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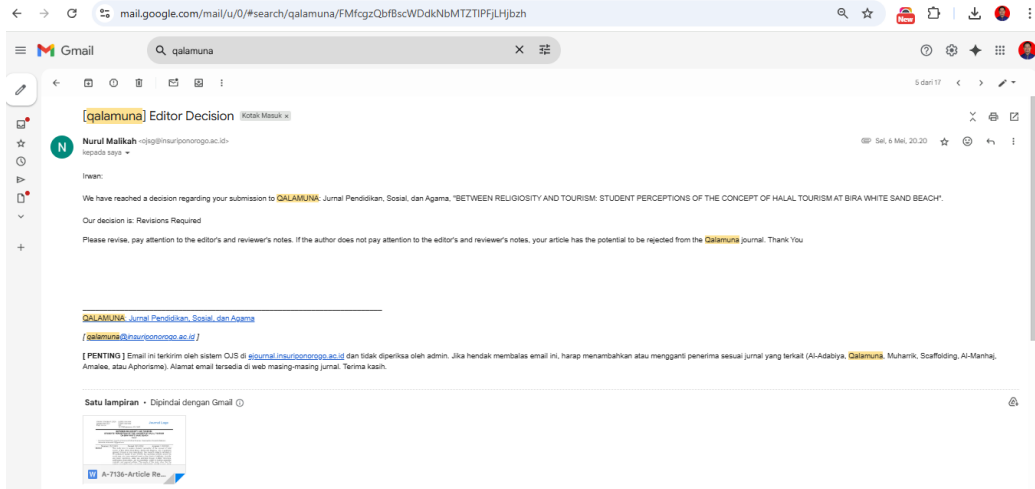
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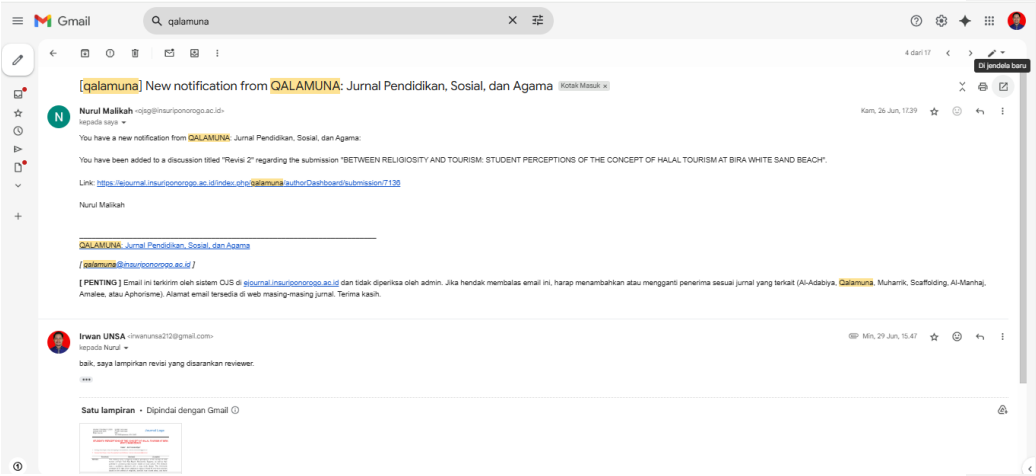
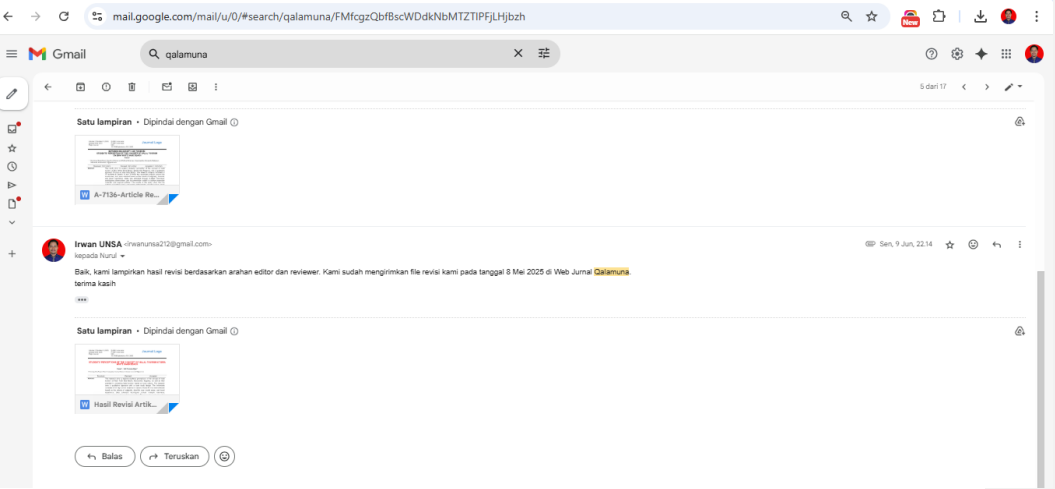
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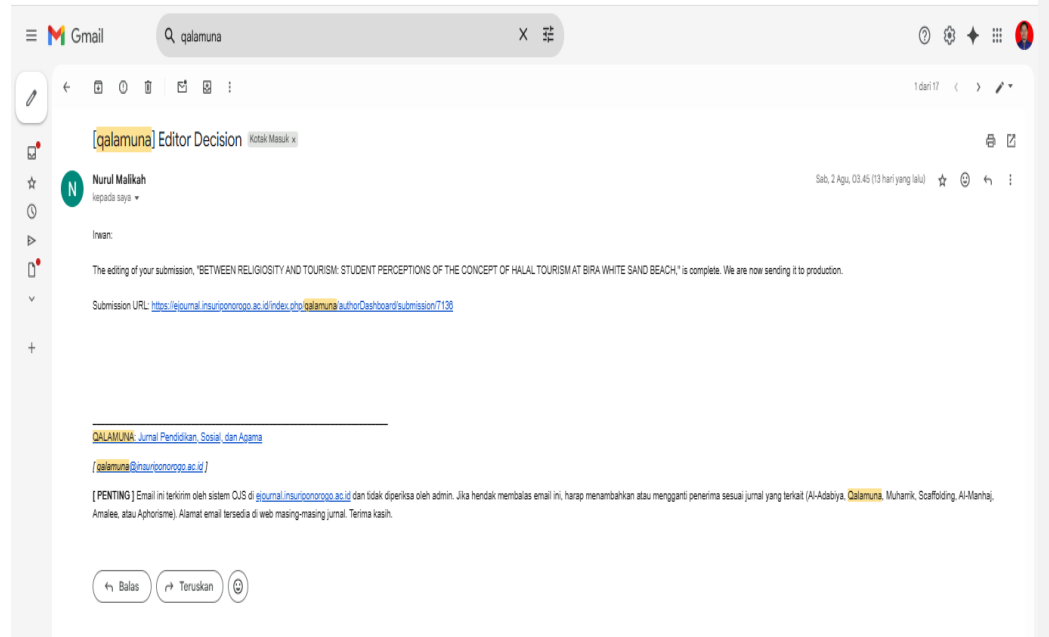
