

# Image and Cultural Taste of Consumption of Gender Products in 'Non-Binary' Gender

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**Abstract**— The culture of consumption and postmodernism that is applied everyday causes an interpretation of self-identity and lifestyle. In this postmodern era, there have been emerging thoughts that are reconstructing existing thought patterns, including the culture of consuming gender. This Consumer Culture raises the pros and cons for consumers because of the emergence of incompatibility with their gender. Segmentation of gender raises certain interpretations of product identity. But for non-binaries, this phenomenon has a different effect, whereby a person can use products of different types of gender. This research aims to investigate the images and feelings of non-binaries who buy products that represent their gender expression because now products with support unisex or non-binary. Researchers have interviewed non-binary volunteers about things in their environment about the reasons they are comfortable being referred to as non-binary, public reaction to them, considerations in the selection of goods, their feelings after buying a product, then how they react to their environment after learning about products that are opposite of their gender, and their expectations of gender awareness of the products they use. Researchers found from interviews that a postmodernist impact on gender deconstruction that integrates with a consumer culture that can cause euphoria of its own and cause a reaction to gender deviations in the public.

**Keywords**— *Gender, Consumption, Postmodernism, Non-biner*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Consumer Culture and postmodernism are things that often applied, therefore the Consumer Culture itself is not only seen and applied as a culture but also as a behavior or a habit that is applied in daily activity[1]. From the daily use of the product, the interpretation of the identity of a Consumer Culture arises. The emergence of emotions forms a meaning, which shapes the identity of a product. These products target certain segments in order to facilitate market share. In communication, these products target certain segments to create an identity, give rise to a taste and interpretation.

This Consumer Culture raises the pros and cons of users due to incompatibility. This incompatibility states the differences in interpretation of certain individuals, for example, the color interpretation, interpretation of the form, and the product function itself, since the product's initial function is changed because of the interpretations[2]. Many consumers who use the products does not inline with gender rules, or even look for the products that are appropriate with their gender interpretation. Nowadays, products with "non-

binary" or "bi-gender" can be discovered on the market to make it easier for consumers to find the "identity" of a product. The purpose of this research is to find out how an image and taste of non-binary people find a product that has a gender impression and one that does not have a gender impression.

## II. METHOD

The researchers used a qualitative approach since it is suitable for the subjects studied. Then the researchers used the interview method because the results of the study were expected to provide assumptions and ways of thinking critically about consumption culture. According to Nazir [3] interview is the process of obtaining information for research purposes by way of question and answer while face to face between the questioner or interviewer. This method is also used to analyze the phenomenon deeper because it has the potential to interpret the feelings of the respondent themselves.

Regarding self-image and feeling towards consuming culture in non-binary gender itself, it is difficult to find it in Indonesia, but there are many relevant studies found as a reference in conducting research as a whole, as well as in using qualitative methodologies. The research team uses references to research conducted by:

- Joshua Goldberg & Shelagh Davies[4] – *Clinical Aspects of Transgender Speech Feminization and Masculinization*
- Fabiano Rocha-Rodrigues[5] – *Deconstruction of the Gender Binary in Advertising: An Interpretive Analysis and Discussion*
- Megen de Bruin-Molé, Daný van Dam, & Akira Suwa[6]– *Consuming Gender: Identity Construction under Global Capitalism*

The first study, [4] discuss the importance of gender habit, aspects of speech, and norms when conducting speech activity that fits with the gender' sense of self. The study involves the speech feminization/masculinization protocols, surgical and non-surgical protocols. The study also recommend few clinical aspects and the outcome of each protocols. The study reach conclusion how a transgender speech rely upon their self-satisfaction and the quality of service provided by the clinician.

The second study, [5] evaluates how the current efforts to gender deconstruction in advertising since the marketing and advertising industry contributes to the gender awareness in society. The study interprets the implicit and explicit codes within advertising. The message can be discovered within colors, context, overcomplicate message, music, image and signs which manipulate the viewer onto the ideas of gender. The study concludes how gendering product use and interest are able to follow the sociological condition and contribute to society awareness of gender multiplicity identity and expression.

