

# Gender Performativity and Non-Binary Identities on Social Media: An Analysis of Chris Derek's Instagram Content in Judith Butler's Theory Framework

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## Abstract

*This study investigates how non-binary identity is constructed and performatively represented through the social media platform Instagram, using Indonesian public figure Chris Derek as a case study. Employing Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity within the critical theory tradition, the research explores three key dimensions of Instagram content: performative visuals, performative narratives, and digital symbols. Ten posts with the highest engagement containing non-binary identity markers—visually, textually, or symbolically—were purposively selected and analyzed. The findings reveal that Chris Derek's gender performance is a complex negotiation between personal identity expression, professional aesthetic strategy, and participation in digital queer communities. Feminine visual representations and hashtags such as #nonbinarymodel and #pride emerge as core strategies of affirmation. The study concludes that social media, particularly Instagram, functions not only as a platform for self-display but also as a symbolic political arena where gender is negotiated, reproduced, and contested. This research contributes to the expansion of queer and digital communication studies in the Indonesian context, where such explorations remain limited.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The development of digital media in the last two decades has fundamentally changed the way individuals present, negotiate, and produce their identities in public spaces. In particular, this shift is most pronounced in gender expression, where social media platforms, such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, not only serve as visual communication channels, but also provide symbolic arenas that empower individuals to construct and perform their identities in ways that transcend conventional boundaries. Studies have shown that these platforms provide tools that enable individuals, especially those coming from non-binary identities, to operate in more inclusive and supportive spaces (Kondakciu et al., 2022).

Non-binary identities are not only visible in online visibility, but also serve to redefine gender norms and representations in the global digital realm. Individuals with non-binary identities use social media to display their bodies, share personal narratives, and reconfigure categories of masculinity and femininity through innovative aesthetic forms. Research shows that non-binary individuals are able to build communities of solidarity through editorial and activist posts, which broadly manifests that social media functions

more than just a platform for self-exhibition; they become a crucial medium of exchange in the negotiation of the meaning of identity in the public arena (Tortajada-Giménez et al., 2013).

On the other hand, the understanding of gender has also shifted from a rigid concept to a more dynamic process, where non-binary identities are seen as the result of ongoing social interactions, mediated by technology and societal responses. In this regard, the theory of gender performativity introduced by Judith Butler provides an important framework for understanding that gender is not a static attribute, but is the result of social actions that are performatively engaged and can change over time. Social media as a visual communication space plays a role in the creation and repetition of these gender expressions, through a combination of body visualization and the effective use of digital language (Kondakciu et al., 2022).

Examining non-binary expressions of identity on social media requires us to see this as a performative practice that goes beyond mere representation; there are social and political dimensions involved in how individuals embody and make sense of their existence. A close analysis of how these performativities are represented on social media is essential, as they not only reflect identities but also serve to shape and regulate social understandings of those identities. With the increasing visibility of non-binary people, their contributions as active agents of change in constructing and discussing identities amidst narratives that are often ensnared in binary and heteronormative paradigms become increasingly strategic. Further studies on this phenomenon are expected to provide new insights into the complex interplay between bodies, symbols, and digital aesthetics in shaping the meaning of gender in the 21st century (Gentzler et al., 2023).

In a global context that increasingly opens up space for diverse gender expressions, it is important to see how these performative practices are manifested locally and contextually. Non-binary representations on social media are inseparable from the dynamics of culture, social norms, and structural constraints that bind queer bodies in different digital spaces. Although social media offers the potential for decentralizing identity narratives, its use always intersects with the cultural values that underlie the society in which the individual is located. Therefore, observing non-binary representation practices is not only important to do theoretically and globally, but also through socioculturally specific case studies. This is where it is important to examine how non-binary individuals in Indonesia—who are in a relatively conservative cultural framework—use social media to negotiate their existence.

One public figure worth noting in this context is Chris Derek, an independent musician and model from Indonesia who openly identifies as non-binary with the use of *they/she* pronouns. Active on Instagram with an artistic visual approach and strong aesthetic curation, Chris is known for a number of local fashion campaigns and editorial shoots that show his body in androgynous and feminine gender expressions. In addition to showing his professional side as a model and creator, Chris also often shares personal reflections on gender identity, his life experiences as a queer in Indonesia, and his involvement in issues of non-binary representation and visibility. His courage to appear openly in the digital public space makes Chris Derek not only an object of representation, but also a symbolic agent in the renegotiation of established gender norms.