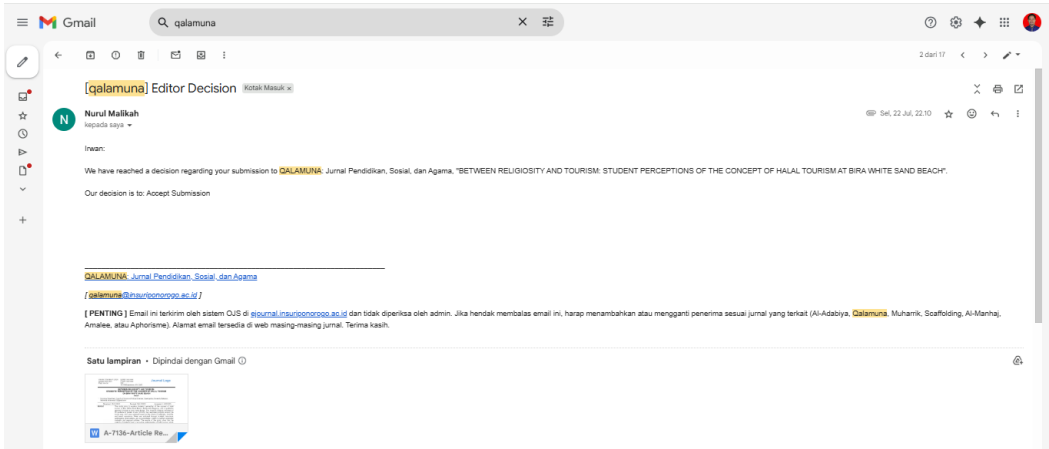
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**BETWEEN RELIGIOSITY AND TOURISM:  
STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF THE CONCEPT OF HALAL TOURISM  
ON BIRA WHITE SAND BEACH**

