
Gastrodiplomacy as a Strategy for Strengthening Indonesian Cuisine in the Philippines: Opportunities and Challenges

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Abstract: Gastrodiplomacy has become an important instrument in modern cultural diplomacy to strengthen nation branding through culinary arts. This study analyzes the potential of gastrodiplomacy as a strategy to strengthen the image of Indonesian food in the Philippines through culinary tourism and hospitality approaches. This study uses a qualitative-descriptive method with scoping narrative review by collecting data from recent journal literature and analyzing various gastrodiplomacy initiatives undertaken by Indonesia. The results show that the Philippines is a potential market for Indonesian culinary promotion given its geographical proximity, cultural similarities, and increasing consumer interest in authentic food. The Wonderful Indonesia, Indonesia Spice Up The World, Wonderful Indonesia Gourmet (WIG) Co-Branding Program, and the launch of the WISH 2025 "Gastronomy Tour Package" catalog give a contribution in building a positive image. However, a more comprehensive strategy is needed, including collaboration with the tourism sector, hospitality human resource training, and the use of digital technology to maximize the impact of gastrodiplomacy. In conclusion, gastrodiplomacy through culinary tourism is an effective soft power to enhance Indonesia's nation branding and open economic opportunities in the Philippines

Keywords: Gastrodiplomacy, Nation Branding, Culinary Tourism, Soft Power, Hospitality, Indonesia-Philippines

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INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary era of globalization, traditional diplomacy focused solely on government-level negotiations is no longer sufficient to build strong and sustainable bilateral relations. Modern nations are increasingly recognizing the importance of soft power as an alternative to promoting national identity and building a positive image on the international stage ((Dina & Rachmawati, 2023; Hussin, 2018; Nye, 2016). One of the most effective and accessible manifestations of soft power is through gastrodiploamacy, namely the strategic use of culinary arts as a tool of cultural diplomacy (Krisnanda et al., 2025; Reynolds, 2012).

Indonesia, as a country with an incredibly diverse culinary heritage, has tremendous potential to utilize gastrodiploamacy as a diplomatic instrument. The diversity of traditional foods from Sabang to Merauke, from the internationally acclaimed rendang to various types of satay, spring rolls, and other traditional dishes, reflects a rich culture that can serve as a bridge to other countries (Santosa, 2016; Simatupang et al., 2024; Trihartono et al., 2020). International recognition such as the determination of rendang as the number one best food in the world by CNN International in 2017 and then its position at 11th in 2021 proves the strength of Indonesian culinary in attracting global attention (Ramdhani, 2017).

In the context of Indonesia-Philippines bilateral relations, gastrodiploamacy offers a unique opportunity to deepen cooperation and cultural understanding. The Philippines, with a population of over 100 million and significant economic growth, is a potential market for Indonesian culinary exports. The geographical proximity and similar cultural backgrounds between the two countries create a strong foundation for promoting authentic cuisine (Ambary et al., 2022; Okniel et al., 2024). For example, the student exchange initiative by Merdeka University Malang, which brought a gastrodiploamacy mission to the Philippines in collaboration with Central Philippines University, demonstrates an academic commitment to promoting Indonesian cuisine at the grassroots level. This supports the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism's program involving students as agents of diplomacy through gastronomy (Kemenpar RI, 2025a).

Among ASEAN countries, the Philippines represents a particularly strategic market for the expansion of Indonesian gastrodiploamacy initiatives. The country has experienced steady economic growth, a growing middle-class population, and increasing interest in culinary tourism and international food experiences. At the same time, Indonesia and the Philippines share geographical proximity, historical maritime connections, and several cultural characteristics that potentially facilitate the acceptance of Indonesian cuisine (Kemenpar RI, 2025b; Maosul et al., 2025). Various Indonesian culinary promotion activities, including food festivals, cultural events, and academic exchange programs, have demonstrated positive public responses toward Indonesian food products. Nevertheless, compared with the strong international presence of Thai, Japanese, and Korean cuisines in the Philippine market, Indonesian cuisine remains relatively less visible and has yet to establish a strong and distinctive culinary identity among Filipino consumers.

