

SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN THAI SOAP OPERA: A CASE OF
SAWAN BIENG (TWISTED HEAVEN)



SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN THAI SOAP OPERA: A CASE OF SAWAN BIENG
(TWISTED HEAVEN)

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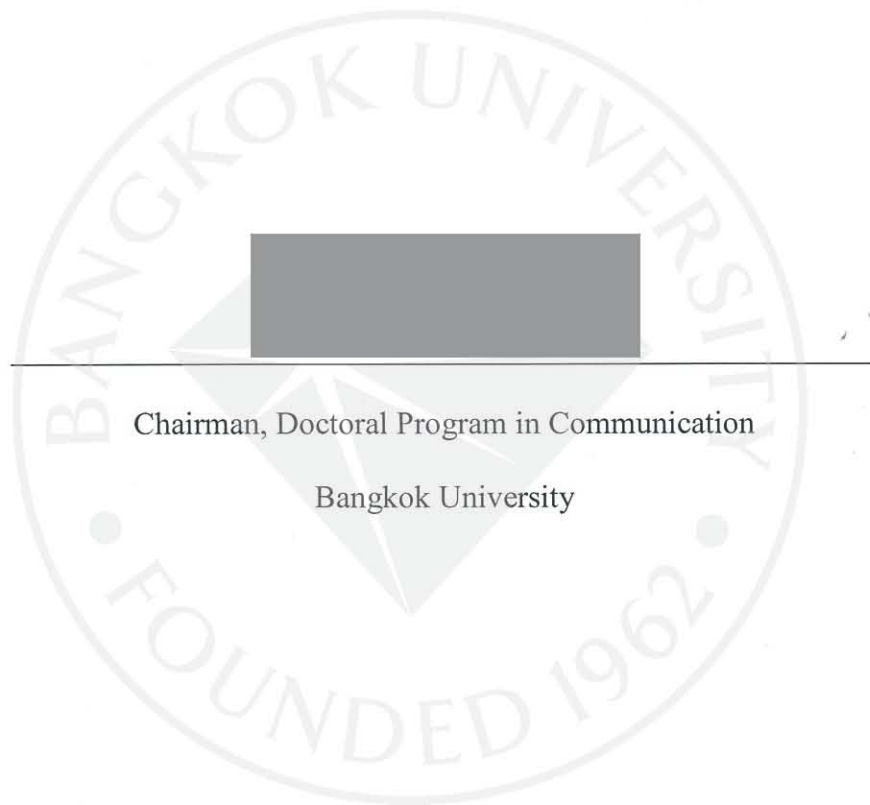
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ABSTRACT

Soap opera has been a very famous type of home entertainment in Thailand. As one of the highly successful soap operas, being produced and broadcasted several times, Twisted Heaven or Sawan Bieng presents both romance and sexual violence in its content. This study aims to examine how Thai audiences interpret the meaning of love in plot, characters' behaviors, and particularly the violent love scenes of Sawan Bieng. A mixed research method was conducted by using the content analysis of five Thai popular websites and in-depth interviews of eight Thai viewers. The data analyses revealed three major findings. First, TV production elements provided the important information for audiences to accept the hero's sexual violence. Second, the sexual violence or rape in Sawan Bieng is one of the audiences' expectation in romance story as Radway (1984a, 1894b) mentioned. Third, the application of the Social Learning Theory appears to have no violent effect. The hero and heroine have been popular role models for teenagers. The audiences not only sympathized with the hero who took responsibility for his sexual violence, but also hailed the heroine as superb role model for her tolerance, forgiveness, and generosity.

Approved: _____



Signature of Advisor



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | Page |
|--|------|
| ABSTRACT..... | iv |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENT..... | vi |
| LIST OF TABLES..... | xiii |
| LIST OF FIGURES..... | xiv |
| CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION..... | 1 |
| 1.1 Background of the Study..... | 1 |
| 1.2 Rationale and Problem Statement..... | 3 |
| 1.3 Objectives of Study..... | 10 |
| 1.4 Scope of Study..... | 10 |
| 1.5 Research Questions..... | 11 |
| 1.6 Significance of Study..... | 13 |
| 1.7 Definition of Terms..... | 16 |
| 1.7.1 Popular Culture | 16 |
| 1.7.2 Soap Opera | 17 |
| 1.7.3 Thai Soap Opera | 17 |
| 1.7.4 Fans..... | 17 |
| 1.7.5 Production Elements | 17 |
| 1.7.6 Encoding and Decoding | 18 |
| 1.7.7 Interpretive Community | 18 |

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

| | Page |
|---|------|
| CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION (Continued) | |
| 1.7.9 Female Roles | 18 |
| 1.7.10 Morality | 19 |
| 1.7.11 Sexual Violence..... | 19 |
| 1.7.12 Social Learning Theory..... | 19 |
| CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE | 21 |
| 2.1 Popular Culture | 21 |
| 2.2 Soap Operas..... | 26 |
| 2.3 Media Violence..... | 35 |
| 2.4 Morality..... | 37 |
| 2.5 Authoritarianism and Female Roles | 38 |
| 2.6 Fans | 39 |
| 2.7 Interpretive Community | 42 |
| 2.8 Encoding/Decoding | 46 |
| 2.9 Popular Culture..... | 51 |
| 2.10 Social Learning | 56 |
| 2.11 Theoretical Framework..... | 58 |
| CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY..... | 60 |
| 3.1 Introduction..... | 60 |

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

| | Page |
|--|------|
| CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY (Continued) | |
| 3.2 Research Design..... | 62 |
| 3.2.1 Analysis of Audiences' Comments..... | 62 |
| 3.2.2 In-depth Interviews..... | 62 |
| 3.3 Population and Sample Selection | 64 |
| 3.4 Research Procedure..... | 66 |
| 3.5 Data Collection..... | 67 |
| 3.5.1 Weblogs..... | 68 |
| 3.5.2 DVD..... | 72 |
| 3.5.3 In-Depth Interview..... | 75 |
| 3.6 Validity and Reliability of the Instrument | 76 |
| 3.7 Data Analysis..... | 76 |
| CHAPTER 4 RESULTS..... | 78 |
| 4.1 Introduction | 78 |
| 4.2 Finding on Research Question #1: How does Sawan Bieng invite the audiences to make judgment about morality in terms of good and bad behaviors by main characters through production elements?..... | 79 |
| 4.2.1 Cast..... | 82 |
| 4.2.2 Dialogue..... | 88 |

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

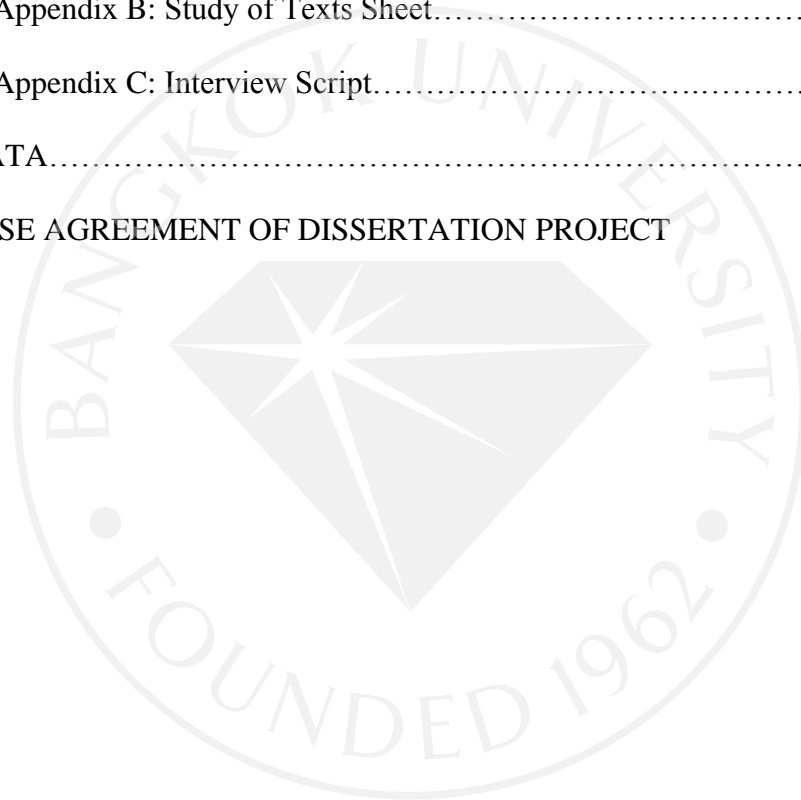
| | Page |
|---|------|
| CHAPTER 4 RESULTS (Continued) | |
| 4.2.3 Plot..... | 89 |
| 4.2.4 Staging (frame)..... | 90 |
| 4.2.5 Lighting..... | 92 |
| 4.2.6 Soundtrack..... | 93 |
| 4.2.7 Costume and Make up..... | 94 |
| 4.2.8 Behavior..... | 96 |
| 4.2.9 Environment..... | 97 |
| 4.2.10 Camera Angles..... | 97 |
| 4.2.11 Others..... | 98 |
| 4.3 Finding on Research Question #2: How do Thai audiences interpret love and sexual violence scenes in Sawan Bieng? | 99 |
| 4.3.1 What is the expression of love in Thai audiences' perception? | 103 |
| 4.3.2 How do Thai audiences perceive the rape of the heroine by the hero? | 108 |
| 4.3.3 How do Thai audiences define love scenes as appropriate?..... | 110 |
| 4.3.4 How do Thai audiences perceive the heroine's decision to marry the hero? | 112 |

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

| | Page |
|---|------|
| CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSIONS..... | 116 |
| 5.1 Summary of Findings..... | 116 |
| 5.2 Conclusions and Discussion..... | 117 |
| 5.2.1 Expression of Love..... | 122 |
| 5.2.2 Interpretation of Sexual Violence in Sawan Bieng..... | 123 |
| 5.2.3 Appropriateness of Love Scenes..... | 124 |
| 5.2.4 Heroine’s Decision to Marry the Hero..... | 125 |
| 5.3 Implications | 125 |
| 5.3.1 Implications for Media Practitioners | 125 |
| 5.3.2 Implications for Policy Makers..... | 126 |
| 5.3.3 Implications for Audiences | 126 |
| 5.4 Limitations | 127 |
| 5.4.1 Time Lapse..... | 127 |
| 5.4.2 Sample..... | 128 |
| 5.5 Future Direction | 128 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY..... | 130 |

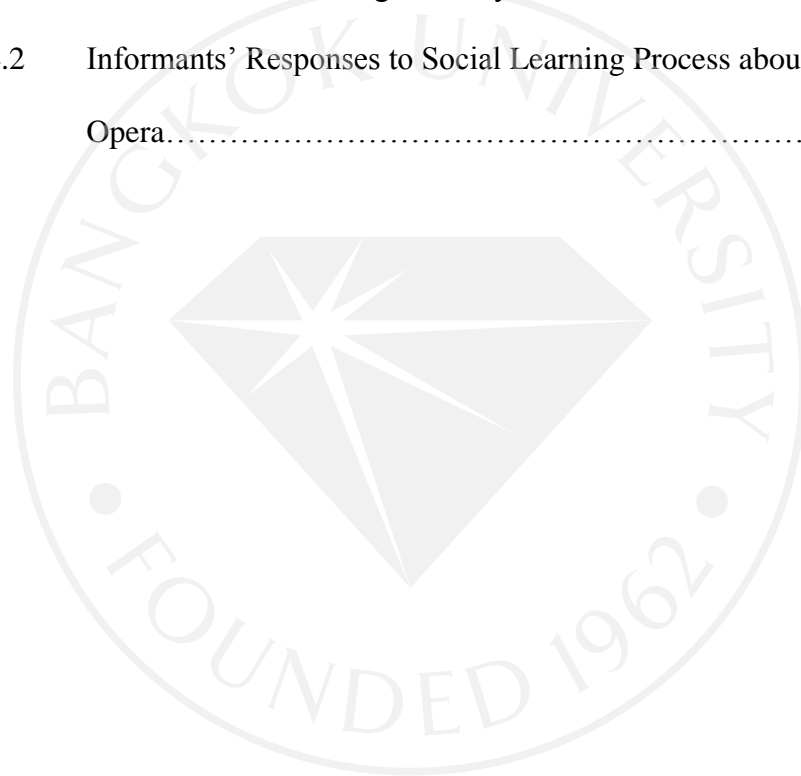
TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

| | Page |
|---|------|
| APPENDIXES..... | 138 |
| Appendix A: Study of blogs sheet..... | 139 |
| Appendix B: Study of Texts Sheet..... | 141 |
| Appendix C: Interview Script..... | 142 |
| BIODATA..... | 143 |
| LICENSE AGREEMENT OF DISSERTATION PROJECT | |



LIST OF TABLES

| | Page |
|---|------|
| Table 3.1 Details of Sampled Weblogs..... | 65 |
| Table 3.2 Informants' Personal Profile..... | 65 |
| Table 4.1 Audiences' Posts Categorized by Production element..... | 79 |
| Table 4.2 Informants' Responses to Social Learning Process about Soap Opera..... | 102 |



LIST OF FIGURES

| | Page |
|---|------|
| Figure 2.1 Theoretical Framework..... | 59 |
| Figure 4.1 Kavee (Ken Theeradetch) and Narin (Ann Thongprasom)..... | 85 |
| Figure 4.2 Kavee's father (Dilok Thongwattana) and Narin's sister (Nattarika Thammapreedanun)..... | 86 |
| Figure 4.3 Kavee's hand on the bed in rape scene..... | 91 |
| Figure 4.4 Costume and Make up of Kavee and Narin..... | 95 |
| Figure 4.5 Costume of hero and heroine at swimming pool scene..... | 96 |

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes background of the study, rationale and problem statement, objective of the study, scope of the study, research questions and hypotheses, significance of the study, and definition of terms.

1.1 Background of the Study

Soap opera is the most popular television genre in Thailand. Lots of digital television channels have attempted to produce good soap operas to serve the audiences' demands. These television channels desire to get the high rating from soap operas' fans. Thus, they devote a large amount of their airtime to entertainment shows including soap operas. The TV Digital Watch (2018), which presents the rating of soap operas on Thai digital television channels, made a brief conclusion as below:

Soap opera is an entertainment content that establish the highest rating for many Thai digital channels. Five Channels (from top ten channels) get the highest rating from soap opera program, including Thai soap operas, new soap operas, and rerun soap operas program that are Channel 7, Channel 3, One Channel, Channel 8, and Channel 3 SD (TV Digital Watch, 2018).

These evidences can be used to prove the success of soap operas in Thailand. Spending many hours to broadcast soaps on television stations helps increase advertising revenue because selling advertising time to the sponsors is the station's

main income. Although the total income of 22 digital television licensees is 17,313.70 Million Bath, which is considered a huge amount (“Reveal the TV digital income in 2017”, 2018), digital television industry in Thailand has faced a fierce competition between major TV channels due to digital transformation and growing popularity of online and social media. Major TV channels attempt to create new programs to win TV audiences’ interest. TV drama, especially soap opera which is the top entertainment program that gets highest rating from the audiences. The popular Thai soap operas such as Mia Luang (Primary Wife), Mia (Wife), Chamleoyrak (Love Defendant), and Plerng Boon (Fire Merit) were remade and became “talk-of-the-town” phenomenon in the Thai society such that lots of online users posted their opinions, comments, and view in online forums and chatrooms. Besides, social media as Facebook or Twister users also posted their personal comments and shared the soap opera’s page. When the last episode was broadcasted, the traffic in Bangkok that is normally jammed became very light as viewers stay home to watch the end of their favorite soap operas.

Due to the fact that it is easy to win the market share of audiences by an exciting plot, sexual violent content is contained in soap opera to a larger extent than other TV genres. According to current situations of sexual violent problems in Thailand, the statistics from the Thai Health Promotion Foundation showed that 306 sexual violent news were reported in 2015 by rape as 73.2 percentages, 53.5% involved students aged between 1-20 years old (“Department of Mental Health Solve Violent Family Problem”, 2016). Alarmingly, there were 87 rape cases per day in Bangkok, making rape the highest number of sexual violence reported in newspaper news (Saiyawach, 2014). It is agreeable that these numbers reflect sexual violent

problem in Thai society that requires solutions from various sectors in Thai society, including mass media.

Due to the high rating of Thai soap opera with sexual violent content, questions regarding social role of media are raised such as “Is soap opera the cause of social violence in Thailand? Do the audiences imitate characters’ violent behavior? And, do the characters serve as bad the role model?” (“Kill or value; Media and violence in Thai society”, 2017). Sexual violence in media becomes a controversial issue in our society. There are continuous arguments between TV producers and scholars together with people who are concerned of this social problem. To strike the balance between commercial and social benefits, studying sexual violence in Thai soap opera is an essential topic and worth further investigation.

1.2 Rationale and Problem Statement

Many Thai soap operas are nowadays represented by the sexual violent scenes in the plot. One of the success factors of the Thai soap opera is the inclusion of sexual violent scenes in its production such as Jamlei Rak or Love Defendant, Dao Pra Suk or The Venus, Sawan Bieng or Twisted Heaven and so on. As the higher rating is very important for broadcasting business, executives of the television channels in Thailand are trying to win the biggest portion of soap operas’ viewers. Soap opera fans are significant target audiences of television, and soap opera is one of the key entertainment contents to win over other channels.

When soap opera fans keep watching their favorite soaps, they are likely to remember those characters intentionally and unintentionally. Questions about potential impacts of soap opera containing sexual violent scenes on audiences’

cognition and behaviors have been posed in Thai society -- Does domestic violence in Thailand relate to the behavior of audiences who have been exposed to sexual violence in soap opera? For these reasons, it is assumed that soap operas have a high influence on people's opinions and behaviors, particularly children and adolescents. For example, the Oshin, Japanese soap opera, which guided the audiences regarding what they should do and what they should not do (Singhal & Udornpim, 1997, p. 172), "promoted values of love, sacrifice, endurance, forgiveness, family ties and so on" The influences of soap operas are illustrated by social discussion either in fan communities or in society at large. Communication scholars are interested in many social issues derived from the soaps' stories and characters' behaviors. Therefore, studying soap operas is not only limited to the texts, but it also includes the study of soaps' fan communities.

Even though there are many researchers who are interested in soap operas, most of them are interested in the effect of watching them. These studies found that the content of media can be the cause of human aggression and violence (Farrar & Krcmar, 2006; Gaziano, 2001; Stack, 2005 and Weber, Ritterfeld & Mathiak, 2006). Besides, the studies also found that young adolescents imitate the violent behaviors from soap operas' characters. "Thai soaps especially have violent scenes that result in young audiences copying the actions," said Supensri Puengkoaksoong, the head of Friends of Women Foundation and working-team member ("Warnings to accompany TV sex and violence", 2007). According to the Social Development and Human Security Ministry survey, "The survey of 1,899 people of all ages found less than half, 41.4 percent, said no soap appropriately portrayed a family's love and understanding

in solving problems without violence” (“Warnings to accompany TV sex and violence,” 2007).

However, the study in this paper provides a different angle to study soap operas and their fans. The negative effects of watching soap opera on the audiences are not the objective of this research. Rather, the main objective of this research is to know the way Thai audiences interpret the meaning of soap operas’ story, characters’ behaviors, and particularly their interpretation of love and sexual violent scenes. Another objective of this study is to explore the way Thai soap operas’ production elements communicate to the audiences regarding morality.

Sawan Bieng (The Twist Road to Heaven) produced in 2008 is a very successful soap opera being studied in this paper as an example of how Thai audiences interpret the meaning of love and sexual violent scenes in Sawan Bieng. The success of Sawan Bieng can be evidenced by several times of reproduction and broadcasting on television. This soap opera has its own fans who know the story well and still continue watching it. The success of this soap opera was emphasized by Anon Pongtubtim, the editor-at-large of *Volume*, one of Thailand’s popular magazines, who was quoted in the article, “Our love affair with soaps” by Chanasongram (2009), as saying that “Lakorn (soap operas) can even reduce the amount of traffic in Bangkok. There were a lot fewer cars on the streets when people were at home watching the end of Sawan Bieng.” (Chanasongram, 2009) The latest season, which won the best soap opera award of the year, was broadcast through channel 3. The main actors, both hero and heroine, also got the best male and female actor awards. Interestingly, this soap opera is in Thai viewers’ hearts though the story presents the negative side of the hero. Although the hero’s violent behaviors, such as

raping the heroine, should not be accepted by Thai viewers, they still watch this soap. Thai audiences seem to understand his behaviors rather than reject them. The hero is supported by his fans from the start till the end of the story. Although the heroine is empathized with by the fans, they still cheer both hero and heroine to fall in love with each other.

Sawan Bieng is the good soap opera to prove that no matter how bad characters are, if fans fall in love with these characters, fans always take their favorite characters' side. In order to explain fans' reactions, for instance, the paragraph below shows the Cambodians and Thai audiences' negative reactions.

The Cambodians indeed have shown that they have the hard time separating fact from fiction and reality from soap opera just like the Bangkok market vendors who threw eggs at the actress who played the part of the persecutor of heroine in soap opera. (“Overdrive: Suvanan is a soap opera Helen of Troy”, 2003)

This is an example of fans' reaction. They cannot separate their real lives from the soap story. They hate the characters who annoy their piteous leading actress because they closely follow the soap's story. This reaction is the phenomenon of parasocial interaction, which means the audiences' emotions that “tend to develop toward their favorite persona such that regular and repeated exposure to these favorite persons will lead the audience member to a point where mediated ‘interaction’ is no longer distinguishable from face-to-face and non-mediated interaction”

(Auter, Ashton & Soliman, 2008, p.134). Therefore, fans have the close relationship and perceive their favorite character as the real person.

