



**TECHNIUM**  
SOCIAL SCIENCES JOURNAL

**Vol. 80/2026**  
**A New Decade for Social Changes**



**PLUS**  
**COMMUNICATION P**



International  
Communication & PR

## **Adaptive yet Vulnerable: Supply Chain Models of Ready-to-Wear Clothing Traders in Bandung's Traditional Markets**

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**Abstract.** Traditional markets remain a vital component of Indonesia's local economy, particularly in the distribution of ready-to-wear clothing products. However, empirical studies examining supply chain models within traditional market contexts remain limited. This study aims to analyze and model the supply chain structure of ready-to-wear clothing traders in traditional markets in Bandung City. A qualitative descriptive research design was employed, with primary data collected through in-depth interviews, field observations, and supporting literature review. Data were analyzed using descriptive-interpretative techniques, including data reduction, coding, categorization, and triangulation. The findings reveal that the supply chain structure is relatively short and simple, involving producers (garment and small-scale sewing workshops), retailers (kiosk and street vendors), and end consumers. Despite its flexibility, the supply chain relies heavily on informal coordination, social networks, and adaptive procurement strategies, which increases vulnerability to supply fluctuations and price instability. Differences in access to suppliers and inventory strategies between kiosk traders and street vendors further shape supply chain performance. This study concludes that the effectiveness of supply chain management in traditional markets cannot be assessed using modern retail standards alone. Instead, a contextual and adaptive supply chain model is required to strengthen efficiency and sustainability while preserving the inherent flexibility of traditional market systems.

**Keywords.** supply chain model, traditional market, ready-to-wear clothing, informal retail

### **Introduction**

The expansion of global economic activities and the increasing intensity of business competition have positioned supply chain management as a critical factor in maintaining sustainability and competitiveness within the trade sector. Supply chains are no longer understood merely as distribution channels, but as integrated systems that connect suppliers, producers, distributors, and end consumers through the simultaneous flows of goods, information, and financial resources. Effective supply chain management has been shown to contribute significantly to cost efficiency, price stability, and firms' ability to respond to dynamic market demand (Christopher, 2016; Simchi-Levi et al., 2021).

In the context of developing countries such as Indonesia, traditional markets continue to play a strategic role as the backbone of consumer goods distribution and as key drivers of people's economic activities. Beyond their economic function, traditional markets also serve as

social spaces that absorb a large workforce and provide livelihoods for millions of small-scale traders. Nevertheless, traditional markets face persistent structural challenges, including limited infrastructure, weak coordination among supply chain actors, and substantial price disparities resulting from distribution and logistics inefficiencies (Purnomo et al., 2018; Sutandi, 2018).

One sector that is highly dependent on the effectiveness of supply chain systems within traditional markets is the ready-to-wear clothing trade. The characteristics of ready-to-wear products—such as seasonality, trend sensitivity, and relatively short product life cycles—require supply chains that are both flexible and adaptive. Inadequate inventory management, delays in supply from garment producers or small-scale manufacturers, and limited access to reliable sourcing channels can reduce the competitiveness of clothing traders in traditional markets, particularly when competing with modern retail formats and digital platforms (Gereffi & Frederick, 2010; Nuzuliati & Awaludin, 2025).

Previous studies on supply chain management have largely focused on large-scale industries and modern retail sectors, while empirical research specifically examining supply chain models among ready-to-wear clothing traders in traditional markets remains limited. In practice, supply chains in traditional markets exhibit distinctive characteristics, involving small-scale garment and tailoring businesses, wholesalers, as well as kiosk-based and street-level retailers operating under diverse procurement and inventory patterns. The heterogeneity of actors and relational structures within traditional market supply chains increases managerial complexity and heightens vulnerability to inefficiencies (Schroeder & Goldstein, 2020; Toni et al., 2025).

