

Consumption practices of thrifting: Cultural materialism analysis of consumer perspectives

Praktik konsumsi thrift: Analisis cultural materialism dari perspektif konsumen

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Abstract

In the global era, people are looking for alternatives in fashion through the thrifting trend. This research aims to analyze the consumption practices of thrifting in Surabaya from a consumer perspective through Marvin Harris' Cultural Materialism approach based on economic infrastructure, social structure, and cultural superstructure. This research uses a quantitative approach with descriptive methods. The data collection technique was a questionnaire with 110 respondents in Surabaya, with ages between 15-40 years. Based on the frequency and preference of thrift shopping, thrift consumption is influenced by affordable prices, ease of access, and the role of digital technology. Economic infrastructure, including thrift stores to online platforms, makes it easy for consumers to obtain high-quality stuff at low prices. Based on cultural values and meanings, thrifting is a symbol of sustainability, creativity, and identity expression. The shift in cultural superstructure reflects that second-hand clothing is accepted as a fashionable alternative that reflects social responsibility and uniqueness. Based on economic relations and local culture, thrifting is an activity that increases the potential of the informal economy by creating business opportunities and strengthening social networks. This research concludes that thrifting is not only an economic alternative but also part of a lifestyle that refers to the value of sustainability and has an impact on local culture.

Keywords: cultural materialism; cultural superstructure; economic infrastructure; social structure; thrifting trend

Abstrak

Di era global, masyarakat mencari alternatif dalam konsumsi fashion melalui trend thrifting. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis praktik konsumsi barang thrift di Surabaya dengan menggunakan perspektif konsumen melalui pendekatan Cultural Materialism Marvin Harris berdasarkan tiga komponen yaitu infrastruktur ekonomi, struktur sosial, dan suprastruktur budaya. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan metode deskriptif. Teknik pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan survei menggunakan kuesioner dengan responden sejumlah 110 di Surabaya dengan kriteria usia antara 15–40 tahun. Hasil penelitian berdasarkan aspek frekuensi dan preferensi belanja barang thrift, diketahui konsumsi thrift dipengaruhi oleh harga yang terjangkau, kemudahan akses, serta peran teknologi digital. Infrastruktur ekonomi meliputi toko thrift hingga platform daring memudahkan konsumen untuk memperoleh barang kualitas tinggi dengan harga murah. Berdasarkan aspek nilai dan makna budaya, thrifting merupakan simbol keberlanjutan, kreativitas, dan ekspresi identitas. Pergeseran suprastruktur budaya mencerminkan bahwa pakaian bekas diterima sebagai alternatif modis yang merefleksikan tanggung jawab sosial serta estetika yang unik. Berdasarkan aspek relasi ekonomi dan budaya lokal, thrifting menjadi kegiatan yang meningkatkan potensi ekonomi informal melalui penciptaan peluang usaha serta memperkuat jaringan sosial. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa thrifting tidak menjadi alternatif ekonomi, melainkan juga sebagai bagian dari gaya hidup yang mengacu pada nilai keberlanjutan serta berdampak pada budaya lokal.

Kata kunci: materialisme budaya; suprastruktur budaya; infrastruktur ekonomi; struktur sosial; trend thrifting

Introduction

In today's globalization, people's habits and lifestyles are changing, especially changes in consumption patterns that lead to increasingly consumptive consumption patterns. One example is the consumption of clothing that cannot be separated from the daily lifestyle. Global fashion trends encourage people to constantly update their dressing styles, so the level of clothing consumption has increased significantly. In this context, people are looking for more economical alternatives to stay stylish without spending a lot of money, one of which is through buying second-hand clothes or thrifting. This practice not only provides an economical solution for consumers but also supports environmental sustainability by

reducing clothing waste (Faerrosa 2023). In recent years, thrifting has become a very popular national phenomenon, especially among the younger generation. Among the younger generation, thrifting is considered more than just an economic activity; it is part of a lifestyle that reflects the values of sustainability and an expression of individuality (Lestari & Asmarani 2021). Buying second-hand goods is no longer seen as a symbol of economic limitations, but has turned into an aesthetic and environmentally friendly part of a modern lifestyle (Siradjudin et al. 2023).

The practice of thrifting is seen as a form of ethical consumption where there are dual benefits obtained and being able to reduce waste and pollution which are negative impacts of producing new clothes, as well as being an economic solution because it is cost-effective (Akbar & Prasetya 2023). Consumers who consume thrifted goods not only fulfill their needs economically but also support environmental sustainability efforts and demonstrate a commitment to environmental preservation (Zahro 2023). In addition, the role of social media, such as Instagram and TikTok, has significantly increased the popularity of thrifting. These digital platforms allow for the emergence of thrifting communities as well as a place for individuals to share thrift finds and style tips. In this era, the development of the digital era has brought a huge impact on human life (Singgih et al. 2022). The thrifting phenomenon has generated a dynamic culture of second-hand consumption, which not only increases the visibility of thrift stores but also increases the sense of community among consumers (Kusindyantri 2023). In addition, digital engagement has increased interest, and participation in thrifting continues to grow, making thrifting more than just a consumption trend but also part of a lifestyle oriented towards sustainability and ethical values (Zahro 2023).

