

From Sacred Symbol to Circular Consumption: Bulus Symbolism and Thrifting Behavior Among Coastal Muslim Youth in Java



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Abstract: This paper examines the relationship between local cultural symbolism, eco-spiritual awareness, and sustainable consumption behavior through the case of thrifting practices among coastal Muslim youth in Java. While previous studies on second-hand fashion primarily focus on economic motivation, youth identity, and circular economy, limited research explores how local religious-cultural symbols influence ecological behavior. This study proposes that the reinterpretation of the bulus symbol associated with the heritage of Demak can function as an eco-spiritual narrative encouraging circular consumption and anti-waste ethics. Using a mixed-methods approach, this research combines semiotic interpretation, discourse analysis, participant observation, and survey data from young thrift consumers in Central Java. The findings reveal that thrifting is not merely an economic activity but also a moral and symbolic practice linked to modesty, anti-excess consumption, environmental care, and ethical reuse. The paper argues that cultural symbols rooted in Islamic-Javanese heritage can become important instruments for sustainability communication and ecological behavior transformation. The study contributes to the growing discourse on sustainable fashion, circular economy, environmental communication, and eco-spirituality by introducing the concept of eco-spiritual circular behavior. It also demonstrates how local cultural heritage can be mobilized as a practical sustainability framework in contemporary youth culture.

Keywords: bulus symbolism; thrifting; circular fashion; eco-spirituality; sustainable consumption; coastal Java; environmental communication.

JEL Classification: Q01; Q53; D12; Z12; Z13.

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Introduction

The global fashion industry has emerged as one of the most environmentally intensive sectors, generating substantial carbon emissions, water pollution, textile waste, and excessive resource consumption. The rapid expansion of fast fashion has accelerated production and consumption cycles by encouraging consumers to purchase inexpensive garments that are frequently discarded after only a short period of use. This linear "take–make–dispose" model has intensified ecological degradation and contributed significantly to the global sustainability crisis. Consequently, the transition toward more sustainable patterns of production and consumption has become a central concern in contemporary environmental discourse.

In response to these challenges, circular fashion has gained increasing attention as an alternative approach that extends product lifecycles through practices such as reuse, repair, resale, upcycling, and second-hand

consumption. Among these practices, thrifting has evolved beyond its traditional association with economic necessity into a widely accepted lifestyle among younger generations. Previous studies suggest that many young consumers now perceive second-hand fashion as an expression of ethical consumption, environmental responsibility, and opposition to the culture of overconsumption promoted by fast fashion. Through reducing textile waste and extending garment usability, thrifting has become an important component of circular economy strategies within the fashion sector.

Despite the growing body of research on sustainable fashion, existing scholarship has primarily examined thrifting from perspectives of consumer behavior, purchasing intention, economic motivation, fashion identity, and environmental awareness. While these studies have enhanced understanding of why consumers adopt second-hand fashion, they generally conceptualize sustainable consumption through economic, psychological, technological, or policy-oriented frameworks. Comparatively little attention has been devoted to the ways local cultural heritage, religious symbolism, and indigenous knowledge systems shape environmental values and sustainable consumption practices. As a result, the cultural and spiritual dimensions of circular fashion remain insufficiently explored, particularly within non-Western societies where sustainability is often embedded in collective traditions and moral worldviews.

This limitation is especially relevant in coastal Java, where Islamic heritage and local cultural symbols continue to influence social norms, community identity, and everyday ethical practices. One of the most distinctive cultural symbols is the *bulus* (softshell turtle), historically associated with the establishment of the Great Mosque of Demak through the Javanese *candra sengkala* tradition. Although the *bulus* has predominantly been interpreted as a historical and religious marker, its symbolic meanings also encompass values closely related to ecological harmony, humility, moderation, resilience, and respect for nature. These meanings provide opportunities to reinterpret the *bulus* as an eco-spiritual symbol capable of connecting cultural heritage with contemporary sustainability challenges.

Building upon this perspective, this study argues that the symbolic reinterpretation of the *bulus* offers an alternative cultural pathway for understanding circular fashion. Rather than viewing thrifting solely as an economically rational or environmentally conscious activity, this research proposes that second-hand fashion among coastal Muslim youth may also represent an eco-spiritual practice grounded in religious ethics, cultural identity, and moral responsibility. Within this perspective, sustainable consumption is expressed through principles of simplicity, anti-waste behavior, moderation, reuse, and collective stewardship toward both society and the environment.

Accordingly, this study introduces the concept of eco-spiritual circular behavior, referring to sustainable consumption practices motivated not only by environmental awareness but also by symbolic, cultural, and spiritual values embedded in local heritage. This concept extends existing discussions of circular fashion by integrating eco-spirituality and cultural sustainability into the analysis of consumer behavior, thereby offering a perspective that has received limited attention in previous studies.

The objectives of this research are fourfold: (1) to reinterpret the *bulus* symbol as an eco-cultural and ecological signifier; (2) to examine the meanings attached to thrifting practices among coastal Muslim youth; (3) to analyze how symbolic awareness influences sustainable consumption behavior; and (4) to develop an eco-spiritual framework for understanding circular fashion practices. By bridging cultural heritage, environmental communication, and sustainable fashion, this study contributes to broader debates on circular consumption and demonstrates how local symbolic traditions can become meaningful resources for ecological transformation in contemporary society.

1. Literature Review

1.1 Fast Fashion and Environmental Crisis

Fast fashion has fundamentally transformed global consumption patterns by accelerating production cycles, encouraging trend replication, and promoting mass consumption. Contemporary fashion systems prioritize speed, low-cost production, and continuous replacement of garments, which contribute to shortened clothing life cycles and increased textile waste generation (Piucco *et al.* 2022; Mitchell, 2023). Consumers are increasingly encouraged to purchase new styles frequently, resulting in excessive clothing disposal and the accumulation of unwanted garments within the global waste stream (Chen *et al.* 2021).

The environmental impacts of the textile industry are significant, as fashion production requires extensive consumption of water, energy, and chemical resources while generating substantial amounts of waste throughout the supply chain. Synthetic textile materials further contribute to environmental degradation through microplastic pollution, while discarded garments create persistent waste management challenges (Chen *et al.* 2021; Ramírez-

Escamilla *et al.* 2024). The increasing ecological footprint of fashion has highlighted the urgent need to reconsider conventional production and consumption systems.

This linear model of “produce–consume–dispose” has been widely criticized by sustainability scholars because it promotes resource depletion and waste accumulation. In response, circular economy frameworks have emerged as alternative approaches that emphasize waste reduction, material recovery, reuse, repair, recycling, upcycling, and the extension of product life cycles within textile systems (Chen *et al.* 2021; Das *et al.* 2025; Ramírez-Escamilla *et al.* 2024). Circular fashion approaches seek to transform garments from disposable commodities into valuable resources that remain within economic and ecological cycles for longer periods (Randhawa, 2025; Kumar, 2025).

