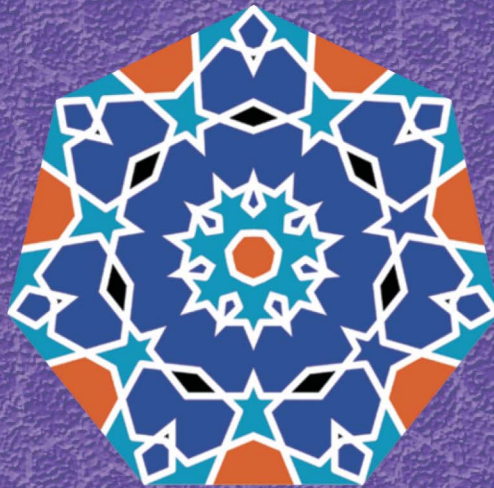


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## **Thailand's halal gastro diplomacy to Indonesia: A study from the glocalization perspective**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this article is twofold: (1) to see how halal gastro diplomacy is exercised as a part of the larger cultural diplomacy strategy of Thailand and (2) to see how globalization paves a way toward Thailand's decision to conduct halal gastro diplomacy. In more detail, the practice that the authors will examine is the practice of Thailand's gastro diplomacy with Indonesia, which is directed explicitly to promoting their halal products. In this research, the authors mainly use the glocalization framework with the primary assumption that globalization is absorbed into the local context. Each country has its way of responding to the global demand in their own way. The authors argue that gastro diplomacy occurs as an outcome of glocalization done by countries which have a comparative advantage in the culinary field. Responding to the high demand from the global trend of halal tourism, Thailand has slightly adjusted its gastro diplomacy strategy towards the halal aspect utilizing its unique culinary products. This research is descriptive and uses a case study approach, which may provide a deeper picture of a phenomenon in social sciences.

**Keywords:** Thailand; Indonesia; gastro-diplomacy; glocalization

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## Introduction

Consuming food is a practice that has existed throughout the history of humankind. This very fundamental activity for the survival of human life then develops along with the interaction of one human group with the other. The exchange of commodities and the procedures for processing them make the cuisine so diverse from one place to another.

Along with the developing international system towards the nation-state era, culinary wealth has again evolved into a treasure for the countries with it. Culinary arts are now starting to be recognized as a tool to improve the image of one country compared to another. This can be seen, for example, in the practice of diplomatic banquets, which are commonly part of traditional diplomacy. Entering the modern era, where diplomacy began to develop in Europe, food is often used to pamper diplomats who come to their country. This activity highlights the host country's prestige in front of foreign guests (De Vooght, 2016).

Among the practice of using food as an element of diplomacy, International Relations now recognizes a new concept called gastro diplomacy. This diplomatic strategy of using a culinary approach has begun to be used by many countries to display their image as an attractive place to visit. Among these countries, Thailand is interesting because of its increasingly strong image as a gastro diplomacy destination country. The interesting thing that also needs to be seen is how Thailand has started incorporating halal values into its gastro diplomacy strategy. This is fascinating because Thailand is a country where Muslims are a minority group.

At the same time, the majority (93%) of Thai people follow Buddhism, which is even the official religion there (Office of International Religious Freedom, 2018). This condition is a potential research topic concerning the rise of halal tourism as a global trend. Therefore, this article attempts to answer two questions: (1) "how is halal gastro diplomacy exercised as a part of Thailand's larger diplomatic strategy?" and (2) "how does globalization contribute to the prevailing trend of halal gastro diplomacy in Thailand?"

The writer will use the glocalization framework developed by Robertson (1994) to analyze this phenomenon. Glocalization itself is a portmanteau. It stands for the concepts of "globalization" and "localization". This concept refers to the condition when globalization penetrates the local context and finally makes something global that is re-translated by the locality. In this case, we can see examples of glocalization in the form of a number of international-scale fast-food restaurants that adapt their menus to local tastes.

According to Robertson, globalization does not necessarily make the whole world uniform. The increasing flow of information and services has made several localities new cultural pockets that are different from other places. If we relate it to Thailand's decision to carry out halal gastro diplomacy, the concept of glocalization sees that the global booming

halal trend has made Thailand aware of the increasing demand to cater to the world's need for it. However, Thailand's unique locality also makes Thailand's halal gastro diplomacy have its style based on its culinary products. Through this article, the authors argue that Thailand's halal gastro diplomacy occurs as a response to the permeating globalization values into its foreign policy strategy. To provide more illustration, the authors will also examine the practice of Thai gastro diplomacy with Indonesia, which is directed explicitly to promoting their halal products.

