

THE MEANING OF THRIFTING IN #TUKARBAJU CAMPAIGN IN ZERO WASTE INDONESIA COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of thrifting or buying used clothes is becoming increasingly popular among young people and has attracted public attention because it is considered as one of the sustainable efforts by applying the principles of sustainable fashion. In interpreting this, the researcher then chose the Tukar Baju community as the object of research as well as a representation of environmental activists engaged in the realm of sustainable fashion. This research uses a qualitative method with an ethnographic type of research to see the meaning of thrifting from Tukar Baju activists and how the process of interaction and exchange of meaning between individuals can strengthen the meaning of thrifting as a form of sustainable fashion effort. Researchers found a pyramid concept of "Buyerarchy of need" in interpreting thrifting as a continuous effort and thrifting is at level 4 and which means thrifting is not the only one. So, to strive for sustainable fashion through thrifting, people need to be smart and not impulsive consumers.

Keywords: *Thrifting, Tukar Baju, Sustainable Fashion, Environmental Communication*

ABSTRAK

Fenomena *thrifting* atau membeli baju bekas menjadi semakin populer di kalangan anak muda dan mengambil perhatian masyarakat karena dianggap sebagai salah satu upaya berkelanjutan dengan menerapkan prinsip fesyen berkelanjutan. Dalam memaknai hal ini, kemudian peneliti memilih komunitas Tukar Baju sebagai objek penelitian sekaligus representasi dari aktivis lingkungan yang bergerak pada ranah fesyen berkelanjutan. Penelitian menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan jenis penelitian etnografi untuk melihat makna *thrifting* dari para aktivis Tukar Baju dan bagaimana proses interaksi dan pertukaran makna antar pribadi dapat menguatkan makna *thrifting* sebagai bentuk upaya fesyen berkelanjutan. Peneliti menemukan sebuah konsep piramida "Buyerarchy of need" dalam memaknai *thrifting* sebagai upaya

berkelanjutan dan *thrifting* berada pada level ke-4 yang artinya *thrifting* bukan menjadi satu-satunya upaya. Sehingga untuk mengupayakan fesyen berkelanjutan melalui *thrifting*, masyarakat perlu menjadi konsumen yang cerdas dan tidak impulsif.

Kata Kunci : Thrifting, Tukar Baju, Fesyen Berkelanjutan, Komunikasi Lingkungan

INTRODUCTION

The term *thrifting* is usually interpreted as the activity of buying used goods. Derived from the words *thrive* and *thrifty*, *thrifting* then interpreted as a way to use money and other goods properly and efficiently. The phenomenon of buying used goods is also attached to other terms such as *second-hand* and *preloved* (Gafara, 2019). The latest discourse on *thrifting* is that it is not only a hobby but as the road for environmental conservation.

Thrifting is related to environmental preservation because fashion systems are throughout their value chain involved in ecological crises that harm the environment and human well-being (Cuc & Tripa, 2014), whereas individuals have decision-making practices and respond to social norms differently (West & Turner, 2009). Clothing products manufactured in an environmentally friendly manner allow consumers to make ethical choices and consumption as well as create an environmentally conscious identity. The strategy to address the textile waste problem is to develop a program that incorporates a 3R waste hierarchy (*reduce, reuse, and recycle*) that can be used as a management tool to guide resource allocation and policy formation (Thompson, 2017).

The history of *thrifting* dates back to the 1760s-1840s. At that time, there was an industrial revolution of the 19th century which later gave rise to the term *mass-production of clothing* (Mahabarata, 2020). Fesyen dianggap barang murah sehingga orang-orang akan membuangnya setelah digunakan (*disposable*). Around the same time, the Salvation Army, which was the first NGO, began to focus on making unused items as donation forms. In 1897, a shelter was established called "Salvage Bridge". This shelter is a place for people who feel excess clothing and belongings, can be donated to that place.

Reporting from Ussfeed.com, when there was a "Great Depression" in America in 1920. Thrift shop is an alternative solution for the lower-class community and a means of donation for the upper class. Until now, Americans make August 17 as the "National Thrift Store Day" which is then celebrated with massive discount offers to enliven thrifting culture (Gafara, 2019).

