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Frontline messenger: preliminary study on Indonesian “diaspora” in gastrodiplomacy

A Trihartono^{1*}, B Santoso², AE Hara³, FZ Pamungkas⁴, and N Viartasiwi⁵

^{1,3,4} Centre for Research in Social Sciences and Humanities (C-RiSSH), University of Jember, Jl. Kalimantan 37, Jember 68121, INDONESIA.

² Department of Social Welfare, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Jember, Jl. Kalimantan 37, Jember 68121, INDONESIA.

⁵ Pilar Data Research and Consulting (Pilar Data Indonesia) Jember 68121, INDONESIA.

*email: atrihartono@unej.ac.id

Abstract. This paper underlines Indonesian “diaspora” as the front liner in implementing gastrodiplomacy. Many studies of the gastrodiplomacy actors focus mostly on the state and the NGOs of the home country. Those previous studies seem to overlook the fact that the diaspora has done on Indonesia’s gastrodiplomacy overseas. Within the academic works, diaspora and its role got less the attention that they deserve. Diaspora has been taking its part by doing direct communication with the public in the international world. Diaspora is among the first and, maybe the foremost, in applying how gastrodiplomacy works. By using the descriptive qualitative method, this paper sees that the diaspora has an essential role in the gastrodiplomacy. This paper suggests that the inclusion of diaspora into the list of the key actor of gastrodiplomacy may shape the more effective public and cultural diplomacy of Indonesia.

1. Introduction

Though the origin of ‘diaspora’ as a term refers to the exile of the Jews (1), this paper would refer to the term ‘diaspora’ in the loose definition. Thus, the term of the diaspora in this paper is “diaspora” refers to Indonesian who live abroad (hereafter Indonesian diaspora). This paper aims at exploring how the Indonesian diaspora has promoted Indonesian cuisine abroad. Studies of gastrodiplomacy have paid more attention to state and non-state actors in the domestic side of countries. Very few studies have discussed non-state actors in gastrodiplomacy overseas that have turned to the front line messengers. They are diasporas who take concrete actions in promoting Indonesian cuisine, both with and without acknowledgment from the State.

In the last two decades, gastrodiplomacy has been used by several countries to promote their unique culinary on international fora. Culinary is often seen as a representation of national identity. Besides, the development of soft power studies is also the reason why many countries provided spaces for non-hard-power resources to be promoted. Culture and culinary are among the resources soft power of a country. As soft power is gaining attention, Gastrodiplomation has, to some extent, increased to be an attractive instrument of Indonesian foreign policy.

The development of gastrodiplomacy is also vital for a country like Indonesia that has a rich cultural and culinary heritage and promotes them globally. In introducing culinary, and even Indonesian culture, the efforts of non-state actors, including diaspora, may have preceded the efforts of the government or the state. The role of diasporas can be seen from the role of individuals, restaurants, and associations of Indonesian students overseas who have essential functions in the promotion of Indonesian cuisine.

As an instrument of soft power, gastrodiplomacy has attracted worldwide attention after Thailand introduced Global Thai Program in 2002. Since then, gastrodiplomacy has become increasingly popular. The way Thailand promotes national identity through culinary has encouraged other countries to pave the same way. For example, Japan has introduced *Shoku bunka kenkyu suishin kondankai* (Global Sushi Campaign) [1], South Korea has created the Hansik Globalization Project [2], Taiwan has expanded the program called Gourmet Taiwan [3], Malaysia has created a project namely Kitchen for the World [4], Peru has provided a spotlight to a so-called *Peru Mucho Gusto*.



Australian project called *There is Nothing Like Australia* has been the way how Australia has underlined its cuisine [5]. Those examples are essential efforts in applying gastrodiplomacy.

Even though the State is an important actor even at a certain level, it is the main actor, but the State does not work alone in gastrodiplomacy. Some frontline actors rarely get public attention, maybe even far from media grabbing. They are the diaspora. According to Safran (1991), diaspora is residents who are separated from their motherland, people who are far from their motherland, and have collective memories of their motherland. They idealized their home and committed to maintaining or building a motherland with an awareness of ethnicity or at the same fate [6]. Cohen (1995) had adopted Safran by adding four features, namely the diaspora, which also included separate groups with forceful or voluntary goals, having strong assimilation from the past [7].

