

การประกอบสร้างอัตลักษณ์ของหญิงข้ามเพศในข่าวภาษาอังกฤษ
ในประเทศไทย: การศึกษาตามแนวทางศึกษาวาทกรรมเชิงวิพากษ์
Constructing Identities of Transgender Women in Thailand's
English-Language News: Critical Discourse Studies

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บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยการศึกษาวาทกรรมเชิงวิพากษ์นี้มุ่งสำรวจการประกอบสร้างอัตลักษณ์ของหญิงข้ามเพศผ่านกลวิธีทางภาษาในการนำเสนอผู้แสดงทางสังคม ในข่าวออนไลน์ภาษาอังกฤษในประเทศไทย เพื่อสะท้อนให้เห็นถึงอุดมการณ์ที่เชื่อมโยงระหว่างการใช้ภาษาและลำดับชั้นทางสังคม การวิจัยใช้วิธีเชิงคุณภาพเพื่อเปรียบเทียบการนำเสนอผู้แสดงทางสังคมในข่าวจำนวน 108 ข่าว ที่เผยแพร่ระหว่างช่วงปี พ.ศ. 2562 - 2567 จากสื่อกระแสหลัก คือ หนังสือพิมพ์บางกอกโพสต์ และสื่อท้องถิ่น คือ หนังสือพิมพ์พัทยา เมล โดยประยุกต์ใช้กรอบแนวคิดการนำเสนอผู้กระทำทางสังคมของ van Leeuwen (2008) เพื่อวิเคราะห์เปรียบเทียบเชิงภาษาศาสตร์ ผลการศึกษาพบว่า กลวิธีที่ปรากฏเด่นชัดที่สุดในหนังสือพิมพ์บางกอกโพสต์ คือ การเรียกขานแบบเป็นทางการ โดยเฉพาะการใช้คำนำหน้าชื่อ 'Ms' ร่วมกับนามสกุล และการระบุหน้าที่การทำงานตามด้วยตำแหน่งวิชาชีพชั้นสูงซึ่งเป็นการประกอบสร้างอัตลักษณ์แบบ "ชนชั้นนำผู้ได้รับการยอมรับ" ที่ผูกติดความชอบธรรมไว้กับสถานะทางเศรษฐกิจ ในขณะที่หนังสือพิมพ์พัทยา เมล กลวิธีที่พบบ่อยที่สุด คือ การเรียกขานแบบไม่เป็นทางการ เช่น การใช้ชื่อเล่นหรือคำนำหน้าว่า 'น้อง' และการระบุลักษณะทางกายภาพซึ่งเป็นการประกอบสร้างอัตลักษณ์แบบ "ผู้เปี่ยมเบนในท้องถิ่น" ผ่านการตีตราเชิงลบและการลดทอนความเป็นมนุษย์ให้เป็นเพียงวัตถุแห่งความบันเทิงหรืออาชญากรรม งานวิจัยจึงสรุปว่า สื่อข่าวภาษาอังกฤษในไทยกำลังผลิตซ้ำลำดับชั้นทางสังคมภายใต้การยอมรับแบบมีเงื่อนไขผ่านการใช้กลวิธีทางภาษาที่แตกต่างกันอย่างชัดเจน

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Abstract

This study employs critical discourse studies (CDS) to investigate the construction of transgender identities through the linguistic representation of social actors in English-language Thai news, exposing the ideological link between language use and social stratification. This study adopts a comparative qualitative design, analysing 108 news articles published between 2019 and 2024 from a mainstream news outlet, the *Bangkok Post*, and a local news outlet, the *Pattaya Mail*. This comparative approach utilizes van Leeuwen's (2008) social actor representation framework to identify how linguistic choices differ across socioeconomic contexts. The findings reveal that the most prevalent strategies in the *Bangkok Post* are formalization, specifically the use of the honorific 'Ms' with surnames, and functionalization based on high-status professional roles. These strategies construct a sanitized elite identity, granting legitimacy contingent upon economic success. Conversely, the *Pattaya Mail* most frequently employs informalization through nicknames or the Thai diminutive 'Nong,' and physical identification that focuses on bodily attributes. This constructs a local deviant identity, framing transgender women through pejorative labeling and marginalizing them as objects of spectacle or crime. This study concludes that linguistic stratification in Thai outlets reinforces a class-based hierarchy of conditional acceptance, where dignity is dictated by socioeconomic status.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Studies, Identity, Media Representation, Social Actor Representation, Thai Transgender Women