One piece of the evidence that indicates the popularity of soap opera in Thailand is the broadcast schedule. Soap operas are usually broadcast during primetime. The show time can be used to indicate the success of the soap opera because it is the most expensive time for the sponsor to buy. A television station will carefully choose only the most popular program to broadcast at that time in order to gain the highest rating, which relates directly to the high income for television stations. A high rating also means a huge number of television viewers who watch television program at that time. Any television program that cannot reach the expected rating might be eliminated from the time schedule. Thus, high competition between different television channels to reach the big portion of soap operas' fans at prime time is always a crisis for Thai television.

The several groups of soap fans are another form of evidence to indicate the success of soap operas in Thailand. Thai soap operas' fans are mixed between many ages and genders while American fans are mostly housewives. The general image of Thai soap operas is not entertainment only for housewives. On the contrary, Thai soap operas are produced to serve every group of viewers who turn on their television set at primetime. Primetime is the time that male viewers come back from their work while children and adolescents come back from their schools. Actually, Thai audiences have more choices to watch on television, but the fact is that soap operas are the favorite format for Thai audiences. Hence, Thai soap operas are produced in many genres to serve the variety of groups of viewers such as action, thriller, comedy, romance and

others. Genres of soap operas are rotated to broadcast by the marketing strategies of each channel.

The popularity of soap opera in Thailand creates controversial issues in Thai society. Many social issues that are widely discussed among Thai people come from soap operas. Due to the popularity of these programs, many fans imitate their favorite characters' behaviors. One of the social issues, for example, is the catch phrases. Soap operas' characters can be the cause of using the same phrase in Thai society by fans who especially admire the specific dialogue from one of the characters in a soap opera. If anyone hears the specific phrase, he or she must think of the original character and the story of that soap opera. Fans bring the specific phrase to use in daily life, and then the phrase rapidly spreads to the whole society. Another example concerns the costume fashion which is one of the topics of discussion that Thai fans always mention when the soap operas' characters have unique style of clothes or sometimes, more fashionable than general Thai costume. The elements of soap operas create social issues to discuss between the members of Thai society. The issues come from the popularity of soap operas that many people have seen through their television sets. Then, gossip about the characters and their behaviors becomes the talk of the town because fans have seen these characters in every episode.

The objective of a soap opera is to represent the story of people who have conflicts with other people, environment, or themselves. From (2006) described soap operas as the stories that could happen in daily life. The plots should be the individual conflicts when people have to stay and do activities together. The conflicts might be one or more, depending on the plot of the story. These conflicts are the roots of finding ways to solve the characters' problems. Crisis situations are produced to

challenge the characters and fans. Emotional decisions of characters lead to the wrong behavior, which include immoral acts such as a forced kiss, push, pull, or rape. These wrong acts from the soap operas at the present time cannot be acceptable actions. Thai viewers know that they are not the correct actions to do, but in fact, fans still see soap operas.

Sawan Bieng is the suitable soap opera to study at this point. Even though the hero (Kavee) is a playboy who abuses and even rapes the heroine, he is loved by soap viewers who have seen him doing bad things. They also cheer both Kavee and the heroine Narin as they fall in love with each other though Narin was raped.

Additionally, fans still love and cheer the bad guy. They also seem to understand Kavee's bad behaviors. Fans share and give the information among the members through their community to create their own meaning. Interestingly, they understand and believe the same meaning in their community.

During the past decades, Thailand has gone through several social changes, especially in terms of growing support for gender equality and human rights protection (Muntarbhorn, 2018). This social change leads to an increasing controversy regarding sexual violence in Thai media, especially soap opera. Accordingly, it is important to investigate how fans make understanding of Sawan Bieng, particularly in terms of morality, love, and sexual violence.

The Synopsis of Sawan Bieng (The Twisted Heaven)

A hero named Kavee was a well-educated, good-looking and self-confident guy who was the only child from a very rich family. As a real playboy with bad behaviors, Kavee also represented a violent person who always forced others to do what he wanted. The heroine, named Narin, had to respond to his demands. The story

become more violent when Leela (Narin's sister) got married to Kid (Kavee's father) and moved into Kavee's house. Full of anger at Leela who obviously showed her affection towards her step-son, Kavee raped Narin. After being raped three times, Narin become pregnant, but did not want Kavee to take responsibility. She then run away from him. When Kavee found out about her pregnancy, he transformed himself and paid her back by taking good care of her, even though she constantly refused his offer for reunion. Eventually, Kavee could prove himself about his transformation. They finally got married at the end.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Based on the rationale and problem statement presented above, this study aims to achieve the following research objectives:

1.3.1 To investigate how Sawan Bieng invited the audience to make judgments about morality in terms of good and bad behaviors by the main characters through production elements.

1.3.2 To examine how Thai audiences interpreted love and sexual violent scenes in Sawan Bieng.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study used a mixed research method – analysis of audiences' comments on weblogs and in-depth interview. In the first phase, members' online posts and comments during 2009 to 2018 in five Thai popular websites -- Sanook, Kapook, Pantip, Liverpoolthail, and Thaitv3 -- were analyzed to identify viewers' cognitive and behavioral responses to several production elements of Sawan Bieng. These

production elements include cast, dialogue, plot, staging (frame), lighting, sound track, costume, behavior, environment, and other change. Each weblog has its own characters for its users.

In the second phase, eight Thai viewers who watched Sawan Bieng were interviewed individually. They were selected based on different demographic characteristics to gain a variety of their viewpoints. The questions were asked in depth-interview by the interviewees' memory of any sexual violence scenes in soap opera, the details and reasons of characters, and their point of view about the sexual violence scenes in soap opera.

1.5 Research Questions

To achieve the research objectives, two research questions are formulated as described below.

RQ#1: How does Sawan Bieng invite the audience to make judgments about morality in terms of good and bad behaviors by the main characters through production elements?

The TV production consist of the following ten elements:

- (a) Cast
- (b) Dialogue
- (c) Plot
- (d) Staging (frame)
- (e) Lighting
- (f) Sound track
- (g) Costume

- (h) Behavior
- (i) Environment
- (j) Others

RQ#2: How do Thai audiences interpret love and sexual violent scenes in Sawan Bieng? There are four sub-questions being posed as followed:

- A. What is the expression of love in Thai audiences' perception?
- B. How did Thais perceive the rape of the heroine by hero?
- C. How do Thai audiences define a love scene as appropriate?
- D. How did the audiences perceive the decision of the heroine to marry the hero?

The answers from research questions in the part of texts will guide the way to explain how texts invite the audiences to make meaning of love and characters' behaviors. Since soap operas are produced by producers who want to send messages to the senders or soap viewers, soap elements contain indirect messages created by several elements, such as dialogue, characters, lighting, costumes, and soundtrack. These soap elements are the texts. In other word, texts are the visual and audio messages that are produced by the television producers to present via television set. In order to create a more effective message, visual and audio techniques are used to offer dominant meaning for the audiences. Therefore, studying texts' elements is a significant part of studying soap operas. The findings from this part of the study will explain how the texts invite the audience to make the meaning.

Answers to the research questions about audiences' feedback will explain the relationship between Sawan Bieng and its fans. Sawan Bieng's audiences share and exchange the information about the story through their community, which creates the

relationship between members about Sawan Bieng's story. This idea is supported by Harrington & Bielby (1995, p.58) who argued that "authentic social relationships develop among fans, and these potentially long-term friendships, organized around intimacy and mutuality". Their relationship relates to their perceptions, opinions, and behaviors because their community will shape the members' identity and ideology (Feldman, 2002). Moreover, the answers will also describe the way audiences make judgments about morality through communication with other members. They help each other to create their own understanding that is accepted to be their beliefs, norms, and cultures. Thus, if we understand fans and their community, we can explain the way Thai audiences interpret the meaning of love scenes and characters' behaviors. Research questions and the findings will represent the way Thai audiences make the understanding of a soap opera.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The contributions of this study are to provide the knowledge of studying Thai soap operas in terms of the soap texts and viewers. The findings of this study will be useful information to produce Thai soap operas in the future. The appropriate techniques and messages will be concerned to serve the audiences because the results of this study will show how audiences are brought to an understanding of a soap opera's values. For those who want to reach the high rating such as soap makers, the finding also provides the information to understand the nature of soap fans. Even though many researchers study soap operas in Thailand, most of them focus on the influence of watching soap operas. The main objective of this research is to know the way Thai audiences interpret the meanings of soap operas and the way soap texts

invite the audiences to make meaning of love and characters' behaviors. Therefore, this research will benefit three groups of related people: communication scholars, soap opera producers, and soap opera viewers.

Communication scholars, the first group, will have the evidence to support relevant communication theories. Interpretive community theory, encoding/decoding theory, popular culture theory, and the theory of social learning will be enhanced by the results of this study. Because communication theories used in this research are found by Western communication scholars and might be more suitable to study in Western culture rather than Eastern culture, this research is a good opportunity to examine these communication theories in an Eastern environment. Moreover, communication scholars will understand the nature of Thai soap operas' fans more than the past because in Thailand, there is not much research done about their nature. Communication scholars can also use the results of this study to explain the nature of Thai audiences and understand the style of Thai soap operas that are produced as the most successful television format in Thailand. This study can also be the case study for those who want to know about Thai soap operas and their audiences. The knowledge from this study will help other communication scholars study about Thai soap operas in the future by using the findings from this research as the basic information.

The next group of people who will benefit from this study is the television producers. This study will help the producers understand soap operas' fans, particularly Thai soap viewers. Due to the fact that producers work with the soap operas and their fans, they need to have knowledge about the audiences in order to produce the appropriate messages for them. Besides, soap viewers can be used to

indicate the success of soap operas because they are related to the ratings. Thus, knowing the audiences is very important for the producers to produce the good soap operas to serve them. If producers understand the audiences well, the potential to reach the audiences' satisfaction will increase. Producers can use the results of this research to check the audiences' understanding on the techniques used to invite the meaning through the soap operas. For instance, a producer would like to present Kavee to the viewers as a playboy, so Kavee's clothes are mostly dark at the beginning of the story. However, he starts to wear brighter colors after he has changed his behaviors. Therefore, Kavee always wears dark clothes when he performs bad behaviors. But when he has changed, he wears the brighter clothes. This research will show that the color of costume can invite the audiences to understand the meaning producers want to convey. The question is if the colors used in the story can represent characters' behaviors. Then, producers can use the color technique to help create audiences' understanding. This research provides the knowledge for those who want to improve the quality of their soap productions to serve the audiences.

The last group is the viewers. This research provides the background information for those who are interested in soap operas. The knowledge from this study will help them understand soap operas' texts that lead them to make the meaning of each scene. Even though they are not the expert as producers, the information from this study will be the backup knowledge for them to understand soap operas' techniques such as camera angles, lighting and other techniques. This specific knowledge will help the audiences more easily interpret the meaning and know the objectives of using each technique in the soaps they like.

In sum, the quality of Thai soaps will increase if producers are able to fully apply any techniques to their soaps if they are sure that their viewers can understand them. This study will provide valuable information to improve the ability to understand both soap texts and soap audiences. Even though soap operas in Thailand are now a less famous television genre, developing the quality of soap operas is the duty of soap producers to create more realistic soaps to reach the fans' satisfactions. Therefore, this study will increase the communication ability of soap opera makers to suitably apply the television techniques used in soap operas. The communication skills of soap viewers to understand these television techniques can be improved by the findings. Besides, this research will present the way Thai audiences make their understanding about morality, particularly love scenes, which will be valuable knowledge to further produce soap operas. Appropriate scenes will be produced to serve Thai audiences and will absolutely increase the quality of Thai soap operas. In order to have the background of this study, the theoretical framework of this research will be provided in the next chapter. Chapter two reviews literature regarding specific knowledge to understand the framework of this research, which is a significant part of conducting this research.

1.7 Definition of Terms

The conceptual definition of each important concept being investigated in this study were provided below.

1.7.1 Popular culture

Popular culture is the well-known and accepted products, beliefs, behaviors, and opinions that people in a community have the same perception, understanding,

and performance. Popular culture products such as music and dance are admired by most people in society. Social members prefer to see, do, and perform their favorite popular culture as they have exposed to such culture.

1.7.2 Soap opera

Soap opera refers to the entertainment genre of television program that normally produce from the well-known novel to be the TV drama. The story is represented by several characters that lead to the conflict and the ending finally. Several soap operas were produced by major TV stations to broadcast every day in their prime time, which can be called “TV series”.

1.7.3 Thai soap opera

Thai soap opera is defined as a kind of television drama that is very popular entertainment in Thailand. Thai drama series are mostly produced from the successful Thai novel. Each character is performed by the well-known actor. Thai soap opera is usually broadcasted during the prime time (during 20.20 hrs. and 22.30 hrs.) in which the majority of audiences watch television for their entertainment.

1.7.4 Fans

Fans refer to the group of people who love to watch soap opera and actors who perform in soap opera. They might know the story of soap opera from their prior reading of the novel. They often communicate with each other through online platforms such as weblog to exchange information about their favorite soap operas.

1.7.5 Production elements

Production elements are defined as the elements of television program that are produced by the production team in order to communicate a particular content with the audiences. The production elements normally include cast, dialogue, plot,

staging (frame), lighting, sound track, costume, behavior, environment, and other change.

1.7.6 Encoding and decoding

This term refers to the process of meaning establishment through the media, especially television. Both producers (senders) and soap operas' fans (receivers) have their own process to create and interpret the messages of soap operas. Even though both processes have the same steps, the coding and decoding of each sender and receiver is not necessarily the same and can be changed all the time.

1.7.7 Interpretive community

Interpretive community is defined as the way that audiences interpret texts that inform through TV program such as soap operas by using encoding and decoding. Besides, the theory of interpretive community explains the communication between members that leads to the creation of meaning among members of their community.

1.7.8 Authoritarianism

Authoritarianism is referred to the principle of using the power to demand others, both physically and mentally. Authoritarianism refuses to allow people to be free to think and act. Under the authoritarian society, people' rights are limited. In this case, the hero of Sawan Bieng is living in an authoritarian family and uses male power to sexually abuse the heroine.

1.7.9 Female roles

Female role refers to the expected standard of a good female roles in terms of behaviors, attitudes, and duties. Females who perform the expected female roles will be accepted as good woman in society. Nowadays, female roles in Thai society have changed to a certain extent, especially in family and work place.

1.7.10 Morality

Morality is the belief of right and wrong performance and behavior of human being. It is also the standard role of living together as the member of human society. Morality will lead to peace in society if human respect it. Morality in Thai society is predominately derived from Buddhism.

1.7.11 Sexual violence

Sexual violence means the performance of any sexual violence, including any actions that force others into unwanted sexual actions such as forced kiss, hug, touch sensitive organs, and rape.

1.7.12 Social Learning Theory

Social Learning Theory is the theory describing that people learn from observation, imitation, and modeling. The theory encompasses both limitation and identification to clarify how people learn from observation of others. Moreover, it is used to explain behaviors of soap viewers who might imitate actions or behaviors from soap operas.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides important information for readers by clearly explaining scholarship about Thai and Western soap operas. Several constructs, which relate to the essential part of the study, are reviewed. The chapter is also categorized into ten parts in order to readily scan the related subject matter. The first part presents general information about popular culture and soap opera that can be the background knowledge for studying Sawan Bieng. The second, third, and fourth part involve media violence, morality, authoritarianism and female roles. The fifth part is about the power of fans in influencing soap opera production. Fans can be the indicators for each soap opera's success because soap operas are produced to serve this group of people. The sixth part involves interpretive community that describes the way audiences interpret texts such as soap operas. Besides, the theory of interpretive community explains the communication between members that leads to the creation of meaning among members of their community. The seventh part explains the encoding/decoding theory, which demonstrates the ways producers, as encoders, send the message to the fans, as receivers, and how the receivers decode that message. It is the process of communication exchange by which members in community make meanings. Then, the eighth part examines the role of popular culture, which explains why soap operas' viewers understand, believe, and accept the meanings from soap operas interpretations. The ninth part concentrates on the Social Learning Theory, which illustrates the behavior people learn from others in society and soap operas' fans learn from the characters they love in soap operas. Each part is essential to study

soap operas and their fans. They are used to explain and describe the soap operas' texts and fandom's reactions. Besides, the constructs and Social Learning Theory being reviewed in this chapter are applied to answer two research questions of this study. Lastly, the theoretical framework of this study is explained.

2.1 Popular Culture

Popular culture consists of two meaningful words: popular and culture. Each word contains specific definition but, depends on the context. Storey (1993) explained that popular culture can be defined in different ways. Popular culture is what remains after people have determined what high culture is. Popular culture is “the residual concept to adjust culture texts and practices which fail to join the required standards as high culture” (Storey, 1993, p. 7). Because each community consists of many members who have their own opinions, beliefs, and cultures, members will help each other select the culture that suits their community. Those preferences need to be accepted by the majority of members or the larger group of people in the community. The preferred culture becomes the popular culture while others that are not selected will be categorized as a sub-culture or high culture. Besides, mass media studies regard popular culture as the commercial product culture that most people in society are interested in, understand, and perform. “Popular culture is mass-produced commercial culture, whereas high culture is the result of an individual act of creation” (Storey, 1993, p. 8). Thus, popular culture is the well-known and accepted products, beliefs, behaviors, and opinions that people in a community have the same perception, understanding, and performance. Popular culture texts are admired by the most of people in society. Social members prefer to see, do, and perform as they have seen

from texts that they already decided as their popular texts. For instance, “texts may be the walls of teenagers’ bedrooms, the way they dress, their hairstyles and makeup as they make of themselves walking indices of their social and cultural allegiances, participating actively and productively in the social circulation of meaning” (Fiske, 1989, p. 147).

Soap operas relate to popular culture clearly because they can be the cause of social issues such as costumes, hairstyles, and others that people imitate from what they have seen in soap operas. Hobson (2003, p.2) stated that “soap opera has its own history and is part of the history of television, a major constituent of popular culture, part of academic debate and, in some cases, part of a shared global cultural awareness” Soap operas become both an academic and non-academic issue for people to debate, discuss, and gossip. Their performances bring people to create their own understanding. The majority of people believe in the decisions of society, which come from their own decision. According to Fiske (1989, p. 147), “fans are productive, their fandom spurs them into producing their own texts”. The popular culture concept can also be applied to the study of soap operas through the community of the viewers. Fans have their own community where members come from different places, but they are interested in the same story. Each member has individual experiences, personal background, and knowledge that he/she brings to the community. Then the process of communication exchange occurs. The cooperation between members to share, exchange, and give the information creates the larger group in their community. The final decision on understandings, rules, and knowledge of members becomes the popular culture in their community. Popular culture, therefore, creates the frame that guides members’ performances and reactions.

Popular culture is also used to explain the successful formula of soap operas. What goes around, comes around. The soap opera's plot must be reasonable enough to make fans believe in the story and should not contrast to the belief of most members in the community. Soap operas are produced to reach the fans' satisfactions, so the producers need to create a story to impress audiences. The characters are created as the tools for producers to create fans' emotion within the story. The producers have to have a particular idea of how to create the audience's pleasure in order to seduce viewers to watch it on their television sets. Producers must have self-esteem that their own definition of pleasure is the same as the majority's (Ang, 1985). Thus, the successful formula of soap operas always represents the general story of people and contains the common conflicts that make sense to the fans. For example, the tensions between characters who performed as good and as evil within a wrestling match can be used to explain "the conflicts and inserted logic which form both fan-subculture and dominant cultural sensibilities" (Ball, 1989, p. 18). The study of a wrestling match can be applied to the soaps' study because they both have the same elements that create their fans' satisfactions. Both have characters that represent the good and bad, create the storyline, and invite fans to interpret the meaning of dialogues, characters, and actions. Then, fans can make their own decisions to take sides. Good characters get empathy from fans while bad characters who cause conflicts and violence do not. Popular soap operas should make sense for fans to decide which characters they like. Consequently, soap operas' plots and stories should be realistic.

Popular culture is the preferred culture in each community. It is the idea used to understand the beliefs, performances, thinking, and other reactions of people in

each community. Fiske (1989) explained that popular culture is not made from the cultural industry, but it is rather made by people. The soap operas' elements are texts or cultural resources made by cultural industries for viewers to accept or reject. Even though the production of soap operas at the present time contains special techniques to create the messages to the audiences, it does not guarantee that those messages can be accepted or understood by fans. The production technology is more advanced than it was in the past so soap operas in the present time are more realistic. The communication between producers and viewers is also improved by advanced technology such as SMS, online chat rooms, and other technologies. Members can exchange and share information to create their own understanding. The ability to make a decision depends on their communication ability. Their communication is interactive, dynamic, and powerful to create their own rules, beliefs, and norms. The paragraph below shows the popular creativity of television production. The production will produce the most realistic plot that is, the one closest to the audience members' lives. Therefore, it is difficult to indicate the framework of text and non-text because the boundaries between text and non-text are not clear. Television techniques are used to create a text, so realistic that some viewers cannot separate between the representative and the fact.

“The boundaries between text and nontext, between the representative and the real, become blurred. This is the creativity of social relevance rather than that of aesthetic quality. It is popular creativity, popular culture at work. It refuses clear-cut role distinction, and thus political distinction, between artist and audience, between text

and reader. It does not accept cultural power as one-way, top-down, but as a democratic power that is open to all who have the competence (and discrimination) to participate in it.” (Fiske, 1989, p. 148)

Thus, community members have the right to select what they want because no one forces them. The power is in their hand to create, choose and make their own popular culture.