Thrifting represents a significant shift in consumer behavior, especially in times of increasing economic pressure. For consumers, thrift is an economical option that helps them fulfill their lifestyle needs at a lower cost. According to Larsen (2023), thrift shopping can also help local economies by creating jobs in thrift stores, promoting sustainable consumption practices, and improving the flow of consumer goods to make them more accessible to a wider audience. On the other hand, advances in digital technology have further boosted aspects of the thrifting economy. Online platforms such as marketplaces and social media not only expand people's access to thrifts but also create new entrepreneurial opportunities, especially for the younger generation (Niu 2023). The thrifting trend is important for companies to understand consumer motivations and their financial impact. Moreover, it rejects traditional views of social status with its thrift. Thrifting encourages an equal approach to fashion aesthetics rather than buying expensive brands; instead promotes the value of second-hand goods (Bardhi & Arnould 2005). However, it goes further, and this social impact on cultural consumption narratives cannot be realized through individual preferences alone. In a cultural context, thrifting is a means of self-expression. Thrift items are not uncommon to include a story or history, which adds a unique nostalgic aspect to these items and deepens consumers' emotional connection to buy (Faerber & Podkalicka 2020). Also, thrifted goods add different sustainability and aesthetic values like ethical consumption and waste reduction, which reflect the presence of interaction between local values and global influence.

The same goes for the number of second-hand shops that can be found scattered across Indonesia, including Surabaya. Surabaya is one of the largest metropolitan cities in the world, which offers a rich context in which to study the phenomenon of thrifting. This is about the localization of economy, consumption, and environmental sustainability in Surabaya. Secondly, in an urban area like Surabaya, consumption behavior is also entangled in a social class bargaining between environmentalism and consumerism (Arimbi et al. 2020). The urban dynamics of Surabaya are characterized by its dynamic urban features based on social media and local marketplaces as the main digital tools to connect thrift stores with young consumers. On these conditions, Surabaya becomes a strategic place for researching thrift consumption patterns in the local context. The advent of fast fashion has seen a lot of people hankering for thrifting, because of economic, environmental, and social factors. The popularity of this phenomenon also depends quite heavily on consumers' views on thrift. For consumers in Surabaya, thrifting is a trendy lifestyle, reflected by a modern way of living and living within their means, and is environmentally sustainable. The culture around thrifting, however, underscores that this is much more than a way of meeting material needs; it is also a means of building cultural identity. Thus, the consumer perspective exerts utmost importance in comprehending the thrifting trend since it provides enlightening into thrifting trend motivations, behavior, and social influences.

This is relevant to the research of several studies on thrift in Surabaya. Research by Syaraahiyya & Rusadi (2023) on the phenomenon of thrift shopping among the public due to changes in modern lifestyles based on globalization studies in the East Java region it is known that thrift shopping among the public is growing due to changes in modern lifestyles. The impact of globalization trends causes people to want to follow trends without wanting to spend a lot of money. Therefore, thrift stores have become very popular in Indonesia. Furthermore, research on the phenomenon of thrift shopping fashion among youth in Mulyorejo District, Surabaya, by Siradjudin et al. (2023) also explained that thrift is an issue of concern for both sellers and buyers, where sellers in Surabaya are trying to maintain the existence of used clothing by utilizing social media.

In addition, a further study on thrift culture in Surabaya conducted by Alfidyah (2023) regarding Thrift Culture in improving the social class of students of the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences of UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya using a review of Antonio Gramsci's hegemony theory, concluded that several factors cause consumers to buy thrifts, including economical prices, media and influencers, unique models, and well-known clothing brands. In addition, Syafa'ati & Khusyairi (2024) research on thrift fashion trends as a new culture of consumerism with Jean P. Baudrillard's theory of consumption society shows that the consumption of thrift fashion products does not only pay attention to the functional value of a garment but there is a symbolic value in purchasing thrift fashion products. Although it is within the scope of the same region such as Surabaya, this research has differences from previous studies, especially in the context of the aspects analyzed, where previous studies have examined thrifts themselves as the main object, while this research emphasizes more on the consumption practices carried out by people in Surabaya based on Marvin Harris' Cultural Materialism approach by examining the economic, social, and cultural sides based on the cultural paradigm.

This is following Novianti's research (2021), which states that economic factors are not the only drivers of decisions to buy used goods, but social, cultural, and psychological factors also influence consumer decisions. This then necessitates the understanding of the thrifting phenomenon in Surabaya from a consumer perspective. In light of this, the theory of Cultural Materialism appears to be suitable for describing a process of linking consumers' thrifting practices with social values. With this approach, the basis for the analytical attempt of Surabaya thrift consumers is to point out some of the aspects such as economy, technology, and environment. Furthermore, this approach enables an understanding of how material infrastructure changes can influence consumption patterns and how ideologies and cultures are produced as reactions to them (Novianti 2021). Accordingly, this research attempts to examine the thrift consumer consumption practice based on a consumer perspective using the Cultural Materialism approach of Marvin Harris. The construction set for this approach consists of three parts the economic infrastructure, the social structure, and the cultural superstructure.