This paper pays attention to the diaspora. This paper sees that in the Indonesian context, diaspora and gastrodiplomacy are two things that cannot be separated. Diaspora is one of the irreplaceable actors in gastrodiplomacy. The strength of the ties created between the diaspora and its home country has shaped the diasporas as the agents of diplomacy for their home countries. In terms of culture and culinary heritage, for example, the diaspora is the spearhead to introduce the culture and culinary abroad similar to those the role of diplomats that have been run by the government. In short, this paper attempts to identify and put the diaspora role in the study of Indonesian gastrodiplomacy.

This work is expected to be one of the preliminary studies that pay attention to the Indonesian diaspora in supporting Indonesian gastrodiplomacy. Diaspora is a frontline messenger to promote the cultural and culinary heritage of the Indonesian archipelago. Therefore, the existence of diaspora is expected to complement the wings of diplomacy carried out by the State.

2. Methods

This paper uses qualitative research with secondary data collection. This way of research is also called an artistic method because the research process is more creative (not patterned) and referred to as an interpretative method as the analysis based on the interpretation of the data found with literature studies. According to Creswell (2009), qualitative research seeks and understands the reality of individuals, groups, or social problems. The process of this research involves research questions and procedures: gathering data from the fieldwork, then analyzing inductively, constructing arguments from specific to general and interpret the data [8].

Furthermore, the data collection of this study uses a literature study. Literature studies will use secondary data obtained through books, periodic reports, journals, scientific articles, and other information contained in the mass media, printed, and online media. Finally, in analyzing the data using describing, explaining, and interpreting research objects.

3. Result and Discussion

Indonesian diaspora has a high potential to contribute to gastrodiplomacy. Nevertheless, Indonesia has not had a definite number of both the number and distribution of the Indonesian diaspora overseas. It is estimated that there are around 6 to 8 million Indonesian diasporas who live in various parts of the world with diverse professional backgrounds. The diaspora consists of students, academics, entrepreneurs, and migrant workers. There are also a few Indonesia diaspora that is caused by the political exile in the post-1965 communist coup d'etat, Papua conflict, and Aceh conflict.

Indonesia may capitalize on the potential of the diaspora through gathering and optimizing the role of the diaspora for the advancement of the motherland. Indonesia may gain lesson-learned from what China and India have done. Those two countries have succeeded in networking with their diaspora and have been able to utilize the potential of the diaspora so that China and the Indian diaspora has been able to contribute to building their ancestral lands.

In the context of how managing the diaspora, the current Indonesian approach is dominated by perspective on utilizing Indonesian migrant workers (TKI, Tenaga Kerja Indonesia). However, the TKI is only one part of the various diaspora profiles. So far, the form of attention to the diaspora is still partial. The Indonesian government has created a forum for the diaspora to contribute to Indonesia. The government has not succeeded in collecting them in a communication forum that is accessible for all. Therefore, it is not surprising that the Indonesian diaspora is still similar to thousands of unconnected dots. Diaspora collides with the lack of communication access to the country. So the diaspora is full of a potential community but still weak in connection.

Despite the lack of communication, diasporas continue to express their love for Indonesia by making various contributions to the country. One of them is by promoting culture and Indonesian value to the international community. There are several names of the diaspora which are popular as ambassadors for the Indonesian nation abroad. They are the spearhead of Indonesian public diplomacy.

Historically, culinary diplomacy, known as gastrodiploamacy, has played a role in every crucial diplomatic and business meeting in the past. The role of culinary is not only present amid meetings involving only state officials (high elites), culinary also complements the negotiation and diplomatic activities. Culinary, to a certain degree, carries a more significant role, namely as part of the cultural diplomacy of a country.

While the actor in gastrodiploamacy, for now, is no longer limited to the country's political elite. Since its implementation requires full support from the public, non-state actors are also significant. Culinary companies, restaurants, chefs, celebrity chefs, tourism agents, public relations, public diplomacy practitioners, cooking guides on TV, and social media are some of the non-state actors who need to gain recognition in gastrodiploamacy. In short, not only state actors but non-state actors also play an essential role in carrying out gastrodiploamacy [11].

Culinary is a communication media that has a position as a medium for state diplomacy. Rockower (2016) explains that culinary is the same as music which can create emotional relationships, even when language is not able to convey [9]. Another opinion from Sham Chapple-Sokol (2012) underlines that the superiority of culinary versus other cultural assets is its ability to create emotional relationships between individuals compared to music or dance [10].

