

**ORIGINAL ARTICLE**

# The Impact of South Korean Gastrodiplomacy in Indonesia on the Development of Korean Food Business Opportunities in Indonesia

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**Abstract**

This article explores how South Korean gastrodiplomacy fosters Korean food business opportunities in Indonesia. Gastrodiplomacy, a soft diplomacy approach, uses cultural elements like cuisine to enhance bilateral relations and national image. South Korea has effectively leveraged the Korean Wave—a global phenomenon including music, drama, food, and lifestyle—to introduce its cuisine to international audiences, including Indonesia. The study outlines the historical and technological developments that spread Korean culture in Indonesia, leading to increased interest in Korean language, entertainment, and culinary experiences. Using qualitative methods like literature reviews and document analysis, it examines the impact of Korean culture on Indonesian society and the resulting business opportunities for Korean food. The article underscores the role of soft power in promoting cultural exchange and attracting Indonesian consumers to Korean cuisine. South Korean gastro diplomacy's success is evident in the rise of Korean restaurants and food stalls in Indonesia, catering to both Korean culture fans and the general public. However, challenges such as differing culinary preferences, limited access to authentic ingredients, cultural eating habits, pricing issues, and promotional strategies are identified as potential obstacles to expanding Korean food businesses in Indonesia. The study provides insights into how cultural diplomacy can create economic opportunities and enhance international cooperation by analyzing gastro diplomacy and its implementation through the Korean Wave. The findings suggest that strategic collaboration between the South Korean government and local stakeholders is essential to overcoming barriers and maximizing gastro diplomacy's benefits for both nations.

**Keywords**

Gastro Diplomacy, Korean Wave, Cultural Exchange, Business Opportunities, Indonesian Consumers

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## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Diplomatic activities are something that often occurs in international relations. Diplomacy, a form of negotiation process, is closely related to implementing foreign policy. Many types of diplomacy are often carried out in political activities between negotiating actors. The aim of this diplomacy is to achieve negotiations that do not involve acts of violence or propaganda. Soft diplomacy is currently widely used by countries around the world. Soft diplomacy is often referred to as public diplomacy. One example of soft diplomacy is cultural diplomacy. Cultural diplomacy is a form of spreading culture through a country's diplomacy by introducing culture to the international sphere. This aims to strengthen bilateral relations and increase the country's positive image internationally. The actual proof of what is happening is cultural diplomacy through the Korean Wave, which spreads South Korean culture worldwide in music, drama, food, lifestyle, and other cultural fields. This is an effort made by the South Korean government to increase foreign tourist visits and create an image of South Korea as a country with an exciting culture worth visiting.

The bilateral cooperative relationship between South Korea and Indonesia started in 1973, but the influence of culture still needs to be well recognized. The development of Korean popular culture began in Indonesia in the late 1900s. However, development has not been very rapid because technology is less sophisticated than it is now. Initially, Korean culture was introduced to Indonesia first through visual media. Then, as the flow of technological developments progressed, the popularity of Korean culture began to be recognized through its dramas or the Korean Wave, which consists of music, drama, films, culture and food. Along with the development of Korean culture in Indonesia, it has begun to attract many fans. Through drama and music presented in Korean, people's interest in studying Korean language and culture increases in depth. There are many Korean language learning programs offered in Indonesia. It does not just stop there; the entertainment and fashion industry has become a trend in Indonesia, making many Korean products enter Indonesia. Please note that Korean culture enthusiasts are divided into several areas, but this research will cover all Korean culture enthusiasts.

