

Uncovering Issues on “Pink Pound” Queer Representations on (Thai) Media Platforms: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

This study investigated the representation of LGBTQ+ individuals in Thai media, focusing on how presentations reflected – or failed to reflect – the diversity of identities and experiences within the community. Utilizing queer theory and a framework centered on gender marginalization within the Asian context, specifically Thailand, the research delved into the complex interplay between media representations, societal perceptions, and the acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals. Cultural and religious factors were examined for their influence on shaping public attitudes. A comprehensive, systematic literature review, conducted using the Bangkok University database and employing keywords such as “queer media representation” and “Thailand,” provided a foundation for the analysis. Five articles met the criteria of showcasing queer representations on Thai media platforms, while those unrelated to media representation were excluded. Additionally, several case studies were included to support the findings from the systematic literature review. Utilizing queer theory, the research aims to offer actionable insights for media organizations. This will help them to promote more inclusive and nuanced portrayals of the LGBTQ+ community, ultimately contributing to a more equitable and accepting society. In essence, addressing gender stigmatization involves embracing a diversity of sexual preferences, orientations, and identities.

Keywords: LGBTQ+, queer representation, media portrayal, stigmatization, stereotyping

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Introduction

Although LGBTQ+ individuals are increasingly accepted and visible worldwide, they still face both predictable and unpredictable challenges that can pressure them and lead to marginalization in various aspects of life. Several studies highlight the specific lived experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals in various contexts. According to the United Nations Development Programme (2019), there is a general trend of positive attitudes towards LGBTQ+ individuals in Thailand. However, many LGBTQ+ individuals continue to face resistance from their families and communities regarding their identities. This resistance often results in stigma, discrimination, and violence, which can lead to significant mental health and wellness consequences for LGBTQ+ individuals. This is further confirmed by the study of Maji et al. (2024), which found that when LGBTQ+ employees are not treated well, it negatively impacts their job satisfaction, career advancement, and family life. Wittaya Luangsaipong, founder of Siam Pride, an LGBTQ-focused travel agency and subsidiary of Oriental Escape, also stated that many Thai operators and business owners in the tourism industry lack knowledge and understanding of gender diversity and how to treat LGBTQ+ individuals appropriately (Shoowong, 2023).

Across the continent, the study by Phillips et al. (2020) conducted in Australia revealed that participants often concealed their sexual identities in their home countries, particularly from family members, due to fears of judgment and discrimination linked to stigma surrounding sexual identity and HIV. While some participants were open with friends, they still faced considerable challenges. Although they experienced greater sexual freedom and acceptance in Australia, many remained reluctant to disclose their identities because of internalized stigma and shame. The stigma faced in their home countries contributed to anxiety surrounding HIV testing in Australia, driven by fears of receiving a positive result. Additionally, some participants reported experiencing racism and a lack of acceptance within Australia's gay community, particularly on dating apps. Concerns about discrimination and judgment regarding their sexual identities significantly impact social connections for Asian-born gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (gbMSM) living in Australia, while HIV-related stigma further heightens their anxiety about testing. The situation in New Zealand is similar, for many individuals, their understanding of gay and bisexual identities aligns with Western definitions; however, for others, these terms are shaped by Filipino cultural and contextual meanings. This includes the use of "gay" as a broad category that may encompass those who identify as transgender. Participants reported actively and carefully managing their diverse identities. Although disclosing their identities to family members was relatively common, it was often framed as a matter of tolerance rather than full acceptance. Disclosing one's identity was generally easier, although some participants still exercised control over when and how they disclosed their identities in certain work and medical contexts (Adams et al., 2022).

Although LGBTQ+ individuals face marginalization and discrimination, they actively work to establish their personal identities and boundaries. In Malaysia, they employ "destiny" and "rights" to challenge the arguments presented by heterosexuals, which often include "legal," "religious," and "traditional values." Additionally, LGBTQ+ participants differentiate themselves from others through the use of referents and personal pronouns that convey their perspectives. Specifically, they refer to themselves as "us" and categorize heterosexuals as "them." When interacting with fellow LGBTQ+ individuals, they use "I," while they refer to those of different sexual orientations as "they" or "you" (Ting et al., 2023).

