



Queer Negotiations: Triadic Critical Discourse Analysis of Gender and Power in Thai Media Representations

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Abstract

Thailand's dramatic surge in LGBTQ+ media visibility—from Boys' Love dramas like *2gether: The Series* to viral queer digital creators—has transformed public perceptions but also exposed the limits of market-driven representation. This study critically interrogates how gender and power are negotiated in Thai LGBTQ+ media, combining Butler's performativity theory, Foucault's analytics of discourse-power, and Thai queer theory to offer a uniquely layered analysis. Through a desk-based Critical Discourse Analysis of mainstream series, digital content, and fan discourse (2018–2025), the research reveals that increased visibility often coincides with persistent tokenism, commodification, and ongoing regulatory intervention by bodies such as the NBTC. Yet, the study also finds that Thai queer communities continually adapt, subvert, and localize global scripts—deploying meme culture, grassroots hashtags, and ritualized acts to carve out new spaces for resistance and belonging. This triadic approach demonstrates that LGBTQ+ representation in Thai media is not simply about inclusion or exclusion, but about ongoing, contested negotiations shaped by global theory, local history, and complex power structures. The research recommends context-sensitive, community-driven strategies for policy and media practice, positioning triadic CDA as essential for future scholarship on gender and power in non-Western media contexts.

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Introduction

In recent years, Thailand has experienced a dramatic surge in LGBTQ+ visibility across both mainstream and digital media landscapes, driven by shifting cultural attitudes, commercial strategy, and the transformative power of digital participation. The rapid ascent of Boys' Love (BL) television dramas—including global sensations like *2gether: The Series* and *Bad Buddy*—has positioned Thailand as a leader in queer-themed scripted content, capturing not only local but also international audiences (Baudinette, 2023; Chen, 2024). Nielsen Thailand and Kantar Media digital audience reports (2022–2025) consistently identify BL and queer-focused programming as among the most-watched and most-discussed on both television and streaming platforms. Simultaneously, digital creators such as Poyd Treechada and Andy Warisara have amassed millions of followers on YouTube and TikTok through content that explicitly centers gender diversity and LGBTQ+ lifestyles, further expanding the reach and influence of queer representation in Thai media (Mohammed et al., 2023; Kirdnark, 2025; Trupp & Sunanta, 2017).

However, this proliferation of queer content is far from unequivocally emancipatory. Increased media exposure has indeed contributed to greater social acceptance and normalization of diverse gender and sexual identities (Sookpornsawan et al., 2024). Yet, persistent controversies reveal that much of this representation remains fraught with limitations. Critics highlight the superficiality of much mainstream visibility, the persistence of damaging stereotypes, and the circumscription of

LGBTQ+ narratives by commercial imperatives and audience expectations—phenomena particularly visible within the BL genre (Hidayat, 2024; Käng, 2012; Lin, 2025; Rattanasimakul et al., 2025; Supasitthumrong & Charoensin, 2021; Trupp & Sunanta, 2017). Rather than fundamentally challenging gender norms, much “safe” queerness is staged primarily for market consumption, reproducing familiar tropes under the guise of inclusion (Supasitthumrong & Charoensin, 2021; Trupp & Sunanta, 2017).

These tensions are exacerbated by Thailand’s complex regulatory environment. The National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) exercises significant influence over what is deemed acceptable in television and digital content, frequently intervening to censor scenes or issue warnings against material perceived as contravening prevailing social or “moral” standards (Jackson, 2011). Recent NBTC interventions in popular BL dramas—such as warnings or censorship of intimate scenes—reflect a broader pattern of state regulation that shapes the contours of LGBTQ+ representation (Barkho, 2011; Kijratanakoson, 2023; Sepulveda, 2025). At the same time, corporate actors—both domestic and transnational—wield substantial power through advertising, sponsorship, and algorithmic curation, promoting some forms of queer visibility while suppressing or marginalizing others (Mohammed et al., 2023; Talbot et al., 2020; Ferreyra, 2022; Sookpornasawan et al., 2024; Kirdnark, 2025).

Public debates increasingly focus on the risks of tokenism, the boundaries of the so-called “pink economy,” and the co-optation of queer identities for commercial gain (Baudinette, 2023; Trupp & Sunanta, 2017). Scholars note that increased LGBTQ+ visibility can paradoxically reinforce new forms of regulation and exclusion, as market and state forces recalibrate the meanings and limits of inclusion (Butler, 1988, 2006, 2021; Foucault, 2022, 2023; Halberstam, 2018; Käng, 2012; McHoul & Grace, 1993; Phruksapaisal, 2023; Stryker, 2017). The Thai context—at the intersection of state censorship, corporate platformization, and vibrant local queer activism—presents a particularly dynamic and contested terrain for LGBTQ+ media politics (Jackson & Sullivan, 1999; Käng, 2012).

