

Antecedents of Halal Brand Gestalt: The Influence of Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction

Rivena Yasin

Klabat University

Deske W. Mandagi

`deskemandagi@unklab.ac.id`

Klabat University

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Abstract

Growing consumer concern for holistic consumption experiences has shifted attention beyond product attributes toward service quality and its influence on overall brand perception. This study investigates the antecedent role of service quality in shaping customer satisfaction and halal brand gestalt within the halal fast-food sector. A quantitative, survey-based research design was employed, using purposive sampling to collect data from 252 halal fast-food customers in Indonesia. The data were analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The findings indicate that the tangibles dimension of service quality is a significant predictor of halal brand gestalt, while empathy has a significant and positive effect on customer satisfaction. In addition, customer satisfaction significantly influences halal brand gestalt and partially mediates the relationships between the tangibles and reliability dimensions of service quality and halal brand gestalt. This study contributes to the halal marketing literature by extending brand gestalt theory to the halal fast-food context and by demonstrating that specific service quality dimensions play a critical role in shaping holistic brand perceptions beyond functional performance and religious compliance. This study introduces a novel application of brand gestalt theory in halal fast food by showing that holistic halal brand perception is selectively driven by tangible service cues and mediated by customer satisfaction, moving halal branding beyond certification-centric and functional explanations toward experiential brand construction.

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of the global halal market has elevated halal branding from a narrowly defined religious marker to a strategic branding construct with profound cultural, economic, and experiential implications. For Muslim consumers, halal brands symbolize not only religious permissibility but also trust, quality assurance, and alignment with lifestyle values (Yarar, 2020; Ali et al., 2018). As halal products increasingly compete within mainstream markets, the emphasis of halal branding has shifted toward delivering holistic consumption experiences that integrate functional, emotional, and symbolic meanings. This transformation reflects the growing recognition that halal branding must extend beyond certification labels to encompass broader service and experiential dimensions that shape overall brand perception and resonance (Noor, 2025; Ahmat et al., 2026).

Despite its growing importance, halal branding remains fraught with structural and perceptual challenges that motivate continued academic inquiry. One major issue lies in the complexity and fragmentation of halal certification systems, which often result in inconsistent standards and enforcement across regions (Amid, 2024; Restuti et al., 2025). In addition, limited consumer education regarding halal principles and certification processes has contributed to varying interpretations of what constitutes a truly halal product (Amid, 2024; Haryati et al., 2024). These challenges are compounded by the fact that halal branding is increasingly associated not only with religious compliance but also with quality, safety, and ethical consumption, leading to heterogeneous perceptions among consumer groups (Ali et al., 2018; Amid, 2024). Prior research consistently demonstrates that effective halal branding enhances consumer trust, satisfaction, and loyalty, which are critical for sustaining long-term consumer brand relationships

and competitive advantage (Noor, 2025; Ahmat et al., 2026). However, much of this work conceptualizes halal branding primarily as a signaling mechanism, offering limited insight into how consumers integrate experiential and service related cues into a cohesive brand evaluation.

Brand gestalt theory offers a compelling conceptual framework to address this limitation by emphasizing holistic brand perception rather than isolated attribute evaluation. Brand gestalt refers to the unified mental representation consumers form by synthesizing multiple brand elements, such as narratives, sensory stimuli, service encounters, and stakeholder interactions, into an overall impression (Mandagi et al., 2024; Mandagi & Centeno, 2024). This holistic perspective is particularly salient in the food and restaurant industry, where experiential factors play a dominant role in shaping consumer perceptions. Prior studies show that a strong brand gestalt enhances differentiation in highly competitive markets, enabling restaurants to create unique and memorable experiences that foster emotional attachment and competitive advantage (Sithole et al., 2025). Moreover, brand gestalt has been shown to influence key behavioral outcomes, including repurchase intentions, customer citizenship behavior, and positive word of mouth (Alshreef et al., 2023; Rantung et al., 2025). Sensory and emotional dimensions, such as food presentation, ambience, and servicescape, are especially potent in reinforcing brand memorability and engagement in restaurant settings (Danhauser et al., 2025; Zanetta et al., 2024). Importantly, brand gestalt is inherently co created through interactions among multiple stakeholders, particularly employees and customers, underscoring the central role of service quality in shaping holistic brand meaning (Erkmen & Hancer, 2019; Mandagi & Centeno, 2025).

Although interest in brand gestalt has grown steadily, existing studies remain largely concentrated on general consumer products and the broader hospitality industry, with relatively limited attention to restaurant and food contexts. Even fewer studies have examined brand gestalt within halal consumption settings, where religious values intersect with experiential, sensory, and service based evaluations. Current halal branding research predominantly focuses on certification credibility, perceived quality, and trust formation (Ali et al., 2018; Noor, 2025), while largely neglecting how service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction contribute to the formation of a holistic halal brand gestalt. This omission is particularly significant in the halal fast food sector, where standardized offerings coexist with highly interactive service encounters, making experiential consistency and service performance critical determinants of brand perception.

Addressing this gap, the present study aims to investigate the antecedents of halal brand gestalt by examining the influence of service quality and customer satisfaction in the halal fast food context. By integrating brand gestalt theory with service quality and customer satisfaction frameworks, this study develops and empirically tests a theoretical model that explains how holistic halal brand perceptions are formed beyond functional performance and religious compliance. The study contributes to halal branding and branding theory by extending the application of brand gestalt to halal food services and by providing empirical evidence of the differential roles of service quality dimensions in shaping holistic brand perceptions. In doing so, it demonstrates originality and theoretical novelty while offering practical

implications for brand strategy, service design, and long term consumer relationship building in halal markets.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Brand Gestalt

Gestalt theory originates from psychology and explains how individuals perceive and interpret stimuli as organized and meaningful wholes rather than as isolated components. Central to this theory is the principle that the whole is perceived as greater than the sum of its parts, as human cognition naturally integrates multiple elements into unified perceptual structures (Mohamed & Adiloglu, 2023). This theoretical perspective has increasingly informed marketing scholarship, particularly in explaining how consumers form comprehensive evaluations of brands based on the interaction of multiple cues rather than on individual attributes.