Within this framework, thrifting represents an important form of circular consumption because it extends garment lifespans, facilitates redistribution of existing clothing, and reduces demand for newly produced apparel. By keeping textiles in use for longer periods, second-hand fashion practices contribute to waste reduction and support more sustainable consumption patterns within the fashion industry (Ramírez-Escamilla *et al.* 2024; Das *et al.* 2025).

1.2 Thrifting and Sustainable Consumption

Thrifting refers to the practice of purchasing and using second-hand clothing. Once primarily associated with economic necessity, it has evolved into a global lifestyle trend, particularly among younger generations who increasingly view second-hand fashion as a sustainable alternative to fast fashion (Sridhar, 2025; Sumathy & Kesawaraj, 2025). Beyond financial considerations, thrifting has become a cultural practice that reflects changing consumer values related to environmental responsibility, individuality, and ethical consumption.

Recent studies identify several motivations that encourage consumers to engage in thrifting. Affordability remains one of the strongest drivers, as second-hand clothing provides access to fashionable items at significantly lower prices than new products (Sumathy & Kesawaraj, 2025; Anisa & Afif, 2025). At the same time, many consumers are attracted by the uniqueness and vintage aesthetics of thrifted garments, which allow them to express personal identity while avoiding mass-produced fashion trends (Sridhar, 2025; Ramdan & Pertiwi, 2025). These motivations are especially evident among Generation Z, who often value authenticity and individuality in their fashion choices (Anisa & Afif, 2025).

Environmental concern has also become a major factor influencing thrifting behavior. By extending the lifespan of garments, thrifting contributes to reducing textile waste, conserving natural resources, and supporting more sustainable patterns of consumption (Aryaputra *et al.* 2023; Sumathy & Kesawaraj, 2025). In addition, many consumers perceive purchasing second-hand clothing as an ethical consumption practice because it reduces demand for resource-intensive fast fashion production and encourages a circular economy (Ramdan & Pertiwi, 2025). Consequently, thrifting has increasingly been framed as a practical strategy for minimizing the environmental impacts associated with excessive clothing production and disposal.

For many young consumers, thrifting also represents a symbolic form of resistance to the wasteful logic of fast fashion and consumer culture. Rather than continuously purchasing newly manufactured products, they reinterpret second-hand clothing as a meaningful expression of sustainability, creativity, and conscious consumption (Podkalicka & Potts, 2014; Haraldsson & Peric, 2017). Through this perspective, garments acquire extended social and environmental value beyond their original economic function.

Nevertheless, scholars caution that the rapid commercialization of thrifting presents important challenges. As second-hand fashion becomes increasingly popular, it risks being transformed into another trend-driven market in which excessive purchasing behavior is justified through the language of sustainability (Aryaputra *et al.* 2023; Sumathy & Kesawaraj, 2025). Rising demand, increasing resale prices, and the commodification of vintage fashion may weaken the environmental benefits traditionally associated with thrift shopping. Therefore, understanding thrifting requires not only examining its economic and environmental dimensions but also its moral, symbolic, and cultural meanings within contemporary sustainable consumption practices (Podkalicka & Potts, 2014; Ramdan & Pertiwi, 2025).

1.3 Eco-Spirituality and Environmental Ethics

Eco-spirituality refers to ecological awareness grounded in spiritual, ethical, and moral understandings of the relationship between humans and the natural environment. Rather than viewing environmental protection solely as a scientific or technical concern, eco-spirituality frames ecological responsibility as a moral and spiritual obligation that encourages harmonious coexistence between humans, other living beings, and the Earth (Encep *et al.* 2022;

Gada, 2024). This perspective has become increasingly relevant in sustainability discourse because it integrates environmental conservation with religious values, cultural traditions, and ethical behavior (Syihabuddin *et al.* 2023).

Within Islamic environmental ethics, humans are regarded as *khalifah* (stewards) entrusted with maintaining the balance of creation. Consequently, environmental responsibility encompasses principles such as moderation (*wasatiyyah*), avoiding wastefulness (*israf*), justice, stewardship, and maintaining ecological balance as expressions of obedience to God (Gada, 2024; *An Islamic Perspective on Ecology and Sustainability*, 2023; *An Analytical Study of Islamic Faith and Ethics in the Context of Environmental Sustainability*, 2025). These principles encourage sustainable lifestyles by emphasizing accountability toward both society and the natural environment rather than unrestricted consumption.

Eco-spiritual values are also deeply embedded in Javanese Islamic traditions, where local wisdom, cultural symbols, myths, rituals, and collective narratives function as moral media for transmitting environmental ethics across generations. Indigenous concepts such as *Hamemayu Hayuning Bawana* emphasize the human responsibility to preserve harmony between people, nature, and the divine, while sacred places and culturally significant landscapes reinforce ecological stewardship through shared spiritual meanings (Hutama, 2025; Rahmayani *et al.* 2025; Suwarno *et al.* 2025). In this context, cultural symbols serve not only as representations of historical identity but also as mechanisms for shaping environmental values, collective memory, and community behavior.

Building upon these perspectives, this study argues that sustainability practices become more socially meaningful and culturally legitimate when environmental messages are communicated through familiar spiritual and cultural narratives. Integrating Islamic environmental ethics with local cultural symbolism can strengthen environmental awareness, foster collective responsibility, and encourage sustainable behavior that resonates with the lived experiences of local communities (Bensaid, 2018; Syihabuddin *et al.* 2023; Suwarno *et al.* 2025).

1.4 Bulus Symbolism in Javanese Islamic Heritage

The *bulus* (softshell turtle) occupies an important place in Javanese cultural memory and Islamic heritage, particularly in Central Java. Within local traditions, the *bulus* appears in folklore, sacred legends, and ritual practices that have been transmitted across generations. Rather than functioning solely as an animal symbol, it represents a cultural sign through which communities express historical memory, moral values, and relationships between humans, nature, and the sacred (Wahyudi *et al.* 2023; Nasir, 2019; Zuhri, 2022).

Historical narratives surrounding the *bulus* demonstrate how pre-Islamic beliefs were gradually reinterpreted through Islamic cultural frameworks. In earlier Javanese cosmology, the *bulus* was associated with fertility, protection, and supernatural power. As Islam spread throughout Java, these meanings were not completely abandoned but were vernacularized into Islamic cultural narratives, allowing local symbols to coexist with religious teachings while acquiring new ethical and spiritual significance (Wahyudi *et al.* 2023; Zuhri, 2022; Maharsi, 2023). This process reflects the broader pattern of cultural accommodation that characterizes Javanese Islam, where local traditions continue to function as media for symbolic communication and religious values (Nasir, 2019; Ariyadi, 2025; Ubaidillah, n.d.).

