

Abstract

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Investigating the Readiness of the Grocery Retail Chains for Virtual Supply Chain Technology in Egypt

Purpose: The advancement in information technology has significantly changed the operations of supply chain management, and promoted efficiency and effectiveness which directly had a positive impact on market competitiveness. The grocery retail sector is probably one of the largest business sectors in many countries and it is one of the sectors that witnessed the applications of evolving supply chain technologies over the past few years such as radio frequency identifications (RFID), quick response codes (QR codes) and more. Therefore, this paper will provide a critical analysis and emphasis on the idea of adopting the virtual supply chain (VSC) concept by the large grocery retail stores in Egypt in order to investigate the grocery retail sector readiness towards applying the VSC.

Research approach: The research is based on the qualitative analysis using a case study approach applied on the top two grocery retail chains in Egypt which are Carrefour and Fathalla. Semi structured interviews were conducted with Fathalla's IT manager, and the receiving manager of Carrefour Alexandria and with subject matter experts (SMEs) to collect the necessary information for a SWOT analysis that would emphasize the strengths and weaknesses of both chains towards applying VSC in addition to the opportunities and threats that may encourage hinder the application of VSC.

Findings and Originality: According to the literature reviewed, it was found that there is a significant gap in literature regarding the application of technologies in supply chain in emerging and developing countries in general, which renders this research important to the discipline. This research is considered the first in investigating the application of the VSC in the Middle East, especially in Egypt. The findings of this research showed that the grocery retail chains are rather ready for the application of the VSC, and it was shown that such application can support them in improving and developing their supply chain processes.

Research impact: This research will bring the topic to the attention of researchers to further investigate and exploit the area of technology in supply chain in Egypt and it will contribute to close the existing gap in the literature.

Practical impact: Applying the concept of VSC will increase the retailers' efficiency, responsiveness, market coverage and accessibility and consequently its profit which will impact the economy as well. Additionally, customers will also benefit from the convenience and ease of access.

Keywords: Virtual Supply Chain, Grocery Retail Sector, Supply Chain Management, Egypt.