

Instagram as a Gastrodiplomacy Tool: A Comparative Analysis of the Consulates General of Japan and Indonesia in Türkiye

Dindin Saepul Kholik 

Sakarya University, Faculty of
Communication, Department of
Public Relations and Advertising,
Sakarya, Türkiye 
dindinsyefullah@gmail.com



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Abstract: In the contemporary era, several countries around the world are utilising their soft power to introduce their distinctive cuisines to other countries through gastrodiplomacy, a form of public diplomacy that focuses on promoting culinary culture. In establishing diplomatic relations, governments use Instagram as a tool to convey information to audiences, as this visual-based platform allows diplomatic actors to promote their national cuisines through photos and videos. In addition, Instagram's function as a social interaction medium facilitates direct dialogue between the sending country and international audiences. This study analyses Instagram as a tool of gastrodiplomacy through a comparative analysis between the Consulates General of Japan and Indonesia in Istanbul, Turkey. Using qualitative content analysis, this study explores the culinary strategies implemented by both Consulates. The findings show that the Japanese and Indonesian Consulates General use Instagram to introduce their respective culinary cultures. This practice not only aims to highlight culinary culture but also to encourage cultural dialogue and strengthen soft power in the digital age.

Keywords: Gastrodiplomacy, Digital Diplomacy, Public Diplomacy, Social Media, Instagram

1. Introduction

As globalisation has increased, diplomatic practices have undergone a transformation in recent decades, particularly through the shift to the digital realm. Currently, the international community is showing growing interest in gastrodiplomacy, which is understood as a component of public diplomacy that highlights national culinary identity. Gastrodiplomacy can play a role in promoting a country's culinary culture and national identity, thereby strengthening its position on the world stage.

Gastrodiplomacy harnesses culinary diversity to promote a country's identity and strengthen its national brand image (Warsito & Kartikasari, 2007, p. 29). Instagram, as a social media platform that focuses on visual content and offers photos, videos, carousels, Stories and live streams, facilitates real-time two-way engagement whilst reaching a wider audience (Hu et al., 2014, p. 595). With its visual features, this platform allows countries to showcase their culinary excellence through photos and videos. In addition, this platform facilitates direct dialogue between countries that convey messages to international audiences.

Although there is a wealth of research on gastrodiplomacy in social media, comparative studies at the consular level remain limited. An analysis of the Japanese and Indonesian Consulates General in Istanbul will provide insights into the differences and approaches taken in building national culinary and cultural images. The study accordingly investigates the visual communication strategies and narrative approaches evident in gastrodiplomacy content posted to Instagram. A qualitative content analysis methodology was used to analyse the images and narratives in the posts published by the two consulates. Thus, this study not only describes the gastronomic content of both countries but also how the visuals and narratives of that content reinforce their cultural diplomacy. This study can contribute to the public diplomacy of countries worldwide, particularly in promoting their cuisine as part of soft power.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Definition and scope of the concept of gastrodiploamcy

Developments in the political world have given rise to issues in international relations, particularly with the rise of public diplomacy (Demirkiran & Demir, 2023, p. 3). Public diplomacy refers to a government's efforts to communicate with other countries around the world in order to foster an understanding of its political positions, values, norms, cultural perspectives, objectives and policies (Pujayanti, 2017, p. 332). According to Cull (2010, p.17), public diplomacy encompasses a nation's efforts to influence the international community through direct interaction with public opinion, as well as the reciprocal influence exerted by the state or private sector in shaping policies to create favourable public opinion. In this context, public diplomacy and national branding need to interact with international audiences, as both practices are involved in international communication projects (Sevin & Ingenhoff, 2018, p. 3665). Therefore, communication skills are very important, especially in managing changes in public attitudes towards foreign policy issues (Hennida, 2009).

Gastrodiploamcy, as a branch of public diplomacy, was first introduced into public discourse in 2002 through an article entitled 'Global Thai' published in *The Economist* magazine (The Economist, 2002). In the article, Thailand was presented as the first country to implement culinary diplomacy to introduce its culinary heritage while enhancing its international image (Michelle & Baskoro, 2022, p.65). Gastrodiploamcy is diplomacy that combines a country's culture and cuisine so that it is not only based on rational knowledge of the country's culture, but also experienced firsthand (Rockower, 2012, p. 236). According to Rachel Wilson, gastrodiploamcy is an attempt to use food to promote cultural diplomacy strategies to improve a country's image (Wilson, 2011, p.14). Nye (2004, p.255) positions gastrodiploamcy as part of the broader field of public diplomacy and sees it as a means of advancing national interests through interaction with other countries.

