The Role of Halalan-Toyyiban Supply Chain Practices As Significant Predictors towards Excellent Customer Service Management

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Abstract

This study examines the role of Halalan-Toyyiban supply chain practices (HTSCP) in the context of service management. Investigation was done to see how retail customers react to the role of HTSCP; that later influence their overall grocery experience. Halalan Toyyiban is a process associated with religious belief and as such it would be difficult to control and guarantee. From the consumer point of view, the process is difficult to evaluate and verify even after consuming the product. Therefore, consumers have to largely rely on the retailer on the reliable information to guide their purchase. In the traditional context of supermarket retailing, excellent customer service management could be interpreted as just meeting the expectations of the supermarket customers, not any sort of exceeding or falling short of their expectations. It is only recently that several of the supermarkets try to achieve competitive advantage by taking the responses of their customers beyond the level of just service satisfaction. These supermarket retailers are now towards exceeding their service expectations. This study attempts to fill this gap by examining the relationship between the roles of HTSCP as significant predictors towards excellent customer service management. Structured questionnaires were distributed to 489 supermarket customers using purposive sampling technique in the urban area. The instruments used for data collection for all variables in the study include halal inputs, halal processes, controls for halal, halal outputs and excellent customer service management were adapted from Halalan- Toyyiban Assurance Pipeline (Management System Requirements for Retailing) of Department of Standards Malaysia as well as from various studies using a five-point Likert scale. The results suggest that all determinants of HTSCP had a good relationship with excellent customer service management. This study identifies additional management efforts that can be implemented in enhancing good retail supermarket practice.

Keywords: Halalan-Toyyiban, Retail Supply Chain Practices, Customer Service Management.

1. Introduction

Today's retail business environment is characterized by continuous and often radical change. Such a volatile climate demands a new attitude and approach within organizations; actions must be anticipatory, adaptive, and based on a faster cycle of knowledge creation. One of the current challenges retail businesses face includes a growing emphasis on creating customer value and improving customer service management. Customers in a restaurant would want more than a meal, guests in hotels would want more than a room, clients in a transaction would want more than a settlement and customers want more than just the product or service that is offered, above all customers want to be treated well. Retail managers must no longer investigate their customers superficially; they must dig more deeply than surveys and feedback forms. As retail organizations have become more complex and information more readily accessible, forward thinking managers have grown concerned with how to allow knowledge to flow freely and how to control and manage this vital flow of information and technology at the same time (Riaz & Chaudry, 2004). Knowledge on product awareness, consumer attitude, organization efficiency and problem-solving capabilities are some of the issues that retail managers need to monitor thoroughly (Noordin et al., 2014). The retail supply chain, for example, relies upon knowledge from

diverse areas including planning, manufacturing, warehousing, and distribution (Hafie & Othman, 2006). In recent years, concerns have been raised on the function of Halalan-Toyyiban Supply Chain Practices (HTSCP) towards business environment particularly in the grocery sector (Aziz & Chok, 2013). The aim of the study is therefore to analyse the influence of HTSCP towards excellent customer service management. This work aims to contribute to HTSCP research specifically relevant to the retail industry in Islamic countries. Compliance to HTSCP is of vital importance to the actual purchasing of products and services offered by the retailers. This study makes two specific contributions to current knowledge. First, the study will reveal the effect of HTSCP in influencing customers' service experience and secondly, the measurement instrument of HTSCP on excellent customer service management will be proposed.