The activities from the historical overview and development process described in Indonesia are a form of South Korean soft diplomacy. Soft diplomacy is one of the strategies used by South Korea to realize its national interests. Cultural diplomacy will help build a foundation of trust. It is from this mutual trust that countries benefit in the long term. Governments can use the personal intimacy created to garner favourable public opinion abroad about deals with a particular country. To achieve these goals effectively, cultural diplomacy and appropriate strategies must be implemented (David, 2011). Previously, this diplomatic practice was considered less effective and would soon lose its fans. However, over the past two decades, Korean popular culture has been proven to be increasingly global. Many existing activities, such as concerts, fashion shows, and other fields, prove this. Then, this became an opportunity for South Korea to be more active and aggressive in this diplomatic practice. There is a lot of soft diplomacy carried out by South Korea, such as holding exhibitions and cultural festivals featuring art and performances, then carrying out sports diplomacy by participating in many international sports tournaments and hosting the Olympics, such as the 2018 Winter Olympics in PyeongChang, South Korea. South Korea did this to establish its presence in the international world. Meanwhile, a form of diplomacy that we can often encounter and experience, both among fans of Korean culture and ordinary people, is diplomacy through food, called gastro diplomacy. Interest in South Korean culture is increasing from year to year. According to 2020 data from the Korean Culture and Information Service, there are more than 100 million K-pop fans worldwide. Also, in 2021, around 74% of foreign tourists will visit South Korea to experience Hallyu culture. Hallyu culture has also recently become a hot topic in Indonesia. This influence can be seen both in terms of music and cuisine. From the data obtained, the South Korean government's soft diplomacy through culture was thriving. Therefore, this research takes the topic of "Analysis of Korean Popular Culture as a Business Opportunity in Indonesia with a Case Study of K-Food in Indonesia".

Referring to quotes in journals that have been previously researched, food in diplomacy can be used to improve a country's image. In other words, diplomacy and culinary arts can be tools to build and improve the world image of a country. This form of culinary diplomacy is called gastro diplomacy. This article is based on the increasing number of Korean restaurants in Indonesia. The similarity of flavours and flavours that suit the Indonesian palate also supports the spread of Korean restaurants in Indonesia. This research will involve two international actors, South Korea and Indonesia, who have been collaborating for a long time. Previously, research literature regarding K-Food in Indonesia has been widely studied and is available in sources that can be found on the internet. However, in this article, we will combine diplomacy through South Korean culture with culinary media and collaborate with the concept of soft power to have a positive impact. This can be used as a business opportunity in Indonesia. Thus, even though the activities carried out are a form of diplomacy carried out by South Korea, this can be used as a beneficial impact in terms of economics, not just cooperation and relations between the two countries.

In this article, we will explain the concept of gastro diplomacy through food. We will touch on soft diplomacy in general. We will only go into more detail by taking a case study of K-food or Korean restaurants widely spread in Indonesia. The business opportunity will take the concept of soft power with the ability to influence society and brand K-Food in the services offered to the Indonesian people. In this research, the author will limit the case study by focusing on Indonesia's Korean culture enthusiasts and business opportunities. The research focus is limited to understanding phenomena related to the popularity and impact of Korean culture for those interested in it. The focus on Korean culture enthusiasts is carried out to see the factors that give rise to their interest in Korean culture and the level of consumption of Korean products. The limitations of the case studies and concepts chosen are carried out to avoid errors in interpretation. However, it should be noted that the case study that the author chose has no limitations in generalizing the research results. Therefore, the author strongly recommends further research involving more variables in the Korean cultural context. Finally, the author hopes this article will contribute to understanding this phenomenon. Based on this background, the author formulates several research questions that form the problem formulation in this research, including 1) What form of soft diplomacy efforts through culinary media (gastro diplomacy) is carried out by the South Korean government in Indonesia? 2) what is the impact of gastro diplomacy on the development of business opportunities in Indonesia? 3) What are the obstacles and problems with K-food in Indonesia in developing business opportunities? The questions above will be used to examine the focus of this research. Then, these questions will support understanding of the concepts used in writing this research.

## 2 | RESEARCH METHOD

In analyzing and explaining this research, the author will use qualitative research methods to understand the phenomenon of Korean popular culture more deeply. Qualitative research methods will generally explore complex aspects of an individual's experience in a social context. Data will be collected through observation and document analysis through qualitative research methods. This research will explain South Korean popular culture, which later entered Indonesia and influenced Korean cultural enthusiasts, giving rise to the opportunity for culinary delights from South Korea to enter Indonesia.