Through gastrodiploamcy, a country can introduce its unique cuisine to the international community so that they can experience its flavours and learn about other cultures through cuisine (Rockower, 2012, p. 235). One way to do this is by introducing culinary heritage (Baskoro, 2017, p. 35). Culinary heritage is part of cultural diplomacy, providing countries around the world with the opportunity to strengthen their brand identity and position internationally (Solleh, 2015, p. 166).

Gastrodiploamcy encompasses various cultural, economic, and tourism activities such as promotion, public relations, marketing, and national branding (Zhang, 2015, p. 3). This strategy raises public awareness of other countries' cultures and opens opportunities to convey a country's unique history, culture, and values by helping foreign communities learn about other countries' cultures through cuisine (Michelle & Baskoro, 2022, p. 67). The actors involved in gastrodiploamcy are not only governments, but also food companies, travel agencies, public relations officers, practitioners, and social media (Zhang, 2015, p. 2). Through gastrodiploamcy, countries can enhance their national brand, public awareness, investment, economy, and tourism (Pham, 2013, p. 1). Overall, various countries use gastrodiploamcy to strengthen cooperation, introduce culinary traditions, build international reputations, and enhance their image (Chapple-Sokol, 2013, p. 182).

2.2. Digital diplomacy

Advances in digital technology have not only introduced new challenges to diplomatic relations but have also created opportunities for two-way communication between governments and foreign publics, allowing diplomatic representatives to engage directly with broad audiences and receive feedback and criticism from people both domestically and internationally (Gilboa, 2016, p. 560). Meanwhile, in achieving national interests, governments utilise information and communication technology to adopt e-diplomacy, also known as digital diplomacy, in their relations with other countries (Dharossa & Rezasyah, 2020, p. 107). Digital diplomacy is a branch of public diplomacy that utilises the internet, information technology and social media to achieve diplomatic objectives (Rashica, 2018, p. 77). The spread of digital technology in society has had an impact on the digitisation process in public diplomacy practices, particularly in terms of technology adoption and diplomatic attitudes towards digital technology transformation (Manor, 2019, p. 32).

In its development, public diplomacy is not only conducted through cultural means but also through digital diplomacy, which has led to changes in the methods diplomats use to engage in strategic planning and information management (Bjola & Holmes, 2015, p. 5). Social media, in particular, has

emerged as a key practice in this shift, enabling governments to communicate directly with the public without the intermediary of conventional news media (Manor, 2016, pp. 13).

Digital diplomacy has gone beyond the concepts of classical diplomacy, including issues such as sovereignty, strategy and geopolitics (Göksu & Özkan, 2021, p. 50). In line with this expansion of scope, digital diplomacy plays a central role in contemporary foreign policy, including in shaping the objectives, instruments and institutional structures of diplomatic engagement via the internet and emerging technologies (Madu, 2018, p. 12). Digital diplomacy strengthens the work of countries in international relations effectively and can realise foreign policy objectives, expand international alliances, and influence people who have never visited other countries through interaction and engagement on social media in digital diplomacy (Wangke, 2021, p. 3). Consequently, the implementation of digital platforms by a country plays a strategic role in supporting the achievement of foreign policy, actively building and maintaining its international image (Manor & Segev, 2015).

Digital diplomacy has paved the way for non-governmental institutions such as non-governmental organisations, multinational corporations, and even individuals with significant influence on social media (influencers) to influence public opinion and even the policies and diplomatic relations of a country (Pugu, 2024, p. 22).

2.3. The role of social media

Technological development has profoundly reshaped daily life, above all through the emergence of new media (Efendi et al., 2017). New media encompasses platforms that provide digitisation, convergence, interactivity, and networked communication for the creation and delivery of content to recipients (Watie, 2012, p. 39).

Social media, as one dimension of new media, constitutes a set of platforms that enable people to gather in online communities through web-based applications that facilitate information sharing and the expression of opinions via text, images, video, and audio (Luttrell, 2018, p. 35). In addition, social media combines telecommunications and interaction technologies, enabling users to produce, collaborate, and share information through text, audio, static images, and video (Dabner, 2012, p. 69).