This situation presents an important phenomenon in the context of contemporary cultural diplomacy. On the one hand, Indonesia possesses rich culinary resources and has launched several national programs such as Indonesia Spice Up The World, Wonderful Indonesia Gourmet (WIG), and the WISH 2025 Gastronomy Tourism Package initiative to strengthen its international culinary presence. On the other hand, the actual utilization of these initiatives in specific foreign markets, particularly the Philippines, has not been widely examined. Although Indonesian cuisine has received international recognition and continues to gain popularity in various countries, limited studies have explored how gastrodiploamacy can be translated into practical strategies for strengthening culinary branding in neighboring ASEAN countries that possess distinct market characteristics and competitive culinary environments.

Existing literature at above, has extensively discussed gastrodiploamacy as an instrument of soft power, cultural diplomacy, and nation branding. Previous studies have predominantly focused on successful gastrodiploamacy models implemented by countries such as Thailand, South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan, highlighting their roles in shaping national image and expanding cultural influence internationally (Bukharov & Berezka, 2018; Fassio et al., 2022; Fusté-Forné & Orea-Giner, 2023). In the Indonesian context, research has generally examined gastrodiploamacy from broader national perspectives, including culinary

promotion programs, soft power strategies, and nation branding efforts. However, relatively limited attention has been given to how Indonesian gastrodiplomacy operates within specific bilateral contexts, particularly within ASEAN regional markets.

Furthermore, previous studies tend to analyze gastrodiplomacy, culinary tourism, hospitality, and nation branding as separate themes (Chapple-Sokol, 2013; Kim et al., 2022; Kowalczyk & Derek, 2020). As a result, there remains limited understanding of how these dimensions can be integrated into a comprehensive framework for promoting Indonesian cuisine abroad. There is also insufficient discussion regarding the opportunities and challenges faced when implementing gastrodiplomacy in the Philippine market, including issues related to cultural acceptance, tourism development, hospitality readiness, market competition, and stakeholder collaboration.

Based on the identified research gap, this study aims to analyze the opportunities and challenges of Indonesian gastrodiplomacy in the Philippines through the perspectives of culinary tourism and hospitality. The study specifically focuses on the Philippine market as a strategic subject of analysis due to its cultural proximity to Indonesia, growing culinary tourism sector, and increasing demand for authentic food experiences. Academically, this research contributes to the development of gastrodiplomacy literature by integrating the perspectives of nation branding, culinary tourism, and hospitality within a specific bilateral context. Unlike previous studies that predominantly discuss gastrodiplomacy at a general national level, this study provides a contextual understanding of how culinary diplomacy can be operationalized in a neighboring ASEAN market. The findings are expected to enrich theoretical discussions on gastrodiplomacy while offering practical insights for policymakers, tourism stakeholders, hospitality practitioners, and culinary entrepreneurs seeking to strengthen Indonesia's international culinary presence.

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach with a scoping narrative literature review method. This approach was chosen because the research focuses on the review, synthesis, and interpretation of various literature discussing gastrodiplomacy, culinary tourism, hospitality, and nation branding in the context of Indonesia-Philippines relations. Through this narrative literature review, this research seeks to build a comprehensive understanding of the opportunities, challenges, and strategies for strengthening Indonesia's culinary image through a gastrodiplomacy approach.

The research data is sourced from secondary sources, including scientific journal articles, conference proceedings, academic books, government reports, policy documents, and institutional publications relevant to the research topic. The literature search was conducted through Google Scholar, SINTA-indexed journals (minimum SINTA 3), and various relevant international journals. The literature used was limited to the period 2015–2025 to ensure the information is up-to-date and relevant to developments in gastrodiplomacy and culinary tourism issues.

The literature search used keywords such as "gastrodiplomacy," "food diplomacy," "culinary tourism," "nation branding," "hospitality," "soft power," and "Indonesia-Philippines." Although this study did not employ a full systematic literature review, the literature search and selection process was structured, adopting the stages of identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. The literature found was selected based on thematic relevance, conceptual contribution, alignment with the research objectives, and the availability of supporting information. The process began with the identification of relevant publications through database searches and institutional sources. The retrieved records were subsequently screened based on title, abstract, publication year, and thematic relevance. Full-text assessment was then conducted to evaluate the conceptual contribution of each source to the study objectives. Only publications that directly addressed gastrodiplomacy, culinary tourism, hospitality, nation branding, or Indonesia-Philippines relations were included in the final analysis. The selected literature subsequently formed the basis for qualitative content analysis and thematic synthesis. Of all the identified sources, 20 publications that met the criteria were selected for further analysis.