Currently, halal tourism is starting to rise as a study that enters the mainstream realm. However, there are still many gaps that can be explored on this topic. Yousaf and Xiucheng (2018) and Kim et al. (2015) consider that research on halal tourism strategies is still primarily limited to Muslim-majority countries, leaving many opportunities for researchers who study non-Muslim majority countries to see practices there. In addition, other studies also tend to be more interested in seeing the suitability of halal tourism with the halal concept in Islamic teachings (El Gohary, 2016; Vargas-Sanchez & Moral-Moral, 2019; Adinugraha et al., 2021).

Some previous studies have also shed some light on Thailand's halal tourism. Aminuddin (2016) compares the halal certification policy between Thailand and Indonesia. However, the article remains limited in seeing halal tourism itself as the product of the changing global trend. Some other research pieces by Fartiannur (2018) and Lipscomb (2019) have successfully discussed the success of Thailand's gastro diplomacy, and both studies do not specifically highlight the halal aspect. Several other articles have also highlighted Thailand's halal practice but are still very limited in discussing it from a diplomatic point of view. Most of the studies take their point of view from the tourism management perspective (Abdul, 2014; Sriprasert et al., 2014; Nurdiansyah, 2018; Syukur & Nimsai, 2018).

Concerning gastro diplomacy, the authors see that research on gastro diplomacy still leaves an open room to be developed even more. The study of gastro diplomacy as part of public diplomacy was started by Rockower (2012), who argues that it can serve as a strategy for middle powers trying to create better recognition by the international community. After that, studies on this issue began to be widely known by using different countries as the background. A number of articles have been written to look at how gastro diplomacy has become a common practice in international relations. In this context, there are articles such as Nahar et al (2018) using Malaysia as a case study on culinary globalization.

On the other hand, Farina's article also reveals how Global Washoku developed into a gastro diplomacy strategy that made Japan global. There is also a like Zhang's (2015) that comprehensively compiles and compares gastro diplomacy strategies from a wide number of countries. Apart from country-specific articles like the ones mention above, there is also an article by Demir et al (2021), who looks at gastro diplomacy from the perspective of

international organizations, arguing that international organizations such as the G20 can also provide a platform for gastro diplomacy practices.

These previous articles have in common that, although they provide comprehensive accounts of how countries propagate their culinary brands, current studies tend to focus less on the conceptual aspects of globalization itself. What is meant here is a discussion that contributes more conceptually to what globalization trends look like and then is absorbed into gastro diplomacy practices that can differ from one place to another. In this case, it is interesting to see how halal gastro diplomacy stems from the phenomenon of globalization.

This research is descriptive and uses a case study approach, which may provide a deeper picture of a phenomenon in social sciences. Gerring (2004) defines the case study method as an intensive study of a single unit to generalize across a larger set of units. As an approach, case studies function more to understand a specific phenomenon than to create a causal model for a particular phenomenon.

In addition, the advantages of the case study method are also stated by Kuznetsov (2014). The non-uniform and case-specific nature of paradiplomacy from one region to another makes this phenomenon quite challenging to find a steady pattern. The case study method will allow researchers to disassemble existing practices in one place and compare them with other areas to see the specifics of the case. This study uses secondary data analysis obtained from official government reports, journal articles, books, and complementary data such as news releases.

### **Food and its diplomatic significance**

Currently, the importance of culinary is increasingly recognized internationally. It is no longer considered a complement to diplomatic practices but rather a part of the diplomatic practice itself. Using culinary arts as the main factor of diplomacy is gastro diplomacy. Conceptually, gastro diplomacy can be understood as a branch of public diplomacy, a practice of diplomacy carried out by the state to form positive public opinion using attractive ways (Cull, 2008).

The emergence of public diplomacy in the global sphere is closely related to global civil society. The concept of global civil society refers to the increasing social participation when citizens, social movements, and individual groups engage in dialogue, confrontation, debate, and negotiation with actors at national and international levels of government (Anheier et al., 2001). Consequently, society is now creating the image of countries in the global world. The state cannot forever ignore the perceptions of foreign people, especially since the era of globalization has made more people able to be involved in the process of influencing policy through their opinions.

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Gastro diplomacy stems from two words, namely *gastro* (stomach) and diplomacy. As implied in its name, food is a central element in gastro diplomacy. The use of food in diplomacy can be understood because of its essential nature. Even in conventional international relations, the position of food is at a fundamental level considering its position for human survival. For example, we can argue that food-related issues, such as food security and policies, constituents of a country's power (Brown, 2011).