Drawing from Gestalt theory, brand gestalt has emerged as a relatively novel yet influential concept in marketing. Brand gestalt refers to the holistic perception or overall impression that consumers develop through the integration of diverse brand elements, including functional attributes, experiential cues, and symbolic meanings (Mandagi et al., 2021). Viewing a brand through a gestalt perspective allows scholars and practitioners to better understand how brands communicate their core characteristics and distinctiveness, as consumers evaluate brands as unified entities rather than as fragmented parts (Rantung et al., 2023). As such, brand gestalt provides a conceptual bridge between cognitive perception theory and contemporary branding practice.

The explanatory strength of brand gestalt lies in its emphasis on the interaction and interdependence of brand elements. Diamond et al. (2009) argue that brand strength cannot be adequately explained by any single brand attribute, but instead emerges from the dynamic combination and mutual reinforcement of multiple brand elements. This perspective encourages more comprehensive and integrative thinking in branding research, moving beyond linear or reductionist models of brand evaluation. When brand elements are perceived as consistent and harmonious, they enhance brand clarity, emotional appeal, and memorability, which are critical for sustained brand competitiveness (Errichiello & Zschiesche, 2022).

To facilitate empirical investigation, Mandagi et al. (2021) operationalize brand gestalt into four interrelated dimensions. The first dimension, story, captures how consumers interpret and internalize brand narratives and communicated information. The second dimension, sensescape, reflects consumers' sensory experiences derived from direct product or service usage. The third dimension, servicescape, relates to perceptions of the physical and environmental context in which the brand is experienced. The final dimension, stakeholderscape, refers to consumer perceptions of the actions, values, and behaviors of stakeholders associated with the brand. These dimensions do not operate independently; rather, their interaction forms a cohesive and holistic brand perception that shapes consumer responses.

The importance of brand gestalt is further underscored by its ability to mitigate perceptual bias that arises when consumers evaluate brands based on limited or isolated cues. Evaluating only selected brand elements may result in incomplete or inaccurate brand perceptions, whereas a gestalt-based evaluation captures the integrated nature of consumer experience (Mohamed & Adiloglu, 2023). Errichiello (2021) highlights that brand gestalt is particularly distinctive because it reflects the relational harmony among complex brand elements. When these elements are well-aligned and clearly structured, they enhance brand attractiveness and deepen consumer engagement.

Empirical research on brand gestalt has expanded across multiple sectors, confirming its relevance and explanatory power. Prior studies have examined brand gestalt in tourism destinations (Mandagi et al., 2025; Walean et al., 2023), telecommunications services (Walean et al., 2024), sustainable product (Rantung et al., 2025), and educational institutions (Pasuhuk & Mandagi, 2023). Collectively, these studies demonstrate that brand gestalt influences key outcomes such as brand differentiation, consumer attachment, and behavioral intentions. However, despite this growing body of literature, research has yet to explicitly examine the relationship between brand gestalt, service quality, and customer satisfaction in the context of halal products. This absence is notable given the experiential and trust-sensitive nature of halal consumption, thereby revealing a critical theoretical and empirical gap that the present study seeks to address.

2.2. Service Quality

Service quality represents a fundamental construct in marketing and service management, reflecting the extent to which a firm's service performance meets or exceeds customer expectations. Beyond product quality, service quality has become an essential determinant of customer evaluations, particularly in experience-driven industries such as food and beverages. Service quality can be understood as the overall assessment of all activities undertaken by a company to satisfy customer needs and expectations through service delivery processes (Prakash & Mohanty, 2013). In the food and beverage sector, service quality is commonly manifested through speed of service, order accuracy, employee politeness, and responsiveness, all of which contribute to customers' overall consumption experience.

The importance of service quality has intensified as consumers increasingly evaluate offerings holistically, considering not only what they consume but also how the service is delivered. High service quality enables firms to improve operational efficiency, respond quickly to service failures, and enhance customer satisfaction through accurate and reliable service processes (Singh, 2023). Conversely, inadequate service quality can generate negative impressions, weaken customer trust, and encourage customers to switch to competing brands (Amoako et al., 2023). Glaveli et al. (2023) further argue that service quality functions as a primary evaluation criterion in customer decision-making and plays a critical role in firm growth. Effective service recovery mechanisms are also crucial, as they can transform dissatisfied customers into loyal ones by restoring trust and reinforcing positive brand perceptions.

To systematically assess service quality, Parasuraman et al. (1991) introduce the SERVQUAL model, which conceptualizes service quality as the gap between customer expectations and perceived service

performance. This model identifies five key dimensions of service quality. Tangibles refer to the physical aspects of service, including facilities, equipment, cleanliness, and employee appearance. Reliability reflects the firm's ability to deliver promised services accurately and consistently. Responsiveness captures the willingness and promptness of employees in assisting customers. Assurance relates to employee knowledge, courtesy, and the ability to inspire trust and confidence. Empathy represents the degree of personalized attention and care provided to customers. These five dimensions collectively provide a comprehensive framework for evaluating service quality across diverse service contexts (Parasuraman et al., 1991; Sebrek, 2020). Based on this framework, the present study operationalizes service quality using all five SERVQUAL dimensions.

Service quality is particularly critical in the food and restaurant sector due to the experiential nature of dining. The dining experience encompasses not only food quality but also service interactions, physical environment, and staff behavior, all of which significantly influence customer perceptions and satisfaction (Ramanathan et al., 2016). Empirical evidence indicates that high service quality directly enhances customer satisfaction and loyalty, leading to repeat patronage and positive word-of-mouth communication (Adriatico et al., 2022). In highly competitive restaurant markets, superior service quality serves as a key differentiator, enabling establishments to build strong brands, attract new customers, and retain existing ones. Restaurants that consistently deliver reliable, responsive, and empathetic service are more likely to establish long-term customer relationships and achieve sustainable financial performance.

2.3. Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is a central construct in marketing and service research, reflecting customers' evaluative judgments of their overall consumption experiences. In the food and restaurant sector, customer satisfaction represents the extent to which dining experiences meet or exceed expectations, encompassing evaluations of food quality, service performance, and the overall restaurant environment (Bonfanti et al., 2025; To & Leung, 2023). As the industry is highly experiential and competitive, customer satisfaction has become a key indicator of service effectiveness and organizational success (Kosasih et al., 2024).

