

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Conceptual Framework of the Study

This is a qualitative study modeling the best practices of five world-class service organizations in Thailand's creative economy. The modeling is assisted by the use of cognitive tools for knowledge management, namely Mind Mapping and Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP). The conceptualization extends the Skandia model of intellectual capital development (Edvinsson & Malone, 1997) that contribute to service process and innovation capital in the service industry. This is represented in Figure X below.

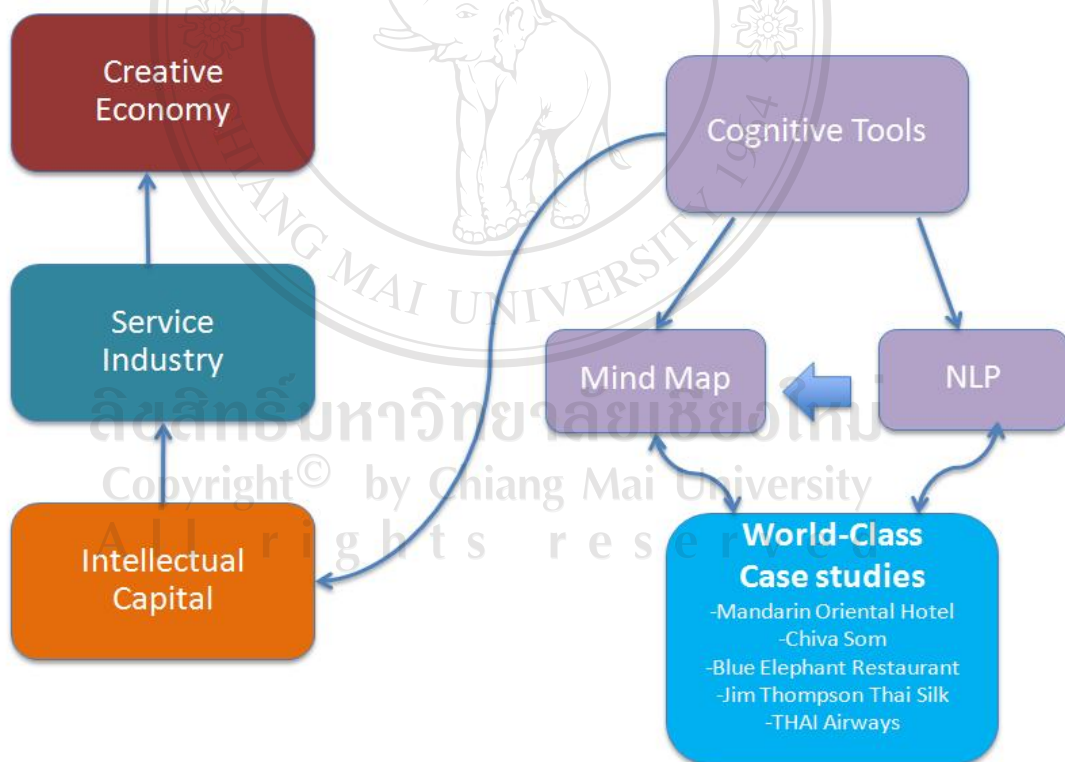


Figure 13 Conceptualization Framework for the Study

Although the Skandia model presents a good conceptual framework for describing the development of intellectual capital, it does not go far enough because it does not incorporate the influence of Thainess capital on human capital and intellectual capital. Furthermore, it does not explicitly provide a role for knowledge management. Consequently, one of the principal aims of this study has been to extend the Skandia service model of intellectual capital development (Edvinsson & Malone, 1997).

The extended model posits that Thainess capital has a direct positive impact on development of human capital, and that human capital has a direct impact on organizational capital, which in turn impacts customer capital. The contribution of knowledge management directly impacts intellectual capital and indirectly impacts organizational capital through the modeling of best practices for training and development. The development and utilization of cognitive tools such as mind-mapping and NLP improve the training process, leading to the further development of first impression management and the use of the six senses. These in turn positively impact service process capital and renewal innovation capital, respectively, having further positive influences on the development of organizational capital within the Thai creative economy. In summary, the author found it necessary to expand the original Skandia model to include several other sources of intangible capital to provide the necessary explanatory power to be inclusive of all elements of the study. These are shown in Figure 14.

