of the hosts and their personal experience of traditional culture is essential. The cultural "stock of knowledge" (Berger and Luckmann, 1996, p. 57) of *Theng* is very close to traditional arts and culture. His rich knowledge and direct experience of traditional culture have been gained from a high degree of "familiarity" (Berger and Luckmann, 1996, p. 59), since

he was born and raised in a rural area of Thailand where there was an abundance of traditional arts and culture. Furthermore, he was a professional *Li Ke* (musical folk drama) performer before becoming a popular comedian. Consequently, in addition to hosting in general, he also turns himself into a culture-specialist by sharing and adding inside information drawn from his prior knowledge/experience. In terms of *Phan*, his hosting role is more official than *Theng* whose role is represented in a more comical way. The show portrays how the personal background of *Phan* is less close to traditional culture than *Theng.* Hence, his key role in the show involves introducing the sequences of the programmes and raising questions for detailed information about Thai culture. This indicates his function as host and, at the same time, as learner.

The guests as Thai culture specialists or performers

The guests are presented as Thais who are proud of the national culture and have a great enthusiasm for preserving and encouraging it. The guests are categorised into two main groups: as culture specialists and as performers. *Khunphrachiao* (คุณพระ เชี่ยว), or culture specialists, play a role as gurus of particular topics of national culture. In each episode, they are invited to educate the audience about Thai past and culture, promote the traditional culture and emphasise the important role of Thais in preserving and encouraging their own Thai cultural identity. The gurus of culture include culturalists, historians, professional artists, academicians, and featured young people who specialise in a particular Thai art and culture.

Regarding the guests as performers, the results reveal that most of the guests who perform various forms of Thai arts are youths. Following the intention of the text producers, the meaning behind the representations of the youths' performances is not merely about expressing their appreciation of national culture but also to generate the idea that the new generations of Thais are at the heart of preserving and encouraging national culture.

Thai youths as studio audiences

Another way of addressing the cultural role of the young people is the representation of the youths as studio audiences. This is intentionally created to emphasise the

important role of the new generations in encouraging national culture. This is represented through inserted shots showing that the majority of the studio audiences are young. The pleasant reactions of enjoyment of the show imply a sense of compatibility of old/traditional culture with the new/modern generation of Thais in the sense that the traditional culture can attract the youths' attention. This connotes the idea that the traditional culture is no longer boring or out-dated for the new generations.

Thai thematic images, graphics and alphabets

For television shows, images and graphics are crucial semiotic resources to create the visual representation of subjects. In *Khunphrachuai*, further to the overall images represented on the set, real images and the graphic pictures of Thai cultural symbols are also displayed on the screen through an editing technique at the stage of the post-production in order to compose a televisual construction of identity. These include various kinds of visual signs. First, real images of a particular kind of culture, including both photographs and motions (as seen in Figure 4.9 and 4.11), are inserted to portray each topic of Thai culture. Second, graphic pictures as a symbol of a particular aspect of Thai identity are specially created for the opening/closing title and the interludes between each section. Third, the typical logo of the show, as seen in Figure 4.10, is repeatedly represented throughout the programme, especially in the opening/closing title and in the interludes between each section. Such typical logo displays both Thai and English names of the show. This implies a contemporary way of representing Thainess. Lastly, superimposed fonts are inserted on the screen to represent further expressions of culture. All of the superimposed (Thai) fonts are presented in the form of the traditional based-style of Thai alphabet, which is hard to find in contemporary handwriting. Moreover, as seen in Figure 4.11, the Thai numerals which have virtually disappeared from daily life since they have been replaced by modern Arabic numerals are presented.

Old film footage of Thai dance inserted on screen

The talk in studio

Figure 4.9: The old film footage of traditional Thai dance in year 1917 represented in _Khunphrachuai_

logo of the _Khunphrachuai_ show

Thai fish shaped graphic picture

Figure 4.10: The logo of _Khunphrachuai_ and graphic pictures in the title and interludes

Thai alphabet   Thai numerals

Ethnic groups in Northern Thailand

Figure 4.11: Images and graphics represented in *Khunphrachuai*

Traditional Thai based-music shows

The results of the analysis reveal the power of music in generating discourses of Thai identity through two main types of music representation: the thematic song and general music. The thematic music of *Khunphrachuai* is created as a fast beat with traditional instrumental music (i.e. music without lyrics), made up of the sounds of a traditional Thai orchestra to represent the joyful mood of traditional Thainess. The thematic music is generally used as the title music at the beginning and the end of each episode, and as the interlude music, which is a shorter piece played between the sections of the show.

Strikingly, despite emphasising the essence of traditional culture, *Khunphrachuai* presents various kinds of Thai music, both instrumental music and songs with lyrics, as not only traditional but also modern/hybrid versions. The music performed in the shows includes folk music, contemporary Thai music, and hybridised versions of Thai music fused with modern and Western style-music. However, although some pieces of music are not entirely Thai, they are still formed with the flavour of traditional Thai music. That is, they are represented as a combination of traditional Thai as the base, supported by other music styles including the Western style-music and *Phleng Thai*

161

Sa Kon (Westernised Thai songs). Such a presentation of fusion is utilised as a way to attract the attention of the audiences, indicating an attempt to turn a negative view of traditional culture among Thais (especially youths) into a positive meaning by showing how attractive and spectacular it can be. Additionally, the lyrics of the songs presented in the show contribute to the represented identity in important ways. For example, when a mixture of Thai and Western music is presented, both Thai lyrics themselves and English translated lyrics are presented on the screen together (as seen in Figure 4.14). This indicates the culturally inclusive practice of *Khunphrachuai* in the same way as the typical logo of the show, as noted. Further discourses of Thai identity generated through lyrics will be discussed in the section on the linguistics of Thai representations (see section 4.2.3).

The form of synergetic identity between the traditional and modern features is mostly evident in Thai music representations. The representations of music are constructed as a high quality and spectacular show which can demonstrate the power of performance of song in uniting people's ideology (McKerrell, 2012). The function of the music shows is not merely entertainment and a presentation of the aesthetic of traditional music itself. It is in essence a musical-discursive construction which can be a powerful vehicle to unite Thai people by creating a group feeling or sense of national cultural belonging. This shows the role of music as a discursive practice and tool for social interaction. As Van Leeuwen (2012, p. 327) states, "the principal musical system - melody, harmony, rhythm, timbre and so on - are not just abstract, formal systems. They realise social meanings and express values and identities and ideologies". The result of this study reveals that music shows are a perfect fusion of traditional Thai and modern/Western culture. This is the traditional Thai music (as the heart of the show) flavoured with some features of Western music styles, both classical and modern (e.g. pop/rock music). Apparently, the fusion in this sense highlights the value of traditional Thai features as the key attraction and utilises the modern/Western features as supporting elements to construct a sense of majestic and traditional at the same time. Examples of this are demonstrated in the figures 4.12 – 4.15.

Figure 4.12: The "*Khunphra* Orchestra" band (วงคุณพระออร์เคสตรา) as a fusion of Thai and Western music, playing a song called "Rak Thai" (Thai roots)

Figure 4.13: The "*Khunphra* Orchestra" band as a fusion of Thai and Western music showing the song called "Rak Thai" (Thai roots)

Figure 4.14: The show of the song "Maekhong Blues (แม่โขงบลูส์)" as a mixture of Northeastern Thai and American Blues music

Figure 4.15: The show of the hybridised version of the traditional Thai song named "Khangkhao Kin Kluai" (ค้างคาวกินกล้วย) **as a fusion of traditional Thai pipe with rock music**

Three explanatory points could be made regarding this interesting synergy. The first is that this is an attempt by the programme producers to create modern/applied

versions of Thai culture in order to indicate that being traditional Thai does not mean that you are not modern (see the text producers' perspectives on Thai fusion identity in the next chapter). This aspect of cultural adaptation is also a way to attract the attention of young audiences who are often thought to have neglected/forgotten their national culture and heritage and consider the traditional culture as outdated and unfashionable. This indicates that the representation of Thai fusion identity is used as one solution to the generational gap and identity crisis. The second is to argue that the show aims to point out that the traditional and the modern can work together, and that, therefore, Thai people can be simultaneously modern and also traditional Thai. This form of synergetic identity construction hence indicates the discourse pointing out that it is possible to combine the two worlds together and embracing one does not mean abandoning the other. This shows that the fusion of traditional culture represented in Thai television programmes has functioned as a cultural compromising tool to maintain a distinctive Thai identity in response to the trend of admiration for foreign cultures and consequent neglect of the traditional culture.

Overall, the results in this section indicate that the multimodal signs are crucial semiotic resources of Thai representation through television. They are the crucial ingredients of televisual texts constructing the overall image of thematic Thai scenery and the Thai atmosphere of the programmes. They also function as a vehicle to convey attractively the contents of national culture to the audiences. The summary of the visual representation of semiotics of Thai representations in the show is illustrated in Figure 4.16.
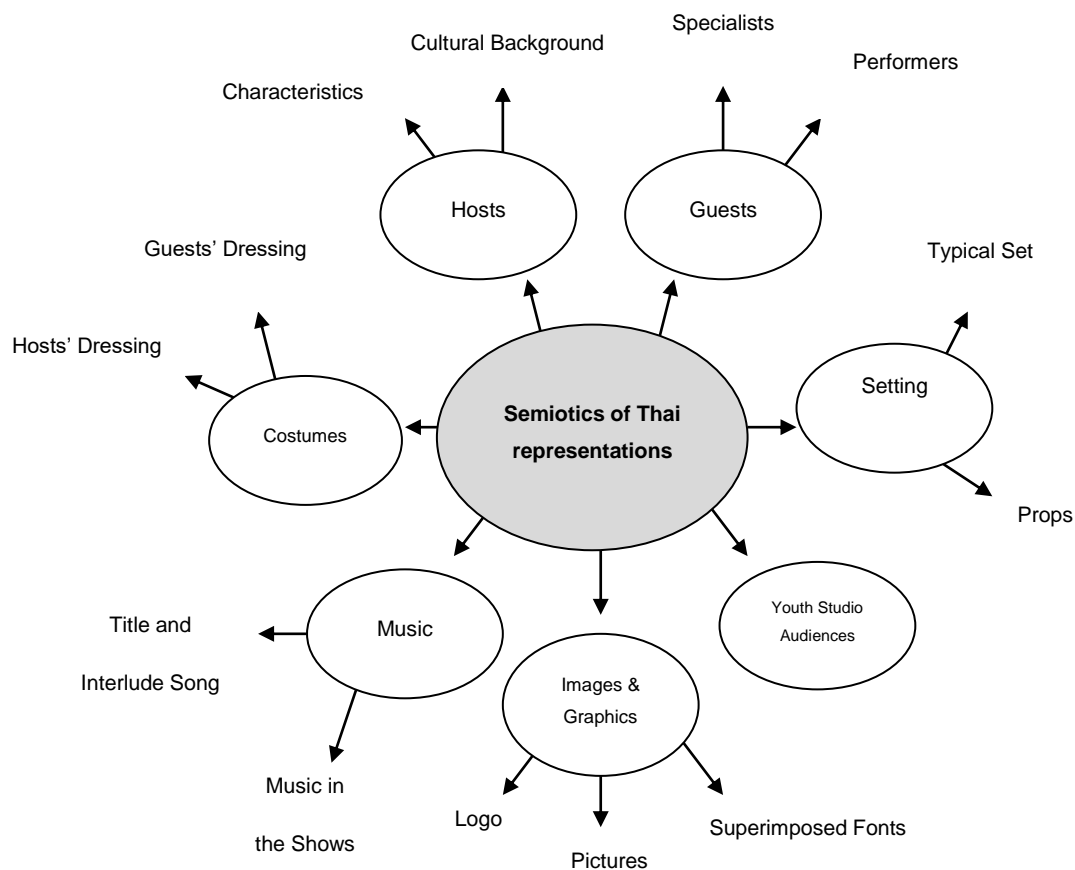
Figure 4.16: The visual representation of semiotics of Thai representations in *Khunphrachuai*

As a result of its distinctiveness in representing Thainess, as noted above, *Khunphrachuai* can therefore be claimed to be not merely a nostalgic mediator of a national past and culture but also one of the inventors of a new tradition of representing Thai cultural identity, which can help to serve the purposes of both the media industry itself and the promotion of national identity in which the incorporation of modernism and traditionalism is integral. This reveals the cultural direction of the show, which focuses on the construction and representation of Thai identity as inclusive rather than nationalist or excluding others. The results of textual analysis show that such an inclusive way of representation is shaped not only by the television discourses producers' cultural stance but also the socio-cultural context, which is highly influential in the way in which contemporary discourses of Thai identity are constructed and distributed to Thai people (this will be further explained in the next chapter).

4.2.2 The genres of Thai representations

The topic analysis of *Khunphrachuai* was conducted in order to examine the constitutive topics of Thai culture contained in the contents of the show. This section starts by reporting the results of the macro structure, a general overview of the main topics and their sub-topics. In addition, a micro analysis of those topics is conducted to provide a detailed analysis of the selected samples. In categorising topics of Thai culture, the comedy *Cham-uat* and the performance of *Phleng Choi* are excluded as they are regarded as key presentational forms of the *Cham-uat Na Man* section rather than as a topic in itself.

The results of the qualitative content analysis reveal several topics of Thai culture (which also include the shared cultures among Thais and neighbouring countries such as the *Song Kran* festival and the evolution of the Thai alphabet, and the invented traditions such as modern Thai boxing, *Lukthung* songs, Traditional Thai-Western fusion performances, and so on). The main topics and the frequency of each topic are shown in Figure 4.17.
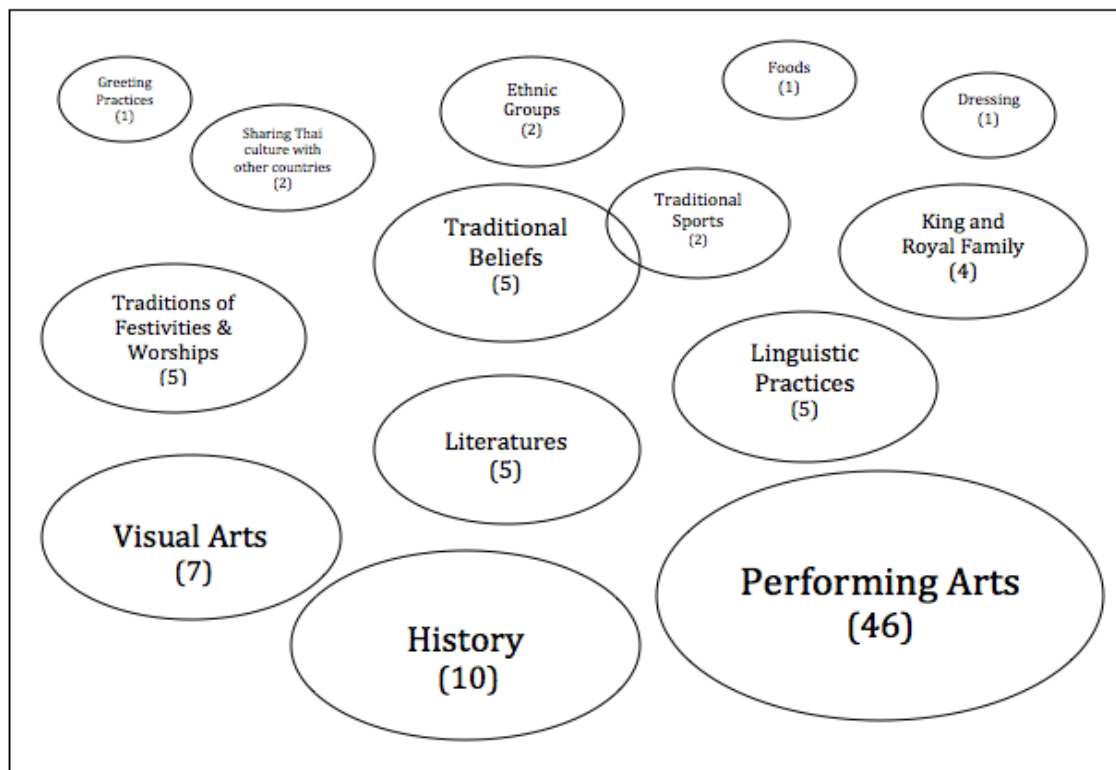
Figure 4.17: The visual representation of the main topics of Thai culture and their frequency of representation

As shown in Figure 4.17, the numbers correspond roughly to the size of the data on each topic. The topics of Thai culture can be categorised into 14 main topics. The largest topic is the performing arts, followed by history, visual arts, and so forth. The high frequency of representing the performing arts (46) indicates that the aspect of performing arts is highlighted as the core of the show. In clarifying the topics of Thai representations, the following visual representations illustrate each of the main topics along with their sub-topics. Following from KhosraviNik (2015a), the details are summarised below.

Thai Performing Arts

Topic 1: Thai music

- Folk music:
Central Thai, Northern Thai, North-eastern Thai, and Southern Thai folk music
- Modern Thai songs:
Songs for Life, City Songs (*Lukkrung*), and Country Songs (*Lukthung*)
- Applied Thai music: a mixture of traditional Thai and Western music, and a mixture of traditional Thai and *Thai Sa Kon* music
- Instruction of playing Thai musical instruments

Topic 2: Thai performances

- Folk performances: Central Thai, Northern Thai, North-eastern Thai, and Southern Thai folk performances
- Applied Thai performances

Topic 3: Folk dances: Central Thai, Northern Thai, North-eastern Thai, and Southern Thai folk dances

Thai History

Topic 1: History of inventions as a product of Thai older generations

Topic 2: Animals as a part of Thai history and life

Topic 3: History of ancient wars

Topic 4: History of place

Thai Visual Arts

Topic 1: Thai paintings

Topic 2: Thai crafts

Figure 4.18: The visual representation of each main topic of Thai culture and their sub-topics

169

Thai Literature

Topic 1: Folk literature

Topic 2: Buddhist tales

Topic 3: Characteristics of females in Thai folk literature

Topic 4: Nomenclature dictionary of Thai literature

Thai Linguistic Practices

Topic 1: Thai alphabet

Topic 2: Thai proverbs

Thai Traditional Beliefs

Topic 1: Beliefs about supernatural power

Topic 2: Buddhist beliefs

Traditions of Festivities and Worship

Topic 1: Thai festival

Topic 2: Guru worships

Topic 3: The Royal Barge Procession

Topic 4: Thai blessing in New Year celebration

King and Royal Family

Topic 1: The *King Bhumibol* and the royal family members' contribution to Thai literary works

Topic 2: The royal duties that contribute to the happiness of Thais' livelihoods

Sharing Thai Culture with Others

Topic 1: Cooperation between Thai and foreign artists in sharing their own national music

Topic 2: Cultural exchange between Thailand and Phutan in sharing their own national culture

Traditional Thai Sports

Topic 1: Thai boxing

Topic 2: Long boat racing

Ethnic Groups

Topic 1: Ethnic groups in North-eastern Thailand

Topic 2: Hill tripe people in Northern Thailand

Others

Topic 1: Instruction of traditional Thai dressing

Topic 2: Distinctiveness of Thai greeting

Topic 3: Outstanding features of Thai foods

Figure 4.18: The visual representation of each main topic of Thai culture and their sub-topics (continued)

170

Topic of performing arts

The emphasis on representing this topic reflects the main purpose of the text producer to show the aesthetic values of Thai performing arts in response to the key purposes and conventions of the television Variety Show format, which aims mainly to provide a spectacle. The interesting point here is that representing an abundance of performing arts can substantiate or constitute the discourse on Thai representation by promoting the country as a land of cultural wealth, especially a wealth of arts. As shown in Figure 4.18, the genre of performing arts includes three kinds: music, performances, and folk dancing. Within each kind, a number of sub-topics are covered, especially the sub topics categorised by geographic origin of local culture - central Thai, Northern Thai, North-eastern Thai, and Southern Thai music/performance/dance. This showcasing of a variety of local cultural artefacts from the four main parts of Thailand serves to unify the members of the nation in the sense that it reminds the audiences that they are not only a local cultural heritage but are rather perceived as national cultural heritage belonging to Thai people all over the country.

Regarding the form of presenting this topic, it is obvious that the bulk of performing arts is displayed through the show format, along with the talk to support the show. These are represented in the *Khunphra Shows* section, in which displaying spectacular shows of Thai arts is prominent. Among the shows of performing arts, music is most frequently represented, followed by performances and folk dances. Interestingly, the performing arts shows are divided into two main features: the representation of traditional Thai performing arts and the representation of a mixture between traditional Thai and modern/Western features, which is a way to represent Thai performing arts in more attractive ways. This is most evident in the music shows in which the Thai features are foregrounded as the core, along with incorporating Western music styles (as explained in the previous section) to help highlight the quality of traditional oriented-Thai fusion musical entertainment. Similarly, in representing some Thai performances, the show also presents the hybridised shows. The obvious example is the presentation of, arguably, an invented tradition called *"Nat Ta Muai Thai"* (นาฏมวยไทย), which combines the art of Thai boxing with Thai country songs, contemporary dance and gymnastics.

Topic of history

The topic of Thai history, represented through the forms of talk and show, focuses on the culturally significant aspects of national history in order to educate Thais to understand the historical events, persons, and things that have played an important role in contributing to the strength of Thai livelihood and culture. The representation of history is used as a way to encourage Thai people to recognise and to be proud of their Thai roots. The historical aspects mediated in the show include, for instance, the ancient war between Thais and Burmese in the Ayutthaya period, the crucial roles of elephants in national historical events, the history of Thai telecommunication (the telephone) and Thai newspapers.

Topic of visual arts

The representation of this topic focuses on the value of various kinds of visual Thai arts that distinctly reflect the uniqueness and superiority of Thai creativity in creating outstanding artistic works. This includes the topic of paintings, i.e. mural paintings, Northern Thai paintings, and watercolour paintings which mirror the images of traditional ways of life, stories of traditional literature, Buddhist stories, and historical events of Thailand. Another topic is the crafts, including handicrafts and colour crafts, which are represented to show outstanding and distinctive features of Thai crafts, especially their meticulousness. Interestingly, all of the crafts represented in the show are made by creative Thai youths who are invited to be exemplary people who encourage and conserve the national cultural heritage.

Other topics of Thai culture

The representation of other topics focuses on emphasising the traditional features and distinctiveness of each aspect of Thai culture, for example, the values of Thai literatures which are the culturally valuable artefacts representing Thai beliefs and cultures (such as the traditional literature "*Khun Chang Khun Phaen*" and the Buddhist tale about *"Nang Kaki"*). Other examples include linguistic practices in terms of the features and evolution of the Thai alphabet (in which the fact that the Thai language has shared a linguistic root with neighbouring countries is

172

emphasised), the meaning of traditional proverbs, traditional beliefs about supernatural power which still exist in contemporary society and Buddhist beliefs regarding social behaviour. Another interesting aspect is the topic of King Bhumibol and the royal family in terms of their contribution to the literary works and also the happiness of Thai people. The show also represents features of festivities (e.g. the *Song Kran* festival) and worship (e.g. the Guru worship in the field of Thai performing arts and media), along with relevant traditional practices that have been handed down by previous generations for posterity. Interestingly, apart from representing the topics of Thai cultural heritage, the results reveal the topic of cultural sharing between Thai and foreign cultures.

The results of topic analysis reveal topic selection. The presence and absence of particular topics reflect the direction of the show in encouraging Thai identity and simultaneously supporting international relations with other countries. This is evidenced by the presence of topics concerning historical/cultural relations between Thailand and other countries, represented positively and sensitively. In representing those topics, there is a cautious avoidance of negative and culturally/politically sensitive issues. The topics about sharing Thai culture with foreigners are presented to promote cultural exchange between Thai and foreign people in sharing their own national culture, especially music. Strikingly, the narration of historical records of ancient wars between Thais and other nations (i.e. Burmese) shows a keenness to avoid sensitive topics. Despite the fact that this topic talks about battles between Thais and others as a part of national history, the way of representation is careful to exclude critical viewpoints on this issue. Talking about the avoidance of negative representation of Other, a quote from a leading figure in the production of the show is very revealing in this regard:

> *"Those who present it uncompromisingly have a hidden agenda. We have no hidden agenda. So, we represent it neutrally."* (The top executive of the *Workpoint Entertainment Public Company Limited* and also the leading figure of the *Khunphrachuai* and the *Chingchasawan*, personal interview, 10 September 2015)

Rather than judging and condemning others, the show attempts to present narratives of a particular ancient war from both the Thai and Burmese historical records without creating a sense of controversy or adversity. This not only indicates the inclusive way of nostalgic representation/mediation of the national past and culture but also reflects the Thai conception of being compromising and *Krengchai*. As explained in Chapter 1, being *Krengchai* is the Thai trait of being considerate and respectful of other people's feelings and avoidance of doing anything that can cause other people to feel discomfort (Thitinan, 2007; Songthama, 2012). Not only an attitudinal expression, being *Krengchai* is also an "institutionalised principle of interaction" (Songthama, 2012, p. 623). The avoidance of negative topics (or the avoidance of presenting topics in an adversarial way) is thus a way to avoid conflict so as to maintain good relations with neighbouring countries. Along with this goal, the avoidance of highly controversial topics can function as a way to encourage Thai people to engage with the trait of being compromising, which could in turn help to avoid social conflict and form a harmony among Thais themselves.

The results of topic analysis show a diversity of modes of constructing and representing identity. The abundance of Thai arts and culture in *Khunphrachuai* works to construct the function of the show as a documentary and educational platform rather than merely entertainment. It can be suggested that the attractive features of edutainment in the show are part of the reason why it is popular. Another interesting point is that within the Thai representations through the talks and shows, the linguistic discourses on Thai culture are generated through several channels of discourses. This will be explained in the following section.

4.2.3 The linguistics of Thai representations

All the talks in the *Khunphrachuai* show were examined to specify the linguistic representation of Thai identity. The results of the analysis show that there are two channels of discourse within the talks: the hosts' discourses and the discourses of interaction between the hosts and guests. In addition to analysing the talks, the lyrics of the songs represented in the show were also investigated. This is because representation through songs is not manifested merely through musicological

aspects per se, as noted. The songs, with meaningful lyrics, are further selected or exclusively created to function as a channel for constructing emotional linguistic discourses on Thai identity. Furthermore, the use of voice-over plays a similar role. In addition to its primary function as a means of explaining general information and introducing the talks/shows to the audiences, the voice-over is constructed to generate the discourses regarding each topic of identity.

