

# Indonesia's Spice-Based Gastrodiplomacy: Australia and Africa continents as the potential markets

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## Abstract

The history of the spice route has left a legacy in Indonesia and the rest of the world. To date, Indonesia continues to be a major global player in the spice trade. Pepper, nutmeg, cloves, mace, and cinnamon were the country's primary exports. Food may foster cross-cultural understanding, which can enhance international cooperation and engagement. Thus, foods rich in spices can be an asset for Indonesia's gastrodiplomacy. In collaboration with other non-state actors and coordinated by Indonesia's Coordinating Ministry of Maritime and Investment Affairs, the Indonesian government has developed an ambitious gastrodiplomacy strategy called "Indonesia Spice Up the World" (ISUTW). Despite possible hurdles, Australia and Africa could be potential markets for further implementation of ISUTW. The research aimed to answer the following questions: 1) To what extent has Indonesia promoted its spice-based gastrodiplomacy? and 2) What are the opportunities and challenges of Indonesia's spice-based gastrodiplomacy for the Australian and African markets? The research employed a mixed-method approach, including surveys to gather data about Indonesian cuisine businesses operating in Australia. This research incorporated a literature analysis, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions with both state and non-state actors to strengthen the study, particularly in the context of the African market.

**Keywords:** Africa, Australia, Gastrodiplomacy, Indonesia Spice Up the World, Indonesian spices

## Introduction

For millennia, the Indonesian archipelago, particularly the Banda Islands and the Moluccas renowned as the Spice Islands, has attracted global attention for its native nutmegs and cloves (Bartels, 2010). Spice is usually defined as an aromatic part of a tropical plant, be its root, bark, flower or seed, and is mostly used for food seasoning (Peter, 2004; Czarra, 2009). *Rendang*, an authentic West Sumatra dish, exemplifies the region's spice-rich cuisine. This caramelized beef curry is slow-cooked in a seasoned coconut milk mixture, blending herbs and spices like ginger, cloves, galangal, turmeric, nutmeg, and candlenuts for a profoundly savoury and spicy flavour. Similarly, Soto, a spiced Indonesian soup, ranks among CNN's top 20 soups globally, showcasing the diverse flavours across the archipelago (Oktavia, 2021). The spices in Soto include onion, garlic, turmeric root, galangal, ginger, coriander, pepper, star anise, cloves, cinnamon, cardamom, and nutmeg.

According to Rahman (2018), at the beginning of the AD century, Claudius Ptolemy wrote *Geōgraphikē Hyphēgēsis* (Geographical Guidelines). Ptolemy revealed the route to the archipelago, where he mapped the direction of the spice-producing regions from Venice, Alexandria, the Gulf of Aden (Yemen), India, Barus, China and then back to Venice. At that time, Venice was an important trading port city in Europe, with spices as one of its primary commodities. The writings of Ptolemy stating about trading activities in Barus in the 2nd century AD, which is located on the west coast of Sumatra, were one of the earliest documentaries of evidence that have shown global commerce since ancient times. Apart from Barus, which is a camphor-producing region for preserving corpses and pharmaceuticals, in Chinese and Indian chronicles, it is stated that before the 5th century AD, traders from the archipelago were heavily involved in buying and selling other spices, especially cloves and nutmeg. The search for spices trading initially was exclusive only to traders from India, China and Arabia. Spices are widely used for medicinal purposes, food seasonings and preservatives, cosmetics and beauty treatments, natural dyes and drinks since thousands of years. The majority of spices are native plants and are only cultivated on the Asian continent.

Rahman (2018) points out that the 15th century can be said as the "century of spices" because the image of spices as a dish enhancer increased initially in European palaces since then. During the 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, about 75% of spices appeared in recipes, in Europe. A recipe book in England during that period, for example, contained a recipe for the type of haddock fish whose habitat in the Atlantic Ocean was seasoned with a sauce made from spices in the form of cloves, mace, pepper, cinnamon, raisins, turmeric, sandalwood, and ginger. Since the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Europeans are not the only ones obsessed with spices; the opening of sea routes for the search for spices allowed European cultural interests and dominance to spread to various parts of the world. The Europeans finally got access to the spice trade and began exploiting the lands they had come to for their economic interests. Hence, the British ruled India, Dutch colonized Indonesia and Spain and Portugal colonized South and Central America.

In 1511, Antonio de Abreu's expedition marked the beginning of colonization in Indonesia for its spices, leading the Portuguese to the Spice Islands, the Moluccas. Similarly,

Spain reached the Moluccas via the Pacific and America, both nations aiming to control the lucrative clove and nutmeg trade. However, Portuguese and Spanish dominance was challenged by the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and the British East India Company (EIC), which continued the colonization efforts in Indonesia to exploit its spice resources (Dalidjo, 2020). Indonesia's spice trade history is deeply tied to its colonial past, particularly in regions like the Moluccas, Bangka Belitung, and Sumatra, which are known for their spice wealth. For example, agriculture, mainly spice cultivation, constituted nearly 57% of North Moluccas' economy (Astuti & Ramos, 2012), illustrating the importance of spices to regional economies during and post-colonization.

The utilization of spices continues to hold significance in contemporary times. The rich historical background of Indonesia and the spice trade significantly shaped the creation of Indonesian cuisine, primarily relying on spices to augment its taste. The research examines Indonesia's spice-based gastrodiplomacy by means of businesses such as restaurants, catering services, and food stalls, without forgetting the significance of spices as essential commodities in preserving the originality of Indonesian cuisine and enhancing its gastrodiplomacy. It specifically aims to assess the opportunities and challenges in implementing the Indonesian Spice Up the World (ISUTW) initiative, the government-led gastrodiplomacy programme, in Australia and Africa. Even though this is not the first time a similar idea has been brought up, ISUTW is envisioned to be a clearer and sharper attempt to promote food abroad. Indonesia's strategy, aiming to strengthen its national brand and market presence, marks a significant, committed step in presenting authentic Indonesian foods abroad. The novel analysis includes Australia and Africa as pivotal continents for advancing Indonesia's gastrodiplomacy.

## Literature Review

The research focuses on diplomacy studies, specifically highlighting gastrodiplomacy's role in promoting national cuisine globally and enhancing a country's brand. Gastrodiplomacy leverages cultural and social engagement as a form of soft power to influence other nations. The concept was first introduced in a 2002 Economist article, "Food as Ambassador," which discussed Thailand's efforts to globalise its culinary traditions (Zhang, 2015). Rockower (2012; 2020) further defined gastrodiplomacy, examining its application in various Asian countries to promote national cuisines internationally. This has spurred considerable academic interest in gastrodiplomacy as a strategic approach to global food promotion.

Rockower (2012) states that middle power countries typically use gastrodiplomacy practices. Discussing gastrodiplomacy is inextricable with other diplomacy practices: public diplomacy, culinary diplomacy, and cultural diplomacy. More profoundly, gastrodiplomacy is also regarded as a means to strengthen nation branding and part of the realization of a particular country's soft power. Therefore, the practices of public diplomacy, culinary diplomacy and cultural diplomacy are part of gastrodiplomacy, which forms a single process in strengthening nation branding outside the country. Rockower (2012; 2020) defines gastrodiplomacy as "a form of public diplomacy that combines cultural diplomacy, culinary

diplomacy and nation branding to make foreign culture tangible to the taste and touch"; he offers foods and culinary aspects as a key for diplomacy practices. Pham (2013) states that gastrodiplomacy is "part of nations' efforts to promote their cultures, build their images, globalize their food industries, attract foreign tourists and build relations with foreign publics". Another scholar, Spence (2016), suggests an example of gastrodiplomacy: the use of food to convey a specific message to others.