Beyond the traditional food security issues, another element can be extracted from the use of food, namely its ability to become a universal diplomatic language. While conventional diplomacy is highly formal, hierarchical, and requires systematic and tactful language skills, the use of food is an experience that is universal, egalitarian, and not bound by national boundaries. As Wilson (2011) argues, the uniqueness of gastro diplomacy lies in its efforts to shift traditional, rational diplomatic habits to something more emotionally appealing. Of course, every human being consumes food and has an impression of delicious food. Gastro diplomacy uses this emotional nuance as a weapon to attract public attention to the perception of a country that implements it. In another article, Suntikul (2019) also said that food has an "ambassadorial capacity," which places gastro diplomacy at the crossroads between tourism, culinary, and diplomacy.

Reynolds (2012) states that food can be a source of soft power for countries because of its ability to display unique cultural symbols. A country that is adept at formulating its gastro diplomacy strategy by highlighting the comparative advantages will attract the attention of the foreign public. However, not all the use of food in diplomacy can be referred to as gastro diplomacy. According to Rockower (2012), gastro diplomacy combines three elements: food diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, and financial investments made by the national government. With those clear-cut elements, we cannot easily attribute any diplomatic act to gastro diplomacy just because it includes food in its practice. Therefore, food donations by some countries in times of disaster cannot fall into gastro diplomacy.

On the other hand, *ad hoc* activities such as when the Indonesian President Joko Widodo served *bakso* (Indonesian meatballs) to the 44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, Barack Obama, during his visit in 2017 (Damaledo, 2017), are also not a form of gastro diplomacy despite using food and being conducted by the state apparatus. Moreover, activities to promote a culinary product by private companies are also not included in gastro diplomacy. The soul of gastro diplomacy is the holistic use of culture translated through public diplomacy employing national culinary products, not the food itself.

## **Thailand's gastro diplomacy: Thai kitchen of the world**

Thai cuisine is arguably one of the most famous cuisines in Asia or even globally. CNN Travel (2021) named Thailand one of the ten countries with the best culinary culture. They describe Thai cuisine as an orchestra, where the complex flavours of spices bring out the “spicy, sour, salty, sweet, chewy, crunchy and slippery” tastes in one mouthful. The positive point also underlined is how Thailand integrates hospitality into its culinary services.

Another interesting point was also proposed by Sunanta (2006). According to him, Thai cuisine is international even from its origins, making it superior. What we call Thai cuisine is a combination of local cuisine that interacted with the culinary influences of India and China in the 15th century. The entry of chilies from Europe, Portugal to be precise, then enriched the taste of Thai cuisine.

As a state in the international relations discourse, Thailand is included in the middle-power category as a country that does not have excellent capabilities to change the course of the global arena but is also too big to be categorized as an insignificant global actor. More specifically, we can also classify Thailand as an emerging middle power, a country category with a “semi-peripheral, materially inegalitarian and recently democratizing” character that distinguishes it from traditional middle powers, which are more stable, democratic, and egalitarian (Jordaan, 2003; Fels, 2017). On the other hand, Freedman (2022) classifies Thailand as an “awkward middle power” based on its ambiguity: the state is now increasingly active in international organizations with developing economic and military capabilities but, at the same time, tends to limit deeper participation in international forums.

Like other middle powers, Thailand's primary weapon to gain a name in the global arena is not through hard power but soft power. Conceptually, we can understand soft power as power based on perception, or power that aims to influence the perspective of each target towards the actor who is the actor of diplomacy (Nye, 2006). If hard power is obtained through military power to conquer other countries, then soft power is won using culture. In this context, then, culinary is also included in it.

The emergence of gastro diplomacy in Thailand's soft power strategy is a new phenomenon. Until the 1970s, Thailand had not yet been an essential player in the international culinary business. Traditionally, the country exports essential agricultural products limited to rice, pineapple and sugar. However, Thailand can produce far more than its population consumes. In the last three decades, Thailand has harnessed innovations in agricultural research and technology to develop a dynamic agricultural sector. Through technology and persistence and aggressive determination in the private sector, the food production for export business has grown.



Thailand's practice of gastro diplomacy was initiated under Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra and has a policy of promoting Thai Kitchen of the World to affirm Thailand's stature as a primary food exporting country that can contribute to food security under the changing world circumstances where global warming and natural disasters can cause food shortages. The Thai Kitchen of the World project started in 2002. It aimed to promote Thai food products that create food safety awareness and produce high-quality food that meets international standards at competitive prices. The government's strategy covers the entire process, from sourcing materials to adding value to products and assisting with distribution.

Thailand's decision to launch a gastro diplomacy strategy was motivated by an interest in shifting Thailand's image from a sex tourism destination to a global culinary destination (Fartiannur, 2018; Gracya, 2021). It was initiated in 2001 when the Thai government conducted a survey assisted by two business schools, namely the Sasin Graduate Institute of Business Administration at Chulalongkorn University in Thailand and The Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University in the United States. The survey results show that "sex tourism" was the predominant image that springs to mind when the international community hears about Thailand (Gracya, 2021: 23). On this basis, the Thai government sees culinary arts as an appropriate starting point to improve the country's image.