Despite the explosion of queer media content, systematic, theory-driven analyses of Thai LGBTQ+ representation remain comparatively rare. Most existing research adopts either quantitative content analysis or audience-reception frameworks (Fongkaew et al., 2019; Rattanasimakul et al., 2025; Sookpornsawan et al., 2024; Trakulkasemsuk et al., 2025), which—though valuable—often fail to interrogate the underlying power-knowledge dynamics that structure inclusion and exclusion (Fairclough, 1989; Hart, 2010; Machin & Richardson, 2008; van Dijk, 1988, 2024; Wodak, 2009; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). Furthermore, much international scholarship applies Western models of queer identity and activism that overlook Thai-specific categories—such as *kathoey* (trans women), *tom* (masculine lesbian), or *dee* (feminine lesbian)—as well as the historically contingent negotiations of gender, family, and nation (Baudinette, 2023; Blackwood & Wieringa, 2007; Jackson, 2011; Käng, 2012; Peletz, 2009; Trupp & Sunanta, 2017).

The present study addresses these critical gaps by deploying a triadic critical discourse analysis (CDA) framework, integrating Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity (Butler, 2006, 2021, 1988; Salih, 2002; Brady & Schirato, 2010; Lloyd, 2007), Michel Foucault's analytics of power and normalization (Foucault, 1977, 1978; McHoul & Grace, 1993; Mills, 2003; Dean, 2009; Kendall & Wickham, 1999), and Thai queer theory (Jackson, 2011; Jackson & Sullivan, 1999; Sreejak, 2025; Käng, 2012; Costa, 2007; Käng, 2012). This multi-layered approach allows for a nuanced interrogation of how media representations are produced, circulated, and contested in the Thai context (Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002; Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

Accordingly, this study asks:

1. How are gender and power negotiated in contemporary Thai LGBTQ+ media representations?
2. What roles do regulatory and industrial structures (state regulation, platformization, corporate influence) and local queer cultures (e.g., *kathoey*, *tom*, *dee*, activism, online communities) play in shaping—or limiting—these representations?

By analyzing selected mainstream and digital media texts—including television, film, YouTube, and TikTok—this research seeks to illuminate the contradictions between authentic visibility and tokenistic commodification, between resistance and normalization, and between global and local discourses of queerness in Thailand (Baudinette, 2023;

Sookpornsawan et al., 2024; Supasitthumrong & Charoensin, 2021; Kijratanakoson, 2023; Kirdnark, 2025; Mohammed et al., 2023). In so doing, it aims to contribute to the further development of critical discourse analysis and to a deeper, regionally grounded understanding of LGBTQ+ media politics in Southeast Asia (Fairclough, 1989; Wodak & Meyer, 2016; van Dijk, 2015; Blommaert, 2005; Blackwood & Wieringa, 2007; Peletz, 2009).

Theoretical Framework: The Triadic Model

Judith Butler's theory of performativity posits that gender is not a fixed identity but is constituted through repeated, socially regulated acts—gestures, language, dress, and comportment—solidifying over time into the illusion of a stable gender binary (Butler, 2006, 2021, 1988; Salih, 2002; Lloyd, 2007; Brady & Schirato, 2010; Fuiuagă, 2024). This framework is especially productive for the Thai media context, where gender is “done” through highly stylized visual and linguistic codes, reflecting and shaping wider cultural negotiations. In Boys' Love (BL) series such as *2gether: The Series* and *Bad Buddy*, lead characters enact “soft masculinity” and ambiguous intimacy, using bodily performance and speech to simultaneously subvert and reinforce gender norms for commercial ends (Baudinette, 2023; Chen, 2024; Supasitthumrong & Charoensin, 2021). Similarly, recurring portrayals of *kathoey* (trans women or effeminate men) in Thai television and film, with exaggerated femininity, makeup, and gesture, oscillate between comic relief and social pathos (Jackson, 2011; Trupp & Sunanta, 2017; Käng, 2012).

Digital platforms broaden these performative spaces. Influencers like Poyd Treechada and Andy Warisara on TikTok and YouTube blend global and local queer aesthetics, curating personas through makeup, dance, and narrative challenges—affirming a spectrum of gendered identities while navigating platform regulations and fan expectations (Mohammed et al., 2023; Kirdnark, 2025; Talbot et al., 2020; Bayramoğlu, Szulc, & Gajjala, 2024). Butler’s insight is clear: gender performance is always a negotiation with wider social and institutional powers.

Crucially, performativity is unstable and contestable. Each repetition carries the possibility for variation and subversion—“redoing” or “undoing” gender (Butler, 1988; Ahmed, 2017; Halberstam, 2018; Valentine, 2007). Thai LGBTQ+ media, then, is a terrain of active participation, contestation, and sometimes resistance.