Media representation plays a crucial role in shaping public attitudes how LGBTQ+ individuals are depicted by media outlets. The researchers appreciate the insights shared by Janamnuysook et al. (2024) regarding the summary statement made by Jamie Clayton in the documentary “Disclosure: Trans Lives on Screen,” which addresses the position of transgender individuals. Clayton stated, “The more positive representation there is, the more confidence the community gains, which then puts us in more danger.” While positive representation can help raise public awareness about the existence of transgender communities, in other words, it may also lead to feelings of threat, prompting some individuals to defend against this existence due to a lack of knowledge and understanding. Therefore, media outlets have a crucial role in presenting and reporting various LGBTQ+ issues, experiences, and stories to enhance public understanding of this group. In simple terms, media agencies are vital in shaping public attitudes.

Several previous studies have examined this portrayal, especially in Asia. For instance, Ng et al. (2024) conducted a study in Singapore that analyzed narratives in newspapers, highlighting their role as a powerful medium in shaping public perceptions of society as a whole. It was found that news agencies focus significantly on reporting LGBTQ+ issues, with a much higher emphasis on gay identities compared to bisexual, lesbian, and transgender identities. A local pride event enjoys a high level of acceptance. While lesbian, gay, LGBTQ+, and transgender identities are generally perceived neutrally, sentiments towards bisexual identities tend to be more negative. Furthermore, the framing of LGBTQ+ identities in connection with various topics is notably interesting. Specifically, “lesbian” is often associated with sensationalized cinema, while “gay” is linked to concerns about hate crimes. In contrast, “bisexual” relates to population surveys, and “transgender” is associated with challenges such as transitioning, alienation, and suicide (Ng et al., 2024).

Marginalization and discrimination are evident in both Vietnam, China, and Malaysia. In Vietnam, Nguyen (2019) discusses how homosexual individuals are defending themselves against the heteronormativity. At certain points, the study highlights challenges to this prevailing culture. In China, likewise, the conflict originated between Xixi, a college student, and Jinan University Press, a publisher, when Xixi legally challenged the classification of homosexuality as a psychosexual disorder. Unfortunately, that claim was withdrawn from court. In this context, it has been found that Chinese netizens on Sina Weibo perceive homosexual individuals as “unhealthy, infertile, disruptive, and corrosive.” This study also highlights the significant role that social and cultural determinants play in shaping public attitudes toward homosexuality (Zhang & Zhuang, 2023).

Furthermore, Boys' Love series are popular among Malaysians for several reasons, including escapism, self-identification, and entertainment. These motivations for media consumption can be understood through the fact that homosexual individuals are not widely accepted and seek opportunities to express their identities while being perceived as legal (Jerome et al., 2022). Bias and stigmatization are still reflected in Malaysian media outlets. A recent study conducted by Roslani and Jamal (2024), likewise, revealed that an analysis of news reports from The Star regarding Nur Sajat, a local transgender woman, demonstrates misrepresentation through the use of names that Nur Sajat has not chosen and incorrect gender identification. Such practices undermine her true transgender identity. Although The Star has reported positively on her success in her business career, it also presents negative portrayals of Nur Sajat, framing her with a criminal profile. It is recommended that media outlets exercise caution in their language use and show respect for LGBTQ+ individuals and their identities.

In Thailand, there is a significantly low level of news coverage about LGBTQ+ individuals, and misrepresentation often portrays them negatively, reinforcing harmful stereotypes and discriminatory language. This can be attributed to a lack of understanding of sexual orientations, gender, and sexuality (Fongkaew et al., 2019). Additionally, Nal (2020) highlights that social and cultural factors, such as social norms, influence how people respond to LGBTQ+ portrayals in TV series. The study reveals that those who are less likely to adhere to and respect social norms in Thailand engage less in discussions about media representation of LGBTQ+ individuals. In contrast, individuals are more inclined to follow Thai social norms tend to criticize LGBTQ+ portrayals in TV series to a greater extent. However, it is encouraging to see that the visibility of homosexuality, particularly in Boys' Love series, has increased in mainstream media platforms compared to previous years. Additionally, representations of sexuality now extend beyond just the stereotype of the third sex (Supawantanakul, 2023).