Voi.id also explained that in Indonesia, there is a thrift market with local terms such as "cimol" in Bandung, "awul-awul" in Yogyakarta, and Central Java and "burjer" in North Tapanuli. The beginning of their presence is not far from the business scope that occurs in coastal areas of Indonesia such as Sumatra, Batam, Kalimantan, to Sulawesi. This coastal area then became the entrance to the presence of used clothing imports which were later better known as 'imported clothes' rather than 'used clothes'.

The Zero Waste Indonesia Community (ZWID) is one of the communities in Indonesia that seeks to introduce thrifting as a way to save the environment. One of their campaigns was named #TukarBaju. A campaign was created to make the public aware of the importance of maintaining the sustainability of the natural environment and efforts to resolve the impact of textile waste that is ignored by the community. In this campaign, there is an interaction of meanings about thrifting and also environmental issues which should be an interesting study for environmental communication scholars.

The problem is, research on environmental communication in Indonesia is still dominated by slum environmental issues (Andriva & Firdaus, 2020; Kamil, 2018), disaster mitigation communication (Dwivayani & Boer, 2020) disaster mitigation communication by the government (Kurniawati, 2020) and little discusses about sustainability issues in the realm of

lifestyle (Susanti & Rachmawati, 2018). For example, research on the role of government communication in handling slum environments (Kamil, 2018).

Meanwhile, research on thrifting has also been carried out (Ghilmansyah, Nursanti, & Utamidewi, 2022). who conducted a study on Bogor youths, concluded that thrifting has become a lifestyle or fashion trend. Thrifting campaign as a fashion waste solution uses the main media named stop motion through print media and digital (Balqies & Jupriani, 2022). Marketing strategy for thrifting clothes sales on Instagram (Nurdin, 2021). Thrifting Thrifting as a self-presentation form (Hayati & Susilawati, 2021).

In the other studies, Prabaswari, Punia, & Aditya (2020) examining the trend of using used clothes or thrifting in Denpasar city is able to provide environmental awareness for the public, especially consumers of used clothes in an effort to extend the clothes' lifetime.

This research itself is research in the field of environmental communication where environmental communication can describe ways and become a forum for citizens, companies, public officials, journalism, and environmental groups in voicing aspirations for nature. Wide audiences are realizing that our understanding of nature and our actions towards the environment depend not only on science but also on public debate, media, the internet, and even ordinary conversations (Cox, 2013). Environmental communication means the application of approaches, principles, strategies, and communication techniques for environmental management and preservation (Flor, 2018). The realm of environmental communication studies is not even fixated only on plant issues and climate conflicts that revolve around disaster problems. However, studies in environmental communication also target the media realm related to environmental news, the process of public participation in environmental decisions, environmental rhetoric, risk communication, environmental conflict resolution/statements, advocacy campaigns, "green" marketing, and images of nature in popular culture (Cox, 2013). Thus, environmental communication is a representation of nature or the environment that raises interest and/or consequential orientation.

This research wants to see how the interaction and communication processes that occur in the Zero Waste Indonesia (ZWID) community shape the meaning of thrifting among its members. In this case, this research uses the basic assumption of symbolic interactionism theory, that each individual embodies meaning through the act of communication because meaning is not intrinsic to anything. In this case, communication has an important role because without meaning, the communication process will be difficult to establish and it takes the individual's role to make meaning in creating meaning together.

Blumer (1969) proposed three approaches to meaning creation: meaning as intrinsic, meaning as a human being instead of things, and meaning as a social product (Ahmadi, 2008). we formulated this research problem with one question: how the interaction between members in the Zero Waste Indonesia community produces the meaning of thrifting in its members.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach. The qualitative approach is research that is descriptive and tends to use inductive analysis (Rukin, 2019). The research method is carried out through an in-depth interview process conducted ethnographically in communication. Ethnography is research that seeks to understand the process of interaction between humans in relation to everyday life (Haryono, 2020). Ethnography as a written description of social organization, social activity, symbols, material sources, and understanding of the practical characteristics of human groups (Anshori, 2017). There are many stages in ethnographic communication research including ethnographic project selection, question submissions, data collection, data recording, data analysis, and writing ethnographic reports (Kamarusdiana, 2019).