Popular culture needs members’ participation to shape their cultural frame and make the decision to believe. The larger group contains most members who agree with the same idea while smaller groups, subcultures, are separated by their different opinions, beliefs, and behaviors. According to Driscoll (2002, p. 207), a subculture is the indication of public or popular culture that is divided by people in society. It is “the smaller groups within larger cultural collectives.” Subcultures come from the group identities that are divided from the larger group identities. They have “distinguishable organizations of information and meaning.” Nevertheless, subcultures can be seen as the subculture or high culture though they are not the preference of the social community. Smaller groups create their own popular (sub) culture. They are not eliminated from the society; instead, they are just divided by the members because they do not fit the popular culture. In order to understand the main factor that indicates the success of soap operas, the study of soap operas needs to explain the behaviors of fans. Social learning theory, which will be presented in the next part, can be used to explain fans’ behaviors.

2.2 Soap Operas

To indicate the meaning of soap operas, Hobson (2003, p.1) provided a general idea of this genre in terms of the soap opera's definition as:

At a simple level, the soap opera is radio or television drama in serial form. It has a core set of characters and locations and is transmitted more than three times a week for fifty-two weeks a year. The main focus of the narrative is on the everyday personal and emotional lives of its characters.

Hobson's definition emphasizes the frequency of broadcasting and gives a bit about the main point of soaps' stories. This point is clear from another scholar's opinion. Spence (1945, p.71) explained that "soaps are closer to myth or fairy tales than to the modern novel. Like myths or fairy tales, soaps simplify situations. Characters are more typical than unique. And the outcome is predictable". According to these definitions, soap operas are the stories about daily life that are narrated through the performance of characters.

Soap operas as a genre share similar plots and characters. From (2006) noted that soap operas are the stories that could happen in the real life of people in a community. The plots might be the individual conflicts when people have to stay and do activities together. Plots can also be the story that narrates the disorder in a community. It is the structure of storytelling. In Wittebols (2004) opinion, soap operas' plots have to follow one of three basic themes. One is the conflict and disorder theme, which creates the problem for the story to present. Another is the bad

and good theme that invites audiences to choose and decide their side of a moral issue through these characters' choices and activities. The third one is the "good life" theme, which presents a dream life to viewers. It invites viewers to imagine for themselves the same happy life: mostly it is set as the middle-class lifestyle. Moreover, Burke (1990) demonstrated that soap operas in the present still use themes that can be found in ancient myths and dramas. The characters and relationships in soaps seem to be the stereotypes that do not change over time. The idea is supported by different dimensions between people in the entertainment business and people who have the responsibility for TV content in "TV ratings force execs to break sex and violence mould" Thepchai (2007) concluded that the same old plot or the formula of success can lead to high ratings. It can be said that, for Burke, the plots of soaps never change; they are still the same from the past till present. In other words, plots of soap operas are classic. The ideas of Wittebol show how soap operas touch the viewers' hearts. The stories and plots of soap operas are simple and relate to real life. Viewers can understand the conflicts that are set in stories. Plots used in soap operas are not difficult to follow and the soap stories are easy to understand.

The success of soap operas is obvious and accepted. This is why many scholars study the factors that are the elements of the soap operas' achievement. For example, Nixon (1970) found that one important qualification is to have the interesting and believable characters in the stories. Therefore, soap operas can present a powerful story. Another significant factor is having characters who serve as emotional representatives. These characters can thereby lead the audiences to personally evaluate the plot or emotionally empathize with the characters or otherwise guide viewers to various emotions (Geraghty, 1991). Interestingly, emotions are an

important part of soaps' achievement. The ability to make their fans understand the story, think, and make decisions on their favorite characters' action in the stories seems to be the format of watching soap operas. Viewers have the ability to weigh the value of characters' actions in each event in stories. They follow the story because they find the characters familiar. It is easy, for viewers, to judge characters whom they think they really know.

Soap operas meet the viewers' satisfactions. Harrington & Bielby (1995) suggested that the construction of soap operas influences the everyday lifestyle and satisfaction of audiences. Soap operas provide common needs through their stories and directly affect their viewers' satisfactions, for example happiness, good love, and others. This idea is supported by Hobson's thesis (2003) that the expectation of audiences is satisfied by soap operas. Besides, soap operas create new expectations for their viewers because they know what to expect from the stories. Viewers have the ability to predict the stories. So, they expect happy ending from the soaps' stories. The important key of the soap operas' success comes from the scenes that fulfill the aspiration of audiences. Therefore, soap operas release the viewers' emotions, which could not be expressed in the real life, and create the fans' great mood when what happens in the story is what they expect. At this point, Radway (1984a) explained that the advantage of reading romance novels is to create the readers' emotion, which is produced to serve a common sense of emotional well-being and to support the readers' natural satisfaction. From this point, her work can be used in this study because the nature of romance readers and soap operas' fans is the same. They predict the stories in novels and soap operas. They have the knowledge about the stories and characters. They share and exchange information through their community. They are

the loyal members who have knowledge about their favorites. Besides, soap operas and romance novels are home entertainment that helps their fans reach their emotional satisfaction. Many soap operas are produced from the romance novels, particularly in Thailand. Most successful Thai soap operas used to be popular novels before being produced as soaps.

Accordingly, the interpretive community of romance novel readers is a concept that helps Radway (1984b) explain how romance readers interpret hero's violent acts. The romance novels and romance soaps are the same fiction genre. The plots they use are created to serve the same loyal fans.

When a romance presents the story of a woman who is misunderstood by the hero, mistreated and manhandled as a consequence of his misreading, and then suddenly loved, protected, and cared for by him because he recognizes that he mistook the meaning of her behavior, the novel is informing its readers that the minor acts of violence they must contend with in their own lives can be similarly reinterpreted as the result of misunderstandings or of jealousy born of true love.

(Radway, 1984b, p.75)

The final purpose of characters is to meet the real love in romance fiction. No matter what the channel is, a novel or television, the super-objective of the main characters never changes from finding true love. Definitely, true love is not a common thing that always happens both in real life and romance fiction. The obstacles in

romance novels and soap operas, for instance the misunderstanding, jealousy, or other negative acts, can happen in real life.

Generally, soap operas use common human struggles as themes. The concept of soaps' themes is represented by Kilguss (1977) who demonstrated that the themes used in soaps are general conflicts that can happen in everyday life. They are normal conflicts and general negative thinking of people such as jealousy, hate and sadness. Sometimes, these themes might be the root of negative actions in soap operas, for example, a violent romance scene that may happen through the story. From this point, Radway (1984a) who studied romance novels and their audiences, explained that violent romance scenes are created to show the way women attempt to resist male force in any situation. In Radway's opinion, romance novels indirectly inform readers about the negative results of patriarchy. The readers have the ability to understand the code from the writers. For example, men should not hurt women in any situations. If women get hurt by men, they should know that this situation is not normal.

Accordingly, the violent romance scene is known as an inappropriate content to broadcast; however, it is still prevalent in soap operas. Radway's opinion can be used to explain the violent romance scene in soap operas. Even though novels and soaps are different media and genres, they both are produced to serve the expectation of their fans. Both romance novels' and soap operas' fans have the same abilities to interpret and understand their favorites. In order to confirm the explanation, Radway (1984a, p. 75) provided the reasonable argument that the violent romance scene exists to serve the audience's expectation of the meaning of patriarchy.

Rape and physical torture of the heroine and the hero are obviously objectionable because the readers are seeking

an opportunity to be shown a happier, more trouble-free version of existence. Such features are probably also distasteful, however, because the romance, which is never simply a love story, is also an exploration of the meaning of patriarchy for women.

Violent romance scenes existing in the story are considered inappropriate scenes and they are used to tell the fans about the fact of patriarchy through the performance of the characters.

Larson (1991) suggested the different degrees of violence in soap operas apart from rape. Other physical aggressions are included. The paragraph below explains the degree of violent performance in soap operas.

The rarity of rapes on the show does not mean romantic relationships were free of physical aggression.

Aggression during kissing can also demonstrate inappropriate behavior. Whenever force and resistance were exhibited during a kiss, it was coded as “forced kissing.” The resistance could be exhibited in many ways (pushing, pulling, grabbing) and temporary resistance was sufficient for a kiss to be counted as forced kissing. (Larson, 1991, p.160)

The studies mentioned above represent important dimensions of soap opera and their audiences. This paragraph provides the information about the romance,

which is the genre of soap opera of this research. It cannot be denied that romance is one of the famous fiction genres because it grows the fans' confidence about love. Radway (1984b) argued that a happy ending in the romance can create self-esteem in audiences because it shows a successful cross-sex relationship. A romance novel increases readers' faith in the possibility of real love. Moreover, "violence can be accepted by the romance readers if that violent behavior is explained sparingly, controlled cautiously, or clearly traceable to the passion or jealousy of the hero." Although the idea of sexual force is used as a soap operas' plot line, soap operas contain a moral violation and punishment through the story. The rape story also presents how a moral violation was punished and how a serious issue was included into the show in a socially responsible manner (Larson, 1991). Every scene in soap operas is purposefully created and developed till the end of the story. In order to understand soap operas, the whole components of the story, characters' behaviors, conflicts, important situations, problem solving, etc., must be analyzed. Therefore, a good method to study romance stories is to examine the whole story, rather than looking at a particular incident or event.

As mentioned in the beginning of this section, the characters in soap operas are significant elements because "through the characters the various elements of the text (situation, actions, locations, indications of time and so on) obtain a place and function in the plot" (Ang, 1985, p. 29). Characters in soap operas can be regarded as the instruments to lead fans to the point that producers want the viewers to see. Also, characters can lead the audiences to the locations, situations, or even their ideas. For instance, Shanahan, Signorielli & Morgan's (2008) study found that most females in television soap operas are married and not working outside their home when

compared to the males. Females are shown in typical female occupations such as secretary and nurse. Besides, the study found that in soap operas, marital status creates happiness. Men are more likely to be single. Soap operas' stories relate to the daily life of people. The characters are created to be the tools to tell the stories. Characters' appearances need to create as close as people in fans' society at that time, including the sex role portrayals to easily create fans' imagination. Thus, soap operas will not produce unfamiliar characters.

Additionally, Levine (2007) found that sexual control in media and censorship is difficult due to its complexity of content. The heroine symbols in television stories (Charlie's Angels, Wonder Woman and Three's Company) create feminist overtones, new roles for women, and patterns for male and female images. Semonche (2007) is another researcher who performed a historical study called "Self-Censoring Sex." He found that there was an attempt to decrease the violent programming in United States of America in the 1960s. However, sexual content was increasing at that time. Studying sexual content in media relates to many factors such as religions that reflect the social image. Potential factors that might relate to the social issue or/and social discussion need to be explored and discussed in order to understand viewers' interpretations.

The reaction of soap operas' viewers is an important indicator of the success of soap operas. If any soap does not have its own fans, it will completely fail. On the other hand, if any soap gains many fans who always watch through their television sets, it is considered a successful story. In addition, of course, soaps directly affect their viewers' emotions, feelings, and opinions. For instance, a few studies have demonstrated that Thai audiences are affected by the soap opera Oshin, a Japanese

soap opera, in terms of educational and cultural knowledge. The story of Oshin guides audiences in what they should and what they should not do (Singhal & Udornpim, 1997). Another example from Seiter, Kreuzner, Warth & Borchers (1989) is that the representation of a married woman's affair on a TV soap opera could be used within a specific marriage as a warning to the husband to change the way he treats his wife. These arguments are supported by the idea of Radway (1984b), who said that reading romance novels improves self-esteem of some romance fans. They will be able to stand up to their husbands and negotiate for their personal space and time in the patriarchal family. Soap operas can bring confidence to its viewers to think, say, and perform differently in their daily lives.

The way to understand why people do what they do, in Radway's (1984b) point of view, for example, why they read romances, is to understand the structure of their society and the explanation of their performances. Hence, people who want to study why women read romance novels should not just know only what women understand. Instead, they should know the reason why women select that novel to read. Therefore, that could be a good cultural analysis. Romance novels are a common resource of soap operas and most of them are very successful in terms of ratings, especially in Thailand.

According to the situation of soap opera in Thailand, a recent survey reported by "Warnings to accompany TV sex and violence" (2007) found that Thai people felt most soap operas did not appropriately raise public awareness of the impact of domestic violence on children and women (73.2%). Local television drama appropriately presented the role of women and men and gender parity (53%). For 41.4% of Thai people, no soap opera appropriately represented a family's love and

understanding in solving problems without violence. Moreover, Supensri Puengkoaksoong, head of the Friends of Women Foundation and a working-team member, concludes that television soaps and advertisings were found to activate violence and sex crimes (“Warnings to accompany TV sex and violence”, 2007). However, the rating of soap operas in Thailand is always increasing. Every television channel needs this support from the soap operas’ fans who always watch their favorite story. Even though this survey shows the negative perceptions of soap operas by Thai audiences, soap opera is still the television viewers’ favorite genre.

Many factors need to be carefully examined in order to understand soap texts and their audiences’ interpretation of sexual violence. The idea of studying romance readers can be applied to study the soap operas because both romance novels and soap operas have their own readers and viewers who are interested in details of stories such as characters, dialogue, and others. These elements are important to study in order to understand why soap fans select the soaps to watch, how they react to the story, and how they make their interpretation on soap operas. Hence, the study of Radway is a guideline for this research to follow. Radway’s concept is used to understand the soap viewers or fans because romance readers and soap viewers are more likely to interpret media content in terms of loyalty, reaction and behavior.

2.3 Media Violence

Aggression is defined as any behavior intended to harm another individual. There are three forms of aggression -- physical, verbal, and emotional aggression (Anderson, et al., 2003). According to Punnahitanond (2012), verbal aggression generally means saying hurtful things to another person; emotional aggression refers

to projecting aggressive emotions (e.g., anger) to others, and physical aggression signifies any acts causing or threatening physical harm towards others, ranging in severity from minor acts (e.g., pushing) to more serious acts (e.g., physical assaults).

Findings on influences of media violence during the past decades indicate that audiences' exposure to violence in mass media increases the likelihood of their aggression in both short-term and long-term contexts (Sparks & Sparks, 2002). How aggression is affected by exposure to media violence can be well explained by several theories. On one hand, short-term effects are produced by observational learning and imitation, arousal and excitation, and priming aggressive scripts and cognitions. On the other hand, long-term effects are produced by observational learning, automatization of aggressive schematic processing, and desensitization or emotional habituation (Bandura, 1994 and Anderson et al., 2003 as cited in Punnahitanond, 2012). Nevertheless, later research by psychologists Gentile & Bushman (2012) found that being aggressive is not just consuming media violence. Aggressive behavior is contributed by many factors. For some audiences, consuming violence in media is enjoyable and not the result of anxiety (Krahe, et al., 2011).

As for Thailand, television dramas prominently feature sexual violence. Data from the Ministry of Health in Thailand showed that 80 percent of Thai dramas featured rape scenes (Chia, 2016). Among popular Thai soap operas, *Sawan Bieng* presented several rape scenes. According to Chia (2016), users of Pantip, the popular online forum rationalize sexual violence in Thai media by differentiating between rape and forced sex. The latter is apparently perceived as acceptable. Hence, sexual violence in Thai media becomes a controversial issue in Thai society between those

who perceive sexual violence in media as harmful and perpetuating female objectification, and those who accept it as plot of the fiction.

2.4 Morality

Morality is the belief of right and wrong performance and behavior of human being. It is also the standard role of living together as the member of human society (Ayala, 2010). Morality will lead the peace to society due to ethics, principles, virtue, and goodness that people in each society faithfully hold. It is the level of morality that influence people's cognition and action. According to Taylor (2012), human behaviors are related to three levels of morality: "(1) to ensure fair play and harmony between individuals; (2) to help make us good people in order to have a good society; and (3) to keep us in a good relationship with the power that created us." Based on this definition, our beliefs are critical to our moral behavior. In other words, if social members have a high level of morality, they are likely to perform moral behaviors. Their violent behaviors can be controlled or decreased by their morality.

Thailand is regarded as an established Buddhist society. Buddhism has a unique approach to morality as proposed by Karma Lekshe Tsomo, a professor of theology and a nun in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition (O'Brien, 2018):

There are no moral absolutes in Buddhism and it is recognized that ethical decision-making involves a complex nexus of causes and conditions. Buddhism' encompasses a wide spectrum of beliefs and practices, and the canonical scriptures leave room for a range of interpretations. All of these are grounded in a theory of

intentionality, and individuals are encouraged to analyze issues carefully for themselves. When making moral choices, individuals are advised to examine their motivation -- whether aversion, attachment, ignorance, wisdom, or compassion -- and to weigh the consequences of their actions in light of the Buddha's teachings.

It is interesting to investigate Thai audiences' interpretation of morality, love, and sexual violence in Thai soap opera in the country with authoritarian culture. Accordingly, the construct of authoritarianism and female roles are reviewed to provide an insightful explanation for this communication phenomenon.

2.5 Authoritarianism and Female Roles

Authoritarianism is a form to govern that totally control political activities of the particular society (communicationtheory.org). In terms of general meaning, authoritarianism is the principle of using the power to demand others both physically and mentally. It refuses to allow people to be free to think and act. People who are under the authoritarianism have limited rights and are required to follow the order of the authorities (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2017).

The divine kingship since the pre-modern times leads to authoritarianism in Thailand. The combination of a Hindu notion of divine kingship and a feudal absolute monarchy reinforced authoritarianism as the dominant political and social culture of the ancient Thai society (Carnegie Council, 1995). This culture has survived into the present, where it has affected family socialization and female roles in Thai society.

For example, father is the first authority to decide the important things for the family members. Father is regarded as a head of family, who can command every family member to do what he wants, including the domination of his wife's and children's lives.

In the past, men are commonly known as a leader, working outside the home whereas women are known as a follower, taking care of children and household chores. Although the western culture and modernization allow Thai women to have more freedom, working more outside the home, getting more opportunities in education, politics and economics, women are still considered having less privilege than men, and being represented as subordinates in Thai media, especially soap operas.

2.6 Fans

Radway's opinion is also very useful to study the soap operas' fans. Although the romance novels and soap operas are different genres and media, they both have their own loyal fans. Romance novel readers closely pursue their favorite stories while soap opera fans watch every episode of their favorite soaps. They spend most of their leisure time on the selected stories, especially television viewers who have the power in their hands to change the program. Burke (2001) argued that television viewers choose only programs that provide pleasures. They are not the victim of programmers who present only trash TV. Baym (1999, p. 41) quoted fans' opinion on why they watch soap operas that "We watch because we are unable to satisfy the emotional needs in our real lives. We turn to soap opera to escape our own despair by dwelling in other people's problems". This viewer's opinion shows that fans can leave

their real lives behind while they watch the soaps. Watching others' problems and the conflicts of each character helps fans feel better about their real lives. The struggles of each character in the story can also make them think about the way to solve their problems. Soap operas seem to be the way for fans to release their painful feelings about everyday life, particularly the female fans who are major viewers of soap operas.

According to Fiske (1989), fans can be classified into two categories: productivity and discrimination. The productivity fans know everything about the soaps such as characters, locations, and others. They understand the reason why each character behaves in the story. Also, they closely follow every episode of the soaps and can predict the outcome and the ending of the story. The other type, discrimination, is the ability of fans to differentiate the good or bad characters and their behaviors in the story (Fiske, 1987). Fans have their own opinions to decide or make the comments about the soaps by their own interpretation. "Fans draw sharp and intolerant lines between what, or who, they are fans of and what they are not" (Fiske, 1989, p. 147). Many fans start watching soaps with their mothers when they are children and watch them throughout their lives (Blumenthal, 1997). Furthermore, soaps fans' characteristics are described by Kielwasser & Wolf (1989) as extreme and permanent loyalty, which makes soap operas different from other popular television genres. Fans are the significant viewers who closely follow the story of soap operas. Even though soap operas are made to serve the audiences by the soap makers, fans have the ability to interpret, predict, and expect the story of soaps because they have a good knowledge of soaps.

Accordingly, fans always have a reaction to the soaps through their comments and opinions. In Harrington & Bielby (1995) study, their respondents explained that people in soaps are not real. Therefore, there is no guilt in gossiping or talking about the characters and nobody gets hurt or betrayed because of their talk. Likewise, the comments fans make come from their own points of view. These opinions might be posted through their community such as printed media or/and online channels. For example, the research on wrestling fans by Burke (2001, p. 11) is used to indicate the reaction of their fans about the way they react to the show. He found that “the wrestling viewers seemed to individualize or explain their interpretations”, based on opinions from the skits and related texts on web pages, in e-mail chat rooms for fans, in wrestling magazines, and in wrestler biographies. These channels can be viewed as their own community where participants can exchange opinions, searching for information, or even inform other fans of the latest information. Viewers have the extensive knowledge of the characters’ histories and places in soap operas. This ability of fans makes them understand and accept each scene, which might be difficult from the outsiders to accept (Geraghty, 1991). The outsiders might not follow some scenes if they do not have background knowledge about characters and settings. They might think that the story is not smooth or that the characters have not enough reason to do the actions. In contrast, soap fans always follow the story, know the background, and understand the conditions of characters.

Hobson (2003) believes that soap opera viewers know every detail of the characters and their stories because they watch, enjoy, and criticize; in other words, they become a part of national and global audiences. Thus, they always share the information, update, and inform each other through their community. Moreover,

another attraction that draws audiences to the soap operas is actors and actresses. Although the performers are not the main element that critics and producers pay attention to, they are analyzed by the audiences. Audiences feel that they know their characters and also know the actors and actresses because they are very familiar characters (Hobson, 2003).

In addition, fans also bring the information they have to share with one another in their community. This concept is supported by the idea of Burke (2001, p.5) who demonstrated the result when viewers become fans. "The information is shared in creative and adaptive ways to form their reality". Moreover, the reality is their understanding of the world that connects the audience to share their view of culture (Burke, 2001). Soap fans have their own understanding that is established by their interpretation. Hence, their relation in soap community can be compared to the communication community.

