
**INDONESIA'S PUBLIC DIPLOMACY STRATEGY: DIGITAL MEDIA BUILDING
THE WONDERFUL INDONESIA CAMPAIGN NARRATIVE
FOR THE 2016-2025 PERIOD**

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Abstract

The transformation of public diplomacy in the digital age has prompted countries to utilize digital media as a strategic space for building their global image and perception. This study aims to analyze how narratives in the Wonderful Indonesia campaign are constructed as a practice of digital public diplomacy to shape the perceptions of international tourists. The approach used is qualitative with a constructivist paradigm, through observation of digital media content as well as a literature review of official documents, scientific publications, and tourism data. The analysis was conducted inductively by interpreting narrative patterns and symbolic meanings within the continuously produced digital content. The findings reveal an evolution of the narrative from a post-pandemic emphasis on safety toward tourism sustainability as a strategy to maintain global relevance. The construction of the "Safe and Responsible Indonesia" identity has proven instrumental in shaping positive perceptions and enhancing the trust of international tourists. These findings reinforce that public diplomacy operates through the production of meaning and symbolic interactions in the digital space. However, there is a challenge in the form of a gap between digital narratives and on-the-ground realities that could potentially affect credibility. This study concludes that the success of digital public diplomacy depends on consistency between narrative construction and actual implementation as the foundation for the sustainability of the nation's image.

Keywords: *Constructivism, Digital Public Diplomacy, Narrative Building, Wonderful Indonesia, Critical Analysis.*

INTRODUCTION

The transformation of public diplomacy in the digital era is driving a shift in state communication patterns toward more open global interactions.

Digital media is now the primary platform for interaction between states and the international public, fostering strategic cross-border communication. This situation places a state's image and perception as crucial factors in determining its legitimacy and position within the international system. In this context, Indonesia utilizes the Wonderful Indonesia campaign as a digital public diplomacy instrument to reach a global audience. This campaign not only functions as tourism promotion but also represents Indonesia's national identity and image (Dewi, 2023).

Studies on Wonderful Indonesia have developed through various studies that position it as a national tourism promotion instrument. Most previous research has focused on the effectiveness of promotion, communication strategies, and the use of digital media in message distribution. However, this approach remains limited because it has not yet thoroughly examined the process of meaning-making through public diplomacy narratives. The dimension of narrative as a social construct that shapes international public perception has not been a primary focus in previous academic analyses. Thus, there is an academic gap in understanding public diplomacy as a narrative practice that constructs meaning (Abelsa, 2025).

In this context, it is crucial to understand how narrative plays a role in public diplomacy practices in the era of global digital communication. Narratives function to organize collective experiences through the process of selecting and structuring meaning in international communication (Miskimmon et al., 2013). The constructivist approach emphasizes that national identities and interests are formed through social interactions and the construction of shared meaning (Wendt, 1992). Based on this, this study questions how narratives in the Wonderful Indonesia campaign are constructed through digital media. The analysis focuses on the narrative construction process as a mechanism for shaping perceptions of Indonesia as an international tourist destination.

This study aims to analyze narrative construction in the Wonderful Indonesia campaign through digital media as a practice of public diplomacy. This study views the campaign as a form of strategic state communication in building relationships with international audiences directly. Narrative, in this context, is understood as a primary tool in shaping meaning, image, and perceptions of Indonesia's national identity. This study argues that public diplomacy works through the construction of narratives that organize public understanding of global realities. Furthermore, digital media is positioned as

a distribution space for narratives that expand the reach and influence the interpretations of global audiences (Manor, 2019).

This research contributes to the study of international relations, particularly in understanding public diplomacy as a meaning-based communication practice. Theoretically, this study integrates a constructivist perspective with the concept of narrative building in the analysis of contemporary public diplomacy. Empirically, this study examines the Wonderful Indonesia campaign as a case study in the context of Indonesian digital public diplomacy. The findings of this study are expected to broaden the understanding of public diplomacy as a process of constructing meaning in global communication. Thus, this research is relevant in explaining the dynamics of international communication amidst increasingly complex digital technology developments.

METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative approach to analyze the phenomenon of digital public diplomacy in the context of contemporary international communication. A qualitative approach was chosen because it enables us to understand the meaning, symbols, and narrative construction in digital media-based global communication practices. This research is interpretive, focusing on analyzing the meanings contained in digital content as the primary object of study. The data used are secondary data obtained from various relevant sources, such as official documents and scientific publications. This approach is deemed appropriate for an in-depth study of narrative construction in the Wonderful Indonesia campaign (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Based on this approach, the object of this research is Indonesia through the Wonderful Indonesia campaign as a practice of public diplomacy in a global digital context. The research focuses on digital media content such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, officially published by the government. Data collection techniques were conducted through observation of digital content related to the Wonderful Indonesia campaign on these various platforms. Furthermore, this research utilized a literature review of official documents, journals, articles, and relevant publications. All data used is secondary data analyzed to understand narrative representation in digital public diplomacy (Manor, 2019).