Michel Foucault’s discourse-power analytics offer a complementary perspective, focusing not on individual acts but on the institutional and discursive structures that produce, regulate, and police what can be seen, said, and known about sexuality (Foucault, 1977; McHoul & Grace, 1993; Mills, 2003; Dean, 2009; Kendall & Wickham, 1999; Rose, 1999; Hook, 2007). Thai media, in Foucault’s terms, becomes a field of discursive struggle, with normality and deviance constituted through language, institutional practice, and surveillance (Fairclough, 1989; Wodak, 2009; van Dijk, 1988, 2015; Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002; Blommaert, 2005).

State and industry gatekeepers, such as the NBTC, regularly sanction or censor content that challenges “public morality” (Jackson,

2011; Kijratanakoson, 2023; Rattanasimakul et al., 2025), as seen in warning cards and edited scenes in BL dramas (Phruksapaisal, 2023; Hidayat, 2024; Charoenporn, 2023). Digital platforms further regulate through community guidelines and algorithmic policing, demonetizing or erasing flagged LGBTQ+ content (Mohammed et al., 2023; Sepulveda, 2025; Ferreyra, 2022). Foucault's biopower lens helps explain why influencers often self-censor for monetization and visibility, resulting in a sanitized queer presence (Kirdnark, 2025; Mohammed et al., 2023; Talbot et al., 2020).

Discursive authority thus emerges from a matrix of state, commercial, algorithmic, and audience power, producing highly uneven landscapes of LGBTQ+ visibility and silence (Fairclough, 1989; van Dijk, 2015; Wodak & Meyer, 2016; Sookpornsawan et al., 2024; Lin, 2025; Trupp & Sunanta, 2017).

Yet, a genuinely critical discourse analysis requires attention to Thai-specific identity categories and histories, as theorized by Peter Jackson, Sam Winter, and others (Jackson, 2011; Sreejak, 2025; Käng, 2012; Asia Pacific Transgender Network, 2019). Thai queer experience cannot be reduced to Western binaries; *kathoey*, *tom*, and *dee* are embedded in local cultural scripts and contested in everyday life (Blackwood & Wieringa, 2007; Peletz, 2009; Supasitthumrong & Charoensin, 2021; Fongkaew et al., 2019). Media draw on these identities as both narrative device and site of negotiation, while memes, hashtags, and independent web series represent grassroots resistance, even as the “pink economy” threatens to commodify difference (Baudinette, 2023; Kirdnark, 2025; Rattanasimakul et al., 2025).

Global scripts—imported from K-pop, Hollywood, or regional BL fandom—intersect and hybridize with local categories, producing dynamic new forms of queer representation (Baudinette, 2023; Chen, 2024; Mohammed et al., 2023; Blackwood & Wieringa, 2007). Thai queer theory insists on context-sensitive, historically grounded critique (Jackson, 2011; Jackson & Sullivan, 1999; Sreejak, 2025; Trupp & Sunanta, 2017).

The triadic framework—Butler, Foucault, and Thai queer theory—thus enables a multi-layered, locally attuned analysis, essential for grasping the ongoing negotiation of gender, power, and authenticity in Thailand’s evolving LGBTQ+ media landscape (Fairclough, 1989; Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002; Wodak & Meyer, 2016; Blommaert, 2005; Peletz, 2009).

Methodology

This study employs a desk-based, qualitative Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), a methodology particularly apt for interrogating Thai LGBTQ+ media where representation is highly mediated and subject to pervasive regulatory and commercial intervention (Fairclough, 1989; Wodak & Meyer, 2016; van Dijk, 2015; Blommaert, 2005; Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002). Desk-based CDA facilitates systematic analysis of media artifacts—television, film, digital content, scripts, captions, regulatory notices, and online commentary—allowing these texts to be examined as both products and producers of social discourse (Wodak, 2009; Machin & Richardson, 2008; Leitch & Palmer, 2010). Given the risks associated with direct participation in surveilled or politicized settings, this approach minimizes ethical complications by relying on public-domain sources and anonymized user content (Jackson, 2011; Foucault, 1978; McHoul & Grace, 1993; Browne & Nash, 2010).