The Indonesian diaspora is a gastrodiploamacy actor abroad. Diaspora is one of the agencies that, for the first time, introduced culinary, and even Indonesian culture, to foreign countries where they lived. The diaspora as a perpetrator of gastrodiploamacy is indeed not new. From diaspora experiences in other countries such as China, Vietnam, India, the spread of culinary culture in many countries is among others is a result of the connection built by the diaspora. For instance, the Indonesian diaspora is among the key actors to promote ending to be accessible and recognized in various parts of the planet.

Most Indonesian diasporas struggle independently abroad. The diaspora initially came from various backgrounds in the culinary world. Some start as assistants for chefs, chefs, or chefs who partner with residents or entrepreneurs. One example is the experience of Chef Agus Hermawan, who met Ron Blaauw. Later on, they founded RonGastrobar Indonesia in the Netherlands. Chef Agus, under the request of the Indonesian Embassy in the Netherlands, is now an 'ambassador for Indonesian cuisine' in the country.

Another story comes from an Indonesian diaspora, namely A.M Hanafi, the former Indonesian Ambassador to Cuba in the era of President Sukarno. In France, A.M. Hanafi and his family built a restaurant that is now quite famous, namely Djakarta Bali Restaurant [12]. This restaurant serves processed Indonesian specialties such as Rendang and Pepes Ikan, where this menu is a food that is very familiar to Indonesian citizens. This restaurant has also been reviewed by leading international food experts, indicating that this restaurant has excellent gastronomic standards.

Furthermore, there is an individual diaspora that is quite famous, namely *Pak Rustono*. Rustono is a Tempe or Tempeh (traditional Indonesian food) maker in Japan. The success story of popularizing Tempe has been spread out on three continents, namely: Asia, Europe, and America. Rustono named his product Rusto's Tempeh. Now he has at least 60 outlets in Japan [13]. Besides, Rustono also did training for making Tempe to volunteers from various countries. Therefore, it is interesting that many people learn to make traditional Indonesian tempeh to Japan.

Also, there are married couples, Robert and Fifi Manan, who actively popularize Indonesian culinary in the United States. The couple adorned a platform titled Luvinary (Luv Indonesia Culinary). This platform aims to introduce Indonesian cuisine, at least about 30 Indonesian culinary icons that they are trying to be introduced in New Orleans, United States.

Also, the success of Asnun Basnar with Rendang cuisine in the United States is another example of the vital role of the diaspora. Asnun Basnar is a native *Minang*. In addition to opening a Padang restaurant in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Asnun Basnar also managed to build a Rendang spice packaging business in Houston. The popularity of Rendang in the United States seems to be inseparable from the efforts of Asnun Basnar to familiarize Rendang to US society [8].

Indonesia also needs to note the success of Chef Vindex Tengker in the United States. Chef Tengker with former Tourism Minister, Marie Elka, collaborated to build a Kasih Restaurant in Los Angeles. Previously, the guests who came to this Restaurant were dominated by non-Indonesians. Only about 20% of Indonesians enjoy Indonesian menus at the Restaurant. Restaurant Kasih is quite famous for serving culinary delights with authentic tastes but with modern presentations. This Restaurant puts forward a simple Bistro concept, with relatively affordable prices. The menu that is served at the Restoran Kasih is various, including Perkedel Jagung, Sate Lilit (Satay), Fried Duck, Rujak Seasoning Goat, Pepes Ikan, and Rendang [15].

Besides, Asnun and Chef Vindex, there is also Wijono Purnomo, known as Chef Yono. Chef Yono is the owner of Yono's Fine Dining in Albany, New York. Chef Yono has spent his life in the culinary world. Restaurant Yono's Fine Dining has been around for more than 35 years now and is a successful restaurant in the United States. Currently, this Restaurant already has one other branch in the US [16].

In Denmark, there is another success story from a woman named Dini Banowati, an Indonesian citizen who has lived for years in Denmark. Dini Banowati lived in the City of Horsens. Dini began her contribution to the culinary field by opening a restaurant called Dini Restaurant. This Restaurant provides various kinds of Indonesian culinary such as Rendang, Nasi Kuning, Satai Ayam Bumbu Kacang, and Martabak Telur. This Restaurant has also received reviews from culinary observers as *byens bedste* (the best in the city): "Excellent food quality and friendly service, as well as guaranteed taste authenticity because the chef is authentic Indonesian"[17].

