

# **Indonesia Soft Power Diplomacy: Halal food in the Implementation of Indonesian Public Diplomacy**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Indonesia, as the largest Muslim population country, should properly include halal food as a national strategic product. Public diplomacy activities to introduce halal food have been increasing intensively, have been carried out by the Indonesian government. This paper aims to analyze Indonesia's potential as well as challenges in implementing public diplomacy of food halal. Public diplomacy in this discussion focuses on public involvement in achieving national interests. Internal public support largely determines the success of a country's diplomacy. The analysis is carried out by considering the internal and external conditions surrounding the development of Indonesian halal food. The results show that in the internal scope, Indonesia has sought institutionally in the context of halal food certification. The government also disseminates and educates the public about the importance of halal food, for example through several exhibitions, electronic and mass media. However, the results of the study indicate that public concern regarding halal food in Indonesia has not yet been developed. While in the external sphere, Indonesia has strived to meet international halal food standards. Indonesia also faces competitors of halal food producers from other countries. In the end, this study concludes that halal food is a soft power that has the potential to be developed in the implementation of Indonesian public diplomacy. Nonetheless, Indonesia is still not a major player in the development of world halal food. Indonesia must further empower the public to actively participate in the implementation of halal food diplomacy.

**Keywords:** Halal Food, Indonesia, Public Diplomacy, Soft Power

## 1. Introduction

Soft power is the ability of actors to achieve goals without going through violence and coercion (Li, 2019: 3). Achieving national goals is formulated in political policies that strive for achievement through foreign policy implemented through diplomacy. In its development, diplomacy is not only carried out by the government as a formal actor but also by other actors, including the community. The emergence of public diplomacy shows the important role of the public as part of forming the power of the state. The public has an important role in achieving national interests in bringing or conveying adopted values, be they cultural, ideological, or values in foreign policy to the public of other countries. Recognition by other countries' public will make it easier to achieve national goals. The impact of public involvement is a form of linkage between public diplomacy and soft power.

One form of national interest is the fulfillment of food needs. Food is a strategic need for every country. The difference in state capability places food needs as a trade commodity with various provisions attached to these commodities. One of the provisions on food in international trade is halal regulation. The development of interactions in international relations plays a role in shaping transnational recognized values, including the concept of halal. The community has a role in communicating this transnational value so that halal becomes a recognized value.

The concept that originated from the value of Islam has become a globally recognized value. Through the Codex Alimentarius. This provision is an agreement between the WHO (World Health Organization) and FAO (Food Agriculture Organization), which focuses on health and food security for humans and the environment (fao.org, 2016:1). Every food commodity in international trade must fulfill this provision. This provision has been adopted and implemented in global food trade interactions including the WTO (World Trade Organization). This provision not only regulates the composition of food that is safe but also covers the food processing chain, starting from being prepared, planted, harvested, stored, distributed, packaged, processed, and even the resulting waste. Halal food provisions are also regulated in this code. Halal provisions are special provisions that take into account the concept of halal which is derived from the concepts used in Islam. Halal provisions in the

Alimentarius codex automatically place halal as a transnational value that binds actors in international relations. As a binder, because to meet the food needs of the community, especially in the Muslim community, every food commodity must meet halal provisions. Muslim communities spread across several regions of the world encourage the fulfillment of halal food needs, whether as a member of the OIC (Organization of Islamic Conference) or not. Halal food needs have become the main needs of the world's Muslims and rank second after Islamic finance.

The emergence of non-OIC countries as major halal food players in international trade is interesting. Even though the total demand for halal-certified food in the world is smaller than the total world food demand, however, the world trend towards halal-certified food products is increasing. The increasing demand for halal-certified food is not only by Muslim groups but also by non-Muslims. This trend is based on the understanding that halal-certified products are part of quality products. This means, that halal products meet health and food safety requirements, even under conditions called balanced diets because food sources must be protected from impurities, and unclean which sometimes contains things that endanger the body for a long time.

