

INDONESIAN DIASPORA IN THE UNITED STATES: STUDY OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN PUBLIC DIPLOMACY'S SELF-IMAGE

Azahra Shafa Nabila¹, Surwandono²

^{1,2}International Relations Department, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta,
azahra.shafa.isip22@mail.umy.ac.id

INFO ARTIKEL

Riwayat Artikel :

Diterima : 15 Desember 2025

Disetujui : 13 Januari 2026

Kata Kunci :

diaspora Indonesia, TikTok, diplomasi publik, citra diri, media sosial..

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini membahas bagaimana diaspora Indonesia di Amerika Serikat memanfaatkan platform media sosial TikTok sebagai sarana membangun citra diri dan berkontribusi pada diplomasi publik non-formal. Diaspora Indonesia, yang terdiri dari mahasiswa, pekerja profesional, dan keluarga, menghadapi berbagai tantangan sosial, budaya, dan ekonomi di negara tujuan. Melalui TikTok, mereka tidak hanya berbagi pengalaman hidup dan adaptasi budaya, tetapi juga memperkenalkan budaya Indonesia secara kreatif kepada publik global. Konten yang dihasilkan umumnya bertema kehidupan sehari-hari, kerja profesional, dan nilai-nilai toleransi, dengan dominasi narasi positif yang aman diterima masyarakat internasional. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa TikTok menjadi ruang alternatif yang efektif bagi diaspora untuk mengekspresikan identitas, melawan stereotip, dan memperkuat citra positif Indonesia di mata dunia. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan agar pemerintah Indonesia mengoptimalkan peran diaspora dalam strategi diplomasi publik berbasis media sosial, termasuk melalui dukungan literasi digital dan penguatan kapasitas produksi konten kreatif. Temuan ini memperkaya literatur tentang diplomasi publik di era digital, dengan menyoroti peran penting aktor non-negara dalam membangun citra bangsa.

ARTICLE INFO

Article History :

Received : 15 December 2025

Accepted : 13 January 2026

Keywords:

Public diplomacy, Indonesian diaspora, United States, content analysis, legal immigration

ABSTRACT

This article aims to understand how the Indonesian diaspora conveys their experiences and knowledge in dealing with sociocultural and economic differences, as well as American immigration policies that are becoming less and less welcoming to immigrants. This study analyzed the content of 100 videos produced by the Indonesian diaspora in America using coding methods based on four main categories: "Survival in America", "Working Professionally in America", "Tips for Facing Problems in America", and "Adapting to a New Environment in America". The results of the study show that the majority of videos talk more about how to live comfortably in America by becoming a legal immigrant. Topics such as legal pathways to obtaining residence permits, successful strategies for working professionally, and adaptation to American social and cultural norms become dominant in the narratives constructed by the diaspora. The main focus of this diaspora public diplomacy is to provide practical education for Indonesians who want to or have lived in the United States so that they can integrate well and minimize risks related to immigration status.

1. INTRODUCTION

The presence of the Indonesian diaspora in the United States has become an increasingly visible phenomenon in the last two decades. Based on data from *the Pew Research Center*, the number of Indonesian diaspora living in the United States is estimated to reach around 145,000 people by 2023. They are spread across various regions, such as New York, California, Texas, and Washington, DC, and consist of various groups, ranging from students and professional workers to families who have settled for a long time (Romdiati, et al., 2015).

From the perspective of international relations, the diaspora is not only a migrant community but also a national asset that has great potential to strengthen diplomatic bridges between Indonesia and the destination country (Abhiyoga & Febreani, 2021a). Through social, cultural, and economic activities, these diasporas indirectly play a role in introducing Indonesia's image to the American public. In other words, they have a role as cultural ambassadors who carry the nation's identity in everyday life in a foreign country (Abhiyoga & Febreani, 2021b).

In the context of digital globalization, international relations are becoming increasingly complex along with technological advances. The emergence of digital platforms and social media also plays an important role in disseminating information quickly and widely, which has an impact on public opinion and influences political events across borders (Eda, 2025). Platforms such as *TikTok*, Instagram, and YouTube have been widely used by the Indonesian diaspora in America to share their stories, life experiences, and perspectives on various social and cultural issues.