The Scandia Model of Intellectual Capital Development

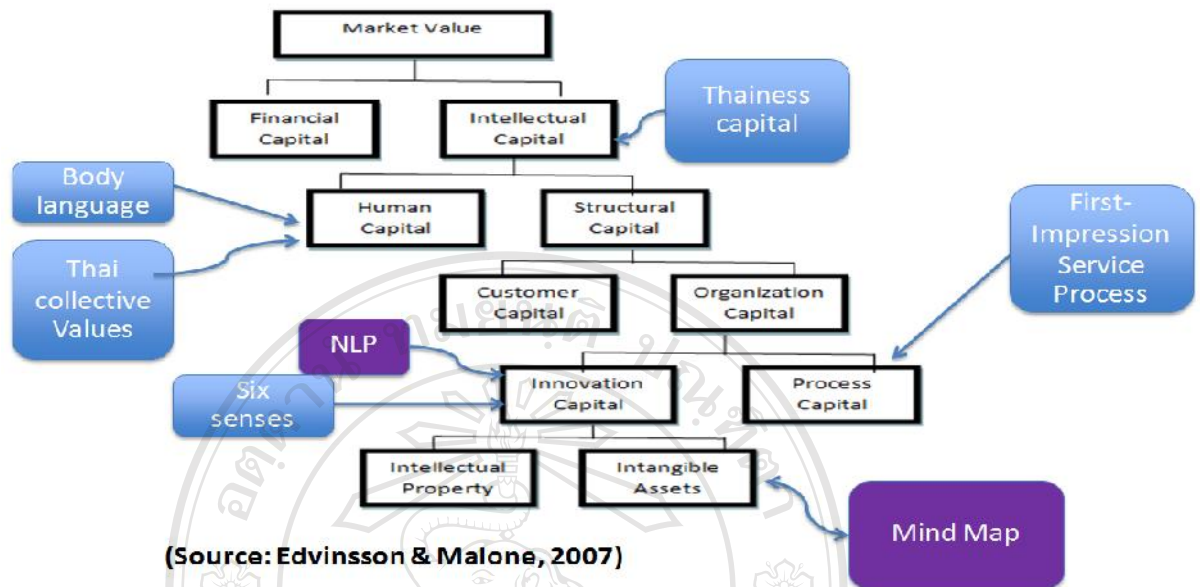


Figure 14 The Expanded Skandia Model Augmented by Thainess Intellectual Capital and Knowledge Management Cognitive Tools

3.2 Research Design

The empirical study of this thesis is based first upon a thorough historical analysis, followed by face-to-face in-depth interviews-including observations-with case studies involving leading world class hospitality service companies in Thailand: namely the Oriental Bangkok Hotel, Chiva-som Spa, Blue Elephant Restaurants, Jim Thompson and Thai Airways.

Qualitative methods and a strong emphasis on empirical research are typical characteristics of this research topic. The triangulation method will be utilized in this qualitative study; including multiple methods of data collection and analysis. Triangulation is defined as “a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 126).

The author has thus summarized the study by using methodological triangulation, which in turn uses multiple qualitative methods to study the programs. The study involves interviews, observation, document analysis, content analysis,

protocol analysis of case studies. If the findings from all of the methods draw the same or similar conclusions, then the validity of the findings has been established.

3.3 Data Collection Procedures

For this study, the researcher has organized the research methodologies into the following three categories:

- 3.3.1 Documentary studies: gathering information from journals and theoretical texts, thoughts, and concepts from many well known academic publishers. As in any such qualitative research, the aim is to "engage in research that probes for deeper understanding rather than examining surface features" (Johnson, 1995, p. 4) and constructivism may help to facilitate that aim.
- 3.3.2 Internet based information gathering: obtained by searching reports, data analysis and relevant research of topics that are in accordance with this thesis. The researcher searched for timely information and rechecked that information to ensure its relevance in order to have up to date information in order to summarize the research.
- 3.3.3 In-depth interviews: further information was gathered by using both unstructured and structured with open-ended questions for protocol analysis. The researcher chose the key informants from the purposeful samplings of those who were both experienced in, and involved at, a management level in one of the 5 world-class hospitality service companies in Thailand. The reader should be aware that the qualitative interviews were concluded in two rounds. First the unstructured exploratory in depth interviews constitute the majority of the transcripts contained in this dissertation were designed to assist the author in capturing and understanding implicit knowledge. The second round of structured confirmatory interviews were designed for to analyze in some details of the major explicit findings of the first round of interviews. These confirmatory interviews are in structured format.