Given these conditions, a deeper understanding of how supply chain models operate among ready-to-wear clothing traders in traditional markets is required, particularly in identifying key actors, product flow patterns, and grassroots-level procurement and distribution mechanisms. This research is important not only for enriching the supply chain management literature within the context of informal economies, but also for informing policy formulation and strategic interventions aimed at strengthening the resilience and competitiveness of traditional markets amid an evolving trade landscape. Accordingly, this study focuses on modeling the supply chain of ready-to-wear clothing traders in traditional markets using a qualitative approach to comprehensively capture empirical dynamics in the field.

### **Literature Review**

Supply chain management (SCM) is a managerial approach oriented toward the integration and coordination of multiple actors involved in the value creation process, ranging from raw material suppliers and producers to distributors, retailers, and end consumers. The primary objective of SCM is to ensure that products are produced and distributed in the right quantities, to the right locations, and at the right time, while minimizing total system costs and meeting expected service levels (Simchi-Levi et al., 2021). From a systems perspective, SCM views all facilities and activities as an interdependent whole. Operational decisions related to procurement, production, inventory, and distribution are therefore interconnected and collectively influence overall system performance. Consequently, SCM emphasizes total system optimization rather than partial efficiency, such as reducing transportation or inventory costs in isolation, while continuously considering customer value and satisfaction (Christopher, 2016; Simchi-Levi et al., 2021).

A supply chain can be defined as a network of manufacturing and service operations involving multiple organizations with distinct functions that are interconnected through the flows of physical goods, information, and financial resources. These three flows constitute

fundamental elements that determine supply chain effectiveness and efficiency, as disruptions in any one of them can significantly affect overall system performance (Chopra et al., 2019; Schroeder & Goldstein, 2020). Furthermore, SCM encompasses the entire value transformation process, from raw material processing to the delivery of goods and services to end consumers. This includes activities such as planning, distribution network design, coordination among actors, and integrated control of material, information, and financial flows. Such an approach enables organizations to enhance competitiveness through greater flexibility, faster responsiveness, and improved adaptability to changes in market demand (Janat, 2016).

In the trade sector, particularly within traditional markets, the application of supply chain management differs markedly from that of modern retail systems. Supply chains in traditional markets tend to be simpler, more informal, and heavily reliant on social relationships, with relatively low levels of coordination and limited access to information and technology. These conditions often give rise to inefficiencies in distribution, supply fluctuations, and price disparities among actors (Faridi & Malik, 2020; Janat, 2016). In the ready-to-wear clothing sector, supply chain complexity is further intensified by product characteristics such as seasonality, trend sensitivity, and relatively short product life cycles. Clothing traders in traditional markets must continuously adjust procurement and inventory strategies in response to changing consumer preferences and supply dynamics from garment producers or small-scale manufacturers. Ineffective supply chain management may lead to excess inventory, supply delays, and declining competitiveness, particularly when traditional traders compete with modern retail formats and digital platforms (Gereffi & Frederick, 2010; Marnoto et al., 2024).

Several studies indicate that strengthening supply chain models among small enterprises and traditional market traders can enhance operational efficiency, supply stability, and business sustainability. Nevertheless, the majority of SCM research continues to focus on large corporations and modern retail sectors, leaving empirical studies on supply chain models among ready-to-wear clothing traders in traditional markets relatively limited. As a result, in-depth analysis of actor structures, product flow patterns, and procurement mechanisms within traditional market contexts remains essential to address this gap in the literature and to contribute both theoretically and practically to the development of supply chain management in informal and small-scale trade settings (Nofrizal et al., 2023; Sutandi, 2018).

## **Research Method**

### **Research Design**

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research design aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding and interpretation of the phenomenon under investigation based on empirical conditions in the field. The qualitative approach does not emphasize statistical testing or mathematical calculations, but rather focuses on the interpretation of meaning derived from data obtained through direct interaction with research participants. Although data may be presented in numerical form, the primary emphasis of this study remains on qualitative interpretation. As noted by Corbin & Strauss (2008), qualitative research enables researchers to systematically explore social realities using multiple data sources, including observations, interviews, documents, and archival materials. This approach is particularly suitable for investigating, analyzing, and explaining phenomena comprehensively by situating context and participants' experiences at the core of the analytical process.

