

The Challenges in Developing Indonesia's Gastrodiplomacy in Jeddah

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ABSTRACT

As globalization continues to develop, culture and culinary traditions have become areas of great interest to the international community. In this context, several countries practice diplomacy through gastrodiplomacy as a means to introduce and promote their national culture and cuisine to the world. The Indonesia Spice Up The World gastrodiplomacy program serves as a diplomatic tool for Indonesia, a nation rich in cultural and culinary diversity, to promote its culture and cuisine globally. Although obstacles remain in its implementation, several initiatives have been carried out. The Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia (KJRI) in Jeddah, in collaboration with the Indonesian diaspora, organizations, and other relevant agencies, continues to work toward greater integration of Indonesian gastrodiplomacy efforts in Jeddah. Important dimensions for understanding the development of Indonesian gastrodiplomacy in Jeddah include product marketing strategy, gastrodiplomacy campaigning, food event strategy, coalition-building strategy, and media relations strategy. Using an exploratory qualitative approach, this study aims to identify and explain the obstacles to the advancement of Indonesian gastrodiplomacy in Jeddah. The results of the study show that challenges persist, particularly the low participation of the restaurant diaspora. This lack of engagement hinders the optimization of culinary promotion and networking opportunities in the region.

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INTRODUCTION

Entering the era of globalization, many countries employ soft diplomacy as a tool to enhance cooperation and strengthen their national image (Gosling, 2021; Gurgu & Cociuban, 2016; Saaida, 2023). Public diplomacy is one alternative strategy that can be carried out by local communities through people-to-people engagement (Fett, 2021; Golan & Dennis, 2015; Hivonnet & Burnay, 2020; Schneider, 2023; Sevin, 2015). Various countries introduce their cultures through gastrodiplomacy—a method of promoting cultural identity and culinary specialties to build a positive national image among the global community. Indonesia, as a country rich in cultural and culinary diversity, possesses significant gastronomic potential that attracts worldwide appreciation (Desi Wibawati et al., 2021).

The term gastrodiplomacy was first popularized by Thailand in 2002 when the country launched a cultural initiative themed “Thai Kitchen of The World.” Following this program, Time magazine published an article that introduced the term gastrodiplomacy to a wider audience. In subsequent years, a scholarly article titled “Breaking Bread to Win Hearts and Minds” was also published (Ramadhan et al., 2019).

In Indonesia, the concept of gastrodiplomacy gained prominence after rendang was ranked first by CNN magazine in 2017. Other Indonesian dishes such as satay and fried rice have also achieved international recognition. From a social and cultural perspective, cuisine represents an integral part of national identity. Culinary entrepreneurs can therefore use this momentum to promote Indonesia through its cuisine, thereby strengthening the nation's brand image. Szondi (2008) defines nation branding as "the strategic self-presentation of a country with the aim of creating reputational capital through economic, political, and social interest promotion at home and abroad." A strong national brand image can also support the growth of the country's culinary industry through economic drivers, one of which is culinary tourism (Pujayanti, 2017).

This positive reputation is further strengthened by Indonesian diasporas abroad, including professional workers serving as chefs, cabin crew, pilots, and flight attendants (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021). The diaspora offers strategic advantages for the Indonesian government in achieving its national interests through brand awareness initiatives. Moreover, the diaspora serves as a vital instrument of public diplomacy in promoting Indonesian cuisine internationally. Culinary arts as a medium of gastrodiplomacy have broad appeal and play a significant role in state diplomacy. Rockower (2012) explains that food, like music, is capable of creating emotional connections even when verbal communication is limited. Similarly, Sam Chapple-Sokol (2012) emphasizes that culinary arts possess even greater potential than other cultural assets, as food fosters stronger emotional bonds between individuals than music or dance (Sam, 2012).

Historically, cuisine has always played a role in important diplomatic and business meetings. Its function extends beyond providing meals during negotiations or high-level state gatherings—it also serves as a cultural bridge and an element of foreign policy in cultural diplomacy. Presently, actors in gastrodiplomacy are no longer limited to political elites; successful implementation requires active public participation. Key actors include culinary businesses, professional chefs, celebrity chefs, tourism promoters, public relations and diplomacy practitioners, and media platforms such as cooking shows and social media channels. These actors collectively contribute to the advancement of gastrodiplomacy (Zhang, 2015).