Ideally, social media is used by organisations to build relationships by creating interactions with their publics through inputs and outputs that benefit both parties, and two-way symmetrical communication is established with this new reciprocal communication model (Wangke, 2021, p. 77). According to Baki (2023, p. 228), the main concept in social media is 'sharing', and as more individuals use it, this platform has developed into a major communication channel for individuals and the public. Through the development and adoption of modern technology, social media has gained recognition not only within society but also as a significant actor in international relations (Ozdal, 2017, p. 18). Platforms such as Instagram have thus considerably expanded the reach of public diplomacy communication strategies, making it substantially easier for publics to follow foreign policy developments through online networks (Duncombe, 2019, p. 109). Social media's presence also plays a meaningful role in advancing culinary diplomacy: visual content showcasing food can arouse curiosity and motivate tourists and food enthusiasts to explore the culinary landscapes of foreign countries (Muhammad & Adilbekova, 2023, p. 434). Social media therefore functions as a powerful conduit for conveying messages to target audiences, offering a more personal, individualised, and dialogic form of communication (Puntoadi, 2011, p. 21).

The role of social media in public diplomacy has enhanced a country's ability to influence public opinion, counter disinformation and facilitate rapid crisis communication, thereby making the delivery of diplomatic messages more effective (Mekaj, 2025, p. 1008). This is particularly true for embassies and consulates general in their efforts to reach diverse audiences while building the country's image on a global scale, ranging from the general public and journalists to policymakers (Bjola & Holmes, 2015, p. 10). In the same way, this allows diplomats to easily expand their diplomatic networks and build strategic relationships (Verrekia, 2017, p. 19). Therefore, the relationship between public diplomacy is not only based on content, but also on the flow of messages (Sevin & Ingenhoff, 2018, p. 3667).

Barman (2024, p. 67) states that the government uses social media platforms through its representatives abroad to shape public opinion to carry out various diplomatic activities, convey policies, and interact with countries around the world. Strauß and colleagues identified six effective strategies for social media-based diplomacy: the use of sentiment-driven content, personalisation of communication,

interactive engagement, provision of relevant information, transparent communication, and networking (Strauß et al., 2015, p. 370-371).

Within this strategic framework, governments often use social media in their diplomatic missions to launch digital diplomacy campaigns on specific themes, events, or issues, to shape public perception, promote the country, and build relationships with many countries around the world (Hassan & Batool, 2024, p. 4). This has proven effective in gaining public support, demonstrating that public diplomacy can be useful as a means of clarifying misunderstandings between organisations and countries (Harris, 2013, p. 2).

Social media is considered an important part of public diplomacy, especially for maintaining a country's reputation (image management), as it is believed to facilitate communication between diplomats and audiences (Bjola & Holmes, 2015, p. 71). Especially with the emergence of Instagram, as the most popular visual-based online platform, launched in 2010 by Systrom and Krieger (Bruner, 2016). This platform has the potential to be used as a means of promoting and marketing an organisation's services, products or brand (Rizky & Setiawati, 2020, p. 179). By 2025, it is estimated to have 2 billion active users, with 500 million daily active users, most of whom are millennials and Generation Z, who spend an average of more than half an hour on the platform every day (Kumar, 2025). Instagram is growing rapidly, especially among governments, which are utilising digital diplomacy and culinary diplomacy to engage with global audiences and strengthen their national image (Sari, 2021, p. 38).

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Aim

This study seeks to examine the differences in gastrodiplomacy strategies employed by the Consulates General of Japan and Indonesia in Istanbul through the Instagram social media platform. It focuses on visual communication and narrative style as reflected in the gastrodiplomacy content of both consulates. In today's digital age, Instagram is no longer just a communication tool but a tool of public diplomacy in shaping a country's image. The focus of this research is to understand how the Japanese and Indonesian Consulates General in Istanbul package gastrodiplomacy in digital content and how this content can build national branding to introduce Japanese and Indonesian culture through social media.

3.2. Research question

This study was designed to examine and analyse the differences in gastrodiplomacy strategies between the Japanese and Indonesian Consulates General in Istanbul through the Instagram social media platform. The questions asked are as follows:

RQ1: To what extent do the Japanese and Indonesian Consulates General in Istanbul utilise Instagram for gastrodiplomacy activities?