Thrifting economic infrastructure refers to material technological aspects that underlie thrifting such as the presence of thrift stores, online marketplaces, and social media. This infrastructure is the key driver for it, in Surabaya thrifts, can be easily accessed by the consumers and it also helps for the local market dynamics (Halicki 2024). Relationships between individuals in the thrifting community comprise social structure. This is a sort of social space where consumers and sellers come together to talk about experiences and bolster and create networks for themselves. The cultural values and ideologies that underlie thrifting practices are reflected in the cultural superstructure. Thrifting is all about sustainability, special aesthetics, and even lifestyle identity, all things, among consumers, that symbolize. It is a phenomenon that reveals that material demands and economic pressures do shape new cultural values related to ethical consumption and sustainability (Harris 2001). By explaining the interaction between economic, social, and cultural forces that shape the phenomena of thrifting in Surabaya, this approach helps to make sense of this. In this context, then, thrifting is not only another form of alternative consumption but also a movement of more social and cultural change.

Research Method

In this research, descriptive research is conducted with quantitative approaches to analyze how thrift practices are consumed by people in Surabaya. This chose the descriptive method because it can afford to present the consumer views on thrift as presented from data gathered systematically, factually, and

accurately. The quantitative approach was selected because it may enable researchers to generate number-driven data that can be used to estimate consumption patterns, preferences, and factors that influence consumer behavior on thrift. Additionally, this approach is also a suitable one for finding patterns, distributions, and relationships among the variables that are pertinent to the phenomenon of thrift consumption of taste. Research results with this quantitative data are expected to be more objective and easy to understand with the provision of data in the form of tables, diagrams, or graphs. The advantage of quantitative research is that results from this study can be replicated and the results are objective because people follow standardized procedures for this work (Baur 2019). Although quantitative research excels in numerical data analysis, it lacks the depth of complexity based on human experience that qualitative research provides (Aravindh & Thirupathi 2019).

Quantitative approaches can provide structured data collection methods through surveys that can provide quantifiable results (Aravindh & Thirupathi 2019). Data collection in this study was conducted through a survey using a structured questionnaire. This instrument was designed based on the theory of Cultural Materialism. To ensure the quality of the questionnaire, content validity was tested through review by experts. In addition, the questionnaire was pilot-tested on a small number of respondents before use to ensure that all questions were well understood. Respondents were selected using a purposive sampling technique based on several criteria, including domicile, respondents must live in Surabaya or often buy thrift in Surabaya. In terms of age, respondents were aged 15-40 years, which is considered the most active age group in the consumption of thrift. In addition, informants must also have purchased thrift at least once in the last three months. The sample size in this study was 110 people, this number was determined to obtain diverse and representative data with an acceptable margin of error in survey-based descriptive research.

The purpose is to use a survey because this is the best method that enables it to sample from a large population to serve as material for further analysis. By Kerlinger (1973), and Sugiyono (2018), the survey is used to analyze the patterns, distributions, and relationship of the related factors with the population under study. Neuman & Kreuger (2003), as you read above, also cite the opinion that surveys are a type of quantitative research that can efficiently research the beliefs, perceptions, and characteristics of the male population. After getting the data, the following things are done, of which first is data presentation: the data is presented in the form of a pie Chart to make it easy to understand. However, descriptive calculations like frequencies and percentages are made on the consumption patterns and the preferences of respondents. Finally, pattern identification and consumption patterns were analyzed based on the relationship between variables such as price, accessibility, and cultural values to illustrate how these factors influence consumer decisions. Data calculation and interpretation were done manually to facilitate data grouping and basic statistical calculations. This study recognizes limitations, such as potential bias in sampling as the online and offline distribution of questionnaires may not have covered all consumer groups. In addition, online surveys also have the potential for response bias as respondents tend to provide socially expected answers. To mitigate these limitations, the researcher ensured that the questionnaire questions were designed to be simple and neutral, and not influence the respondents' answers.

Results and Discussion

This chapter expounds the Surabaya case study of thrifting consumption by merging the three key factors: economic infrastructure, social organization, and supercultural organization, which influence urbanites' shopping styles and frequency of behavior. The included sub-chapters are (1) Frequency and preferences of thrift shopping, which addresses shopping habits and sponsors communications; There are three streams for this research: (2) Cultural value and meaning of thrifting, which describes the socio-cultural significances and identity formation from thrifting; and (3) Economy and local culture linkages, which shows the impact of thrifting to local economy and its changes on consumption culture. This chapter examines consumer conduct statistics and contextualizes them from the perspective of cultural materialism, outlining material conditions to social structures, and cultural ideologies within urban society.

This chapter completes this research, by providing a unique interdisciplinary method that integrates quantitative survey data with theoretical analysis and thereby relates thrifty consumption practices to socioeconomic factors and cultural change in large cities. This chapter finds that thrifting is not all driven by affordability, cultural identity, self-expression, and environmentalism. Above, thrift shopping

in Surabaya can be seen as a consumer adaptive strategy combining with new consumption values in urban society, such as sustainability, creativity, digital interactivity, and ongoing transformations in social structures and cultural values within the local context of a globally interconnected world.