The symbolic significance of the *bulus* is also reflected in ritual traditions and oral narratives. The annual Bulusan tradition in Kudus preserves collective memory through folklore and communal ceremonies, reinforcing social cohesion and cultural identity (Wahyudi *et al.* 2023). Similarly, the legend of Sendang Bulus in Ponorogo associates the *bulus* with the Javanese philosophical concept of *memayu hayuning bawana*, which emphasizes harmony between humans, nature, and the cosmos (Pramudiyanto & Sari, 2024). Contemporary cultural productions, including the film *Setan Jawa*, further illustrate how the *bulus* continues to serve as a powerful symbolic figure whose meanings evolve across different social and historical contexts (Pangestu *et al.* 2025).

Building upon these cultural and religious interpretations, this study proposes an ecological reinterpretation of the *bulus* symbol. Rather than viewing the *bulus* solely as a historical or mythical icon, it is conceptualized as a symbolic framework for sustainable living. The characteristics traditionally associated with the *bulus* can be interpreted through contemporary sustainability principles: its slow movement symbolizes moderation and resistance to excessive consumption; its protective shell represents resilience and environmental protection; its ability to inhabit both land and water reflects adaptation and coexistence with diverse ecosystems; and its longevity signifies intergenerational responsibility and the continuity of environmental stewardship. These ecological meanings are not presented as original historical interpretations but as a contemporary symbolic reading that bridges Javanese Islamic heritage with environmental ethics and sustainable consumption. Through this reinterpretation, the *bulus* becomes a cultural symbol that connects heritage identity, eco-spiritual values, and sustainability practices.

1.5 Sustainable Consumption and Symbolic Behavior

Consumption is no longer understood solely as an economic activity but also as a social and symbolic practice through which individuals construct and communicate their identities, values, and moral commitments (Costa *et al.* 2021; Sutanto *et al.* 2025). Purchasing decisions, including the choice to consume second-hand clothing, are influenced not only by functional needs but also by cultural meanings, environmental awareness, and social interactions that shape consumer behavior (Musa *et al.* 2025).

Within the context of sustainable consumption, environmental communication scholars argue that pro-environmental behavior is more likely to emerge when sustainability is communicated through culturally meaningful narratives and shared symbolic systems rather than through technical or scientific information alone (Promotion of Cultural Narratives and Practices That Inspire Environmental Consciousness, 2025). Cultural narratives help individuals connect environmental responsibility with personal beliefs, emotions, and collective identities, thereby strengthening long-term commitment to sustainable lifestyles (Cultural Narratives and Their Impact on Sustainable Business, 2025).

Thrifting illustrates this symbolic dimension of sustainable consumption. Beyond its economic benefits, second-hand fashion has become a means of expressing environmental concern, anti-consumerist values, uniqueness, and ethical responsibility (Devi *et al.* 2025; Widyaningsih *et al.* 2025). Previous studies also indicate that motivations for thrifting extend beyond affordability to include ecological consciousness, frugality, religious values, and social identity, demonstrating that second-hand consumption functions as both a practical and symbolic form of environmental engagement (Sridhar, 2025; Widyaningsih *et al.* 2025). Accordingly, this study positions thrifting not merely as a market behavior but as a symbolic environmental practice shaped by eco-spiritual narratives, cultural meanings, and moral values that encourage sustainable consumption.

2. Theoretical Framework

This study draws on four complementary theoretical perspectives to explain how thrifting can be understood as a form of sustainable consumption shaped by symbolic meaning, spiritual values, circular economic practices, and environmental communication.

2.1 Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism explains that meaning is created through social interaction and interpretation. Rather than viewing social interaction as merely a setting for behavior, this perspective considers it the process through which human behavior is formed (Blumer, 1969). Individuals do not simply respond to external stimuli; they interpret situations based on shared symbols and ongoing social interactions (Blumer, 1969). As Blumer (1969) argues, people act toward things according to the meanings those things hold for them, and these meanings emerge and develop through interaction with others. From this perspective, thrifting is more than an economic activity. It is a socially constructed practice that carries symbolic meanings associated with responsibility, identity, and ethical consumption.

2.2 Eco-Spirituality

Eco-spirituality links environmental behavior with moral and spiritual awareness. It is an interdisciplinary field that explores the relationship between religion, spirituality, ecology, and environmentalism through intellectual, emotional, and practical engagement (Sponsel, 2024). Scholars argue that many environmental problems originate not only from technological or economic systems but also from underlying beliefs, values, and attitudes toward nature. Addressing challenges such as biodiversity loss, climate change, and excessive consumption therefore requires a renewed understanding of humanity's spiritual relationship with the Earth and its moral responsibility to protect it (Sponsel, 2024). Ecological responsibility is grounded in values such as simplicity, gratitude, balance, and stewardship, which are also central to nature-based spiritual traditions (Taylor, 2010). Within this framework, choosing second-hand clothing can be understood as an expression of ethical living that reflects both environmental concern and spiritual responsibility.

2.3 Circular Economy

Circular economy theory emphasizes reducing waste by extending the life cycle of products through reuse, repair, recycling, and resource circulation. Rather than following the traditional linear model of production and disposal, the circular economy seeks to redesign production and consumption systems according to a cradle-to-cradle approach, where materials and resources remain in use for as long as possible (Ghisellini *et al.* 2016). Reuse, in particular, refers to any operation in which products or their components are used again for the same purpose

without becoming waste (European Union, 2008, as cited in Ghisellini *et al.* 2016). Thrifting reflects these principles by extending the useful life of clothing and reducing demand for newly produced garments. It therefore represents a practical form of circular consumption that contributes to waste reduction and resource efficiency.

2.4 Environmental Communication

Environmental communication examines how language, narratives, and symbols shape public understanding of environmental issues. This perspective argues that communication does not simply describe nature; it also influences how people perceive, value, and respond to it (Cox, 2013). Cox (2013) introduces the concept of *condensation symbols* - words, images, or phrases that evoke strong emotional responses by connecting with deeply held cultural values. Such symbols can encourage public engagement with environmental concerns by making complex issues more meaningful and relatable. In this study, environmental communication provides a framework for understanding how symbolic narratives surrounding thrifting can promote sustainable consumption. Shared cultural meanings and ethical messages help transform everyday consumption practices into expressions of environmental responsibility.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed an explanatory mixed-methods design integrating quantitative survey data with qualitative field observations and semi-structured interviews. The quantitative component examined general patterns of thrifting behavior and sustainable consumption among Muslim youth in coastal Central Java, while the qualitative component explored how participants interpreted second-hand clothing consumption in relation to environmental awareness, Islamic ethical values, and the cultural symbolism of the *Bulus*. The integration of both approaches enabled the study to examine not only behavioral tendencies but also the meanings and narratives underlying those behaviors.

