

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In chapter 2, relevant literature and theories were reviewed. For this chapter, research methodology used in this thesis is explained. Firstly, an understanding of qualitative research as the cornerstone methodology of this thesis is reviewed. Secondly, case study research method as the research strategy is depicted. Thirdly, a research framework systemizing all research issues is portrayed. Fourthly, data collection reporting the field study procedures is described. Lastly, data analysis method is explained.

3.1 Qualitative Research

The nature of qualitative research is subjective. This approach does not entail serious statistic numbers or rigorous mathematical analysis (Zikmund, 1997: 159). It employs methods that seek for quality including feeling, perceptions, viewpoints, meaning, relationships, stories, and dynamic changing perspectives (Patton, 1990: 14). Strauss and Corbin (1990: 19) noted that qualitative research can be used to uncover and understand what lies behind any phenomenon about which little is yet known.

Qualitative research is essentially an investigative process that focuses more on words than on the numbers that are important to quantitative researchers. Most of those researchers have now shifted to endorsement of qualitative inquiry as a legitimate means of generating valid knowledge. Qualitative inquiry is an appropriate technique for finding explanations of processes occurring in local contexts (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 11-13)

There are still some misunderstandings about what really the term qualitative research is. The term is confusing because it can mean different things to different people. Some researchers collect data by means of interviews and observations, the techniques that are dominantly associated with qualitative methods. However, they then code those data in a manner that allows them to be statistically analyzed. In effect, they are quantifying qualitative data (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 9).

Qualitative research can be comprehensively characterized through certain appropriate definitions. Although Marshall and Rossman (1995: 5) argued that qualitative research is often defined by what it is not, the definition in the next page that was proposed by Denzin and Lincoln (1994: 2) clearly figures its characteristics.

“Qualitative research is a multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials: case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactive, and visual texts that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals lives.

The definition above implies that qualitative researchers are most likely to be involved in a wide range of interconnected methods to achieve optimum research goals and findings. However, qualitative research per se has certain unique characteristics. Bogdan and Biklen (1982: 7-12) depicted that there are five common characteristics of qualitative research.

Firstly, qualitative research has the natural setting as the direct source of data and the research is the key instrument (p.27). This naturalistic form of inquiry is based on the belief that actions can best be understood in the context of the setting in which they occur (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Secondly, the nature of qualitative research is descriptive. Merriam and Simpson (1984) have found that descriptive research is the most commonly used form of research. It allows the researcher to examine people’s attitudes and opinions in a real world setting and to draw attention to the relationship between two or more events or phenomena (Bales, 1993).

Thirdly, Bogdan and Biklen pinpointed that qualitative research is much concerned with process rather than merely with outcomes. Qualitative researchers are more interested in how people negotiate meaning and come to interpret events than they are looking only at the results of such interactions. In other words, qualitative researchers are dedicated to studying things surrounding the numbers or statistical data that are preferred by quantitative researchers.

Fourthly, qualitative researchers have a tendency to the inductive analysis of data. Quantitative studies mainly utilize a deductive approach; i.e. testing of theoretically derived hypothesis. Patton (1990: 44) states that qualitative studies on the other hand use an inductive approach, whereby the researcher attempts to understand the multiple interrelationships among dimensions that emerge from the data without making prior assumptions or specifying hypothesis about the linear or correlative relationships among narrowly defined and operationalized variables.

Finally, Bogdan and Biklen (1982: 12) identify that the qualitative researcher has the primary concern with 'meaning'. Qualitative researchers believe in the uniqueness of each case because of the belief in the importance of the individual perspectives of each participant.

Interest in qualitative research has been growing constantly. A number of social scientists believe in an objective world. In that world they can develop hypotheses dealing with theory that represents truth. Nonetheless, other social scientists believe that 'there is no one truth and subscribe to the idea that people co-construct the social and cultural worlds they inhabit' (Swanson et al. in Swanson and Holton (Eds), 1997: 89).