Given this potential, the Indonesian diaspora can also play an essential role in advancing Indonesian gastrodiplomacy. Among diaspora communities, promotional activities and culinary introductions are often organized by individuals, restaurants, and Indonesian student associations, with support from Indonesian diplomatic representatives abroad. Indonesian cuisine acts as a cultural ambassador representing national identity. Food serves as a unifying force that fosters relationships between communities and nurtures cultural acculturation through shared tastes.

Since 2021, gastrodiplomacy during the administration of President Joko Widodo has been strategically developed and implemented. The Government of Indonesia launched the Indonesia Spice Up The World (ISUTW) program in November 2021, under the coordination of the Coordinating Ministry for Maritime Affairs and Investment. ISUTW is a cross-ministerial initiative designed to expand the marketing of Indonesian spices, processed foods, and seasoning products—particularly in Africa, Australia, and other promising international markets (Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, 2021a).

The main objectives of the ISUTW program are to promote Indonesian cuisine abroad and to establish 4,000 Indonesian restaurants worldwide by 2024, alongside increasing spice export values (Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, 2021b). The categories of spices and dishes being promoted include fried rice seasoning, satay, soto, gado-gado, and rendang, as well as supporting spices such as nutmeg, cloves, ginger, cinnamon, and vanilla (Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, 2021c).

ISUTW is structured upon four program pillars: Production of Spices and Processed Products, Indonesian Restaurants, Culinary Promotion, and Indonesian Culinary Destinations. To implement these initiatives, ISUTW collaborates with various ministries and institutions, including Indonesian embassies abroad, diplomatic missions, chefs, local companies, and diasporas (Agus Trihartono et al., 2022). Among the targeted markets for Indonesian spice and culinary products—besides Africa and Australia—is the Middle East.

Saudi Arabia is a key country in the Middle East that maintains close diplomatic relations with Indonesia. As the fourth-largest Muslim nation, Indonesia sends the highest number of pilgrims annually. The Indonesian diaspora in Saudi Arabia plays an increasingly significant role in supporting Indonesian diplomacy, particularly economic diplomacy. According to the Acting Head of Economic Affairs at the Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia in Jeddah, there are currently 41 Indonesian restaurants in Jeddah and surrounding areas (Muhammad Aris, 2024). These restaurants, established by Indonesian entrepreneurs, feature five main Indonesian dishes: rendang, soto ayam, fried rice, chicken satay, and gado-gado. The popularity of these cuisines among Saudi citizens and foreign residents reflects strong interest in Indonesian food.

According to Laras Putri Olifiani (2023), the Indonesian diaspora in Saudi Arabia plays a vital role in strengthening Indonesia's brand image both professionally and within community networks. However, the implementation of Indonesian gastrodiplomacy policy in Jeddah has drawn criticism due to overlapping roles and coordination challenges among government institutions.

Previous studies have examined topics related to this research. First, Laras Putri Olifiani et al. (2023), in their study titled "The Role of the Indonesian Diaspora in Jeddah in Increasing Brand Awareness Through Indonesian Kampung Melayu Restaurants," describe the role of non-state actors in advancing gastrodiplomacy through the presence of Indonesian diasporas in Saudi Arabia. The findings show that the success of Indonesian gastrodiplomacy in promoting national cuisine is strongly influenced by the contributions of the diaspora and their business networks. Second, a study by Dafa Murdhania (2022) titled "Analysis of the Implementation of Thai Gastrodiplomacy in Strengthening Relations with Muslim Countries Through Halal Food" discusses Thailand's policies in promoting halal culinary products to Muslim-majority nations. The results indicate Thailand's success in expanding its halal food industry through the Global Thai program, positioning the country as the second most popular destination among the world's top 10 Muslim tourist destinations.

Based on the above background, it can be observed that a comprehensive study on Indonesian gastrodiplomacy in Jeddah has yet to be undertaken.

