

Gastrodiplomacy in Tourism: ‘Capturing Hearts and Minds through Stomachs’

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Abstract *Gastrodiplomacy, the strategic use of food as a powerful tool for achieving diplomatic goals, is linked well to tourism, and the concepts function symbiotically. Like soft power and cultural diplomacy, gastrodiplomacy is present through tourism which is catalysed by the country’s international diaspora, ethnic restaurants, and food festivals. Considering the mounting academic interest towards tourism in gastrodiplomacy, this paper examines the role of national tourism promotional campaigns as the most relevant, yet unaddressed channel for the articulation of a country’s gastrodiplomacy. The findings of this study confirm that, if used effectively, government-led tourism campaigns are significant as a collective venue in which to introduce, explain and promote a country’s national cuisine to foreign publics. This paper examines the pitfalls of India’s national tourism campaign in terms of its capability to communicate the country’s immense latent potential to tourists and recommends a strategic model for the future of Indian gastrodiplomacy.*

Keywords: *Incredible India, Content Analysis, Food Diplomacy, Soft Power*

INTRODUCTION

Food as an indispensable element of humanoid existence has continuously played a significant role in international affairs (Gale, 2008). It has been used as a way to display power, national attributes, plurality, multi-ethnic cultures and as an inevitable attraction of tourism. Tourism plays a vital role in exposing the local culture’s own culinary practises, further serving as an attraction which can slowly become an international brand for a country. Food and culture bring people together to create familiarity and empathy. Indeed, this could often be helpful for those unexplored or misrepresented developing countries as it appeals to people’s hearts and minds (Hussin, 2018).

Relevant to all, food and tourism are now being widely discussed for the significance of their geopolitical encounters (Nair, 2017). Zhang (2015, p. 570) connected cuisine to “what is referred to as soft-power or a public diplomacy tool which has been recognised in the diplomatic practices of different countries since ancient times” primarily through trades. Gastrodiplomacy, also known as culinary diplomacy, is a transdisciplinary concept initially put forth by Rockower

and Chapple-Sokol in the early 2000s. Within the broad spectrum of public diplomacy and the specific area of cultural diplomacy, gastrodiplomacy can be seen as an edible brand of a country’s foreign policy. The role of food in connecting people and culture through the dining experience, operated through the framework of tourism, can be a pragmatic dais for cultural strategy. Rockower (2011, p. 125) has suggested it as the “easiest way to win hearts and minds is through the stomach”. Both of these terms, culinary diplomacy and gastrodiplomacy, are commonly used interchangeably. However, critiques like Chapple-Sokol (2013) differentiate them as private and public based on the mode of action.

In this respect, a culinary diplomacy is a proper tool for public diplomacy by way of connecting government-led activities to the public or other members of government, that is government to government (G2G), such as via food expositions. Conversely, gastrodiplomacy functions through people to people (P2P) connections, as it occurs behind closed doors in line with Rockower’s (2014) observations.

Suntikul (2019), in her seminal work *Gastrodiplomacy in Tourism*, conceptualises the connections between tourism, food and gastrodiplomacy by pointing out the inevitable role

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of tourism in the articulation of gastrodiploacy. According to Suntikul, gastrodiploacy is “the realm of policies and practices by which both states and non-state actors seek to engender positive associations with a national brand among foreign publics, using the channels through which tourists or potential tourists come into contact with the national

cuisine” (p. 1077). Throughout this work, many channels of communication for gastrodiploacy in tourism practises are mentioned, such as national gastrodiploacy campaigns, local and overseas ethnic restaurants, ambassadorial programmes, events, and cuisine schools, which are described as the most influential (see Fig. 1).

