



Thrift Shopping and Indonesian Urban Youth Fashion Consumption

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia has witnessed the increase of thrifting culture (the trading of imported used clothes) in the last five years. Although in the past, the trading of used clothes was more intended for consumption by the urban poor, with the proliferation of flea markets in big cities, this trade has been recently gentrified by the younger generation. Even as Indonesia is one of the largest new textile and garment producers in the world, thrifting businesses show that shopping for used clothes is still popular in the country. The emergence of thrift shops is also widespread, especially on e-commerce platforms such as Shopee and social media platforms such as Instagram. This study investigates how Indonesia's urban youth understand thrifting culture and what motivates them. 94 participants were surveyed and focus group interviews were conducted with 12 participants. From quantitative and qualitative data obtained, this study found that most of the participants took part in thrift culture for economic and environmental reasons. However, how the younger generation interprets thrifting is nuanced, and not only a dichotomy of economic or environmental considerations. This study found that the practice of thrifting has many layers: strategies for dealing with economic challenges, issues of identity and individuality, bonds with the community, and social responsibility towards the environment. It also indicates that thrifting culture in Indonesia creates many additional problems because most of the used clothing is illegally imported from other Asian countries. Although limited studies have been done on the practice of thrifting in Indonesia, this research serves as a preliminary study and can inspire further investigations in this area.

KEYWORDS

thrift, second-hand, shopping, fashion, Indonesia, youth

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INTRODUCTION

As one of the largest textile and garment producers in the world, Indonesia has also experienced a rapid increase in the business of trading second-hand fashion in the last few years (Machado et al. 2019). Second-hand trading, popularly referred to as the practice of thrifting, has become especially common on social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, as well as e-commerce sites such as Shopee and Tokopedia (Utomo 2021; Lestari and Asmarani 2021). Most of the consumers of this kind of second-hand fashion are urban youth. However, research that looks at how thrifting is carried out by young, urban Indonesians is still very rare. Yet while these new and popular forms of second-hand commerce in Indonesia have never been explored in scientific papers, thrifting has been the subject of heated popular debate on social media. One such debate became a trending topic in mid-March 2021.

An altercation on Twitter in March 2021 stirred controversy over the practice of trading second-hand clothes. A Twitter user with the account name @RistyRianda tweeted her 'success' story of making profits during the pandemic by selling used clothes through Shopee. She added that a profit of 28 million rupiah (equal to 1800 USD) was obtained in just four months of selling used clothes on Shopee. This tweet was widely shared and applauded. One of the people who weighed in with criticism, however, was Clara Ng, a well-known Indonesian novelist, who replied that used clothes should be donated to the poor, not used as an 'industry'. This thread then became a trend that day, with a discussion about how the used clothing business in Indonesia is actually detrimental, because it adds carbon emissions and threatens the survival of the domestic clothing industry. The thread sparked an intense public discussion on Twitter about the thriving used clothing business in Indonesia and its multi-dimensional impacts, as the industry not only violates the law, but also harms the environment and the apparel business as a whole (Lestari and Asmarani 2021). The thread and controversy about the thrifting business reflect broader concerns: the Indonesian government has banned the import of used clothes, and there has been criticism from garment businesses about the demise of their clothing trade due to the increasingly rampant practice of trading used clothes (including second-hand online shops).

Looking at the history of used clothes in Indonesia, the practice of buying and selling second-hand goods has occurred long before the emergence of online thrift or vintage commerce on various social media platforms. Various sources mention that trading used clothes has often occurred in traditional markets or small bazaars since the Asian financial crisis in 1998 (Utomo 2021; Ayu et al. 2020). Trading used clothes has been historically represented as an economical solution for a lower-class market who cannot afford to buy new clothes at the mall. In this context, buying used clothes is undertaken in order to fulfill the basic need for clothing, and style is not a consideration. However, in recent years, along with the emergence of e-commerce giants such Tokopedia (founded in 2009) and Shopee (founded in 2015), as well as the increasing number of online shops on Instagram or Facebook, the used clothing business has begun to shift, not only because of the cheap prices of the clothes, but also for reasons more associated with lifestyle. The practice of buying second-hand fashion has begun to penetrate the urban middle class, who have the ability to buy new clothes but choose to thrift online instead of, or as well as, their other consumption practices.

