STUDY OF CONSUMER PREFERENCES TO SUPPORT THE MARKETING STRATEGY OF THE THRIFT CLOTHING BUSINESS

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Abstract

With the increasing number of thrift shops and traditional markets on Lombok Island, researchers view research in relation to consumer behavior and marketing strategies as very important. The purpose of this study is to analyze consumer preferences as a supporter of the marketing strategy of the thrift clothing business on Lombok Island. In-depth interviews were conducted with five key informants of this study who are business people and consumers of thrift clothing who have shopped at least five times at markets or thrift stores on Lombok Island. The results of this study show that thrift clothing consumers mostly make purchases offline of daily wear and clothing to work. In addition, consumers buy thrift clothes because of the availability of various brands from various countries such as Korea, Japan, and America. The reason for consumer preference in purchasing thrift clothing is because of the much cheaper price, much better quality of materials, the availability of various unique models to meet the needs of consumer fashion styles, and a little awareness of environmental sustainability. The result of this study provides an overview of consumer preference patterns that can be used in the preparation of marketing strategies, namely in terms of price, products, and distribution channels. Theoretically, the results of this study also enrich the wealth of knowledge in the field of consumer behavior, especially regarding consumer preferences in purchasing used clothes.

Keywords: Consumer Preferences, Consumer Behavior, Marketing Strategy, Thrift Shop

Article History: Received: 29 August 2023 Revised: 08 September 2023 Accepted: 14 September 2023
INTRODUCTION

Consumers and business people today have realized that the fashion industry has a bad environmental impact (Mohr et al., 2021). Therefore, business people have also started to run businesses and create more environmentally friendly products (Kotler et al., 2021). Meanwhile, consumers are starting to shift their fashion preferences to thrift which is considered an environmentally friendly measure. From a business standpoint, this could be an opportunity for repurposing preloved or second-hand clothing. Current trends show that consumer behaviour is shifting toward savings, where the second-hand fashion market is projected to increase (Mohr et al., 2021; Thredup, 2021).

Thus, this study aims to examine and analyse in-depth consumer preferences for thrift clothing as an effort to support marketing strategies. Although currently, the thrift clothing business is experiencing threats in terms of government permits, from a management and business point of view, this thrift shop business is still very critical and worthy of research about consumer behaviour and marketing strategies. The urgency and feasibility of this research are seen by researchers based on the increasing number of thrift shops and traditional markets that specialize in selling thrift clothes. In the beginning, thrift shops were commonly used by charitable organizations to generate funds (Martin, 2016). But currently, thrift shops are seen as promising business opportunities for entrepreneurs, especially by MSME players. Especially on Lombok Island. This thrifting business or sale of used clothes can be found from the city to areas throughout the island of Lombok. There are at least thirty-two thrift shops listed on Google Maps (www.google.com, 2023). Thrift shops or thrift markets are available almost everywhere throughout the island so they are very accessible to consumers. Looking from a business point of view, an understanding of the external environment of the business is also important (Janković et al., 2016). The development of this thrifting trend needs to be balanced with an effective marketing strategy to increase consumer purchases (Mohr et al., 2021). Based on that, it can be said that research on consumer preferences is also very necessary to continue to be carried out because consumer desires and market trends are always changing. Moreover, consumer preferences are known to be very closely related to business marketing strategies. Consumer preferences are the basis for determining business and marketing strategies for business actors. Moreover, in previous research, it was found that although 49% of consumers are interested in buying used/recycled fashion products, only 24% do it in real terms (H. J. Park & Lin, 2020). Even in another study, it was found that of the 30% of consumers who said they would shop ethically (based on environmental safety by buying recyclables), only 3% realized it in their shopping patterns (Futura, 2005). That is, their purchase intention was not entirely realized. These findings certainly raise many questions for marketers.

This explanation further supports the researchers’ thinking that so far research on consumer purchasing behavior towards second-hand clothing is still very limited (Park et al., 2020). Research by Park et al. (2020) found that consumers’ own self-oriented factors determine more of their purchasing decisions, such as the desire to hunt for "treasure" and branded goods. On the other hand, research also finds that consumers prefer to shop offline rather than shop online, and prefer second-hand clothes that are clean (i.e. have been washed), especially for inexperienced consumers. (Maria et al., 2022; Silva et al., 2021). However, for experienced consumers, this hygienic factor is not that important (Silva et al., 2021). Although there is a possibility that consumers will feel embarrassed if they are known or seen by other people buying used clothes, they will avoid places or
channels that are known to many people (Silva et al., 2021). Based on different findings of previous studies, therefore both practically and theoretically, research on consumer preferences still has a wide gap because there is still very little understanding about it (Frank & Brock, 2018). Further research is still needed to provide a deeper understanding of consumer preferences in purchasing used clothing products. In practical terms, this study can provide an overview of consumer preference patterns that can be used in the preparation of marketing strategies. While theoretically, the results of this study can enrich the wealth of knowledge in the field of consumer behavior, especially regarding consumer preferences in purchasing used clothes.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Today's intense business competition encourages people to be more creative in running their businesses (Sinulingga & Sihotang, 2021). A good idea and hard work alone are not enough to sustain a business, especially with very rapid market changes. In addition to the products offered in the market being very diverse, consumer needs and desires continue to change along with market developments. This is what causes entrepreneurs to strive to develop marketing strategies that can increase the company's competitive advantage (Nugraha et al., 2021; Sinulingga & Sihotang, 2021).