2. Halalan-Toyyiban Supply Chain Practices (HTSCP)

Various definitions of supply chain practices exist in the relevant literature, often using the same terms and sometimes overlapping their meanings and understandings. Supply chain management is the process of planning, planning, executing, controlling and monitoring supply chain activities with the objective of creating value, building a competitive infrastructure and leveraging logistics worldwide. Supply chain practices provide a proven foundation for the success of a retail industry. The key aspects of supply chain management practices according to Tan et al (2002) are supply chain integration, information sharing, customer service management, geographical proximity, and timely capabilities (JIT). Although many studies have focused on this aspect (such as price, quality, delivery reliability, outsourcing, time to market, risk, supplier sharing, cycle time compression, continuous process flow, IT sharing and product innovation) (Narasimhan and Das, 1999; Scannell et al., 2000; Elmaghraby, 2000; Wisner, 2003; Talluri and Narasimhan, 2004; Chen and Paulraj, 2004a; Chen et al., 2004) research on halal practices in supply chain management is rare and difficult to find despite studies being conducted. Therefore, it is difficult for organizations to understand the true function of Halalan-Toyyiban supply chain practices.

Halalan-Toyyiban supply chain practices (HTSCP) is a Quranic term that means permitted, allowed, lawful or legal process. Its opposite is haram (forbidden, unlawful or illegal). These terms are commonly used in relation to food products, meat products, cosmetics, personal care products, pharmaceuticals, food ingredients, and food contact materials (Department of Standards Malaysia, 2010). While many things are clearly halal or haram, there are some things which are not clear (Sariwati & Ahmad, 2015). Further information is needed to categorise them as halal or haram. Such items are often referred to as *mashbooh*, which means doubtful or questionable. Thus, in general, every food is considered halal in Islam unless it is specifically prohibited in the Qur'an or the Hadith.

Halalan Toyyiban foods are those that are free from any component that Muslims are prohibited from consuming according to Islamic law (Shariah) which are processed, made, produced, manufactured and/or stored using utensils, equipment and/or machinery that have been cleansed according to Islamic law (Zulfakar et al., 2014). In order to ensure that all processes of retail chains are Halalan-Toyyiban, retailers must comply with HTSCP elements such as input, process, control and output as recommended by the Malaysian Standards Department (2010) in the document of Halalan-Toyyiban Assurance Pipeline (Retailing) (Table 1).

Table 1: Halalan-Toyyiban Supply Chain Practice

HTSCP Practice	Definition
Inputs	Inputs for HTSCP practices are categorized as man (workers, people), machines (equipment, machines and appliances), materials (raw materials, inventories), methods (procedures), management (employers and staff), management information system (operating system and ICT), money (funding and financial support), and management of environment and technology.
Processes	Retail halal supply chain processes encompass all inbound and outbound transportation services, inclusive of the nature and description of containers and equipment; modes of transportation; placement, stacking and storage conditions; dispatch, receiving, handling and distribution activities with clear process flow diagrams for tracking and traceability on shariah
Controls	The shariah -based controls are to ensure shariah compliance as in the Islamic laws; while the technical controls are to ensure the integrity and technical aspects of managing the retail logistics processes and activities.
Outputs	The halal outputs in the retail supply chain and logistics services are rest assured in shariah compliance when the halal inputs, halal processes and halal controls are in-place; with objective documented evidence and demonstrated compliance through shariah-based work practices by the management and workers in the organization.

*Adopted from Department of Standards Malaysia (2010). MS 2400-3:2010 (P): Halalan- Toyyiban Assurance Pipeline – Part 3: Management System Requirements for Retailing, Malaysia

A lot of Literature describes the practices of supply chain management from different perspectives with the aim of increasing the competitive edge of the company (Narasimhan and Das, 1999; Scannell et al., 2000; Elmaghraby, 2000; Wisner, 2003; Talluri and Narasimhan, 2004; Chen and Paulraj, 2004a; Chen et al., 2004). By enhancing the company's competitive advantage, the organization improved its performance. The three dimensions of supply chain management practices commonly used are strategic supplier sharing, customer relationships, and information sharing (Wisner, 2003; Talluri and Narasimhan, 2004; Chen and Paulraj, 2004a). When the world is hit by Covid19, every business needs to think of new ways to stay productive. One of the things to do is to use a proper procedure in day to day business activities. Malaysia for instance, may employ information used by Department of Standards Malaysia (2010); MS 2400-3: 2010 (P): Halalan-Toyyiban Assurance Pipeline - Part 3: Management System Requirements for Retailing, Halalan-Toyyiban supply chain practices in Malaysia. The standard has four elements which include inputs, process, controls and outputs. These elements, however, have not yet been properly studied and measured.