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**Abstract**

This study aims to explore students' perception of the concept of halal tourism at Bira White Sand Beach, Bulukumba Regency, with a qualitative approach through a case study design. The research subjects consisted of 50 students in grades XI and XII from two secondary schools around the tourist area, who were selected based on the criteria of religiosity, domicile, and travel experience. Data was collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation related to tourism promotion materials and regional policies. The results of the study show that the majority of students have a normative understanding of halal tourism, which includes the provision of worship facilities, halal food, and restrictions on interaction between genders. However, students also identified gaps between these principles and tourism practices in tourist destinations, such as the lack of adequate means of worship and the behavior of tourists that are not in accordance with religious norms. This dilemma illustrates the tension of cultural identity among students who are trying to balance the values of religiosity with the reality of freer tourism. The findings also show that most students have the readiness to be involved in the promotion of halal tourism based on local wisdom. They argue that the integration of Bugis-Makassar culture that emphasizes courtesy and respect for guests can be an effective strategy in developing inclusive and competitive halal tourism. This research suggests involving the younger generation in the promotion of halal tourism based on local culture.

**Keywords**

Halal tourism; local culture; cultural identity; young generation

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**1. INTRODUCTION**

Halal tourism has become one of the leading sectors in the development of the global tourism industry, especially in countries with Muslim-majority populations. This concept not only includes the provision of facilities that comply with Islamic law, such as halal food and places of worship, but also reflects the values of religiosity in the overall tourist experience. In Indonesia, as a country with the largest Muslim population in the world, the development of halal tourist destinations is part of efforts to encourage sharia-based economic growth.

Bira White Sand Beach in Bulukumba Regency, South Sulawesi, is one of the tourist destinations that has great potential to be developed as a halal tourist destination. Its stunning natural beauty and local culture steeped in Islamic values make it a strategic place to apply this

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concept. However, the success of halal tourism implementation is highly dependent on the acceptance and perception of the local community, including the younger generation who will become the main actors and consumers of tourism in the future.

School students, as part of the younger generation, play an important role in shaping and spreading understanding of halal tourism. Their perception of this concept can affect the sustainability of the development of halal tourist destinations in their area. Previous research has shown that an individual's level of religiosity can affect their perception and attitude towards halal tourism. For example, research by (Husen & Majid, 2023) found that tourists' perceptions of halal tourism can attract interest in visiting halal destinations, although the level of religiosity is not always the main determining factor in decisions (journal.presscience.org).

In addition, research (Abror, Wardi, Trinanda, & Patrisia, 2019) shows that halal tourism and customer engagement have a significant impact on tourist satisfaction, with religiosity as a moderating variable that strengthens relationships (Taylor & Francis Online). These findings suggest that a person's understanding and attitude towards Islamic values can affect experience and satisfaction in the context of halal tourism.

However, there is a gap in the literature regarding how the younger generation, especially school students, view and understand the concept of halal tourism. Most of the research focuses on the perception of tourists or tourism industry players, while the perspectives of school students as part of local communities and future tourism actors are poorly explored.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the perception of school students towards the concept of halal tourism in Bira White Sand Beach, taking into account religiosity factors as variables that can affect their understanding and attitude. The results of this research are expected to contribute to developing more effective halal tourism education and promotion strategies, as well as supporting the efforts of the government and stakeholders in creating sustainable halal tourism destinations that are accepted by the local community.