This activity not only shows the involvement of the diaspora in the digital world but also opens up opportunities for the international public to get to know Indonesia through personal narratives that can be trusted. The Indonesian government itself encourages the strengthening of participatory public diplomacy, where society, including the diaspora, takes part in building a positive image of the nation on the global stage (Effendi, 2022). This is where social media plays a role as a bridge between the personal identity of the diaspora and national interests.

The Indonesian diaspora community in America is very diverse, reflecting the complexity of their motivations and social backgrounds. Indonesian students, for example, come to pursue higher education and often face cultural, linguistic, and academic challenges, as well as loneliness (Arzia et al., 2024). On the other hand, migrant workers and professionals have to deal with economic pressures, different work systems, and even uncertain legal status (Widodo & Belgradoputra, 2019)). This condition shows that being a diaspora is not always easy, especially when in a cultural environment that is very different from one's homeland. In facing these challenges, social media often becomes an escape space as well as a place to seek support. *TikTok*, as one of the rising platforms, is used by the diaspora to share life experiences, establish connections, and show the positive side of their lives in a foreign country (Wilantara, 2024).

TikTok, as one of the rising platforms, is utilized by the diaspora to share life experiences, establish connections, and showcase the positive side of their lives abroad. Through this phenomenon, this study focuses on examining how the Indonesian diaspora in the United States utilizes *TikTok* to build their self-image while contributing to non-formal public diplomacy that strengthens Indonesia's positive image in the eyes of the world.

Diaspora generally refers to the life of people in foreign countries far from their homeland. At the beginning of the movement of people from one region to another, which has occurred for a long time, diaspora was initially marked by forced migration (Brubaker, 2005). However, over time, the meaning of diaspora has expanded and not only includes those who move because they are forced to but also those who migrate voluntarily for various reasons, such as work, education, culture, politics, and others. Currently, diaspora can be permanent or temporary, for example, diplomats, contract workers, or students (Brubaker, 2005).

Diaspora has a broad meaning; in addition to the life of people abroad, diaspora is also interpreted as a dynamic cultural entity. They maintain ties with ancestral identities in their homeland while experiencing negotiations for

new identities formed through social, cultural, and institutional interactions in the destination country. The conditions of uncertainty often faced by migrants, especially regarding legal status or social position, encourage them to build new identities while maintaining old cultural roots (Suhantoro et al., 2025).

There are unique dynamics in the Muslim diaspora, especially in the United States. They often face stereotypes, discrimination, and integration challenges in a non-Muslim majority society. Therefore, the Muslim diaspora often uses spaces such as social media to affirm their religious identity while fighting negative prejudices (Wilantara, 2024). The migration that gave birth to this diaspora also plays an important role in building a country's identity. The diaspora brings cultural characteristics and national identity to the destination country. This exodus can be utilized by the country of origin for various interests, such as cultural diplomacy, international trade liaison, attracting investment, and transferring knowledge and skills (Suhantoro et al., 2025).

According to Kenny, in (Effendi, 2022), diaspora generally comes from the Greek word *diasperein*, which means "to spread" or "scatter," and is used to refer to groups of people who migrate from their home areas to other countries. They settle in new countries but still maintain ties with their home countries, both real and emotional. This relationship is not only related to culture but also includes the spread of ideas, art, and even social and political movements. (Effendi, 2022)

In various countries, diasporas play an important role in international relations, both as non-state actors and as an extension of their home country's diplomacy. For example, India engages the diaspora as part of its public diplomacy and soft power, along with Buddhism and yoga. China utilizes the diaspora as part of its foreign strategy, especially in the charm offensive in the Xi Jinping era. The Philippines even positions the diaspora as a new form of soft power through the concept of people-powered diplomacy (Effendi, 2022). African countries utilize the diaspora in Europe to support

economic and development policies (Effendi, 2022). El Salvador and Colombia build national images through close relations with the diaspora in the context of public diplomacy. Meanwhile, the UK engages the diaspora and its former citizens through media such as BBC broadcasts as a tool of public diplomacy (Effendi, 2022)

In this context, the diaspora is often positioned as a transnational bridge connecting the country of origin with the destination country through cultural, economic, and political networks. Castells said that the diaspora also builds a relationship called a network society, which can form a dual political identity due to the influence of the situation in the country of origin and the destination country (Castells, 1997). Thomas Faist distinguishes the diaspora into the old diaspora, who migrated due to conflict and tended to want to return to their homeland, and the new diaspora, who migrated for economic interests and adapted more easily to local society (Effendi, 2022)