The importance of customer satisfaction lies in its strong relationship with customer loyalty and long-term business sustainability. Satisfied customers are more likely to return, develop loyalty, and engage in repeat patronage, which is essential for sustained performance in the restaurant sector (Chun & Nyam-Ochir, 2020; Dandis et al., 2023). Prior studies indicate that customer satisfaction is significantly influenced by food quality, service quality, and restaurant image, and that high satisfaction levels enable restaurants to differentiate themselves from competitors in increasingly competitive markets (Biswas & Verma, 2023; Ahmed et al., 2023; Manhas et al., 2024).

Among the determinants of customer satisfaction, service quality consistently emerges as a dominant factor. Elements such as staff behavior, professionalism, responsiveness, and service-related knowledge play a vital role in shaping customer satisfaction and reinforcing positive consumption experiences

(Mekoth et al., 2023; Nguyen & Malik, 2022; Rasheed & Rashid, 2024; Al-Refaei et al., 2024). Empirical evidence further suggests that customer satisfaction not only directly influences loyalty but also serves as a key mechanism linking service quality to broader brand-related outcomes. Despite its established importance, limited research has examined customer satisfaction as an explanatory mechanism in the formation of holistic brand perceptions, particularly within halal food contexts, highlighting the relevance of its inclusion in the present study.

3. HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Service quality, customer satisfaction, and brand gestalt are closely interrelated constructs in service and branding research, particularly within experience-intensive sectors such as food and restaurants. Service quality, as conceptualized in the SERVQUAL model, reflects the gap between customer expectations and perceived service performance across five dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy (Parasuraman et al., 1991; Sebrek, 2020). These dimensions provide a comprehensive framework for assessing service encounters across industries (Liu et al., 2025) and are especially salient in restaurant contexts, where service interactions, staff behavior, and physical environments significantly shape customer perceptions (Ramanathan et al., 2016). Empirical studies consistently demonstrate that high service quality enhances customer satisfaction and loyalty, leading to repeat patronage and positive word-of-mouth, which are essential for long-term competitiveness in highly saturated restaurant markets (Adriatico et al., 2022; Ahmed et al., 2023). From a holistic branding perspective, service quality also functions as an experiential cue that contributes to the formation of brand gestalt, as consumers integrate service experiences, sensory impressions, and interpersonal interactions into a unified brand perception (Diamond et al., 2009; Mandagi et al., 2021). Customer satisfaction further serves as a cumulative evaluative mechanism that translates service encounters into enduring brand impressions and behavioral outcomes (Chun & Nyam-Ochir, 2020; Dandis et al., 2023). Despite extensive research on service quality and customer satisfaction, limited studies have simultaneously examined their roles in shaping brand gestalt, particularly in the context of halal food products. Addressing this gap, the present study develops a conceptual framework that positions customer satisfaction as both an outcome of service quality and a mediating mechanism in the formation of halal brand gestalt.

3.1. Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction

Service quality has long been recognized as a primary antecedent of customer satisfaction in service industries. Customers evaluate service encounters by comparing perceived performance with prior expectations, and satisfaction emerges when service delivery meets or exceeds these expectations (Parasuraman et al., 1991). In the restaurant sector, dimensions such as physical tangibles, reliability in order accuracy, responsiveness of staff, assurance conveyed through professionalism, and empathy through personalized attention are critical determinants of customer satisfaction (Ramanathan et al., 2016; Adriatico et al., 2022). Prior empirical studies consistently confirm that improvements in service quality lead to higher levels of customer satisfaction, which in turn enhance customer loyalty and revisit

intentions (Biswas & Verma, 2023; Chun & Nyam-Ochir, 2020). Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1a–H1e: The five SQ dimensions (i.e., tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy) positively influence customer satisfaction.

3.2. Service Quality and Brand Gestalt

Beyond satisfaction, service quality plays a critical role in shaping holistic brand perceptions. From a gestalt perspective, consumers form brand evaluations by integrating multiple experiential cues rather than assessing isolated attributes (Diamond et al., 2009). In restaurant settings, service quality dimensions such as staff behavior, physical environment, and responsiveness contribute to the coherence and harmony of brand-related experiences, thereby strengthening brand gestalt (Mandagi et al., 2021). Although previous studies have demonstrated the importance of brand gestalt in various sectors, including tourism, telecommunications, health tourism, and education, empirical research directly linking service quality dimensions to brand gestalt remains limited (Tumober et al., 2024; Walean et al., 2024; Tappy & Mandagi, 2024; Pasuhuk & Mandagi, 2023). Given the experiential nature of service encounters, it is proposed that each service quality dimension contributes to the formation of a positive brand gestalt. Thus, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H2a–H2e: The five SQ dimensions (i.e., tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy) positively influence brand gestalt.

3.3. Customer Satisfaction and Brand Gestalt

Customer satisfaction reflects customers' overall evaluations of their consumption experiences and serves as a key driver of brand-related outcomes. In the food and restaurant sector, satisfied customers are more likely to develop favorable brand impressions, revisit intentions, and positive word-of-mouth behaviors (Chun & Nyam-Ochir, 2020; Dandis et al., 2023). While prior research has examined brand gestalt as an antecedent of satisfaction in tourism and small business contexts, limited attention has been given to the role of customer satisfaction in shaping brand gestalt (Rantung et al., 2023; Walean et al., 2024). Drawing on satisfaction and gestalt theories, this study proposes that satisfied customers are more likely to integrate their positive service experiences into a coherent and favorable brand gestalt. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3 : Customer satisfaction positively influence brand gestalt.

3.4. Mediating Role of Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction may also function as a mediating mechanism linking service quality to brand gestalt. High service quality enhances satisfaction by improving customers' service evaluations, which are subsequently incorporated into holistic brand perceptions. Although prior research has examined service quality, customer satisfaction, and brand gestalt concurrently, the mediating role of customer

satisfaction has not been empirically tested, particularly in halal food contexts (Lebo & Mandagi, 2023). Given the trust-sensitive and experiential nature of halal consumption, customer satisfaction is expected to play a pivotal role in translating service quality into halal brand gestalt. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4a–H4e: The five SQ dimensions (i.e., tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy) have a positive and significant indirect effect on brand gestalt mediated by customer satisfaction.

The conceptual framework illustrating the proposed relationships among the study variables is presented in Figure 1:

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative, cross-sectional research design employing a structured questionnaire to examine both descriptive patterns and causal relationships among the study variables. A descriptive approach is used to capture respondents’ profiles and perceptions, while a correlational approach is applied to test hypothesised relationships among service quality, customer satisfaction, and brand gestalt. This design is appropriate for empirically assessing latent constructs and their interrelationships within a predefined theoretical framework.