Introduction

Language is not merely a descriptive tool but a powerful social practice that constructs, maintains, and challenges identities. In the context of Thailand, the representation of transgender women (TGWs), historically referred to as *kathoeyes*, has been shaped by a complex negotiation between traditional visibility and modern rights-based discourse. While Thailand is often exoticized globally as a "gay paradise," Jackson (1999) has long argued that this acceptance is conditional, operating within a strict hierarchy that separates the high-class, associated with beauty, wealth, and talent, from the low-class, associated with poverty, sex work, and deviance. Building upon Jackson's observation, this study argues that media representation not only reflects a monolithic gender bias but also actively constructs classed identities. By analyzing linguistic strategies, this study demonstrates that while gender ideology persists as a

repressive force, it is the socioeconomic status of TGWs that determines whether the media grants them “Ms.,” level dignity or reduces them to a ‘sticky-fingered’ biological spectacle. Therefore, focusing on class construction allows for a more nuanced understanding of how Thai society’s conditional acceptance is enforced linguistically.

While there is high visibility of transgender women in Thai media, the existing scholarship has predominantly focused on broad cultural stereotypes, such as the comedic joker or the tragic victim (Kijratanakoson, 2023; Ninpanit, 2020). Most of this research relies on content analysis to identify recurring tropes. However, a significant gap remains: relatively few studies have utilized critical discourse studies (CDS) to examine how social class intersects with gender identity, particularly in the English-language press, which targets specific socioeconomic readerships. As a result, the linguistic mechanisms through which ‘high-class’ and ‘low-class’ transgender women are differentiated remain underexplored.

Despite the academic attention to media bias against TGWs (e.g., Kijratanakoson, 2023; Ninpanit, 2020), there remains a limited body of research that specifically examines how English-language news media, through which Thai gender culture is communicated to a global audience, linguistically reproduce this class-based dichotomy. Previous studies have largely focused on quantitative contrasts between positive and negative representations, often overlooking the qualitative nuances of class. To address this gap, the present study explicitly identifies socioeconomic class and linguistic strategies, specifically nomination, classification, and the contrast between functionalization and physical identification, as the primary variables of analysis. By examining these variables, this research investigates how English-language outlets in Thailand linguistically stratify transgender women not merely by gender but, more specifically, by socioeconomic class, thereby producing forms of conditional legitimacy.

Research objectives

This study aims to fill this gap by shifting the analytical lens from media bias to class construction. The specific research objectives are:

1. To analyze and compare the linguistic strategies, specifically nomination, classification, and the contrast between functionalization and physical identification, employed to represent transgender women in mainstream versus local English-language news outlets in Thailand.

2. To investigate how these linguistic choices construct distinct identities and reproduce ideologies related to social class stratification, particularly through the dichotomy of the sanitized elite and the local deviant.

Research scope

This study examines the linguistic representation of transgender women in two distinct English-language online news outlets in Thailand: the *Bangkok Post* (BP), representing the mainstream national press targeting a business-oriented audience) and the *Pattaya Mail* (PM), representing the local community press serving an expatriate and tourist demographic. The dataset spans a five-year period from 2019 to 2024, and is comprised of 108 news articles collected from diverse sections of the publications (e.g., crime, lifestyle, social news) based on specific linguistic markers (e.g., transgender woman, ladyboy, *kathoey*). The analysis is specifically limited to three dimensions of van Leeuwen's (2008) framework: (1) nomination, strategies for naming to establish authority, (2) classification, strategies for labeling identity groups, and (3) the interplay between functionalization and physical identification, strategies for defining actors by their socioeconomic role versus their biological attributes.

To address the identified gap, this study compares two distinct media ecologies: the mainstream national press, BP, and the local community press, PM. This comparison is critical for understanding how the target audience of a publication, influences identity construction, specifically, why a transgender subject is legitimized as 'Ms.' in one outlet while labeled a 'ladyboy' in another. The significance of this study lies in its potential to expose the gatekeeping mechanisms of language. By revealing how acceptance is granted or withheld based on socioeconomic utility, this research offers a deeper understanding of the conditional acceptance that characterizes Thai society.