A review of literature published on Human Resource Management over the past six decades shows increased attention to diversity and inclusivity in the workplace. While gender and racial demographics have been of significant interest, previous studies have insufficiently addressed the understanding and analysis of religious factors (Triana et al., 2021). Cultural expectations and marginalization, likewise, pose significant challenges for LGBTQ+ students pursuing degrees internationally. A review of existing literature indicates that these students, who navigate life both as international students and as LGBTQ+ individuals, encounter difficulties living abroad, even while they seek out more accepting environments (Campbell & Dezago, 2024). Rich et al. (2021) also emphasized that religious beliefs and personal relationships are the two primary factors shaping attitudes towards LGBTQ+ individuals among Koreans. In Spain, additionally, both positive and negative attitudes towards transgender individuals are influenced by the psychological factor of empathy. Specifically, a lower level of empathy is likely to lead to negative attitudes and increase transphobia among university students towards transgender people (Esteban-Mora, 2022). In the research market, understanding consumer behavior related to LGBTQ+ individuals should not be underestimated, given the growing size and significance of this market (Coombes & Singh, 2022).

The issue of LGBTQ+ identity, therefore, has become increasingly complex in today's society. Its scope and terminology have expanded in both breadth and depth, influenced by a variety of perspectives and viewpoints. This study aims to analyze the representation of queer individuals in (Thai) media and explore the various cultural and religious contexts that shape people's views on LGBTQ+ individuals. It conducts a systematic literature review with a particular focus on Thai media platforms.

Literature Review

It is essential to provide an overview of queer theory, as a foundation of analysis in this paper, which was initiated by Michel Foucault, acknowledging that gender and sexual identities are shaped by social and power dynamics. This perspective influences how people in various cultures perceive gender and sexual identities, moving beyond biological and physical factors. In other words, queer theory encourages individuals to think outside conventional frameworks, recognizing that not only traditional heterosexuality and cisgender identities exist, but also a diverse range of other genders and sexualities (Pollak Library, 2025). The term “queer” is also complex, encompassing non-heterosexual identities and resistance to heteronormative structures like marriage and capitalism. Queer theory, rooted in

political activism, emphasizes the subjective experiences of queer individuals. Originating from movements like ACT UP and Queer Nation during the AIDS epidemic, it critiques mainstream LGBT organizations that prioritize assimilation. A key concept that arose is “homonormativity,” which highlights how certain advances in LGBT rights benefit primarily white, middle-class individuals while marginalizing others, such as people of color and transgender individuals. This concept illustrates how progress can inadvertently reinforce inequality, visible in areas like gentrification and advertising (Grzanka, 2019). As a result of the extensive use of queer theory, particularly among activists, conflicts have emerged between its original concepts—challenging heteronormativity and advocating for social change—and contemporary interpretations. Therefore, it is essential to honor the theory's originality by analyzing concrete lived queer experiences rather than engaging in unclear and abstract theorizing (Halperin, 2021).

According to Broto (2021), as previously mentioned, LGBTQ+ individuals face obstacles related to violence and discrimination. From the perspective of queer theory, to promote gender and sexual binaries and diversity, it is recommended to incorporate LGBTQ+ viewpoints in the participatory planning process of community development projects. However, the integration of LGBTQ+ issues into participatory planning processes is hindered by three main factors. Firstly, their exclusion from broader community matters results in significant gaps. Additionally, heteronormativity is often regarded as the social norm within development and urban planning contexts. Finally, discussions about sexuality and identity are restricted due to concerns about safety and communication.

In psychology, queer theory has been widely applied. However, there are three notable circumstances that should be acknowledged. First, “coercive queering” refers to the practice of labeling individuals as “queer” even if they do not identify as such, which often affects transgender and gender-diverse people. This distinction underscores the difference between queer theory, which is oppositional, and queer studies, which may sometimes adopt queer theory in ways that can be exclusionary. Second, the impact of racial privilege within queer theory and its application in psychology is examined. This encompasses acknowledging the contributions of Black feminist perspectives, analyzing how racial hierarchies influence psychological interpretations of subjectivity, investigating racialized desire, and steering clear of Western-centric criticisms that overlook indigenous ways of knowing. Additionally, class privilege should be taken into account. Third, the lasting influence of psychoanalytic theory, especially the work of Lacan, on queer theory is acknowledged. While this relationship can be beneficial, it may also impede the acceptance of queer theory within psychology's more cognition-focused mainstream. Nonetheless, Lacan's idea of the “sexual non-relationship”—which stresses that a subject is formed through absence and desire—resonates with queer theory's rejection of straightforward body-identity connections and provides a useful framework for understanding sex and gender (Riggs & Treharne, 2017).