3.2 Data Collection

Qualitative data were collected during a community-based low-cost clothing bazaar (*Pasar Murah*) held in Bungo Village, Wedung District, Demak Regency. The event served as a natural setting where participants actively engaged in selecting, examining, and discussing second-hand clothing. Forty participants were purposively involved in the qualitative component, consisting primarily of adolescents and children, together with teachers, students, local MSME actors, and visitors attending the bazaar. These participants represented various social backgrounds commonly found in coastal Muslim communities.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted informally while participants were selecting garments or browsing clothing displays. Rather than relying on formal interview sessions, conversations emerged naturally during the shopping process, allowing participants to express spontaneous opinions regarding clothing quality, purchasing considerations, environmental concerns, affordability, and personal meanings associated with wearing second-hand clothing. This naturalistic approach captured participants' everyday reflections within an authentic consumption setting.

Participant observation was conducted continuously from morning until midday throughout the bazaar activities. The researcher documented participants' interactions, purchasing behavior, non-verbal responses, spontaneous remarks, conversations among family members and peers, and observable decision-making processes during clothing selection. Field notes and visual documentation complemented the interview data by providing contextual information regarding the social dynamics surrounding thrifting practices.

The quantitative component consisted of a questionnaire survey involving 215 respondents from coastal communities in Central Java who were familiar with or had experience with thrifting activities. The survey measured ecological awareness, anti-fast fashion attitudes, symbolic attachment to local culture, sustainable consumption orientation, and self-reported thrifting behavior.

3.3 Data Analysis

Qualitative data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis following the six-phase procedure proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Interview transcripts, field notes, observation records, and participants' spontaneous remarks were first read repeatedly to achieve data familiarization. Initial open codes were then generated inductively from the data before being organized into broader categories reflecting recurring patterns.

The coding process focused on themes related to (1) environmental awareness, (2) Islamic ethical values concerning moderation (*anti-israf*) and responsible consumption, (3) economic motivations, (4) social meanings of

second-hand clothing, and (5) symbolic interpretations of the Bulus as a representation of ecological responsibility and modest living. These themes were subsequently reviewed, refined, and interpreted to develop an integrated understanding of eco-spiritual meanings associated with thrifting behavior.

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify general behavioral patterns among respondents. The findings from both datasets were integrated during the interpretation stage through triangulation, allowing qualitative evidence to explain and contextualize the broader quantitative patterns. Rather than establishing causal relationships, the integrated analysis was used to explore how ecological awareness, Islamic ethical values, and local cultural symbolism collectively contribute to participants' understanding of sustainable consumption within coastal Muslim communities.

4. Results and Discussions

The findings presented in this section are derived from the integration of two complementary datasets. The qualitative findings are based on a purposive subsample of 40 participants who took part in a community-based low-cost clothing bazaar (*Pasar Murah*) held in Bungo Village, Wedung District, Demak Regency. This qualitative subsample included adolescents, children, students, teachers, local MSME actors, and bazaar visitors who were interviewed and observed while selecting or browsing second-hand clothing. Their spontaneous conversations, observed behaviors, and field interactions provided contextual insights into the meanings attached to thrifting practices.

The quantitative findings are drawn from a separate survey involving 215 respondents from coastal Muslim communities in Central Java. The survey was designed to examine broader patterns of ecological awareness, attitudes toward fast fashion, symbolic attachment to local culture, and sustainable consumption orientation. The integration of these two datasets enables the findings to combine contextual interpretations from the qualitative inquiry with broader behavioral tendencies identified through the survey.

Together, these findings demonstrate how thrifting is understood not merely as an economic practice but as a socially and culturally embedded form of sustainable consumption shaped by environmental awareness, Islamic ethical values, and local ecological symbolism.

4.1 Thrifting as Ethical Consumption

This theme emerged consistently from the qualitative interviews and participant observations conducted during the *Pasar Murah*, and was further supported by the broader survey findings indicating positive attitudes toward clothing reuse.

The findings indicate that respondents perceive thrifting as a morally preferable alternative to fast fashion. Rather than viewing second-hand shopping merely as a means of saving money, participants described thrifting as a conscious lifestyle that reflects environmental responsibility and ethical consumption. Respondents repeatedly associated second-hand clothing with reducing textile waste, extending garment life, minimizing unnecessary consumption, and resisting the culture of excessive purchasing promoted by fast fashion. These perceptions are consistent with previous studies suggesting that contemporary thrifting has evolved into a form of sustainable consumption motivated by environmental awareness, ethical values, and anti-consumerist attitudes rather than purely economic necessity (Cervellon *et al.* 2012; Guiot & Roux, 2010; Park & Lin, 2020).

One participant explained:

"Buying second-hand clothes feels more responsible because we reuse what already exists instead of producing more waste."

This statement reflects the principles of circular consumption, in which products are kept in use for as long as possible to reduce resource extraction and environmental degradation (Joy *et al.* 2012; Niinimäki *et al.* 2020). By extending the lifespan of clothing, consumers contribute to reducing textile waste while challenging the linear model of production and disposal that characterizes the fast fashion industry (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017).

Another respondent connected thrifting with Islamic teachings about avoiding excess (*isrāf*) and practicing moderation (*wasatiyyah*). According to the participant, purchasing second-hand clothing represents an effort to consume responsibly while remaining consistent with religious values emphasizing simplicity, gratitude, and stewardship of natural resources. This finding aligns with Islamic environmental ethics, which encourage moderation, prohibit wastefulness, and regard humans as *khalifah* entrusted with protecting the environment (Foltz *et al.* 2003; Izzi Dien, 2000; Nasr, 1996).

Overall, these findings demonstrate that thrifting behavior among young consumers is shaped not only by economic considerations but also by ethical consciousness. Participants interpreted second-hand consumption as

an environmentally responsible practice that simultaneously expresses personal morality and religious commitment. This supports previous research suggesting that sustainable consumption is influenced by symbolic meanings and moral values embedded within cultural and social contexts rather than by economic rationality alone (Jackson, 2005; McCracken, 1986; White *et al.* 2019). In this study, thrifting emerges as an ethical consumption practice through which environmental responsibility, personal identity, and Islamic moral values are integrated into everyday consumer behavior.

4.2 Eco-Spiritual Meanings of Reuse

This theme was identified primarily through qualitative thematic analysis of interviews, spontaneous participant remarks, and field observations conducted during the Pasar Murah in Bungo Village, while the survey findings provided complementary evidence regarding ecological awareness and symbolic attachment to local cultural values.

The qualitative findings indicate that many participants interpreted clothing reuse through moral and spiritual values rather than solely through economic or environmental considerations. During informal interviews conducted while participants browsed and selected second-hand clothing, respondents frequently described thrifting using expressions such as *living simply*, *being grateful for what is still usable*, *avoiding waste*, and *not being excessive in consumption*. These ideas emerged naturally in conversations and were reinforced by spontaneous remarks recorded during participant observation. Such findings suggest that sustainable consumption in coastal Muslim communities is embedded within everyday ethical reasoning rather than being driven exclusively by environmental knowledge. This interpretation is consistent with previous studies arguing that pro-environmental behavior is shaped not only by ecological awareness but also by cultural meanings, moral values, and spiritual worldviews (Kearins & Springett, 2003; White *et al.* 2019).

