

Gastrodiplomacy: How Indonesian Cuisine Shapes Bilateral Relations with Saudi Arabia (2017-2023)

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan strategi Indonesia dalam menggunakan gastrodiplomasi di Arab Saudi dari tahun 2017 hingga 2023, dengan menekankan pendekatan diplomasi lunak (*soft power*). Dengan melibatkan gastrodiplomasi, Indonesia bermaksud memperkenalkan warisan kuliner dan meningkatkan reputasi internasionalnya. Upaya strategis ini dilakukan bersama-sama oleh pemerintah Indonesia dan pengusaha restoran Indonesia di Arab Saudi. Dengan menggunakan konsep gastrodiplomasi dan kepentingan nasional, penelitian ini menginvestigasi strategi yang diimplementasikan untuk mempromosikan makanan Indonesia dan tujuan pemerintah yang mendasarinya. Metode deskriptif-kualitatif digunakan, dengan pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui studi pustaka. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa pemerintah Indonesia dan pengusaha makanan telah menerapkan gastrodiplomasi di Arab Saudi melalui dua strategi utama: membuka berbagai restoran Indonesia dan menyelenggarakan acara makanan Indonesia. Akibatnya, disimpulkan bahwa kepentingan nasional Indonesia dapat diwujudkan dengan cara yang lunak (*soft power*) melalui gastrodiplomasi. Artikel ini menawarkan rekomendasi untuk penelitian selanjutnya untuk menilai efektivitas gastrodiplomasi Indonesia di Arab Saudi, serta kemungkinan studi perbandingan dengan upaya gastrodiplomasi di negara lain.

Kata kunci: gastrodiplomasi, kepentingan nasional, diplomasi lunak, masakan Indonesia, Arab Saudi

Abstract

This study aims to elucidate Indonesia's strategic use of gastrodiplomacy in Saudi Arabia from 2017 to 2023, highlighting a soft diplomacy approach. By engaging in gastrodiplomacy, Indonesia intends to introduce its culinary heritage and enhance its international reputation. This strategic effort is undertaken collaboratively by the Indonesian government and Indonesian restaurateurs in Saudi Arabia. Utilizing the concepts of gastrodiplomacy and national interest, the research investigated the strategies deployed to promote Indonesian cuisine and the underlying governmental objectives. A descriptive-qualitative method was employed, with data collection achieved through a literature review. The findings revealed that the Indonesian government and food entrepreneurs have implemented gastrodiplomacy in Saudi Arabia through two primary strategies: opening various Indonesian restaurants and organizing Indonesian food events. Consequently, Indonesia's national interests could be softly pursued through gastrodiplomacy. This paper offers recommendations for future research to assess the effectiveness of Indonesian gastrodiplomacy in Saudi Arabia, as well as the possibility of comparative studies with gastrodiplomacy efforts in other countries.

Keywords: gastrodiplomacy, national interest, soft diplomacy, Indonesian cuisine, Saudi Arabia

INTRODUCTION

A country cannot stand alone without cooperation with other countries. Such cooperation is inseparable from the national interest. A country makes various

efforts to fulfill its national interests, be it through hard power, soft power, and smart power. Protecting national interests can be performed without being engaged in violence. Various countries in international relations

efforts to fulfill its national interests, be it through hard power, soft power, and smart power. Protecting national interests can be performed without being engaged in violence. Various countries in international relations have utilized soft power to realize their interests (Haneş and Andrei, 2015).

Gastrodiplomacy, promoting national cuisine to enhance international relations, is a key soft diplomacy tool for Indonesia, a country rich in culinary heritage. With a tropical climate and sunlight-rich soil, Indonesian culinary specialties are unique and need to be known both domestically and internationally (Damayanti, 2022). Gastrodiplomacy is the use of culinary arts as a diplomatic tool, promoting culture, image, and globalization. It involves various actors, including state politicians, food companies, chefs, tourism agencies, public relations firms, and media, to attract foreign tourists and build public relationships (Luckyardi and Apriliani, 2022).

Saudi Arabia, being a key partner for Indonesia, plays a vital role in this context. Indonesia's relationship with Saudi Arabia, also known as Nusantara, dates back to antiquity. The earliest interactions between the two countries occurred in the Phunisia and Saba civilizations and Arab and Persian ships dealing with China. From 3000 BC, screens were regularly observed in the Mediterranean and Egypt on board ships from Polynesian nations, including Indonesia. Trade was the only interaction between Indonesian kingdoms and Arabs until the seventh century. After Islam originated in the Arab world of Jazirah, relationships in the religious sphere expanded, and followers, including Arabs, must propagate it.