The data collection technique is obtained from data in the form of written language obtained through literature reviews, namely credible sources such as journals, articles, and books that have previously existed and have research topics relevant to what is being researched and then developed and given limitations. The data obtained will then be processed, and the research results will be presented. However, this research could be more detailed in conveying specific numerical data. In this research, the author will collect information that is relevant and related to this research topic regarding the influence of Korean popular culture through food, the influence of those interested in Korean culture as a Korean food business opportunity, as well as the implementation of the concepts of gastro diplomacy and soft power. The literature used comes from scientific journals, scientific works, and scientific articles, which will be used to support and strengthen arguments and research findings and answer

questions used as problem formulations in this research. This writing will use a deductive method. The presentation of each analysis will be explained, starting from a general overview to focusing on a specific study based on the boundaries of the case study.

### 3 | LITERATURE REVIEW

In this segment, we will compare previous research, which is relevant reference material for this topic and is used to analyze and develop new variables from previously researched research. While writing this, the author analyzed several reference materials that could contribute to and complement this research. Using literature can develop understanding and comparisons regarding context and theories that align with this research.

#### 3.1 | Food as Medium State Diplomacy

The article used as a comparison with this research comes from the Indonesian Journal of Global Discourse, Mataram University by Suhaida Juniarti, Alfian Hidayat, and Purnami Safitri, with the title Analysis of South Korea's Gastrodiplomacy Strategy in terms of Increasing Foreign Tourist Visits in South Korea (2014-2019). In his writing, the author describes gastro diplomacy as an effort to support the national interests of world countries. The general picture is explained by describing universal diplomacy, which is then linked to culinary diplomacy, which is known as gastro diplomacy. Countries that have succeeded in carrying out gastro diplomacy, such as Thailand, Taiwan, Australia, the United States, and Peru, have become references for the success of this diplomacy. Then, the author takes South Korea as a country currently carrying out its gastrodiplomacy by running programs such as Korean Cuisine to The World. This research focuses on South Korea, which is aggressive with its diplomatic strategy.

#### 3.2 | Gastrodiplomacy

In the study of International Relations, gastro diplomacy is a form of diplomacy that uses a country's national food to promote special foods to other countries. Gastrodiplomacy is a new terminology that exists in the 21st century. The concept of gastrodiplomacy was first introduced by Paul S. Rockower in the early 2000s. Gastrodiplomacy, in simple terms, can be interpreted as the best way to win hearts and minds through the stomach (Rockower, 2011, p. 107). In gastro diplomacy, food will play a role as the main actor in realizing the country's interests and improving the nation's values and image. Through a communication approach, countries can offer the charm of their food to the general public to get used to the taste of a country. According to Pham (2013), gastro diplomacy is a form of government action in exporting culinary heritage and increasing national brand awareness as part of public diplomacy. Food is used as a transcendent object in gastro-diplomacy activities. The potential gain from this gastro-diplomacy concept is that it opens up access to economic and political cooperation.

#### 3.3 | Soft Power

As defined by (Nye, 2008), soft power is an inspirational approach using the ability to influence other parties, such as building relationships or using attraction without coercion. In simple terms, the concept of soft power is the ability to attract, not force, by overriding military power. Soft power's main focus is attracting global interest in cultures and countries that use soft power as a diplomatic tool. The advantage of soft power is that it does not require many costs because it does not use military elements and can still achieve national interests. In this literature, the concept of existing soft power will be explained to enable large opportunities for the Korean food business in Indonesia. The concept in this article will refer to the influence of Korean popular culture on Indonesian society.

### 4 | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the results of analyzing the journals that are used as a comparison to this research, a discussion can be found, accompanied by answers to the questions that have been asked. The results of this research are then divided into three sub-topics, which have also been supported by finding answers to research questions. These results and discussion will focus on research questions that are shown to support the results of the research that has been conducted. This section will also elaborate on the research's concepts and objects.

