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Students' Perceptions of the Concept of Halal Tourism at Bira White Sand Beach

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Abstract

This research explores students' perceptions of *halal* tourism at Pasir Putih Bira Beach, Bulukumba Regency, and their potential in promoting *halal* tourism based on local culture. The research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. The informants were 50 high school students in classes XI and XII, selected based on religiosity, domicile near tourist areas, and travel experience. Data collection techniques include in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. The research results show that most students have a normative understanding of *halal* tourism, such as the importance of worship facilities, *halal* food, and restrictions on interactions between genders. However, gaps were found between this understanding and the reality on the ground, including the lack of *halal* facilities and tourist behavior that was not in line with religious values. Students experience a dilemma between maintaining religious values and the reality of modern tourism. The research conclusion shows that students have the potential to become *halal* tourism promotion agents by integrating local cultural values such as politeness and respect for guests. This research recommends educating the younger generation and promoting *halal* tourism based on local wisdom to create inclusive and competitive destinations.

Keywords Cultural Identity; *Halal* Tourism; Local Culture; Young Generation

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1. INTRODUCTION

Halal tourism has experienced significant growth over the past decade, in line with the rising awareness among global *Muslim* communities regarding the importance of adhering to sharia principles in daily life, including tourism activities. This trend has not only influenced the increasing demand for *halal*-friendly destinations but has also encouraged *Muslim*-majority and minority countries to develop infrastructure, products, and services that comply with Islamic guidelines (Battour & Ismail, 2020). The concept of *halal* tourism extends beyond *halal* food and prayer facilities to include alcohol-free services, *Muslim*-friendly accommodations, gender interaction management, and the integration of Islamic ethics and spirituality throughout the travel experience (Samori & Rahman, 2020). In Indonesia, the country with the world's largest *Muslim* population, the development of *halal* tourism is integrated into the national strategy for a sustainable sharia economy. The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (2022) emphasized, through the *National Strategy for Halal Tourism Development*, the importance of collaboration between local stakeholders, industry players, and communities to create globally

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competitive and culturally grounded *halal* destinations. Economic potential in this sector is also supported by the *Global Muslim Travel Index 2023*, which projects that the number of *Muslim* travelers worldwide will reach over 230 million by 2028 (CrescentRating & Mastercard, 2023). At the local level, a study by Mutmainnah and Kadir (2021) highlights that a local wisdom-based approach to *halal* tourism management can increase community acceptance and reinforce cultural identity around tourism destinations.

Bira White Sand Beach in Bulukumba Regency, South Sulawesi, is one of Indonesia's promising coastal tourist destinations, renowned for its natural beauty and rich maritime cultural traditions. Its predominantly *Muslim* population provides a conducive social-religious environment for the development of *halal* tourism initiatives. This local context presents an opportunity to develop tourism that aligns with Islamic values while also reflecting the region's indigenous wisdom, such as the Bugis-Makassar traditions of hospitality and modesty. According to Mutmainnah and Kadir (2021), integrating local cultural identity with Islamic principles enhances community acceptance and sustainability of *halal* tourism practices. However, the development of *halal* destinations faces challenges beyond the physical infrastructure, including the readiness of the community to internalize and participate in such models. The younger generation, particularly students, plays a vital role as future consumers and potential agents of transformation in shaping tourism narratives and practices (Rahman et al., 2020). Religious knowledge, digital media, and educational institutions influence their perceptions and attitudes, which mediate how they conceptualize *halal* tourism (Maulana & Rahmawati, 2020). Therefore, understanding their views is essential to designing culturally contextualized and community-driven *halal* tourism strategies.

As part of the local young generation, school students play a crucial role in shaping attitudes, narratives, and social acceptance of *halal* tourism. They are future consumers of tourism services and potential agents in promoting religious and cultural values within tourism development. Their involvement reflects the long-term sustainability of *halal* tourism initiatives, especially when rooted in community-based participation. Understanding how students perceive *halal* tourism offers insights into the depth of socialization of Islamic values in daily life and public spaces. According to Maulana and Rahmawati (2020), teenagers' perceptions of *halal* tourism are significantly influenced by their religious knowledge and the internalization of Islamic norms acquired through formal education. Furthermore, a study by Huda and Kartini (2021) emphasizes that the interplay between family values, peer influence, and access to Islamic digital content shapes youth attitudes toward religious tourism. Similarly, research by Hamdan and Saari (2020) in Malaysia finds that the level of religiosity among *Muslim* youth positively correlates with their support for *halal* tourism policies and their preference for sharia- compliant services. These findings underscore the importance of involving educational institutions in promoting *halal* tourism awareness among students to cultivate a generation that is both religiously grounded and culturally engaged in the tourism sector.