Methodology

This study employed a systematic literature review (SLR) to address the two research objectives. The SLR methodology was chosen for its rigorous, replicable, and transparent approach to data collection and analysis, minimizing bias (Mengist et al., 2020). This involved establishing clear research questions, developing a comprehensive search strategy, applying strict inclusion criteria, and utilizing appropriate quality assessment tools (Shaheen et al., 2023). Using the keywords “queer media representation” and “Thailand,” a search of the Bangkok University database yielded 212 initial results; however, only nine met the

inclusion criteria. It was vital to note at this point that the term “media representation” referred to any media platforms.

Unfortunately, upon reviewing and analyzing each article, only five were selected for inclusion in this study. The remaining four articles were excluded for various reasons, i.e. one article primarily reviewed various previous studies conducted in the US, Germany, Thailand, and China. Additionally, this study utilized to explain the LGBTQ situation in Thailand was based on research conducted by Chao, S. (2022). Signifying tomboy and the Thai TV Series Club Friday to be continued: She changed. *Communication, Culture & Critique*, 15(3), 433-439. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ccc/tcab060> for the study of Zhao and Ng (2022); one paper primarily addressed issues related to the career paths of transgender individuals and did not adequately cover media representation for the study of Fontana and Siriwichai (2022); no additional data were collected; instead, only existing literature was reviewed (Fontana & Siriwichai, 2022). Furthermore, this paper included studies from other countries in the Asia-Pacific region for the study of Janamnuysook et al. (2024); and one paper was excluded because it did not address media representation. Instead, it focused on comparing the health risks faced by cisgender and transgender individuals by the study of Wichaidit et al. (2021).

Below was a list of the five articles that meet the requirements.

- Shimauchi, S. (2023). Thai boys love drama fandom as a transnational and trans-subcultural contact zone in Japan. *Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, 37(3), 381-394. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2023.2237709>
- Chao, S. (2022). Signifying tomboy and the Thai TV Series Club Friday to be continued: She changed. *Communication, Culture & Critique*, 15(30), 433-439. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ccc/tcab060>
- Kijratanakoson, N. (2023). Journalistic role performance of the Thai press on the issue of transgender rights. *International Journal of Communication*, 17, 1232-1254.
- Amaki, Y. (2024). Acceptance of sexual and gender minorities through romance TV drama series with LGBT characters: The voices of college students in Thailand. *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, 16(2) , 1-20. doi: <https://doi.org/10.21659/rupkatha.v16n2.20g>
- Ocha, W. (2023). Buddhism, gender, and sexualities: Queer spiritualities in Thailand. *Equality, Diversity & Inclusion*, 42(5), 685-705. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1108/EDU-01-2020-0025>

Results and Discussion

In the findings section, the results were divided into two parts based on the research objectives. The first part addressed current media representations of LGBTQ+ individuals, followed by an examination of how cultural and religious factors influenced public awareness and attitudes towards LGBTQ+ communities.

Current Media Representations of LGBTQ+ Individuals

In this part of the findings, although it was difficult to identify a specific number, the increased visibility of LGBTQ+ individuals in Thai media representation corresponded with a greater number of risks and challenges faced by these individuals. Thanks to accessible social media platforms like YouTube, Boys' Love or “tai-numa” fans had created communities that promoted diversity, equality, and combat marginalization and stereotypes. These gatherings fostered a shared culture and sense of belonging, enhancing understanding and awareness of

LGBTQ+ issues beyond simple media consumption. This also helped women and LGBTQ+ individuals gain more confidence and appreciation, as access to LGBTQ+ content, particularly from Thailand, had been limited in Japan (Shimauchi, 2023). Thai content, in general, had also gained widespread acceptance and distribution among Chinese youth (Jirattikorn, 2021).