The third study [6] reveals about the importance of understanding the gender assumption in society structure. The study aims to discover the relation between culture and gender. The study mentioned the importance of understanding how consumption determines certain ideologies in society and also how the consumers are encouraged to identify themselves with those ideologies. The study reveals the process of gender identity and the relation with consumption is increasingly multifaceted.

The relation of three previous study [4] [5] [6] and this current study, are the idea of gender multiplicity, gender based product, consumption culture, gender ideology, and gender construction in society. These studies reveals the deconstruction of gender in society. Our current study are also studies the relation between gender with products and also their behavior.

### III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In the results of in-depth interviews related to product images and taste, there are diverse responses from product purchases and 'introspective' feelings towards the products they buy. When the researcher conducted the interview, the two speakers wanted their identities to be interrupted, the two speakers were volunteers who recognized themselves as non-binary. The researchers also agreed to interview volunteers after considering their daily gender choices.

#### A. Data of the Interviewees

Expectation and target for our interviewee samples will be people who represent themselves as a non-binary spectrum, youthful people, and people who using brand/products/items that differ from the gender norms.

- Interviewee #1 (23 years old, Freelance artist)
- Interviewee #2 (23 years old, Project Manager on a Start-Up Company)
- Interviewee #3 (20 years old, Student)

#### B. List of the questions:

- Questions were made to explore interviewees' feelings towards their representation.
- How they represent themselves towards the public, and their culture as a consumer as well.
- Reasons why it's more comfortable for being labeled as non-binary
- The reaction of their surroundings for "coming out" as a non-biner

- Considerations for choosing everyday items/products that differ from their biological gender
- An additional factor of feelings and self-pleasurable after buying the products
- Reaction and response of their surroundings that interviewees bought items/products that differ from gender
- Specific hope and expectations for products and brands to be aware of gender rights

#### C. Interview Answers

Interviewee 1 (23 Years Old, Freelance Artist)

*1) What is your reason to be comfortable for labeling yourself as a non-binary?*

I'm educated under gender roles since childhood, before knowing these terms, I'm more often to violate the gender 'role' and directed to behave properly. Even though it has been taught, I feel blind in seeing the norms set for a particular gender only. My immediate environment is surrounded by independent women and troubled male figures so that I indirectly support feminism, but also not completely feel like a victim. When I'm surrounded by women I feel like I'm a man and vice versa. Even though it can be completed in nature like an innate gender, it doesn't matter to me to look and be the opposite and when misgender happens, it's not at all offended.

*2) What are the public / your surrounding's reactions for "coming out" as a non-binary?*

Admitting myself to the public (especially the closest people) except my family. This because the influence of the opinions of people I don't know seems not to be too significant, but in families, it can be dangerous if it is considered too 'idealistic' because I think it can complicate many things. I'm not sure they understand the concept of non-biner. My mother personally supports my appearance as anything, but when I (ever) appear in extended family and friends as non-biner, it is very likely to cause a reaction. I received positive reactions from people outside the family, and finally, I felt no need to explain anything to my relatives. Some people who oppose are also very visible, but it doesn't make me judge them negatively.

*3) What are your considerations for choosing every items / products that differ from your biological gender?*

I don't like too much "standing out" items. Most of the men's products can be considered "neutral". For physical products sometimes products for men are stronger than women (for example soap and deodorant). And just follow the needs and do not force to use certain gender products, but their functions.

*4) Is there any additional factor of feelings and/or self-pleasurable after buying the stuff?*

Self-representation I have is that most tend to be about practicality and minimalism, this is what most male products have. For example, for women's flip-flops, many accessories tend to be annoying if worn for too long or make feet hurt quickly. While the mountain sandals that sometimes have the impression 'gentlemen' are very comfortable.

Is no specific struggle for the product I am looking for, but for most clothes I have to be smart in choosing if I want to appear gender-neutral. I feel normal, just like buying ordinary things.