From several success stories about diaspora in various countries, this paper highlights that so far, the diaspora is the forefront of Indonesian culinary diplomacy abroad. They have their respective roles by introducing culinary diversity that is closely related to their ancestral lands in Indonesia. Their goal besides the economy in the country of people by undergoing a culinary business, indirectly promote Indonesian culture and culinary. They independently managed to play the role of diplomats for Indonesia in culinary.

However, not all efforts carried out by the diaspora went well. Some individuals and group businesses that carry Indonesian culture and culinary are, in fact, unsuccessful. Generally, some restaurants had less capacity to maintain sustainability in running their culinary business. As conveyed by Prof. Andrik in our interview, explained that licensing and standardization are other issues part of Indonesian restaurants in building their businesses.

In terms of obtaining the host country licenses, Professor Andik addresses an example of how difficult to get licenses for Indonesian culinary entrepreneurs, for instance, in Russia and Belgium. Most of the diasporas generally are not so resilient in obtaining permission. (Interview with Indonesian cultural diplomacy activist)

As culinary is among the best way to introduce Indonesian uniqueness to the international community, this sector is auspicious. However, there has not proper attention from the government to work on this culinary sector. To boost nation branding through culinary, culinary promotions in the flag of Gastrodiplomacy need to be included in the state budget. Without the involvement of the state in culinary promotion, the country is still considered to have not weighted in carrying out the diplomacy of Indonesian culinary culture.

Although culinary has started to get the recognition by several government institutions such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Trade, it seems that the Ministry of Tourism (Kemenpar) is the most attentive institution to apply gastrodiplomacy. Ministry of Tourism started its first step by carrying out the program to create co-branding to the Indonesian diaspora restaurants abroad. Ministry of Tourism has a mission to increase the number of foreign tourists visiting Indonesia. Kemenpar launched a program called Wonderful Indonesia Co-branding. This Co-Branding Program was introduced in 2018.

To begin the Co-branding process, Kemenpar invites Indonesian diaspora restaurants around the world to partner with this program. In the partnership, Kemenpar provides promotion in mass media and Kemenpar social media, which are integrated into the Wonderful Indonesia program. Ministry of Tourism also provides flexibility for restaurants in their domicile countries in choosing the type of participation that is most suitable in the Wonderful Indonesia campaign. Besides, Kemenpar also provides facilities to all participants to connect to the business to the business

network, as well as partners from Wonderful Indonesia Co-branding, which consists of banks, airlines, cosmetics, food and non-food, fashion and crafts [18].

In return, diaspora restaurants can promote Wonderful Indonesia Tourism. The Wonderful Indonesia Tourism promotion was carried out through Wonderful Indonesia Corner, where they can display the flyers, the map about Indonesia, and tourism destinations. Besides, the form of promotion is done through Videotron or display of short films that contain the branding of Wonderful Indonesia. Also, to strengthen the promotion, there is an activity sponsored by the Wonderful Indonesia program, which contains Indonesian culture [19].

In this Wonderful Indonesia promotion program, there are three strategies emphasized to diaspora restaurant-restaurants that have established partnerships with Kemenpar. The three strategies are, see (table 1.1).

Table 1.1 Promotion Strategy Through Indonesian Diaspora Restaurants

No	Promotion Strategy	Explanation
1.	Restaurant as Tourism Etalage	Indonesian Restaurants abroad are the window of Indonesian culture and cuisine
2.	Integrating with the 3A concepts in Bahasa Indonesia are <i>Atraksi, Amenitas, Aksesibilitas</i> (Providing Exhibition, Facility, and Accessibility)	Featuring Indonesian cuisine and a variety of Indonesian cultural attractions in diaspora restaurants, including parts of attractions and amenities. Improving accessibility supported by increasing integration between diaspora restaurants.
3.	Seasonal Brand Activations	Exhibition brand activation periodically and continuously. All Indonesian restaurants are promoted through gastronomy festivals in various countries for a month.

(Source: Yuswohady, 2018) [20].

From the table, three aspects are being implemented by the Wonderful Indonesia program, namely creating a marketing channel, opening accessibility, and conducting seasonal brand activations. In the first aspect, diaspora restaurants have a strategic position to play the role of diplomats who promote Indonesian culinary wealth and diversity. In business language, restaurants are positioned as "marketing channels". The marketing channel is essential because these restaurants already have a strong customer base, especially for well-known and reputable restaurants in their country of origin.