The establishment of the Republic of Indonesia Representative in Jeddah on May 1, 1950, marked the beginning of diplomatic relations between Indonesia and Saudi Arabia. The Republic of the Indonesian Embassy replaced the Representative Elections in 1964. In 1985, Saudi Arabia relocated its capital to Riyadh, and the Indonesian government established the Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia in Jeddah (Cabinet Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia, 2018). Moreover, Saudi Arabia is also known as the Land of the

Two Holy Mosques, with Mecca and Medina as centers of spirituality in Islam (Tamba, 2019). Indonesia, the fourth most populous country, hosts the highest number of Hajj pilgrims annually, strengthening the bilateral relationship between the two countries.

Indonesia benefits from collaboration in various areas, with a small number of pilgrims traveling to Saudi Arabia for worship, highlighting its economic advantage (Anam et al., 2021). This country sees a market in Saudi Arabia by examining the popularity of Hajj pilgrims from other nations. It is part of its strategy to engage in gastrodiplomacy in Saudi Arabia with the aim of achieving national branding. This strategy aims to fulfill national interests by selling food to Indonesian citizens who worship and foreign citizens who live in Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia has responded openly to Indonesia's gastrodiplomacy strategy through food, as evidenced by various collaborations between the governments of both countries. It highlights the intersection of culture, diplomacy, and global partnerships in Indonesia's food diplomacy.

The study of Indonesia's gastrodiplomacy in Saudi Arabia holds particular relevance as it bridges culinary arts and diplomacy. This research adds valuable insights to the broader field of international relations, specifically in how culinary diplomacy can influence policy-making, foster cultural exchange, and enhance international business ties. It emphasizes a novel perspective that integrates gastronomy with geopolitics, reflecting modern diplomatic trends. Existing literature on gastrodiplomacy and international relations offers a limited focus on Indonesia's unique approach toward Saudi Arabia. This research aims to fill that gap by exploring this specific bilateral relationship. By identifying the existing gap and limitations in previous research, the study underscores the necessity of examining Indonesia's gastrodiplomacy in Saudi Arabia. It contributes a new angle, shedding light on the innovative diplomatic methods employed by Indonesia in a critical international partnership.

This figure is crucial to unveil the novelty through the number of previous research documents from Scopus processed with VosViewer. In this figure, each cluster has a unique theme and color; several terms stand out with

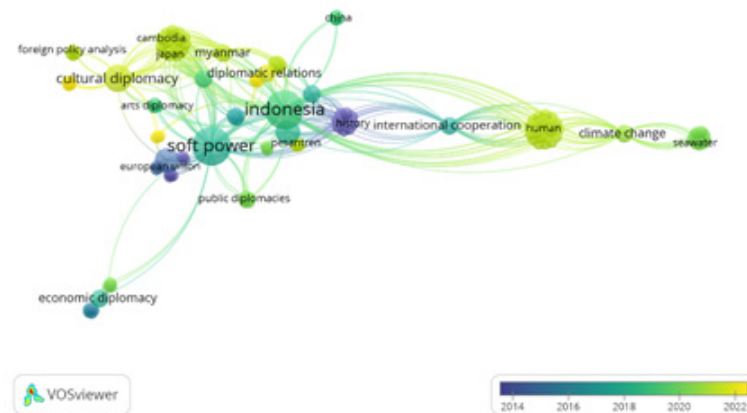


Figure 1. Overlay Visualization Soft Diplomacy Indonesia- Saudi Arabia (Processed by Authors, 2023)

bigger node sizes than other nodes, as well as dark colors indicating previous research. The purple node contains information on the most common topics related to defense diplomacy, science diplomacy, global health, and civil-military relations. In cluster 2, the most common topics include foreign policy, the Middle East, and the European Union. Cluster 3 encompasses identity, intercultural dialogue, and cross-cultural understanding as the most common topics. The green cluster represents topics related to Indonesia and soft power. However, the topic of soft power on green clusters only indicates soft power in general. It does not deal more specifically, for example, with the soft power of gastrodiploamacy. Then, it does not talk about soft power between Indonesia and Saudi Arabia. Hence, this study aims to discover Indonesia's gastrodiploamacy strategy through food in Saudi Arabia in 2017-2023.