This study uses the term 'thrift' or 'thrift shopping' to explain consumption practices (shopping, purchasing, collecting) of used fashion products (clothes, bags, shoes, and other accessories) in the context of a lifestyle that is currently popular in Indonesia. Many thrift stores also use the term 'vintage clothing shop' or 'pre-loved fashion' to attract buyers and at the same time describe the goods they sell as rare and vintage. The use of the term 'thrift fashion' or 'thrift' is a term that is currently popular in everyday Indonesian usage, supplanting the outdated term 'second-hand fashion'.

The practice and consumption of thrift fashion in Indonesia, and how urban youth interpret this practice, have rarely been studied previously. The gap in the literature is evident from a literature search that only managed to collect a few mass media articles, all discussing the profitable second-hand clothing business, with the exception of two micro-scale studies which will be mentioned below. Nevertheless, similar studies on thrift fashion economies have been conducted in the context of Zambia (Hansen 2016) and middle-income economies such as the Philippines (Lynne Milgram 2012). The results of the research in these two countries are useful as a comparison to the practice and consumption of thrifting or thrift fashion in Indonesia.

The study of the practice of thrifting usually falls on two poles: top-down and bottom-up. The top-down analysis looks at practices of thrift and austerity in terms of economics, history, and political economy, while the bottom-up approach analyzes thrifting practices

from an ethnographic point of view (Podkalicka and Tang 2014). They suggest that although the practice of thrifting can be seen as everyday culture, the latter approach is usually too narrow and does not explain the phenomenon of thrifting more comprehensively. For this reason, they suggest research on thrifting can be approached with both a top-down and a bottom-up approach together. Moreover, some of these studies are also interesting to examine the various reasons why people engage in thrifting.

Several studies have been conducted on the various motivations of people for thrift shopping. Two such studies explain thrifting motivation as based on personal satisfaction and environmental responsibility (Park et al. 2020; Hochtritt 2019). Personal satisfaction was related to gratification when finding cheap goods, and similarly, environmental reasons were related to moral responsibility for environmental sustainability. Several other studies conducted in various countries support similar ideas (Orminski, Tandoc, and Detenber 2021; Kong et al. 2016; Thomas 2020). Another study stated that thrift shopping can be influenced by social and cultural factors, such as a family member or close friend who is a 'thrift hunter' (Christiansen and Snepenger 2005). A further study even identified six motivations for thrift shopping similar to those above, but adding hedonism as one of the reasons people thrift and explaining that someone can splurge by buying second-hand goods (Bardhi and Arnould 2005). Two studies carried out on a very micro scale (interviewing five people) on the practice of thrifting in Indonesia found similar findings, focusing on economic and environmental motivations (Lestari and Asmarani 2021; Ayu et al. 2020). But these studies do not fully explain the rising popularity of thrifting in Indonesia. Even as Indonesia is one of the largest textile and garment-producing countries in the world with an export value of US\$13.8 billion in 2019 for export to the US, Middle East, and Europe (Medina [no date]), the practice of thrifting is increasingly popular among young adults. This contradiction reinforces why this study is significant. Given these gaps and contradictions, this study focused on two important issues: what motivates urban youth to do thrift shopping or thrifting, and how urban youth understand this practice. This study employed an open survey to gather responses from young people who have experienced thrift shopping, as well as conducted focus group discussions with 12 young people (mostly students) to further explore how they practice thrifting in their daily lives.