Figure 1. Chris Derek's Instagram Account Profile

The existence of Chris Derek's non-binary identity is also explicitly confirmed through his Instagram profile (@chrissderek), where they list the pronoun “they/she” as a marker of gender identity. In the bio column, Chris calls himself an “artist” and links the account to queer-based music, modeling, and personal branding. This profile is not only a statement of identity, but also a form of social declaration that social media is used as a medium of resistance to dominant gender norms. The open mention of pronouns becomes a performative element in the context of Judith Butler—namely as a speech *act which* not only depicts, but also creates and reinforces gender existence through symbolic actions. Thus, the Instagram bio is not just self-information, but also part of an overall digital performance that strengthens the visibility of non-binary identities in online spaces.

One of the most striking forms of identity articulation in Chris Derek’s Instagram account is the combination of body representation and reflective emotional narrative. In a post-dated June 8, 2020, for example, Chris uploaded a portrait of himself in a state of undress, showing a body with long hair, a blank expression, and a pose that does not indicate conventional masculinity. The accompanying caption reads: “These past 6 months of 2020 have been a rocky path for me, especially having to deal with a lot of things simultaneously while struggling with my own self. My point is, we’ve all gone through hell, and I think we’ll always be ready to even face the worst.”



Figure 2. Chis Derek's Instagram Content June 8, 2020

This upload represents a form of performativity that does not only rely on non-binary visual symbols such as fashion or makeup, but also through language that expresses vulnerability, solitude, and the existential process as a queer subject. In the context of Judith Butler's theory of performativity, the body and the caption form a unified performative action that articulates identity not only through aesthetics, but also through emotional experiences that are communicated publicly. This kind of upload shows that non-binary

gender representation on social media is not just a form of aesthetic expression, but also a symbolic act that produces a re-meaning of the body, affection, and existence in an open but still risky digital space.

In addition to emotional narratives, Chris Derek's non-binary gender performativity is also manifested in the form of visual aesthetic exploration that consciously goes beyond conventional gender norms. In an upload dated March 31, 2022, Chris presents himself in a long white dress, lace gloves, and a flower crown in an outdoor setting. The photo is part of a collaborative campaign titled "Puspa" collection produced with local labels @cakecaine, @sorai.merch, and @byhening. The caption does not explicitly mention gender identity, but the use of hashtags such as #nonbinarymodel, #androgynousmodel, and #pride 🏳️🌈 clarify the identity position being performed.



Figure 3. Chris Derek's Instagram content on March 31, 2022

In Judith Butler's perspective, the body in this photo not only functions as an aesthetic object, but also as a medium for subversive gender articulation. Chris consciously displays feminine performance without having to be biologically female, and in doing so, he challenges the essential relationship between sex, gender expression, and identity. This upload shows that Instagram is not only a place for queer existence, but also a curatorial space where gender meanings are reconstructed through the body, clothing, and digital symbols.

However, beneath these aesthetic expressions lies a deeper challenge. Non-binary representations in Indonesia are still mired in stereotypes and exoticization, often viewed as invalid ambivalences (Aguilar Contreras, 2024). This misunderstanding creates vulnerability for non-binary subjects who seek to be understood and accepted in a society that is still developing in recognizing gender diversity. As Judith Butler explains, gender performativity is not simply a representation, but rather a repetitive action that is shaped through body style and social norms (Das & Farber, 2020a). Therefore, a deeper understanding of these performative constructions is essential to avoid simplistic readings of the expressions of identity displayed.

This research is based on the theory of performativity developed by Judith Butler, who argues that gender is not essential, but rather the result of social practices that are repeated through various media including visuals, language, gestures, and narratives. In the context of social media, especially Instagram, gender performativity emerges through elements such as captions, hashtags, and visual images that regulate symbolic interactions between individuals and their audiences. Thus, Instagram functions not only as a platform for

displaying identity, but also as an arena for the production and battle of gender meanings (Adiyanto & Putra, 2023).

The development of studies related to gender performativity on social media is recognized as increasing globally. Research by Abidin (2020) and Cover (2022) shows that social media is a productive place for the expression of queer and non-binary gender identities that go beyond traditional binary boundaries (Nur Cahya et al., 2023). However, most of these studies focus on Western contexts and international public figures, while studies on local dynamics in Southeast Asia, especially Indonesia, are still relatively rare. Research on LGBTQ+ representation in Indonesia often focuses on issues of advocacy and social stigma in mainstream media, without exploring the visual and symbolic practices of non-binary individuals on social media platforms (Rizali & Sufyanto, 2024). This indicates a gap that needs to be bridged in the existing literature.