This trend should be potential for Muslim countries (OIC) to expand their influence in international relations. This is because the average Muslim countries already have halal certification bodies that play a role in monitoring and controlling halal products in the market. The trend towards halal food should also be a gateway for OIC countries to expand the influence and dependence of other countries on halal products. Competence in the form of certification bodies, regulations, and halal products is a potent force that can be applied to a bargaining position. Unfortunately, based on the Global Islamic Economy Indicator report, it shows that almost 50 percent of halal food suppliers are non-OKI (Reuter, 2018:44). This shows that the ultimate goal of halal food trading activities is economic benefits. The economic superiority of a country becomes its strength, which can influence other actors.

Indonesia as a majority Muslim country is ideally able to take advantage of this opportunity. Indonesia also has a halal certification body which is often used as a reference for other countries in making halal provisions. Certification bodies are also in the regions to facilitate services to the community. Even several universities in Indonesia took the initiative to develop a halal study center. However, this condition still does not place Indonesia as a major player in the world halal food trade.

Studies related to soft power in the field of low politics have been reviewed by Aidarbek Amirbek and Kanat Ydyrys” (Amirbek, 2014;501). This research shows that some countries use education as a way to encourage the achievement of national interests. A competent education system becomes a competitive advantage for a country including by providing opportunities for students to study in other countries. So that foreign students who have received education and returned to their home countries are expected to be the effective mediators or "transmitters" of the values adopted, culture, language, and technological superiority of the country. Education becomes a "global competition for minds" that can influence other actors. In the study of Aidarbek Amirbek and Kanat Ydyrys, described that education as an intangible value become a source of soft power.

The next study is about Conceptualizing Public Diplomacy Social Convention Culinary: Engaging Gastro Diplomacy Warfare for Economic Branding by Noor Nirwandy, Ahmad Azran Awang (Nirwandy, 2014: 325). This study shows that on public diplomacy, is what usually done by a nation state to start communicating interest by using "brand" to increase promotion of the country. The focus of the study emphasizes the efforts of nation branding through culinary diplomacy. Culinary becomes a symbol of identity of a country or group that has culinary culture. Public diplomacy not only communicates non-verbal things such as food and culture, but also promotes economic growth and trade. This also can be applied to halal food with its value and provisions in its development has become part of its own brand which has implications to the economic growth and trade of the countries that implement halal provisions. Also, there was study about Gastrodiplomacy: Assessing the role of food in decision-making by Charles Spence (Spence, 2016:54) shows that food can influence decision making. In some conditions, including high-level meetings involving heads of state, food is a calculated part. Food identity such culture contains provisions in treating the food becomes a

communicated part. Actions or activities that are considered to offend the identity can be an obstacle in reaching agreement in making decisions.

Other studies that related to halal food is by Pazim Othman, Irfan Sungkar and Wan Sabri Wan Hussin (Othman, 2009:306). Emphasize that halal food with all its standards and certifications is not only for Muslims, but also for non-Muslims because food is a universal thing that is needed by all humans. This is in line with the basic principles of Islamic understanding of "Rahmatan Lil Alamin" which confirms that Islam brings benefit to all humanity. With a case study of Malaysia's efforts to improve the superiority of halal meat products, then to improve the superiority of halal beef products, an understanding is needed that beef is a universal food ingredient. The management of halal beef must be universal to meet the needs of all groups. Because the halal concept will be related to other concepts in Islamic teachings and this relation has not fully realized yet by Malaysia and other OIC countries. Regarding this awareness, Abdul Raufu Ambalia and Ahmad Naqiyuddin Bakar at "The People's Awareness on Halal Foods and Products: Potential Issues for Policy-Makers" (Raufu, 2014:3) also reviewed that halal food is not only focused on government policies, efforts in fulfilling halal certification provisions, and developing institutions halal, but also related to public awareness of halal food. This awareness is part of the demands of the community in making decisions. So that if the community realizes the importance of halal food, the certification and institutional process will run on its own.

Based on the number of previous studies, it was shown that halal food has a competitive value which is sought by the economic actors including the state. Food can be used as a medium to convey and achieve the national interests. Even, halal food needs to get its own attention as part of making decisions. So this research underlines the attachment between these previous studies. The similarity of these studies shows that halal values are part of the soft power that is fought through policy, diplomacy and the role of community. But all of the literature does not discuss Indonesia specifically.

