

Perception Speaks Louder Than Words: Brand Gestalt, eWOM, and Repurchase Intention in Halal Cosmetics

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Abstract

Although electronic word of mouth (eWOM) is widely recognized as an important influence on consumer behavior, less is known about how eWOM is transformed into continued purchasing decisions through consumers' holistic perceptions of a brand. Addressing this gap, this study examines Brand Gestalt as the perceptual mechanism linking eWOM with repurchase intention in the halal cosmetics market. Brand Gestalt conceptualizes brand perception as an integrated configuration of Storyscape, Sensescape, Servicescape, and Stakeholderscape. Data were collected through a questionnaire-based survey of 371 consumers with prior experience purchasing halal cosmetic products and analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling. The findings show that eWOM strongly contributes to the formation of all four Brand Gestalt dimensions, confirming its role as an important source of holistic brand meaning. However, eWOM does not directly influence repurchase intention. Among the Brand Gestalt dimensions, only Sensescape and Stakeholderscape significantly predict repurchase intention, whereas Storyscape and Servicescape do not exert significant independent effects. The mediation analysis further reveals that the influence of eWOM on repurchase intention operates through Sensescape and Stakeholderscape, indicating an indirect-only mediation pattern rather than a direct persuasion mechanism. These findings extend eWOM research by repositioning online consumer communication as a mechanism of brand-meaning formation and advance Brand Gestalt theory by demonstrating functional asymmetry among its dimensions: although all dimensions are strongly shaped by eWOM, only sensory and stakeholder-related perceptions translate that influence into repurchase intention. Managerially, the findings suggest that halal cosmetic brands should move beyond generating positive online conversations and ensure that eWOM reinforces credible sensory experiences and trustworthy stakeholder associations that can sustain repeat purchasing.

1. Introduction

Digital commerce and social media have transformed how consumers evaluate cosmetic brands. Online reviews, ratings, recommendations, influencer content, and other forms of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) increasingly shape consumer perceptions before and after purchase (Liu et al., 2024), particularly when product quality, suitability, safety, authenticity, and brand values are difficult to evaluate prior to consumption (Wanigapura et al., 2025; Singh & Mittal, 2026). Yet a fundamental question remains unresolved: why does favorable online communication not necessarily translate into repeat purchasing? Positive eWOM can increase awareness, reduce uncertainty, and encourage favorable evaluation, but continued patronage may depend on whether the fragmented cues encountered online are integrated into a coherent and meaningful representation of the brand (Rantung et al., 2025; Wanigapura et al., 2025).

This question is particularly relevant in Indonesia, where domestic cosmetic brands compete intensively with international brands through e-commerce and social-media platforms (Consumer News and Business Channel, 2024). In such digitally contested markets, generating favorable online communication or securing an initial purchase is insufficient; brands must convert these favorable

evaluations into continued purchasing. The theoretical issue, therefore, extends beyond whether eWOM affects behavioral intentions to how consumer-generated communication becomes incorporated into brand meaning and, ultimately, whether particular forms of that meaning are sufficiently consequential to motivate repurchase.

Halal cosmetics provide a theoretically distinctive setting in which to examine this process. Consumer evaluations of halal cosmetic brands encompass functional and aesthetic performance as well as sensory experience, symbolic meaning, ethical considerations, value congruence, authenticity, and relationships with relevant stakeholders (Anwar, 2025). Importantly, several attributes associated with halal consumption have the characteristics of credence qualities: consumers cannot necessarily verify religious compliance, ethical appropriateness, or authenticity solely through direct product use. Consequently, their evaluations may depend partly on the legitimacy and assurance provided by actors surrounding the brand. Certification authorities, religiously credible communities, retailers, influencers, peer consumers, and other stakeholders can serve as signals of trustworthiness, legitimacy, and conformity with expected halal values. In this setting, therefore, stakeholders are not simply peripheral actors communicating about a brand; they can become part of the meaning through which the brand itself is judged.

This feature makes Brand Gestalt particularly useful for explaining halal cosmetic consumption. Brand Gestalt conceptualizes a brand as a holistic configuration of interconnected meanings rather than a collection of independently evaluated attributes (Mandagi et al., 2021, 2026). Its 4S framework comprises storyscape, sensescape, servicescape, and stakeholderscape, capturing respectively the narratives surrounding the brand, consumers' sensory and experiential impressions, the environments through which the brand is encountered, and the actors involved in constructing and validating brand meaning (Mandagi & Centeno, 2025). Collectively, these dimensions form consumers' overall representation of what a brand is and what it signifies (Mandagi et al., 2026).

The dimensional structure of Brand Gestalt is especially pertinent to halal cosmetics. Storyscape encompasses brand narratives, heritage, positioning, values, and communicated meanings; sensescape reflects product appearance, fragrance, texture, packaging, and consumption experience; and servicescape captures physical and digital environments such as retail outlets, e-commerce platforms, and service interactions (Mandagi & Centeno, 2025; Walean et al., 2024). Stakeholderscape, however, assumes additional theoretical significance in halal consumption because the people and institutions surrounding a brand may provide the social and institutional assurance through which otherwise difficult-to-verify claims acquire credibility. Consumers, employees, retailers, influencers, communities, and other stakeholders therefore contribute not only social associations but also legitimacy to the holistic brand representation (Mandagi & Centeno, 2025; Walean et al., 2024). This suggests that the four dimensions may jointly constitute Brand Gestalt while performing different functions in converting brand meaning into subsequent behavior.

eWOM represents a potentially important antecedent of this holistic meaning formation. Digital consumer communication simultaneously carries informational, experiential, sensory, symbolic, and social cues. Reviews, recommendations, photographs, testimonials, social-media discussions, and consumer-generated videos communicate product performance as well as consumption experiences, brand meanings, service encounters, and stakeholder behavior (Liu et al., 2024). Rather than responding to each cue independently, consumers may organize these signals into broader configurations of brand meaning (Mandagi et al., 2021). Favorable eWOM may therefore do more than persuade consumers directly. It may construct or reinforce storyscape, sensescape, servicescape, and stakeholderscape, thereby shaping the holistic representation through which subsequent purchasing decisions are made.

Prior findings provide the two sides of this theoretical process but have not yet connected them adequately. On the antecedent side, Mandagi and Aseng (2021) found that digitally mediated social media marketing significantly influenced all four Brand Gestalt dimensions and that selected dimensions transmitted its effects to loyalty. Although social media marketing is marketer-generated rather than consumer-generated, their findings demonstrate that digital communication can participate in Brand Gestalt formation. Wang et al. (2024) similarly showed that consumers integrate experiential, environmental, and provider-related information when forming Brand Gestalt cognition and subsequent choices. These findings suggest that digital communication can construct holistic brand meaning rather than functioning solely as a direct persuasive stimulus.

On the consequence side, Brand Gestalt has demonstrated behavioral relevance across several contexts. Storyscape and sensescape predict brand attitude and revisit intention (Walean et al., 2023), while sensescape, servicescape, and stakeholderscape contribute to satisfaction and sensescape directly predicts loyalty (Walean et al., 2024). Destination Brand Gestalt has also been associated with multiple dimensions of brand equity (Pongoh & Mandagi, 2025), while evidence from city branding links Brand Gestalt with attitude, satisfaction, and loyalty (Mandagi et al., 2025). More recent research confirms that the four 4S dimensions collectively contribute to overall Destination Brand Gestalt, which subsequently enhances satisfaction and loyalty (Mandagi et al., 2026). Most directly, Rantung et al. (2025) demonstrated that Brand Gestalt positively influences repurchase intention in the context of an Indonesian traditional sustainable product.

Taken together, however, these streams leave two mechanisms unresolved. First, it remains unclear whether eWOM affects repeat purchasing primarily through direct persuasion or through brand-meaning formation. Conventional eWOM models frequently position consumer-generated communication as a stimulus directly influencing attitudes and behavioral intentions, whereas a gestalt perspective implies a more elaborate mechanism in which eWOM first shapes the configuration of meanings consumers attach to the brand. Establishing this distinction is important because favorable online communication may be behaviorally ineffective when it fails to become incorporated into a coherent brand representation.

Second, existing Brand Gestalt research provides insufficient explanation of whether its four dimensions are equally consequential for behavioral conversion. The dimensions may be jointly shaped by digital communication without exerting equivalent effects on repurchase intention. This possibility is particularly salient in halal cosmetics. Storyscape and servicescape may organize narrative and contextual meaning, whereas sensescape provides direct experiential confirmation of product performance and stakeholderscape provides social and institutional assurance for difficult-to-verify halal and authenticity claims. Thus, the dimensions may share a common antecedent while differing in their capacity to convert favorable communication into continued purchasing. Examining this potential functional asymmetry moves Brand Gestalt research beyond asking whether holistic brand perception matters toward identifying which components of that gestalt actually carry behavioral consequences.