The sample includes five Thai series/films drawn from both mainstream broadcast and streaming environments (2018–2025), chosen for their significance within Thailand’s contemporary LGBTQ+ media landscape in terms of cultural visibility, audience reach, industrial prominence, controversy, and relevance to questions of regulation and representation, chosen for milestone status, regulatory intervention, or controversy: *2gether: The Series*, *Bad Buddy*, *KinnPorsche*, *The Love of Siam*, and *Yes or No*. These titles were selected for their roles in triggering NBTC or corporate interventions, inspiring fan activism, or marking key moments in LGBTQ+ media discourse. The selection was purposive as each title was included because it represented a recognizable discursive moment in Thai queer media, whether as a milestone text, a commercially influential production, a site of censorship or public debate, or a culturally resonant work frequently referenced in scholarship and popular discussion. The inclusion of both mainstream and streaming texts reflects the hybrid media ecology through which Thai LGBTQ+ representation now circulates, where broadcast television, cinema, platform-based distribution, and social media discussion are deeply interconnected rather than analytically separable.

The apparent imbalance between Boys’ Love (BL) and Girls’ Love (GL) texts in the sample also reflects the wider industrial reality of Thai queer media production during the study period, in which BL has enjoyed significantly greater visibility, investment, and transnational circulation than GL. Accordingly, the sample does not claim numerical parity across subgenres; instead, it seeks to capture the most influential and

discursively significant texts available within the period under study. Nevertheless, this imbalance is acknowledged as a limitation of the study, as GL representation remains comparatively underexamined and warrants fuller treatment in future research.

For digital creators, four to six major Thai queer or ally YouTubers/TikTokers were selected based on reach, explicit LGBTQ+ focus, and engagement with power and surveillance (Kirdnark, 2025; Mohammed et al., 2023; Bayramoğlu et al., 2024; Talbot et al., 2020; Sepulveda, 2025). Notable examples include Poyd Treechada, Andy Warisara, ZaintSee, Bie The Ska, and GMMTV. These creators were included not as a statistically representative sample of all Thai LGBTQ+ digital voices, but as high-visibility cases that illuminate how queer self-presentation, platform governance, monetization, and audience interaction intersect in contemporary Thai digital culture.

Data collection systematically targets scripts, subtitles, social media posts, fan/creator hashtags, top-viewer comments, and regulatory warnings, sampled from both periods of peak controversy (e.g., NBTC actions, hashtag campaigns) and routine cycles (Baudinette, 2023; Kirdnark, 2025). All content is accessed via official platforms or public archives, with no direct subject involvement and strict anonymization of user data (Browne & Nash, 2010). This combination of textual, paratextual, and regulatory material was intended to strengthen the coherence of the dataset by tracing representation across production, circulation, reception, and control, rather than treating any single media form in isolation.

Analysis proceeds via four phases: (1) Textual analysis—examining language, imagery, and performativity (Fairclough, 1989; Blommaert, 2005; Wodak & Meyer, 2016); (2) Discursive practice—mapping power and production/consumption (van Dijk, 1988, 2015; Machin & Richardson, 2008; Richardson et al., 2014); (3) Socio-cultural practice—locating discourse in Thai socio-political context (Wodak, 2009; Richardson & Wodak, 2009; Hart, 2010); and (4) Triadic coding—applying a codebook based on performativity (Butler), power/regulation (Foucault), and local resistance/commodification (Jackson, Winter, Baudinette), refined iteratively for emergent Thai discursive patterns (Fairclough, 1989; Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002).

The coding and interpretation were conducted by the researcher through repeated close reading and comparative cross-checking of texts, scenes, captions, and audience discourse. While no formal intercoder was employed, analytic reliability was strengthened through iterative recoding, reflexive memoing, and repeated comparison across media forms and discursive sites. This study therefore adopts transparency and reflexivity, rather than statistical intercoder agreement, as appropriate standards of rigor for qualitative desk-based CDA.

Results: Triadic Analysis in Practice

A. Series/Film Analysis—Triadic Passages

1. *2gether*: The Series

Butler's performativity is central to *2gether: The Series*, where gender is not merely a topic but a lived, repeated act. The show's stylized performances—affectionate gestures, subtly feminized costumes for male leads, choreographed bodily intimacy—exemplify Butler's notion that gender is constituted through public repetition, not essential truth (Butler, 2006, 1988; Salih, 2002; Baudinette, 2023). The ritualized “confession” scenes are more than plot points: they are performative acts, enacting what Butler (2006, 2021, 1988) calls the sedimentation of gender—instilling the illusion of stable identity via public negotiation (Fuioagă, 2024; Supasitthumrong & Charoensin, 2021).

Foucauldian power operates as both presence and absence. NBTC warnings before intimate scenes, the bleeping of certain lines, and the pivoting of explicit intimacy into coded gestures all mark visible interventions of state and institutional power (Foucault, 2022, 2023; Rattanasimakul et al., 2025; Kijratanakoson, 2023). The series performs not only queer romance but also self-surveillance: characters, producers, and viewers learn the unspoken boundaries of “acceptable” queer desire, exemplifying Foucault's insight that power is productive as well as repressive, scripting the conditions of possibility for queer representation (Sepulveda, 2025; Mohammed et al., 2023; Baudinette, 2023; Wodak, 2009; van Dijk, 2015).