Data analysis was conducted using qualitative content analysis techniques. The initial stage involved familiarizing the data by thoroughly reading and reviewing all selected literature. Next, coding was conducted to identify key concepts, ideas, and findings related to the research focus. The coding results were then grouped into thematic categories reflecting key issues in Indonesian gastrodiploamacy in the Philippines.

The final stage of analysis was conducted through thematic interpretation and synthesis, connecting the various categorized findings to gain a comprehensive understanding of the opportunities, challenges, and strategies for implementing gastrodiploamacy. This synthesis provides the basis for explaining how culinary promotion can act as a soft power instrument to strengthen Indonesia's nation branding while simultaneously supporting the development of tourism and the hospitality sector in the Philippine market.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Gastrodiploamacy: Definition, Theory, and Contemporary Context

Gastrodiploamacy is a relatively new term but is gaining increasing academic recognition as a subdiscipline of public diplomacy and cultural diplomacy. Previous research defines gastrodiploamacy as the use of food and culinary arts as an instrument to build diplomatic relations and promote cultural understanding between nations. More specifically, gastrodiploamacy differs from culinary diplomacy, which is more formal and elite-oriented, typically involving state dinners and official government events (Ambariyanto et al., 2022; Maosul et al., 2025).

In the context of Joseph Nye's soft power theory, food has unique characteristics that make it a very effective diplomatic tool (Kokkranikal & Carabelli, 2024; Nye, 2016). This theory explains that soft power is the ability to shape others' preferences through attraction, rather than coercion or economic incentives. Food, as a universal language that transcends language and cultural barriers, has the capacity to create deep emotional connections with international audiences. Through shared food experiences, a more authentic understanding of a nation's cultural values, traditions, and identity is fostered (Anholt, 2016; Reynolds, 2012).

Positive interactions between different groups can reduce prejudice and increase cooperation. Food facilitates the ideal conditions for this contact theory because it creates a pleasant and intimate setting (Magbuo & De Jose, 2025). When one tastes authentic dishes from other cultures while learning about the history and meaning behind them, it creates a holistic and memorable learning experience. Maosul and other gastrodiploamacy researchers distinguish between three levels of culinary diplomacy.

First, culinary diplomacy, which is government-to-government and elite, occurs at the dinner tables of diplomats and at official government events. Second, gastrodiploamacy, which is a coordinated government campaign to use culinary arts as a niche in cultural diplomacy, involving government-to-people relations. Third, social gastronomy, which is people-to-people through social media, chef personalities, and non-profit organizations (Okniel et al., 2024). These three levels complement each other and when well integrated, can create a comprehensive soft power impact (Chapple-Sokol, 2013; Krisnanda et al., 2025)

2. Gastrodiploamacy as Effective Soft Power for Indonesia's Nation Branding

Based on literature analysis, gastrodiploamacy has proven to be a highly effective soft power instrument for building Indonesia's nation branding. This effectiveness is supported by several fundamental factors.

First, food has a universal character that transcends linguistic, religious, and ideological barriers. When someone enjoys Indonesian rendang or satay, they are not only consuming food but also absorbing the cultural values embedded in each dish. This process creates a stronger emotional connection than more formal and bureaucratic forms of traditional diplomacy (Çöl et al., 2023; Yayusman & Mulyasari, 2024; Yıldırım & Yıldırım, 2022).

Second, Indonesia's rich and diverse culinary scene reflects a unique and strong national identity. Each region in Indonesia has its own culinary specialty, the result of a unique blend of geographical, historical, and cultural influences. Rendang from Minangkabau, recognized as one of the world's best dishes, soto Betawi from Jakarta, gado-gado from Java, oxtail soup from Sunda, and many more, together shape the narrative of Indonesia as a rich, diverse, and innovative nation (Correia et al., 2020; Sabrina & Krisnanda, 2025; Sio et al., 2024). This narrative is highly valuable in nation branding because it differentiates Indonesia from its competitors.