RQ2: What differences are observed in the visual and narrative approaches present in the Instagram content of the Consulates General of Japan and Indonesia in Istanbul?

RQ3: What image-building strategies do the two consulates use through their gastrodiplomacy content on Instagram?

3.3. Research method

This study adopts a qualitative research design anchored in a content analysis approach, which enables comprehensive examination of data through the identification of patterns, themes, and meanings. Content analysis is understood as a research technique for drawing replicable and valid inferences from texts within their contexts of use (Krippendorff, 2018, p.24). This method allows for the examination of written material containing information about the subject to be studied (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 1999, p.187). The subject matter can be in the form of writing or visual elements. In this context, content analysis techniques can be used to analyse various forms of communication such as photos, newsletters, billboards, images, articles, and video (Ünlü & Boran, 2024, p.17). Within the scope of the present study, content analysis was employed to decode the symbolic messages embedded in each Instagram post, while also providing detailed characterisation of the visual and narrative elements present in the content of both consulates.

3.4. Sample and limitations

Data for this study were gathered from the Instagram accounts of the Consulate General of Japan in Istanbul (@japonyaistanbulbaskonsoloslugu) and the Consulate General of Indonesia in Istanbul (@indonesiainistanbul), covering the period from January 2023 to December 2024.

The inclusion criteria for gastrodiploacy posts consist of: food and beverage content, restaurant promotion content, cooking demonstration content, and Cultural festival content featuring local specialities. The exclusion criteria consist of: Administrative posts such as public holidays, congratulations from the government, and content that does not feature local specialities at all. In total, 28 posts from the Japanese Consulate's Instagram account and 28 posts from the Indonesian Consulate General's account meeting the inclusion criteria were selected for analysis.

The data were collected on 17 September 2025, and the number of followers of each account was recorded on the same date as contextual background information. However, this study also has several limitations. First, it only focuses on two case studies, namely the Japanese and Indonesian Consulates General, in the same geographical area in Istanbul. Second, this study only focuses on content analysis without assessing the direct perceptions and understanding of the audience. Third, the analysis is limited to Instagram and does not extend to other platforms. Notwithstanding these limitations, the findings are expected to yield meaningful insights into how social media is deployed in the practice of gastrodiploacy.

3.5. Coding procedure framework

This study combines deductive and inductive approaches to develop a coding scheme. The deductive method is a framework that has been successfully used by previous researchers and can be applied to this study (Ardèvol-Abreu, 2015, p.433). This approach also refers to categories derived from literature on gastrodiploacy, public diplomacy, and social media (Cull, 2010; Rockower, 2012). Meanwhile, the inductive approach is a framework that develops from patterns, themes, and frameworks that emerge during the data analysis process (De Vreese, 2005, p. 53).

Each post was thoroughly examined based on its caption, visual content and contextual information. This analysis focused on identifying patterns, themes and meanings relating to gastrodiploacy practices in the Instagram posts of both consulates. The coding process was guided by the core concepts established in the literature review, particularly the objectives of gastrodiploacy outlined by Rockower (2012) and the public diplomacy framework proposed by Cull (2010), without imposing pre-defined quantitative categories.

The coding process was conducted independently by the researcher. To maintain internal consistency, all 56 posts were coded on two separate occasions, two weeks apart. Any discrepancies were resolved through a review of the analytical framework. This procedure serves as a measure of internal validity in single-researcher qualitative content analysis (Krippendorff, 2018).

4. Research Result

4.1. Analysis of the gastrodiploacy of the consulate general of Japan

This study examines Instagram content from the @Japonyaistanbulbaskonsoloslugu account over the period from January 2023 to December 2024. This verified analysis encompasses the framework of gastrodiploacy proposed by Rockower (2012), promotion, public relations, marketing, and national branding (Zhang, 2015), as well as public diplomacy as described by Cull (2010). Three themes of gastrodiploacy were identified from this analysis: Introduction to Culinary Heritage, referring to posts introducing traditional dishes (Rockower, 2012, p. 235), Restaurant Promotion (Zhang, 2015, p. 3), and Cooking Demonstrations as a means of facilitating direct cultural experiences (Rockower, 2012, p. 236). This data is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1*Culinary Japanese Cuisine*