This research was conducted for 5 months with an interview process through their respective residences conducted by researchers from October to February by collaborating with the Zero Waste Indonesia community.

The Zero Waste Indonesia community was chosen by researchers with the background in the environmental activity movement from Zero Waste Indonesia which is quite massive with its community child named Tukar Baju. In addition, the Tukar Baju community is arguably quite representative of the sustainability movement in the fashion sector with non-profit campaigns through online and offline that are carried out.

The object of this study was the activists of the Tukar Baju community which amounted to 3 resource persons including one in the *social media manager* section and 2 people in the *campaign activation* section of the Tukar Baju community. The three speakers are active members of Tukar Baju and are in charge of the campaigns that have been carried out.



Figure 01 : Offline Tukar Baju Event

Source : Instagram Tukar Baju

Data collection methods are obtained from the process of observation, interviews, and documentation studies. Data analysis in this study was made by data collection and writing findings (Creswell, 2016). Data analysis steps include data processing and preparation, initial reading of information, data coding, code description, thematic analysis of code, use of computer programs, presentation of data in tables, graphs, figures, and also interpretation of research data (Creswell, 2016).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Thrifting dan upaya *Buyerarchy of need*

Thrifting term according to interviews with the three activists of Tukar Baju produces different meanings for each individual. But from these differences, the source mentioned or said a little about sustainable fashion. Although actually personally the source I met first knew *thrifting* was just a hobby or just a glimpse of it. But from that trivial thing then comes a curiosity that is high enough to lead them to an interest in sustainable fashion or even involved in the Tukar Baju community.

According to them, the three Tukar Baju activists, *thrifting* is actually not the main solution to running a sustainable fashion business. The most important thing is to use clothes that are already owned and that are in each individual's closet. Tukar Baju activists usually refer to what they do as a manifestation of the pyramid concept. "*Buyerarchy of need*" which consists of *use what you have, borrow, swap, thrift, make, and buy*.

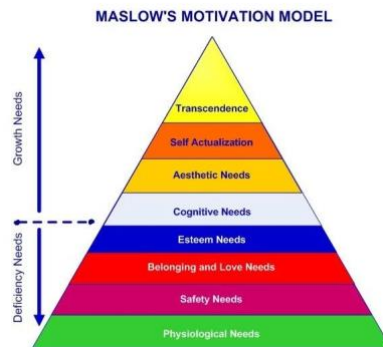
"From me personally, I'll go back to the buyerarchy of need. That actually thrifting is not the best solution for the environment. Yes, the best solution is to use what you have."



Figure 02 : Buyerarchy Pyramid of need

Source : Webinar Tukar Baju

The concept of "Buyerarchy of need" is an adaptation of the concept in the realm of psychology proposed by Abraham Maslow, namely "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs". In this case the concept of "Buyerarchy of need" they produce by borrowing certain theories in different contexts. Production of such terms is known as *theoretical jamming*.



Figure,03 : Pyramid of Needs (Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs)

Source : (Maslow, 1943)

The speakers began to recognize the concept of "Buyerarchy of need" through chat or repeated mentions in discussion topics in the realm of sustainable fashion. The chat process that always brings up the concept of "Buyerarchy of need" then results in a process of interaction between community members. It is also known that not everyone even members of the community know the figure of Maslow even his concept. Where Maslow's concept is better known in psychological studies or people who study about slices of psychology. In this community, there is only one resource person who has a background in psychology, so the other two speakers are more familiar with Maslow's concept from the interaction process that is established in the community.

Although within the Tukar Baju activist group there is uniformity regarding the Buyerarchy of need, personally in getting meaning and interpreting it there are different stories from each member. Among them are experiences, invitations, information searches, and the need for something.

The first interviewee revealed that they liked *thrifting* Starting from their friend's invitation to visit *thrift shop* in Japan. This is in line with studies (Ghilmansyah et al., 2022), the motives of the social environment and the closest environment give rise to the encouragement of interest in thrifting among millennials because of the similarity of interest in thrifting.