Therefore, four main linguistic channels provide the discourses on Thai identity to the audiences. These are: 1) the hosts' discourses, 2) the discourses of interaction between the hosts and guests, 3) the discourses of voice-over, and 4) the discourses of lyrics. The proportion of linguistic practice through these four channels is presented in Figure 4.19.
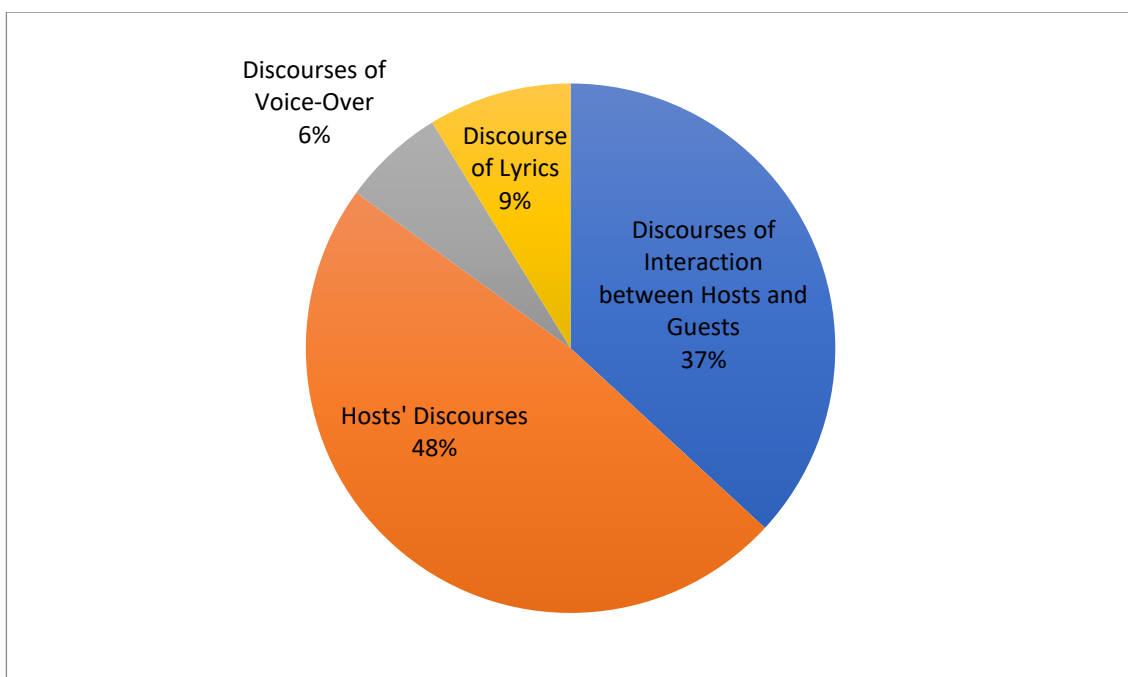
Figure 4.19: Four main channels of discourses on Thai representations in *Khunphrachuai*

It can be seen from Figure 4.19 that the majority of linguistic discourses on Thai identity come under the hosts' discourses (48%), followed by the discourses of interaction between hosts and guests (37%), the discourses of lyrics (9%), and the

discourses of voice-over (6%). Within the four channels, several discourses topics of Thai identity are established. This are explained channel by channel below.

The hosts' discourses

The hosting script is the key linguistic tool for emphasising the cultural standpoint of the show regarding Thai identity. Apart from introducing the topics and the guests to audiences, the function of the hosts' speeches is to address the discourses on Thai identity in three main aspects. The discourse topics generated in the hosts' speeches together with their frequency of representation (given in brackets) are summarised in Figure 4.20.
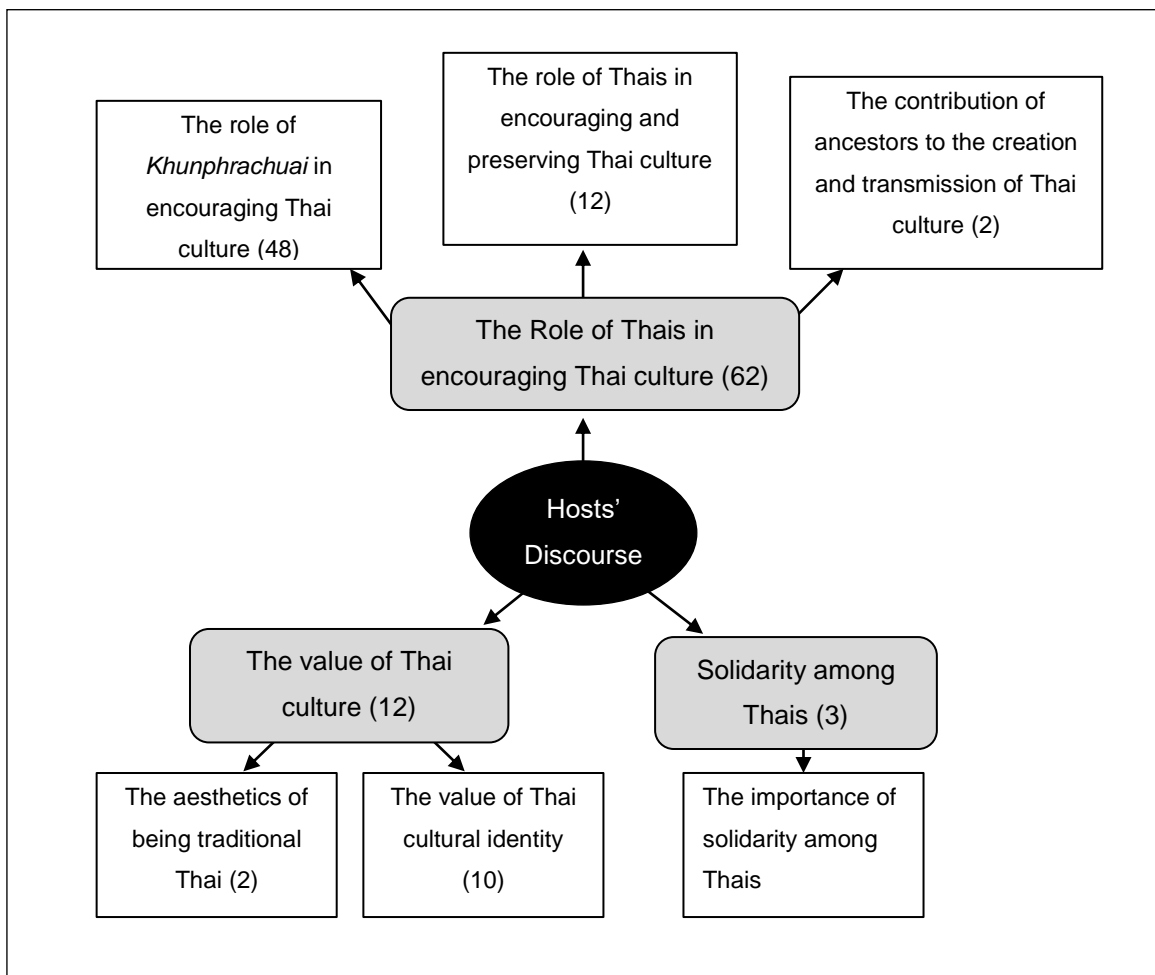
Figure 4.20: The discourse topics of the hosts' speeches

As shown in Figure 4.20, the results of qualitative content analysis show that the hosts' discourses mainly focus on the role of Thais in encouraging and preserving national culture. Another two foci are the discourses on the value of Thai culture and solidarity among Thais. The details of the greatest discourse topic, containing three sub-discourse topics, are explained as follows:

• **The discourse topic of the role of** *Khunphrachuai* **in encouraging Thai culture** is represented through a repetition of the slogan of this television show at the opening of the programmes. The hosts' speeches in this sense include the following two slogans:

> *"Welcome to Khunphrachuai, the television show that completely presents culture and entertainment."* (Mentioned in most episodes)

> *"Welcome to Khunphrachuai, the television show which aims to encourage culture."*

• **The discourse topic of the role of Thai people in encouraging and preserving Thai culture** stresses the significant role of Thais in encouraging national cultural identity. This discourse is made through admiring Thai people (especially youths) who play a role in preserving traditional culture or in promoting Thai reputation, as well as persuading the audiences to appreciate and encourage their own Thai culture. The examples of this are as follows:

Example 1: The host's speech talks about the topic of the applied version of Thai performance called "*Nat Ta Muai Thai*", which combines the art of Thai boxing with Thai country songs, contemporary dance, and gymnastics. As this show is performed by a group of youths, the host therefore expresses his admiration for the role of youths in preserving and promoting culture and also being role models for other youths. As the host said:

> *"This is the performance of the group of **Thai youths** who love and appreciate traditional Thai boxing, which is the art of self-defence created by our ancestors and has been handed down from generation to generation."* (Speech of Theng in the show)

177

Example 2: The host's speech is presented in relation to the show of *"Phin Khaen Pong Lang"* (พิณ แคน โปงลาง) - a North-eastern Thai performance that includes playing North-eastern instrumental music together with local dance. The discourse topic focuses on raising awareness of encouraging and preserving the cultural heritage among all generations of Thais, especially the new generation, whose actions are deemed critical for the existence of national identity in the future. The host stated that:

> *"I'm delighted to watch a performance like this. It is fortunate that the **gurus and teachers** have persuaded **their students** to preserve our Thai performing arts. If **Thai youths** neglect Thai culture, it will exactly be no longer in existence."* (Speech of Theng)

- **The discourse topic of the contribution of ancestors to the creation and transmission of Thai culture** is about admiring the ancestors as they generated and handed down traditions from generation to generation. An instance of this is shown as follows:

> Phan: *Our country is located on the land which is full of an abundance of natural resources, including numerous kinds of food sources, animals and plants. As a result, **our ancestors** utilised these natural resources to build up Thai civilisation, which has been handed down from generation to generation.*
>
> Theng: *This is the Thai wisdom.*

The hosts' speeches above talk about the topic of *Lan* leaf handicraft - a kind of traditional handicrafts which has continuously been handed down and further developed to create a variety of products. The hosts' speeches focus on the cultural contribution of the ancestors to the creation and transmission of Thai wisdom and cultural heritage. As a result of this, the culture has been handed down to posterity so that it can be utilised and developed further by and for the younger generations. This also indicates the value of Thais' intellectual ability in creating, employing, and adapting to maintain their own culture.

The results of analysing the hosts' discourses show that the host's discourses topic of the role of Thais in encouraging and preserving culture focuses on three main groups of people. Firstly, ancestors as the prior creators of Thai culture. Secondly, all generations of Thais as the cultural inheritors and transmitters. Lastly, *Khunphrachuai* itself as the cultural agent. This indicates the idea that the existence and continuity of national culture is a result of and depends on the cooperation of all people, along with social institutions, especially media products. Obviously, the linguistic stance through all of these talks is that of admiration and persuasion, as seen in the examples above.

The discourses of interaction between the hosts and guests
The talks between hosts and guests are presented in the form of interviews. The interviews are mainly between the hosts and culture specialists about a particular topic of culture. The talks with the performing art performers also take the form of a short conversation to support their performances. An interesting point revealed by the data is that this cultural television show does not engage with debates around the necessity of a total restoration of traditional identity/total return to origins or the creation of a dichotomy between traditional and modern/multicultural identities. Rather, the talks are presented as a chat among Thais who collectively share a sense of national cultural belonging and the collective memory. Hence, there is no power struggle or discursive tension between the hosts and guests as they share a similar understanding of the situation and the agenda. Namely, they concur with regard to the aims and overall stance of identity construction. Arguably, this way of social interaction reflects the Thai trait of harmonious talk, in which the avoidance of conflicts - such as avoiding making a disagreeable statement - is a key feature. Representation and maintenance of harmony for its own sake has a strong cultural value in Thai society. The harmonious and compromising interaction between the hosts and guests is based on and can represent the concept of a compromising interaction and being *Krengchai* (as noted above). Based on this order of discourse, the form of harmonious and compromising talk has been presented in many television shows in various genres (apart from a number of genres which focus on debates on controversial such as political/ideological issues). Even in the Western formatted Thai television shows, according to Thitinan (2007), a form of glocalisation

is adopted by presenting Thai cultural values. For instance, *The Weakest Link* (Thailand) represents the Thai trait of compromising and being *Krengchai.*

Three main aspects are built into the interaction between the hosts and guests. The discourse topic of raising awareness about detailed knowledge of Thai culture is most prominent. The other two discourses relate to the role of Thais in encouraging and preserving national culture and the value of Thai culture. Figure 4.21 illustrates the discourse topics of the hosts and guests and their frequency of occurrence.
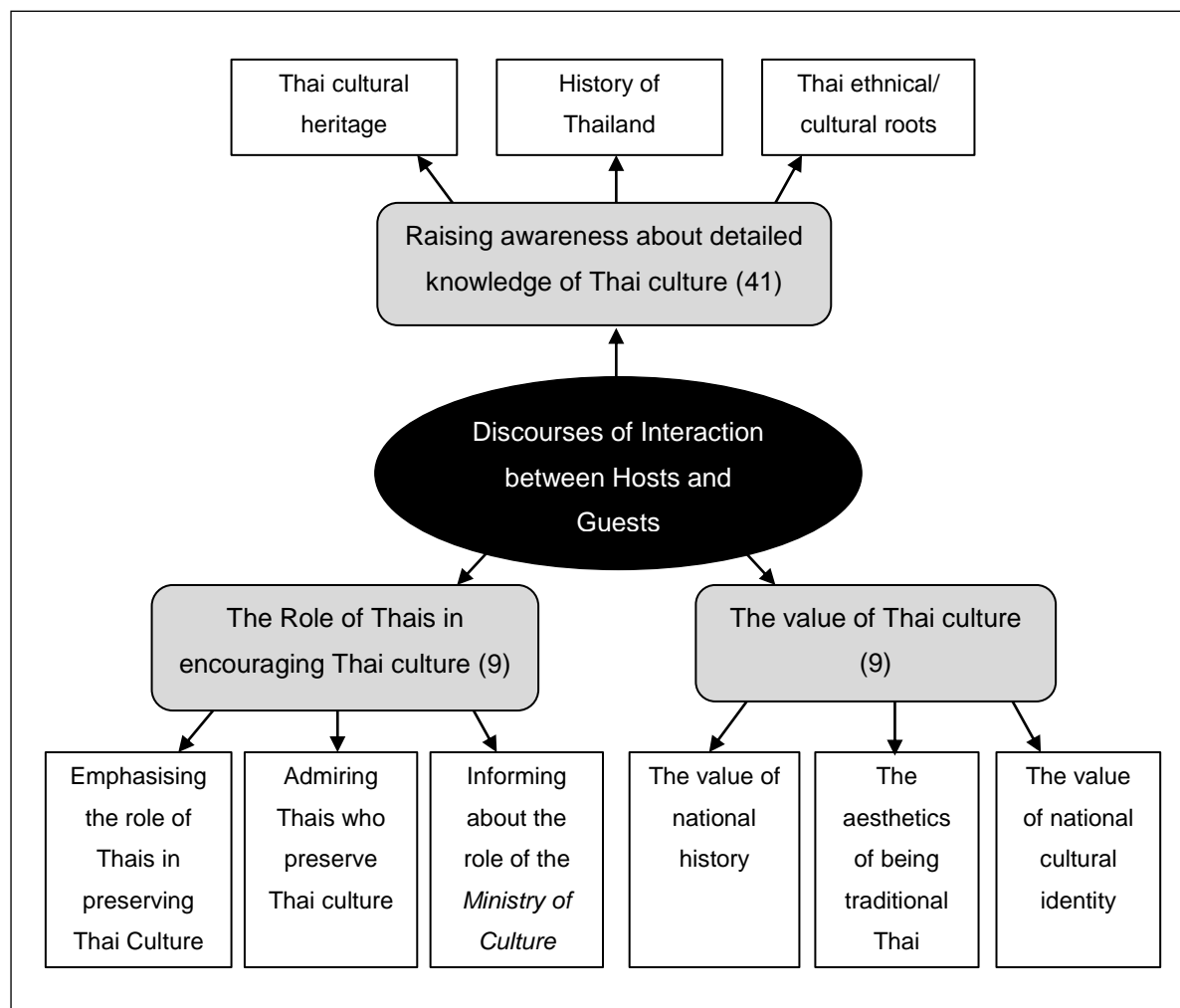
Figure 4.21: The discourse topics of the interaction between the hosts and guests

As shown in Figure 4.21, the discourse topic of raising awareness about detailed knowledge of Thai culture is much more significant than the other two discourse

topics. The reason for this is that providing the viewers with detailed knowledge of national culture is the primary aim of the talks, especially in the section of *Phumpanyathai*, in which the talk between hosts and guests is the key presentation form. The discourse goal of this is to warn people that it is significant for them to understand their own national culture accurately and clearly. The talks in this sense are full of various topics of an actually *existing and lived* Thai culture which is to be encouraged and promoted. Also, the talks cover the *nostalgic* traditional culture, that is, the particular qualities of national culture which have vanished or been neglected and forgotten. In other words, it is the unique qualities of identity which have dramatically and excessively been altered and thus need to be reconditioned.

In the talks, an abundance of detailed knowledge about culture is provided through *explaining/teaching* together with *demonstrating/displaying* the relevant cultural artefacts to support the talk. Fulfilling this, insertion of *superimposed texts* on the screen is used as a technique to give further details of each topic. Despite providing an in-depth knowledge of culture, the conversations in the talks are designed to be *edutainment* talks. This indicates the essence of using multimodal modes of communication, i.e. linguistic plus audio-visual, to create a sense of education plus entertainment in television texts. One of the outstanding talks is demonstrated in the instance below:

Figure 4.22: A discussion about the *Rot Nam Damhua* ceremony

Phan: *The topic of the talk today is about the Rot Nam Damhua (รดน้ำดำหัว) ceremony (the traditional water-pouring ceremony to ask for blessing from the respected elders) on the occasion of Song Kran festival.*

Theng: *Does the Rot Nam Damhua ceremony in these days differ from its own traditional way in the past?*

Guest 1: **Different***. Nowadays, we can see that the youngsters ask the elders to have a seat and then the youngers pour the water to the elders' hands along with blessing them with good health, happiness and long life.* **In fact, in the past,** *this practice was about the youngsters preparing a bowl of water to ask the elders to put their hands into the bowl. This was not pouring water into the hands. It was dipping the water in order to touch their own heads and faces. The elders then sprinkled the water on the youngsters along with blessing them. Hence, this (the traditional way) was to ask a blessing from the elders, not blessing the elders (as seen in the current practice)… Anyway, if the youngsters would like to bless the elders, they can do that by referring to the sacred things and the Triple Gem to bless the elders.*

182

The conversation above is about the topic of traditional practices in the *Song Kran* festival. It focuses on teaching how to conduct the social activities and ceremonies in the festival as accurately and appropriately as they were traditionally undertaken. This indicates the attempt of the show to raise awareness of preserving the value of traditional culture by educating the audiences about the core and accurate ways of the practices. This shows the way that television discourse is created to evoke the quality of Thai tradition in response to the fact that great changes in several social activities and practices regarding Thai festivals have resulted in their loss, or at least in an inaccurate rendering of them in contemporary society.

The discourses of the lyrics

The results demonstrate the crucial role of lyrics in enhancing the power of the presentations of the songs in creating important discourses and uniting people's ideology (McKerrell, 2012). There are two main forms of meaning-making through lyrics. The first form is a presentation of meaningful lyrics relevant to Thai identity. The second form is the metaphorical expression of the lyrics. The lyrics that say, "Thailand as the golden land", "the harmony of Thais is similar to the glutinousness of the sticky rice", and "the buffaloes and elephants are symbolic of Thai culture" are examples of this practice of metaphorical meaning-making. Figure 4.23 illustrates the discourse topic constituents of the lyrics.

Solidarity among Thais (and a sense of national belonging) (10)

The value of Thai culture (3)

Discourses of Lyrics

The Role of Thais in encouraging Thai culture (1)
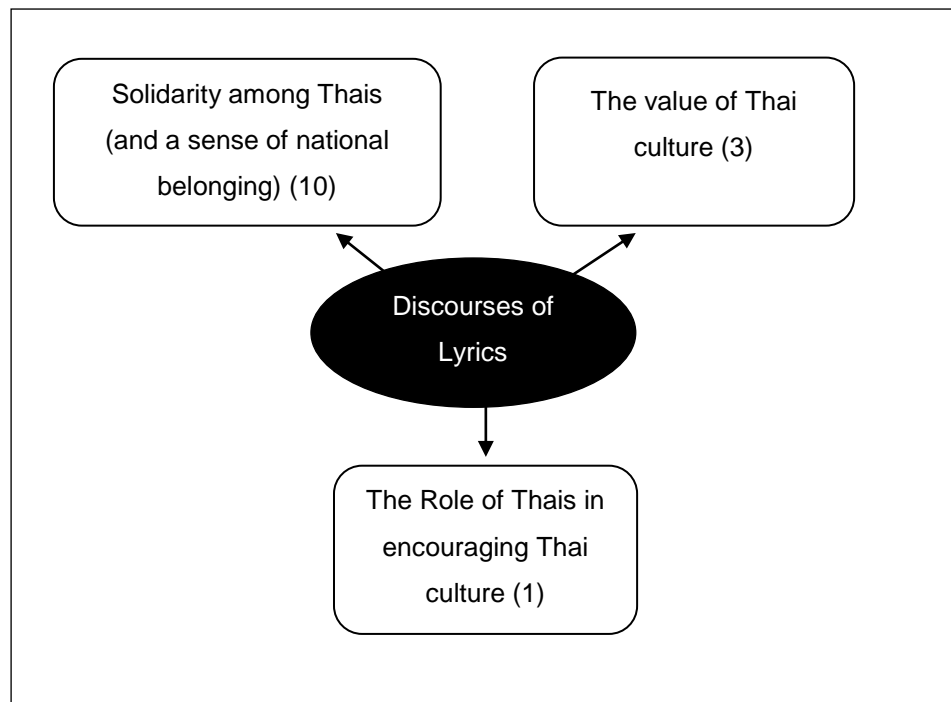
Figure 4.23: The discourse topics of the lyrics

The figure above illustrates that the majority of lyrics are engaged with the discourse topic of solidarity and a sense of national belonging. To generate meaningful discourse on Thai identity, the text producers seek to choose the songs in which lyrics relate overwhelmingly to cultural identity. Notably, this includes well-known songs which the text producers select to re-arrange as a new version (in order to raise the aesthetic and attractiveness of the songs). Moreover, the text producers also create new songs to generate culturally meaningful discourses. These songs are written by Prapas Cholsaranon - the top executive of the organisation, who is also a leading figure in the production of the *Khunphrachuai* show and at the same time a well-known professional songwriter. This creation of texts indicates the strong enthusiasm of the television producers for underlining the significance of national identity. The exemplary songs that generate discourse on solidarity among Thais and a sense of national belonging include:

- The song *"Khon Ban Diao Kan"* (คนบ้านเดียวกัน), which represents the value of Thai society's sense of harmony. Through the rewritten lyrics of the original song, the song presents a unity among Thais who are from different parts of

Thailand, i.e. the North, the Northeast, the Central, and the South. In this way, the local language of each part of Thailand as such is included.

- The song *"Chang Chu Thai"* (ช้างชูไทย), which stresses the historical roles of elephants as a part of supporting and defending Thailand. Through such metaphorical expression, the song aims to illustrate the idea that Thai people should support Thainess; the more Thainess is preserved and strengthened, the more socially secure the nation will be.

- The song *"Ban Rao"* (บ้านเรา), which supports the view that Thailand is a land of happiness worthy of calling "home".

These songs also include the song "*Muai Thai" (Thai Boxing*), which underlines the value of the boxing as a feature of national heritage. Also, the song "*Song Kran Ban Rao"* (สงกรานต์บ้านเรา) emphasises the value of the *Song Kran* festival as it contains the traditional cultural activities and acts as a forum to bring people together.

The discourses in the voice-over

The voice-over is the technique of using voice narration added in programmes at the stage of sound editing. In *Khunphrachuai*, the voice-over is mainly used as a linguistic channel for explaining further information, introducing the shows and talks, making the transition between sections, and uttering the vocal narration of a short documentary as part of Thai representations. The results of analysis show that the voice-over presents three main discourse topics of identity, as detailed in Figure 4.24.
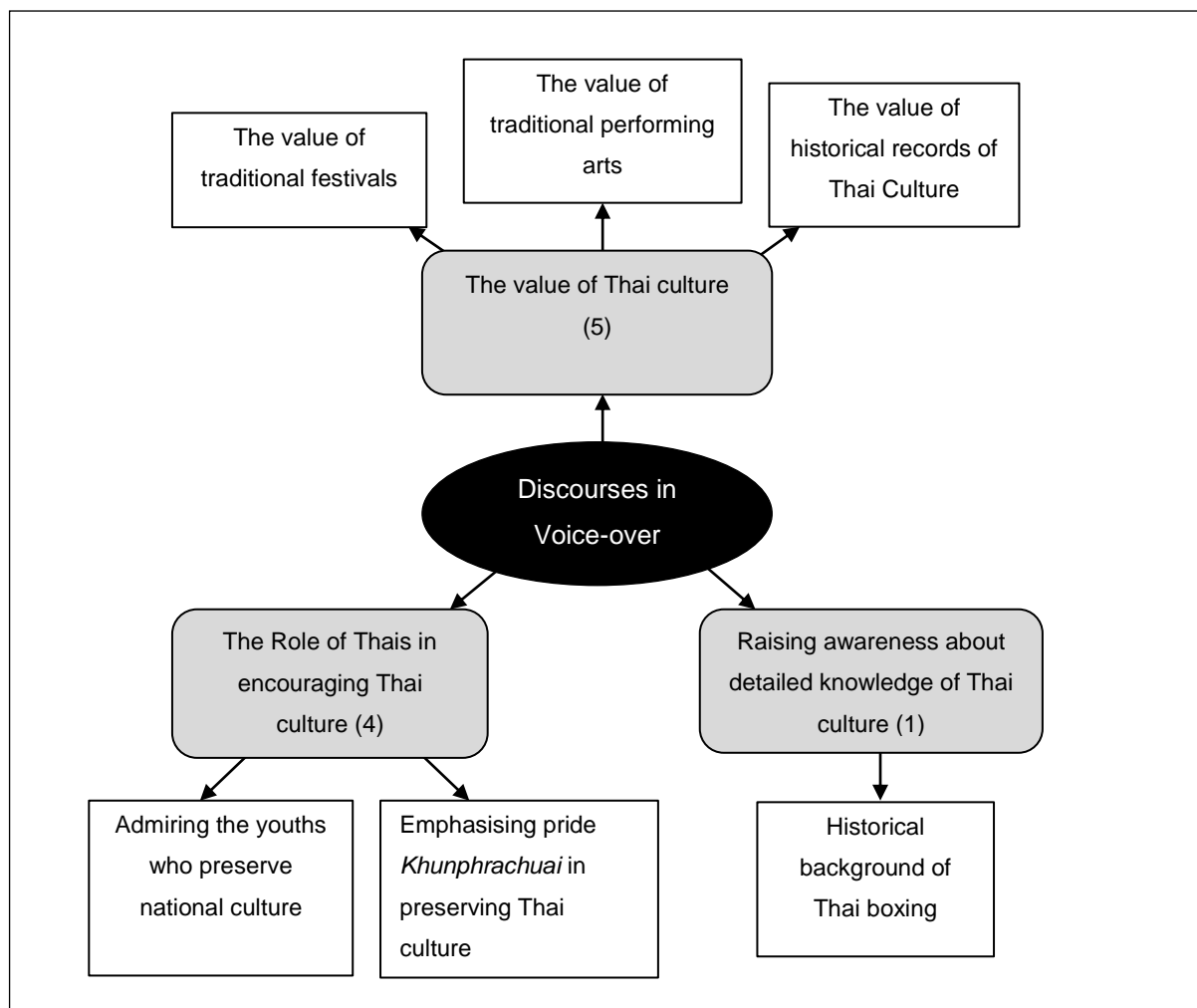
Figure 4.24: The discourse topics in the voice-over

It can be seen in Figure 4.24 that the majority of discourses in the voice-overs concern the value of Thai culture. They emphasise the value of culture in terms of the traditional festivals, performing arts, and historical records of national culture. Additionally, the discourses cover the role of Thais in encouraging Thai culture, including pride in *Khunphrachuai* as being the television show that encourages the national art and culture as well as admiring the youths who preserve it. Lastly, the discourse on raising awareness about detailed knowledge of culture includes providing information about the historical background and development of traditional culture (boxing). The following example shows the construction of discourses in the voice-over.