Furthermore, Wilson (2011) reiterates that food could be a harmless way to gain interest and connect with the outside community. That is why, according to Rockower (2012), gastrodiplomacy aims to captivate hearts and minds through emotional rather than rational appeals. The field has evolved to attract attention from the lens of anthropology and sociology, highlighting the need to understand human cultures and behaviours deeply. Maye-Banbury and Casey (2016) confirm that gastrodiplomacy could run effectively because the media of connection (food) is also practiced through anthropological and sociological lenses, eliciting emotional responses and evoking memories through the senses of taste and smell. This approach underlines the importance of considering the target audience's cultural preferences and culinary traditions in gastrodiplomacy efforts.

The concept of gastrodiplomacy often gets mixed up with food diplomacy and culinary diplomacy, though each has distinct focuses and targets. Gastrodiplomacy is designed to engage broad international audiences and bolster national branding globally. Unlike food diplomacy, which addresses people who need help in crises, and culinary diplomacy, targeting diplomatic figures through formal dining or called diplomacy on the table, gastrodiplomacy encompasses public, cultural, and culinary diplomacy to increase attention and understanding of national culinary to many foreign people (Rockower, 2012). Zhang (2015) reinforces this argument in his study; he emphasizes that food is a gastrodiplomacy and nation-branding tool, and both are intertwined.

Upon closer reflection, the debate of nation-branding in gastrodiplomacy practice has sparked discussion. The definition of nation branding has been often studied since the late 1990s. Simon Anholt initially reflected nation branding as a means to form and promote different self-image and build an effective international reputation to fulfil national interests (Teslik, 2007). In its development, nation branding is then defined as a complex and unique concept; it is a multi-dimensional blend of elements that provide the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance for all its target audiences (Dinnie, 2008; Chernatony, 2008). It is also noteworthy to understand that nation branding is very close to national identity and country of origin (Chernatony, 2008). Potential rewards to be gained when nation branding has been strengthened are attracting tourism, stimulating inward investment and boosting exports, increasing currency stability, helping restore international credibility and investor confidence, increasing international political influence, stimulating stronger international partnerships and enhancing nation-building (Temporal, 2006, cited in Chernatony 2008). In other words, nation branding reflects national identity, representing dominant values that are embedded in a particular community.

The definition of gastrodiplomacy is constantly evolving, but its main goals include conveying ideas through food, showcasing cultural aspects, and enhancing national branding. Furthermore, the public continues to be the focus of gastrodiplomacy initiatives. The research aims to complete the working definition of gastrodiplomacy by focusing on spices as critical components, which can serve as a driving force for gastrodiplomacy initiatives, particularly in Indonesia.

## Research Methodology

The research utilizes a mixed-methods approach to gather data and support analyses. Primary resources are collected by conducting focus group discussions with various stakeholders, including government and non-governmental actors involved in spices and gastrodiplomacy issues. A research team also engaged with experts in gastrodiplomacy, such as a government official from the Indonesian Embassy in Sydney, Australia, the Indonesian Embassy in Windhoek, Namibia, Indonesia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Indonesia's Coordinating Ministry of Maritime and Investment Affairs, founders of gastronomic associations in Indonesia, professional chefs in Indonesia and Australia, catering business owners in Australia, Indonesian gastronomic experts, and other relevant stakeholders.

Secondary resources are gathered by examining literature from official papers, books, and scholarly publications. Analysing texts and documents like government reports, media articles, books, and journals can help understand distributed or private knowledge (Hammarberg, Kirkman, & de Lacey 2016). vom Brocke et al. (2009) emphasize that literature reviews are crucial in scholarship as science is primarily an accumulative pursuit. The research has also been inspired by Indonesia's ongoing efforts in food promotion worldwide since 2008, though the term 'gastrodiplomacy' has yet to be used at that time. Until the first Indonesian Gastrodiplomacy Congress was held in Jakarta in December 2020, it brought together an array of stakeholders focused on gastronomy to commit to developing robust and precise steps for enhancing the Indonesian gastrodiplomacy strategy.

In Australia, the research is supported by survey findings that analyse the Indonesian culinary business environment. Two surveys were conducted from September 8 to October 8, 2021, and then from October 8 to November 8, 2021. The online surveys were used to collect early data on the Indonesian restaurant business in Australia, helping to identify and map out the initial knowledge in the country. The initial phase sought responses from cafes, restaurants, and catering proprietors across Australia. The subsequent phase of the survey aimed to gauge the perspectives of consumers from Indonesian diasporas, including students, regarding these businesses.

Online surveys have gained popularity as a qualitative research tool, especially during times of social mobility restrictions, despite facing limitations like lower response rates compared to traditional survey methods (Braun et al., 2021; Buchanan & Hvizdak, 2009; Gordon & McNew, 2008;). Using the Survey Monkey platform to send this survey to 27 business owners and 100 members of the Indonesian diaspora in Australia, it was expected

that the results would be comparable in nature and quality to those from traditional paper surveys (Gordon & McNew, 2008). A purposive sampling technique utilizing a snowball approach was used. There are around 151 Indonesian restaurants in Australia, according to the survey conducted by the Directorate of Public Diplomacy, Indonesia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2021), and these businesses were considered the population for the study. The research was carried out during the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

For the Africa region, due to the limited move during the COVID-19 pandemic, the distribution of survey was challenging. However, complete information was primarily gathered through an extensive literature review, hearings with Indonesian government stakeholders and representatives of some embassies in African regions during the formulation of ISUTW, and active participation in events such as webinars organized by the Indonesian Embassy in Windhoek, Namibia. One notable event was the "Thirty Years of Indonesia-Namibia Diplomatic Relations: Towards a Dynamic Economic Partnership," held in 2021.

The research emphasizes Australia and Africa as potential markets for adopting Indonesian gastrodiplomacy, without forgetting spices, a crucial element of Indonesian identity. These two regions are essential for expanding the reach of Indonesian food marketing globally, and this writing will elaborate on the rationale.

### **Prelude to "Indonesia Spice Up the World": A Long Journey**

Prior to the official launch of Indonesia Spice Up the World in the late of 2021, the spirit of Indonesia to promote Indonesia's plethora of food and spices has been present long before this commitment was stipulated and became the primary agenda of Indonesia's soft power demonstrated to the world. Non-state actors, in particular, have been instrumental in assisting the Indonesian government in promoting Indonesian foods and spices at a number of festivals and cultural events. Since 2008, there have been arguably four major programs that were considered as initial steps of Indonesia's gastrodiplomacy: Indonesia Inspired (2008), Indonesia-Spain Culinary Cooperation (2012), Spice it Up Program at Frankfurt Book Fair (2015 and 2016), Wonderful Indonesia Co-Branding Program (2017), and The First Congress of Indonesian Gastrodiplomacy (2020).

