The Role of CMT Convection Business in Enhancing the Local Economy in West Cilacap

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Abstract

The growth of Cut, Make, Trim (CMT) convection businesses in West Cilacap faces core problems such as limited access to raw materials, low human resource capacity, restricted market penetration, and minimal technological adoption that hinder the competitiveness of the small and medium industry sector. This study is a field research with a descriptive-analytical qualitative approach conducted across seven primary sub-districts in West Cilacap through direct observation, in-depth interviews with business owners, workers, and relevant agencies, as well as official documentation studies. Based on the data analysis, the CMT convection business has proven to contribute significantly to boosting the local economy by absorbing around 1,200 workers with an average production capacity exceeding 140,000 pieces of clothing per month, increasing total household income by 120% (from IDR 1,250,000 to IDR 2,750,000 per month), and strengthening educational-health expenditure allocations and community savings capacity. Nevertheless, these structural barriers require strategic interventions and multi-stakeholder collaboration to sustainably optimize this sector.

Keywords: MSMEs, CMT Convection Business; Local Economy; Cilacap.

I. INTRODUCTION

Small and Medium Industries (SMIs) constitute a critical component of regional economic development, particularly through their capacity to utilize locally available resources, absorb labor, and establish community-based production networks. In Western Cilacap, encompassing Kawunganten, Patimuan, Cipari, Wanareja, Majenang, Cimanggu, and Karangpucung, the Cut, Make, and Trim (CMT) production arrangement has increasingly become an integral part of the rural garment and creative industry landscape. The relatively flexible nature of CMT production allows small-scale rural manufacturers to become involved in the wider ready-to-wear garment supply chain without assuming the substantial fixed investment and operating costs normally associated with vertically integrated manufacturing. At the community level, the expansion of home-based garment production has subsequently contributed to the emergence of localized economic networks and new centers of micro-scale industrial activity (Pratama et al., 2023; Setiawan & Hartono, 2021).

The expansion of CMT-based garment production creates considerable opportunities for strengthening the local economy. When supported by adequate institutional and productive capacities, this sector can potentially develop into a strategic source of employment, household income, and regional economic resilience. However, such potential cannot be realized solely through increased production volumes. Sustainable development of the sector requires improvements in technological capacity, managerial competence, workforce capabilities, market access, and the bargaining position of local producers within the garment value chain (Subagyo & Rahayu, 2020). Evidence from Western Cilacap suggests that these dimensions remain relatively weak. A substantial proportion of CMT operators continue to rely on external principals for production orders and operational direction. Such dependence limits the autonomy of local producers and

exposes them to low profit margins, unpredictable order cycles, seasonal fluctuations, and restricted opportunities to invest in modern production equipment. At the same time, deficiencies in managerial expertise and digital capabilities further constrain the ability of these enterprises to respond effectively to changes in market and industry conditions.

The position of CMT enterprises within the rural economy is therefore closely associated with the structure of the production relationships in which they participate. Their challenges extend beyond internal business management and reflect broader issues concerning the participation of rural producers in manufacturing value chains. Previous research has explored various dimensions of garment-sector SMEs and manufacturing enterprises. Rahmawati and Susilo, for example, investigated the efficiency of CMT production costs within an urban industrial context (Rahmawati & Susilo, 2019). Hidayat et al., examined the contribution of local government support to the resilience of micro-enterprises in Central Java (Hidayat et al., 2022). Meanwhile, Fernandez-Stark et al. and Wijaya, emphasized the significance of upgrading local firms within value chains as a means of enhancing competitiveness and increasing their capacity to capture economic value. Despite these contributions, relatively limited attention has been devoted to rural CMT enterprises operating through subcontracting arrangements, particularly in regions outside major metropolitan and industrial centers (Fernandez-Stark et al., 2019; Wijaya, 2024).

This limitation in the existing literature points to a significant research gap. Specifically, insufficient attention has been paid to the ways in which rural CMT producers maintain business continuity while operating under asymmetric relationships with external principals, as well as to the role of the local industrial ecosystem in facilitating or constraining their upgrading processes. Unlike firms that control multiple stages of garment production, CMT operators generally concentrate on production activities and have limited control over product development, branding, marketing, and access to end consumers. This configuration can place them in a structurally dependent position within the value chain. Nevertheless, their activities remain economically significant because they generate employment, sustain household livelihoods, and connect rural communities with wider manufacturing networks. Examining this dual position is therefore essential for understanding the prospects of rural industrial development in non-metropolitan regions.