The novelty of this research lies in two main aspects. First, by taking Chris Derek—a local non-binary public figure who dares to express his identity in the digital public space—as the subject of the study, this research makes a significant contribution to the study of non-binary gender expression in Indonesia which is still minimal. Second, the theoretical approach that uses Butler's performativity allows for an in-depth analysis of the dynamics of the body, image, and narrative as social practices that construct gender meaning symbolically and politically. The emphasis on Instagram as a space for identity negotiation supports the position of social media as an important field for contemporary queer articulation in Indonesia.

Chris Derek was chosen as the object of study not only based on his status as a non-binary public figure, but also the consistency and courage he has shown in presenting his identity in the digital space. Instagram was chosen as the right medium because of its visual and algorithmic characteristics, allowing performative efforts to be expressed aesthetically and strategically. Chris Derek's uploads function as an archive of gender performance that can be analyzed to understand the practices of representation, subversion, and production of meaning in the context of contemporary Indonesian popular culture.

By analyzing how Chris constructs his identity through visual practices on Instagram, this study aims to enrich the understanding of gender performativity in the still limited social landscape in Indonesia.

## Literature Study

Judith Butler is a central figure in post-structuralist feminist thought and queer theory. Through her monumental work, *Gender Trouble* (1990), Butler challenges essentialist assumptions about gender that link gender identity directly to biological sex. For Butler, gender is not “what we are” but “what we do”—that is, something that is socially produced through a series of performative acts that are repeatedly repeated within the context of particular cultural norms. This concept is further developed in *Bodies That Matter* (1993), where Butler emphasizes that the body is not a neutral entity, but is always constructed in discourses that shape who can have a valid social existence (Lloyd, 2015).

A key idea in Butler's theory is the concept of performativity, which should not be confused with “performance” in the theatrical sense. Performativity refers to how social actions—such as speaking, dressing, moving, or writing captions on social media—repeatedly shape what counts as gender identity. Butler calls this the *stylized repetition of acts*, where the gender subject is produced not because of a fixed substance, but through the repetition of norms. In this case, gender is the effect of discursive practices and not the origin of identity. What makes it political is that such repetition can be a space of resistance, when individuals choose to perform different iterations of the dominant norm, producing

new meanings that are subversive of the masculine–feminine binary system (Scandurra et al., 2019).

Butler's concept of gender performativity is central to understanding non-binary representation, where individuals are not bound by traditional gender norms and often challenge binary categories. Research by (Vijlbrief, 2019) suggests that non-binary individuals often experience complex identity shifts in response to dominant and often oppressive social norms (Vijlbrief et al., 2020a). Other research by (Ferreday, 2022) highlights how non-binary individuals can experience emotional distress related to their identities, particularly when forced to explain and justify those identities in environments that do not understand or accept them (Ferreday, 2022).

Butler has also been criticized for her over-focus on the discursive aspect and her lack of attention to the material, affective, and institutional contexts in which performativity takes place (Vijlbrief et al., 2020a). In the context of today's digital media, performative practices not only take place in discourse, but are also integrated into algorithmic systems, visual aesthetics, and public interactions. Therefore, in social media-based studies, an understanding of performativity needs to be combined with an analysis of the media infrastructure itself.

In the context of communication and media research, Butler's theory of performativity has been widely used to analyze gender expression in social media. The application of her theory emphasizes that every expression of gender identity on social media must be read as a symbolic act that creates meaning, not just a reflection of a stable identity. For example, when someone uploads a photo wearing feminine clothing even though it is socially read as male, accompanied by a certain caption and hashtag, this action is part of a performative action that forms (not just displays) their gender identity (Das & Farber, 2020b). A study by (Biscop 2019) identified how video games provide a space for individuals to express non-heteronormative identities that reflect gender performativity in the form of game interactions, which are similar to how individuals interact on social media platforms (Biscop et al., 2019). This shows how important the digital context is in the analysis of gender performativity.

In this study, Butler's theory is used as a conceptual framework to analyze how non-binary identities are constructed through the Instagram content of Chris Derek, a public figure in Indonesia. Chris's posts that display his body in various expressions—such as wearing dresses, using makeup, displaying reflective captions, and including hashtags such as #nonbinarymodel or #pride 🏳️‍🌈—are not merely documented as personal life. Instead, these actions are read as performativity that symbolically and socially shape the meaning of non-binary gender, while also challenging dominant binary norms.

Methodologically, this theory serves as a guide in building analysis categories for Instagram content, such as:

- **Performative Visual:** how to dress, body pose, facial expression, photo background.
- **Performative narrative:** caption content that is reflective or declarative about gender identity.
- **Digital symbols:** use of hashtags, mentions, or involvement in queer campaigns.

