

**DIPLOMACY AND SOCIAL MEDIA:  
THE UTILISATION OF INSTAGRAM AS AN INSTRUMENT OF INDONESIA'S  
ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY**

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***Abstract***

*The Covid-19 pandemic has transformed various aspects of interstate relations, including the practice of economic diplomacy. Conventional diplomatic methods which rely on direct interactions have shifted to digital methods, including the use of social media and yet, the academic literature on this phenomenon remains scarce. This research, then, aims to analyse how the Indonesian government utilises Instagram as one instrument of its economic diplomacy. The conceptual basis for this research is adopted from Kishan Rana's three stages of developing countries' economic diplomacy model which are salesmanship, networking, and regulatory management (Rana, 2012). Employing a mixed method approach based on volume and thematic analysis, several findings can be identified. First, Indonesia's economic diplomacy through Instagram tends to be most active in Asia, with three accounts having the highest public engagement, namely the Indonesian embassy in South Korea, Kazakhstan, and Cambodia. In all cases, the role of the private sector within – or in cooperation with – the embassy was a determining factor. Second, based on the patterns of Instagram content, Indonesian representative tends to only focus on network building, with little regard for salesmanship and regulatory management activities. This shows that the utilisation of social media for economic diplomacy by Indonesian representatives is mostly still an extension of Indonesia's classic diplomatic practice, which relies more on building and maintaining the network.*

**Keywords:** *big data, digital diplomacy, economic diplomacy, social media*

**Abstrak**

Pandemi Covid-19 telah mentransformasi berbagai aspek relasi antar negara, termasuk praktik diplomasi ekonomi. Metode diplomasi konvensional yang banyak bergantung pada interaksi langsung kini mulai tergantikan oleh metode digital, termasuk pemanfaatan media sosial. Namun sayangnya, kajian literatur terkait ini masih terbatas. Karenanya, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk melihat bagaimana pemerintah Indonesia memanfaatkan Instagram sebagai salah satu instrumen diplomasi ekonomi. Untuk landasan konseptual, digunakan tahapan diplomasi ekonomi milik Kishan Rana (2012) yang mengidentifikasi tiga fase diplomasi ekonomi negara berkembang yakni penjualan (salesmanship), pembentukan jejaring (networking) dan pengelolaan aturan (regulatory management). Menggunakan metode penelitian campuran berbasis volume analysis (kuantitatif) dan thematic analysis (kualitatif) dari sumber big data di Instagram, diperoleh beberapa temuan utama. Pertama, diplomasi ekonomi Indonesia melalui Instagram paling aktif di kawasan Asia dengan tiga akun utama yang memiliki engagement tertinggi yakni kedutaan Indonesia di Korea Selatan, Kazakhstan dan Kamboja. Terkait ini, adanya peran dan keterlibatan sektor swasta menjadi salah satu elemen penting. Kedua, berdasarkan pola unggahan ketiga akun ini, diplomasi ekonomi Indonesia cenderung fokus di upaya pembentukan

jejaring dan sangat lemah di aktivitas penjualan/promosi dan pengelolaan regulasi. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa utilisasi media sosial dalam bidang diplomasi ekonomi – utamanya oleh Kementerian Luar Negeri Indonesia – masih merupakan ekstensi dari pola diplomasi klasik yang lebih banyak bergantung kepada pembentukan jejaring dan kerjasama.

Kata kunci: big data, diplomasi digital, diplomasi ekonomi, media sosial

## **Introduction**

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused a health crisis, social crisis and economic crisis globally. For the Asia-Pacific region, which over the last decade has experienced a rapid economic growth trend, the Covid-19 pandemic had an impact on slowing economic growth to the point that it was predicted to encounter an economic slowdown of minus 2.5% in 2022 (International Monetary Fund, 2022). Indonesia was also one of the countries that has felt the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, causing economic growth to reach minus 2.1% in 2020 and 3.7% in 2021 (Asia Development Bank, 2022). This figure was quite far from the average economic growth in Indonesia, which is usually around five per cent. This slowing economy causes Indonesia to need to formulate a special strategy regarding economic recovery, including through the strengthening of economic diplomacy (Muhibat & Intan, 2020).

Economic diplomacy has been one of the main pillars of Indonesia's diplomacy, even before the pandemic (Tempo, 2019).

However, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed several major weaknesses in traditional economic diplomacy practices, particularly regarding traditional diplomacy methods that rely heavily on face-to-face and direct contact. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the use of digital technology in economic diplomacy, especially because conventional diplomatic methods seem obsolete.