The role of the diaspora in various countries shows that they are not only cultural communities but also important actors in public diplomacy and international relations, both as extensions of the policies of their countries of origin and as independent actors who mobilize political and economic power through their global networks. Castells (Effendi, 2022)

Previous studies have discussed the role of the diaspora in maintaining cultural identity and its contribution to the image of the nation, although they have not specifically highlighted the use of social media such as TikTok. Some of these studies, specifically by Simorangkir and Jamiati (2025), emphasized that social media serves as a space for interaction that encourages cultural restoration in the digital era; however, while their context encompasses broader dynamics of diversity, it does not directly address the diaspora or the TikTok platform (Simorangkir & Jamiati, 2025).

Meanwhile, (Mahardika et al., 2022b), and (Bagus et al., n.d.) studied in depth how the Indonesian restaurant diaspora in America plays a role in gastrodiploamacy. This study highlights

the contribution of the diaspora through restaurants as an effective medium of cultural diplomacy in introducing culinary tourism and a positive image of Indonesia in the eyes of the United States public (Bagus et al., n.d.)). The main focus of this study is on the gastrodiplomacy strategy through the restaurant diaspora, without highlighting the use of social media as the main tool in building the nation's image. Rohman, Nugroho, and Nasution (2025) emphasize the aspect of non-formal education in maintaining the cultural identity of migrant children. This study shows how Sanggar Bimbingan becomes an important means for migrant children to maintain their Indonesian cultural identity through various arts, culture, and religious activities (Rohman et al., 2025). This study introduces a model of "adaptive transnational" identity as a result of the integration of Indonesian and local cultures but has not utilized or explored social media as the main supporting tool in the process of forming this identity.

From previous studies, it can be concluded that many studies have discussed the diaspora, cultural identity, gastrodiplomacy, and the role of culture in public diplomacy, but none have specifically examined how social media, especially TikTok, is used by the Indonesian diaspora in the United States in building self-image and carrying out non-formal public diplomacy. The novelty of this study lies in the focus of the analysis on the use of TikTok as a platform that dominates the digital interaction of the diaspora in building self-narratives, fighting stereotypes, and contributing to Indonesia's positive image in the eyes of the world. This study provides a new perspective on public diplomacy that is no longer centered on formal channels or state actors but is carried out by diaspora individuals through creative content on social media based on global algorithms.

2. METHODS

The research method in this article uses a qualitative approach with content analysis techniques on TikTok video content produced by the Indonesian diaspora in the United States. Primary data was obtained from one hundred

TikTok videos uploaded by more than ten Indonesian diaspora accounts with significant numbers of followers and high levels of interaction (likes, comments, and shares). The selection of videos is purposively carried out by considering the representation of the theme and the consistency of content production. The videos are then coded into five main thematic clusters: (1) the year of arrival and the migration period; (2) how to work in America; (3) daily way of life; (4) the process of adaptation to American culture and social system; and (5) how to deal with problems (both administrative, social, and emotional). The coding process is carried out systematically using qualitative assistance software such as NVivo or ATLAS.ti to ensure reliability and thematic consistency.

Furthermore, the coding results of each cluster were analyzed simultaneously using the crosstabulation technique to find cross-relationships between themes. For example, the relationship between the year of arrival and the adaptation strategy or between the type of work and the form of problem faced. This cross-tab technique allows researchers to identify narrative patterns in the experiences of the Indonesian diaspora as well as assess how they indirectly play a role in public diplomacy—both through positive narratives about Indonesia, the cultural practices they maintain, and the cross-cultural interactions they document. This analysis is the basis for evaluating the extent to which the Indonesian diaspora in the United States has helped shape the global public perception of Indonesia through short video-based social media platforms such as TikTok.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

TikTok offers a unique approach through a creative and accessible short video format. TikTok's sophisticated algorithm allows relevant and interesting content to be more easily discovered by users (Nova Amalia Fitri et al., 2024). Through content about Indonesian cuisine, local culture, daily life in America, and responses to stereotypes, the Indonesian diaspora forms a more humane and diverse narrative about their identity. An example is the

Nadiajohnston TikTok account, which shows life in America as a worker. Not infrequently, the content created contains educational messages about tolerance, diversity, and Indonesian culture that are packaged in a light but meaningful way.