By analyzing these three dimensions, this study seeks to understand how non-binary subjects produce their identities performatively in public, aesthetic, and algorithmic spaces. This approach allows for a reading of gender as a dynamic social process, which is performed through the body but never fully attached to the body.

Through Butler's framework, this study not only positions Instagram as a space for self-documentation, but also as a performative stage where identity is constructed, displayed, and wagered. Chris Derek, as a local queer figure, is an important representation of how non-binary bodies not only "exist", but "act" in society through a series of symbolic actions

that can be analyzed socially and culturally. Thus, the theory of performativity is not only useful for understanding identity, but also opens up space for criticism of norms that continue to reproduce inequality of representation in digital culture.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach in the critical tradition to explore how non-binary gender representations are constructed through visual and symbolic practices on social media. This approach is very relevant to the study's aim of uncovering the hidden meanings behind representations, as well as the power relations and social norms that operate in the process. In the critical tradition, social media is seen not only as a communication channel, but also as a space for the production of discourse that reflects, negotiates, and enables resistance to dominant representational systems (Vaast, 2020).

The method used is qualitative content analysis, with objects in the form of Chris Derek's Instagram feed uploads. Instagram feeds were chosen because of their documentary characteristics, public nature, and as a form of primary content that can be observed in its entirety in visual and narrative curation. This study covers all of Chris Derek's feed uploads from the first content on May 12, 2016 to the last upload on March 19, 2025, with a total of 574 contents. From this population, the researcher used a purposive sampling technique to select 10 contents with the highest level of engagement that met the main criteria, such as the use of hashtags related to non-binary identities (de Graaf et al., 2021)

The selection of content based on the level of engagement (likes, comments, and shares) aims to observe content that has public resonance and high visibility, thus allowing for an in-depth analysis of how non-binary gender representations work in the context of digital social interactions (Tasker & Gato, 2020). From these contents, researchers categorized and coded the data based on three main dimensions arranged based on Judith Butler's theoretical framework:

1. **Visual Performative Aspects:** This includes clothing style, body pose, facial expression, and photo background.
2. **Performative Narrative:** Focus on the content of the caption that contains reflections on identity or experience as a non-binary subject.
3. **Digital Symbols:** This includes the use of hashtags, mentions, and affiliations with queer accounts or inclusive brands.

The analysis was conducted by separating each content based on the three categories and relating them to the main concepts in Butler's theory of performativity, such as stylized repetition of acts, citationality, and subversive resignification. This approach allows the research to examine not only what is displayed, but also how the display functions as a symbolic act that shapes and negotiates the meaning of non-binary gender. In this case, Instagram is positioned as a digital performative space where queer subjects such as Chris Derek practice their identities through visualization of their bodies and consciously constructed digital narratives (Jones et al., 2019).

Data validity is maintained through triangulation between visual elements, narratives, and public engagement to ensure a comprehensive analysis and consider the social responses that emerge. The limitation of this study lies in the scope of objects that are limited to one public account, so that the results of the study are not intended to be generalized, but to provide an in-depth understanding of non-binary representation practices in specific and contextual digital spaces (Flynn & Smith, 2021). With this approach, this study is expected to provide new insights into the dynamics of non-binary gender representation on social media and how symbolic actions can influence public understanding and interaction with queer identities in the current cultural context.



### 3. RESEARCH RESULTS AND


#### 3.1. Research result

To understand how non-binary identities are constructed, negotiated, and performed on social media, this study focuses its analysis on the Instagram content of Chris Derek, an Indonesian public figure who openly identifies as non-binary through the use of *they/she pronouns*. Instagram, as a visual and symbolic platform, provides a strategic space for queer subjects to consciously articulate their identities—through body curation, clothing, caption narratives, and the use of hashtags and digital social networks. In this context, Chris Derek's uploads not only represent bodies and lifestyles, but also function as performative acts that symbolically create and stake non-binary identities in the digital public space.


This analysis uses Judith Butler's theoretical framework of performativity, which views gender as the result of social and symbolic actions that are repeated in cultural power relations. To that end, ten content with the highest level of engagement from a total of 574 posts on Chris Derek's Instagram feed were purposively selected based on the criteria of relevance to non-binary identity expressions, marked by the use of hashtags such as #nonbinary, #nonbinarymodel, #androgynous, and the like. The analysis was conducted by dissecting the content based on three main categories: performative visuals (dress style, expression, setting), performative narratives (caption content), and digital symbols (hashtags and mentions). Through this approach, the study seeks to examine how queer bodies work performatively in the logic of social media—while producing gender meanings outside the dominant binary system.