Upload date	Type of food	Content Type	Gastrodiplomacy Theme
14.01.2023	Oden	Photo	Culinary Heritage
03.02.2023	Setsubun	Video	Culinary Heritage
07.06.2023	Matcha	Photo	Culinary Heritage
14.06.2023	Dorayaki Recipe	Photo	Cooking Demonstration
17.06.2023	Types of Japanese Tea	Photo	Cooking Demonstration
30.06.2023	Japanese Restaurants in Istanbul	Video	Restaurant Promotion
11.07.2023	Wagyu	Photo & Video	Culinary Heritage
22.07.2023	Japanese Restaurants in Istanbul	Photo & Video	Restaurant Promotion
26.07.2023	Okonomiyaki	Video	Culinary Heritage
13.08.2023	Japanese Restaurants in Istanbul	Video	Restaurant Promotion
20.08.2023	Karaage Recipe	Video	Cooking Demonstration
06.09.2023	Japanese Restaurants in Istanbul	Video	Restaurant Promotion
09.09.2023	Ekiben	Photo	Culinary Heritage
14.10.2023	Japanese Restaurants in Istanbul	Video	Restaurant Promotion
09.11.2023	Itsumi Japanese Cuisine	Photo	Restaurant Promotion
11.11.2023	Japanese Restaurants in Istanbul	Video	Restaurant Promotion
30.11.2023	Japanese Cuisine	Photo	Cooking Demonstration
10.12.2023	Miso Soup Recipe	Video	Cooking Demonstration
24.12.2023	Japanese Pilav Recipe	Photo	Cooking Demonstration
15.02.2024	Onigiri/Omusubi	Photo	Culinary Heritage
29.02.2024	Wagashi	Photo	Culinary Heritage
09.03.2024	Japanese Restaurants in Istanbul	Video	Restaurant Promotion
14.04.2024	Japanese Restaurants in Istanbul	Video	Restaurant Promotion
19.06.2024	Soya Beans	Photo	Culinary Heritage
06.07.2024	Japanese Restaurants in Istanbul	Video	Restaurant Promotion
10.07.2024	Natto	Video	Culinary Heritage
17.08.2024	Nigiri Sushi	Video	Cooking Demonstration
21.12.2024	Takoyaki	Video	Culinary Heritage

4.1.1. Culinary heritage

The most frequently appearing theme in the Japanese Consulate General's Instagram content is culinary heritage, accounting for 11 of the 28 posts analysed. The analysis shows that posts in this category feature a variety of traditional Japanese dishes accompanied by explanations of their history, symbolism and significance. Posts featuring Oden (14 January 2023), Setsubun (3 February 2023), and Wagashi (29 February 2024) were accompanied by captions explaining the traditions and significance of each dish. Posts on Soya Beans (19 June 2024) and Natto (10 July 2024) provided information on the food ingredients that form the identity of traditional Japanese cuisine. This approach aligns with the concept of culinary diplomacy (gastrodiplomacy) proposed by Rockower (2012, p. 235), which positions distinctive cuisine as a means of introducing culture to the international community. Furthermore, this also supports Solleh's (2015, p. 166) assertion, which emphasises culinary heritage as part of cultural diplomacy that represents a country on the international stage.

4.1.2. Restaurant promotion

The second theme that emerged was restaurant promotion, which appeared in 10 of the 28 posts uploaded by the Japanese Consulate. Analysis shows that posts in this category featured Japanese restaurants operating in Istanbul, such as Itsumi, Udonya, Maromi, Sushi Manga, and several others. Furthermore, the presence of Japanese chefs was a recurring element in both the documentation of events and the presentation of cuisine. This pattern aligns with Zhang's (2015, p. 3) observation that gastrodiplomacy positions cuisine as a promotional medium to strengthen a country's international image.

4.1.3. Cooking demonstration

The third theme is Cooking Demonstrations, comprising 7 of the 28 posts. This theme features Chef Tokita as the main figure appearing in various posts, such as the Dorayaki Recipe (14 June 2023), Karaage (20 August 2023), the Miso Soup Recipe (10 December 2023), and the Japanese Pilav Recipe (24 December 2023). These posts encourage the audience to engage directly with Japanese culinary practices. This aligns with Rockower's (2012, p. 236) assertion that gastrodiploacy functions not only through rational knowledge of a country's culture but through direct experiential engagement with its cuisine.