The Thai Kitchen of the World Thailand program is an effort by the Thai government to change the country's negative image caused by sex tourism and increase the number of country restaurants around the world. In promoting Thai cuisine globally, the Thai government prioritizes standardization and quality of Thai food production, selecting high-quality restaurants through its sub-program called the Thai Select. In addition to that, the Thai government-appointed Thai Airways International and the Tourism Authority of Thailand as the responsible agents for Thai restaurant selection. Thai Airways International transports groceries from Thailand to Thai restaurants in destination countries to ensure the freshness of the food (Sunanta, 2006: 11-12).

The gastro diplomatic strategy for making Thailand the Kitchen of the World is to promote the export of raw materials, processed foods (ready to cook, ready to eat, sauces or condiments), and non-food products such as tableware and decorations for Thai restaurants, as well as a skilled workforce to work with overseas partners. As the first target of the policy, the government plans to increase the number of Thai restaurants overseas, which can help boost the annual exports of the Thai food industry (Varayanond, 2013). In realizing the Thai Kitchen of the World as a gastro diplomacy practice, Thailand has developed a one-stop service for producing and exporting Thai food and products worldwide. This strategy is carried out in various ways, by various government departments and in collaboration with the relevant public and private sectors.

First, for example, the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs is directly involved. It plays an active role in promoting Thai cuisine globally as a leading sector and facilitator in implementing gastro diplomacy. The Ministry seeks to establish a harmonious and constructive relationship in conducting gastro diplomacy activities between the government as a state actor and non-state actors, including chefs, diaspora, private sector, media, universities and the general public (Pujayanti, 2017). Each Thai embassy has been aiming to continue to increase the number of Thai restaurants overseas where they serve. The Ministry annually allocates a budget of THB 20 million or US\$ 1 million for the promotion of Thai food and agricultural products abroad. 140 The Thai Embassy organizes Thai Food Exhibition such as cultural events, holds cooking demonstrations, and establishes cooperation to promote the authentic Thai food culture to the foreign public. The Ministry cooperates with the Tourism Authority of Thailand and the Ministry of Culture in organizing Thai Food Exhibitions abroad. To make the exhibition more attractive, local chefs in each country participate in the event and conduct cooking demonstrations (Sari, 2021).

Another party involved in this project is the Thai Ministry of Labour. They have a huge role in advancing the Kitchen to the World project. The Ministry is responsible for coordinating and enhancing the workforce's potential to maintain competency standards to gain international recognition and compete in the world market. The Ministry cooperates with several institutions to develop courses for workers, develop training equipment, and develop training patterns. Furthermore, the department establishes appropriate guidelines for workforce development of various groups, sets standards for workforce development, and controls and conducts tests for workers. This department acts as an information center on staff development, vocational training, workforce development, and industrial technology development. To train Thai cooks, participants are expected to gain good knowledge, skills, and attitudes towards Thai cuisine. They will also learn to buy raw materials, store and preserve them properly, cook meals and desserts, and serve them properly.

Thailand has also launched the Thai SELECT program to ensure the quality of exported food or restaurants built abroad. This program serves as a seal of approval given to Thai restaurants overseas serving authentic Thai food and Thai processed food products. The aim is to increase the recognition of the quality of Thai restaurants and Thai processed food products and encourage Thai restaurant entrepreneurs and food producers to improve their quality while maintaining their authenticity (Thai SELECT, 2022). Under the Thai SELECT project, Thai restaurants that meet Ministry of Commerce standards will be supported by certification to maintain quality food and service. This can also guide tourists choosing the best Thai restaurant or culinary product.

Thai SELECT restaurant certifications are divided into four categories based on service excellence. First, the "Thai SELECT Signature" indicates a level of excellence that equals

5-stars or even higher. The label is given to restaurants that offer premium quality authentic Thai food with luxurious design and outstanding service. Second, there is also the “Thai SELECT Classic” certificate awarded to Thai restaurants which has achieved the standard taste of authentic Thai cuisine with good services, just under the premium service of the Signature class.

Overall, visitors might expect that restaurants with the Classic certification offer a good impression at a not too high price. Third, the program also provides the “Thai SELECT Casual” certification to overseas Thai restaurants that offer Thai food with authentic taste. The vendors included in this certification may range from family restaurants to food trucks or food stalls.

Next, another certification called the “Thai SELECT Unique” is awarded to restaurants in Thailand that offer specified local Thai food such as Southern Thai food, Northern Thai food, and others. Lastly, the Thai SELECT also provides the “Thai SELECT Product,” a certificate given to Thai food products such as Thai instant curries, condiments, and Thai desserts prepared in a traditional and authentic style with world-class packaging.