METHOD

The method used in this study is a qualitative descriptive approach. This method employs data collection techniques through interviews and literature studies (Fadli, 2021). The primary data in this paper were obtained from interviews with key and supporting informants (Sondak, 2019). The key informant in this study was the Acting Head of the Economic Function at the Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia (KJRI) in Jeddah. This paper utilizes a qualitative method based on the concept of a gastrodiplomacy strategy. The secondary data consist of information obtained from literature studies, including journals and research reports (Ahyar et al., 2020). The collected data then underwent a source triangulation process to ensure reliability and strengthen the final analysis presented in this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Bilateral Relations between Indonesia and Saudi Arabia

Indonesia and Saudi Arabia officially established diplomatic relations on May 1, 1950, with the opening of the Indonesian Embassy in Jeddah. In its development, the status of the mission changed in 1964 to the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Jeddah (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023). However, following the relocation of the capital city, the Indonesian government also moved the embassy from Jeddah to Riyadh, while the existing Indonesian mission in Jeddah was converted into the Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia in Jeddah (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023a). This step was taken to further enhance relations and cooperation between Indonesia and Saudi Arabia in the economic, social, cultural, and other sectors.

Even before formal diplomatic relations were established, Saudi Arabia was one of the seven Arab countries that recognized the proclamation of Indonesian independence on November 4, 1947. Over time, cooperation between the two countries has continued to develop positively. Indonesia and Saudi Arabia are also members of several international forums, including the United Nations, G20, OIC (Organization of Islamic Cooperation), and GNB (Non-Aligned Movement) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023b). Currently, with Indonesia's status as the world's fourth most populous country—whose majority population is Muslim—the relationship between the two nations has become increasingly close and significant, particularly given Indonesia's large hajj pilgrimage quota. This cooperation is also grounded in a shared sense of Islamic brotherhood, reflected in reciprocal visits between leaders of both nations. Over time, bilateral cooperation has strengthened across multiple sectors.

President Joko Widodo paid a state visit to Saudi Arabia on September 11–12, 2015, resulting in several commitments to enhance bilateral cooperation, including an agreement to increase Indonesia's hajj quota. Subsequent visits were made on May 20–21, 2017, to attend the Arab–Islamic–American Summit, and again on April 14–15, 2019, to discuss various issues requiring immediate implementation. Likewise, the King of Saudi Arabia, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, made a historic state visit to Indonesia on March 1–9, 2017—the second such visit since King Faisal's visit in 1970—marking a memorable milestone in bilateral relations (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023c).

Beyond religious affairs, Indonesia also maintains strong economic ties with Saudi Arabia. The Kingdom is one of Indonesia's key non-traditional trading partners, ranking as its 28th largest export partner. In 2019, total trade between the two countries reached USD 5.06

billion, with Indonesia's exports to Saudi Arabia valued at USD 1.5 billion and imports at USD 3.5 billion (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023d). Although Indonesia's trade balance with Saudi Arabia remains in deficit due to high oil and gas imports, the non-oil-and-gas sector shows a surplus in Indonesia's favor. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia is an important partner in the field of employment, as Indonesia aims to increase the number of professional workers deployed to the Kingdom.

The Government of Indonesia officially suspended the sending of domestic-sector workers to Saudi Arabia on August 1, 2011, and expanded this policy through the Decree of the Minister of Manpower Number 260 of 2015 concerning the Termination and Prohibition of the Placement of Indonesian Migrant Workers (Tenaga Kerja Indonesia) with individual employers in Middle Eastern countries (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023e). In the field of education, as of January 2018, more than 3,800 Indonesian students were studying in Saudi Arabia at various levels, including over 1,500 at the university level (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023f). Notably, almost all of these students receive full scholarships funded by the Government of Saudi Arabia.

Regarding regional and global cooperation, Indonesia and Saudi Arabia share similar stances on key issues relating to peace in the Middle East, particularly concerning the Arab–Israeli conflict. Both countries also maintain a shared commitment to combating terrorism and radicalism and to promoting a peaceful and tolerant image of Islam. Additionally, Indonesia and the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) are exploring strategic partnerships, including the Indonesia–GCC CEPA (Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement), to further strengthen trade cooperation between the two sides.