Previous research on *halal* tourism has predominantly concentrated on tourists' preferences, consumer behavior, or the role of industry stakeholders, while giving limited attention to the perceptions of local youth directly embedded in tourism communities. Abror et al. (2019) emphasize that tourists' satisfaction with *halal* tourism services is significantly shaped by emotional involvement, service quality, and aligning experiences with religious values. Similarly, Rahman et al. (2020) highlight the importance of culturally sensitive market segmentation, underscoring that *Muslim* consumers' loyalty is influenced by how well tourism offerings reflect their Islamic identity. While these studies provide valuable insights into consumer behavior at the macro level, they fall short of exploring how *halal* tourism is perceived and socially constructed at the grassroots level, particularly among students living near developing *halal* destinations. In this regard, Putra and Santosa (2022) argue that young people's interpretations of religious tourism are deeply shaped by localized religious education, exposure to cultural practices, and their socio-digital environments. Understanding students' perceptions in local communities can uncover the sociocultural dynamics behind the acceptance,

negotiation, or even resistance toward *halal* tourism initiatives, thus providing a more grounded foundation for participatory tourism development models.

To understand students' perceptions of *halal* tourism comprehensively, this study adopts a multidisciplinary theoretical framework, particularly drawing on recent applications of Social Representation Theory and contemporary models of religiosity. Moscovici's (1984) Social Representation Theory, which remains relevant in recent scholarship, has been used to explain how individuals develop shared understandings through social interaction and cultural transmission. In the case of *halal* tourism, students' interpretations are shaped not only by personal beliefs but also by their embeddedness in religious discourse, school curricula, peer groups, and digital environments (Zulhuda & Rahim, 2019). Glock and Stark's classical model of religiosity, now adapted in modern Islamic studies, is useful in analyzing students' internalization of Islamic principles through five dimensions: belief, practice, experience, knowledge, and consequences (Yusof & Salleh, 2021). These aspects help reveal how religiosity influences students' perception and support for *halal*-based tourism practices.

Additionally, *halal* tourism among youth is increasingly viewed through the lens of cultural and identity consumption, where religious practices are negotiated in daily lifestyle choices, including travel (Sulaiman & Rosid, 2022). Youth today are influenced by online Islamic content and social media trends, which act as new spaces for identity performance and value negotiation (Ismail & Idris, 2020). Despite this growing discourse, limited studies have focused on the role of local youth—particularly students living in or near tourism destinations—as active interpreters and potential co-creators of *halal* tourism narratives. Most research still centers on tourists' behavior or state-driven *halal* tourism policy (Samori & Ishak, 2021). This study addresses that gap by combining recent adaptations of social representation theory and religiosity dimensions to explore how high school students in Bira construct meaning around *halal* tourism. This approach presents a novel contribution to contemporary literature on tourism sociology in *Muslim*-majority contexts.

Therefore, this study aims to examine school students' perceptions of *halal* tourism at Pasir Putih Bira Beach, with particular attention to the level of religiosity as a sociocultural factor that may influence their attitudes, interpretations, and potential roles in promoting *halal*-based tourism. Since youth are future consumers and emerging influencers in their communities, understanding how they perceive and negotiate Islamic tourism values is vital for formulating inclusive and culturally grounded strategies. Focusing on students living within or near a prominent tourist destination, this study emphasizes the significance of community-level insight, which has been largely absent in the mainstream *halal* tourism discourse. Furthermore, it responds to recent calls in the literature to reframe *halal* tourism from a purely economic model into one that is participatory and socially sustainable (Hashim et al., 2020; Hanafiah et al., 2022).