Voice-over: *The topic for today is one of the outstanding contributions of Thai wisdom, that is, the Southern Thai performances including the Di Ke Hu Lu and No Ra, **the shows that are really hard to find these days**. So, **Khunphrachuai will encourage you (the audiences) to learn about** the cultural background of these performances and also enjoy watching these performances shown on the stage of Khunphrachuai.*

This example shows the use of voice-over to introduce the talk and the shows of traditional performances. It can be seen from the script that the voice-over creates a discourse topic on Thai culture by stressing the value of the "*Di Ke Hu Lu*" and "*No Ra*" as *Southern Thai performances*, which are rare in contemporary society. This voice-over also includes the discourse topic on the role of *Khunphrachuai* as a cultural agent in promoting national culture.

The linguistic representation of identity in *Khunphrachuai* is a crucial component for achieving the discursive goals on Thai culture. A comprehensive visual representation of linguistic content and representation of Thai identity in the show is illustrated in Figure 4.25.

The Construction and Representation of Thai Identity in *Khunphrachuai*
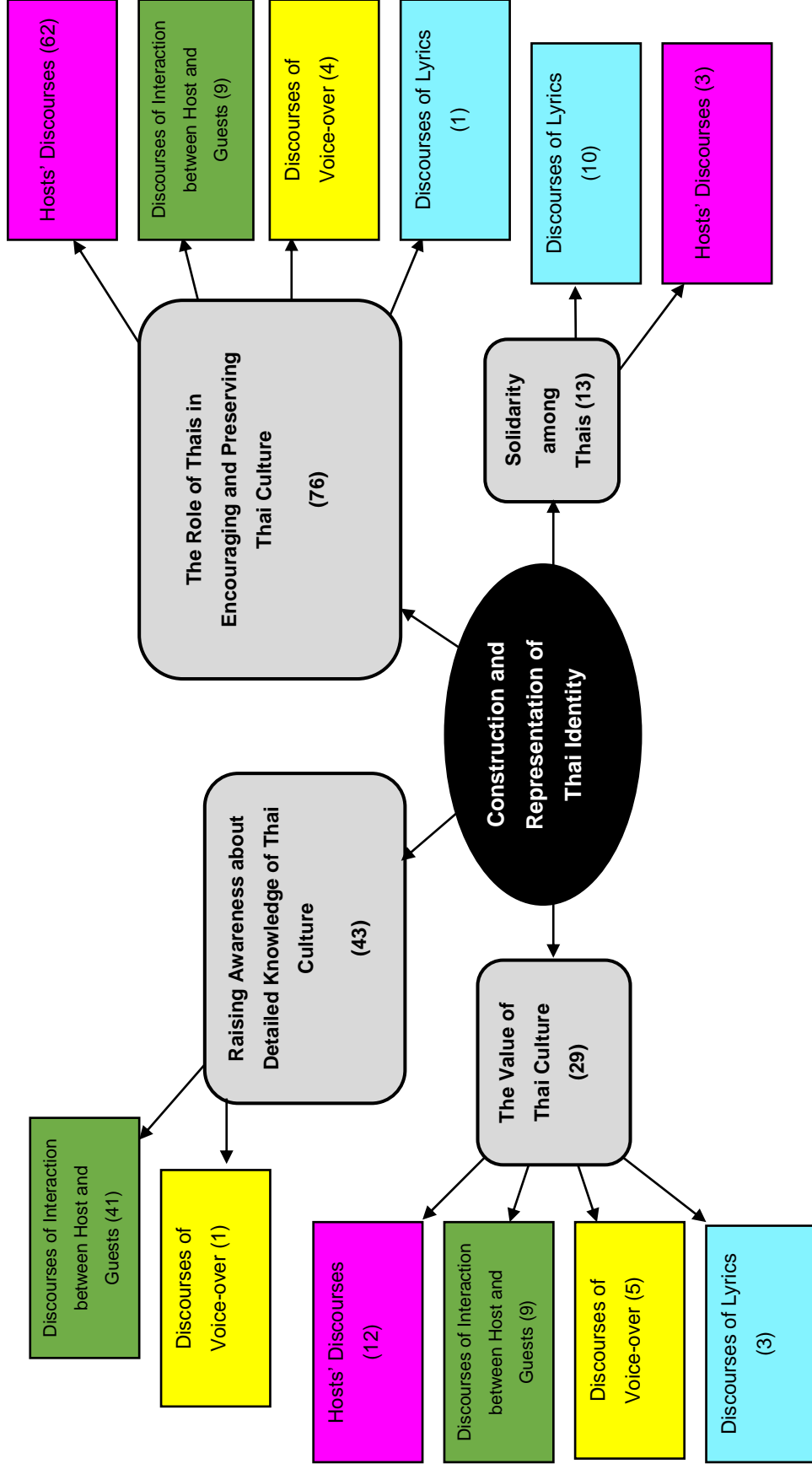
Figure 4.25: The construction and representation of Thai identity in *Khunphrachuai*

188

4.3 Other Television Shows with Similar Cultural Effect

In addition to *Khunphrachuai*, two other well-known television variety shows have also engaged with similar themes. The overall presentation of the *Chingchasawan* show revives a nostalgic atmosphere of temple fair (งานวัด) that functioned as a principal and popular venue for all Thai performances/entertainments in the past, before being replaced by modern/Westernised venues (Wankwan, 2014). Despite their hybrid features, the performances of Thai country music, or *Lukthung* songs (which this thesis claims to be an invented tradition), and the Ferris wheel are presented in the show as cultural symbols to evoke nostalgic feeling and collective memory among Thais regarding such nostalgic temple fairs, along with highlighting the value of the *Lukthung* songs as a distinctive Thai identity.

In order to feature the value of Thai culture, the *Chingchasawan* show, as seen in figures 4.26 and 4.27, represents Thai country music through the format of music contests among young people. This functions as a stage for contests among groups of youths from several parts of Thailand who appreciate Thai country music and are dedicated to preserving this kind of performing arts. The discourses generated in this television show contain the cultural values of Thai country music performances and the efforts of youths to present impressive shows in order to win the contest. Interestingly, beyond the goal of winning, the show constructs the discourse topic of the appreciation of national culture among young people in general and beyond TV. In addition to providing spectacles of Thai country music performed with Thai-style dancing, such multimodal discourses emphasise the role and passion of the generations to maintain Thai culture. In this way, the representations of their passionate voices for Thai country music, their emotional displays when they win or lose the competition, and the harmony between the candidates underscore the value of Thai art and culture as really meaningful to them. It also displays the impact of media discourses on the general public. Figures 4.26 and 4.27 illustrate the representation of Thai country music performances in this television show.

Figure 4.26: The representation of Thai country music performance in *Chingchasawan*

Figure 4.27: The representation of Thai country music performance in *Chingchasawan*

Likewise, *Talatsot Sanam Pao* contributes to the national culture by representing Thai approaches to foods and Thai-style markets. The main theme of the show engages with representing the aesthetics of the Thai way of eating, cooking and some cultural aspects of Thai-style fresh-food markets which are becoming increasingly rare in contemporary Thailand, especially in the urban areas in which food culture has been modernised. This is evident from an increase in the Western-style supermarkets and the convenience stores replacing the traditional fresh-food markets. As Kanitta (2010) argues, *Talatsot Sanam Pao* supports Thai food culture in

several respects. This includes the encouragement of visiting and shopping at Thai-style fresh-food markets (and other forms of traditional markets, for example floating markets), where an abundance of traditional foods and culture are provided. Along with this, the cultural values regarding Thai thoughts and ways of life beyond the contents of the markets are foregrounded. These values include, for instance, generosity, making good relationships among people, love and happiness within the family, the concept of patience, and Buddhist morals. This indicates the central role of this light entertainment television show is to promote the food culture itself and also maintain the values of Thai thought and other cultural values. The programme has made a contribution to the revival of traditional style-food markets, which have become a source of tourism (see Chapter 5 for more on this). Figures 4.28 and 4.29 illustrate the representations of Thai food culture in the *Talatsot Sanam Pao* show*.*

Figure 4.28: The representation of Thai food culture in *Talatsot Sanam Pao*

Figure 4.29: The representation of a Thai-style fresh-food market in *Talatsot Sanam Pao*

As noted above, these three television shows share similar discursive goals of the construction and representation of Thai identity in the sense of raising the value of national cultural identity and encouraging it by creating Variety Show spectacles which appeal to mass audiences. The aim of the programmes is that more attractive and appealing representations of Thai culture and art forms can lead to greater audience interest, which will in turn contribute to wider and more powerful discursive constructions and promotions of national identity. The cultural impacts of the three television shows of this study will be discussed in the next two chapters.

Conclusion

The textual analysis above confirms the "power" of nostalgia television discourses in constructing "knowledge" (Foucault, 1995, p. 27) of national identity. The results of the analysis reveal the power of entertaining television shows to evoke the collective memories of a collective national past and culture, reviving nostalgic cultural distinctiveness as a paradise lost which needs to be revived and at the same time promoting a sense of national/cultural belonging and solidarity among members of the nation. This shows the way in which television discourses are produced, substantially through nostalgic communication, to remind Thai people of their national cultural roots and also reinforce Thai unity in the sphere of culture.

Media discourse relates to aspects of power, and that power can be transmitted through discourses (Fairclough, 1995b; Machin and Mayr, 2012). The results of this micro-analysis of television texts show that all ingredients of Thai identity construction, in line with the construction of reflective nostalgia, in nostalgia television programmes work to utilise the power of mass text production and distribution within a cultural project upheld by television producers and media institutions and also broader socio-political institutions such as organs of the state and the government (which will be discussed in the next chapter). In the view of this study, television discourse on identity in this sense reflects the text producers' awareness of a decline in enthusiasm about traditional identity and cultural practices. Moreover, it indicates that the nostalgia media can be used as a cultural agent to maintain and strengthen national identity and, further, in the political sphere, facilitate the strengthening of nation-building.

Additionally, the results of the textual analysis reveal that some aspects of culture represented in the show, which in fact also exist in other societies (such as the *Song Kran* festival (which is a shared culture among Southeastern-Asian countries), the smile as a way of greeting, the roles of elephants in historical events, and so on, are claimed as Thai symbols. This implies that the discourses of national identity are a product of the construction of myth (see Chapter 7).

Chapter 5. Thai Identity: Perspectives from the Text Producers

Introduction

This research project explores the ways in which Thai cultural identity is constructed, represented and perceived by investigating processes of production and consumption of certain televisual content and the features of Thai television shows considered outstanding media products encouraging and conserving the cultural identity of the country. In addition to an analysis of television shows (see Chapter 4), this analysis chapter provides a discussion on the televisual construction of Thai cultural identity from the perspectives of the text producers of the three television shows. To that end, in-depth interviews with key industry figures were conducted. These interviews serve to bring together the textual analysis and contextual information on production circumstances to gain better insights into the interplay of television production, the text and wider society with regard to nostalgic Thai identity. This can help to answer questions concerned with why the texts are designed in such a way and the cultural positioning of the production and distribution of the shows, i.e. an understanding of why they construct and represent national identity as they do, and in what ways the identity representations in the shows are shaped/influenced by the government and the broader socio-cultural context. This helps to understand the way national identity construction/representation is shaped/guided by a web of power relations, the crucial factor in producing social knowledge (Foucault, 1995) and discourses of national culture and history (Said, 1978). Additionally, the perspectives of the text producers can also underpin the discussion on the subsequent audience analysis as the third element of this research.

The interview questions fall within three main areas: 1) the link between television shows and government involvement in cultural policy; 2) the processes of production regarding the representation and promotion of Thai identity; and 3) the popularity and cultural impact of the shows. Interestingly, apart from the differences in their personal views on Thai identity in general, this study did not find a significant difference among the perspectives of the text producers, i.e. the differences were marginal and over minute detail. This is mainly because all of the interviewees (producers and key figures), as Thais who have a personal interest in Thai art and culture, share a similar

vision and common cultural ideology regarding Thai identity. This chapter is an investigation into how such viewpoints are operationalised in relation to television shows and what constitutes such perspectives.

The results of the analysis of this data set indicate that the perspectives of certain key figures in the television industry corroborate the ideas of Pattana (2003, p. 33), who suggests that Thai society has been longing for "identity and self-confidence, self, and the past that is linked with the future". This is evident from the nostalgia phenomenon in contemporary society, such as, for example, the revival of old places (which evoke features of a Thai utopia) and a refreshed interest in traditional national and local cultural heritage (Pattana, 2003). The data obtained from the interviews with the text producers, as part of media institutions, reflects their concerns, which are aligned with the cultural problems argued by Pattana regarding the loss of "what is now not attainable" (Keightley and Pickering, 2012, p. 122). The problem as such is about the loss/blurring of the uniqueness of Thai cultural identity that has been "lost", "forgotten", and "submerged" (Smith, 2010, p. 30). In response to such "fear of forgetting", television is therefore used as a source to create an abundance of memory (Holdsworth, 2011, p. 4). The text producers produce and distribute the shows to help evoke the collective memories of national past and culture among Thais and underscore the value of national culture and heritage. This will be provided through a discussion on the views of the text producers on the representations of Thai identity, the link between the shows and government cultural policy, and the cultural values and impact of the shows on audiences and society in the way that it is assumed by producers.

5.1 Popular Television Shows as a Link to Imagined Communities

As explained in the previous chapter, the results of this study demonstrate the vital cultural function of popular television Variety shows. The data gained from the text producers' perspectives also affirm this idea. Apart from being used as a source of entertainment, Variety shows have become one of the principal sources for the circulation and promotion of national identity narratives as a part of the construction of the cultural ideology of Thai identity in contemporary Thailand. This is evidenced by the fact that the government employs the *Khunphrachuai*, the *Chingchasawan*,

and the *Talatsot Sanam Pao* shows as communicative tools for nationwide promotion of their cultural projects in relation to their cultural missions (see next section). This indicates the multidimensional role of television discourse as "public", "institutional" and "professional" discourse (Fetzer, 2014, p. 368).

The results of this study show that the text producers' personal interest in and cultural concerns about Thai culture have a great influence on the beginning of each show and its direction of Thai representation. In fact, the shows were started as a result of personal interest at the top of media organisations and the main producers of the shows in the aesthetics and the value of Thai art and culture, together with their attempt to create an outstanding entertaining television show to encourage Thai art and culture. The leading figure of *Khunphrachuai* and *Chingchasawan* explained the origins of both shows as follows:

> *"In my view, to civilise the nation is not only about looking towards the progress but also looking backwards to the past in order to enhance the progress with substantial direction and unity. Personally, I love Thainess… So, when we considered in what way we can represent Thainess, we thought of the aesthetics, arts and bonds between the old generation and the new generation."* (The top executive of the *Workpoint Entertainment Public Company Limited* and also the leading figure of the *Khunphrachuai* and *Chingchasawan* shows, personal interview, 10 September 2015).

It emerged from the research that Thai representations in the shows are created in accordance with the producers' cultural aims, for example focusing on the encouragement of national culture through recalling a *vanished/nostalgic* culture and at the same time promoting the *living/existing* culture as a way of facilitating the continuity of the cultural heritage of the nation. The data obtained from the interviews with the text producers reveals the reasons for this. They present the *living* Thai culture because they see that it always needs to be maintained and further promoted. The *nostalgic* Thai culture is revived because the text producers realise that it has vanished and/or is neglected among Thais, especially the youth and urbananised citizens whose lifestyle has been modernised and influenced by some features of powerful foreign cultures under the influence of globalisation (as discussed in Chapter 2). This reflects the function of nostalgic communication in facilitating the continuity of identity as it is "one of the means - or better, one of the more readily

accessible psychological lenses - we employ in the never ending work of constructing, maintaining, and reconstructing our identities" (Davis, 1979, p. 31).

The results of the interviews show a close correspondence between the producers' personal views on Thai identity and the cultural standpoint of their shows. In response to the question **"What is Thai identity to you?"**, the majority replied that it is the "Thai ways of thinking", for example sincerity (*khwamchingchai*) and generosity (*khwam-uea-fuea-phuea-phae*), rather than art and cultural artefacts. From their perspective, despite the fact that the lifestyles of people in current Thai society have been modernised and influenced by some aspects of foreign cultures, Thai ways of thinking have remained embedded in Thai minds. This is evidenced by several social practices which are perceived as a reflection of Thai ways of thinking. The obvious evidence of this is the Thai smile, which represents gentility and friendliness as well as the *Wai* (the act of pressing the hands together at the chest or forehead) which is not only a way of greeting but also represents several aspects of Thai thought. Despite the fact that gestures similar to the *Wai* also exist in other Asian countries, especially in Buddhist countries, where it is part of Buddhist symbols and rituals, the Thai style-*Wai* is perceived to be and is claimed as a specifically Thai symbol. The *Wai* is a way of showing respect, gentility, gratitude and apology. As discussed in Chapter 1, the friendly smile and ubiquitous *Wai* is considered a Thai cultural markers (Suwilai, 2014). It has been claimed that the *Wai* serves several functions in Thai society, including as a marker of national identity, utilitarianism, status-marking, personal enhancement, and religious functions (Powell *et al.*, 2014). Thailand is considered the "Land of Smile" (Hoare, 2004, p. 241; Knutson, 2004, p. 151). The Thai trait of *Wai*, together with the smile, is used in the promotion of social harmony (Khutson, 2004). This is also presented in all episodes of the television shows. Talking about this issue, the leading figure in the production of *Khunphrachuai* said that:

> *"Overall, it is Wai. The Wai can refer to gentility, conscience, greeting, thanks/gratitude, apology and respect. Thainess is placed in it."* (The top executive of the Workpoint Entertainment Public Company Limited and also the leading figure of the *Khunphrachuai* and *Chingchasawan* shows, personal interview, 10 September 2015).

Similarly, the main producer of *Talatsot Sanam Pao* suggested that:

> *"Thai identity to me is generousness. I believe that although we don't have food to eat, we will absolutely get it." (*The main producer of *Talatsot Sanam Pao*, personal interview, 17 September 2015).

Another response to this question is that everything which has been created and used among Thais in everyday life can be counted as Thai identity, whether it is traditional or modern/fusion Thai. One informant reported that:

> *"Thai identity to me is anything which has emerged in Thailand. It is any kind of culture happening in Thailand, whether old or new. It's not only about the old but also the new and the modern."* (The main producer of *Khunphrachuai*, personal interview, 8 September 2015).

Likewise, the *Chingchasawan* producer explained that:

> *"Thai identity to me is Thai lifestyle in everyday life. Anything we do from sleeping to waking up and eating and so on is Thai way of life."* (The main producer of *Chingchasawan*, personal interview, 25 August 2015).

These results indicate that the text producers account for the national identity in respect of Thai cognition rather than cultural artefacts, and they view Thai identity as referring to both traditional and modern cultural features. They therefore present Thainess in the shows as both traditional and modern/contemporary. The aspects of combining old and new in this sense is an interesting affirmation that Thai identity in their perception is not an exclusionary nationalist identity because the exclusionary nationalism always places emphasis on certain (old) aspects, discrimination and exclusionary practices (Wodak *et al.*, 2009). This aspect is strongly represented in the shows. For example, in the *Khunphrachuai* texts, the representations of Thai fusion identity (especially the representations of the modern versions of traditional Thai music and costume) reflect the producers' viewpoints that the traditional and the modern can work harmoniously together, and Thais can be modern and traditional at the same time (see Chapter 4). However, these viewpoints are based on the key discourse of *Khunphrachuai*, which suggests that national culture can exist and will last as long as Thai people still acknowledge and remain faithful to their cultural roots.

Another interesting point is that the text producers use metaphor to envisage Thai identity. It has been suggested that metaphors are vital for understanding how people relate to reality, and hence they can reflect how the users see and think about reality (Alvesson, 2011). As Morgan (2006, p. 4) argues, "the use of metaphors implies a way of thinking and a way of seeing that pervade how we understand our world generally". In this sense, the leading figure of *Khunphrachuai* explained the crucial perspective of the show through a description of the lyrics of a Thai thematic song called *Rak Thai* (Thai roots). The lyrics of this song were written by him using the metaphor of a tree to represent the thematic idea of the show. The leading figure of the show explained that the key message of this song suggests that Thai culture can be compared to a tree that will exist if its root is strong. The tree (Thai culture) cannot go against the powerful wind from the West (Western culture). It therefore needs to adapt at the same time that it maintains its roots. If the root is strong, the tree will continue to exist. In his own words:

> *"Thai culture is like a tree. The tree is very important. The ground is like the nation. The ground needs the tree to fix its surface and the tree also needs the ground to fix itself. They mutually depend on each other. We can't avoid shedding some leaves of the tree because it (Thai culture) can't go against the strong wind from the West (Western culture). So, we need to shed some leaves of this tree, that is, to eliminate some long-winded features, to make it shorter and to remove some features of the old custom. However, we must not cut away its root. So, we ought to maintain this tree. This song says that it is agreed that the wind is too strong, and the tree can't go against it totally. So, we need to shed some leaves and nourish the root. We need to enrich the cultural root appropriately."* (The top executive of the *Workpoint Entertainment Public Company Limited* and also the leading figure of the *Khunphrachuai* and *Chingchasawan* shows, personal interview, 10 September 2015).

The metaphorical expressions through the linguistic constructions of national identity in the shows, mostly in the lyrics, indicate that the text producers fully understand the power of metaphor in discourse. As Semino (2008, p. 85) suggests, "metaphor is a particularly important linguistic and conceptual tool for the achievement of persuasion". The text producers, therefore, utilise metaphors as one of the tools for ideologically forming a sense of national belonging and encouragement of national culture (see the examples of this in the previous chapter).

In response to the question *"Should Thai culture be applied or combined with foreign cultures?"*, all of the text producers claimed that Thai fusion Identity is an

effective way of cultural adaptation and development which can greatly help to maintain Thai culture. The crucial idea which the text producers of all the television shows share jointly is that the representations of Thai fusion identity need to be based on the concept of adopting elements of the new while simultaneously highlighting the core of traditional identity and distinctive elements of Thai culture. This is one of the reasons why the shows display Thai fusion/hybrid identity as a tradition-based fusion identity. For instance, despite the fact that *Talatsot Sanam Pao* represents aspects of popular trendy food among Thais which include not only traditional Thai food but also modern/applied versions of Thai food and foreign foods, the show represents Thai thoughts and values beyond those representations of food and market. Discussing this, the leading producer asserts that the representation of food culture and markets in the show is a rhetorical device they intentionally use to promote Thai food culture itself and, at the same time, represent the social values behind it. The data obtained from the interviews reveals the representation of fusion and features of contemporary Thai identity in the shows, such as food, costumes and settings. The results show that the show is not designed to solely or entirely restore Thai past and culture and exclude new things. Rather, it focuses on highlighting the distinctive Thai identity and values in an inclusive way. This is an ingenious way to help to remind people not to forget their Thai cultural roots and also to underline core Thai values. In this respect, the leading producer of the show explained that:

> *"When we go to the market, we don't exactly see anyone dressing in traditional Thai costume these days. Likewise, the show doesn't totally represent the costume (of the hosts and guests) as traditional Thai dressing. I don't want to show that everyone has to drink water from the jug as it was in the past (olden times). It has adapted to suit what's going on in the contemporary world. However, you (Thai people) must not forget where you are from… Don't forget your own roots. This is very important… This aspect is embedded in every episode of the show."* (The main producer of *Talatsot Sanam Pao*, personal interview, 17 September 2015).

A further reason why the representations of Thai culture in the shows include both traditional and fusion Thai identity rather than focus merely on the traditional one is that, from the vantage point of the TV industry, commercial is one of the main goals of the production and distribution of the shows. To enhance the attractiveness of Thai representations in the shows, the text producers therefore represent the features of fusion identity to create entertainment spectacles which relate to the viewers and contribute to the popularity of the show (Newcomb, 2004) in terms of both business

and promotion of Thai culture. For instance, the *Chingchasawan* producer explained why they represent the modern version of Thai country music performances:

> *"On one hand, Thai people are interested in the combination of Thai culture with new things. So, the show represents something traditional and also something new… It is like the case of Thai fruits that we might feel they are more special and interesting when they are decorated and carved."* (The main producer of *Chingchasawan*, personal interview, 25 August 2015).

It can be claimed that the emergence of several forms - media products and other forms of cultural artefacts - of Thai fusion identity representation is a way of Thai cultural adaptation to a contemporary society which has been heavily influenced by the modern and foreign lifestyles. As Williams (2009) asserts, cultural adaptation is important in facilitating an existence of cultural tradition:

> "The existing state of the selective tradition is of vital importance, for it is often true that some change in this tradition – establishing new lines with the past, breaking or re-drawing existing lines – is a radical kind of contemporary change." (Williams, 2009, p. 39)

In this respect, as mentioned in Chapter 2, glocalisation - a process "in which the local exercises influence in constituting the global" (Chang, 2003, p. 28) - is a significant way of Asian television's adaptation and development in response to the globally changing circumstances in the media world. Glocalisation as a way of cultural adaptation is also employed in the representations of Thai cultural television shows in the sense that the shows bring together traditional cultural features and certain characteristics of foreign cultures to constitute a modern version of Thai identity. According to the results of the textual analysis, the representations of the shows adopt this route of cultural adaptation through representation of Thai identity as an inclusive identity. This way of representations is enacted to support the cultural ideology of the compatibility and accommodation of the traditional Thai and other cultural features. This corresponds to the text producers' views which see that national culture needs to be not only conserved but also developed/adapted at the same time. In this sense, the leading figure of *Khunphrachuai* and *Chingchasawan* pointed out that:

> *"Definitely, the culture needs two ways of management. It needs both conservation and development.*" (The top executive of the *Workpoint Entertainment Public*

Company Limited and also the leading figure of the *Khunphrachuai* and *Chingchasawan* shows, personal interview, 10 September 2015).