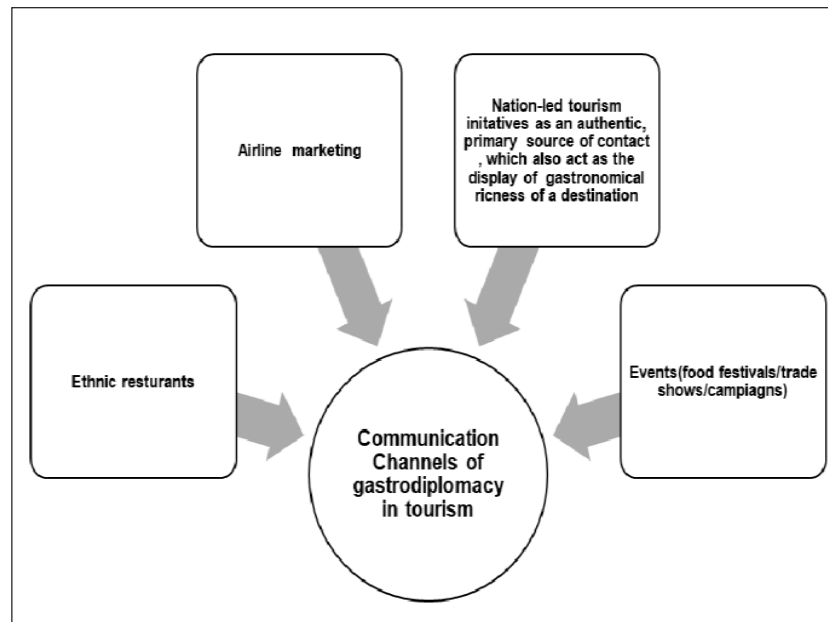


Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

This study adjoins one of the most critical, yet neglected, contact zones or channels (according to Suntikul’s original framework) for the articulation of gastrodiploacy through tourism, i.e. national tourism promotional campaigns, by exploring the role of tourism marketing materials, produced by state actors, as vital in the action levels of gastrodiploacy. Several researchers have identified the role of destination marketing by using gastronomy tourism (Boniface, 2003; Hall & Sharples, 2003; Hjalager & Richards, 2002; Okumus, & McKercher, 2007). Such studies have found that official tourism promotional campaigns lead by governments were more popular amongst tourists desiring an authentic experience (Boyne, Hall, and Williams, 2003; du Rand et al., 2003). As per Horng & Tsai (2009, p. 74), “the government tourism website has also become an important means of advertising the local cultures and cuisines of culinary tourism destinations”. Similarly, as per Wilson (2011, p. 99), “the prevalence of gastrodiploacy as a governmental tool is generally on the rise”. In the same way, Hussin (2018) found that Asian countries are more involved in gastrodiploacy than their European or American counterparts. Most notably, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, and South Korea are leading the charge, with various gastrodiploacy initiatives through tourism.

Although gastrodiploacy or culinary diplomacy has thus far had limited involvement in political, diplomatic and

theoretical conversations in India, several instances from diplomatic history and modern diplomatic exercises offer sufficient motivation for considering the role food can play in political relations, diplomatic communication, soft power and diplomatic transmission in India (Sudershan & Bhatt, 1995; Srinivas, 2007; Hannam & Diekmann, 2011; Dasgupta, 2013). The endorsement of countrywide cuisines seems to be an under-researched arena in the country, which is surprising considering India’s famous and globalised cuisine. In this context, this paper investigates the articulation of gastrodiploacy through the Incredible India Campaign (IIC), a national tourism promotional campaign.

This study empirically examines the articulation of gastrodiploacy in and through a national tourism promotional campaign — in this case, Incredible India (IIC) as the most influential point of contact between tourists and their destination. The research questions which guided this study are as follows:

RQ1: What is the role of state-led tourism campaigns as a tool of gastrodiploacy?

RQ2: How does IIC (the national tourism promotional campaign of India) communicate gastrodiploacy to potential tourists?

RQ3: How are culinary attractions institutionalised in IIC to influence perceptions of a nation, within the frameworks of tourism and public diplomacy?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Food, Tourism and Diplomacy: Role of the State

Food is an informal ambassador of a nation for attracting international populaces (and their governments) towards its socio-cultural and traditional context, in order to engender a favourable global reputation. Accordingly, gastrodiplomacy can be described as a sequence of actions through the dining experience of a nation's (and, in this case, a tourism destination's) cuisine to develop the diplomatic exchange of culture, values and identity, and to fortify perceptions about that country. Chapple-Sokol (2013) has indicated that unlike traditional government to government (G2G) diplomacy, gastrodiplomacy can work more efficiently through people to people (P2P) intervention. Tourism is the one principal display place for P2P intercession through the personalised encounter.

One of the notable differences between cultural diplomacy and gastrodiplomacy is in their respective levels of application. Unlike cultural diplomacy, gastrodiplomacy does not need an induced platform such as a cultural expo or show; it works through the nation's daily practices and tourism activities. Similarly, tourism works at a grassroots level between people, cultures and communications, in which food or national cuisine can be seen in two different ways according to its roles: firstly, as a motivation for visiting the country to enjoy the culinary practices, and secondly, as the cultural thread which connects a person, group or community to the target destination. Moreover, the ethical dimensions of culinary practise also reveal the culture and tradition of a nation and are thereby diplomatic in their actions. Significantly, however, previous studies of these applications fail to consider the stages of personal interaction or the know-how involved in influencing minds towards the target country.

For the past two decades, many countries have deployed gastronomy in their foreign policies to enhance international affairs (see Table 1). Many of these initiatives have directly or indirectly enhanced tourism revenue for their respective nations. For instance, Thailand's Global Thai campaign aims to widen the prospects of Thai cuisine by increasing the number of Thai restaurants abroad, and thus globalise the national cuisine (Suntikul, 2019; Wisdom, 2015). Global Thai "not only introduces deliciously spicy Thai food to thousands of new tummies and persuades more people to visit Thailand, but it could subtly help to deepen relations with other countries" (Rachel, 2013, p. 15). Similarly, Moskin (2003) noticed similar models of gastrodiplomacy

operating in South Korea's kimchi diplomacy. Taiwan's iteration of this model is called diplomacy by dim sum, and Malaysia named its initiative the Malaysian Kitchen for the world.