The primary objective of this study is to analyze the strategies and implementation of Indonesia's gastrodiploamacy in Saudi Arabia from 2017 to 2023. It further aims to understand how this aligns with Indonesia's broader national interests and global positioning. The research's geographical focus on Saudi Arabia and the specified time frame offers a targeted perspective on a complex and multifaceted subject, allowing for a detailed and nuanced exploration of Indonesia's use of culinary diplomacy as a soft power tool.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK UNDERSTANDING NATIONAL INTERESTS THROUGH GASTRODIPLOMACY

Realism and neo-realism in international relations emphasize that states act primarily based on their national interests, focusing on power and survival (Antunes & Camisao, 2018). Gastrodiploamacy is a non-traditional diplomatic method utilizing culinary practices and food to enhance cultural influence and foster goodwill. It helps states navigate global politics and aligns with the realist view of state behavior. Gastrodiploamacy promotes a country's specialties, increasing public awareness of its brand and helping the foreign public, especially those hesitant to travel, become familiar with the culture through culinary experiences. It also involves winning hearts and minds through the stomach.

According to Paul Rockower, the use of food as a diplomatic instrument is a more effective way of intermediary non-verbal communication that can unite all groups (Fathun, 2023). Paul Rockower defined gastrodiploamacy as a non-threat-based public diplomacy strategy that promotes culinary culture to foreign audiences, aiming to improve a nation's reputation as a food brand. This approach, which involves the state and public relations, can lead to potential political and economic collaboration between nations by promoting awareness and understanding of the nation's culinary culture (Wilson, 2011).

Furthermore, according to Rockower, gastrodiploamacy is “the act of winning hearts and minds through stomachs”. By employing a dialogical approach, a nation presents its gastronomic delights to different audiences, aiming to acquaint them with the distinctive tastes of its cuisine. Gastrodiploamacy provides a practical means for individuals who are unable to engage in recreational activities to still gain knowledge about different cultures through the sense of taste (Putri and Baskoro, 2023). Gastrodiploamacy comes from two words: gastro (stomach) and diplomacy. When food is utilized as a commodity for diplomacy, it is called gastrodiploamacy. It makes it difficult for many people to understand the study of gastrodiploamacy, the terminology of genealogy that is not similar. Even so, the thing to remember is that when gastronomy enters the realm of diplomacy, the study is no longer focused solely on philosophical issues of food but rather a practice or attempt by a state and non-state to tell its story about the local food.

Gastrodiploamacy is a comprehensive strategy that involves state sponsorship and strategic policies. However, it also requires more access to all activities for non-government actors. This approach aims to castrate government dominance and create a perception that non-government programs are not propaganda. Non-governmental actors in gastrodiploamacy include celebrity chefs, food companies, tourism agents, public relations firms, public diplomacy practitioners, television cooking programs, and social media involvement (Baskoro, 2017).

Moreover, a French diplomat, François de Callières, has talked about the relationship between power, diplomacy, and food. He underlined the concept of culinary diplomacy as a subtle way of creating intimacy, friendship, and information for high-level actors (Muhammad and Adilbekova, 2023). Gastrodiploamacy employs traditional or local food as a non-military tool to engage with other nations, following the principles of soft power. Rockower claimed that gastrodiploamacy does not aim to persuade people through logical facts but instead focuses on fostering warm and emotional relationships, using food as the primary means of communication between nations. Food plays a significant role in

gastrodiploamacy activities since it holds a special and profound meaning (Rockower, 2012).

Gastronomic diplomacy is a strategy that not only bridges cultural boundaries but also aligns with economic interests. It promotes national cuisine, boosting trade relations and the international food market. This strategy fosters economic partnerships and business investments, as food culture often resonates with people, creating trust. Promoting a country’s wine or culinary traditions can lead to increased exports and tourism. Gastrodiploamacy also opens access to economic and political cooperation, as food or cuisine is recognized as a nation’s identity or a unit for nationalism. For example, Indonesia adopts food gastrodiploamacy to introduce its image to Saudi Arabia, utilizing its culinary heritage as a tool for promoting its national branding internationally.

INTERSECTION OF GASTRODIPLOMACY AND NATIONAL INTEREST IN BILATERAL RELATIONS

The primary concept in international relations is national interest. Every nation is perpetually engaged in pursuing or safeguarding its national interests. Every nation’s foreign policy is developed according to its national interests and consistently strives to achieve its objectives. It is a universally accepted right of every country to safeguard its national interests. Through the concept of national interest, policymakers understand the goals to be achieved by a country’s foreign policy. In practice, it becomes the basis for state action. National interests refer to a rhetorical device through which political legitimacy and support for state action are generated. Thus, national interests have great power because they help become equally crucial and legitimize a state’s actions (Burchill 2005).