According to Kijratanakoson's (2023) study, a journalistic analysis of the popular English newspaper *Bangkok Post* revealed that trans women were the primary focus, while other genders and sexualities were given less attention. Referring to the study by Fongkaew et al. (2019), media representation and portrayal, as well as the genres of stories narrated—such as journalistic styles in newspapers and television dramas, films, and series—had differentiated and distinguished transgender individuals from other genders and sexualities, such as lesbians and gays. This portrayal often presented and marginalized transgender individuals as jokes or sources of amusement stereotypes (Kijratanakoson, 2023). While Boys' Love series featuring male-male relationships had been widely produced and embraced, a qualitative study from paper argued that the increase in these romance dramas had not made Thai society more accepting of LGBTQ+ individuals. It suggested that these dramas were often viewed as fantasies and that their disconnect from reality did not lead to genuine support for LGBTQ+ communities. The self-promotion of actors was seen as more significant than education about LGBTQ+ issues, and the series may not provide accurate information about the LGBTQ+ community, potentially leading to misunderstandings. Additionally, while these series were popular among youth, they might not be well accepted by Thai society as a whole. Furthermore, although the dramas could enhance the visibility of LGBTQ+ culture, they might simultaneously promote discrimination. Critics also pointed out that these series merely depicted romantic relationships without genuinely supporting the LGBTQ+ community, and the sexualized portrayals within the dramas may be misleading (Amaki, 2024).

Gender and sexuality in Thai media representation had also evolved beyond traditional and existing sexual identities. Although this study referenced Chao's (2022) research on lesbianism in the Thai series “Club Friday To Be Continued: She Changed,” it also discovered some noteworthy shifts in representations of lesbianism. It was noted that in the past, the term “tomboy” or “tomboyism” was used to describe stereotypes of masculine-identified lesbians. In this series, a tomboy protagonist embodies a tom identity but subsequently falls in love with a man, prompting changes in her appearance. This scenario could lead to an internal conflict regarding the character's identity and attractions. The boundary of gender and sexuality associated with “tomboy” had been broadly expanded from an identity to a style, influenced by pan-Asian popular culture (Chao, 2022) and arguing non-homosexuality, given by the queer theory.

The researchers observed that the representation of LGBTQ+ individuals across various media platforms often lacked depth regarding their sexual preferences, orientations, and identities, with limitations particularly apparent for certain orientations. Additionally, media portrayals of LGBTQ+ individuals seemed to be primarily geared toward monetization. In Thailand, for instance, the production of Boy's Love and Girl's Love series had been prolific; however, other sexual preferences, orientations, and identities often received less attention. Despite the conclusion of these series, monetization efforts persisted. The actors in these series often become idealized couples who resonated with fandoms and communities, evolving into idols, influencers, presenters, brand ambassadors, business owners, and more.

Some of these series had even been sold internationally, expanding their influence beyond local borders.

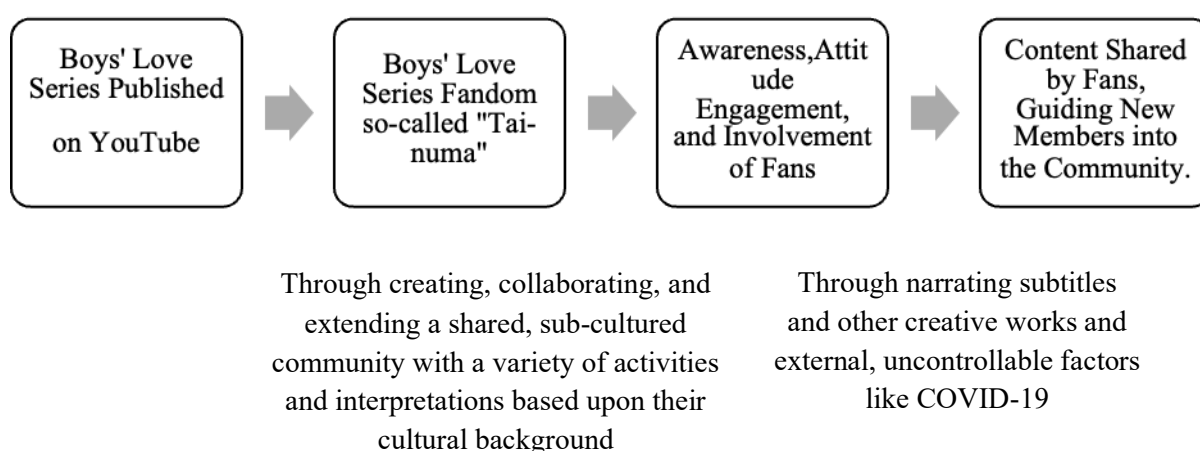
Cultural and Religious Influences on Public Awareness and Attitudes Towards LGBTQ+ Communities

While various factors, such as the internet and geography (as discussed in Chao, 2022), were used to explain these changing circumstances, this study focuses exclusively on cultural and religious determinants, specifically fandom culture (Shimauchi, 2023), consumption culture and consumer culture (Amaki, 2024; Chao, 2022; Kijratanakoson, 2023), and religious background (Ocha, 2023). Cultural and religious factors can serve as determinants that both encourage and discourage various genders and sexual identities in Thailand.