In order to study the soap opera, one important thing that needs to be researched is fandom. In fact, a soap opera is produced to serve the audiences who are active viewers. They have the ability to react to the soap opera in terms of the character, dialogue, location, costume, make up, and other element that are combined in a soap opera. Also, the members of fans are gathered from the people who fall in love with the same soap opera. Each fan might have personal comments about the soaps before sharing them with others in the community.

2.7 Interpretive Community

The idea of an interpretive community, in this research, is very useful to explain the understanding among members. Interestingly, each fan has personal

interpretations and uses their personal experiences to make the understanding through their community (Feldman, 2002). Their interpretation covers all elements that are the construction of soap operas such as characters, dialogues, costumes, locations, stages, and others. In other words, fans can analyze and understand each scene because of their rich knowledge.

According to Feldman (2002), “interpretive” cognition is shared among members of cultural group. They know the same stories in the same ways and hope to tell this kind of knowledge, what it means to them, to others. Baym (1999) illustrated the idea that the soap opera has specific meaning for each audience member. The viewers make their own meaning based on their own experiences. The most frequent topic about soaps that people discuss is the emotion that each character expresses through the story. Another important topic is the relation between characters in the story. All topics they discuss are compared to their personal experience, which they learn in their daily lives.

According to Feldman (2002), interpretation is a continuous construction process that needs to be developed by the members in online community. Two processes of the construction indicate the members’ interpretation formats. One is the construction of the canon. An individual interpretation is created by using the individual’s own experiences. Another is the collective and public interpretation of the canon. This process is to gather the meanings that members interpret and share with the other members in the community. The author also suggested that every online community member has the ability to be a writer as well as a reader. Thus, the meanings that members make in the community are accepted as their reality

A fan community provides the opportunity for its members to communicate and develop everyone's knowledge. John Ellis (1982) argued that the special quality of television is its direct communication to the viewers. That is, television is addressed so that television viewers use more interpersonal communication than mass-public communication. "Television viewing audiences and individuals who are mentally and socially active use mediated messages to create an 'interpretative reality' - understood within social rule-following, historically-situated, specific contexts" (Burke, 2001, p.6). Even though soap operas are broadcasted through television, a mass medium, fans communicate to one another by using interpersonal communication. They share, exchange, and give information into the community where everyone can gather and learn the information to understand their social knowledge.

Interestingly, fans interpret and evaluate the characters' behavior through the soap. Besides, they also predict the future events in the story. Both activities are based on each individual (Baym, 1999). Livingstone (1989, 1990) argued that viewers differently interpret the story lines because they diversely interpret characters according to their understanding. Whyte (1943) explained from his point of view that the meaning interpretation is the process which has to be understood. The audiences use all elements they have seen in soap operas to interpret the meaning of each scene. Their interpretations of the television program may include the important message that producers want to send to them. However, their interpretation has to rely on their own experiences that lead to their understanding. For example, Singhal & Udornpim (1997) found that Thai viewers learned many lessons from *Oshin* (the Japanese soap opera) in terms of being grateful to the parents, endurance, and other values. In

addition, Japanese customs and rituals are other benefits Thai viewers learned.

Several Thai viewers also related the lessons from Oshin to their personal lives. Soap fans use their own experiences to interpret and evaluate the meaning of characters' behaviors to make their own understanding through the stories. All soap elements provided through the stories are also interpreted by the soap viewers.

The audiences must create their own appropriate explanations to understand the story (Allen, 1985; Geraghty, 1991 and Livingstone, 1989). Soap operas are the stories that are made by the producers to serve the viewers' expectations. The producers encode their own meanings through the characters, dialogues, and other elements in order to send the information to the senders or soap fans. However, fans have their capabilities to make their own understanding, which might not be as producers' meaning. Fans create their interpretations based on their personal experiences to match their background knowledge, which leads to individual interpretation. No one can force them to understand soaps because soap operas are open for different interpretations from each individual.

Dialogue and camera shots are used to support the producer's intended meaning of each scene. Both seem to be signs for fans to interpret in special scenes. Dialogue is the main factor to communicate directly and indirectly to viewers. Likewise, camera shots guide fans to the right objects in scenes. From (2006) stated that dialogue can reflect the variations in soap operas such as characters, situations, and characters' relationships, while Brunsdon (1983) pointed out that the familiarity of the scenes and compatibility of the camera shots in the soaps also function to direct attention to specific characters and dialogue. Moreover, dialogue and camera shots can be used to dominantly present plots, themes, and characterization from the

viewpoint of producers. Dialogue is compared to the explanation from producer's mouth while camera shots are the vision perspective from the producer's eye. Thus, both dialogue and camera shots relate to other elements in soap operas. Every element in soap operas is a useful tool to send messages to fans. The interpretive community concept helps understand the fans' activities and explain how soap operas' viewers interpret the meaning of story.

2.8 Encoding /Decoding

Soap operas are produced to serve the viewers' expectations. Fans' satisfaction is the main purpose for the producers who make soap operas. Because a high rating represents the soap opera's success, producers need to know how to produce soap operas that give satisfaction to fans. Soap opera producers and directors use their knowledge to create the messages through the characters, dialogues, and actions. They also use other techniques such as camera angles to support the messages and meaning they offer to soap operas' viewers. However, fans have their own ability to make meaning, and fans' understanding may not be the same as what soap opera makers intend to convey. This section provides information on the encoding and decoding concept to explain the process of meaning establishment through the media, especially television. Both producers (senders) and soap operas' fans (receivers) have their own process to create and interpret the messages of soap operas. Even though both processes have the same three steps, the knowledge of each sender and receiver is not completely the same and can be changed all the time.

Hall's model of television communication presents the structure of establishing message from sender and interpretation process of receivers. The model

was created to explain how the “meaning structure 1” might differ from the “meaning structure 2” in the encoding and decoding diagram. Both producers (senders) and fans (receivers) have their own knowledge, environment, background, and others that affect the way they think, perform, and interpret other people. Producers and fans are like the encoders and decoders. If the producers’ messages relate to viewers’ experiences, then codes might be understood in the same way. The misunderstanding is decreased if the process of communication exchange matches the communicators’ knowledge.

In contrast, the good or bad process of exchange, the failure of codes’ suitability may lead to misunderstandings. Besides, misunderstanding can occur because Messages themselves might invite audiences to interpret their own meaning in order to suit their understanding. There is no guarantee that viewers will accept or reject the producer’s messages because it is out of their control. Viewers might be dominated by the producer’s messages; they might negotiate meaning to understand the messages, and the oppositional meaning might possible occur if audiences are invited to create their own meaning by soap elements.

The processes of encoding and decoding are comprised of the same three steps: technical infrastructure, relations of production, and frameworks of knowledge. The first step is the technical infrastructure, which means the production techniques to create the messages such as the camera angles, lighting, sound track, and others to make the meaning in message. It seems to be the technical practice. So, producers should know the degree of using those elements to match their receivers. At this point, to create the messages, producers have to think about the environment at that time which is called relations of production. In order to make the messages say what they

mean, the producers need to check other related factors that might affect the messages such as political or economic issues that might interplay with the messages' meanings. The last step is frameworks of knowledge, which refers to the producers' perspectives to input the meaning to messages. These frameworks mean background, experiences, and other identities.

In terms of decoding, the receivers can interpret the meaning of producer's messages in one of three ways. The first interpretation is the dominant or preferred meaning. Receivers or audiences are dominated by the meaning that producers offer. Receivers totally accept the messages created by the senders or producers. The negotiated code, the second interpretation, means the receivers accept some parts of producer's messages while others are rejected. The producer's messages are mixed with the receiver's understanding and the receivers create the new meaning that they prefer. The last interpretation, oppositional code, means receivers completely create their own meaning. Receivers reject the meanings that are provided by the senders and make the meanings that they prefer from the messages. In Hall's view, there is no guarantee that receivers can fully interpret the meaning as producers want because receivers or audiences have the ability to create their own meaning. Encoding is a professional process that uses television techniques to create messages by using the producer's knowledge, but decoding is a personal process to interpret the meaning of a producer's messages. Therefore, the perspective of both sender and receiver might or might not be different. Interestingly, the processes of communication exchange, for receivers, are the same steps. The importance is that the knowledge of each step is different for senders and receivers. That is the main cause of asymmetries of meaning,

meaning acceptance, meaning negotiation, and meaning rejection of producer's messages.

Although the processes of encoding are carefully created by three steps of message establishment, there is no guarantee that receivers will decode the same meaning as producers' wish. The process of communication exchange, encoding and decoding, cannot predict the outcomes. Storey (1996) argued that a media professional cannot guarantee the result of codes they made. They also cannot suggest the results even though they want the receivers' decoding to agree with their encoding. Encoding and decoding are controlled by the different circumstances. Because both senders and receivers' environment can change over the time, a mismatch of understandings is always possible.

Thus, the producers as senders use their knowledge to decrease fans' misunderstanding in order to be interpreted as they prefer by the receivers. Soap opera makers know that soap operas are the products to be broadcasted through television. So, they need to use techniques for images and sounds in order to support the meaning while they send the message to viewers. Ang (1985) explained that a television program contains a series of electronic images and sounds that rise from the television set. From this point, a system of presentation contains a combination of visual and audible signs in television program. Those sights and sounds are considered text. The specific visualization and audio support the meaning of each scene. Even though the characters' actions in soap operas can be considered the tools for sending the messages, visual and audio signs can be used to guide the viewers to understand the producers' intended meaning.

Additionally, Allen (1983) explains the frameworks that viewers use to make sense of the shows. The ideological code provides a general frame of experience that makes audiences predict the stories. Video-cinematic codes are important logic signals in the frame. When the camera movement is changed, viewers will know and understand the difference. Next, other techniques of soap opera such as time, space, style of acting and narratives are called generic codes. Lastly, intertextual codes are other conventions that help create the meaning to the shows. For instance, mystery sound, imagination, lighting, costumes, and make up are added to direct and increase the viewers' emotions. Codes are created by the senders to convey their intended messages to receivers who have their own community to help each other interpret the meaning of codes. Each community has its own culture, rule, and identity that are established by the members of community. Storey (1996) talks about the importance of codes that make up the culture:

A code is a rule-governed system of signs, whose rules and conversations are shared amongst members of a culture, and which is used to generate and circulate meaning in and for that culture. Codes are links between producers, texts, and audiences, and are the agents of intertextuality through which texts interrelate in a network of meanings that constitutes our cultural world.

Understanding the way to encode and decode the meaning through the message is as important as to know the significance of codes. Studying soap operas needs to understand the concept of encoding and decoding as well. To understand the

soap viewers more, we need to know the way they gain the information through their community, which relates to audiences' beliefs and performances. Popular culture can be used to explain the reaction of the soap audiences in both their community and society.

2.9 Popular Culture

Popular culture consists of two meaningful words: popular and culture. Each word contains specific definition but, depends on the context. Storey (1993) explained that popular culture can be defined in different ways. Popular culture is what remains after people have determined what high culture is. Popular culture is “the residual concept to adjust culture texts and practices which fail to join the required standards as high culture” (Storey, 1993, p. 7). Because each community consists of many members who have their own opinions, beliefs, and cultures, members will help each other select the culture that suits their community. Those preferences need to be accepted by the majority of members or the larger group of people in the community. The preferred culture becomes the popular culture while others that are not selected will be categorized as a sub-culture or high culture. Besides, mass media studies regard popular culture as the commercial product culture that most people in society are interested in, understand, and perform. “Popular culture is mass-produced commercial culture, whereas high culture is the result of an individual act of creation” (Storey, 1993, p. 8). Thus, popular culture is the well-known and accepted products, beliefs, behaviors, and opinions that people in a community have the same perception, understanding, and performance. Popular culture texts are admired by the most of people in society. Social members prefer to see, do, and perform as they have seen

from texts that they already decided as their popular texts. For instance, “texts may be the walls of teenagers’ bedrooms, the way they dress, their hairstyles and makeup as they make of themselves walking indices of their social and cultural allegiances, participating actively and productively in the social circulation of meaning” (Fiske, 1989, p. 147).

Soap operas relate to popular culture clearly because they can be the cause of social issues such as costumes, hairstyles, and others that people imitate from what they have seen in soap operas. Hobson (2003, p. 2) stated that “soap opera has its own history and is part of the history of television, a major constituent of popular culture, part of academic debate and, in some cases, part of a shared global cultural awareness”. Soap operas become both an academic and non-academic issue for people to debate, discuss, and gossip. Their performances bring people to create their own understanding. The majority of people believe in the decisions of society, which come from their own decision. According to Fiske (1989, p. 147), “fans are productive, their fandom spurs them into producing their own texts”. The popular culture concept can also be applied to the study of soap operas through the community of the viewers. Fans have their own community where members come from different places, but they are interested in the same story. Each member has individual experiences, personal background, and knowledge that he/she brings to the community. Then the process of communication exchange occurs. The cooperation between members to share, exchange, and give the information creates the larger group in their community. The final decision on understandings, rules, and knowledge of members becomes the popular culture in their community. Popular culture, therefore, creates the frame that guides members’ performances and reactions.

Popular culture is also used to explain the successful formula of soap operas. What goes around, comes around. The soap opera's plot must be reasonable enough to make fans believe in the story and should not contrast to the belief of most members in the community. Soap operas are produced to reach the fans' satisfactions, so the producers need to create a story to impress audiences. The characters are created as the tools for producers to create fans' emotion within the story. The producers have to have a particular idea of how to create the audience's pleasure in order to seduce viewers to watch it on their television sets. Producers must have self-esteem that their own definition of pleasure is the same as the majority's (Ang, 1985). Thus, the successful formula of soap operas always represents the general story of people and contains the common conflicts that make sense to the fans. For example, the tensions between characters who performed as good and as evil within a wrestling match can be used to explain "the conflicts and inserted logic which form both fan-subculture and dominant cultural sensibilities" (Ball, 1989, p. 18). The study of a wrestling match can be applied to the soaps' study because they both have the same elements that create their fans' satisfactions. Both have characters that represent the good and bad, create the storyline, and invite fans to interpret the meaning of dialogues, characters, and actions. Then, fans can make their own decisions to take sides. Good characters get empathy from fans while bad characters who cause conflicts and violence do not. Popular soap operas should make sense for fans to decide which characters they like. Consequently, soap operas' plots and stories should be realistic.

Popular culture is the preferred culture in each community. It is the idea used to understand the beliefs, performances, thinking, and other reactions of people in

each community. Fiske (1989) explained that popular culture is not made from the cultural industry, but it is rather made by people. The soap operas' elements are texts or cultural resources made by cultural industries for viewers to accept or reject. Even though the production of soap operas at the present time contains special techniques to create the messages to the audiences, it does not guarantee that those messages can be accepted or understood by fans. The production technology is more advanced than it was in the past so soap operas in the present time are more realistic. The communication between producers and viewers is also improved by advanced technology such as SMS, online chat rooms, and other technologies. Members can exchange and share information to create their own understanding. The ability to make a decision depends on their communication ability. Their communication is interactive, dynamic, and powerful to create their own rules, beliefs, and norms. The paragraph below shows the popular creativity of television production. The production will produce the most realistic plot that is, the one closest to the audience members' lives. Therefore, it is difficult to indicate the framework of text and non-text because the boundaries between text and non-text are not clear. Television techniques are used to create a text, so realistic that some viewers cannot separate between the representative and the fact.

The boundaries between text and nontext, between the representative and the real, become blurred. This is the creativity of social relevance rather than that of aesthetic quality. It is popular creativity, popular culture at work. It refuses clear-cut role distinction, and thus political distinction, between artist and audience, between text

and reader. It does not accept cultural power as one-way, top-down, but as a democratic power that is open to all who have the competence (and discrimination) to participate in it. (Fiske, 1989, p. 148)

Thus, community members have the right to select what they want because no one forces them. The power is in their hand to create, choose and make their own popular culture.

Popular culture needs members' participation to shape their cultural frame and make the decision to believe. The larger group contains most members who agree with the same idea while smaller groups, subcultures, are separated by their different opinions, beliefs, and behaviors. According to Driscoll (2002), a subculture is the indication of public or popular culture that is divided by people in society. It is "the smaller groups within larger cultural collectives." (p. 207) Subcultures come from the group identities that are divided from the larger group identities. They have "distinguishable organizations of information and meaning." (p. 207) Nevertheless, subcultures can be seen as the subculture or high culture though they are not the preference of the social community. Smaller groups create their own popular (sub) culture. They are not eliminated from the society; instead, they are just divided by the members because they do not fit the popular culture. In order to understand the main factor that indicates the success of soap operas, the study of soap operas needs to explain the behaviors of fans. Social learning theory, which will be presented in the next part, can be used to explain fans' behaviors.

2.10 Social Learning

Humans are social animals who need to socialize with other members. They need to be accepted by others to be a part of community and learn how to be a member in society. Thus, social learning is the theory that explains human behaviors when they live together in the society and how they learn some behaviors from others in the society. Normally, humans learn from their personal observations and experiences. Humans have an ability to learn from mistakes and error (Bandura, 1971). Humans are able to learn rapidly if that behavior brings the positive outcome. The reward is the motivation for them to learn and imitate some behaviors. For instance, the study on children's behaviors by Bandura (1977) found that social learning involves observing, and modeling the attitudes and behaviors of others. Adoption of modeled attitudes and behavior is easily accepted if the model is the same as the observer, possesses status, and rewards attitude and behaviors.

Gibson (2004) argued that "social learning theory identifies learning as a dynamic interplay between the person, the environment, and behavior." (p.193) Soap operas influences behavior as its viewers closely follow the characters' behavior because of fans "natural tendency to imitate what they see others do" (Hergenhahn & Olson, 1997, p. 326) Then, they might know they should or should not imitate the characters' behaviors from their favorite soap operas. Social learning explains that the sources of social behavior patterns are extremely affected by the audiovisual mass media because most young people spend their time on pictorially presented models, particularly through television (Schramm, Lyle & Parker, 1961). Social learning theory explains soap operas fans' behaviors because television viewers unconsciously learn the behaviors from watching and imitating the behaviors of characters on soap

operas. Models represented on television are very efficient in capturing attention (Bandura, Grusec & Menlove, 1966). Fans might not pay attention to the story in order to mimic the characters' behaviors, but behaviors they see might become their experiences to use when they encounter the same situation. It is the nature of human learning to imitate the behaviors they like or admire.

Bandura & Walters (1964, p.49) argued that “pictorially presented models are provided in films, television, and other audiovisual displays, often without the accompaniment of any direct instructions to the observer” Thus, the Social Learning Theory is a useful theory to explain fan behaviors that are imitated from their favorite characters in the story. As earlier stated, the Social Learning Theory (originally known as Social Cognitive Theory) is based on the principle that humans learn from observation. Thus, Social Learning encompasses both “imitation” and “identification” to explain how people learn through observation of others in their environments (Baran & Davis, 2006, p.183). Most important to their soap opera is “modeling” from the mass media that is the “acquisition of behaviors through observation”. Thus, whenever television viewers watch soap opera, they may have imitated or identify some celebrities of their preferences with their “role models”.

Bandura (1971) proposed that the social learning process consists of four stages:

1) Attention → 2) Retention → 3) Reproduction → 4) Motivation

The imitation of behaviors is not the power of pictures in television because the results of study showed that “pictorially presented models are provided in films, television, and other audiovisual displays, often without the accompaniment of any

direct instructions to the observer” (Bandura & Walters, 1964, p. 49). Thus, social learning is the theory used to explain fan behaviors that are imitated from their favorite characters in the story. The imitative behaviors are learned from their observation of the soap’s story. New patterns of behavior can be acquired through observing the behavior of others or by direct experience in the social learning system (Bandura, 1971). The behaviors that viewers see on soap operas can shape their behaviors in daily life, particularly when the viewers are children and teenagers who still learn how to behave in society. As we can see from the study of Bandura & Walters (1964), shaping behavior and modifying social norms are the main parts that models play and exercise the extreme influence on the behavior of children and adolescents. The idea is supported by Baran & Davis (2000), who also recognized the power of media as a learning tool.

2.11 Theoretical Framework

The Social Learning Theory was introduced by Bandura (1971). The theory describes that people learn from observation, imitation, and modeling. The theory encompasses both limitation and identification to clarify how people learn from observation of others. Moreover, social learning theory is used to explain the reaction of soap viewers who might imitate actions or behaviors from soap operas. Using this theory as a theoretical framework benefits this study as it will help us to know the degree of audiences’ imitation, which can be used to explain the social issues when audiences do the same behavior as the characters do. Especially, in Thailand, many social issues such as inappropriate costumes of Thai young adolescents are the results of watching soap operas.

This research applied the concept of interpretive community, encoding and decoding, popular culture, and social learning theory, to discuss and explain the way Thai audiences make the understanding on soap operas and how soap texts invite the audiences to interpret the meaning. The findings of this research will enable Thai television producers to improve the quality of their soap operas. Understanding soap operas and their fans is complicated. Accordingly, appropriate methodologies are necessary for this research to find out the results. The next chapter is about the methods that were used in this research. The details of each method are explained in the next chapter.