Literature review

Critical discourse studies and the representation of the social actor framework

This study is situated within critical discourse studies (CDS) and adopts a qualitative approach to interpreting the functional nuances of language in context. Following the foundational principles of the field, this study specifically focuses on the role of discourse in the social reproduction of power abuse and inequality (van Dijk, 2009), particularly in relation to gendered and class-based stratification. By viewing news discourse not as a neutral reflection of reality but as a site of ideological struggle,

this study aims to reveal how linguistic choices function systematically to legitimize specific social hierarchies while marginalizing others.

To operationalize this critique of power, this study employs van Leeuwen's (2008) social actor representation framework as its primary linguistic toolkit. As detailed in the Methodology section, this framework provides the necessary instruments to deconstruct how social actors are represented in news texts. By analyzing the selected sociosemantic categories through the critical lens of CDS, this study moves beyond mere description to evaluate how these linguistic forms operate as gatekeeping mechanisms. This theoretical alignment ensures that the analysis illuminates how specific discursive strategies, whether through naming conventions or identity labeling, actively construct a conditional acceptance that grants dignity to elite subjects while stripping it from the marginalized.

Media representation and the transgender body

A central tension in the representation of transgender women is the discursive focus on corporeality. Previous scholarship indicates that media narratives often reduce transgender individuals to their physical attributes, a process Billard (2016) identifies as objectification, which frames the subject as a biological spectacle rather than a whole person. In the Thai context, this focus on the body, such as references to surgery, hormones, or physical features, often serves to demarcate social standing. Jackson (1999) observes a historical distinction where the 'high-class' transgender woman is defined by her intellect and beauty, whereas the 'low-class' *kathoey* is depicted through physical excess and deviance. Consequently, the inclusion or exclusion of physical descriptions in news reports is not a neutral stylistic choice but a strategic one. This study posits that the media's fixation on the body functions as a tool for "othering," particularly when describing subjects from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

Social class and conditional acceptance

While Thailand is globally perceived as tolerant, this study argues that such tolerance mirrors Winter's (2009) broader observation that acceptance of transgender women is often conditional and contingent upon specific cultural norms. Transgender women are tolerated largely when they confine themselves to specific entertainment or service roles, or when they achieve significant economic success. However, a critical gap remains in understanding how this ideology is reproduced in English-language news media, which serve as a primary conduit of Thai gender culture to international audiences. Although recent studies have examined media bias against transgender women (e.g., Kijratanakoson, 2023; Ninpanit, 2020), they have primarily focused on

positive versus negative sentiment, often overlooking the qualitative nuances of class construction.

This study addresses this gap by synthesizing the concept of conditional acceptance with linguistic analysis. It argues that the news-discourse bond in English-language outlets actively reinforces a class-based hierarchy. By juxtaposing a mainstream national outlet against a local one, this research aims to reveal how divergent linguistic strategies, specifically nomination, classification, and the contrast between functionalization and physical identification, are employed to validate the elite while stigmatizing the local, thereby enforcing a strict socioeconomic stratification under the guise of news reporting.

Methodology

Research design

This study employs a qualitative critical discourse studies (CDS) theoretical framework, drawing on van Dijk (2009), to investigate the linguistic construction of transgender identities. Unlike quantitative content analyses that focus on the frequency of terms, this research prioritizes the discursive construction of social class and status. The study adopts a comparative design, juxtaposing a mainstream national outlet against a local community outlet to reveal how divergent editorial ideologies influence the construction of the elite versus the deviant.

Data source

To capture the news-discourse bond across distinct socioeconomic contexts, data collection targeted two English-language news outlets in Thailand representing divergent editorial spheres. On one end of the spectrum is BP, Thailand's oldest and leading English-language daily. Targeting an educated, middle-to-upper-class readership that includes expatriates and the international business community, this outlet serves as a proxy for the normative standard of journalism in the country. Conversely, the study examined PM, a local outlet serving the Eastern Seaboard, particularly the tourist-centric city of Pattaya. With a focus on community news, tourism, and crime, it provides a localized perspective frequently associated with the nightlife and entertainment sectors. The strategic selection of these opposites facilitates a critical comparison between the national elite discourse of the mainstream press and the local community discourse of the regional outlet.

Data collection

Data collection was conducted via keyword searches on the official online news archives of both publications, employing purposive sampling to curate a dataset spanning from January 2019 to December 2024. To ensure the corpus authentically captured the representation of TGWs, article selection was governed by strict inclusion criteria. Specifically, texts were required to contain defining keywords such as ‘Thai transgender women,’ ‘transgender,’ ‘ladyboy,’ or the Thai word ‘*kathoey*.’