Addressing these issues, the present study examines eWOM, the four dimensions of Brand Gestalt, and repurchase intention in the context of halal cosmetics. The proposed framework treats consumer-generated eWOM as a source of heterogeneous cues from which consumers construct storyscape, sensescape, servicescape, and stakeholderscape. It then examines whether these dimensions have equivalent or differentiated consequences for repurchase intention and whether they constitute distinct pathways through which eWOM is converted into repeat-purchase intentions. This dimensional approach permits a more precise assessment of both Brand Gestalt formation and its behavioral conversion.

Accordingly, the study addresses four research questions:

1. To what extent does eWOM shape each Brand Gestalt dimension, namely storyscape, sensescape, servicescape, and stakeholderscape, in the context of halal cosmetics?
2. Which Brand Gestalt dimensions significantly predict consumers' repurchase intention toward halal cosmetic brands?
3. Does eWOM directly predict repurchase intention toward halal cosmetic brands?
4. Which Brand Gestalt dimensions mediate the relationship between eWOM and repurchase intention?

This study makes three principal contributions. First, it reconceptualizes consumer-generated eWOM not merely as a persuasive influence on behavioral intentions but as an antecedent of holistic brand meaning. By linking eWOM to the four Brand Gestalt dimensions, the study extends the digital communication perspective established by Mandagi and Aseng (2021) from marketer-generated social media communication to consumer-generated communication and clarifies how digitally circulated cues become incorporated into consumers' representations of a brand. Second, it advances Brand Gestalt theory by demonstrating that its dimensions can be jointly formed yet differentially consequential. This distinction introduces functional asymmetry into the 4S framework: the presence of a common antecedent does not imply that storyscape, sensescape, servicescape, and stakeholderscape contribute equally to behavioral conversion. Third, in the halal-cosmetics context, the study identifies sensory and stakeholder-related meanings as the principal mechanisms through which favorable eWOM is converted into repurchase intention. This finding is theoretically consequential because it differentiates experiential

confirmation from legitimacy-based assurance, showing that what consumers experience through the product and whom they associate with, trust, or regard as legitimizing the brand are particularly important in transforming positive online discourse into continued purchasing.

From a managerial perspective, these arguments challenge the assumption that generating favorable eWOM is sufficient to secure repeat customers. Digital conversations may strengthen multiple dimensions of brand meaning, yet only particular meanings may ultimately drive behavioral continuity. For halal cosmetic brands, this implies that online communication should not merely produce positive sentiment but reinforce credible sensory experiences and a trustworthy stakeholder ecosystem capable of providing assurance, legitimacy, and confidence in the.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Brand Gestalt

Brand Gestalt provides a holistic perspective on how consumers construct brand meaning. Drawing on Gestalt theory, it proposes that consumers integrate multiple brand-related cues into a coherent mental representation in which the whole acquires meaning beyond the sum of its individual elements. Mandagi et al. (2021) established its empirical foundation through four interrelated components, subsequently refined into the 4S framework: storyscape, sensescape, servicescape, and stakeholderscape (Mandagi & Centeno, 2025). Conceptually, Brand Gestalt represents the overarching holistic perception of the brand, whereas the four 4S dimensions represent distinct but interconnected domains through which that holistic meaning is formed. Consistent with the present structural model, these dimensions are therefore modeled separately to determine whether they have differentiated antecedents and behavioral consequences rather than being treated as a single undifferentiated construct.

Empirical evidence supports both the holistic relevance and dimensional distinctiveness of Brand Gestalt. Mandagi and Aseng (2021) found that social media marketing influenced Brand Gestalt dimensions and that selected dimensions transmitted its effects to loyalty. Walean et al. (2023) showed that story and sensescape predicted brand attitude and revisit intention, while Walean et al. (2024) found that sensescape, servicescape, and stakeholderscape contributed to satisfaction, with sensescape also predicting loyalty. Other studies have linked Brand Gestalt to brand association, awareness, image, perceived quality, and loyalty (Pongoh & Mandagi, 2025), as well as attitude, satisfaction, and loyalty (Mandagi et al., 2025). Mandagi et al. (2026) further demonstrated that all four dimensions contribute to overall Brand Gestalt, although their contributions differ in magnitude, while Rantung et al. (2025) established a positive relationship between Brand Gestalt and repurchase intention. Collectively, these findings suggest that the 4S dimensions jointly constitute holistic brand meaning but may not be equally consequential for subsequent consumer behavior.

This dimensional distinction is particularly meaningful in halal cosmetics. Storyscape captures narratives through which brands communicate their identity, including halal values, ethical commitments,

authenticity, heritage, and value congruence. Sensescape represents consumers' direct sensory and experiential encounters with the product, including texture, fragrance, appearance, packaging, and overall usage experience. Servicescape encompasses the physical and digital environments in which consumers engage with the brand, including retail stores, e-commerce platforms, websites, and customer-service interfaces. Stakeholderscape reflects the network of actors through which brand meaning, credibility, and legitimacy are constructed (Mandagi & Centeno, 2025; Walean et al., 2024). In halal consumption, this dimension is theoretically distinctive because consumers may rely on halal certification authorities, religiously credible or trusted communities, knowledgeable retailers, credible influencers, employees, peer consumers, and online communities to provide assurance regarding claims that are not always directly verifiable through product experience. Stakeholderscape therefore captures not merely who is associated with the brand, but also the social and institutional sources through which halal credibility and trust can be reinforced.

Digital communication can shape each of these dimensions. Online reviews, ratings, testimonials, social-media conversations, and user-generated content communicate narratives about brand values, sensory experiences, service encounters, and the credibility of relevant stakeholders. Mandagi and Aseng (2021) demonstrate that digitally mediated communication can shape Brand Gestalt dimensions, while Wang et al. (2024) show that consumers integrate multiple experiential and stakeholder-related cues from online comments when forming holistic brand evaluations and subsequent decisions. These findings suggest that eWOM may function not only as a persuasive influence but also as an informational input through which the four dimensions of Brand Gestalt are constructed.

Despite these developments, the process connecting consumer-generated digital communication, Brand Gestalt formation, and repeat purchasing remains insufficiently understood. Prior research shows separately that digital communication can shape Brand Gestalt dimensions (Mandagi & Aseng, 2021) and that Brand Gestalt can influence repurchase intention (Rantung et al., 2025), but limited attention has been given to whether eWOM shapes each 4S dimension and whether those dimensions contribute differently to behavioral conversion. This distinction is important in halal cosmetics because narrative, sensory, environmental, and stakeholder-related meanings may all be formed through eWOM while exerting unequal effects on repurchase intention. Accordingly, the present study treats Brand Gestalt as the overarching theoretical framework while empirically examining storyscape, sensescape, servicescape, and stakeholderscape as separate mediating dimensions linking eWOM with repurchase intention.

2.2 Electronic Word of Mouth

eWOM refers to consumer-generated opinions, evaluations, recommendations, and experiences communicated through online reviews and other digital platforms. Its influence may depend on volume, valence, argument quality, and source credibility (Verma et al., 2023). In this study, however, eWOM specifically reflects consumers' tendency to consult, read, and use online reviews when evaluating brands and purchase alternatives, rather than the positive or negative valence of those reviews. Such

reviews contain heterogeneous sensory, cognitive, affective, and social information that consumers integrate when forming evaluations (Wang et al., 2023; Ahmed & Amritesh, 2023).

This informational role is particularly relevant to cosmetics, where consumers often consult online reviews to assess product effectiveness, appearance, texture, ingredients, safety, authenticity, packaging, and user experiences before purchase. Prior studies confirm the relevance of eWOM to cosmetic purchase decisions (Abdul-Talib & Vadivalu, 2023) and show that its effects can operate both directly and through health concern, environmental concern, and consumer attitude (Nguyen et al., 2024).

More broadly, eWOM often influences behavior through intervening brand evaluations rather than direct persuasion alone. Prior research has identified brand identity (Shams et al., 2024), brand attitude (Uyanik, 2025), brand image (Kaushal et al., 2023), perceived quality and brand trust (Hairani et al., 2024), and perceived value and brand/store image (Liao et al., 2023) as relevant mechanisms. Online brand-community trust and positive eWOM intention have likewise been associated with repurchase behavior (Phan Tan, 2024). These studies demonstrate the importance of mediation but generally isolate single evaluative mechanisms.

Brand Gestalt offers a broader explanation by capturing an integrated configuration of narrative, sensory, service, and stakeholder meanings. In halal cosmetics, consulting online reviews can simultaneously expose consumers to information about product experience, halal and ethical values, service encounters, authenticity, retailers, influencers, communities, and other stakeholders. Consistent with the multidimensional information-processing perspective of Wang et al. (2023) and Ahmed and Amritesh (2023), eWOM may therefore function as an informational input from which consumers construct storyscape, sensescape, servicescape, and stakeholderscape. Accordingly, this study examines whether consumers' use of online reviews shapes these four Brand Gestalt dimensions and whether they subsequently transmit the effect of eWOM to repurchase intention.

