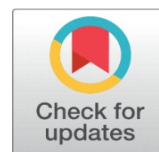


INVESTIGATING THE CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS OF H-MARTS IN KOREA THROUGH SWOT ANALYSIS



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ABSTRACT

Purpose: A surge in demand for Halal products has been witnessed throughout Korea giving rise to a new emerging concept of ethnically owned and ethnically operated H-Mart. The concept of H-Marts originated out of a necessity due to a rising demand for Halal food products in Korea.

Methodology: Extensive literature reviews are obtained from leading databases and the articles recorded matches or related with the keywords. Secondly, an approach incorporating a well formulated survey questionnaire in line with Kano questionnaire is developed to get H-Marts customers' perspective. After the literature was reviewed, the information was transcribed using Microsoft excel and Timko's CS coefficient.

Findings: 19 H-marts variables were generated from the literature review, followed by the distribution of 200 standard survey questionnaires to three different H-mart customers. As a result, 19-variables were categorized into the SWOT matrix.

The significant contribution of this study is twofold; first a lack of research attention given to H-marts in Korea, secondly, it uncovers valuable information about customer's service satisfaction of H-marts through a well-structured survey questionnaire. Thirdly this study theoretically presents 4-SWOT strategies for the executive managers of H-Marts, which are practically considered to be valuable information for H-mart's executive managers.

Received 27 January 2022

Accepted 28 February 2022

Published 12 March 2022

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DOI

[10.29121/granthaalayah.v10.i2.2022.4475](https://doi.org/10.29121/granthaalayah.v10.i2.2022.4475)

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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Keywords: H-Mart, Halal, Ethnic Retailing, Convenient Stores, SWOT

1. INTRODUCTION

The word halal refers to food allowed for Muslims to be consumed as per Islamic believes. Recently, not only food but also services such as medicines, cosmetics, finance, and tourism have also been included (Park, Taehwa, et al., 2010). The global halal market currently stands at about US \$ 6. trillion and is expected to grow to US \$ 8. trillion or more by 2021. On the other hand, domestic private companies are aware of the importance of the Muslim market, but there is a lack of market information on halal products (Kim, 2017). Therefore, market information on halal products is a part that can be grasped at the final retail store. Here, halal Mart refers to the B2C (Business-to-Customer) market, which is the final point of contact for accurate market information on products. Therefore, customer satisfaction and revisit cannot be expected unless a service quality survey is conducted in relation to halal foods. In addition, a false service quality awareness survey can have a negative impact on the whole organization. This is a good example of the failure of E-Mart to enter the Chinese market without an accurate service quality survey [Orakzai et al. \(n.d.\)](#)



The purpose of this article is to identify and examine range of issues and factors affecting business strategies developed by mostly ethnic owned and ethnic managed H-marts in Korea, to identify SWOT in the H-marts business environment and to uncover strategies to leverage on the strengths and opportunities, rectifying the weaknesses and overcoming threats.

H-Mart is short for Halal mart or Halal food store, the concept of H-Marts in Korea originated from the rising demand for Halal food products. The emerging concept of H-marts has become an alternative food network in Korea which provides an alternative food option to Halal food consumers. In the light of recent changes observed in Korean retailing food industry, the advent of promising businesses like H-mart can only enrich the retail environments in Korea.

The traditional approach to defining ethnic retailing was developed by some sociologists and anthropologists from the perspective of entrepreneurship and in the context of ethnic economy. In the traditional approach, an ethnic economy, of which ethnic retailing is a major part is defined as consisting of ethnic employers including their co-ethnic employees [Aldrich and Waldinger \(1990\)](#) [Bonacich and Modell \(1980\)](#) that occur when any immigrant or ethnic group maintains a private economic sector in which it has a controlling ownership stake [Light and Gold \(2000\)](#) and thus the ethnic economy exists primarily due to the existence of a co-ethnic consumer market.

In recent years a surge in demand for Halal products has been witnessed throughout south `Korea giving rise to a new emerging concept of ethnically owned and ethnically operated H-Mart.

The concept of H-mart has emerged as the only reliable halal shopping outlet available for halal food consumer in Korea, developed out of a necessity owing to a continuous rise in demand for halal food products in Korea secondly, it warranted a study to identify its strengths, external opportunities and classify its internal weakness and external threats through SWOT analysis. An investigation incorporating extensive literature review obtained from the leading databases and the articles recorded matches or related with the keywords, yielded 19-attributes, and based on this information a standard survey questionnaire was formulated in line with Seroquel five dimensions and Kano questionnaire guideline was developed. Additionally, in order to analyse the intended segment of H-Mart food market, four different H-marts located at four different locations in the metropolitan city 4 Daegu, South Korea were identified and subsequently selected for the study. Based on observations of Survey questionnaire results of the H-Marts, a customer perspective was developed and analysed through Timko CS Coefficient and subsequently 19-attributes were categorized into SWOT matrix dimensions, through SWOT analysis. Having identified these factors, new developed strategies are proposed which may build on the strengths, eliminate the weaknesses, exploit the opportunities and counter the threats.

The contribution of current study is twofold; first it goes deep into the minds of H-marts customers to uncover valuable information about customer's service satisfaction of H-marts through a well-structured survey. Secondly, in the light of data interpretation and its results this study theoretically presents four SWOT strategies namely; (1) SO (Strength-Opportunity) combination strategies, (2) ST (Strength-Threats) combination strategies, (3) WO (Weakness-Opportunity) combination strategies, and (4) WT (Weakness-Threats) combination strategies which is in line with previous research by [Peter \(2007\)](#) Furthermore, the current study would not only help facilitate future studies on this subject but also it can act

as a guide for the H-Marts players to have a better understanding about its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and to overcome its external threats.

This article is organized in the following manner.

An intensive literature review is followed by methodology, data development, data collection and data analysis. Next a discussion, conclusion and recommendation are outlined.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Relevant research literature, summaries about convenient stores, independent retail stores, haleness (halal), ethnic minorities' owned businesses and SWOT are presented below.

The availability of halal product at retail stores has become increasingly important for Muslim consumers, particularly for those Muslim consumers who reside in a country of origin where the majority of the population is not Muslim. According to Van Warden et. al., (2010) for most Muslims the concept of halal (Arabic word, meaning permitted or lawful) and haram (Arabic word, meaning prohibited or unlawful) are the key parts of their daily dietary need. The word halal and halal food are synonymous whereas, in recently times the word halal and haleness has become fairly common in the Western food industry, primarily due to a rise in demand for the export of halal food products to the Middle East and Southeast Asian countries (Van Warden, Frans, and Van Dalen, Robin, 2010). Academic research on independent retail sector can be traced back to early 1930. According to [Wood and Browne \(2007\)](#), some of the conventional advantages of independent retail lay in their ease of accessibility, location, flexible opening hours, home delivery, friendly and personal service, and informal financial service. Whereas a review of the existing literature reveals that previous researchers have adopted a traditional approach for investigating convenience store phenomenon. The main focus of their research was to study issues such as location evaluation [Wood and Browne \(2007\)](#), and service provisions [Rapp and Islam \(2006\)](#), [Ting \(2005\)](#), [Kimberly et al. \(2002\)](#).