In this study, empirical realities and events observed in the field serve as the primary foundation for developing an understanding of the research object. Accordingly, a descriptive qualitative design is considered the most appropriate approach for capturing the dynamics and

characteristics of the phenomenon in a contextual and in-depth manner (Nugrahani, 2014). The study relies on primary data sources, defined as data obtained directly by the researcher from original sources. Primary data were collected through direct interaction with informants, particularly through interviews, ensuring that the information reflects actual experiences, perspectives, and practices occurring in the field.

### **Collecting Data**

Data collection in this study was conducted through several complementary stages to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. The methods employed included a literature review, interviews, and field surveys. First, the literature review involved examining relevant written sources such as books, scholarly articles, and other academic publications. This stage aimed to establish a theoretical foundation, enhance conceptual understanding, and support the analysis of research findings within an established scholarly framework.

Second, in-depth interviews were conducted directly with clothing traders in traditional markets as the primary informants of the study. Informants were selected based on their direct involvement in ready-to-wear clothing trading activities, enabling them to provide detailed insights into practical experiences, operational practices, and the dynamics of supply chains operating within traditional markets in Bandung City.

Third, field surveys were carried out through direct observation of the traditional markets examined in this study. This activity aimed to capture factual conditions related to the physical market environment, patterns of trading activities, and interactions among actors involved in the distribution and sale of ready-to-wear clothing. Observational data were used to complement and validate findings derived from interviews and the literature review.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis in this study was conducted qualitatively using a descriptive–interpretative approach, in line with the research design and data collection techniques established earlier. The analysis aimed to understand, interpret, and explain the patterns and dynamics of the supply chain among ready-to-wear clothing traders in traditional markets based on empirical findings from the field. The data analysis process consisted of several stages, as follows:

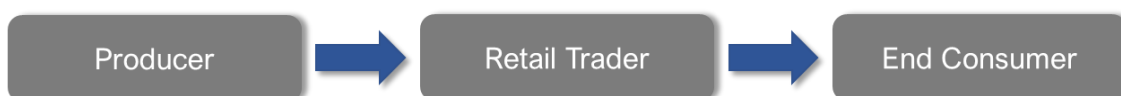
- *Data reduction*, which involved the selection, filtering, and organization of data obtained from interviews, field surveys, and the literature review. At this stage, relevant information aligned with the research focus was identified, raw data were simplified, and findings were grouped according to initial themes related to supply chain actors, distribution flows, and procurement mechanisms.
- *Categorization and coding*, whereby data derived from interviews and observations were classified into thematic categories reflecting patterns of relationships among actors, the roles of each participant, and prevailing supply chain practices in traditional markets. This process enabled the identification of interconnections among concepts and facilitated a more structured understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.
- *Data presentation*, in which the results of the analysis were organized into narrative descriptions, conceptual tables, and supply chain flow models. This stage aimed to support meaningful interpretation and to systematically illustrate the structure of the supply chain among ready-to-wear clothing traders in traditional markets.

- *Data triangulation*, conducted by comparing and cross-validating information obtained from multiple data sources and collection methods. Interview findings were verified through field observations and supported by evidence from the literature review, ensuring that the resulting interpretations accurately reflected empirical conditions and were methodologically robust.
- *Conclusion drawing and interpretation*, undertaken by linking empirical findings with the conceptual framework and relevant literature. Conclusions were developed inductively based on emerging patterns and themes in the data, providing a comprehensive depiction of the supply chain model of ready-to-wear clothing traders in traditional markets and its implications for strengthening traditional market performance..

### **Result and Discussion**

Traditional markets represent one of the main pillars of Indonesia's economy, playing a crucial role in employment absorption and in the distribution of essential consumer goods. Available data indicate that traditional markets support approximately 12.5 million traders operating across more than 13,000 market units nationwide (Sutandi, 2018). These findings underscore that the sustainability of traditional markets extends beyond economic considerations to encompass significant social dimensions, thereby positioning the effectiveness of supply chain systems that underpin trading activities as a strategic issue.