Interestingly, in all of these initiatives, governments linked tourism to localised contact zones to allow an international audience to experience food for a "dual-purpose – the idea of pleasing the palate while at the same time improving political affairs – [which] lies at the core of any effort in the realm of gastrodiplomacy" (Wilson, 2013, p. 15). The Peruvian gastrodiplomacy strategy differs slightly from those of Asian countries, as it was formulated mainly to minimise negative perceptions of the country (Suntikul, 2019; Wilson, 2013). In Europe, France is utilising the popularity of French gastronomic tourism in their diplomacy by creating cities of Gastronomy.

Accordingly, this study argues that the introduction of and familiarisation with a country's cuisine is the initial stage of efficient gastrodiplomacy. This introduction can be created through a country's international cultural diaspora, foreign restaurants, gastrodiplomacy campaigns, special events or tourism. Tourism alone can be a crucial vector of interest and acceptance through the empathy created during the planning stages and further developed throughout the visit. According to Suntikul (2019, p. 1072), "tourism can be seen as both beneficiary and instrument of gastrodiplomacy campaigns, [and] it is also both beneficiary and instrument of the positive national brands towards which such campaigns strive".

From a tourism perspective, gastrodiplomacy can be placed under the much broader framework of destination marketing due to its creation of a positive connection between food, tourism, culture, and specific provincial characters (Okumus et al., 2007). As with any kind of advancement or showcasing concerning the travel industry, an inquiry is necessary to determine how much accentuation ought to be given to a target country's culinary attractions. While the travel industry has received increasing consideration, further inquiry into culinary attractions within the industry uncovers different conclusions about the job of advancement and promotion for culinary traveller preferences.

Notwithstanding, there has been very little, if any, exploration on the issue of how to make the best 'use' of a given destination's administration of the travel industry site, especially concerning the nation's culinary interests. Developing nations, such as BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), must identify and channel their culinary attractions as a facet of cultural diplomacy using their national websites (Dahiya & Duggal, 2020).

Food as Brand: Why India?

Since Indian cuisine is as diverse as its culture, geography and communities, Indian food has become "a marker of

identity; of caste, of class, of family, purity, kinship, tribe affiliation, parity, lineage, religious group, ethnic group, and increasingly of secular group identification” (Srinivas, 2007, p. 85). In anthropological studies, Indian food offers a significant pathway of cross-cultural interactions which constructs identities through the socio-cultural dimensions of dining patterns. Manisha Bhasin (the Senior Executive Chef for the ITC Maurya hotel) has observed that “international

tourists have a limited idea of Indian food. Unlike other countries, the specifications of Indian food change every 100 kilometres and with each region, community, and ethnic household kitchen” (India Today, 2012, p. 1). This diversity demonstrates India’s untapped potential as a gastronomic tourist destination. These unusual culinary varieties are a powerful diplomatic tool to eliminate the current stereotypification of a country (Hassin, 2018).

Table 1: Comparative Analysis of Gastrodiplomacy Strategies

Country	Gastrodiplomacy Programme	Strategies	Comparative Study and Analysis of India’s Gastrodiplomacy
Malaysia	Malaysian Kitchen for the World	● Promoting Malaysia’s multi-ethnic cuisine as a fusion of Chinese, Indian and Malaysian. ● Promotes Malaysia’s Peranakan cuisine. ● Global food fairs and Chef programme.	<i>Strengths</i> ● Globalised Indian foods; popularity and diversity. ● Omnipresent Indian diaspora. ● Widespread Indian ethnic restaurants. ● Fusion and derived cuisines due to cross-cultural interactions. <i>Weaknesses</i> ● An inadequate effort from the government to utilise the power of Indian cuisine. ● Lack of adequate strategy. ● Pitfalls in overcoming the potential bottlenecks for tourism development. ● Lack of gastrodiplomacy programmes and schemes.
Thailand	Global Thai programme The Food Basket of Asia	● Thai Select certification programme for ethnic Thai restaurant overseas. ● Thai Chef works visa initiatives.	
Peru	“Cocina Peruana para el Mundo” – Peruvian Cuisine for the World	● Internet and celebrity promotions. ● UNESCO inscription for Peruvian food.	
Japan	Love around the world	● Ethnic restaurants abroad. ● Enhance production of Japanese food products – Rakuten global market. ● Foodex Japanese festival.	
South Korea	Kimchi Diplomacy Global Hansik Campaign	● Both domestic and international activities using celebrities, chefs and idols. ● Vigorous promotion through media.	
Taiwan	Dim Sum Diplomacy	● Promote ethnic restaurants abroad. ● Increase exports of Taiwan food.	
France	The network of Cities of Gastronomy	● UNESCO inscribed Gastronomic Meal of the French.	
Italy	Worldwide Week of Italian Cuisine	● Event-oriented strategy.	

Compared to other countries such as Thailand, South Korea, Taiwan or Malaysia, India has many advantages. Its widespread cultural diaspora, established cuisine, omnipresent ethnic restaurants, fusion foods, and diversity make the country exceptional. Moreover, India’s two staple foods, idli and samosa, are included on the World Food Day list. Most of India’s above-mentioned Asian counterparts do not have these advantages, though they have been steadily creating them through strategic gastrodiplomacy campaigns.