In understanding students' perception of halal tourism, a theoretical approach is important so that the analysis is not only descriptive, but also interpretive. One relevant approach is the theory of social representation (Moscovici, 1984) which explains that social understanding is formed through the process of interaction in society. In this context, students' perception of the concept of halal tourism is the result of social construction influenced by religious values, local experiences, and the media. In addition, the religiosity theory from (Glock, C. Y., & Stark, 1965) can be used to analyze the religious dimension that affects the way students interpret halal tourism, both from ideological, ritual, and consequential aspects. This theory asserts that religiosity is not only a matter of belief, but also how that belief is manifested in social behavior, including in tourism activities.

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In addition, the perspective of cultural consumption (Featherstone, 2007) provides an understanding that tourism is part of the practice of symbolic consumption that reflects values and identity. In the context of the younger generation, halal tourism is not only seen as a religious activity, but also part of the search for cultural identity and religious lifestyle. This shows the importance of understanding how local religious and cultural values meet in tourism practices.

Several previous studies reinforce the importance of this research. For example, a study (Putra, I. G. N. A. & Santosa, 2022) shows that halal tourism awareness and preferences among Muslim adolescents are influenced by their level of understanding and religiosity. However, this study does not focus on students as part of the tourist destination community. Meanwhile, research (Abror et al., 2019) and (Rahman, Moghavvemi, Thirumoorthi, & Rahman, 2020) confirm that tourists' perception of halal tourism is closely related to the level of religiosity, but there is little research on the formation of this perception at the local community level, especially among students.

Thus, this research is significant not only to enrich the halal tourism literature from a sociological perspective, but also to formulate a more inclusive approach to education and destination development based on local values.

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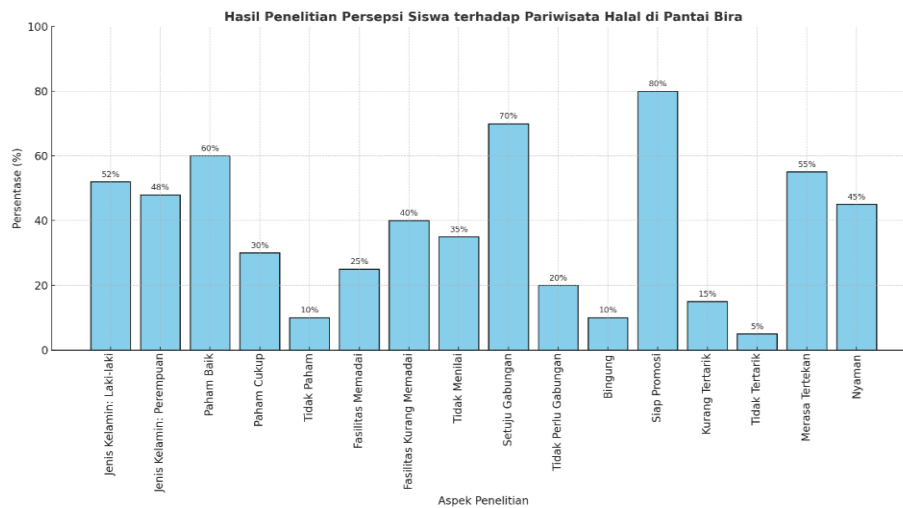
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## 2. METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to examine in depth the students' perceptions of the concept of halal tourism at Bira White Sand Beach, Bulukumba Regency. The research subjects were 50 students in grades XI and XII from two secondary schools around the tourist area, who were purposively selected based on the criteria of religiosity, domicile, and travel experience, and involved Islamic Religious Education teachers and local community leaders as triangulative informants. Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation of tourism promotional materials, school curriculum, and regional policies related to halal tourism. Data analysis was carried out using thematic analysis techniques (Braun & Clarke, 2006) through the stages of data familiarization, coding, finding themes, reviewing, defining, and preparing reports. Validity of findings was maintained through triangulation of sources and methods, member checking, and peer debriefing. The case study was chosen to understand students' perceptions as social constructions influenced by religious values, local culture, the school environment, and the existence of the Bira tourist area, allowing researchers to provide in-depth interpretations of the relationship between religiosity and tourism practices in local communities.