In the context of Malaysian Halal food operations, previous studies focused on different issues and have come up with various arguments. Noordin et al. (2009) and Shafie and Othman (2006) highlighted the lack of assistance and collaboration among authorities, conflict among authorities (governing bodies and state government) as well as slow certification processes and inefficiency of Halal certification process. Talib et al. (2008) revealed that processing and handling as well as insecurity about halal food quality were some of many obstacles faced by retail customers. Ballou (2007) explained that elements such as logo authenticity are vital for food status and handling. Abdul et al. (2009) revealed that food quality trust and confidence, shariah compliance warehouses, shariah compliance transportation, shariah compliance equipment and service have become major consumer interests. Nonetheless, in many studies earlier, none was related to the effect of HTSCP on excellent customer service management. This is probably due to the lack of studies that deal with this issue.

3. Understanding Customer Service Management

Customer service management in this study can be described as all of the retailer activities that increase the value received by their customers when shopping in their store (Levy & Weitz, 2007). Excellent customer service management can be identified as both tangible and intangible values which increase the activities related to customer experiences with the products or services (Parasuraman et al., 1991, 1994a, 1994b); it either effects the customer directly or indirectly (Kursunluoglu, 2011). Specifically, customer service management is the internal and subjective response that the retailers have to any direct or indirect contact with a customer. Direct contact generally occurs in the course of purchase, use, and service and is usually initiated by the customer. Indirect contact is most often encountered with the type of company's services, products or brands and comes in the form of recommendations, criticisms, advertising, news reports, reviews, word-of-mouth and so forth. Levels of customer service management offered depend on the criteria such as retailer's characteristics, services offered, retail mix offered (which include product, price, place, promotion and personality or image of the store) as well as the income of target market. Satisfying customers through offering excellent customer service management provides long-term customer satisfaction (Berman & Evans, 2010). Thus, the execution of good overall customer service management experience is important in creating customer satisfaction (Parasuraman et al., 1991, 1994a, 1994b).

Managing great customer service is not just the responsibility of the customer service department. It is a holistic approach that includes all departments in the organization so as to be able to identify and resolve issues faster, reduce costs, and increase satisfaction of both the organization and customers (Mathew et al., 2014). There are two dimensions of service; the procedural dimension and the personal dimension. The procedural dimension consists of the established systems and procedures to deliver products and/ or services. The personal dimension deals with how service providers (using their attitudes, behaviours, and verbal skills) interact with customers. Many researches mostly focus on the personal dimension but very few gives attention to the procedural dimension (Tieman, 2006) (Figure 1).
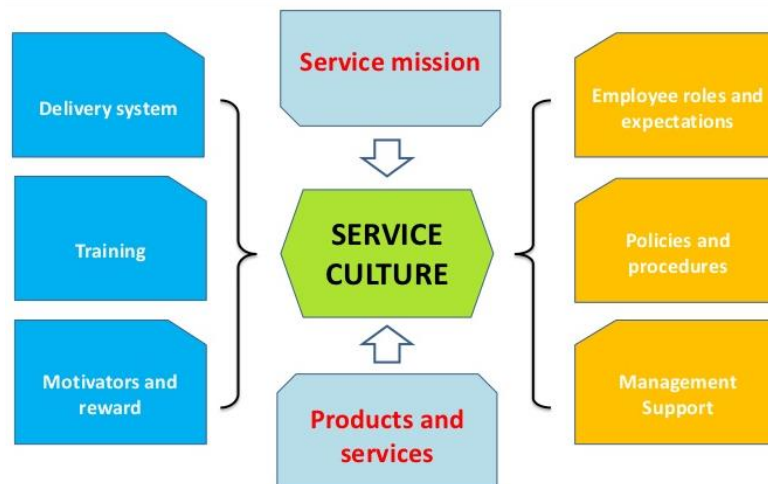
Figure 1: Service Culture Components
Source: https://www.slideshare.net/dringem/managing-customer-service