Tettner and Kalyoncu (2013) and Civitello (2011) emphasised India’s gastrodiplomacy through its ancient historical food trades and postcolonial history by pointing out some derived foods, such as pork vindaloo (an Indian dish derived from the Portuguese dish Carne de vinha d’alhos). Likewise, Rockower (2011, p. 1) noted that cross-cultural contact is

highly influential in branding Indianess globally, stating that “India is a natural spot to conduct gastrodiplomacy (Samosa Diplomacy), as India’s mark on global cuisine is profound”. Defrancq (2018) also recognised the lack of push from Indian governmental bodies to promote its cuisine globally. Thussu (2013) underlined the importance of promoting Indian cuisine to enhance the country’s soft power. Scholars such as Thussu (2013) have identified Indian cuisine as the most influential soft power for the country. Similarly, Tharoor (2011, p. 1), the famous Indian orator and parliamentarian, once said: “today in Great Britain – the isle that once considered India to be her crown jewel – Indian curry houses employ more workers in the U.K. than the iron, steel, coal and shipbuilding industries combined”.

India's lack of a valid diplomatic strategy is widely acknowledged. Rockower (2011, p. 1) noted that "a gastrodiplomacy campaign could help to raise Indian brand awareness, spur tourism and introduce global diners to the authentic Indian palate. A bit of digestive diplomacy is just the dish to help pique global interest and appetites in the new India". In this context, it is

beneficial to review India's gastrodiplomacy against Suntikul's (2019) concept of tourism in gastrodiplomacy. Compared to other countries such as Thailand, South Korea, Taiwan or Malaysia, India has many advantages. Its widespread cultural diaspora, established cuisine, omnipresent ethnic restaurants, fusion foods, and diversity make the country exceptional

Table 2: Applied Data Triangulation

Data Sources	Limitations	Delimitations
Guidebooks	• The possibility of outdated information about facilities travels requirements and sites. • Author bias or the use of the author's own 'cultural spectacles' to view/understand/ interpret India culture.	• Use of most recent version, to search for the current issue. • Selection of guidebooks from well-known and famous publishers; reader reviews can act as a critical analysis tool. • Critical evaluation of data incorporated and reflexive approach to examine the information.
Brochures & photographs	• Not peer-reviewed or edited. • Use of age-old representations or continuous use of the same kind of visual representation for years.	• Careful selection of tour operators via awards, readers reviews, etc. • Critical evaluation of the contents. • Included modality, contrast.
Videos and documentaries	• Author's bias. • Mainly for entertainment purposes, questioning the authenticity of representations. • The interference of political/personal/broadcaster bias. • May not provide an accurate or fair portrayal of a subject under discussion while describing another culture.	• Selection of available, relevant documentaries. • Use of viewer ratings/comments.
Web-based promotional materials (virtual tours, e-brochures)	• The absence of a strict model of quality assurance of information such as peer review or publisher's analysis. • Not always reliable for academic purposes.	• Use of authentic websites such as the Tourism website of the Government of India for gathering information.

METHODOLOGY

This paper communicates the conceptualisations of Suntikul (2019) regarding gastrodiplomacy and tourism, which show various channels of communication between food, tourism, and diplomacy (see Fig. 1). This study attempts to introduce an additional channel, namely state-oriented tourism campaigns, to this framework in order to understand the extent of government authorities' efforts to portray the clear image of a country and its cuisine(s) to a global audience (tourists) by creating and encouraging connections, and using contact zones through which tourists or potential tourists can interact with Indian cuisine. According to its research questions, this study follows a qualitative case study approach to achieve an in-depth, rich understanding of the context and draws data from the secondary resources of the Incredible India Campaign. Baxter & Jack (2008, p. 544) define the qualitative case study "as an approach to research that facilitates the exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources. This ensures that the issue is not explored through one lens, but rather a variety of lenses which allows for multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood". For that reason, five main

types of tourism marketing materials circulating through the IIC were selected: 1) IIC web-contents, 2) online brochures, 3) eBooks, 4) videos, and 5) traditional brochures and leaflets. This data triangulation (Decrop, 1999) helps to minimise the potential weakness of any single type of marketing materials (see Table 2 for the strengths and weaknesses of each type). Moreover, it is vital to consider the different types of tourists according to their preferences for engaging with either the traditional or electronic version of the IIC.

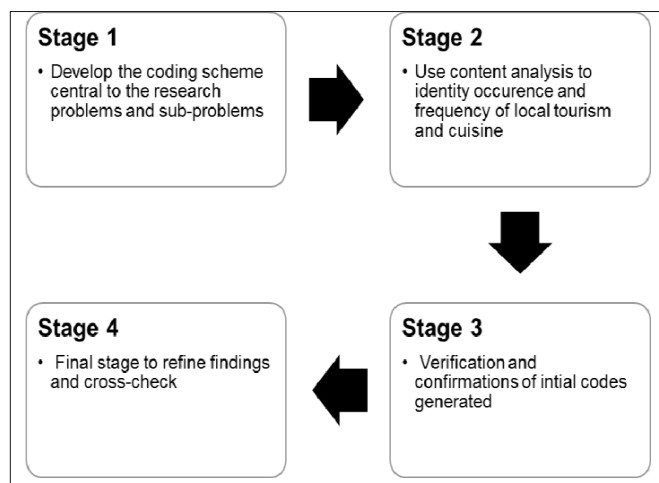
Sampling

Purposive sampling techniques were incorporated to choose more productive and context-specific materials to ensure quality over quantity. Purposive sampling is widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest" (Palinkas et al., 2016, p. 533). Selecting relevant sampling criteria is critical for reducing any researcher bias in purposive sampling, as the choices are made solely by the inquirer (Patton, 2002). Thus, due to the copious volume of marketing materials available, three sampling criteria