In line with these data collection techniques, this study employed qualitative data analysis to process and interpret the data obtained. The analysis was conducted inductively by identifying patterns, themes, and meanings that emerged within the narratives of digital content. The analysis

process evolved along with ongoing data collection to deepen understanding of the phenomena studied. The analysis focused on the construction of narratives within digital content as a representation of Indonesian public diplomacy practices in the global space. This approach aims to understand how meaning and perception are shaped through digital narratives in international communication (Miskimmon et al., 2013).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study identifies narrative patterns in the Wonderful Indonesia campaign through a systematic analysis of official government digital media content. Data were collected from various platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, reflecting Indonesia's global communication strategy. Key findings indicate the construction of a new identity, the evolution of campaign narratives, and the strategic management of international public perception. The research findings are not only descriptive but also interpretive, utilizing constructivist and narrative-building perspectives (Miskimmon et al., 2013). These findings provide an analytical basis for Indonesia's digital public diplomacy, which functions as a practice of constructing meaning that continuously influences global perceptions.

Based on these findings, the discussion focuses on analyzing narrative as a primary instrument in Indonesia's public diplomacy practices in the digital era. The analysis integrates constructivist perspectives and the concept of narrative-building to understand how meaning is constructed in international communication. The discussion is systematically structured into several interrelated thematic sections that form a coherent argumentation. Each section examines a different aspect, from identity reconstruction to evaluating campaign effectiveness in the contemporary global context. The overall analysis is directed toward answering the research question: how narrative construction shapes perceptions in digital public diplomacy (Manor, 2019).

Reconstructing the Identity of "Safe & Responsible Indonesia"

The Wonderful Indonesia campaign demonstrates a post-pandemic narrative shift, emphasizing safety, cleanliness, and responsibility in various official digital content. Visual and text content showcases health protocols, managed destinations, and messages of trust aimed at international tourists. This pattern emerges consistently across various digital platforms and demonstrates the uniformity of government communication messages. This data can be visualized in a simple table showing the frequency of dominant narrative themes on each platform. These findings indicate a systematic

strategy in rebuilding Indonesia's image as a safe and trusted destination post-pandemic.

The presence of this visual content demonstrates that the security narrative in the Wonderful Indonesia campaign is conveyed not only through text but also through structured and consistent visual symbols in digital communications. Representations such as the use of health attributes, protocol monitoring, and the affirmation of safe travel standards demonstrate how public diplomacy messages are constructed multimodally to reinforce the intended meaning for global audiences. In this context, visuals function not as a complement, but as an integral part of the perception-building process that influences how the international public understands Indonesia's identity. This aligns with the view that meaning in global communication is formed through the repeated interaction of text, symbols, and visual representations (Miskimmon et al., 2013).

These findings can be analyzed through a constructivist perspective, which views national identity as a social construction in international interactions. Identity is not fixed but rather shaped through representations of meaning that are repeatedly produced in global communications. The "safe and responsible" narrative represents an active effort to reshape international perceptions of Indonesia. This strategy aligns with the view that meaning in international relations is constructed through symbolic interaction (Adler, 2013). Thus, public diplomacy serves as a tool to reconstruct a nation's identity through the production of targeted narratives.

The identity reconstruction in this campaign is not only responsive but also demonstrates strategic planning in the nation's communications. The narrative is used as an instrument to rebuild international public trust in the safety of Indonesian destinations. This emphasizes that a nation's identity is dynamic and can be shaped through a consistent communication strategy. This process demonstrates how meaning is constructed through the repetition of symbols and messages in the digital space. Overall, the Wonderful Indonesia campaign successfully rebuilt Indonesia's image as a safe nation in a post-pandemic global context.

Narrative Building Strategy from "Stay Safe" to "Sustainable Tourism"

The Wonderful Indonesia campaign narrative has evolved from the crisis phase to a more sustainability-oriented recovery phase. In the initial phase, the message focused on safety through slogans like "stay safe" and emphasized health protocols. Over time, the narrative evolved to promote "sustainable tourism," emphasizing sustainability and the quality of the travel

experience. To clarify these dynamics, this study compiled a comparison of content across time periods based on publication date, digital platform, and key messages systematically identified in official secondary data relevant to the analysis objectives of this study. This presentation is then summarized in a chronological table of narratives, allowing readers to trace shifts in themes, messaging strategies, and global context in a structured and easily verifiable manner.

This evolution demonstrates that narratives adapt to global dynamics and the changing needs of international audiences. The table shows that the crisis phase was dominated by security messages, while the recovery phase featured sustainability, quality experiences, and the normalization of increasingly open international mobility. This finding is consistent with digital public diplomacy literature, which emphasizes context-based message adaptation and the importance of narrative as an instrument for shaping public perception and trust across countries. Therefore, the chronological table serves not only a descriptive function but also an analytical one, as it helps link message changes to countries' strategies in responding to global tourism competition and evolving tourist expectations.

This strategy can be understood through the concept of narrative building, which emphasizes the role of narrative in shaping public interpretation. Narratives not only convey information but also guide how audiences understand certain realities within a global context. The selective selection of issues, symbols, and messages is carried out to construct the meaning desired by the country. This aligns with the finding that narrative is a strategic instrument in international politics (Miskimmon et al., 2017). Therefore, narrative building becomes a key mechanism for shaping perceptions through diplomatic communication.