The ten content pieces analyzed in this study were selected based on a combination of thematic relevance to non-binary identities and the highest engagement levels, reflecting the social resonance of the content in the eyes of the digital public. All of these pieces of content are still publicly available and documented on Chris Derek's Instagram feed, spanning a time span from 2017 to 2025. Each post was analyzed based on three categories of gender performativity: visual aspects, caption narratives, and digital symbols, as described in the previous analytical framework. Table 1 below systematically presents the content identity (upload date and engagement level), performative visual elements, performative narratives, and use of digital symbols that affirm non-binary gender expression.

**Table 1. Chris Derek's Content**

Content	Upload Date	Content Description	Caption	Hashtag	Like	Comment
	12 April 2022	Editorial photoshoot of feminine white dress, soft and cinematic style.	I couldn't thank @cakecaine @sorai.merch and @byhening enough... had my first compliment ever from my mom and my brother.	#nonbinarymodel #pride 🏳️ #petitemodel #fashioncampaign	1666	39



	<b>1 June 2021</b>	An editorial shoot, featuring neutral outfits and confident expressions.	Had a good one with @voaindonesia where I get to share... To my fellow Enbies out there, you are valid, and you are loved!	#nonbinary #pride #pridemonth	489	62
	<b>25 June 2020</b>	Local collection editorial fashion campaign, androgynous style.	I have this indescribable feeling to finally be able to represent more of myself in my commercial portfolio...	#nonbinarymodel #editorialmodel #pride 🏳️	419	75
	<b>March 31, 2022</b>	'Puspa' collection photoshoot with white dress and flower crown.	Individual shots from @cakecaine's @sorai.merch x @byhening "Puspa" collection 🧸 🌸	#nonbinarymodel #androgynousmodel #pride 🏳️	446	41
	<b>December 12, 2017</b>	Close-up shot of lipstick product with heavy makeup.	LAYN Cosmetics The Multi Lipstick "Mona". Brushed and Photographed by @u9xzy.	#androgynousmodel #layncosmetics	368	6
	<b>14 June 2020</b>	Fashion shoot with the theme 'camouflage', invisible body style.	Camouflage. Campaign shoot for @ladouchevita Random 2020 Collection.	#nonbinarymodel #fashioncampaign	339	31
	<b>August 26, 2021</b>	@huma_the_label campaign with natural and neutral modeling style.	Campaign shoot for @huma_the_label	#nonbinarymodel #editorialmodel	324	34
	<b>17 May 2024</b>	IDAHOBIT campaign text slide without body image.	What a special day to celebrate love, diversity and acceptance on IDAHOBIT day...	#IDAHOBIT	293	31

	<b>9 June 2021</b>	Fashion catalogue of layered clothing with masculine and feminine tones.	Found this in my gallery, I'm actually really digging this look but gosh...	#nonbinarymodel #pride 	318	6
	<b>18 November 2020</b>	Editorial campaign full of glamorous makeup, feminine style.	Throwback to when @marshadmartha did her magic to make me look beautiful...	#nonbinarymodel #fashioneditorial	292	32




In this study, the analysis was conducted on ten contents that have been presented in Table 1, using the theoretical framework of gender performativity developed by Judith Butler. The focus of the analysis is grouped into three main thematic categories: performative visuals, performative narratives, and digital symbols. This framework helps in understanding how non-binary identity representations are constructed and negotiated in the context of social media.

First, a **performative visual indicator including** clothing, poses, facial expressions, and visual backgrounds. These elements not only highlight aesthetics, but also form symbolic bonds that negotiate gender meanings outside of binaries. For example, the use of a certain style of dress can create a self-image that is constructed through consistent visual choices, prioritizing individual freedom in expressing non-binary identities (Paglialunga, 2024). In this context, the visual strategies used by Chris Derek on social media allow viewers to understand his identity in a more complex way (Oakley, 2016). Furthermore, research suggests that these visualizations can serve as a means of resistance to rigid gender norms, which are rooted in society (Garrison, 2018).

Second, in categories **performative narrative**, the caption text analysis shows how the narrative structure reveals Chris's personal experiences and identity statements as a non-binary individual. Reflective captions can enrich understanding of identity by implying the internal and external negotiation processes that individuals experience in social environments that often emphasize heteronormative norms (Darwin, 2017). This narrative serves to reinforce verbal gender performance and shows how text can function as a medium for conveying affective experiences that challenge norms (Zanin et al., 2023). Again, Chris's narrative design has an impact on representation that can create space for further discussion of non-binary experiences among the public (Cho, 2018).