2.3 Repurchase Intention

Repurchase intention refers to a consumer's willingness to purchase the same product or brand again following prior consumption experience. Unlike initial purchase intention, it reflects an accumulated post-consumption judgment based on prior experience, perceived value, trust, and overall brand evaluation (Shahid et al., 2023; Hussain et al., 2024). In halal consumption, prior purchasing experience has been shown to strengthen subsequent repurchase intention, while knowledge and religious considerations can also contribute to continued purchasing decisions (Putri et al., 2018; Shahid et al., 2023).

Repurchase intention is strategically important because an initial purchase does not necessarily develop into a lasting consumer–brand relationship. It represents an important transition from favorable evaluation to continued patronage and, potentially, loyalty. Hussain et al. (2024) found that favorable attitudes toward halal cosmetics strengthen repurchase intention, which subsequently contributes to brand loyalty. More broadly, holistic brand evaluations have been associated with loyalty-related

outcomes and continued behavioral commitment (Mandagi et al., 2025; Mandagi et al., 2026; Pongoh & Mandagi, 2025), while Rantung et al. (2025) directly demonstrated that Brand Gestalt positively influences repurchase intention.

Research on halal consumption further indicates that repurchase decisions emerge from a combination of functional, religious, experiential, and relational considerations. Religious knowledge, commitment, and halal certification can influence purchasing and subsequent repurchase behavior (Shahid et al., 2023), while product quality, religious beliefs, and trust contribute to attitudes that foster repurchase intention (Hussain et al., 2024). Putri et al. (2018) similarly identify knowledge and religiosity as relevant determinants. Thus, continued purchasing in halal markets is shaped not by religious compatibility alone but by the interaction of product performance, credibility, trust, prior experience, and value-based evaluation.

Digital information increasingly contributes to this evaluative process. eWOM can shape purchase-related intentions through brand image, attitude, perceived quality, trust, source credibility, and review usefulness rather than through direct persuasion alone (Kaushal et al., 2023; Filieri et al., 2023; Hairani et al., 2024; Upadhyay & Tripathi, 2023; Uyanik, 2025). In cosmetics, Nguyen et al. (2024) demonstrate that eWOM influences behavioral intention through underlying consumer evaluations, while Abdul-Talib and Vadivalu (2023) emphasize the role of eWOM and social-network communication in cosmetic purchase decisions. For experienced consumers, such information can be compared with prior product experience, either reinforcing or challenging existing brand evaluations. Moreover, trust in digitally transmitted information varies according to its social embeddedness, sincerity, and perceived credibility (Beck et al., 2023; Filieri et al., 2023).

Despite these developments, much of the halal cosmetics literature explains repurchase intention through discrete antecedents such as religiosity, halal certification, product quality, trust, attitude, prior purchase behavior, and digital marketing activities (Putri et al., 2018; Shahid et al., 2023; Hussain et al., 2024). Such approaches may underrepresent how consumers integrate multiple simultaneous cues when reassessing a brand. Brand Gestalt addresses this limitation by conceptualizing brand evaluation as a coherent configuration of interconnected meanings rather than as isolated judgments (Mandagi et al., 2021). Its four dimensions, Storyscape, Sensescape, Servicescape, and Stakeholderscape, capture narrative, sensory, service-environment, and stakeholder-related meanings respectively (Mandagi & Centeno, 2025). These dimensions have been associated with attitude, satisfaction, loyalty, revisit intention, and related relational outcomes (Mandagi & Aseng, 2021; Walean et al., 2023; Walean et al., 2024; Pongoh & Mandagi, 2025; Mandagi et al., 2026), with Rantung et al. (2025) providing direct evidence of a relationship with repurchase intention.

From this perspective, repurchase intention represents an accumulated post-consumption decision arising from how consumers integrate previous experience, digital information, product performance, and brand-related meanings. Because repeat purchasing occurs after direct brand experience, not merely before trial, some gestalt dimensions may be more behaviorally consequential than others. In halal

cosmetics, Sensescape can provide experiential confirmation through texture, fragrance, packaging, and product performance, while Stakeholderscape can provide credibility and assurance through trusted actors, communities, retailers, and other legitimizing stakeholders. These experiential and credibility-related cues may therefore exert stronger effects on repurchase intention than more abstract narrative meanings represented by Storyscape, providing a basis for examining whether the four Brand Gestalt dimensions contribute asymmetrically to continued purchasing.

2.4 Hypothesis Development

2.4.1 eWOM and Brand Gestalt

eWOM exposes consumers to heterogeneous informational, experiential, sensory, and social cues about brands. Online reviews and other user-generated content communicate product experiences, emotions, evaluations, service encounters, and stakeholder-related perceptions. Wang et al. (2023) show that eWOM contains sensory, cognitive, affective, and social information, while Ahmed and Amritesh (2023) argue that consumers integrate these cues rather than process them independently.

This reasoning is consistent with Brand Gestalt, which conceptualizes brand meaning as a coherent configuration of interconnected elements (Mandagi et al., 2021). Within the 4S framework, these meanings are represented empirically through Storyscape, Sensescape, Servicescape, and Stakeholderscape (Mandagi & Centeno, 2025). By consulting and using online reviews, consumers can acquire information about brand narratives and values, product texture and sensory experience, service and digital environments, and the credibility or behavior of actors associated with the brand. eWOM may therefore contribute to the formation of each Brand Gestalt dimension.

Empirical evidence supports this mechanism. Mandagi and Aseng (2021) found that digitally mediated communication significantly influenced Brand Gestalt dimensions, while Wang et al. (2024) showed that consumers integrate experiential, environmental, and provider-related cues from online comments when forming holistic brand cognition. More broadly, eWOM influences brand identity, attitude, image, trust, and perceived quality (Kaushal et al., 2023; Hairani et al., 2024; Shams et al., 2024; Uyanik, 2025). In halal cosmetics, these online cues may concern halal and ethical values, sensory product experience, service encounters, authenticity, and the credibility of consumers, influencers, retailers, communities, and other stakeholders. Accordingly, greater consultation and use of eWOM are expected to strengthen each dimension of Brand Gestalt.

H1a–d

eWOM has a positive and significant effect on the four dimensions of Brand Gestalt (i.e., storyscape, sensescape, servicescape, and stakeholderscape).

2.4.2 Brand Gestalt and Repurchase Intention

Brand Gestalt represents consumers' holistic understanding of a brand, while Storyscape, Sensescape, Servicescape, and Stakeholderscape capture distinct dimensions of that meaning (Mandagi et al., 2021; Mandagi & Centeno, 2025). Prior research shows that these dimensions influence revisit intention, attitude, satisfaction, brand equity, and loyalty (Walean et al., 2023; Mandagi et al., 2025; Pongoh & Mandagi, 2025; Mandagi et al., 2026), while Rantung et al. (2025) directly link Brand Gestalt to repurchase intention.

Each dimension may contribute differently to continued purchasing. Storyscape can reinforce halal values, ethical narratives, authenticity, and value congruence; Sensescape provides direct experiential confirmation through texture, fragrance, appearance, packaging, and product use; Servicescape supports convenient and reliable interactions across physical and digital environments; and Stakeholderscape provides credibility and social assurance through consumers, influencers, retailers, trusted communities, and other brand-related actors. These mechanisms are particularly relevant to halal cosmetics, where repurchase decisions reflect accumulated evaluations of product experience, trust, quality, and brand credibility (Shahid et al., 2023; Hussain et al., 2024). Accordingly, the four dimensions are expected to contribute positively to repurchase intention, although their effects may differ in magnitude.

H2a-d

The four Brand Gestalt dimensions (i.e., storyscape, sensescape, servicescape, and stakeholderscape) have positive and significant effects on repurchase intention.

2.4.3 eWOM and Repurchase Intention

eWOM can influence future purchasing decisions by reducing uncertainty, providing social information, and reinforcing or challenging consumers' prior brand evaluations. Online reviews and recommendations may therefore affect whether consumers consider continued purchasing appropriate, although the strength and direction of this effect can depend on how the information is interpreted. Prior studies generally support the relevance of eWOM to purchase-related intentions across digital markets (Abdul-Talib & Vadivalu, 2023; Filieri et al., 2023; Nguyen et al., 2024). In cosmetics, Nguyen et al. (2024) found that eWOM influenced purchase intention both directly and indirectly through consumer attitudes and related evaluations, while Abdul-Talib and Vadivalu (2023) similarly identified eWOM and social networking sites as important sources of purchase-related information.

Evidence regarding post-purchase behavior is more nuanced. Liao et al. (2023) showed that eWOM operates within relationships involving brand evaluations, perceived value, and repurchase intention, while Phan Tan (2024) linked eWOM-related processes with repurchase intention through online brand-community relationships. Jalil et al. (2021) likewise positioned eWOM as relevant to repurchase intention in the halal cosmetics social-media environment. However, direct effects are not always evident. Hairani et al. (2024), for example, showed that eWOM may influence behavioral outcomes through brand awareness, trust, perceived quality, and related evaluations rather than through a simple direct pathway.