Ethnic Retailing Commonly immigrants' retailing businesses are very often referred to as 'ethnic'. In the beginning most social anthropologists selected a traditional approach in defining ethnic businesses, which was basically developed from the ethnic economy perspective. Coincidentally, the history of ethnic business is as old as the history of the immigration to the immigrant-receiving countries. It is well established that in all cases, the owners of ethnic stores and mostly the store operators spoke the same language. This cognitive approach made other immigrant customers feel "at home" when shopping in a store environment from their own ethnic background. [Bonacich and Modell \(1980\)](#), states that in the early stages the store owners adopted a need-based approach to carryout ethnic business activities, a necessity entrepreneurship. Mostly ethnic economy consists of ethnic retailing having predominantly ethnic employers and co-ethnic employees [Bonacich and Modell \(1980\)](#), [Aldrich and Waldinger \(1990\)](#). Ethnic economy exists due to two main reasons, firstly when any immigrant (or ethnic group) owns a private business in which it has a predominantly controlling ownership stake" (2000, 9) whereas an ethnic economy mostly depends on co-ethnic consumer market.

In the cultural resource's thesis model, it proposes that main ethnic business strategies are based on two important conditions. The first one is the structural opportunities, which depends on the presence of positive market conditions including ease of access to business ownership whereas the second one is ethnic group characteristics which means sufficient demands for ethnic consumer

products and relies on the availability of both ethnic and class resources, including aspiration derived from cultural endowment support, adequate know-how business knowledge, ease of access to a reasonable amount of capital, and ethnic social networking including kinship. According to [Goode et al. \(2005\)](#), it states that while fulfilling the distinctive needs of their co-ethnic customers, many ethnic minorities' owned businesses in certain areas acquire a competitive advantageous position considering that comparatively they face little competition [Jamal and Chapman \(2000\)](#).

Convenience Store

Although there is no specific definition available of a convenience store, according to [Baron et al. \(2001\)](#) a store size with less than 3,000 square feet and located at a nearby walking distance of the residential areas and having a good range of product assortment. [Bolton and Drew \(1991\)](#) defines it as a business which operates on a small scale with less than ten employees. H-marts have emerged as a new concept, known as an alternative food network in Korea. The concept of H-Marts or halal marts in Korea originated from the daily increase in demand for halal food products whereas the concept of halal mart goes beyond conventional convenient stores' approach. H-Mart is short for Halal mart or Halal food store. They are like mini food stores, smaller in size and they are located at an accessible locality surrounded by a high concentration of specified consumers, residing, and working nearby. According to America's National Association of Convenience Stores (NACS), a convenience store is a type of retail business which offers various consumable products for quick purchase at convenient location (NACS Online, 2008). Whereas [Kearney et al. \(2013\)](#) explains it as 'a comparatively high-margin, small size store that offers a limited selection of items for a quick buy such as ready-to-eat and ready to consume foods products. Whereas [Ting \(2005\)](#) argues that convenience stores are more prone to acceptability in high population density areas primarily due to the faster lifestyle by the locals.

2.1. SWOT ANALYSIS

SWOT analysis as abbreviated has its origins in the 1960s and is adopted to plan and develop organizational strategies. The origin of SWOT analysis is credited by Albert Humphrey 1960s and 1970s. Initially, SWOT analysis tool were formulated from the business management literature and was adopted for its use in the 1980s [Markovska et al. \(2009\)](#). SWOT analysis is an important decision-making support tool and is commonly used to examine the strategic conditions of an organization [Gao and Peng \(2011\)](#). Having identified key factors, strategies are formulated which may build on the strengths, eliminate the weaknesses, exploit the opportunities to counter the threats [Dyson \(2004\)](#). See below [Figure 1](#) source: [Morrison \(2016\)](#).

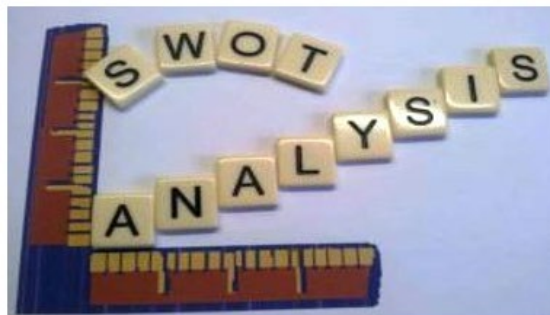


Figure 1

The greater the ability of an organization to influence the industry environment, the likelier it is to earn profits above the industry's average. The analytical structure of SWOT that is used to review the external environment tends toward the RBV view. The assumption that organizations can strategize against threats implies that they are reactive to their environment. The SO strategy in the second quadrant is an ideal situation.

SWOT analysis (or SWOT matrix) is a strategic planning and strategic management technique used to help a person or organization to identify its strength, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to a business competition or project planning. Sometimes it is referred to as a situational assessment or situational analysis tool. Moreover, SWOT analysis helps organizations or individuals about systematic and comprehensive diagnosis of important factors. Additionally, organizations can identify and categorize their positive and negative factors and then develop and adopt a good strategy [Gao and Peng \(2011\)](#). The last version of SWOT analysis was developed by [Dealtry \(1992\)](#) in which it explains that the essence of SWOT incorporates steps built on strengths, eliminate weaknesses, exploiting opportunities and mitigating the negative effects of threats. SWOT analysis is a traditional way of searching for insights into ways of acquiring the desired results by conducting analysis through its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. According to [Valentin \(2001\)](#) SWOT analysis provides a good insight for executive managers who make strategic businesses decisions, for educators who teach strategic decision-making techniques and for students whose coursework require developing cases analysis or business plans. Entering into an uncharted land of new business or a known business environment has both some positive and negative aspects the most important thing, however, is to select the most profitable fit option. The SWOT approach used for the current study draws in line with existing knowledge can help provide a base upon which to build new understandings about H-Marts.

According to the article by [Valentin \(2001\)](#) business strategy is widely equated with finding, formulating, and maintaining a robust cost-effective fit between a commercial project and its business environment. Getting a desired insight into a business, SWOT instigates a strategic analysis through strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats is the traditional means of searching for insight into ways of grasping and acquiring the desired results. Description of SWOT analysis makes the technique look much too easy by simply filling in the information in the given quadrants. Additionally other researchers suggest, first to find favourable and unfavourable internal and external facts and then consider how strengths may be leveraged to realize opportunities and how weaknesses, which aggravate threats to obstruct progress [Hofer and Schendel \(1978\)](#), [Thompson and Strickland \(1998\)](#), [McDonald and Malcolm \(1999\)](#).