Thai queer theory reveals the limits and possibilities of local negotiation. While *2gether* avoids overt identification with categories like kathoey or tom, it embraces “safe androgyny,” palatable within the market logics of BL. Fan-driven hashtags and paratextual meme culture on Thai social media recode the show in distinctly Thai ways—deploying language, in-jokes, and community commentary to fill in gaps left by sanitized scripts (Jackson, 2011, 2020; Talbot et al., 2020; Ferreyra, 2022). As Jackson (2011) notes, such practices are not merely derivative but constitute “queer negotiation”—adapting global scripts to local desires and resistances, and repurposing market products as sites of micro-resistance.

2. Bad Buddy

The performance of gender in *Bad Buddy* is even more layered. The oscillation between rivalry and intimacy is choreographed via bodily codes—sports aggression, tenderness, stylized costuming—enacting Butler’s (1988) concept of “doing and undoing gender” (Lloyd, 2007). Recurring “tomboy” tropes in the supporting cast and ritualized coming-out scenes reinforce the constructedness of gender and queerness, demonstrating that visibility is not merely about inclusion but about how identity is staged, stylized, and made intelligible (Supasitthumrong & Charoensin, 2021; Sreejak, 2025).

Foucault’s analytic comes sharply into focus during the NBTC’s warning about a same-sex kiss—a moment that generated both regulatory backlash and grassroots resistance. The show’s creators and fans responded not through overt protest, but through digital meta-

commentary—Instagram posts, coded references, and apology livestreams—demonstrating Foucault’s principle that “where there is power, there is resistance” (Foucault, 1978; McHoul & Grace, 1993; Lin, 2025; Charoenporn, 2023; Dean, 2009; Fairclough, 1989; Phruksapaisal, 2023; Trupp & Trupp & Sunanta, 2017). The trending of #SaveBadBuddy exemplifies Foucauldian counter-conduct: fans leverage the same media apparatus that regulates them to articulate protest and demand visibility.

Thai specificity is visible in the show’s use of Buddhist motifs (karma, fate), queer banter in regional dialects, and nuanced references to kathoey identities. Rather than simply importing Western “coming out” scripts, *Bad Buddy* weaves queer experience into the grammar of Thai kinship, duty, and social belonging (Jackson & Sullivan, 1999; Trupp & Sunanta, 2017). Commodification is evident in the series’ profitability, but its engagement with local culture enables queer expression that is both subversive and marketable (Baudinette, 2023).

3. KinnPorsche

KinnPorsche is notable for its explicit, stylized queerness—drag performances, BDSM iconography, and overt declarations of non-heteronormative desire (Butler, 2006, 1988). The series foregrounds Butler’s “stylized repetition” via gender-bending costuming and repeated queer kinship rituals (Baudinette, 2023; Rattanasimakul et al., 2025), yet every transgression is commodified and algorithmically amplified for commercial gain.

Foucauldian power is tangible in the interplay between NBTC censorship (blurred intimacy, forced edits) and platform self-regulation (Kijratanakoson, 2023; Mohammed et al., 2023; Sepulveda, 2025). Fans circulate “safe for work” edits and online campaigns to protect the show, highlighting how resistance is itself shaped by the limits of visibility established by state and industry (Ferreyra, 2022; Talbot et al., 2020; Wodak, 2009; van Dijk, 2015; Barkho, 2011).

Thai queer theory illuminates how *KinnPorsche* both draws from and commercializes local queer cultures—kathoey side characters, queer-coded slang, and scenes set in LGBTQ+ nightlife districts. The “pink economy” is narratively foregrounded, confirming Jackson’s (2011) concept of “subversive inclusion”: queerness is made visible, yet always within marketable and regulated boundaries (Baudinette, 2023).

4. The Love of Siam

In *The Love of Siam*, queer desire is enacted through subtle touch, anxious glances, and repeated negotiation of language—performative acts that never escape the context of family, religion, and nation (Jackson, 2011; Trupp & Sunanta, 2017; Blackwood & Wieringa, 2007). The performance of gender and queerness is fraught and melancholic, always mediated by social expectation.

Power operates less overtly but no less forcefully. The film’s lack of NBTC warning is itself a sign of strategic self-censorship—producers knew what could not be shown (Jackson, 2011; Rattanasimakul et al., 2025). Mainstream media coverage provided partial legitimacy while

policing boundaries, illustrating discourse's capacity to both legitimize and contain (Wodak, 2009; Fongkaew et al., 2019).

Thai-specificity is foregrounded through Buddhist invocations, parental negotiation, and the film's subsequent deployment as an icon of tolerance—an object both for youth inspiration and commodified “inclusion” campaigns (Trupp & Sunanta, 2017).