Since this thesis aims to study the nature of cultural tourism management through the co-operative approach of Mae Gum Pong Royal Project Electricity Co-operative, Limited, which is a phenomenon that requires an appropriate technique for finding explanations of processes occurring in a local context. It also focuses on researching the natural settings of Mae Gum Pong community by interpreting the meanings and making sense that the people try to describe. This thesis is, therefore, based on the qualitative method.

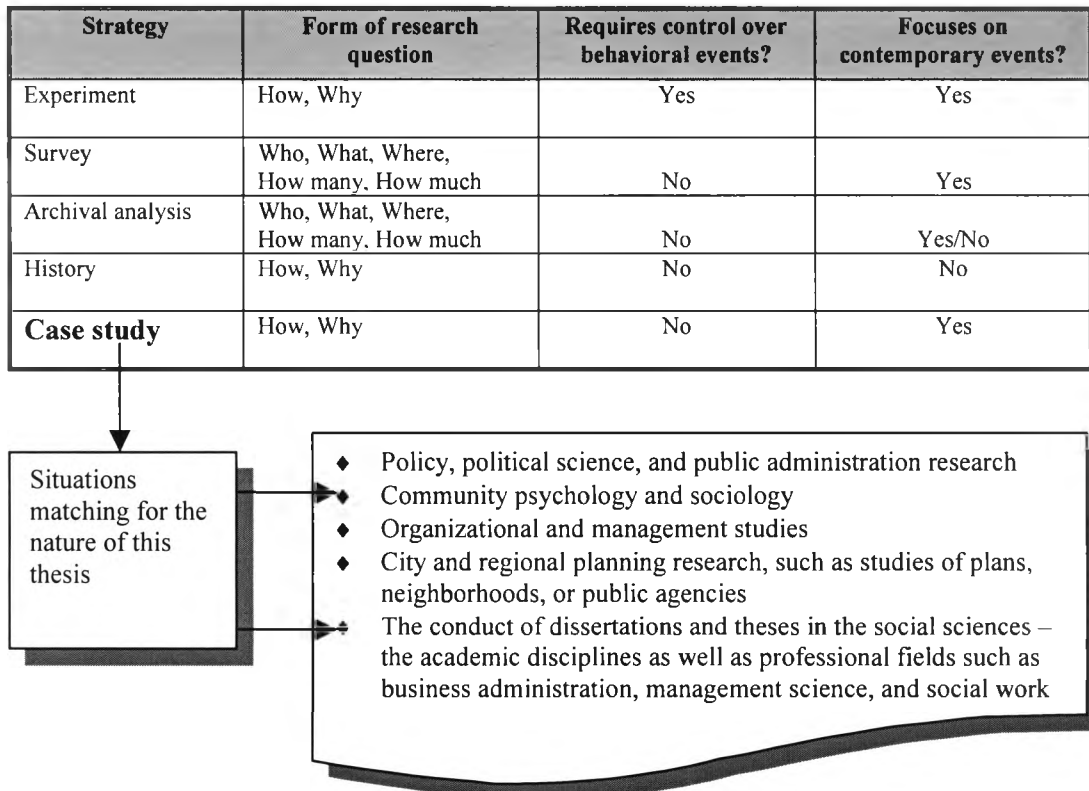
3.2 Case Study Research Method as the Research Strategy

The case study research method is one of the most prevalent formats for conducting research, in particular qualitative research. Yin (1994: 1), one of the best-known advocates of case study research, strategically views case studies as the preferred strategy when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context.

Yin (1994: 13) defines the case study research as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. The primary advantage of the case study is that an entire organization can be investigated in depth with careful attention to detail. This highly focused attention enables the researchers to concentrate on identifying the relationships among functions, individuals, or entities (Zikmund, 1997: 108).

Zikmund (1997: 108) also delineates that the nature of conducting the case study research method often requires the cooperation of the people to be studied individually or organizationally. Case study researchers have no standard procedures to follow. They must be flexible and attempt to glean information and insights wherever they find them. The freedom to search for whatever data that an investigator deems important makes the success of any case study highly dependent on the alertness, creativity, intelligence, and motivation of the individual performing the case analysis.