were implemented in this study to obtain context-specific, information-rich samples: 1) communication of national cuisine, 2) channelising local, regional or ethnic cuisine, and 3) an introduction to dining culture and food-related activities and materials. These criteria were developed by Horng and Tsai (2010) in order to understand the efficiency of governments in conveying a country's culinary potential through their promotional activities.

Data Analysis

Content analysis is a widely used data analysis technique for tourism and destination promotion (Choi et al., 2007; Echtner & Prasad, 2003; Hudson & Miller, 2005; Kemp & Dwyer, 2003), and for culinary tourism (Boyne & Hall, 2004; Boyne et al., 2003; Frochot, 2003; Okumus et al., 2007). To explore the articulation of gastrodiploacy through the IIC, this study also uses qualitative content analysis, "a technique for identifying and analysing the content of a given text, including its words, meanings, pictures, symbols, ideas, themes, or any message that it seems to communicate" (Neumann, 2003, p. 219). Following the principles of the content analysis model formed by Neumann (2003); Horng & Tsai (2010), a four-stage content analysis model was deployed (Fig. 2).



Source: Neumann, 2003

Fig. 2: Stages of Content Analysis

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Little is known about the gastrodiploacy initiatives of Indian governments apart from the Incredible India tiffin launch (Rockower, 2011). This may be due to the combined projects of cultural and heritage ministries, which are not focused on the gastronomy of India, treating it instead as one of the cultural attractions (Nair, 2018). Similarly, far too

little attention has been paid to the culinary tourism potential of India. Therefore, it is crucial to consider the competency of the national tourism promotion campaign (IIC) both in terms of tourism and the gastrodiploacy of India.

Communicating National Cuisine

This paper investigates the role of the national tourism promotional campaign as an efficient tool for the articulation of gastrodiploacy, and as the most relevant initial contact zone for expectant tourists before their visit (thereby creating familiarity with the destination). While there are many other channels of information available for travellers to understand more about their destination, including from non-state actors, government-led activities are often considered authentic resources on a location (Horng & Tsai, 2010). The culture of food, together with the agronomy of the ingredients, cooking style of the dishes, and traditions connected with the practice of eating it, are foundations of incredibly rich cultural heritage which can promote unity and generate constructive conversation. Ironically, the use of food for cultural reasons has focused mostly on nations and how nations should use their delicacies to create and maintain a positive brand image. In light of this apparent restriction, researchers have suggested that gastrodiploacy continue pursuing functions beyond nationalism. Throughout this context, it will be possible to create a tourism industry that leverages culinary cultures to foster productive conversations. This would involve people exploring a new culinary culture, and thus enrich the prospect of interaction with the other through this exploratory process. These activities would qualify as food culture sociology, which are exchange exercises between two or more cultures (Tettner & Kalyoncu, 2016).

The reviewed promotional materials offer an overview of the assortments and descriptions of regional cuisines, food cultures and archetypal foodstuffs. There is a dedicated section for food and cuisine under the experiences tab on the IIC website (IIC.org), which introduces the regional ethnic foods of almost 96 tourist destinations in India. Crucially, this can be considered a great effort to introduce the diverse forms of Indian cuisine. One might describe these endeavours as tender-minded public diplomacy, applied, not to persuade by diametrically endorsing gastrodiploacy, but somewhat more implicitly through arresting emotional connections (Rockower, 2012). In a sense, these introductory snippets are often helpful in demonstrating India's ancient, multicultural, or multi-ethnic heritage through gastronomy. They serve as an example of using "food to communicate culture in a public diplomacy context", as described by Rockower (2014, p. 13).

However, in respect to the diplomacy of food, the question is how effectively the state has positioned food as a strategic tool in the IIC and how profoundly or inimitably the state

binds to its “culture, history, or geography as cuisine” (Rockower, 2014, p. 13). At this juncture, the inspected promotional materials were found to be circulating the cultural, topographical, political, postcolonial, religious, and historical aspects of India through its gastronomy. Therefore, these cuisines can be considered, not merely an attraction, but instead a powerful weapon to demonstrate the uniqueness of India as a global home for all.

Overall, it is a great initiative to add a dedicated section of *Food and Cuisines* for each destination, as this will increase familiarisation which often leads to empathy towards a destination, an ultimate goal of gastrodiplomacy. However, when compared to the immense potential of India as a food tourism destination, this study contends that there is a level of incompetency in the IIC materials in conveying India's strengths to the foreign public. For instance, India should be ingenious in furthering their cultural delicacies found more often internationally. Indian street food never seems to travel to foreign taste buds, severely lacking in the myriad of recipes that local Indians cherish. Indian food is very much an informal but integral part of Indian public and cultural diplomacy; what is needed now is the more intensive use of gastrodiplomacy in public diplomacy campaigns.