5) *How are their reactions if you bought these items?*

They're no particular reaction, because my grandmother used a lot of products like that. At least by ordinary people spelled 'sporty'. At first, I was very embarrassed if my boyfriend's family knew about my preferences, but it turned out they were very understanding.

There are times when I am very overtly being myself, but there are times when I also don't feel a problem being anything and going back to being heteronormative.

6) *Is there any specific hope and/or expectations for brands and products to be aware of gender rights?*

I don't like products with gender labels for children, because the concept of choosing a new gender identity arises when I was a teenager and it shouldn't be necessary because later they have the right and can determine their own identity. There are quite a lot of products that are aware of gender rights for adults, but adults who need this product are transgender people because most non-binaries do not have a problem with existing heteronormative goods. For goods that are sometimes marketed for non-binary are often right on target and happy if it turns out there is attention, but not very urgent.

Interviewee 2 (23 Years Old, Project Manager on a Start-Up Company)

7) *What is your reason to be comfortable for labeling yourself as a non-binary?*

Boredom faces the nonsense and social stigma that is often leveled by people, either family members or the chatter of netizens, about the expectations/nature/standards that should be towards each gender. Also, there is a sense of wanting to develop themselves by adopting traits both from each gender and free from stereotypes that are usually juxtaposed.

8) *What are the public / your surrounding's reactions for "coming out" as a non-binary?*

The reaction was quite positive such as "cool" or "really up-to-date" or "wow, like his father's old ones". If my friends already understand the mindset of my identity, usually just silence or even deliberately obscure my real identity. Except for matters of professionalism at work, the facts are outlined immediately. Even then, there are still many new people who are not sure.

9) *What are your considerations for choosing every item/product that differs from your biological gender?*

The main consideration is only comfort when using the product. Second, size consideration. Usually, I prefer slightly looser because the geographic conditions are quite hot. Other things such as the choice of color or brand are usually because they want to achieve a certain look/style. And also comfortable with being worn will certainly be more flexible in daily activities and increase confidence.

10) *Is there any additional factor of feelings and/or self-pleasurable after buying the stuff?*

Especially when trying to reach a certain look/style. There is a sense of wanting to imitate the appearance of a role model idol who is also comfortable to use every day. There is no special struggle, it's just that the goods sought are sold in certain countries. I also feel happy and sometimes want to buy another if one product is very satisfying.

11) *How are their reactions if you bought these items?*

No one knows, but even if they do, they only discuss whether or not the quality of the product itself or consider the price to save.

12) *Is there any specific hope and/or expectations for brands and products to be aware of gender rights?*

So specific, because designers and brands for me are free to market anything. Consumers also have the freedom to choose or not choose to buy their products.

Interviewee 3 (20 Years Old, Visual Communication Design Student)

13) *What is your reason to be comfortable for labeling yourself as a non-binary?*

It's more likely hard to explain but I'm leaning towards the feminine spectrum, if binary is pink and blue I'm more comfortable to turn yellow. Because the expectations for the two binaries don't fit the way I see myself.

14) *What are the public / your surrounding's reactions for "coming out" as a non-binary?*

Their responses are good. I firstly came out through my close friends, and I immediately replace pronouns

15) *What are your considerations for choosing every item/product that differs from your biological gender?*

I have no consideration of the brand or where it is in the masculine and feminine spectrum. Its more likely to how the function is.

16) *Is there any additional factor of feelings and/or self-pleasurable after buying the stuff?*

Well because I wear more yellow and cheerful clothes, the factor is when you can look in the mirror and smile.

17) *How are their reactions if you bought these items?*

They tend to ask first, maybe why that I bought over certain designs, but they usually easily "ignored" because of "cute designs teehee"

18) *Is there any specific hope and/or expectations for brands and products to be aware of gender rights?*

I hope to reduce the stigma about gender and color and also multiply urban design

Aestetification in everyday life has a tendency to change an old form of culture into a new culture, therefore control over emotions and tastes emerges. And between two choices; (1) the culture is adopted by certain practitioners/groups of people, or (2) the culture will grow and develop so that it will be accepted by the community.