Figure 3.1: A Summary of Relevant Situations for Different Research Strategies and for Case Study



Source: Developed from Yin, R. K. (1994). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (2nd Edn), Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, pp.1, 6.

As seen in Figure 3.1 in the last page, Yin (1994) pictures a number of situations that use the case study as a research strategy as well as pinpoints form of research question, control over behavioral events, and focus on contemporary events, relevant to different research strategies. In the light of these reviewed ideas, the justification for selecting the case study research method is provided in the following paragraph.

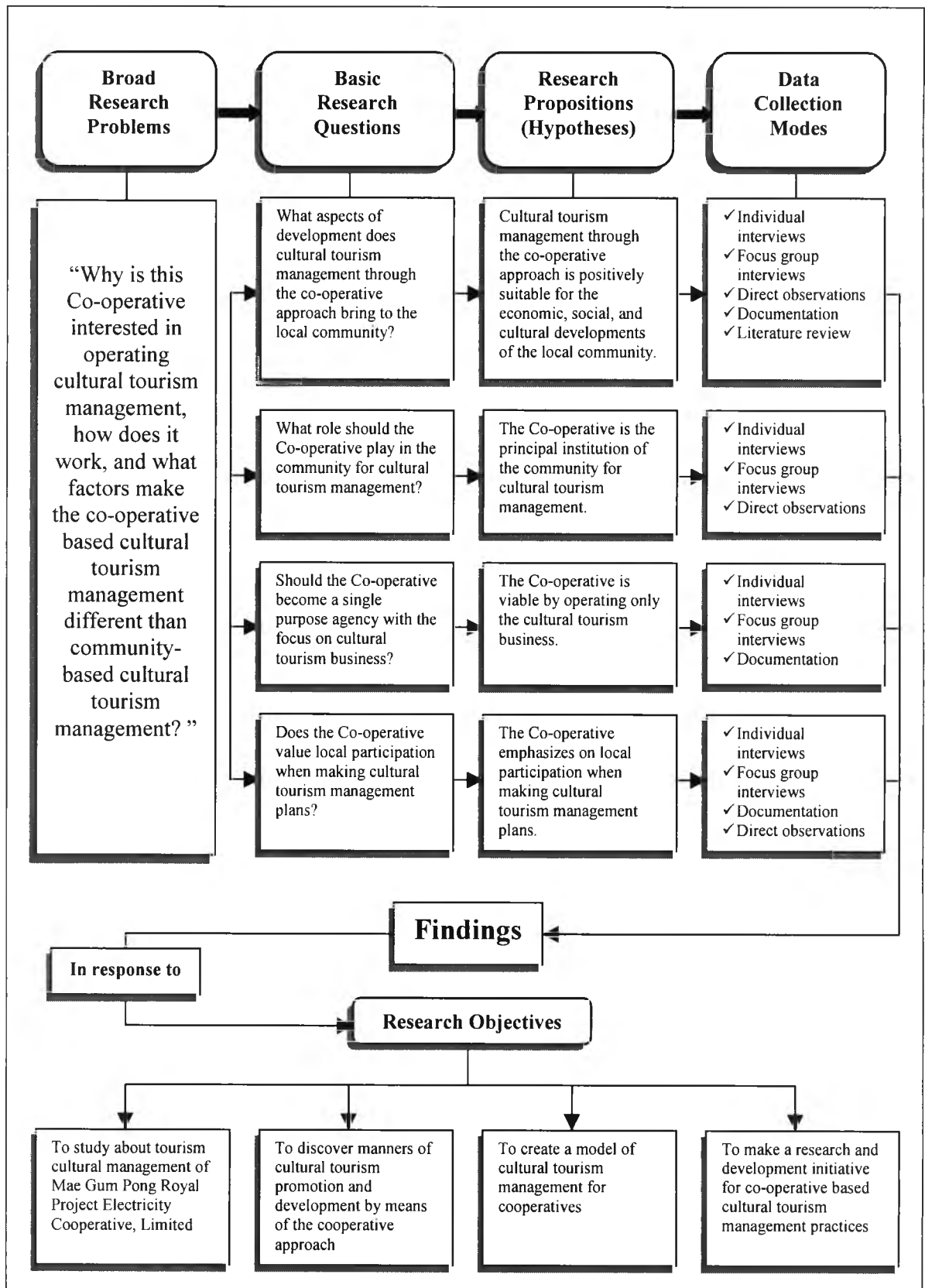
This thesis concentrated on how and why questions toward the existing context of the Co-operative, which is a central body of the community by focusing upon the contemporary events. Also, it is a thesis in the area of cultural management in which the befitting mixture of academic disciplines and professional practices are essentially required. Therefore, the case study research method was selected as the research strategy for this thesis.