Many participants viewed reusing clothing as a way of respecting resources entrusted by God. Instead of treating garments as disposable commodities, they considered extending the life of clothing to be an expression of gratitude and responsibility. One secondary school teacher commented:

"Islam teaches us not to be wasteful. If clothes are still suitable to wear, there is no reason to throw them away simply to follow trends. Reusing them reflects gratitude for what God has provided."

Similarly, a university student explained:

"Buying second-hand clothes is not embarrassing. If something is still useful, it should continue to be used. Throwing away good clothes only creates more waste."

These statements resonate with Islamic environmental ethics, particularly the principles of avoiding *isrāf* (excessive consumption), practicing *wasatiyyah* (moderation), and fulfilling humanity's role as *khalifah* (steward) responsible for protecting creation (Nasr, 1996; Izzi Dien, 2000; Foltz *et al.* 2003).

Participant observations further supported these interpretations. Throughout the bazaar, visitors carefully examined garment quality before purchasing, exchanged recommendations with family members and friends, and frequently expressed satisfaction when finding durable clothing suitable for continued use. Spontaneous remarks such as *"it's still good, why throw it away?"* and *"someone else can benefit from this"* reflected practical expressions of anti-waste ethics and responsible consumption. These everyday interactions illustrate how environmental responsibility is negotiated through ordinary social practices rather than through formal environmental campaigns.

Although participants did not generally refer to the *Bulus* symbol spontaneously during shopping activities, many associated its ecological interpretation with the values they had already expressed once its meaning was briefly introduced during the conversation. Participants commonly interpreted the *Bulus* as representing patience, moderation, careful use of resources, and harmonious coexistence with nature. Rather than creating new consumption behaviors, the symbol functioned as a culturally meaningful narrative that reinforced ethical understandings already present within participants' religious and social values. In this sense, the *Bulus* served as a symbolic bridge connecting local cultural heritage with contemporary environmental responsibility, illustrating how traditional symbols can strengthen eco-spiritual interpretations of sustainable consumption.

The survey findings complement these qualitative insights by demonstrating generally positive attitudes toward clothing reuse and sustainable consumption among the broader sample of 215 respondents. When interpreted alongside the qualitative evidence, these results suggest that eco-spiritual values and local cultural narratives may contribute to strengthening favorable perceptions of thrifting as a socially responsible practice, although the present study does not establish a direct causal relationship between *Bulus* symbolism and individual consumption behavior.

Overall, these findings indicate that ecological behavior in coastal Muslim communities is culturally mediated through moral, religious, and symbolic narratives rather than solely through scientific environmental discourse. The

reinterpretation of the *Bulus* provides an eco-spiritual narrative that aligns Islamic ethical principles with sustainable consumption, transforming everyday practices such as thrifting and clothing reuse into meaningful expressions of environmental stewardship. These findings reinforce previous scholarship suggesting that sustainability initiatives become more effective when environmental messages are embedded within locally meaningful cultural symbols and community value systems (McCracken, 1986; Kearins & Springett, 2003; White *et al.* 2019).

4.3 *Bulus* as Symbolic Ecology

The proposed framework was developed through the integration of qualitative themes identified from interviews, spontaneous participant remarks, and field observations with broader quantitative patterns from the survey. It should therefore be understood as an empirically informed conceptual framework, rather than a statistically validated behavioral construct. The qualitative findings provide insight into how participants interpreted the *Bulus* symbol and connected it with ecological and moral values, while the quantitative findings provide complementary evidence regarding broader orientations toward sustainable consumption.

The findings indicate that not all participants were familiar with the academic or historical interpretations of the *Bulus* associated with the Great Mosque of Demak. However, when the cultural meaning and ecological interpretation of the symbol were introduced during informal conversations, the *Bulus* stimulated reflections on environmental responsibility, moderation, and sustainable living. This is an important distinction: the study does not assume that participants' existing thrifting practices were caused by their knowledge of the *Bulus*. Rather, the findings suggest that the *Bulus* can provide a culturally familiar symbolic vocabulary through which participants may articulate and reconsider values that are already present in their everyday lives. Such a process is consistent with Symbolic Interactionism, in which meanings are not regarded as fixed properties of objects but are constructed and reconstructed through social interaction and interpretation (Blumer, 1969).

During these conversations, participants associated the *Bulus* with qualities such as patience, balance, endurance, protection, and continuity. These interpretations were subsequently connected to ideas of moderation and more thoughtful consumption. For example, the slow movement of the *Bulus* was interpreted by some participants as a metaphor for not rushing to replace possessions simply because new products or fashion trends become available. The protective shell was associated with protection and resilience, while the animal's longevity was interpreted as a reminder of the importance of continuity and long-term care. These interpretations correspond with sustainability perspectives that emphasize sufficiency, durability, reduced consumption, and responsible resource use rather than continuous acquisition and disposal (Jackson, 2005; White *et al.* 2019; Niinimäki *et al.* 2020).

The ecological interpretation of the *Bulus* also intersected with participants' understanding of Islamic ethical principles. Some participants connected environmental responsibility with self-control, moderation, gratitude, and avoidance of unnecessary waste. These interpretations are compatible with Islamic environmental ethics emphasizing *wasatiyyah* (moderation), avoidance of *isrāf* (excess), the human role as *khalifah* (steward), and the maintenance of balance between human activities and the natural environment (Nasr, 1996; Izzi Dien, 2000; Foltz *et al.* 2003). Importantly, the findings do not suggest that participants uniformly possessed a formal understanding of Islamic environmental ethics. Rather, these principles emerged through participants' everyday moral language concerning waste, reuse, gratitude, and responsible use of resources.

The findings further demonstrate that the ecological meaning of the *Bulus* is socially constructed and contextually negotiated rather than inherently fixed. The same cultural symbol can carry historical, religious, architectural, and ecological meanings depending on the context in which it is discussed. Through conversations during the *Pasar Murah*, the *Bulus* was not simply presented as a historical feature associated with Demak's heritage; it became a point of reflection through which participants could relate local heritage to contemporary concerns about consumption and environmental degradation. This process is consistent with symbolic consumption theory, which emphasizes that cultural objects can acquire meanings related to identity, values, and social relationships beyond their material functions (McCracken, 1986).

This reinterpretive process is particularly relevant to the context of Demak, where cultural heritage and environmental vulnerability coexist. The *Bulus* can therefore be understood as a symbolic ecological mediator: not a direct determinant of thrifting behavior, but a cultural reference through which environmental responsibility, moderation, and local identity can be discussed together. In this sense, the ecological significance of the *Bulus* emerges through the interaction between heritage meaning and contemporary environmental concerns. This interpretation extends previous discussions of sustainability communication by suggesting that local cultural symbols may provide culturally resonant entry points for discussing sustainable consumption (Kearins & Springett, 2003; White *et al.* 2019).