Program Indonesia Spice Up the World

Indonesia is rich in spices that are spread across the archipelago, including cloves, pepper, nutmeg, kencur, turmeric, ginger, and many others. In Indonesia, various spices can easily be found and are commonly used as food additives, medicines, processed food and beverage ingredients, and body warmers during cold seasons. This provides an opportunity for Indonesia to enhance its culinary diplomacy through spices and processed products derived from native Indonesian ingredients. The diversity and richness of Indonesian spices—responsible for determining the taste, color, aroma, and appearance of dishes—are key elements that define the delicacy and uniqueness of Indonesian cuisine.

Currently, there are 1,177 Indonesian restaurants in eight countries, consisting of 697 in the Asia-Pacific and African regions, and 480 in Europe and the Americas (Kemenparekraf, 2021). According to the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (2021), the culinary industry is the largest contributor among all creative economy sub-sectors to Indonesia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In 2020, Indonesian culinary contributed around 41 percent, or approximately 455 trillion rupiah, to the national creative economy's GDP. In addition, the culinary sub-sector absorbs the highest number of workers—around 9.5 million people (Kemenparekraf, 2021). With the continuing growth of spice and processed food exports, it is expected that this sector will strengthen domestic economic links, from farmers to distributors, while generating significant employment.

Furthermore, rendang is listed among the 50 Best Foods in the World according to CNN (Liputan6.com, 2021). Indonesia has even earned the nickname “Mother of Spices,” as its spices have historically served as a primary global trading commodity across the archipelago’s ports. Indonesia’s rich culinary heritage serves as a vital foundation for developing gastrodiplomacy. This cultural asset became the basis for the establishment of the Indonesia Spice Up The World (ISUTW) program, launched on November 4, 2021. The program operates under four main pillars (Agus Trihartono et al., 2022), namely:

Spice Products – including the production, packaging, exhibition, and financial support for processed spice products;

Indonesian Restaurants – through collaborations involving chefs, promotions, and restaurant design;

Culinary Exhibitions – by organizing festivals, creating digital content, establishing media collaborations, and hosting forums and conferences;

Indonesia as a Culinary Destination – by developing culinary-themed tourism routes, preparing gastronomic destinations, and creating travel content promoting these destinations.

The ISUTW program was initiated by the Coordinating Ministry for Maritime Affairs and Investment, which also serves as the program’s lead coordinator. Its implementation relies on synergy among various ministries, state and non-state institutions, and the wider community (Agus Trihartono et al., 2022a). To ensure its success, the Indonesian government has developed three main strategies. The first strategy focuses on establishing partnerships with local Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). The second strategy involves reactivating the Wonderful Indonesia branding initiative. The third strategy centers on promoting Indonesian spices and processed spice products. These three strategies support the realization of the ISUTW program’s objectives.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is one of the key collaborating agencies in the ISUTW program, with specific responsibilities for mapping and promotional activities abroad. As a mapping actor, the Ministry identifies the number and distribution of 1,120 Indonesian restaurants worldwide. As a promotional actor, it organizes events such as formal diplomatic banquets, food festivals, and public bazaars in collaboration with local organizations and communities across various countries (Agus Trihartono et al., 2022b).

Indonesian Gastrodiplomacy through the Indonesia Spice Up The World Program in Jeddah 2021-2024

Paul Rockower is an expert in the field of public diplomacy, particularly gastrodiplomacy. He defines gastrodiplomacy and explains its role in diplomacy and its relationship to culture. Rockower (2015) describes gastrodiplomacy as the intersection between food and foreign policy, emphasizing how nations communicate their culture through cuisine. He further notes that restaurants can serve as front-line agents in introducing and shaping a nation’s image abroad. Moreover, food-based gastrodiplomacy acts as a vehicle for cultural communication and for engaging foreign publics. Similarly, Pham (2013) states that in gastrodiplomacy, countries employ food as a strategic instrument to promote culture, build a national image, globalize their food industries, attract tourists, and foster relationships with foreign audiences.

For middle-income countries such as Peru, Taiwan, Thailand, and South Korea, gastrodiplomacy serves as a tool to enhance national reputation. According to De Voog (2011), food in traditional diplomacy has historically been used to strengthen international relations. Formal state banquets for visiting dignitaries symbolize the importance of bilateral ties. For example, in 2003 the British government hosted Russian President Vladimir Putin at a grand royal banquet to mark the first state visit by a Russian leader in over 125 years (British State Banquet, 2003). Informal banquets hosted by heads of state may likewise serve to foster closer diplomatic relations.