#### 4.1 | Forms of South Korean Gastrodiplomacy in Indonesia

Gastrodiplomacy is a type of diplomacy from soft diplomacy with a focus on culinary. This type of diplomacy involves using national cuisine to create South Korea's image internationally. This diplomatic strategy is the South Korean government's strategy in introducing its national cuisine. This culinary diplomacy quickly entered Indonesia through South Korea's popular soft diplomacy, the Korean Wave. The introduction of national food is shown through popular dramas and films, so this indirectly promotes culinary delights and makes it an attraction for fans of Korean culture. Programs such as Korean Cuisine to the World also aim to increase public understanding and interest in Korean food. The South Korean government then held several activities in the Korean cuisine to the World program, such as culinary promotions involving platforms, both social media and websites. In this culinary promotion, the government held Korean food festivals in various countries where visitors could enjoy or taste Korean food and participate in cooking practices. The South Korean government took the opportunity to create cooking courses for people in various countries to receive special training, learn Korean cooking techniques, and expand their knowledge of Korean food.

If we return to the concept of gastro diplomacy, this diplomacy is not solely carried out to introduce food. However, this diplomatic process aims to promote national interests and build good cooperative relations. One of the quotes that the author once read was that diplomatic activities or cooperation always require food, which can be used as a good start in future relationships. This diplomatic activity is based on the view that the easiest way to win hearts and minds is through the stomach. Proof of the success of this gastro-diplomacy concept is the increasing number of foreign tourists visiting South Korea. This diplomacy is considered easy and straightforward to enter other countries, especially Indonesia because the tools used are not harmful but profitable and can inspire the country to look at the strategies used by the South Korean government. Realizing the national interests the South Korean government wants to achieve has been successful. National interests, such as introducing South Korean national food, are used as a medium to achieve other national interests. What is meant by other national interests: (1) Increasing a positive image, gastro diplomacy indirectly shapes the international community's perception of a positive image of South Korea, (2) Improving Bilateral Relations, creating a positive image for the country becomes a supporting factor in improving bilateral relations with other countries, (3) Improving the Economy, South Korea's culinary diplomacy by introducing food has increased the demand for raw materials and food products from South Korea. Increasing demand for products will improve the South Korean economy, and (4) Increasing Tourism: Through gastro-diplomacy, foreign tourist visits are increasing. This is influenced by foreign tourists who want to try to experience the sensation of Korean culture directly.

In Indonesia itself, the impact of the spread of Korean culture can be seen in the increasing number of Korean fans and the rise of restaurants originating from South Korea in Indonesia. Korean food has entered the scene, along with the development of Korean music and dramas. Most restaurants and stalls that serve Korean food initially needed help adapting to Indonesian tastes. However, as they developed, they began to adapt to Indonesian tastes but retained the authenticity of Korean food. This was done so that gastro diplomacy could enter Indonesia. Now Korean restaurants now have many branches in Indonesia. Korean food lovers in Indonesia are not only fans of Korean culture but also the general public. Not only restaurants but also many stalls serve Korean cuisine.

#### 4.2 | The Impact of Gastrodiplomacy on the Development of Business Opportunities in Indonesia

The impact of Korean pop culture, which includes Korean dramas and K-pop, has influenced the food sector in Indonesia. Research conducted by Korea Science found that Indonesian consumers highly prefer Korean food such as rayon, noodles, snacks, and kimchi. The Korean culinary industry is experiencing rapid growth as the South Korean diaspora has introduced their authentic cuisine abroad. The South Korean government also carries out culinary diplomacy by holding K-Food Fairs in various countries, including Indonesia, to promote and introduce Korean culinary delights as a form of cultural exchange. The popularity of Korean pop culture in Indonesia has significantly impacted the development of the local pop music industry. Indonesia is now one of the fastest-growing K-pop

markets in Southeast Asia. Therefore, there is a potential opportunity to open a Korean food industry in Indonesia as interest in Korean food increases in line with the popularity of Korean pop culture.