## **2. Result**

In general, there are two conditions to explain halal food as a source of Indonesian soft power, namely internal and external conditions. Internally, Indonesia is an Islamic country

with the largest Muslim population in the world, around 86% of Indonesia's population is Muslim. The Muslim population is more than 1.6 billion people or around 23.4 percent of the total world population and Indonesia contributes around 12.7 percent of the total world Muslim population. This reality makes Indonesia the largest Muslim country in the world. In 2010, Muslims in Indonesia had around 205 million people or 88.1 percent of the population of 237 million people (Kompas, 2014:1). Based on this amount, it is assumed that the need for halal-certified food is also large. At least several variants of food consumed by Indonesian Muslims.

To meet these needs, the Indonesian government initially mandated through the MUI to issue halal fatwas. This institution collaborates with BP POM to conduct an investigation. Next on October 11, 2017, the Indonesian government established the Halal Product Guarantee Agency (BPJPH). As Law No.33 of 2014, BPJPH has a mandate to issue halal certification products. For this matter, BPJPH collaborates with MUI. Next MUI together with the Food, Drug and Cosmetics Assessment Institute (LPPOM) has the authority to issue halal fatwas for a product, certify halal examiners and auditors engaged in the halal industry (Kemenag, 2016:1). To carry out this task, BPJPH has collaborated with MUI which has around 1,500 auditors and has collaborated with several competent universities (Kemenag, 2016:1), such as Bogor Agricultural Institute, Gajah Mada University, University of Indonesia, Islamic University of Indonesia and others, which have halal studies. The presence of the auditor is expected to make it easier for the public to consult and submit their food products to obtain halal certificates. Also in Jakarta, the Jakarta Industrial Estate Pulogadung (JIEP) halal area was developed as part of the Jakarta International Halal Hub (JIHH) plan (wartakota, 2016:1). Internally, Indonesia has potential at both the government and public levels in developing halal food.

While in external conditions, there has been a development in the world halal food suppliers. Based on the 2017 Global Islamic Economy Indicator report, it shows that Brazil is the top 10 halal food supplier in the world, even though Brazil is not a member of the OIC and is not a country with a large Muslim community. Brazil is the world's halal-certified chicken supplier. A few years before, Brazilian chicken cutters conducted a comparative study and learned to slaughter and manage slaughtered chickens following the Islamic regulations in Malaysia. Efforts made by Brazil are not in vain, because ultimately it increases

Brazil's income in the sector. Some non-OIC countries are interested in learning to develop halal ecosystems

Based on the report of the Global Islamic Economy Indicator, it also shows that almost 50 percent of halal food supplier countries are non-OKI. Some non-OIC countries are in the form of meeting halal standards and certification by forming halal guarantee institutions formed by Muslim communities and receiving government support. He reiterated that the global halal food trade is no longer just to fulfill the provisions of Islamic law and faith, but rather on the competency-based competition. Halal competence in commodities has become a common trend and need and has a higher economic value than commodities without this competency.

### **3. Discussion**

Based on these two conditions, internally Indonesia has more potential to place Indonesia as the dominant actor in halal food. The large Muslim population as halal food consumers can be empowered. So this is where it is necessary for empowerment and public participation. The empowerment of local communities in public diplomacy emphasizes the internal stakeholders of Indonesian halal food. These internal stakeholders are not only producers but also consumers who use halal food products. In general, halal food consumers in Indonesia are not only Muslim groups who make halal food a necessity and obligation, but also the wider community who sees the need to consume food that has been guaranteed to a standard. However, people's understanding of halal-certified food is still low. It should be emphasized here that not all halal food consumers in Indonesia feel the need for halal certification on the food consumed. The pluralism of Indonesian society has been the basis of the formation of tolerance between ethnic, cultural and religious groups. This tolerance is one of them which underlies mutual trust and respect between religious adherents and one form is only preparing halal food for halal consumers.

At the producer level, there is not yet full awareness and understanding that halal certification is a competency for commodities that have economic value. As the market law depends on supply and demand, then due to the demand for halal-certified food in a small country, it does not require certification. Even the push to apply for halal food certification is

still low and considers certification is a complicated matter. This condition is a challenge for the implementation of Indonesia's halal policy.