Juyan Zhang (2015) explained that there are 6 (six) forms of gastrodinutrition strategies, as follows: 1) A product marketing strategy, a product marketing strategy that markets culinary brands and food images in the world through the establishment of restaurant chains, and the promotion of food product exports; 2) A food events strategy, a culinary strategy by organizing or being involved in various international food festivals/bazaars to promote food to foreign countries; 3) The coalition-building strategy, A strategy to build coalitions by involving partnerships such as organizations that have similar interests to expand culinary/food-related channels and networks. Culinary campaigns seek partners in the hospitality and tourism industry because they share the same interests and have resources that have a great influence on foreign targets Other partners include diplomatic organizations, such as embassies and cultural centers, as well as foreign local shops; 4) The use of opinion leaders strategy, Using opinion leaders to increase awareness and credibility of food brands; 5) The media relations strategy, Media relations is essential for a gastrodiplomacy campaign. Social media, such as YouTube and Twitter, play a very important role; 6) The education strategy, involves culinary education through teaching programs and participatory events to ensure consistency in food image and long-term relationships with food lovers. This strategy has two aspects. First, the sponsoring country trains and certifies cooks before they work abroad to ensure consistent quality of cuisine. Second, teaching programs for foreigners are created to enhance their hands-on experience and subsequent identification with the cuisine of a country.

According to Juyan Zhang (2015), the gastrodiplomacy strategy requires collaboration from various state and non-state actors. Not only does it require the role of the state as a policy maker, but the role of the community is needed to build awareness, help the state grow public awareness of food brand marketing, and the role of the community is very important to establish collaborative relationships with foreign communities. Through gastrodiplomacy, countries are increasingly innovative in marketing their products as well as using food to improve a country's image. However, according to Juyan Zhang (2015), there are challenges in the practice of gastrodiplomacy at the global level. These issues include food security, food counterfeiting, food and environmental protection, food protectionism and trade, and competition for cultural heritage. The phenomenon of spoiled dumpling food being exported from China to Japan has caused dozens of Japanese to fall ill, and the two countries are at odds over where the contamination occurred. In 2013 there was a widespread scandal in Europe when horse meat was counterfeited as beef, prompting the EU to create a network to ensure cross-border cooperation on violations of food law requirements. So these things can be a challenge for the practice of gastrodiplomacy.

In making the ISUTW program abroad a success, the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs through representatives of the Indonesian Embassy/Consulate General serves as a mapping actor and promotional actor. The Indonesian Consulate General in Jeddah is one of the Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia with a focus on citizen service. Some of the considerations that are the reason for this include the quantity of the Indonesian diaspora, the complexity of legal issues that befall Indonesian citizens, and Saudi Arabia which is the destination for settling or visiting the Indonesian people. In the work area of the Indonesian Consulate General in Jeddah, there are around 162,000 Indonesian citizens who work in various sectors, both formal and informal. Given that the data from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia is Indonesian citizens who hold official documents, the Indonesian Consulate General in Jeddah estimates that the actual number of Indonesian citizens is more than this figure, with an estimate of around 500,000 people. The working area of the Indonesian Consulate General in Jeddah covers the Western region of Saudi Arabia consisting of four Emirates, namely the Provinces of Makkah, Medina, Tabuk, and Aseer. The working area of the Indonesian Consulate General in Jeddah is a trade gateway that can easily reach cities in Saudi Arabia as well as the Gulf countries, Middle East and Africa which are supported by infrastructure, including highway facilities to various cities, airports, air transportation, ports and sea piers, free zone areas, land transportation, railway transportation which is currently being actively built as a priority project. telecommunications, banking, office centers, trade, hospitality, resorts, education, hospitals, and restaurants of international standard.

Jeddah is one of the largest non-oil industrial cities in Saudi Arabia. Currently, the industrial area "Jeddah Industrial Estate" has approximately 620 factories that continue to be equipped with various facilities for the convenience of industrial operational activities. These factories produce a wide range of products, including food products, beverages, clothing, household appliances and appliances, electronics, cosmetics, chemicals, building materials and others. Industrial products from this region are not only marketed to domestic market consumers but also to the regional markets of the Gulf region and the international market of the Middle East.