Therefore, with HTSCP, which is how something is provided, not just what is provided; the goal is to provide a positive experience to the end user. Consequently, the above notions lead to the following hypotheses:

H1: "Inputs" from HTSCP in the retail premises positively predicts excellent customer service management;
H2: "Processes" from HTSCP in the retail premises positively predicts excellent customer service management;
H3: "Controls" from HTSCP in the retail premises positively predicts excellent customer service management;
H4: "Outputs" from HTSCP in the retail premises positively predicts excellent customer service management.

4. Methodology

This study is correlational in nature and was conducted using cross-sectional analysis or transversal study. The population of the study consists of 500 retail shoppers who reside in three major cities in Klang Valley. The sampling frame for the study is unavailable thus, non- probability sampling which is purposive sampling was utilised to select the samples. A total of 489 respondents were chosen to participate in the study which represented 97.8% of the response rate. The instruments used in the study is a survey questionnaire, which items were carefully drawn from the focus group conducted prior to the present study, which were based on the conceptualization of the "Department of Standards Malaysia (2010), MS 2400-3:2010 (P): Halalan-Toyyiban Assurance Pipeline – Part 3: Management System Requirements for Retailing, Malaysia". The measure contains 21 items measuring inputs (7 items), processes (8 items), controls (5 items) and outputs (3 items). The Cronbach's alpha of the measure is highly reliable at 0.90. Meanwhile, excellent customer service management variable was measured using the principles of expectancy disconfirmation theory. The scale contains 15 items assessing overall feelings about HTSCP while shopping in the retail supermarkets. The Cronbach's alpha of the measurement is highly reliable at 0.94. The study employed the five-point Likert scale to gauge the responses. Data analysis revealed that 489 responses were almost equally divided between male and female respondents (Table 2).

Table 2: Demographic Profile

Characteristics	N	%
Gender		
Male	240	49.1
Female	249	50.9
Race		
Malay	225	46.0
Chinese	166	33.9
Indian	98	20.1
Age		
Below 25 years	62	12.7
26 to 35 years	122	25.0
36 to 45 years	185	37.8
46 to 55 years	112	22.9
56 and above	8	1.6
Marital Status		
Married	314	64.2
Single	175	35.8
Academic Qualification		
Diploma	124	25.4
Advanced Diploma / Bachelor Degree	210	42.9
Postgraduate / Professional Qualification	155	31.7
Occupation		
Government Employee	159	32.5
Private Employee	224	45.8
Self-employed	106	21.7
Monthly income		
Under RM3,000	54	11.0
RM3,001 to RM7,000	180	36.8
RM7,001 to RM11,000	171	35.0
RM11,001 and above	84	17.2
Visit Supermarket		
About Twice a week	291	59.5
About Once a month	198	40.5

4.1 Factor Analysis

In order to spot the underlying structure or dimensions in the variables used in this study, principal component factor analyses with varimax rotation were employed. This is due to the fact that factor analysis is able to distinguish whether a common factor or more than a single factor is present in the responses to the items. This is vital to understand the underlying structure in the data matrix, to identify the most parsimonious set of variables as well as to establish the goodness of measures for testing the hypotheses (Hair et al., 2006). In assessing the validity of the HTSCP, Principle Components Factor analysis was conducted. Initially, there were 21 items for the scale with different number of items for the four dimensions. The results revealed that only 19 items formed four structures equivalent to the original structures which are inputs 6 items, processes 6 items, controls 4 items and outputs 3 items (Table 3). The KMO measure of sampling adequacy for the HTSCP scale is 0.906, indicating that the items were interrelated. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity indicates a significant value (approx. chi-square 2954.129, $p < 0.01$) showing the significance of the correlation matrix and appropriateness for factor analysis. In addition, the individual MSA value ranges from 0.633 to 0.922 demonstrate that the data matrix was suitable to be factor analysed. Results of factor analysis with varimax rotation indicated the existence of four factors with initial eigenvalues greater than one which explains 79% of total variance.