This shows how *TikTok* can be a tool to build a collective self-image while introducing Indonesian values to the global public. By utilizing *TikTok's popularity and algorithm*, the Indonesian diaspora can convey diplomatic messages without having to go through formal channels. These messages are conveyed through light, creative, and easily accessible content, making it more effective in reaching a global audience. The trend of using TikTok by the Indonesian diaspora in the United States has increased rapidly in recent years, especially as a space for public expression and a medium for social engagement. Many Indonesian diaspora influencers use this platform to share life stories in America, from the struggle to get a green card and the experience of working in the formal sector to the process of cultural adaptation. Based on the results of observations of TikTok content from 2022 to 2025, there are several diaspora figures who consistently share content with the theme of diaspora life; the content produced is also diverse, both educational and inspiring, and problematic.

In 2022, content will feature more basic things related to immigrant life, such as cheap housing, working hours, public transportation, and cost of living. For example, a TikTok account with the username @ekameynia, who works as a kindergarten teacher, shows information about her daily life and the cost of living in the US. The narratives that are built are generally informative and realistic, aiming to provide the public with an overview of diaspora life without much dramatization. Entering 2023, there has been a shift in focus to exploring professions, social adaptation, and cultural pride. For example, @stevenaprilliano shares content about his profession as a barista and provides information on working hours in the US, while @rikavinna shares how she adapts to the American environment by discussing topics such as Indonesian food ingredients available in the

US and aspects of work culture. Much content displays the diaspora's experience as an office worker, chef, or barista, as well as showing social interactions and living environments such as housing atmospheres, diaspora villages, and culture shock.

In 2024, diaspora content experienced a surge in actualization with the emergence of various influencers who consistently shared their experiences of living in the US. The narratives displayed began to cover themes such as success in buying a house or car, comparisons of Indonesian-American culture, and tips for adapting to a lifestyle. Not only does TikTok serve as a medium for expression, but it also serves as a playful and engaging tool for informal cultural diplomacy. 2025 is marked by more complex content, discussing legal aspects such as @stevenaprilliano, who provides information related to tax mechanisms and bills in the US, or the professional achievements of the diaspora, for example, an Indonesian citizen who succeeded in becoming a lieutenant colonel in the US, to social reflections such as the dark side of big cities and criticism of the reality of life in America. This pattern shows that TikTok diaspora content is increasingly mature, critical, and used strategically to shape the image of an Indonesian diaspora that is empowered, connected, and relevant on the global stage.

This actualization shows how TikTok is not only a place to share but also a place of influence that expands the reach of cultural diplomacy informally to the global public. Plus, this trend also increases every year, as shown in the trend graph in Figure 1 below:

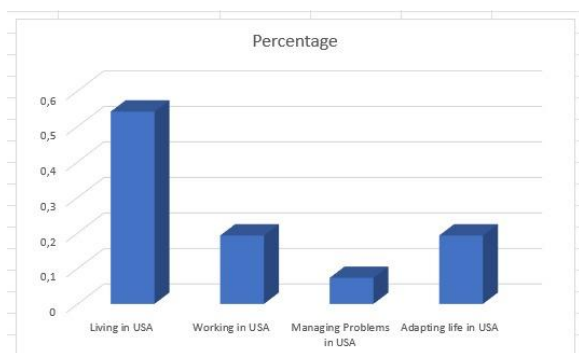


Figure 1. Diaspora TikTok Trends in the US for the 2021-2025 Period Source: Processed Data, 2025

The graph above illustrates the percentage trend of news and content related to the Indonesian diaspora on social media platforms, such as TikTok, from 2021 to 2025. There is a significant increase from 2021 to 2024, with a peak in 2024 reaching the highest percentage of nearly 50%. This shows that in 2024, the Indonesian diaspora is increasingly active in using social media as a means to express identity, share experiences, and build self-image in the global realm. However, in 2025 there was a decrease in activity, although the percentage was still higher than at the beginning of the period. This finding indicates that the use of social media by the diaspora is dynamic and influenced by various factors, including the social, political, or immigration policy situations in the United States.

In addition to describing the dynamics of content, the communication style of the Indonesian diaspora on TikTok can also be categorized into two main tendencies, namely *reactioner* and *trendsetter*.