Building on this context, the present study investigates how CMT-based garment enterprises contribute to the strengthening of the local economy in Western Cilacap and examines the dynamics that shape their development. A qualitative descriptive-analytical approach is employed to identify and characterize the principal actors, relationships, production mechanisms, and institutional interactions that constitute the local CMT ecosystem. The analysis particularly considers the dependence of local producers on external principals, the distribution of production activities and economic value among participating actors, the existing capabilities of CMT enterprises, and the potential pathways through which technological, managerial, and institutional improvements can support business upgrading.

The principal contribution of this study is its interpretation of the CMT garment sector as a rural manufacturing ecosystem rather than merely an aggregation of individual micro and small enterprises. This perspective highlights the interconnectedness of subcontracting relationships, local productive capabilities, community-based manufacturing, and collaborative interventions involving multiple stakeholders. By adopting this ecosystem perspective, the study extends existing discussions of rural industrialization and SME upgrading, which have often emphasized firm-level performance without sufficiently considering the broader network of relationships within which rural enterprises operate. Theoretically, the study contributes to the literature on regional economic development, rural industrialization, and value-chain participation by providing

evidence from a non-metropolitan manufacturing context. Practically, the findings can serve as an empirical reference for the Cilacap Regency Government, industry participants, financial institutions, educational institutions, and other stakeholders in developing collaborative strategies to enhance local bargaining capacity, facilitate technological and managerial upgrading, broaden market opportunities, and establish a more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable rural garment industry.

II. METHOD

This study employs a field-based, qualitative descriptive-analytical design to map and comprehensively analyze the role of Cut, Make, Trim (CMT) garment enterprises in driving local economic development across West Cilacap (Moleong, 2021). The research was conducted in seven primary manufacturing districts: Kawunganten, Patimuan, Cipari, Wanareja, Majenang, Cimanggu, and Karangpucung. A descriptive-analytical framework was chosen for its capacity to capture the complex socio-economic realities of local entrepreneurs, supply chain configurations, and the localized impacts of government policies within their natural settings (Sugiyono, 2020).

Data were gathered using three main techniques: direct observation, in-depth interviews, and documentary review. Field observations were conducted across various CMT workshops to examine daily operational workflows, machinery adoption, working conditions, and labor dynamics (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In-depth interviews were carried out with key informants selected via purposive sampling until data saturation was reached. Informants included CMT workshop owners, garment workers, community leaders, and representatives from the Cilacap Regency Department of Trade, Cooperatives, and MSMEs (Miles et al., 2014)). Additionally, secondary data including MSME statistics, employment reports, and regional economic policy documents were compiled through documentary research (Suriadi et al., 2022).

To establish data trustworthiness and rigor, source and method triangulation protocols were applied (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Source triangulation involved cross-checking statements across business owners, workers, and government officials, while method triangulation cross-verified interview accounts against observational findings and official secondary metrics (Rijali, 2018).

Data analysis followed the interactive model outlined by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), which encompasses three continuous phases: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. During data reduction, observational notes, interview transcripts, and secondary documents were systematically coded and sorted into core analytical categories, such as economic contributions, enabling and constraining factors, socio-economic impacts, and policy interventions. The synthesized data were then organized into narrative matrices and thematic diagrams. Finally, inductive conclusions were derived and verified to formulate multi-stakeholder strategic frameworks aimed at supporting the sustainable growth of West Cilacap's CMT garment sector (Nugrahani, 2018).

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. Result

Profile of the Region and Development of the CMT Apparel Industry in Western Cilacap

The Western Cilacap region, which administratively encompasses seven sub-districts: Kawunganten, Patimuan, Cipari, Wanareja, Majenang, Cimanggu, and Karangpucung is characterized by geographical and socio-economic features dominated by the agrarian

sector, informal trade, and home-scale industries. The regional characteristic of being far from major manufacturing growth centers has driven the local population to develop survival mechanisms based on micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). In its development, the apparel sector operating under the Cut, Make, Trim (CMT) system has emerged as one of the primary pillars of non-agricultural productive economic activity in this region.

