

## REPRESENTATION OF GASTRONOMY BRANDING THROUGH “ARUNA AND HER PALATE” FILM

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### ABSTRACT

Indonesia is one of the well-known international tourist destinations, one of which is through its culinary diversity. The variety of culinary culture in Indonesia cannot be separated from the historical stories and characteristics of each region. With these peculiarities, Indonesian cuisine must of course receive special attention in the promotion process. In the world of culinary marketing, there is a concept known as gastronomy branding. This concept briefly means doing marketing communication activities about food. Mass media, especially films, can be a channel for mass communication to carry out this gastronomy branding activity. Through its reach, films can convey a gastronomy branding communication message to introduce Indonesian cuisine to a wide audience, both nationally and internationally. One of the Indonesian films that raises the culinary specialties of the archipelago is "Aruna & Her Palate". This research qualitatively, through literature study, will present a representation of gastronomy branding that is shown through the film "Aruna & Her Palate".

**Keywords:** *Representation, Gastronomy Branding, Film*

### ABSTRAK

Indonesia merupakan salah satu destinasi wisata internasional yang dikenal, salah satunya, melalui keragaman kuliner yang dimiliki. Ragam budaya kuliner di Indonesia tak lepas dari runtutan kisah sejarah serta ciri khas dari masing-masing daerah. Dengan kekhasannya tersebut, kuliner Indonesia tentu harus mendapat perhatian khusus dalam proses promosinya. Dalam dunia pemasaran kuliner, dikenal sebuah konsep bernama gastronomy branding. Konsep ini secara singkat berarti melakukan aktivitas komunikasi pemasaran tentang makanan. Media massa, khususnya film, dapat menjadi saluran komunikasi massa untuk melakukan aktivitas *gastronomy branding* ini. Melalui daya jangkauannya, film dapat menyampaikan pesan komunikasi *gastronomy branding* untuk memperkenalkan kuliner Indonesia ke audiens yang luas, baik nasional maupun internasional. Salah satu film Indonesia yang mengangkat kuliner khas nusantara adalah “Aruna & Lidahnya”. Penelitian ini secara kualitatif, melalui studi literatur, akan menyajikan representasi *gastronomy branding* yang ditampilkan melalui film “Aruna & Lidahnya”.

**Kata kunci:** *Representasi, Gastronomy Branding, Film*

### INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country that has a lot of cultural diversity. Starting from the arts, social culture, ethnicity, language, a variety of cuisines, also signature foods. Its cultural diversity makes Indonesia one of the tourist destinations that presents a complete tourist attraction. Not only the culture but also the natural beauty.

One of the tourist attractions that is a priority for tourism promotion is the variety of signature foods in various regions. As we all know, Indonesia has a lot of food types, which are known for their unique taste as a result of the combination of spices, seasonings, and proper cooking methods.

In 2011, the signature confectionery of West Sumatra, Rendang, was named "The world's 50 best foods" by CNN International in

11th position. Currently, Rendang, along with Tempe (tempeh) and Jamu (herb), is being proposed for inclusion on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) list in 2019.

It is not only Rendang but Nasi Goreng also has become one of Indonesia's culinary icons. Although history records that fried rice is the assimilation form of Indonesian and Chinese culinary cultures, Indonesian fried rice has been found in many international menus with the name Indonesian Fried Rice. Since 2017, Rendang and Nasi Goreng are two of the five types of culinary that being promoted by the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy as Indonesian culinary icons. The other three types of food are Gado-gado (mixed vegetables with peanut sauce), Satai (satay), and Soto.

Besides being important in human life as a primary need, food is also a necessary element of life. Food becomes a cultural entity through its history and traditions.

In recent years, food has increasingly developed not only as a fulfillment of life necessities, but also as a medium of socialization, existence, negotiation, and identity (Irwansyah, 2020). As we can see, especially in big cities, business meetings and talks often begin with a meal together, either at lunch or dinner. This situation is known as a lunch meeting or business dinner. Even today, there are many food vloggers, food bloggers, and food photography.

Through its uniqueness and specialty, food is also a tool of diplomacy, or known as culinary diplomacy. It is in line with what was conveyed by the Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Retno Marsudi, who stated that food is the nation's identity. Gastro-diplomacy will support Indonesia's economic diplomacy (National Seminar on Economic Diplomacy: "Gastro-diplomacy to Strengthen the Indonesian Economy", 2019).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Representation Theory**

Representation theory was first introduced by Stuart Hall. According to Hall, quoted by Nugroho (2020), representation is the ability to imagine or describe. Representation is

closely related to culture because culture is shaped by meaning and language, and language is a symbol of representation. This cultural code is packaged then by the mass media and distributed to the public to be understood together (Sofiana et al., 2013).