This research is expected to contribute practically by offering recommendations for policymakers and educators to incorporate *halal* tourism education in formal and informal settings. Theoretically, it enriches the tourism sociology literature by highlighting how religious values, cultural expectations, and youth agency interact in constructing meaning around tourism in *Muslim*-majority societies. It also aligns with broader discourses on value-based tourism, prioritizing ethical, inclusive, and locally relevant development frameworks (Nurhayati & Haryadi, 2021). By examining students' voices in destination communities, this study bridges the gap between macro-level tourism policies and micro-level community narratives, offering a grounded understanding of *halal* tourism from the young generation's perspective.

2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to deeply explore school students' perceptions regarding *halal* tourism at Bira White Sand Beach in Bulukumba Regency. The

qualitative method was chosen for its ability to uncover the subjective meanings and social representations that students attach to *halal* tourism, particularly in the context of a *Muslim*-majority community with growing tourism activities. A case study design is considered appropriate as it facilitates a contextual analysis of social phenomena within real-life settings, where the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not evident (Yin, 2018). The selection of 50 students from grades XI and XII was based on purposive sampling, considering three main criteria: level of religiosity, residence proximity to the tourist site, and tourism experience. These students were considered information-rich subjects capable of offering insights into the interaction between local culture, Islamic values, and tourism behavior.

Data collection techniques included semi-structured in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis of school curricula, promotional materials, and local government policies on *halal* tourism. This triangulation approach enhances the richness and credibility of the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Interviews were conducted in informal and formal school-related settings to maximize comfort and openness among participants. Thematic analysis was used as the data analysis technique, following the six-phase framework developed by Braun and Clarke (2006): familiarization with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. The study incorporated member checking, peer debriefing, and cross-method triangulation to ensure validity and reliability. Moreover, a reflexive approach was employed to mitigate researcher bias, particularly in interpreting culturally embedded religious expressions (Zahran & Saad, 2021). This methodological framework enables the researcher to interpret students' narratives not merely as individual opinions but as part of a broader social construct shaped by religiosity, digital influences, and local cultural traditions that intersect in tourism experiences.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings

The results showed that the distribution of respondents based on gender consisted of 52% male and 48% female. In terms of understanding the concept of *halal* tourism, 60% of students understand that *halal* tourism is related to the provision of facilities by Islamic teachings, such as places of worship, *halal* food, and restrictions on interaction between genders; 30% of students have a sufficient understanding even though they are not entirely sure about its implementation, while 10% of students admit that they do not understand the concept well. Regarding the perception of *halal* tourism facilities at Pasir Putih Beach, Bira, 25% of students considered worship facilities adequate, 40% considered them inadequate, and the other 35% did not assess because they rarely or never used them.

Regarding the attitude towards the incorporation of religiosity and modern tourism, 70% of students agree that the integration of religious values with tourism practices can increase the attractiveness of *halal* tourism, 20% consider that religious aspects do not need to be prioritized in tourism, and 10% do not have a firm view. Regarding readiness to be involved in *halal* tourism, 80% of students expressed their readiness by participating in education and promoting Islamic culture in local destinations, and 15% were less interested due to limited knowledge and access. In comparison, 5% were not interested at all. Finally, related to the dilemma between the value of religiosity and tourism practices, 55% of students feel depressed when they see tourist behavior that is not by religious norms. However, they still try to understand tourism as part of economic activities. In comparison, 45% of students feel comfortable with these conditions, although they still expect the existence of supporting facilities for *halal* tourism.