The *reactioner category* refers to the diaspora who initially only created simple content about their lives in the United States, for example, showing the atmosphere of the city, their place of residence, or their daily activities. Over time, this content began to attract the attention of Indonesians who were curious about life abroad. Questions from the audience also emerged, generally related to issues that were currently hot in Indonesia. For example, when the Indonesian public was busy discussing the low minimum wage standards in the country, several diaspora were asked about salaries in America and then

responded by explaining their income as service sector workers or professionals. Accounts like @stevenaprilliano, for example, once shared details of working hours and salaries as a barista in the US, which indirectly provided a comparison to the issue of the minimum wage in Indonesia. Likewise, when the issue of taxation arose in Indonesia, the audience often asked about the taxation mechanism in America, and diaspora like @stevenaprilliano again responded with educational content about tax bills and income deductions.

reactionary style shows that Indonesian diaspora content is often reactive to public discourse in the country. The content created by the diaspora does not begin with educational or political intentions; rather, it evolves in response to active interactions with Indonesian netizens. In this case, TikTok becomes a dialogue space that brings together the diaspora's experiences with the curiosity of the Indonesian people directly and contextually. Meanwhile, the *SS enter trend* refers to a content production pattern that is more in line with global trends and the development of the platform itself (Setyowati & Arenal, 2023). In contrast to the assumption that there are certain figures who start and are then imitated by others, in reality most of the diaspora create content because TikTok is becoming a dominant social media that promises popularity as well as the potential for additional income. No one figure consciously becomes a trendsetter, but rather it happens organically because of the opportunities provided by the TikTok algorithm and ecosystem itself. Accounts like @rikavinna, who share their experiences of cultural adaptation, looking for Indonesian food ingredients, and understanding social life in the US, are not merely following others but responding to viral opportunities and the potential for content monetization. This can also be seen in many other diasporas who have started to create content about cultural comparisons, housing, and lifestyle as a form of representation that is in line with TikTok's light visual trends.

These two approaches show how TikTok has become a strategic medium that is not only entertaining but also opens up space for the diaspora to build their self-image and carry out

cultural diplomacy informally. The Indonesian diaspora in the United States uses TikTok not only as a means of entertainment but also as a medium to build their self-image, introduce culture, and voice diplomatic messages informally. The trend of increasing content to its peak in 2024 shows how social media, especially TikTok, has become an effective alternative space for the diaspora to express their identity amidst the challenges of stereotypes and discrimination. The decline in activity in 2025, although still quite high, indicates dynamics influenced by external factors such as immigration policies or the socio-political situation in the United States, which is in line with Castells' opinion that diaspora networks are dynamic following the global context.

The findings are in line with what Prasetyo (2022) said: that modern diaspora, including the Indonesian diaspora, utilizes digital media to build cultural, economic, and social relations with their home and host countries (Prasetyo, Rofiq et al., n.d.) Eda (2025) also stated the role of non-formal education in maintaining diaspora identity, where non-formal education can help diaspora maintain their identity and ancestral values amidst the influence of secular culture in the host country (Eda, 2025).

So, it can be said that TikTok is not just an entertainment platform but can also be used as a digital public diplomacy space in all things, such as marketing in any form, in this case for the Indonesian diaspora. This phenomenon shows a shift in the role of the diaspora as a non-state actor who is able to build a positive image of Indonesia in the eyes of the world through informal and creative channels. The results of this study are expected to enrich the literature on social media-based public diplomacy and become a reference for Indonesia's diplomacy strategy in the digital era (Pasauran et al., 2025).

The content created by the Indonesian diaspora on TikTok is very diverse, ranging from promotions of traditional cuisine such as tempeh and rendang and cultural arts performances to educational videos about the values of tolerance, diversity, and diaspora life in America.

Generally, TikTok users package this content in a light, creative, and relatable manner to enhance its acceptance among the global public. The types of content displayed by the Indonesian diaspora in the US can be seen in the following graph:

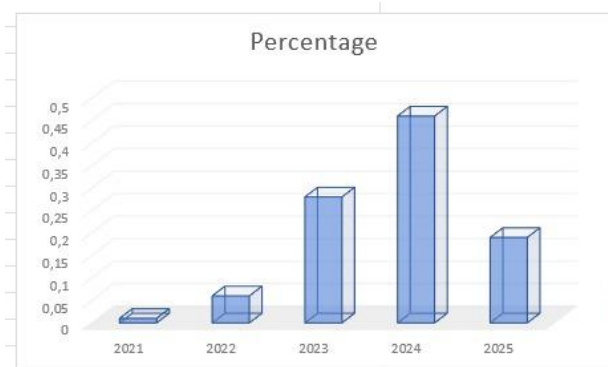


Figure 2. Types of Content by Diaspora in the

The graph above illustrates the percentage distribution of Indonesian diaspora video content on TikTok based on the main theme related to life in the United States. The “Living in USA” category dominates with the highest percentage, around 60%, indicating that most of the content focuses on how to live comfortably as a legal immigrant and the experience of living in America. Meanwhile, the “Working in USA” and “Adapting life in USA” categories each contribute around 20%-25%, indicating that the diaspora also shares a lot of professional tips and cultural adaptation processes. Meanwhile, content related to “Managing Problems in the USA” occupies the smallest portion, indicating that this theme is less of a priority for diaspora narratives on social media, perhaps because it is more sensitive or complex to share publicly.

The results of this study show that the Indonesian diaspora in the United States uses TikTok as a medium to strengthen their self-image through a variety of positive and constructive content. The dominance of content with the theme “Living in the USA,” up to 60%, shows how the diaspora tries to show their daily lives as immigrants who are able to adapt, live comfortably, and contribute to their new environment. However, during the period 2021-2025, it can be seen that the current living in the USA content mostly shows the reality that living

in the United States is not as easy as imagined. In various videos, such as about the cost of boarding in LA, the cost of living for students, or cheap housing, it appears that the economic burden faced by the diaspora is quite high. Although income in the US seems large, the high cost of rent, basic necessities, and transportation means that many diaspora have to live frugally and work several jobs at once in order to survive.

Some content also shows the difficulty of finding permanent employment after graduating from college, so many work part-time or in the service sector. This shows that living in America does not always mean prosperity but is full of challenges and pressures. This reality is often far from the imagination of Indonesian people who think that living abroad is definitely better. This is in line with the findings of Azizah & Perkasa (2025), who stated that expectations of a comfortable life abroad often do not match reality (Azizah & Perkasa, 2025). The diaspora often bears the social burden of appearing successful in front of the Indonesian public, when in reality they have to live frugally and work hard (Alunaza, 2017). Through TikTok, this narrative began to be opened honestly and openly.

Meanwhile, content with the theme "Working in the USA" often emerges from the diaspora showing their place and type of work in the service sector, education, and the informal sector. Some examples that appear on TikTok are diaspora working as baristas, kindergarten teachers, restaurant employees, lecturers at renowned universities such as Harvard, and workers in the security sector. This trend shows that the Indonesian diaspora tends to share their daily work to respond to the curiosity of the public in Indonesia about how to get a job, challenges in the workplace, and the income picture in the United States.

This type of work-themed content is one of the most trending because it is able to answer hot issues in Indonesia, for example, about minimum wage standards or job opportunities abroad. Its light format, in the form of daily videos or clips of work activities, makes this theme spread quickly on TikTok. This

phenomenon is in line with the results of previous studies, which show that the diaspora uses social media not only for networking but also to build a professional self-image as well as a source of practical information for prospective migrants (Wulandari et al., 2025). Erwin et al. (2023) also emphasized that social media such as TikTok encourages the emergence of content workers who aim to get monetization or simply self-branding (Erwin et al., 2023).

Then, regarding the minimal content about "Managing Problems in the USA," it indicates that the diaspora tends to choose narratives that are safe, light, and easily accepted by the global public, in accordance with TikTok's characteristics as a creative platform that prioritizes a positive image. Of the dozens of contents analyzed, only a few touched on issues such as discrimination, challenges in obtaining a green card, or social pressure in the US, such as the content "job requirements in the US do not discriminate" and "now green cards can be bought" by @tetanggamerika. The green card itself is a residence permit or right to settle in the US permanently. To obtain a green card, immigrants can usually only go through certain channels, which are certainly not easy (Mukaromah et al., 2022). However, the discussion regarding this green card is not in-depth and tends to be wrapped in a light or informative narrative only.

The lack of problematic content shows that the diaspora tends to present a positive and socially safe image. Raising issues of the lower class, mental stress, or legality issues is often considered sensitive and risky to their personal image and position in the destination country. This is in line with what (Erwin et al 2023) said in their book: that the diaspora tends to carry out self-branding based on success and stability to build a positive public perception. In other words, TikTok is used more as a safe space for representing identity than as a medium for voicing complaints or resistance (Erwin et al., 2023).