Third, Indonesia's culinary sector has a significant competitive advantage. Research by (Okniel et al., 2024) shows that the combination of authenticity, quality, and affordability of Indonesian food creates a unique value proposition that is difficult for other countries to match. While Thai cuisine has successfully positioned itself as the "Kitchen of the World" through structured programs, Indonesian cuisine still has much potential that has not been fully exploited. A more structured and strategic gastrodiplomacy program could optimally utilize this potential.

The success of the Wonderful Indonesia Co-Branding program in various countries demonstrates the potential of Indonesian gastrodiplomacy. The Djakarta Bali restaurant in Paris, the flagship of this program, successfully created brand awareness about Indonesia and opened the minds of Parisians to Indonesian cuisine. This success story then became leverage to attract other Indonesian investors and entrepreneurs to open restaurants in other countries. In this way, gastrodiplomacy not only has a soft power impact but also a tangible economic impact through increased export value and foreign investment (Ambary et al., 2022; Bessiere, 1998; Jeannot et al., 2022).

Another equally important initiative is the release of the "Gastronomy Tour Package" catalog, which contains 15 tour packages curated by the Wonderful Indonesia Scale-up Hub (WISH) 2025 (Ambary et al., 2022; Kemenpar RI, 2025b; Yayusman & Mulyasari, 2024). This demonstrates the government's commitment to packaging culinary experiences into marketable tourism products. This catalog not only lists dining establishments but also profiles businesses, featured products, and unique selling points that connect stories, spaces, and actors into a series of taste journeys. In conjunction with the high level of interest in authentic Indonesian cuisine in the Philippines, reflected in various festivals and Indonesia's participation in international events, the gastronomy tour package format can be adapted into cross-border products, such as the "Indonesia Gastronomy Short Break" package, which specifically targets Filipino tourists, combining direct flights, culinary destination visits, and cultural activities.

3. Gastrodiplomacy Opportunities in the Philippine Market

The Philippines offers a very attractive opportunity for Indonesia to implement gastrodiplomacy for several strategic reasons. First, the Philippines' large and growing demographics create a significant market size. With a population of over 100 million and a steadily increasing GDP per capita, the Filipino middle class has increasing purchasing power to consume quality food and experience-based dining (Dinçer et al., 2016; Okniel et al., 2024). Projections indicate that in the coming decade, the growth of the Filipino middle class will continue, opening up a larger market opportunity for premium culinary experiences (Herlina et al., 2019).

Second, the cultural proximity between Indonesia and the Philippines creates advantages in marketing and adopting Indonesian cuisine. Both countries share similar historical backgrounds as maritime civilizations, share several basic food ingredients, and share similar cultural values of hospitality and community-oriented society. These shared cultural traits make it easier for Filipinos to appreciate and adopt Indonesian culinary traditions. Unlike promoting Indonesian cuisine to Western countries, which requires extensive cultural education, in the Philippines, the adoption process can be more natural and quick (Chisik et al., 2018; Maosul et al., 2025).

Third, the success of previous events demonstrates the strong receptivity of the Filipino public to Indonesian cuisine. The 2016 Indonesian Food Festival in Manila, held by the Indonesian Embassy

in Manila at one of the city's premium malls, attracted thousands of visitors and generated positive media coverage. Visitors not only sampled the food but also expressed strong interest in purchasing Indonesian products and gaining information about Indonesian culinary destinations. The 2017 World Street Food Congress in Manila, attended by the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism, also demonstrated that traditional Indonesian dishes such as rendang, satay, lumpia, and various other snacks received a very positive response from Filipino audiences (Syntiadewi Putri et al., 2022; Vukolic et al., 2025).

Fourth, Indonesia's strategic positioning within ASEAN provides leverage to promote Indonesian cuisine in the Philippines as part of a broader ASEAN community-building initiative. When tourism boards and the Philippine government view the promotion of Indonesian cuisine as part of strengthening the ASEAN community and regional cooperation, it garners stronger political support. The Terra Madre 2025 program held in the Philippines with the participation of an Indonesian delegation demonstrates that this momentum already exists and needs to be maximized (Japutra et al., 2022; Matulin, 2026; Ranieses et al., n.d.).