On the other hand, several halal-certified products from Indonesia received world awards as products that consistently maintain halal competence. Such as Indomie, Chitato, Walls ice cream, Silver Queen and Sari Roti as well as several other food products and become export commodities. The existence of halal-certified export commodities is an opportunity that Indonesian halal food is worthy of calculation.

The Indonesian government also realizes that the potential for Indonesian halal commodities can be a strength of Indonesia that is not only in the economic field but also social and political. This can be proven by Indonesia's involvement and active role in the World Halal Food Council (WHFC) and the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC). In these two institutions, Indonesia contributes to establishing existing provisions and agreements for the interests of Indonesia. Achievement of interests will also not be achieved without community empowerment.

The empowerment of local communities in public diplomacy emphasizes the internal stakeholders of Indonesian halal food. Internal stakeholders consist of producers and consumers. Despite the challenges faced by these two stakeholders, Indonesia's local resources and potential are the basis of public diplomacy. Indonesia already has the potential that is the source of Indonesia's strength, the next thing that can be done is to convince and prove the international world of Indonesian competence.

The implementation and form of public diplomacy vary. Public diplomacy is one form of diplomacy concerning ways to convey or communicate national interests to other actors. As a form of communication, this was also emphasized by Sevin, that public diplomacy is a communication-based activity aimed at non-formal actors in other countries aimed at achieving foreign and other objectives (Sevin, 2015; 562). There are three characteristics of public diplomacy in the digital age, namely the ability to develop relationships and communities, dependence on content creators and feedback/comments, and horizontal network arrangements so that ideas can develop through social networks. The character of diplomacy in the digital era marks that technological developments affect the process and results of these diplomacy activities. Also, Fitzpatrick identified six relevant functions of

public diplomacy, namely; advocacy/influence, communication/information, relational, promotion, politics, and war/propaganda (Fitzpatrick, 2013:50). While L'Eang identifies three functions namely; Representational (rhetoric, speech, advocacy), dialogic (negotiation, peacemaking), and counseling (L'Etang, 1996: 14). In another reference, Jan Mellisen defines public diplomacy as an effort to influence other people or organizations outside the borders of his country in a positive way to change the outlook on a country (Mellisen, 2006:43). Based on all these definitions, public diplomacy functions to promote national interests through understanding, informing, and influencing the public abroad. there are three differences between public diplomacy and official (traditional) diplomacy. First, public diplomacy is transparent and wide-ranging, whereas traditional diplomacy tends to be closed and has limited reach. Second, public diplomacy is transmitted from the government to other governments. Third, the themes and issues carried by official diplomacy (the first channel) are in the behavior and policies of the government, while the themes and issues raised by public diplomacy are more towards public attitudes and behavior. Based on these differences, public diplomacy is often referred to as Tailor-made diplomacy. This is because the implementation of public diplomacy is adapted to certain conditions and conditions, meaning that a form of public diplomacy can only be implemented in certain conditions. For example; Public diplomacy by promoting the development of liquor to countries with Muslim communities becomes irrelevant. Or promoting the superiority of beef processing to a country with a Hindu community is a risky thing and is considered to be harassing the country.

Just as the purpose of diplomacy, in general, is to influence behavior and thinking, so too is the goal of public diplomacy, so that parameters are needed to measure whether public diplomacy is successful or not. Seven pillars must be understood so that the public diplomacy that is carried out can be successful, in the sense that it can fulfill its purpose in informing, involving, and influencing the international public (Ross, 2003:23). *First*, there is policy coordination at the national level. Public diplomacy takes a variety of forms, and all of them are aimed at supporting national interests and fulfilling a country's international obligations. For this reason, it must be ensured in advance that the international public understands the policies adopted well. It must also be ensured that the source comes from the government, not the others. Public diplomacy at the national level needs to be coordinated at the level of government given the diversity of messages, languages, target groups, formats, and media.

Coordination is important so that the priorities for information and understanding of the theme are clear; the message to be conveyed is consistent, and the sources used are effective. The coordination referred to here is cross-sectoral, not only the responsibility of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but also other ministries that intersect with the objectives to be achieved.