Third, analysis on digital **symbols including** hashtag use and engagement in queer communities. The use of hashtags such as #nonbinary and #pride not only increased the visibility of Chris's identity, but also created alliances of social solidarity in the digital environment (Fox & Ralston, 2016). The use of these digital symbols reinforces the performativity of nonbinary identities by bridging relationships between communities struggling for visibility and support in the broader social context (Gaudszun & Elmezeny, 2023). Hashtags in the context of social media serve as elements that build collective narratives and empower individuals to share their experiences, creating networks of support among members of the broader queer community (DeMirjyn, 2023).

**Table 2. Chris Derek's Content Analysis Based on Three Main Thematic Categories**

Upload Date	Engagement	Visual Performative	Performative Narrative	Digital Symbols
<b>12 April 2022</b>	1747	White dress, feminine style, gentle expression, editorial background	First compliment from a conservative family, emotional meaning as non-binary	#nonbinarymodel, #pride  , mention @cakecaine, @sorai.merch
<b>1 June 2021</b>	552	Editorial fashion, confident poses	Declaration of non-binary identity in Indonesia, validation of queer existence	#pride, #nonbinary, mention @voaindonesia
<b>25 June 2020</b>	494	Fashion campaign, feminine pose, fashion catalog background	Pride as non-binary in the modeling industry	#nonbinarymodel, #editorialmodel, #pride 
<b>March 31, 2022</b>	487	White dress, floral accessories, androgynous pose, natural background	Collaborative campaign promotion, aesthetic feminine expression	#nonbinarymodel, #androgynousmodel, #pride  , @cakecaine
<b>December 12, 2017</b>	374	Close-up face, full makeup, androgynous style	Cosmetic promotion with feminine appearance	#androgynousmodel, #layncosmetics
<b>14 June 2020</b>	370	Full body green dress, blurred pose, plain background	The 'camouflage' campaign, the body is not defined by gender	#nonbinarymodel, #fashioncampaign
<b>August 26, 2021</b>	358	Joint fashion campaign, neutral style, close-up and portrait	Appearing as a muse in a fashion campaign	#nonbinarymodel, #editorialmodel, @huma_the_label
<b>17 May 2024</b>	329	No body, just campaign text	IDAHOBIT's message of solidarity, a call to action against LGBTQ+ discrimination	#IDAHOBIT
<b>9 June 2021</b>	324	Neutral layered clothing, mixed masculine-feminine style	Reflection of personal style and body comfort	#nonbinarymodel, #pride 
<b>18 November 2020</b>	324	Glamorous makeup, fashion catalog	Pride in appearing feminine in fashion collection	#nonbinarymodel, #fashioneditorial

		background, feminine poses		
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Based on Table 2 above, it shows that the ten Instagram contents with the highest level of engagement, gender performativity analysis was conducted through three main thematic categories: visual, narrative, and digital symbolic. In the category performative **visual**, it was found that the stylized representation *females* the dominant expression used by Chris Derek in presenting his non-binary gender identity. As many as four out of ten contents display visuals that explicitly contain feminine elements—seen from the use of dresses, floral accessories, soft body poses, to cinematic aesthetics associated with the representation of femininity. Meanwhile, the expression androgyny and style neutral each appear twice, indicating a tendency towards gender-ambiguous bodies or not tied to a single symbol of masculinity or femininity. Style *masculine only* appears once, and the visuals focus on makeup only found explicitly in one content. This finding shows that Chris Derek's visual strategy tends to use more feminine aesthetics as a medium to expand the realm of non-discrete gender expression, as well as a form of resignification of the body within Butler's performative framework.

In the category **performative narrative**, analysis of the caption content shows that Chris uses more reflective narratives than declarative ones. Only one in ten contents explicitly contains personal reflections on emotional experiences, such as dealing with mental stress, the struggle to accept oneself, and the experience of first receiving validation from family. There were no captions that were directly declarative or explicitly stated non-binary identity, such as the use of the phrase “I am non-binary” or a firm form of identity claim. This shows that in his narrative practice, Chris emphasizes the affective dimension and bodily experience as a queer subject, which is in line with Judith Butler's concept of performativity as the effect of repeated actions that are not always declarative, but often operate through ambiguity, irony, and openness of meaning. These reflective captions can be read as a form of citationality which reinforces gender performance through personal language that evokes empathy, rather than as an explicit political statement.