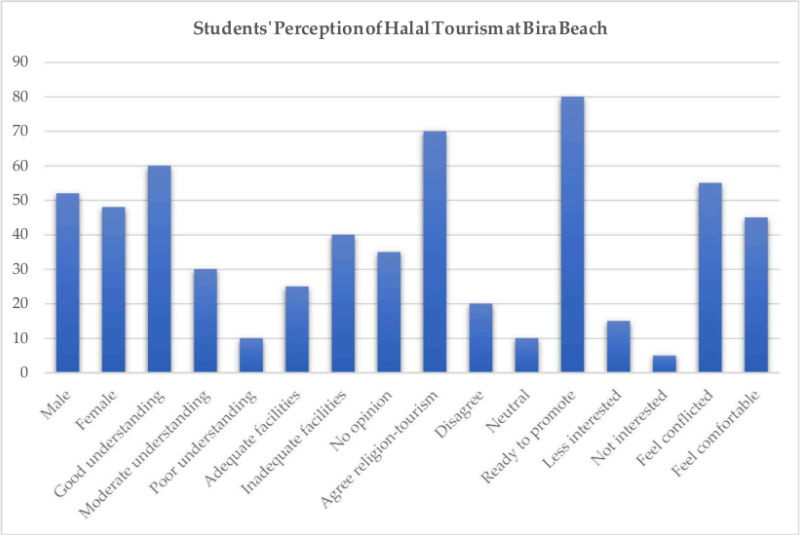


Figure 1. Students' Perception of Halal Tourism at Bira Beach

From the data obtained, it appears that most students (60%) have a fairly good understanding of *halal* tourism. However, most feel that its implementation is still lacking in the tourist destination of Bira White Sand Beach. Most students also showed a willingness to be involved in the promotion of *halal* tourism (80%), hoping that the incorporation of religious values and local culture can enrich the tourism experience that is more in line with Islamic principles. However, there was a moral dilemma for students about the sight of tourists who do not adhere to religious values, suggesting a tension between religious identity and the reality of freer tourism in the area.

The results of this study revealed three main themes that represent students' perceptions of the concept of *halal* tourism at Pasir Putih Beach Bira, namely: (1) normative understanding of *halal* tourism; (2) the dilemma between religious values and local tourism practices; and (3) the potential of students as agents of local culture-based *halal* tourism promotion.

First, most students show a fairly good understanding of the concept of *halal* tourism, which they associate with "tourism by Islamic law", such as the availability of worship facilities, *halal* food, and restrictions on gender interaction in tourist attractions. This knowledge is generally obtained from religious studies at school and social media. However, some students also admitted that they have not seen the concept fully implemented in the Bira tourism area.

Secondly, there is a dilemma in the students' perception of the tourism practices in their area. While they understand the Islamic values that govern ethics in travel, they also realize that many tourist activities in Bira do not fully reflect *halal* principles-such as the presence of tourists in revealing clothing, the lack of worship facilities, and beach parties. Some students felt "value-disturbed" but understood that tourism is part of regional economic development. This shows a tug of war between their religiosity and the reality of tourism they witness daily.

Third, the students generally expressed their willingness to be involved in promoting *halal* tourism, particularly with a local culture-based approach. They considered integrating local wisdom, such as

Bugis-Makassar customs that uphold the value of politeness and respect for guests, as an effective approach to developing religious and inclusive tourism. Some students also suggested that the government and schools should provide special education on *halal* tourism as part of the curriculum or extracurricular activities. This finding shows that students are recipients of information and potential social actors in shaping the narrative of religious and local wisdom-based tourism. Their perceptions reflect the negotiation space between Islamic identity and openness to the dynamics of modern tourism in their area.

The results of this study indicate that students' perceptions of *halal* tourism in the Bira White Sand Beach area not only reflect a normative understanding of Islamic values, but also show the process of negotiating identity and values in the context of modernity and openness of tourism. Most students perceive *halal* tourism as a form that maintains sharia norms, such as the availability of *halal* food, places of worship, and polite tourist behavior that does not conflict with religious teachings. However, behind this understanding, cultural tensions reflect the social complexity in local communities, starting to open up to global dynamics.

In focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, students revealed that while they recognize the importance of religious values in their daily lives, they also witness that tourist areas, including Bira, are social spaces that bring together different lifestyles. The behavior of tourists from outside the region, even foreign countries, who bring different cultural values and practices, is often perceived as a deviation from local norms. However, they do not necessarily reject the presence of these tourists, because they realize that tourism is one of the main drivers of the regional economy. This awareness shows that students live in two poles of values that attract each other: on the one hand, as religious individuals in a conservative society, and on the other hand, as part of a generation that grew up in the openness of information and diversity.