3.3 Research Framework

Research issues should be clearly identified before framing research procedures. The issues should be at least incorporated by broad research problems, basic research questions, research propositions (hypothesis)¹⁸, and data collection modes. This will enable researchers to design a research framework, which is simply regarded as a blueprint to direct the research undertakings. Since the broad research problems are the starting point of creating such a framework, they should not set with yes/no questions. Rather, why, how and what questions are more preferred (Perry, 1997: 1). As a result of the justification, the broad research problems of this thesis were set with the following; why this Co-operative is interested in operating cultural tourism management?, how it operates?, and what factors actually make the co-operative based cultural tourism management different than community-based cultural tourism management? Having identified the problems eased setting the basic research questions, research propositions, and data collection modes consecutively. The research problem of this thesis is exhibited in the next page.

¹⁸ Qualitative research based on case study research methodology uses the term 'research propositions' to represent the testable statements to be explored in a dissertation. In contrast, quantitative research uses the term 'research hypotheses' to represents such statements.

Figure 3.2: Model of Research Framework for This Thesis



Source: Prepared for This Thesis

From Figure 3.2 on the last page, broad research problems, basic research questions, research propositions (hypotheses), and data collection modes were deployed to frame the direction of research conduct. This was to ensure that all the contents were interconnected systematically and converged to achieve the research objectives. Broad research problems were set up to originate an overview of research inquisitiveness. The curiosity led to the establishment of basic research questions, which were the key pillars of guiding to the design of research propositions (hypotheses). Then, the data collection modes could be appropriately posed to each of the propositions. This way of research framework was modeled in response to the research objectives eventually.

3.4 Data Collection

The tools for the data collection for this thesis covered individual interviews, focus group interviews, direct observations, and reviews of literature. The data collection was divided in to two modes. The first mode was conducted in the field by employing individual interviews, focus group interviews, and direct observations. The other mode was done through documentation, and literature review. These modes of data collection are considered the basic means of collecting data for research using case study methodology. Collecting the data for the first mode was done during 5 – 10 November 2001 and 10 – 14 March 2002 at the office of Mae Gum Pong Royal Project Electricity Co-operative, Limited and in the Mae Gum Pong community. The participants for the individual interviews comprised Co-operative Chairman, Co-operative Treasurer, five homestay providers, six Co-operative members, and 10 tourists¹⁹. Five focus group interviews were participated by five groups of participants; six directors from the Board (BOD), homestay providers, eight local government officials, seven Co-operative members, and villagers. Direct observations were done through ways of life, management practices, activities, dialogues, and sense of place. The settings are located in Moo 3, Huay Kaew Sub-district, Mae On District, Chiang Mai Province.

¹⁹ During the time of the individual interviews, only six tourists were available for the interviews. The researcher asked some homestay providers for contact details of the tourists who used to stay at their home. The researcher received a list of seven tourists' contact details and made phone calls to them for the interviews. Out of seven persons, only four persons were able to participate with the telephone interviews while the other three persons were in overseas.