4.2. Analysis of the gastrodiploacy of the consulate general of Indonesia

Applying the same analytical framework, this section examines the Instagram content from the @indonesiainistanbul account over the same period, namely January 2023–December 2024. As with the Japanese Consulate's account, the posts were coded based on Rockower's (2012) framework of gastrodiploacy, the categories of promotion, public relations, marketing and national branding from Zhang (2015), and Cull's (2010) concept of public diplomacy. This analysis also yielded three themes: Culinary Heritage, referring to posts introducing traditional dishes (Rockower, 2012, p. 235); Restaurant Promotion (Zhang, 2015, p. 3); and Cultural Festivals, reflecting the integration of gastrodiploacy content into broader cultural celebrations (Chapple-Sokol, 2013, p. 182). This data is summarised in Table 2.

Table 2

Culinary Indonesian Cuisine

Upload Date	Type of Food	Content Type	Gastrodiploacy Theme
26.02.2023	Pembukaan Warteg Nuriye	Photo & Video	Restaurant Promotion
07.03.2023	Pembukaan Urip Indonesian Food	Photo & Video	Restaurant Promotion
10.05.2023	Coffex Istanbul	Video	Festival
23.05.2023	Pembukaan Restoran Indonesia Dapoer Istanbul	Photo & Video	Restaurant Promotion
28.07.2023	Bazaar Kemerdekaan	Photo	Festival
04.08.2023	Rawon Soup	Photo	Culinary Heritage
05.08.2023	Discover the Flavors of Indonesia Street Food	Photo	Culinary Heritage
14.09.2023	Festival Pasar Senggol	Video	Festival
14.09.2023	Şimdi Endonezya'nın Kahve Zamanı	Photo	Festival
18.09.2023	Uncover the Sweet Secrets of Indonesia (Part 1)	Photo	Culinary Heritage
30.09.2023	Uncover the Sweet Secrets of Indonesia (Part 2)	Photo	Culinary Heritage
25.11.2023	Halal Expo di Istanbul	Video	Festival
27.11.2023	Asian Corner Restaurant Açılışı	Video	Restaurant Promotion
04.12.2023	Ngulik Bahan Lokal (Dünya Mutfağı)	Video	Culinary Heritage
08.12.2023	Imkonezya Restaurant	Video	Restaurant Promotion
28.12.2023	Endonezya Kültür Buluşmaları	Video	Festival
25.01.2024	Opening Taretan Resto	Video	Restaurant Promotion
09.03.2024	Vegetable Carving	Video	Festival
10.03.2024	Endonezya Mutfak Kültürü	Video	Culinary Heritage
18.03.2024	Budaya Sehat Jamu: Jamu	Photo	Culinary Heritage
01.07.2024	Coffex Istanbul	Video	Festival
09.07.2024	Indonesian Coffee Cupping	Video	Festival
20.07.2024	F Istanbul Expo	Video	Festival
26.09.2024	Endonezya Festivali	Video	Festival
26.09.2024	Coffee Summit	Video	Festival
30.09.2024	Pasar Senggol	Video	Festival
08.10.2024	Papeda	Video	Culinary Heritage
06.12.2024	Cilacap'ın Unagisi	Photo	Culinary Heritage

4.2.1. Culinary Heritage

The first theme in the Indonesian Consulate General's content is culinary heritage, which featured in 9 of the 28 posts analysed. The analysis shows that the Indonesian Consulate's posts showcase a wide variety of Indonesian cuisine, highlighting the diversity of traditional dishes and street food. Posts such as Sup Rawon (4 August 2023), Discover the Flavours of Indonesia Street Food (5 August 2023), and Uncover the Sweet Secrets of Indonesia, Parts 1 and 2 (September 2023). This is in line with Rockower's (2012, p. 235) assertion that gastrodiploamacy enables the international community to experience a country's culture through its cuisine.