Frequency and preferences of thrift shopping sub

This sub-chapter presents the frequency and preference of thrift shopping, which explains the shopping frequency characteristics and consumer preferences for accessing thrift products in Surabaya in the context of urban consumption practice. Thrifting actions are not mere arbitrariness, follow the pace of personal wants, and depend in great measure on the feasibility of access to information, disseminated by digital platforms in abundance. In light of this, it is crucial to know how often consumers buy second-hand, through which platform(s) they can purchase second-hand, and what agency most profoundly informs consumption trends. This analysis is intended to inquire into the role of economic infrastructure and technological innovation in reorienting the patterns of thrift consumption, which are no long that properly functioning merely economically but inherently as a constituent element of the modern lifestyle.

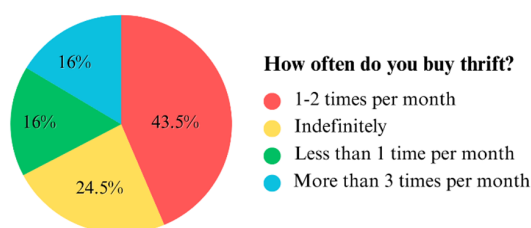


Figure 1.

Source: Primary survey data

Based on the Figure 1 shows that out of 110 respondents, who often buy thrifts 1-2 times per month, a percentage of 43.5%. Buying indefinitely with a percentage of 24.5%. Buying less than 1 time per month with a percentage of 16%. Buying more than 3 times per month with a percentage of 10%. This shows that the frequency of purchasing thrifts is included in purchases that are not fixed, according to the needs of each consumer.

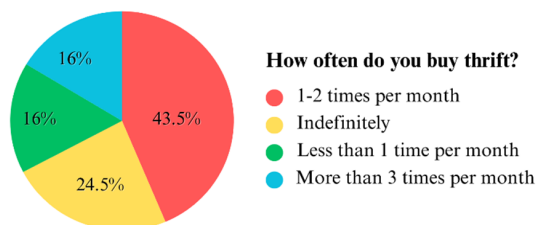


Figure 2.

Source: Primary survey data

Based on the Figure 2, it shows that out of 110 respondents, the majority of thrift consumer respondents know the thrifting trend from Instagram social media with a percentage of 43.4%, TikTok at 25.5%, Facebook at 21.7%, and others 9.4%. This shows that thrift has become a social media trend because almost all social media platforms are a means for people to find out about the development of thrifts in Surabaya.

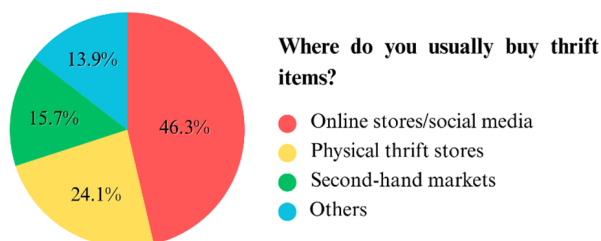


Figure 3.

Source: Primary survey data

Based on the Figure 3 shows that out of 110 respondents, the majority of thrift consumer respondents buy Thrifts through online stores or social media, with a presentation of 46.3%. Buying in physical stores with a percentage of 24.1%. Buying at second-hand markets with a percentage of 15.7%. Buying in other places with a percentage of 13.9%. This shows that online stores are more attractive to consumers, but physical stores are also still a necessity for Surabaya people in buying thrift needs.

Based on these data, the economic infrastructure aspect plays an important role in influencing consumers' frequency and preference for thrift shopping in Surabaya. Affordability and ease of access characterize this infrastructure: thrift stores provide low prices for high-quality products and cheaper prices in general than what can be found in new retail outlets. This is consistent with the opinion of Harris (1979) that economic infrastructure has a materialistic basis which facilitates material patterns of consumption of people. According to the thrift consumption questionnaire results in Surabaya, most of the consumers buy thrifts 1-2 times per month (43.4%), an activity that is also supported by individual needs (24.5%). The evidence from this data furnishes that thrift consumption practice is an adaptive response to urban socioeconomic pressures (such as inflation, or low income) to stay at the same living standard (i.e., more frugally, as per James et al. (2010)).

Additionally, consumers' access to the development of online platforms for thrift shopping also broadens access to purchase thrift from home and hence can increase the frequency of consumption (Putra 2024). This is a case in which changes in people's consumption patterns result from technological development in the economic infrastructure. The fact that thrift shopping in Surabaya can be considered a materially efficient and adaptive consumption strategy that adjusts to the pressure of economic conditions. This occurs because, besides the basic needs, the consumption patterns are dependent upon the interaction between the economic conditions and the availability of resources material in a specific social environment.

Social structure aspects include community interactions and social influences, such as peer recommendations, social media trends, and collective practices that shape people's consumption patterns. In Surabaya, these social dynamics are reflected in the role of social media as the main channel in disseminating information related to thrift trends, with Instagram (43.4%) and TikTok (25.5%) as the main platforms that bridge consumer interactions (Adji & Claretta 2022). The presence of social media can create a digital community that encourages consumers to share experiences, information, and recommendations, ultimately increasing the appeal and legitimacy of thrift shopping in urban society. Social structures often reflect the norms and values of a community, and in this context, thrift shopping is considered to be part of a social identity that reflects creativity, sustainability, and a community-based economy. Not only that, the social dynamics within thrift stores also shape a hedonic and satisfying experience, where interactions between consumers, the thrill of discovery, and friendly relationships among shoppers enrich the social aspects of thrift shopping (Bardhi & Arnould 2005).