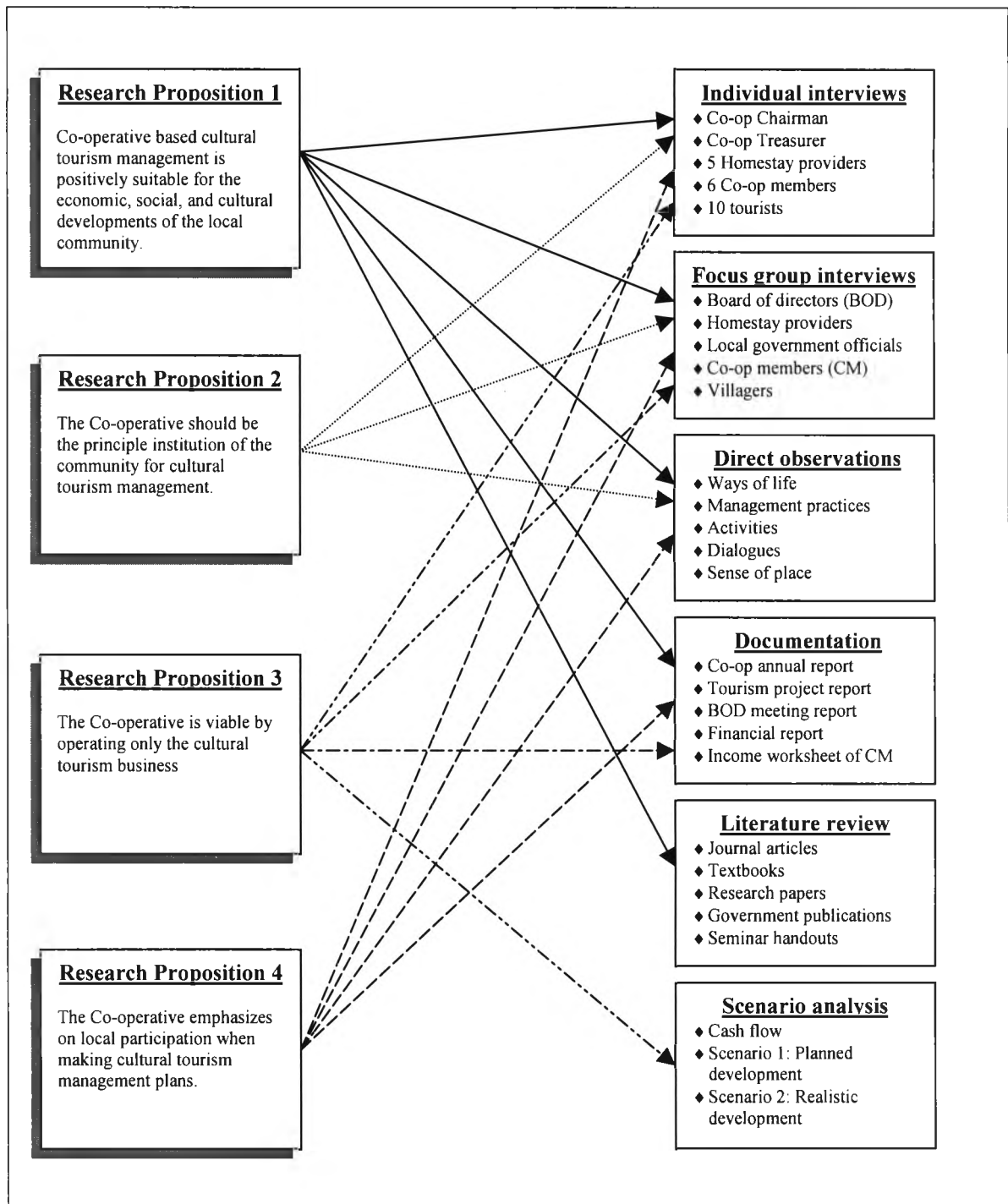
Figure 3.3: Research Methodological Matrix

Method Theme	Individual Interviews	Focus Group Interviews	Direct Observations	Documentation	Literature Review	Scenario Analysis
Historical background				✓		
Actual practices at Mae Gum Pong (MGP) community	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Attitudes to tourism by local and other stakeholders	✓	✓	✓			
Results - Economy - Social - Culture - Learning	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Future of MGP cultural tourism by co-operative approach	✓	✓				✓