The findings of this study indicate that efficiency and cost structures within the supply chains of ready-to-wear clothing traders in traditional markets are highly dependent on the distribution models employed. In general, the supply chain flows identified in this research involve three primary actors: producers, retailers, and end consumers. While this configuration reflects a relatively short supply chain structure, it also entails a degree of complexity arising from variations in business scale and procurement mechanisms among market participants.



*Figure 1. Supply Chain Flow*

### **The Role of Producers in the Supply Chain**

Producers serve as the initial actors in the supply chain by transforming raw materials or textile components into ready-to-wear clothing products that are suitable for market distribution. Based on field findings, producers within the traditional market supply chain can be classified into two main categories. The first category consists of garment companies or medium-scale manufacturers that produce clothing on a regular basis and distribute their products through large wholesalers before reaching retailers in traditional markets. This distribution pattern indicates an indirect relationship between producers and market traders, which has implications for both pricing structures and product availability at the retail level.

The second category comprises small-scale garment producers or sewing workshops that utilize leftover fabrics or defective production outputs to create low-priced clothing items. Products from this category are primarily supplied to street vendors who offer affordable clothing options. Distribution mechanisms in this segment are more informal and rely heavily on interpersonal information networks, whereby traders actively approach producers to procure merchandise. This finding is consistent with the view that supply chains in small-scale and

informal sectors tend to be highly flexible, yet characterized by limited systematic planning (Christopher, 2016; Mittal et al., 2025).

In addition, some clothing traders operating permanent kiosks source their merchandise from established apparel companies or large wholesale centers such as Tanah Abang. This pattern indicates that traditional market traders do not rely exclusively on a single supply source, but instead combine multiple procurement channels to ensure inventory continuity and maintain product variety.

### **Characteristics of Retail Traders in Traditional Markets**

Retail traders play a key role as intermediaries linking producers to end consumers. The findings of this study indicate that ready-to-wear clothing retailers in traditional markets can be categorized into two main groups: kiosk traders and street vendors. Kiosk traders typically operate permanent business spaces within market premises and offer products of relatively higher quality. Their inventory management practices follow a hybrid approach combining *make-to-stock* and *make-to-order* strategies, whereby products are regularly available while being continuously updated in response to fashion trends and supply availability from producers.

In contrast, street vendors do not have permanent storage facilities or display spaces and sell their merchandise in open market areas. The products offered are generally derived from surplus or leftover garment production, resulting in limited and non-uniform product variations. Relatively low selling prices—ranging from IDR 10,000 to IDR 60,000—serve as the primary attraction for consumers with lower to middle purchasing power. Street vendors predominantly adopt a *make-to-stock* inventory strategy, with replenishment occurring when stock levels approach depletion. These findings suggest that retailers' inventory strategies are strongly shaped by capital constraints, limited business space, and the characteristics of consumer demand (Chopra et al., 2019; Priporas et al., 2017).

### **The Role of End Consumers in the Supply Chain**

End consumers represent the final actors in the supply chain and play a strategic role in determining the sustainability of ready-to-wear clothing trade activities in traditional markets. Consumers' purchasing decisions directly influence demand patterns, inventory turnover rates, and procurement strategies adopted by retailers. In this sense, consumers function not only as final recipients of products but also as key drivers shaping the overall dynamics and direction of the supply chain. Field observations indicate that consumers of ready-to-wear clothing in traditional markets are predominantly households, particularly housewives, who purchase products to meet personal and family needs. This consumer profile reflects the orientation of traditional markets toward fulfilling daily necessities, guided by rational considerations of price and product utility. Price sensitivity emerges as a dominant factor in purchasing decisions, especially among middle- to lower-income segments. Consequently, retailers are encouraged to adjust pricing strategies and product assortments to remain competitive and aligned with consumers' purchasing power (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Beyond price considerations, proximity and ease of access also play a significant role in consumers' choice of traditional markets as shopping destinations. Traditional markets facilitate direct interactions between sellers and buyers, offer flexibility in transaction processes, and allow for price negotiation—features that constitute added value compared to modern retail formats. The social interactions embedded in buying and selling activities further strengthen consumer loyalty and foster long-term relationships between traders and customers,