The procedure for the data collection for the formation of first impression knowledge creation is shown in the Mind Map in Figure 15.

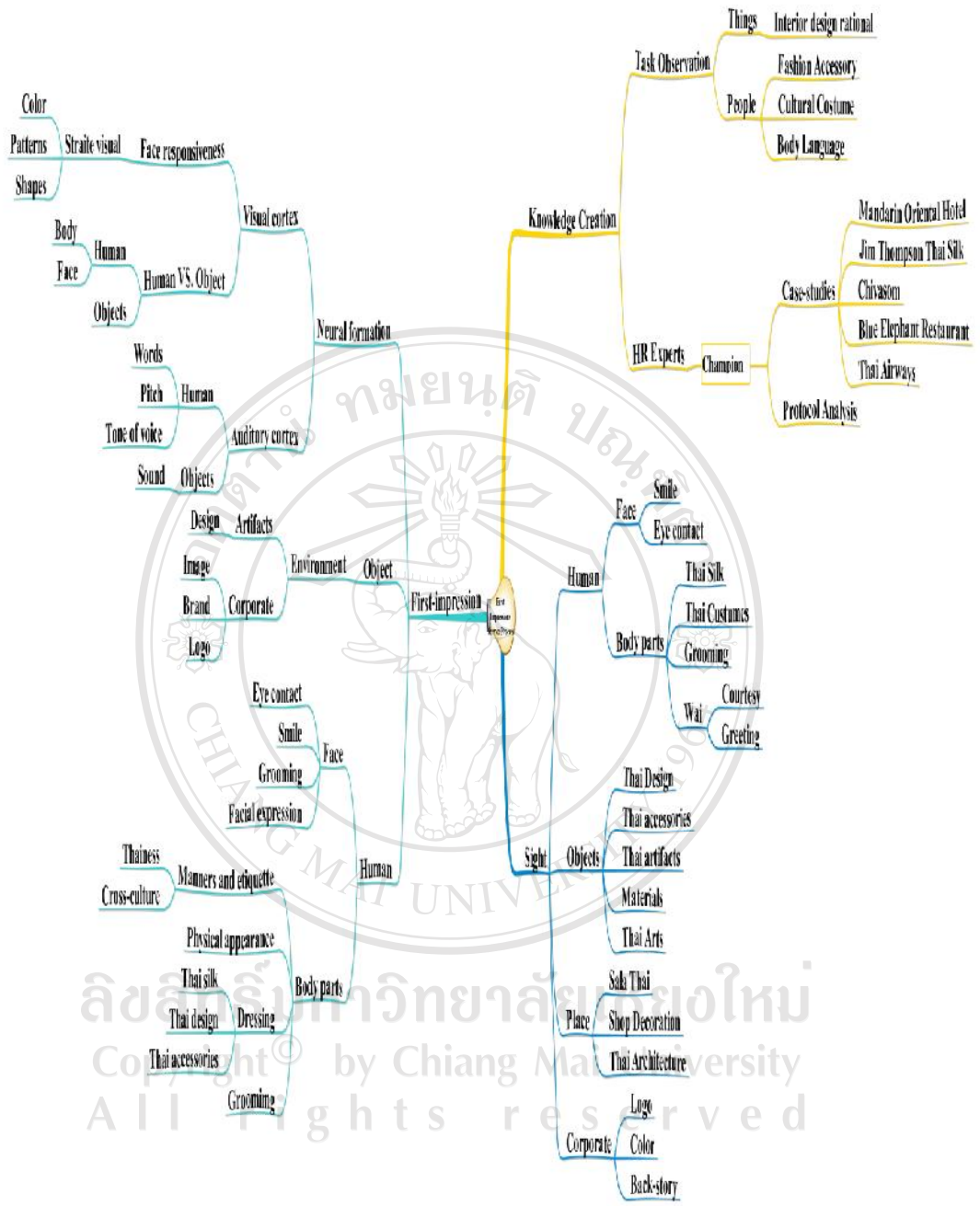


Figure 15 First Impression Knowledge Creation Mind Map

3.4 Protocol Analysis

Erisson (1996) suggested that more recent research based on explicit information processing models of the cognitive process that caused thinking-aloud verbalizations to be views in a new light. This study utilized standard procedure to make a careful verbatim transcript of the tape recorders, thus persevering the raw data in “hard” form. At the same time, information processing models of the cognitive processes provide a basis for making the coding process explicit and objective.

We can now summarize the basic assumptions that set the stage for this study. More fundamentally we see verbal behavior as one type of recordable behavior, which should be observed and analyzed like any other behavior. The cognitive processes that generate verbalizations are the subset of cognitive processes that generate any kind of recordable response or behavior. Hence, the researcher would look for the same kind of “mechanical” for cognitive process description as other kinds of behavior. The interviewing and observation involved both object modeling and people modeling, as shown in Figure 16.