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION 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 in accordance with 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 perceptions of halal tourism facilities at Pasir Putih Beach Bira, 25% of students considered that worship facilities were sufficient, 40% considered them inadequate, and the other 35% did not give an assessment because they rarely or never used these facilities. Regarding the attitude towards combining the value 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. In the aspect of readiness to be involved in the promotion of halal tourism, 80% of students expressed their readiness by participating in education and promotion of Islamic culture in local destinations, 15% were less interested due to limited knowledge and access, while 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 in accordance with religious norms, although they still try to understand tourism as part of economic activities, while 45% of students feel comfortable with these conditions although they still expect the existence of supporting facilities for halal tourism.



From the data obtained, it appears that the majority of students (60%) have a fairly good understanding of the concept of halal tourism, although 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 in relation to 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 in accordance with 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 Bira tourism area.

Secondly, there is a dilemma in the students' perception of the tourism practices that take place 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 also understood that tourism is part of regional economic development. This shows that there is a tug of war between their religiosity and the reality of tourism that they witness on a daily basis.

Third, the students generally expressed their willingness to be involved in promoting halal tourism, particularly with a local culture-based approach. They considered that integrating local wisdom, such as Bugis-Makassar customs that uphold the value of politeness and respect for guests, could be an effective approach to developing tourism that is both religious and inclusive. 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 not only recipients of information, but also 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.

## DISCUSSION

This study found that most students have a normative understanding of the concept of halal tourism which is associated with the principles of Islamic law, including the provision of worship facilities, halal food, and restrictions on interaction between genders. This finding is in line with the social representation theory of (Moscovici, 1984), which states that individuals form a collective understanding of a new phenomenon based on their social interactions and cultural context. In the context of this study, students' understanding of halal tourism is formed through religious education, travel experience, and social media influence.

The dilemma that students feel between the value of religiosity and local tourism practices illustrates the process of identity negotiation, as described in cultural identity negotiation theory (Ting-Toomey, 2005). Students, as members of the local community, face a situation where religious norms meet with more liberalized global tourism practices. This process creates identity tensions, but also opens a space for adaptation, where some students try to maintain their religious values without rejecting the existence of tourist activities as part of local economic development.

Furthermore, students' readiness to engage in halal tourism promotion shows their potential as agents of social change (Bandura, 2001). In the perspective of tourism sociology (Cohen, 1984), local actors are not only the objects of tourism development but also play an active role in defining the direction and values of their tourist destinations. This finding reinforces the idea that the integration of local wisdom, such as the value of politeness in Bugis-Makassar culture, with halal tourism principles can be an effective strategy for building inclusive, religious, and competitive destinations.

Conceptually, the results of this study enrich the discourse on halal tourism as a social construction (Stephenson, 2014), where the concept of halal in the context of tourism is not solely related to products and services, but also related to how local communities understand, accept, and shape tourism practices according to their religious and cultural values.

In addition, the results of this study show that there are limitations in the implementation of the concept of halal tourism in the field, which shows that students' normative understanding has not been fully supported by empirical experience in tourist destinations. This finding reinforces the analysis in the literature that in the context of halal tourism development, there is a gap between ideology and practice (Battour & Ismail, 2020). The lack of adequate worship facilities and the incompatibility of tourist behavior with religious norms create ambivalent conditions, where students try to negotiate the values espoused with the reality faced.

The process of identity negotiation that occurs among students can also be linked to the theory of glocalization in cultural sociology (Robertson, 1995), where local values (religion) interact

with global practices (modern tourism). Instead of experiencing a frontal clash of values, students show a form of selective adaptation, namely by accepting the diverse reality of tourism while still maintaining hope for the strengthening of halal values in their destination. This indicates that the younger generation has an important cultural flexibility in building a community-based halal tourism model.