The way the text producers responded regarding the notion of Thai fusion identity and adaptation of the culture as noted above implies their cultural orientation to the construction of the inauthenticity of Thai culture in the sense that Thai culture can be represented and constructed through the adaptation and hybridisation. Despite perceiving a distinctiveness/uniqueness of Thai cultural features, the text producers realise the fact that Thai culture, more or less, was and has been influenced by foreign cultural elements, i.e. by a product of cultural borrowing and adaptation. This is reflected in the viewpoint of the leading figure of the *Khunphrachuai* and *Chingchasawan* shows, who oversees the overall production and presentation of both shows, affirming his perception of the inauthenticity of Thai culture. As he explained:

> *"there is no authentic Thai... We can't confirm if the Sun Tha Ra Phon songs and Lukthung songs are actually authentic Thai. Lukthung itself has its own cultural distinctiveness, but at the same time, the musical arrangement of it (Lukthung) sounds very similar to the Southern-American music. Even the Sam Cha rhythm which has been claimed by Thais as Thai culture was adapted from the Southern-American music. The (Lukthung) costume is also not Thai. However, the stories narrated in the songs are about Thai life… The term 'authentic Thainess' doesn't actually exist. We accept it as Thainess, and it has continuously been developed."* (The top executive of the *Workpoint Entertainment Public Company Limited* and also the leading figure of the *Khunphrachuai* and *Chingchasawan* shows, personal interview, 10 September 2015).

5.2 Thai Television Shows and Government Cultural Policy

To account for the link between the shows and government cultural policy, at the stage of in-depth interviews the text producers were asked to indicate whether and in what way the processes of the production of their television show might entail government involvement. The response of the text producers displayed satisfaction with producing the show without government intervention, as they are not state-funded productions. Although there is no government interference, the data obtained from the interviews reveal a very close relationship between the three television shows and the government, especially between the shows and the state cultural administration. Professionally, there is no government intervention in the sense of direct involvement in the creative and production processes (even though the actual

contents could be said to be very much in line with the government's announced cultural preferences), yet there is an obvious amount of collaboration.

5.2.1 Television shows and government involvement

The relationship between the shows and the government is discussed in two main aspects by the interviewees: 1) government support in terms of awards and arts and cultural resources and facilities; and 2) co-operation between the shows and the government in promoting specific government projects. The text producers of the three television shows suggested that the processes of production are independent of the government in general. The variety of content and forms of presentation in the shows are created and presented depending on the cultural vision and considerations of the text producers, based on their concerns about professional media ethics and social responsibility. When asked whether the shows obtain any support from the government sector, all of the text producers replied that the shows received support in terms of awards rather than funding. Talking about this, the *Talatsot Sanam Pao* producer stated that:

> *"They have seen that we did it well, so they gave us awards."* (The main producer of *Talatsot Sanam Pao*, personal interview, 17 September 2015).

The *Chingchasawan* producer explained that:

> *"I am thankful that the government gave us the awards. This is really a moral support for us. Although we don't gain any funding or other kinds of support, at least we see that they admire what we do."* (The main producer of *Chingchasawan*, personal interview, 25 August 2015).

Regarding government support for the shows through provision of facilities, *Khunphrachuai* is the only television show that has regularly and substantially gained access to the art and cultural resources from the government. This does not mean that the other two television shows have been rejected by the government sector, but that *Khunphrachuai* is the only one that needs specific access to these information and facility resources. At the stage of searching for information, as one of the important parts of the pre-production process, the text producers are continually in need of in-depth information and research. As the accuracy of that information is

essential, the text producers of this show can draw on government facilities which can provide them with rich and reliable data about art and culture. This includes archives, museums, libraries, experts, and so forth. Moreover, the government has also allowed the text producers to contact people in government organisations in person to provide the producers with beneficial information and/or to involve them in the show as guests.

Regarding government funding, contrary to the television shows telecast on *The National Broadcasting Services of Thailand, or NBT* (Channel 11), which is run by the government's *Public Relations Department*, there is no government funding to support the overall production of these three television shows. The only one way of funding they receive from the government sector is specific funding for promoting a particular government project through the shows, known as "tie-ins". As *Khunphrachuai's* main producer said:

> *"There is no government funding for the show directly. The funding was sometimes provided as a particular budget (for the promotion of government's projects through the show). When the projects finished, such funding is ended."* (The main producer of the *Khunphrachuai*, personal interview, 8 September 2015).

Compared with the other two shows, the promotion of government projects is mostly represented in *Khunphrachuai,* for example the promotion of Thai performing arts contests among youths run by the *Department of Cultural Promotion, the Ministry of Culture*, and the promotion of the *ASEAN* community sponsored by the *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand*. In *Chingchasawan,* the obvious instance of the promotion of government's projects is the representation of the *Musical Compositions of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej* singing and dancing contest sponsored by *The National Legislative Assembly*. In *Talatsot Sanam Pao*, promotion of the government's projects takes the form of the promotion of tourism sponsored by the *Tourism Authority of Thailand.*

Another interesting point is that these three shows also help to promote government projects, without government funding, if they see that those kinds of projects are useful to the viewers. The co-operation, as noted, indicates the interdependent

relationship between television shows and the government, while in practice they work together and support each other. Figure 5.1 illustrates the relationship between the shows and government involvement.
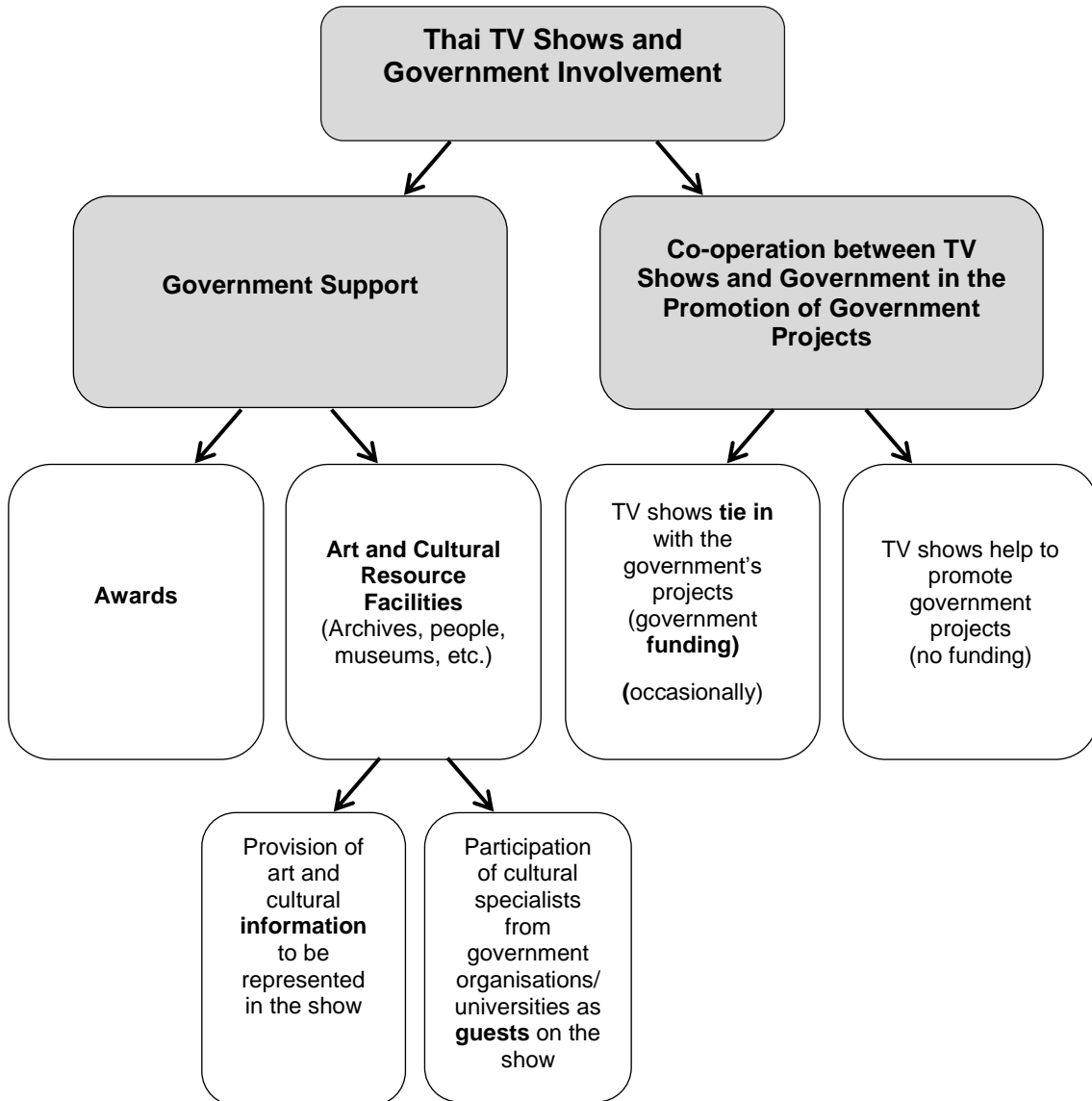
Figure 5.1: The relationship between Thai television shows and government involvement

5.2.2 Television shows and the Ministry of Culture policy

In addition to the aspect of government involvement, this study also looked at the policy of the *Ministry of Culture* of Thailand to examine the link between the Thai representations in the shows and government cultural policy as part of the construction and promotion of Thai identity. Arguably, the close relationship between the shows and government involvement exists because the shows and the

government share the same cultural vision, rather than that the shows are a part of the government. According to the four-year action plan (for the years 2012-2015) of the *Ministry of Culture* (Ministry of Culture, 2016), the conduct of cultural policy places emphasis on four main strategic issues. These four cultural issues, along with the four main relevant service goals, are outlined in Figure 5.2.

Four Main Strategic issues	Service Goals
1. Employing religious and cultural aspects to enhance solutions to social problems and development of the five border provinces in **Southern Thailand**	1. Arranging religious, art and cultural activities to enhance solutions to social problems and the development of the five border provinces in Southern Thailand
2. Building preparedness for and associating with **the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC)**	2. Developing the knowledge and establishing a religious, artistic and cultural relationship among people in ASEAN
3. Building the **values of conscience and Thai wisdom**	3. Thai people realise the significance of arts, religion and culture as well as take part in the monitoring of and creation of art, religion and culture
4. Enhancing the knowledge management of **art and culture**	4. The relevant institutions take part in domestic and international cooperation in art, religion and culture

Figure 5.2: The four main strategic issues and the service goals of the *Ministry of Culture* of Thailand

Current government cultural policy, illustrated in Figure 5.2, indicates the government's attempt to support cultural development at both domestic and international level. Whereas the encouragement of Thai art, culture, religion and unity among Thais is focused, social and cultural participation between Thailand and other *ASEAN* countries is also stressed. Based on this document, the first strategic issue links the religious and cultural aspect to the unrest in Southern Thailand (as outlined in Chapter 1). One manifestation where this aspect is shown is the *Khunphrachuai* show, which generates discourses on solidarity among Thais (see Chapter 4) through representing not only solidarity among people across the country but also, more specifically, harmony among Thais in the south. In this way, the show represents songs with lyrics which encourage harmony among Thais in Southern

Thailand, accompanied by hosts' discourses that stress this point. For instance, the show of the song *"Tai Santisuk" (The Peaceful Southern Thailand)*, which has lyrics expressing how Southern Thais are proud of being Thai and they seek to live in peace with the rest of the country. Another example is the show of the song "*Ban Chan" (My Home)*, which represents the mental suffering of Thais who live in the border provinces in the South, where social conflict and terrorism still occur. The results of the interviews show that the text producers of *Khunphrachuai* represent their concerns about the promotion of solidarity among all citizens of the nation, rather than the government force in those representations. They thus create a discourse of solidarity whereby the representation of musical shows are considered an entertaining and emotional way to promote this aspect.

Focusing on the second strategic issue, the emphasis on social and cultural participation among the peoples of *ASEAN* is linked to the aspect of inclusive identity. That is, it focuses on the participation in the *ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC)*, placing emphasis on the following goals:

> "The *ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community* aims to contribute to realising an ASEAN Community that is people-oriented and socially responsible with a view to achieving enduring solidarity and unity among the peoples and Member States of ASEAN. **It seeks to forge a common identity and build a caring and sharing society which is inclusive** and where the well-being, livelihood, and welfare of the peoples are enhanced." (Association of Southeast Asian Nations, 2016a)

In *Khunphrachuai*, there was a promotion of the *ASEAN Community* in 23 episodes of the show, tied in with the government's promotion of this project in the second half of the year 2015. The promotion was represented through individual parts of the show, especially created for the promotion of this project and sponsored by the *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand.* In this way*,* two special sections, called *"ASEAN Minute" and* "มองโลกแลไทยก้าวไกลสู่อาเซียน" (*Looking at the world, looking at Thailand: Progressing towards ASEAN*), were created to provide the viewers with important information about the *ASEAN Community* and the advantages of participation in this project (see further discussion on this issue in Chapter 7).

The last two government strategic issues - "building the value of conscience and Thai wisdom" and "enhancing the knowledge management of art and culture" - are closely related to the Thai representations in all three television shows in the sense that they similarly focus on the encouragement and promotion of art and culture. The most striking result to emerge from the data is that the construction of Thai identity in *Khunphrachuai* is in complete agreement with all four strategic issues. This confirms that the constructions and representations of Thai identity in the shows are aligned with government cultural policy, despite the fact that the government is not directly involved in the processes of production. When the text producers were asked about the beginning of the shows, the common view was that the shows were generated as a result of the producers' personal interest in and appreciation of Thai culture, along with awareness of producing attractive and appealing television programmes to be exemplary shows.

The results of the textual analysis, together with the perspectives of the key figures in television industry, substantiate the claim that although the government does not have to be part of the production processes of the television shows, the shows can help in implementing the line of government cultural policy. The connection between the shows and government cultural policy indicates an effort on behalf of the government to construct a collective ideology of contemporary Thainess as an inclusive rather than a nationalist identity. These results further support the idea of Hall (1996a, p. 612), which notes that "national identities are not things we are born with, but are formed and transformed within and in relation to representation". The exclusionary form of nation-building might not work for contemporary Thailand, which aims to achieve both domestic and international phases of development. For this reason, the promotion of national identity as inclusive is an effective way to contribute to state goals in this sphere. The government has promoted Thai identity and relevant aspects in the society through different events and projects, including through television, which has been a powerful platform for communication and promotion of Thai culture to mass audiences (Hamilton, 2002; Thitinan, 2007; Tapakon and Kanjana, 2011). Regarding the television shows examined in this study, the shows' capability to bring all of this together and produce entertaining presentations might be a reason why they are well known as the outstanding television shows which encourage national cultural heritage.

Arguably, this televisual representation of Thai identity as inclusive identity is compatible with the cultural circumstances of Thailand as it is a way to underpin the maintenance of distinctiveness of Thai culture and simultaneously embrace multiculturalism (which can support the international relationships between Thailand and other countries). Similarly, it is evident that the process of inclusion in this sense has also emerged in the Thai film industry to support the goals of the cultural industry. A study by Veluree (2015, p. 267) examines the relation between the practices of Thai film policies and the Thai nation-state. She argues that whereas most government-funded films focus on a representation of Thainess and affirmation of the Thai nation-state, "sometimes the state authorities need to suppress their nation-building agenda in regard to film policy to accommodate their economic agenda". As a result, some films are allowed by state authorities to represent "expressions of Thainess that deviate from the state hegemony" in order to achieve international fame and/or to promote tourism. Focusing on the television industry, this study found that the processes of production of television shows are not directly connected with government policy, as with the case of Thai films noted above. However, the televisual representation of Thai identity as inclusive is in line with the government's vision of national culture along with the encouragement of social and cultural communion at the international level. Arguably, this does not take on the character of a nationalism in which nationalist sentiment and cultural movements are embedded, as in, for instance, the right-wing populism in some European countries in which exclusion - i.e. the "sharp dichotomization of the social into an "Us" identity constructed along national, regional, religious and ethnic lines versus a "Them" ways - is emphasised (Wodak and KhosraviNik, 2013, p. xx). As mentioned above, the inclusive way of Thai cultural movement indicates the direction of the construction of national identity in contemporary Thailand in the sense that Thai identity is supposed to be inclusive rather than exclusionary nationalist. This implies a cultural direction in constructing inauthenticity of Thai culture.

Additionally, the shows also represent aspects of cultural sharing between Thai and foreign cultures rather than rejecting otherness. This is a form of representation and promotion of Self which is not a strict "Self and Other" representation, which is the defining characteristic of nationalism. Nationalism assumes that the Self is only

constructed by way of negative representation of the Other. In relation to this, Boréus (2013, p. 295) explains the relation between discursive discrimination (DD) and nationalism as "nationalism might be related to DD, since it involves drawing borders between us and them, thus allowing for differential treatment of groups". In respect of DD, "proposals for unfavourable treatment" and "negative other-representation" are used (Boréus, 2013, p. 294). An obvious example of this is the representation of Iran (Self) and the West (Other) in Iran's nuclear programme. As KhosraviNik (2015a) argues, the Iranian discourses represent the Self through the perspective of its history and the West's interventions in Iran (as the negative representation of Them). The features of exclusion noted above can distinguish the Thai representation of Self from nationalist narratives.

5.3 The Cultural Values of the Shows

The television producers' enthusiasm for producing nostalgia television shows together with the support from the government reflects their "nostalgic interests and investments" (Keightley and Pickering, 2012, p. 114) as crucial elements that fulfil the promotion of the cultural heritage of the nation. The interesting point is that such interests and investments relate not only to the maintenance of national culture as a heritage handed down from the past. They also reflect the collective aspiration of the media institutions and the state to reconnect with the past to strengthen the present and continuity of a distinctive national identity. As Keightley and Pickering (2012, p. 114) state, "the nostalgic interests and investments…do not only involve the preservation of the past for its own sake. They may also signal a collective desire to reconnect with what has apparently been lost or reassess what has apparently been gained."

The results gained from the interviews indicate that the text producers view that the shows play a meaningful role in upholding the national culture by having an impact on Thai society. From their perspective, the shows play a cultural role regarding not only the encouragement of Thai culture for its own sake but also the development of the television shows' production, as a vital source for mediating national past and culture. The crucial cultural values of the shows are explained below.

5.3.1 The role as exemplary television shows in the Thai television Industry

In response to questions about the beginning of the shows, the text producers of all shows provided largely similar answers. That is, the shows are inspired by their appreciation of Thai culture and like-minded intent to uphold national cultural heritage. In addition to this, they noticed that, at that time, there was a lack of spectacular and entertaining cultural television shows. For this reason, these three shows were created to be exemplary entertaining television shows with a modern, fashionable presentation to escape the label of outdated and boring.

Talatsot Sanam Pao is based on the inspiration of the main producer, who is a genuine Thai food enthusiast. The main producer suggested that despite the fact that there were a number of television shows representing different aspects of Thai food and fresh-food markets at that time, they did not really represent the attraction of those markets regarding Thai lifestyle and the values behind it. They hence created this show to underline Thai values and social meanings behind the presentation of foods and markets per se. As a result of its popularity, the show has become the exemplary television show, evidenced by an increase of many television shows that represent food and culture in a similar way. The main producer said that:

> *"Looking back on the last ten years, there was no TV show that talked about the fresh-food markets. My mother also sold goods at the fresh-food market. At that time, I saw that there were some TV shows which represent the aspects of a fresh-food market but they hardly represented a chat between the hosts with the sellers in the markets… We were the first one who produce a TV show that highlights the fresh-food market. Afterwards, a lot of TV shows presented in the same way as we do."* (The main producer of *Talatsot Sanam Pao*, personal interview, 17 September 2015).

Khunphrachuai and *Chingchasawan* were created according to the idea of the top executive of the organisation *Workpoint Entertainment Public Company Limited*, a man with a substantial interest in art and culture. In the interviews, he said that:

> *"There were some cultural TV shows at that time, but they were not fashionable."* (The top executive of the *Workpoint Entertainment Public Company Limited* and also the leading figure of the *Khunphrachuai* and *Chingchasawan* shows, personal interview, 10 September 2015).

The concern noted above led the text producers to conceive a show to be a spectacular and attractive cultural television show. As the main producer pointed out:

> *"The Khunphrachuai show was created in response to the inspiration of the top executive, who was keen to produce the show to fulfil the Thai TV industry… The show was produced to be the protector, the leader, and the agent of Thai people for representing aspects of culture."* (The main producer of *Khunphrachuai*, personal interview, 8 September 2015).

The creative productions of these shows indicate the attempt of the text producers to provide the Thai television industry with a flagship show for the production of cultural television shows which are also fashionable, attractive and entertaining. The light entertainment genre was considered the appropriate format as it matches Thais' tastes and styles of entertainment consumption (see discussion in Chapter 7).

5.3.2 The Khunphrachuai show as cultural brand

Regarding the popularity of the shows, it can be said that they are standard bearers that have fluctuated in terms of ratings. Despite the slight drop in their ratings compared with the past, they have always been well-known and well-liked by Thais. That is to say, Thai people generally know about these shows more or less even when they do not regularly watch them. The continuity of the telecast for longer than a decade, along with the prominence of the shows in promoting national culture through a variety of entertaining features, might be a reason why they have continued to be popular and influential. In this respect, the *Khunphrachuai* producer stated that:

> *"I think it has been successful. In my experience, when I asked people if they know the Khunphrachuai show, I found that they knew it and they claimed that it's the TV show conserving and encouraging Thainess. I'm not sure if they regularly watch the show but they certainly know it. Everyone knows that it is the best TV show in terms of conserving and promoting Thainess. In this sense, it is quite a superior TV show."* (The creative of the *Khunphrachuai*, personal interview, 8 September 2015).

As *Khunphrachuai* has been telecasted for more than ten years, its ratings are therefore up and down. The text producers have expressed their determination to continue producing the show. As they explained, one of the reasons why they will continue to do so is that it has become a cultural brand. When they were asked

"What will happen if the show incurs a financial loss in the future?", they replied that they would find ways to improve and make any necessary adjustments to the show. They asserted that they would never stop producing it even if this means financial loss for the network. As the top executive of the organisation said:

> *"If it incurs a financial loss, we will try to find ways to improve and adapt it. We won't give up producing it… If we view it from the marketing perspective, Khunphrachuai has been a brand that we have created. It's a really important brand. If it is given up, it might affect several aspects. It might let the members in the production team feel down, and I believe that it will also affect the spirit of those who work in the TV industry in the sense that the cultural TV show will never make a success, even Khunphrachuai. Therefore, at least, it has been a tree that needs to be maintained. Although it might be a tree which is not widespread enough, it should not be cut down."* (The top executive of the *Workpoint Entertainment Public Company Limited* and also the leading figure of the *Khunphrachuai* and *Chingchasawan* shows, personal interview, 10 September 2015).

It is noteworthy to contemplate the sentiments behind the assurance that the show will never end. The possible explanation is that as the show is so well established and acknowledged by the society as an outstanding cultural television programme, the producers cannot imagine dropping it. The show is considered as a cultural brand, a significant cultural symbol, and probably a tool of promotion of the organisation itself as the media institution that has produced and distributed the popular television programmes and the one which can play a cultural role in a similar way for public service broadcasting.

5.3.3 The cultural impact of the shows

The cultural impact of the shows reflect the power of television discourses in constituting "situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people" (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997 cited in Wodak and Meyer, 2009, p. 6). The results gained from the interviews indicate that the text producers see the power of television discourses in underlining the value of Thai culture and also circulating a sense of cultural belonging among Thais.

In comparison with *Khunphrachuai*, *Chingchasawan* and *Talatsot Sanam Pao* are more successful in terms of ratings. However, regarding achievements in preserving

national culture, all text producers perceived that the shows more or less equally contribute to the promotion of Thai culture. Although there is no statistical evidence for this, they believed and noticed that the shows could help to promote national identity in the sense that the Thai representations in the shows have an influence on audiences' cultural behaviour and the cultural trends in wider society.

The *Khunphrachuai* producers pointed out that they noticed that the show had contributed to an increase in admiration for traditional culture among Thais. In addition to its basic function in providing the viewers with knowledge of culture and reminding them of their cultural roots, the text producers perceived that the representations of Thai musical performances and contests among the youths in the show could lead to increasing popularity in traditional music among the new Thai generations. The examples of this include the increasing trend of learning to play traditional Thai musical instruments such as the xylophone and several musical shows at schools that have brought the Thai thematic songs presented in the *Khunphrachuai* show to be performed/covered. Talking about this, the leading figure of the show explained:

> *"We have noticed that after we presented the Thai xylophone playing contest in the show, the xylophone was then out of stock and the traditional Thai music schools in Bangkok (the capital of Thailand) gained more students. Moreover, there have been a lot of musical shows in the schools bringing the songs in the Khunphrachuai show to represent again, as seen on YouTube."* (The top executive of the *Workpoint Entertainment Public Company Limited* and also the leading figure of the *Khunphrachuai* and *Chingchasawan* shows, personal interview, 10 September 2015).

Moreover, the producers suggested that *Khunphrachuai* influences the trends of cultural events in society. The outstanding features of what this thesis argues as "*Khunphrachuai* invented-tradition of Thai representations", i.e. the *Khunphrachuai*-style of Thai representations - such as the hosts' costumes, the decoration of the set and the applied/modern version of traditional Thai musical performances - are applied to Thai representations in several cultural events arranged by other organisations. The main producer explained the popular trend in employing the *Khunphrachuai* style-Thai representations in many cultural events as follows:

> *"Yes, it does. Nowadays, there is a popular trend in dressing in T-shirt and Chongkraben pantaloons among contemporary Thai musical performers... The*

decoration of the set with the Ton Kok trees and the red curtains is also employed in many Thai cultural events. In fact, these features didn't exist in the last ten years… It seems that the modern style-Thai cultural events are mainly presented in line with the Khunphrachuai style-Thai representations. For example, positioning the alto xylophone on a chair so that the musician can play it standing up, dressing in a white T-shirt and colourful Chongkraben pantaloons, and playing this style of Thai music." (The main producer of the *Khunphrachuai*, personal interview, 8 September 2015).

In the same vein, the *Chingchasawan* producers also recognised the cultural impact of the show. They perceived that the contest of Thai country music performances in the show could lead to an increasing trend in the popularity of this kind of music among youths, not only in rural but also in the urban areas. This is evidenced by the increasing number of the youth competitors in the shows' contests compared with the past. Furthermore, they suggested that the show could play a meaningful role in reviving the popularity of Thai country music and dancing performances that seemed to have been lost. The capacity of the show to evoke the nostalgic memory of the temple fairs where the *Chingchasawan* (Ferris wheel) and Thai country music performances were commonly presented has helped to increase the social events which raise the nostalgic mood. As the producer said:

> *"It can help to recall the revival of the lost Thai country song bands… and also the trend in bringing back the mood of Thai temple fairs to the social events."* (The main producer of the *Chingchasawan* show, personal interview, 25 August 2015).

Likewise, the *Talatsot Sanam Pao* producers noted that the show attempts to remind the viewers not to forget Thai identity through the representation of the aesthetics and value of Thai-style markets and food consumption per se and also the Thai social values behind it, such as merit, generousness, friendliness and tolerance. Besides, the producers noted that the main aim of the show is to recall the nostalgic memories of traditional food culture in relation to the fresh-food market. It is hoped that this will contribute to a revival in the popularity of Thai food and Thai-style markets. Fortunately, the text producers feel that it has actually happened. As the main producer of the show stated:

> *"Shopping at the Thai fresh-food markets is a part of Thai lifestyle…The show simulates the identity of Thai market to present to Thai viewers and remind them that they used to go shopping at the fresh-food market in the past. We would like to make the viewers wonder why these days Thai people admire shopping at department stores.*

While there has been an increase of department stores, some fresh-food markets have already been closed down. So, this is why we produce the show…The main aim of the show is to recall the nostalgic feeling. I think that most Thai people used to experience shopping at the fresh-food market, but they had changed to admire the supermarket instead when they grew up. So, it will be great if the show can influence them to go back to shop at the fresh-food markets near their home. Fortunately, it is.” (The main producer of *Talatsot Sanam Pao*, personal interview, 17 September 2015).