On the other hand, this study also questions the effectiveness of the IIC as a gastrodiplomacy tool at the levels on which it is active. Arguably, the design and descriptions under ‘food and cuisine’ is informative, but tedious and brief for all destinations. As a consequence, one can cast doubt on the effectiveness of the IIC to properly position or communicate Indian cuisine as a tool of gastrodiplomacy, concerning capacity versus capability.

Channelling Local, Regional or Ethnic Cuisine

Hornig & Tsai (2010, p. 78) note that “the food and spices grown locally are the keys to the successful promotion of food culture”. Tourist regions with available local or ethnic cuisine is a fantastic combination of tourism and gastrodiplomacy (Tellstrom et al., 200). The IIC website presents the food and cuisine attractions alongside each destination, which seems to be beneficial in promoting the culture and heritage of India. For example, Hyderabad, the regime of Nawab is associated with Hyderabad biriyani, is presented with textual and symbolic narration (IIC-Hyderabad). Similarly, Kolkata biriyani is mentioned:

The Kolkata biriyani came into being when exiled Nawab Wajid Ali Shah of Lucknow had to move to Bengal and brought the Awadhi biriyani with him. With reduced riches, and yet an urge to keep traditions alive, the Awadhi biriyani changed with the addition of readily available and cheaper potatoes, to replace some

amount of meat. Moreover, thus, the Kolkata biriyani was born. The addition of potatoes can only be seen in Kolkata biriyani’ (IIC- Kolkata).

This kind of narration provides a better idea of the richness of Indian culture. For some places, like Goan and Delhi, cuisines are being projected along with their colonial legacies. The diplomacy of the past has been channelled through the food, which is often successful in attracting the colonised in search of their colonial nostalgia. The combination of the background image and foodscapes are unusual.

Delhi's famed cuisine has evolved as a result of centuries of different ruling empires and the confluence of varied cultures in the capital. Be it the rich Mughlai or Frontier Cuisine, age-old eateries and street food of Old Delhi, or the Chinese food vans and new age speciality restaurants, Delhi is a foodie's paradise' (IIC-Delhi).

Literally “milk with dates” in Persian, Sheer Korma is a festival vermicelli pudding prepared by Muslims on Eid ul-Fitr. Vermicelli are fried in clarified butter. Then milk (sheer) is added, and the vermicelli is allowed to cook further. As the mixture thickens, sugar and dates are added along with any other dried fruits’ (IIC-Hyderabad).

These statements show the cross-cultural influence on India's traditional cuisines, and these derived cuisines are crucial in the globalisation of food culture as the “most effective cultural diplomacy takes national traits and cultures, distils them to their most tangible forms, and communicates them to audiences abroad” (Rockower, 2014, p. 13). More often, this creates a homely ambience for tourists from the mentioned countries by creating an emotional connection; for example, Portuguese tourists visiting Goa will recognise the influences of their home culture. Furthermore, Kim et al. (2009, p. 424) add “local food and beverages on holiday also play an important role in introducing tourists to new flavours and different traditions at destinations”.

Additionally, the campaign has been more focused on the historical and cultural contexts of local cuisine, attempting to connect the local cuisines such as Idly, Rasam and Sambar with their historical and nutritional significance. As per the IIC website narration,

From Idlis (steamed rice cakes) to Dosa (crepe-like pancakes), Sambar (spicy lentil stew) to Rasam (world's oldest consommé), South India cuisine is a tradition built on a foundation of Ayurveda. One of many firsts here, steaming as a culinary technique evolved, and that is how the steamed Idlis and Pithas were conceived.

Interestingly, a collaboration of culinary attractions with Ayurveda (popular medical tourism aspects) was found to

nurturing the gastrodiploacy contact zones. However, beyond these descriptions, it should be promoted on an international platform, to develop the diplomacy of food to attract minds and souls (Nye, 2014).

Introduction to Dining Culture and Educating Foreign Publics

The food culture of a destination demonstrates how the ingredients are cultivated, how these foods are prepared and in which manner (traditional ways) it is consumed. Moreover, the exercise of gastrodiploacy works when the dining culture of a destination is communicated to the foreign publics (in this case, tourists) in a diffused manner by promoting or introducing the customary ways of national culinary culture. Then, the designated channels should do these functions adequately to create favourable outcomes. In this way, national tourism marketing activities can be considered as a great venue to introduce or explain a country's dining culture. Here, the term explains, is very relevant for countries like India, while Indianess is often maligned as otherness (Nair, 2017). For instance, Indians commonly eat with bare hands, and this tradition attracts both appreciation and criticism all over the world. As mentioned by Rockower (2014, p. 14), gastrodiploacy is not merely the promotion of food products, but also "remains a more holistic approach to raise international awareness of a country's edible nation brand through the promotion of its culinary practices and cultural heritage". Thus, this study examines how effectively the IIC communicates its dining culture towards a much broader international audience.