Adapting to life in the USA is also an important channel for sharing professional experiences and the process of cultural

adjustment. The adaptation process is one of the richest narrative themes. Many diasporas share how they learned to understand the local culture, from the queuing system and how to interact to the work style and religious life in a non-Muslim majority country. Experiences of cultural differences, the shock of facing new customs, and the efforts to adjust to a foreign system are at the heart of their content. Not only does this adaptation narrative show challenges, it also shows the process of learning and accepting local values, which ultimately forms a hybrid identity as part of the global community.

This adaptation is often presented in a storytelling or vlog format, which makes the audience feel close and involved. More than just getting used to it, this content also becomes a means for the diaspora to reflect on changes in identity and values. The image that is formed is a diaspora figure who is open, learns from the environment, and is able to navigate the complexities of foreign cultures without losing their identity as Indonesians. Wilantara (2024) stated that social media acts as a reflective space for the diaspora to reconstruct their identity during the migration process. TikTok, with its fast and easily accessible format, allows the diaspora to display their adaptation phases honestly but remain communicative and strengthen the cultural bridge between Indonesia and the destination country (Wilantara, 2024).

This finding is in line with the findings of (Effendi, 2022)), who stated that the modern diaspora builds identity and image through digital media as a form of transnational relations. The content produced by the diaspora not only strengthens connections with the country of origin but also becomes a means of cultural diplomacy that introduces Indonesian values to the global community. With TikTok, indirectly, the community gets non-formal education by providing a new perspective for Indonesians towards Indonesian immigrants in the US, and indirectly, algorithm-based digital content can build a good self-image of the diaspora and the US (Wardhani & Mirdad, 2025).

4. CONCLUSION

This study shows that the Indonesian diaspora in the United States uses TikTok not only as a medium for entertainment but also as a strategic means to build their self-image, introduce Indonesian culture, and carry out non-formal public diplomacy. The dominance of content themed on daily life, cultural adaptation, and professional work reflects the diaspora's efforts to display the positive, friendly, and adaptive side of their identity in the eyes of the global public. TikTok as a global algorithm-based platform allows diaspora narratives to reach a wide audience in a creative, light, and effective way. This phenomenon confirms the role of the diaspora as a non-state actor that is able to contribute to Indonesia's positive image through informal channels in the digital era. The cautious attitude of the diaspora, especially the Muslim diaspora, in responding to sensitive political issues also shows a smart adaptation strategy to maintain comfort and social stability in the destination country.

The Indonesian government can enhance its collaboration with the diaspora to build the nation's image on social media by offering support, digital literacy training, and creative spaces for the diaspora to produce positive content. In addition, these results also serve as a reference for the development of more participatory public diplomacy policies, where non-state actors such as the diaspora can be optimized as the spearhead of cultural diplomacy and the nation's image. Furthermore, these findings enrich the literature on social media-based public diplomacy, emphasizing that diplomacy is no longer only the property of formal actors but can also be carried out collectively and informally by the diaspora community through global digital platforms.