Thailand's efforts in realising its gastro diplomacy are successful when viewed from two indicators: the number of Thai restaurants abroad and the number of incoming visits to Thailand. Sari (2021) writes that there are approximately 15,000 Thai restaurants worldwide as of 2019. This number certainly exceeds the initial target that the Thai government had discussed in 2001, namely to build 3,000 Thai restaurants abroad. In terms of visits, Thailand also experienced a significant increase of 200% in 2002-2019. A third of the tourists surveyed admitted that they visited Thailand to try the cuisine (Lion Brand, 2019).

### **Global halal trend and Thailand's policies at a glance**

Even though Thailand sets its primary goal of promoting Thai restaurants as much as possible in as many countries as possible, Thailand cannot deny that a global trend is leaning toward the halal food industry. According to the Global Islamic Economy Report 2017/2018 by Thomson Reuters in collaboration with Dinar Standard, globally, Muslim consumers spent \$1.2 trillion on food and beverages in 2016. By 2022, this figure is expected to reach \$1.9 trillion. According to the report, the Muslim countries with the highest spending on food and beverage in 2016 were Indonesia (\$169.7 billion), Turkey (\$121.1 billion), Pakistan (\$111.8 billion), Egypt (\$80.9 billion), and Saudi Arabia (\$48 billion) (Reuters, 2017).

Meanwhile, as reported by the ASEAN Post in 2018, the Pew Research Center predicts that the number of Muslims globally will continue to grow by remaining the second-largest religion until 2050 and reducing the disparity between Christianity and Islam every decade. This is especially true for the Asia Pacific region, where this region will continue to have the

third-largest Muslim population by percentage after the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa. Thailand sees the halal food sector as a new alternative to increasing the tourism industry and the value of its exports. This can be seen wherein, in 2014, the market capitalization of halal food increased to \$164 billion or equivalent to 16% compared to the previous five years (Khidhir, 2018).

Culinary tourism itself is expected to be one of the mainstays of Thai tourism that supports the achievement of the target of 20 million foreign tourists visiting Thailand in 2019. Based upon those figures, the Thailand Ministry of Tourism has been seeking to increase the potential of the culinary economy as the spearhead of tourism through halal food gastro diplomacy (Wijaya, 2018). Battour and Ismail (2016) describe halal tourism is defined as any object or action which is permissible to use or engage in the tourism industry. If it is associated with gastro diplomacy, the halal concept also ensures that all processes and food materials are served to follow Islam's halal standards. Therefore, the principle of halal gastro diplomacy is to integrate the principles of gastro diplomacy based on the use of local culinary activities under the rules of Islamic law, to then be used to increase positive opinions from the foreign Muslim public.

Although not a Muslim-majority country, Thailand finds a strong enough reason to strengthen its halal culinary industry. In terms of exports, Thailand certainly sees the economic benefits obtained by the state by having halal certification and by marketing its halal food products in countries with a majority Muslim population.

During his speech at the Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Mas Surakarta, Prakorn Privakorn (in Aminuddin, 2016) illustrates why it is essential for Thailand to maximize its halal gastro diplomacy, namely because: (1) Thailand is one of the ten largest food-exporting countries in the world; (2) Thailand is one of the five largest countries that export non-alcoholic and non-pork products to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation countries (with & without Halal certification); (3) Thai cuisine is in the top five in the world; (4) Thailand consistently ranks at the top of the world's tourist destinations; (5) Thailand is one of the best medical destinations in Asia for patients and their families. For these reasons, it is natural that Thailand should be more in touch with Muslim countries for their export purposes.

Awareness of the halal industry is nothing new for Thailand. According to Purnama et al. (2021), the forerunner of the Thai halal industry has even gone through four stages starting from 1949. Thailand's awareness of halal began when the country had difficulties exporting its products to the Middle East market. The first stage of Thailand's halal certification occurred when the *ulama* became involved in the food processing and service of halal products even though there was no official certification process. The second period occurred from 1949 to 1997, when there was an increasing urgency to develop halal industries to meet the needs

of Muslims in Thailand. In the third stage, which took place from 1997 to 2016, Thailand enhanced their certification quality by establishing several bodies such as the Halal Science Center and the Halal Standard Institute of Thailand.

Meanwhile, now Thailand is entering its fourth period of halal industry development. The country is now expanding its halal business to foreign markets through digital media, cloud, and e-commerce (Purnama et al., 2021: 35-36). Based on the division of the period, the Thai gastro diplomacy period can be said to be in the fourth period that is currently happening.