Moreover, they noticed that the success of the show in evoking the old-fashioned mood of Thai-style markets among Thais (especially among urban Thais who are familiar with modern style-markets) has contributed to the revival of nostalgic Thai-style markets and increasing popularity of this aspect of cultural consumption. This is evident from the nostalgic tourism boom regarding fresh-food markets, floating markets and old markets. The producer explained a cultural impact of the show as follows:

“It has greatly contributed to the popularity of visiting Thai-style markets. It has helped to recover this kind of market, such as the Am Pha Wa Market, which has much revived and has been more popular since it was represented by the show.” (The main producer of the *Talatsot Sanam Pao*, personal interview, 17 September 2015).

Arguably, the cultural values of the shows as noted above indicate the central role of nostalgic media discourses in not only facilitating the continuity of national culture but also providing a revival of nostalgic identity through evoking the nostalgic memories/images/representations of traditional culture to the new generations. This reflects the function of nostalgia television shows in forming collective nostalgia among Thais, which can facilitate the maintenance of national culture and also the formation of a collective sense of cultural belonging which contributes to unity among Thais. This also indicates the important phase of the culture industry in the sense that it can outstandingly serve the public service. These results further support Bernstein (2001, p. 100), who suggests that "ultimately, the culture industry no longer even needs to directly pursue everywhere the profit interests from which it originated… The culture industry turns into public relations, the manufacturing of goodwill per se, without regard for particular firms or saleable objects".

Conclusion

This chapter shows the power behind television discourses in shaping and constructing the social knowledge of national identity following directions that fit the sociocultural circumstances of contemporary Thai society. Rather than exercising their power to build nationalist sentiment, the government, together with media institutions, employ entertaining television programmes as a tool for mediating a desired and suitable historic past of the nation and constructing/representing Thai identity in an inclusive (non-nationalist) way. This indicates the balancing function of non-nationalist nation-building in maintaining the distinctiveness of national culture and at the same time supporting international relations and the development of the country. This inclusive version of nation-building seems to be considered by the State and also by media institutions as the most appropriate way to develop the country in both the domestic and international spheres. This shows the difference in cultural stance between the non-nationalist nation-building at present and the nationalist nation-building of the past (as discussed in Chapter 1).

The results of this chapter indicate the communion of thought between key figures in media institutions and the government. As aforementioned, government cultural policy places emphasis on both the maintenance and promotion of Thai cultural heritage and the enhancement of an inclusive identity in response to goals in international affairs, in particular Thailand's participation in the *ASEAN* community, which aims to contribute to closer bonds between the *ASEAN* member states in terms of political, economic and socio-cultural development. Despite the fact that the text producers cannot be intimately connected to the formulation of government cultural policy, the representations of Thai fusion identity through their shows are evidence indicating that the text producers share the same vision as the government in terms of acknowledging and promoting multiculturalism to the society. Nevertheless, simultaneously, the maintenance of national culture is still emphasised at the core. As the direction of an inclusive cultural vision is represented through television discourse and is apparently stressed in government cultural policy documents, this study, therefore, argues that the construction of Thai identity (Self) in contemporary Thai society is inclusive identity representation, and is thus non-nationalist.

The results of this chapter demonstrate the way in which the creators of television discourses construct and represent Thai identity to target viewers. The next chapter will discuss the perspectives of Thai viewers on the Thai representations and nostalgic representations in the *Khunphrachuai* show to achieve an understanding of text consumption and the cultural impact of the shows on audiences and society.

Chapter 6. Viewership and Thai Representations in the Television Shows

Introduction

In addition to Chapter 4 and 5 which attended the results of the textual analysis of Thai representations in the shows and the perspectives of the text producers, the current chapter involves analysis of the viewers' perspectives on Thai representations in the *Khunphrachuai* show as the key television show of this study. The results of this research project support the work of Lewis (2002) studying the role of media in shaping the construction of national identity in the countries challenged by globalisation including Thailand. Lewis claims that the media in Thailand have played a central role in shaping the cycle of remembering and forgetting the aspects of national identity and have also interacted with the state to create their own version of the past influencing the popular memory of the nation.

Drawing on the ideas of Fairclough and Wodak (1997 cited in Wodak and Meyer, 2009, p. 6): the discourse is not only "socially constitutive" but also "socially conditioned", and it constitutes "the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people", this study explores the way in which the television discourses play a role in constituting the audiences' ideas and cultural behaviours. To understand how Thai people make sense of the Thai identity representations in the shows and how those representations were connected with their cultural views and behaviours, a number of focus groups were conducted. The aim of the focus groups is to explore the viewers' perspectives on Thai representations in the *Khunphrachuai* show to answer the question of how they perceive and interpret the identity representations in the show, and how they link it to their own lived experiences/knowledge to make sense of the texts and discourses of identity projected in the show. In this way, the cultural impacts of the show on their views and practices were also investigated. The questions of the focus group interviews covered three main areas: 1) the viewing habits; 2) the audiences' perceptions and interpretations of the Thai identity representations in the *Khunphrachuai*; and 3) the cultural impacts of the show on audiences' views and behaviours.

This analytical chapter will provide a discussion on audiences' responses to the Thai representations in the show as a product of nostalgic communication which the text/show set to convey to shape the contemporary identity projection and to help to facilitate a continuity of the national identity (as discussed in Chapter 4 and 5). For example, as the leading figures of the *Khunphrachuai* show production team asserted, the way to civilise the nation is not only by looking towards the progress/future but also looking backwards to the past in order to fulfil the progress with substantial direction and unity. This chapter will cover a discussion on the views of 1) viewership and Thai core values as a key cultural marker, 2) stock of knowledge and interpretation of Thai identity, 3) viewership and nostalgia and 4) cultural impacts of the show on audiences' views and behaviours.

6.1 Viewership and Thai Core Values as Key Cultural Markers

> "National identities are not things we are born with, but are formed and transformed within and in relation to representation... a nation is not only a political entity but something which produces meanings - a system of cultural representation." (Hall, 1996a, p. 612)

Following Hall's conception of national identity, it can be argued that the cultural representations in the television shows have played a meaningful role in constructing and circulating the national-identity narratives. The fact that the Thai representations are the product of television discourse which has been constructed and promoted not only in response to the text producers' cultural concerns but also in line with the government cultural policy (as explained in Chapter 5) indicates their constructive power to shape the public knowledge. This shows the powerful role of the television text producers together with the government sector as what de Cillia *et al.* (1999, p. 155) calls "the actors in concrete (institutionalised) contexts", in constituting the knowledge of the members of the nation. This corresponds to the view of Foucault (1995, p. 27) who argues that "power produces knowledge". As noted in Chapter 2, the television discourses can play a powerful role in reflecting and constructing particular values and beliefs about various aspects of reality (Lorenzo-Dus, 2009). Likewise, the results of the analysis of television texts together with the producers' perspectives (see Chapter 4 and 5) indicate the crucial role of television discourses as a tool which the Thai identity narratives producers - not only the television show producers per se but also the government sector getting involved in the process of

text production - use to articulate and generate the certain structural meaning of national identity. In this way, the representations in the shows construct the discourses of Thai identity in accordance with the social and cultural goings-on in contemporary Thailand as a multicultural society, rather than totally flashing back to traditionalism. The national identity narratives in the shows, therefore, consist of the two main sets of discourses of identity - the discourses on maintenance of traditional culture together with the discourses on the encouragement of social and cultural communion at international level (see Chapter 5).

As discussed in Chapter 4, the *Khunphrachuai* and the other two shows present several topics around Thai identity construct including both material and non-material cultures through a variety of semiotic resources. Focusing on the *Khunphrachuai,* the topics of Thai identity represented include the performing arts (as the biggest topic), history, visual arts, literatures, linguistic practices, traditional beliefs, traditions of festivities and worships, the King and the Royal Family, sharing Thai culture with others, traditional sports, ethnic groups, traditional dressing, greeting practices, and foods. Among those topics, the show highly emphasises the representations of arts as these have been considered as a Thai cultural marker which is full of cultural aesthetic figures and also underpins the spectacular entertainment values of the Variety television show (Newcomb, 2004). The interesting point is that, within the representations of various topics of culture in which the material cultural artefacts are greatly highlighted, the nostalgic Thai core values behind those texts have highly been embedded.

This study found that both text producers and audiences considered the Thai core values as the unique cultural marker of national identity. The data gained from the focus groups illustrate that despite the displays of art and cultural artefacts have been obviously highlighted in the show, both old and young viewers perceived that the show attempted to underline the value of Thai core values as one of the important Thai cultural makers. The majority of viewers understood that the show attempted to represent the national identity regarding not only the particular topics of culture per se as the main topic of each episode but also the core values (whether vanished or living) at the same time. Both young and old audiences suggested that

these core values were obviously represented through the two channels of discourses including the presentations of the hosts and the interaction between the hosts and guests. In this respect, the viewers collectively perceived that, throughout the show, the Thai ways of talk and manners of the hosts/guests and the traditional based-dressing style they dressed were the semiotic resources which the text producers used to emphasise the value of and to evoke the nostalgic Thai values/manners that had vanished/had been neglected among Thais, especially the youths. When the viewers were asked *"To what extent does the show represent the traditional Thai values?",* both old and young viewers suggested that the Thai core values underlined in the show consist of the politeness *(khwamsamruam or khwamriaproi)*, gentleness/humility (*khwam-on-nom*), showing respect for senior people and so forth. Talking about the semiotic elements of the show reflecting the core values, the old urban viewers suggested that;

Old urban viewer 1:   *It is reflected through the talks…*

Old urban viewer 2:   *That's right.*

Old urban viewer 1:   *The speeches of the hosts and guests*

Old urban viewer 2:   *Also, the style of dressing*

In a similar vein, the young viewers noted that the show represented the Thai core values through the ways of talk, the manners, and the hosts and guests' interactions. For instance, one young rural viewer said;

"The hosts always sit on the floor with legs tucked back to one side (Nang Phapphiap)… When they appeared in other TV shows, they are really funny. However, in this show, they are much more gentle and polite."

Similarly, one young urban viewer explained that;

"It's clearly presented through the hosts' actions, sitting on the floor while talking and so forth."

Further to the audiences' viewpoints regarding identity represented in the show mentioned above, their opinions on Thai identity in general were also explored to find the relation between these particular ideas and their interpretation of the show. The data gained from the focus groups indicate that the audiences' views on identity

represented in the show are extremely similar to their ideas of Thai identity in general sense. For this thesis, Thai identity refers to cultural qualities/characteristics perceived to be cultural markers for identifying Thainess and differentiating Thais/Thainess from others. The results of the audience analysis reveal that despite the fact that there have been various kinds of Thai culture collectively shared among Thais, both old and young viewers considered the core values/ways of thinking as the most distinctive markers of Thai identity. In response to the question **"What is Thai identity to you?"**, all participants, in the same way as the text producers' perspectives, considered the Thai core values/ways of thinking as the most outstanding distinctive cultural marker of national identity. As they suggested, these core values included the good and polite manners, *Wai (the act of pressing the hands together at the chest or forehead)* when greeting and leaving, smile, generosity (*khwamminamchai* or *khwam-uea-fuea-phuea-phae)*, respect for senior people, gratitude, forgiveness, gentleness, awareness of dressing appropriately and so forth. Besides, the minority of the old rural viewers further suggested that in addition to those values, any kind of culture used among Thais - including the lifestyle, food, dressing, customs and beliefs - could also be considered as a marker of Thai identity. When the old rural viewers were asked what Thai identity is to them, they suggested that;

Old rural viewer 1:	*The Wai, smiling, courtesy, helping each other and good interpersonal relation.*
Old rural viewer 2:	*It is the smile.*
Old rural viewer 3:	*Thing which really reflects the traditional Thainess is smile.*
Old rural viewer 2:	*I also see that Thai boxing represented in the show refers to Thai identity. However, in general sense, I would say it is smile and Wai.*

Likewise, the young urban viewers stated that;

Young urban viewer 1:	*It is Thai manner. Thai people very much rely on the social manners. Don't interrupt while other people are talking.*
Young urban viewer 2:	*Don't walk across those who are sleeping/laying down.*
Young urban viewer 1:	*Yes, it's true. I noticed that the Westerners don't mind about this. As seen in the football matches, for example,*

the Western football players normally walk across those
who are falling down, but Thais avoid doing like that.

In relation to the results explained above, this study found that the audiences' ideas of national identity have been influenced by the discursive construction of Thai identity through not only media products but also the government projects. As argued in Chapter 5, the Thai representations in the *Khunphrachuai* have highly been in line with the recent government cultural policy. In the same way, the viewers' perception of identity aforementioned is very much in line with the recent government promotion of the concept of "*12 Core Values for Thais*" - announced and promoted by the government since the year 2014 (as explained in Chapter 1). These core values are derived from a collection of the long traditional Thai values (based on the general public perception) together with King Bhumibol's ideas of Thai living. The concept of *12 Core Values* has been nationwide promoted in order to provide a creation of a good standard of living in the current Thai society (i.e. to guide Thai people to apply these values to their daily life), and also facilitate a "creation of a strength of Thailand" (Royal Thai Government, 2014; National Science Technology and Innovation Policy Office, 2014). The government's promotion together with the representations of Thai values in the show indicates that the long traditional core values have continually been highlighted as one of a meaningful national identity for Thais. The same direction of the text producers' and viewers' perceptions as mentioned above is an evidence showing that although Thais' way of life has culturally been changed as a result of modernisation and cultural imperialism (as discussed in Chapter 2), Thai people as a member of imagined national community have still collectively perceived the long traditional values as a prominent marker of their national identity. This shows the power of the continuous circulation and promotion of national identity discourses in which the television has been utilised as a principal source. This supports the view of Hall (1996a, p. 613) who notes that

> "a national culture is a discourse... National cultures construct identities by producing meanings about the nation with which we can identify; these are contained in the stories which are told about it, memories which connect its present with its past, and images which are constructed of it." (Hall, 1996a, p. 613)

However, despite both old and young viewers agreed that the core values are highly symbolic of Thai identity; they had different views on the existence of these values in contemporary society. The old Thais viewed these values as *nostalgic* because these had decreased and had been neglected among the new generations. On the contrary, the young considered these values as the *living* identity because they had seen that these social values had still existed in Thais' minds and social practices. Based on their personal experience, the old Thais noted that the Thai core values had obviously been neglected among the youths in contemporary society, compared with the youths in the past whose thoughts and social behaviours were much more engaged with traditional Thainess. As shown in the conversation below, the senior participants drew their long experience to compare the different social behaviours among the youths in the past and those in the present. Talking about the *Wai*, they explained that:

> *Old urban viewer 1:*   *We always Wai when we meet the older people. Nowadays, the teenagers hardly show respect to the senior people as we do. When we told them to Wai, they said no.*
>
> *Old urban viewer 2:*   *They said no.*

On the contrary to the old, the young viewers suggested that the traditional core values have still obviously and highly existed. As they claimed, despite the fact that Thais' way of life had changed to be more modern and had culturally been influenced by the foreign cultures, the sense of "being Thai from within" had still existed in Thais' minds and practices. The young urban viewers said that;

> *Young urban viewer 1:*   *I think everyone has a sense of Thainess embedded in themselves, but we just didn't clearly express it or didn't notice ourselves that we are Thai. Some people might love to use the brand name bags and eat the very expensive Western foods. However, when they accidentally hit others, they still make an apology and say that 'I'm so sorry'. This shows that they are Thai.*
>
> *Young urban viewer 2:*   *That's right.*
>
> *Young urban viewer 1:*   *If you meet someone you know or respect and then you greet them with the Wai, it means that the Thai way of thought has existed in your mind… Actually, you have spiritually been involved with Thainess. You have only let other cultures blind yourself.*

The opposite views aforementioned indicate that the difference in cultural experience and familiarity with traditional culture between the old and new generations has a great influence on their knowledge and perception of national identity. Furthermore, the results reveal further surprising findings regarding the opposite ideological views on the existence of particular Thai values. Whereas the elderly participants showed appreciation for traditional core values and confirmed the need to maintain such values, some young participants (a minority of the young rural viewers) clearly expressed that Thai society had relied excessively on some traditional core values which they perceived to be no longer appropriate for contemporary Thai society. In the focus group with the young rural viewers, whereas the majority of participants viewed Thai values - such as politeness, gentleness, showing respect for senior people, and meticulousness - as distinctive and valuable and described them in a positive way, two participants openly showed disagreement. Asserting that some traditional values are unacceptable for them, they explained that the Thai idea of seniority was old-fashioned and unconstructive as it had contributed to a negative practice of judging others and led to a certain inequality among people. Arguing against the other participants' ideas regarding *khwamnopnom* (showing humility/politeness/respect to senior people), they said that:

Young rural viewer 1:	*They (the other participants in the group) view it as khwamnopnom, but I view it as a way to judge other people and to judge many things. For example, we judge this person to be senior/superior; to be mature. This is (therefore) a person we must respect. Judging that this is a person who must show respect to us. Judging them to be inferior/lower... Judging that what is to be high and low... I feel that we should be more open-minded... Let the value (of people) to be shown by their practice.*
Young rural viewer 2:	*...Thainess is artificial... Culturally, there is the creation of social status among humans... I think it is negative.*
The other six participants:	**(kept on listening and being silent)**
Interviewer:	*(rechecking the ideas they had previously expressed) So, in sum, you all view that Thai identity to you is Thai ideas?*
Majority:	*Yes (nodding).*

However, disagreement on particular traditional ideas should not be taken to mean that these young Thais completely ignore traditional Thai values. The way they

interacted with other participants and the interviewer before, during, and after participating in the focus group implies that they also subscribed to the Thai values they considered as valuable and that fit their modern lifestyles. This was reflected, for instance, in the fact that they used Thai terms such as "*Khap*" to show agreement and politeness, and expressed the *Wai* to greet and say good bye to the noticeably older person in the room (the interviewer). Also, when they were then asked, ***"In terms of the tangible culture, what is Thai identity?",*** these two participants clearly identified particular aspects of Thai culture - including a lifestyle which is close to nature, certain arts e.g. traditional paintings, and food as indicators of Thai identity. This suggests that, despite the disagreement regarding the ideological aspect noted above, all viewers collectively shared the idea that Thainess does indeed have its own distinctiveness.

A further interesting finding emerging from the focus groups is the appearance of the Thai traits of being *Krengchai* and seeking to avoid disagreement/conflict with others. Not only represented in the television texts (as noted in Chapter 4), reticence/quietness also emerged in the focus groups when debatable, controversial, or sensitive issues were discussed. This reflects the Thai trait often argued to be a sign of unspoken disagreement with the ideas of others. The results demonstrate that such a trait emerged among the elderly more than among the youths, reflected in the fact that the majority of the former did not express disagreement and opposing views openly; it seems they felt uncomfortable coming into conflict with others in the group and hence remained quiet. For example, the quietness immediately began among the elder urban viewers as soon as one participant suggested that she would like to see the *Cham-uat* comedy in the *Khunphrachuai* show present amusing double entendres (i.e. presenting sexually-related issues in a comedic way). Also, this situation sometimes emerged among the young participants. The act of being silent among the young rural participants while others expressed opposing views, as illustrated above, is one example. An additional apparent instance is the emergence of quietness among young rural viewers while other participants were complaining about a politically sensitive issue (i.e. the issue about royalism). The results noted above, arguably, constitute evidence confirming that the Thai traits of being *Krengchai* and seeking to avoid disagreement/conflict with others, as elements of Thai social values, still prevail in Thais' minds.

6.2 Stock of Knowledge and Interpretation of Thai Identity

The results of the audience analysis reveal that viewers' cultural experiences and familiarity with traditional culture has a considerable influence on their knowledge and perception of national identity. Regarding the interpretation of Thai identity in the show, the viewers drew together their cultural experience and stock of knowledge of Thai culture to make sense of the televisual constructed Thai identity. The crucial point of this is that the *age* and the *geographical origin* of the viewers affect their exposure to traditional culture in everyday life and perception/interpretation of identity representations in the show. This will be explained throughout this section.

6.2.1 Audiences and cultural knowledge

Following the perspective of the social construction of reality introduced by Berger and Luckmann (1996, p. 13): "reality is socially constructed", it can be argued that the viewers' stock of knowledge of Thai culture as social reality has been constructed and shaped by their own cultural experience (whether direct or non-direct) gained through participating in the cultural activities and events in the society they have lived in. As Triandafyllidou and Wodak (2003, p. 205) suggest, "social identity is a characteristic of humans as social beings" and the term identity relates to three complementary notions: "sameness", "distinctiveness", and "similarity". For this research project, the categorisation of the age group and geographic origin (location of living) of the audiences (as explained in Chapter 3) is the criteria alluding to the relation between those three concepts. Despite the fact that there has been a difference among audiences in terms of age and location, they have ideologically shared a sense of "we are Thai". This corresponds with the idea of Triandafyllidou and Wodak (2003) arguing that "both the social and the personal part of the individual's identity involve relations of similarity and difference". As they state;

> "the social part of a person's identity refers to her/his similarity with other people. Those who have common backgrounds are likely to have similar social identities. The phenomenon of identification with a group or social category means that the individual perceives her/himself as similar to others who make part of the same group(s) or category(ies)… The individual perceives her/himself as similar to others of the same background ("we" are members of the same groups or, which is nearly the same thing, have similar social identities) and different from members of other groups or categories ("them")" (Triandafyllidou and Wodak, 2003, pp. 212-213).

The results of the audience analysis show that the degrees of familiarity of national culture, obtained from the different degrees of cultural exposure, significantly result in how much audiences have stock of knowledge of the culture. As Berger and Luckmann (1996, p. 57) state:

> "The social stock of knowledge differentiates reality by degrees of familiarity. It provides complex and detailed information concerning those sectors of everyday life with which I must frequently deal. It provides much more general and imprecise information on remoter sectors." (Berger and Luckmann, 1996, p. 57)

In line with the view noted above, the data gained from the focus groups indicate that the age group (old or young) and geographical origin (location of living: rural or urban) of the viewers are closely related to the degree of exposure to traditional Thai culture in the sense that these are the crucial factors to the degree of viewers' proximity/familiarity of the traditional culture. The age has an effect on *how long* and the geographical origin indicates *how close* they have directly experienced the traditional culture. Focusing on the age group, when the participants were asked about to what extent they have had a direct experience of traditional Thai culture and how they have learnt, the answers obviously demonstrate that the old viewers have much more direct experience and understanding of traditional culture than the young as a result of their prolonged cultural exposure. Whereas the old viewers have substantially and directly learnt the traditional culture from their long-lived experience, the young viewers - who have grown up and lived in the modernised and multicultural Thai society - have normally learnt it from the older generations within family and teaching/cultural activities at school. This indicates the vital role of family and school as social institutions that help to transfer knowledge of national culture and heritage to younger generations, hence upholding constructed discourses of national identity.

In terms of the geographical origin, interestingly, the results reveal that location of living does not affect the cultural exposure among the old participants because their long-lived experience of traditional culture are generally similar. The reason of this might be explained by the fact that both old urban and rural Thais (aged 46 - 68) had collectively shared the cultural experience in the past Thai society in which the

traditional culture flourished and was common to Thais all over the country. As a result, the old urban and rural people equally have a direct experience of national culture because their traditional-based ways of living in the past, whether they lived in Bangkok or rural areas, let them directly/closely/extensively experience several kinds of traditional culture. It, therefore, can be argued that the geographical origin has no effect on the cultural exposure among the old Thais. On the contrary, this factor has a great effect on the degree of cultural exposure among the young generation. The data gained from the focus groups show that the young rural viewers (whose everyday life has still been connected with the maintained traditional culture) have a direct experience of traditional culture much more than the young urban who have grown up and lived in Bangkok - the most modernised and urbanised part of Thailand in which the traditional culture has been blurred. As explained in Chapter 2, compared with the past Thai society in which people were much closer to the traditional culture, the contemporary way of life has much culturally changed since some aspects of contemporary Thai identity have been fused with foreign cultures - not only Western cultures but also the powerful cultures of other Asian countries. The contemporary Thai lifestyle, therefore, more or less, has led to a lack of the exposure to traditional culture, especially among the new generations who have greatly adopted and consumed a variety of foreign pop cultures and social values.

However, the young rural viewers - who have grown up in the rural areas where the traditional/local culture has still been maintained and transferred among the members of the community - claimed that they had still experienced the maintained traditional culture, despite being a young generation. All young rural viewers asserted that they had gained knowledge and direct experience of traditional/local culture from everyday life and learning from the older generations in the family. One young rural viewer explained that:

> *"I have learnt it (traditional/local culture) from my family. Since I was born, they have brought out it so that I have experienced it. When I grew up, I had also learnt in schools that there had been the cultural identity of my province (local community)."*

On the other hand, all young urban viewers as Bangkokians suggested that they lacked a direct experience of traditional culture because it had been rare in their

community. As they claimed, the traditional culture had absolutely been uncommon in their everyday life. Nevertheless, they sometimes had gained knowledge of traditional culture from learning and participating in the cultural activities provided by the schools when they were a school student (while participated in focus group interviews, all of them were a university student). Talking about this, one young urban said;

> *"I had learnt it in the school. The primary school really encouraged it, especially in terms of sport and traditional Thai music."*

In response to the question ***"Do you think that you have been close to traditional Thai culture?"***, the young urban participants answered that;

Young urban viewer 1:	*Absolutely, no.*
Young urban viewer 2:	*Hardly.*
Young urban viewer 1:	*I have lived in the city centre (of Bangkok). So, there's no traditional Thai culture shown in my area.*
Four viewers:	*(nodded their head to show agreement with what mentioned)*
Young urban viewer 2:	*(Giving an example) Never watched Li Ke (the musical folk dramatic performance)*

As mentioned above, it can be concluded that the age group is a key indicator of an amount of direct cultural experience of Thai people, whereas the location of living is merely a major factor resulting in the deficiency of exposure to traditional culture among the youths. Additional interesting point is that the continued transfer of cultural knowledge from the old generations to the younger generations plays an important role in facilitating a continuity of traditional culture. The transferred knowledge has been extracted from Thais' collective memories as selected/remembered choices of the past experience (Matsuda, 1996 cited in Pattana, 2003). Hence, the continuity of national culture and also the revival of vanished culture are connected with the politics of memory - the politics regarding remembering and forgetting the past people selected and negotiated (Pattana, 2003). The fact that television shows have played a central role in constructing discourses of national identity and providing a revival of nostalgic culture leads to an exploration of audiences' perception and understanding of Thai identity representations in the *Khunphrachuai* show.