According to Scott Burchill, national interests serve as the motivation of a country in implementing its foreign policy (Burchill, 2005). Charles Bread asserted that national interests are the reason behind a state’s goals and ambitions in carrying out international relations. In essence, this study deployed the concept of national interests to describe and analyze the main reasons, motivation, or justifications forming the basis of a country’s behavior or actions in its interactions with

other countries. The fundamental national interests can be defined as follows: defense interests (safeguarding the nation-state and its citizens against physical violence originating from other states or externally motivated threats to its system of governance), economic interests (enhancing the economic well-being of the nation-state in comparison to other countries), interests in the world order (preserving an international political and economic system that allows nation-state to feel secure and enables its citizens and trade to operate peacefully beyond its borders), ideological interests (protecting and perpetuating a set of universally regarded values embraced by the people of the nation-state) (Suwarman et al., 2019).

Gastrodiplomacy is an integrative approach that blends cultural exchange with economic strategy. Food is a universal language that transcends barriers, facilitating cultural understanding and appreciation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019). Simultaneously, it serves as an economic asset, promoting trade and investment. This synergy between cultural outreach and economic benefit creates a multifaceted diplomatic tool. By engaging in gastronomic diplomacy, states can foster better bilateral relations, building cultural bridges that lead to economic cooperation. This integrated approach reveals how soft power tactics like gastrodiplomacy can be part of a broader and multifunctional strategy serving national interests. Gastrodiplomacy is a potential strategy for the government to enhance Indonesia's image and national branding through the use of soft power. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has implemented some preliminary measures through Indonesian diplomatic missions overseas, the Ministry of Tourism, and non-governmental entities such as restaurant establishments, diaspora communities, and Indonesian students via the Indonesian Student Association (PPI) abroad (Trihartono et al., 2020). The state adopted two strategies for its gastrodiplomacy in this study. First, it collaborated with Indonesian food entrepreneurs to create an Indonesian restaurant in Saudi Arabia. Second, it hosted an Indonesian cuisine event in Saudi Arabia with the goal of national branding.

Certain reasons have underlie Indonesia's adoption of gastrodiplomacy. This country realizes its national interests not only with hard power but also with soft power, such as gastrodiplomacy, to achieve the objective of national branding (Cabinet Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia, 2018). The legacy of Indonesia's ancestors has put gastrodiplomacy at the center of attention, with spices as the most vital and implementable wealth. Indonesia also has natural wealth, but nature requires a lot of funds to be processed, as is the fact that there are still many natures in this country that foreign companies process. However, the heritage of spices in Indonesia has become a masterpiece and momentum, serving as a tool for national branding. The affordable prices of spices have allowed entrepreneurs with the capital to open Indonesian food restaurants abroad, inspiring the government of Indonesia to hold Indonesian food events abroad.

The contribution of other countries plays a significant role in realizing the national interest. Indonesia can clearly see the advantages of its culinary heritage and the rich taste of spices. Hence, it utilizes them as a soft power in diplomacy through gastrodiplomacy. Numerous immigrants from Indonesia and other parts of the world have triggered Indonesia to carry out gastrodiplomacy in Saudi Arabia through various strategies. Accordingly, it becomes momentum for Indonesia to introduce its culinary and national branding.

The impact of gastrodiplomacy on bilateral relations extends beyond the mere cultural exchange. It can shape perceptions, foster mutual respect, and create opportunities for collaboration. By leveraging food and culinary traditions, states can navigate sensitive political landscapes, build trust, and open doors for dialogue and negotiation. The shared experience of food culture can lead to common ground, laying the foundation for further diplomatic, economic, and strategic engagements. Therefore, understanding the role of gastrodiplomacy in shaping bilateral relations provides insights into how soft power can be harnessed effectively in the complex arena of international politics (Ogbolu, 2020).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopted a descriptive-qualitative approach suited to provide an in-depth understanding of Indonesia's gastrodiploamacy in Saudi Arabia. This design allows for a nuanced interpretation of complex social phenomena, particularly as they relate to the intersections of culture, diplomacy, and international relations (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). The methodology emphasizes the exploration and interpretation of underlying themes, trends, and strategic implications of Indonesia's culinary diplomacy.