THRIFT PRACTICE IN INDONESIA: HISTORY AND TRAJECTORIES

A study that examined the history of flea markets in Indonesia states that flea markets have thrived since the financial crisis in 1998 that affected big cities in Java, such as Jakarta, Bandung, and Surabaya (Utomo 2021). During this time, people's purchasing power fell drastically, leading many to buy household goods, including clothes, shoes, and bags, at

open-air flea markets which were commonly connected to traditional markets open every morning in cities throughout Indonesia. Many terms for these markets were used besides flea markets, such as in Javanese “*awul-awul*”, or (pile of clothes), because used clothes were piled up just like that, and buyers choose for themselves. The selling price for clothes that were still fit for use was by the unit, while for those not fit for use was per kilo. These used clothes were mainly bought by poor people to meet their primary need for clothing. The fashion or style factor was not really a consideration.

Along with the trend of thrift shopping in the West, Indonesia is also experiencing a shift in practices regarding the consumption of second-hand goods, especially since the two largest e-commerce establishments in Indonesia, Tokopedia and Shopee. Shopee currently dominates as the biggest e-commerce champion in Indonesia. The thrifting business is starting to look widespread in e-commerce, as well as on Instagram. Certain trends are also starting to be seen, with many styles inspired by the fashion styles of Japan, Korea, and Western countries in general. The prices are also fairly expensive. In an interview in the mass media, one of the sellers mentioned that the used clothes were bought in sacks from suppliers, and had been divided based on grades: grade A for good ones (sometimes including premium brands), grade B for decent ones, and grade C for those not worth selling (Ayu et al. 2020). Buyers then sort the clothes again, wash, dry, and pack. Sellers on e-commerce sites and social media display these clothes with more attention, taking aesthetic photos to be uploaded on social media platforms. Not surprisingly, one shirt on the Instagram account of many followers can sell jackets or hoodies for IDR 150,000.00, which is more expensive than new clothes, and sells well in a few minutes after being uploaded.

Indonesia has a strong potential market for online shopping. Data from APJII (Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association) indicate that the number of online consumers in Indonesia has quadrupled from 21.2 million in 2014 to 84.2 million in 2016. Further data show that consumers are dominated by students, at 89.7%. The pandemic has increased online shopping by 52%, too, with fashion and food products dominating purchases (Budianto 2021). The reason for this increase is that Indonesia implemented a lockdown at the peak of the Alpha and Delta waves, causing many consumers to make purchases from home, including the purchase of second-hand goods. This supports global consumer trends expressed by Yangzhom (Paulicelli, Manlow, and Wissinger 2021, p. 51): “the second-hand fashion market continues to hold over 40 billion in global market share and is expected to annually grow at a rate of 15–20% – with higher rates predicted for developed markets”. Nonetheless, the business of trading used clothes is actually illegal in Indonesia. The government has issued Law No. 7/2014 which states that the rules for importing goods must be new goods. In certain cases when it comes to importing second-hand goods, the report

states that clothing is not one of them (Kementrian perdagangan Republik Indonesia 2015). The report, which can be accessed through the website of the ministry of trade, points to threats of contamination: E.Coli, S.aureus, aspergillus, and Candida spp were found (Ministry of Trade Republic of Indonesia, 2015). The second-hand clothing business is also feared to be detrimental to the domestic clothing industry.

Not surprisingly, textile and garment entrepreneurs often voiced protests to the government to enforce the rules banning imported used clothes, as it was seen as harmful to their business (Taqiyya 2021; Suhendra 2016). The potential loss is estimated at 30 trillion rupiah due to a large amount of smuggling of used clothes (Ministry of Trade Republic of Indonesia, 2015). In the same report, the Ministry of Trade also admits that weak enforcement of regulation has allowed the used clothing business to continue to exist in Indonesia. On the other hand, the thrifting business creates new jobs for its sellers, who were previously threatened due to the pandemic. In one report in online news media, one of the sellers saved her family from economic hardship due to her highly profitable Instagram thrifting business (Rizka 2021). This report also states that second-hand clothes from Japan and Korea are in vogue because of the influence of the popular culture of the two countries in Indonesia.