The CMT system is a production chain model within the textile and garment industry where the buyer (brand owner, wholesaler, or large-scale factory) supplies the raw fabric and patterns, while local apparel units are responsible for executing the cutting, sewing/assembly (making), and finishing processes (trimming, quality control, ironing, and packing). This production model is highly adaptive to the social structure of Western Cilacap because it does not require substantial initial capital investment for raw material procurement; instead, it relies on labor efficiency and the flexibility of a home-based industry workforce.

Based on field inventory data and estimations of CMT garment units across Western Cilacap, the distribution of production capacity and labor absorption across the seven sub-districts is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Estimated Distribution of CMT Units, Workforce, and Production Capacity in Western Cilacap

Sub-District	Estimated Units	Peak Workforce (Persons)	Average Production Capacity (Pcs/Month)	Main Product Types
Majenang	42	315	38	Muslim Wear, Uniforms, T-Shirts
Wanareja	35	245	29,5	Children's Wear, Casual Pants
Cimanggu	28	196	22	Muslimah Fashion, Hijabs
Karangpucung	25	175	19,5	Sportswear, T-Shirts
Cipari	18	108	13	Dusters, Everyday Wear
Kawunganten	15	90	10,5	Abayas (Gamis), Men's Shirts
Patimuan	12	72	8	Trousers, School Uniforms
Total	**175**	**1,201**	**140,5**	—

Source: Processed Primary Data from Field Inventory and Department of Trade, Co-operatives, and MSMEs of Cilacap Regency (Processed, 2026).

Data in Table 1 indicates that Majenang and Wanareja serve as the epicenters of CMT apparel growth in Western Cilacap, supported by accessibility to national arterial transportation networks and relatively high population density. The average regional production capacity exceeds 140 thousand pieces of clothing per month.

The operational structure of CMT forms a fragmented yet tightly integrated work chain. Specific division of labor facilitates the entry of workers with varying skill sets. This is corroborated by a statement from a CMT business owner in Majenang (Slamet, 2026):

"This CMT system is extremely helpful for those of us with limited capital to buy fabric rolls directly from factories. The fabric is shipped straight from agents or brand owners in Bandung or Jakarta. Here, we focus solely on cutting, sewing, and packing. Thus, our main assets are sewing machines, electricity, and the skills of local residents. Young school graduates or housewives can be trained immediately in sewing or trimming without having to wait to achieve high-level tailoring expertise."

Economic Changes and Household Income Diversification

Prior to the development of CMT apparel enterprises, the livelihood structure of Western Cilacap residents was dominated by seasonal agriculture (paddy and plantations) and informal work such as construction labor and retail trading. Heavy reliance on the agrarian sector led to sharp fluctuations in household income caused by harvest cycles, crop failures, and limited effective working days for agricultural laborers.

The emergence of CMT businesses triggered a process of income diversification. Labor absorption within the CMT industry does not require spatial migration to major metropolitan areas like Jakarta or Surabaya; instead, it allows residents to remain in their villages while engaging in productive economic activities. The flexible nature of the work facilitates participation among female labor forces (particularly housewives) and productive-age youth.

Table 2. Comparison of Household Income Structure and Expenditure Allocation Before and After Working in the CMT Sector

Household Economic Indicator	Before CMT Contribution	After CMT Contribution	Percentage Change (%)
Average Primary Income/Month	IDR 1,250,000	IDR 1,300,000	+4.0%
Side Income from CMT/Month	IDR 0	IDR 1,450,000	—
Total Household Income/Month	IDR 1,250,000	IDR 2,750,000	+120.0%
Food Consumption Expenditure	IDR 850,000	IDR 1,200,000	+41.2%
Education & Health Expenditure	IDR 200,000	IDR 550,000	+175.0%
Savings / Business Investment	IDR 50,000	IDR 350,000	+600.0%

Source: Processed Primary Data from CMT Worker Household Sample Survey in Western Cilacap (N=85, 2026).

Table 2 demonstrates that family member participation in CMT activities increases the average total household income by 120%, from IDR 1,250,000 to IDR 2,750,000 per month. This increase directly impacts welfare improvement: the share of expenditure

dedicated to education and healthcare rose by 175%, and the capacity to save (asset accumulation pattern) surged by 600%.