Table 3:Principal Component Factor Analyses For HTSCP

Component	1	2	3	4
Ip3	.879			
Ip4	.870			
Ip2	.834			
Ip1	.805			
Ip6	.784			
Ip7	.754			
Pc1		.845		
Pc3		.794		
Pc5		.684		
Pc4		.665		
Pc6		.632		
Pc7		.601		
Cr5			.811	
Cr4			.802	
Cr3			.800	
Cr1			.750	
Op3				.725
Op1				.710
Op2				.701
% variance explained	27.854	22.411	19.230	9.812
MSA				.633-.922
KMO				.906
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Approx. Chi- Square				2954.129
Df				171
Sig				.000

The first factor comprises six items with loadings ranging from 0.754 to 0.879. This factor mainly embraces inputs to the HTSCP; thus, the original name was retained. One item was removed due to high cross loadings or it loaded differently from the original conceptualization. The second factor was extracted with factor loadings which ranged from 0.601 to 0.845. This factor consisted of six items which reflected the whole process of the HTSCP; therefore, the original name was also retained. Two items were removed due to high cross loadings or it loaded differently from the original conceptualization. The third factor reflects the controls of the HTSCP comprising four items with factor loadings which ranged from 0.750 to 0.811. The original name for the third factor was retained. One item was removed due to high cross loadings or it loaded differently from the original conceptualization. Finally, the fourth factor contains three items with factor loadings which ranged from 0.701 to 0.725. This factor relates to the outputs of the HTSCP; thus the name output was maintained. In determining the unidimensionality of the excellent customer service management variable, principal component factor analyses was also performed. The results are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4 Principal Component Factor Analyses For Excellent Customer Service Management

	Component
ECSM 1	.875
ECSM 2	.851
ECSM 3	.732
ECSM 5	.728
ECSM 6	.717
ECSM 7	.700
ECSM 8	.694
ECSM 11	.831
ECSM 12	.742
ECSM 13	.750
ECSM 14	.817
ECSM 15	.801
% variance explained	59.917
MSA	.891 - .935
KMO	.919
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Approx. Chi-Square	1205.206
Df	45
Sig	.000

The KMO measure of sampling adequacy for the excellent customer service management in general scale is .919 indicating that the items were interrelated. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity indicates a significant value (approx. chi-square 1205.206, $p < 0.01$) showing the significance of the correlation matrix and appropriateness for factor analysis. Nonetheless, the individual MSA value which ranges from 0.891 to 0.935 demonstrates that the data matrix was suitable to be factor analysed. Results of factor analysis with varimax rotation indicated the existence of one factor with initial eigen values greater than one that explains 60% of total variance. The finding revealed that the existence of one factor with 12 items. The remaining three items were removed due to high cross loadings or they loaded differently from the original conceptualization.

4.2 Reliability and Correlation Analysis

The reliability analysis results signify that the measure gauging the intended variables has high internal consistency and stability with Cronbach Alpha values which range from 0.698 for 'input' to the HTSCP to 0.951 for process of the HTSCP. Results of correlation analysis indicate that all variables are highly correlated with each other. The highly correlated variables indicate significant relationships among them which should be highly considered in explaining the phenomenon of interest. Significant correlations are observed between the independent variables or HTSCP. The lowest correlation is between 'inputs' to the HTSCP and the 'controls' of the HTSCP ($r =0.015$, $p >0.05$). The highest correlation is between 'controls' of the HTSCP and the outputs of the HTSCP ($r =0.755$, $p >0.01$). These significant correlations signify convergent validity of the independent variables. Besides, significant correlations are also observed between independent variables and the dependent variable with the lowest correlation between 'inputs' to the HTSCP and excellent customer service management ($r=0.245$, $p<0.01$). The highest correlation is found between 'processes' of the HTSCP and excellent customer service management ($r=0.651$, $p<0.01$). These significant correlations signify synchronized validity of measures (Table 5).