4.2.2. Restaurant promotion

The second theme in the Indonesian Consulate General's content is the promotion of restaurants, which features in 6 of the 28 posts. Analysis shows that posts in this category highlight the opening of Indonesian restaurants in Istanbul as a sign of Indonesia's cultural presence. Posts documenting the openings of Warteg Nuriye (26 February 2023), Urip Indonesian Food (7 March 2023), Dapoer Istanbul (23 May 2023), and Taretan Resto (25 January 2024). These posts contain visual documentation of the presence of Indonesian cuisine abroad. This is in line with Zhang's (2015, p. 3) statement that culinary diplomacy encompasses public relations activities and nation-branding through food.

4.2.3. Cultural festival

Cultural festivals were a recurring theme in 13 of the 28 posts in the Indonesian Consulate's content. Analysis shows that food forms part of cultural activities and festivals. Posts in this category include the Independence Day Bazaar (28 July 2023), the Pasar Senggol Festival (14 September 2023), and the Endonezya Festival (26 September 2024). The content presented consists of documentation of cultural celebrations and festivals involving the serving of traditional Indonesian food. This is in line with Chapple-Sokol's (2013, p. 182) assertion that gastrodiploamacy strengthens international image through the promotion of cuisine within the framework of cultural exchange.

5. Comparative Analysis

An analysis of Instagram content relating to gastrodiploamacy published by the Japanese and Indonesian Consulates-General in Istanbul between 2023 and 2024 reveals significant differences in approach, emphasis and narrative style in the way each consulate communicates its gastrodiploamacy activities on the platform.

Both consulates use Instagram as a platform to showcase gastrodiploamacy activities and share two common thematic categories: Culinary Heritage and Restaurant Promotion, indicating that the promotion of distinctive cuisine and the presence of restaurants in Istanbul are priorities for both nations within their diplomatic missions. This demonstrates that the approach to gastrodiploamacy described by Rockower (2012) and Zhang (2015), in which distinctive cuisine serves as a means of enhancing a country's image and promoting cultural engagement in an international context, is reflected in the practice of both consulates.

However, the two consulates have different strategic focuses. The Japanese Consulate's content is dominated by Culinary Heritage, which features in 11 of the 28 posts, with a focus on Japanese culinary culture. Cooking demonstrations form part of the Japanese Consulate's gastrodiploamacy strategy, with Chef Tokita appearing repeatedly in this content. Meanwhile, the Indonesian Consulate places greater emphasis on Cultural Festival content, which features in 13 of the 28 posts. This theme centres on a strategy to embed gastrodiploamacy within the broader context of cultural festivals and to promote Indonesia's cultural diversity. Meanwhile, the Indonesian Consulate's restaurant promotion content focuses on the opening of restaurants as a means of introducing Indonesian cuisine in Istanbul, such as Warteg Nuriye, Taretan Resto and Urip Indonesian Food.

Overall, the differences between the two consulates in their thematic emphasis and content presentation can be understood within the framework of public diplomacy, which emphasises image-building through soft power. These differences highlight the cultural values that each country presents to the international community through digital diplomacy (Cull, 2010; Zhang, 2015).

6. Discussion

This study examines the gastrodiploamacy strategies implemented by the Japanese Consulate-General and the Indonesian Consulate-General in Istanbul via their Instagram accounts between January 2023 and December 2024. The findings are discussed below by addressing the three research questions that form the basis of this study.

1. The benefits of Instagram for gastrodiploamacy

Based on the findings of an analysis of Instagram content from the Japanese and Indonesian Consulates General in Istanbul, both consulates utilise Instagram as a tool for culinary diplomacy. The Japanese Consulate General posted 28 pieces of content covering three themes: culinary heritage, restaurant promotion and cooking demonstrations.

This reflects a structured gastrodiploamacy strategy. The Indonesian Consulate General also published 28 posts across the themes of culinary heritage, restaurant promotion, and cultural festivals, demonstrating a broader approach that integrates cuisine with Indonesia's cultural diversity. These findings confirm that Instagram functions as a tool for public diplomacy. Consistent with Manor's (2016, p. 13) observations, social media enables governments to communicate directly with the public without having to rely on conventional media. Both approaches demonstrate that Instagram is not merely a tool for media publication but also a diplomatic instrument for strengthening a country's image. This assertion aligns with Manor (2019, p. 32), who notes that the proliferation of digital technology has influenced the process of digitalisation within public diplomacy practices.