Thus, eWOM may contribute to repurchase intention either directly or through intervening perceptual and relational mechanisms. Because consumers who consult and use online reviews gain additional information for reassessing the desirability and credibility of previously purchased brands, greater engagement with eWOM may nevertheless strengthen their willingness to repurchase. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3

eWOM has a positive and significant effect on repurchase intention.

2.4.4 The Mediating Role of Brand Gestalt

eWOM may influence repurchase intention indirectly by shaping how consumers interpret and organize brand-related information. Ahmed and Amritesh (2023) conceptualize eWOM as a configuration of multiple cues, while prior studies show that its behavioral effects can operate through intervening evaluations such as brand image and consumer attitudes (Kaushal et al., 2023; Nguyen et al., 2024). This suggests that eWOM may affect subsequent purchasing not only through direct persuasion but also by altering consumers' representations of the brand.

Brand Gestalt provides a multidimensional mechanism for this process. Storyscape, Sensescape, Servicescape, and Stakeholderscape capture narrative, sensory, service-related, and stakeholder-related meanings through which consumers organize brand information (Mandagi et al., 2021; Mandagi & Centeno, 2025). Digitally mediated communication has been shown to shape these dimensions (Mandagi & Aseng, 2021), while Brand Gestalt and its dimensions have been associated with repurchase intention, revisit intention, satisfaction, and loyalty (Walean et al., 2023; Rantung et al., 2025; Mandagi et al., 2025; Mandagi et al., 2026). Accordingly, consumers' use of eWOM may influence repurchase intention through each 4S dimension, although the strength of these indirect mechanisms may differ. Thus:

H4

The four Brand Gestalt dimensions (i.e., storyscape, sensescape, servicescape, and stakeholderscape) mediate the positive relationship between eWOM and repurchase intention.

The conceptual framework integrates eWOM, the four dimensions of Brand Gestalt, and repurchase intention. Brand Gestalt serves as the overarching theoretical concept, while Storyscape, Sensescape, Servicescape, and Stakeholderscape are modeled as distinct dimensions. The model examines both the direct effect of eWOM on repurchase intention and its indirect effects through each Brand Gestalt dimension, as summarized in Fig. 1.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a cross-sectional quantitative survey design to examine the relationships among eWOM, the four Brand Gestalt dimensions, and repurchase intention in halal cosmetics. Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). PLS-SEM was appropriate because the study examines a predictive model involving multiple latent constructs, simultaneous structural relationships, and dimension-specific mediation effects. It also enables joint assessment of the measurement and structural models.

3.2. Population and Sampling

The target population comprised consumers of halal cosmetic products aged 18–55 years residing in major cities and surrounding areas in Indonesia. A non-probability purposive sampling technique was employed because respondents were required to have prior experience purchasing or using halal cosmetics and therefore be capable of evaluating eWOM, Brand Gestalt, and repurchase intention. Eligibility criteria were: (1) aged 18–55 years, (2) residing in a major city or surrounding area in Indonesia, and (3) having experience purchasing or using halal cosmetic products. The minimum age of 18 ensured that all participants were adults capable of providing informed consent independently.

The minimum sample size was determined through an a priori statistical power analysis based on the most complex endogenous construct in the structural model. Repurchase intention was predicted by five constructs: eWOM, Storyscape, Sensescape, Servicescape, and Stakeholderscape. Assuming a medium effect size ($f^2 = .15$), a significance level of $\alpha = .05$, statistical power of .80, and five predictors, the analysis indicated a minimum required sample of approximately 92 respondents. The final sample comprised 371 valid respondents, substantially exceeding this threshold and therefore providing adequate statistical power for estimating the proposed PLS-SEM model and testing the direct and indirect relationships (Hair et al., 2021).

3.3. Data and Instrumentation

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire comprising demographic information and 29 measurement items, all assessed on a seven-point Likert scale from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”). eWOM was measured using five items adapted from Jalilvand and Samiei (2012), capturing consumers’ tendency to consult, read, and use online reviews when evaluating halal cosmetics. Brand Gestalt was measured using 19 items adapted from Mandagi et al. (2021), with Storyscape, Sensescape, Servicescape, and Stakeholderscape modeled as four correlated first-order constructs rather than as a higher-order construct. Repurchase intention was measured using five items primarily adapted from Chiu et al. (2009).

All items were contextually adapted to the halal-cosmetics setting while preserving their original conceptual meaning. The questionnaire was translated from English into Bahasa Indonesia and independently back-translated into English to assess semantic equivalence. Discrepancies were discussed and resolved before finalization. The instrument was then pretested with 30 consumers who

met the study's eligibility criteria to assess clarity, comprehension, and contextual suitability, with minor wording refinements made where necessary.

3.4. Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected from March to May 2025 using an online questionnaire administered through Google Forms and distributed through social media and other digital communication channels. Potential respondents first completed eligibility screening questions and provided informed consent before accessing the survey. A total of 401 responses were received. After screening for eligibility, completeness, and duplicate or unusable submissions, 30 responses were excluded, resulting in 371 usable responses for analysis. To minimize duplicate participation, respondents were instructed to submit the questionnaire only once, and responses were checked for duplicate or highly similar entries. No personally identifying information was collected, and all responses were treated anonymously and confidentially. The final dataset was exported to Microsoft Excel for data cleaning before subsequent statistical analysis. Ethical approval was granted by the Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Klabat Research Committee (Approval No. 015/UK/FEB.RK/SK/2025). Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the study purpose, confidentiality of their responses, and their right to withdraw at any time. Electronic informed consent was obtained from all participants before they proceeded to the questionnaire.

3.5. Data Analysis Procedure

Data were analyzed using SmartPLS 4 in three stages: data screening, measurement-model assessment, and structural-model assessment. Prior to PLS-SEM analysis, the dataset was examined for missing values, duplicate responses, response-pattern anomalies, and potential outliers. Following the screening procedures described above, the final dataset comprised 371 complete and usable responses, and no imputation was required.

The reflective measurement models were evaluated using indicator loadings, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Outer loadings of approximately .708 or higher were considered satisfactory, while Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values between .70 and .95 indicated adequate internal consistency. Convergent validity was established when average variance extracted (AVE) exceeded .50, and discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion and heterotrait–monotrait ratio (HTMT), with HTMT values below .90 considered acceptable. Structural collinearity was assessed using variance inflation factors (VIF), with values below 5.00 indicating no critical collinearity concerns.

The structural model was assessed using path coefficients, coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), and out-of-sample predictive performance. As general benchmarks, f^2 values of .02, .15, and .35 were interpreted as small, medium, and large effects, respectively, while Q^2 values above zero indicated predictive relevance. Statistical significance of direct and dimension-specific indirect effects was evaluated using 5,000 bootstrap subsamples, a two-tailed significance level of 5%, and 95% bias-corrected and accelerated confidence intervals. Predictive performance was additionally

examined using PLSpredict with 10 folds and 10 repetitions, comparing PLS-SEM prediction errors with the linear-model benchmark.

Because all constructs were obtained from the same self-report survey, potential common method bias (CMB) was addressed both procedurally and statistically. Procedurally, participation was anonymous, respondents were informed that there were no right or wrong answers, and measurement items were worded clearly to reduce evaluation apprehension and consistency motives. Statistically, full-collinearity VIFs were examined, with values below 3.3 indicating that CMB was unlikely to represent a critical threat. Discriminant-validity results were also considered alongside this assessment, particularly given the conceptual proximity of the four Brand Gestalt dimensions.

This analytical procedure enabled the study to evaluate the measurement properties of eWOM, Storyscape, Sensescape, Servicescape, Stakeholderscape, and repurchase intention before testing the hypothesized direct and mediation relationships.

4. Results

4.1 Respondent Profile

Table 1 summarizes the demographic profile of the 371 respondents. The sample was predominantly female (88.7%) and relatively young, with 79.0% aged 18–30 years, characteristics that are particularly relevant given the strong engagement of younger female consumers with cosmetics and digital product information. Nearly half held a bachelor’s degree (49.3%), while private-sector employees (34.2%) and students (25.1%) constituted the largest occupational groups.

Tabel 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Sample (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	42	11.3
	Female	329	88.7
Age	17–20	83	22.4
	21–30	210	56.6
	31–40	76	20.5
	> 40	2	0.5
Education Level	Junior High School	3	0.8
	Senior High School	151	40.7
	Diploma (D1–D3)	23	6.2
	Bachelor's Degree	183	49.3
	Postgraduate Degree	11	3.0
Occupation	Student	93	25.1
	Entrepreneur	43	11.6
	Private Employee	127	34.2
	Unemployed	60	16.2
	Civil Servant	34	9.2
	Others	14	3.8
Domicile	Bitung	37	10.0
	Manado	134	36.1
	Tomohon	32	8.6
	Minahasa	56	15.1
	North Minahasa	17	4.6
	Others	95	25.6

4.2 Measurement Model Assessment

4.2.1 Indicator Reliability and Convergent Validity

As shown in Table 2, the measurement model demonstrates satisfactory reliability and convergent validity across all constructs. Indicator loadings range from 0.843 to 0.927, exceeding the recommended

0.70 threshold. Cronbach's α values (0.926–0.945) and composite reliability values ($\rho_c = 0.944$ –0.958) indicate strong internal consistency, while AVE values (0.773–0.821) are well above the .50 threshold. Overall, Table 2 confirms that all constructs exhibit adequate reliability and convergent validity.