Furthermore, to guarantee content relevance, the study prioritized articles where TGWs functioned as the primary social actors, either as subjects or objects of the news event, thereby excluding incidental mentions. Finally, to verify that the discourse had significant public reach, selected articles were required to be freely accessible and demonstrate tangible audience engagement, such as shares or comments. This rigorous selection process yielded a final corpus of 108 news articles, comprising 64 from BP (totaling 25,388 words) and 44 from PM (totaling 9,152 words).

Due to space limitations, the References section lists only the news articles explicitly cited in the text, as illustrative examples. The complete corpus of 108 articles is retained by the researchers and is available upon request.

Analytical framework

To operationalize the analysis of class construction, this study employs van Leeuwen’s (2008) Social Actor Representation framework as its primary coding instrument. While the original framework offers a comprehensive inventory of over thirty sociosemantic categories, this study strategically isolates three specific dimensions, nomination, classification, and the contrast between functionalization and physical identification, as they represent the most salient mechanisms for constructing the sanitized elite versus local deviant dichotomy in the context of transgender representation.

The first dimension, nomination, investigates the politics of naming to examine how social distance and authority are established. This category connects to the research question by revealing the level of respect afforded to the subject. Evidence for this dimension is drawn from the presence of formal honorifics (e.g., “Ms”), which signal high status, contrasted with informalization strategies such as the use of nicknames (e.g., “Lizzie”) or diminutives (e.g., “Nong”), which often function to infantilize the social actor or strip them of adult agency (van Leeuwen, 2008).

Complementing this is the dimension of classification, or identity labeling, which examines how the subject is culturally categorized. This dimension analyzes the specific noun phrases used to label the group to determine whether the classification carries pejorative connotations. The analysis distinguishes between neutral, clinical terms (e.g., transgender woman) and culturally loaded or stigmatizing labels (e.g., ladyboy, *kathoey*), thereby revealing how specific lexical choices can serve to marginalize the subject within the social hierarchy.

Finally, the study examines the interplay between functionalization and physical identification to determine the social value assigned to the actor, specifically, whether they are defined by their socioeconomic utility (role) or reduced to their biological existence (body). Functionalization is evidenced by terms denoting activities, occupations, or professional roles (e.g., CEO, business tycoon), whereas physical identification is evidenced by linguistic references to somatic attributes, appearance, or surgical modifications (e.g., implanted breasts, surgery). Contrasting these two categories is critical for this study, as it exposes the mechanism of othering, whereby elite subjects are legitimized through their intellect and function, while local subjects are objectified through their bodies.

Table 1: Social Actor Categories

		Category			
		Nomination (The Politics of Naming)		Classification (Identity Labeling)	Functionalization vs. Physical Identification (Role vs. Body)
Code	Formalization	Informalization		Functionalization	Physical Identification
Description	Surnames with honorifics (e.g., Ms., Dr.) indicating respect and adult status	Given names, nicknames, or diminutives (e.g., “Nong,” “Lizzie”) indicating familiarity or infantilization.	- The head nouns used to classify subjects. - The semantic prosody of terms such as “transgender woman” (standardized) versus “ladyboy” (localized), - Modified by adjectives (e.g., “sticky-fingered” vs. “successful”).	Defining the subject by what they do (e.g., “CEO,” “thief,” “sex worker”), serving as a marker of socioeconomic utility.	Defining the subject by how they look (e.g., “implanted breasts,” “surgery,” “masculine features”).

Data analysis

The data analysis was conducted using a qualitative critical discourse studies approach, employing a systematic, three-phase coding process to ensure empirical rigor.

In the first phase, linguistic coding, the entire corpus of 108 articles was closely read and coded using van Leeuwen’s (2008) social actor categories. The analysis specifically focused on identifying nomination strategies (e.g., honorifics vs. nicknames), classification strategies (e.g., functionalization vs. classification), and physical identification (e.g., references to surgery or body parts). To ensure reliability, the coding was performed

iteratively, with ambiguous cases discussed between the researchers until consensus was reached.