There are several important actors in Thailand's halal gastro diplomacy. The first is The Central Islamic Committee of Thailand (CICOT). The main objective of CICOT is to regulate the affairs of the Islamic religion in the Kingdom of Thailand (Nawawi et al., 2019). At the national level, their responsibilities include (1) determining the application of Thai Halal Product Standards; (2) ensuring the standards are per Islamic principles and international standards; (3) approving the use of the standard halal logo on halal products; (4) acting as a Halal Accreditation Body (HAB) to accredit the Halal Certification Body (HCB) and the coordination and supervision units related to the implementation of halal in the context of the effective implementation of halal product standards (Dahlan et al., 2013).

Second, a Halal Science Center (HSC) is also established at Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok. HSC is an independent academic institution attached to the Faculty of Allied Health Sciences, Chulalongkorn University. Its main objective is to lead the research, development and innovation of the halal science industry in Thailand. One of its roles is to conduct chemical analysis of possible non-halal substances in halal products by becoming a center for halal science. Despite its ability to determine the "halal-ness" of the product under test, HSC does not have the authority to issue halal certification. Instead, it is the role of CICOT to accredit and certify halal products.

Third, the Halal Standard Institute of Thailand (HSIT) is also the Halal Standard Institute. It is the official institution responsible for managing the issuance of halal certificates and their accreditation. The agency was established based on a Cabinet resolution on 11 August 2003. It aims primarily to establish halal standards, conduct research and provide training and courses related to halal matters in Thailand. The agency works closely with Thailand's Islamic Center Committee and the Government to establish halal food standards that meet the requirements of Islamic law, international standards and regulations for halal certification in Thailand (Aree, 2012).

With this, HSIT is tasked with training individuals and personnel who have the knowledge, abilities and skills to support the manufacture, marketing and export of halal products and services following international standards. The main objective of the institute

is to build credibility and develop trust in halal products and, at the same time, coordinate Thai halal standards with global standards and organizations. Overall, HSIT is responsible for the education, research and development of halal standards following Islamic principles (Zain et al., 2017).

### **Thailand's halal gastro diplomacy to Indonesia**

To provide a more detailed look at how Thailand conducts its gastro diplomacy abroad, the authors will use Thailand's gastro diplomacy toward Indonesia as a case study. Indonesia is one of the countries targeted by the Thai Kitchen of the World project. Not only that, but Indonesia also has a sizeable halal market potential considering that it is a country with the largest Muslim population in the world. Not to mention, it is an ASEAN country that is geographically close to Thailand. In 2018, consumption of Indonesian halal products could reach \$214 billion or reach 10 percent of the world's share of halal products.

Bilateral relations between Thailand and Indonesia have existed since 1950 and are mainly carried out in the economic field. Relations between the two countries were further strengthened by the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on Export Development Cooperation between the Directorate General of National Development of the Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Indonesia and the Department of International Trade Promotion of the Thai Ministry of Trade in September 2013 in Bangkok, Thailand. This cooperation aims to further strengthen cooperation between the two countries in export development to maximize the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC).

In practice, the Thai government has a relatively significant role. The government believes that by maintaining the authentic taste offered by the foreign public, the impression and new dining experience will be more memorable. It will increase the likelihood that they will taste Thai food again. The Thai government wants foreign consumers to experience an authentic taste through various programs held by the Thai government. As a party with the ultimate power in promoting its gastro diplomacy, determines several actors who will later promote halal food according to their predetermined strategies.

Sari (2021) outlines that Thailand's initiative to expand its halal gastro diplomacy to Indonesia began in 2018 when the Thai government saw an opportunity to fill the gap left by Indonesia's inability to satisfy its own domestic halal product needs. Firmansyah and Pandansari (2021) said that Indonesia is more of a "stamp" for finished products than an active halal food producer. Indonesia's shortage has become an opportunity for Thailand to expand the reach of its halal industry through targeted gastro diplomacy to Indonesia. There are six strategies carried out by Thailand in promoting their halal food products in Indonesia, namely: (1) opening Thai restaurants; (2) exporting Thai authentic fast food; (3) conducting

food and cultural festivals; (4) facilitating chefs with certifications; (5) utilizing media to publish the information about the newly-opened restaurant's openings; (6) enhancing relations with the Indonesian public through the embassy.

Through the first strategy, namely opening Thai restaurants, there are as many as 13 Thai SELECT certified restaurants in Indonesia, 11 of which have successfully received halal certification from the Indonesian government. The number of Thai Select restaurants that have been certified halal shows that Thailand is serious about using halal food to pamper Indonesian consumers with the taste of the food they offer. This is in line with the statement of the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a speech in Jakarta in 2019 that the role of the restaurant here will not only introduce delicious Thai food to thousands of new stomachs and persuade more people to visit Thailand, but can also subtly help deepen relations with other countries.