One marketing strategy must be based on knowledge of consumer needs and wants or preferences. Therefore, research on consumer preferences is very important, especially because the results of consumer research are known to be able to complete important information for public policy-making by the government (Effendi, 2016). But unfortunately, currently, practical and theoretical knowledge about these consumer preferences is still very little (Frank & Brock, 2018). Currently, knowledge on the topic is still limited to the fact that at least 49% of consumers are interested in buying used/recycled fashion products, however, not all of them realize it in the form of purchasing used fashion products (H. J. Park & Lin, 2020).

Marketing literature states that consumer preferences can be explained by consumer psychology theory and consumer economic theory. Consumer psychology theory explains that humans choose a product or service that is economically valuable to be purchased and used to meet their needs where the purchase can be caused by impulses within themselves or from the environment (Effendi, 2016). The process of purchasing products by consumers is related to consumer perceptions and preferences of the products to be purchased. Meanwhile, consumer economic theory explains that consumer behavior about how consumers choose and decide on purchases affects the company's marketing strategy (Febianti, 2014). Consumers choose to make purchases with various considerations. Some considerations that influence consumer preferences are awareness of environmental sustainability. Consumers are beginning to realize that humans must consume wisely, morally, and less (Kostadinova, 2016). In this case, consumption wisely and less can be associated with consuming or buying second-hand clothes which are still very suitable for use. Moreover, it is known based on previous research that consumers today are smarter in shopping (Katrandjiev & Naydenova, 2012). Consumers associate this second-hand clothing product business as a form of sustainable consumption opportunity where consumers can extend the life cycle of the products they buy (Yang et al., 2017). Moreover, used clothes are sold much cheaper (Todeschini et al., 2017). This is what causes the consumption of thrift clothes to grow.

The phenomenon of consumption of used clothes has occurred throughout the world, including in Indonesia where thrift shops can be found in almost every city. Although at first the consumption of used clothes was only a form of community support for
charitable organizations to generate funds (Martin, 2016), now thrift shops are a promising business opportunity. Consumers have started to switch shopping from shopping malls to thrift shops, especially physical stores as suggested by previous researchers that stores or entrepreneurs who focus on selling second-hand products may emphasize the pleasure of hunting and the experience of visiting the store rather than price, making it necessary to have a physical store (Guiot & Roux, 2010). Although there are also consumers who avoid physical stores for reasons of embarrassment if they are seen shopping thrift by other people (Silva et al., 2021). Various contradictory research findings and the emergence of the thrift shopping trend are what are causing marketers and academics to conduct research on this trend shift because of course from a business point of view, the right marketing strategy based on an understanding of the environment and consumers is very important (Janković et al., 2016; Mohr et al., 2021).

Previous research states that not all consumption behaviour of these goods is caused by environmental awareness or sustainable consumption, but some consumers enjoy unique, authentic, and quality goods that can be obtained from buying used clothes at thrift shops (Pierce & Paulos, 2011). This shows that many things affect consumer purchasing preferences so it is very necessary to investigate further. In addition, currently, in-depth research with a qualitative approach regarding consumer preferences for used clothes is still not widely conducted. So, the potential for research development in this field is still very widely open.

**METODE**

This study used a qualitative approach where five informants were in-depth interviewed by researchers. Singh (2015) explains that the qualitative approach enables researchers to review the information and data obtained more creatively, and meaningfully, and synthesize richer conclusions. The sampling technique of this study adopted the snowball sampling technique which allows researchers to flexibly select informants based on the depth and saturation of the information obtained. The snowball sampling technique also allows researchers to save more time and find informants that may not be detected by researchers through other key informants (Naderifar et al., 2017). The key informant in this study were three clothes consumers on Lombok Island with other supporting information from two thrift clothing business owners. This research stage was developed according to the following scheme (Singh, 2015).

![Research Scheme](image)

**RESULTS**

In-depth interviews with consumers show diverse preferences for the type of clothing purchased and where they buy their thrift clothing. As an illustration of consumer preferences based on interviews with key informants of this study, the researcher presents the following data grouping table.
Factors Influencing Consumer Preferences

Product Prices:
“The first maybe because it is cheap, then the second, compared to new clothes in ordinary clothing stores, not branded clothing stores, compared to such shops, clothes in thrift stores are of higher quality.”

C.1, 11 April 2023

“First in terms of economy, for example, two branded clothes, good brands, we can get for Rp 20k, or there are also unbranded but good quality for Rp 10k for 3 clothes.”

C.1, 11 April 2023

“The quality is good, then the price is cheap.”

C.2, 11 April 2023

“Product Quality:
“. . . compared to new clothes in ordinary clothing stores, not branded clothing stores, compared to such shops, clothes in thrift stores are of higher quality.”