2.2. ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF SWOT

Some of the most common and important advantages of SWOT analysis is that it is very useful tool for scanning internal strengths and weaknesses of an organization as well as for finding opportunities and minimize the risks of threats. In the strategic planning and early decisions stages, the SWOT analysis is a commonly used tool [Bartol and Martin \(1998\)](#) which is believed to be well recognized and highly established for these situational matters [Dyson \(2004\)](#). In addition, Sorensen [Vidal and Engstrom \(2004\)](#) suggests that SWOT analysis encourages learning about the situation and reflects on what can be done better. Many enterprises are missing out on this important strategic information such as the implication of accurate knowledge of enterprises' strengths and weaknesses and

the significance of its framework, [Houben et al. \(1999\)](#). Whereas [Pesonen et al. \(2001\)](#) argues that one of the main disadvantages of SWOT is that after analysing the enterprise's external and internal circumstances the selection of advantageous strategies is not fully supported by the quantitative methods.

3. METHODS

3.1. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The main objective of conducting a SWOT analysis study on H-Mart in Korea (South) is to identify its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in the H-marts business environment and to uncover strategies to leverage on the strengths and opportunities and rectifying the weaknesses with a view to overcome prevailing threats.

A wide-ranging literature review explored the existing knowledge of the subject and constant comparison analysis led to the identification of emerging themes subsequently included in standard survey questionnaires.

The methodology adopted for the current study is narrated as below.

3.2. SCALE DEVELOPMENT

Four different halal Marts (with customers from four different countries of origin) in a metropolitan city of Daegu were identified for the study, as given below (in line with the study by [Orakzai et al. \(n.d.\)](#));

- 1) **World Mart:** It is situated just outside the main university campus of Kyungpook National University with a high concentration of Muslim customers mainly university students and their families from Pakistani, Indian, Nepali, Sri Lankan, Nigerian and Bangladeshi origin.
- 2) **Asian Mart:** It is situated just outside Main Bukbu Bus terminal; its customers are mainly Muslim factory workers, businessmen and their families from Malaysian background.
- 3) **Indonesian Mart:** It is situated just 20 minutes away from the main subway station near Yeungnam University with mixed customers such as Muslim university students, Muslim factory workers, Muslim businessmen, their families, and others, mostly from Indonesian background.
- 4) **Malaysia Mart:** It is situated near the Egyptian mosque / Islamic center with customers mostly Muslim businessmen and Muslim factory workers and their families from Egyptian and Tunisian background.

All four selected H-marts are situated at different locations in Daegu city. The owners of these Marts were contacted in advance for getting their consent to allow their customers to participate in the current study.

3.3. QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

The following steps underline our approach.

Informed by the extant of literature on service quality and Islamic values, a list of attributes was generated (as shown above in [Table 1](#)). A standard survey questionnaire was designed in line with five proposed dimensions of SERVQUAL model [Berry et al. \(1990\)](#), (1) Tangibles, (2) Reliability, (3) Empathy, (4) Responsiveness, (5) Assurance and it is evaluated as an effective research methodology. Next a Kano survey Questionnaire, in line with Kano questionnaire guideline, two questions each for each attribute, (in functional and dysfunctional

form) was formulated and spread around selected dimensions. The Kano model can logically explain the impact of customer requirements on customer satisfaction in product and service development stages. [Sauerwein et al. \(1996\)](#). See below [Table 1](#) quality factors.

Table 1

Quality factors SERVIQUAL	Quality evaluation item	References
Tangibles	1. Location	Jan Hathcote et al (1994)
	2. Cleanliness	Jason M Carpenter (2006)
	3. Products Assortment	Doreen Chze Lin Thang (2003)
Reliability	4. Halal Certification	Sharifah Zannierah Syed Marzuki et al (2012)
	5. Honesty	Gita Gayatri and Janet Chew (2013)
	6. waiting time	Mark M. Davis and Thomas E. Vollmann (1990)
	7. Promise	Gita Gayatri and Janet Chew (2013)
	8. Reputation	Gordon H.G. McDougall (2000)
Responsiveness	9. Home delivery	Mu-Chen Chen (2011)
	10. Security in Transactions	Jason M Carpenter (2006)
	11. Trust	Jan Hathcote (1994)
Empathy	12. Social Interaction	Jason M Carpenter (2006)
	13. Language	Martin K. Hingley and Paul Custance - 2010
	14. Modesty	Gita Gayatri and Janet Chew (2013)
	15. Humanness	Gita Gayatri and Janet Chew (2013)
	16. Islamic values	Gita Gayatri and Janet Chew (2013)
Assurance	17. Courteous	J. Joseph Cronin et al (1992)
	18. Prompt	Gita Gayatri and Janet Chew (2013)
	19. Ambience	Julie Baker et al (1994)

3.4. ORGANIZING QUESTIONNAIRE

Moreover, we prepared our survey in line with Seroquel and Kano questionnaire design, the questionnaire developed for the study is divided into following parts.

Part-I. Demographic information: In this part there are questions related to the respondents

Part-II. General Quality information: In this part there are questions about the importance associated with general elements of H-Marts.

Part-III. Service Quality satisfaction information: In this part there are questions about the importance associated with H-Mart's service quality.

Intense literature review yielded the following set of 19 attributes; those selected attributes were spread around the following proposed dimensions of SERVIQUAL, 1) Tangibles, 2) Reliability, 3) Empathy, 4) Responsiveness, 5) Assurance

3.5. PRE-TESTING

The survey was conducted from August to October 2017, and the survey questionnaires were distributed to customers from four H-Marts. In order to create a more conducive atmosphere for constructive participation, respondents were given a short informal training session beforehand. A pilot test of the survey

questionnaire was conducted as a sample testing to test the viability of questions with a first set of three Kyungpook national University students (the regular customers of H-Marts). The questionnaire was further refined with grammatical and other minor mistakes and was second time pilot tested with another set of three different Halal Mart students (the regular customers of H-Mart) from Kyungpook national university, Daegu, South Korea.

Participants Criteria. The rationale for choosing Daegu is that it has one of the highest concentrations of diverse Muslim population in South Korea. Respondents selected to participate in this study were mainstream peoples from all walks of life, indigenous Muslims Koreans, migrants Muslims and international Muslim students from metropolitan and regional households in Daegu, South Korea. The inclusion criteria for the sampling included characteristics such as middle to upper class social standing, age ranging from 17 to 65 years, and having been born or lived in republic of South Korea for at least one year or more and being a regular user of H-marts.

3.6. QUESTIONNAIRE DISTRIBUTION AND DATA COLLECTION

In total 200-questionnaires were distributed i.e., 50-questionnaires each for each Mart and subsequently all completed survey questionnaires were collected. In total 185 questionnaires were found to be valid for use. Microsoft Excel, spreadsheets was used to calculate numerical data, tables, and graphs.

The total number of questionnaires distributed are depicted below in [Table 2](#), a total number of distributed vs. validated questionnaires.

#	Name	Distributed	Valid for use
1	Asian Mart	50	34
2	World Mart	50	67
3	Indonesian Mart	50	46
4	Malaysian Mart	50	38
Total		200	185

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Data analysis was conducted using MS-Office-Excel to derive Timko's customer satisfaction coefficient [Timko \(1993\)](#). In this study, the convenience sampling method was used to obtain general information about the characteristics of the population due to a realistic budget and time constraints.

When data was analysed, it was found that there is no significant difference in service quality perception among the customers from four different Halal-Marts. In addition, considering that there is no difference in the analysis of variance among the four groups of H-Marts, hence it is reasonable to use the general H-Mart information.