In Surabaya, thrift consumption patterns that are increasingly integrated into the social fabric of urban society demonstrate a social transformation towards digital connectivity and consumption practices based on global communities. This is in line with Cultural Materialism, which states that social structures not only shape consumption patterns but also reinforce the symbolic meanings and collective values that result from these practices, such as sustainability and economic creativity (Miller 1987). In general, thrift shopping does not just fulfill economic needs, but also becomes an important element that builds social identity and strengthens social relationships in an increasingly connected urban society.

In particular, within the context of an urbanized society such as Surabaya, aspects of the cultural superstructure help determine the meanings and motivations embedded in thrift shopping practices. The increasing emphasis on cultural values of sustainability and environmental awareness has led to an increased interest in thrifts. Today, more and more consumers are switching away from thrifts not only because of economics but also because they see thrifts as a way to cut down on waste and promote environmentally friendly practices (Beniulis 2023). In this case, this is a shift within society's ideology because second-hand clothing was once considered worthless; now this is accepted as a fashionable choice and one of a few who express social responsibility (Lapolla & Kim 2015).

Against this background, social media like Instagram and TikTok as platforms to promote the practice of thrift shopping and serve as the main platform to promote this cultural narrative as the ethical and aesthetic contemporary lifestyle. This consumption practice has been perceived as a social address for the younger generation, thanks to their growing thrift through social media, as expressed by a synthesis of economic, ethical, and aesthetic values. The findings show that consumers prefer to purchase thrift items through online stores (46.3%) as well as physical stores (24.1%). This indicates that thrift consumption has merged into the daily lives of urban people. This choice reflects not only material needs but also sustainability ideology, where thrift purchasers are perceived to contribute to reducing clothing waste and supporting the reuse of goods.

Cultural values and meanings of thrifting

This sub-chapter examines the cultural meanings and values of thrifting in conjunction with the cultural values and social meanings of thrift consumption amongst the urban-positioned Surabaya denizens. In the last decade or so, thrifting is no longer confined to the practicality and thriftiness of past years; it has also evolved to become a lifestyle choice much like thrifters themselves: concerned with values of resourcefulness, self-expression, and being kinder to the environment. People have begun to perceive second-hand pieces as an expression of individuality, originality, and creativity, things that new pieces do not possess. This chapter explains how changes in what we value when we purchase things, from simple utility to cultural connection, are conditioned by the physical setting, social systems, and shifts in beliefs of city living. This narrative becomes a lens to make sense of the visual data given as diagrams to demonstrate how cultural values and symbolic meanings are enacted and constructed in the thrifting phenomenon.

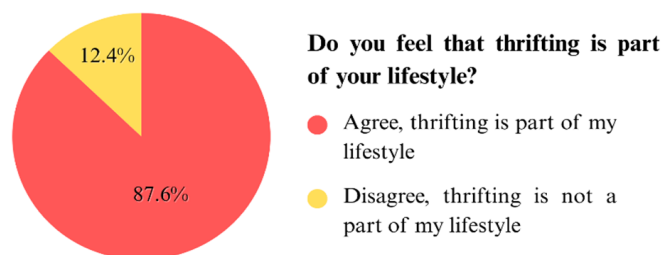


Figure 4.
Source: Primary survey data

Based on the Figure 4, out of 110 respondents, the majority of respondents agree that thrifting is a lifestyle with a percentage of 87.6% of respondents. Then 12.4% of other respondents disagreed. This significant percentage difference shows that thrifting has become part of the lifestyle of the people of Surabaya.

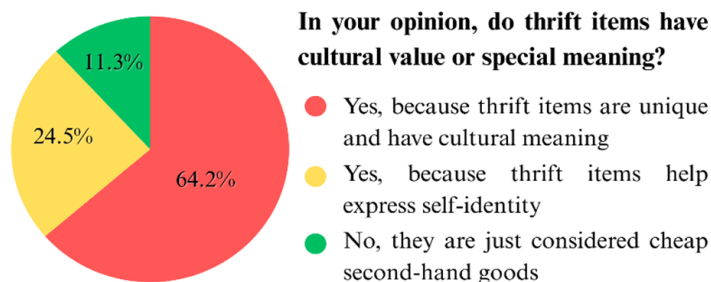


Figure 5.
Source: Primary survey data

Based on the Figure 5, it shows that out of 110 respondents, the majority of respondents feel that thrifting has cultural value and special meaning because it is unique, with a percentage of 64.2%. Then 24.5% feel that thrifting helps express themselves, while 11.3% feel that thrifting has no cultural value and special meaning because it is only considered cheap second-hand goods. This shows that nowadays more people think that thrifting has cultural value and special meaning because it is unique and can express themselves rather than just considering it as meaningless second-hand goods.