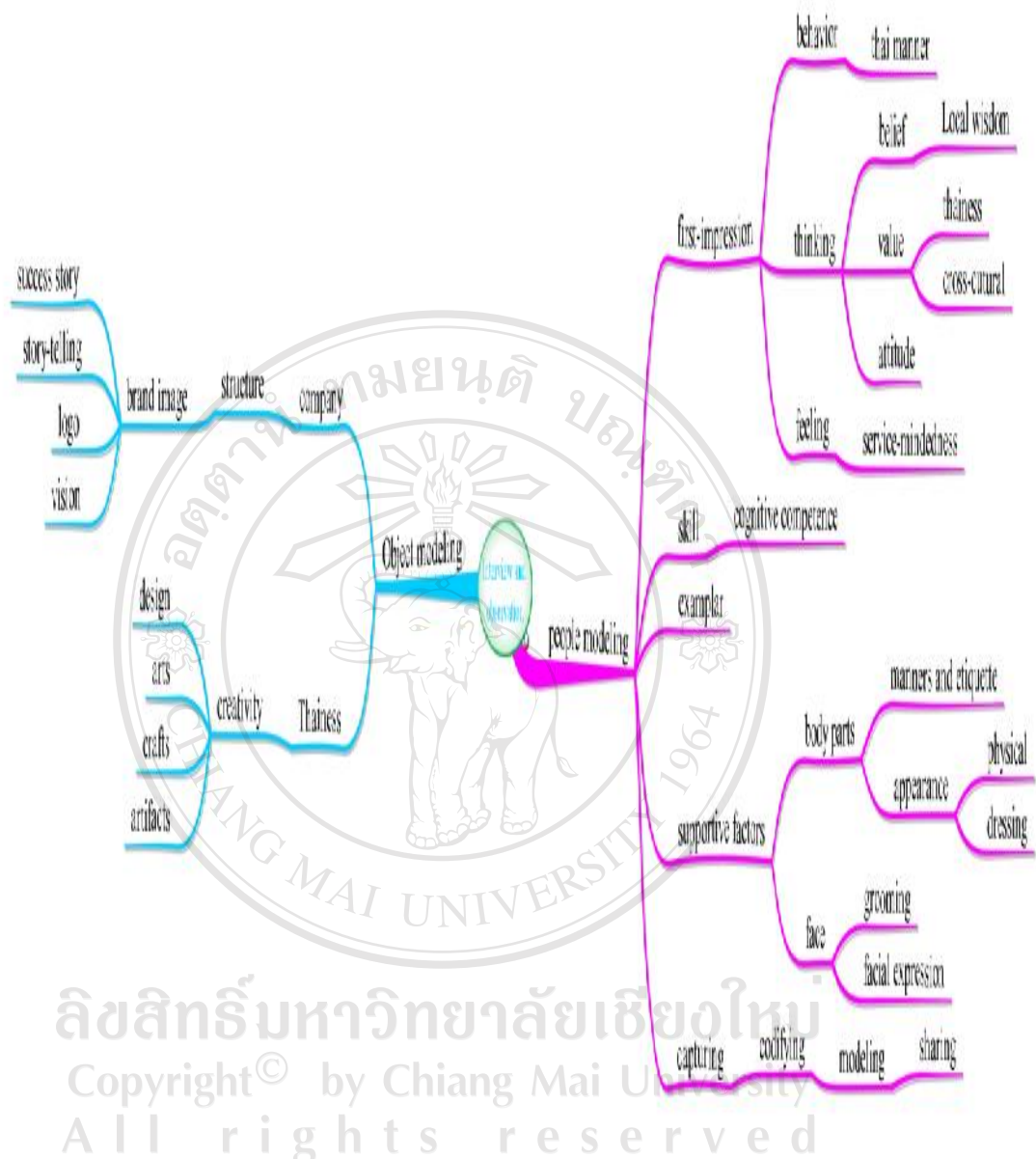


Figure 16 Interviews and Observation in the Research Process

Ericsson (1996, p.9) stated that “whether one can and should be subjects’ verbal reports in not a matter of faith but an empirical issue on par with the issue of validating other types of behavior, like eye fixations or motor behaviors. A single verbal report should not force us to discard analysis of verbal reports generally...”

In this study the author has developed the Mind Mapping application (Buzan, 2006) derived from world-class case studies findings from intensive protocol analysis, together with visual body language evaluation of staff members of the organizations

studied. The Mind Maps which this study develops from the data are typically expressed as multivariate diagrams of some complexity indicating the relative strength of all the relevant sensory input moderator and output variables.

3.5 Environment Settings

Goffman (1959) views the environment as providing a setting that includes “the furniture, décor, physical layout, and other background items that supply the scenery and stage props for...” (p. 13).

David (1984) identified the elements of organizations that influence the quantity and quality cues actors receive:

- The physical structure (e.g. wall, furniture)
- Physical stimuli (e.g. time on the clock, a ringing telephone)
- Symbolic artifacts (e.g. framed certificates)

The organizational culture also provides powerful cues for IM (Wexler, 1983):

- Organization strategies, policies, symbols, myths, and stories to teach, demonstrate, and support the behaviors and attitudes that are appropriate to the organization (Trice & Beyer, 1984)
- Norms relate to a wide varieties of behaviors including dress, performance, and communication (Feldman, 1984)

Type of work

The nature of their tasks have important implications regarding the images that actors can claim (Weary & Arkin, 1981).

3.6 Preparation prior to gathering the information

The researcher has gathered information using in-depth interviews and observation, whilst using the following tools:

3.6.1 The Researcher: qualitative research methodology considers the researcher as the most important tool in gathering information. The specific characteristic of good qualitative research is based around someone who can use effective methods and these depend mainly on the specific qualities of the researcher themselves. So not only does the researcher need to have specific knowledge and understanding of the specific academic content, but also needs to undertake the relevant qualitative research. The researcher must therefore have an ability to both analyze and synthesis relevant information. They also need to be able to do the following: set up the cognitive process, to define, to create the hypothesis, to formulate an idea, imagine concepts, and summarize complex information. So, it can be seen, that the researcher is a main tool of any research. (Siriporn Jirawuttikul, 2009: 33-34) Therefore, the researcher has to prepare themselves before gathering the information. To help in the information collecting, recording, and analyzing data process towards achieving the objectives, the researcher must have prepared themselves to be ready for the research methodologies inherent in the following categories:

3.6.2 Methodological categorization: the researcher has studied and understood the theory of qualitative research from academic journals and related text books. They further enhanced their knowledge by reading, and understanding, the writings of experts in qualitative research and, of course, their own professor's advice.

3.6.3 Data collecting techniques: the researcher has studied the methods and techniques of in- depth interviews and observation in academic journals. In addition before collecting real information the methodology was pre-tested using a first interview and finalized after the second in-depth interview under the professor's guidance. Naturalistic Observation is

utilized in this study. The researcher records people's behavior in their natural environments with little or no personal intervention.