FASHIONING THE YOUTH: INDONESIAN FASHION CONSUMPTION AND DIGITAL MEDIA

Indonesia is a country with the fourth-largest population in the world, with a rapidly growing middle-class—almost 50% of the 277 million population (World Bank 2020). The productive age population (15-64 years) dominates compared the non-productive age group, with a median age of 30 years, making Indonesia a country with a young population. In terms of the use of social media, Indonesia always occupies the top five in the use of Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, indicating that the majority of Indonesia's young generation is literate in technology and digital platforms (Kemp 2020). In his study on Indonesian streetwear, Luvaas stated that the domestic fashion industry is very developed, but it is not yet known on the global fashion horizon (Luvaas 2013b). Furthermore, according to Luvaas, despite having a large textile industry, Indonesia is currently only a third-world country that produces fashion products for big brand names such as Zara, Nike, and Adidas (Luvaas 2013a). There are no well-known brands from Indonesia abroad, although Luvaas' ethnographic research indicates that there are hundreds of local Indonesian streetwear brands. The large purchasing power of the young middle class and good economic conditions have ensured local streetwear brands survive and are favored domestically (Luvaas 2013b). However, in recent years, the government has formed a ministerial agency

for the creative economy, which aims to increase the competitiveness of the Indonesian fashion industry (Rahmawati 2021b; Kuwado 2017). Data from the Creative Economy Agency show that the three creative industries that generate the most state revenues are the fashion, culinary, and craft industries (Kuwado 2017), especially the Islamic fashion industry or Muslim fashion.

Indonesia has become one of the largest Muslim fashion centres, along with Malaysia and the UAE (Maulia 2019). As a country with a majority Muslim population, and a large middle-class, Muslim industries are growing rapidly, such as fashion, halal food, and Islamic tourism (Fealy 2008). Wearing a hijab for female Muslims in an urban area is no longer perceived as an underdeveloped Islamic myth, but as Islam that is modern and responsive to global fashion (Jones 2007; Rahmawati 2016; Smith-Hefner 2009). The local fashion business can especially be observed on popular e-commerce platforms such as Shopee and Instagram. Instagram is the most popular social media for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), with around 99 million users in Indonesia (Kemp 2020). The role of influencers is also significant in making style famous in Indonesia, either through the role of fashion bloggers in the past (Luvaas 2013a; Rahmawati 2016), or through YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok (Rahmawati 2021a).

The thrifting business is estimated to have started to become popular in the last five years, along with other fashion shopping through various e-commerce platforms and social media, which have grown rapidly (Jannah 2022; Suhendra 2016). As mentioned previously, the contemporary thrifting business is different from the concept of a flea market, which is associated with the traditional market. Thrifting businesses rarely have offline stores to reduce operating costs. Moreover, Instagram is at the forefront of promotion with attractive visualization and product photography. Besides advertising on Instagram, most thrift stores also sell through Shopee and Tokopedia to facilitate payment transactions. Two well-known thrift shops on Instagram, kibo.co (115,000 followers) and hakkarun.co (150,000 followers), are diligent in updating the clothes on display and usually sell within hours. In the description column, they specify that the clothes they sell have been washed with antiseptic, which makes consumers have faith in the clothes, even though they are paying a price that is relatively not cheap (more than IDR 100,000 for cardigans or hoodies). Consumers can also buy new clothes on e-commerce platforms at prices that are not that expensive. Clothing is the most traded thrifting product, following other accessories such as bags, shoes, and hats. Further, some thrift shops with large audiences on Instagram sometimes hold impromptu bazaars in their respective cities (mostly in Jakarta or Bandung) several times a year, to clear out products that have not been sold.