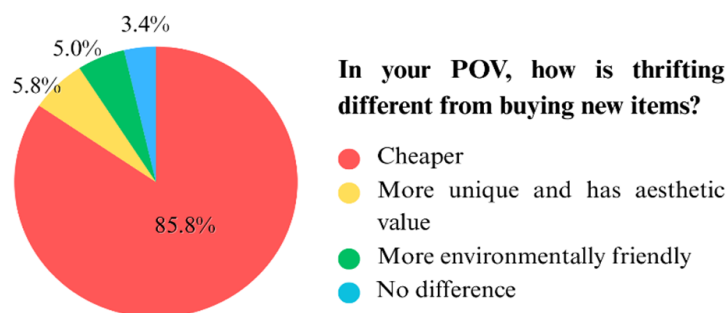


Figure 6.

Source: Primary survey data

Based on the Figure 6, shows that out of 110 respondents, the majority of respondents think that thrifting is different from buying new items because the price is cheaper with a percentage of 85.8%, while 14.2% of other respondents feel that thrifting is not too different from buying new items, only slightly different because it is more environmentally friendly. This shows that the cheaper price factor is the reason why people think that thrifting is different from buying new items.

Based on these data, the economic infrastructure aspect is a key element in explaining the phenomenon of thrift shopping as a response to material needs and economic challenges. This infrastructure is characterized by affordability and more efficient resource utilization, where thrifts offer much cheaper prices compared to new goods in traditional retail outlets. Findings show that 85.8% of respondents consider low prices as the main factor that attracts them to buy thrift items. This is an indication that the practice of thrifting has become an adaptive alternative solution for people exposed to urban economic pressures, being able to afford quality goods without having to give up their budget for other needs (Bardhi & Arnould 2005). This behavior is not only about promoting economic efficiency for sustainability, however, as purchasing secondhand goods fosters the extension of goods' lifecycles and therefore directly reduces waste (Venn et al. 2015).

Living in an urban condition like Surabaya together with budget constraints has inspired people to choose thrifting as a creative and efficient way to survive. According to Marvin Harris's Cultural Materialism, consumption patterns are generally dependent on existing interactions between material conditions and social needs. For the moment, thrifting constitutes an inventive response to economic pressures. Also, the online platforms that make it easy for consumers to shop thrift have aided the use of goods by consumers to shop more frequently and more (McDonald & Dan 2020). The digitization of this process makes thrifts more accessible and can accommodate, not only basic needs but also more diverse lifestyle preferences.

Collective values, community networks, and family tradition all play a supporting and reinforcing role in a culture of thrift, as well as increasing other aspects of social structure. Thrift shopping is not only a financial decision, but a social activity that contributes to relationship building with individuals who believe in saving, and resource sustainability (James et al. 2010). From this, findings have shown that 64.2 percent mentioned that thrift items have unique cultural value and special meaning, and 87.6 percent of respondents perceive thrifting as part of a lifestyle. Additionally, 24.5% of respondents associated thrifting with self-expression, where thrifted goods with rare designs or particular aesthetics become a means by which to express a sense of individual identity and lifestyle.

The social structures that underpin consumption and create social legitimacy for patterns of consumption such as this one are not the ones that we often understand structures to be performing. Thrifting-based lifestyles illustrate the formation of a new subculture that connects individuals through shared consumption practices, both directly within thrift communities and through social media. Digital platforms such as Instagram and TikTok increase the frequency of these social interactions by facilitating the sharing of thrift-related trends and ideas. Thrifting not only fulfills an economic need but also becomes a social symbol that reflects the values of sustainability, creativity, and originality that are increasingly valued in contemporary urban society (Miller 1987).

The cultural superstructure aspect emphasizes that thrift shopping has embodied the value shift of urban society towards sustainability and environmental awareness. Thrift culture, which emerged as a response to the negative impacts of fast fashion, is no longer seen as an economic choice alone but also as an alternative that supports environmentally friendly practices (Aryaputra 2023). This cultural shift can be seen in the increasing acceptance of second-hand clothing as not only practical but also fashionable, overcoming the negative stigma previously attached to second-hand shopping practices (Lapolla & Kim 2015). In this context, consumer motivations go beyond the financial aspect, encompassing hedonic dimensions such as emotional satisfaction from the thrill of finding unique and aesthetically pleasing items (Holmes 2018). The results show that 64.2% of respondents consider thrift items to have cultural and aesthetic value, while 24.5% see them as a medium to express personal identity.

These findings confirm that thrift consumption is not solely based on economic considerations but also reflects an increasingly strong cultural dimension, where values of sustainability, creativity, and waste reduction are integral to the ideology of modern urban society. Thrift consumption illustrates a shift in the cultural values of urbanites who now value the uniqueness and personal character of a product more than the brand or social status attached to a novelty item. This reflects a rejection of mass consumption and an emphasis on recycling practices that support waste reduction efforts, in line with the ideology of sustainability (Morley & Robins 1995). The thrifting trend not only reflects changes in consumption patterns but also illustrates the transformation of cultural values that increasingly value individual creativity and environmental responsibility in their consumption choices.