2. Differences in Visuals and Narratives

The two consulates exhibit quite striking differences in their visual and narrative approaches to gastrodiploamacy content. The Japanese Consulate-General emphasises structured and educational content, such as the theme of Chef Tokita's cooking demonstrations, with him serving as a consistent and easily recognisable figure in every post. This recurring figure reinforces the Japanese Consulate General's identity as a cultural communicator and reflects what Cull (2010, p.17) describes as sustained engagement with foreign audiences as a function of public diplomacy.

Meanwhile, the Indonesian Consulate-General adopts a more celebratory and promotional narrative style, with much of its content centred on cultural festivals and restaurant promotions. This approach fosters an image of cultural diversity. Indonesian content tends to use dynamic, event-based imagery, whilst Japanese content focuses on more carefully composed visuals that highlight individual dishes and cooking techniques.

This difference indicates that the two consulates have different priorities. The Japanese consulate's strategy emphasises cultural depth and culinary authenticity, whilst the Indonesian consulate's strategy emphasises cultural diversity. Thus, in both visual and narrative elements, each consulate reflects its national identity through the practice of digital diplomacy.

3. Instagram strategies in shaping the image of Japan and Indonesia

The image-building strategies employed by both consulates reflect their broader soft power objectives. The Japanese Consulate General emphasises education, culinary quality and a disciplined culinary tradition. The consistent focus on Japanese chefs, culinary practices and restaurant promotional content, combined with the educational focus of cooking demonstration posts, positions Japanese cuisine as a culinary tradition with distinct cultural characteristics. This is in line with Rockower's (2012, p. 236) argument that gastrodiploamacy enables a country to introduce its culture directly through cuisine, thereby deepening cultural understanding and strengthening the national image.

Meanwhile, the Indonesian Consulate General places greater emphasis on Indonesia's culinary and cultural diversity. This approach is similar to that described by Chapple-Sokol (2013, p. 182), who argues that gastrodiploamacy strengthens cooperation, introduces culinary traditions, builds an international reputation, and enhances a nation's image through the active promotion of culinary traditions within a framework of cultural exchange.

Overall, the findings indicate that both consulates utilise Instagram as a strategic soft power instrument, through which national identity and cultural values are constructed and promoted to an international audience. This aligns with Zhang's (2015, p. 3) assertion that gastrodiploamacy constitutes an interrelated diplomatic tool, encompassing promotion, public relations, marketing, and national branding.

7. Conclusion

This study analyses the gastrodiploamcy strategies of the Japanese Consulate General and the Indonesian Consulate General in Istanbul via Instagram during the period from January 2023 to December 2024. A total of 56 posts were examined, with three gastrodiploamcy themes for the Japanese Consulate: Culinary Heritage, Restaurant Promotion, and Cooking Demonstrations; and Introduction to Culinary Heritage, Restaurant Promotion, and Cultural Festivals for the Indonesian Consulate.

The findings indicate that both consulates actively utilise Instagram as a tool for public diplomacy, leveraging the platform's visual strengths to promote distinctive cuisine and build national image. However, the two consulates differ in their respective approaches. The Japanese Consulate employs a structured, education-oriented strategy, emphasising culinary authenticity and cultural depth through consistent figures such as Chef Tokita. The Indonesian Consulate adopts a broader, event-driven approach, embedding gastrodiploamcy within cultural festivals and restaurant openings to build Indonesia's image as a diverse, community-oriented culture.

These differences reflect varying priorities in terms of soft power. The Japanese Consulate-General positions cuisine as a globally recognised cultural tradition, whilst Indonesia emphasises the cultural diversity of its culinary heritage. Both strategies align with the functions of gastrodiploamcy, as outlined by Rockower (2012), Zhang (2015), and Cull (2010), which demonstrate that diplomatic missions at the consular level effectively utilise social media to strengthen a country's national branding.

This study contributes to the literature on digital diplomacy and gastrodiploamcy by presenting a comparative analysis at the consular level. These findings offer practical insights for diplomatic missions seeking to develop more effective and culturally grounded social media strategies. Future research could broaden the analytical scope by incorporating other social media platforms such as Twitter or YouTube, as well as extending the observation period to include more up-to-date data. Furthermore, subsequent research could expand the scope of the study by comparing gastrodiploamcy practices carried out by a wider range of diplomatic representatives from various countries, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of digital gastrodiploamcy strategies on social media.

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