- 3.6.4 contexts for the knowledge management: The researcher has reviewed the theories, knowledge creation and intellectual capital of this project. According to Nabuzoka (2010), qualitative methods have been historically prominent in cultural anthropology, whose main method has been ethnography. Through a process that can be both inductive and deductive, allowing the understanding of the rules that people have for making sense of their worlds, which are often specific to various domains of enquiry. In other words, this study of meaning is central to cultural psychology. Thus, it is considered to be of utmost importance to understand meaning from the participant's point of view. The goal of anthropology is "to make sense out of narrations of informants and one's own observations in terms of a system of meanings of values" (p. 288). According to Bruner (1990), cultural psychology "seeks out the rules that human beings bring to bear in creating meanings in cultural contexts. These contexts are always contexts of practice. It is always necessary to ask what people are doing or trying to do in that context" (Bruner, 1990, p. 118).
- 3.6.5 With the set of semi-structured open-ended questions, the researcher creates an analysis of knowledge management as a tool, which will be utilized for modeling "Thainess service language". As an intellectual capital value creation for the creative economy of this study, the model will be based on the mental literacy tool known as mind-maps, which were first developed by Tony Buzan. The questionnaire is open-ended and flexible, without fixed ordering and number of questions. The questions come from selective points of view and the general questions are sourced from academic journals, the researcher's professional experience, and the theoretical concepts which underpin the framework of the research. The researcher asks the respondent to express an opinion regarding particular subjects or issues. Open-ended questions provide subjects with the freedom to express themselves as to how and

what they think, feel, and do. Thus it is easier to explain the many nuances of their thoughts and feelings. Direct surveys were applied in this study. In direct surveys, the researcher maintains direct communications with the respondent and is thus able to provide feedback, observe reactions, repeat questions or ask for additional information. Direct surveys were obtained using both face-to-face interviews and telephone interviews. Additional surveys in this study involve historical analyses of the secondary knowledge-base and were mostly derived from written documents.

3.7 Measures: Setting the interview's scope and creating the observation tool

The researcher has set the basic conceptual framework and the topics following the theme of first impression management for intellectual capital development. After data analysis, we were able to summarize the data into the conceptual framework in the following manner:

1. Topics or concepts that needed to be studied were based on the research questionnaire main topics. Collection was by way of interviewing or searching many sources of information. The related topics consisted of two parts:
 - The first part was capturing Thainess capital for first-impression creation and human capital capacity building in the five world class hospitality cases study companies.
 - The second part was searching for sensory inputs and cognitive bases for first impression management, by both exploratory observation and confirmatory structured interviews.

2. In the first round of interviewing all interviews were unstructured. The main questions used for the second round of interviews were constructed in order to obtain the topic related information for the basic conceptual framework. During the questioning, the researcher had to be aware of what types of open-ended questions to ask in order to formulate deeper questions. Therefore, the main questionnaire's format and content must be

such that it doesn't ask leading questions, and therefore widens the scope. Thus the respondent can feel free to give additional information with their own ideas. The main questions were wide ranging and were formulated as follows:

First topic: Is first impression in the organization designed or naturally made?

Second topic: Are there any first impression training and development programs in your organization?

Third topic: How is the importance of first impression rated in your organization?

Fourth topic: What is the strongest asset for first impression creation in your organization?

Fifth topic: What are the key collective Thainess values for human capital training and development in your organization?

Follow up questions asked for deeper additional information over that of the main questions. This is because it could possible that by using only main questions the researcher might not get the maximum amount of useful information from the respondent may not give a wide ranging answer. However, the researcher has to be aware that the follow up questions were not the same as, or construed as, the main question. Questioning was the key factor that elicits relevant information from the respondent, so each question must be given due consideration particularly with regards to information that the researcher has acquired and reviewed already. This contributes to the content validity of the study.

There were three follow up questions. The first one was about cognitive knowledge creation: "How can six senses be utilized in the knowledge creation of first impression management? The second one was also about cognitive knowledge creation: "What sense or senses contribute the most to first impression formation in your organization?" The final follow up question was: "Are there any training and development programs in your organization on the following intellectual capital

development topics: 1) human capital, 2) organization capital, 3) cultural capital, and 4) customer capital?”