In this study, references to cultural phenomena and cultural dynamics specifically pertained to a certain subculture of fandom (Shimauchi, 2023) and its associated consumption culture and consumer culture (Amaki, 2024; Chao, 2022; Kijratanakoson, 2023). The study by Shimauchi (2023) provided a comprehensive and insightful understanding of how LGBTQ+ communities could enhance their collective power through fandom subculture, presented in a clear and engaging way. The researchers would now like to present and summarize the key points in the following figure.

Figure 1

Media Representations of LGBTQ+ Individuals on YouTube, Along With the Influences of Fandom Subculture, Encourage Understanding and Foster Rapport With LGBTQ+ People



Source. Concluded from Shimauchi (2023)

By understanding and applying the framework of Shimauchi (2023), this study identified four main stages for empowering LGBTQ+ communities through fandom as a subculture. In detail, Thai Boys' Love series were not only broadcasted on mainstream media but also widely shared on social media platforms like YouTube, ensuring extensive outreach both nationally and globally. This accessibility allowed individuals from around the world to easily access this type of content. Consequently, fan communities known as "Tai-numa" emerged and actively developed across the globe. These "Tai-numa" fans could be viewed as a centralized, shared, and subcultural community dedicated to creating, collaborating, exchanging, and expanding knowledge and understanding through diverse practices and interpretations, based on their personal cultural backgrounds.

This two-way interaction fostered a sense of belonging while simultaneously raising awareness, shaping attitudes, and increasing engagement and involvement in LGBTQ+ activities and initiatives as well as rights. Additionally, community members shared content related to Boys' Love series by providing subtitles and other creative works, which further enriched and encouraged new members to join the community. Beyond the power of fandom culture in amplifying LGBTQ+ voices, external uncontrollable factors, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, also played a significant role in influencing community development and outreach (Shimauchi, 2023).

The study by Amaki (2024) effectively utilized Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) to explain and interpret the phenomena observed. According to EBSCO (2017), it was noted that not all cultures qualify as consumer cultures; specifically, the term referred to societies driven by capitalism and a pervasive desire to purchase goods and commodities. The United States was frequently cited as a quintessential example of a consumer culture. In such societies, most individuals felt compelled to engage in consumption, regardless of gender, age, or socioeconomic background. Media—through advertising and commercials—continuously reinforces this impulse by portraying consumption as a pathway to social status, happiness, and well-being. Additionally, consumption was often seen as a social obligation that boosts self-esteem; those who refrained from participating may feel unsuccessful, marginalized, or excluded. Conversely, people outside the dominant consumer culture—whether by personal preference or lack of resources—highlight that consumerism is not purely based on free choice. For many low-income individuals, consumption is mainly utilitarian and restricted to immediate needs, with their options limited by socio-economic constraints. This challenges the notion that consumer culture is solely about freedom of choice, demonstrating that participation is often inaccessible or unsustainable for many, which can lead to feelings of deprivation and social exclusion.

As demonstrated in Ocha's (2023) study grounded in Theravada Buddhism, this religious tradition could serve as both an empowering and a limiting influence on LGBTQ+ identities, gender roles, and equality. An effective approach would be to adopt a flexible religious framework that fully embraces cultural diversity and promotes modernization, thereby respecting social equality, diversity, and human rights. This could be successfully achieved when individuals—whether laypeople or monks—deeply understand the core principles of Theravada Buddhism, particularly two of its essential concepts: *anicca* (impermanence), which signified that all things were transient and nothing is permanent, and *anatta* (non-self), which indicated that the body and mind were not inherently separate or owned by an individual. Recognizing these principles suggested that it was unnecessary to perceive LGBTQ+ identities as fixed or unchangeable. Even if someone identifies as LGBTQ+, their body, mind, and soul could evolve or transform over time (Ocha, 2023).

This understanding also helped explain phenomena observed in studies such as Chao's (2022), where a main actress shifted her style and identity from tomboyism to femininity. It reinforced the idea that the attributed of existence were not always static, contrary to common stereotypes. In particular, societal stereotypes—such as those targeting transgender sex workers, known as *katoey*—often categorized as *phi kanun*—have historically undermined religious credibility and beliefs by portraying these individuals as disrupting religious norms and moral standards (Ocha, 2023).