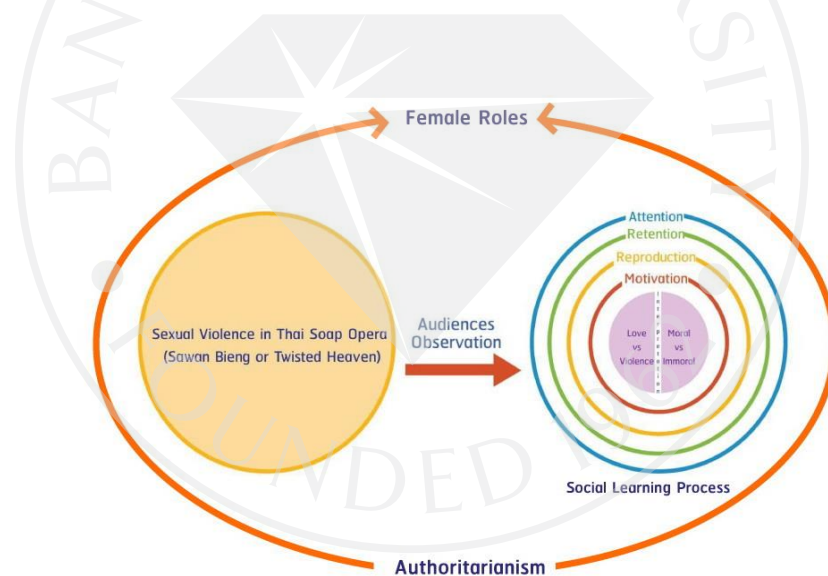


Figure 2.1: Theoretical Framework

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes research design, population and sample selection, research procedure, data collection, and data analysis. The coding of audiences' comments on five sampled weblogs and how the in-depth interviews of fans were analyzed was explained in details. Validity and reliability of this research is also discussed.

3.1 Introduction

Although the study of media and its influence in Thailand through soap operas and their audiences is not new, there are only a few researchers who study the way Thai audiences interpret the meaning of soap operas. The purposes of this research are to explain how the texts of one of the most popular soap operas in Thailand, Sawan Bieng, invite the audiences to interpret their meaning of the soap opera, and to examine how Thai audiences understand Sawan Bieng's story and its love scenes. The production elements of soap opera such as characters' behaviors, costumes, soundtrack, and other elements were analyzed in this study.

In order to examine audience members' interpretations, the posts on weblogs from Thai popular websites were analyzed and the texts in Sawan Bieng's DVD were examined. Texts were used to find out the way the TV producer invite his audiences to interpret meanings of morality in terms of good and bad behaviors by main characters. Weblogs could be the site to study audiences' interpretations while visual and audio texts in Sawan Bieng's DVD were the primary source to study producers'

messages. According to Baym (1999) who studied online community, “the limits and possibilities of computer networks and mass media texts are preexisting contexts that become meaningful only in the way in which they are invoked by participants in ongoing interaction” (p.5). Thus, using weblogs and Sawan Bieng’s DVD were suitable resources to find out the answers for research questions. Sections of texts and blogs were separately studied by using the particular spread sheets that are designed to specifically examine both sender (producer) and receivers (audiences). The relationship between texts and audiences were studied through the spread sheets. In order to answer the research questions of this study, qualitative approaches were the appropriate methodology because “qualitative approaches investigate how audiences understand media and cultural texts.” (Stokes, 2003, p.3)

In addition, in-depth interview was also used to answer the second research question of this study. As the in-depth interview was suitable method to investigate the opinions of a small group of interviewees, eight interviewees who had been watched soap opera Sawan Bieng, were invited to be informants. Their personal profiles contained a variety of occupation, education, age and gender in order to gain diverse ideas. The same questions were asked to know how they interpret the meaning of love scenes in Sawan Bieng. Interviewees showed freely their point of view on love scenes in Sawan Bieng. They were encouraged to describe their perception about the expression of love, rape of heroine by hero, the appropriate love scene and the decision of the heroine to marry the hero. The data were well organized to answer research questions. The analysis of audiences’ comments was conducted to answer the first research question while in-depth interviews of fans were conducted to answer the

second research question of this study. The data from both methods were analyzed carefully to fulfill the objectives of the study.

3.2 Research Design

This study used a mixed method to answer the proposed two research questions. The first phase involves analysis of audiences' comments on Sawan Bieng in five weblogs and the second phase involves in-depth interview of its viewers.

3.2.1 Analysis of Audiences' Comments: an analysis of audiences' comments on Thai audiences' posts and comments on five popular weblogs and Sawan Bieng's DVD content were conducted by the major investigator. Soap opera elements such as characters' behaviors, costumes, soundtrack, and other elements were analyzed because blogs are "arguably the oldest, largest, most widely accessible, and most widely used network for interactive online discussion" (Baym, 1999, p.5). Besides, blogs are online spaces that allow general public to present the discussion between audiences, and particularly, soap viewers often discuss with one another more than other television genres' fans (Rubin, 1985). People post their comments on blogs in order to give, share, exchange, and gather information between members of these blogs. The members of online community have the opportunity to express their opinions regarding their favorite soap operas.

3.2.1 In-depth Interviews: Eight audiences who watched Sawan Bieng were invited for a face-to-face interview, which took about one hour for each interviewee. They were purposively chosen due to their different occupations, education levels, age, and gender to represent various groups of Thai drama audiences. Being asked the same questions, the interviewees were encouraged to freely describe their perception

about the expression of love, rape forced on the heroine by the hero, the appropriateness of love scenes and the decision of the heroine to finally marry her rapist. All interviews were audio-recorded and verbally transcribed by the major investigator. The analyses of interview transcripts determine the Thai audiences' interpretation on love expression and sexual violence presented in *Sawan Bieng*.

Studying the soap opera and its audiences needed data support conclusions. Thus, I thoroughly looked at the texts in order to arrive to the reasonable interpretation. Qualitative approaches provided the opportunity to analyze the related elements that were important to study *Sawan Bieng* and its fans. Interpretation of the evidence and understanding the meaning were concerned in this study. Qualitative research was accepted by research scholars as equally effective methodology as quantitative research. To support this point, Stokes (2003) presented her idea that: The terms qualitative and quantitative were used to refer to these seemingly discrete sets of methods. These two broad paradigms of research were both used to investigate media and cultural studies and were often seen to be distinct and mutually exclusive (p.2). Qualitative methods could be used to investigate both external and internal factors, which related to people's opinions, performances, and behaviors in the society. The criticisms and analysis of this research relied on the evidence found from *Sawan Bieng*'s texts and its audiences. Stokes (2003) argued that qualitative research "is subject to criticism from supporters of quantitative methods for their lack of objectivity" (p.3). Using qualitative approaches was more subjective, which was suitable for this research. In order to answer both research questions appropriately, an analysis of audiences' comments on the five weblogs and in-depth interviews of fans were used.

3.3 Population and Sample Selection

To analyze audiences' comments on Sawan Bieng, these five online communities -- Sanook, Kapook, Pantip, Liverpoolthail, and Thaitv3 -- were selected as the sampled weblogs since they have unique characteristics and specific types of members. 'Sanook.com' and 'Kapook.com' are the popular websites for teenagers and young adults in Thailand, while 'Pantip' users are white-collar people. Websites' members are allowed to create the topics that they want other members to discuss. Next, 'Liverpoolthailand' represents the male website and it is the proof that Sawan Bieng has various groups of fans, not only female fans. Lastly, 'thaitv3' is the website of Channel Three station where Sawan Bieng was broadcasted. It is the specific site for only Sawan Bieng's fans to chat through their community.

In addition to those weblogs, texts in Sawan Bieng's DVD were examined and used to find out how its 11 production elements invited the audiences to make judgments about morality by main characters. Weblogs could be the site to study audiences' interpretations while visual and audio texts in Sawan Bieng's DVD were the primary source to study producers' messages.

Table 3.1: Details of Sampled Weblogs

| No. | | Number of Posts | Percentage of Post | Number of Persons Who Posted | Percentage of Persons Who Posted |
|-------|---------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1 | www.pantip.com | 181 | 4.68 | 165 | 5.62 |
| 2 | www.liverpoolthailand.com | 33 | 0.85 | 24 | 0.82 |
| 3 | www.sanook.com | 1,022 | 26.48 | 876 | 29.85 |
| 4 | www.kapook.com | 1,793 | 46.45 | 1,467 | 49.98 |
| 5 | www.thaitv3.com | 831 | 21.54 | 403 | 13.73 |
| Total | | 3,860 | 100 | 2,935 | 100 |

Table 3.2: Informants' Personal Profile

| Nickname | Gender | Age | Status | Income | Education | Hometown | Religion | Occupation |
|----------|--------|-----|---------|--------|-------------------|-------------|----------|-----------------------|
| Tu | Male | 30 | Single | 50,000 | Master Degree | Bangkok | Islam | Production Manager |
| Jeab | Female | 31 | Single | 40,000 | Bachelor | Bangkok | Budhism | Marketing Manager |
| Meaw | Female | 34 | Married | 10,000 | Primary School | Sakolnakorn | Budhism | Female Cook |

(Continued)

Table 3.2 (Continued): Informants' Personal Profile

| Nickname | Gender | Age | Status | Income | Education | Hometown | Religion | Occupation |
|----------|--------|-----|---------|--------|--------------------|-----------------|----------|----------------|
| Took | Female | 36 | Married | 5,000 | Senior High School | Nakornrachasima | Budhism | House Wife |
| Noon | Female | 35 | Single | 35,000 | Master Degree | Nakornpathom | Budhism | Lecturer |
| Dome | Male | 25 | Single | 7,000 | Senior High School | Bangkok | Budhism | Student |
| Nan | Female | 25 | Single | 20,000 | Senior High School | Bangkok | Buddism | Student |
| Ball | Male | 23 | Single | 15,000 | Bachalor | Bangkok | Budhism | Online Content |

3.4 Research Procedure

As for the analysis of audience comments, Sawan Bieng's fans established their community on the online-space at these five websites -- Sanook, Kapook, Pantip, Liverpoolthail, and Thaitv3 -- to post their opinions about this soap. The comments that were posted by the members of these five websites were analyzed to find out the way audiences interpret the meaning of love in Sawan Bieng. The expression of love and opinions about violent love scenes in Thai audiences' perception were expressed through their posts on the blogs. From these posts, the ideas and opinions of fans were gathered and analyzed to answer the research questions.

In terms of the in-depth interview, eight audiences who watched *Sawan Bieng* were invited for a face-to-face interview, which took about one hour for each interviewee. They were purposively chosen due to their different occupations, education levels, age, and gender to represent various groups of Thai drama audiences. Being asked the same questions, the interviewees were encouraged to freely describe their perception about the expression of love, rape forced on the heroine by the hero, the appropriateness of love scenes and the decision of the heroine to finally marry her rapist. All interviews were audio-recorded and verbally transcribed by the major investigator. The analyses of interview transcripts determine the Thai audiences' interpretation on love expression and sexual violence presented in *Sawan Bieng*.

3.5 Data Collection

The data were collected from three sources that were weblogs, fan's site, and the full story from *Sawan Bieng's* DVD, and in-depth interviews. These weblogs and fan's site were used to show the reaction, opinion, emotion, and community relationship of the viewers. The full story of *Sawan Bieng's* DVD was studied as the messages from producer, in other words, the visual and audio texts. In-depth interviews were conducted to find out how audiences interpret meanings of love and sexual violent scenes in *Sawan Bieng*. Therefore, each resource had its own value to analyze that was beneficial to this study. The data were collected by mix-method that are the analysis of audiences' comments and in-depth interview.

In the first phase, members' online posts and comments during 2009 to 2018 on five Thai popular weblogs-- Sanook, Kapook, Pantip, Liverpoolthail, and Thaitv3 -

- were analyzed to identify viewers' cognitive and behavioral responses of main characters' behaviors through 11 production elements -- cast, dialogue, plot, staging (frame), lighting, sound track, costume, behavior, environment, and others -- of soap opera. Each weblog has its own characters that provides the various group of sample audiences' opinions.

In the second phase, eight audiences who watched *Sawan Bieng* were interviewed individually. They were selected based on different demographic characteristics to gather a variety of their viewpoints. The questions were asked in depth-interview by the remember of any sexual violence scenes in soap opera, the details and reasons of characters, and the point of view about the sexual violence scenes of audiences.

3.5.1 Weblogs

I used weblogs to study the reaction, opinion, and emotion of the audiences because blogs were “arguably the oldest, largest, most widely accessible, and most widely used network for interactive online discussion” (Baym, 1999, p.5). Besides, blogs were online spaces that allowed general public to present the discussion between audiences, particularly, soap viewers often discussed with one another more than other television genres' fans. (Rubin, 1985) People posted their comments on blogs in order to give, share, exchange, and gather information between members of these blogs. The members of online community had the opportunity to demonstrate their opinions about their favorite soap opera. Their commented that were posted on the blogs were used in this study to find out the suitable themes for this research. The fans' opinions from these blogs helped me understand the reactions of the viewers to *Sawan Bieng* and how they gained the meaning through their community or blogs.

This method was used to answer the research questions by studying the comments that were posted as their interaction in community. The value of their conversation through the posts shown how the soap operas fans interconnected (Whetmore & Kielwasser, 1983). These blogs also represented the relationship between members in their community. Members were allowed to express their ideas and opinions to their social community. The idea was supported by Carragee (1990, p. 86) who suggested that:

For interpretive researchers, this construction (blog) is a way to understand the complexity and variability of audience responses to media messages. It also highlights the social character of reception and, in so doing, represents an effort to place individual readers or viewers within broader social and cultural contexts.

Blogs could be used as a means to study the online community and the relationship among members who were fans of Sawan Bieng. The social perception in terms of culture was seen from the blogs as well. Moreover, the most important advantage of using blogs was that all posts were spontaneous comments, which the posters expressed from their truly thinking. It could be said that these posts were pure information from the soap viewers, which was very excellent data to use in this research.

I explored the data from five online communities that provided blogs for their members. Five Thai popular websites that I used to gather the data were www.sanook.com, www.kapook.com, www.pantip.com, www.liverpoolthailand.com

and www.Thaitv3.com. These five online communities had their own characters and specific types of members. Sanook.com and Kapook.com were the popular websites for teenagers and young adults in Thailand. Both websites were mostly visited by young internet users. These websites could be called the variety websites that provided many kinds of information for the users such as news, entertainment, games, and so on. The main users of these websites were the same group of people who watched Thai soap operas, including *Sawan Bieng*.

Another popular website that was analyzed is Pantip.com. The users of this website were people in working class. The members of this website were older than other weblogs. This website was well-known by Thai net-users as a variety website, which provided more information about IT, marketing, and entertainment. Websites' members were allowed to create the topics that they wanted other members to discuss. These groups of people always commented soap operas, which were broadcasted through their space. They created the specific space to make the opinion on each soap opera. *Sawan Bieng* was one of the most popular soap opera that members discussed their opinions through their online community. Since members of this website were different from those of the first two websites, the comments that were posted on this website were different.

In order to broaden my study, I used one more website, which provided data from another group of fans. The specific website, www.liverpoolthailand.com, was another resource for this research. Because Thai soap operas had many groups of fans, www.liverpoolthailand.com represented the male website and proved that *Sawan Bieng* had various groups of fans, not only female fans. Normally, this website provided information about soccer players, games, tournament, and other related

information. The information from four websites were analyzed in this study. I used the comments that were posted from those four websites since Sawan Bieng was broadcasted 2008-2009.

Additionally, www.thaitv3.com was the fifth online community that I used in this research. According to its popularity, many fans visited the Sawan Bieng's site in order to post their opinions. This site was a part of www.thaitv3.com, which was the website of the channel three where Sawan Bieng broadcasted. It was the specific website for only Sawan Bieng's fans to chat through their community. People who visited this site have to click on the specific name of a soap opera in order to get into the community of this soap opera site. This site provided 831 comments from people who liked Sawan Bieng and its actors. They were the members of this site and Sawan Bieng's fans who had the ability to participate their reaction through the community. The information from fans' site was beneficial for this study because it was used to understand their reaction, opinion, and community. Hence, using information from the fans' site helped to understand the relationship between fans and Sawan Bieng. The commented they made through the site could be used as a means to know the way fans made the understanding. I could use them to find their satisfaction with Sawan Bieng.

The posts were translated and written in English because the original posts were Thai language. Each quote was putted in the blog spreadsheet I designed to study the posts. The posts might talked about anything that related to Sawan Bieng, answer the question, gave the information or knowledge about the soap, or even complained about the story, characters, costume or whatever. These posts were studied in this research because these comments were spontaneous comments from

Sawan Bieng's fans. Date, time, and genders of posters were noted in the blog sheet. The posts were categorized into different categories listed in the blog sheets consisting of content, actors, emotion, idea, inform, or other topics. For example, the post about actors and his/her feeling to violent love scene was put in actors, emotion, and idea columns. Besides, blog sheet was designed to use with dominated codes, negotiated codes, and opposite codes. Using this sheet, I could see the difference of each post and the relationship within their community. Moreover, I could look at the codes and go back to review the scenes mentioned in those posts to find out the way the audiences were invited to interpret the meaning in Sawan Bieng's DVD. A number of the posts and the posters were shown in the table one. These numbers illustrated the community of people who were the members of blogs and fans' sites.

3.5.2 DVD

The DVD contained the data from the producer who produced this soap opera to serve the audiences. The visual and audio texts were created by many techniques in order to make the realistic messages. Blogs and fans' site provide fan's emotion, feelings, and opinions from the viewers who had an ability to create their own interpretation. They had their own community where they could exchange the information or even expressed their emotions to other members. Costello & Moore (2007) illustrated their idea about soaps' fans that "they do their own interpretation of the text, ignoring the opinions and desires of producers, advertisers, network executives, and critics" (p.126). The information from both resource blogs and fans' sites were expressed by their real emotion, feeling, and opinion, which no one forces or guides them to say. Therefore, the data from these resources were appropriated information to study and provided the answers for research questions.

The significant source to study soap opera texts was the DVD of all episodes of Sawan Bieng. I watched the whole story of Sawan Bieng for several times in order to investigate all elements that related to the meaning of each scene. Using the DVD, I observed the ways that producer signaled the audiences. For this research, texts included the actors, plot, staging or frame, lighting, sound track, costume, characters' behaviors, environment, and other changes. These elements were analyzed to know how the texts invited the audiences to interpret the meaning. These texts were provided in the forms of visual and audio techniques, which were used to make the meaning to the audiences.

Each element was analyzed and explained. Actors were the people who performed the characters in soap operas. Their acting included the nonverbal language such as gesture and face expression. The way actors performed in each scene representing the messages from producers were analyzed. Plot was the main story, which led to the conflict of people in soap that was used to explain the reason of characters' behaviors. Staging referred to the frame the producer used to create the meaning. I carefully observed the way the producer managed the frame that might related to the specific meaning. For example, Narin was force kissed and raped by Kavee. Kavee's position was the right hand of audience while Narin was left side. Right hand side was the stronger position in the frame when compared to the left hand side, so producer signaled Kavee is stronger than Narin in this scene.

Lighting was used to create the meaning producer wants. For example, the level of light could related to the degree of truth of character. If the light was bright, characters in that scene were saying the truth. Whereas the darker scenes were always used when characters had personal secrets or hide the fact to other characters.

Soundtrack was an interesting element to signal the audience about the situation, emotion, and crisis. From Sawan Bieng, Kavee force kissed and raped Narin while the exiting sound was used as the fade under of this scene. After this scene was cut and input the scene of Narin crying on the bed, the sad song was inserted to signal the emotion of this scene. This element was very obvious in soap operas when producers send the message to the audience. Sound track also mean the sound effect that was used to create the meaning to the scene such as the sound of water movement, wind, or other sounds that were included to create the meaning to the messages. Besides, costume of characters in film were used to indicate social classes, occupations, and activities. The costume helped me to interpret the texts. Also, the behaviors of characters provided more information to make the audiences know the characters. The environment and other changes included the surrounding in each frame and scene was set to support the meaning of texts. The other changes was used to tell the audience about the situation of each scene. These mentioned elements were produced by the producers who professionally used special techniques such as using soundtrack, light, and color in scene to create the meaning they want through the frame and send the messages to the audiences. Thus, these details were carefully concerned while I watched the DVD.

However, soap operas' texts that were produced by the professional soap makers could not guaranteed that they were always understood or accepted by the audiences. It was possible for the audiences to reject or refuse the producer's messages because texts themselves could invited the audiences to make their own understanding. Moreover, the soap elements that were used to create texts by the producers were analyzed to identify patterns that invited the meaning. Therefore, I

was explored how audiences made the understanding from these texts and how texts patterns invited the meaning. Each episode was watched carefully to investigate the signals, which invited the audiences to interpret the meaning and helped me answer research questions.

3.5.3 In-depth Interview

This study used a semi-structured interview format which allows the interviewer to adjust the nuance and sequence of questions based on the interviewees' answers. The questions are categorized into four sections: 1) Sawan Bieng' story, 2) sexual violent scenes, 3) love theme, and 4) morality of the main characters. Each section contains three questions such that audiences were allowed to freely express their points of view. Then, violent scenes, main character's behaviors, reason of hero and heroine, and the end of story were asked. The questions encourage them to express their inner feelings, emotion, and reasons for their interpretation. Example interview questions are provided below:

- 1) Have you ever seen Sawan Bieng?
- 2) Do you remember the version of Ann and Ken?
- 3) Do you remember the story?
- 4) How do you feel about sexual violence scenes?
- 5) What do you think when Narin forgives Kavee?
- 6) Is it possible that someone imitates Kavee to rape his/her lover? Why?
- 7) What if someone does violent behavior as Kavee in real life?
- 8) What is the cause of violent behaviors in your opinion?

3.6 Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

The soap elements were filled into the text's spread sheet that I designed. I explained the scene into the column of story in order to know the details of each scene that I studied. Audio and visual columns were included to put the picture and sound that were used in this scene. To know what special techniques producers used to this scene, there was a column of technique provided. Moreover, soap elements that I mentioned above were included into this spread sheet where I filled the details of each element to the column. Then I saw the overall picture of each scene about the signal that the producer used to send the messages. Also, the pattern that invited meaning was represented by using this spread sheet.

According to the questions used in the in-depth interview, the questions were screened by the academic advisor and co-advisors, and were approved by the Ethics Committee for Human Research from Bangkok University in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki.