Instead of buying factory-produced *branded* goods, they were tempted to follow their friend's invitation to hunt for used clothes in the Harajuku Street area to get cheap prices with good quality. In fact, according to them, buying second-hand goods in Japan is no longer a taboo. From the story, it is known that Japanese residents who incidentally become *role models* of today's fashion are not ashamed to use used clothes as their fashion *style* and instead become a fashion show on Harajuku Street.

Another story with the second speaker, they are actually familiar with the term *thrifting*. They called it "awul-awul". They argue that before really understanding environmental issues, they often felt bitterness about fashion waste. After studying environmental issues, they then realized that from the environmental side, it turns out that extending the life of the clothes has a very big meaning, not just loving the clothes until there. Even if used repeatedly it has helped the environment in an effort to reduce carbon footprint.

In the midst of the thrifting phenomenon *that is increasingly spreading in the younger generation, people no longer consider* thrifting as a bad activity. Even by normalizing *thrifting*, people no longer attach importance to ego and *less thinking about pride*. Even *thrifting* becomes the "gong" of every problem in the fashion realm. And in terms of model and price, *thrifting* is increasingly affordable and becomes the popular community.

This research corroborates findings Prabaswari et al., (2020) regarding the selection of thrifting clothes as an effort to save money in buying branded goods by outsmarting them to shop at thrift shops or flea markets. With this technique, buyers can buy branded used items at very cheap prices and resell them if they have bored

Given their high interest in thrifting, one of the speakers said that they had a thrift experience that tended to be impulsive like buying new clothes. In order to always update thrift clothing info, they intend to create a second Instagram account whose contents are specifically for online thrift shop accounts so that they always update and get thrift clothes. Moreover, the thrift shop phenomenon is currently dominated by many online stores.

"There continues to be that tendency so it's like an impulsive tendency. My fault is, like I'm used to being like people nowadays when you buy it, create a special second account to see the clothes on Instagram, I also had time like that. Continue to browse my instagram containing what thrift store online, and it's like thrift store is everything. Well, like the trend of thrift stores in Indonesia, they don't open those clothes every time. It's like there is a period. For example, they just got like the term ball, what the hell is like the clothes just came to the store, then they curate it and they will open maybe a week or even a day, then the time is also determined, for example at 4 pm, then they upload it first to their instagram, so we can see the collection, there is anything, then it will be opened to buy it, for example at 4 pm. Now that's what it looks like, actually, their way is okay because their clothes are limited but for us, consumers, that's it"

The explosion of the thrifting phenomenon *among young people followed by the emergence of thrifting online stores* on social media makes the worry of *inappropriate thrifting* clothes disappear. Even in the care of *thrifting* clothes themselves, in composition and *treatment*, there is actually no significant difference in caring for them. What needs to be considered is precisely the care based on the grouping of materials and fabrics, the selection of detergents and definitely must pay attention to the clothes material and in accordance with the procedures on the clothing label. For example, *polyester* on sports clothes is washed by hand, not a washing machine.

According to the interviewees, the care of thrifting clothes is the same as ordinary clothes. That drying hangs "lyn dry" without going through the drying process through the washing machine is much better. Because with a washing machine there is actually an impact on the environment. Even in washing, the detergent selection greatly affects clothes so that they do not quickly "worn out" and lose its color. What is certain is that you must pay attention to the clothes material and in accordance with the procedures on the clothing label.

Formation of the meaning of thrifting in the interaction between members

Interest in *thrifting* Not only comes from within oneself but also from social interactions that bring meaning to *thrifting*. The role of idol figures has a big influence on the fashion taste of each user (Prabaswari et al., 2020). In self-concept, Cooley explains that self-feelings are social because meaning is created through language and culture along with subjective interpretations of individuals and actors they consider influential and have close relationships (*significant other*).

In interpreting sustainable fashion, the speakers have actually known them for a long time through the upbringing of parents at home, especially mothers. They call it "*decluttering*" or sorting clothes according to categorization. With *decluttering*, we will realize and appreciate more what items we have so that we can resist the feeling of wanting to buy new clothes. Because actually, sustainable fashion is not an instant process in striving for a better environment, but slowly little by little.