The relationship between economy and local culture

This sub-chapter covers the economy-local culture relation, discussing the relation between narratives about thrifting consumption practices as a cultural practice and the mechanism of the dynamics that govern the local economy and culture in Surabaya. Thrifting in the context of an urban simultaneity is not just a reaction to economic constraints - it becomes a key pillar of the informal economy, upon which are deposited cultural values that were evicted from other areas of life by the advance of consumerist culture. This trend tells us that consumption activities are not only led by material needs, but rather determined, influenced, and driven by society's values and cultural attitudes. By way of cultural materialism theory, this sub-chapter describes how economy and culture intersect: from thrifting's effects on local commerce and shopping among the low and middle class, right to its part in creating new lifestyle behaviors and cultural identities. This story serves as a backstory for understanding before you get to see some visual evidence of how thrifting influences our local economy and culture in very real ways.

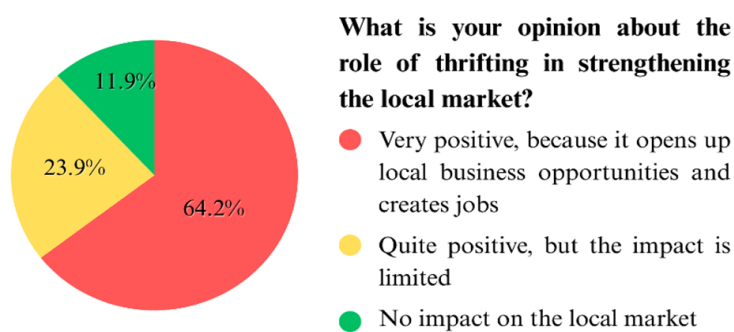


Figure 7.
Source: Primary survey data

Based on the Figure 7, out of 110 respondents, the majority of respondents think that the role of thrifting in strengthening the local market is very positive because it opens up local business opportunities and creates jobs, with a percentage of 64.2%. Then, 23.9% of respondents felt that thrifting was positive enough to strengthen the local market but with limited impact, and 11.9% of respondents felt that thrifting did not affect the local market. This shows that from the consumer's point of view, the development of thrifting strengthens the local market, which is different from the producer's point of view, which feels that thrifting causes competition.

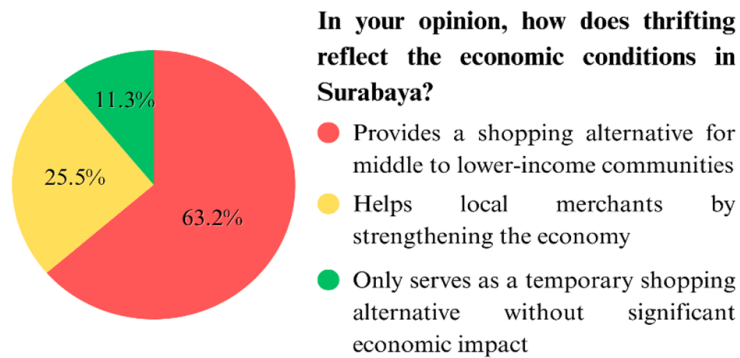


Figure 8.

Source: Primary survey data

Based on the Figure 8, out of 110 respondents, the majority of respondents think thrifting can provide shopping alternatives for middle to lower-income people with a presentation of 63.2%. 25.5% of respondents think thrifting can help local merchants strengthen the economy, and 11.3% of respondents think it has no significant impact. This shows that according to consumers, the shift phenomenon from the consumption of new goods to the consumption of thrifting goods reflects the economic conditions in Surabaya.

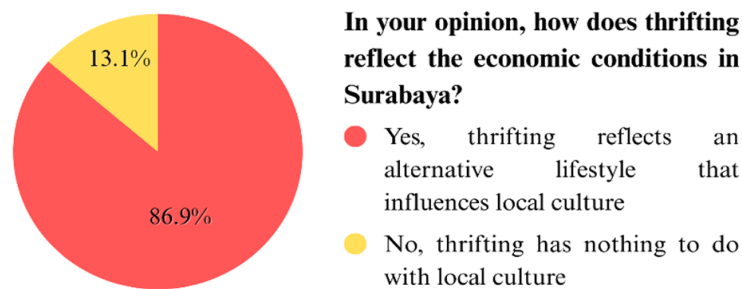


Figure 9.

Source: Primary survey data

Based on the Figure 9, out of 110 respondents, the majority of respondents think that thrifting shows an alternative lifestyle that influences local culture, with a very large percentage of 86.9%, while 13.1% of respondents think that thrifting has nothing to do with local culture. This significant percentage difference shows that thrifting has become part of the global trend that influences the local culture of Surabaya people.

Based on these data, the economic infrastructure aspect plays a crucial role in supporting thrift consumption practices in Surabaya, which is characterized by ease of access and affordability. Second-hand shops offer a suitable alternative for consumers who cannot afford to access mainstream retail, especially in cities with significant economic disparities (Rahmawati et al. 2022). This makes thrifting a response to economic pressures, where consumers seek thrifty solutions to fulfill their clothing needs. The increasing popularity of second-hand online platforms further expands the market, making the practice more inclusive by reaching a wider audience and making it easier for people to access (Putra 2024).

In addition to fulfilling consumer needs, secondhand fashion also has a positive impact on the local economy. Many thrift stores are managed as small businesses that not only rely on community participation but also utilize local resources, thus contributing to informal job creation (Niu 2023). The data shows that 64.2% of respondents believe that thrifting opens up local business opportunities and creates jobs, while 63.2% see it as a shopping alternative for middle and lower-income earners. This confirms that thrifting is not only an economic strategy for consumers but also serves as a catalyst for informal economic growth at the local level. The presence of small thrift shops, community bazaars, and online sellers creates new entrepreneurial opportunities, allowing local people to participate in the creative economy. In an urban context like Surabaya, where economic pressures often limit people's purchasing power, thrift becomes an adaptive solution that responds to the needs of low to middle-income consumers for quality products at affordable prices.