The Government of Indonesia conducts the ISUTW program throughout 2021 to 2024 through several aspects, including: 1) A product marketing strategy: A product marketing strategy that markets culinary brands and food images in the world through the establishment of restaurant chains, and the promotion of food product exports. The ISUTW program not only aims to spread the authenticity of Indonesian cuisine, but also introduces and promotes spices used in Indonesian cuisine which then transforms into exports. Indonesian Gastrodiplomacy activities through ISUTW have a focus on building export networks and restaurant networks. The most important role in promoting Indonesian cuisine products is through the government, the local government of the Indonesian Embassy/Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia, the diaspora, and organizations engaged in the food sector. The Indonesian Consulate General in Jeddah has mapped Indonesian restaurants in the working area of the Indonesian Consulate General in Jeddah, namely 41 Indonesian restaurants. The Indonesian Consulate General in Jeddah collaborates with the diaspora and the International Trade Promotion Center (ITPC) Jeddah and restaurant owners to organize activities to build export networks, including the Indonesia Week Festival (IWF) 2022, and Amazing Indonesia; 2) Food

Event Strategy: Culinary strategy by organizing or being involved in various international food festivals/bazaars to promote food to foreign countries. From food events to bazaars, there are several events held throughout 2021 to 2024. Some of them are Gastrovaganza Indonesiana, Indonesia Week Festival (IWF) 2022, Indonesia Spice Up the World for Hajj and Umrah, and Amazing Indonesia; 3) Coalition-Building Strategy; This coalition-building strategy involves developing partnerships with organizations that have similar interests and goals in expanding the network. In this case, the Indonesian Consulate General in Jeddah collaborated with the Indonesian diaspora in Jeddah and the International Trade Promote Center (ITPC) Jeddah. The Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia (KJRI) Jeddah and the International Promotion Center (ITPC) Jeddah in collaboration with Golden Al Gamah Est. for Food Stuffs; 4) Media Relations Strategy; In promoting the ISUTW program, the most important strategy is to use the media to disseminate information to values and identities to the whole world. This strategy includes the use of social media to promote the ISUTW program which has been organized by the Indonesian Consulate General in Jeddah and ITPC and can be accessed through the official website of the Indonesian Consulate General in Jeddah <https://www.kemlu.go.id/jeddah>, the official website of ITPC Jeddah <http://www.itpc-jeddah.sa>, social media [@instagram](#) the Indonesian Consulate General in Jeddah <https://www.instagram.com/indonesiainjeddah/>, social media [@instagram](#) ITPC Jeddah <https://www.instagram.com/itpc.jeddah/>, the official website of Golden Al Gamah Est. for Food Stuffs <https://goldengamah.com.sa/en>, social media [@instagram](#) Golden Al Gamah Est. for Food Stuffs https://www.instagram.com/golden_algamah/. Youtube social media; 5) The education strategy: This strategy involves culinary education through teaching programs and participatory events to ensure the consistency of the food image and the long-term relationship with food lovers. This strategy has two aspects. First, the sponsoring country trains and certifies cooks before they work abroad to ensure consistent quality of cuisine. Second, teaching programs for foreigners are created to enhance their hands-on experience and subsequent identification with the cuisine of a country. Indonesia Spice Up the World for Hajj and Umrah 1444 H carried out a cooking demo activity which was held by inviting the Indonesian diaspora in Saudi Arabia, Chef Daru, as a cooking demo instructor, attended by chefs from restaurants, hotels, and caterers in the Jeddah, Makkah, Medina, and surrounding areas with a total of more than 100 participants. This activity also involved 9 importers of Indonesian spices, sauces, soy sauces, and foodstuffs who presented samples of these products to be promoted to invited participants. In addition to targeting the fulfillment of the needs of Hajj, this event also intends to promote Indonesian spice products and foodstuffs for daily needs.