"Actually, if I think about it again, actually from childhood, I think I got an example from my mother, for example, because of sustainable fashion, we are also related to decluttering. So we also have to be aware that in our closet such as clothes that we don't wear anymore"

Even in choosing *thrifting*, there are no public figures or idols who really describe the fashion of the speakers. Instead, it is more about the interest in idols who adopt a sustainable lifestyle or the culture of a particular region such as the concept of "Harajuku Street" which has motivated the hobby of *thrifting*. From this, the speakers became more convinced that everyone could still be *fashionable* even if they have to or choose to wear *thrifting* clothes and *used* clothes.

And joining the Tukar Baju community has changed the view of *thrifting* become more positive because it is not only looking for needs but also trying to campaign for a sustainable fashion movement through *thrifting*. Because there are so many #TemanTukar (the name for the Tukar Baju audience) that are still misguided with the meaning of *thrifting* Like what the source knew before knowing sustainable fashion. The pursuit of *thrifting* is only the price is cheap or the brand is famous. Even though the essence is not there, but *thrifting* is one solution to extend the life of clothes and prevent clothes that are still suitable for use from ending up in TPA.

The interviewees' views on *thrifting* changed since getting to know sustainable fashion. Starting from attending webinars, reading articles or content related to *sustainability*, into contribute as a *volunteer* and gaining more knowledge about sustainable fashion. Interacting with Zero Waste Indonesia volunteers also contributed greatly to this understanding. It turns out that from just "knowing", "aware", then trying to "contribute directly" is enough to bring big changes for themselves even for those around them and others.

The way Tukar Baju activists emphasize the meaning of *thrifting* in this case is by talking about it through content, *Instagram live*, and webinars where Tukar Baju activists participate as speakers. The Tukar Baju Team tries to urge the audience and the public to be wiser in *thrifting* so as not to be impulsive and remain *mindful* in consuming clothes. Even often tells their experience in *thrifting*, starting from their incomprehension of *thrifting* they thought this practice was solely to buy branded goods at low prices, to change their mindset to do *thrifting* only when needed.



Figure,04 : Sharing session in the event of #TukarBaju offline

Source : Instagram Tukar Baju

To prove their action in implementing sustainable fashion, not infrequently Tukar Baju activists often present themselves with clothes according to the campaign raised. According to them, the Tukar Baju Webinar is the most appropriate momentum *for sharing* and campaigning for sustainable fashion. Moreover, the initial conditions of the pandemic at that time made it difficult to use good clothes to leave the house. With this webinar, they then took the time to *show off* that we can really use environmentally friendly clothes even at home.

Tukar Baju always tries to instill itself to invite the public to raise awareness of ownership that should not be strengthened. But precisely this is a responsibility and can be given up to get new things that are actually healthier. Because all of it flows and rotates continuously and is not a straight line that will endless.

Developing the concept of sustainable fashion is not only looking at the "buyerarchy of need" pyramid with open eyes but also understanding it through material selection. There are many types of fabrics that have produced clothes that until now we use. Some are organic to synthesis.

What distinguishes the concept of Tukar Baju from the community is that Tukar Baju activists become sustainable fashion agents who have the mandate to educate. In applying and strengthening the meaning of *thrifting*, Tukar Baju activists prefer to be *role models* rather than having to give long lectures to the general public.

In general, however, activists have not been able to clearly assess how *influential* the whole movement. But, with the Tukar Baju, people are quite educated with an understanding of sustainable fashion. Because actually the value of the power of environmental sustainability is not only in ourselves but about how the Tukar Baju movement is able to *influence* people and there is a ripple effect.

The process of interpreting *thrifting* obtained by Tukar Baju activists basically comes from many sources, experiences, information searches into meetings, and communication between Tukar Baju members. The meaning of *thrifting* by each activist will always evolve over time. Both through searching for information personally through articles, news to other reliable sources. Or by developing communication and interaction through community or personal channels.

Sustainable fashion has a wide domain and *thrifting* is one form of alternative effort. If we refer to the pyramid of "buyerarchy of need" we will find steps and instructions for practicing sustainable fashion. These include *use what you have, borrow, swap, thrifting, make, and buy*.