A female garment worker in Wanareja detailed the dynamic shift in income patterns and work flexibility within the CMT system (Maryani, 2026):

> *"My husband used to rely solely on uncertain daily agricultural labor. During planting or harvest seasons we had money, but during lean seasons we struggled to find loans. Since CMT garment businesses arrived in our village, I can take piece-rate work sewing sleeves and collars at home using my own machine, or work at the workshop once the children leave for school. The income is quite substantial. I can earn IDR 350,000 to IDR 500,000 a week. The money goes directly toward buying rice, paying school fees, and saving the rest."*

Contribution of CMT to Labor Absorption and Local Multiplier Effects

Labor absorption in the CMT system occurs through detailed, structured task specialization. Operational activities divide the workflow into several functional stages:

1. Cutting is fabric cutting according to master patterns using electric cutting machines; executed primarily by male workers with high geometric precision.
2. Making is assembly and sewing of garment components (collars, sleeves, body panels, or buttons), absorbing the largest proportion of labor.
3. Trimming is tThread trimming, label attachment, and detail finishing; typically performed by entry-level workers or housewives.
4. Quality Control (QC) is inspection of sewing standards, neatness, and dimensional measurements to ensure zero product defects.
5. Ironing and Packing is steam pressing and packaging into plastic wrap ready for shipment.

Table 3. Work Structure and Wage Distribution Scheme in Western Cilacap CMT Units

Work Stage	Labor Share (%)	Gender Dominance	Primary Payment Scheme	Average Weekly Income (IDR)
Cutting	10%	Male	Daily / Weekly	IDR 450,000 – IDR 650,000
Making (Sewing)	55%	Female / Male	Piece-rate (Per Pc)	IDR 400,000 – IDR 750,000
Trimming	15%	Female	Piece-rate / Daily	IDR 250,000 – IDR 400,000
Quality Control	8%	Female / Male	Weekly / Monthly	IDR 400,000 – IDR 550,000
Ironing & Packing	12%	Male / Female	Piece-rate / Daily	IDR 300,000 – IDR 450,000

Source: Processed Primary Data from CMT Business Inventory (2026).

The economic impact of CMT extends beyond direct wage payouts. Wages received by thousands of workers are recirculated back into the local economy through daily consumption transactions. Food stalls, grocery shops, traditional market vendors, local transport services (carrying raw materials and finished goods), and sewing machine repair

technicians experience consistent revenue increases, illustrating the local economic multiplier effect in operation.

As expressed by a local logistics provider in Cimanggu, he said (Suwandi, 2026):

"Every week I haul bales of cut fabric from major business owners in Majenang to deliver to home sewers across Cimanggu and Karangpucung villages, then pick up the completed clothing. The village economy comes alive. Eateries near workshop locations are always packed during lunch breaks or weekly paydays. Money keeps circulating in our villages."

Structural and Operational Constraints of CMT Enterprises

Despite driving employment and income growth, field analysis reveals that the sustainability of the CMT industry in Western Cilacap faces structural constraints across seven core aspects:

1. Raw Material Access and Supply Chain Efficiency
   Most CMT businesses act as passive job-order receivers from brokers or factories outside the region (e.g., Bandung, Pekalongan, Jakarta). The absence of a local bulk textile hub incurs high freight costs and shipping delay risks.
2. HR Capacity and Skill Allocation
   Worker skills are mostly self-taught or passed down informally without standard certification. Competency in complex pattern reading, export-grade sewing techniques, and motion economy remains low.
3. Technology and Production Equipment Limitations
   Most small units rely on older single-needle conventional sewing machines and lack specialized machinery (automatic sergers, button-attaching machines, interlock machines, or industrial boilers), limiting capacity and energy efficiency.
4. Dependence on Brokers and Limited Market Access
   Business owners hold weak bargaining positions regarding per-piece fees. Vulnerability arises when main brand owners unilaterally cut margins or reallocate orders to lower-cost regions.
5. Low Digitalization and Ecosystem Marketing
   Utilization of e-commerce platforms, social commerce, and digital catalogs remains minimal. Most producers have not established local own brands, remaining comfortably in passive subcontracting arrangements.
6. Limited Access to Formal Capital
   CMT owners face challenges accessing Micro Business Credit (KUR) or formal bank loans for machine upgrades due to collateral requirements, lack of legal business permits (NIB), and inadequate financial record-keeping.
7. Weak Management and Business Governance
   Financial records frequently mix household and business funds. The absence of income statements, accurate Cost of Goods Sold (COGS) calculations, and long-term business plans leaves units vulnerable to liquidity crises during payment delays.