The same thing can also be said about the second effort for food exports. With such a rigorous certification process through the Thai SELECT Product, combined with the halal certification provided by The Halal Standard Institute of Thailand, Thailand is serious about marketing its halal food products. This strategy also fulfills another gastro diplomacy goal of Thailand, namely increasing exports of food-related products in a country.

Table 1. List of the Halal-certified Thai SELECT Restaurants in Indonesia

No	Name	Address
1.	TAMNAK THAI (Thai SELECT Classic)	Menteng Central, Lanta 1 JL. HOS Cokroaminoto, Menteng, Jakarta.
2	TOM TOM (Thai SELECT Signature)	Grand Indonesia Mall, Lantai 5, West Mall, JI, MH. Thamrin, Jakarta.
3	SUAN THAI RESTAURANT (Thai SELECT Classic)	Jl. Cideng Timur No.58, Jakarta.
4.	Coca Suki (Thai SELECT Classic)	BRI Center Park, Lt.8, Jl. Jend. Sudirman Kav, 44-46, Jakarta.
5.	THAI ALLEY (Pacific Place) (Thai SELECT Classic)	Jl. Jend Sudirman No. 52-53, Level 5, Jakarta Selatan.
6.	THAI STREET (Lippo Mall Kemang) (Thai SELECT Classic)	Jalan Pangeran Antasari No.36 Lippo Mall Kemang, Jakarta Selatan, Daerah Khusus Ibukota Jakarta.

7.	THAI STREET (Plaza Senayan) (Thai SELECT Classic)	Plaza Senayan Lt.LG Blok DB No.24, Jl. Asia Afrika No.RT.1, RT.1/RW.3, Gelora, Kecamatan Tanah Abang, Kota Jakarta Pusat, Daerah Khusus Ibukota Jakarta.
8.	Thai Street (Setiabudi one) (Thai SELECT Classic)	Sentra Mulia, No.Kav 62, 12920, Jl. H. R. Rasuna Said No.18, Setiabudi, Kota Jakarta Selatan, Daerah Khusus Ibukota Jakarta.
9.	Crab Paradise	Kompleks Green Ville Blok BK No. 1, Jalan Raya Ratu Kemuning, Kb. Jeruk, Kota Jakarta Barat, Daerah Khusus Ibukota Jakarta.
10.	The Jittlada	Jl. M. H. Thamrin, RT.1/RW.5, Menteng, Kec. Menteng, Kota Jakarta Pusat, Daerah Khusus Ibukota Jakarta.
11.	Thai Street (Tunjungan Plaza 6)	Tunjungan Plaza 6, Lantai 5, Jl. Embong Malang No.32-36, Kedungdoro, Tegalsari, Kota Surabaya.

Source: Thai SELECT (2022)

The third effort is conducting food and cultural festivals. According to Zhang (2015), this strategy is the most widely used in gastro diplomacy campaigns. Through this event, the Thai government wants to introduce the image of Thai food that can be enjoyed by everyone, without exception. This is in line with Thailand's goal of promoting halal food in Indonesia, namely the desire of all Indonesian people, most of whom are Muslims. Next, the Thai government has also conducted festivals for the Indonesian public for the past three years (2018-2020). This program collaborates between the Tourism Authority of Thailand and the Thai Embassy in Indonesia. Unfortunately, in 2020 the Thai Festival will not be held due to the high transmission rate of COVID-19 in Indonesia. It remains to be seen whether the festivals will resume in the future.



Table 2. List of Food Festivals hosted by Thailand in Indonesia

No.	Nama Festival	Tempat	Tanggal
1.	Thai Festival 2018	Emporium Pluit Mall, Jakarta	6-8 April 2018
2.	Thai Festival 2019	Emporium Pluit Mall, Jakarta	5-7 April 2019
3.	Potluck Festival 2019	Perpustakaan Nasional Republik Indonesia, Jakarta	16 Oktober 2019

Source: Royal Thai Embassy Jakarta (2019)

The fourth effort about providing certification to the chefs consists of training and issuing certificates for workers (chefs) from origin to destination countries and teaching for foreign publics. In the aspect of training and certification of workers, the Government of Thailand has performed its role well. Because every Thai SELECT restaurant in Indonesia, the chef is a certified workforce who understands the standardization of authentic Thai dishes.

The fifth strategy is through the media. The Thai government issued the publication of restaurant openings through their official website, <http://www.thaiselect.com/>, and in 2018 the Thai government facilitated the mobilization of their consumers by releasing the Thai SELECT application that can be downloaded for iOS and Android. The Thai government is also trying to share recipes and cook their food through the "DITP Select" YouTube channel.