6.2.2 Interpretation of Thai identity representations in the show

Main discourses of Thai identity

Because the key message of the show is the heart of all textual features of Thai representations through the show, the question **"What is the key message that the show attempts to communicate with the viewers?"** was asked in the in-depth interviews with the text producers. In response to this question, the producers of the *Khunphrachuai* suggested that the show attempted to remind Thai people of their national culture and also emphasise the value of it. As the main producer of the show explained;

> *"We want to tell the viewers that they have their own culture. We want to let them remember, recall, and learn it… Our key purpose is to ask them that, can you remember your own culture?"* (The main producer of the *Khunphrachuai*, personal interview, 8 September 2015)

In the focus groups with audiences, the question regarding the viewers' opinion about the key message of the show was raised. The answers to the question *"In your view, what is the key message that the show attempts to tell you?"* indicate that all groups of viewers generally shared the same idea regarding this. That is, they similarly perceived that the show attempted to remind the audiences of the national past/traditional culture in order to encourage them not only to *recognise* the Thai cultural root and the value of it, but also to *realise* their significant role in preserving it and to *be proud* of it. These ideas of the viewers really correspond with the main discourses of identity generated in the show (as discussed in Chapter 4), apart from the discourse of solidarity among Thais (the smallest discourse constructed through the lyrics and hosts' speeches) which was not come to the viewers' notice when they thought about the key message of the show.

To gain the more in-depth data, the question about the four main discourses of Thai identity generated in the show (as discussed in Chapter 4) - including the discourses of 1) the role of Thais in encouraging and preserving national culture, 2) raising awareness about detailed knowledge of Thai culture, 3) the value of Thai culture and

4) solidarity among Thais - was raised in the focus groups. In this way, later the question of the key message of the show was answered, these particular four main discourses were briefly introduced to the participants and followed by the question ***"In your view, which of the four discourses does the show mostly focus on?"*** In overall response to this question, the majority of viewers perceived that the show presented all of the four discourses. Regarding the discourse mostly highlighted in the show, most of participants (all groups of viewers except the group of old rural) reported that the show mostly emphasised the discourse of "the value of Thai culture", whereas the group of old rural viewers suggested that the discourse of "raising awareness about detailed knowledge of Thai culture" was mostly underlined. One young urban participant explained the value of national culture that;

> *"If everyone recognises the value of it (Thai culture) as other ones and I do, it will then bring about harmony."*

In addition, it is surprising that the majority of young rural audiences asserted that they did not perceive the presentation of the aspect of "solidarity" in the show, whereas the other three groups of viewers perceived that the show created the sense of solidarity among the members of the nation. Talking about the generation of discourse on solidarity, one old rural participant suggested;

> *"The show lets us to further recall our background and Thai identity and stimulates us to further recognise the essence of our root… The identity can unite people together."*

Likewise, one young urban viewer said;

> *"I don't think the culture can be maintained by just only one person. It really needs help from everyone."*

In contrast, the young rural viewers' opinions extremely differed from others'. Although they had further been informed during the focus groups that the discourse of solidarity had been represented through the lyrics and the hosts' speeches, the majority of them asserted that the did not see such meanings of solidarity in the show. The reason of this might be explained by the fact that they normally watched the show - especially in terms of the presentation of the songs in which the sense of social harmony was really emphasised - for entertainment rather than concentrating

with an interpretation of meanings behind those texts. As one young rural audience said;

"I didn't see the sense of harmony presented in the show at all."

Based on the results mentioned above, it can be suggested that although some ideas of the viewers differed in details, the fact that the overall viewers' interpretation of discourses of identity is generally in agreement with what the text producers attempted to address, which in turn, indicates the success of the show in circulating the particular cultural vision and concern whereby the generation of contemporary discourses of Thai identity has really been in line with the cultural vision of the State.

Interpretation of Thai fusion identity

According to the results of the textual analysis, the overall feature of Thai representations in the *Khunphrachuai* show is constructed as a Thai fusion identity. Although this, arguably, engages with the construction of inauthenticity of Thai culture in which the forms of cultural hybridisation and adaptation are used, it is obviously displayed as traditional Thai-based fusion through various semiotic resources e.g. settings, costume, music and so forth (see Chapter 4). In the focus groups, the audiences' viewpoints on this issue were also examined. When they were asked ***"Is the overview of Thai representations in the show original Thai or Thai fusion identity?"***, all groups of viewers suggested that it was fusion rather than entirely original Thai. However, they noted that although the Thai culture represented in the show were fused with contemporary Thai and foreign cultures, the show highly focused on underlining the features of traditional culture as a core, in other words, it is a traditional based-fusion Thai identity.

Further to the above question, respondents were asked to indicate how they feel about the Thai fusion identity representations in the show. The results demonstrate that all groups of audiences considered it as an up-to-date, attractive and spectacular form of Thai representations - the modern form of cultural presentation that had attracted the spectators' (both old and young) attention, especially the youths who

had usually welcomed the fusion forms of cultural representation rather than entirely traditional forms. Talking about this issue, a young urban interviewee said;

> *"Definitely, the producers of the show love Thai culture, and they want to address this to the young generations…. So, they have tried to find a way to persuade the young generations to welcome to learn the old culture. I believe they think that if they presented the old things too much, the young generations wouldn't accept it… So, they have decided to present it as applied(hybrid) Thai culture… The different things can work together. This is a win-win situation. Both Thai culture and technology (new/modern things) have been encouraged at the same time."*

Focusing on the spectacular display of traditional Thai fused with Western musical performances which are greatly presented in the show, one young rural viewer commented that;

> *"I think it's so cool. It's a combination between the East and the West. It is the way that the traditional Thai music is combined with the modern music styles. Personally, I prefer something hybrid. So, I think this fusion is wow! So cool! I want to continue listening to it more and more."*

Another young rural interviewee also suggested that;

> *"The fusion is good. I don't like the very traditional Thai music. That's too traditional and boring… Also, I don't like the pure (Western) orchestra music because it's also boring. When they both are mixed together, it becomes better and more modern."*

Focusing on the perspectives of the old generation, surprisingly, all of the old audiences welcomed the Thai fusion identity representations in the show rather than refusing it. They suggested that it was necessary to combine the old with the new together. This has been a good way to create a sense of attractiveness to interest a large number of Thai people, especially the youths. The old urban viewers expressed their opinions about Thai representations in the show as follows;

Three old urban viewers:	*It should be fusion.*
Old urban viewer 1:	*It should be fusion because it's now modern period, not the olden times.*
Old urban viewer 2:	*However, the old things also need to be maintained.*
Other viewers:	*That's correct.*
Old urban viewer 2:	*The old things maintained, and the new things added. Otherwise, we will become underdeveloped.*

Similar to the old urban, the old rural participants explained that;

Old rural viewer 1:   *They (the text producers) have applied it to attract several groups of viewers. If they totally present the traditional Thai culture, we (senior people) definitely welcome but the teenagers might neglect it.*

Old rural viewer 2:   *Exactly, the teenagers don't want to watch it.*

Old rural viewer 3:   *I also welcome the fusion. I also like it.*

Old rural viewer 4 and 5:   *I like it too.*

Old rural viewer 6:   *We like the traditional style. However, for the young people, the fusion is more attractive.*

The fact that not only the young but also the old generation of Thais greatly welcomed the fusion/hybrid Thai identity representations indicates the close correspondence between the construction of Thai culture as inclusive identity and the audiences' viewpoints agreeing with it. The reason for this is not the fact that the show has changed their views on this issue; rather, arguably, the viewers and the text producers had shared the same cultural vision. This is evidenced by the audiences' perspectives on Thai identity in general sense. When they were asked **"*Should Thai identity be original or hybrid?*"**, all group of viewers responded that the direction of national culture encouragement needed to be in line with the socio-cultural circumstance of the contemporary Thai society in which the lifestyle and everyday culture of people have been influenced by multiculturalism. They noted that the cultural adaptation had been very significant in maintaining national culture. Hence, Thai culture could be fused with other cultures, whether contemporary (modern) Thai culture or foreign cultures. In this respect, they also asserted that the form of cultural hybridisation as such needed to be produced with an emphasis on Thainess as a core. Also, they stressed that it was important to Thais to be concerned that the national culture always needed to be presented in an appropriate way. In other words, whereas some Thai culture could be applied/hybridised, some of them still need to be presented in its original form. One old rural Thai stated that;

"At the present time, it should be fusion. It can't be too strict. We can't accept only Thai culture."

Other old rural also suggested that;

> *Old rural viewer 1:*   *It should correspond to the contemporary period. It should be appropriately used and adapted in relation to the time and place.*

> *Old rural viewer 2:*   *Occasionally, it's good to use the original Thai. It depends on situation.*

Likewise, the old urban Thais said;

> *Old urban viewer 1:*   *Fusion.*

> *Old urban viewer 2:*   *It should be fusion.*

> *Old urban viewer 3:*   *Yes, it should be. If we are too conservative, we might be unacceptable to other countries.*

> *Old urban viewer 2:*   *That's right. Other nations won't accept us if we are too conservative.*

> *Old urban viewer 3:*   *They might think that our country is so outdated.*

In the same way as the old, the young viewers said;

> *Young rural viewers 1:*   *It should be adapted. If we are too conservative, Thainess will finally disappear.*

> *Young rural viewers 2:*   *I think everything in the world needs balance. If we engage only one direction too much, it will collapse.*

Although the overview of Thai identity in the show was constructed by the producers and interpreted by the audiences as fusion identity, the viewers jointly perceived that it engaged the form of traditional Thai based identity construction. All group of the audiences claimed that they appreciated the Thai fusion identity represented in the show because it aesthetically highlighted Thai culture. Despite the fact that it is fused with other cultures, the value and distinctiveness of Thai culture have greatly remained intact. Arguably, an appreciation of the value of this form of cultural adaptation refers to the fact that there has already been a circulation of Thai fusion identity presentation, namely, and more specifically, involvement with the construction of the inauthenticity of Thai culture, in Thai society (the government cultural policy referred to in Chapter 5 is one major source of this aspiration). This might have a great influence on Thai people' cultural perception in the sense that this

direction of cultural ideology has socially constructed and shaped the collective cultural knowledge among the members of the nation so that it could make a significant contribution to the promotion of the national ideology of not only maintenance of Thai culture per se (to serve the domestic level of cultural development) but also encouragement of cultural inclusion to serve the goal of international phase.

6.3 Viewership and Nostalgia

Exploring to what extent the representations of nostalgic Thai identity in the show have a cultural impact on audiences' sentiment and behaviours, the focus group questions included discussions about an emergence of nostalgic feeling among the viewers. As de Cillia *et al.* (1999, p. 154) state, "the construction of national identity builds on the emphasis on a common history, and history always to do with remembrance and memory". In terms of this study, the results of textual analysis show that the televisual construction of identity greatly engages with the revival of nostalgic Thai identity (see Chapter 4). This is a way of recollection of the collective memory of the members of the nation that can play a role as a tool in the circulation and promotion of national identity. In relation to the role of the show in providing a revival of nostalgic Thai culture, it is interesting to investigate to what extent the Thai representations in the show are connected with the nostalgic sentiments of the viewers. In this way, asking the focus group participants *"Why do you watch the show?"* was conducted to investigate whether the exposure of the show is a result of a yearning and desire for looking backwards to traditional culture. The answers of both old and young viewers show that they did not watch the show because of having a nostalgic feeling to look back to the past/traditional culture. The main reason why they watch the show is that the show provides them with entertainment together with interesting knowledge of Thai culture. Its feature as the outstanding cultural television show presenting various topics of culture through the form of Variety Show as a kind of television light entertainment (Lusted, 1998; Newcomb, 2004) is the main element attracting the viewers to watch the show.

Nevertheless, apart from the shared viewpoints of the old and young viewers mentioned above, there is a different viewpoint between them in terms of the way

they perceive Thai identity representations in the show. Whereas the old viewers generally viewed those representations as "a repetition and revival of their old experiences", the young audiences mostly perceived it as "a provision of new/surprising/fantastic cultural knowledge" for them. The results of the analysis indicate that the nostalgic representations of identity in the show engage with not only the construction of nostalgia in general sense i.e. recalling the nostalgic identity as part of the collective memories among Thais who shared the same cultural experience and history, but also the representation of the national past and national identity narratives as a form of "wilful nostalgia" (Bergin, 2012). The wilful nostalgia in this sense refers to nostalgia for the past in which people - whether the old or young generations - have no direct experience with it. When the participants were asked ***"Did you usually know the Thai culture presented in the show before watching it in the show?",*** the majority of the old audiences indicated that they viewed those represented in the show as "the old things of the old generations" (including them). Based on their prior knowledge, they had generally known several aspects of culture presented in the show. However, although they had already had a broad knowledge of Thai culture, the show also let them gain a deeper and further knowledge of national culture, especially those of prior generations before they were born. In terms of the young audiences, the majority suggested that they had basically known - mostly from an indirect experience - the aspects of Thai culture represented in the show before watching. However, they only had a smattering of knowledge and lacked a direct experience of traditional culture. Thus, they generally viewed the Thai culture in the show as a new knowledge and unseen/unfamiliar thing. The contrast between the old and the young viewers' interpretation mentioned above demonstrates that the way they perceive and interpret the Thai representations in the show greatly relies on their own cultural stock of knowledge and experience.

Furthermore, this study found that the Thai way of returning to the national symbols and traditional identity is involved with the *reflective nostalgia* - a form of nostalgia which relates to the reflection and representation of individual and cultural memory, rather than the *restorative nostalgia* which focuses on total restoration of the national past/symbols (Boym, 2001) i.e. an uncompromising return to origin. As being a member of the nation, all viewers have jointly shared some cultural experiences of Thai culture, more or less. The similar view on "what Thai identity to them is"

discussed in the previous section - as all participants considered the core values as the most outstanding distinctive Thai cultural marker - is one of the evidence demonstrating that they have collectively shared the same cultural vision.

The results of the previous study of Natthapon (2003, p. 13), analysing the audiences' perception of nostalgic Thai film *Nang Nak* that mirrors the beauty of the past Thai life through the historical narrative, reveal that the viewers welcomed the nostalgic films "due to the desire to go back to simple ways of past Thai life". In line with Natthapon's study, the focus group interviews with the *Khunphrachuai* audiences included the questions about an emergence of nostalgic feeling regarding watching the show to explore whether they watch the show due to the nostalgic feeling/desire to see the display of national past/traditional culture, as well as whether the show plays a role in evoking the viewers' feeling of yearning for the past and traditional culture. The response to the question ***"Did you have a feeling that you would like to get back to the past Thai culture during/after watching the show?"*** indicates that despite the fact that the initial reasons for watching the show were not involved with the nostalgic feeling, the exposure of Thai representations in the show affected the viewers' structure of feeling regarding nostalgia. The results of the analysis demonstrate that there was an emergence of nostalgic feeling among the viewers as a result of watching the representations of nostalgic Thai identity in the show.

Interestingly, the nostalgic feeling emerged in the audiences' mind at different degrees. This includes the three stages of nostalgic sentiment: 1) the stage of **"recalling"** or looking back on the memories of individual past and/or collective memories of the national past, 2) the stage of **"thinking of"** the pleasured past they have directly experienced and 3) the stage of **"yearning to get back"** to the past. The following figure provides the visual representation of nostalgic feeling as an effect of watching the show;

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  Stage 3:                                                     │
│   Yearning to get back to the past                            │
│                                                               │
│   ┌───────────────────────────────────────────────┐          │
│   │  Stage 2:                                       │          │
│   │  Thinking of the pleasured past experiences     │          │
│   │                                                 │          │
│   │   ┌─────────────────────────────────┐           │          │
│   │   │  Stage 1:                        │           │          │
│   │   │  Recalling the memories of       │           │          │
│   │   │  individual and/or collective    │           │          │
│   │   │  past                            │           │          │
│   │   │                                  │           │          │
│   │   │        All viewers               │           │          │
│   │   └─────────────────────────────────┘           │          │
│   │                                                 │          │
│   │   Majority of the old urban and old rural viewers│         │
│   │                                                 │          │
│   │      and minority of the young rural viewers    │          │
│   └───────────────────────────────────────────────┘          │
│                                                               │
│            Nostalgia in general sense                         │
│        Minority of the old urban and old rural viewers        │
│                                                               │
│         and minority of the young urban viewers               │
│                                                               │
│                  Wilful Nostalgia                             │
│                                                               │
│         Majority of the young urban viewers                   │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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Sense of amazement and admiration of the nostalgic Thai culture represented in the shows (perceived as new knowledge/ unseen things)

Majority of the young viewers (both urban and rural)

Figure 6.1: The three degrees of nostalgic sentiment emerged in the viewers' mind as per results of focus group analyses of the study

As shown in figure 6.1, in consequence of viewing the nostalgic representations of Thai identity in the show, there are three stages of nostalgic feeling emerged in the audiences' sentiments. The results show that the stage of ***recalling*** is a primary response of all viewers. The audiences' sentiment of *recalling* the memories of the past as such corresponds with the text producers' main purpose as it is the stage of nostalgic feeling which the text producers basically aim. As noted in Chapter 4, the main aim of Thai representations in the show is to remind the viewers of their own Thai culture. The *recalling* is a stage in which the viewers recall the memories of the past - either individual memories or collective memories of the national past. In terms of the individual past experience, the representations of nostalgic identity in the show led viewers to think back on their own past, as Davis (1979, p. 122) calls "private

nostalgia", relevant to those displayed in the show. For instance, thinking about the good old days when they were younger and/or when they used to be much more surrounded by the traditional Thai culture/style of living, compared with their life at the present. In a broader sense, the cultural experience of each member of the nation as such are also a part of national culture they have collectively shared. The representations of the collective memory of the nation are therefore a way the text producers use to not only evoke the individual memories but also evoke the national memories, as Davis (1979, p. 122) calls "collective nostalgia", at the same time.

In terms of stage 2, whereas the first stage is merely involved with the act of remembering, the second stage engages with the stronger nostalgic sentiment, the emotion of *thinking of*. At this stage, the viewers have a sentiment of missing the vanished past, in other words, the paradise lost from their current real life. The results of the analysis indicate that the Thai representations in the show led majority of the old viewers (both urban and rural) to think of their pleasured cultural experiences they used to be involved with in the past, whereas among the youths, this feeling merely emerged in a young rural viewer. The reason for this might be explained by the fact that majority of nostalgic culture represented in the show are traditional Thai and/or traditional Thai-based fusion rather than modern Thai culture. Thus, the revival of nostalgic culture in the show is generally a reflection of the past embedded in the collective experiences/memories of the old viewers rather than of the young Thais. As a result of watching the show, the old viewers looked back to the past with a sentiment of missing/thinking of it. The past in this sense include the ordinary/close to nature-ways of life they used to experience, the joyfulness of their childhood, the ancient foods they used to eat when they were young, the past experiences of watching/playing the traditional performing arts they used to be familiar with in the past, and so forth.

Lastly, at the stage of *yearning to get back* to the past, the Thai representations in the show brought about the audiences' emotion of longing for the paradise lost, as Boym (2001, p.8) calls "the edenic (paradisiac) unity of time and space". The results of the analysis show that both old and young audiences had a sentiment of yearning for the past and desired to get back to the past as a result of watching the show. The

interesting point of this is that there are two main forms of yearning for the past occurring among the viewers: 1) yearning for the past they have directly experienced and 2) yearning for the past which they have no experience about it. The first form of yearning refers to the nostalgia concept in general sense, as explained in Chapter 2, which is understood as a yearning for the past involved with individual memories or collective memories among people who shared the same experiences/cultural history. On the other hand, the second form of yearning for the past is involved with the *wilful nostalgia* - a nostalgia for the past that individual has no personal/cultural direct experience about it (Bergin, 2012). The data gained from the focus group interviews indicate that the first form of yearning for the past was only occurred among the minority of the viewers of both old and young viewers (i.e. two old urban, two old rural, two young urban audiences and none of the young rural viewers). When the viewers were asked if they would like to get back to the past in relation to Thai representations in the show, one old urban audience suggested that;

> *"When the Thai cultural gurus in the show talked about culture, I felt like I really wanted to get back to the past when I had been young. Oh… it's so good."*

Also, one old rural viewer said;

> *"Sometimes I want it to be the same as it used to be. For example, getting back to be close to nature. I want to get back to be like that. Life surrounded by the same conditioned canal, the rice fields and the old way of harvesting rice. This made me feel warm. It was really friendly and impressive."*

Likewise, one young urban viewer explained that;

> *"I want to get back to live as I used to do in the past… I feel it's more worth than the everyday life at present. When I was young, I had many things to play. I used to play the Banana Gun (the traditional toy made from banana stalk) with friends… We enjoyed playing many things. But in these days, we have only played the smart phones."*

The most surprising aspect of the data is that the *wilful nostalgia* only appeared among the (majority of) young urban. The reason of this might be answered by the fact that, as discussed in the previous section, the young urban people lack direct experience of traditional culture (in terms of both time and space). Consequently, they welcomed the traditional Thai culture represented in the show as it was "unseen

and amazing things" for them. After watching the show, they felt that the traditional culture and lifestyle of the old generations were amazing and beautiful. As a result, they desired to experience it. As the young urban audiences stated;

Young urban viewer 1:   *I didn't have much chance to experience it. When I saw or heard about the strange things (old culture), I had wondered about those who lived in the former times.*

Young urban viewer 2:   *How were they?*

Young urban viewer 1:   *How did they live? Sometimes, I wanted to get back to the former times when there were no social media, but people could live well… I'm wondering how we were if we lived in the former times. This makes me want to go back to that past.*

Aforementioned, it can be argued that the young urban Thais' remoteness of traditional culture might be a reason why they have had a feeling of wilful nostalgia, whereas the young rural audiences (whose rural daily life has been much more connected with the traditional culture) have no feeling of wilful nostalgia at all. In this sense, the young rural participants asserted that the show did not lead them to yearn for the past. However, it encouraged them to raise their positive opinions towards the traditional culture, that is, it is no longer perceived as boring for them. Rather than longing for the past, the young rural audiences had a sense of amazement and admiration of the nostalgic Thai culture represented in the show as it was an amazing-unseen thing for them. This feeling also appeared among the young urban viewers.

In view of all that has been mentioned so far, the occurrence of nostalgic feeling among the viewers is in with the view of Wilson (1999) who suggests that nostalgia refers to the desire for not only time but also place. The results of the audience analysis indicate that things the viewers looked back/thought of/yearned for were connected to both happy time and place embedded in their nostalgic memories - the good old days when they enjoyed/felt happy with and the nostalgic places where they enjoyed the pleasant experiences taking place there. To explore the cultural function of the *Khunphrachuai* show as nostalgic communicative tool in facilitating a continuity of identity (Davis, 1979; Robertson, 1992; Tannock, 1995; Wilson, 1999; Bergin, 2012; Niemeyer, 2014; Wilson, 2014), the issues of the cultural impacts of the show

on audiences' views and behaviours were asked. This will be discussed in the following section.

6.4 Audiences and Cultural Impacts of the Show

The results gained from the focus groups demonstrate that the show has a cultural impact on the viewers' minds much more than cultural practices. Arguably, the capacity of the show in bringing about the nostalgic feeling regarding Thai culture to the viewers' minds (whichever stage of nostalgic feeling) has contributed to their understanding of the national culture and a sense of cultural belonging, which can more or less result in the change in their attitudes towards Thai culture and some aspects of cultural practices. In addition to the elemental impact of the show in terms of leading the viewers to gain further understanding of and realise their cultural roots, the show also leads the majority of viewers to be proud of their national culture and to realise the role of Thai people in encouraging and preserving national culture. Talking about this, one old rural viewer said;

> *"This TV show lets us to be closer to our culture, to learn more about our culture and to be more impressed by our culture. If there's no this TV show, we might be able to watch Thai culture displayed at the temple fairs and other places, but we don't really know its history.... On the other hand, if we watch this TV show, we will gain knowledge. This knowledge will lead us to appreciate and be closer to our culture."*

Similar to the old viewers, the young urban viewer suggested;

> *"Regarding some kinds of Thai identity such as the Khon (Thai classical masked drama) actors' mask, sculpture and whatever which is Thai culture, I wonder how the older generations created it and how they knew to find things to produce it. If there were no the old generations in the past, we would never have a chance to see these valuable things. So, I'm so proud that the old generations created and handed down these to the younger generations."*

Conversely, the group of young rural viewers is the only one group of participants claiming that the show did not contribute to their either sentiment of being proud of Thai culture or awareness of their role in preserving it. However, they suggested that the show resulted in a change of their opinions in the sense that it led them to have more positive attitude towards traditional culture. As a result of watching the show,

they considered the traditional Thai culture as no longer boring and too conservative for them.

Focusing on the impact of the show on audiences' behaviours, the data gained from the focus groups shows that the show made a minor impact on a change in viewers' cultural practices. As the old viewers asserted, their cultural standpoints and actions had already corresponded with the purpose of the show i.e. they had already concerned themselves with encouragement of national culture. Nevertheless, the old Thais suggested that the show affected their cultural activities in the sense that it led them to raise the cultural knowledge in the show to transfer to their descendant. Also, the emergence of a sentiment of yearning for the past due to watching the show sometimes influenced them (minority of old urban viewers) to find the way to get back to the long-lost experiences - such as the traditional Thai foods they used to eat when they were young and the rare traditional performances - by visiting the places/environments where the paradise lost as such has still been available. In this sense, one old urban viewer explained her cultural action as a result of watching the nostalgic food presented in the show, as follows;

> *"After watching the ancient Thai food presented in the show, I then tried to sort out where it had still been available… It has been lost from my everyday life for a long time. Seeing it in the show made me miss it and be keen to look for it to eat."*

For the young audiences, among the young rural viewers only, the show also brought about some change in their cultural action. The minority of the young rural participants suggested that after watching the show they had shared some video clips of the *Cham-uat* comedy shows represented in the section of *Cham-uat Na Man* (see Chapter 4) to friends, and they had also practised singing the *Choi songs* as presented through those comedy shows.

As mentioned above, it can be argued that the nostalgic mediation of the past and national identity on television can play the vital role of nostalgia, as many scholars have suggested (Davis, 1979; Robertson, 1992; Tannock, 1995; Wilson, 1999; Bergin, 2012; Niemeyer, 2014; Wilson, 2014), in facilitating a continuity of national/cultural identity. Despite the fact that the show largely has a success in

leading the viewers to "look back" rather than "yearn to get back" to the past, it more or less plays a central role in raising a social awareness of the value of national culture as well as contributing to a sense of cultural belonging among Thais, especially the youths whom the text producers have attempted to address.

Conclusion

This chapter provides the interesting points about audiences' perception and interpretation of Thai representations in the show. The results reveal that the age group and geographical origin of the audiences are the important factors that result in the cultural exposure to and familiarity with the traditional culture. In interpreting the Thai identity represented in the show, the viewers draw on their stock of knowledge of Thai culture gained from their direct/indirect experience to make sense of it. As a result of watching the nostalgic representation of the show, the three different degrees of nostalgic sentiments emerged in audiences' minds. Among the three degrees, the stage of "recalling" the memories of individual/collective past is the primary response of all viewers. Other two more-intense degrees of nostalgic feeling, i.e. the emotion of "thinking of" the pleasured past and of "yearning to get back" to the past, also emerged in some viewers' sentiments as a result of watching the nostalgic culture represented in the show perceived by them as a vanished past or a paradise lost from their current/real life.