#### *Indonesia Inspired*

The Indonesian Embassy in London, in partnership with the Asia London Cultural Centre (Asia House), hosted the "Indonesia Inspired" festival from October 9–22, 2008, in the Asia House Building in London. Asia House held this kind of event annually to showcase Asian arts and culture, including Indonesia in 2008. William Wongso, an Indonesian chef, and culinary expert was invited to speak on this occasion regarding Indonesia's culinary heritage. At that time, Indonesia Inspired was considered the country's first and largest modern festival ("Indonesia Inspired akan diadakan", 2008). A committee of Asia House's "Indonesia Inspired" program, K. Pringgoharjono (2022, personal communication, January 4), also agreed that Indonesia has engaged in gastrodiplomacy long before what has been attempted recently,

citing food promotion in London in 2008 as an example. This festival, which incorporated fashion and films in addition to food promotion, can be seen as one of Indonesia's major steps in promoting its authentic foods abroad.

### *Indonesia-Spain Culinary Cooperation*

Late in 2012, William Wongso, Indonesia's culinary expert, and Rafael Anson, Chairman of *Real Academia Gastronomica de Espana*, have agreed to take a collaborative action to promote culinary, particularly Indonesian foods, in Casino de Madrid, Madrid, Spain. This event was held in conjunction with the launch of 30 traditional Indonesian culinary icons by Mari Elka Pangestu, the former Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy of Indonesia (2011–2014) ("Spanyol promosikan kuliner", 2012). According to William Wongso (2022, personal communication, January 4), this effort may have been one of the earliest stages in the development of Indonesian gastrodiplomacy. This cooperation agreement aimed to foster networks and cooperation for the growth of Indonesia's gastronomy as well as establish the culinary association named Indonesian Gastronomy Association, or IGA. In addition, the Indonesian Embassy in Madrid utilized this opportunity to promote Indonesian foods in Spain, with William Wongso demonstrating culinary shows at the CETT Barcelona School of Tourism, Hospitality, and Gastronomy in Barcelona and the Alambique Cooking School in Madrid ("Spanyol promosikan kuliner", 2012).

### *Spice It Up! Indonesia*

In 2015, Indonesia served as the Guest of Honour Country at the Frankfurt Book Fair, one of Germany's largest book fairs. With the main support of Indonesia's Ministry of Education and Culture, Spice It Up! Indonesia has a mission to promote Indonesian cuisine on a global scale (Spice It Up, 2015a). Inside the book fair, Indonesia provided culinary workshops, culinary shows, discussions, and cookbook launches by Indonesia's renowned chefs and culinary figures, showed more than 50 native spices, and opened the Spice Island Café, which served Indonesia's premium coffees and teas (Spice It Up, 2015b). The success of Spice It Up! Indonesia in 2015 continued Indonesia's diplomacy efforts at food and spice aspects in the following year. On October 18–23, 2016, Indonesia rejoined the Frankfurt Book Fair. Spice It Up! Committees organized the "Food Explorer" event, in which Indonesian chefs and students from a vocational cooking school in Germany cooked alongside around 1,000 kids aged 12 to 18 from schools in Germany, Austria, Italy, and other European countries (Wildan, 2016). By preparing Indonesian dishes, including Meatballs, Beef Rendang, Kue Lumpur, and Fried Noodles, they practiced "see, touch, feel, hear, and taste," which were essential cooking abilities. According to K. Pringgoharjono (2022, personal communication, January 4), former Chief Program Officer for Culinary, Youth, and Student Programs (Spice It Up!) for Frankfurt Book Fair 2015, the Spice It Up! program was arguably the first Indonesian government program, which successfully implemented a large-scale culinary program involving chefs, book authors, and culinary experts. Presumably, the Spice It Up! program has become one of the Indonesian early gastrodiplomacy programs that has

contributed to the growing awareness of utilizing Indonesian foods and spices as instruments of diplomacy to promote Indonesia's culture, nation brand, and market potential.

### *Wonderful Indonesia Co-Branding Program*

Given the increasing need for a long-term program to support Indonesian culinary promotion, Indonesia's Ministry of Tourism (recently transformed into the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy in 2019) developed a program to support Indonesian culinary promotion (Trihartono et al., 2020). One of the most prominent programs was to collaborate with restaurants overseas established by Indonesian diasporas through the Co-Branding Wonderful Indonesia program in early 2018. (V. Datau, personal communication, June 10, 2020). R. Manan (2020, personal communication, September 17) adds that there were up to 100 restaurants that were co-branded through this Wonderful Indonesia program. This initiative was created to assist Indonesian restaurants abroad in promoting their cuisine in the host country. On the other hand, Indonesia's Ministry of Tourism might promote Indonesian tourist destinations by displaying photographs, artwork, and sculptures that symbolize Indonesia in their restaurants. There are three selection criteria for restaurant partners: 1) Location and Year of Establishment; restaurants must be in the city center, easily accessible, and have been in operation for more than three years; 2) Food Menu; restaurants must serve at least two of the five national foods of Indonesia, namely Gado-gado, Nasi Goreng, Rendang, Satay, and Soto; and 3) Wonderful Indonesia Partner; Indonesian restaurant owners may become an official partner for Wonderful Indonesia, a government-sponsored tourism brand. According to Trihartono et al. (2020), the Ministry of Tourism has cooperated with ten Indonesian restaurants abroad that meet the following criteria: 1) Ron Gastrobar in Amsterdam, the Netherlands; 2) Djakarta Bali in Paris, France; 3) Yono's Restaurant in Albany, New York, USA; 4) Kasih Restaurant in Los Angeles, California, USA; 5) Fluffy Lamb in Perth, Australia; 6) Sendok Garpu in Brisbane, Australia; 7) Ubud Restaurant in Sydney, Australia; 8) Sari Ratu in Singapore; 9) Bumbu Desa in Malaysia; 10) Indonesia Grill and Gastrobar in Houston, Texas, USA. The initiative had previously garnered an enthusiastic reaction from various stakeholders and had become the leading programme for marketing Indonesian cuisine abroad at that time.

### *The First Congress of Indonesian Gastrodiplomacy*

The concurrent presence of food promotion to the world leads government and non-government stakeholders to reaffirm the spirit of gastrodiplomacy by conducting the first congress of Indonesian gastrodiplomacy in 2020. Amidst the early upsurge of the COVID-19 global pandemic, the Indonesian Culinary Institute, under the auspices of Indonesian diaspora entrepreneur in the United States, Robert Manan, led and coordinated the conduct of the Congress of Indonesian Gastrodiplomacy on December 13, 2020. Many prominent figures in the gastronomic industry attended the congress, ranging from government actors, chefs, culinary storytellers, culinary business owners, culinary experts, culinary association leaders, private businesspeople, and academics. During the congress, all the stakeholders

came together and declared 14 initiatives symbolizing the commitment to promoting Indonesian foods and spices. The declaration of Indonesian gastrodiplomacy highlights: to synergize of various stakeholders to work collaboratively, create a culinary centre, database platform for Indonesian food records, and accommodation support (airlines for easing export procedures) for food promotion, take concern on Indonesia's maritime specialities and culinary diversity, strengthen historical narratives and culinary education, promote Indonesian culinary online, embrace and harness Indonesian diaspora abroad, provide ease and access for spices export-import mechanism and Indonesian restaurants opening overseas, and develop gastronomic cities in Indonesia (Declaration of Indonesian Gastrodiplomacy, 2020). The congress has been responded positively by many stakeholders. In the meantime, the timing was also in line with the government's idea to strengthen Indonesia's gastrodiplomacy in developing what is called Indonesian Spice Up the World (ISUTW), which has just been initiated as a response to the continuation of the food promotion program earlier. The role of the non-state actors was apparent. Their initiatives uniting various stakeholders and declaring a gastrodiplomacy commitment in a one-day meeting amidst the COVID-19 pandemic led to a great success that employed a good beginning for collaborative action for Indonesia's more robust food and spices promotion abroad that are future advanced through the national action plan of ISUTW.