Meanwhile, the category **digital symbol indicates** that Chris Derek consistently uses symbolic elements to reinforce his non-binary identity affiliation. Out of the ten-content analyzed, the hashtag containing the word “nonbinary” appears eight times, making it the most dominant digital symbol used. This shows that although the caption narrative tends to be implicit, the strategy of identity visibility is carried out explicitly through the choice of hashtags. Other hashtags that also appear frequently are “#pride” (five times) and “#androgynous” (twice), which represent the solidarity of the queer community in general and the expression of a gender-ambiguous body, respectively. One content also contains “#IDAHOBIT”, indicating Chris’ involvement in a global queer advocacy campaign. These digital symbols not only function as metadata in Instagram’s algorithmic system, but also as performative actions that affirm the existence of non-binary subjects within the digital queer community network. In the context of Butler’s theory, the use of these digital symbols is a form of action which reinforces the representation of identity through linguistic signs that are socially recognized and politicized.

Overall, the findings from these three categories suggest that Chris Derek’s gender performativity is most strongly exercised through visual and symbolic dimensions, while the narrative aspect tends to be effective-reflective and non-declarative. This pattern shows that non-binary expression on social media is not always done through explicit verbal declarations, but through the curation of body aesthetics, symbolic affiliations, and personal narratives that open up space for interpretation and resistance


to normative gender structures. Thus, this study emphasizes the importance of rereading queer representation practices in the digital context with a performative approach that does not solely focus on identity statements, but also on symbolic and visual actions that continuously shape gender meanings.

### 3.2. Discussion

The research findings show that Chris Derek's representation of non-binary identity through his Instagram account is a complex performative practice, involving various aspects, including body construction, visual aesthetics, personal narratives, and digital symbols. In the context of Judith Butler's theory, gender is not a fixed entity, but rather the result of repeated social actions, or what Butler calls "stylized repetition of acts" (Rosati et al., 2022). The contents on Chris Derek's Instagram not only display gender identity, but also actively produce gender meaning through symbolic actions and visual aesthetics that can be analyzed as performativity.

Visually, the presence of feminine clothing styles in the content shows a representational strategy that rejects the masculine/feminine dichotomy. For example, in the post showing Chris wearing a feminine dress, there are visual elements that reflect how queer bodies are produced and negotiated through language, imagery, and emotion, in line with Butler's thinking (Scandurra et al., 2021). This indicates that the body is not a neutral medium, but a political means to construct and fight for gender.

However, in terms of narrative, the majority of captions produced by Chris are reflective and do not explicitly declare a non-binary identity. This approach shows how gender performativity can operate in ambiguity, avoiding overly fixed labels and creating space for more fluid gender representations (Frohard-Dourlent et al., 2017). In Butler's context, reflective narratives actually show more complex social dynamics in the expression of queer identity.

In terms of digital symbols, the use of hashtags such as #nonbinarymodel, #pride , and #androgynousmodel dominate the content analyzed, with non-binary hashtags being used consistently. This suggests that while verbal narratives tend to be implicit, the strategy of visibility through digital symbols is assertive and affirmative, reinforcing the affirmation of Chris's identity within the global queer community network (Durbeej et al., 2021). For example, content that functions as a call for solidarity for the protection of gender minorities still acts as a performative practice within the context of the community.

An interesting question that arises from this analysis is whether Chris's non-binary gender performativity is more a representation of his everyday personal identity or his professional aspect as a model and musician. The findings show that these two aspects cannot be separated strictly; some content, including cosmetic product campaigns and fashion catalogs, reflect Chris's professional side. However, his personal narrative and support for the queer community provide emotional depth that indicates a further engagement as a queer individual (Noon, 2020). Thus, Chris Derek's gender performativity is not only personal but also related to the market and politics of representation, where the creation of queer voices occurs in various social spaces.

Within the framework of further discussion, there are several aspects that can be studied: first, how social media functions as a symbolic arena for queer expression in the face of algorithmic logic that commodifies identity (Baker & Walsh, 2018); second, how non-binary bodies are negotiated both visually and discursively to meet expectations of representation, while remaining a strategy of resistance to heteronormative norms (Ellis et al., 2015); and third, how reflective narratives and digital symbols are used to build queer affective communities in digital spaces amidst

the forces of economic and cultural domination (King & Fretwell, 2025). Thus, Chris Derek's practice of gender performativity becomes a complex form of socio-political expression, full of ambiguity and strategy in the context of contemporary digital culture.