Library research was conducted to collect secondary data. It included an analysis of academic articles, governmental reports, diplomatic correspondence, media coverage, and documentation from relevant events and summits. The study also relied on secondary data sources like statistical reports, trade agreements, and international treaties to understand the economic and trade aspects of the relationship between Indonesia and Saudi Arabia.

The analysis employed the theoretical frameworks of gastrodiploamacy and national interest providing a lens to explore how culinary diplomacy aligns with broader national and international goals. The use of these frameworks has enabled a multifaceted analysis that considers political, economic, cultural, and social dimensions. Thematic analysis was applied to categorize and interpret the qualitative data, identifying patterns that reveal the strategies, implementation, and impact of Indonesia's gastrodiploamacy in Saudi Arabia.

The study adhered to ethical guidelines in qualitative research, ensuring that all sourced information was appropriately credited and confidentiality was maintained where necessary. Although the research primarily relied on publicly available data, careful consideration was given to the context, source, and potential biases of the information. The methodology was transparent, and the research process was meticulously documented to ensure replicability and validity.

Limitations of the research included potential biases in the source material, the availability of information related to specific diplomatic strategies, and the challenge of capturing the full complexity of cultural exchanges.

The delimitations, on the other hand, refer to the intentional boundaries of the study, focusing on the time frame of 2017 to 2023, in which the authors chose the scope of the research in that year because Indonesia was interrupting gastrodiploamacy during those years. It was illustrated by the opening of an Indonesian food restaurant and the organization of an Indonesian food event in Saudi Arabia in 2017-2023. However, not much was discussed about gastrodiploamacy Indonesia in Saudi Arabia. Hence, the limited information emerged as a limitation of this study.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Indonesia and Saudi Arabia have shared a long-standing historical relationship spanning several centuries, characterized by cultural exchanges that have mutually benefited the populations of both nations. Nevertheless, in modern diplomacy, conventional approaches frequently fall short in closing cultural divides and promoting reciprocal comprehension. Gastrodiploamacy provides a distinct method to foster engagement, surpassing language and ideological obstacles by establishing ties via shared culinary experiences.

This research aims to analyze Indonesia's gastrodiploamacy in Saudi Arabia, focusing on the employed techniques, the reception by Saudi citizens, and the broader implications for bilateral relations. Indonesian cuisine serves as a powerful tool for soft diplomacy due to its abundance of flavourful spices that can captivate individuals via the delectable taste of the dishes. To fully leverage the potential of gastronomy as a means to promote cross-cultural understanding and enhance friendly ties in a globally interconnected society, policymakers need to have a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of gastrodiploamacy in this particular environment.

OVERVIEW OF STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY INDONESIA IN SAUDI ARABIA

Indonesia has actively utilized gastrodiploamacy as a form of soft diplomacy in Saudi Arabia. By promoting its culinary heritage, Indonesia aims to create a cultural bridge, enhancing its image and influence. The strategies

included hosting Indonesian food festivals, collaborating with local restaurants, and engaging in culinary diplomacy at official state functions. These initiatives are part of a broader public diplomacy strategy to leverage food as a symbol of national identity and cultural exchange. The government has imposed a policy of gastrodiplomacy on Saudi Arabia by involving non-governmental actors. It was depicted by the entrepreneurs opening Indonesian food restaurants in Saudi Arabia. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has collaborated with organizations such as the Indonesian Gastronomy Association (IGA) to organize national seminars on economic diplomacy. These events have provided a platform for sharing knowledge and experience related to the culinary business, especially Indonesian specialty food abroad. Foreign Minister of the Republic of Indonesia, Retno Marsudi, stressed that food is a national identity, and gastrodiplomacy supports Indonesian economic diplomacy (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of The Republic of Indonesia, 2019).

Poppy defined gastrodiplomacy as a form of unconventional diplomacy that aims to foster cultural understanding and promote connections between people independent of political affiliations. These developments are perceived as more efficient in enhancing global recognition of the country by promoting its gastronomic and cultural heritage. The notion of Indonesian gastrodiplomacy is characterized by its methodical and integrated approach, assessed by diverse food businesses, particularly the micro sector, which is seeing continuous growth. It implies an increasing number of job opportunities for the Indonesian population (Pujayanti, 2017). Based on the government's stance, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia received an equal share of the USD 138 billion budget for diplomatic and international cooperation initiatives in 2023 (Swasta & Awam, 2012).