Source: Prepared for this thesis

Figure 3.3 displays the methodological matrix for themes and methods of data collection. Individual and focus group interviews were heavily used in almost every theme except the historical background in which documentation was essentially required. For the scenario analysis, it was used for analyzing the future of Mae Gum Pong cultural tourism by the co-operative approach. This matrix led to the test of the research propositions 1-4. To test the propositions, the methods were given in each proposition with sources of data where the researcher went to collect and bring them to the analytical process consecutively. Figure 3.4 on the next page shows the sources for data collections used in this thesis.

Figure 3.4: Sources for Data Collection



Source: Prepared for this thesis

From Figure 3.3 shown above, even though every research proposition used different kinds of the tools, individual interviews and focus group interviews were employed in common. Appointments with the interviewed people and arrangements to the field studies were made in advance through good cooperation of the CPD local staff in Chiang Mai Co-operative Provincial Office.

For conducting individual and focus group interviews, a list of interview questions was essential. In this regard, it was systematically prepared in coherence with the lists of research questions and research propositions. To do this, series A, B, C, and D were set to get the research questions, interview questions, and research propositions in line with each other. Table 3.1 shows the details of the series.

Table 3.1: Series of the Interview Questions Matched with Each Research Question and Proposition

Series	Research Questions	List of Interview Questions	To Test Research Propositions
A	1. What aspects of development does cultural tourism management through the co-operative approach bring to the local community?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What changes have you experienced since the implementation of cultural tourism run by the Co-operative? • Are such changes positive to the local development? • Why do you think so? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-operative based cultural tourism management is suitable for the economic, social, and cultural developments of the local community.
B	2. What role should the Co-operative play in the community for cultural tourism management?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it good that the Co-operative is operating the cultural tourism management? Why? • Should there be any other agency other than the Co-operative to run the cultural tourism management? Why? • If any other agency can run better management of cultural tourism than the Co-operative, what role should the Co-operative play to support the cultural tourism management for the community? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Co-operative is the principal institution of the community for cultural tourism management.
C	3. Should the Co-operative become a single purpose agency with the focus on cultural tourism business?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the Co-operative strong enough to live on only operating cultural tourism business? Why? • Between a multi-purpose business agency that is the existing form of the Co-operative and a single purpose business agency by relying on the cultural tourism business, which one do you prefer? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Co-operative is viable by operating only the cultural tourism business.
D	4. Does the Co-operative value local participation when making cultural tourism management plans?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the Co-operative make planning for the cultural tourism management? • How can the people in the community participate in making the cultural tourism management plans? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Co-operative emphasizes on local participation when making cultural tourism management plans.

Source: Prepared for This Thesis

Both individual and focus group interviews were recorded by a tape recording machine. Certain key issues naturally emerged from those interviews also were recorded in a simple hand writing form. The issues recorded by the latter form included not only the verbal essence but also behavioral meanings performed by the participants.

To make the direct observations in the field studies as natural as possible in order to get the most authentic pictures, the researcher appeared to the community as a normal tourist when observing. This allowed the researcher a reliability of the data being observed. However, it was undeniable that when conducting the interviews of the individuals and focus groups, the appearance of the researcher was likely to be seen by the respondents as a researcher. This might have resulted in being unnatural reactions of the respondents at the beginning of the interviews since they seemed to say only positive things. To solve such a limitation, the researcher overcame it by making the atmospheres of the interviews relaxed, entertained, and informal. Having done this, the respondents candidly spoke out what they viewed.

Reviewing relevant literature, which is the other mode of data collection, was implemented between 1 October 2001 and 15 January 2002. Documentation was done through Co-operative performance annual reports, monthly board of directors meeting reports, income worksheet of homestay providers, accounting and financial reports, tourism project documents, and other related internal documents. However, this documentary information was not considered as definitive findings. Rather, it was viewed as clues of further steps of the investigation. Also it generated, to some extent, new unexpected questions for the next steps of the study. Several sources of literature, including textbooks, research papers, journal articles, publications, and handouts were examined.