Several newspaper articles state that although the import of used clothes is prohibited and illegal, in practice the government has been unable to enforce this regulation (Jannah 2022; Prihatini 2022). One of the sellers interviewed even stated that during the pandemic there was an increase in purchases at her thrift shop, from 100 clothes per month up to 500 clothes per month, with Korean clothes being the most in demand (Jannah 2022). As one of the largest fan bases of Korean popular culture (*hallyu*) in Asia, it is not surprising that used Korean clothes are also in demand in Indonesia. This *hallyu* phenomenon has been increasing in Indonesia since the KTO (Korean Tourism Organization) opened a representative office in Jakarta in 2008, even offering halal tour packages in Korea (Muchtar 2018). This is similar to data reported by the Ministry of Trade that most of the used clothes imported in Indonesia come from the US, Korea, and Japan (Ministry of Trade Republic of Indonesia 2015). The same report also mentions that the used clothes entered Indonesia illegally from the ports of Singapore and Malaysia, which were controlled by cartels and distributors. These distributors then sell sacks of used clothes of various grades to thrift shop owners. Thus, the owner of the thrift shop must choose and combine clothes of various grades to be sold (Jannah 2022). The police have been reported to have arrested warehouses for used clothes imported from Korea and Japan at several points in Jakarta and Batam several times, with an estimated turnover of billions of rupiah. Yet, the thrifting business is still common everywhere (Santoso 2016; Setiyawan 2019).

METHODOLOGY

To gather opinions and responses about thrifting practices in Indonesia, a survey using the Google Forms application was conducted. The Google Form was spread through social media platforms including the WhatsApp Group for students in our university. Unexpectedly, it turned out that 94 respondents filled out the survey, with demographics mostly from big cities in Indonesia (Surabaya and Jakarta). In the next stage of data collection, 25 of respondents were contacted who stated that thrifting had become part of their lifestyle. They were then invited to the focus group discussion (FGD) forum via a Zoom video conference. However, many of them canceled their participation due to personal reasons. Thus, FGDs with 12 participants were held at last.

The results of the survey filled out by 94 respondents indicate some basic information as follows. Most of the respondents were female students (74%) compared to male students. The majority of respondents were in the age group 17-18 years old or freshmen students (64%), followed by senior year students, aged 20-22 years. The age of the respondents who stated that they had shopped for second-hand goods several times (more than once) varied from 16 to 24 years. In terms of the frequency of shopping for thrifting, 56% of respondents

said about two to five times, followed by 25% of them who said they did it many times, and the remaining 19% said that they had only done it once. A further 52% of respondents admitted to shopping through social media and e-commerce such as Instagram, Shopee, and Tokopedia, while the rest shop directly through offline thrift shops in their cities. Furthermore, 93% of respondents stated that they bought clothes (tops and bottoms) at the thrift shop, followed by shoes (4%), bags (1%), electronic goods (1%), and cosmetics (1%).

It was found that the majority of respondents' motivation or reason for thrift shopping was the price (72%), followed by the trend for thrifting (13%), and environmental reasons (11%). The figure below presents their reason in detail.