ultimately contributing to demand stability within the supply chain (Özbek et al., 2024; Sheth, 2011). Furthermore, consumer preferences for affordable products with sufficient variety influence retailers' procurement patterns. Retailers tend to rely on flexible supply sources, such as small-scale garment producers or sewing workshops, to adjust product volume and assortment in response to changing consumer tastes. This pattern indicates a reciprocal relationship between consumer behavior and supply chain strategies at the retail level, whereby shifts in consumer demand directly affect distribution flows and inventory management practices (Chopra et al., 2019; Song et al., 2022).

These findings are consistent with the literature emphasizing that consumers in traditional market contexts play an active role in shaping supply chain structures and performance, particularly within small-scale and informal business sectors. Preferences related to price, accessibility, and social relationships enable traditional markets to remain relevant and competitive despite the expansion of modern retail and digital commerce. Accordingly, a thorough understanding of end consumers' characteristics and behavior is essential for designing adaptive and sustainable supply chain models for ready-to-wear clothing traders in traditional markets (Christopher, 2016; Sutandi, 2018).

### **Discussion of Findings**

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that the supply chain of ready-to-wear clothing traders in traditional markets exhibits a relatively simple structure with a limited number of actors. Nevertheless, this structure faces significant efficiency challenges due to constraints in coordination, planning, and access to information. The short supply chain—typically involving only producers, retailers, and end consumers—provides traders with a high degree of flexibility in adjusting product volume and assortment. However, such flexibility also increases vulnerability to supply fluctuations, price uncertainty, and reliance on informal networks in procurement processes.

These findings are consistent with the view that supply chains in informal sectors and small-scale businesses tend to be responsive yet weakly structured. The absence of systematic inventory planning mechanisms and limited integration of information among actors often lead traders to rely on experience and intuition rather than measurable demand forecasting. This condition may result in inefficiencies, such as excess inventory for certain products or stock shortages during periods of high demand (Mentzer et al., 2001). At the same time, the simplicity of the supply chain structure reflects the adaptive capacity of traditional market traders in coping with resource limitations. Traders are able to leverage social relationships, geographic proximity, and trust-based networks with producers or suppliers to sustain their business operations. This pattern suggests that efficiency in traditional market contexts is not necessarily determined by the level of system formalization, but rather by actors' ability to adjust to demand dynamics and changing business environments (Chen & Paulraj, 2004).