Obstacles to the Development of Indonesian Gastrodiplomacy in Jeddah

Based on the findings of the research, it was found that the development of Indonesian gastrodiplomacy in Jeddah through the ISUTW program has not been optimal because there are several factors that have not yet been supported, including the following: 1) The ISUTW program has not provided maximum results for the restaurant diaspora chain/network in Jeddah. This according to the Economic Function of Jeddah Aris Munandar is due to several things, such as: First, related to the limited budget for diaspora restaurant development. Second, the participation of the restaurant diaspora in Jeddah is still low due to many factors, one of

which is that for the Indonesian diaspora in Jeddah, the Indonesian Government does not give appreciation or privilege to the diaspora. In addition, for the diaspora in Jeddah, they can independently introduce the image of Indonesia through Indonesian cuisine/culinary served without having to deal with the complicated administration of the Indonesian Government if they join the restaurant diaspora program; 2) Obstacles faced by Indonesian restaurant owners in Jeddah related to the limited availability of raw materials and spices of Indonesian products. This is because there is still limited cooperation from the Government of Indonesia to open export opportunities. Export activities sometimes experience many obstacles such as cost structure, standardization, etc.

According to Juyan Zhang (2015), there are challenges in the practice of gastrodiplomacy at the global level. These issues include food security, food and environmental protection, food protectionism and trade, and competition for cultural heritage. One of the significant obstacles to Indonesia's gastrodiplomacy practice in Jeddah is the absence of a trade cooperation agreement between Indonesia and Saudi Arabia. According to the Minister of Religious Affairs (Menag) Yaqut Cholil Qoumas, the obstacles related to the export of Indonesian hajj products are still difficult to penetrate in the Saudi Arabian market (Himpuh.or.id, 2023). In fact, Indonesia and Saudi Arabia have closeness because Indonesia is the country with the largest number of Muslims and both countries are active members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and Group of 20 (G20). The need to accelerate the process of Indonesia's trade agreement with Saudi Arabia in order to increase the competitiveness of Indonesian products in the Saudi Arabian market

CONCLUSION

In the era of President Joko Widodo's second term, Indonesia's gastrodiplomacy gained a clearer direction through the launch of the Indonesia Spice Up The World (ISUTW) program in 2021. Initially, the gastrodiplomacy sector was considered only a sub-sector within Indonesia's broader tourism program. However, in November 2021, the Indonesian government officially launched the Indonesia Spice Up The World (ISUTW) initiative. Unlike previous programs, ISUTW is the first government-led initiative specifically focused on promoting spices, culinary heritage, and restaurants.

Based on its single narrative, ISUTW is defined as a collaborative program involving multiple stakeholders in promoting Indonesian cuisine globally. The program has three main objectives: (i) achieving a spice export value of two billion U.S. dollars, (ii) supporting the establishment of 4,000 Indonesian restaurants abroad, and (iii) promoting spice products and culinary brands from local Indonesian producers. Under the coordination of the Coordinating Ministry for Maritime Affairs and Investment, Indonesia's gastrodiplomacy now stands on a clearer institutional foundation. Previously, the promotion and branding of Indonesian culinary activities were often segmented across different ministries.

Within this framework, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs acts as a mapping and promotional actor abroad through Indonesian embassies and consulates general. The Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia in Jeddah collaborates with the International Trade Promotion Center (ITPC), Indonesian restaurants in Jeddah, local organizations, and the Indonesian diaspora to implement various programs in support of the ISUTW initiative.

Despite these efforts, several obstacles remain. The main challenge is fostering communication and awareness among the Indonesian diaspora in Jeddah to increase collaboration with the government in implementing the ISUTW program. One ongoing difficulty is the activation of the restaurant diaspora in Jeddah. So far, the role of the diaspora within the ISUTW framework has focused primarily on restaurant owners, even though other diaspora actors—such as students and cultural organizers—also have the potential to serve as agents for promoting Indonesia's culinary identity. For example, Indonesian students abroad, if provided with proper culinary orientation, could act as informal cultural ambassadors closely connected to local communities in their host countries.

In addition, promotional activities could be strengthened through active participation from Indonesian diaspora groups living overseas. Learning from Vietnam's success, the diaspora there has become a strong force in promoting the nation's culinary heritage. Saudi Arabia, with its large Indonesian diaspora working in various sectors, presents a valuable opportunity for the Indonesian government to apply the “use of opinion leaders” strategy to further enhance the effectiveness of gastrodiplomacy efforts in the country.

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