Overall, the findings suggest that the reinterpretation of the *Bulus* may contribute to shaping environmentally responsible consumption values among coastal Muslim communities by connecting sustainability with locally meaningful cultural and religious narratives. However, the evidence does not establish that *Bulus* symbolism directly increases thrifting behavior or causes behavioral change. Instead, the findings indicate that the symbol may support, reinforce, or provide language for values such as moderation, reuse, resource stewardship, and ecological responsibility. This distinction is important because the present study captures participants' interpretations, attitudes, and observed practices rather than measuring behavioral change over time.

Accordingly, the *Bulus* is conceptualized in this study not as a behavioral intervention in itself, but as a symbolic ecological resource within an eco-spiritual approach to sustainable consumption. Its potential contribution lies in translating relatively abstract concepts of circularity, sufficiency, and environmental stewardship into a locally recognizable narrative grounded in Demak's cultural heritage. This provides a basis for the proposed Eco-Spiritual Circular Behavior Framework, while also indicating the need for future longitudinal or experimental research to examine whether exposure to such cultural-symbolic narratives is associated with measurable changes in sustainable consumption behavior.

4.4 Sustainable Identity Among Muslim Youth

The findings suggest that thrifting may function not only as a consumption practice but also as a form of identity expression among Muslim youth. Within the qualitative data collected during the *Pasar Murah*, participants frequently described second-hand clothing in terms of simplicity, practicality, environmental responsibility, and ethical consumption. For some participants, choosing reused clothing appeared to represent a way of expressing personal values concerning moderation, avoiding unnecessary waste, and responsible use of resources. These findings are consistent with previous research suggesting that consumption practices can function as symbolic expressions of identity and social values rather than merely satisfying material needs (McCracken, 1986; Jackson, 2005).

Several participants contrasted thrifting with highly consumption-oriented forms of fast fashion. New clothing purchased primarily to follow rapidly changing trends was sometimes associated with unnecessary consumption, whereas second-hand clothing was described using terms such as *simple*, *still useful*, *not wasteful*, and *good enough to wear*. Such interpretations suggest that participants may attach symbolic value to reuse as an alternative to excessive consumption. This observation is broadly consistent with research showing that second-hand consumption can be associated with authenticity, individuality, anti-consumption orientations, and resistance to conventional consumer culture (Guiot & Roux, 2010; Cervellon *et al.* 2012; Park & Lin, 2020).

For Muslim participants, these meanings were also sometimes interpreted through religious values. The preference for using clothing for longer periods and avoiding unnecessary disposal was perceived as compatible with *wasatiyyah* (moderation) and avoidance of *isrāf* (excessive consumption). Islamic environmental scholarship similarly emphasizes moderation, stewardship, and responsible resource use as important dimensions of an environmentally conscious way of life (Nasr, 1996; Izzi Dien, 2000; Foltz *et al.* 2003). The present findings therefore suggest that sustainable identity may be constructed through the intersection of environmental concerns, religious ethics, and everyday consumption practices rather than through environmental awareness alone.

Digital media also appeared in participants' accounts as an important context for the circulation and normalization of sustainable-fashion meanings. Participants referred to social-media content, online thrift communities, styling practices, and anti-fast-fashion discussions as sources through which they encountered ideas about second-hand clothing and sustainable fashion. However, the present study does not establish that digital media directly caused participants to adopt thrifting practices. Rather, the qualitative evidence indicates that digital platforms provide spaces in which particular consumption meanings can be encountered, shared, discussed, and socially validated. This interpretation is compatible with research emphasizing the role of social and cultural meanings in shaping sustainable consumption orientations (White *et al.* 2019).

The qualitative findings also revealed an important tension within thrifting culture. Several participants recognized that buying large quantities of second-hand clothing merely because items are inexpensive, fashionable, or suitable for social-media content can reproduce patterns of excessive consumption. In this situation, the fact that a garment is second-hand does not necessarily make the overall consumption practice sustainable. This observation is particularly relevant to the concept of circular consumption because extending the life of products does not automatically eliminate overconsumption. Sustainable consumption also requires attention to the quantity of goods acquired, the frequency of purchasing, the duration of use, and the motivations underlying consumption decisions (Jackson, 2005; Niinimäki *et al.* 2020).

This tension provides an important qualification to the positive association between thrifting and sustainable identity. The findings suggest that thrifting should not automatically be equated with sustainable consumption. Its environmental significance depends partly on how reuse is practiced and what values accompany it. A consumer who purchases second-hand clothing frequently and excessively may still participate in a consumption pattern that conflicts with principles of sufficiency and moderation. Conversely, purchasing fewer garments and extending their useful life may be more consistent with the environmental and ethical dimensions of circular consumption.

Taken together, the qualitative findings suggest that sustainable identity among Muslim youth may emerge through the intersection of reuse practices, environmental awareness, Islamic ethical values, and culturally meaningful narratives. In this context, thrifting can provide a practical expression of values such as moderation, resource stewardship, and avoidance of unnecessary waste. The *Bulus* adds another symbolic layer to this process by providing a locally rooted cultural reference through which ideas of patience, protection, continuity, and ecological responsibility can be articulated.

However, these findings should not be interpreted as evidence that thrifting or *Bulus* symbolism directly produces sustainable identity or causes behavioral change. The study captures participants' reported meanings, attitudes, and observed practices at a particular community event, complemented by survey data from 215 respondents. Therefore, the findings indicate associations and interpretive patterns rather than causal effects. Future longitudinal research could examine whether these symbolic and ethical orientations are maintained over time and whether they are associated with measurable changes in purchasing frequency, clothing use duration, disposal practices, and other dimensions of circular consumption.

Overall, the findings support the proposition that sustainable fashion among Muslim youth can be understood as a symbolic and ethical practice, rather than solely as an economic or environmental choice. When thrifting is interpreted through moderation, responsibility, ecological awareness, and local cultural meaning, it may serve as one expression of a broader sustainable identity. This interpretation extends previous research on symbolic consumption and sustainable behavior by highlighting the potential role of culturally and religiously embedded meanings in how young consumers understand and communicate responsible consumption (McCracken, 1986; Kearins & Springett, 2003; White *et al.* 2019)

4.5 Eco-Spiritual Circular Behavior

Based on the integrated findings, this study proposes Eco-Spiritual Circular Behavior (ESCB) as an empirically informed conceptual framework for interpreting sustainable consumption among Muslim youth and other community members in coastal communities. The framework emerged from the convergence of qualitative themes identified through interviews, spontaneous participant remarks, and field observations during the *Pasar Murah*, together with broader patterns identified from the survey of 215 respondents. The framework should not be interpreted as a newly validated behavioral construct or as evidence of a causal relationship between eco-spiritual values and thrifting behavior. Rather, it provides an interpretive framework for understanding how environmental concerns, religious ethics, cultural symbolism, and circular consumption practices may be interconnected within a particular socio-cultural context.