Table 4. Matrix of Operational Constraints and Competitiveness Implications for Western Cilacap CMT Industry

Constraint Aspect	Primary Field Indicator	Business Implication
Raw Materials	Lack of local textile agents; high transport costs from outside regions.	Profit margins eroded by high logistics expenses.

HR Capacity	Basic sewing skills; absence of modern fashion design training.	Fluctuating product quality; stitch defect rates reach 5–8%.
Technology	Dominance of manual/used machines; shortage of specialized equipment.	Slow production speeds; inability to fulfill rush orders.
Market Access	Trapped in subcontracting schemes; heavy dependence on middlemen.	Weak bargaining position; value-added captured by external parties.
Digitalization	Conventional marketing methods; underutilized marketplaces.	Market reach restricted to local or routine orders.
Capital	Formal collateral constraints; aversion to bank interest rates.	Slow machine replacement cycles; capital accumulation hindered.
Management	Manual record-keeping; personal and business finances intertwined.	Lack of break-even point analysis; high vulnerability to bankruptcy.

Source: Business Evaluation Survey Data of CMT Western Cilacap (2026).

B. Discussion

Relevance of the CMT System to Local Economic Development (LED)

Empirical findings in Western Cilacap confirm that the growth of CMT apparel units reflects the principles of Local Economic Development (LED). According to Blakely and Leigh, LED is a process whereby local governments or community organizations leverage existing resources and form partnerships with private sectors or citizens to create jobs and stimulate economic activity in a defined geographic area (Blakely & Leigh, 2013).

The CMT industry leverages two primary rural assets: an abundant productive labor force and social capital built on local kinship networks. In Western Cilacap, the CMT system serves as an inclusive economic adaptation mechanism. Rather than alienating workers from their social environments, it integrates manufacturing into domestic community spaces.

This home-based industry model aligns with Todaro and Smith's, framework on inclusive development. Genuine development is measured not merely by aggregate Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP) growth, but by how effectively it reduces poverty, mitigates inequality, and expands employment opportunities (Todaro & Smith, 2015). CMT in Western Cilacap contributes to curbing open unemployment and reducing urban migration among rural youth.

Inter-Sectoral Linkages and the Multiplier Effect

The success of the CMT industry in driving the local economy can be evaluated through Hirschman's Industrial Linkage Theory. Hirschman posits that growth in a primary sector stimulates secondary sectors through backward and forward linkages (Hirschman, 1958).

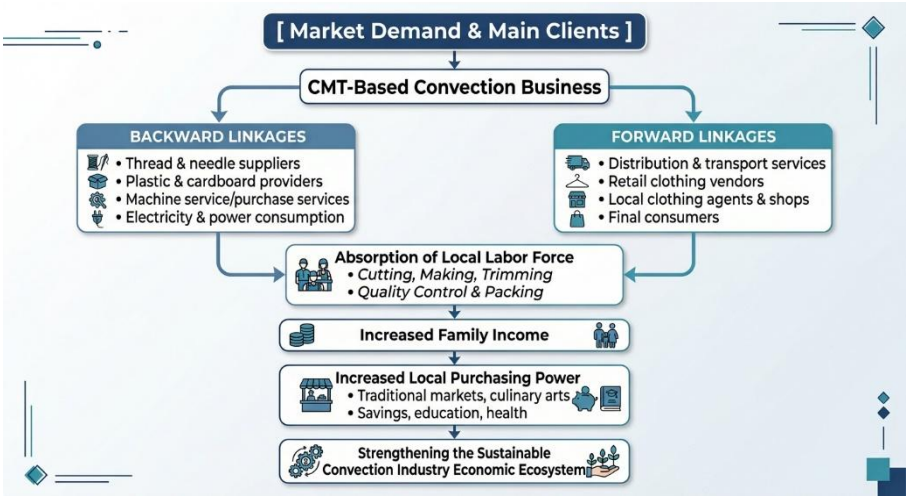

Figure 1: Inter-Sectoral Linkages and the Multiplier Effect

In Western Cilacap, backward linkages manifest in the demand for auxiliary production inputs such as sewing thread, buttons, zippers, plastic packaging, cardboard, machine lubricants, electrical power, and repair services. Although primary fabrics are supplied by external buyers, demand for local supply materials creates a secondary market for wholesale supply stores in forward linkages major sub-district towns like Majenang and Wanareja.