In the study on "Gender Performativity and Non-Binary Identities on Social Media: An Analysis of Chris Derek's Instagram Content in the Framework of Judith Butler's Theory and the Tradition of Critical Theory", the results of the analysis show that the gender performativity displayed by Chris Derek on Instagram is a complex mix of social norms, individual expression, and interactions in the digital community. Through the use of visuals, narratives, and digital symbols, Chris not only expresses his non-binary identity but also contributes to the negotiation of gender meanings on social media.


A relevant reference to support this argument is the work of Vijlbrief (2019), who explains how non-binary individuals in Amsterdam interact with gender norms, feeling insecurity and longing for affiliation while still enjoying experimentation within gender boundaries (Vijlbrief et al., 2020b). This is in line with Judith Butler's theory that views gender as an act constructed through repetition; where the act of playing with gender boundaries has the potential to disrupt oppressive norms. In this context, Chris's expression, although dominated by a feminine style, can be seen as a form of subversion of rigid masculine and feminine norms.

Furthermore, references from (Badstue 2020) underline that gender is always being re-formed and produced, but individuals also have space to negotiate their gender expressions (Badstue et al., 2021). This reflects the same pattern, where Chris, through the Instagram content he uploads, creates alternative performativity that not only adheres to but also challenges traditional notions of gender, in accordance with Butler's view.

Chris's involvement in digital symbols, such as the explicit use of hashtags, not only visually reinforces his identity but also serves as a form of political action. It unites the queer community, as discussed by Morgenroth and Ryan (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2018), highlighting how gender norms and stereotypes shape individual performativity. Chris's actions can be understood within a broader cultural context, where social media becomes a platform for individuals to negotiate their identities and to empower their communities.

Overall, Chris Derek's analysis of Instagram content within Butler's theoretical framework and the critical theory tradition offers insight into the complex dynamics of non-binary gender performativity and highlights the importance of digital platforms as arenas for identity assertion and negotiation of traditional norms. This study, with its strong references to previous literature, makes an important contribution to developing an understanding of non-binary identities in the current social media context.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study examines the practice of non-binary gender representation in social media through a case study of Chris Derek's Instagram content, using Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity within the framework of the critical theory tradition. The results of the analysis show that the expression of non-binary identity displayed by Chris is a form of performativity that is carried out visually, narratively, and symbolically, which not only represents identity but also actively shapes and produces gender meaning through digital media. Chris's actions in combining feminine body aesthetics, reflective narratives, and queer digital symbols such as the hashtags #nonbinarymodel, #pride , and #androgynousmodel, become a form of identity articulation that dismantles conventional

binary structures and expands the space for expression for queer identities in the relatively conservative Indonesian public space.

The data shows that feminine-style representations are found in 40% of the selected content, while non-binary hashtag-based digital symbols appear in eight of the ten highest-engaged content. Chris' narrative captions tend to be reflective rather than declarative, showing a tendency towards an affective and nuanced style of expression. This confirms Judith Butler's idea of gender as the result of repeated symbolic actions that are not always explicit, but rather work through ambiguity and repetition that open up new spaces for the expression of identity.

In the tradition of critical theory, this expression cannot be separated from the power relations and hegemonic representational systems. Instagram as an algorithmic platform is not just a space for free expression, but a curatorial space that demands the subject to rearrange themselves to suit the values of visibility, aesthetics, and public engagement. However, through his visual and narrative practices, Chris Derek is able to use this platform as an arena to challenge and resist dominant gender norms, while building solidarity among queer communities globally. Thus, gender performativity in this context is not only interpreted as individual expression, but also as a symbolic and political act that produces identity in the midst of a social field that is constantly being negotiated.

Based on these findings, this study recommends that further studies on gender performativity on social media expand the scope of the object of study to other local queer figures who are also actively using digital spaces for identity expression. In addition, it is important to deepen the interdisciplinary approach between performativity theory and digital media studies, especially in examining how platform logic and algorithms influence queer visibility and representation strategies. This study also opens up space for more inclusive digital activism, by encouraging the creation of alternative narratives that are able to challenge the dominance of heteronormative representation in the Indonesian social media landscape.

As a practical solution, cross-sector collaboration between queer communities, academics, journalists, and digital platform developers is needed to create a more gender-equitable media ecosystem. For example, by building community-based educational channels on social media that support non-binary gender expression safely and openly. At the institutional level, educational institutions can integrate gender equality education and media literacy into the curriculum as a form of systemic intervention against representational discrimination. Mainstream media are also encouraged to provide diverse and inclusive space for queer narratives, not only in documentary or special coverage formats, but as part of daily cultural and lifestyle reporting. Finally, it is important for all stakeholders to interpret gender identity expressions on social media not merely as aesthetics, but as a political discourse that contributes to the democratization of digital space and culture.

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