In the last strategy, namely opinion-making and improving relations, the Thai government capitalizes on H.E. Songphol Sukchan's role as the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Thailand in Indonesia. In the context of halal gastro diplomacy, he places his position on the Indonesian market as the embodiment of Thailand to Indonesia, where the majority are Muslim. This effort is related to the opinion leader strategy described by Zhang (2015). According to him, the opinion leader strategy is related to public figures to increase public credibility and knowledge about food. In this case, the Thai Ambassador to Indonesia collaborated with non-governmental parties in Indonesia to show that Thai cuisine, especially halal ones, is very close to Indonesians.

## **Glocalization and Thailand's halal gastro diplomacy**

Why does Thailand, a country with a majority non-Muslim population, bother creating a halal-based gastro diplomacy strategy? We can explain this in terms of glocalization, a combination of terms from globalization and localization. In essence, this concept is a derivative of globalization and emphasizes how its impacts also change the behavior of actors at the domestic level.

However, first, we need to understand globalization and how it gave rise to the halal trend. In this case, we can use the arguments of Mattova (2009) to explain how globalization can change today's human perception of an object. Globalization, according to Mattova, is driven by the attraction of objective needs (not influenced by human decisions) such as nature, geographical conditions, and biological needs and subjective needs (influenced by human decisions) such as freedom and aesthetics. In this framework of thought, the advent of halal culinary as a global trend is a cross between an objective need (food) that meets a subjective need (religious affiliation). This linkage is also driven by the intensification of human interaction and information technology that conflates territorial boundaries. Finally, another subjective need emerges, namely the economic need for countries that detect the potential benefits of these needs. This can explain the widespread trend of halal throughout the world.

However, globalization itself is not a single occurrence and is not experienced by all countries uniformly from time to time. Social life is a reality that is constantly undergoing transformation and reconfiguration. In Swyngedouw (2004) idea, globalization has a two-way process. First, it does spread global issues and trends to the domestic order. However, on the other hand, globalization also allows national actors to show their characteristics in international forums. On an ongoing basis, the local context is projected at the global level; on the other hand; global values are continuously translated into local contexts.

By Robertson (1994), this two-way process is called glocalization. The argument put forward by Robertson is that globalization does not create uniformity but also creates cultural pockets, each of which can highlight its characteristics amid globalization. Robertson sees that globalization can be translated into local-style policies that give color to the meaning of globalization in one place compared to another. This is what causes there to be differences in style between one country and another in responding to global trends, including, in this case, the halal culinary trend.

If we relate the stage of development of Thailand's halal industry and how glocalization occurs, then Thailand's failure to penetrate the Middle East market in the era before 1949 was the beginning of Thailand's exposure to the reality of international trade. In subsequent periods, Thailand adjusted the reality of the exposure through many actions such as creating CICOT, HSTC and HSIT as institutions that supervise the development of the halal industry there. Let's look at it through the lens of glocalization.

These efforts are a form of Thailand's adaptation of the increasing demand for halal culinary in the country while preparing to meet the challenges of meeting demand abroad. Programs such as Thai SELECT, which were originally used to promote the richness of Thai

cuisine, have also slowly adapted to capture the halal market abroad.

Based on the principle of glocalization, the phenomenon of globalization does not always have to lead to Westernisation. Some countries with specific advantages can use globalization to create a unique fusion of increasing flows of goods and services with their local wisdom and rich traditions. What Thailand does in its gastro diplomacy activities reflects this. Instead of being uprooted by the halal trend, the culinary characteristics of Thailand are even more amplified by its ability to frame its culinary wealth with a new public diplomacy approach.

## Conclusion

Based on several discussions above, we can conclude that the practice of gastro diplomacy can be viewed from various perspectives. One of them is the perspective of globalization, which investigates how interactions between people can change our perception of objective and subjective needs and how linking these two needs creates new modes of activity. From the above article, we can conclude that globalization permeates localities by changing our perception of needs. Halal food, which was originally only a religious rule that must be obeyed by the world's Muslims, eventually evolved as an economic opportunity for countries, including Thailand, which incidentally is a non-Muslim majority, to create a diplomatic strategy to enhance its brand in this contemporary era.

From this paper, the authors have also proven that each country has a unique approach to profit from the momentum of globalization. Through the Thailand case study, we can see that so far, countries that have a comparative advantage in the culinary field can also respond to globalization in their ways, which suit their domestic cultural features. Responding to the high demand from the global trend of halal tourism, Thailand has slightly adjusted its gastro diplomacy strategy towards the halal aspect. This also improves the image of those already popular with sex tourism. Uniquely, this halal gastro diplomacy has also made them successful in gaining markets in other countries despite not being a Muslim-majority country.

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