Aspects of social structure play a significant role in shaping thrift consumption practices in Surabaya. Thrift shopping is not just an economic activity but also a social activity that strengthens relationships between individuals and communities. This involves families and individuals going together because thrifting is about sharing, sharing experiences, and sharing information on where to get the best deals, creating a solid social network (Rahmawati et al. 2022). But thrifting serves as much more than a social tool: it plays an important economic role in the labors of local networks. More than 25.5% of respondents said that thrifting helps nourish the local merchant's economy, while 86.9% of respondents believed it was part of an alternative lifestyle that influences the local culture. It's not just about shopping for the most affordable items but is part of a movement to support local communities and promote sustainability. From a social structure point of view, thrifting emerges as a subculture of consumption around the norms of sustainability and solidarity in society. This is the more frugal and more environmentally friendly consumption pattern where people don't consume on the need but also do multiplication in terms of promoting local communities and their economies.

Also, the cultural superstructure aspect supports the explanation that the thrift practices in Surabaya become an exhibit for change in their values in this direction is sustainability and environmental awareness. As fast fashion continues to have negative effects on the environment and humanity, we are more aware of them and have started to choose second-hand stores as a more eco and socially responsible option (Lestari & Asmarani 2021). This culture shift is evidenced in the refashioning of secondhand clothing, which is now fashionable and appealing after considering the bad images already onboard secondhand products (Rahmawati et al. 2022). While we don't just mean that consumers are motivated by reasons related to their money, shoppers also get pleasure from discovering unique things and being able to get them at lower prices (Hulme 2019).

However, this mix of utility and hedonism reveals thrifting culture isn't just about saving, but is also a form of self-expression, individuality, and social responsibility. This indicates that although thrifting is a form of consumption, what is more, it is a cultural activity played out in aesthetic and symbolic contents, and 86.9% of respondents believed that thrifting contributed to expanding the cultural structure in Surabaya. Thrifted goods are perceived as unique, with a story, and represent urban cultural identity. This practice also signifies sustainability ideology in Surabaya where this ideology is rejected in mass consumption and integrated with the global values of sustainability in the local culture. The result of this process is that consumption patterns become more environmentally conscious and strengthen Surabaya's urban identity as part of the global trend. Not only does thrifting meet material needs, but it also symbolizes the changing cultural values in modern society. With its thrift, Surabaya fits the vision of Morley & Robins (1995) of a cultural shift that has its aesthetic, social, and environmental values at its heart.

Conclusion

The thrifting phenomenon is marked by a huge deviation in the pattern of consumption, and more particularly, the younger generation is qualified for this category. Part of a lifestyle, thrifting is more than an economic alternative; it goes a way of being sustainable, stylish, and being who you are. This phenomenon can also be attributed to the development of digital technology, in that social media and marketplace platforms such as the increased popularity of thrifting give wider access and enchant communities. Not only does this change the way we perceive secondhand consumption, which was once a marker of economic deprivation, but now it's seen as a marker of sustainability and ethical awareness. The interaction of economic, social, and cultural factors in society is illustrated by thrift consumption in Surabaya itself. Through thrift stores and digital communities, not only can thrift be shown to have high potential for the local economy but also a challenge that antithetically contradicts traditional narratives of social status and fashion consumption. What thrifting means to the consumer is not just a means to fulfill material needs sustainably, but also a way to craft a cultural identity that is linked to value with sustainability. The thrifting phenomenon is an excellent opportunity to explore how material conditions, social structures, and cultural values come together to produce new patterns of consumption resonant with dominant economic pressures and global trends.

This study applies the Cultural Materialism approach to examine the consumption practices of Surabaya thrifts by focusing on the relationship among economic infrastructure, social structure, and cultural superstructure is a factor that brings up consumption patterns of urban society. Beyond its response to economic pressures, this phenomenon has been adopted for change in cultural values around sustainability, aesthetics, and social responsibility. From an economic perspective, the offering of thrift stores, digital communities, and marketplace platforms are the main infrastructures that increase access and affordability to a point where it becomes possible to live thrifty as an alternative solution and as an efficient consumption option despite economic pressure. On a social basis, thrifting builds community networks and exchanging experience and information to create a lasting strong, and sustainable subculture. Shopping thrifting is not just shopping anymore but has become a mark of how modern people like to lead their lives by being creative, original, and environmentally concerned. From the cultural point of view, thrifting is a reflection of ideological changes in the urban residents who no longer accept mass consumption and increasingly support sustainability, by using thrift products as an image of personal identity expression and respect for Western local values. In this time of globalization, the practice of thrift consumption in Surabaya reflects the relationship between the economy and local culture. The thrifting phenomenon also shows that economic pressures, technological influences, and awareness of sustainability will make people adopt more ethical, creative, and relevant consumption patterns to face cultural challenges in modern socio-economic life.

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