Furthermore, students also realize the gap between the idealism of Islamic values and tourism practices in the field. They want *Muslim*-friendly tourist attractions, but they also realize the limitations of facilities such as small and unclean prayer rooms, uncertified *halal* food, and a lack of Islamic value-based instructions or information. This shows that the concept of *halal* tourism in Bira is still in the conceptual stage and has not been fully implemented. Some students even considered *halal* tourism as a discourse that has not touched the reality of destination management. Therefore, they suggested that local governments and tourism managers should be more active in preparing *halal* facilities and involving local communities in designing tourism policies that include values and culture.

One of the interesting findings of this research is the great potential of students to become agents of change in the promotion of *halal* tourism. In interviews, students expressed their enthusiasm to be involved in *halal* tourism education through social media, school communities, and religious and cultural extracurricular activities. They also conveyed creative ideas such as creating educational content on digital platforms, compiling local *halal* tourism guides in brochures, and volunteering in social activities that promote a culture of courtesy to tourists. This proves the younger generation can bridge Islamic values and open and dynamic tourism practices if properly empowered.

Interestingly, some students linked religious values in tourism to Bugis-Makassar local wisdom, such as the concepts of *siri* (self-respect) and *pesse* (empathy), which are believed to be the roots of ethics in society. They believe these values can be a moral foundation in interacting with tourists, including maintaining manners, dressing politely, and respecting differences. Thus, for most students, *halal* tourism is not only seen as a product of outside culture (the Middle East or other *Muslim* countries), but can be developed from the roots of local traditions that harmonize with Islamic principles. This suggests a hybrid approach in building contextualized and local value-based *halal* tourism.

However, this study also found that there is a group of students who are ambivalent or even skeptical towards the implementation of *halal* tourism. This group feels that too many regulations and rules will reduce the recreational impression of tourism itself. Some students argue that tourism is a

relaxing space and should not be burdened with strict rules. These arguments reflect the shifting orientation of the younger generation towards religion and a more permissive modern lifestyle. This is a challenge in designing a *halal* tourism education model that is not patronizing, but still touches the reflective and moral sides of the younger generation.

In a sociological framework, these students' perceptions can also be understood through the perspective of interpretative sociology, which emphasizes the importance of meaning and subjective understanding in viewing social reality. For students, *halal* tourism is not just a collection of rules or product labels, but a reflective space that brings together religious values, local identity, and global demands. They interpret *halal* tourism not as a form of isolation from other cultures, but as a way to reaffirm their identity in the current globalization. This view is important to be the basis for building *halal* tourism policies based on participation and dialog across generations.

From a policy development point of view, the findings of this study provide a strong signal to local governments, Tourism Offices, and educational institutions that *halal* tourism development strategies must start from early value education. The school curriculum can be an important medium to shape students' understanding of tourism ethics, cultural politeness, and basic Islamic principles in everyday life. Schools can also be an experimentation space for students to develop social projects that support *halal* tourism, such as tourism awareness movements, tourist-friendly student communities, or creative competitions for cultural-religious tourism content.

Overall, the results of this study not only illustrate how students interpret *halal* tourism and open a space for reflection that *halal* tourism in areas such as Bira has multidimensional challenges- both in terms of understanding the concept, infrastructure readiness, to social dynamics and values that are constantly changing. Therefore, the development of *halal* tourism in this region cannot be separated from the active involvement of local communities, especially the younger generation, who have sensitivity to social change and the spirit to maintain the values they believe in.

From an academic perspective, this research enriches the literature of tourism sociology and contemporary Islamic studies by emphasizing the importance of youth actors in shaping value-based tourism discourse. The younger generation cannot only be seen as objects of education, but also as creative subjects capable of producing new meanings about tourism, religiosity, and local identity. In this context, students are not only "consumers" of knowledge, but also "producers" of new narratives about *halal* tourism in Indonesia. Therefore, systemic support for this potential must be continuously developed through collaboration between schools, government, and local tourism actors.