Indonesia is a developing country that wants to strengthen power, not only with hard but also with soft power. Indonesia decided to carry out gastrodiplomacy with various countries, one of which was Saudi Arabia, as a form of national branding. Indonesia has culinary potential that is in demand abroad. Indonesia also has

natural wealth in the form of spices, which later characterizes its cuisine. The attractiveness of Indonesian spices is extremely strong, even European colonization in Indonesia began from the desire to control these spices. Indonesia's culinary potential must be optimized for its national interests. Indonesia chose to strengthen soft power in diplomacy and to make the archipelago's culinary heritage a masterpiece in gastrodiplomacy. Indonesia's strategy is inseparable from national interests. Indonesia's national interest in gastrodiplomacy in Saudi Arabia is to introduce Indonesia through the image of food taste. Indonesia wants to give good national branding to the international community. It is based on the international community seeing the image of a country from the products it produces; the country's image has an essential meaning; therefore, every country tries to show a good picture (Pujayanti, 2017).

In addition, Indonesia also possesses a national interest in spreading food to Saudi Arabia and the Middle East. It is an advantage for Indonesia because it will carry out more and more collaborations, and of course, it will escalate state revenue. Then, Indonesia also wants to strengthen bilateral relations with Saudi Arabia. The Coordinating Minister for the Economy, Airlangga Hartarto, met with the Minister of Economy and Planning of Saudi Arabia, Faisal Al-Ibrahim, on May 22, 2022, at Davos, Switzerland, to discuss the connections between the two countries. Airlangga expressed optimism over Indonesia's potential to establish a strategic partnership with Saudi Arabia by leveraging the collaborative efforts of Saudi Arabia Vision 2030 and the Golden Indonesia Vision 2045 (Coordinator of the Ministry of Economic Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2022).

As previously explained, the government has supported entrepreneurs through the procurement of events and funds, such as Warung Bakso Mang Oedin—an Indonesian food restaurant located in the Al Balad area, Jeddah, Arab. Bakso is a delicious typical Indonesian food. Bakso Mang Oedin has been around since 1995. It has been selling well and has been visited by pilgrims, not only from Indonesia but also from the

Philippines and several other countries. The menu is presented in two languages, English and Indonesian, but the prices are listed in Saudi riyals. However, visitors can also pay in rupiah. The various choices on the menu include ordinary meatballs, bakso mercon, bakso beranak, and mie ayam bakso. It also offers fried rice, chicken rice with fresh vegetables with chili paste, chicken satay, pempek, rawon, soto, and nasi campur.

Diding Kelvin, the owner of this meatball stall, asserted that their main market was pilgrims who came to perform worship in the holy land. However, many Indonesian citizens living in Saudi Arabia and citizens from other countries often came and became customers. Diding admitted that he had dozens of employees, not all of whom were Indonesian. Some were Filipinos, Bangladeshis, and Afghans (CNN Indonesia, 2022).



Figure 2. Warung Bakso Mang Oedin in Saudi Arabia (Oedin, 2023)



Figure 3. Menu of Warung Bakso Mang Oedin on Instagram Feeds (Oedin, 2023)



Figure 4. Mie Ayam Bakso Mang Oedin (Authors' documentation, 2023)



Figure 5. Menu of Wong Solo Restaurant on Instagram Feeds (Restaurant Wong Solo, 2023)



Figure 6. Wong Solo Restaurant in Saudi Arabia (Amkas, 2020).

The presentation of Indonesian specialties as part of culinary diplomacy has received a positive response from the international community. Meatballs are considered a typical Indonesian food. The spice flavors of Bakso Mang Oedin have appealed to international palates. When foreigners taste and genuinely like meatballs, it simultaneously contributes to the establishment of Indonesia's national branding, leaving a lasting impression. Subsequently, Indonesia gained recognition from other countries.

Furthermore, in 2017, the Wong Solo restaurant was established in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. At first, the owner of the Wong Solo or Wongso Group restaurant, Puspo Wardoyo, had developed Indonesian culinary businesses abroad as a form of introducing Indonesia, which was quite difficult, especially in Saudi Arabia. Puspo Wardoyo even took 15 years to build a restaurant in Saudi Arabia, and this effort was only realized in 2017 (Kurniawan, 2020). Wong Solo restaurant serves various Indonesian food, including a variety of Indonesian side dishes made to order in a buffet system. It serves nasi rendang, grilled chicken rice, crispy chicken rice, fried catfish rice, meatballs, mie ayam, soto lamongan, nasi pecel, nasi udud, es dawet, and almost all Indonesian food. It serves different types of Indonesian food every day. In addition, it often provides food discounts to attract customers.