The link between the cultural television show and the viewers as discussed in this chapter indicate the success of the text/show producers' intentions as part of the discursive constructors of national identity that help to contribute to an increase of cultural awareness among Thai people. The results of the audience analysis show that the viewers' conceptions of Thai identity are in line with a shared conception of national identity among the text producers and the government. The shared ideological vision in this sense reflects a close connection between the content of television texts, the discourse practice (text production and consumption) and also the government's policies in managing the processes of discursive construction of Thai identity. Despite the fact that the Thai representations in the show do not entirely represent the original form of national culture, in other words, as argued, they involve the construction of the inauthenticity of Thai culture, the capacity of the show

in providing a revival of national past/collective memories has been very important in not only underlining the distinctiveness and the value of national culture but also, as Tosh (2015) argues, conditioning the popular understanding of the present.

The next chapter, *Conclusion and Discussion*, will provide an overall conclusion and critique of research findings. The results of the analyses of television discourses of Thai identity, perspectives of the text producers and the audiences will be discussed, in line with the sociocultural context of Thai society and the order of discourse that has shaped/controlled the construction and promotion of Thai identity in contemporary Thailand.

Chapter 7. Conclusion and Discussion

Introduction

The final chapter provides a summary of the findings on the discursive construction of nostalgic Thai identity through Thai television programmes and a general discussion to draw out the broader implications of the research results. Afterwards, the contribution and limitations of this research are explained. Finally, by a number of future possible research directions are suggested.

The formation and promotion of national cultural identity are ideological tools for uniting a people all across a nation, making them members of an imagined community (Anderson, 2006). In this thesis, Thai identity is regarded as cultural qualities/characteristics, whether traditional or modern, perceived to be cultural markers for identifying Thainess and differentiating Thais/Thainess from others. This thesis finds that the construction of nostalgia around the perception of Thainess has been at the centre of the particular identity discourses which promote the country's perceived traditional culture and heritage as core identity markers. The results of this study reveal that the nostalgic mediation of national past and culture on popular television shows involves the constructive form of reflective nostalgia, the form of cultural hybridisation and adaptation, and the presentation of what Hobsbawm (1983) terms invented (Thai) traditions. This thesis also finds that the construction of discourses of national identity, in which the nostalgic mediation of national past and culture is central, is allied to the construction of the inauthenticity of Thai culture. One of the more significant findings to emerge from this study is that the construction and inculcation of Thai culture constructs the myth of the authenticity of Thai culture. A summary of the findings of the study which contribute to the major arguments as such is explained as follows below.

7.1 Nostalgia Television and the Promotion of National Identity
This thesis confirms the cultural role of nostalgia in the construction and promotion of national identity as a way to, as several scholars have suggested (Davis, 1979; Robertson, 1992; Tannock, 1995; Wilson, 1999; Bergin, 2012; Niemeyer, 2014; Wilson, 2014), help facilitate the continuity of identity. The results of the textual

analysis confirm the capacity of nostalgic mediation of the past and culture on television to evoke collective memories and construct the revival of a sweet national past embodied by a distinctive Thai culture. Not only do they serve to maintain the nation's cultural heritage for its own sake, but such nostalgic representations also symbolically reflect the bitterness, or the cultural conditions, of the present, in which the continuity of traditional Thai cultural attributes has been challenged by globalisation and cultural imperialism.

This thesis finds that the shows are produced and distributed in response to the text producers' primary concerns around the cultural problems underpinning regarding the continuity of a desired national identity. As argued in Chapter 5, such concerns of the figures in the television industry correspond with the claim of Pattana (2003, p. 33), who notes that Thai society has been longing for "identity and self-confidence, self, and the past that is linked with the future". It is argued that their concerns are aligned with the cultural problem in the sense that distinctive and unique national cultural attributes have been "lost", "forgotten", and "submerged", and are in need of rediscovering, remembering and recollecting (Smith, 2010, p. 30). For this reason, in response to the "fear of (cultural) forgetting" (Holdsworth, 2011, p. 4) and the cultural uncertainties (Dauncey and Tinker, 2015), the text producers have created nostalgia television shows as a means to evoke the collective memories of national past and culture and underline the value of Thai cultural heritage.

This thesis thus finds that the representations of Thainess in the shows are created in accordance with a focus on encouraging national culture through recalling a *vanished/nostalgic* culture and also promoting the *living/existing* culture as a way of facilitating the continuity of the cultural heritage of the nation. It also emerges that the way in which the shows represent the national past and cultural identity align with a sense of reflective nostalgia - a particular kind of nostalgia which focuses on reflecting on the nation's past and culture - rather than a restorative nostalgia that seeks an uncompromising return to origin (Boym, 2001). Underlining the sweetness of national identity, the shows foreground the value of Thai identity and its distinctiveness and evoke the collective memories of national past and culture. This shows the way in which nostalgia is used to revive the sweetness of the past in

response to the bitterness of the present, i.e. the excessive cultural imperialism and the loss/decrease of Thai uniqueness.

The results of this study reveal the discursive function of television Variety Shows, which marshal eloquently linguistic resources together with other modes of communication to construct multimodal assemblage for a national identity discourse. Through the spectacular and entertaining form of the Variety Show genre, the TV shows present various topics of Thai identity and generate meaningful discourses behind them. In Chapter 4, the results of the analysis of television texts show the way in which the nostalgic construction/representation of national culture and heritage is used to revive and foreground the values and distinctiveness of national identity. This thesis elucidates on three main sets of modes of representation integral to an overall discursive construction of identity: the topics/genres of, the semiotics of, and the linguistics of Thai representations.

The results of the topic analysis of the *Khunphrachuai* show reveal an abundance of traditionally perceived national culture and heritage, including both living and nostalgic/vanished identity. This includes the genres or topics of Thai performing arts (as the biggest topic), followed by the topics of history, visual arts, literature, linguistic practices, traditional beliefs, traditions of festivities and worship, the King and Royal family, sharing Thai culture with others, traditional sports, ethnic groups, etc. The variety of topics as such accentuates Thailand's cultural wealth, especially the performing arts - including music, performances and folk dances - which constitute the largest discourse topic. This also reflects that there is a large variety of sources of Thai entertainment. The interesting point to note here is that the represented cultural identity in the show includes not merely the long-standing national culture and historic past. It also contains a number of invented Thai traditions - newly invented ones created as a mixture of selected elements of the desired past and new/modern cultural features (Hobsbawm, 1983). As evidenced by the results of the textual analysis, the *Khunphrachuai* show presents various aspects which it argues to be invented Thai traditions, including, for example, the *Cham-uat*, a new form of Thai comedy, invented in the first decades of the twentieth century (Wankwan, 2014), *Muai Thai* (modern Thai boxing) which is posited as an invented tradition developed

from a pre-existing, non-sporting forms of boxing *(Muai Bo Ran)* and local boxing tradition, as a modern national sport (Vail, 2014), and *Lukthung* songs (Thai country songs), an invented tradition in which Thai folk music is fused with Western musical elements.

Not only presenting the topics of invented Thai traditions, as noted above, the *Khunphrachuai* show also invents new, or modern, tradition, of Thai representation. As discussed in Chapter 5, thus is argued, and claimed by the text producers, to be *Khunphrachuai* style-Thai representations. Throughout the show, various semiotic resources are brought together to form the show as nostalgia television. The nostalgic construction of identity is represented through a Thai thematic setting revolving around the reflection of Thai cultural symbols and the revival of nostalgic traditional cultural elements including national/traditional costumes, the Thai characteristics of the hosts, guests as culture specialists and performers, young people as studio audiences, Thai style-music, and Thai images, graphics and lettering. Through this Thai thematic concept, the results of the analysis demonstrate that the cultural hybridisation and adaptation of Thai culture - including the mixture of traditional and modern Thai cultural features and the fusing Thai with un-Thai (foreign) cultural features - are used as a way to create the attractiveness and spectacular qualities of mediated Thai representations. This outstanding and unique style of the show's Thai representations lead to the claim that *Khunphrachuai* is an outstanding nostalgia television show that plays a significant role in inventing a new tradition of Thai representations, or, in other words, it provides a contemporary model of nostalgic mediation of the past and traditional culture on television in which cultural innovation and change are greatly adopted. Indeed, this model constructs the inauthenticity of Thai culture.

In addition, meaningful discourses of identity are generated through four main linguistic channels: the discourses of hosts (the biggest), of interaction between the hosts and guests, of lyrics and of voice-over. Through these linguistic channels, the four main significant discourses topics are generated. As detailed in Chapter 4, the foremost discourse topic (mostly represented) is the discourse topic on *the role of Thais in encouraging and preserving Thai culture*. The second most stressed

discourse is the discourse topic of *raising awareness about learning detailed knowledge of Thai culture*, often created through the talks between the hosts and guests. Thirdly, the discourse topic of *the value of Thai culture* is largely created through the hosts' speeches. Lastly, the discourse on *solidarity among Thais* is mainly foregrounded through the lyrics of the songs. The fact that such linguistic construction is created through a series of well-prepared scripts (as demonstrated in Chapter 4) along with multimodal modes of meaning-making indicates the text producers' enthusiasm for creating a perfect combination of the sets of Thai representations to form an attractive and culturally meaningful television discourse.

Interestingly, the results of analysing television texts reveal that the emphasis on maintaining specific Thai cultural values, especially the Thai traits of being compromising and *Krengchai*. Such Thai traits are, apparently intentionally, presented through the hosts' discourses (especially through speeches and gestures) and also through the interaction between the hosts and the guests. As argued in Chapter 4, the harmonious and compromising interaction between the hosts and the guests is based on and serves to represent the ideas of a compromising interaction and being *Krengchai*. This Thai conception is also reflected in the results of the topic analysis, from which avoidance of the negative other-representation emerged (see Section 7.3 for more detail). Moreover, the existence of such Thai traits also emerged during the focus group interviews with the audiences. As noted in Chapter 3 and Chapter 6, the interaction among participants in the focus group interviews reflects the Thai trait of harmonious talk, in which the avoidance of conflict, the essence of being *Krengchai*, and the presence of unspoken disagreement, are key features. As a result of the emergence of such Thai traits, conducting a focus group with Thai viewers was accomplished with unexpected difficulty (see Chapter 3). This thesis thus suggests that the method of focus group interviews does not quite suit the Thai way of social interaction, especially when conducted with elderly participants, who seemed to be, arguably, not only embarrassed to freely and confidently express their ideas in a social setting, but also adhere strongly to the traditional social practices in which these Thai traits are maintained much more than the younger participants.

Additionally, this thesis uncovers a number of noteworthy observations about audiences' interpretations of Thai representations in the show and the impacts of the nostalgic representation of identity on the viewers. The results of audience analysis show a close connection between the "degree of familiarity" of national culture and the degree of the "social stock of knowledge" (Berger and Luckmann, 1996, p. 57). This study finds that the different degrees of familiarity with national culture, gained from different degrees of cultural exposure and experience, result significantly in how much audiences have a stock of knowledge of the culture. This study argues that age group and geographical origin are the key factors when it comes to gaining knowledge of the traditional culture. Age group is the key indicator of the degree of direct cultural experience of people. As a result of their prolonged cultural exposure, the older viewers have direct experiences and understanding of traditional culture, much more so than younger viewers. The majority of the older audiences viewed the Thai culture represented in the show as *the old things of the old generations* (including themselves). On the contrary, as a result of having only a modicum of knowledge and lacking direct experience of historic past and traditional culture, the majority of younger viewers generally considered the knowledge of Thai culture in the show as *new knowledge and unseen/unfamiliar things*. These results confirm that age is the most influential factor in cultural proximity and the achievement of the social stock of knowledge.

At the same time, the geographical origin, i.e. location of living, merely results in a deficiency of cultural exposure among young people. While geographical origin does not affect the cultural exposure among the older Thais, it has a great effect on those of the young generation. The location of living does not affect the cultural exposure among the old viewers' because their long-lived experiences of traditional culture are generally similar. The stock of knowledge obtained from personal cultural experience, as noted above, corroborates the findings of a study by Suwannamas and Sutee (2010) which examined audiences' interpretations of the representation of the past in the popular variety talk television programme *Wan Wan Yang Wan Yu*. Similar to the findings of this thesis, Suwannamas and Sutee (2010) claimed that different viewer experiences resulted in differences in the stock of knowledge of the past. The audiences' experience is thus presented as the key factor that affects the way they make sense of and perceive the representation of the past in the show.

One of the more significant findings to emerge from this study is that the nostalgic representation of national identity brings about the emergence of nostalgic emotion among viewers. The results of audience analysis reveal that the viewers watch the show as entertainment/education rather than to enjoy a sense of nostalgia. However, the nostalgic construction of identity in the show consequently leads the viewers to experience sentiments of nostalgia. As elaborated in Chapter 6, these nostalgic sentiments emerge in three stages/degrees. The *recalling* the individual/collective memories is a primary stage of nostalgic sentiments that emerges in the minds of all viewers. This corresponds with the text producers' main purpose as it is the stage of nostalgic feeling which the text producers basically aim. A second, higher degree of nostalgic emotion is the stage of *thinking of* the pleasured past. Lastly, the highest degree is the stage of *yearning* to get back to the past. The emergence of nostalgic sentiments in the viewers' minds as such clearly indicates that the nostalgic mediation of the past on television can have a great cultural impact on audiences' emotions in connection/reconnection with the national past and culture. The nostalgic form of representations found in this study might be hence employed in the production of media products to promote national culture, identity and history.

This study supports the idea that reflective nostalgia is a practical and appropriate cultural tool for constructing and promoting national identity in contemporary Thai society. This study further finds that the Thai representations in the shows have a great impact on audiences' cultural attitudes but less influence on audiences' cultural practices. It emerges that the show can contribute to audiences' further understandings of national past and culture, the realisation of their cultural roots and of their potential role in encouraging national cultural heritage. Also, the construction of reflective nostalgia in the show can lead viewers to have more positive attitudes towards traditional culture (among the young rural viewers), i.e. perceiving it as no longer boring and conservative. In terms of effects on practices, the older viewers added to the knowledge represented in the shows to transfer to their descendants. Moreover, the shows lead the older viewers, among the minority of them, to return to the long-lost experiences by visiting the places where the paradise lost, such as nostalgic foods and traditional performances, is still available. Conversely, the Thai representations in the shows have less of an influence on the youths' cultural actions.

The results show that, after watching the show, the young audiences (merely a minority of young rural viewers) share video clips of the comedy shows through the *Choi Songs in* the *Cham-uat Na Man* section to friends and also practice singing such songs. Despite such minor impacts, this at least signals that the entertaining form of Thai representations and reflective nostalgia in the show are to an extent serving to persuade the youths to further encourage national culture and involve themselves in cultural activities/practices.

This thesis confirms a strong association between the constructions and representations of national identity in line with reflective nostalgia and the inclusive cultural position of nation-building. Reflective nostalgia can work as a cultural tool for the construction and promotion of national identity for contemporary Thailand, subsuming both goals of strengthening the national cultural identity and unification of the country, and at the same time facilitating the international development of the country (see below). Unlike restorative nostalgia, which entails elements of nationalism, reflective nostalgia can work to evoke the private and collective memories of a national past and culture among the members of the nation (Self) without undermining the international relationships with other nations (Other).

7.2 The Government and the Discursive Construction of Thai Identity

As explained in Chapter 2, under *Article 40* of the *1997 Constitution*, Thai broadcast media producers and distributors have been able to represent many varied forms of television product, based on professional media ethics and social responsibility. Whereas Thai film policies and practices come under stricter governmental regulation (Veluree, 2015), the results of this study assert that the processes of production of popular television shows are independent from state interference, i.e. they are not the state-funded productions (as discussed in Chapter 5). The three shows are produced by the business organisations and distributed through commercial-free television channels which are not run by the government. Nevertheless, despite the fact that the discourses of Thai identity in the shows are principally shaped by the text producers' cultural vision, this thesis reveals that the overall discourse of Thai representations in the shows conforms to a high degree with government cultural policy, which guides the direction of how national identity is constructed and promoted to the members of the nation. These results concur with Hall's argument "a

national culture is a discourse" (Hall, 1996a, p. 613) and the constructions of national identities focus on "linking membership within the political nation state and identification with national culture" (Hall, 1994 cited in de Cillia *et al.*, 1999, p. 155).

Despite there being no government interference in the processes of production of the shows, this research finds a relationship between the shows and government involvement. Firstly, this includes governmental support for the shows in terms of provision of awards and art and cultural resource facilities. Secondly, there is co-operation between the shows and the government in promoting the government's projects. On the one hand, the shows help to promote such cultural projects without government funding, as the text producers realise that such projects and information are beneficial for Thais. On the other hand, the shows were funded directly by the government for the promotion of particular projects, e.g. the promotion of performing arts and singing contests among young people, and the promotions of Thailand's participation in *ASEAN* (*Association of Southeast Asian Nations*) community.

The results of the analysis show that the government's project regarding *ASEAN Community* is especially promoted through many episodes of the *Khunphrachuai* show. This was presented in the special sections of the show specially created for the promotion of this project, sponsored by the *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand.* These include the section called *"ASEAN Minute"*, which focuses on introducing and providing a common understanding of the technical terms used in *ASEAN* and their abbreviation. The *ASEAN Minute* was represented in all episodes telecast from 19 July to 20 September 2015. Another is the special section called "มองโลกแลไทยก้าวไกลสู่อาเซียน" (*Looking at the world, looking at Thailand: Progressing towards ASEAN*), represented in all episodes telecast from 27 September to 27 December 2015. These special sections took the form of a talk between the hosts and guests from the government sector to provide the audiences with useful information about Thailand's participation in the *ASEAN Community*. The main aim of these sections was to contribute to an understanding of and preparation for Thai people for participating in the *ASEAN Community*, which was to enter into force on 31 December 2015. This is in accordance with "the ASEAN Vision 2020, adopted by the ASEAN Leaders on the 30th Anniversary of ASEAN, agreed on a

shared vision of ASEAN as a concert of Southeast Asian nations, outward looking, living in peace, stability and prosperity, bonded together in partnership in dynamic development and in a community of caring societies" (Association of Southeast Asian Nations, 2016b).

Thai youth as special host

Technical term used in *ASEAN* and its abbreviation

Guest from the *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand*

Figure 7.1: A talk about ASEAN Community (AC) in a special section of the *Khunphrachuai* called "ASEAN Minute"

The set decorated with the national flag of
the ten member states of *ASEAN*

Guest from the *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*
of the Kingdom of Thailand

**Figure 7.2: A talk about ASEAN in the special section of the *Khunphrachuai*
called "มองโลกแลไทยก้าวไกลสู่อาเซียน".**

The results of this study indicate that television discourse, as mediated discourse, is "constrained by the institutional requirements of society" (Fetzer, 2014, p. 369), and, in a broader context, such (media) institutional requirements are generally shaped by the existing national discourses fostered by the government. This study has identified that the construction of television discourses of Thai identity is really in line with the government's vision of cultural promotion and management in contemporary multicultural Thai society. In the model scheme and policy of the *Ministry of Culture* (Ministry of Culture, 2016), government cultural missions cover both the domestic and international dimensions of socio-cultural promotion. As explained in Chapter 5, the government's missions focus on the encouragement and promotion of national cultural heritage regarding art, culture and religion and unity among Thais. Simultaneously, the employment of cultural aspects to enhance cooperation and relation with foreign countries, especially in terms of the relation with the members of *ASEAN*, is also one of the emphases.

This study argues that the constructions and representations of Thai identity in the television shows are aligned to such government cultural policy despite the fact that the text producers do not entirely know the government cultural policy. Strikingly, as explained in Chapter 5, the study clearly shows that the Thai representations in the *Khunphrachuai* show are in line with all government strategic issues noted in the action plan of the *Ministry of Culture*. Moreover, the Thai representations in the *Chingchasawan* and the *Talatsot Sanam Pao* shows are also in line with government cultural goals in terms of encouragement of national cultural heritage. This indicates the role of television in facilitating the discursive construction of certain cultural worldviews of the nation according to the state's direction. As discussed in Chapter 1, Thai identity was/has been constructed, reconstructed, or transformed according to a top-down cultural policy. The national discourses of national identity were and have always been shaped by those who have administrative power. Thus, this thesis argues that national identity is a man-made/artificial discourse constructed, reconstructed, and inculcated through a web of power relations. As Said (1978, p. 5) notes, "men make their own history, that what they can know is what they have made". Supporting Foucault (1995, p. 27) that "power produces knowledge", this study maintains that power produces discourses of Thai identity, and that Thai identity is hence, in agreement with Wodak *et al.* (2009, p. 22), "the product of discourse". As Wodak argues:

> "If a nation is an imagined community and at the same time a mental construct, an imaginary complex of ideas containing at least the defining elements of collective unity and equality, of boundaries and autonomy, then this image is real to the extent that one is convinced of it, believes in it and identifies with it emotionally. The question of how this imaginary community reaches the minds of those who are convinced of it is easy to answer: it is constructed and conveyed in discourse, predominantly in narratives of national culture. National identity is thus the product of discourse." (Wodak *et al.*, 2009, p. 22)

7.3 The Construction of Thainess as Inclusive Identity

This study shows that the televisual formation of national identity narratives creates an alternation between two main sets of discourses of identity. Principally, the shows substantiate the discourse of a sense of national cultural belonging among Thais through the representations, which highlight clearly the values of traditional culture, together with the role of Thai people in encouraging it. Concurrently, the shows also create a sense of cultural inclusion - i.e. the acceptability of multiculturalism and the

adoption of modern/foreign cultures - to Thai society. This thesis therefore argues that the discursive construction of Thai identity in contemporary Thailand is constructed and promoted as an inclusive identity. This is evidenced by the results of the study revealing that Thai identity is represented through the inclusive way of Self representation, rather than entirely getting back to the origins and excluding Other.

First, the shows represent Thai fusion identity as a combination of Thai and foreign cultures and a blend of the traditional and the modern, such as in the presentation of music shows as a form of synergetic identity between the traditional and the modern/western culture. This indicates that the cultural hybridisation and adaptation are central to the inclusive way of Self representation. Second, the show presents a cultural commonality between Thai and foreign cultures, i.e. the representation of encouraging cultural sharing and association between Thailand and other countries. In addition to the promotion of ASEAN community (see the previous section), the results of the topic analysis reveal a sustained depiction of topics of cultural sharing between Thai and foreign cultures, including the cultures of other Asian and also western countries, especially through the aspects of performing arts.

Third, the inclusive way of representation is further reflected in the positive representation of Other and the avoidance/absence of the "negative other-representation" which is a prominent feature of nationalism (Boréus, 2013, p. 294). This is arguably a way to avoid conflict so as to maintain good relationships between Thailand and other nations, especially neighbouring countries. One obvious instance of this is illustrated in the absence of a negative representation of Other in the narrative of national history regarding the ancient wars between Thais and Burmese people. Rather than criticising Other, the *Khunphrachuai* show presents a narrative of the ancient wars from both Thai and Burmese historical record without creating a sense of controversy. This differentiates the show from nationalist narratives. The nationalist narratives of Thai history have been circulated through several sources, especially in schools (teachings about topics of national history) and through historical television dramas and films. Prominent instances of nationalist media products include the historical films *Bang Rajan* and *Suroyothai*, which generate "a sense of national unity" by representing the role of national heroes and solidarity

among Thais to defend the nation against enemies (Harrison, 2010b, p. 117). Another example is the state-funded film *The Legend of King Naresuan*, which represents the story of one of "the greatest Thai warriors" (Veluree, 2015, p. 103). Despite the fact that the history of the ancient wars between Thai and Burmese people in the *Ayutthaya Kingdom* (1350-1767) has consistently been promoted to Thais with a depiction of Myanmar as the enemy, the inclusive way of narrating those historical events, as shown in the *Khunphrachuai* texts, can also work. It can therefore be argued that the discursive construction of Thai identity in television programmes places emphasis on creating a sense of national cultural belonging by foregrounding the sense of "us/our" rather than pointing out the disadvantages of admiring other cultures or blaming the new trend such as modern/contemporary pop cultures responsible for the erosion of Thai identity. These results demonstrate that the nostalgic narratives of national past and history in relation to Other do not have to be presented through the exclusionary nationalism of restorative nostalgia.

The aspect of inclusion also emerges in the results of audience analysis. As discussed in Chapter 6, both elderly and young audiences welcome the fusion form of Thai representations in the shows in which the intention of a new tradition of representing Thainess (by the text producers) is employed. The reason for this is that the viewers understand that although Thai identity is represented as a fusion, it is formed as a tradition-based representation in which the distinctiveness of national culture/Thai symbols is highlighted as a core fused with modern/foreign cultural forms to make it more appealing and attractive. Additionally, the audiences believe that the encouragement of national culture should be in line with the circumstances of contemporary Thai society, in which multiculturalism is an integral and positive element. However, data emerging from the perspectives of the audiences, of the producers and of the government (as reflected in policy) indicate that this shared vision of representations of Thai inclusiveness should foreground the distinctiveness and value of Thai cultural heritage. This signals a sense that traditional values and cultural heritage may be being marginalised as a result of what is perceived as cultural imperialism, a subject which is debated as one of the cultural problems in contemporary Thailand.

One of the reasons why cultural inclusion is prevalent and embraced in Thai society might be the fact that cross-cultural integration and borrowing foreign elements have for many years been a feature of Thai history. As discussed in Chapter 1, Thai identity has long been subject to cross-cultural consumption and selective cultural hybridisation and borrowing. Also, the inclusion has happened to the existence of Thai culture at the domestic level. Thailand comprises six main regions - Central, Northern, Northeastern, Eastern, Western, and Southern - which are internally diverse in terms of language, ethnicity, and culture. In each region can be found sustained efforts at promoting local cultures and initiatives to protect language and local ways of life. This local cultural inclusiveness is a microcosm of the larger nation, where the use of the (central) Thai language is seen not as a force to discredit or undermine local cultures and languages but rather as a means to "unify people of different ethnicities, languages, and cultures into a single nation. The use of the Thai language makes it possible for a common education curriculum to be promoted throughout the entire country" (Suwilai, 2014, p. 20). Hence, while Thais in each region usually speak their own local language in everyday life, they also need to use and learn the national (central) Thai language as the official language of the nation and the language of education and nation-wide media.

With regard to this study, this inclusive pattern of nation-building takes on similar features to the ideological construction of American identity through the representation of *Superman* (Gordon, 2001). As Gordon argues, *Superman*, which links "a wistful nostalgia" with "a commodity", has been tied (by *Superman*'s owners) to the ideological construction of Americanness that unites the two different values (individualism and consumerism) with democracy, and marks it as American (Gordon, 2001, pp. 177-178). Likewise, this thesis finds that the discursive construction of Thai identity unites two different, and often juxtaposed, cultural ideas, i.e. traditionalism and modernism. Taken together, these results suggest that television has been substantiating the promotion of Thai identity in line with a government cultural policy which envisages contemporary Thai identity as a form of inclusive collective identity incorporating the modern and the traditional, rather than a nationalistic and exclusionary identity. Also, the inclusive format of Thai identity construction/representation arises from and is also compatible with the country's socio-cultural and historical circumstances as a way to underpin the maintenance of

the traditionality/distinctiveness of Thai culture, while simultaneously integrating a form of multiculturalism. This cultural direction can also be supportive of the international policies of cooperation and relationships between Thailand and other nations, especially neighbouring countries.