Table 2
Measurement Model Assessment

Construct	Loading range	Cronbach's α	ρ_c	AVE
eWOM	0.846–0.908	0.926	0.944	0.773
Storyscape	0.869–0.923	0.936	0.952	0.797
Sensescape	0.872–0.911	0.938	0.952	0.800
Servicescape	0.896–0.918	0.945	0.958	0.821
Stakeholderscape	0.877–0.927	0.926	0.948	0.819
Repurchase intention	0.843–0.919	0.937	0.952	0.799

4.2.2 Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio (HTMT) and the Fornell–Larcker criterion. As shown in Table 3, all HTMT values were below the commonly recommended threshold of 0.90, ranging from 0.772 to 0.876. The highest HTMT value was observed between Storyscape and Sensescape (0.876), followed by eWOM and Storyscape (0.863). These results indicate that the constructs demonstrate adequate discriminant validity under the 0.90 criterion. Nevertheless, several values exceeded the more conservative threshold of 0.85, suggesting relatively strong conceptual associations among some constructs. This proximity is theoretically plausible given that the four brand gestalt dimensions represent related components of an integrated brand perception, while remaining empirically distinguishable.

Table 3
Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) of Correlations

Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. eWOM						
2. Storyscape	0.863					
3. Sensescape	0.834	0.876				
4. Servicescape	0.839	0.798	0.829			
5. Stakeholderscape	0.844	0.800	0.818	0.772		
6. Repurchase intention	0.809	0.800	0.826	0.800	0.813	

The Fornell–Larcker results provide further support for discriminant validity. As presented in Table 4, the square root of the AVE for each construct, shown on the diagonal, was greater than its correlations with all other constructs. For example, the square root of the AVE for eWOM was 0.879, exceeding its highest inter-construct correlation of 0.874, while the corresponding values for Storyscape, Sensescape, Servicescape, Stakeholderscape, and repurchase intention were 0.893, 0.895, 0.906, 0.905, and 0.894, respectively. Taken together, the HTMT and Fornell–Larcker results provide sufficient evidence that the six constructs capture empirically distinct concepts, supporting the discriminant validity of the measurement model.

Table 4
Fornell–Larcker Criterion for Discriminant Validity

Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. eWOM	0.879					
2. Storyscape	0.810	0.893				
3. Sensescape	0.874	0.814	0.895			
4. Servicescape	0.870	0.845	0.876	0.906		
5. Stakeholderscape	0.874	0.839	0.857	0.810	0.905	
6. Repurchase intention	0.849	0.844	0.869	0.849	0.852	0.894
<i>Note.</i> Bold diagonal values represent the square roots of the AVE.						

4.3 Structural Model Assessment

4.3.1 Structural Collinearity

Prior to evaluating the structural relationships, collinearity among the predictor constructs was examined using inner variance inflation factor (VIF) values. As reported in Table 5, the VIF values for the paths from eWOM to Storyscape, Sensescape, Servicescape, and Stakeholderscape were all 1.000, reflecting the absence of collinearity because eWOM is the sole predictor of these endogenous constructs. For repurchase intention, the VIF values ranged from 2.935 to 4.239. The highest VIF was observed for Storyscape (4.239), followed by Sensescape (3.988), Servicescape (3.766), eWOM (3.573), and Stakeholderscape (2.935).

Table 5
Structural Collinearity Assessment (Inner VIF Values)

Structural Path	VIF	Assessment
eWOM → Storyscape	1.000	No collinearity issue
eWOM → Sensescape	1.000	No collinearity issue
eWOM → Servicescape	1.000	No collinearity issue
eWOM → Stakeholderscape	1.000	No collinearity issue
eWOM → Repurchase Intention	3.573	No collinearity issue
Storyscape → Repurchase Intention	4.239	No collinearity issue
Sensescape → Repurchase Intention	3.988	No collinearity issue
Servicescape → Repurchase Intention	3.766	No collinearity issue
Stakeholderscape → Repurchase Intention	2.935	No collinearity issue

Although several values exceed the more conservative benchmark of 3.3, all remain below the commonly applied threshold of 5.0. Accordingly, the results indicate moderate intercorrelations among some predictors of repurchase intention but no critical collinearity that would preclude estimation or interpretation of the structural paths. The structural coefficients were therefore retained for subsequent hypothesis testing, while the comparatively elevated VIF values were considered when interpreting the relative effects of the highly related predictors.

4.3.2 Explanatory Power and Effect Sizes

As shown in Table 6, the model demonstrates substantial explanatory power for all endogenous constructs. eWOM explains between 76.4% and 81.0% of the variance in the four brand gestalt dimensions, while the predictors of repurchase intention collectively explain 80.6% of its variance.

Table 6
Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Endogenous Construct	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Assessment
Repurchase Intention	0.806	0.804	Substantial
Sensescape	0.764	0.764	Substantial
Servicescape	0.774	0.773	Substantial
Stakeholderscape	0.765	0.764	Substantial
Storyscape	0.810	0.809	Substantial
<i>Note.</i> R^2 values of approximately 0.25, 0.50, and 0.75 may be interpreted as weak, moderate, and substantial explanatory power, respectively.			

As presented in Table 7, eWOM exerts large effect sizes on all four brand gestalt dimensions, with the strongest effect observed for Storyscape ($f^2 = 4.262$). In predicting repurchase intention, Sensescape shows the largest effect ($f^2 = 0.074$), followed by Stakeholderscape ($f^2 = 0.044$), both indicating small effects. In contrast, eWOM ($f^2 = 0.017$), Servicescape ($f^2 = 0.010$), and Storyscape ($f^2 = 0.006$) exhibit negligible effect sizes on repurchase intention.

Table 7
Effect Size (f^2) Assessment

Structural Relationship	f^2	Effect Size
eWOM → Sensescape	3.245	Large
eWOM → Servicescape	3.415	Large
eWOM → Stakeholderscape	3.248	Large
eWOM → Storyscape	4.262	Large
eWOM → Repurchase Intention	0.017	Negligible
Sensescape → Repurchase Intention	0.074	Small
Servicescape → Repurchase Intention	0.010	Negligible
Stakeholderscape → Repurchase Intention	0.044	Small
Storyscape → Repurchase Intention	0.006	Negligible

Note. f^2 values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 indicate small, medium, and large effects, respectively; values below 0.02 are considered negligible.

4.3.3 Hypothesis Testing: Direct Relationships

The direct structural relationships were evaluated using standardized path coefficients (β), t -statistics, and p -values obtained from the bootstrapping procedure. As presented in Table 8, eWOM demonstrates strong, positive, and statistically significant effects on all four dimensions of brand gestalt. The strongest effect is observed for Storyscape ($\beta = .900$, $t = 56.314$, $p < .001$), followed by Servicescape ($\beta = .879$, $t = 46.438$, $p < .001$), Sensescape ($\beta = .874$, $t = 47.492$, $p < .001$), and Stakeholderscape ($\beta = .874$, $t = 46.612$, $p < .001$). These findings indicate that favorable electronic word of mouth is strongly associated with consumers' perceptions across all four dimensions of brand gestalt. Accordingly, the hypotheses proposing positive relationships between eWOM and Storyscape, Sensescape, Servicescape, and Stakeholderscape are supported.

Table 8
Hypothesis Testing of Direct Relationships

Relationship	β	t	p	Result
eWOM → Storyscape	0.900	56.314	< 0.001	Supported
eWOM → Sensescape	0.874	47.492	< 0.001	Supported
eWOM → Servicescape	0.879	46.438	< 0.001	Supported
eWOM → Stakeholderscape	0.874	46.612	< 0.001	Supported
eWOM → Repurchase Intention	0.157	1.480	0.139	Not supported
Storyscape → Repurchase Intention	0.094	0.808	0.419	Not supported
Sensescape → Repurchase Intention	0.335	3.623	< 0.001	Supported
Servicescape → Repurchase Intention	0.119	1.075	0.282	Not supported
Stakeholderscape → Repurchase Intention	0.241	2.811	0.005	Supported
<i>Note.</i> β = standardized path coefficient; t = bootstrapped t -statistic. Relationships are considered statistically significant at $p < 0.05$.				