4.2 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study population comprises customers of halal fast-food restaurants in North Sulawesi, Indonesia. A purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure that respondents possessed relevant consumption experience. Accordingly, eligible participants were required to have purchased from a halal fast-food outlet at least three times, enabling informed evaluations of service quality and brand perceptions.

The minimum sample size was determined using two complementary approaches. First, following the indicator-based rule of thumb proposed by Hair et al. (2022), a minimum of five observations per indicator was required. Second, an a priori statistical power analysis was conducted with a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$ and statistical power of 0.80, which indicated a minimum requirement of 200 observations. The final sample consisted of 252 respondents, exceeding both the indicator-based threshold and the minimum sample size required for adequate statistical power. This sample size is therefore sufficient for robust estimation using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Table 1. Respondent Profile

Variable	Category	n	%
Age	20-30	172	68.3
	31-40	30	11.9
	41-50	31	12.3
	Above 50	8	3.2
	Below 20	11	4.4
Gender	Male	65	25.8
	Female	187	74.2
Domicile	Bitung	17	6.7
	Manado	45	17.9
	Minahasa	70	27.8
	Minahasa Selatan	4	1.6
	Minahasa Tenggara	5	2
	Minahasa Utara	27	10.7
	Other	53	21
	Tomohon	31	12.3
Occupation	Private Employee	128	50.8
	Other	96	38.1
	Entrepreneur	17	6.7
	Government Employee	11	4.4

4.3 Instrument Development and Measurement

Data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire consisting of two sections. The first section captured demographic information, including age, gender, domicile, and occupation. The second section measured the study constructs using established scales adapted from prior literature to fit the research context.

All latent variables were measured using a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Service quality was measured using 29 items adapted from Parasuraman et al. (1991), Mathong et al. (2020), and Uslu and Eren (2020). Customer satisfaction was assessed using six items

adapted from Uslu and Eren (2020), Wu et al. (2024), and Terpstra et al. (2014). Brand gestalt was measured using 19 items across four dimensions, adapted from Mandagi et al. (2021).

Prior to full-scale data collection, the questionnaire underwent face and content validity assessment involving academic experts and practitioners in marketing and consumer behavior. Feedback regarding clarity, relevance, and wording was incorporated to refine the instrument. Content validity was further ensured by grounding all measurement items in previously validated scales.

4.4 Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted between March and April 2025 using both online and offline survey methods. Offline data were collected by directly approaching customers at halal fast-food outlets, while online responses were gathered via a Google Forms link distributed to eligible respondents. Participants who completed the questionnaire were encouraged to share the survey link with other qualified respondents, facilitating broader coverage within the target population. To ensure the credibility and accuracy of the findings, this study strictly adhered to ethical research principles. Participation was entirely voluntary, respondents' anonymity was maintained, and all collected data were treated with full confidentiality. Verbal informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Ethical clearance for the study was granted by the institutional research Committee (Approval No. 016/UK/FEB.RK/SK/2025).

4.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS and SmartPLS software. SPSS was used for data screening, descriptive statistics, and respondent profiling. Structural Equation Modeling using PLS-SEM in SmartPLS was employed to test the measurement and structural models. Measurement model evaluation included assessments of convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability. Convergent validity was established through indicator loadings (> 0.70) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE > 0.50). Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion, while reliability was confirmed through Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values exceeding 0.70. Following measurement validation, the structural model was evaluated to test hypothesised relationships, including direct and indirect effects.

4.6. Common method bias

To mitigate potential common method bias, both procedural and statistical remedies were applied (Podsakoff et al., 2012). Procedurally, questionnaire items were carefully worded, pre-tested, and randomly ordered to reduce response pattern bias. Anonymity was ensured to minimise social desirability effects.

Statistically, Harman's single-factor test was conducted using exploratory factor analysis. The results indicated that no single factor dominated the variance, with the largest factor accounting for 31.53%,

below the recommended 50% threshold. These results suggest that common method bias is unlikely to threaten the validity of the study findings.

5. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

5.1. Measurement Model Assessment

Measurement model testing is carried out before conducting hypothesis testing or structural model testing to test the validity of each variable. The first analysis is convergent validity conducted by looking at the factor loading of all existing indicators. Based on the results in Tables 4 and 5, all indicators have a factor loading value above 0.7, which means that convergent validity has been met.

The second validity test is discriminant validity which is carried out by looking at two criteria, namely the Fornell-Larcker Criteria and HTMT. The Fornell-Larcker validity test is carried out by comparing the square root value of AVE of each variable with the correlation between variables in the model. The results in Table 3 shows that all of the square roots of AVE on the diagonal of the table are greater than the correlation coefficient of the two variables, this indicates a high degree of discriminant validity.

Table 2
Discriminant validity with Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Assurance (1)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	0,92						
Brand Gestalt (2)	0,84	0,90					
Customer Satisfaction (3)	0,89	0,84	0,96				
Empathy (4)	0,90	0,85	0,90	0,93			
Reliability (5)	0,86	0,75	0,84	0,84	0,88		
Responsiveness (6)	0,91	0,83	0,90	0,91	0,86	0,92	
Tangibles (7)	0,90	0,88	0,90	0,90	0,82	0,89	0,92

The second discriminant validity test looks at the HTMT. Based on the results of the HTMT test as seen in Table 3, shows that all HTMT values range from 0.795 to 0.892 and remain below the recommended threshold of 0.90, indicating adequate discriminant validity among all constructs. Even closely related constructs exhibit acceptable HTMT values, confirming that each latent variable is empirically distinct and supporting the robustness of the measurement model.

Table 3
Discriminant validity with HTMT

Construct	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Assurance (1)						
Brand Gestalt (2)	0,847					
Customer Satisfaction (3)	0,810	0,810				
Empathy (4)	0,837	0,846	0,819			
Reliability (5)	0,821	0,795	0,883	0,892		
Responsiveness (6)	0,843	0,849	0,820	0,840	0,838	
Tangible (7)	0,829	0,796	0,819	0,829	0,872	0,825

The internal consistency reliability of the measurement model was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, rho_A, and composite reliability, in accordance with the recommendations of Hair et al. (2022). All constructs exhibit strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70, ranging from 0.86 to 0.96. The rho_A values similarly surpass the 0.70 criterion, providing further confirmation of construct reliability and addressing potential estimation bias associated with Cronbach's alpha in PLS-SEM.