These findings also reflect the importance of expanding the understanding of halal tourism not only in terms of “products and services” (such as halal food and prayer rooms), but also in the dimensions of value perceptions and emotional experiences of tourists and local communities. As argued by (Mohsin, Ramli, & Alkhulayfi, 2016), the success of halal tourism depends on the extent to which religious and cultural values can be authentically integrated in the destination experience. Therefore, focusing on halal tourism education at the local level, especially through the involvement of students and schools, is a strategic step.

Finally, this research shows that the development of local culture-based halal tourism can be a powerful differentiation strategy in the global tourism market. By highlighting the values of politeness, respect for guests and religiosity in the context of Bugis-Makassar culture, destinations such as Bira White Sand Beach can offer a unique experience that not only meets the needs of Muslim tourists, but also attracts general tourists seeking cultural authenticity. This strategy supports a sustainable approach to tourism development, where local economies thrive without compromising social and cultural values.

This research contributes to expanding the study of halal tourism by integrating the perspectives of social representation, cultural identity negotiation, and glocalization. Theoretically, this research enriches the understanding of how the concept of halal tourism is shaped, negotiated, and internalized by local communities, especially the younger generation, in a heterogeneous modern tourism context. It also confirms the importance of viewing halal tourism as a dynamic social construction, rather than simply a set of product and service standards.

Practically, these findings provide insights for policy makers, tourist destination managers, and educational institutions to further involve the younger generation in the promotion and development of halal tourism. Local culture-based halal tourism education programs can be designed to strengthen the capacity of students as promotional agents, while building a harmonious tourism narrative between religious values and global dynamics. This approach can increase destination competitiveness and strengthen the cultural identity of local communities.

This research has several important implications. First, there is a need for a participatory approach in the development of halal tourism, where local communities - especially the younger generation - are involved as the main actors, not just as beneficiaries. Second, local governments

and tourism managers need to ensure the availability of adequate halal facilities in tourist destinations to support the experience of Muslim tourists. Third, the integration of local cultural values into tourism practices needs to be strengthened to create a more contextual, sustainable and competitive halal tourism model. In the future, further research can be conducted with a longitudinal approach to see changes in perceptions and the role of the younger generation in the development of halal tourism in the long term.

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#### 4. CONCLUSION

This research provides an in-depth insight into students' perceptions of the concept of halal tourism in Bira White Sand Beach, as well as the challenges and potentials of developing halal tourism based on local culture. The majority of students have a fairly good understanding of the concept of halal tourism, but the implementation of these principles in tourist destinations still experiences gaps, especially in the provision of adequate worship facilities and the incompatibility of tourist behavior with religious values. The dilemma felt by students between the value of religiosity and freer tourism practices reflects the existence of cultural identity tensions among the younger generation, who face challenges to maintain their religious values amid the dynamics of modern tourism.

Nonetheless, the majority of students showed a willingness to be involved in the promotion of local wisdom-based halal tourism, indicating their potential as agents of social change. Students felt that the integration of local cultural values, such as politeness and respect for guests in Bugis-Makassar culture, could be an effective approach to developing tourism that is not only religious but also inclusive and attractive to a wide range of people. This shows that there is room for the adaptation of religious values in the face of a freer tourism reality, while maintaining harmony with local wisdom.

Practically, these findings emphasize the importance of integrating local cultural values in the development of halal tourism that is more inclusive, sustainable, and competitive. Recommendations that can be given are that policy makers, tourist destination managers, and educational institutions involve the younger generation more in the education and promotion of local culture-based halal tourism. Halal tourism education based on local wisdom needs to be an integral part of the curriculum and extracurricular activities in schools. This research also contributes to the development of halal tourism theory and tourism sociology by introducing a new perspective on the interaction between religious values and local culture in modern tourism. Further research with a longitudinal approach can provide a deeper understanding of changes in perceptions and the role of the younger generation in the development of halal tourism.