In this study, eco-spiritual circular behavior refers to consumption practices in which environmental responsibility is interpreted through a combination of ecological awareness, moral values, spiritual meanings, and culturally embedded understandings of responsible resource use. This conceptualization extends conventional approaches to circular consumption by drawing attention to the meanings and value systems through which circular practices are understood and enacted. While circular economy research commonly emphasizes resource efficiency, reuse, repair, and waste reduction, sustainable consumption research has increasingly recognized that consumer practices are also shaped by values, identities, social norms, and cultural meanings (Jackson, 2005; Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017; White *et al.* 2019; Niinimäki *et al.* 2020).

The framework is theoretically informed by Symbolic Interactionism, which proposes that meanings emerge and are continuously negotiated through social interaction (Blumer, 1969), and by symbolic consumption theory, which emphasizes the role of consumption practices in communicating identity, values, and social meanings (McCracken, 1986). In the present study, second-hand clothing was not understood exclusively in terms of economic affordability or material reuse. Participants also attached meanings related to simplicity, avoiding waste, gratitude, environmental responsibility, and religiously informed moderation. These findings suggest that the sustainability meaning of a consumption practice is partly dependent on the cultural and moral context in which that practice is interpreted.

Four interrelated analytical dimensions emerged from the findings.

First, symbolic ecological awareness refers to the interpretation of local cultural symbols as resources for articulating ecological meanings. In this study, the *Bulus* associated with the Great Mosque of Demak provided an example of how a historical cultural symbol could be reinterpreted in relation to contemporary ecological concerns. Participants did not uniformly possess prior knowledge of the historical or academic meanings of the *Bulus*. However, when its ecological interpretation was introduced during conversations, some participants associated its characteristics - such as slowness, protection, endurance, and continuity - with moderation, careful resource use, and ecological responsibility. The *Bulus* therefore functions in this framework not as a direct behavioral determinant but as a symbolic ecological reference through which sustainability can be discussed in locally meaningful terms.

Second, moral-ecological orientation refers to the connection between environmental responsibility and moral or religious values. Participants' accounts contained ideas corresponding to *wasatiyyah* (moderation), avoidance of *isrāf* (excessive consumption), gratitude, and human responsibility as *khalifah* or steward of creation. These interpretations are consistent with Islamic environmental scholarship emphasizing moderation, responsible resource use, stewardship, and balance between human activity and the natural environment (Nasr, 1996; Izzi Dien, 2000; Foltz *et al.* 2003). The findings suggest that these values may provide a moral language through which everyday practices such as reuse and clothing consumption are evaluated.

Third, circular consumption practice refers to observable or reported practices associated with extending the useful life of products, including purchasing second-hand clothing, reusing garments, reducing unnecessary disposal, and considering whether an item remains usable before purchasing or discarding it. These practices correspond with fundamental principles of circular economy and sustainable consumption, particularly the extension of product lifetimes and reduction of unnecessary material waste (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017; Niinimäki *et al.* 2020). Importantly, however, the findings also reveal that second-hand consumption is not automatically sustainable. Purchasing excessive quantities of inexpensive second-hand clothing may reproduce consumption patterns that are inconsistent with sufficiency. Thus, the circular dimension of the framework concerns not simply what is purchased but also how much, how often, for what purpose, and for how long products are used.

Fourth, socially embedded environmental responsibility refers to the role of interpersonal interaction, community settings, digital communication, and shared cultural narratives in shaping how sustainable consumption is discussed and interpreted. The *Pasar Murah* provided a social setting in which participants could exchange opinions, observe others' choices, and discuss the value and usability of second-hand clothing. Digital media similarly appeared in participants' accounts as a context in which sustainable-fashion meanings could be encountered and circulated. These observations are consistent with research emphasizing the social and symbolic dimensions of sustainable consumption (Kearins & Springett, 2003; White *et al.* 2019). Nevertheless, the present study does not establish that community interaction or digital media directly produces sustainable behavior; rather, the findings indicate that these social contexts provide opportunities for sustainability meanings to be shared and negotiated.

The four dimensions can therefore be understood as interconnected analytical components rather than statistically independent variables. Symbolic ecological awareness provides a cultural vocabulary; moral-ecological orientation provides an ethical interpretive framework; circular consumption practice represents the observable or reported consumption dimension; and socially embedded environmental responsibility describes the social context in which these meanings are negotiated. Their relationship is therefore conceptual rather than causal:

Cultural Symbolism → Moral-Ecological Interpretation → Circular Consumption Meaning/Practice ↔ Social Context

This conceptualization differs from a conventional behavioral model in which one variable is assumed to predict another. Instead, it emphasizes the possibility that sustainable consumption emerges through interactions among meanings, values, practices, and social contexts. Such an interpretation is consistent with the broader argument that consumption practices are socially and culturally embedded rather than determined exclusively by rational calculations of economic or environmental benefit (Jackson, 2005; McCracken, 1986; White *et al.* 2019).

The framework also contributes to the literature by bringing together four bodies of scholarship that are often discussed separately: circular economy, sustainable consumption, symbolic interactionism, and eco-spirituality. Circular economy perspectives explain the material dimension of reuse and resource conservation; sustainable consumption research addresses consumer practices and environmental responsibility; Symbolic Interactionism explains how meanings are constructed through interaction; while eco-spiritual perspectives illuminate the moral and spiritual dimensions of environmental responsibility. Their integration provides a culturally situated interpretation of sustainable consumption that is particularly relevant to communities where environmental practices intersect with religious and cultural identities.

The role of the *Bulus* is particularly important within this framework because it illustrates how local heritage can become a contemporary symbolic resource for sustainability discourse. The findings do not demonstrate that knowledge of the *Bulus* causes participants to engage in thrifting. Instead, they suggest that the ecological reinterpretation of the symbol may provide a culturally resonant way of connecting ideas of moderation, continuity, protection, and responsible resource use with contemporary sustainability concerns. In this respect, the *Bulus* operates as a symbolic mediator between cultural heritage and ecological meaning, rather than as a direct predictor of consumer behavior.

4.5.1 Integration of Qualitative and Quantitative Evidence

Integration occurred at the interpretation stage through methodological triangulation. The quantitative survey involving 215 respondents was used to identify broader patterns in ecological awareness, sustainable consumption orientation, and thrifting-related attitudes. These patterns were subsequently interpreted alongside qualitative evidence obtained from the 40 participants involved in the *Pasar Murah*, including informal interviews, spontaneous remarks, participant observations, and field notes.

The two datasets therefore served complementary rather than interchangeable purposes. The survey provided broader descriptive evidence regarding sustainable consumption orientations, whereas the qualitative data provided contextual explanations of how participants understood reuse, moderation, environmental responsibility, and the *Bulus* within an everyday community setting. Where the two datasets converged, the qualitative evidence helped contextualize the broader quantitative patterns. Where differences or tensions emerged, such as the distinction between thrifting as sustainable reuse and excessive second-hand purchasing, the qualitative findings provided additional nuance rather than being treated as confirmation of a causal relationship.