Composite reliability values for all constructs are also well above the minimum acceptable level of 0.70, ranging from 0.86 to 0.97, indicating a high degree of internal consistency among the indicators. Consistent with the guidelines of Hair et al. (2022), these results confirm that the measurement instruments demonstrate adequate reliability and are suitable for subsequent structural model evaluation.

Table 4
Measurement items loadings and reliability (variable service quality)

Construct	Indicator	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	AVE
Service Quality – Assurance	Assur1	0,91	0,96	0,96	0,97	0,75
	Assur2	0,94				
	Assur3	0,91				
	Assur4	0,92				
	Assur5	0,93				
Service Quality – Empathy	Empa1	0,94	0,86	0,87	0,87	0,75
	Empa2	0,89				
	Empa3	0,94				
	Empa4	0,91				
	Empa5	0,93				
	Empa6	0,92				
Service Quality – Reliability	Relia1	0,85	0,91	0,91	0,93	0,63
	Relia2	0,88				
	Relia3	0,81				
	Relia4	0,85				
	Relia5	0,88				
Service Quality – Responsiveness	Resp1	0,89	0,86	0,86	0,87	0,74
	Resp2	0,92				
	Resp3	0,91				
	Resp4	0,93				
	Resp5	0,93				
	Resp6	0,94				
Service Quality – Tangibles	Tangi1	0,92	0,87	0,87	0,88	0,65
	Tangi2	0,92				
	Tangi3	0,95				
	Tangi4	0,93				

Construct	Indicator	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	AVE
	Tangi5	0,93				
	Tangi6	0,9				
	Tangi7	0,91				

Table 5

Measurement items loadings and reliability (variable Customer Satisfaction and Brand Gestalt)

Construct	Indicator	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	AVE
Customer Satisfaction	KP1	0,96	0,86	0,88	0,86	0,62
	KP2	0,96				
	KP3	0,97				
	KP4	0,97				
	KP5	0,94				
	KP6	0,96				
Brand Gestalt	Sense1	0,81	0,88	0,88	0,88	0,7
	Sense2	0,86				
	Sense3	0,89				
	Sense4	0,8				
	Sense5	0,78				
	Serve1	0,9				
	Serve2	0,91				
	Serve3	0,85				
	Serve4	0,89				
	Serve5	0,89				
	Stake1	0,88				
	Stake2	0,87				
	Stake3	0,77				
	Stake4	0,79				
	Stor1	0,85				
	Stor2	0,82				
	Stor3	0,86				
	Stor4	0,75				
	Stor5	0,72				

4.3 Structural model assessment

Table 6 presents the assessment of the structural model quality, including the coefficient of determination (R^2), adjusted R^2 , predictive relevance (Q^2), and inner variance inflation factor (VIF). The results demonstrate strong explanatory power for both endogenous constructs. Specifically, Brand Gestalt ($R^2 = 0.838$) and Customer Satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.863$) explain a substantial proportion of variance in the model. The adjusted R^2 values further confirm the robustness of these explanatory levels.

All Q^2 values are greater than zero, indicating satisfactory predictive relevance and confirming that the model has strong out-of-sample predictive capability. Although some inner VIF values exceed the conservative threshold of 3.3, they remain within acceptable limits for PLS-SEM, suggesting that multicollinearity does not pose a serious concern and does not critically bias the estimated path coefficients.

Table 6
Structural Model Quality Assessment

Endogenous Construct	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Q^2	Inner VIF (Min–Max)
Customer Satisfaction	0.863	0.861	0.784	2.253–3.765
Brand Gestalt	0.838	0.834	0.570	2.175–3.129

4.4. Hypothesis Testing Results

The hypothesis testing results indicate selective support for the proposed relationships between service quality dimensions, customer satisfaction, and brand gestalt. For H1a–H1e, tangibles and empathy are found to have significant positive effects on customer satisfaction. Tangibles show a strong influence, highlighting the importance of physical facilities and tangible service cues in enhancing customer satisfaction, while empathy underscores the role of personalized and caring service interactions. In contrast, reliability, responsiveness, and assurance do not demonstrate significant effects on customer satisfaction, suggesting that these functional and process-related dimensions are less salient in shaping satisfaction within the studied context.. Regarding H2a–H2e, the results reveal that tangibles are the only service quality dimension that significantly influences brand gestalt, indicating that concrete and visible service attributes play a central role in forming customers’ holistic brand perceptions. Other service quality dimensions, including reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, do not show significant direct effects on brand gestalt, leading to limited support for the second hypothesis set.

Further analysis provides strong evidence for the pivotal role of customer satisfaction in brand perception formation. In support of H3, customer satisfaction exerts a substantial and significant positive effect on brand gestalt, demonstrating that satisfied customers are more likely to develop an integrated and favorable overall perception of the brand. Conversely, the results related to H3 indicate that assurance and empathy do not directly affect brand gestalt, implying that their influence may be indirect or contingent on customer satisfaction. Overall, the findings emphasize the dominance of tangible service elements and customer satisfaction as key drivers of brand gestalt, while other service

quality dimensions appear to play a more supportive or secondary role within the proposed framework.. The results of the structural model testing are shown in Table 7 and Fig. 2 below.

Table 7
Results of Direct Effect Testing

Relationship	Sample	STDEV	T Statistics	P Values	Significant?
	Mean (M)		(O/STDEV)		
Tangibles -> CS	0.31	0.06	5	0.00	Yes
Reliability -> CS	0.11	0.06	1.9	0.06	No
Responsiveness -> CS	0.19	0.1	1.72	0.09	No
Assurance -> CS	0.14	0.08	1.78	0.08	No
Empathy -> CS	0.23	0.1	2.3	0.02	Yes
Tangibles -> BG	0.43	0.08	4.98	0.00	Yes
Reliability -> BG	0.07	0.06	1.28	0.2	No
Responsiveness -> BG	0.02	0.1	0.36	0.72	No
Assurance -> BG	0.03	0.08	0.47	0.64	No
Empathy -> BG	0.09	0.09	0.92	0.36	No
CS -> BG	0.54	0.15	3.91	0.00	Yes

Table 8 below is the result of mediating effects. The mediation analysis examines whether customer satisfaction mediates the relationships between service quality dimensions and brand gestalt. The results indicate that customer satisfaction significantly mediates the effects of tangibles and reliability on brand gestalt. Specifically, the indirect effect of tangibles on brand gestalt through customer satisfaction is significant ($t = 3.51$; $p < 0.001$), suggesting that tangible service elements enhance brand gestalt by first increasing customer satisfaction. Similarly, the relationship between reliability and brand gestalt is significantly mediated by customer satisfaction ($t = 2.00$; $p = 0.04$), indicating that reliable service performance contributes to holistic brand perception indirectly through satisfaction, even though its direct effect was not significant.