From this we know that the development of information and understanding of sustainable fashion is not only done through the "3R" strategy component of *reduce*, *reuse*, and *recycle*. But also perspective and understanding of the use of fashion itself.

According to Blumer, those meanings are then modified through two actions, first the communicator shows the meaning. Tukar Baju realizes that *thriftling* actually allows it to have a double meaning as "waste" and as an alternative to *sustainable* fashion. In response to this discourse, Tukar Baju on its behavior actually positions itself more as a neutral party.

Appreciating *thriftling* as an alternative to running sustainable fashion and warning the public in carrying out *thriftling* activities with signs that have been learned. In this case, Tukar Baju is acting as a communicator who sorts, checks, and edits meaning in a personal context.

Research in the Tukar Baju community, an assumption and agreement were found in viewing *thriftling*. According to activists, *thriftling* can be categorized as an alternative effort towards a better environment with environmental sustainability in the textile realm.

But *thriftling* is not the most absolute solution to the environment, but there are more ways and efforts that are primary before *thriftling* in accordance with the concept of "buyerarchy of need".

Activists do not view negatively and forbid behavior of *thriftling*, even enough to appreciate fashion trends of *thriftling* which is being intensified in the younger generation. But with all the offers given *thriftling* makes most consumers impulsive and unwise.

So that Tukar Baju as a form of interaction and communication to the general public seeks to educate it. So that good habits that are expected to create a sustainable environment can continue to be optimal and have a positive impact.

Role modelling, a light invitation to little by little began to be carried out as an effort to make people aware of the importance of understanding and behavior that reaps environmental sustainability. Because basically the meaning of *thriftling* according to each individual is different and will continue to develop according to conditions and time.



Figure 05 : Campaign #MulaiDariLemari by Tukar Baju community administrators

Source : Instagram Interviewee



Figure,06 : The campaign #MulaiDariLemari by one of #TemanTukar
Source : Instagram Teman Tukar Baju

The movement and role of environmental activists according to Forsyth (1999), is seen as a way to increase democratization and empower local groups in terms of environmental policy. An example is with environmental and humanitarian campaigns and discourses on workers in the textile industry. But in reducing the existing environmental impact, the movement of environmental activists cannot be measured to the extent of its effectiveness.



Figure,07 : Campaign #TukarBerCerita
Source : Instagram Tukar Baju

This does not mean that the movement of environmental activists does not have a deep role in reducing the impact on the environment. But with a small and simple role to increase awareness in replicating environmental discourse is becoming something that is increasingly starting to be discussed in the community.

But the most important thing that activists must then begin to follow is the critical nature and ability of activism itself to represent those most affected by risk. And of course, it can shape a more democratic and effective environmental policy.

Compared to other activist movements that tend to be massive and organized, home or lifestyle environmental activist movements tend to be weak and less attractive in the public eye.

According to the author, this is against the background of insignificant influences and effects in affecting the dignity and dignity of people's lives. In contrast to the movement of social, economic activists or even about conflicts with government policies that we have often encountered in the demonstration movements to the streets.

So in real life, environmental issues are very low in *connected* value in shaping the times and tending towards the society of the upper economic circles. This is in line with the community's view that to live a sustainable lifestyle, they must be present in themselves and *sustainable* with wooden "things", *Non-plastic*, herbal drinks. And this value is firmly embedded in people's minds. That way, the concept of environmental activists that are formed not only introduces environmental discourse but also implementation according to community lines according to the meaning of environmental communication, namely as a nature representation or the environment that raises interest and/or consequential orientation.

CONCLUSION

The meaning of *thrift* according to environmental activists represented by the Tukar Baju community views *thrift* as an alternative to striving for sustainable fashion. In interpreting *thrift* personally, activists get a lot of new knowledge and views from various things, both personal experiences, independent information searches, or even by joining the Tukar Baju community.

The interactions that are established in this community form a wiser view of the meaning of *thrift*. With the presence of members from various lines and their respective focuses, it actually presents a more open discussion about *thrift* to sustainable fashion. The meaning of *thrift* resulting from interactions between communities strengthens the position of *thrift* as an alternative form of sustainable fashion efforts through the application of the pyramid "Buyerarchy of need".

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