3.7 Data Analysis

According to Lindlof & Taylor (2002, p. 216), the main objective of coding "is to mark the units of texts as they relate meaningfully to categories (concept, theme, constructs)" Open coding was used in this study to group the information into themes; I created themes to suit information gathered. For instance, the complaint theme included all the codes that blamed about Sawan Bieng, which might be characters' behaviors, costume, or others. This method was used to group the data and separated the different data into the same theme. This way was used to see the overall picture of data before these codes were interpreted in the discussion section. Open

coding was the great way that researchers used to compare the information “after a rich data set has begun to build up.” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 214) I also linked the information to make the understanding to answer the research questions. Moreover, categorization “refers to the process of characterizing the meaning of a unit of data with respect to certain generic properties” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 214). The appropriate name that referred to the data was created to name each group of codes. Categories were used to compare the themes that were found from the information. Therefore, the information was coded and categorized in order to compare to one another to see the relations among the information.

In conclusion, this chapter provided the methodology and processed for this research. Using the suitable methodologies mentioned in this chapter were directly beneficial to gather the data. Thus, the results from this research were used to explain and answer the research questions that were presented in the first chapter.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Chapter four provides answers for both research questions. Data analyses of audiences' comments on the sampled five weblogs reveal how Sawan Bieng invited its audiences to make judgments about morality in terms of good and behaviors by main characters through production elements. In addition to the audiences' comments, findings of depth-interviews of eight fans indicate how love and sexual violent scenes were interpreted by the audiences.

4.1 Introduction

The results of studying Sawan Bieng text are exhibited in part one. Results are cautiously collected from the data on five websites, which were studied from the posts which are posted from Sawan Bieng audiences. Thai users' opinions who are the audiences of Sawan Bieng are shown in this chapter. The important reasons and effectiveness of this Thai soap opera are also represented by collecting from five weblogs. Particularly, the topic of violent scenes such as rape were studied via these audiences' comments. The audiences used the websites and blogs to communicate together about their perception and attitude on the topic of this TV drama. More than three thousand comments were studied, separated, and categorized. The results are represented in the form of each production elements and sub-questions.

4.2 Findings on Research Question # 1: How does Sawan Bieng invite the audience to make judgments about morality in terms of good and bad behaviors by main characters through production elements?

Table 4.1 shows the number and percentage of audiences' comments on Sawan Bieng posted in the five sampled weblogs -- Pantip, LiverpoolTH, Sanook, Kapook, and Thaitv3 -- based on 11 production elements. The highest number of posts on these weblogs involve cast, followed by dialogue, plot, and soundtrack.

Table 4.1: Audiences' Posts Categorized by Production Elements

| No | Categories | Pantip | | LiverpoolTH | | Sanook | | Kapook | | Thaitv3 | |
|----|------------------------|--------|------|-------------|-------|--------|------|--------|-------|---------|-------|
| | | posts | % | posts | % | posts | % | posts | % | posts | % |
| 1 | Cast | 76 | 42.0 | 13 | 39.4 | 547 | 53.5 | 806 | 45.0 | 307 | 36.94 |
| 2 | Dialogue | 38 | 21.0 | 4 | 12.12 | 101 | 9.9 | 129 | 7.18 | 140 | 16.84 |
| 3 | Plot | 10 | 5.52 | 3 | 9.09 | 163 | 16.0 | 356 | 19.87 | 137 | 16.49 |
| 4 | Staging (Frame) | 5 | 2.77 | 2 | 6.06 | 10 | 0.97 | 22 | 1.22 | 16 | 1.95 |
| 5 | Lighting | 7 | 3.86 | 1 | 3.03 | 29 | 2.83 | 15 | 0.83 | 24 | 2.9 |
| 6 | Soundtrack | 13 | 7.2 | 4 | 12.12 | 72 | 7.04 | 281 | 15.67 | 79 | 9.58 |
| 7 | Costume and Make up | 12 | 6.62 | 2 | 6.06 | 20 | 1.95 | 112 | 6.24 | 54 | 6.6 |
| 8 | Behavior | 10 | 5.52 | 2 | 6.06 | 41 | 4.01 | 31 | 1.72 | 49 | 5.4 |

(Continued)

Table 4.1 (Continued): Audiences' Posts Categorized by Production Elements

| No | Categories | Pantip | | LiverpoolTH | | Sanook | | Kapook | | Thaitv3 | |
|-------|---------------|--------|------|-------------|------|--------|------|--------|------|---------|-----|
| | | posts | % | posts | % | posts | % | posts | % | posts | % |
| 9 | Environment | 3 | 1.65 | 1 | 3.03 | 15 | 1.46 | 20 | 1.11 | 12 | 1.6 |
| 10 | Camera angles | 1 | 0.55 | 1 | 3.03 | 8 | 0.78 | 12 | 0.66 | 6 | 0.8 |
| 11 | Others | 6 | 3.31 | 0 | 0 | 16 | 1.56 | 9 | 0.5 | 7 | 0.9 |
| Total | | 181 | 100 | 33 | 100 | 1022 | 100 | 1793 | 100 | 831 | 100 |

The qualitative analysis of audiences' comments in the five sampled weblogs revealed how audiences encoded and decoded weblogs regarding morality. It was found that some comments about the Thai audiences' concerns on the hero's morality, which indicated that the audiences well acknowledged that the rape is not acceptable at all. It is not a good behavior of a good person, as shown in the following quote.

“Very popular soap! But very immoral story too.

Because the hero seems to be mental disorder, lack of warmth. He raped the heroine many times. However,

Thais really love this soap opera”. (Lavacances)

“What? The story of woman being raped! Why still

broadcasted? Please use the suitable rate for the

audiences”. (Member number 3348068)

In addition, some online comments infer that the male dominant culture in Thai society may have an impact on Kavee's violent behaviors. He was viewed as a playboy by involving with several women whereas Thai females are philanderer if they do the same. Sex and gender role in Thai society tends to be the standard of its people's actions. As the male dominant culture establishes the social norm for females (i.e., one love and one husband) while more and more people are against an oppression of women in Thai society, it becomes controversial issue such that some audiences disapprove of sexual violence in Sawan Bieng whereas the others support it as part of the plot.

Nevertheless, Sawan Bieng's fan club who completely watched the whole story of Sawan Bieng suggested differently in terms of Kavee's morality. If the viewers did not watch the whole story, they might not have enough information to understand about Kavee. Most audiences take side with Kavee, the hero of the story to marry Narin, the heroin. At the end of story, the responsibility of a good man was displayed by Kavee. Therefore, they perceived the reason of raping as stemming from his "real love." Even though rape is extremely immoral, audiences still supported Kavee and Narin to be happy together at the end. The audiences suggested that Kavee does not know the way to show love and how to express the real feeling to his lover.

"Kavee got angry on Leela, Narin's older sister. Then, he raped her younger sister who is Narin. But, Kavee actually loves Narin. He merely acted as if he did not care." (Edna Mode)

"If there is no rape scene in Sawan Bieng, there is no feeling too. We might not clearly see the bad side of

Kavee in the story. That leads to be irrational of Narin that she tried lot to reject Kavee at the end of the story.”
(Soon-Ngo-Khong Rachawanonsoodlor)

At nearly end of the story, Kavee showed his suffers from fearing of losing someone he truly loves when Narin decided to run away from Him while she was pregnant. Kavee tried so much to apologize her. He was so guilty for his wrong doing. Narin did not accept his apology for a long period of time. She always ignored him. Finally, Kavee took his all time to take care of her though Narin never let him in her house or talk to him. He was so suffered due to he loves and cares Narin. He shows his real responsibility, love, and care for Narin and the coming baby which have touched on the audiences’ heart. Hence, the switching of Kavee’ character are the reasons for the audiences to forgive him at the end of the story, including Narin.

Based on the 11 production elements, the audience made judgments about morality in terms of good and bad behaviors by main characters as described below:

4.2.1 Cast

Most of audiences agree that between Kavee (Teeradetch Wongpaoupan or Ken) as the hero and Narin (Srichan Thongprasom or Ann) as the heroine are perfect actors, particularly this soap opera. Because Ken (Kavee) and Ann (Narin) were the winners of the best actors from other soaps. Their ability of acting well guarantees the quality of the soap opera. As we can see from the posts below.

“I love this soap lots. I watched every episode. I love Ken and Ann and really hope they will play soap together again.” (Opor, IP:125.26.116.26)

“I like Ken and Ann very much. They both played very well, cute, and pity.” (Joob Joob, IP: 125.24.254.156)

“I like every soap that played by Ken and Ann. Especially when Ken plays as a very bad guy and Ann is so pathetic. I support Ann. No matter what soap opera, if Ken performs with Ann, I will follow that soaps.” (Kae, IP :202.149.25.225)

Furthermore, Ken and Ann are smart looking and the popular type of male and female by the Thais’ beauty standard (Ken is fair skin, tall, and handsome whereas Ann is slim, fair skin, and beautiful face.)

“I like Ken Teeradetch a lot, super handsome man. Ann is very beautiful girl, I like her eternally. I love to watch both in the same soap opera.” (Roxan)

They also show their opinions on Sawan Bieng’s cast that is appealing for them to wait and watch. Not just only Ken and Ann, other actors in this soap opera production are well known as the good actors such as Nattarika Thammapreedanun or Namphung (Leela; Narin’s older sister), Louis Scott (Pawan; Kavee’s relative), Dilok Thongwattana (Kid; Kavee’s father). Below are viewers’ posted comments:

“I love all actors of Sawan Bieng. Producer is very good at casting all perfect characters. That is why this soap opera is very high rating. Ann is good at acting, nothing to complain. Ken has a sadistic acting. I want to be a heroine instead of Ann. Namphung is so beautiful. She wins the hearts of males. Although Louis is a bit younger for this character, Sawan Bieng is top rank of the soap opera.” (Kook-Klang)

“Leela is so hot even though Louis is pretty young to play this role. Anyway, the totality of this soap is awesome.” (Jam-Jee-Ma-Kheo-Poa-Pae)

“I like all actors of this soap opera. Ken and Ann are so pretty. I am really pity for Ann, but I do love Ken. The story is very fun. All characters are vibrant, so much fun to watch though. I will watch every episode. I do not, of course, miss.” (Roxan)

“All actors are very good in acting. Sawan Bieng could be on air whole week because it is super enjoyable. Even though Sawan Bieng has violent content, it is soap opera. They will love each other at the end. Good lessons are given through the story of soap. Need to follow up.” (Sirisyia)

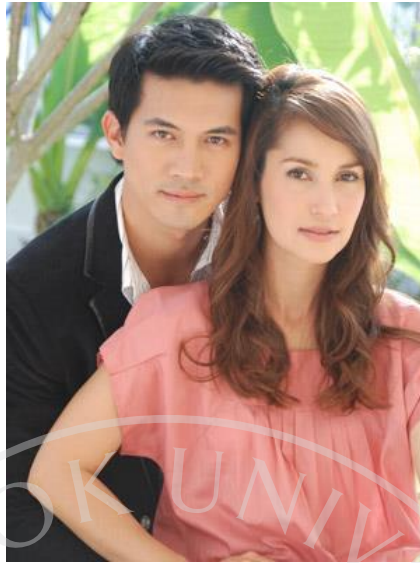


Figure 4.1: Kavee (Ken Theeradetch) and Narin (Ann Thongprasom)

Source: *Sawan Bieng's pictures*. (2008). Retrieved from

<https://gossipstar.mthai.com/tv/drama/ch3/17036>.



Figure 4.2: Kavee's father (Dilok Thongwattana) and Narin's sister (Nattarika Thammapreedanun)

Source: *Sawan Bieng's pictures*. (2008). Retrieved from <https://gossipstar.mthai.com/tv/drama/ch3/17036>.

Hence, *Sawan Bieng's* actors motivate audiences to believe in the story. Cast also stimulates the audiences' inner when they watch this soap opera. Due to the acting ability, it is not difficult for audiences to understand and love its story. "All actors are professional chosen," viewers stated on the blogs. Most of viewers who posted the comments about the cast of this soap are females. As we know that soap opera is the famous home entertainment for females. It can be proved by their posts because of gender terms in Thai language. The last word on the posts were "Kah" if viewers are female. In contrast, "Krub" were used by male viewers.

Cast is one another reason to make more interesting for the audiences to be continually watched on every episode. The development of each character in *Sawan*

Bieng produced by Channel 3 version was made to be more modern, when compared with the previous version produced by Channel 7, as shown in the comments below:

“Soap opera is soap opera. They are the same story. But I like to watch the Channel 3 version more.” (Member number 1502206)

“Kob who played Narin of Sawan Bieng from the Channel 7 version is uncomparable to Ann at all. Kob is always nonsense crying. I like Ann so much, she is talented.” (Member number 2187546)

“Namphung is now prettier than she was an actress on Channel 7.” (Atiporn)

Besides, audiences also believed in the possibility of this soap opera to win the best soap opera of the year. Thai audiences are interested in soap opera cast as well as the story plot. The violent scene by leading actor makes it easier for the audience to confess if hero and heroine are suitable to be couple in term of their nice face and body. Smart male and beautiful female are appropriate to be lover based on the Thai opinion. Accordingly, it leads to the understanding that Narin is perfectly fit with Kavee in term of physical though she is raped by him. The audiences posted their opinions regarding this point, as presented below.

“Why this soap ended so quickly? The story in newspaper I read is also nearly ended, too. I want to watch for a long time. I like Ken and Ann so much.

Hopefully they both will play the soap together again.”

(One Voice)

“I really like this soap, followed every episode. I never missed. When they both will play the soap opera together again?” (Dok-Daisy-See-Chompoo)

“So pity on Kavee. He is sharp-tongued but his heart is so weak. Also pity on Narin. She must be revenged by Kavee. Otherwise, I will watch this soap until the end.”

(Member Number1189544)

4.2.2 Dialogue

Dialogue is one of the production elements. Dialogue is used to express the feeling of each character. Script writer has the duty to create words which is very important for the audiences to know characters. In order to design the suitable dialogue for each character, script writer must understand well about the background, emotion, and situation. Therefore, viewers will understand what character is, and why each character performs in certain ways. When the actors act, they will be loved or hated, character’s dialogues which combine word and voice tone are related. From the study, most of participants are pointed out in the same direction on the topic of dialogue. They well understood using strong dialogue. Each character has its own style to use dialogue. Each character has their reasons and background to act differently. “Who said that Leela is bad? She just wants to win Kavee because he always hurt Leela’s feeling.” The communication style is also designed to match each character such as Kavee who is very aggressive guy. His speech is pretty hurtful such

as one of the opinions, “Why Kavee is sharp-tongued?” Even though some words are too strong, it is accepted that it is soap opera, not true story. The viewers stated that “dialogues are strong but they understand well that it is fiction, not feature.”

Moreover, the dialogue, written by the script writer, is also a key to understand all characters’ actions. Particularly, Kavee who does the violence such as raping Narin. “You must recoup for your sister” and “If you do not say sorry, I will make you know how to be sorry”, are the last dialogue of Kavee before raping her, as a case in point. Although Kavee’s reason appears in his dialogue that why he raped Narin, he never spoke his mind. That is why audiences understand well his violence.

In this production element, female viewers establish their comments about the sex scenes such as “there are too much about sexual relations” while males did not mention it but talked about how realistic it is.” They question the possibility of females to forgive person who ever raped her. In addition, audiences state that “Sawan Bieng seems to expand the story. It might result in high rating”. Even though audiences accepted that dialogues are well arranged to use, not too many words to make the audiences understand why Kavee has to be harsh on others and why Narin forgives Kavee at the end of this story. It cannot be denied that dialogue is an important tool for soap opera to make viewers clear and understand the character’s actions, reasons, and reactions.

4.2.3 Plot

The participants argue that how they understand the sex scenes on Sawan Bieng. They claim about the plot of this soap that “This soap emphasized Narin gratefulness to her mother, sister, and brother. Narin is very much patient person who should be a role model for teenagers”. Besides, audiences believe in the tolerance of

Narin that should be touching to Thai youth as much as it could be. That is why viewers understand Narin's actions, reasons, and reactions. As one post stated, "if people have a reason to be tolerant which is called "Khan-Ti" in Thai language, they will not be depressed. It is because tolerance is reasonableness". Audiences understand well about Narin's actions because they understand the plot of the story.

Furthermore, Kavee's bad behaviors are also explained in the viewers' post as their opinions such as "Director might try to reflect how the rich people raise their children. They spoil their child since they consider only their own interests". This is the same thing that Kavee does in Sawan Bieng. In addition, viewers stated how they understand Kavee who raped Narin. They continually explain that the plot presents them such as "Love must be exchanged with love. To save other's face, you have to be sincere, tolerant, and look after". Narin taught Kavee to know how to love others. Furthermore, a turning point of Sawan Bieng at the nearly end of the story makes the audience shifted their support to cheer up Kavee over Narin who was supported in the first part of the story because she became strong person. As a result, it is clear that audiences understand the violent scenes from the plot.

4.2.4 Staging (frame)

There are some comments on the websites that violent scenes occurred in the inappropriate location and time. For instance, Kavee raped Narin at the swimming pool on the rainy day. This scene was produced to create more pressure for both Narin and Kavee. Staging of violent scenes are designed to be uncomfortable place where is difficult to find the exit. The effectiveness of this violent scene is to make the inner of soap audiences to sympathize with Narin due to this situation.

On the other hand, another group of audience stated that most of locations in this soap opera are very beautiful and nice view. Using the great location convinces the audiences to believe the reason of violence. Sawan Bieng provides many frames that refer to the stronger person in each scene, particularly the violent sex scene. As an example, Kavee always stands on the right hand of the audiences which is the main staging. It refers to the stronger status on the frame. Audiences understand that symbolic well such as Narin's hand is pressed by Kavee's hand on the bed in the rape scene. This frame enables the audiences to understand that Kavee always uses violence to fix his problems including love. It cannot be denied that Narin is a victim of his emotion.



Figure 4.3: Kavee's hand on the bed in rape scene

Hence, Narin has enough reasons to rankle the hero's action at the nearly end of the story. Clearly, such violent scene as rape is designed to communicate with audience to understand the director's message by using staging or frame.

4.2.5 Lighting

The study does not find the answer of participants about the topic of lighting on websites. Only comments posted that using more lighting will be highly white skin are discovered. Nonetheless, lighting is an important instrument to make the emotional climate. Sharp light provides the strong light which was used to present an aggressive action as Kavee's emotion. Lighting was deliberately set for brightness and shadow. Director also used light setting as a symbol to represent the hero's dark side. We can see clearly Kavee's shadow when he raped Narin at a swimming pool. While Kavee is still a handsome guy, he could be a monster in the same scene by the result of light setting.

Besides, soft light is used to convey the romantic emotion, particularly Kavee's emotion. As we can see from the scene after the rape, lighting was always set the soft light to present the real feeling of Kavee. He showed his love and care via his eye, touching, and action. He touched her hair carefully and looks at her with his passion. He was alarmed when feeling her higher temperature. Kavee's care was shown after the rape scene. Therefore, a question was asked, how does the director make believe among the audiences? Soft light is an appropriate answer. Because of the significance of soft light is designed to generate more beautiful feeling, emotion, and action. Warm tone scene is made by using soft light, creating an inner for audiences to understand the real feeling of Kavee. Hence, lighting is important for the

soap opera. Sawan Bieng is a good evidence for using light at the right time and in the right place.

4.2.6 Soundtrack

Soundtrack of Sawan Bieng entitled, “Sin Sood Sak Tee” means “It is finally ended.” It was written to use as a theme song of this soap opera. The points of view regarding soundtrack are posted on the websites are nearly the same that is soundtrack is a very good song. The lyric was written to explain directly the real feelings of both hero and heroine. Hence, it is easier for the audiences to understand the hero or heroine when their actions are opposite of their emotions. As we know from the plot that Narin and Kavee never spoke their mind, soundtrack is another tool for director to demonstrate the real feelings of leading actors. Especially, violent scene such as rape which should not happen normally for the lovers. Real emotions from bottom of their hearts are conveyed by the lyric of soundtrack. There are more than 300 comments on the lyric of soundtrack, as shown below.

“Although I have hurt for a long time,

How much longer must I keep hurting?

Why is my heart not getting used to it yet?

It hurts to have to endure seeing, have to endure hearing.

There will never be a day that it will finally end.

I wish to be there on the day it ends, please?

I do not want to break my heart more than it can be.

End it already when there is no other path to take.

We are loved, and there is only sadness.

My heart cannot take anymore, I cannot accept anymore.

I do not want to sit for waiting, I want to choose to walk away. How many hundreds of time? I have been sad, just once has it nearly killed me. How much I have been hurt, I want to finally end it.”

Mentioned by using of soundtrack, we can see the expression of leading actors by the lyric of this song. Soundtrack is always faded in, after the violent scene is done. It is not only explainable but also stimulates the inner feelings among the audiences as well. It cannot be denied that song can influence the feelings of audiences. Voice of singer, Panadda Reangwut, who sang this soundtrack, is very clear and great quality. Her voice expresses very well the feeling of Narin to the audiences. Clearly, soundtrack is used as the explanation of Narin’s feelings, emotions, and obligations when she suffered from Kavee’s violent behaviors.

4.2.7 Costume and Make-up

Costume and make-up is very significant element for television production. Actor could perform any character if the suitable costume and make up is applied. For example, when a 30-year old actress would like to be a 70-year old person, make-up artist can work on her face and body to change her to become old lady by using an art of make- up and cosmetics. Besides, costume can also be used to change actors and actresses to be others. It can be said that the magic of make-up and costume can create any character in soap opera.



Figure 4.4: Costume and Make-up of Kavee and Narin

Source: *Sawan Bieng's pictures*. (2008). Retrieved from <https://gossipstar.mthai.com/tv/drama/ch3/17036>.