4.1. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

The following [Table 3](#) illustrates information about H-marts' consumers' use status (demographic).

Category	Frequency (persons)	Ratio (%)
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Gender	Male	151	81.60%
	Female	34	18.40%
	Total	185	100.00%
Age	20-30 years old	97	52.40%
	30- 40 years old	65	35.10%
	40 -50 years old	15	8.10%
	50+ years old	8	4.30%
	Total	185	100.00%
Academic level	Undergraduate Level	52	28.10%
	Graduate Level	133	71.90%
	Total	185	100.00%
Income level	Less than \$20,000	97	52.40%
	\$20,000- \$40,000	61	33.00%
	\$40,000- \$60,000	13	7.00%
	\$60,000- \$80,000	11	5.90%
	\$100,000	3	1.60%
	Total	185	100.00%
Preferred Mart	Local Halal Mart	168	90.80%
	Emart/ Homeplus/ Lotto Mart	16	8.60%
	Others	1	0.50%
	Total	185	100.00%
Visits	Daily	19	10.30%
	Once a week	114	61.60%
	2 - 6 times a week	34	18.40%
	Once a month	5	2.70%
	2 - 6 times a month	13	7.00%
	Total	185	100.00%

The results of the frequency analysis to identify demographic characteristics are shown in the table above. The majority of respondents are male (81.6%) and female (34.4%), accounting for 52.4% of the respondents in their 20s, followed by 35.1% in their 30's. The average level of education is 133 (71.9%) or more at the graduate level and 52.4% or more of the respondents' income level are below \$ 20,000 (about 20 million won), while the second highest income frequency recorded is 33.0% (about 40 million Korean won). Additionally, the majority of respondents (90.8%) preferred the same local halal mart, while some (8.6%) opted for others. The reason for this is the tendency to buy halal food from the usual reliable Muslim stores which caters for Muslims dietary needs. The frequency of visits by Halal Mart was 61.6%, which was 2-6 visits per week, indicates that there is no significant difference in service quality perception among the customers visiting four different marts. This result is attributed to the fact that 91.3% of the Muslim customers, who used Halal Mart more than once a week, have similar information about Halal Mart services with a same pattern of consumption habit.

4.2. GENERAL QUALITY INFORMATION

First a cross-sectional table containing answers for each set of H-mart was individually calculated followed by a cross-sectional table for a total sum of questions for all four H-marts. There are two parts to each question in the survey; the vertical axis represents replies to functional data while horizontal axis represents replies to dysfunctional data, as shown below in [Table 4](#), a total sum of 4 marts.

Table 4

Functional	Dysfunctional					Total
	1- Like	2- Must be	3- Neutral	4-Live with it	5 Dislike	
1 Like	0	7	134	257	802	1200
2 Must be	0	2	101	367	375	845
3 Neutral	0	1	70	31	6	108
4 Live with	0	1	1	14	1	17
5 Dislike	2	0	0	0	2	4
Total	2	11	306	669	1186	2174

Total: 2174

4.3. SERVICE QUALITY SATISFACTION INFORMATION

In this section, a total sum of service satisfaction for each H-Marts was calculated followed by a total sum of all four H-marts as illustrated in tables below (5-point Likert scales).

See below [Table 5](#), depicting a total sum of service satisfaction.

The column (strongly agree) as shown above illustrate that there is no significant difference in service quality satisfaction perception among the customers visiting four different marts.

Table 5

#		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Answers
1	Satisfaction	110	63	8	2	2	185
2	Repatronage Intention	120	53	10	1	1	185
3	Recommendation	131	45	7	1	1	185
Total		361	161	25	4	4	

Total=555
Likert Scale = 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

4.4. TIMKO CS COEFFICIENT

Timko's customer satisfaction coefficient is applied to calculate and verify data with the help of proposed Timko CS formula [Timko \(1993\)](#), as shown below in [Table 6](#), Timko CS Coefficient formula

Table 6

Division	The satisfaction coefficient (S)	Dissatisfied coefficient (D)	Remarks
Equation	$\frac{A+O}{A+O+M+I}$	$\frac{O+M}{A+O+M+I} (-1)$	A: Number of respondents with attractive quality M: Number of respondents with neutral quality O: Number of responses with One dimension quality I: Number of respondents with indifference quality

As shown below when Timko CS coefficient was applied, it yielded rich data outlining customers preferences in functional and dysfunctional form. The top three factors are found to be ambiance (Func= 0.79: Dysfunc= -0.59), humanness (Func= 0.0.78: Dysfunc= -0.59) and halal certification (Func=0.75: Dysfunc= -0.68) whereas the bottom three factors are

Waiting time (Func=0.48: Dysfunc= -0.30), Trust (Func=0.47: Dysfunc= -0.24) and Reputation (Func=0.41: Dysfunc= -0.14).

See below [Table 7](#) for the illustration of Timko’s Customer Satisfaction factor of quality evaluation items of H-marts.

Quality factor	Quality evaluation item	Timko CS Coefficient			
		Satisfaction		Dissatisfaction	
		$\frac{A+O}{A+O+M+I}$		$\frac{O+M}{A+O+M+I} (-1)$	
Tangibles	Location	0.6	10	-0.52	8
	Cleanliness	0.61	9	-0.58	6
	Products Assortment	0.64	7	-0.34	15
Reliability	Halal Certification	0.75	3	-0.68	2
	Honesty	0.59	11	-0.53	7
	Waiting time	0.48	17	-0.3	16
	Promise	0.56	13	-0.38	12
	Reputation	0.41	19	-0.14	19
Responsiveness	Home delivery	0.72	4	-0.71	1
	Security in Transactions	0.51	14	-0.24	17
	Trust	0.47	18	-0.24	17
	Social Interaction	0.71	5	-0.42	10
Empathy	Language	0.63	8	-0.42	10
	Modesty	0.59	12	-0.45	9
	Humanness	0.78	2	-0.59	3
	Islamic values	0.51	15	-0.35	13
Assurance	Courteous	0.7	6	-0.63	3
	Prompt	0.5	16	-0.35	13
	Ambience	0.79	1	-0.59	4

4.5. RATIONALE FOR CATEGORIZING QUALITY FACTORS RANK-WISE IN SWOT MATRIX

SWOT analysis is an instrument of strategic management of companies or products. In order to derive promising futuristic strategies SWOT provides an important insight into internal strengths and weaknesses as well as external influences, which can be opportunities or to the lea’s threats. In applying SWOT, the most important items according to the topic’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats are specified for H-Mart and then the items are ranked as per Timko CS Coefficient calculation.

The rationale for categorizing variable factors rank-wise is based on the importance of each variable perceived by the customers. Factors with most satisfying Timko’s CS Coefficient are ranked as ‘strengths’, whereas items falling in

the second category depicts company's the external 'opportunities and third category of factors, as perceived by the customers are categorized as the 'weaknesses. Similarly, items with least satisfying Timko's CS Coefficient are ranked as 'threats. The following table illustrates the status / rank of each variable determined after Timko's CS Coefficient (satisfaction and dissatisfaction) calculation as shown below in [Table 8](#) Timko's CS Coefficient status ranked wise.