The increasingly consumptive attitude of Korean culture enthusiasts has resulted in the proliferation of Korean food entering Indonesia. The concept of soft power influences this. The concept of soft power here plays a role in the ability to influence with attraction, making it easier for Korean restaurant business opportunities to enter Indonesia. So, before Korean restaurants were established, they had already influenced soft diplomacy. The influence of soft diplomacy is channelled through visual media. The big influence exerted by fans of Korean culture in Indonesia has become a K-food business opportunity in Indonesia. By offering authentic Korean food connected to popular Korean pop culture, K-food businesses can attract K-pop fans and achieve success in the competitive culinary market.

The primary role of soft power in this phenomenon is that of fans of Korean culture. Why is it said that this is because of the benefits of the influence of Korean culture enthusiasts? Forms of soft power influenced by Korean culture enthusiasts are: (1) There is a high level of interest in Korean culture in Indonesia, so it is easy to spread the level of awareness of Korean culture. This can increase awareness of Korean culture at large, attracting the attention of the K-food business target market, (2) Korean culture enthusiasts are known for their active social media activities. On the platform, Korean culture enthusiasts recommend each other's experiences, especially culinary ones. Social media has a vast network, so it cannot be denied that this can have a significant influence, and (3) K-pop fans often have a strong emotional connection to the Korean artists or music groups they like. K-food brands that work with such artists or groups can leverage this emotional connection to strengthen their brand's appeal among fans. Collaboration and joint promotions can increase consumer trust and loyalty towards K-food businesses.

Furthermore, some of the influences obtained by Korean culture enthusiasts are divided into several areas. First, Korean Music (K-pop) fans: K-pop fans, or what is usually referred to as K-poppers, experience soft power from the idols they like, and then from here, a community will be formed that shares Korean culture, especially Korean food culture. Second, Drama and Film Fans, it is easy to guess where the influence of fans who like Korean dramas and Korean films comes from. Soft power they get through what they watch. A scene that is often shown in Korean dramas and films is eating time. Food that is visually attractive to the audience will indirectly have the ability to influence; thus, this is called soft power.

This interest in Korean culture is also a promotional tool. The K-food or Korean food business opportunity in Indonesia is due to the significant demand, especially if its influence continues to increase. For example, during the Covid-19 pandemic, people enjoy life more by watching entertainment shows on television or YouTube. At that time, interest in Korean food increased because the shows they enjoyed showed or served Korean food presented with good visualization. The improvement in this situation has created an opportunity for entrepreneurs to flock to open restaurants serving typical South Korean dishes. An example of a restaurant with many branches in Indonesia is a restaurant that serves Korean Grill with a promotion called "All You Can Eat," which has the tactic of being free to take and only paying the net price per person. It cannot be denied that through soft power, culture spreads to gastro diplomacy and is assisted by Korean culture enthusiasts, creating opportunities for the Korean market coupled with the characteristics of Indonesian people who want to be included in existing trends. This soft power is considered trivial but has a very influential impact.

#### 4.3 | Barriers and Problems with K-food in Indonesia in the Development of Business Opportunities in Indonesia

As far as diplomatic practices have been carried out through gastro diplomacy, there has only been a beneficial impact on the results. However, every policy implemented will have a negative impact. In this section, researchers have analyzed the obstacles and problems that may be faced through gastrodiploamacy. The obstacles and problems of South Korean gastro diplomacy in Indonesia concern the South Korean government. There needs to be careful market research and good cooperation between the South Korean government.