5. Yes or No

Yes or No centers the performativity of “tom” and “dee” identities—lesbian desire is enacted through stylized haircuts, ritualized identity performance, and coded flirtation (Trupp & Sunanta, 2017; Butler, 1988). Every costume change and confession reinforces the constructedness of desire.

Foucault's analysis clarifies the film's careful avoidance of explicit sexuality, favoring romance and confession in school settings—a strategy that made queerness legible and marketable, but also sanitized (Fairclough, 1989; Rattanasimakul et al., 2025; Wodak, 2009).

Thai queer theory highlights the film's unapologetic deployment of “tom” and “dee,” with paratextual fan spaces—clubs, hashtags, interviews—offering sites for real Thai queer women's visibility, but again within commercialized and sanitized narratives (Jackson, 2011; Trupp & Sunanta, 2017; Käng, 2012).

B. Digital Creator Analysis—Triadic Lenses Applied

1. Poyd Treechada- Poyd’s digital persona demonstrates Butlerian performativity—her TikTok/YouTube content deploys visual glamour, stylized gestures, and repeated acts of self-identification (Butler, 1988; Kirdnark, 2025; Salih, 2002; Ahmed, 2017). “Coming out,” discussing body/voice/pronouns, are public acts constituting gender anew with each repetition.

Foucault’s lens reveals the boundaries Poyd negotiates: content remains within the limits permitted by platforms and sponsors—marketable, but rarely overtly political (Mohammed et al., 2023; Sepulveda, 2025; Talbot et al., 2020). Her marketability is itself a negotiation with power.

Thai queer tradition grounds Poyd’s content—use of local slang, references to Buddhist beauty, collaborations with kathoey icons—making her influence both locally rooted and globally legible (Jackson & Sullivan, 1999).

2. Andy Warisara- Andy’s work enacts gender trouble through parody, voice modulation, and gender-bending sketches (Butler, 2006; Halberstam, 2018). These acts disrupt heteronormative scripts through humor and repetition.

Foucauldian dynamics appear in periodic bans, content removals, and preemptive self-censorship—creators learn to modulate content in

response to algorithmic discipline (Mohammed et al., 2023; Sepulveda, 2025; Bayramoğlu et al., 2024; Talbot et al., 2020).

Her use of Thai idioms, parodies of kathoey culture, and campaign hashtags like #PrideThailand create spaces for queer resistance and storytelling (Ferreyra, 2022).

3. ZaintSee- ZaintSee's genre-blending parodies are pure performativity—gender is done through pronoun play, accents, and deliberate slips (Butler, 1988; Prosser, 1998). Foucault's framework explains the creator's navigation of algorithmic bans via alternative accounts and networks of marginalized creators (Sepulveda, 2025; Ferreyra, 2022).

The local is inscribed through jokes about Buddhist merit, riffs on kathoey tropes, and use of protest hashtags—making ZaintSee's work both resistance and reclamation (Jackson & Sullivan, 1999; Trupp & Sunanta, 2017).

4. GMMTV and Bie The Ska -These corporate platforms enact performativity contractually: diversity campaigns, BL drama, pride events—consistently on-brand but always verging on tokenism (Mohammed et al., 2023; Talbot et al., 2020). Foucauldian power is evident in their double-bind—pleasing sponsors, dodging sanctions, and maintaining algorithmic favor; public responses to controversy reveal the limits of corporate advocacy (Fairclough, 1989; Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

Both employ local discursive strategies—slang, queer influencer collaborations, hashtags—to legitimize and manage their audiences (Jackson & Sullivan, 1999; Baudinette, 2023).

C. Multimodal Artifacts

Scripts and subtitles from BL dramas like *KinnPorsche* and *Bad Buddy* stage gender acts through affectionate nicknames, ritual confessions, and visual cues of “safe” queerness (Butler, 1988; Supasitthumrong & Charoensin, 2021). TikTok trends—gender-swap filters, #TomDeeChallenge—perform and iterate gender for mass audiences (Bayramoğlu et al., 2024; Talbot et al., 2020).

Foucauldian operations of power manifest in NBTC warning cards, takedown notices, and forced apologies, demarcating the edge of allowable speech (Kijratanakoson, 2023; Barkho, 2011; Rattanasimakul et al., 2025). Social media commentaries rehearse both surveillance (“this got past censors!”) and solidarity (“we want real representation!”) (Ferreya, 2022; Talbot et al., 2020).

Thai queer language, memes, and hashtags (#PrideThailand, #SaveBadBuddy) mobilize both protest and community. Fan memes riff on Buddhist motifs or karma, blending resistance with local subversion (Jackson, 2011; Trupp & Sunanta, 2017; Ferreya, 2022). These discursive artifacts demonstrate how Thai queer communities continually adapt, resist, and celebrate through media.