C.1, 11 April 2023

“The quality is good, then the price is cheap.”

C.2, 11 April 2023

Friends/Family:
“And I also not only buy in Mataram but also in Sumbawa. Already used to buy thrift with my siblings. It seems that since I was in high school, I have bought them because this thrift item has been around for a long time.”

C.1, 11 April 2023

“At first, it was because of my sisters’ good fashion look. I asked where to buy it, and they said in Karang Sukun. So, after I could make money by myself, I went by myself. The quality is good, then the price is cheap.”

C.2, 11 April 2023

“It depends on my friend's invitation because I have friends who like to buy thrift.”

C.1, 11 April 2023

Distinguished/Unique Style:
“For example, we buy clothes at a new clothing store, but not branded clothes, yes, one type of clothing can be three, so it can be one person buying it and there are two more people who will buy the same clothes. As for thrift clothes, one person can only buy one type of clothing and no one will have the same clothes.”

C.1, 11 April 2023

“In terms of clothing models, it seems that thrift is more diverse, there are many choices, We can mix and match. So far I am satisfied and I think it is worth it so I repeatedly buy them.”

C.2, 11 April 2023

“In terms of models, I prefer thrift clothes.”

“Just that I avoid comments from people who say "this must be from buy one get one at the store"

C.1, 11 April 2023

Environmental Sustainability:
At first, I was just buying. But then I once read that buying this thrift can help protect the earth. The biggest waste is from clothes. They said so. So that means there are benefits too, I bought thrift. I thought about it. It turns out that it can protect the earth too. It turns out that I helped save the earth”

C.3, 11 April 2023

Table 2. Types/Brands and COO of Clothes Purchased

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types/Brands and COO Of Clothes Purchased</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Japanese. Taiwan. That's it. Korean. Once I watched a glimpse of a Korean drama, some clothes are worn by Korean film players, I have seen them also sold in thrift stores.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>C.1, 11 April 2023</td>
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<tr>
<td>“We sell more clothes from Japan and China. Like jackets, t-shirts, etc.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>O.1, 11 April 2023</td>
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<td>C.2, 11 April 2023</td>
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Source: Data processed (2023)
Table 3. Consumer Preferences on Where to Buy Thrift Clothing

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Consumer Preferences on Where to Buy Thrift Clothing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Offline. I am more satisfied with choosing and the clothes can be tried on immediately. Well, it's true that we can't always do it when we buy thrift in the market, but we can see whether it's right or not. If it fits us or not. In the store, there is even a fitting room.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>C.1, 11 April 2023</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Usually, it depends, if I need to wear it soon, I go offline. If not, lately it's mostly online.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>C.2, 11 April 2023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“If I have more time, it's better to buy offline. Because we can choose directly to be like and we try it first.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>C.3, 11 April 2023</td>
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<tr>
<td>“We sell online too, but those who come to the store are more crowded because they can try them on directly, I guess.”</td>
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<td>O.2, 11 April 2023</td>
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In the previous section, we emphasized that research on consumer preferences is critical to support the development of marketing strategies. In this case, researchers specifically discuss the preferences of thrift clothing consumers on Lombok Island. For business people, especially MSMEs engaged in thrift clothing sales, in-depth knowledge of consumer preference patterns can be used to develop appropriate and strong marketing strategies to improve their business marketing performance.

The results of interviews with thrift clothing consumers show that so far consumers still prefer to shop offline because consumers need to try thrift clothes directly before deciding to buy. In addition, consumers also enjoy seeing a wide selection of clothing when shopping offline. This is consistent with previous research by Maria et al. (2022) and Sarkar & Das (2017) which found that consumers enjoy making visits to physical stores and checking out their products, although for some people this activity is time-consuming and physically demanding. It's been claimed that shopping involves more than merely going through the motions and buying something. It can be a lot of fun to browse things and feel their colours, textures, and other attributes during the actual shopping process.

In addition, researchers also prove that consumer preferences for thrift clothes are closely related to cheaper prices for product quality that is much better than new clothes sold in most stores on Lombok Island. In addition to much better quality, the availability of unique and different clothing models is also a major point for consumers. In the fashion sense, it is very important for consumers to appear exclusive and different from others. Therefore, one of the other factors that supports consumers' preferences to buy thrift clothes is their observation of family and friends who have had thrift shopping experiences and proven to have attractive appearances. Furthermore, references from the closest people (friends or family members) can also determine the decision to purchase the type of clothing to be made.

Apart from that, although not much, there are also consumers who buy more thrift products than before because they realize that this activity can help reduce waste and protect environmental sustainability. This is in accordance with previous research that has been done by other researchers before (Yang et al., 2017).

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of this research data, it can be concluded that consumer preferences for thrift clothing are caused by many factors, such as price, quality, family and friend factors, the need to look different with a unique style, and slightly influenced by awareness to help protect the environment by reducing waste from clothing. Therefore, in the preparation of marketing strategies, thrift clothing business people can provide a better shopping experience with a more diverse selection of products, comfortable shopping places, and carry out promotional strategies.
that are sensitive to messages related to the uniqueness of product models that can be owned by consumers.

REFERENCES