The second phase involved thematic categorization. During this stage, the recurring linguistic patterns identified in Phase One were grouped into broader discursive themes. It was through this inductive process that two distinct identity clusters emerged. The term ‘sanitized elite’ was coined by the researchers to describe the pattern observed in BP, in which subjects were consistently legitimized through formal titles and professional roles, effectively sanitizing them of the stigma typically associated with transgender identity. Conversely, the term ‘local deviant’ was coined to describe the pattern in PM, in which subjects were frequently objectified through informal naming and physical descriptions, thereby tethering them to narratives of deviance and the sex industry.

The final phase was ideological interpretation. Drawing on the foundational principles of CDS (van Dijk, 2009), specifically the role of discourse in the reproduction of power and inequality, these constructed identities were interpreted to reveal the underlying ideologies of class stratification. The analysis examined how the linguistic choices functioned as gatekeeping mechanisms, reproducing a system of conditional acceptance in which transgender women are only validated when they conform to elite socioeconomic norms, however if they do not conform, they will remain marginalized within society.

To ensure the rigor of the coding process and minimize researcher bias, an inter-coder reliability check was conducted. A second independent coder (a postgraduate researcher in applied linguistics) blindly coded a random subset of 24 articles (approx. 22% of the corpus). Reliability was calculated using Percent Agreement and interpreted through Landis and Koch’s (1977) benchmarks. The analysis yielded a “Substantial” agreement level of 63.8% in identifying social actor strategies. When disagreements arose, the researchers convened a consensus meeting to refine the coding definitions, ensuring a consistent application of the analytical framework across the full dataset.

Research Results

This study analyzed 108 news articles from BP and PM. The comparative analysis reveals that linguistic strategies differ significantly between the two outlets. Based on the patterns of formalization and pejorative labeling identified in the coding process, this study categorizes the constructed identities into two distinct themes: the Sanitized Elite, a term coined to describe identities legitimized through wealth and formal registers,

and the Local Deviant, identities marginalized through criminal association and informal registers. The following sections detail the linguistic realization of these themes according to the social actor representation categories: nomination, classification, and physical identification.

Nomination strategies: Formalization vs. Informalization

The strategy of nomination, or how social actors are named, serves as the primary mechanism for establishing social distance and authority. The analysis shows that BP systematically employs formalization to integrate TGWs into the sphere of formal public life. When reporting on high-status individuals, the mainstream press strictly adheres to the female honorific “Ms” followed by the surname. This is evident in the coverage of business tycoon Anne Jakkaphong:

Extract (1): “But Ms Jakkaphong said in a statement that the acquisition was an opportunity to evolve the brand” (News Agencies and Online Reporters, 2022)

By syntactically aligning the transgender subject with the standard female honorific, the text may create a categorized individuality that demands respect equal to that of cisgender heterosexual professionals.

In stark contrast, PM relies on informalization, specifically the use of the Thai diminutive ‘Nong’ (younger sibling) or playful nicknames. As van Leeuwen (2008) notes, informal nomination functions by framing subjects as characters in a local spectacle. Even when celebrating a beauty queen, the language infantilizes the subject:

Extract (2): “Now 20, ‘Nong Rock’ took what she learned and beat out 29 other contestants” (Warapun Jaikusol, 2020)

Furthermore, in crime reports, PM often refers to subjects by bare nicknames, creating a sense of familiarity that implies disrespect:

Extract (3): “The confrontation, captured in a viral video, shows Mr. Yiam a.k.a. Lizzie pursuing and physically assaulting a Russian tourist” (Pattaya Mail, 2023a)

Classification strategies: Functionalization vs. Pejorative classification

Classification assigns social actors to specific classes or roles. The findings reveal that legitimacy in these texts is inextricably linked to economic function.

BP prioritizes functionalization, defining TGWs through high-status professional roles. The transgender identity is secondary to their socioeconomic utility:

Extract (4): “the most powerful trans woman in the world, Jakkaphong ‘Anne’ Jakrajutatip, CEO of JKN Global Group Plc, has just made her dream come true” (Supoj Wancharoen, 2022)

Furthermore, when the term ‘transgender’ is used in BP, it is often modified by descriptors of wealth, sanitizing the identity through its proximity to capital:

Extract (5): “According to Forbes, Anne is the third richest transgender person in the world... Thailand’s first transgender billionaire.” (Dumrongkiat Mala, 2020)

Conversely, PM employs classification with negative semantic prosody. The analysis identifies a recurring collocation where the local term ‘ladyboy’ is tethered to criminality through pejorative adjectives:

Extract (6): “The Indian embassy will have more to complain about after yet another of its citizens lost his wallet to some sticky-fingered ladyboys.” (Pattaya Mail, 2022a)

Extract 7 further reinforces the aforementioned point by constructing a collective deviance, framing the group as a public nuisance rather than individuals.