Triadic Synthesis

Each sub-theme is systematically interpreted through the three analytical lenses, highlighting the interplay and tension that single-theory approaches miss.

Tokenism is a persistent paradox: public declarations of pride, stylized intimacy, and inclusion of kathoey/tom characters seem radical but risk, sedimenting new normative constraints through repeated representation (Butler, 2006, 1988; Baudinette, 2023). Foucault clarifies how such gestures are appropriated by the state and industry as markers of “tolerance,” while simultaneously preserving underlying hierarchies of regulation and control (Foucault, 1978; McHoul & Grace, 1993; Fairclough, 1989). Regulated scripts and algorithmic suppression domesticate queerness, channel queer expression into acceptable forms (Mohammed et al., 2023; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). For instance, NBTC warnings and edited scenes in series such as *Bad Buddy* demonstrate how visibility is permitted but carefully managed. However, Thai activism and meme cultures rework these representations, transforming token inclusion into sites of negotiation and, at times, protest (Jackson, 2011; Ferreyra, 2022).

Commodification operates as both threat and opportunity: local queer identities become media products, packaged for market and global consumption (Baudinette, 2023). Stylized repetition, sold is mobilized as a market strategy, where “authenticity” becomes a consumable aesthetic (Baudinette, 2023; Trupp & Trupp & Sunanta, 2017). Foucault’s normalization analysis reveals how commodification is always bounded

market visibility is constrained by regulatory and platform logics (Kijratanakoson, 2023; Sepulveda, 2025). Yet, local scholarship suggests this visibility can enable both community resources and subversive acts within commercial scripts (Jackson & Sullivan, 1999).

Resistance performed through everyday practices—through subversive performativity, meme culture, and grassroots digital activism (Butler, 1988; Talbot et al., 2020; Trupp & Sunanta, 2017). Yet such resistance remains embedded within power structures, resistance is always situated within circuits of power—censorship, platform bans, and commercial pressures continually circumscribe its scope (Foucault, 1978; McHoul & Grace, 1993; Mohammed et al., 2023). What appears as progress is thus always negotiated—dynamic interplay of agency and constraint.

The triadic reading reveals that Thai LGBTQ+ media is neither simply liberated nor wholly co-opted. Rather, it is negotiated field of representation, where performance, regulation, and local discourse are constantly reworked and reimagined.

Discussion

The triadic analytical framework employed in this study—synthesizing Butler’s performativity, Foucault’s discourse-power, and Thai queer theory—enables a more comprehensive interpretation than single-theory approaches. By weaving these three strands together and applying them to every media artifact, the analysis moves beyond surface

description to illuminate the deeper dynamics of representation, power, and negotiation in Thai LGBTQ+ media.

Single-theory models, while valuable, generate partial insights. For example, performativity theory alone highlights how gender and sexuality are enacted through stylized repetition in Thai TV and film (Butler, 1988; Fuioagă, 2024), but risks overlooking how those very performances are delimited by the operations of state and corporate power. Likewise, a purely Foucauldian critique maps how discourses of “normality” and “deviance” are enforced via NBTC guidelines, platform censorship, and self-surveillance (Foucault, 1978; McHoul & Grace, 1993; Fairclough, 1989; Kijratanakoson, 2023), yet may miss the generative force of local, lived identities or the resilience of queer cultural forms. Thai queer theory, when used in isolation, foregrounds the specificity of local identities—kathoey, tom, dee, and the nuances of Thai resistance—but cannot fully account for the transnational logics of commodification or the micro-technologies of media power (Jackson, 2011; Jackson & Sullivan, 1999; Sreejak, 2025).

The triadic model, by contrast, reveals how these dimensions operate simultaneously. This is particularly clear in the analysis of tokenism: what appears as “progressive” inclusion when seen only through the lens of performativity is revealed, through Foucauldian and local lenses, to be a tightly managed process, policed by state agencies and corporate sponsors and frequently emptied of its subversive charge (Butler, 1988; Foucault, 1978; McHoul & Grace, 1993; Trupp & Trupp &



Sunanta, 2017). When all three lenses are brought to bear, we see not just that queer identities are represented, but how their visibility is continually negotiated—claimed, constrained, and re-signified—within intersecting regimes of power, market, and culture (Baudinette, 2023; Ferreyra, 2022).

Similarly, the commodification of LGBTQ+ identities emerges as neither unambiguously liberatory nor wholly co-opted. The triadic approach demonstrates how local identities (e.g., kathoey, tom, dee) are mobilized as media commodities, with their authenticity staged for consumption (Baudinette, 2023). At the same time, the marketization of queerness is always entangled with both the soft control of regulatory agencies (Kijratanakoson, 2023) and the creative agency of queer Thais, who continually subvert, adapt, or “queer” these commodified forms for their own ends (Jackson & Sullivan, 1999; Trupp & Sunanta, 2017).