In contrast, customer satisfaction does not mediate the relationships between responsiveness, assurance, or empathy and brand gestalt, as the corresponding indirect effects fail to reach statistical significance. These findings suggest that not all service quality dimensions translate into brand gestalt via customer satisfaction, highlighting the selective nature of the mediation mechanism.

Table 8
Results of Mediation Effect Testing

Relationship between variable	STDEV	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	Significant?
Tangibles -> CS -> BG	0,05	3,51	0,00	Yes
Reliability -> CS -> BG	0,03	2,00	0,04	Yes
Responsiveness -> CS -> BG	0,05	1,94	0,05	No
Assurance -> CS -> BG	0,05	1,72	0,09	No
Empathy -> CS -> BG	0,08	1,78	0,08	No

4.5. Discussion

This study advances halal branding research by explaining how service quality and customer satisfaction contribute to the formation of halal brand gestalt in the fast-food context. Building on SERVQUAL and brand gestalt theory, the findings demonstrate that holistic halal brand perceptions are shaped through selective experiential mechanisms rather than uniformly across all service quality dimensions. This insight responds directly to prior calls to move beyond certification-centric and signaling-based views of halal branding toward a more experience-oriented and perceptual understanding of halal brands (Ali et al., 2018; Noor, 2025; Ahmat et al., 2026).

The results for H1a–H1e show that service quality dimensions exert differentiated effects on customer satisfaction. Consistent with extensive service and restaurant literature, tangibles significantly enhance customer satisfaction, underscoring the importance of physical facilities, cleanliness, visual presentation, and employee appearance in shaping dining experiences (Parasuraman et al., 1991; Ramanathan et al., 2016; Adriatico et al., 2022). In halal contexts, tangible cues play an even more critical role as they function as visible signals of hygiene, safety, and compliance, which are closely associated with trust and perceived halal integrity (Ali et al., 2018; Yasar, 2020; Amid, 2024). Empathy also positively influences customer satisfaction, supporting prior findings that personalized attention and caring interactions strengthen emotional responses and satisfaction in food service settings (Nguyen and Malik, 2022; Mekoth et al., 2023; Rasheed and Rashid, 2024). In contrast, reliability, responsiveness, and assurance do not significantly affect satisfaction. This finding diverges from traditional SERVQUAL assumptions but aligns with recent studies suggesting that functional service performance in standardized fast-food environments is often perceived as a basic expectation rather than a source of satisfaction enhancement (Asti and Ayuningtyas, 2020; Arianto and Octavia, 2021). Consequently, H1 is only partially supported, reinforcing the argument that satisfaction in halal fast food is driven more by experiential and relational cues than by operational consistency alone.

The findings for H2a–H2e further demonstrate that only tangibles have a direct and significant effect on brand gestalt. This result is theoretically consistent with brand gestalt theory, which emphasizes that

consumers form holistic brand perceptions by integrating salient and sensory-rich cues into a unified mental representation (Diamond et al., 2009; Mohamed and Adiloglu, 2023). Tangible elements directly contribute to the sensescape and servicescape dimensions of brand gestalt, which have been shown to be particularly influential in food and restaurant contexts where sensory stimulation and environmental cues dominate consumer evaluations (Danhauser et al., 2025; Zanetta et al., 2024). Prior brand gestalt studies similarly report that physical and sensory elements play a dominant role in shaping holistic brand impressions and memorability (Mandagi et al., 2021; Errichiello, 2021; Sithole et al., 2025). The non-significant effects of reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy suggest that these interaction-based dimensions may lack the perceptual salience required to directly shape holistic brand meaning, especially in highly standardized halal fast-food settings. This finding extends existing brand gestalt research by empirically demonstrating that not all experiential cues contribute equally to gestalt formation.

Strong support for H3 confirms customer satisfaction as a key antecedent of brand gestalt, offering an important theoretical contribution. While prior research often positions brand gestalt as an antecedent to satisfaction in tourism and small business contexts (Rantung et al., 2023; Walean et al., 2024), the present study provides empirical evidence for the reverse relationship. Satisfaction represents a cumulative evaluative judgment that integrates repeated service encounters into stable cognitive and affective brand perceptions (Chun and Nyam-Ochir, 2020; Dandis et al., 2023). In halal consumption settings, satisfaction likely operates as a cognitive integrator through which functional performance, experiential quality, and religious trust are synthesized into a coherent halal brand gestalt. This finding supports satisfaction theory and reinforces the argument that holistic brand perceptions emerge through cumulative experience rather than isolated service attributes.

The mediation analysis further clarifies these relationships by demonstrating that customer satisfaction partially mediates the effects of service quality on brand gestalt. The significant indirect effects for tangibles and reliability indicate that customer satisfaction serves as a critical transmission mechanism through which certain service quality dimensions are translated into holistic brand perceptions. While tangibles exert both direct and indirect effects, reliability influences brand gestalt only through satisfaction, suggesting that consistent service performance strengthens brand gestalt when it contributes to overall satisfaction rather than through immediate perceptual impact. This pattern aligns with prior research emphasizing the cumulative and evaluative nature of satisfaction in shaping long-term brand meaning (Chun and Nyam-Ochir, 2020; Dandis et al., 2023) and extends emerging work on the mediating role of satisfaction in brand gestalt formation (Mandagi et al., 2025). The absence of mediation effects for responsiveness, assurance, and empathy further underscores the selective role of satisfaction, suggesting that not all service interactions are internalized into holistic brand perceptions in standardized halal fast-food contexts.