The effects on repurchase intention show a more differentiated pattern. Sensescape exerts the strongest positive and statistically significant effect on repurchase intention ($\beta = .335$, $t = 3.623$, $p < .001$), followed by Stakeholderscape ($\beta = .241$, $t = 2.811$, $p = .005$). In contrast, the direct effect of eWOM on repurchase intention is not statistically significant ($\beta = .157$, $t = 1.480$, $p = .139$). Storyscape ($\beta = .094$, $t = 0.808$, $p = .419$) and Servicescape ($\beta = .119$, $t = 1.075$, $p = .282$) also do not significantly predict repurchase intention. These findings suggest that, when the predictors are considered simultaneously, consumers' sensory experiences and perceptions of brand-related stakeholders are the principal brand gestalt dimensions associated with repurchase intention.

4.3.4 Indirect Effects

The specific indirect effects were examined to determine whether eWOM influences repurchase intention through the individual dimensions of brand gestalt. As reported in Table 9, two of the four indirect pathways are statistically significant. The strongest indirect effect occurs through Sensescape ($\beta = .293$, $t = 3.602$, $p < .001$), indicating that favorable eWOM contributes to repurchase intention primarily by strengthening consumers' sensory perceptions and experiences associated with the brand.

Table 9
Specific Indirect Effects

Indirect Relationship	β	t	p	Result
eWOM → Sensescape → Repurchase Intention	0.293	3.602	< 0.001	Significant
eWOM → Stakeholderscape → Repurchase Intention	0.210	2.836	0.005	Significant
eWOM → Storyscape → Repurchase Intention	0.084	0.811	0.417	Not significant
eWOM → Servicescape → Repurchase Intention	0.105	1.072	0.284	Not significant

The second significant indirect effect occurs through Stakeholderscape ($\beta = .210$, $t = 2.836$, $p = .005$). This finding suggests that eWOM can enhance repurchase intention by strengthening consumers' perceptions of the people and stakeholders associated with the brand. Thus, Sensescape and Stakeholderscape represent the two significant mechanisms through which eWOM is translated into stronger repurchase intention.

In contrast, the indirect effects through Storyscape ($\beta = .084$, $t = 0.811$, $p = .417$) and Servicescape ($\beta = .105$, $t = 1.072$, $p = .284$) are not statistically significant. Although eWOM strongly influences both dimensions, their nonsignificant direct relationships with repurchase intention prevent them from transmitting the effect of eWOM to subsequent purchase intentions. Accordingly, improvements in brand narratives or service-related perceptions generated by eWOM do not independently produce a statistically significant increase in repurchase intention in the current model.

4.3.5 Model Fit and Predictive Assessment

Model fit was assessed using the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), squared Euclidean distance (d_ULS), geodesic distance (d_G), chi-square, and normed fit index (NFI). The results are presented in Table 10.

Table 10
Model Fit Assessment

Fit Index	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.043	0.066
d_ULS	0.814	1.899
d_G	1.061	1.319
Chi-square	2094.348	2338.191
NFI	0.850	0.832

As shown in Table 10, the SRMR values are 0.043 for the saturated model and 0.066 for the estimated model. Both values are below the commonly applied threshold of 0.08, indicating an acceptable overall model fit. The estimated model produces higher d_ULS, d_G, and chi-square values than the saturated

model, reflecting the additional restrictions imposed by the specified structural relationships. The NFI values of 0.850 for the saturated model and 0.832 for the estimated model further indicate a reasonably acceptable level of model fit. Taken together, these results suggest that the proposed structural model provides an adequate representation of the observed data.

Beyond model fit, the model's out-of-sample predictive performance was assessed using PLSpredict. Predictive relevance was evaluated using Q^2_{predict} , root mean square error (RMSE), mean absolute error (MAE), and comparisons between the PLS-SEM prediction errors and those generated by the linear model (LM) benchmark. The results are presented in Table 11.

Table 11
Predictive Assessment Using PLSpredict

Endogenous Construct	Q^2_{predict}	RMSE	MAE	PLS-RMSE < LM-RMSE	Predictive Power
Sensescape	0.762	0.491	0.334	1/5 indicators	Low
Servicescape	0.773	0.481	0.332	5/5 indicators	High
Stakeholderscape	0.764	0.490	0.336	4/4 indicators	High
Storyscape	0.809	0.441	0.288	1/5 indicators	Low
Repurchase Intention	0.720	0.535	0.356	3/5 indicators	Medium

As reported in Table 11, all endogenous constructs exhibit positive Q^2_{predict} values, ranging from 0.720 to 0.809, confirming that the model possesses substantial out-of-sample predictive relevance. Storyscape records the highest Q^2_{predict} value (0.809), followed by Servicescape (0.773), Stakeholderscape (0.764), Sensescape (0.762), and Repurchase Intention (0.720). These results indicate that the model generates meaningful predictions for all endogenous constructs.

However, comparison with the LM benchmark reveals variation in the model's predictive power across constructs. Servicescape demonstrates high predictive power because the PLS-SEM model produces lower RMSE values than the LM benchmark for all five indicators. Stakeholderscape similarly exhibits high predictive power, with lower PLS-SEM prediction errors for all four indicators. Repurchase Intention demonstrates medium predictive power, as the PLS-SEM model outperforms the LM benchmark for three of its five indicators. In contrast, Sensescape and Storyscape exhibit low predictive power because the PLS-SEM model generates lower RMSE values than the LM benchmark for only one of their five indicators.

5. Discussions

5.1 Overview of the Principal Findings

The findings reveal a coherent but differentiated process through which eWOM contributes to repurchase intention. Favorable eWOM strongly shapes all dimensions of Brand Gestalt, indicating that online consumer communication plays an important role in constructing how consumers understand a brand's stories, sensory qualities, service environment, and stakeholder network. However, this strong perceptual influence does not automatically translate into repurchase intention. Instead, the behavioral consequences of Brand Gestalt are selective, with Sensescape and Stakeholderscape emerging as the dimensions that meaningfully drive consumers' willingness to repurchase, while Storyscape and Servicescape do not exert independent effects when the dimensions are considered simultaneously.

This pattern extends the original conceptualization of Brand Gestalt as a synergistic configuration of interconnected brand cues rather than a collection of isolated attributes (Mandagi et al., 2021; Mandagi & Centeno, 2025). It is also consistent with accumulating evidence that the individual dimensions of Brand Gestalt do not contribute equally to downstream consumer outcomes. Walean et al. (2023), for example, found that Storyscape and Sensescape influenced behavioral responses in a destination context, with Sensescape exerting greater influence on revisit intention. Similarly, Walean et al. (2024) showed that several Brand Gestalt dimensions contributed to satisfaction, but only Sensescape directly strengthened loyalty. Mandagi et al. (2026) likewise identified Sensescape as particularly influential within the broader Brand Gestalt configuration. The present findings therefore reinforce an important theoretical distinction between dimensions that contribute to the formation of the overall brand representation and dimensions that are sufficiently diagnostic to influence subsequent behavior.

The results also challenge a simple stimulus-response interpretation of eWOM. Although eWOM has frequently been linked to purchase-related intentions in cosmetics and digital consumption contexts (Abdul-Talib & Vadivalu, 2023; Nguyen et al., 2024), other evidence suggests that its behavioral effects depend on intermediate evaluations. Kaushal et al. (2023) position brand image as an intervening mechanism between eWOM and purchase intention, while Hairani et al. (2024) found that eWOM did not directly influence purchase intention despite its influence on perceived quality and brand trust. Filieri et al. (2023) similarly demonstrate that influencer-generated eWOM affects purchase decisions through source trustworthiness and brand attitude. Viewed together, these studies support the central finding of the present research: eWOM appears to be more powerful in shaping the psychological representation of a brand than in independently triggering repurchase behavior.

5.2 eWOM as a Formation Mechanism of Brand Gestalt

The strong influence of eWOM across all Brand Gestalt dimensions suggests that consumer-generated digital communication functions as a major mechanism of contemporary brand formation. Consumers encounter brands not only through firm-controlled advertising and direct product experience but also through reviews, recommendations, social-media discussions, influencer content, online communities, ratings, and shared consumption narratives. These sources collectively provide informational, experiential, symbolic, and social cues from which consumers construct an integrated understanding of what the brand represents.

This interpretation is closely aligned with Gestalt theory, which assumes that individuals organize multiple cues into coherent wholes rather than evaluating each stimulus independently. Mandagi et al. (2021) conceptualize Brand Gestalt as the synergy of stories, experiences, environments, and stakeholders, while Mandagi and Centeno (2025) further emphasize the co-created nature of this gestalt. The present findings extend this argument by positioning eWOM as an important co-creative input into that process. Brand meaning is therefore not produced exclusively by the organization; it is continuously reconstructed through what consumers say about the brand and how those accounts circulate within digital networks.

The findings are particularly consistent with Mandagi and Aseng (2021), who showed that social-media marketing influences all Brand Gestalt dimensions. The present study extends that evidence from marketer-generated social-media activity to consumer-generated eWOM. This distinction matters because consumer-generated information carries a different form of legitimacy. Reviews and recommendations are commonly perceived as reflections of lived experience rather than formal promotional claims and can therefore supply consumers with cues that are difficult for brands to communicate credibly through conventional advertising. Beck et al. (2023) further demonstrate that different forms of eWOM do not carry equal relational value, with recommendations, referrals, and social communities having stronger implications for trust than impersonal ratings and reviews. Filieri et al. (2023) similarly highlight the importance of sincerity and trustworthiness in determining whether digitally transmitted brand information influences consumers.