DAFTAR PUSTAKA

- Abhiyoga, N., & Febreani, YK (2021a). Gastrodiplomacy Strategy of Indonesian Diaspora in the New Normal Era (Case Study of Tempeh in the United States). *Padjadjaran Journal of International Relations*, 3(2). <https://doi.org/10.24198/padjir.v3i2.31172>
- Abhiyoga, N., & Febreani, Y. K. (2021b). Tempe Gastrodiplomacy Strategy by the Indonesian Diaspora in the United States. *Padjadjaran Journal of International Relations*, 3(2).
- Alunaza, H. (2017). Diaspora as Indonesia's Multi-Track Diplomacy to Realize the Master Plan for Acceleration and Expansion of Indonesia's Economic Development. *Proyeksi—Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 22(2).
- Arzia, S., Firstania, D., Hakim, AR, Tyas, DM, Psychology, F., Buana, U., & Karawang, P. (2024). *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Self-Adjustment of Indonesian Students Studying in Thailand (in Apriliani et al., 2016) explains* 5 (3), 629–638.
- Azizah, S., & Perkasa, DH (2025). Compensation Strategy for Expatriate Cultural Adaptation. *Journal of Economics, Management, Information Systems (JEMSI)*, 6 (3).
- Eda, YR (2025). The effectiveness of Christian religious education for the spiritual growth of adolescents at the Indonesian Rahmani Christian Church, Cawang Diaspora Congregation. *EKKLESIA*, 3 (2), 106–122.
- Effendi, TD (2022). Strategy of Involving Indonesian Diaspora in Public Diplomacy Strategy of Involving Indonesian Diaspora in Public Diplomacy. *Journal of Diplomacy and Security Studies*, 14(1), 14–38.
- Erwin, Subagja, AD, Masliardi, A., Hansopaheluwakan, S., Kurniawan, Dwi, S., Darmanto, Budi, E., & Muksin, NN (2023). *DIGITAL BUSINESS: Latest Marketing Strategies and Techniques*. PT. Sonpedia Publishing Indonesia.
- Mahardika, IBN, Damayanti, C., & Wijayati, H. (2022). Contribution of Restaurant Diaspora to Indonesia's Nation Branding in the United States. *Lino: Journal of International Relations*, 2(1), 18–30.
- Mukaromah, Z., Muzani, & Zid, M. (2022). United States Government Policy towards (Muslim) Migrants. *Mercatoria Journal*, 15 (2), 73–84. <https://doi.org/10.31289/mercatoria.v15i2.7362>
- Pasauran, Dwivayani, Ibrizah, & Nurliah. (2025). FAIRCLOUGH DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE PHRASE “DON'T DO IT, DEK YA” BY THE TIKTOK ACCOUNT @zhio.butto.pink IN THE CHANGE OF SOCIAL INTERACTION OF GENERATION Z. *Journal of Social and Technology (SOSTECH)*, 5(4), 1156–1174.
- Prasetyo, AA (2022). Disruption of Libraries as Public Spaces: Dissecting the Thoughts of Jurgen Habermas and Digital Public Spaces. *Indonesian Journal of Philosophy*, 5(3), 213–218. <https://ejournal.undiksha.ac.id/index.php/JF/article/view/46177>
- Rofiq, A., Arifin, J., & Purwanto. (2024). *Harmony in Difference: Indonesian Muslim Diaspora's Strategy in Facing Anti-Islam Challenges in the Netherlands*. Insight Mediatama. www.insightmediatama.co.id
- Rohman, An., Nugroho, A., & Nasution, IF (2025). Strengthening the Cultural Identity of Indonesian Migrant Children through Non-Formal Education at the Muhammadiyah Kepong Guidance Center, Malaysia. *Scientific Journal of Campus Teaching*, 5(1), 68–84. <https://doi.org/10.56972/jikm.v5i1.Submit>
- Romdiati, H. (2015). Globalization of Migration and the Role of Diaspora: A Literature Review. *Indonesian Journal of Population*, 10 (December), 89–100.
- Setyowati, E., & Arsal, T. (2023). The Use of TikTok Social Media on the Imitation Behavior of Students of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Semarang State University. *Solidarity: Journal of Education, Society and Culture*, 12(2), 240–258. <https://doi.org/10.15294/solidarity.v12i2.76685>

- Simorangkir, YY, & Jamiati. (2025). Cultural Restoration in the Digital Era and the Impact of Social Media on the Dynamics of Religious and Cultural Diversity in Society Yessi Yudika Simorangkir 1 and Jamiati 2, Communication Science Study Program, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Malikussaleh University. *Triwikrama: Multidisciplinary Journal of Social Sciences*, 8 (1).
- Suhantoro, Akilah, U., Safi'e, M., Rahmatullah, I., Fadlan, MA, & Shobahiyah, Q. (2025). *Cultural Connectivity with the Religious Spirit*. Kramantara JS.
- Wardhani, B., & Mirdad, MA (2025). *Indo-Pacific Dynamics and Its Impact on Human Security in Indonesia | i* (April Issue). PT. Pustaka Saga Jawadwipa.
- Widodo, H., & Belgradoputra, RJ (2019). Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers. *Binamulia Law*, 8 (1), 107–116. <https://doi.org/10.37893/jbh.v8i1.42>
- Wilantara, M. (2024). *Reconstruction of Bali Tourism Communication: Changing Cultural Views From Globality to Locality*. CV. Budi Utama.
- Wulandari, S., Fajrianor, M., Zusanri, M., Saragih, OK, & Adiwijaya, S. (2025). Revealing Inspiration and Reality of the World of Work for Generation Z: A Content Analysis of TikTok. *Multikultural: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial*, 3 (1), 29–36.