4. Integrated Gastrodiplomacy Implementation Strategy: A Tourism and Hospitality Perspective

To maximize gastrodiplomacy opportunities in the Philippines, an integrated and comprehensive implementation strategy involving various stakeholders is needed. This strategy must combine elements from the three levels of food diplomacy mentioned previously.

Table 2. Implementation Strategy and Indicators of Indonesian Gastrodiplomacy in the Philippines

Level of Diplomacy	Key Actors	Main Strategy	Forms of Implementation	Indicators
Government-to-Government (Culinary Diplomacy)	1. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2. Ministry of Tourism, 3. Ministry of Culture, 4. Philippine government	Strengthening bilateral cooperation	1. State banquets, cultural agreements, 2. Chef visits, culinary exchange programs	1. Number of bilateral agreements; 2. Frequency of official culinary events; 3. Number of chef exchanges; 4. Level of institutional involvement
Government-to-People (Gastrodiplomacy)	1. Government agencies, 2. Culinary entrepreneurs, tourism institutions	Broad promotion of Indonesian cuisine	1. Expansion of Indonesian restaurants, 2. Food festival, 3. Culinary tourism, 4. Packages, digital campaigns	1. Number of Indonesian restaurants established; 2. Festival attendance rates; 3. Reach and engagement of digital campaigns; 4. Tourism package uptake
People-to-People (Social Gastronomy)	1. Food influencers, 2. Celebrity chefs, 3. Culinary media	Strengthening socio-cultural engagement	1. Chef exchange programs, 2. Workshops, 3. Media collaborations,	1. Number of influencers involved; 2. Media coverage volume;

Level of Diplomacy	Key Actors	Main Strategy	Forms of Implementation	Indicators
Quality Assurance & Standards	1. Government, 2. Certification bodies, 3. Industry actors	Ensuring culinary quality and consistency	4. Cooking demonstrations	3. Social media engagement metrics; 4. Frequency of collaborative event
			1. Restaurant standardization, 2. Product certification, 3. Service quality improvement	1. Number of certified restaurants / products; 2. Customer satisfaction scores; 3. Compliance rates with standards; 4. Repeat customerrates
Human Resource Development	1. Educational institutions, private sector	Enhancing workforce capacity	1. Culinary training, 2. Service excellence programs, 3. Cultural sensitivity training	1. Number of trained personal; 2. Training completion rates; 3. Service quality assessments; 4. Employer satisfaction levels
Destination Marketing	1. Tourism boards, 2. Travel industry	Promoting culinary tourism destinations	1. Integrated campaigns, 2. Gastronomic tourism packages, 3. Cross-border promotions	1. Number of campaigns launched; 2. Tourist arrivals linked to culinary tourism; 3. Package sales; brand awareness metrics
Regional Collaboration	1. Government, 2. ASEAN partners	Cross-national promotion integration	1. Culinary festivals, 2. International exhibitions, 3. ASEAN joint programs	1. Number of joint programs; 2. International event participation; 3. Cross-border partnerships formed; Regional media exposure

Source: Authors, 2025

First, at the government-to-government level (culinary diplomacy), coordination is needed between the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Culture, and Ministry of Tourism with their counterparts in the Philippines to facilitate high-level food events and cultural exchange programs (Dewi et al., 2025a; Jeannot et al., 2022). This can be done through state dinners, bilateral cultural agreements that include culinary arts, and sponsored visits by renowned Indonesian chefs

to the Philippines. This diplomatic level is crucial for providing legitimacy and institutional support for gastrodiploacy efforts.

Second, at the government-to-people level (gastrodiploacy proper), a structured campaign is needed to promote Indonesian food to the wider Filipino public. This can be done through several tactical initiatives. First, the expansion and strengthening of Indonesian restaurants in major Philippine cities through a co-branding program. The government can provide financial incentives, business mentoring, and marketing support to Indonesian entrepreneurs who want to open restaurants in the Philippines that meet certain quality standards. Second, organize regular food festivals and culinary events in various cities in the Philippines, positioning them as cultural celebrations and educational experiences. Third, collaborate with Philippine tourism boards to promote Indonesian culinary destinations as part of regional tourism packages. Fourth, digital marketing campaigns targeting middle-class Filipino consumers through social media and food blogs (Gregana & Ylagan, 2024; Matulin, 2026).