In addition, the foreign audience who visited the Indonesian restaurant certainly had an interest in Indonesia beforehand. From the experience of visiting Indonesian restaurants, the foreign public was expected to be more confident to visit Indonesia. The main target of this program is that food as one of the main tourist reasons for visiting Indonesia. Increasing the brand awareness and image of Indonesia in the foreign audience is the aim of this program.

The diaspora restaurant turned to be "Frontline messenger of Indonesia" by presenting Indonesian-specific content. The content displayed is a wealth of Indonesian cultural arts (such as dance, music, crafts, and of course, typical foods). Besides, the diaspora restaurant also provides information about exotic Indonesian tourist destinations and a variety of typical culinary in Indonesia. When the content delivered is added with a culinary experience, sharing understanding is the goal. All activities may, to some extent, form an influential power that may attract foreign tourists to Indonesia.

The second aspect is the accessibility. This aspect is how foreign audiences who have a curiosity in Indonesia can find information sources to know Indonesia closer. Through a diaspora restaurant, the facility is run by providing facilities related to information in the form of promotions. While attractions function to create emotional experiences to get to know more about Indonesian cuisine, the diaspora restaurant is a "channel" that will "lead" foreign audiences to get to know, know, and be close about Indonesia. In the concept of diplomacy, such actions are closely related to public diplomacy that uses non-state actors to take part in Indonesian gastrodiplomacy.

The third aspect is the seasonal brand activations to increase brand awareness of Indonesia in the eyes of foreign audiences. In order for the role of the diaspora restaurant as a culinary promotion channel to run effectively, the Ministry of Tourism plans to make brand activation periodically and

sustainably. This strategy will have a good impact on diaspora restaurants. If previously the diaspora restaurants only carried out independent promotions, after the Co-branding program, they were slowly raised due to government-provided facilities.

The diaspora restaurant is a strategic point of Indonesia's nation branding. For this reason, since mid-2018, Indonesia, through the Ministry of Tourism (Kemenpar) has started to identify diaspora restaurants from Indonesia in various countries of the world. This program is named Wonderful Indonesia Co-branding restaurant Indonesia. In the first step, Kemenpar captures ten restaurants that serve Indonesian specialties in Australia, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Singapore, and the United States to promote Indonesia's culinary wealth. Here is the list of the first ten diaspora restaurants in Co-branding by Kemenpar:

Table 1.2 Ten Indonesian Diaspora Restaurants for Co-Branding

Number	Name of Restaurants	Lokasi
1.	Gastrobar Indonesia	Netherland
2.	Djakarta Bali	Paris
3.	Fluffy Lamb	Australia
4.	Sendok Garpu	Australia
5.	Ubud Resto	Australia
6.	Sari Ratu	Singapore
7.	Bumbu Desa	Malaysia
8.	The Yono's Fine Dining	United States
9.	Indonesia Grill & Gastrobar	United States
10.	Kasih Restaurant	United States

Source: Wonderful Indonesia Co-Branding Forum [15]

The ten diaspora restaurants (Table 1.2) above have partnered in a program created by the Ministry of Tourism. These ten restaurants will display the Wonderful Indonesia logo at the entrance. Further, five unique dishes are recommended for inclusion in the diaspora restaurant menu. The five dishes are Rendang, Nasi Goreng, Sate, Soto, and Gado-Gado. Finally, for those restaurants, Kemepar will later make a special page related to the Co-Branding collaboration of Wonderful Indonesia.

Promoting Indonesia may employ restaurants in various countries. The latest data listed on the Wonderful Indonesia Restaurant website on July 2019, shows that there are, at least, 139 Indonesian restaurants spread throughout the world that has been organized in the Co-Branding Ministry of Tourism program. Australia is the country with the most significant number of Indonesian diaspora restaurants for about 40 restaurants. In Singapore and Malaysia, there are about 18 restaurants and 12 restaurants. When the Co-branding program was introduced, it was gathered in a program that aims to make joint promotion for various Indonesian culinary cultures.