Wong Solo restaurant is a destination for Hajj and Umrah pilgrims to treat their homesickness with Indonesian food. However, the restaurant, as a form of Indonesian gastrodiploamacy, also has foreign customers. It is a busy restaurant because it serves an almost complete set menu of Indonesian food, demonstrating the image that Indonesian cuisine is highly diverse and the spices are extremely delicious. Moreover, foreigners really like spices from Indonesia.

INDONESIAN FOOD EVENT IN SAUDI ARABIA

Food events could serve as a means of implementing gastrodiploamacy, utilized by Indonesia to enhance its soft power. This food event has the potential to elevate Indonesia's global reputation and generate anticipation for its diverse culinary tastes. Indonesia has organized

various Indonesian food events in Saudi Arabia to create national branding. In 2018, the Chambers of Commerce and Industry in Indonesia and Jeddah, the Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia, and the Ministry of Trade, as well as support from PT Wahyu Promo Citra, held an Indonesian food event called Made in Indonesia Expo at the Jeddah Center for Forums and Events. It featured 75 platforms of Indonesian products and services from various companies, 70% of which were Indonesian food, ranging from coffee, chocolate, dendeng, rendang, fried rice, meatballs, soto betawi, ayam geprek, and other Indonesian dishes. This event was attended by Indonesian citizens and the people of Saudi Arabia, one of whom was Eman Radi, a native of Saudi Arabia, who gave the impression that he was extremely happy to enjoy Indonesian culinary delights. According to him, the spicy taste of Indonesian food makes him want to continue to enjoy it on various occasions (Aminah, 2018).

Furthermore, from December 20, 2018, to January 9, 2019, Indonesia was the guest of honor at the 33rd Janadriyah Festival in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (Ministry of Education and Culture of The Republic of Indonesia, 2019). The festival was packed with visitors who were interested in getting to know Indonesian culture and was attended by around 22,000 people in 2018. The purpose of this annual cultural festival is to demonstrate a diverse range of traditional Arabic cultures, including dance, poetry, opera, manuscript, and book exhibitions. Additionally, the festival featured numerous sporting activities, such as horse racing and camel racing. Every invited country was granted the chance to showcase its artistic and cultural ingenuity in the pavilion allocated by the committee. Indonesia, as the guest of honor, was granted the exclusive right to a pavilion measuring 2,500 meters, featuring a grand stage measuring 20 x 12 meters. This pavilion is located in the Janadriyah region, which spans 160 hectares and serves as a platform to exhibit and present various cultural works from Indonesia. Indonesia's festival showcased the participation of 600 performers from different provinces, who delivered a total of 240 performances over 21 days. During the Janadriyah occasion in 2018, Indonesia showcased not

just its culture but also utilized the occasion as an opportunity to distribute traditional herbal drinks known as jamu, which exemplify distinct Indonesian traits. A year later, Indonesia was once again invited to be a distinguished participant at the World Franchise Exhibition 2019. The event took place at the Dhahran International Exhibition Center in Al Khobar City, Saudi Arabia, from April 27 to 29, 2019. The 144-square-meter Indonesian Pavilion could accommodate Indonesian companies from various sectors offering Indonesian franchise brands to Saudi Arabia, including food and beverages (Rikza, 2019).

Then, in 2020, the ASEAN Food Festival was held by Lulu Supermarkets and Hypermarkets throughout Saudi Arabia from October 14 to 20, 2020. The event aimed to promote and market products from ASEAN member countries, including products from Indonesia. The Economic and Trade Team of the Indonesian Consulate General in Jeddah, led by PF Economics 1, Dr. Windratmo, also visited Lulu Supermarket in Jeddah to monitor the promotional program (Embassy of The Republic of Indonesia in Riyadh, 2020).

Various Indonesian snacks included biscuits, wafers, coffee, and others. Furthermore, in 2021, the *Gastrovaganza Indonesiana* event was held. To make the event a success, the Indonesian Consulate General in Jeddah collaborated with five selected Indonesian restaurants based on their quality and availability: Kraton, Wong Solo, Kampung Melayu, Bahrawi, and Nusantara. The active participation of the Dharma Wanita Association of the Indonesian Consulate General in Jeddah also supported the event. There were at least 27 typical Indonesian dishes served by restaurant participants, encompassing appetizers, main courses, and desserts. The menu served included grilled konro soup (makassar), taliwang grilled chicken (ntb), gado-gado, oxtail soup, nasi padang, grilled ribs, chicken/meat satay, nasi bakar, pindang fish soup, wong solo grilled chicken, rendang, ayam penyet surabaya, tengkleng, fried rice, dendeng balado, pempek Palembang, bala-bala, mendoan tempe, tahu poong, egg roll, grass jelly, the tarik, and es doger. Meanwhile, for finger food, the Indonesian Consulate General in Jeddah presented

onde-onde, ku cake, klepon, solo sausage, risol, spring rolls, pastels, onion nuts, brittle beans, sumpia, cheese sticks, and cheese bidaran. The *Gastrovaganza Indonesiana* event was not only attended by Indonesian citizens but also foreigners who were interested in Indonesian cuisine and culture (Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Riyadh, 2020).