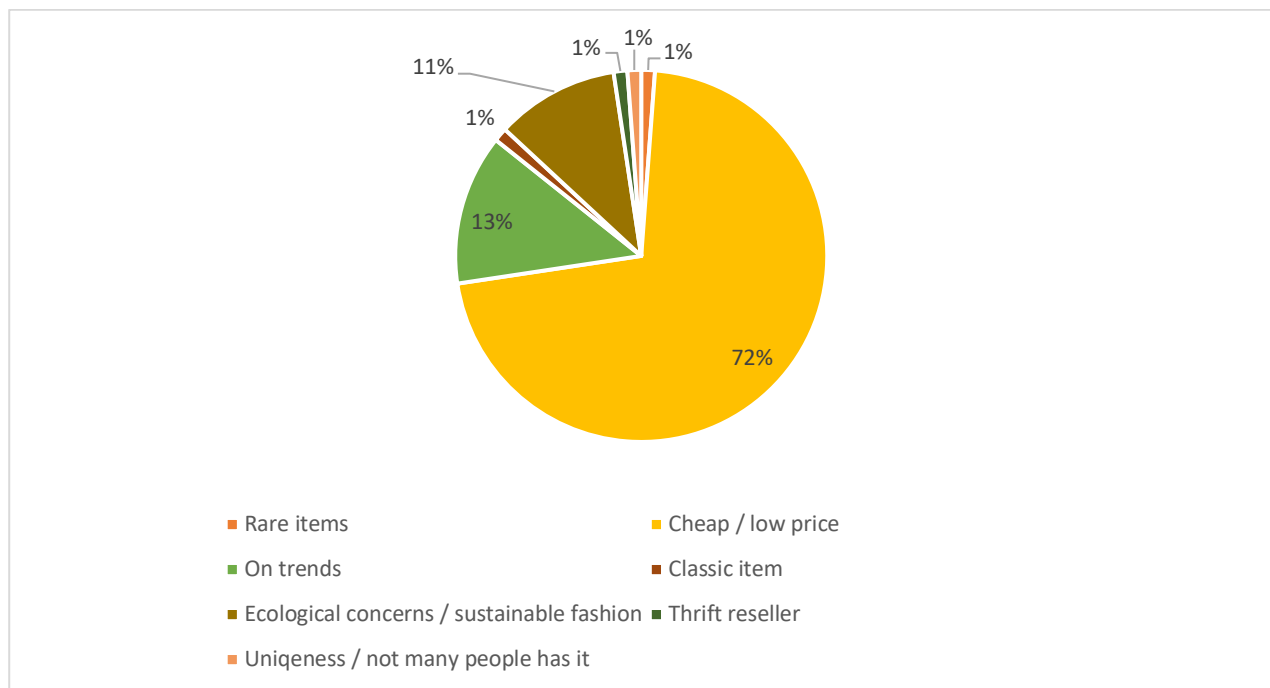


Figure 1. Motivations for Thrift Shopping

The results obtained from FGDs with 12 respondents are elaborated on in the next section.

YOUNG INDONESIANS AND CONSUMING THRIFT FASHION

The results of the FGDs were similar to those of other studies on people's motivation to shop second-hand (Park et al. 2020; Machado et al. 2019; Bardhi and Arnould 2005), which suggest that economic motivations are the main reason people thrift. However, after further investigation through FGD, only three informants state that thrift shopping was a strategy to survive in poverty.

"I came from a humble background and have been buying used items since I was in elementary school. Thus, there is usually a flea market that my parents always go to." (ADS, student, 19)

"You may say that my family's frugality rescued them. Well, not only clothes, but we bought household items from the flea market as well. In the past, thrift was real, currently it is for trend only." (RR, student, 20)

"Buying second-hand goods is my family's tradition. I often wear my sister's school uniform. Since childhood, I always accompanied my father to go to the flea market. It used to be called a flea market or *pasar loak* before there was a cool term like thrifting." (TS, freelancer, 24)

Thrifting has become TS's identity. To this day, he still likes to hunt used goods, even though he admits that he has enough money to buy new things. In this case, TS stated that the practice of thrifting is still preserved as part of his family history.

"Nowadays, I am hunting for second-hand goods more to reminisce about the past and respect the tradition and family memories. Even though I have enough income, I still like to reminisce and repeat the thrifting tradition." (TS, freelancer, 26)

The three informants above stated that they had been used to shopping for used goods since they were young and often stated that thrifting has become a trend, different from similar practices in the past. These claims are similar to a search of newspaper articles which stated that the development of thrifting in Indonesia is growing rapidly along with e-commerce, social media, and the cultural influences from foreign countries in the last five years (Rizka 2021).