Table 5
The Reliability and Correlation Analysis

V	M	1	2	3	4	5
I	4.11	(.715)				
P	4.03	.198**	(.951)			
C	3.89	*.015**	.755**	(.856)		
O	3.75	.142*	.771**	.708**	(.698)	
ECS	3.95	*.245**	*.651**	.466**	.387**	(.908)

Notes:**.Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed); *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed); N=489

4.3   Regression Analysis

Regression analysis was performed to determine the influence of HTSCP which include inputs, processes, controls and outputs on excellent customer service management of the selected retail supermarket. The finding shows R^2 of 0.695, indicating that 69.5% of the variance was explained by HTSCP (F=37.954, p=0.000). Looking at the contribution of the individual independent variable, inputs ($\beta =0.355$, $p<0.05$), processes ($\beta =0.478$, $p<0.01$), controls ($\beta =0.487$, $p<0.01$) and outputs ($\beta =0.521$, $p<0.01$) are significant predictors of excellent customer service management. Thus, H1, H2, H3 and H4 were supported (Table 6).

Table 6
The Regression Analysis

Variables	Customers' Shopping Satisfaction
Standardized Beta Coefficients	
Inputs	.355*
Processes	.478**
Controls	.487**
Outputs	.521**
R	.885
R^2	.695
F Value	37.954
Sig. F Value	.000
Durbin Watson	1.712

5. Managerial Implications

The halal outputs factor in the study refers to the documented evidences and demonstrated compliance of shariah-based work practices adhered by the management and the workers in the retail supermarkets. The findings reveal that, in general, customers believe that compliance-based documentation demonstrates proper implementation of HTSCP with verifiable evidence and subsequently offers excellent customer service management. Having a proper compliance-based documentation in place is a preventive measure to avoid any controversy or dispute with the regulatory bodies as well as customers. It is important to note that maintaining relevant HTSCP is subject to regular update for changes in facts and circumstances related to the HTSCP activities. If the relevant facts and circumstances change, maintenance activities will need to be undertaken by the supermarket management.

Supermarket retailers should continue to adapt to changing consumer demands, industry issues and regulations affecting their businesses. Some retail grocers are expanding their footprints, others are narrowing to specialty formats, and some seem to be doing both. All are facing increased competition and high expectations around freshness, convenience, and transparency. To date, the emerging trends which are critical for retail businesses evolve in the area of food integrity, food safety, as well as food waste. As grocers focus more on "farm to table" freshness, the result will be an increased importance on collecting and utilizing data related to the safety and integrity of the foods they offer. This will apply to more than just monitoring food temperature during shipping. Supermarket retailers will need to engage with their suppliers and partners more closely in order to ensure data integrity throughout the chain of custody for food and ultimately, to continue earning customer trusts in their operations. Evidence from findings reveals that control comes as a second factor in predicting excellent customer service management in retail supermarkets. Control in HTSCP means that the management of the retail supermarkets strictly follows Islamic laws in order to ensure the integrity of the retail supermarket operations.

Process on the other hand, deals with all inbound and outbound transportation services, inclusive of the nature and description of containers and equipment; modes of transportation; placement, stacking and storage conditions; dispatch, receiving, handling and distribution activities with clear process flow diagrams for tracking of shariah compliant movements as supermarket retail managers seek to maximize the reliability and efficiency of distribution networks while minimizing transport and storage costs. Understanding the differences and correlation between HTSCP in both inbound and outbound logistics can provide insight for developing a comprehensive Halalan Toyibban supply-chain management strategy.