### **The National Action Plan of Indonesia Spice Up the World**

Since 2020, the Indonesian government has embraced food and spices as critical tools for diplomacy, drawing inspiration from Thailand and Vietnam's gastrodiplomacy successes. It is also supported by the fact that culinary was the sub-sector industry marked as the most significant contributor to Indonesia's GDP and considered the industry that recruited human resources the most. In 2020, the culinary industry contributed approximately 41% of the total GDP ("Indonesia Spice Up the World", 2021b) and the export worth of culinary attained roughly USD 1.3 billion (Catriana & Djumena, 2020).

Since 2020, the Indonesian government, under the coordination of Indonesia's Coordinating Ministry of Maritime and Investment Affairs, has been arranging a leading and strategic program to promote Indonesia's food and spices under the name of Indonesia Spice Up the World (ISUTW). ISUTW is a collaborative program involving all stakeholders aiming to promote Indonesian culinary to achieve the export values of spices and seasonings up to USD 2 billion and activate 4,000 restaurants overseas in 2024. Previously, this initiative also aimed to improve certain tourism sites in Indonesia to become the focal point of gastronomy tourism, with the goal of attracting foreign tourists to experience and discover the local food. Regardless of what types of foods the tourists choose, Purnomo, Somantri, and Adnan (2023) contend that tourists' consumption of local food while traveling determines which foods are considered authentic. Consequently, it is crucial to enhance Indonesia's status as a gastronomy destination. However, the main goals decided during the first cycle of ISUTW, which lasts until the end of 2024, are to initially stimulate the growth of Indonesia's restaurants overseas and enhance the export values of spices.

Officially announced on November 4, 2021, during the National Day at Dubai Expo 2020, ISUTW initially targeted Australia and Africa, recognising many unexplored market potentials for Indonesian products and restaurants there. However, it is then acknowledged that the markets would be expanded without limiting to those two continents (Sartin, 2021). By the end of 2022, the most recent update involves selecting 12 pilot project countries for ISUTW implementation. Focusing on some regions and countries will indeed be beneficial for Indonesia to map out the opportunities and challenges systematically. The countries mentioned include the United States (US), China, Japan, the Netherlands, Australia, the United Kingdom (UK), Germany, France, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Turkey, Qatar, and South Africa (Indonesia's Coordinating Ministry of Maritime and Investment Affairs, 2022a). Australia and South Africa, located on the African continent, are also seen as prospective markets for Indonesia.

The formulation of ISUTW includes both state and non-state actors. The state actors comprise some of Indonesia's ministries, governmental bodies, and state-owned enterprises associated with trade, industry, maritime, agriculture, tourism, finance, international affairs, culture, law and human rights, transportation, and market research. On the other hand, non-state actors encompass gastronomy associations, expert chefs, culinary business owners, food influencers, and start-ups. Table 1 identifies the actors supporting the program formulation, including:

Table 1 State and non-state actors participating in the formulation of ISUTW

State Actors	Non-state Actors
Coordinating Ministry of Maritime and Investment Affairs	Dewan Rempah Indonesia ( <i>Indonesian Spice Council</i> )
Coordinating Ministry of Economic Affairs	Gabungan Pengusaha Makanan dan Minuman Indonesia (GAPMMI) ( <i>Indonesian Association of Food and Beverages</i> )
Ministry of Finance	Indonesia Culinary Institute (ICI)
Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy	Indonesia Gastronomy Association
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Indonesia Chef Association
Ministry of Trade	Asosiasi Chef Profesional ( <i>Professional Chef Association</i> )
Ministry of Law and Human Rights	Indonesia Gastronomy Network (IGN)
Ministry of Education and Culture (later transformed into Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology in 2021)	Indonesia Gastronomy Community (IGC)
Ministry of Agriculture	Asosiasi Pengusaha Jasaboga Indonesia (APJI) ( <i>Catering Services Association in Indonesia</i> )
Ministry of National Development Planning	Team Leader of Indonesia's Culinary Tourism Acceleration and Development, Ministry of Tourism (2014-2019)
Ministry of Industry	Aku Cinta Masakan Indonesia ( <i>I Love Indonesian Food</i> )
Ministry of Health	Culinary Experts
Indonesian Institute of Sciences (later merged into National Research and Innovation Agency in 2021) (BRIN)	
Drug and Food Supervisory Body (BPOM)	
PT Garuda Indonesia	

Source: Indonesia's Coordinating Ministry of Maritime and Investment Affairs, 2020a.

Two key objectives of ISUTW are to be followed in the initial stage of implementation until 2024 (Indonesia's Coordinating Ministry of Maritime and Investment Affairs, 2022b). They include: 1) Increase export values of spices and seasonings to USD 2 billion; 2) Establish up to 4,000 Indonesian restaurants abroad

*Increase export values of spices and seasonings to USD 2 billion*

Indonesia, known globally as 'the mother of spices,' aims to double its spice export value to USD 2 billion by enhancing the quality and export processes and promoting native spices through the ISUTW initiative. This strategy, which follows a notable increase in spice exports to USD 1.02 billion in 2020 (Indonesia's Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, 2021a), involves improving logistical support, expanding financial options, and extending networks of local enterprises, alongside reviving the Co-branding Wonderful Indonesia program. In addition to the increased export values, it is also hoped that the worldwide distribution of Indonesian spices could supply Indonesian restaurants and create common standards for the taste of Indonesian foods served abroad. This program is also anticipated to increase the economy of Indonesian society, especially the local Indonesian farmers as the spice's suppliers.

*Establish up to 4,000 Indonesian restaurants abroad*

To enhance its global culinary footprint, the Indonesian government targets the establishment of 4,000 eateries abroad in 2024, building from the current 1,100 (Indonesia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Public Diplomacy Directorate, 2021, personal communication, July 27). Achieving this goal requires setting restaurant standards, creating promotional menus, and fostering partnerships, especially with the Indonesian diaspora. This expansion also aims to globally promote *Gado-gado*, *Nasi Goreng*, *Rendang*, *Satay*, and *Soto*, leveraging their international acclaim as evidenced by CNN's recognition of *Rendang* and *Nasi Goreng* among the world's top foods in 2017 and *Rendang* again in 2021 (Cheung, 2017; "Rendang kembali masuk daftar", 2021). This strategy underscores the potential of Indonesian cuisine on the global stage.