Discussion

This study found that most students possess a normative and conceptual understanding of *halal* tourism, which they generally associate with Islamic legal principles, including the availability of prayer facilities, *halal*-certified food, and the restriction of free inter-gender interactions in tourism settings. These views are not formed in isolation but are shaped through a combination of religious education at school, familial socialization, and increasing exposure to Islamic digital content via social media. As stated in the theory of social representations by Jodelet (2015), individuals form collective understandings of social phenomena through cultural communication and interaction, which in this case is manifested in how students define *halal* tourism as a reflection of their religiosity. Their understanding, although normative, is not static—it is continuously negotiated within the context of tourism development, peer influences, and access to Islamic lifestyle media. Sulaiman and Rosid (2022) emphasize that among *Muslim* youth, religiosity intersects with lifestyle choices and identity expression, including how tourism is interpreted and practiced. Similarly, Ismail and Idris (2020) highlight the role of digital religious influencers and travel content in shaping youth preferences toward *halal* tourism experiences that align with Islamic values. In the Indonesian context, Wulandari and Rachmawati (2021) found that the construction of *halal* tourism awareness among students is reinforced through school-based Islamic programs and local discourse on religious ethics. Furthermore, these perceptions are

strengthened through structured extracurricular activities, such as *Pesantren Kilat* (short Islamic boarding programs) and youth religious forums, which serve as platforms to reinforce moral teachings and ethical consumption, including in tourism behavior. This indicates that students are not passive recipients of religious discourse but actively interpret, negotiate, and disseminate values related to *halal* tourism in their social environments. Viewed from the lens of interpretive tourism sociology, such perceptions demonstrate how tourism is not merely experienced but is socially constructed based on values, identities, and shared meanings (Jennings, 2010). Therefore, students' normative views can be a strategic foundation for designing participatory, culturally sensitive *halal* tourism initiatives that align with global *Muslim* travel trends and local wisdom.

However, in contrast to previous studies that have predominantly emphasized the perceptions of tourists or tourism industry players (Samori & Ahmed, 2020), this study takes a different perspective by focusing on school students as part of the local community embedded in the sociocultural fabric of the tourism destination. This focus reveals that the formation of *halal* tourism understanding is not solely influenced by macro-level factors such as government regulations, industry campaigns, or global Islamic travel trends, but is significantly shaped by micro-level interactions, community narratives, and localized religious-cultural values. According to Hanafiah, Jamaluddin, and Zulkifly (2019), community-based actors are instrumental in sustaining *halal* tourism because they act as gatekeepers and transmitters of local ethics and norms. In this case, students serve as a social lens through which the integration of religious values and tourism practices is interpreted, negotiated, and disseminated. Moreover, the involvement of youth in the discourse on *halal* tourism provides an important counterbalance to top-down policy approaches, offering grassroots-level insights that are often neglected in state-centric tourism planning (Yusof & Ismail, 2021). In the Indonesian context, Sari and Prasetyo (2022) found that youth in rural and semi-urban areas internalize tourism values through community-based education and religious organizations, thus shaping their perception of "acceptable" tourism behavior. These findings support the argument that the development of *halal* tourism cannot be detached from community participation and intergenerational dialogue, particularly in regions where cultural and religious values are deeply intertwined. Therefore, this study contributes a sociological perspective that highlights the role of students not merely as passive observers, but as emerging opinion leaders who embody the intersection of religious identity, local culture, and modernity in tourism spaces. Their insights help bridge the gap between policy intentions and social realities, essential for designing inclusive, grounded, and sustainable *halal* tourism initiatives.

The dilemma between religiosity values and local tourism practices illustrates a complex process of identity negotiation, as conceptualized in the Cultural Identity Negotiation Theory by Ting-Toomey (2005), which posits that individuals construct and reconstruct their cultural identities in response to intercultural interactions. In the context of Bira, students as members of the local *Muslim* community are exposed to contrasting sets of norms—those grounded in Islamic teachings and those brought by tourists with different cultural and moral orientations. This exposure places students in a liminal space where they must reconcile their internalized religious values with the behaviors and practices observed in the tourism environment. Such negotiations are not merely passive adaptations but involve active meaning-making processes influenced by familial, educational, and digital environments. A study by Fauzi and Aziz (2021) reveals that young *Muslim*s often experience moral ambivalence when confronted with globalized leisure practices, prompting them to reinterpret religiosity through more pragmatic or flexible lenses, particularly in regions that are becoming increasingly tourism-oriented. Similarly, in Malaysian and Turkish contexts, Arslan and Kartal (2020) argue that youth do not entirely reject modern tourism but seek to embed Islamic values in leisure by selectively adopting or resisting certain practices, illustrating a dynamic religio-cultural adaptation. In Indonesia, the study by Arifin and Rahmat (2023) found that adolescents living in tourist zones often feel tension between religious expectations and social realities but remain open to hybrid expressions of piety, such as dressing modestly while enjoying modern beach tourism. These findings underscore that identity negotiation among youth is neither