Extract (7): “Korean tourist pickpocketed by Pattaya’s notorious transgender thieves” (Pattaya Mail, 2022b)

Physical identification: The invisible vs. the corporeal

The final category, physical identification, reveals a divergence between the mind and the body.

In BP, physical descriptions of TGWs are notably absent. The narrative in Extract (4) focuses on capabilities and business models, effectively rendering the transgender body invisible in order to emphasize intellectual merit. In contrast, PM frequently reduces the subject to physical identification, focusing on bodily attributes or modifications.

Extract (8): “People tried to convince the woman to come down, but were greeted with insults and flashes of her implanted breasts.” (Pattaya Mail, 2023b)

Extract (9): “A drunken and blood-smeared Supoj Krongthong” (Patcharapol Panrak, 2020)

This semantic focus on “implanted breasts” or “blood-smeared” bodies reduces the subject to a biological spectacle, reinforcing the narrative that the “local” transgender woman is defined by her corporeality, whereas the “elite” is defined by her intellect.

Discussion

This study investigated the linguistic representation of transgender women in Thai English-language online news. The findings confirm that representation is bifurcated by the outlet’s target audience, constructing two opposing identities: the sanitized elite in BP and the local deviant in PM.

The divergence in nomination strategies, formalization in BP versus informalization in PM, reflects a deep-seated class construction (Jackson, 1999). By consistently using ‘Ms’ and professional titles, BP validates TGWs by integrating them into the formal social order. In contrast, PM’s use of nicknames, for example, ‘Lizzie,’ aligns with van Leeuwen’s (2008) observation that informalization can function as a strategy of delegitimation, signalling that the social actor does not require the respect accorded to full adults. This linguistic infantilization reinforces the ideology of conditional acceptance (Winter, 2009), suggesting that dignity is not a universal right but a privilege reserved for the wealthy.

It might be argued that the difference in representation merely reflects the disparate nature of the news events; BP covers business news, while PM covers local crime. However, critical discourse studies posit that media texts do not simply mirror reality but actively construct it through the process of selection (van Dijk, 2009). The ‘sticky-fingered ladyboy’ in PM is not an objective description but a stylized construction of deviance. Even in crime reports, standard journalism could employ neutral terms such as ‘suspect’; the choice to use pejorative classification and focus on ‘implanted breasts’ reveals an editorial ideology that commodifies the ‘low-class’ TGW as an exotic or dangerous object for the tourist gaze.

The Body as a Site of Othering

The findings regarding physical identification further illuminate the mechanism of othering. BP’s erasure of the body allows the elite subject to be judged on merit (mind), whereas PM’s fixation on surgery and nudity tethers the local subject to their biology (body). This supports Billard’s (2016) argument that focusing on the transgender body acts as a delegitimizing tool. This dichotomy reproduces the historical Thai hierarchy

noted by Jackson (1999), where the *kathoey* is associated with physical excess and poverty, while the acceptable transgender woman is sanitized and intellectualized.

The sanitized elite and local deviant are not just reflections of individuals but products of a news-discourse bond that caters to specific audiences. The mainstream press validates transgender identities only when they fit the neoliberal ideal of success, while the local press preserves the deviant stereotypes compatible with the sex-tourism narrative.

Conclusion and suggestions

This study concludes that linguistic choices in English-language Thai news function as a gatekeeping mechanism for social class. Mainstream outlet constructs a sanitized elite identity compatible with global norms, but it restricts this validity to the wealthy. Local outlet preserves the exotic/deviant identity compatible with sex-tourism narratives, stripping the working-class TGW of dignity through informal naming and physical objectification.

To achieve true equality, media discourse must decouple respect from wealth. It is insufficient to simply adopt politically correct terms; media practitioners must dismantle the class-based hierarchy by beginning to humanize the local TGW, the street performer, and the service worker, beyond the tired stereotypes of crime and cabaret. Future research should explore how these class dynamics play out in Thai-language media to see if the “news-discourse bond” differs in the vernacular context.

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