The objectives of this study were to analyze the representation of queer individuals in Thai media and to explore the cultural and religious contexts influencing societal views on

LGBTQ+ individuals. The findings indicated that LGBTQ+ individuals received greater acceptance on Thai media platforms, especially on popular social media outlets like YouTube (Shimauchi, 2023). However, in mainstream media, particularly concerning trans women, the issue remained marginalized and often treated as a subject of ridicule (Kiratanakoson, 2023). This circumstance can be described that, when considering the characteristics of media platforms, traditional and mainstream media are typically one-way communication, where information flows from journalists to the general audience. Compared to international online news headlines, Thai online news headlines tend to reflect more negative attitudes toward transgender people. Additionally, transgender individuals are often collectivized and homogenized—treated as the same in news reports. In other words, transgender people are portrayed through a one-sided perspective, which is accepted as an accurate and real depiction of the truth (Ninpanit, 2020).

In contrast, social media platforms facilitate two-way dialogue, enabling individuals and users to connect, interact, and engage with each other physically and emotionally around a common subject. By applying the social media maturity model, which includes four stages—pre-social, connection, engagement, and social advantage—social media evolves to effectively influence and resonate within people's minds (Chen, 2010). Social media platforms like YouTube serve as a foundation for fans to share and express their sense of belonging and identity, fostering the development of communities where members can communicate and interact with one another (Shimauchi, 2023).

Similarly, Anurak et al. (2021) explained that the perception of trans women as a joke stems from media portrayals, such as Thai films and movies, which often depict this group as humorous characters who are sexy, carefree, promiscuous, unsuccessful in love, lacking dignity, and not accepted by society. Sirote Klampaiboon, as cited in Itthipongmaetee (2017), emphasized that “Some reporters don’t really understand the issue... They need to realize that they’re telling someone’s story and they don’t need to make a joke of someone.” It is crucial for journalists to focus on two main aspects: developing a deep understanding of specific issues, such as those concerning LGBTQ+ people in this study, and adhering to legal and ethical standards. The researchers believe that communicators and journalists should adopt an egalitarian perspective, meaning that they should respect diversity and differences regardless of individuals’ identities, sexual preferences, or orientations, as suggested by Keeler (2023).

Despite the increase in media content depicting Boys' Love relationships, these are often viewed more as commercial and promotional tools rather than educational resources. This approach does not necessarily contribute to a correct understanding and acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals and can distance participants from the realities they face (Amaki, 2024). Additional spaces should be allocated to support LGBTQ+ identities and preferences (Guest editorial, 2023).

While some may argue that the focus on sexual preferences, orientations, and identities is limited due to the lack of specific emphasis in this study, the researchers acknowledge such perspectives. This is because sexual preferences, orientations, and identities encompass more than what individuals typically perceive or understand about themselves. As communicators, the researchers view this study as a preliminary, representative effort aimed at supporting queer theory and promoting the fundamental human rights that affirm the equality of all individuals.

Conclusion

By utilizing queer theory, this research aims to provide practical recommendations for media organizations, which play a crucial role in shaping public perceptions of LGBTQ+ individuals. It seeks to encourage more inclusive and nuanced representations of the community. Accepting LGBTQ+ individuals as fellow humans necessitates fostering openness to diversity and differences at all societal levels and respecting the changes that vary across different contexts. Addressing gender stigmatization requires embracing a broad spectrum of sexual preferences, orientations, and identities. These strategies ultimately contribute to a more equitable and accepting society. This study has certain limitations that need to be addressed. Future research should focus on a comparative cultural study, as cultural and religious factors significantly influence perceptions and opinions regarding LGBTQ+ issues. It would be insightful to explore the perspectives of individuals from various countries. To achieve this, inclusive qualitative research methods such as in-depth interviews, participant and non-participant observations, focus groups, and other innovative approaches like workshops, simulations, role-plays, and events should be utilized. Additionally, developing and testing educational and persuasive campaigns can effectively promote diversity and equality.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

The researchers acknowledge the use of various AI-assisted tools for paraphrasing, summarizing, extending, and revising the content presented here to enhance the language's clarity, readability, coherence, completeness, and academic professionalism. However, all content has been sought, developed, structured, organized, and verified by the researchers themselves.

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