binary nor linear, but multidimensional and context-dependent. The ability of students to navigate these conflicting influences also reflects their sociocultural agency, which is essential for fostering a model of *halal* tourism that accommodates both religious integrity and inclusivity. Hence, the challenge for educators and tourism stakeholders is creating discursive spaces where young people can openly explore and articulate their identities without compromising core religious values, while fostering respect for pluralism and diversity within tourism spaces.

In contrast to earlier studies that emphasize the role of tourists in identity negotiation (Suki & Suki, 2020), this research highlights the significant role of students as agents of social change within their communities, especially in shaping the narrative and practice of *halal* tourism. Rather than viewing youth as passive observers, this study positions them as proactive individuals who can reinterpret religious norms and local cultural values to produce tourism concepts that are more inclusive and community-based. Bandura's (2001) social cognitive theory supports this view by arguing that individuals with developed self-efficacy and moral agency can drive transformation in their social environments. In regions such as South Sulawesi, where cultural constructs like *siri* (honor) and *pesse* (compassion) are deeply rooted, students naturally integrate these ethical values with Islamic principles, forming a hybrid model of *halal* tourism that resonates with local identity and global expectations. Supporting this, Farmaki (2020) emphasizes that local actors are central to interpreting and influencing tourism development rather than merely receiving its impact. Empirical findings from Oktaviani and Safitri (2022) also demonstrate that student involvement in cultural tourism programs increases awareness of local wisdom and fosters responsibility in promoting sustainable tourism. Similarly, Zainal, Zali, and Kassim (2021) show that Malaysia's youth-led *halal* tourism initiatives enhance community participation and tourist satisfaction. These insights underscore the need for participatory frameworks where students are given space, training, and institutional support to become active contributors to *halal* tourism planning. Their involvement ensures cultural sustainability and promotes tourism grounded in ethical values, social inclusion, and grassroots innovation—an approach that moves beyond top-down policymaking toward a more community-oriented model.

The results of this study further reinforce the notion that *halal* tourism is not a rigid framework governed solely by formal rules or state-issued certifications, but rather a dynamic and socially constructed practice that evolves through the everyday interactions and interpretations of local communities (Battour & Ismail, 2020). The implementation of *halal* tourism at the grassroots level is deeply influenced by how communities perceive religious teachings, integrate cultural values, and navigate the challenges of modern tourism. As Stephenson (2014) pointed out, *halal* tourism must be understood as a socio-cultural process shaped by local norms, intergroup dialogue, and the negotiation of moral boundaries. In this regard, local stakeholders—including students, educators, religious leaders, and families—play a vital role in determining what is acceptable and how Islamic principles are translated into tourism practices. A study by Fitriani and Hasyim (2021) found that perceptions of *halal* tourism among residents are more flexible and contextual than formal policies suggest, often adapting to local wisdom and community expectations. Mihalik and Zhang (2022) emphasized that successful *halal* tourism initiatives rely on mutual trust and ongoing communication between policy- makers and the host community, rather than solely on infrastructure or compliance measures. These perspectives support the view that *halal* tourism should be co-created through participatory mechanisms that allow local actors to shape its meaning and implementation. Therefore, the sociological lens used in this study captures students' perceptions and reveals the broader cultural logic through which *halal* tourism becomes embedded in community life. It suggests that sustainability in *halal* tourism cannot be achieved through top-down regulation alone but must involve continuous cultural negotiation, shared values, and locally grounded interpretations of sharia principles.