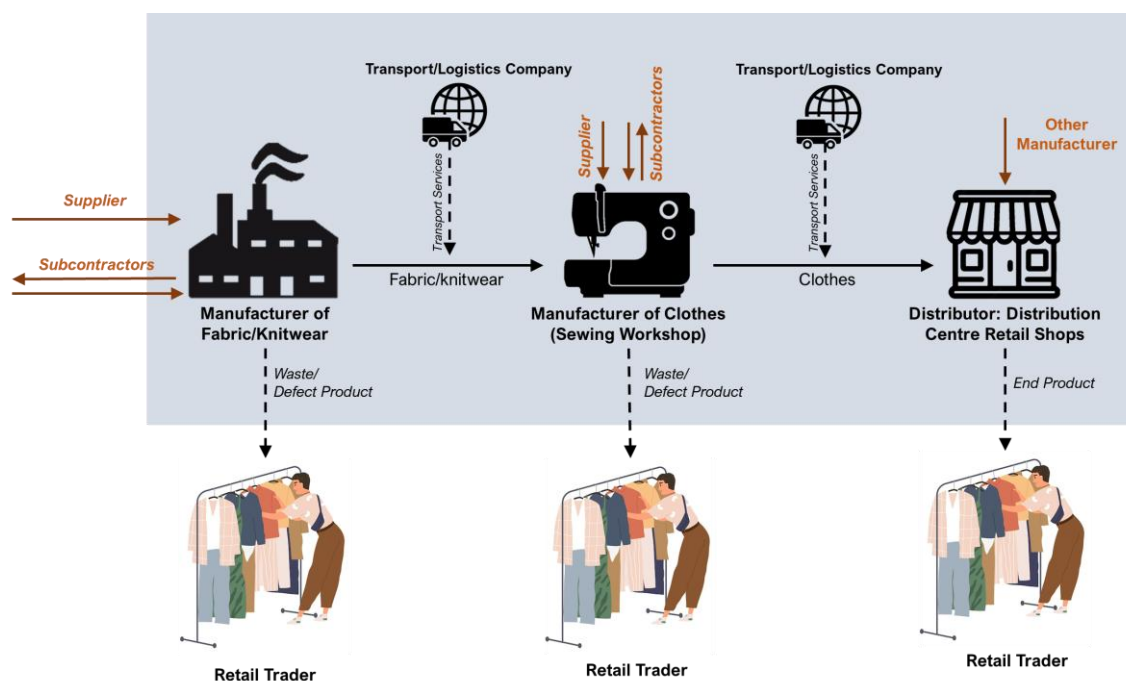
Furthermore, the findings reveal the presence of internal segmentation within the supply chain, particularly between kiosk traders and street vendors. Differences in business scale, capital availability, and access to supply sources influence inventory strategies and the level of risk faced by each group. Kiosk traders generally enjoy greater supply stability due to their access to large wholesalers or established apparel companies, whereas street vendors are more susceptible to supply fluctuations as they depend on surplus production from small garment manufacturers or sewing workshops. These results reinforce the argument that actor heterogeneity in traditional markets must be a central consideration in developing inclusive and sustainable supply chain models (Caniëls & Gelderman, 2007; Wang et al., 2019).

From a theoretical perspective, the findings support a contingency approach to supply chain management, emphasizing that supply chain design and governance should be aligned with environmental context, actor characteristics, and product types. Efforts to optimize supply chains for ready-to-wear clothing traders in traditional markets cannot rely on the direct adoption of technology-intensive and formally integrated modern retail models. Instead, they should focus on strengthening coordination, improving access to information, and implementing policy support that is consistent with empirical conditions in the field (Ketchen & Hult, 2007; Payne & Peters, 2004). An in-depth understanding of actor characteristics, relational patterns, and distribution flows thus becomes a critical foundation for formulating more efficient and sustainable supply chain models—models that preserve the flexibility inherent in traditional markets while reducing vulnerability to supply risks and price instability. A summary of the key findings, particularly those related to the supply chain of ready-to-wear clothing traders in traditional markets, is presented in the following table.

**Table 1.** Characteristics of the Supply Chain of Ready-to-Wear Clothing Traders in Traditional Markets

Aspect	Key Findings	Supply Chain Implications
Supply chain structure	Short and simple	Flexible, but vulnerable to supply disruptions
Coordination pattern	Informal and trust-based	Limited systematic planning
Inventory strategy	Diverse (make-to-stock and hybrid)	Risk of overstock and stock-outs
Access to supply	Uneven among traders	Inequality in business stability
Demand responsiveness	Rapid but reactive	Highly dependent on traders' experience

Source: Result of Data Analysis (2026)



**Figure 2.** Integration of the Visual Supply Chain Model with Research Findings

The figure above provides a comprehensive representation of the structure and dynamics of the ready-to-wear clothing supply chain in traditional markets, which is relatively short yet involves a diverse set of actors with varying levels of formality and capacity. The distribution flow begins with textile raw material producers, continues to garment manufacturers or sewing workshops, and extends to distributors and retailers who interact directly with end consumers. These findings highlight that supply chains in traditional markets rely heavily on flexible inter-actor relationships, including subcontracting networks and informal mechanisms, a pattern commonly observed in the apparel industry in developing countries (Tokatli, 2007). The reabsorption of waste and defective products by street vendors further illustrates the adaptive nature of supply chains in the informal sector, although such practices remain largely unsystematic (Christopher, 2016).