The initiative of the ISUTW program has also gained various responses. As mentioned in Table 1, non-state actors have actively participated in the making. For instance, the US-based Indonesian diaspora, Robert Manan, also the founder of Indonesia Culinary Institute, was very engaged in the spirit of Indonesia's gastrodiploamacy, conducting the first congress of Indonesian gastrodiploamacy which gathered many stakeholders amidst the pandemic circumstances. Others, such as Indonesian diasporas in Australia and The Netherlands, have also informed regarding the program; however, the precise direction to implement the program and what diaspora could help are still limited. D. Tjoe (2021, personal communication, July 28), owner of one of Indonesian restaurants in Australia, responded that the initiative of ISUTW to open many Indonesian restaurants abroad also needs to look at the restaurants that are struggling or almost closed. On the other hand, R. Lubis (2022, personal

communication, May 22), co-owner of one of Indonesian restaurants in the Netherlands, is very eager to support the implementation of ISUTW; however, the direction of what needs to be assisted from the diaspora in the Netherlands to the program remains limited. If ISUTW is implemented, she added that Indonesia should focus on a clear and enhanced export mechanism for fresh ingredients and spices. After nearly three years, the ISUTW program continues to evolve, seeking concrete directions for expansion with the potential for greater diaspora involvement.

### **Australia as a Closer Neighbour: Opportunities and Challenges**

Australia is one of Indonesia's closest neighbours as indicated by its geographical location. Despite their close proximity, neither Indonesia nor Australia has yet designated each other as its main trading partner. According to Gary Quinlan's (2019) speech, Indonesia is Australia's 13<sup>th</sup> largest trading partner, and Australia is Indonesia's 13<sup>th</sup> largest. Given the fact that China continues to be Indonesia's and Australia's major trading partner.

Nonetheless, as evidenced by the recent agreements that have been enacted, there is great potential for a deeper relationship between countries. Both countries have recently concluded two potential transformative agreements that may increase both relations in multifarious sectors, which are the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) established in 2018 (Indonesia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020; Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2018) and the Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive and Economic Partnership Agreement (IA-CEPA) that entered into force on July 5, 2020 (Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2020). Prior to the newly established indentureships, Indonesia and Australia have actually developed close people-to-people ties within the framework of Australia's Government Colombo Plan, which was established in 1950 and renewed in 2014 to support Australian undergraduates studying and applying for internships in the Indo-Pacific region. Longing for the country's beauty and the indelible memories are some reasons people, particularly Australian youth, are keen to travel to Indonesia again for leisure. In 2019, over 1,263,850 Australian travellers visited Indonesia, making them the fourth-largest foreign tourist group in the country (Mulyasari et. al., 2020). In addition, the representative of the Indonesian Embassy to Australia in Canberra (2021, personal communication, March 17), stated that based on the VITO report, Indonesia is the most desired tourism destination for Australians post the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is self-evident that education, culture, and tourism are the most important sectors in Indonesia and Australia's practice of soft diplomacy, which they have maintained for a long time. Australian familiarity with Indonesian cuisine suggests the potential for further engagement. The cooperation framework within CSP and IA-CEPA agreements may also guide the initiative. This foundation positions Australia as a prominent market for the ISUTW programme, highlighting opportunities and challenges to be navigated (Yayusman, Yaumidin, & Mulyasari, 2023).

## Opportunities

Longstanding people-to-people ties between Indonesia and Australia have lured many Australians to come to Indonesia for a variety of purposes. Besides, many Indonesians also reside in Australia for reasons like marriage, education, employment, and business. In 2016, 73,213 Indonesian-born people were registered in Australia, with 56.9% of the Indonesian-born population having arrived prior to 2007 (Australia's Department of Home Affairs, 2016). This information places Indonesia among the top 20 countries of origin for foreign-born in Australia. In 2019, the number of Indonesian-born individuals reached roughly 88,740 (Australia's Department of Home Affairs, 2022).

Either for settlement or education, a significant number of Indonesian diasporas have begun to pursue culinary business opportunities in Australia. It could include restaurant openings, catering, and delivery services. The majority, however, are not restaurants.

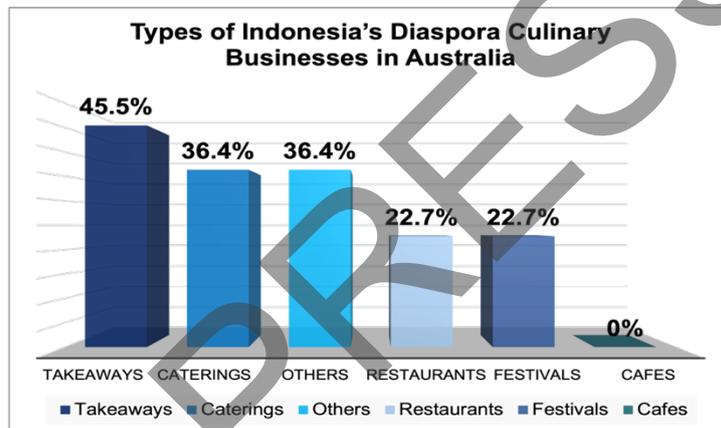


Figure 1 Types of culinary business established by Indonesian diasporas in Australia

Source: Research Center for Area Studies, National Research and Innovation Agency, 2021.

Surveys conducted by the Research Center for Area Studies, National Research and Innovation Agency in Indonesia in late 2021 indicate that the majority of Indonesian diasporas in Australia operate takeaways (45.5%) and catering services (36.4%). While restaurants are placed fourth, roughly 22.7% of Indonesian diasporas in Australia have opened a restaurant (Figure 1). There are over 140 Indonesian restaurants in eight states and two territories in Australia, including, but not limited to, 58 in New South Wales (NSW), 47 in Victoria and Tasmania (VIC and TAS), 15 in Western Australia (WA), 11 in Queensland (QLD), 9 in the Northern Territory (NT), 2 in South Australia (SA), and 1 in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) (Indonesian Embassy in Canberra, personal communication, March 17, 2021). The numbers have been substantial, but there is potential for growth. On the other hand, data from Directorate of Public Diplomacy, Indonesia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in mid-July 2021 showed an increasing number of Indonesian restaurants in Australia, reaching roughly

151. To be precise, In Australia, there are a total of 36 restaurants that make use of Indonesian spices, and there are also 14 stores or food stalls that sell Indonesian spices (Indonesia's Coordinating Ministry of Maritime and Investment Affairs, 2021). Furthermore, Indonesia has a quite large number of diasporas living in Australia, and their contributions to the culinary industry are well established. There are also numerous associations founded by the Indonesian diaspora to promote culinary promotion in Australia, including the Indonesian Student Association in Australia (PPI Australia), the Indonesian Cultural Circle (ICC), and the Indonesian Restaurant Association (IRA).

Support from the Indonesian government has also been present, although significant progress is still anticipated. The Indonesian Embassy in Canberra, on the one hand, has conducted culinary initiatives such as annual Indonesian festivals at the Embassy and training for Indonesian restaurant owners in partnership with Indonesian diasporas. The Indonesian Consulate General in Sydney, on the other hand, reported that there are approximately 41.236 Indonesian diasporas working in the area, including food and beverage importers such as Sony Trading and Eastern Cross Trading, owners of grocery stores, tofu and tempeh producers, and factories producing traditional Javanese soy sauce made from fermented soybeans. As part of a previous government program, some Indonesian restaurants in Sydney have received the co-branding designation "Wonderful Indonesia". To be more precise, the Indonesian Consulate General in Sydney has incorporated gastrodiplomacy into multiple diplomatic agendas in relation to promotion. It has cooperated with Indonesia's Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy and VITO Australia. Taste of Indonesia, Gastronomy Family Trip, blogger reviews on local media, and a market intelligence study were among the activities conducted (Indonesia's Coordinating Ministry of Maritime and Investment Affairs, 2020a).