Crucially most importantly, the triadic model clarifies that Thai queer identities are neither merely performed nor simply regulated. They are **actively negotiated at the intersection of global theory and local discourse**—through ritualized bodily acts, institutional constraints, and grassroots activism (Butler, 1988; Jackson, 2011). It is at this intersection that new forms of resistance and community emerge: hashtag campaigns, meme cultures, and digital content creation all operate as practices of everyday negotiation (Ferreyra, 2022; Talbot et al., 2020). Even moments of apparent capitulation or commercial compromise can be re-read as tactical—what de Blackwood & Wieringa (2007) calls “making do” within the cracks of power.

Finally, applying all three lenses to each artifact clarifies the conditions under which representation becomes possible, and crucially, who benefits or loses in the process (Fairclough, 1989; Sepulveda, 2025). This multi-layered reading exposes the hybrid logics of the Thai media landscape—its moments of genuine progress, its persistent conservatisms, and the continual creative labor of those negotiating their lives within, and sometimes against, its boundaries.

The triadic approach provides a necessary framework to the complexity of LGBTQ+ representation in Thailand's media ecosystem. It provides the conceptual tools to read both the promise and the peril of new forms of visibility—and to recognize, always, the unfinished project of queer liberation.

Conclusion

This study affirms that an integrated; triadic Critical Discourse Analysis —drawing together Butler's theory of performativity, Foucault's analytics of discourse-power, and the specificities of Thai queer theory—provides a comprehensive lens for understanding the shifting terrain of gender and power in Thai LGBTQ+ media.

The proliferation of queer visibility across mainstream series, films, and digital platforms in Thailand, is accompanied by persistent tensions, is marked by tensions between the promise of authentic representation and the realities of tokenism, commodification, and persistent regulatory constraint (Butler, 2006, 1988; Foucault, 1978; McHoul & Grace, 1993;

Jackson, 2011; Jackson & Sullivan, 1999; Baudinette, 2023). This research has shown that gender and power in contemporary Thai LGBTQ+ media are not simply represented but are actively negotiated through iterative performative acts, state and platform surveillance, and the ongoing contestation of local and global discursive resources. Apparent increases in LGBTQ+ visibility are often structured by NBTC interventions, algorithmic suppression, and commercial market logics, creating a fragile equilibrium where queer identities are rendered simultaneously visible and governable (Rattanasimakul et al., 2025; Kijratanakoson, 2023; Mohammed et al., 2023; Sepulveda, 2025).

At the same time, resistance remains present but conditional. Thai queer creators and communities persistently rework imported media scripts, deploying local language, meme culture, and ritual to contest erasure, produce new forms of belonging, and press against the boundaries set by both state and industry (Jackson & Sullivan, 1999; Ferreyra, 2022). These findings directly answer the central research questions by demonstrating that gender and power in Thai LGBTQ+ media are not only shaped by regulatory and industrial structures, but are also continually redefined from below by the adaptive strategies and creative interventions of local queer cultures.

These findings highlight the value of a context-sensitive, layered analytical approach. the triadic framework not only identifies the visible contours of representation but unearths the mechanisms of inclusion, exclusion, and negotiation that define Thai queer life in the media sphere.

This model exposes how “progress” in representation is always contingent, provisional, and negotiated—its possibilities shaped by the interplay of global theory, local knowledge, and structural power.

While not prescriptive in intent, the findings suggest the importance of more inclusive media practices that engage with the lived realities of Thai LGBTQ+ communities. (Manushya Foundation, 2022; Lin, 2025). Future research should extend this analysis across underrepresented identities (particularly GL narratives), broader regional contexts, and longitudinal developments in platform governance and media production. (Trupp & Sunanta, 2017; Sookpornawan et al., 2024).

Limitations of the Study

This study is based on a relatively small, purposive sample of media texts and digital creators, and therefore does not aim for statistical generalization. The dataset reflects an imbalance toward BL content, which mirrors industry trends but limits fuller representation of GL narratives. As a desk-based CDA, the study relies on publicly available materials and does not include interviews with creators or audiences. Additionally, the analysis was conducted by a single researcher, and while rigor was ensured through iterative coding and reflexive analysis, no formal intercoder reliability was applied. These limitations define the scope of the study and indicate directions for future research.

Ultimately, This study demonstrates that the politics of representation in Thai LGBTQ+ media cannot be understood without recognizing the perpetual negotiation of performance, power, and local



resistance—a negotiation that is ongoing, unfinished, and central to the unfinished project of queer liberation in Thailand and beyond.

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