Aside from using the tools for the data collections, a case study database was also created. This is an important way to increase the reliability of the case study (Yin, 1994: 94-98). As mentioned at the stage of conducting the interviews, simple handwriting notes and tape recording were created as a database of the case study. These instruments were systematically organized and categorized in different sets available for the later reviews. In addition to the case study notes, documents relevant to the case study were also collected.

3.5 Data Analysis Method

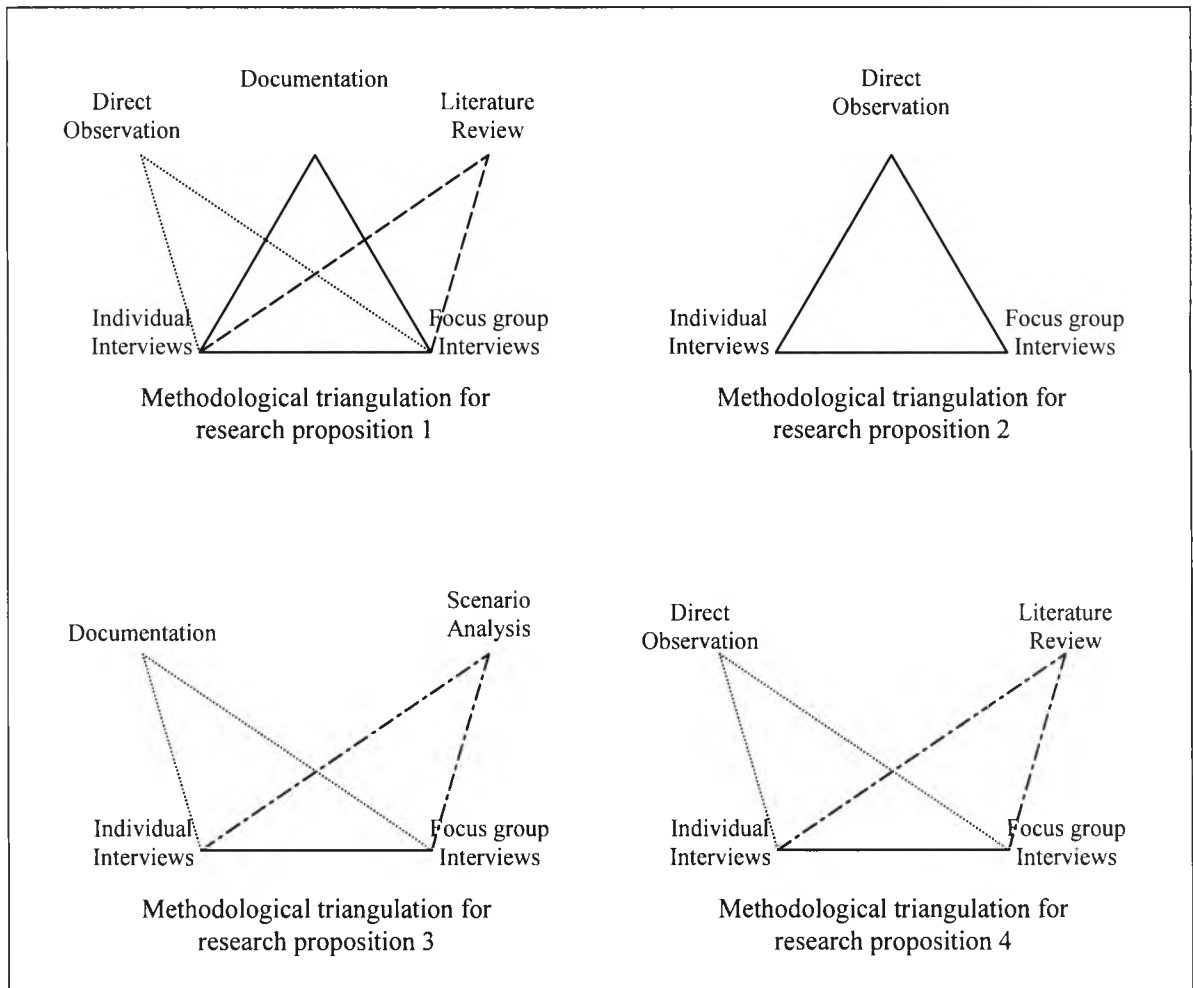
Theoretically known as triangulation (Denzin, 1970; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Patton, 1987; Yin, 1994; Maxwell, 1996; and Potter, 1996), the analysis method was principally used for analyzing the data in this thesis. Triangulation is a valuable method when a researcher encounters conflicting evidence and must decide which set of evidence has the higher degree of credibility (Potter, 1996). The idea of triangulation is based on collecting information from a diverse range of individuals and settings, using a variety of methods (Denzin, 1970).