In the meantime, at home, the Indonesian government, specifically the Ministry of Trade, has provided full support for expediting trade channels, particularly for spice products. As part of the implementation of IA-CEPA, Indonesia, on the initiative of the Indonesian Chamber of Commerce (KADIN), provides trading house services in order to enter the Australian market. The representative of Indonesia's Ministry of Trade (2021, personal communication, November 11) disclosed that the established trading house will provide training on how to export products to Australia, open up cooperation opportunities, particularly for spices, coffee, tea, seafood, handicrafts, and processed foods and beverages, expand exporter networks, and provide business consultation services for the Australian market. In the future, the trading house is projected to grow beyond its current location in Sydney.

Despite Indonesia's attempt to open the spice market to Australia, it is known that Australia is not among the top five export destinations for Indonesian spices. However, due to a high demand for spice products such as cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, and pepper, Australia has a potential for it (Indonesia's Ministry of Trade, personal communication, November 11, 2021). Although still in its inception, the existence of Indonesia's trading house and the implementation of IA-CEPA may open the door to trade opportunities for Indonesian spices

with Australia, Indonesia's closest neighbour. Moreover, this effort is anticipated to be highly helpful in achieving Indonesia's export ambitions for spices and basic condiments.

Aside from the technical support from the Indonesian government, the Indonesian diaspora has played a vital role in promoting Indonesian cuisine in Australia. They promoted Indonesian cuisine through social media and participation in cultural events and festivals.

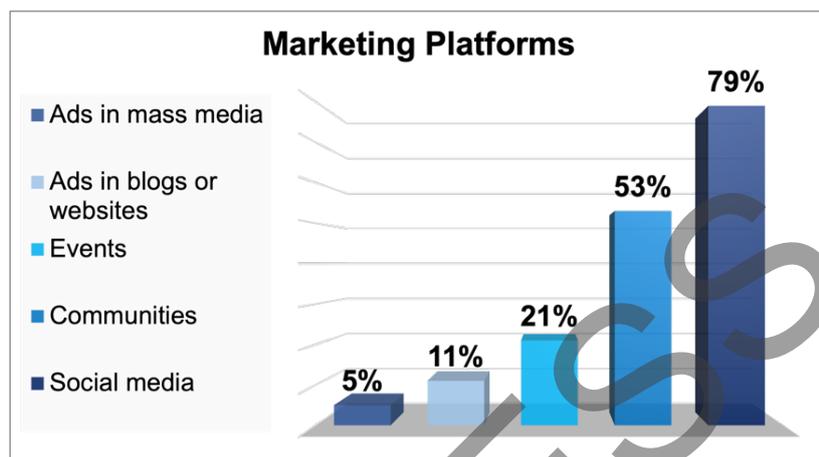


Figure 2 Marketing Platforms for Culinary Business Promotion

Source: Research Center for Area Studies, National Research and Innovation Agency, 2021.

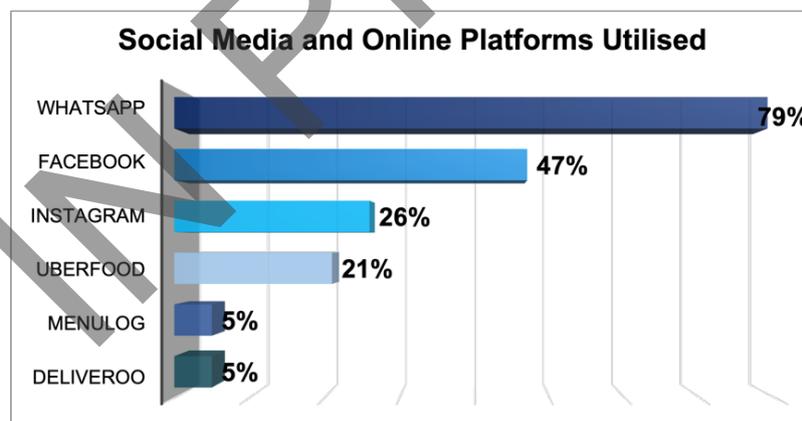


Figure 3 Social Media and Online Platform Used for Culinary Business Promotion

Source: Research Center for Area Studies, National Research and Innovation Agency, 2021.

The majority of Indonesian business owners communicated information and sold food via social media (79%) (Figure 2), mainly via WhatsApp Group (79%). (Figure 3). Communities (53%) and cultural events (23%) are the subsequent two venues where business

owners advertise their foods (Figure 2). The group members and visitors are not only Indonesians, many native Australians and other Asians were also drawn to Indonesian foods.

Indonesia might capitalize on its current chances of advancing the gastrodiploacy action by collaborating with both governmental and non-governmental entities to further the promotion of Indonesian cuisine and spices in Australia. When unveiled in Australia, agendas are not necessarily designed from scratch.

### Challenges

While projecting Australia as a potential market for the ISUTW, despite the availability of opportunities, several hurdles also surface.

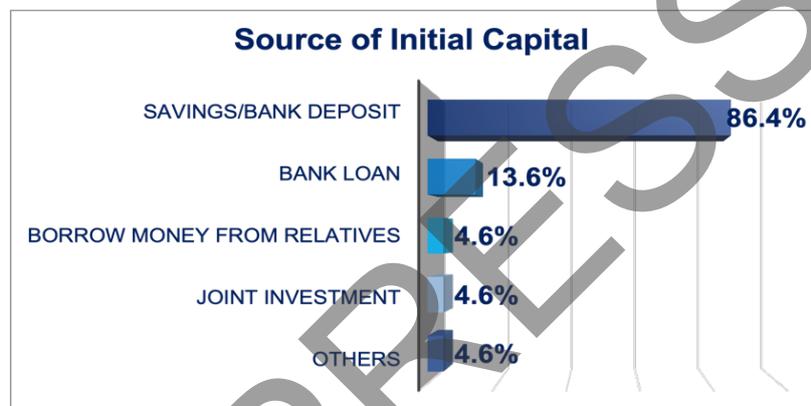


Figure 4 Source of Initial Capital for Opening Indonesia's Culinary Business in Australia.

Source: Research Center for Area Studies, National Research and Innovation Agency, 2021.

The majority of Indonesian restaurants (86,4%) (Figure 4) established in Australia were financed by the owners' bank deposits or savings. Until the survey was finished, the Indonesian government arguably made minimal funding support to the establishment of Indonesian restaurants. The representative of the Indonesian Embassy in Canberra (2021, personal communication, March 17) concurred that capital constraints have become one of the obstacles for Indonesian culinary businesses in Australia. Throughout ISUTW, the necessity for specific mechanisms for financial assistance for the establishment of 4,000 restaurants is of the utmost importance. To begin a culinary business, a large amount of money is required for the business permit, management, and hiring of employees. According to the survey, Indonesian restaurants and other culinary businesses have less than two staff to run and serve the businesses, particularly during and after the COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 5). It is an exception for successful Indonesian restaurants, such as Shalom Restaurants, which have already opened several branches in various Australian states.