Furthermore, the visualization underscores the role of third-party transportation and logistics services as key connectors between nodes within the supply chain, reflecting cost-efficiency strategies and distribution flexibility among small-scale enterprises operating under high demand uncertainty (Chopra et al., 2019; Janat, 2016). At the downstream level, consumer preferences related to price, accessibility, and product variety function as demand drivers that actively shape production and procurement patterns upstream. Accordingly, this visual model serves as a synthesis of the study's findings, demonstrating that the ready-to-wear clothing supply chain in traditional markets is contextual, adaptive, and socially networked. Strengthening such supply chains therefore requires consideration of local characteristics and empirical realities, rather than the normative adoption of modern retail supply chain models (Mentzer et al., 2001; Schroeder & Goldstein, 2020).

### **Conclusion**

This study aims to model the supply chain of ready-to-wear clothing traders in traditional markets in Bandung City using a descriptive qualitative approach. The findings indicate that the resulting supply chain structure is relatively simple and short, involving key actors such as producers (garment manufacturers and sewing workshops), retailers (kiosk traders and street vendors), and end consumers. However, the simplicity of this structure does not necessarily imply efficiency, as it remains constrained by limitations in coordination, planning, and access to information among supply chain actors. Empirical evidence reveals that the ready-to-wear clothing supply chain in traditional markets is highly dependent on informal mechanisms, social relationships, and flexible inter-actor networks. While these patterns enhance traders' adaptive capacity in responding to shifts in consumer demand, they also increase vulnerability to supply fluctuations, price instability, and inventory imbalance risks. The segmentation between kiosk traders and street vendors further highlights significant differences in inventory strategies, access to supply sources, and levels of business risk.

Overall, this study underscores that the effectiveness of supply chains among ready-to-wear clothing traders in traditional markets cannot be assessed solely based on modern retail standards. Instead, it must be understood contextually in relation to actor characteristics, business scale, and the surrounding socio-economic dynamics. The proposed supply chain model reflects the adaptive empirical realities of traditional markets, yet it requires further strengthening to enhance efficiency and long-term sustainability.

### **Implications**

This study makes a theoretical contribution to the field of supply chain management by extending the application of SCM concepts to the context of traditional markets and the

informal economy. The findings support a contingency approach to supply chain management, emphasizing that supply chain design and governance should be aligned with environmental conditions, actor characteristics, and the types of products traded. In doing so, this study enriches the SCM literature, which has traditionally been dominated by research on large-scale enterprises and modern retail systems.

From a practical perspective, the findings provide concrete insights for traders, producers, and relevant stakeholders regarding relational patterns and distribution flows within the ready-to-wear clothing supply chain in traditional markets. These insights can serve as a foundation for traders to improve procurement and inventory management strategies, as well as for local governments and market authorities to design capacity-building programs that are better aligned with the needs and characteristics of traditional market actors.

In terms of policy implications, this study highlights the importance of facilitative interventions, such as improving access to supply-related information, strengthening distribution infrastructure, and developing small-scale logistics systems. Policy initiatives should take into account the realities of informal networks and established social relationships, ensuring that interventions reinforce rather than disrupt the adaptive mechanisms that constitute the core strengths of traditional markets.

### **Limitations & Recommendation**

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research adopts a qualitative approach within a geographically limited context, focusing on traditional markets in Bandung City. Consequently, the findings cannot be broadly generalized to other regions or trade sectors. Second, the study relies entirely on primary data collected through interviews and observations, making the results highly dependent on informants' subjectivity and the researcher's interpretation. Third, the study does not explicitly measure supply chain performance using quantitative indicators, such as cost efficiency or service level metrics.

Based on the findings and the identified limitations, several recommendations can be proposed. First, future research is encouraged to integrate qualitative and quantitative approaches to provide a more comprehensive assessment of supply chain performance. Second, subsequent studies may expand the research scope to include other cities or regions in order to compare traditional market supply chain models across different local contexts. Third, future research could explore the role of digital technologies and online platforms in supporting the strengthening of supply chains among ready-to-wear clothing traders in traditional markets, while preserving the adaptive characteristics that define these market systems.

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