However, this study also reveals a notable discrepancy between students' normative understanding of *halal* tourism and its actual implementation in the field. This creates a sense of ambivalence and even cognitive dissonance in their perceptions. While most students articulate the

importance of Islamic principles such as modesty, *halal* food availability, and gender segregation in tourism areas, their experiences at Bira Beach often contradict these ideals. This tension becomes evident when they encounter inadequate prayer facilities, a lack of signage or information supporting *halal* practices, and the prevalence of tourist behavior that clashes with local religious norms. Such inconsistencies validate prior findings by Rahman et al. (2020), who argue that in many *Muslim*-majority destinations, *halal* tourism struggles to bridge the gap between ideological aspirations and operational realities. Moreover, Fauzia and Ahmad (2021) point out that many *halal* tourism projects are implemented symbolically for branding purposes without genuinely addressing the infrastructural and socio-cultural readiness of the destination. A study by Harahap and Kusuma (2022) found that local students in tourist destinations in Indonesia often feel caught between their religious commitments and the secular dynamics of tourism economies, forcing them into internal negotiation. From a governance perspective, Henderson (2016) asserts that the success of *halal* tourism is contingent not only on compliance but also on the depth of stakeholder engagement, especially with community members who are expected to support or adapt to the tourism framework. The findings from this research thus reinforce the importance of aligning policy narratives with lived experiences, particularly among youth who embody both the conservatism of religious upbringing and the openness of contemporary social life. Bridging the gap between discourse and practice in *halal* tourism requires not only the provision of facilities but also consistent cultural messaging, inclusive planning, and sincere efforts to embed Islamic values within the physical, social, and symbolic spaces of tourism.

Furthermore, the process of value negotiation among students in the context of *halal* tourism can be more comprehensively understood through the theoretical lens of glocalization, which describes the interaction between global cultural flows and localized identity expressions (Roudometof, 2016). In this study, students demonstrate an ability to selectively adopt aspects of global tourism culture—such as fashion trends, digital tourism content, and recreational lifestyles—while reinforcing religious values like modesty, politeness, and *halal* consumption. This duality reflects a cultural flexibility that is both adaptive and strategic, allowing young people to navigate the tension between maintaining religious-cultural identity and participating in the modern tourism economy. According to Tarmizi and Lubis (2022), *Muslim* youth in tourism regions increasingly engage in "filtered adoption" of global practices, accepting only those elements that can be reconciled with Islamic and local ethical norms. This adaptive approach is particularly evident in how Bira Beach students reinterpret local traditions—such as the Bugis concept of *siri'*—within the broader narrative of *halal* tourism promotion. In a comparative context, Dinç and Dinç (2020) found that Turkey's youth similarly blend religiosity and cosmopolitanism, shaping new hybrid tourism identities. Such cultural hybridity enables local communities to differentiate themselves within the global tourism market by offering experiences that are both ethically grounded and culturally unique. More than a mere preservation of tradition, this process represents an active reinterpretation of identity through participation in global networks, including social media platforms where students share content related to local *halal* destinations. As Wibisono and Hamdan (2021) pointed out, this digital engagement amplifies the reach of local tourism narratives and encourages peer-based promotion grounded in cultural pride. Therefore, *halal* tourism that emerges from a glocalized perspective strengthens community identity and religious integrity and provides a competitive advantage by offering distinctiveness in a saturated global tourism industry.

4. CONCLUSION

This research reveals that the majority of students understand the concept of *halal* tourism normatively based on Islamic values. However, there are still gaps in its implementation at the Bira White Sand Beach destination. The main challenges faced are the limitations of worship facilities and the incompatibility of tourist behavior. Despite facing a dilemma between religious values and the reality of modern tourism, students show potential as agents of social change. They believe integrating local cultural values, such as politeness and respect in Bugis-Makassar culture, can strengthen *halal*

tourism's inclusive and competitive character. This finding implies the importance of involving the younger generation in education and promoting local wisdom-based *halal* tourism through school curriculum and community activities. This can strengthen cultural identity while addressing the needs of *Muslim* tourists.

Recommendations for future research are to conduct longitudinal studies to observe the dynamics of perceptions and involvement of the younger generation in the development of *halal* tourism over time. In addition, participatory and interdisciplinary approaches can provide a more comprehensive picture of community-based *halal* tourism practices.

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