The three informants above also mentioned that the term 'thrifting' is a new popular term currently used to express the shift in the practice of trading used clothes, or the gentrification of the practice of trading used goods. Likewise, terms such as "vintage" or "pre-loved" were not used in the past. In his ethnographic study of Indonesian streetwear, Luvaas stated that the influence of English in everyday vocabulary is very inherent in urban circles. Accordingly, local clothing brands often use English to increase the competitiveness of their brands (Luvaas 2013b). Ironically, the Indonesian government campaigns for the public to consume local products also used an English tagline such as I Love Indonesia or Go Local (Luvaas 2013b). Similar observations can also be captured from many thrifting shops circulating on Instagram. Almost no one uses the term 'used clothes' (*baju bekas*) or 'second-hand', most use the term 'thrift shop or thrift store' and some use the vocabulary 'classic, vintage, or pre-

loved'.

Thrifting as A Trendy Hobby and Individuality

Besides the three participants above, several other participants stated that thrift shopping is their hobby and a means to express their individuality. They argue that frugality has become their hobby and allows them to fulfill their "unique" or "intelligent" individuality, while others express it as their "satisfaction". As stated in the FGD,

"I enjoy making clothes and researching vintage or DIY fashion. It feels great if I can remodel vintage clothes to make them brand new." (AB, student, 21)

"I absolutely enjoy altering used clothing, such as old jackets and shoes. Thus, I have something unique that no one else has." (THS, student, 18).

"I detest wearing outfits with the same design (as others). If you buy in a department store, the styles are very similar. That is why I like thrifting because it is unique, nobody has it. Sometimes it is also an expensive brand and vintage. This is what makes me very happy and satisfied." (ARA, student, 19)

Many researchers have noted that fashion has always been about identity and individuality (Steward 2020; Park et al. 2020; Breward 1995). Yangzom investigated that thrifting fashion or second-hand fashion has been around for centuries since the pre-modern era but has been made famous by the rise of the do-it-yourself culture (Paulicelli et al. 2021). The popularity of DIY teachers on various channels such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok makes thrift culture synonymous with youth culture. It is therefore understandable that thrift fashion is more attractive to the younger generation because of its individuality.

Thrifting as Community Belonging

Two FGD participants mentioned thrifting as part of an effort to form a community of used goods hunters. They stated that they actively joined the thrifter or bargain hunter community. They mentioned that in big cities such as Jakarta, Bandung, and Surabaya, thrifting communities were formed. Their activities are varied, including bartering goods between members and holding bazaars to sell their own community goods.

"As student from other country, I enjoy thrifting here. Therefore, I joined a very active thrifting community here. I first found it on Facebook. They like to meet up and sometimes we go to the flea market together, hunting for bargains. We often run charities and sell goods from our community. On the one hand, this community allows me to make some new friends and overcome loneliness." (RE, student, 20)

"There is a sense of community. I know for some it might be a bit ridiculous that there is a frugal community. Yet, thrifting culture indeed supposed to be about community and being responsible for what we buy and consume." (AKL, student, 18)

Several previous studies investigating thrifting as a hobby (Lestari and Asmarani 2021; Ayu et al. 2020) found that second-hand shop communities tend to exist in big cities in Indonesia such as Jakarta, Bandung, Bali, and Surabaya. What is more, many social media outlets such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok can serve as a medium to organize various activities for this community.

Thrifting as an Environmental Responsibility

The discussion turned interesting when the topic was about thrifting as an environmental issue. One participant, TT, a student who used to live in the US as an exchange student, pointed out the difference between the US and Indonesian frugal practices.

"I believe that thrifting here [in Indonesia] is completely different from what I did abroad. There, [thrifting is] by society for society as a conscious and collective responsibility in controlling excessive consumption in fashion. There are many charity shops as well (abroad). Meanwhile, in Indonesia we do not buy from our community, most thrift fashion items are imported from Korea or Japan. I never found any second hand for charity, here. However, it makes me wonder whether we even care about the environment at all." (TT, student, 19)

Most local and international NGOs in Indonesia rely on monetary donations rather than organizing second-hand businesses. Thus, it is understandable that TT is indifferent and somewhat skeptical about how thrifting is being practiced in Indonesia. Other participants have shown similar statements.