Probe questions were questions for which answers from the follow up questions had been given but there might have been some issues where further clarification was required, because insufficient information had been provided when answering the research questions. There were 4 probe questions:

- 1) Which of the six senses contribute to cognitive knowledge creation in the creative economy framework?
- 2) How well can the synergy of cross cultural links between local and global standards be optimized to achieve world-class best- practice in service modeling?
- 3) How do Thai people become aware of, and experience, Thainess values and identities in terms of thinking, feelings and behavior?
- 4) How can “Thainess capital”, as a visual-multisensory representation, be utilized for good first impression formation for the co-creation of brand identity that can generate added value to national branding?

It must be born in mind that not only were these questions used for the interviews, but they were also used to fix the source of the information in order to make the process of data collection clearer and to check the completeness of the information source as well. Without the fixed interview’s scope, the researcher might have ignored important sources of data.

The question’s scope checking and testing was done in such a way as to consider the possibility of tool usage. The researcher created the questions’ scope based on the documents study and the basic conceptual framework. These questions were then taken to the advisors to ensure that they were considered to be appropriate, after which the qualitative research professors suggested improvements to the process in order to follow the qualitative research’s steps.

Therefore, in order to make the questions’ scope appropriate to the research content, the researcher presented the questions to three professors who are, collectively, qualitative research professors in 1) industrial and organizational

psychology, 2) public administration, and 3) human resources development. Following the three professors' consideration, the researcher improved both the questions' scope and the questionnaire itself, under the professors' and advisors' guidance. Then the qualitative research professors again reviewed and reconsidered the revised questionnaire.

3.8 Procedure for Data Analysis

The researcher used observational studies based on Rosenfeld (p. 201), Goffman and other symbolic interactive studies of IM through the use of observational techniques. This methodology involves the researchers observing many and varied interactions, looking for patterns, and then summarizing the patterns in a model. Observational researchers carrying out observational studies must attempt to be as structured and scientific in their collection and analysis of the data as possible given the limitations imposed by this method.

The empirical study of the thesis is based on thorough historical analysis and in-depth interviews, including observation, complete with case studies, of the leading world-class hospitality service companies in Thailand namely: The Oriental Bangkok Hotel, Chiva-Som, Blue Elephant Restaurant, Jim Thompson and Thai Airways. In order to attain the sense of identity, the questions were based on the cognitive sensory information and linked to experiential emotions in order to explore the first-impression formation derived from "Thainess Capital". Due weight is given as to how each case-study is used to communicate their intellectual capital, comprised of human capital (interpersonal communications), organizational capital (branding), and relationship capital (rapport).

A series of photo images were used to trigger responses, where the respondents are asked to select the three images that they felt were the most representative of the Thainess Service Language. Respondents were then asked to indicate which primary sensory-based impression Thainess Service Language formation were most relevant: sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch or cognitive thought. The survey was then used to explore the extent to which Thainess capital contributes to conscious awareness of Thainess value co-creation.

In order to investigate how customer services define Thai cultural identity Hofstede's (2001a) definition of culture was applied. In selecting a symbolic representation of "Thainess Capital" for first impression management, story-telling, heroes, symbols, logos, slogans and rituals with both a high symbolic value and being socially essential, from the customer's viewpoint, were considered. Experiential perceptions were evoked through sub-modality representation of both sensory and affective responses to service imagery, in other words how the Thainess service language is represented through sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch and mind.

In this study, the new language called "Thainess service language" (TSL) is explored, identified, and modeled for intellectual capital value creation by exploiting "Thainess capital" in order to become a driving force in national competitiveness. The mental literacy tool known as Tony Buzan's Mind Maps will be utilized for effective knowledge representation and Buzan's multiple intelligences will be extended based on Thainess service language best practices.

Using service language as the creative metaphor, non-verbal communication will be explored to create good first impression management in Thai ways of doing things. The resultant knowledge management will utilize "Thainess service language" as the intellectual capital value creation model for the creative economy.

3.9 Validation

In the first round of exploratory interviewing all interviews of Mandarin Oriental Hotel and Thai Airways were unstructured to find the key success factors for the formulation of the conceptual framework. The main questions used for the second round of interviews were constructed in order to obtain the topic related information for the basic conceptual framework. The in-depth interviewing and observation of Chiva-Som, Blue Elephant Restaurant, and Jim Thompson Thai Silk Company were used for the validation of the conceptual framework.