The particularly strong formation of Storyscape is conceptually understandable because eWOM is inherently narrative. Consumers rarely communicate only isolated evaluations; they recount experiences, explain why products worked or failed, describe interactions with sellers or brand representatives, and locate those experiences within personal and social contexts. Through repeated circulation, these narratives can become part of the socially constructed story of the brand. Yet the similarly strong formation of Sensescape, Servicescape, and Stakeholderscape indicates that eWOM does more than transmit stories. Online discussions about cosmetics frequently describe fragrance, texture, appearance, packaging, ease of application, digital shopping experiences, customer service, influencer credibility, certification, community responses, and the behavior of other brand-related actors. In this sense, eWOM provides consumers with a distributed set of cues from which the entire Brand Gestalt can be assembled.

This interpretation also resonates with Ahmed and Amritesh (2023), who conceptualize eWOM itself as a gestalt of informational cues requiring cognitive integration. It further complements Wang et al. (2024), whose large-scale analysis of online consumer comments demonstrates that consumers simultaneously draw on environmental, experiential, and provider-related information when making brand-related decisions. Taken together, these perspectives suggest that the relationship between eWOM and Brand Gestalt is not merely persuasive but configurational: eWOM supplies the raw social information from which holistic brand meaning is constructed.

5.3 Which Elements of Brand Gestalt Drive Repurchase Intention?

The differentiated effects of the Brand Gestalt dimensions demonstrate that the elements that make a brand meaningful are not necessarily the same elements that make consumers buy it again. Sensescape emerges as the most behaviorally consequential dimension, suggesting that repurchase decisions in halal cosmetics are strongly grounded in embodied and experiential evaluations. Cosmetics are inherently sensory products. Texture, fragrance, visual appearance, packaging, application experience, comfort, and the felt quality of the product become directly observable through consumption. These experiences provide consumers with concrete evidence about whether the brand continues to deliver value, making sensory evaluations particularly diagnostic for repeat purchasing.

This interpretation is strongly supported by previous Brand Gestalt research. Walean et al. (2023) found Sensescape to be more influential than other gestalt dimensions in predicting revisit intention, while Walean et al. (2024) reported that Sensescape was the only dimension with a direct effect on customer loyalty in the telecommunications context. Mandagi et al. (2026) likewise identify Sensescape as particularly influential in shaping overall Brand Gestalt and subsequent loyalty-related outcomes. The recurrence of this pattern across different consumption domains suggests that sensory and experiential cues may occupy a distinctive position within Brand Gestalt because they provide consumers with personally verifiable evidence rather than merely communicated claims.

The importance of sensory experience also aligns with emerging evidence from digital cosmetics markets. Chen et al. (2025) found that experiential platform characteristics and visual appeal play important roles in post-adoption behavior among online cosmetics consumers. In the halal consumption literature, Hussain et al. (2024) similarly demonstrate that product quality contributes to favorable attitudes that subsequently support repurchase intention, while Shahid et al. (2023) show that prior purchase behavior and product-related evaluations are central to subsequent halal cosmetics repurchase. These findings collectively suggest that repeat purchasing becomes increasingly grounded in experienced performance once consumers move beyond the initial adoption stage.

Stakeholderscape also emerges as an important driver of repurchase intention. This finding underscores the socially embedded nature of halal cosmetics consumption. Consumers do not evaluate halal brands solely through their direct interaction with products. Their perceptions are also shaped by influencers, retailers, online communities, employees, other consumers, certification authorities, and social networks surrounding the brand. Mandagi and Centeno (2025) emphasize that stakeholders actively participate in the co-creation of Brand Gestalt, while Wang et al. (2024) demonstrate that product and service providers can become central components of consumer decision making. In digital environments, therefore, the credibility and behavior of actors associated with the brand may operate as signals of authenticity, reliability, social acceptance, and value congruence.

This stakeholder mechanism is particularly salient in halal markets, where trust, certification, social validation, and value consistency are integral to consumer evaluation. Hussain et al. (2024) identify trust as an important antecedent of favorable attitudes and repurchase intention toward halal cosmetics, while Shahid et al. (2023) emphasize the relevance of halal certification, religious knowledge, and prior purchasing behavior. Putri et al. (2018) likewise show that knowledge and religious considerations contribute to halal repurchase decisions. Stakeholderscape may therefore capture more than interpersonal attractiveness or social visibility; it can represent a broader social assurance system through which consumers judge whether a halal cosmetics brand is trustworthy, legitimate, and worthy of continued patronage.

The absence of independent effects for Storyscape and Servicescape is equally informative. Storyscape may strongly shape what the brand means without being sufficiently diagnostic to determine whether consumers buy it again. Narrative meaning can differentiate a brand, strengthen identity, and enrich symbolic associations, but consumers with prior product experience may ultimately place greater weight on what the product feels like and whether trusted actors validate the brand. Similarly, Servicescape may remain relevant to the overall brand experience without independently driving repurchase once sensory experience and stakeholder perceptions are taken into account.

These findings should not be interpreted as evidence that Storyscape and Servicescape are irrelevant. Brand Gestalt is inherently holistic, and its dimensions share substantial conceptual territory. Their lack of independent behavioral effects may therefore indicate functional overlap rather than theoretical redundancy. Indeed, Rantung et al. (2025) demonstrate that Brand Gestalt as a broader configuration contributes positively to repurchase intention in a traditional-product context, while Pongoh and Mandagi (2025) show that holistic Brand Gestalt strengthens multiple dimensions of brand equity. The more appropriate conclusion is that Brand Gestalt dimensions perform different functions: some contribute primarily to constructing the meaning of the brand, whereas others become more decisive when consumers translate that meaning into behavioral commitment.

5.4 Brand Gestalt as the Mechanism Connecting eWOM with Repurchase Intention

The central theoretical contribution of the findings lies in demonstrating that the influence of eWOM on repurchase intention is primarily interpretive rather than automatic. Favorable online communication does not appear sufficient by itself to produce continued purchasing. Instead, consumers first incorporate digitally transmitted information into their understanding of the brand, and it is this reconstructed brand meaning that provides the basis for subsequent behavioral decisions. Brand Gestalt therefore operates as a perceptual conversion mechanism that translates socially transmitted information into consumer-relevant brand meaning.

This interpretation responds directly to an important limitation in conventional eWOM research, which often treats online communication as a proximal predictor of purchase intention. The broader literature increasingly suggests that this relationship is more complex. Kaushal et al. (2023) argue that brand

image helps explain how eWOM becomes purchase intention. Upadhyay and Tripathi (2023) demonstrate that review helpfulness can fully transmit the effect of review valence to purchase intention. Filieri et al. (2023) show that source-related characteristics operate through trustworthiness and brand attitude, while Uyanik (2025) finds that brand attitude mediates the relationship between eWOM and brand preference and that this process depends on source credibility. Hairani et al. (2024) likewise report that eWOM does not necessarily exert a direct influence on purchase intention even when it shapes perceived quality and trust. Collectively, these studies indicate that consumers rarely act on eWOM in an unmediated manner; they first interpret what the information implies about the brand.

The present study advances this literature by replacing relatively narrow mediators such as attitude, image, trust, or perceived value with the broader concept of Brand Gestalt. Rather than asking whether eWOM changes one specific brand evaluation, Brand Gestalt captures how consumers integrate multiple informational domains into a coherent representation of the brand. This provides a richer explanation of why eWOM can have substantial perceptual influence while displaying limited direct behavioral influence. Online reviews may simultaneously alter perceptions of brand stories, sensory qualities, service encounters, and associated stakeholders, but those perceptions must become behaviorally meaningful before they can sustain repurchase.

The mediation pattern is also notably selective. The pathway from eWOM to repurchase intention operates primarily through Sensescape and Stakeholderscape rather than uniformly across the entire gestalt. This finding closely parallels Mandagi and Aseng (2021), who found that social-media marketing shaped all Brand Gestalt dimensions but that Sensescape and Stakeholderscape were particularly important in transmitting its effects to brand loyalty. The replication of this structural pattern in a different communication setting and product context is theoretically significant. It suggests that digitally generated brand meaning may consistently require an experiential and social conversion process before it produces relational or behavioral outcomes.

The sensory pathway implies that eWOM becomes behaviorally consequential when consumers interpret online information as credible evidence about what using the product will actually be like. Reviews describing texture, fragrance, application, packaging, comfort, and visible results reduce experiential uncertainty and create expectations that can later be confirmed through use. Nguyen et al. (2024) similarly show that eWOM concerning green cosmetics influences behavioral intention partly by changing consumers' underlying evaluations and concerns. For existing customers, this process may become even more consequential because externally communicated experiences can be compared against accumulated personal experience, strengthening or weakening the coherence of the brand gestalt.