Third, at the people-to-people level (social gastronomy), an organic grassroots movement involving Filipino food influencers, celebrity chefs, and food media is needed to promote Indonesian cuisine. This can be facilitated through culinary exchange programs where Filipino chefs and food bloggers are invited to workshops and immersion experiences in Indonesia, where they then become advocates for Indonesian cuisine in their home countries. Collaborating with Filipino celebrity chefs and food media personalities to conduct cooking demonstrations and product launches of Indonesian culinary products can create buzz and authentic endorsements that are more credible than traditional advertising.

From a hospitality and tourism perspective, implementation strategies must consider several important aspects. First, quality assurance of Indonesian culinary products and services to be exported to the Philippines. This ensures that Filipino consumers' first experience with Indonesian cuisine is positive and memorable, which will encourage repeat consumption and word-of-mouth marketing. Standardization and certification of restaurants, food products, and culinary professionals are critical in this regard (Sorcaru, 2019).

Second, workforce development and training in the hospitality sector. Restaurant staff and culinary professionals who will work in the Philippines need to be trained not only in culinary skills but also in customer service excellence and cultural sensitivity. This training can be conducted through collaboration between hospitality schools in Indonesia and partner institutions in the Philippines, as well as through private sector training programs.

Third, destination marketing for culinary tourism. Integrated marketing campaigns are needed that promote Indonesian cities and culinary destinations as must-visit places for Filipino tourists interested in culinary experiences. Tourism boards can develop culinary tourism packages that entice Filipino tourists to visit Indonesia and experience authentic Indonesian cuisine at the source locations. This experience will make Filipino tourists ambassadors for Indonesian cuisine when they return to the Philippines (Chisik et al., 2018).

From a culinary tourism and hospitality perspective, the presence of WIG and WISH 2025 addresses some of the issues identified in this study, particularly the need for quality standardization, narrative strengthening, and capacity building for actors along the gastronomy value chain. The WISH acceleration program in the gastronomy subsector is designed to help business actors improve their storytelling, experience design, and package culinary tourism products to be more competitive in the international market. This aligns with recommendations regarding the importance of human resource development and improving service standards to ensure that foreign tourists, including Filipino, first experiences with Indonesian cuisine are consistently positive and memorable.

The WISH initiative has the potential to serve as a model for Indonesia when designing joint promotional programs with institutional partners in the Philippines, whether in the form of famtrips, chef exchanges, or thematic culinary tourism routes targeting Filipino consumers. Furthermore, these two programs demonstrate that Indonesian gastrodiploacy is increasingly being explicitly

positioned within the framework of nation branding strategies and strengthening soft power through measurable gastronomic tourism channels.

The Ministry of Tourism's official statement emphasized that every Indonesian dish carries a cultural story and can be used as a gastrodiplomacy instrument that affirms Indonesia's image as a world-class gastronomic destination. Within Indonesia-Philippines relations, opportunities include developing joint programs that integrate WIG and WISH with cultural diplomacy agendas, such as incorporating Indonesian gastronomic tour packages into ASEAN tourism promotions, or positioning WISH-accelerated businesses as key partners in culinary festivals, food exhibitions, and cross-border events like Terra Madre in the Philippines. Thus, these policy developments not only enrich the theoretical discourse on gastrodiplomacy but also provide an operational framework that can be adapted to strengthen the presence of Indonesian culinary delights in the Philippine market through a holistic and sustainable culinary tourism approach.

4. Challenges and Obstacles in Implementing Indonesian Gastrodiplomacy in the Philippines

Despite the enormous opportunities, there are several challenges that must be anticipated and managed in implementing gastrodiplomacy in the Philippines. First, there are challenges related to the supply chain and logistics. Shipping culinary products from Indonesia to the Philippines requires strict regulatory compliance, proper packaging, and reliable logistics infrastructure. Products that are sensitive to weather conditions and storage, such as perishable foods, require sophisticated cold chain management. These logistics costs can increase the price of the final product in the Philippine market, thereby reducing competitiveness (Okniel et al., 2024).