The success of this campaign rests on the narrative's ability to adapt to the dynamically changing global context. The narrative's flexibility allows the message to remain relevant and competitive amidst the competitive international tourism industry. Narratives are not static, but rather evolve according to the situation and communication needs. This demonstrates that an effective communication strategy requires the ability to continuously adapt. Therefore, narrative building is at the heart of Indonesia's digital public diplomacy strategy in building its global image.

Digital Public Diplomacy in Managing Perceptions Amid Fierce Competition

Digital media has become a key platform for Indonesia's public diplomacy, distributing content that reaches a global audience. Interaction occurs through various forms of engagement, such as comments, likes, and shares, reflecting the international public's response. This level of interaction can be presented in a simple graph to demonstrate the level of audience engagement with campaign content. This response indicates how the public receives and responds to the narrative conveyed by the state. Thus, digital media significantly expands the reach and effectiveness of public diplomacy.

The digital interactions in the comments section and audience responses to Instagram content can be used as concrete examples to observe the transformation of public diplomacy practices, which are becoming increasingly participatory and open. States are no longer the sole communication actors, but instead interact directly with the international public in the digital space. Communication is two-way and allows for a direct exchange of meaning. This aligns with the development of modern public diplomacy, which emphasizes audience engagement (Manor, 2019). Therefore, digital media has transformed the way states build relationships and perceptions globally.

The success of public diplomacy depends heavily on a state's ability to strategically manage public perception through narrative. Narrative serves as a primary tool for influencing how the public perceives a state's identity and image. Digital interactions strengthen the legitimacy of messages through active audience participation in communication. This demonstrates that public diplomacy is not only about delivering messages, but also about building relationships. In this context, digital public diplomacy has become an arena for narrative competition between states in shaping global perceptions.

Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Analyzing the Logic of Tourist Increase (2022-2025)

Data shows that the number of international tourists experienced a significant increase between 2022 and 2025 following the global pandemic. This data can be presented in a tourist visit statistics table based on official government sources and international organizations. This increase indicates a link between digital campaigns and the recovery of the national tourism sector. However, this increase cannot be explained solely by external factors such as the reopening of global travel. Therefore, the Wonderful Indonesia campaign contributed to accelerating the recovery of Indonesian tourism.

The increase in tourists needs to be critically analyzed to understand the influencing factors more deeply. Post-pandemic factors do play a role, but they do not fully explain the changes in international tourist behavior. The campaign narrative contributed to shaping positive perceptions of Indonesia's safety and attractiveness. This relates to perception theory, which emphasizes the importance of representation in shaping individual decisions. Thus, public diplomacy influences tourist behavior through the construction of meaning.

The campaign's effectiveness lies in the combination of global momentum and an appropriate narrative strategy. The narrative conveyed was able to accelerate the recovery of tourist confidence in Indonesian destinations. The positive perceptions created encouraged increased interest in international tourist visits. This demonstrates the importance of integrating strategic communication with global conditions. Overall, public diplomacy played a significant role in supporting the recovery of Indonesia's tourism economy.

Critical Analysis of the Challenges of Synchronizing Reality and Image Sustainability

Despite the campaign's success, there are challenges in maintaining consistency between the narrative created and the reality on the ground. The discrepancy between promotions and actual experiences can create a perception gap among tourists. Examples of potential discrepancies can be seen in issues of infrastructure, service, or management of certain destinations. This has the potential to impact the credibility of messages conveyed through public diplomacy. Therefore, image sustainability is a key challenge in Indonesia's communication strategy.

From a constructivist perspective, a narrative that is not supported by reality can alter the meaning received by the international public. Experiences that do not align with expectations can undermine trust in previously constructed messages. This suggests that narratives must be supported by concrete practices to maintain credibility. Studies on public diplomacy also emphasize the importance of consistency between communication and policy (Manor, 2019). Thus, narrative sustainability depends on the alignment between symbols and reality.

The long-term success of Indonesia's public diplomacy depends on the ability to align narratives with real conditions on the ground. Public diplomacy relates not only to communication but also to the implementation of policies that support those messages. Consistency is key to maintaining the positive image built through digital campaigns. This requires a sustainable

strategy in national tourism management. Therefore, the future of Indonesian public diplomacy is determined by the integration between narrative and real practice.

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that Indonesian public diplomacy shapes a strategic narrative through the Wonderful Indonesia campaign on digital media. The narrative evolves from security to tourism sustainability. This construction of meaning significantly influences international perceptions. These findings confirm that public diplomacy operates through the production of symbolic meaning in global digital interactions (Manor, 2019). The research implications strengthen constructivism as an approach to understanding narrative-based public diplomacy. Practically, these results are relevant for national tourism communication strategies. A limitation of this research lies in the use of secondary digital data. Future research is recommended to expand on primary data for a more in-depth analysis of global audience perceptions (Sevin, 2017).

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