The stakeholder pathway operates differently but complements the sensory mechanism. Here, eWOM transforms repurchase intention by shaping perceptions of the people and institutions connected to the brand. Recommendations from trusted consumers, influencers, communities, retailers, or credible brand representatives can provide social confirmation and reduce uncertainty. Beck et al. (2023) demonstrate

that socially closer forms of eWOM are particularly important in developing trust, while Filieri et al. (2023) show that perceived sincerity and trustworthiness are central to the persuasive effects of influencer communication. In halal cosmetics, this social validation may be especially important because purchase decisions involve not only performance expectations but also confidence in authenticity, legitimacy, and compliance with valued standards.

The broader implication is that eWOM should not be conceptualized primarily as a digital promotional force. Its more fundamental role is to participate in the social construction of the brand. Consumers absorb other consumers' experiences, narratives, evaluations, and judgments and reorganize them into a coherent representation that subsequently guides behavior. Brand Gestalt therefore provides a bridge between communication and consumption by explaining how dispersed digital cues acquire integrated meaning.

This perspective also refines Brand Gestalt theory itself. The findings indicate that the dimensions of a gestalt can be jointly shaped while remaining functionally asymmetric. Holism does not require every component to produce identical downstream consequences. Storyscape, Sensescape, Servicescape, and Stakeholderscape may collectively constitute the brand as perceived by consumers, yet particular dimensions become more diagnostic at particular stages of the consumer journey. In the present setting, eWOM broadly constructs the brand, while sensory experience and stakeholder-related meaning provide the principal routes through which that construction becomes repurchase intention. Brand Gestalt should therefore be understood not only as the holistic outcome of integrated brand cues, but also as a differentiated psychological architecture through which communication is converted into consumer behavior.

6. Conclusions

This study shows that eWOM primarily functions as a mechanism for shaping consumers' holistic perceptions of halal cosmetic brands rather than as a direct driver of repurchase intention. Favorable eWOM contributes strongly to the formation of all four Brand Gestalt dimensions, but only Sensescape and Stakeholderscape emerge as meaningful drivers of repurchase intention. The findings therefore indicate that the dimensions of Brand Gestalt are jointly formed but behaviorally differentiated. Most importantly, Brand Gestalt explains how eWOM becomes behaviorally relevant: online consumer communication shapes the overall representation of the brand, while sensory experience and stakeholder-related perceptions provide the principal pathways through which this representation translates into repurchase intention.

The study contributes to eWOM theory by reframing online consumer communication as an antecedent of holistic brand meaning rather than merely a direct behavioral stimulus. It also advances Brand Gestalt theory by demonstrating that consumer-generated digital communication contributes to the co-creation of Storyscape, Sensescape, Servicescape, and Stakeholderscape, thereby extending Brand Gestalt beyond firm-controlled branding activities. The differentiated effects of these dimensions further reveal

functional asymmetry within the gestalt: although the four dimensions constitute an integrated brand representation, they do not necessarily exert equivalent effects on behavioral outcomes. By identifying Sensescape and Stakeholderscape as the principal mechanisms connecting eWOM with repurchase intention, the study refines understanding of how holistic brand perceptions are converted into consumer behavior and extends the nomological applicability of Brand Gestalt to the halal cosmetics context.

Halal cosmetic managers should view eWOM management as a process of shaping coherent brand meaning rather than simply generating positive online visibility. Consumer reviews, testimonials, influencer content, and online discussions should consistently reinforce the intended brand story, sensory promise, service experience, and stakeholder credibility. Particular attention should be given to Sensescape by encouraging authentic communication about texture, fragrance, appearance, packaging, application, and product experience, while Stakeholderscape should be strengthened through credible influencers, knowledgeable retailers and employees, responsive online communities, transparent communication, and visible consistency with halal-related values and standards. Storyscape and Servicescape should not be neglected, but managerial efforts should ensure that all four dimensions operate coherently, with sensory delivery and stakeholder credibility receiving greater emphasis because they appear more consequential for repurchase.

The study is limited by its cross-sectional, self-reported design and its focus on halal cosmetics within a specific consumer context, which restricts causal inference and broader generalizability. Future research should employ longitudinal, experimental, and behavioral designs to examine how exposure to different forms of eWOM changes Brand Gestalt over time and whether these changes predict actual repurchase behavior. Replication across product and service categories would clarify whether the relative importance of Sensescape and Stakeholderscape is context dependent. Further studies should also examine boundary conditions such as source credibility, brand familiarity, product involvement, trust, authenticity, skepticism, and eWOM valence, while testing alternative higher-order or configurational specifications of Brand Gestalt to better explain how its dimensions operate jointly in shaping consumer behavior.

Declarations

Ethical approval

Ethical approval was granted by the Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Klabat Research Committee (Approval No. 015/UK/FEB.RK/SK/2025).

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Author Contribution

Author ContributionsCryzelda M. Lumbantoruan: Conceptualization, methodology, investigation, data collection, data curation, formal analysis, and writing – original draft.Deske W. Mandagi: Conceptualization, methodology, supervision, validation, formal analysis, writing – review and editing, and project administration.Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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Figures

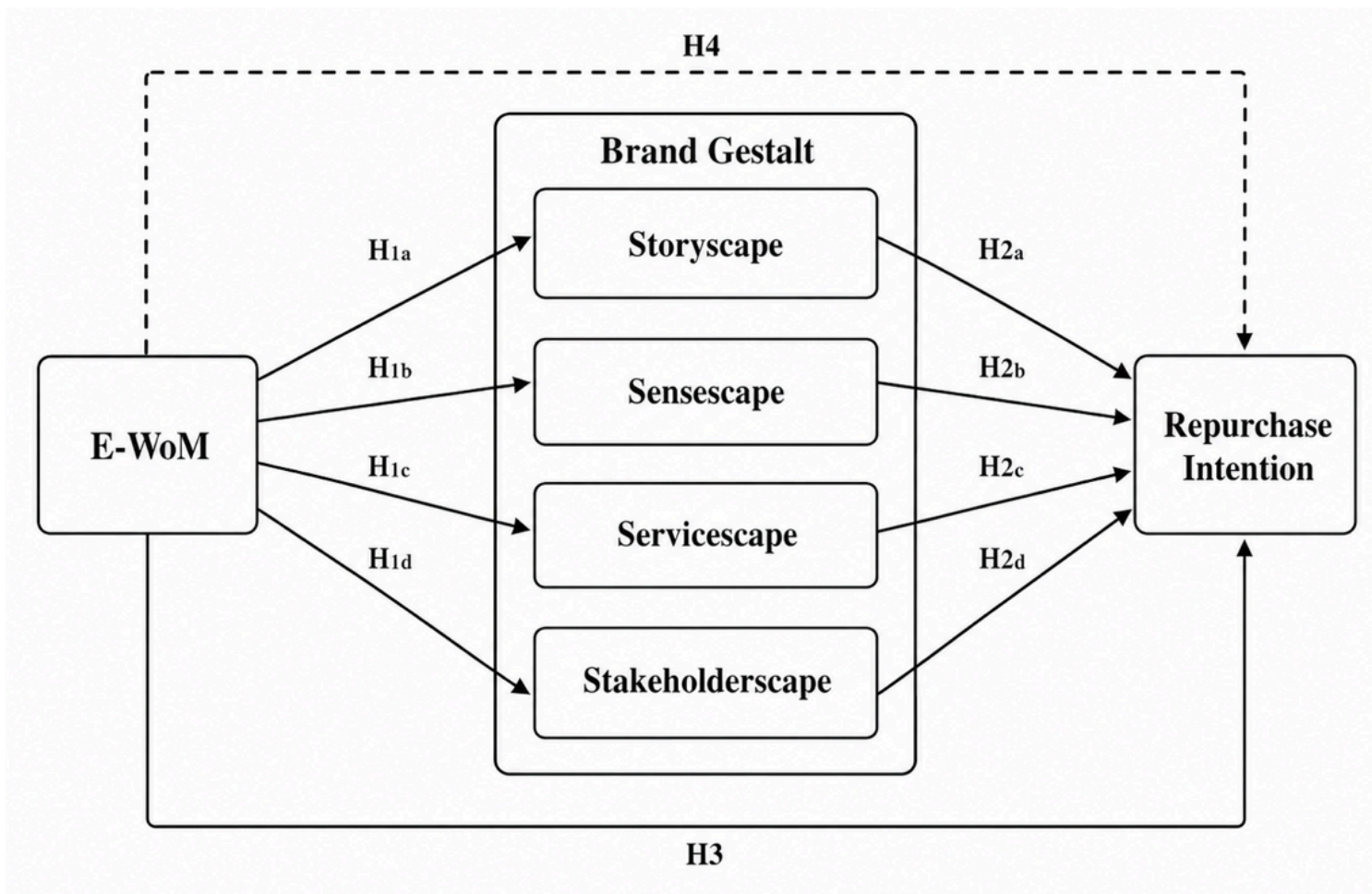


Figure 1

Legend not included with this version