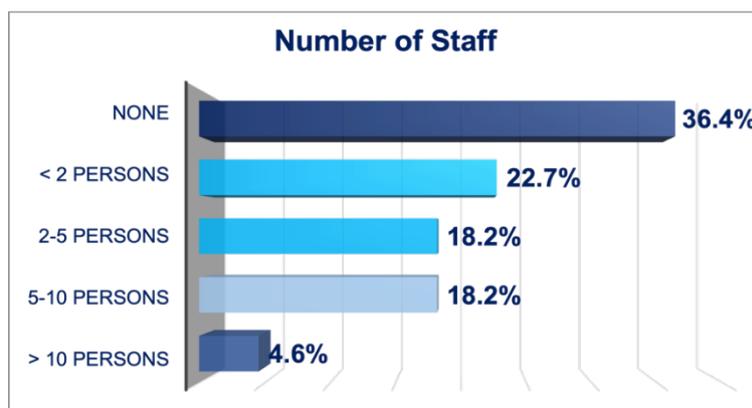


Figure 5 Average Number of Staff Working in Indonesia's Culinary Businesses in Australia.

Source: Research Center for Area Studies, National Research and Innovation Agency, 2021.

Notably, Australia does not rank in the top five export markets for Indonesian spices. Indonesia's top five export markets for spices are the United States (USD 113.82 million), China (USD 104.12 million), India (USD 82.15 million), Vietnam (USD 48.83 million), and the Netherlands (USD 33.82 million) (Indonesia's Ministry of Trade, personal communication, November 11, 2021). Meanwhile, as the number of Indonesian culinary businesses increases, the need for basic condiments made from authentic spices has risen. It is some homework for the Indonesian government to be concerned about increasing Indonesian spice exports to Australia. In fact, Thai spices are more prevalent than Indonesian spices in foreign countries. The ISUTW aims to reach a USD 2 billion export target for spices, which necessitates clear clarification of export-import agreements.

Furthermore, as part of the ISUTW endeavour, Indonesia aimed to establish Indonesian fine-dining restaurants. Nevertheless, more than just restaurants can serve as a platform for Indonesia's gastrodiplomacy. B. Nugraha, a restaurateur at one of Australia's Indonesian restaurants (personal communication, November 12, 2021), opined that Indonesian food stalls offering express food are still lacking, despite the fact that they may contribute to the promotion of Indonesian cuisine. The current Australian lifestyle demands that everything, including meals, be served quickly. This mindset is essential for increasing the quantity of Indonesian culinary businesses using alternative methods. Indonesia's gastrodiplomacy strategy should include not only fine-dining establishments but also food trucks and food stalls. *Banh Mi*, a Vietnamese sandwich, has gained popularity in Southeast Asian countries due to its widespread availability around the city and its quick preparation.

Regarding export commodities, Australia's export mechanism is normally of a high standard. Finding Indonesian-origin spices in Australia is relatively tough. Numerous Indonesian products have not yet met the certification requirements (Indonesia's Ministry of Trade, personal communication, November 11, 2021). Therefore, the majority of spices in Australia come from Thailand and Vietnam. Most of the time, Indonesia exported its spices to third parties, causing the labelling mechanism to no longer list Indonesia as the owner of the products. This is a big hurdle for Indonesia. The goal of ISUTW is indeed to achieve spice

export values of USD 2 billion, however, Indonesia should also position itself as one of the biggest spice exporters recalling its historical legacy. It is a valuable nation brand for Indonesia that needs to be preserved.

Academically, scholarly research on Indonesian gastrodiplomacy in Australia is notably scarce. A few studies conducted by Indonesian scholars, such as Yayusman et al. (2023) explore specifically Australia as a potential market for Indonesian gastrodiplomacy, emphasizing the importance of understanding Australian consumer behaviour and resources and opportunities Indonesia has in Australia. Prior to that, Sapuan and Azizah (2018) shed light on the gastrodiplomacy activities Indonesia employed towards Australia under President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (2004-2014) focusing on Indonesian food festivals, restaurants, and food product promotions. However, there is a dearth of research from foreign scholars' perspectives on Indonesia's soft power diplomacy in Australia. Previous research on foreign restaurants in Australia has mainly focused on Chinese, Korean, Thai, Japanese, Portuguese, and Greek cuisines (Collins et al., 1995; Hamada, 2011; Kye-Hong, 2016; Kye-Hong & Seunghoon, 2017; Ma & Hsiao, 2020). This oversight overlooks the potential of Indonesian restaurants and catering in Australia, one of its closest neighbours. Thus, it is essential to conduct research to formulate the optimal plan for Indonesian gastrodiplomacy more comprehensively, helping stakeholders to identify and navigate the challenges associated with while implementing the ISUTW program.

### **Seeking Potential in a Rising Africa: Opportunities and Challenges**

Despite the geographical distance, Africa presents a growing market opportunity for Indonesia, bolstered by historical ties from South-South cooperation efforts like the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the 1955 Asian-African Conference, notably the Bandung Conference (Amal & Galuh, 2022). NAM and the Bandung Conference in 1955 have created a collaboration platform that guarantees egalitarian values as a result of their previous overwhelmingly colonial experiences (Mathews, 1987). With some African countries, for instance Namibia, Indonesia has established a profound relationship due to a similar struggle for independence and liberation from European colonialism (Hakam, 2022). The rise of Africa, which is predominantly supported by Western countries and China's development initiatives and humanitarian aid, is now irrefutable. Indonesia, throughout its soft power initiative on gastrodiplomacy, should also take the potential of this growing continent into account.

#### *Opportunities*

There are opportunities to promote Indonesian food and its food culture in Africa, and the ISUTW program can play a crucial role in achieving the goal. The potential for the Indonesian culinary industry in Africa is attributed, among other factors, to Indonesia's extensive and favourable reputation in Africa, particularly when linked to the Bandung Conference (Phillips, 2016). The Bandung Conference marked a significant milestone as the first world event that was independently held and led by the leaders of these two continents.

President Sukarno's administration in Indonesia organized the conference, which represented the apex of the Afro-Asian solidarity movement that emerged from various freedom movements gaining momentum since the colonial era. The Bandung Conference was a pivotal moment for the rise of the Asian-African movement, which played a crucial role in shaping world history during the Cold War. The enduring legacy of the Bandung Conference has cemented Indonesia's name in African collective memory, fostering ongoing South-South collaboration and may reinforce the relevance of Indonesia's Spice Up the World (ISUTW) program in Africa.

Indonesia has been actively trading spices like nutmeg and cinnamon with Egypt, Morocco, and Algeria, while importing cloves from Madagascar, Tanzania, and the Comoros, tapping into Africa's growing demand for packaged and instant spices. This demand contributed to a 13.56% annual increase in Indonesia's spice exports from 2015 to 2019, suggesting significant potential for expanding spice trade relationships across the continent (Saptandari & Yuniarti, 2022). Indonesian culinary exports, notably Indomie instant noodles, coconut milk, and Kapal Api's (Kopiko) coffee products, have found a receptive market in Africa, particularly in Namibia (Olomuyiwa, 2021). Soy sauce, *tempeh* and instant seasonings for *Nasi Goreng* and Satay are also available in some supermarkets in South Africa, although the production process is in other countries outside Indonesia (Indonesia's Coordinating Ministry of Maritime and Investment Affairs, 2020b).