Furthermore, in 2022, there was an Indonesian Week Festival (IWF) held in collaboration with importers of Indonesian products in Saudi Arabia. It was held from July 28 to August 18, 2022, at Sarawat Superstore, Rawdah District, Jeddah. Eight importers participated in this event, with various products (140 products) marketed, including food and beverage products such as biscuits, instant coffee, noodles, drinks, cereals, and other snacks (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2020). Apart from that, this event also provided special promotional prices given by participating importers. Indonesian products have been widely available and easy to find in Saudi Arabia because they are well-received by the people of Saudi Arabia.

IMPACT OF TWO INDONESIAN FOOD GASTRODIPLOMATIC STRATEGIES IN SAUDI ARABIA

Indonesian food restaurants and food festivals in Saudi Arabia have demonstrated a positive impact by achieving the goal of gastrodiplomacy. Then, gastrodiplomacy not only represents a cultural display but will also bring benefits to the economic interests of Indonesia where not only Indonesian food is introduced, but the food ingredients of Indonesia (such as spices and rice) can also be purchased by foreign citizens in Saudi Arabia, raising the number of Indonesians (TV Sekolah Indonesia Jeddah, 2021). This economic impact has been depicted by Indonesian exports in 2020, amounting to USD 36.4 billion worldwide and USD 0.4 billion to Saudi Arabia. Indonesia experienced a 2.1 percent increase in exports from 2016 to 2020, whereas Saudi Arabia saw 6.5 percent growth in the same period. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia has been one of the target markets of Indonesia. In addition, the massive Muslim population in Saudi Arabia, totaling 31.9 million people,

and the demand for imports of halal food and beverages from the world was also high, worth USD 20.6 billion in 2020. Although its imports have grown only 1.6 percent in the last five years, the demand for halal food and beverages from Indonesia has grown relatively high, as evidenced by the 6.5 percent growth of Indonesia's exports to Saudi Arabia during 2016-2020 (Akhmad Akbar Susanto et al., 2021).

Meanwhile, this gastrodiploacy would also impose social impacts. Initially, it regards the citizens from other countries. A successful gastrodiploacy will happen when there is an internal bond between the two countries in non-political affairs. The Foreign Minister of Indonesia orchestrated the event, which encompassed several activities, including the Made in Indonesia Expo 2018, the Janadriyah Festival, the ASEAN food festival, the Gastrovaganza Indonesia, and the Indonesia Week Festival. The formation of the Indonesian food lover community in Saudi Arabia has introduced many people throughout the world to the flavors of Indonesian food. This group has been a source of comfort for Indonesians living and working in Saudi Arabia.

CONCLUSION

Gastrodiploacy is a tool of a country's soft power, employed with the aim of establishing a country's national branding. Food serves as a vital necessity for humans, but beyond its basic function, the taste of food can acquire a profound and meaningful worth. Indonesia has excelled in the importance of strengthening soft power. Hence, it has opted to utilize gastrodiploacy as a means of exerting soft power and showcasing its specialties. Indonesia has engaged in food gastrodiploacy with various countries, notably Saudi Arabia. Using the concepts of gastrodiploacy and national interest, this study discovered that Indonesian food employed two strategies: opening restaurants and holding Indonesian food events to perform gastrodiploacy and promote national interest in Saudi Arabia. These two strategies were implemented for the specific purpose of advancing Indonesia's national interests within the international community, with a particular focus on Saudi Arabia. Both strategies were

quite successful. Indonesia, renowned for its flavorful cuisine, is a prime example of a country where the abundance of spices is evident. This occurrence is the result of the persistent hard work of Indonesian food entrepreneurs, creative ideas, and activeness from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia in Saudi Arabia. Additionally, the Saudi Arabian government's willingness to openly embrace this collaboration has played a significant role. These two strategies also extend to fostering cooperation between Indonesia and Saudi Arabia in other culinary events.

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