*Second*, there are reasons and rationality in favor of the policy. *Third*, the message to be conveyed to the international public must be consistent, credible, trustworthy, and true. The public targeted by public diplomacy is diverse, so credit must be considered - what we mean and mean what we say. *Fourth*, avoiding the appearance of a contradiction between consistency and the making of the message. Consistency is understood as the ability to design a message for a particular public. Given the development of information technology, the message to be conveyed must also be designed quickly. The information vacuum will bring up messages that come from sources outside the government. *Fifth*, because the target group of public diplomacy is broad and diverse, it is necessary to utilize all existing communication channels such as the internet, broadcasting, print publications, traveling or exchanging education and culture. *Sixth*, expand alliances and cooperation with private sectors and other non-state actors. *Seventh*, the need to build a foundation of trust and understanding through commitment and dialogue. Based on the scope of the functions and objectives of public diplomacy, the indicators that public diplomacy has been carried out include the activities of communicating both, directly and indirectly, there are actors or informal groups that are targeted and there are goals to be achieved.

Next is how public diplomacy can become a soft power. Soft power is the ability to get what you want by attracting attention or influencing other parties to want to adopt the goals of countries that use soft power. The soft power exercise model in public diplomacy that was considered successful was during the Cold War where the democratic and human rights values brought by the United States could stem the socialist values promoted by the Soviet Union. The US also has a cultural industry through film and music that is found throughout the world and influences the behavior of young people around the world (Ross, 2003:23). Another example of the application of public diplomacy in another soft power framework is what China has done. China with the success of its economic development is popular among developing countries. China succeeded in portraying itself that an undemocratic regime can build its economy. The concept of the Beijing Consensus that combines the authoritarian

model and the market economy becomes popular when compared to the Washington Consensus concept which combines democracy with a liberal economy (Nye, 2007: 4).

The presence or absence of soft power in public diplomacy related to the parameters of its achievement. It's just as in Nye's study that the source of soft power and its effects can have different effects from one another. So to measure it by looking at public perceptions of other countries. Public perception becomes an important parameter in soft power as a result of the influence of the actions and thoughts of other actors. In hard power parameters can be seen from the actions and thoughts of decision-makers or elites, while soft power is in public. Based on this, soft power studies are often related to public diplomacy. There are survey results that can be used to measure the presence or absence of soft power. One of them is by utilizing the Pew Survey on Global Attitude. The survey shows public behavior in responding to something that can be analyzed by its tendencies. This tendency of public behavior is part of the analysis of soft power. Besides, soft power can also be measured in two dimensions, affective and normative. Still based on Nye, effectively relates to sources that are of interest to a country such as culture, economic progress, education, development and other things that have their values. Whereas normative relates to support and legitimacy. This means that the effective possessed by the state if it affects the attitudes and behavior of the state will encourage the support and legitimacy of the actor over other actors. In the measurement of soft power, according to Nye, the sources of soft power (affective) are converted or changed to see the results.

Besides Portland, Facebook and the USC Center on Public Diplomacy make a report on the Global Ranking of Soft Power which shows the level of soft power possessed by countries in the world (MacClory, 2019:5). Measurements and methodologies developed to refer to Nye's thoughts. According to Nye that the source of soft power is culture, political value and foreign policy, the Portland report developed it to make it easier to find data. There are thirteen polling categories as soft power indicators, including; Culture, Digital, Education, engagement, enterprise, government, global culture, luxury goods, technology products, cuisine, liveability, friendliness, and foreign policy. The category is a source of attraction or if you borrow the term Nye called the affective. Each of these sources has its purpose, which in its implementation is often related to other sources. For example, achieving the goal of introducing a country's cuisine requires support from other fields. Cuisine that is part of a

country's culture will not be recognized by other countries if there is no relationship and interaction between these countries. To introduce cuisine to make it more interesting also requires support from non-state actors such as entrepreneurs, academics and local government of the cuisine. The existence of cultural festivals, trade shows or other promotional activities is an example of the form of response because these activities are not carried out without permission and willingness from the relevant authorities. While the outcome is a collaboration of activities or further collaboration of these activities.