Conversely, forward linkages develop through connections with local transport services, retail clothing vendors in traditional markets across Cilacap, and digital marketing networks (resellers/dropshippers) run by local youth.

The increase in income earned by garment workers (Table 2) stimulates local consumption. According to Keynesian Multiplier Theory, piece-rate wages are recirculated within the regional economy, triggering secondary consumption waves across local agriculture, food vendors, educational services, and household needs. This recirculation mitigates economic leakage outside the region.

Value Chain Transformation: Moving Up from Low-Cost Subcontracting

While the CMT industry supports labor absorption, its placement within the Global/Regional Value Chain (GVC) remains in the lowest value-added segment. Applying Gereffi's, Global Value Chain framework, the CMT industry in Western Cilacap operates within a *buyer-driven chain* (Gereffi, 2005).

In this governance structure, large buyers (brand owners or main wholesalers) control high-value functions such as product design, branding, marketing, and distribution networks. Local CMT units remain restricted to pure assembly/stitching functions characterized by thin profit margins and price pressure.

To prevent enterprises from becoming trapped in a low-cost manufacturing model, industrial upgrading is necessary. Applying Humphrey and Schmitz's, framework, four upgrading stages are relevant for Western Cilacap CMT producers (Humphrey & Schmitz, 2002):

1. Process Upgrading
   Improving efficiency by reorganizing factory layouts, adopting modern machine technology (e.g., automatic cutters and energy-efficient servo motors), and implementing Total Quality Management (TQM).
2. Product Upgrading
   Shifting production from simple items (like dusters or basic t-shirts) toward complex, higher-value garments (such as intricate embroidered Muslim wear, jackets, or technical outerwear).

3. Functional Upgrading
   Transitioning units from CMT subcontractors to Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEM) or Original Design Manufacturers (ODM), where local owners source their own materials, create designs, and market finished products.
4. Chain/Inter-Sectoral Upgrading
   Leveraging manufacturing capabilities to expand into related sectors, such as fabric accessory production, textile bags, or home textile products.

Policy Implications and Multi-Stakeholder Strategies

Strengthening the CMT industry ecosystem requires active collaboration among government, academic, private, and community stakeholders (Pentahelix framework) rather than reliance on market forces alone.

Based on the operational constraints synthesis (Table 4), an integrated policy intervention matrix is proposed across five priority pillars in Table 5.

Table 5. Policy Recommendations and Multi-Stakeholder Interventions for CMT Development in Western Cilacap

Policy Priority	Specific Program Intervention	Executing Actors (Pentahelix)	Long-Term Target
HR Upgrading	Standardized training in sewing, pattern making, QC, and management via communal vocational centers.	Dept. of Manpower, Universities, Apparel Associations	Increased work efficiency and reduction of stitch defect rate below 2%.
Tech Modernization	Machine scrap-and-rebuild subsidy scheme; industrial electricity incentives for small units.	Dept. of Industry, PLN, Banking Institutions	Increase in average production capacity by 45%.
Capital Access	Dedicated Micro Business Credit (KUR) for Joint Business Groups without heavy collateral requirements.	Financial Services Authority (OJK), State Banks, Dept. of MSMEs	100% of units connected to formal financial institutions.
Digitalization and Market	Digital marketing training, digital catalog development, and local business-matching platforms.	Dept. of Trade, Marketplace Communities, Academics	Creation of independent local own brands in Western Cilacap.
Institutional Strengthening	Establishment of Western Cilacap Garment Producer Co-operatives and CMT Owner Associations.	Business Owners, Village Governments, Dept. of Co-operatives	Strengthened bargaining position in raw material sourcing and fee negotiations.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the Cut, Make, and Trim (CMT) convection business plays a vital role in enhancing the local economy of West Cilacap by serving as a inclusive driver of employment generation, household income diversification, and local purchasing power expansion. Despite structural constraints such as supply chain dependency, low human resource competencies, outdated production technology, and limited formal capital access, the CMT sector generates significant local economic multiplier effects that strengthen rural economic resilience. Achieving long-term sustainability and value chain upgrading from low-cost subcontracting to independent local manufacturing requires a coordinated Pentahelix strategy focusing on skill standardization, technological modernization, financial inclusion, digital marketplace penetration, and institutional strengthening across the region.

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