Second, there are challenges related to standardization and quality control. Indonesian culinary products and restaurants in the Philippines need to achieve consistent quality standards to build trust and brand reputation. However, with the large number of Indonesian entrepreneurs and producers with varying levels of professionalism, maintaining this consistency is challenging. Strict quality control mechanisms and certification systems are needed to ensure that every product and service bearing the Indonesian name reflects authentic quality standards (Chapple-Sokol, 2013; Dewi et al., 2025b; Pinto et al., 2023).

Third, there are challenges related to competition. Thai cuisine already has a significant head start with established brands and extensive restaurant networks in the Philippines. Vietnamese, Japanese, and Korean cuisines also continue to increase their presence in the Philippines with aggressive marketing strategies. Indonesian cuisine needs to find a unique positioning and strong differentiation to compete in this crowded market.

Fourth, the challenge lies in cultural perception and market awareness. Despite growing awareness of *rendang*, many Filipino consumers still have limited knowledge of the breadth and depth of Indonesian culinary traditions. Extensive education and marketing efforts are needed to create broader market awareness, not just about a few iconic dishes but about Indonesian gastronomy as a comprehensive, rich and diverse culinary system (Kemenpar RI, 2025b).

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that gastrodiplomacy offers considerable potential for strengthening the image of Indonesian cuisine in the Philippines. The cultural proximity between the two countries, supported by growing public interest in culinary experiences and tourism activities, creates favorable conditions for introducing Indonesian cuisine to a wider audience. In this context, food serves not only as a cultural expression but also as a medium for fostering mutual understanding and enhancing Indonesia's visibility in the international arena.

The analysis further suggests that the success of gastrodiplomacy is closely linked to the ability to integrate culinary promotion with tourism and hospitality development. Efforts to introduce Indonesian cuisine abroad are likely to be more effective when supported by quality visitor experiences, professional hospitality services, destination marketing initiatives, and collaboration

among government institutions, industry actors, educational institutions, and local communities. Therefore, gastrodiploamacy should be viewed as part of a broader ecosystem rather than as a stand-alone promotional activity.

This study also highlights the importance of examining gastrodiploamacy within a specific bilateral context. While previous discussions have generally focused on gastrodiploamacy as a national strategy, the Indonesia-Philippines case demonstrates that opportunities and challenges are shaped by local market characteristics, cultural dynamics, and existing patterns of cooperation between countries. Understanding these contextual factors is essential for designing more relevant and sustainable strategies for international culinary promotion.

This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on gastrodiploamacy by demonstrating how culinary promotion can be understood not only as a cultural diplomacy instrument but also as an integrated mechanism linking nation branding, culinary tourism, and hospitality development. By focusing on the Philippines as a specific bilateral case, the study expands existing gastrodiploamacy literature that has largely concentrated on broader national strategies or on countries with more established culinary diplomacy programs. The findings provide a contextual framework that may be applied to other ASEAN markets with similar socio-cultural characteristics. Given the conceptual nature of this study, further research is needed to explore the practical impacts of gastrodiploamacy initiatives from the perspectives of consumers, tourism stakeholders, culinary entrepreneurs, and policymakers. Empirical studies in these areas would enrich current understanding and provide stronger evidence regarding the role of gastrodiploamacy in supporting nation branding.

Nevertheless, this study is limited by its reliance on secondary data and literature-based analysis. Future research may employ empirical approaches such as surveys, interviews, focus group discussions, or case studies involving Filipino consumers, tourism stakeholders, restaurant operators, policymakers, and hospitality professionals. Comparative studies between the Philippines and other ASEAN countries may also provide deeper insights into the effectiveness of Indonesian gastrodiploamacy across different cultural and market environments. Such investigations would strengthen the empirical foundation of gastrodiploamacy studies and support the development of more evidence-based strategies for international culinary promotion. nding, tourism development, and the international competitiveness of Indonesian culinary products.

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