Overall, the findings contribute to halal branding and branding theory by demonstrating that halal brand gestalt is constructed through tangible experiential cues and cumulative satisfaction rather than uniform service excellence or certification signals alone. By integrating service quality, customer satisfaction,

and brand gestalt into a single explanatory framework, this study extends brand gestalt theory into halal food services and responds directly to calls for more holistic and experiential approaches to halal branding (Ali et al., 2018; Noor, 2025; Mandagi and Centeno, 2025). Practically, the results suggest that halal fast-food brands should prioritize tangible service design and satisfaction management to build coherent and memorable halal brand perceptions that extend beyond religious compliance and functional performance

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Conclusions

- This study set out to explain how service quality and customer satisfaction contribute to the formation of halal brand gestalt in the halal fast-food sector. The findings demonstrate that halal brand perceptions are shaped through selective experiential mechanisms rather than uniformly across all service quality dimensions. Among the SERVQUAL dimensions, tangibles emerge as the most influential factor, exerting both direct and indirect effects on brand gestalt, while empathy contributes to customer satisfaction but not directly to holistic brand perception. In contrast, reliability, responsiveness, and assurance do not significantly influence customer satisfaction or brand gestalt directly, indicating that these dimensions may be perceived as baseline expectations in standardized halal fast-food settings.
- Customer satisfaction plays a central and integrative role in the proposed model. It significantly influences brand gestalt and partially mediates the relationships between service quality and brand gestalt, particularly for tangibles and reliability. These results suggest that holistic halal brand perceptions are formed not merely through isolated service encounters or certification cues, but through cumulative satisfaction experiences derived from tangible and consistent service delivery. Overall, the study extends halal branding research by demonstrating that halal brand gestalt is constructed through experiential and evaluative processes that go beyond functional performance and religious compliance alone.

5.2 Theoretical implications

This study offers several important theoretical contributions to branding, service marketing, and halal consumption literature. First, it extends brand gestalt theory into the halal fast-food context, an area that has received limited empirical attention. By demonstrating that tangible service cues and customer satisfaction are primary drivers of holistic brand perception, the study empirically supports the gestalt principle that consumers evaluate brands as integrated wholes rather than as collections of discrete attributes.

Second, the findings refine SERVQUAL-based theory by showing that not all service quality dimensions are equally salient in shaping satisfaction and holistic brand perception. In standardized service environments, such as halal fast food, interaction-based dimensions appear less influential than sensory

and environmental cues. This challenges the assumption of uniform dimensional effects commonly embedded in service quality models and suggests the need for contextualized applications of SERVQUAL.

Third, the study contributes to halal branding theory by shifting the focus from certification-centered signaling toward experiential brand construction. By positioning customer satisfaction as an antecedent and mediator of brand gestalt, the research demonstrates how halal brand meaning is co-created through repeated service experiences rather than solely through formal compliance mechanisms. This integrative framework advances understanding of how religious, experiential, and perceptual elements interact in halal brand formation.

5.3 Practical implications

The findings offer several practical implications for halal fast-food operators and brand managers. First, managers should prioritize tangible service elements, including restaurant cleanliness, physical layout, food presentation, and employee appearance, as these factors have the strongest influence on both customer satisfaction and brand gestalt. Tangible cues not only enhance dining experiences but also function as visible signals of hygiene, trustworthiness, and halal integrity.

Second, the significant role of customer satisfaction highlights the importance of consistency in satisfaction management. While reliability alone may not directly shape brand gestalt, it contributes indirectly through satisfaction. Therefore, ensuring consistent service delivery remains essential for reinforcing positive cumulative evaluations. Third, although empathy enhances customer satisfaction, its limited impact on brand gestalt suggests that interpersonal service initiatives should be designed to support satisfaction rather than serve as standalone branding tools.

Finally, the results suggest that halal branding strategies should move beyond certification visibility and functional service efficiency toward experience-driven brand design. By integrating tangible service cues with satisfaction-oriented strategies, halal fast-food brands can develop more coherent, memorable, and differentiated brand gestalts that resonate with contemporary halal consumers.

5.4 Limitations and future research

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that open avenues for future research. First, the study focuses on the halal fast-food sector, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other halal industries such as halal fine dining, packaged food products, or halal tourism. Future studies should examine whether the dominance of tangibles and satisfaction persists across different halal consumption contexts.

Second, the cross-sectional research design restricts causal inference and does not capture changes in brand gestalt formation over time. Longitudinal research could provide deeper insights into how cumulative satisfaction experiences shape holistic brand perceptions in the long run. Third, this study

relies on self-reported measures, which may be subject to response bias. Future research could incorporate behavioral data or experimental designs to strengthen validity.

Finally, future studies may extend the model by incorporating additional variables such as halal trust, perceived authenticity, religious commitment, or brand engagement to further explain the formation of halal brand gestalt. Examining moderating effects, such as consumer religiosity or cultural orientation, may also enrich understanding of how different consumer segments construct holistic halal brand perceptions.

Declarations

Author Contribution

Author Contributions Statement Rivena Yasin: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Writing – Original Draft. Deske W. Mandagi: Conceptualization, Methodology, Supervision, Validation, Writing – Review & Editing, Project Administration. Both authors contributed to the interpretation of the findings, reviewed the final manuscript, and approved the submitted version.