Finally, the halal inputs factor in HTSCP refers to the proper infrastructure being appropriately placed in the retail supermarkets. As large format stores get even bigger and small format stores become more specialized, supermarket retailers are reinvesting in new and/or consolidated infrastructures. Reducing infrastructure costs provide retailers with advantages to increase profitability and pass along lower pricing to customers. With this comes a greater need for improved equipment operations and maintenance. To eliminate unnecessary maintenance costs, such as refrigerant leaks, lighting and food service equipment, it is believed that HTSCP can be used as a control and monitoring element. As the systems capture systematic data, leading supermarket chains will be able to extract meaningful insights from that information to help identify areas to reduce costs and improve business efficiency. Supermarket management that embraces the role of HTSCP in each of the above developing trends can emerge as industry leaders in the future. In order to be excellent in customer service management, retailers are encouraged to implement the HTSCP (Figure 2).

WHAT?
Captures and Distributes What A Customer Thinks About HTSCP

WHEN?
At Point of Customer Interaction

HOW?
Surveys, Observational Studies on HTSCP

WHO USES THE INFORMATION?
Retailers, Policy Makers, Customers

RELEVANCE TO FUTURE PERFORMANCE?
Leading; locates places to add offering in the gaps between expectations and experience on HTSCP
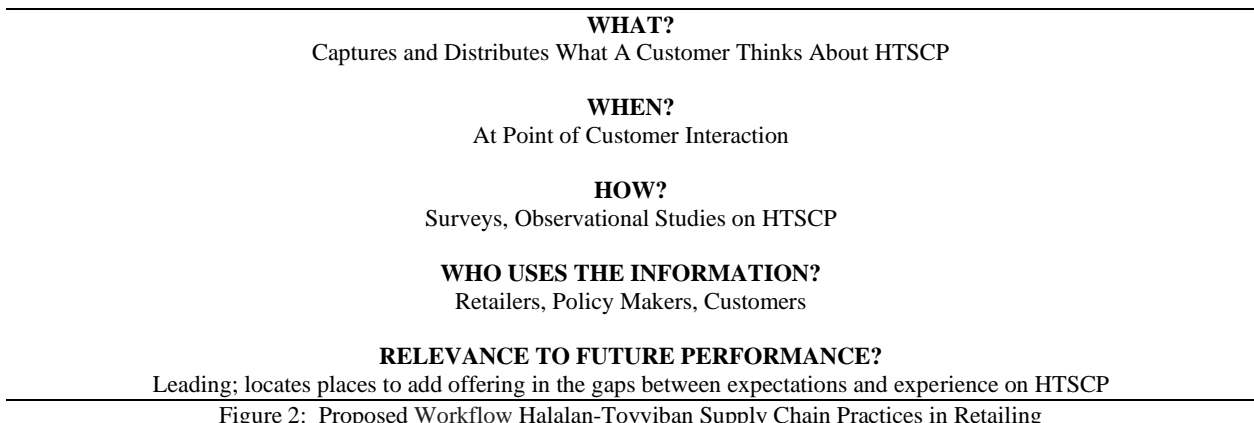
Figure 2: Proposed Workflow Halalan-Toyyiban Supply Chain Practices in Retailing

6. Suggestion for Future Research

In general, these findings have yet to be generalized to all types of retail formats. This is due to the fact that there are many other considerations that may influence the results of this research. However, this study is expected to bridge the gap between traditional and halal supply chain practices, though it is only a basic study. Basic research is what will make it relevant in the future. Therefore, similar research needs to be done repeatedly for different retail formats. It is important for retail companies to interact with HTSCP to regulate their product quality, inventory level, time, and expenses on a regular basis. Other possible future studies include the impact of HTSCP on shipping, warehousing, courier services, road / train and air transport related to food consumption; as well as its impact on retail industry during the Covid19 pandemic. Halalan- Toyyiban Assurance Pipeline for Management System Requirements for Retailing may not solely be for certification purposes but for use in day-to-day retail business operations.

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