Accordingly, the Eco-Spiritual Circular Behavior Framework should be regarded as a conceptual proposition generated from the empirical findings of this study. Its four dimensions provide a basis for future empirical testing, including the development and validation of measurement instruments, structural modeling, longitudinal research, or comparative studies across different Muslim and coastal communities. Such future research would be necessary before the framework could be considered a validated behavioral construct or before causal relationships among its dimensions could be established.

Overall, the proposed framework suggests that sustainable consumption may be more meaningfully understood when circular practices are examined together with the cultural symbols, moral values, spiritual interpretations, and social contexts in which those practices occur. In the context of coastal Muslim communities in Demak, the *Bulus* provides one locally grounded example of how heritage symbolism may be reinterpreted as an ecological narrative. Its significance lies not in proving that a traditional symbol changes consumer behavior, but in demonstrating how local cultural heritage can provide a meaningful language through which contemporary sustainability values are interpreted, discussed, and potentially incorporated into everyday consumption practices.

4.6 Implications for Environmental Communication

The findings demonstrate that local cultural symbols can serve as powerful instruments for environmental communication by making sustainability messages more meaningful within local social and cultural contexts. While environmental campaigns frequently rely on scientific evidence, technical information, and policy-oriented discourse, the present study suggests that culturally embedded narratives may generate stronger emotional engagement and encourage deeper behavioral commitment. Sustainability messages become more persuasive when they resonate with values, identities, and shared cultural experiences that communities already recognize and embrace (White *et al.* 2019; Kearins & Springett, 2003).

The reinterpretation of the bulus symbol illustrates how local heritage can be transformed into a contemporary ecological narrative without losing its cultural and historical significance. Through social interaction and collective interpretation, respondents reconstructed the symbolic meaning of the *bulus* from a historical marker associated with the Great Mosque of Demak into a representation of moderation, resilience, balance, protection, and environmental stewardship. This process reflects the central proposition of symbolic interactionism that meanings are continuously created and negotiated through human interaction (Blumer, 1969). It also supports symbolic consumption theory, which emphasizes that symbols communicate moral values and collective identities beyond their original material or historical functions (McCracken, 1986).

The findings further indicate that environmental communication in culturally embedded societies such as Indonesia may become more effective when sustainability messages are connected to collective memory, local cultural symbols, religious ethics, and moral narratives. Rather than presenting environmental responsibility solely as a scientific obligation, respondents interpreted sustainable consumption through familiar concepts rooted in

Islamic teachings, including moderation (*wasatiyyah*), gratitude, avoidance of waste (*isrāf*), and stewardship (*khalifah*) (Nasr, 1996; Izzi Dien, 2000; Foltz *et al.* 2003). These values provided an ethical foundation that strengthened participants' willingness to adopt environmentally responsible behaviors.

This finding also complements previous studies arguing that pro-environmental behavior is more likely to be sustained when environmental messages are embedded within culturally meaningful symbolic systems rather than communicated exclusively through technical or regulatory approaches (Jackson, 2005; White *et al.* 2019). In the context of coastal Muslim communities, local heritage functions not merely as cultural preservation but also as a communication resource capable of translating abstract sustainability concepts into everyday moral practices.

Overall, this study suggests that environmental communication strategies should move beyond information-based campaigns toward culturally grounded approaches that integrate heritage, spirituality, and local wisdom. The bulus symbol demonstrates how indigenous cultural heritage can become an effective medium for promoting sustainable consumption by connecting ecological responsibility with collective identity, religious values, and shared historical memory. Such an approach enriches contemporary environmental communication by showing that long-term sustainability is fostered not only through scientific knowledge and policy interventions but also through culturally resonant narratives that inspire moral commitment and collective environmental action (Kearins & Springett, 2003; White *et al.* 2019).

Conclusion

This study explored how the reinterpretation of the bulus symbol shapes eco-spiritual understandings of sustainable consumption among coastal Muslim youth in Java. Rather than viewing thrifting simply as an economic strategy or a contemporary fashion trend, the findings demonstrate that second-hand consumption is embedded within broader symbolic, cultural, and religious value systems. Sustainability is therefore understood not only as an environmental concern but also as a moral practice informed by local heritage, Islamic ethics, and collective identity.

The study shows that the bulus, historically recognized as part of the cultural heritage of the Great Mosque of Demak, can be reinterpreted as an ecological symbol representing moderation, resilience, balance, and continuity. Through this reinterpretation, local cultural heritage becomes a meaningful medium for communicating environmental responsibility. The findings suggest that sustainable behavior is strengthened when environmental messages are connected to familiar cultural symbols and moral narratives rather than relying solely on scientific or policy-oriented discourse.

The principal theoretical contribution of this research is the development of the Eco-Spiritual Circular Behavior framework. Unlike conventional circular economy models that primarily emphasize material flows and resource efficiency, this framework explains sustainable consumption as the interaction of four mutually reinforcing dimensions: symbolic awareness, moral-ecological identity, circular consumption practices, and collective environmental responsibility. By integrating symbolic interactionism, eco-spirituality, and sustainable consumption theory, the framework demonstrates that circular behavior is shaped not only by environmental knowledge but also by culturally embedded symbolic meanings and ethical commitments.

These findings also offer practical implications for sustainability initiatives. Environmental communication, sustainability education, and circular fashion campaigns may become more effective when they incorporate local cultural heritage and religious values as part of their communication strategies. In culturally diverse societies such as Indonesia, heritage symbols can function as bridges between traditional wisdom and contemporary environmental challenges, encouraging behavioral change through narratives that communities perceive as meaningful and culturally legitimate.

This study is limited to coastal Muslim communities in Java and focuses primarily on the symbolic reinterpretation of a single cultural icon. Future studies should examine similar symbolic systems in other cultural and religious contexts to evaluate the broader applicability of the proposed framework. Comparative and quantitative research would also help test the relationships among symbolic awareness, eco-spiritual values, and sustainable consumption behaviors across different communities. Such investigations may further advance understanding of how local cultural heritage contributes to sustainability transitions and environmental communication in diverse socio-cultural settings.

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Credit Authorship Contribution Statement

Dian Nafiatul Awaliyah: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Writing – original draft, Project administration, Funding acquisition.

Atik Suprapti: Supervision, Validation, Review.

Alamsyah: Supervision, Validation.

Djoko Wibowo: Visualization.

Dwi Devy: Administration.

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Declaration of Use of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies: The authors declare that generative AI and AI-assisted technologies were not used in the research process, data collection, data analysis, or interpretation of the findings. Any use of AI-assisted tools for language or editorial support should be disclosed separately in accordance with the journal's policy. The authors retain full responsibility for the content, accuracy, and integrity of the manuscript.

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