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## STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE CONCEPT OF HALAL TOURISM AT BIRA WHITE SAND BEACH

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<b>Abstract</b>	This research aims to explore students' perceptions of the concept of halal tourism at Pasir Putih Bira Beach, Bulukumba Regency, as well as their potential in promoting halal tourism based on local culture. The research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. The informants consisted of 50 high school students in classes XI and XII who were selected based on the criteria of religiosity, domicile near tourist areas, and travel experience. Data collection techniques include in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. The research results show that the majority of 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 involving the younger generation in education and promotion of halal tourism based on local wisdom to create inclusive and competitive destinations.	
<b>Keywords</b>	Halal tourism; local culture; cultural identity; 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 both Muslim-majority and minority countries to develop infrastructure, products, and services that comply with Islamic guidelines (Battour & Ismail, 2020). The concept of halal tourism now extends beyond halal food and prayer facilities to include alcohol-free services, Muslim-friendly accommodations, gender



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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 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 that go 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 both future consumers and potential agents of transformation in shaping tourism narratives and practices (Rahman et al., 2020). Their perceptions and attitudes are influenced by religious knowledge, digital media, and educational institutions, which serve as mediating factors in how they conceptualize halal tourism (Maulana & Rahmawati, 2020). Therefore, understanding their views is essential to designing culturally contextualized and community-driven halal tourism strategies.

School students, as part of the local young generation, play a crucial role in shaping attitudes, narratives, and social acceptance of the concept of halal tourism. They are not only future consumers of tourism services but also 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 youth attitudes toward religious tourism are shaped by the interplay between family values, peer influence, and access to Islamic digital content. 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 who are 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 the alignment of experiences with their 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 the perceptions of students 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 existing 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. Given that youth are not only future consumers but also emerging influencers in their communities, understanding how they perceive and negotiate Islamic tourism values is vital for formulating strategies that are both inclusive and culturally grounded. By 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. Additionally, it aligns with broader discourses on value-based tourism, which prioritize ethical, inclusive, and locally relevant tourism 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 perspective of the young generation.

## 2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore deeply the perceptions of school students regarding the concept of 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 clearly evident (Yin, 2018). The selection of 50 students from grades XI and XII was based on purposive sampling, taking into account 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.

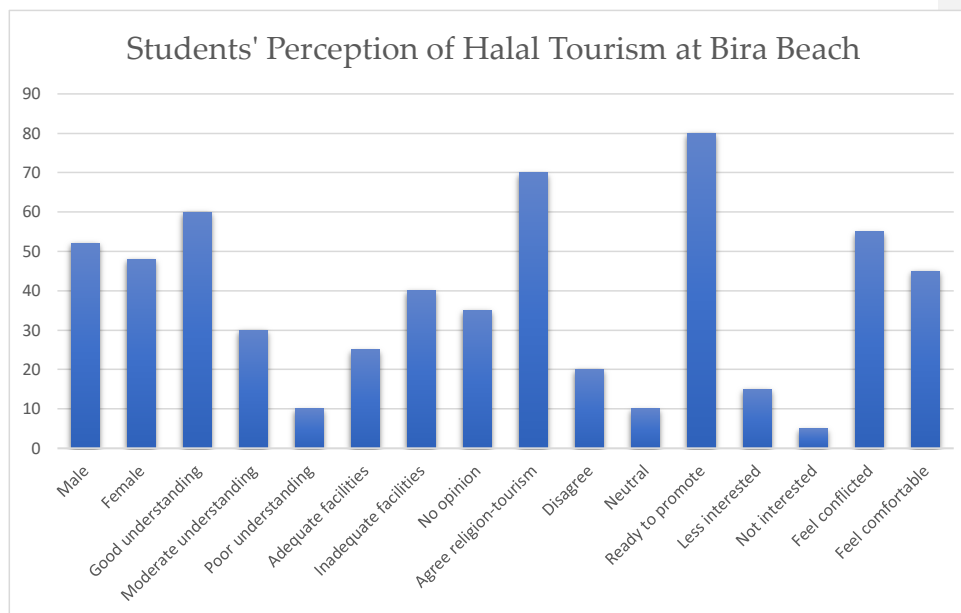
Data collection techniques included semi-structured in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis of school curricula, promotional materials, and local government policies related to halal tourism. This triangulation approach enhances the richness and credibility of the data (Creswell & 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. To ensure validity and reliability, the study incorporated member checking, peer debriefing, and cross-method triangulation. Moreover, a reflexive approach was employed throughout the process 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 DISCUSSION 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 in accordance with 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 that worship facilities were adequate, 40% considered them inadequate, and the other 35% did not give an assessment because they rarely or never used these facilities.