The fact is there are Indonesian food products already manufactured by reputable companies such as Indofood, Wingsfood, Bango, and Sasa Inti in Africa, although their usage is not yet widespread. Indomie is an exception, enjoying significant popularity in Namibia and beyond, illustrating the potential for promoting Indonesia's national brand via its food products, as evidenced by multiple studies (Chinweobo-Onuoha, Patience, & Onyemaechi, 2018; Ramadhani et al., 2020; Tarrósy, 2016; Uzo & Nzegwu, 2018). The Indonesian Embassy in Windhoek often collaborates with Indomie to open booths at several exhibitions (Indonesia's Coordinating Ministry for Maritime and Investments Affairs, 2020b). Since 1995, Indofood has aggressively expanded its global footprint, launching a noodle factory in Nigeria and spreading to several African nations such as Egypt, Morocco, Nigeria, Sudan, South Africa, Mozambique from 2009 to 2019, thus positioning itself as a dominant player in the instant noodle market and Indonesia's most successful brand in Africa (Ramadhani et al., 2020).

Furthermore, Namibia, which heavily relies on imports in its international trade, presents a significant strategic opportunity, particularly in the culinary aspect. This can be a great opportunity for Indonesia to encourage industry players in the food sector to export to the country. Despite their geographical distance, Indonesian and Namibian societies have similar consumption patterns. They share similarities in the use of spices, meat dishes, seafood, and grains (Amalia, 2022) In Indonesia, various traditional meat dishes can be found, such as Rendang. Located on the west side of the Western Continent and bordering the Atlantic Ocean, Namibia, is also known for its popular seafood dishes among its people. Indonesia, being a maritime archipelago, boasts a plethora of renowned seafood dishes, including the popular *empek-empek*. This delectable fish cake is made from fish meat, tapioca

powder, and various spices, and is typically served with a sweet and tangy *cuko* sauce. *Empek-empek* has gained global recognition, as it was recently voted the fourth best seafood dish in the world by Taste Atlas, an online encyclopaedia of flavours that features traditional dishes, local ingredients, and authentic restaurants from around the world (Arnani, 2023). Given the shared love for seafood, the promotion of Indonesian seafood, including *empek-empek*, is anticipated as part of the gastrodiplomacy initiative to Namibia.

The gastronomic potential of Namibia prompted the Indonesian Embassy in Windhoek to expose Indonesian cuisine to the people in Namibia. In November 2016, the Embassy organized an event called “A Taste of Indonesia,” to introduce Indonesian cuisine in Namibia. The event featured the renowned Indonesian chef, William Wongso in which he transformed unique Namibian meat dishes such as eland and springbok into Indonesian specialties like *rendang* and *satay*. The event was highly successful, exceeding expectations, and eliciting enthusiasm from the Namibians to learn and discover the unique Indonesian cuisine, especially with the combination of Namibian ingredients and Indonesian spices (Amalia, 2022).

### Challenges

Despite opportunities, running the ISUTW program in Africa is facing multiple obstacles including the uneven distribution of Indonesian culinary products, the limited number of diasporas, and the unfamiliarity of the local public with Indonesian foods. On a continent comprising 55 nations and home to 1.3 billion people, Indonesian cuisine is remarkably sparse, with only four Indonesian restaurants located in Egypt, South Africa, Rwanda, and Sudan (Indonesia’s Coordinating Ministry of Maritime and Investment Affairs, 2020b). The Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Pretoria, South Africa accredited to Botswana, Lesotho and Eswatini, for instance, stated that foreign restaurants in South Africa are dominated by Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese and Thai cuisines. Offered menus are typically similar to Indonesian foods. However, the number of Indonesian restaurants is still limited there. There is a Dutch-Indische restaurant in Johannesburg, owned by a South African of Dutch descent (*Afrikaans*), serving menus of Indonesian cuisines such as *Satay* (Indonesia’s Coordinating Ministry of Maritime and Investment Affairs, 2020b). However, the fact is that *Afrikaans* who know about Indonesian foods remain limited and in other words, have not yet been very familiar with Indonesian foods.

Furthermore, the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in the Republic of Namibia reports that the absence of Indonesian restaurants in Namibia’s capital. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, two small-scale Indonesian food stalls, run by members of the Indonesian diaspora, were a staple at a local event dubbed “Street Food,” where they served popular dishes such as fried noodle, chicken *satay*, and *nasi goreng*. The Asian restaurants in Namibia are dominated by Indian and Chinese cuisines, with four Indian restaurants, five Chinese restaurants, two Thai restaurants, and a Japanese restaurant in the area surrounding the city (Indonesia’s Coordinating Ministry of Maritime and Investment Affairs, 2020b). Namibians

are fond of sweet and salty culinary creations, in contrast to Angolans, who enjoy spicier food. This gastronomic preference aligns with the flavour of Indonesian dishes.

Another challenge is that Indonesian culinary businesses need help transporting Indonesian ingredients and spices due to the long distance and infrequent flights between Indonesia and African countries. However, with direct flights from Addis Ababa to Jakarta through Ethiopian Airlines, Ethiopia offers a potential solution to this challenge.

## Conclusion

For many centuries, Indonesian spices have been highly appealing to global traders for centuries. Indonesia, which is currently very active in building up its gastrodiplomacy strategy, views spices as a valuable national richness, whose role could be boosted up as part of export commodities and national brand of the country. However, spice trade and export are not the only concerns; attention should also be given to food outlets like restaurants and other culinary businesses that sell authentic Indonesian food, mainly using spice-based ingredients. The research serves as a basis for why looking at Australia and African regions is essential for ISUTW, especially since the programme's first cycle is about to end in 2024. Robust actions in regard to where the programme should be prioritised are necessary for a more prosperous and concrete projected second cycle of ISUTW.

The research has produced findings and evidence showcasing the importance of both. The close distance between Indonesia and Australia, the bilateral agreement and the number of Indonesian diasporas linking with the gastronomy industry in the country are the strength to advance Indonesian gastrodiplomacy in Australia. On the one hand, Indonesian national product, Indomie, has been setting foot in Africa for more than twenty years. The instant noodle brand has been introducing Indonesian tastes to African people. The brand popularity is still going strong on the continent, which is a good start to achieve a satisfying result. Indonesian and African foods, especially in Angola and Namibia, which tend to be flavourful, have a lot in common when it comes to taste. This would also facilitate entry into the African market. Still, the hurdles are present.

In addition, to effectively assess ISUTW initiative's success in promoting Indonesian gastronomy, it is crucial to consider the specific target markets and the unique characteristics of each product category. In Australia, with its substantial Indonesian diaspora and a general familiarity with Indonesian cuisine, focusing on promoting restaurants and authentic dishes could yield significant benefits. This strategy utilizes existing cultural connections and the diaspora's potential influence in gastrodiplomacy. Conversely, in Africa, where engagement with Indonesian culture is comparatively lower yet products like Indomie (instant noodles) have attracted notable consumers, enhancing the assortment of packaged food and beverage offerings could leverage these established market presences. Moreover, offering instant ingredients (*bumbu*) for traditional dishes such as *Soto* and *Rendang* could serve as an introductory asset for locals to prepare authentic Indonesian meals at home, combining convenience with cultural exploration to appeal to a broader audience.

The road ahead will not be easy to reach the goals of bringing Indonesia's spice-based food renowned internationally. However, by officially having the gastrodiplomacy initiatives, Indonesia has been on the right path. It is anticipated that additional research should be conducted on the opportunities and constraints of other possible nations for Indonesian gastrodiplomacy. The United States, for instance, is a crucial market that should be thoroughly examined.

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