7.4 TV Variety Shows: A Source of Edutainment and Promotion of National Identity

According to Scheurer (1985, p. 320), the focus of the form of television Variety Show is the presentation of content through the "variety-revue technique of the build" with a sequence of acts and performances to provide the shows with a sense of the spectacular. The basic feature through which Variety Shows are successful is the capacity "to appeal to a unified culture, one whose members shared some commonly held beliefs, tastes, and values" (Scheurer, 1985, p. 321). In Thailand, a large number of popular Variety Show programmes are telecast on several channels. They are based on a variety of contents and forms of presentation that correspond well to Thai pop culture tastes and values.

The interesting point is that the Variety Show has been utilised as a tool for education and information. Although its format originally engaged with forms of spectacular entertainment, especially comedy, musical performances (Scheurer, 1985; Newcomb, 2004), contemporary Thai Variety Show programmes have been further developed, not only in terms of a variety form of presentation but also to include content which contains "edutainment" - a combination of "traditional sources of entertainment", such as Television Drama, with "educational tools" (Bird, 2005, p. 311). The representations of Thai cultural heritage in the three television shows analysed in this study provide a wealth of evidence of the success of the edutainment Variety Show format.

Another interesting point is the issue of why the Variety Show genre is popular among Thais. Arguably, the diversity of content and presentation techniques contribute to their popularity. Another reason can be explained in line with the cultural context of the Thai way of living. It has been suggested that, according to Kislenko

(2004, p. 137), "Thailand is a country of great variety in its festivals, holidays, and celebrations". From past to present, a wide variety of entertainment has been inseparable from Thai people's social activities. There is a long tradition of Thai lifestyle that is closely linked to a great variety of entertainment. The research data in this study reveals that a large and diverse array of traditional performing arts from the length and breadth of the country are represented in the television programmes. In addition to these findings, in a broader context, several further kinds of traditional entertainment are represented, varied in format and style and based on a particular local culture of each region of Thailand. There are four main micro-features of the overall entertainment culture in Thailand in relation to geographical origin, i.e. the Central Thai, the Northern Thai, the North-eastern Thai and the Southern Thai cultures. The long tradition of entertainment consumption surrounding lifestyles and tastes has continually facilitated Thai peoples familiarising themselves with these culturally-based entertainment cultural products. This might be one of the reasons why the Variety Show genre is popular among Thais and is utilised as a cultural agent for the promotion of national cultural identity to mass audiences.

This study has further found that outstanding television shows encouraging national culture speak to the central role of mass media within a public service broadcasting ethos. This indicates the development of Thai television in the sense that popular and entertaining television shows can function as a tool of public service and social institutions (Van den Bulck, 2001). Arguably, despite the fact that the commercial television channels do not have a commitment to public service broadcasting, they can do this within the specific context in Thailand. McQuail *et al.* (1992) note that public service broadcasting is aimed to maintain national language and culture and represent the national interest. Similarly, Van den Bulck (2001) states that a crucial task for public service broadcasting is to make a contribution to national integration and the representation of national identity and culture, which is to be based on three main actions: education, information and entertainment. In relation to such cultural goals, popular Variety Shows can work effectively although they are not entirely in line with the basic attributes and the traditional model of public service broadcasting, in which an emphasis on the informative and educational aims is the key (Lunt, 2009). The televisual construction of edutainment is hence a way in which light

entertainment television shows are employed - through distributing and communicating the values of Thai culture to the mass - to serve the public interest.

Evidently, the *Khunphrachuai* show is highlighted as a role model of the outstanding (in terms of being both influential and popular) television show encouraging and conserving Thai cultural identity. The evidence for this is the many awards and rewards this television show has received, from both government and several media associations. *Khunphrachuai* has been commended by the government sector with the *Phramahathiraratchao Ramluek Awards* (2008) from the *Ministry of Culture* and is also used as a source for promoting the government's cultural projects. This is evidence of the cultural policy to promote Thai culture through powerful mass media as a cultural agent. Additionally, this television show has been commended by several media associations. The awards include the *Mekkhala Awards* (2004) provided by *Thai Journalists Association,* the *Star Entertainment Awards* (2004 - 2009), the *Dao Mekkhala Awards* (2014) by *Entertainment Correspondents Association of Thailand,* the *Top Awards* (2010 and 2012) by *TV Pool* Magazine, the *Phik Kha Ne Suan Awards* (2012) by the *Broadcaster and Journalist's Assembly of Thailand,* and the *Nat Ta Rat Awards* (2010 and 2012) by *Radio-Television Broadcasting Professional Federation* (Workpoint Entertainment, 2011; Workpoint Entertainment, 2015). This governmental and professional acknowledgement shows the extent to which this television show has been highlighted as a role model for mass media products.

The results of this study concur with Thitinan (2007, p. 86) findings that "television has been playing, and continues to play, a central role in the construction and re-construction of Thai cultural identity". It is evident that there are several television programmes which represent Thai cultural identity, such as period television dramas, which mirror images of Thailand and its culture in the past, and documentaries, which present several aspects of culture. However, these television genres, despite their nationwide popularity, lack continuity of distribution, i.e. they are televised for a period of time and then replaced by another story in which the encouragement of national identity may not be central. Despite the fact that their texts are closely related to nostalgia, which is seen as a vital tool for facilitating the continuity of

identity, their discontinuous nature seems to undermine their centrality to the nostalgic mediation and promotion of national past and culture. It therefore can be argued that, unfortunately, the discontinuity of Thai representations through television dramas, which is one of the most popular television genres in Thailand, cannot effectively/continuously facilitate the continuity of construction and representation of national cultural identity. Regarding the genre of the television documentary. Although they informatively and educationally provide several aspects of knowledge including Thai past and culture, they, unfortunately, do not gain success in popularity, compared with the light entertainment products. Due to these limitations of other television genres, the weekly variety shows appear as a major means to solve the problem.

7.5 The Broader Implications of the Research Results

Overall, this research has shown that the constructions and representations of nostalgic Thai identity in the three television shows analysed in this study are clues which signal current Thailand's cultural condition in searching for a distinct identity. This study therefore supports Pattana (2003, p. 33) claim that Thai society is yearning for self-identity and confidence by drawing on a past to linked to the future. In agreement with Keightley and Pickering (2012, p. 114) idea of nostalgia, the Thai nostalgic interests and investments are emerged to serve not merely the maintenance of the past for its own sake but also to "signal a collective desire to reconnect with what has apparently been lost or reassess what has apparently been gained". Hence, aspects of Thai nostalgia, embedded in the processes of the discursive construction of national identity analysed in this thesis, are means of collectively rethinking the past (sweetness) to understand the present (in which the bitterness exists) to build a national future. This shows the way in which nostalgia is used "to make social progress" (Lizardi, 2014, p. 48).

In addition, the thesis speaks to the convention between the micro and macro levels of the discursive construction in relation to Thai cultural identity in contemporary Thailand. This convention involves the shared idea that the inclusive way of nation-building is the proper way to balance the maintenance of a distinctive national identity with a project to develop the country in an age which is increasingly dependent on

cultural, technological, political and economic currents connecting nations across the world. Harking back to the past and attempting to construct an exclusionary identity is no way to take a nation forward in the era of globalisation. The results of this study signal that the exclusionary nationalist construction of national identity (Wodak et al 2013 on European contexts; KhosraviNik and Zia, 2014; KhosraviNik and Sarkhoh, 2017 on Middle Eastern contexts) does not fit contemporary Thailand's goal of development in which building and consolidating international relationships is one of the primary aims. Instead of undertaking a nationalist programme, the construction and representation of Thainess as an inclusive national identity are operationalised. As noted above, this thesis demonstrates that the nostalgic representation of national identity can be formed through the synthesis of traditional and new/modern features in which cultural hybridisation, adaptation, and the invention of new traditions to represent Thainess are deployed. Indeed, the nostalgic mediation of the past and culture, allied to reflective nostalgia, can serve this end. Hence, this study argues that reflective nostalgia can function as a means of the construction of national identity in a non-nationalist way.

This communion of thoughts regarding Thai identity is reflected by the collective cultural vision between the text producers and the audiences, which are influenced by the macro-level of construction and promotion of Thai identity. Indeed, the macro-level is connected with the government cultural policy and the socio-cultural circumstances of current Thai society that work towards the development of the country on both domestic and international scales. This might be the reason why the inclusive version of construction and representation of Thai identity (Self) has been employed, rather than engaging with the exclusion of Other, or mainstream nationalist direction of nation-building as it was, for a particular socio-cultural and political purpose, in Thailand in the past (see the discussion on Thai nationalism in Chapter 1).

The results of this thesis are also broadly consistent with a study by Lewis (2002) which claims that Thai media have played an influential role in arranging the cycle of remembering and forgetting aspects of national identity. In this sense, the media have interacted with the state to create their own version of the past, thereby

influencing the popular memory of the nation. Thus, in Thai circumstances, and as Foucault (1995) claimed, there is a close connection between power and the generation of knowledge:

> "power produces knowledge…power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations." (Foucault, 1995, p. 27)

The most obvious finding to emerge from this study is that the power of nostalgia television discourse is not merely created and distributed by key figures in the media institutions; it is shaped and influenced by the broader discursive contexts. The government as policymaker plays a dominant role in the way in which national identity is constructed and promoted, and in arranging the cycle of remembering and forgetting. The Thai state's version of an appropriate direction for the nation's socio-cultural development befitting the current context of Thai society seeks to incorporate multiculturalism, or the inclusion of multiple cultures, from both within and without the nation. As noted, despite the fact that the processes of productions of the shows are independent of government interference, the Thai representations and promotions in the shows have been either directly and indirectly, one way or another, connected with the government.

This thesis argues that the discursive construction of Thai identity is shaped and produced by multidimensional power. Such power includes the power of reflective nostalgia television discourse per se (the *"d discourses"*), the power of the text producers as key figures in media institutions, the power of the government, and the power of the *"Big D Discourses"* in place in the Thai context, i.e. the macro discourses and Thai order of discourses and socio-cultural Thai contexts (Gee, 2011, p. 34). Multidimensional power in this sense is the overriding factor that shapes, constructs, and re-constructs the way Thai people see Thai identity. The multidimensional power over the discursive construction of Thai identity is illustrated in the figure below;
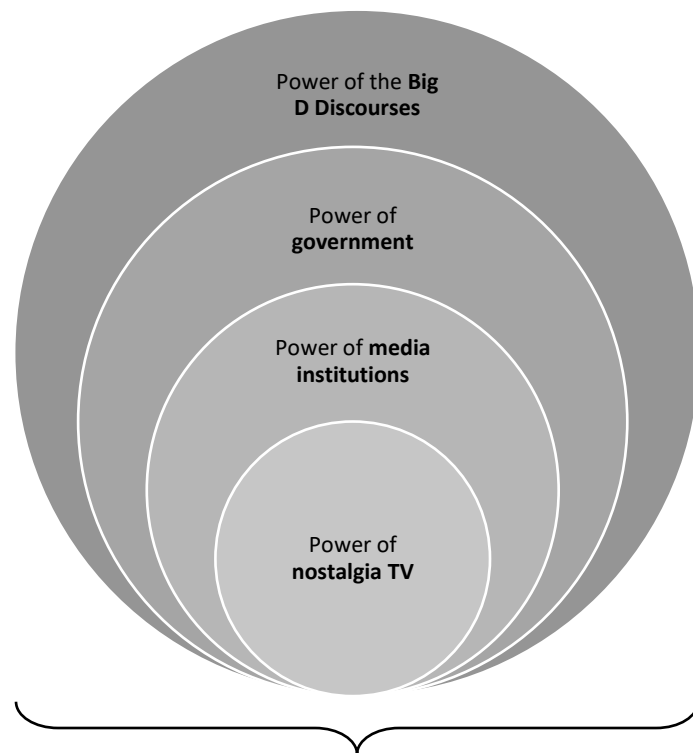
Audiences' perceptions & interpretations of nostalgia TV discourses of Thai identity and cultural impacts of the shows on their attitudes & behaviors

Figure 7.3: The multidimensional power over the discursive construction of Thai identity as inclusive identity

Furthermore, the study contributes to our understanding of the *inauthenticity* of Thai culture and its nostalgic mediation of the past through popular television. The research has shown that the nostalgic mediation of the past and national culture on television is the key to the construction and representation of national identity. The important aspect to be emphasised here is that the constructions and representations of Thai identity as such are involved with the construction of inauthenticity. As previously discussed, in the process of constructing and representing a national cultural identity, either authenticity or inauthenticity can be generated (see Chapter 1 and Chapter 4). The former relates to the formation of an original, unaltered, pristine and unspoilt culture(s). If the construction/maintenance of authenticity is the aim, then innovation and change (which can be made through cultural hybridisation and adaptation) are limited. This is closely related to the construction of restorative nostalgia. On the contrary, in communities/nations where the maintenance of the original and unaltered is not a key aim of constructing and representing a collective

identity, change and innovation are acceptable and therefore included. This means that the inauthenticity of a particular culture is being stressed. Evidenced by the results of this study, as already noted, the nostalgic mediation of a Thai past and culture on television clearly employs cultural hybridisation and adaptation to symbolise particular cultural features when promoting and inculcating discourses of national identity. What emerges from this construction and representation of Thainess is a Thai fusion identity. This way of identity construction reflects how cultural innovation, changes and modifications to national culture are used. As mentioned above, this thesis thus argues that the nostalgic mediation of Thai past and culture on television, as important aspects of the discursive construction of national identity, is allied to the construction of an inauthentic Thai culture. This way of inculcating an envisaged contemporary Thai identity as a form of inclusive collective identity reflects the cultural orientation of the media institutions/text producers and the government, as already noted, which focuses on incorporating and fusing traditionalism and modernism, rather than a form of openly nationalistic and exclusionary identity.

One of the most striking findings to emerge is that the results of this thesis reveal the notion of the *myth of authenticity* of Thai culture. Barthes (1957, p. 109) states that "everything can be a myth provided it is conveyed by a discourse". Myth, in this sense, is "a story by which a culture explains or understands some aspect of reality or nature…; a culture's way of thinking about something, a way of conceptualizing or understanding it" (Hall, 2011, pp. 82-83). Based on the results of audience analysis, the participants generally understand and realise that many aspects of a traditionally perceived national culture are inauthentic in origin, as the development and evolution of Thai culture have evidently included a significant amount of cultural borrowing and hybridisation and have always been influenced by prior foreign cultures (see Chapter 1). This is reflected in the audience acknowledging that many aspects of Thai culture are not original. For instance, they explained that *Foi Thong* (golden threads), which had long been considered by Thais as a traditional dessert, was in fact a Portuguese influenced-Thai food. They also noted that the Thai language shared its roots with other Asian languages and that the traditional *Chongkraben* pantaloons were initially influenced by Cambodian culture. Also, *Phat Thai* (Thai-style fried noodles), an invented tradition long perceived as a Thai symbol, was said by the audiences to be

actually quite modern, created during the regime of Phibulsongkhram to signify Thai nationalism. These examples of the audiences' perspectives on specific kinds of Thai culture indicate that Thai people generally have a stock of knowledge regarding the inauthenticity of Thai culture. However, surprisingly, the results of the study illustrate that, despite understanding and acknowledging these facts, the audiences strongly perceived and asserted that Thai culture has its own uniqueness and identity, and they also used the term *"Thai Thae"* (which means "authentic Thai") when describing Thai culture. One possible explanation of this is that although many cultural features which have been perceived as Thai cultural markers - such as the *Wai*, the smile, politeness, and wearing *Chongkraben pantaloons* which is a tradition shared among Southeast Asian countries - have also long existed in other countries, Thai people consider that Thai culture had developed and evolved so that its own distinctiveness/uniqueness has been created, and hence these features uniquely symbolise Thainess. In the view of this thesis, the perception of Thainess in this sense is considered a myth of the authenticity of Thainess. If authenticity relates to the establishment of an original, unaltered, pristine and unspoilt culture(s), as mentioned above, it is cumbersome and questionable at best to claim that Thai culture is authentic. Hence, the term *"Thai Thae"* cannot always refer to the authenticity of Thainess.

7.6 Contributions and Limitations of this Research

The findings from this study make several contributions. First, this thesis is an attempt to connect scholarship in television studies and national identity within the global television industry. It adds to the research on the topics of mass media and cultural identity in Southeast Asia. Also, this interdisciplinary research fills a gap (see Chapter 1) in the research on Thai media and cultural studies by bridging the critical analysis of nostalgia television discourse, the analysis of the construction and mediation of Thai cultural identity, and audience studies. It has also made an attempt to theoretically examine the link between such analyses and the contextualisation of the wider socio-cultural context of Thailand to achieve an understanding of "why", which can help to understand the connections between television, culture and society as the main focus of media and cultural studies.

This thesis is one of the first studies in the field of media and cultural studies using the semiotic and CDA approach. Methodologically, it combines the model of analysing cultural texts both from the production and consumption and the textual ingredients themselves and involves major fieldwork. Specifically, it is one of the first studies in the field of Thai media and cultural studies to employ the theoretical and methodological framework of critical analysis of media discourse proposed by Fairclough (1995b) as an approach to provide an understanding of the ways in which national cultural identity is constructed, represented and perceived. Investigating the construction of Thai identity through the nostalgic mediation of national past and culture in popular television variety shows, this thesis covers the three levels of analysis of the discourses of Thai cultural identity. These are an analysis of nostalgia television texts themselves, an analysis of the processes of production (covering the perspectives of the producers of such television discourses and also the government involvement in the shows), and an analysis of the audiences' perspectives on the constructed discourses of national identity in the shows. Additionally, the contextualisation of the results gained from these three levels of analysis noted above, by drawing on the Thai socio-cultural context, serves to achieve an understanding of "why". In this way, it can provide future studies with a model of examining the construction of national identity through the nostalgic mediation of national past and culture on television and other kinds of multimodal media text.

This work contributes to our existing knowledge of nostalgia by providing deeper insights into viewership and nostalgia in connection with the nostalgic mediation of the past and culture on television. It has proposed a close connection between viewership and nostalgia. Significantly, the results of the audience analysis reveal the different degrees - from delicate to strong nostalgic emotions - of nostalgic sentiments which emerge in the viewers' minds as a result of watching nostalgic communications in the shows (see Chapter 6). This provides an understanding of nostalgia in terms of both private and collective nostalgic feelings. This analytical framework can be further employed in the analysis of nostalgia in media products and its relation to audiences' perceptions and interpretations as well as analysis of nostalgia in a broader context. For example, it can be employed as a theoretical framework of audience studies in relation to the nostalgic mediation of the past and culture through different kinds of media, and the audiences' perception and

attachment to the past and culture in the sense of either individual or collective nostalgia. It can also be adopted to the studies of nostalgia as a link to other kinds of cultural or commercial products and tourism as well as the analysis of the construction of national identity in different socio-cultural and political contexts. This knowledge of nostalgic sentiment emergence can also serve as a guide for wider social institutions, especially governments, to incorporate the idea of nostalgia within their cultural and/or political projects of nation-building.

This study has its own limitations in scope, largely related to time restrictions. At the analytical stage of television texts, the study focuses only on *Khunphrachuai* as the key television show rather than thoroughly examining the discourses in all three television shows. Despite the fact that these television shows have a similar focus, analysing them would have provided further insights and detailed understandings of Thai identity representations. However, to strengthen the study, the in-depth interviews with the text producers cover the perspectives of all three television shows. This could help to seek answers to the how and why questions beyond the meaning-making of Thai identity in the shows and the social factors or the broader context which shape the way discourses of Thai identity are generated and represented. A further limitation of this study is the limited scope in terms of television genre. This study covers only analysis of the *Variety Show* genre as a sample of popular television products. A similar project would be strengthened if it included an investigation into and comparison of other television genres with a similar cultural focus, such as period television dramas and documentaries.

7.7 The Suggestions for Future Research

Further research should be undertaken to investigate the discursive construction and representation of Thai identity in a wider context, particularly investigations of national identity construction through other television genres or other forms of nostalgia media. This would provide further insights into the role of media discourse in facilitating the continuity of national identity and forming unity among the members of the nation. Also, in future investigations of viewership and nostalgia, it might be possible to use a different criterion of audience samplings, such as education, social status, and different age groups. Interviews with middle-aged viewers might be

interesting as they might reveal different findings of perception and interpretation from those of the old and young viewers garnered in this study.

Appendices

Appendix 1: The Questions List for the in-depth Interviews with the Key Figures in the production of Thai television programmes

Project Title: The Discursive Construction of Nostalgic Thai Identity through Thai Television Programmes

Name of Researcher: Suwannamas Lekngam

Interviewees:

1) The **programme producers** (the main person in producing the overall features of the television shows through the processes of pre-production, production and post-production)

2) The **creatives** (who do the research and/or write the scripts)

1. The TV Shows and Government Policy

This area examines the link between the production of the TV shows and the government cultural policy in general i.e. how these shows may/may not be linked to the overall cultural policy of the country?

Questions:

1. How was the show started? Was it started during the trend of Thai cultural revival in Thailand (e.g. social events and media products)?
2. Why do you produce the show focusing on Thai culture? What did inspire/influence you to produce this kind of TV show?
3. Did you get any support from the government? (fund and other kinds of encouragement?)
4. Why have you promoted the cultural events of the government? (Is it a co-operation between the government sector and the show?)
5. In your opinion, what is the overall aim of the government cultural policy linking to TV industry?

2. Processes of Production

This area examines the perspectives of the text producers on the processes of production regarding the construction, representation and promotion of Thai culture.

Questions:

1. What is the overall (cultural) aim of the show?
2. What is the thematic idea/main message you attempt to communicate through the show?
3. How do you normally produce the show to represent Thai culture?

    3.1 How do you select the topic? What criteria are used for selecting the topic to represent and not represent in the show?

    3.2 How do you represent Thai culture through the forms of visual and audio signs i.e. hosts, guests, setting, costumes, music, images and graphics, and youth studio audiences?

    3.3 How do you use language through the talks, lyrics and voice-over to represent and promote Thai culture?

    3.4 What are the main Thai cultural values you attempt to focus on? (e.g. the Thai concept of being compromising and Krengjai?)

4. Why does Thai representation in the show include Thai fusion identity?
5. How the show link to the audiences? (both target group of audiences and audiences in general)
6. In what way do you address the Thai youth audiences?
7. Do you think the different groups of generation have a different understanding of Thai identity represented in the show?
8. What is Thai identity to you?

3. Cultural Impacts and Popularity of the Shows

This area examines the perspectives of the text producers on the cultural impacts and the popularity of the Thai representation, as well as the success of the promotion of Thai culture through the shows.

Questions:

1. Do you think the show has succeeded in terms of business and/or in terms of promoting Thai culture?

2. What is the trend of its popularity from the beginning to the present?

 Has the trend changed?

3. In your opinion, why the show is well-known? (because of the topics represented, the presentation forms, the language use, etc.?)

4. To what extent does the Thai representation in the show has an impact on the audiences and society?

    - If so, in what way? (e.g. audiences' thoughts about Thai identity? / audiences' cultural behaviours?)

    - How do you know that there is an impact?

    - Is the impact linked to the government cultural policy?

5. What is the plan for production and distribution of the show in the future?

6. How does this trend (representing Thai culture in TV shows) in general continue in the future?

Appendix 2: Questions List for the Focus Group Interviews with Thai Viewers

Project Title: The Discursive Construction of Nostalgic Thai Identity through Thai Television Programmes

Name of Researcher: Suwannamas Lekngam

1. Viewing Habit

   1) How often do you watch the show?
   2) Where do you watch the show?
   3) Whom do you watch the show with?
   4) Do you arrange the certain time to watch?
   5) Do you watch the show through television or other viewing channels (e.g. YouTube)?
   6) What activity do you do during watching the show?

2. Perception and Interpretation of the Thai identity representation in the shows

   1) Why do you watch the show?
   2) What is/are the feature(s) which make the show interesting?
   3) Which aspect of the show do you like most? Why?
   4) How do you feel about the Thai identity representation in the show?
   5) Do you think the Thai representation in the show in terms of the topics and presentation forms are original Thai or Thai fusion identity? How do you feel about that?
   6) Which change would you like to see about the show if you could?
   7) What is the aim of Thai representation in the show, in your view?
   8) Which message do you think the show attempt to tell the viewers?
   9) Do you think the show can help to encourage Thai identity?

3. Cultural Impacts of the shows

1) Did you talk about Thai identity represented in the show between/after watching? In what way?
2) Does the show change your view about Thai identity?
3) Does the show influence your cultural action?
4) Do you think the different groups of generation have different understanding of Thai identity represented in the show?
5) Do you think it is important for Thai people to encourage Thai identity?
6) What is Thai identity to you?
7) Why does Thai identity matter?
8) Do you think Thai identity should be original Thai or it should work together with foreign/modern culture?

Appendix 3: Research Participant Consent Form for In-Depth Interview

Title of Project: The Discursive Construction of Nostalgic Thai Identity through Thai
                                  Television Programmes
Name of Researcher: Suwannamas Lekngam
Type of Participation: In-depth Interview

I, the undersigned, confirm that I voluntarily agree to participate in the research
project conducted by Suwannamas Lekngam from Newcastle University. I have read
and understood the information about the project as provided in the Information
Sheet and I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and
my participation. I also understand that I can withdraw from the interview at any time
without giving reasons and that I will not be penalised for withdrawing nor will I be
questioned on why I have withdrawn.

I agree to provide information to the researcher under the conditions of confidentiality
(e.g. use of names, pseudonyms, anonymisation of data, etc.). The use of the data in
research has been explained to me and I understand that the data I provide is to be
anonymous.

I agree that the researcher will conduct the audio recording of the interview. I, along
with the researcher, agree to sign and date this informed consent form.

Participant:

_____   _____   _____
Name of Participant   Signature   Date

Researcher:

_____   _____   _____
Name of Researcher   Signature   Date

Appendix 4: Research Participant Consent Form for Focus Group Interview

Title of Project: The Discursive Construction of Nostalgic Thai Identity through Thai Television Programmes
Name of Researcher: Suwannamas Lekngam
Type of Participation: Focus Group Interview

I, the undersigned, confirm that I voluntarily agree to participate in the research project conducted by Suwannamas Lekngam from Newcastle University. I have read and understood the information about the project as provided in the Information Sheet and I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and my participation. I also understand that I can withdraw from the participation at any time without giving reasons and that I will not be penalised for withdrawing nor will I be questioned on why I have withdrawn.

I agree to provide information to the researcher under the conditions of confidentiality (e.g. use of names, pseudonyms, anonymisation of data, etc.). The use of the data in research has been explained to me and I understand that the data I provide is to be anonymous.

I agree that the researcher will conduct the video recording of the interview. I, along with the researcher, agree to sign and date this informed consent form.

Participant:

_____   _____   _____
Name of Participant   Signature   Date

Researcher:

_____   _____   _____
Name of Researcher   Signature   Date

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