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Figures

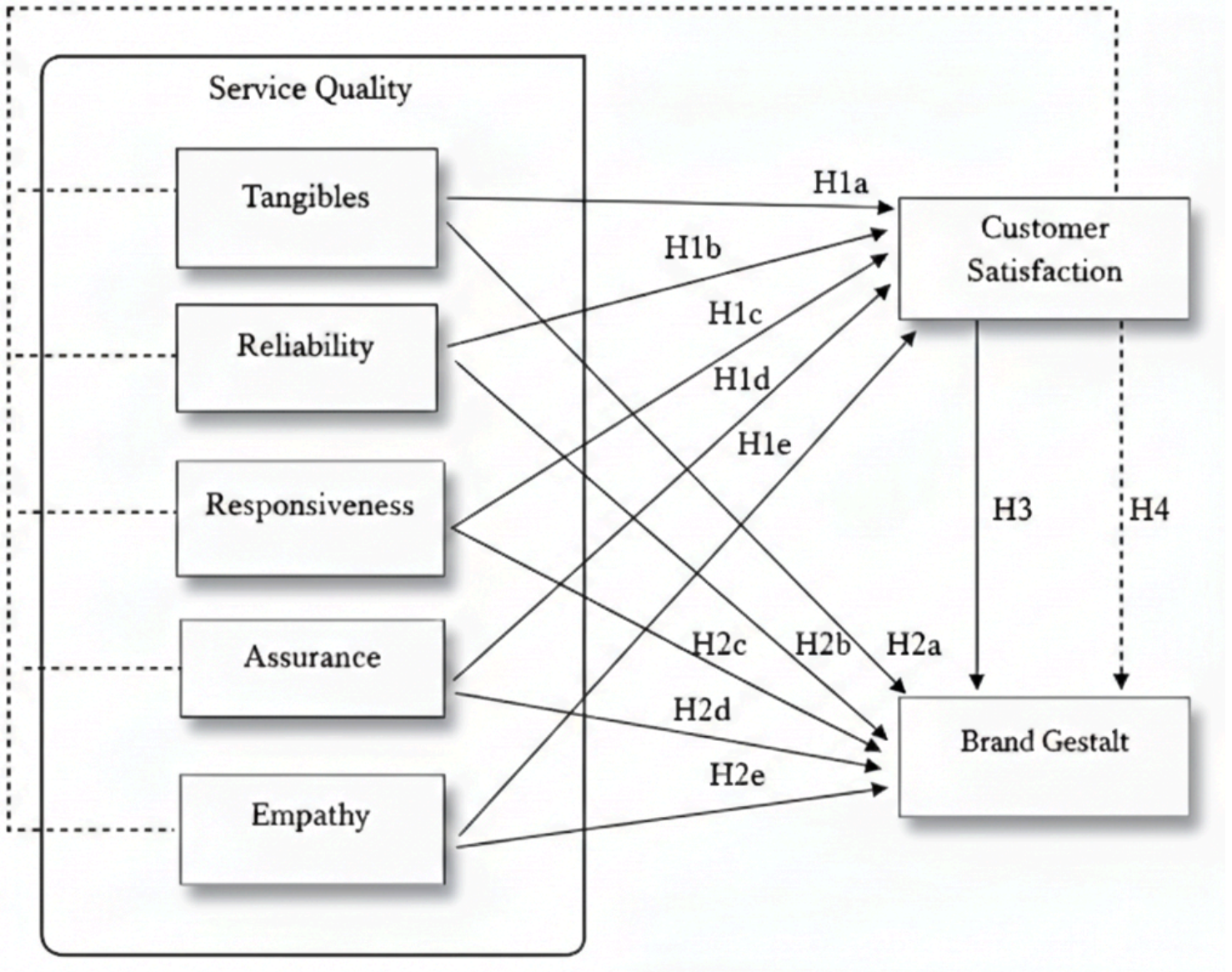


Figure 1

Conceptual Framework

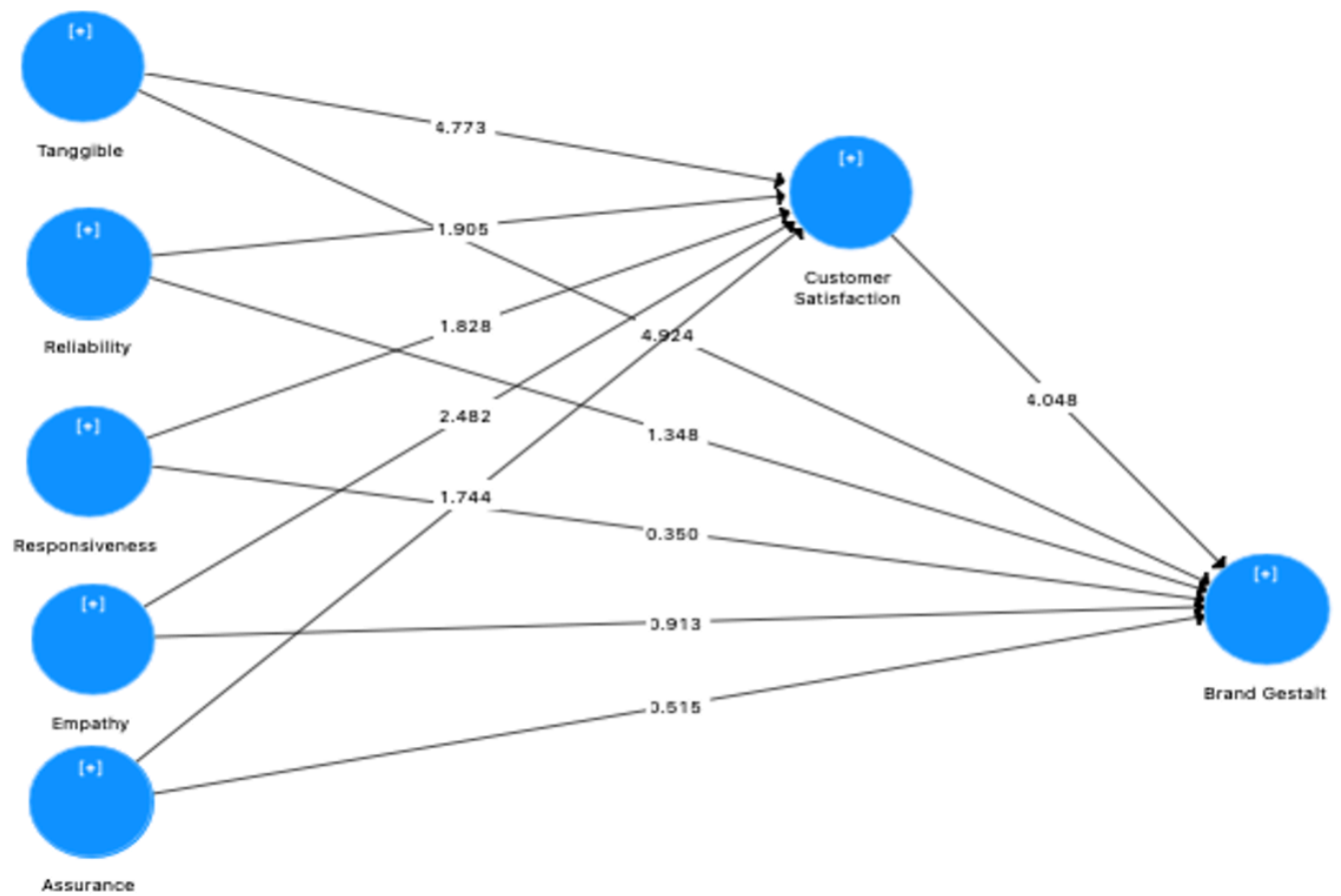


Figure 2

Structural Model