The number and distribution of Indonesian diaspora restaurants in the world are as follows:

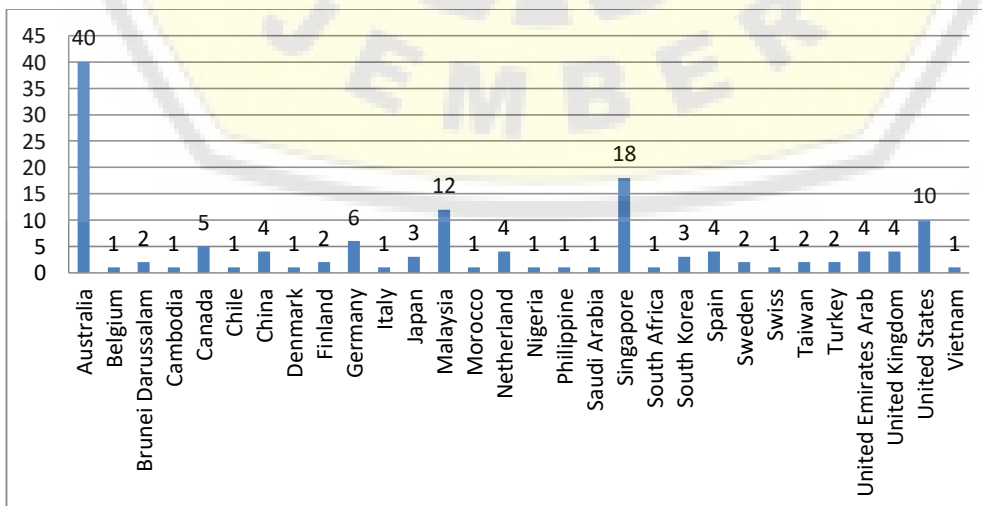


Figure 1.1 Number of Indonesian Diaspora Restaurants in the World

(Source: Wonderful Indonesia Restaurant, 2018)

The co-branding program is an essential step to create a good future of Indonesian gastrodiplomacy. However, all efforts seem to have limitations for some reasons: First, the co-branding program seems too premature to be the spearhead for Indonesian culinary promotion. Second, the potency of Indonesian gastrodiplomacy is enormous. The restaurant is one of the other players. Gastrodiplomacy may include Individuals, culinary businesses, students, and Indonesian who are residents overseas. Regarding gastrodiplomacy, the government may send chefs and restaurant crews to many corners of the planet as Thailand and have done so far.

Regarding the role of the state, the Indonesian government can take lessons from other countries' models. Learning from Malaysia, for instance, the Malaysian government has created a program called the Malaysia Kitchen for the world. Through the program, Malaysia is seriously providing government support Malaysian culinary entrepreneurs to advance Malaysian culinary in various countries. Similarly, Thailand has skillfully been able to optimize its gastrodiplomacy by providing support to diaspora networks with a synergy of various elements, including the Thai Airways airline. Now, Thailand comes to harvest time. Thai restaurants have been dominant in almost every corner of the world

Diaspora is among the channels for optimizing gastrodiplomacy. Employing national policy, the Indonesian government may optimize the potential of the diaspora in this culinary field. The policy of Indonesian culinary and Indonesian culture seems to start to be more proficient. Thus, all efforts require an adequate portion of the budget in the annual state budget plan. The portion of this budget is seen as a form of seriousness from the government to support culinary business abroad. Culinary may be a bridge to introduce nation brand to the world. Gastrodiplomacy, thus, is not merely all about culinary. It is about the nation-brand of the country. Through the food or culinary, an identity of the nation would be easily known and understood by the international public. Culinary may have intersection and linkage to those tour promotions, and brand awareness of the national product.

4. Conclusion

Diaspora is a player of Indonesian gastrodiplomacy. Diaspora, with the various background and roles, silently but significantly, is an agency in the cultural and culinary promotion of Indonesia. All of the diaspora's steps were started without any support from the Indonesian government. Diaspora simultaneously promotes Indonesian culture and cuisine in the places where they live abroad.

Since 2018 through the Ministry of Tourism, the Indonesian government has created a program called Co-Branding Wonderful Indonesia. This program aims to support Indonesian gastrodiplomacy. Around 139 restaurants have joined the program. However, seeing the vast culinary wealth and culture of Indonesia, this number is still too small. Compared to other countries, the number of Indonesian restaurants that carry out promotions is still minor. Therefore, Gastrodiplomacy Indonesia is not only carried out by diaspora restaurants, but the government also seems to need to be fully involved by providing the facilities and resources it has to optimize the actors of gastrodiplomacy, including the diaspora. For this reason, the paper concludes that the government needs to work on the culinary sector as a tool for Indonesia's diplomacy. For this purpose, the government's efforts to include the diaspora as the main spearhead of Indonesian gastrodiplomacy is significant because the Indonesian Diaspora has long carried out its duties as Front Line Messengers.

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