Hall states that representation is necessary, not only for communication, but also in social interaction. He considers that humans will not be able to interact without representation as a basic need for human communication.

Hall divides representation into three forms: (1) reflective representation, namely language or symbols that reflect meaning; (2) intentional representation, namely how language and symbols display the speaker's intent; and (3) constructionist representation, namely how meaning is reconstructed 'in' and 'through' language (Nugroho, 2020).

### **Gastronomy Branding Concept in Indonesia**

If examined through each word, gastro comes from the Greek "gastros" or "gastér" which means "stomach." Meanwhile, gastronomy is absorbed from English "gastronomy." In the Merriam-Webster dictionary, there are two definitions of gastronomy namely the art or science of good eating and culinary costumes or style.

Irwansyah and Triputra (2016), in their journal, define gastronomy as an activity that includes tasting, preparing, experiencing, researching, discovering, understanding, and writing about food. The gastronomy study will not escape the culture and food aspects. While branding is a combination of names, symbols, designs, and relationships that were built to attract consumers as a solution (American Marketing Association, 2022). Thus, gastronomy branding can be interpreted as a marketing communication activity that prioritizes aspects of tasting, preparing, experiencing, researching, understanding, and writing about food (Irwansyah, 2020).

In Indonesia, the concept of gastronomy branding is not very popular. But, in the gastronomy branding practice, it has been widely used as a promotion and diplomacy medium, or what is known as gastro diplomacy.

### **The Role of Media in Gastronomy Branding**

Indeed, promotion and branding activities surely cannot be separated from the role of the media, both conventional media, and new media. Start from print media to digital-based media. No exception for gastronomy branding, the media also have a significant role in the process of promotion. Irwansyah (2020) mentions the close relationship happened between gastronomy and the media is called food journalism. In his study, Forne (2017) defines food journalism as a part of journalism that focuses on writing, depicting and narratives related to gastronomy.

As quoted in Irwansyah (2020), there are at least two roles of the media and their relation to gastronomy (Frost et al., 2016): (1) the media becomes a tool for dissemination that can influence attitudes, ideas, and change; (2) the media becomes an observer to test and understand the process of the results of these changes. Both roles link the media with its function as a marketing instrument and a means of understanding society. The role of media in gastronomy branding has now expanded, not only in the form of print media (magazines, newspapers, tabloids, etc.) and audio-visual media (films, videos, etc.) but also through digital media (food blogs, food vlogs, food photography).

### **Film as Mass Communication Media**

In carrying out their daily lives, communication is the most necessary element in society, both verbal and nonverbal. Communication becomes a medium of socializing and interacting to exchange information. In the formula of the communication context, mass communication is a form of communication to a large audience, both in number and channel (West & Turner, 2007). Mass communication requires communication channels that have a broad target audience, such as newspapers, radio, video, the internet, and film, to achieve this goal.

Baran, in his book quoted by Asri (2020), states that film is an audio-visual mass communication channel that can convey

messages, ideas, even morals, and others briefly to a large audience. Therefore, it can be said that film as a mass communication medium because it can be an intermediary in conveying communication messages to the public through scenarios packaged in a story (Anisti, 2017).

Not only as an entertainment medium, but films can also function as a promotional medium to represent one country's culture to another, including a type of culinary culture (Khaerani, 2016).

### **‘Aruna and Her Palate’ Film**

‘Aruna and Her Palate’ is a multi-platform form of the novel of the same title by Laksmi Pamuntjak, published in 2014. The novel was later made into a big-screen work in 2018 through Palari Films.

This culinary-themed film focuses on Indonesian specialties, stars a series of well-known actors and actresses, Dian Sastrowardoyo, Nicholas Saputra, Oka Antara, Hannah Al Rasyid, and others. During its release, “Aruna and Her Palate” won several awards from film award events, such as the Indonesian Film Festival, Maya Awards, and Film Festival Tempo. In the international level, “Aruna and Her Palate” won an award as “The Most Entertaining Film Among All Participating New Films” at the 2019 Osaka Asia Film Festival (OAFF), screened at the 69th Berlin International Film Festival (Berlinale) in 2019, and being the opening film for the 2019 CinemAsia Film Festival at Kriterion Amsterdam, Netherlands.

The story of “Aruna and Her Palate” begins with the journey of three friends, Aruna (Dian Sastro), Bono (Nicholas Saputra), and Nad (Hannah Al Rasyid). Aruna is an epidemiologist who was assigned to conduct research on cases of bird flu in several regions in Indonesia. Bono is a chef who is looking for Indonesian recipes. Meanwhile, Nad is a culinary observer who is currently compiling a book. On their way, they meet Aruna's former co-worker, Farish (Oka Antara). They then traveled to four cities, includes Surabaya, Pamekasan, Pontianak, and Singkawang. From their journey, the audience will be treated to 21 types of typical Indonesian food and drinks,

including Campor Lorjuk/Kerang Bambu (bamboo shells) (Pamekasan), Bakmi Crab (crab noodles) (Singkawang), Rawon (Surabaya), and Pengkang (Pontianak).

## METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative method with a literature study. The data collection was obtained through various scientific references such as research journals, final works (dissertation), articles on countries' websites, and online mass media articles from 2007 to 2021. All the mass media articles used are credible mass media registered in the Press Council.

Qualitative methods are research that uses a lot of data in the narratives or words obtained from interviews, focus group discussions (FGD), journal articles, and even from secondary sources such as company reports, government publications, and the internet or literature studies (Sekaran and Bougie, 2013).

The object of this research is the film media entitled "Aruna and Her Palate." The film is 1 hour 46 minutes long, watched through a pay film platform. The part that is analyzed is the depiction of gastronomy branding, which is displayed through the representation of various Indonesian culinary delights in it.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The shooting of various culinary delights in the film "Aruna and Her Palate" was done in great detail. Not only the types of shots used, includes close-ups and extreme close-ups, lighting, and the several shots for one culinary depiction are also quite varied. Through these shots, the audience can understand in specific what spices or seasonings are needed to make a dish.

For example, when shooting a Rawon dish (Surabaya). In the film, the shooting is done with close-up shots showing the activity of breaking the *keluak* as the main spice that gives Rawon a distinctive black color. Then, the *keluak* is pulverized with other seasonings in a mortar, stir-fried, then given water, and additional crushed lemongrass stalks.

Another example is when the characters arrive in Pamekasan (Madura) and taste a signature dish, namely Campor Lorjuk. It is narrated, in the scene, that Campor Lorjuk is made from Lorjuk, a type of shellfish, similar to bamboo shells but smaller in size and can be found only in Madura. To show the Lorjuk, a picture of the Campor Lorjuk seller presented boiling Lorjuk. As a complement, Lorjuk will be served with rice cake, vermicelli, cassava chips, peanuts, fried sprouts, and smothered in a sauce that looks like *soto* sauce at a glance.

Not only the main dish, "Aruna and Her Palate" also introduces snacks from various regions in Indonesia, such as Madu Mongso, Peneleh, Sekoteng, Choi Pan, and several other dishes, such as Rujak Soto, Sop Buntut, Mi Ayam, Pengkang, etc.

The "Aruna and Her Palate" film perfectly illustrates to the audience about the variety of culinary delights that can be used as tourist destinations when visiting Indonesia. Submission of gastronomy branding through films is the accurate medium to communicate the richness of Indonesian cuisine. As a mass communication medium, film is the right channel to promote Indonesian culinary culture to other countries. Even at the 69th Berlin International Film Festival (Berlinale) in 2019, "Aruna and Her Palate", was included in the film show in the "Culinary Cinema" category along with 11 other films.

The detailed visualization produced on the entire contents of the film provides excellent information on the representation of gastronomy branding. Through this film, which has the opportunity to be screened at international film festivals, Indonesian cuisine is introduced to the global community.

The mass media also plays a role in promotional activities, both for the film promotion and further promotion of the various culinary delights featured in the film. In various mass media articles, both online and in print, many tell specifically about regional specialties shown in movies. Of course, it increasingly Indonesian culinary signatures to the larger community.

## CONCLUSION

The “Aruna and Her Palate” film has become the accurate medium as a mass communication channel to introduce the concept of gastronomy branding to the larger community, especially the international community, through its screening at several international film festivals. Through detailed descriptions of various dishes, making and serving process, and the base ingredients used in each shot, the “Aruna and Her Palate” film becomes an instrument for spreading and delivering messages representing gastronomy branding in Indonesia to attract tourists, both local and international, to come to Indonesia and get to know more deeply the existing culinary.

To introduce Indonesian culinary, the media has played a major role in the “Aruna and Her Palate” promotion. The mass media, in this study, including the film “Aruna and Her Palate”, also online and print media, become agents of spreading the meaning of gastronomy branding representation to the larger community.

## RECOMMENDATION

Based on the research results, the following recommendations can be given:

1. There needs to be an effort to introduce the concept of gastronomy branding more massively to the larger community so that people can realize that Indonesia has the potential for tourist attraction through its culinary treasures.
2. More films with similar themes are needed that are made with good quality so that they have the opportunity to be presented at international events. However, the concept and representation introducing of gastronomy branding can use a several media. Not only through films, but also in other alternative media such as short videos, documentaries, podcasts, and others.

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