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. In the aspect of readiness to be involved in the promotion of halal tourism, 80% of students expressed their readiness by participating in education and promotion of Islamic culture in local destinations, 15% were less interested due to limited knowledge and access, while 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 in accordance with religious norms, although they still try to understand tourism as part of economic activities, while 45% of students feel comfortable with these conditions although they still expect the existence of supporting facilities for halal tourism.



From the data obtained, it appears that the majority of students (60%) have a fairly good understanding of the concept of halal tourism, although 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 in relation to 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 in accordance with 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 Bira tourism area.

Secondly, there is a dilemma in the students' perception of the tourism practices that take place 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 also understood that tourism is part of regional economic development. This shows that there is a tug of war between their religiosity and the reality of tourism that they witness on a daily basis.

Third, the students generally expressed their willingness to be involved in promoting halal tourism, particularly with a local culture-based approach. They considered that integrating local wisdom, such as Bugis-Makassar customs that uphold the value of politeness and respect for guests, could be an effective approach to developing tourism that is both religious and inclusive. 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 not only recipients of information, but also 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 do have the perception that halal tourism is a form of tourism 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, there are cultural tensions that reflect the social complexity in local communities that are 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 form of 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 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 that halal tourism is only 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 are inclusive of 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 the form of brochures, and volunteering in social activities that promote a culture of courtesy to tourists. This is proof that the younger generation, if properly empowered, can be a bridge between Islamic values and open and dynamic tourism practices.

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 that these values can be a moral foundation in interacting with tourists, including in maintaining manners, dressing politely, and respecting differences. Thus, for most students, halal tourism is not only seen as a product of outside culture (Middle East or other Muslim countries), but can be developed from the roots of local traditions that are in harmony 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 space to relax, 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, but also 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 as well as 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 needs to 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 are active in interpreting, negotiating, and disseminating 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 serve as a strategic foundation for designing participatory, culturally sensitive halal tourism initiatives that align with both 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 both 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 tend to internalize tourism values through community-based education and religious organizations, thus shaping their perception of what constitutes "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, which is 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 Muslims 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 to create discursive spaces where young people can openly explore and articulate their identities without compromising core religious values, while simultaneously 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 are capable of driving 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 youth-led halal tourism initiatives in Malaysia enhance both community participation and tourist satisfaction. These insights collectively underscore the need for participatory frameworks where students are given space, training, and institutional support to become active contributors in halal tourism planning. Their involvement not only ensures cultural sustainability but also promotes tourism that is 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 pointed out by Stephenson (2014), 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) that perceptions of halal tourism among local 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 not only captures the perceptions of students but also 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, which 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, 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 personal religious commitments and the secular dynamics of tourism economies, which forces them into a process of 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 simultaneously reinforcing religious values like modesty, politeness, and halal consumption. This duality reflects a cultural flexibility that is not only adaptive but also 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 are increasingly engaging 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 the way students at Bira Beach 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 youth in Turkey similarly

exhibit a blend of religiosity and cosmopolitanism, shaping new forms of 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 pointed out by Wibisono and Hamdan (2021), 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 globalized perspective not only strengthens community identity and religious integrity but also 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, but there are still gaps in its implementation at the Bira White Sand Beach destination. The limitations of worship facilities and the incompatibility of tourist behavior are the main challenges faced. Despite facing a dilemma between religious values and the reality of modern tourism, students show potential as agents of social change. They believe that the integration of local cultural values, such as politeness and respect in Bugis-Makassar culture, can strengthen the inclusive and competitive character of halal tourism.

The implication of this finding is the importance of involving the younger generation in education and promotion of local wisdom-based halal tourism, both 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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