Table 8			
	Quality evaluation item	Timko's CS Coefficient	
		Satisfied	Dissatisfied
#	Strengths		
1	Ambiance	1	4
2	Humanness	2	4
3	Halal certification	3	2
4	Home delivery	4	1
5	Social interaction	5	9
#	Weakness		
1	Promise	13	12
2	Security in transaction	14	16
3	Islamic value	15	13
4	Prompt	16	13
#	Opportunity		
1	Courteous	6	3
2	Product assortment	7	14
3	Language	8	9
4	Cleanliness	9	6
5	Location	10	8
6	Honesty	11	7
7	Modesty	12	8
#	Threats		
1	Waiting time	17	16
2	Trust	18	17
3	Reputation	19	19

4.6. SWOT MATRIX OF H-MARTS

Based on Customer's survey results of H-marts the following table is generated as per the importance of each theme/ variable perceived by the customers.

See below [Table 9](#), perceived customers' importance of each theme/ variable (Source: [Lobriser and Abplanalp \(1998\)](#)).

Table 9	
Strengths	Weaknesses
Internal strengths	Internal weaknesses
S-1: Ambiance	W-1: Promise
S-2: Humanness	W-2: Security in transaction
S-3: Halal certification	W-3 Islamic value
S-4: Home delivery	W-4: Prompt
S-5: Social interaction	
Opportunities	Threats
External opportunities	External threats

O-1: Courteous	T-1: Waiting time
O-2: Product assortment	T-2: Trust
O-3: Language	T-3: Reputation
O-4: Cleanliness	
O-5: Location	
O-6: Honesty	
O-7: Modesty	

Conventional SWOT checklists are exemplified by [Thompson and Strickland \(1998\)](#) it includes insight into powerful strategy and attractive customer base among potential strengths and concludes that potential threats include the entry of effective new competitors as well as unprotected exposure to industrial driving forces. He concludes that entertaining vague possibilities rarely discloses which factors are most important and which are least important.

See below [Table 10](#), a SWOT framework structure of 4 H-marts.

Table 10		
	Internal Factors	External Factors
Favorable Factors	S-1: Ambiance	O-1: Courteous
	S-2: Humanness	O-2: Product assortment
	S-3: Halal certification	O-3: Language
	S-4: Home delivery	O-4: Cleanliness
	S-5: Social interaction	O-5: Location
		O-6: Honesty
		O-7: Modesty
Unfavorable Factors	W-1: Promise	T-1: Waiting time
	W-2: Security in transaction	T-2: Trust
	W-3 Islamic value	T-3: Reputation
	W-4: Prompt	

4.7. MAPPING OUT SWOT STRATEGIES

According to previous research, there is a widely accepted notion that SWOT analyses maximises strengths and opportunities and minimises threats and weaknesses. According to [Lobriser and Abplanalp \(1998\)](#) the main SWOT table lists the internal and external success factors, shows the call for action, and enables the formulation of strategies. For mapping out the strategies, the SWOT table has to be searched for logical SWOT combinations which answer the following questions.

- 1) Which strength fits with which opportunity (SO-combination)?
- 2) Which strength fits with which threat (ST-combination)?
- 3) Which weakness fits with which opportunity (WO-combination) and
- 4) Which weakness fits with which threat (WT-combination).

4.8. PROPOSED COMBINATION OF 4 STRATEGIES

When selecting strategy options, offensive strategies using strengths and opportunities are preferred against defensive options, simply minimizing risks and weaknesses [Lobriser and Abplanalp \(1998\)](#).

In the light of customer's survey results, variables were categorized into SWOT categories, and subsequently four types of proposed strategies are developed namely SO combination strategies (Strengths-Opportunities), ST combination

strategies (Strengths-Threats), WO combination strategies (Weaknesses-Opportunities) and WT combination strategies (Weaknesses-Threats).

When it comes to SWOT matching, external and internal variables are the most difficult part in developing SWOT Matrix [David et al. \(2009\)](#). Hence there are no perfect SWOT strategies, and the purpose is for guideline and recommendation only.

The following table shows, H-Marts selected attributes categorized into SWOT (with given source) - further external and internal categorization of each factor (Category-fit) are shown in the last two columns.

In the left column, selected attributes are given followed by source in the second column. The third column has four SWOT categories while in the fourth and fifth columns selected attributes are categorized as per their importance perceived by the customers. See below [Table 11](#), H-Marts selected attributes categorized into SWOT.

For each considered SWOT combination(s) strategy, a list is generated to create a logically balanced result (e.g., S1/O3 means that strength number 1 and opportunity number 3 have been considered). The aim of the strategy formulation is to produce possible and attractive strategies.

Table 11

Factors	Sources	SWOT	Internal	External
1. Home delivery	1. Julie Baker et al (1994)	Strengths	S-1: Ambiance	
2. Humanness	2. Gita Gayatri and Janet Chew (2013)		S-2: Humanness	
3. Ambiance	3. SharifahZannierah Syed Marzuki et al (2012)		S-3: Halal certification	
4. Language	4. Mu-Chen Chen (2011) / Martin K. Hingley and Paul Custance (2010)		S-4: Home delivery	
5. Social interaction	5. Jason M Carpenter (2006)		S-5: Social interaction	
1. Trust	1. Gita Gayatri and Janet Chew (2013)	Weakness	W-1: Promise	
2. Product assortment	2. Jason M Carpenter (2006)		W-2: Security in transaction	
3. Modesty	3. Gita Gayatri and Janet Chew (2013)		W-3 Islamic value	
	4. Gita Gayatri and Janet Chew (2013)		W-4: Prompt	
1. Islamicvalue	1. J. Joseph Cronin et al (1992)	Opportunity		O-1: Courteous
2. Cleanliness	2. Doreen Chze Lin Thang (2003)			O-2: Product assortment
3. Location	3. Martin K. Hingley and Paul Custance (2010)			O-3: Language
4. Honesty	4. Jason M Carpenter (2006)			O-4: Cleanliness
5. Promise	5. Jan Hathcote et al (1994)			O-5: Location
6. Prompt	6. Gita Gayatri and Janet Chew (2013)			O-6: Honesty
7. Courteous	7. Gita Gayatri and Janet Chew (2013)			O-7: Modesty
8. Halal certification				

1. Reputation	1. Mark M. Davis and Thomas E. Vollmann (1990)	Threats	T-1: Waiting time
2. Waiting time	2. Jan Hathcote (1994)		T-2: Trust
3. Security in transaction	3. Gordon H.G. McDougall (2000)		T-3: Reputation

4.9. EXPLANATION

The category fit results of SWOT analysis are as follows:

Strengths

Ambiance: the serenity and the feel-good factor of a place that make customers feel safe, secure, and comfortable.

Humanness: The manners in which staff treats its customers.

Halal certification: an authentic and government authorized/sponsored Halal food traceability authority/ source.

Home delivery: a free home delivery service is one of the key indicators that can facilitate customers.

Social interaction: another important factor; a shop/mart should be a place facilitating customers where shoppers can interact with each other's for a quick chat with friends-in-shipping.