There is some limited evidence to support this practice. For example, IIC (website) details the traditional feast of Kerala (Sadya) as,

The traditional vegetarian feast of Kerala. Usually served as lunch, it consists of parboiled pink rice, side dishes, savouries, pickles and desserts spread out on a plantain leaf. Tradition insists that the pointed end of the leaf points to the left of the seated guest. Rice is served on the lower half of the leaf" (IIC-Kerala).

Likewise,

Kashmiri Waswan is a traditional 36-course dinner, and its preparation is considered an art. All the dishes are meat-based and slightly sticky. Kashmiris consider it the core of their culture' (IIC-Srinagar).

However, the findings indicate that the Indian authorities are not fulfilling the potential of its diverse cuisine. For example, the Waswan could have been more effectively communicated with an accompanying image. Similarly, out of the ninety-seven destinations portrayed on the IIC

website, very limited dining practises are highlighted; this is an unanticipated outcome of this study. This is one of the prime examples of a lack of strategic planning.

Solleh (2018) has asserted that these informative descriptions are beneficial to 'middle powers', since the international public has minimal knowledge about the presented culture or, worse, are holding viewpoints framed by destructive stereotyping. Therefore, promotional literature could be seen as an excellent venue for capturing the attention of tourists and educating them about the culture of their destination (Hussin, 2018). Moreover, familiarisation through promotional activities creates opportunities for understanding (especially for developing nations) those whose culture, place and people are frequently evaluated unfavourably against hegemonic Western culture. Any form of diplomacy, such as cultural, soft or gastrodiploacy, provides a more powerful way to eliminate misconceptions about a destination (Nair, 2017). As Hussin (2018) has mentioned, Malaysian gastrodiploacy projects were found to have minimised several misconceptions about the land, by presenting its culture to the foreign public. The governments of Thailand, Indonesia, South Korea, and Peru are actively promoting these schemes.

However, this study also underlines the inadequacy of India's gastrodiploacy activities through tourism. Strugar (2015, p. 4) has suggested the "efforts made by the Indian government have been insufficient, but there have existed initiatives oriented" towards promotion through gastronomy. This paper thus lists the identified weaknesses of India's gastrodiploacy in channelling its scope to the foreign public or foreign governments, to persuade them to exploit gastrodiploacy better and achieve even more favourable outcomes.

There is significant potential for India to boost its already well-known gastronomic reputation and endorse the infinite cultural diversity that all its states can boast, permitting others to benefit from how the government depicts the country (Rockower, 2014; Strugar, 2015). Thus, this study has identified the drawbacks and potential of the IIC as a contact zone of gastrodiploacy. It is also worth noting that du Rand et al. (2003) and Henderson (2009) have mentioned the importance of announcing food festivals and events through an authentic source to communicate a destination's food culture. However, in the selected IIC promotional materials, there was no mention of any food festivals or events.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of national tourism promotional campaigns in articulating the gastrodiploacy of India to the rest of the world. These study

findings underline the considerable potential for a national tourism promotional campaign as a display port for a country's gastronomic power to attract international hearts and minds. The findings of this study substantiated gastrodiplomacy as a powerful channel or contact zone for both people to people and government to government diplomacy. Suntikul (2019), through her seminal work *Gastrodiplomacy in Tourism*, explores the immense potential of tourism for channelling a nation's gastrodiplomacy effectively. For Suntikul (2019), gastrodiplomacy is the domain of policies and practices through which both states and non-state actors attempt to develop strong relationships with a national brand among foreign audiences, using channels within which travellers or potential tourists come into contact with national cuisine. She further identified three main zones through which tourists come into interpersonal contact with a nation's cuisines. However, this conceptual framework fails to address the most central zone of communication in tourism, namely social tourism promotional activities such as national campaigns. Even though both state and non-state actors are significant in marketing a destination, government-led official tourism websites or activities are considered a more authentic source of information compared to industry-scripted advertisements (Boniface, 2003; Hall & Sharples, 2003; Hjalager & Richards, 2002; Ignatov & Smith, 2006; Okumus et al., 2007; Horng & Tsai, 2010).

Accordingly, the current findings add to a growing body of literature on tourism and gastrodiplomacy by positioning a national promotional campaign as the most critical zone of contact in the communication of gastrodiplomacy through tourism. This is a significant finding for many developing nations attempting to enhance their wealth yet have untapped tourism attractions in the offering of mouth-watering foodscapes. Traditional, authentic cuisines are an edible part of each culture of a destination, which further act as a fantastic interaction point to generate familiarity, empathy, and affinity, with such familiarity often influential in erasing any international conceptual fallacies about that nation (Hussin, 2018).