The concept of halal as a law in the Muslim community becomes its power. The concept of halal is a forced force for the Muslim community to practice the faith. It is said to be forced because it is a recognized law and its fulfillment is part of the fulfillment of human rights. In the interaction of international relations, the fulfillment of human rights is very important to show human existence and forms of respect for human existence. Therefore, the implementation of the halal concept, on the other hand, is a form of respect for human rights. The coercive power of the concept of halal as Islamic law places the fulfillment of goods and services with halal certification not only as of the fulfillment of human rights but also as the achievement of standards to gain business profits from the economic activities carried out. Then the form of forced power as a halal concept soft power is in the form of the establishment of halal certification institutions and submission of halal certification on trade products. Based on the understanding above, here is the process of converting soft power according to Nye (MacClory, 2019:5) with public diplomacy on Indonesian halal food.

*Figure 1. Nye's Soft Power Conversion on Halal Food*



Referring to the process, the form of Indonesian public diplomacy on halal food can be seen from several activities that involve the public in diplomacy activities to influence the public and governments of other countries.

*Table 1. Form of Public Diplomacy and Soft Power of Indonesian halal*

<b>Variabel</b>	<b>Dimentio n</b>	<b>Indikator</b>	<b>Reality/ Empirical</b>	<b>Output</b>
Communication	Direct	Product exhibition, Fair trade, gallery	Indonesia's participation in several international halal product exhibitions; ExpoHalal Spain 2016, Indonesia International Halal Lifestyle Expo & Conference 2017, Thailand Halal Assembly, 2018 Halal Expo Australia (HEA), the Taiwan International Halal Expo. Indonesian Activities: International Indonesia Halal Expo (Indhex) 2018, Indonesia Halal Training & Education (IHATEC),	Trade, sales, workshops and training cooperation
	Indirect	Social media, mass media, the official web of government, companies, institutions	indohalalexp, halalmui, gomuslim.go.id,	The intensity of interaction on social media, designation, mention
Non formal actor	Public of other countries	The country's halal food product market	Asia, Europe, Africa	Widen the area of product marketing
Goal	Economic	Income, employment	Increased demand for halal food, the development of MSMEs with halal certification	Increased community income

Based on table 1. soft power in diplomacy is shown by the existence of direct and indirect communication conducted by non-formal actors with specific objectives, namely economics. The form and implementation of diplomacy is realized through the presence of exhibitions, festivals, making galleries and the use of social media. The output of public diplomacy is a soft power outcome. The output and outcome above show that there is potential for Indonesian soft power in public diplomacy through halal food. Further detailed calculations are needed to measure how much soft power is in public diplomacy on Indonesian halal food. And this certainly requires further study and research.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Public diplomacy is becoming a trend in the interaction of international relations. Diplomacy involving non-state actors is considered able to improve relations that have been established between countries. Supported by developments in technology and information, public involvement is the key to influencing the public of other countries which is ultimately expected to be able to influence state policies. Issues that develop in public diplomacy are more on low-political issues that are commonly developed in the community. Halal food is one of the issues that is developing and becoming a world trend. Increasing demand for halal-certified food globally not only from OIC countries but also from non-OIC countries. Halal food trend is a potential opportunity for the development of the Indonesian economy considering that Indonesia as a country that requires halal food is quite large.

The agreement on halal food provisions in the codex Alimentarius places halal provisions as part of the provisions of international relations. Codex becomes a reference in international trade, thus to be able to engage in international trade, it must meet existing provisions. Halal food with halal value has its potential as a source of soft power. Soft power sources or potential will not appear as power if without any effort to apply or introduce the potential and resources to other actors. One way that can be done is through public diplomacy involving non-state actors in achieving national interests. In general, it can be said that all potentials and resources that are low politics can be developed by the state as soft power with the public. The public plays a role in influencing the public of other countries. If other countries' publics

give recognition, support, and legitimacy, then this may affect the policies made by the government or even international institutions, organizations or regimes.

### **Acknowledgement**

This paper is an output of research study entitled Soft Power in Public Diplomacy through Halal Food. This research was funded by the Budi Luhur University Jakarta under the Budi Luhur Cakti Foundation. This research is also part of the chapter in the research dissertation.

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