Weaknesses

- 1) **Promise:** to provide service as per promised specification.
- 2) **Security in transaction:** nowadays modern retail requires up-to-date modern transaction techniques, which is the essential part of a secure transaction. Ensuring security in transaction is both transparent and creates a trustworthy atmosphere.
- 3) **Islamic value:** the values in accordance with Islamic teachings (Islamic norms).
- 4) **Prompt:** to provide quick and timely service.

Opportunity:

- 1) **Courteous:** to be courteous in their dealings, with a special attention given to Muslim women customers.
- 2) **Product assortment:** the range and appropriateness of available products on sale
- 3) **Language:** same language atmosphere, with those from the same country of origin, same culture and same religious are intertwined like a single fabric.
- 4) **Cleanliness:** hygienically clean and standard comfortable premises.
- 5) **Location:** one of the key factors from customers point-of-view, it means how far is the location of the shop/marts - the closer the better, it creates a sense of ease to walk (at a walking distance) for a quick per need shopping.
- 6) **Honesty:** to be honest in delivery and dealing with customers.
- 7) **Modesty:** Islamic dress-code and language appropriateness.

Threats:

- 1) Waiting time: the long queues and longer waiting time can lead to customer's dissatisfaction, vice versa.
- 2) Trust: an important factor to build a good reputation.
- 3) Reputation: a highly valuable deterrent, a good reputation increases the level of trust and vice versa.

4.10. STRATEGY PLANNING

Planning a strategy starts with finding appropriate combinations. In case of H-marts, first, the proposed SO- combination strategy option is discussed, followed by WO and ST options and at the end WT options are analyzed.

The following four types of strategies are proposed.

4.10.1. AGGRESSIVE STRATEGIES (SO-COMBINATION)

As pointed out by [David et al. \(2009\)](#) SO-combination Strategies are used to capitalize on the internal strengths by taking advantage from external opportunities. See below [Figure 2](#) for SO combination strategies (Strengths-Opportunities)

In an ideal case scenario, internal strength(s) can be used to understand and exploit external opportunity (ies) [David et al. \(2009\)](#). See below [Table 12](#), favourable & unfavourable factors.

Table 12		
	Internal Factors	External Factors
Favorable Factors	S-1: Ambiance	O-1: Courteous
	S-2: Humanness	O-2: Product assortment
	S-3: Halal certification	O-3: Language
	S-4: Home delivery	O-4: Cleanliness
	S-5: Social interaction	O-5: Location
Unfavorable Factors		O-6: Honesty
		O-7: Modesty

According to survey results, the internal strengths such as Ambiance, Humanness, Halal certification, home delivery, social interaction are the part and parcel of customers preferred set of service satisfaction items. When a customer or a group of customers from ethnic background visit a shop/mart for shopping, instinctively they would prefer a place with people from same language/ethnic/religious background, additionally there is a high possibility that they will end up meeting other co-ethnic customers at the same premises. Similarly, an Ambiance atmosphere for a brief social interaction can be a plus point and can provide an ideal shopping experience for many.

Whereas external opportunities such as courteous, product assortment, language, cleanliness, location, honesty, modesty, Islamic value, cleanliness Location, Honesty and modesty are the key external influencing factors. If they are utilized appropriately these factors can play an anchoring role to support strengths with a possibility of double-strengths advantage which can put H-Mart in further advantageous position. Additionally, these important factors are enough to capture

customers' attention and imagination. It is therefore recommended that the executive managers of H-marts must take heed of these favourable factors to increase their core competencies and use them in their favour to increase customers repeat shopping.

4.10.2. CONSERVATIVE STRATEGIES (WO COMBINATION)

The WO-strategies reduce internal weakness (ies) or develop missing strength(s) to realise external opportunities [David et al. \(2009\)](#). See below [Figure 3](#) for ST combination strategies (Strengths-Threats)

Therefore, it is imperative to improve the internal weaknesses and take advantage from prevailing external opportunities as illustrated below in [Table 13](#), the favourable & unfavourable factors of WO strategy.

Table 13		
	Internal Factors	External Factors
Favorable Factors		O-1: Courteous
		O-2: Product assortment
		O-3: Language
		O-4: Cleanliness
		O-5: Location
		O-6: Honesty
		O-7: Modesty
Unfavorable Factors	W-1: Promise	
	W-2: Security in transaction	
	W-3 Islamic value	
	W-4: Prompt	

To improve on internal prevailing weaknesses such as Promise, Security in transaction, Islamic value, prompt, and all these factors if realized and improved can be converted to internal strengths. Similarly external opportunities can tilt the balance by creating more favourable conditions for H-mart business to create a long-term sustainable business atmosphere. Modesty is another key factor that must be fully understood and addressed in accordance with Islamic cultural norms, which means that the dress code for staff of H-mart should be in line with Islamic teaching of modesty. Thirdly, when customers enter the premises to shop what they observe first is the 'product assortment', the more there is variety on offer, the better impression it would create but appropriation is must. Lastly, the art of counterbalancing internal weaknesses with external opportunism can be converted to a win-win situation. External opportunities such as Islamic value, cleanliness Location, Honesty (to be honest in dealing with customers), Promise (to provide service as per promised specification) can become trigger customer interest. Prompt service is to provide quick and timely service, whereas courteousness requires the H-Mart staff to be courteous in their dealings, with a special attention given to Muslim women customers can play complementary roles. Thirdly, honesty in dealing with customers is highly valuable added deterrent factor. In short to create a win-win situation, it needs a clear directionally approach to convert opportunities into missing strengths which means converting failure into success and loss into profitability.

4.10.3. COMPARATIVE STRATEGIES (ST COMBINATION)

According to [David et al. \(2009\)](#), we can use the internal strengths to avoid or to cushion the impact of external threats). See below [Figure 9](#) depicting ST combination strategies (Strengths-Threats).

In ST strategy internal strength(s) are used to minimise external threats [David et al. \(2009\)](#) as shown below in [Table 14](#), the favourable & unfavourable factors of ST strategy.

Therefore, it is suggested that H-marts managers must learn to deliver on the positive internal strengths such as the home delivery, Humanness, Ambiance, Language, Social interaction. A reliable and government sponsored regulatory Halal certified body to verify Halal products with a reliable Halal tractability source may help in improving external Reputation, Waiting time and Security in transaction. Secondly the source of Halal certified food, a legally recognized Halal source of food is imperative for the Muslim customers; it would create a trustworthy impression. Moreover, Halal certification is one of the key factors and it is of a great value, it can help enhance H-mart's viability, trust ability and profitability.

Table 14

	Internal Factors	External Factors
Favorable Factors	S-1: Ambiance	
	S-2: Humanness	
	S-3: Halal certification	
	S-4: Home delivery	
	S-5: Social interaction	
Unfavorable Factors		T-1: Waiting time
		T-2: Trust
		T-3: Reputation

4.10.4. DEFENSIVE STRATEGIES (WT COMBINATION)

Defensive strategy is defined as a marketing tool that helps companies to fend off an attack and retain valuable customers that can be taken away by competitors. [David et al. \(2009\)](#) explains that a defensive strategy is required to reduce the internal weakness (es) to avoid external threats (only defensive strategy in a worst-case scenario).