The obstacles faced by South Korean gastro diplomacy in Indonesia are: (1) Differences in culinary preferences and culture Indonesia and South Korea are countries with different backgrounds. This continues with racial differences and the tastes of each country. Regarding taste, Indonesia has a culinary richness different from South Korea. Indonesia is famous for its solid and varied spices, while South Korea does not like strong flavours. So, some Korean dishes may still need help from Indonesians to accept them. There needs to be a strategy to introduce and familiarize Korean food so that it can enter the Indonesian tongue, (2) Limited access to raw materials, seeing how the tastes are different between Indonesia and Korea, this applies to the raw materials, which are also different. Differences in seasons are also a supporting factor for different raw materials. Even though there are many fans of Korean food in Indonesia, access to raw materials for Korean food still needs to be improved. So, different raw materials can change the authenticity and quality of Korean dishes served in Indonesia. The South Korean government needs to collaborate with local suppliers so that raw materials from South Korea can be easily accessed in Indonesia, (3) Different eating culture: Even though it is known to be trivial, differences in eating methods can hinder Korean food business opportunities in Indonesia. Indonesia has a culture of eating using spoons and plain hands, and South Korea uses chopsticks in its dishes. This is an obstacle because using chopsticks is challenging to learn directly, and you need to get used to them, (4) More expensive prices, food prices in Indonesia and Korea are very different. This is caused by differences in the currency values of these two countries. Indonesian people are more inclined towards plentiful and cheap food, which is an obstacle for the Korean food business in Indonesia. Many obstacles are encountered when stating the price of an item or food. There needs to be a price adjustment for Korean food in Indonesia so that it is possible for Indonesians to be interested in Korean food, and (5) Promotion, successful gastrodiplomacy requires effective communication. A good promotion can ensure that Indonesians receive information about South Korean gastrodiplomacy. Promotion via social media can be done by displaying good and beautiful visuals to attract attention. Promotions such as reduced prices or meal vouchers can be one of the tricks that can be implemented in promotions. However, there is still a need for a sufficient understanding of Korean cuisine, which can be included in the promotion.

The obstacles and problems analyzed and produced 5 points as an essential focus need to be used as a reference for the South Korean government in carrying out gastro diplomacy. Attention to these obstacles and problems can be the key to developing an effective strategy for introducing and popularizing Korean food in Indonesia. There needs to be cooperation between parties such as the South Korean government and the culinary industry, both restaurants and local communities, which can play a strong role in realizing South Korean gastrodiplomacy to Indonesia.

## 5 | CONCLUSION

Diplomacy is widely used in world political life. Diplomacy has various ways to achieve its goals. There are methods that involve force and the use of weapons, and can also be done through attraction. What is meant by attraction is soft diplomacy. Soft diplomacy has an important role in matters of cooperation between international actors. Even though this type of diplomacy seems impossible, its implementation has been successful from the past until now. There are several other types of soft diplomacy, but the most popular one is cultural diplomacy. Countries in the world widely use cultural diplomacy to carry out relations with other countries without coercion. In this research, the main focus analyzed is cultural diplomacy carried out through culinary arts, called gastrodiplomacy. Gastrodiplomacy was famous and well-known not long ago and has grown over the years. The understanding of diplomacy in collaboration with food is becoming increasingly popular and widely used. Culinary use is aimed at building a good image for a country without the need for a ceasefire. Gastrodiplomacy also gives a country a characteristic easily recognized through its food. This is the aim of gastrodiplomacy.

Cooperation between the Korean government, restaurants, and the Indonesian people is essential to encouraging food diplomacy. By overcoming challenges and taking advantage of existing opportunities, South Korean food diplomacy in Indonesia can effectively strengthen bilateral relations and encourage cultural

understanding and cooperation between the two countries. In the era of globalization, this is a crucial step to strengthen cultural ties between the two countries and open up opportunities for cultural exchange. The author hopes that what has been researched and analyzed to produce this writing can provide readers with an understanding of the concepts of gastro diplomacy and soft power in implementation in the K-food case study in Indonesia. If, in the future, the writing in this research is used as a reference in developing new research, it is highly recommended that it be added to the literature on gastro diplomacy.

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