"Yeah... the fact that the clothing is now trash from other Asian nations is what I find disturbing about the thrifting culture here. However, it is imported here and sold through Instagram. Sometimes, it is also a bit expensive. I mean you can buy a new one for the same price. People buy them to fill their greed. It is not really about environmental awareness." (RH, 24, fresh graduate)

"According to what I have read, thrifting is meant to promote slow fashion by encouraging people to keep their clothes longer rather than purchasing new ones every month. I think people are abusing this concept. They buy cheaper clothes in bulk and are proud of themselves for thinking they save the environment. This is ridiculous." (LD, 20, student)

"I understand that poor people need second-hand clothes. What I do not understand is that middle-class or even rich people buy used clothes as a trend these days. I make sure I know the source of my clothes. I do not want to be part of the problem." (AL, 17, student)

As discussed in the literature review at the beginning of this study, many used clothing sellers have experienced a tremendous increase in turnover during the pandemic due to shifts in consumer habits who prefer to shop from home (Prihatini 2022). Used clothes are usually purchased in bulk from importers or distributors and then washed, ironed, and aesthetically photographed (Sudrajat 2018). Thrift shops can be easily found on Instagram or any e-commerce in Indonesia. In addition, successful second-hand sellers can afford to rent or buy outlets in malls and department stores. Regulations regarding the import of used clothing from abroad have been prohibited by the government and have even been regulated by law (no 7/2014) for various reasons, including for health and safety reasons. However, in practice, this rule is not fully implemented (Taqiyya 2021; Ayu et al. 2020).

The practice of thrifting for Indonesia's urban youth is not only divided between reasons of price or responsibility for the environment, as stated in several previous studies in various countries (Machado et al. 2019; Bardhi and Arnould 2005). Instead, a range of answers were found in the FGDs which led to the conclusion that the practice of thrifting is a complex phenomenon. Although most of the informants are middle class with sufficient economic capacity to buy new clothes, the practice of thrifting is carried out for various reasons related to hobbies, identity, individuality, and community. The reason for this individuality is based on the refusal of the younger generation of informants to follow the flow of local and global consumerism which tends to display a uniform style. Thrifting is carried out as a means to present oneself as authentic, unique, and distinctive, although the mechanism for establishing self-authenticity is also influenced by the latest trends about thrifting through social media and influencers. The mass media's observation that most of the used clothes sold are imports from Korea and Japan demonstrates that the tastes of the younger generation of Indonesia are actually influenced by Asian popular culture, which is dominating through popular entertainment channels.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated how young people in Indonesia interpret their thrifting practices and what motivates them. Surveys and focus group discussions were conducted to fill gaps in similar research on the practice and consumption of thrifting in the Indonesian context. The complexity of how the younger generation interpret the practice of thrifting goes much

deeper than simply that buying and selling used goods is purely a matter of economic considerations. This study found that the practice of thrifting has many layers of meaning, ranging from thrifting as a way of life and a strategy in dealing with economic challenges, to a means to express issues of identity and individuality, community ownership, and social responsibility toward the environment. The younger generation of Indonesians interviewed in this research realised that the practice of thrifting in Indonesia is illegal and problematic in terms of environmental responsibility. At the same time, the young generation in this study express the view that the practice of thrifting in the future must consider the sustainability of fashion and responsibility to the community and the environment.

Therefore, the ban on the import of used goods in Indonesia and its implementation deserves further investigation and interrogation, especially from the point of view of policy studies, political economy, and legal analysis. The limitation of this study is that it is a relatively small sample (12 people). However, even on a smaller scale, this research can open the way for further research in terms of the practice of thrifting in the Indonesian context, which can be expanded by taking a larger sample, as well as exploring how different generations interpret this practice.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

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