Sawan Bieng production also uses the power of costume and make-up to create Ken and Ann to be Kavee and Narin. Costume of Kavee is set to be a smart, charming, and rich person while Narin's cloth is set to be sweet, working, and middle class woman. Natural color is used as make-up for both of them. Pursuant to website's posts, there are a few comments about costume and make up. Some posted that make-up is suitable for each character. Imitation of drama costume was found. Audiences' statement about buying the same costume to wear clearly confirms their good reaction toward Sawan Bieng's costume and make-up.



Figure 4.5: Costume of hero and heroine at swimming pool scene

In addition, violent scenes such as rape represent an appropriate set costume for each location. Casual wear is used as short pants and white shirt, in the violent scene. Narin has to fight with Kavee in the swimming pool and is raped at the end of this scene. The costume is set to match to the location where the vacation accommodation is. Narin's cloth did not convey sexy image to the audiences as her suitable make-up is created as no make-up. These elements are combined to communicate the act as violent scene rather than sexy scene. Absolutely, the feedback of this scene is the audiences' empathy for Narin, which fulfilled the director's objective.

4.2.8 Behavior

Based on the violent scene that Kavee rapes Narin, Sawan Bieng audiences admire this soap opera as a good example for Thai girls nowadays. As Narin tried so much to save her female dignity which is considered good social value among Thai females. She fully fought Kavee as we can see from every scene of rape. Although

rape scenes in Sawan Bieng happened in a private location, sexual behavior is forbidden, extremely public place. Either hug or kiss is never accepted to perform in public in term of romantic relationship. It can be said that Thai people are unlikely to reveal the display of love and sex in the public place. In other words, public display of affection is not allowed in Thai society. Furthermore, living together between male and female is a wrong conduct based on the Thai culture, if they are not spouse. The Thais concern on the female dignity. Hence, Thai females are instructed to deny the opportunity of being with the opposite gender, especially in the private places. As we can see from Narin's behavior that she tried a lots to leave the risk situation from Kavee. Nonetheless, comments about the behavior of both Kavee and Narin cannot be found directly. They generally posted their feelings on Kavee's and Narin's behaviors in each situation.

4.2.9 Environment

The websites that are selected to study provide a big number of comments about Sawan Bieng. Environment in Sawan Bieng was not mentioned. However, sexual violence occurred because of Kavee's social environment where all main characters lived in the same house. In particular, Leela obviously showed her affection on Kavee while Narin tried to avoid him. Moreover, Kavee's father (Kid) not only gave higher attention and value to his stepmother (Leela) than himself, but also reacted to him with physical and verbal violence.

4.2.10 Camera Angles

Actually, there are lots of camera angles that make the beautiful and realistic scene via television screen. Director utilizes the technique of soap opera production to produce the good soap. The power of production elements can be proved by the

audience comments. They comply with the story of soap and also go along with the reason of Kavee to do the violent scene. Despite, the audiences know well how bad the rape is, they yet wish Narin to forgive Kavee. Nevertheless, soap audiences do not focus on production elements. On the other hand, plot is more interesting for them base on the comments they posted about Sawan Bieng.

4.2.11 Others

Audiences commented on various version of Sawan Bieng, what is more. They raise the point of Sawan Bieng rating to compare the accomplishment between Channel 3 and Channel 7 version. Both channels produced Sawan Bieng and got national success in term of rating. Some fans mentioned on the better production of Channel 3 when comparing to Channel 7. Nevertheless, some audiences disagreed and posted the contradictory opinion.

“Channel 7 version is better production than Channel 3.

Ann, the actress is too old to be Narin. She is not suitable to be leading heroine of this soap opera. The story script is lack of creative thinking. Everything is the same an old version, nothing changed.” (Member number 1550111)

Consistent with the reason of watching Sawan Bieng, the excellent script is an important key to success for female audiences. While the reason of males to watch this soap opera is satisfying the plot, casting the actors and soundtrack are effective on teenager fans. In term of the suggestion, Sawan Bieng fans would like to watch the

rerun on Channel 3. The audiences, particularly, channel three fans still love this soap opera, both story and production elements.

In summary, it cannot be denied that Sawan Bieng is a popular soap opera of Thailand. A huge number of comments on the websites demonstrate its huge success. The findings are very helpful to answer the first research question of this study. Next, the second research question of this study will be represented on part 2 using an in depth interview.

4.3 Findings on Research Question # 2: How do Thai audiences interpret love and sexual violence scenes in Sawan Bieng?

Analysis of audiences' comments and depth-interviews with 8 fans were conducted to answer the second research question, and its sub-questions as followings:

- 4.3.1 What is the expression of love in Thai audiences' perception?
- 4.3.2 How do Thai audiences perceive the rape of the heroine by hero?
- 4.3.3 How do Thai audiences define love scenes as appropriate?
- 4.3.4 How do Thai audiences perceive the heroine's decision to marry the

hero?

The data analyses of the audiences' comments reveal their interpretation of love that the real love of Kavee was presented in the form of violence in Sawan Bieng. Most audiences are female and desire to be Narin. They also posted that they would like to face the violent scene as Narin if Kavee is acted by Ken Teeradetch. Audiences understand well the reason of Kavee to rape Narin. They watch every

episode of Sawan Bieng. Therefore, they understand the reason of rape as “the real love”. Even though rape is extremely immoral, audiences still support Kavee and Narin to be happily together at the end. The audiences suggest that Kavee does not know the way to show love and how to express the real feeling to his lover.

“The scene that shows Kavee does not know how to express love is when he met Narin and shouted at her about her sickness. While he hugged her, his eyes showed real feeling of love and care for Narin, but Kavee could not say anything because he does not know the way to express how much he loves her.”

(Hiraikotsu)

As we can see from the scene after the rape, the real feeling of Kavee is represented by his real love. He shows his love and care via his eye, touching, and action. He touches her hair carefully and looks at her with his passion. He is shocked learning about Narin’s higher temperature. Kavee’s care happened after the rape scene. His nice performance shows how he loves and cares for Narin. It also allows the audiences to understand the real love of Kavee.

“The most dramatic soap opera! Very impressive! I hate Kavee at the beginning. But at the end of story, I think Narin should forgive him. Kavee has already repented his fault.” (Member Number 1362415)

The Social Learning Theory, which is known as a role model theory, is used to analyze the love scenes in the soap opera especially when they turned out sexually violent. As we know that the violent love scenes are included by the plot of Sawan Bieng. Audiences yet love this kind of soap opera. The hero who rapes heroine, is yet accepted by the viewers. Final part of this soap opera, nevertheless, is happy ending. Hence, the objective of this second research question is to describe the way that the Thai audiences accept the hero's illegal and immoral conduct. It cannot be denied that rape is a type of violent crime.

In terms of the actor, Kavee who was performed by Ken Teeradetch, is substantially popular character. Viewers are emotionally involved with Kavee rather than hate him. Besides, Narin, the rape victim, who decided to marry with Kavee at the end, was performed by a famous actress, Ann Thongprasom. Audiences' point of views regarding their interpretation of love scenes are displayed. Their perception of appropriate love scene is comprehended eventually.

Almost all of the eight interviewees involved in each of the four steps in Social Learning Process as shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Informants' Responses to Social Learning Process about Soap Opera

| Social Learning Process | Tu | Jeab | Meaw | Took | Noon | Dome | Nan | Ball |
|-------------------------|----|------|------|------|------|------|-----|------|
| Attention | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Retention | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Reproduction | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ | √ |
| Motivation | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ | √ |

In terms of attention, both hero and heroine have been very popular and “role models” among Thai audiences: Kavee is the name of the hero performed by Ken Theeradetch while Narin is the name of the heroine performed by Ann Thongprasom. Owing to the popularity of the leading characters or role models, the soap opera Sawan Bieng had been given high rating from the beginning and rerun many times; the last rerun was broadcasted during March-May 2018 and the soap opera itself was branded as “the famous drama of the time.”

In terms of retention, almost all interviewees could recall love scenes including violent ones between hero and heroine. Overall, the soap opera reflects the real love between the “responsible” man and the “victim of rape” in the Thai culture that can be analyzed by the Social Learning Theory.

In terms of reproduction, interviewees did not imitate sexual violence as modeled by Kavee since they understand Kavee’s family background being the only child being spoiled and his anger toward Naree’s elder sister.

In terms of motivation, interviewees were well aware that rape is an illegal and immoral act. It is not realistic for ordinary people. It is possible only in soap opera. It is not acceptable in real life. In particular, it does not make sense that expression of love is performed by rape.

Next, the data analysis indicates how the Thais audiences perceive the rape of the heroine, Narin, by hero, Kavee. The analysis results determine the way that Thai audiences view love scenes as appropriate. Lastly, audiences' points of view regarding Narin's decision to marry Kavee, is finally divulged. The results of this study also display audiences' view of the Thai soap opera, Sawan Bieng, particularly on the violent love scenes. Research questions are answered one by one in order to provide readers with its sufficient answers.

4.3.1 What is the expression of love in Thai audiences' perception?

The study found that the expression of love perceived by Thai audiences is in various forms. Care is one of perception that is mentioned. There are many forms of care that can be seen in many scenes. For example, Kavee took care of Narin when she was sick. His anxiety was clearly shown by his facial expression. Audiences presume that this reaction results from love. If Kavee does not fall in love with Narin, he will not rape her at all. As Kavee is a self-confident person and play boy, there is no other reason for him to rape Narin. In addition, the nearly ending, Sawan Bieng is represented Kavee's endeavor to reconcile extremely with Narin. Audiences' sympathy is affected by Kavee's great care. As we can see from the interview's data below.

“Because Kavee is the cause of Narin's sickness. So, he takes care of her. Thinking of other begins from this

point.” Dome, Student (personal communication, May 1, 2018).

“Yes, Narin falls in love with Kavee, finally. No matter how Kavee does a hundred bad things to her, for the great goodness and love, it is forgivable.” Tu, Production Manager (personal communication, April 8, 2018).

“They love each other from the beginning of the story. That makes me feel like everyone supports when every rape scene happens. Because everyone knows from the background of story that they really love each other.

From the bottom of their hearts, there are some situations that cause argument. They did not hate each other from the beginning. Hence, when there is a rape scene, I feel like other audiences, including myself, who want to see they are in love. I did not feel the violent element. I feel that they should be loved. So, it will be happy ending.” Jeab, Marketing Manager (personal communication, April 11, 2018).

Next, the relationship between male and female is another perception of love. Thai audiences believe that Narin has a deep connection which is beyond love. It is a deep bond between male and female. Although Narin lost her virginity by rape, their

relationship began. Kavee has never denied to be her husband. In contrast, Kavee utterly tried to apologize Narin and showed his responsibility on his violent performance. The deep bond between Kavee and Narin is clearly exhibited by her pregnancy. When audiences know that Narin is going to have baby, they automatically feel the family relationship. Moreover, audiences noticed Kavee's attempt to take care of Narin and baby, even though Narin ignored and showed no interest on him.

Interviewees involved in the first step of social learning process, attention. They paid attention to Kavee who was performed by a popular actor, Ken Teeradetch. His acting is interesting and highly accepted by Thai audiences.

Interviewees also involved in the second step of social learning process, retention. Ken Teeradetch could be a role model for the audiences to immitate Kavee's expression of love. As can be seen from the interview scripts, audiences could remember the rape scene very well.

“I feel so good actually. Love scene happened at swimming pool. Kavee got a slap from Narin and then he kissed before dragging her up from the pool. This scene is still in my mind.” Tu, Production Manager (personal communication, April 8, 2018).

“Actually, I am a soap opera fan. I know that it is a soap. I am an audience who knows soap opera or real life. I feel like I can separate between soap opera role and real life role, which one is suitable role.” Jeab,

Marketing Manager (personal communication, April 11, 2018).

Finally, interviewees involved in the third and fourth step of social learning process, reproduction and motivation. Although Kavee's violent performance is understood by Sawan Bieng's plot, audiences will absolutely not imitate such rape in real life. It is because audiences understand well that Sawan Bieng is just a soap opera. In real life, rape should not be happened and imitated. It is illegal. As we can see from the interviewees' responses below.

“No way! In real life, you do imprison because human has ideology. They have their own ideas. If you do the same thing as Kavee, you are bagged by the police since you start the rape. No matter how good you are.”

Ballon, Online content (personal communication, May 9, 2018).

“As I said, Sawan Bieng gives the background that they did not hate each other and Narin was not be oppressed. They love from inside their heart. From background, hence, audiences understand the situations such that Kavee does not really hate or get angry on Narin, but it is love actually.” Jeab, Marketing Manager (personal communication, April 11, 2018).

In addition, most of audiences indicate that imitation of Kavee's violent act is less likely to happen. They believe that most audiences could differentiate soap opera from their real life. Soap opera is normally created to entertain with an interesting plot. Many soap opera production elements support its plot. As it is shown by the interviewees below.

“Very small possibility that people will do the same thing as Kavee does. I guess they might have the mental health problem.” Ballon, Online content (personal communication, May 9, 2018)

“I don't think so. You saw Kavee rape Narin, then you will do the same thing. No! The soap opera does not affect people like that.” Tu, Production Manager (personal communication, April 8, 2018).

However, some interviewees expressed their opinions that refer to children with low media literacy. Young soap viewers might imitate Kavee's violent act. Youth audiences might misunderstand that rape is a way of lover doing as shown below in the female interviewee's opinion.

“It may be possible. There are many kinds of human. I suppose a kind of audiences who watch soap to be entertained, not think much. They don't care that it is real or not. On the other hand, I suppose to be the child without media literacy. So that might be possible for

them to understand that if you love a woman, you can rape her. Then, finally she will be yours.” Jeab, Marketing Manager (personal communication, April 11, 2018).

4.3.2 How do Thai audiences perceive the rape of the heroine by the hero?

The social Learning Theory is particularly applicable to soap opera *Sawan Bieng* for its being sexually violent, thus, raising, many public concerns among critics and academics of particular importance, is the rape of the heroine, Narin, by hero, Kavee, illegal and how it is perceived by Thai audiences?

In this soap opera *Sawan Bieng*, Kavee, was born a rich, handsome, playboy and arrogant man. He has not been well taken care of by his father who always argued with him. Kavee has been loved by many women including the older sister of the heroine. Leela, who married the hero's father and moved to live in the same house in order to be close to the hero. While Kavee showed no interest in Leela and any other women, he has tried hard to win the love of the heroine, Narin, who also lived in the same house with him. However, Narin, always avoids or runs away from him whenever she was approached by the hero, Kavee, at the beginning. That eventually leads to the rape scenes.

The soap opera highly dramatized the rape scene at the hero's house at a suburban area where he kidnapped the heroine in a car to rape and sleep with her overnight. Despite repeated pleas by Narin, Kavee fulfilled his love. Prior to this event, Kavee, had been just set up by Narin's sister, Leela, at the house and consequently slapped by his father for harming his wife. Kavee was very frustrated

and did not make any response, he finally left the house and came across the heroine. The Thai television viewers perceived the interconnection between the “set up scene” and the “rape scene” in the soap opera *Sawan Bieng*. As some soap opera audiences said the hero, Kavee, decided to rape the heroine, Narin, because, for one reason he would like to win her love out of his heart and, for another reason, he would like to take a revenge for her sister set-up and his father bias treatment against him. Apart from this rape scene, many Thai audiences could recall two other rape scenes as well: one at the heroine’s bedroom and the other at the swimming pool.

The Social Learning Theory is particularly helpful to explain the meaning of sexual violence between the two role models in the soap opera, *Sawan Bieng*. Most Thai audiences interviewed could recall all steps in the theory leading to the sexual violence or rape from attention, retention, reproduction to motivation which includes a vicarious reinforcement of reward and punishment. In this soap opera, the two male and female models were very popular and the audiences admire them very much. In the case of hero, Kavee, who raped the heroine, Narin, and might be blamed or punishment by someone, many audiences argued that seeing the role model punished for exhibiting a “rape” make viewers feel as if they were actually punished. Thus, they did not blame or hate their male model. At the end, Kavee showed to be the “responsible” man by proposing to marry the heroine, Narin, who has well accepted to marry him. This is indeed a happy ending – a “reward reinforcement”.

In Thailand, rape has still been illegal and offenders are prosecuted as a crime. However, among Thai lovers, it is common nowadays to see many pregnant women before marriage. As some audiences said “*Sawan Bieng* models may reflect what actually happens in Thai society, particularly young Thai women become

pregnant before marriage” Took, (personal communication, April 25, 2018). House wife. In fact, young pregnant has turned out to be social problem in Thailand and countries throughout the world.

The female role model, Narin, performed by Ann Thongprasom, has been highly respected by Thai audiences in real life as well as in soap opera and other performances. Many of her fan clubs have tried to imitate her well-behaved and decent life styles. In soap opera Sawan Bieng, the heroine, Narin, has become the rape victim by the hero and suffered from its many sequences, physically and psychologically. Many audiences said, Narin has set a high standard role model in good woman, who stands up for love, justice and equality. The heroine has also been hailed as a role model who champions, compassion, tolerance, perseverance, forgiveness and family happiness. In view of these characters, she was perceived to have won the heart and mind of the hero who finally ask to propose to marry her.

4.3.3 How do Thai audiences define love scenes as appropriate?

Lessons can be learned from soap opera, Sawan Bieng. In response to research question one, Thai audiences considered some love affairs between the hero’s father and heroine’s sister and the flirting scene between the hero and heroine’s sister as “immoral”. According to Buddhism, the national religion, sexual immorality is the third of the five precepts required for ordinary layman. The others are killing, stealing, lying, and taking intoxicants (Keown, p.980). It responses to the second research question, most Thai audiences perceived violent love scenes, particularly rapes, not only illegal but also immoral, and called for social sanctions to solve the problems.

Therefore, Thai audiences would like to see an appropriate love scene that is relatively free from physically and mentally “violent” and compassionate. As most audiences said:

“What I do not like in the soap opera Sawan Bieng is, I do not know why the hero and heroine have to quarrel. They do not speak directly though they love each other”. Took, House wife. (personal communication, April 25, 2018).

“Sawan Bieng gives the lesson for the audiences that hero’s perform as sexual violence is to disrespect the women. But if you want to take the responsibility on your fault, how to do?” Ballon, Online content (personal communication, May 9, 2018)

“Sawan Bieng is given the background to the audiences that Kavee and Narin did not really hate each other. Heroine is not really oppressed. They deeply love so that audiences know the reason. Thus, viewers do not hate the hero’s violent performance. It is love actually”. Jeab, Marketing Manager. (personal communication, April 11, 2018)

Some communication scholar said that an appropriate love should be shared by a couple of husband and wife or communicator and receiver. It may be thought of

as a result of a communication or an interaction process where people engage in sharing mutual understanding on common issues. In addition, Thai audiences states their opinion about an appropriate love via interview that the way to love is the way to care. According to Sawan Bieng Thai viewers, the best expression of care are absolutely not to use the violence. As Nan, student, who was interviewed (2018, May 7) expressed, “Actually, this soap opera precarious to mix violence and love together which is not appropriate”.

Amid violent love scenes in Sawan Bieng, Kavee showed his responsibility and guilt. Thus, forgiveness from Narin is reasonable for Thai audiences. Meaw, female cook and Sawan Bieng audience proclaims as follows.

“Finally, the hero changed himself and his performance. He looked to be more gentle man. Okay, he could change himself. He was okay. Then, Narin accepts his better change” Meaw, Female cook. (personal communication, April 20, 2018)

4.3.4 How do Thai audiences perceive the heroine’s decision to marry the hero?

Referring to Thai audiences’ opinions, the heroine final decision to marry the hero in soap opera, Sawan Bieng was a long process involving a change in “cognitive” from negative perception to a positive perception or attitude. As earlier said, the male role model, Kavee performed by Ken Theeradetch, was very handsome, born in a rich family, very arrogant, he was negatively stereotyped and dislike the female role model, Narin, performed by Ann Thongprasom. At the very beginning,

the relationships between the two characters appeared to be a little bit hostile. They turned out to be very bad and fragile after the heroine was raped by the hero and pregnant. Many Thai audiences remarked that the heroine, Narin, was a “superp model” for her role to “tolerate and forgive” the hero who raped and also loved her. As we can see from some audiences’ expression below.

“Because of the heroine, Narin, is an excellent person.

Narin is a characteristic that was created to think of other before herself. For example, if our relative does badly to others, then they will revenge at us. We will never accept because we did not do anything. But Narin, who always asked herself that why was she. She accepted it because she was scared of Kavee to harm her sister. She loves her sister, then, she accepts herself. Why did Narin forgive Kawin? I think, she actually loves Kavee, but just does not know when it happened.”
Dome, student (personal communication, May 1, 2018).

Tolerance and forgiveness are considered by Buddhism as characters of great persons devoted to social goods. The heroine had been raped three times by the hero and suffered physically and psychologically, but instead of taking a revenge, she preferred for keeping tolerant and, most importantly, forgiving.

Based on female role in Thai culture, the heroine had been regarded by the audiences to set a “superb model” in nursing a new baby born from “unwanted or raped pregnancy.” The hero, Kavee, was also accepted by many Thai audiences to be

their role model of this emerging love relationship or family happiness. Gradually, the two role models managed to reconcile their differences and reach mutual understanding and compassion and family happiness. In view of all these happenings, the heroine, Narin, has every reason to accept the hero's proposal to marry him at the end of the soap opera. It is indeed a happy ending of the sexually violent drama. According to the in-depth interviews, some Sawan Bieng viewers reveal their opinion below.

“For me, it is a deep connection. Narin and Kavee are close. No matter how violence it is, it is love, finally”.
Noon, (personal communication, April 30, 2018).