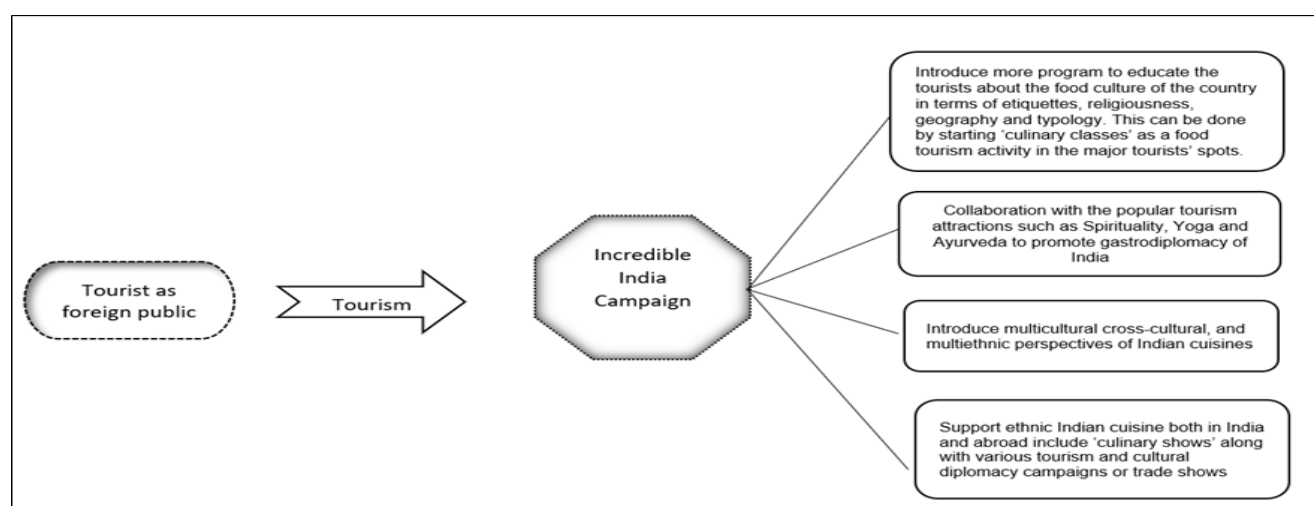
Furthermore, this paper analysed India's national tourism promotional campaign, Incredible India, to understand its role in promoting gastrodiplomacy. India, unlike its Asian counterparts, including Thailand, Malaysia, Taiwan, and South Korea, has not been actively engaged in gastrodiplomacy initiatives (Strugar, 2015). Nonetheless, the country has a globally recognised, widespread and established culinary network in the form of ethnic restaurants, the cultural diaspora, and World Food Days. Indian cuisine is one of the most diverse, regionalised, religious foodscapes

in the world. Rockower (Rockower, 2011), the pioneer of gastrodiplomacy, opined that India is a natural place to conduct gastrodiplomacy (Samosa Diplomacy), as India's global cuisine mark is powerful. This became India's pursuit for spice bounty that flavoured the European exploration age and sent indefatigable navigators cruising around the Cape of Good Hope to reach India's shores.

On the one hand, this study agrees with the views of Rockower (2012), Tharoor (2012), Thussu (2013), Struger (2015) and Nair (2017) regarding India's gastrodiplomacy potential. On the other hand, the outcomes of this study explore the effectiveness of the nation's strategy in utilising its capacity (capacity versus capabilities). The IIC is an excellent tool for communicating India's gastronomy to potential tourists who come in contact with the promotional materials, serving as a starting point for cultural diplomacy with the potential to communicate food culture and traditional dining practises and provide information about food festivals in the nation or abroad. Specifically, the IIC was designed to offer transparent, diverse, multi-ethnic, multicultural, and historical perspectives on Indian cuisines. Surprisingly, authorities have not fully utilised the opportunity to parade this diversity as a strength, instead opting to tediously explaining individual dishes.

However, the campaign could be more influential if it included more details, such as visual images of the dining arrangements and medicinal or religious perspectives. Similarly, it could be a great venue to explain the traditional foods, preparation, ingredients, and etiquettes, including how, when and where it is consumed. Dahiya & Duggal (2015) emphasise the importance of national marketing websites as information on traditional food/drinks, eating customs, food recipes, hygiene practices, food events, and restaurants shows along with pictures and videos if provided on the websites will surely be sufficient the information needs of culinary tourists across the country and stimulate them to make purchasing decisions. This would create better cross-cultural understandings for international tourists and potentially reduce their misunderstandings or increase their awareness of the nation (Hussin, 2018).

Some caveats must be noted regarding the present study, as it focused solely on the IIC, namely websites, brochures, images, and videos, and did not include any other source of government-instigated promotional activities. Thus, these findings are limited only to the IIC. Additionally, as per Rockower (2012, 2014), India's gastrodiplomacy exercise is much more multidisciplinary than those of other nations, as it is practised through the collaboration of different ministries such as tourism, cultural and international affairs.



(Source: Author)

Fig. 3: Proposed Model for Indian Gastrodiplomacy through Tourism

Therefore, more research is necessary to gain a better understanding of India's gastrodiplomacy specifically, through the inclusion of other ministries and relevant non-state actors. It would be interesting to compare the experiences of individuals through pre-visit and post-visit comments circulated through the official social media sites of the IIC, or reviews from websites such as Trip Advisor. Of course, many managerial implications have been identified and which are listed in the suggested gastrodiplomacy model for India (see Fig. 3).

DECLARATION

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