Supang Chantavanich (1997a: 129) notes that triangulation is heavily used in qualitative research. It is an appropriate technique for examining the reliability of the sources of data collected. Triangulation can be implemented through four options; data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and methodological triangulation (pp. 129-130).

Data triangulation triangulates the differences of times, places, and persons that generate data. Investigator triangulation checks if investigators are different, the data collected will be also different. Theory triangulation seems to be the most difficult among the other three options as it is to test whether use of different theories will bring about different interpretation of data. Methodological triangulation relies on at least three sources of evidence, such as use of an interview, observation, and documentation altogether to ensure the reliability of the data collected.

This thesis selected the methodological triangulation in which different sources of data were examined to find out the common facts or factors derived from the sources. Based on the preferred option of triangulation, individual interviews and focus group interviews were used as compulsory sources, together with one or more sources of evidence, to strengthen the reliability of the data collected.

Figure 3.5: Models of Methodological Triangulation for Research Propositions 1 – 4



Source: Prepared for this thesis

Figure 3.5 visualizes models of methodological triangulation that were used for verifying the reliability of each source of data collected for each research proposition. The verified data were then brought into the data analysis process, which employed analytic induction.

Supang Chantavanich (1997b: 106-117) defines analytic induction as an analysis method that researchers compile all perceptions from seeing concrete data and then generalize the data into an abstract form by means of the induction manner. Simply, induction is to discover common characteristics from a set of concrete data in order to make a generalization that what is the same attribute they hold. Basically, analytic induction requires more than one source of concrete data, such as two objects, two behaviors.

For example, when one looks at a table, a chair, a bed, a cupboard, and a bookshelf, the one will generalize these concrete things as being household appliances responding the needs for daily life activities. If the one looks at a dog, he/she will not generalize the dog as a household appliance because of the different attributes. Another example, which is more complicated than the previous one, is that while collecting data in a rural area, a researcher saw three villagers in different behaviors. The first person was fishing, the second person was gambling, and the third person was making clothing that she was employed occasionally by a factory in the city. Although the behaviors were different, the researcher could make a generalization based on the three behaviors that the villagers were making income (p. 106).

For the data analysis in this thesis, analytic induction was used in each source of evidence after being triangulated. Then, the induced source was generalized into a conclusion to test the four research propositions. Data analysis and interpretation are described in the next chapter.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter described the research methodology employed in this thesis. Based on qualitative data, the thesis used case study research methodology as the research strategy. Research framework was designed to direct the studies of all the research issues systematically. Data collection used multiple sources of evidence, including individual interviews, focus group interviews, direct observations, documentation, and literature review. The collection was also divided into two modes. The first mode was conducted in the field by using individual interviews, focus group interviews, and direct observations. The interview questions in each series matched with the research questions and propositions were revealed. The other mode was done through documentation and reviews of related literature. Triangulation, in which three sources of data collected are tested to confirm the reliability of research findings, was used for verifying the reliability of each source of evidence. Finally, analytic induction played a fundamental role in the data analysis process. In the next chapter, data analysis and interpretation are described.