See below [Figure 10](#) for the WT combination strategies (Weaknesses-Threats)

Based the above narrated information it is highly recommended that the executive mangers of H-Marts must take advantage from positive external factors such home delivery, Ambiance, Language to counter external threats such as reputation, waiting time, security in transaction. Building a good reputation, reduced waiting time and providing secure customer's transaction system.

See below [Table 15](#), the favourable & unfavourable factors for WT strategy.

In this strategy the proposed combination illustrates the formation that needs a careful inward-looking approach. It is recommended that the current H-Marts service setup should increase its core competencies level. The internal unfavourable factors such as trust should be improved. In any case scenario trust is one of the most import factors for any good business entity to survive, as it is quite omnipresent that no one wants to shop at an untrustworthy and less reputable shopping place. Adopting defensive strategy can help 'to fend off external attackers

and retain valuable customers by urgently addressing core issues including long waiting queues would help enhance H-Mart's business reputation.

Table 15

	Internal Factors	External Factors
Favorable Factors		
Unfavorable Factors	W-1: Promise	T-1: Waiting time
	W-2: Security in transaction	T-2: Reputation
	W-3 Islamic value	T-3: Trust
	W-4: Prompt	

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

A success in the business comes from providing your customers with both convenience and value, one without the other is not enough to survive. Nowadays organizations are seeking for the effective ways to compete with their competitors, with their main focus on internal services which plays one of the most important roles in helping to gain competitive advantage. Service firms are realizing the significance of customer-centered philosophies and are turning to quality management approach to help in managing their businesses more proficiently. Considering the unstable environment in which organizations are inserted, strategic capability becomes essential for those that seek to maintain and or grow in the market, such micro and small enterprises.

With changing world's business dynamics, a change is also taking place in Korean food retailing business industry. The advent of newly emerged H-Marts in Korea and the lack of research articles warranted a need for the current research to be conducted. The befitting factors for SWOT categories, consisting of Strength, weakness, opportunity, and threat are generated from the literature reviews and supported by the respondents' views. Based on observations of the H-Marts customer perspective (survey data from 4-H-marts) in the metropolitan city Daegu, this article conducted a SWOT analysis of H-marts and presents four strategies.

In recent times a surge in demand for halal food products have been witnessed throughout the world, similarly a demand for Halal products in Korea has also skyrocketed with the emergence of a new concept called H-marts. In search of rightful answers to equally rightful questions, we created a research plan incorporating basic logical steps required to conduct a SWOT analysis of H-marts in Korea. In our pursuit we prepared a research plan and in the light of in-depth literature review we selected important themes and variable and subsequently we formulated a survey questionnaire. Four different H-marts, located at four different locations were identified and incorporated for the current study. A total of 200-questionnaires were hand distributed and the filled questionnaires were subsequently collected. The data interpretation is conducted, and the importance of each attribute is estimated by using Timko's CS coefficient formula. In line with the importance perceived by the customers, each attribute is categorized accordingly. The most important attribute is categorized as the internal strengths while the least important factors were categorized as external threat, whereas the second category attributes are categorized as external opportunities and the third category factors are grouped as internal weaknesses

SWOT analysis typically consists of using four sequential steps within focus group settings: identifying important attributes, generating SWOTs, categorizing SWOTs within a 2- by- 2 matrix, and deliberating how best to address those factors falling in SWOTs. (Doug Leigh 2006).

5.1. FOURFOLD STRATEGIES OF SWOT MATRIX

In the light of data analysis, we proposed 4-SWOT strategies as shown below in Figure 2.

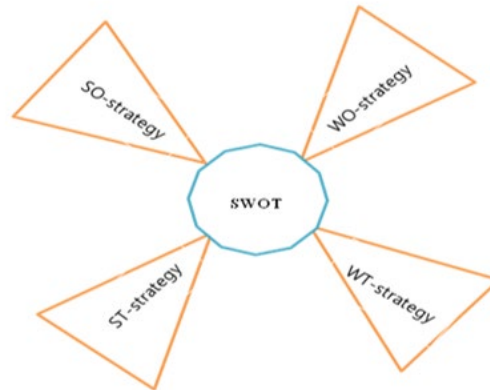


Figure 2

5.1A. AGGRESSIVE STRATEGIES (SO COMBINATION).

Finding an appropriate balance would double the Strengths with a combination of a double strength advantage. See below Figure 3, a point of balance for SO Strategies.

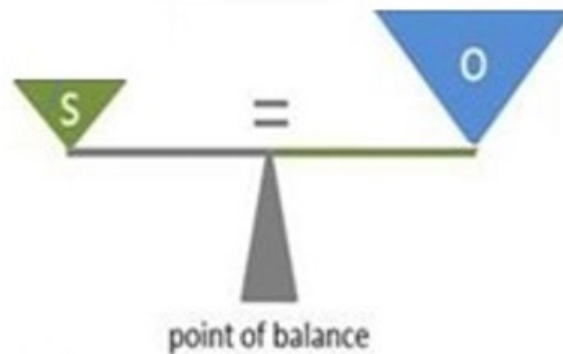


Figure 3

5.1B. CONSERVATIVE STRATEGIES (WO COMBINATION).

Finding an appropriate balance to be able to convert weaknesses into opportunities, see below Figure 4, a point of balance for WO Strategies.

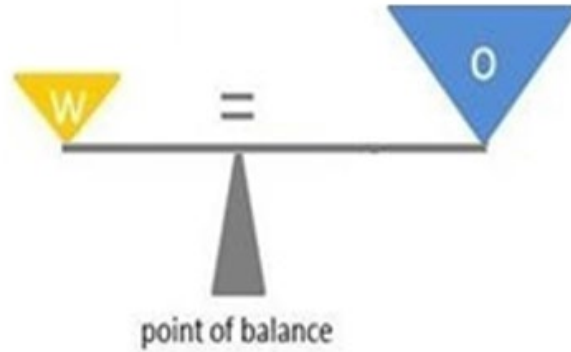


Figure 4

5.1C. COMPARATIVE STRATEGIES (ST COMBINATION)

Finding an appropriate balance to be able to address and convert threats into opportunities. See below [Figure 5](#) which depicts a point of balance for ST combination strategies.



Figure 5

5.1D. DEFENSIVE STRATEGIES (WT COMBINATION)

For finding an appropriate balance between weaknesses and threats, see below [Figure 6](#) which shows a point of balance for WT combination strategies.

It is imperative that halal mart retailers either foreign or locally owned should address underlined issues i.e., the needs and priorities of Muslim shoppers. If we take an account the proposed combination of strengths and opportunities strategies, it can place H-marts into an advantageous driving position by realizing the key aspects as narrated earlier. The internal weaknesses and external threats combined with economic and social change, expected competition from multiple retailers and locational difficulties are some of the factors to create inadequacies in these independent convenience stores trading environment. Demographic changes may lead to a scenario in which there is a lack of adequate population to support the number of retail outlets in a particular catchment area, the same constraints apply to H-marts in Korea. In any case the advent of H-mart can only supplement the retail environments in Korea.