“Narin truly was rape, but she does not do anything. She likely loves him because actually, she should report to the police in order to defend herself from this guy, right? However, Kavee shows his responsibility and sorrow at the nearly end of soap opera. Then, Narin finally accepts Kavee because they love each other”
Took, House wife (personal communication, April 25, 2018).

Additionally, turn over the new leaf of Kavee that changes his behaviors to be a good man in order to show his responsibility, love, and care to Narin is one reason. The audiences have seen lots of turn over scenes at the end of story that make them understand Kavee's real character and his true feelings. His mistakes were

penalized by Narin's decision to totally ignore him. Kavee represents the man who feels guilty on his mistakes and shows responsibility by compensating for what he did. Besides, He spent for almost a year trying to please Narin (until her baby was born) in order to prove his real love. His sufferings finally bring the love and forgiveness from Narin, and also from the audiences.

In summary, the eleven production elements were created to invite their audiences to make judgments about morality in terms of good and behaviors by main characters, Kavee and Narin. The audiences' moral judgments are quite consistent with their interpretation of love and sexual violent scenes in Sawan Bieng, which include four themes: 1) good relationship, 2) mutual caring, 3) deep connection, and 4) responsibility.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Sawan Bieng, the popular Thai soap opera, is absolutely successful in terms of plot, TV production, and rating. The successful evidence of this soap opera is appeared on many websites that related to the reputation of Sawan Bieng. Many times of reruns are always accepted and talked to on the social media. All elements of Sawan Bieng production is connected to communicate with the audiences. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that Sawan Bieng combines the violent sex scene though the main story is about love. The heroine, Narin is raped by the hero, Kavee. Audiences do not hate him, on the other hand, they understand the reason of hero's behavior. Besides, rape is illegal that everyone knows well. Audiences also cheer both protagonists as Kavee and Narin to be happy ending. This chapter covers the summary of findings, conclusions and discussion, implications, limitations and future direction.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The data analyses from five websites revealed the Thai audiences' judgment on the hero's morality, which indicates that the audiences well acknowledged that the rape is not acceptable at all. It is not a good behavior of a good person, as shown in the following quote.

“Very popular soap! But very immoral story too.

Because the hero seems to be mental disorder, lack of

warmth. He raped the heroine many times. However,
Thais really love this soap opera”. (Lavacances)

Nevertheless, Sawan Bieng’s fan club who completely watched the whole story of Sawan Bieng suggested differently in terms of Kavee’s morality. If the viewers did not watch the whole story, they might not have enough information to understand Kavee’s violent behavior. Most audiences took side with Kavee’s decision to marry Narin. At the end of story, the responsibility of a good man was displayed by Kavee. Therefore, audiences perceived the reason of raping as resulting from his “real love.” Even though rape is extremely immoral, audiences still supported Kavee and Narin to be happy together at the end. The audiences explained that Kavee does not know the appropriate way to show his love and to express the real feeling to his lover.

5.2 Conclusions and Discussion

The expression of love perceived by Thai audiences was presented in various forms. Care was mentioned since there are many forms of care that can be seen in many scenes. For example, Kavee took care of Narin when she was sick. His anxiety was clearly shown by his facial expressions. Audiences presumed that this reaction resulted from love. If Kavee does not fall in love with Narin, he will not rape her at all. As Kavee is a self-confident person and a playboy, there is no other reason for him to rape Narin. In addition, at the nearly ending, Sawan Bieng represented Kavee’s endeavor to reconcile with Narin. Audiences’ sympathy is affected by Kavee’s great care. As we can see from the interview quote below.

“As Kavee is the cause of Narin’s sickness, so, he takes care of her. His care for others begins from this point.”

Dome, (personal communication, May 1, 2018).

As for the second research question, based on the title of Sawan Bieng or “Twisted Heaven,” it is of highly emotional satisfaction and can explain how romance readers and romance soaps interpret hero’s violent acts. In order to confirm the explanation, Radway (1984) provided the reasonable argument that the violent romance scene was used as excites in order to meet the audiences’ expectation of the meaning of patriarchy. The audiences explained well the reason of the first rape scene in Sawan Bieng, as shown in the following quote.

“Leela who is Narin’s sister, lied to her husband, Kit (Kavee’s father), that she was slapped by Kavee. Even though Kavee tried to explain the truth that Leela slapped herself, Kit did not believe Kavee and slapped him. For me, it is important that father should trust his son, but Kit took side of Leela. So, I do understand this scene. I do not cry but I strongly feel it”. Dome, (personal communication, May 1, 2018).

As the popularity of soap opera Sawan Bieng in Thailand can affect social issues in Thai society, the main objective of this study is to understand the way Thai audiences interpret the meaning of love and characters’ behaviors, particularly the violent love scene. In order to understand both Sawan Bieng and its audiences or fans,

research questions are divided into two parts that are the part of texts and the audiences.

RQ I: How does Sawan Bieng invite the audience to make judgments about morality in terms of good and bad behaviors by main characters through production elements?

- (a) Cast
- (b) Dialogue
- (c) Plot
- (d) Staging (frame)
- (e) Lighting
- (f) Sound track
- (g) Costume
- (h) Behavior
- (i) Environment
- (j) Others

RQ II: How do Thai audiences interpret love and sexual violent scenes in Sawan Bieng?

- A. What is the expression of love in Thai audiences' perception?
- B. How did Thais perceive the rape of the heroine by hero?
- C. How do Thai audiences define a love scene as appropriate?
- D. How did the audiences perceive the decision of the heroine to marry the hero?

To answer the two research questions, this study used a mixed-methods – analysis of audiences’ comments on five weblogs and in-depth interviews of eight fans.

1) Analysis of audiences’ comments on 5 weblogs and Sawan Bieng’s DVD

Soap opera elements such as characters’ behaviors, costumes, soundtrack, and other elements were analyzed. In order to examine audience members’ judgment of morality toward the hero’s behaviors, the posts on weblogs from Thai popular websites were analyzed and the texts in Sawan Bieng’s DVD were examined. Texts were used to find out the way they invited audiences to interpret the meaning of morality. Weblogs could be the site to study audiences’ interpretations while visual and audio texts in Sawan Bieng’s DVD were the primary source to study producers’ messages. Sections of texts and blogs were separately studied by using the particular spread sheets that were designed to specifically examine both sender (producer) and receivers (audiences). The relationship between texts and audiences were studied through the spread sheets.

In order to summarize the huge data that were used in this research, the numeric data are shown in Tables. The Table 1 is the data of posts and weblog users gathered from the five weblogs which are 1) www.pantip.com, 2) www.liverpoolthailand.com, 3) www.sanook.com, 4) www.kapook.com, and 5) www.thaitv3.com. Number of posts and weblog users are presented in form of percentage. In addition, the Table 2 showed the number of each production element posts in each weblog that is also displayed in percentage. In addition, good and bad behaviors of Kavee and Narin judged by the audiences in terms of 10 production

elements -- Cast, Dialogue, Plot, Staging (Frame), Lighting, Soundtrack, Costume, Behavior, Environments, and others --were descriptively reported. The audiences judge Kavee that his sexual violent behaviors were immoral, but his guilt, caring, and responsibility toward Narin made them forgive him finally. As for Narin, the audiences admire her for her superb female role model.

Thailand was ruled by Patriarchy and Absolute Monarchy for over 600 years. Therefore, it is understandable that social norm in Thailand support male power. Based on authoritarianism, father and husband are considered the leader in Thai family. This social norm may help to explain audiences' moral judgment of Kavee as doer and Narin as victim. The power of male in Thai society allow the majority of sampled audiences understand his violent behavior and forgive him when he took responsibility for Narin.

Nevertheless, due to higher education and increasing support for gender equality and human right protection in Thai society, it becomes controversial such that sexual violence in media is acceptable or not. Those who are opposing media violence, therefore; request for higher social responsibility among media producers by avoiding violent content, while those who are not opposing it still enjoyed violent content in media.

Sawan Bieng is a good lesson for the producer who would like to produce the sexual violent scenes in the future. There are both kind of audiences --1) the violent behaviors are not accepted at all, 2) looking for the reason of story. Hence, giving the scenes that Kavee turned back to be good and suffered from finding Narin who leave him alone, are needed. Audiences were touched from Kavee' sorrow and his intention to win her heart. His warm performances at the end of the story, make audiences

understand his real feeling and forgive his fault at the beginning of story. It can be said that it is needed to have the return of Kavee scenes in order to repeat Kavee's real love, care, and responsibility on his past fault, including his violent behaviors.

2) In-depth interviews

Eight audiences who watched soap opera Sawan Bieng, were invited to be informants, who have a variety of occupation, education, age and gender in order to gain various perspectives. The major findings are discussed as follow.

5.2.1 Expression of Love

Next, Sawan Bieng defines love to Thai audiences as the action more important than just a word. It is true that we only one hear the sentence "I love you" from the mouth of Kavee since the last scene of the soap opera. Although he really loves her and try hard to show his sincere at the nearly end of story, Kavee represent his real feeling through his actions. And, the audiences understand him well and absolutely cheer Kavee. The background of hero is contained into the story, help the audiences to know the reason of his violence. Kavee is an only one child in a rich family. Everyone loves and spoils him. His father sent him to study abroad due to his mother was dead since he was young. That leads to be a self-centered person. Besides, he is handsome and playboy. Lots of girls have a crush on him. Hence, he uses the violent performance to Narin because he has no idea how to deal with her as lover. Finally, he presents his responsibility and real feeling via his nice actions till win Narin's heart. So, Sawan Bieng plot reveal that "action is more important than word".

Furthermore, the role of popular culture theory explains why soap operas' viewers understand, believe, and accept the meanings from the interpretations of soap operas. Sexual violent scene in Thai soap opera, Sawan Bieng, is accepted by the

reasonable plot. Kavee, hero is the icon of bad boy who turns to be a good male by showing his responsibility on Narin's pregnancy. Kavee is forgiven from his mistake by the role of Thai culture. As Storey (1993) explained that popular culture can be defined in different ways. Popular culture is what remains after people have determined what high culture is. Sawan Bieng emphasizes that males need to be responsible, particularly with the women with whom they caused pregnancy. The topic of sexual violence as rape in Sawan Bieng is mentioned in every weblog that are used to study. It is the reaction of the soap audiences in both their community and society to exchange the information through their members as popular culture is "the residual concept to adjust culture texts and practices which fail to join the required standards as high culture." (Storey, 1993, p. 7). As each community consists of many members who have their own opinions, beliefs, and cultures, members will help each other select the culture that suits their community. Those preferences need to be accepted by the majority of members or the larger group of people in the community. The preferred culture becomes the popular culture while others that are not selected will be categorized as a sub-culture or high culture. In conclusion, the decision of good and bad behavior is made by the members in their community such as weblogs and their society as Thai society. Thai soap audiences believe that sexual violent scene in Sawan Bieng are immoral and illegal behavior, and love needs to be expressed in the right way, not rape. Males who have responsibility on their wife and child could be forgiven if they ever made a wrong conduct as Kavee did to Narin.

5.2.2 Interpretation of Sexual Violence in Sawan Bieng

The same questions were asked to find out how they interpreted the meaning of sexual violence in Sawan Bieng. Interviewees revealed freely their point of view on

sexual violent scenes in *Sawan Bieng*. They were encouraged to describe their perception about rape of heroine by hero.

The Social Learning Theory is particularly helpful to explain the meaning of sexual violence between the two role models in the soap opera, *Sawan Bieng*. Most Thai audiences interviewed could recall all steps in the theory leading to the sexual violence or rape from attention, retention, reproduction to motivation which includes a vicarious reinforcement of reward and punishment. In this soap opera, the two male and female models were very popular and the audiences admire them very much. In the case of hero, Kavee, who raped the heroine, Narin, and might be blamed or punished by some audiences. On the other hand, many audiences argued that seeing the role model punished for exhibiting a “rape” make viewers feel as if they were actually punished. Thus, they did not blame or hate their male model. At the end, Kavee showed to be the “responsible” man by proposing to marry the heroine, Narin, who has willingly accepted to marry him. This is indeed a happy ending – a “reward reinforcement”.

5.2.3 Appropriateness of Love scenes

Kritsana Asoksin was a well-known author of the novel *Sawan Bieng* and many loyal readers were aware of using the rape as a tool to develop a climax that reflects her plot on Kavee’s and Narin’s twisted heaven. Radway (1984) argued that romance novel and romance soaps are the same fiction genre. The plots they use are created to serve the same loyal fan. Consistently, Meaw (2018, April 20), Female cook, voiced her opinion that many Thai soap operas in the past that contained violent romance scenes were successful in terms of ratings. *Sawan Bieng* which has the same plot is popular too.

Sawan Bieng means the “Twisted heaven” which symbolically represents Kavee’s and Narin’s love story that started with misunderstanding and sexual violence but ended happily. Sawan Bieng’s novelist compares main characters’ happy ending to the heaven such that is why this soap opera names “Sawan Bieng.”

5.2.4_Heroine’s Decision to Marry the Hero

Heroine’s decision to marry the hero is supported by most audiences. The female role model, Narin, performed by Ann Thongprasom, has been highly admired by Thai audiences in real life as well as in soap opera and other performances. Many of her fan clubs have tried to imitate her well-behaved and decent lifestyles. In Sawan Bieng, the heroine, Narin, has become the rape victim by the hero and suffered from its many sequences, physically and psychologically. Many audiences said, Narin has set a high standard role model in good woman, who stands for love, justice and equality. The heroine has also been hailed as a role model who champions compassion, tolerance, perseverance, forgiveness and family happiness. In view of these characters, she was perceived to have won the heart and mind of the hero who finally asked to propose to marry her.

5.3 Implications

Findings from the data analyses provide benefits for the following groups.

5.3.1 Implications for Media Practitioners

The results of this study are beneficial for media practitioners to appropriately present sexual violent scenes in the future soap opera. Only reasonable plot is acceptable by fans. The switching of character (turning back to be good) scenes are needed in order to show the suitable behavior of characters. Using sexual violent

behaviors have to be punished in term of reasonable plot for the audiences. As audiences now focus on the whole production elements, TV producers must emphasize the quality of every TV production element. Particularly, social media, nowadays, is used as the general tool for fans to communicate and exchange their opinions. Sexual violent scene in soap opera can be socially acceptable when it strongly relates to characters' background. Thai audiences are nowadays ready to conceive, analyze, and distinguish the content from what they consume, including soap opera.

5.3.2 Implication for Policy Makers

In Thailand, it is common nowadays to see many women with unwanted pregnancy. As some audiences said “Sawan Bieng models may reflect what actually happens in Thai society, particularly young Thai women become pregnant before marriage.” Took, (personal communication, April 25, 2008). In fact, young pregnancy has turned out to be important social problem in Thailand and many countries throughout the world.

For the policy makers, Sawan Bieng is the case study to prove that soap opera is not just the entertainment, but it can be an edutainment source as well. Therefore, the government or social workers should support the good soap opera to serve as a tool for the Thai audiences to learn about important social issues in Thai society. For example, providing financial support to the media producers who create content that are reflecting social problems and suggesting possible solutions.

5.3.3 Implication for Audiences

Lastly, audiences in general know how to choose between good and bad soap operas. Good soap could be supported by the fans, while others should be criticized

by the public to achieve further quality improvement. Besides, soap opera is also the reason for audiences to join and interact with other members in the online community, which is a channel to exchange information and educate themselves. The social issues that they discuss in the weblogs tend to lead them to study the issues deeply so that the members' concerns can be satisfactorily responded. In addition, the good soap opera might serve as a good lesson for new generations in order to make the right judgment on morality. A suitable soap opera might be a good lesson for its audiences to learn how to lead their life. Youth audience may be indirectly educated by media in such a way to overcome their social obstacles and low social cost.

5.4 Limitations

However, this study has some limitations.

5.4.1 Time Lapse

The first broadcast of Sawan Bieng was in 2008. This research started in 2009 but its data collection was completed in 2018. This research has quite a long time lapse for the informants to think about their responses to this soap opera. However, Sawan Bieng was rerun many times as this version of channel 3 that performed by Ken Theeradetch and Ann Thongprasom, is extremely popular. Every time of reruning this soap, it always stimulates active discussions on the weblogs by its fans via popular websites such as Pantip, Mthai, or Sanook.

It cannot be denied that Sawan Bieng (Ken-Ann version) is very old soap opera. There is no new version to be reproduced. However, Channel 3 still reran Sawan Bieng (version 2008) and receive the good interesting in form of rating always.

The latest rerun was from April 3, 2018 to May 7, 2018 in “Hit Dramas across Time” (La-Korn-Dang-Kham-Way-La) program on Channel 3.

5.4.2 Sample

The most of participants of this research are female due to the most of soap opera fans are female. Less male fans who watch soap opera closely from the beginning until the end, particularly the romance soap. Hence, most of opinions from the audiences of this research are female’s point of view. The answer of research questions of this study might be the viewpoint of female more than male opinion. This limitation is included two methods of this study. Eight audiences who are invited to in-depth interview combined by 5 women and 3 men. What is more, the majority of comments on weblogs are posted by women. It can be seen from the language that soap fans post. “Kah” or “Krub” at the end of sentence in Thai language reveal the gender of participants. “Kah” is female and “Krub” is the male.

5.5 Future Direction

This research focus on the interpretation of audiences on the sexual violent scene of Thai audiences. Hence, this study provides the way of Thai audience interpretation and the reason of understanding “love” in Thai perception. The future research might study further across cultures by exploring other sample groups such as foreigners who love to watch Thai drama like Chinese audiences using a Thai soap opera as a tool. The focus of studying should be on different interpretations between Thai and others about “love” and “rape”. That is, the difference in cultures might lead to the interesting findings of the study. Furthermore, according to the fact that Thai Soap opera is now exported to China and other countries in Asia, it is a good sign for

Thai media producers to produce the programs that would satisfy broader markets. The future study may support Thai television production to create more emotional scenes, particularly love scenes and international symbols in Thai soap opera. Thai entertainment industry could eventually be more developed and earn more income from international markets such as India, Korea, and Japan.



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Appendix A

Study of Blogs Sheet

| Study of Blogs Sheet | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---------|------------|-----|---------|-------------|---------|--------|---------------|--------|----------|------------|----------|---|
| Website : Sanook (Topic: What do you think about <i>Sawan Bieng</i> ?) | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| No. | Date | Time | Sex | Content | Actors | Emotion | Idea | Inform | others | Dominate | Negotiated | Opposite | Quote |
| 1 | 10.4.08 | 6.10 pm | No | | Actors | Anxiety | reduce | not real | | | X | | Wow, that's it. It's just a soap, not real life. No matter how good it is, it's not real. Just watch to reduce anxiety. No matter how good performs are, it's not real. Actors are actors, which are created. |
| 906 | 29.7.08 | 2.52 pm | F | | Ken &Ann | Natural | yes | nice scene | | X | | | I have seen many versions of Sawan Bieng's actors, but my favorite actors are Ken and Ann. She performs natural. The scene is nice. I commented this soap in my exam, I got the great score. |

Study of Blogs Sheet

Study of Blogs Sheet

Website: Sanook (Topic: What do you think about *Sawan Bieng*?)

| No. | Date | Time | Sex | Content | Actors | Emotion | Idea | Inform | others | Dominate | Negotiated | Opposite | Quote |
|-----|--------|----------|-----|---------|--------|---------|-----------|------------|---------|----------|------------|----------|--|
| 7 | 2.4.08 | 3.00 pm | F | | Ken | Please | | | Heroine | X | | | I like Ken very much, but please not do badly with the heroine. |
| 16 | 2.4.08 | 7.23 pm | No | | Ken | Admire | Good view | Great soap | | X | | | Ken performs as a bad guy very well. This is a good soap, which gives the good view for audiences. Channel 3 produces only great soap. |
| 75 | 9.4.08 | 3.49 pm. | M | | | | Excellent | | | X | | | One word I would say, excellent. |
| 62 | 7.4.08 | 5.22 pm | M | cool | | Admire | | | Hero | X | | | The hero is so cool. His car is so nice. He is completely conceit person and never care of any girls. |

Appendix B
Study of Texts Sheet

| Study of Texts Sheet | | Episode number: 4 (8/9) | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|-------------------------|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|---------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------------|-------|
| Story | Visual | Audio | Technique | Elements | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | cast | dialogue | conflict | behavior | costume | camera | light | sound | frame | environment | other |
| Kavee was slapped by his father because his wife (Leela) lies that Kavee hurts her. Kavee wants to revenge Leela, so he forces Narin (Leela's sister) to his private house and rape her. | Force kiss and rape are included in this episode. | Sound track | Using of flash back (to emphasize reason to both Kavee and audiences). | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes | no | yes | yes | yes | no |

Appendix C

Interview Script

1. Have you ever seen *Sawan Bieng*? Can you remember Ken and Ann version?
2. Can you conclude the story?
3. Can you remember others popular soap opera that on air the same time?
4. Do you know any soap operas that Ken and Ann perform together?
5. Why *Sawan Bieng* was popular, in your view?
6. What do you think about *Sawan Bieng*'s plot?
7. What do you like and dislike in this soap opera?
8. How do you feel about sexual violence scenes?
9. Why Kavee gets the forgiveness from Narin?
10. Why Narin forgives Kavee, in your opinion?
11. If Kavee and Narin do not perform by Ken and Ann, is this soap still popular?
Why?
12. Why almost audiences accept Kavee though he rapes Narin and cheer them to
be happy at the end?
13. If someone rape as Kavee in real life, will the end be the same as *Sawan
Bieng*? Why?
14. What *Sawan Bieng* gives the audiences?
15. Is it possible that someone might imitate Kavee, why?
16. If anyone imitates the violent behavior as Kavee, what is the cause to be in
your view?

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