This has to do with the ideas conveyed by Durkheim [7] about cultural consensus, where industrial strikes and disputes occur as an example of how differences and disagreements are accepted because of the diversity of human culture so much that it is accepted and merges into a shared culture. As a result, the idea of a person becomes a powerful

symbol, because it is one of the few sacred and powerful examples, which has the potential for universal appeal in the modern world. The conceptualization of unity through difference, or unity that allows difference, is becoming more accepted today as part of some changes that have led to, or are related to, postmodernism which undermines the project of nation-state cultural integration [7].

Thus, the role of globalization and postmodernism related to this phenomenon is the idea of humans as a symbol, has its own appeal to a matter where (1) is resistance to natural thought against feelings and self-image in the modern era, (2) a form of human rights in order to be able choose what they like.

Quoting from the cultural theorist, Judith Butler [8] that there is normativity related to ethics. Normative markets make judgments about what types of identity expressions are valid and acceptable. Considering advertising, for example, although it can be argued that they have become more inclusive of a wider variety of sexual choices, they often only validate certain types of sexual identities - which again fit in with a traditional, partner and family-based constructions[9].

When related to hyperreality, Baudrillard [10] states that hyperreality is a concept which in its construction cannot be separated from the production and play of signs (semiotic) that go beyond its original reality. It can be explained that reality is an object that functions as a semiotic with references having the same value (equivalent). Whereas in simulations which are seen with hyperreality, objects no longer function semiotically, because the reference objects themselves are dead, then there are only markers by producing their own duplications.

The effect of hyperreality on this phenomenon has an impact on consumer culture, where consumption culture has aspects and assumptions in the form of voices towards existing phenomena. Hyperreality makes consumers feel safe and comfortable because of the 'identity' images emblazoned on the outer packaging, but actually, these products are just ordinary products that are used every day. The strength in these products is how they hook the market with the phenomenon, as relevant as possible so that the buyer feels 'special' from the esterification of packaging with the frill 'support x rights' One strong example is that some products have an image to support any gender so as not to weigh on 1 gender, regardless of the shape, color, and usage that was originally 'specific' to the 1 gender.

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This study concludes that postmodernists have an impact on deconstruction in the current digital era. Postmodernists create a gender deconstruction which then merges with a culture of daily consumption. In consumer culture, there is a hyperreality to the reaction, feeling, and image when consuming an item. This is what happens with present-day phenomena.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

What happened to the present phenomenon finally merges into one with modernity. This new gender is one of a series of forms of acceptance from modern circles because of the melting of culture towards modern society over time. But before the formation of this "new gender" division, this phenomenon was opposed by all modernists because it was said to be a form of social deconstruction; (1) the form of opposition to biological law, and (2) the form of opposition to nature in religious norms. But in the end, it was accepted and fused as in the various theories of globalization explained in this discussion.

Because this phenomenon has a large impact, the impact it has on consumption culture has a large impact on the market today. There are items that support the phenomenon described, "the coming-out year" which gives rise to its own euphoria; (1) creates a sense of security and comfort when buying products with support for this phenomenon, (2) the feeling of 'being supported'.

These products eventually leave the form of function, because the buyer will buy the label "LGBTQ + Friendly" and so on, but the actual product quality is the same as a product without the lure of a label and or identity.

If specific to gender, this form of consumer culture is the same, leaving meaning for symbols, but giving rise to its own image. It can also be concluded that these product forms give rise to hyperreality. The image depicts the identity of the product used. Where a gender sign is no longer needed, so everyone can use it, and eventually, it merges.

This "fusion" of culture can be seen from the results of interviews, that the purchase of a product gives rise to a sense of comfort, and identity as non-binary is formed so that it is ultimately used for everyday life. Although the public reaction gives the impression of being shocked because it deviates gender "biologically" and "religiously", the public will give its own distinction depending on conditions and situations

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