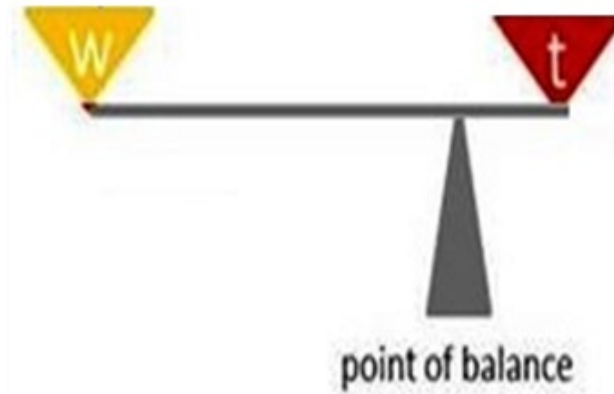


Figure 6

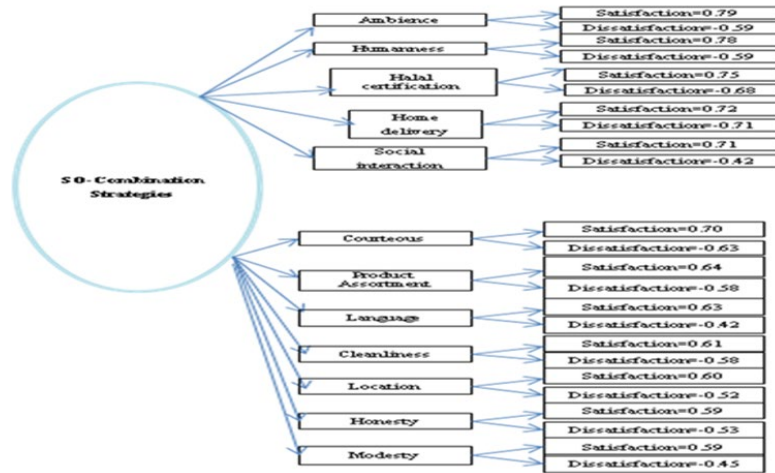


Figure 7

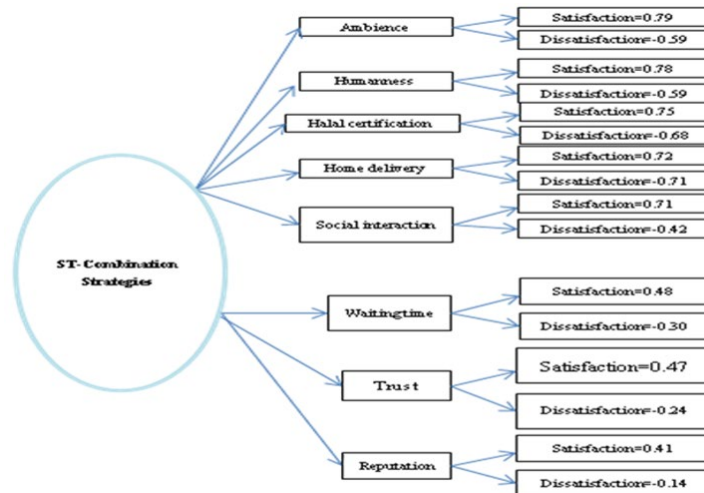


Figure 8



Figure 9

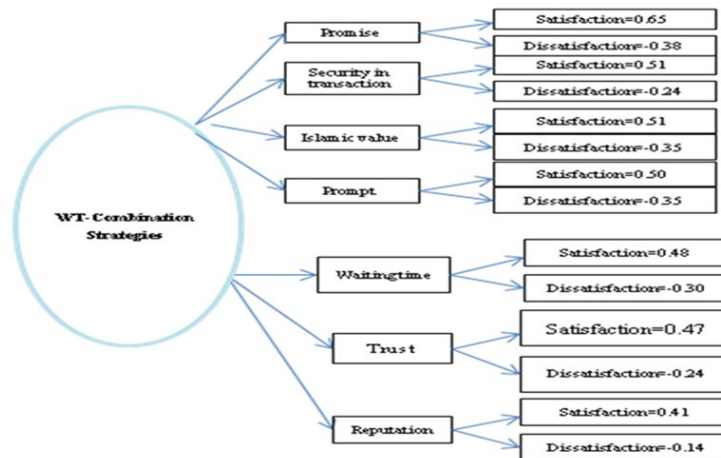


Figure 10

5.2. GOOD BUSINESS PRACTICE

Good business practice calls for the development of a strategy to encompass all aspects of the business, from entry decision, resource development and competitive approach, to succession or exit plans. This will then place an enterprise in a position to respond proactively to changes in the external trading environment and maximise available opportunities [MacMillan and Tampoe \(2000\)](#). The business entry decision is closely linked to the business owner’s motivation for self-employment [Basu and Goswami \(1999\)](#). However, the key to business success is seen as being aware of the changing external environment and the development of skills and resources necessary to meet the challenge presented [Byrom et al. \(2017\)](#). Collaboration between government officials and H-marts is the key for formulating a unified comprehensive Halal food policy, which would untimely lead to a better understanding and may attract more investors to invest in this lucrative Halal industry.

As per Korean home office statistics, in 2013, the number of Muslims in Korea has steadily increased from 86,000 in 2008 to 138,000, and the size of the domestic

halal market is on the rise as well. In order for Korean food industry to enter the growing international halal market, the government Korea has shown a lot of interest such as announcing that it will foster halal industry as a government-funded industry in 2016. These initiatives would make Korea food industry competitive on international arena.

5.3. MINIMIZING RISKS TO AVOID FAILURE

When entering an industry, the most important factor to be considered by the entrepreneurs is the lower risk for failure. There is a big difference in failure rates for entering in a new (unknown) market and entering in a known market. Second, it is necessary to establish a discriminative strategy that strengthens the factors that cause customer satisfaction beyond the customer satisfaction of H-marts service. The Halal food sector in Korea is undergoing through a rapid change, with a measurable increase in demand for halal food products means a demand for newer H-mart outlets. In a nutshell, based on the favourable internal factors (strengths) the executive managers of H-marts can maximize their advantage from its opportunistic external favourable factors (opportunities). Factors such as the “right location, at right price at the right time and the provision of a greater variety of goods” and services to consumers has placed H-marts in a win-win position. The growth of organized retail firms coupled with the consumers’ increasing demand for certified halal products along with a providing need-based service for a growing desire for halal food, is already translating into a rowing opportunity and it’s finding a ready acceptance among local halal food consumers.

6. LIMITATION

The SWOT analysis conducted for this study has its own shortcoming. First the current study is based on the limited number of respondents of the survey from four different H-marts, located at four different parts and not the assumption that they are certain to be fully correct, as they may contain some imaginable and bias matter in relation to H-marts. Secondly, this investigation does not fully illustrate how to achieve competitive advantage, simply as a guideline and thirdly the SWOT analysis done may be outdated considering that the business environment of H-marts are subject to a constant change.

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