A survey from McKinsey shows that technology adoption in business and society has progressed very rapidly during the pandemic, with an estimated progress equivalent to five years in just a few months (McKinsey, 2020). In the field of International Relations, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Kemenlu) of the Republic of Indonesia has also actively promoted the use of digital instruments in diplomacy, for example by holding the Regional Conference on Digital Diplomacy (RCDD) in 2019. The majority of state diplomacy units now also have their own social media accounts and some countries even have special units that handle digital diplomacy, for example, the United States and the

United Kingdom. State representatives – such as embassies and consulates – are also quite active in using social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and official government blogs.

Of the various social media that are currently available, Instagram is one of the social media that is quite popular globally, especially among young adults. In terms of users, Indonesia ranks fourth in the world after India, the United States and Brazil, with the number of Instagram users as of July 2021 up to 91.77 million (Database, 2021). Through an influencer marketing survey conducted by Mediakix, 60 per cent of respondents consider Instagram to be the best platform for online interaction better known as engagement (Viva, 2020). Instagram has the advantage of presenting visual information, both photos and videos and making it more interesting and easier to filter information compared to mere text like Twitter. Users can write captions and add hashtags and locations so that their photos or videos can be seen by other users even without following each other. In other respects, Instagram also makes it easy to carry on online interaction through the Instagram story and live features, which can be used by country representatives to open question-and-answer sessions and conduct polls.

These features have caused Instagram to

become one of the main choices for a country's economic diplomacy instruments, considering that many economic diplomacy activities depend on visual elements such as product promotion or tourism. Furthermore, if we observe the current pattern of countries' economic diplomacy, almost all countries' economic diplomats – such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Trade, Ministry of Investment and Ministry of Tourism – have also utilised digital channels, especially Instagram. Unfortunately, this practice is not followed by sufficient studies in the literature.

Conceptually, economic diplomacy is one of the studies in modern diplomacy that emerged as a consequence of the multiplication and diversification of economic activities and relations between countries. As a study, economic diplomacy tends to have a cyclical pattern, where this study will move following changes in global political constellations. As an example, (Coolsaet, 2001; 2004) stated that economic diplomacy will tend to increase when economic globalisation occurs but is not accompanied by adequate global regulations. Under these conditions, economic diplomacy will become an instrument for states to safeguard their economic interests in a system that tends to be anarchic. Considering this, the COVID-19 pandemic is a phenomenon that has

changed the structure of global economic governance and created a lot of uncertainty that caused countries to start to restructure their economic diplomacy strategies, including prioritising digital methods.

However, at the present time, the majority of scientific studies related to economic diplomacy still focus on conventional diplomatic patterns involving physical elements such as face-to-face and traditional communication methods (Moons & Van Bergeijk, 2017; Rana & Chatterjee, 2011; Yakop & Van Bergeijk, 2011). This tends to be different from the actual practice where countries have now activated many modern diplomatic channels, including digital methods. It is shown that there is a discrepancy (gap) between the global phenomena that occur and how science explains these phenomena. Therefore, this research aims to fill this gap by adding studies related to the digital aspects of economic diplomacy which tend to be currently neglected. This research will offer two main contributions: *first*, providing empirical contributions related to digital economic diplomacy practices carried out by Indonesia, and second, applying research methods based on social media and big data that are still rarely used in diplomacy and international relations, especially in Indonesia.

This research applies social media research

as a research method with Instagram as the main data source. There were two stages of data searching; first, conducting data scraping on Instagram with two hashtags, that are #economic diplomacy and #indonesianeconomic diplomacy. The first stage aims to identify Indonesian representative accounts abroad that use these hashtags and have the highest engagement on Instagram. At this stage, three accounts with the highest engagement will be selected as the database and sample from the population. In the second stage, all Instagram posts on these three accounts that use the two hashtags above will be classified based on the selected conceptual framework. This research adopts Kishan Rana's concept of Stages of Economic Diplomacy (2012) that classifies the stages of economic diplomacy into three: economic salesmanship, networking, and regulatory management.

Based on this research method, three Instagram accounts were obtained as the database; they are the Instagram accounts managed by the Indonesian embassy in South Korea (@Indonesiainseoul), the Indonesian embassy in Kazakhstan (@Indonesiainnursultan), and the Indonesian embassy in Cambodia (@Indonesiainphnompenh). From these three accounts, it is acquired a total of 115 posts that used the two hashtags above and

all were further classified following Kishan Rana's conceptual categories. Derived from the analysis carried out, it was found that the practice of economic diplomacy undertaken by Indonesia's representatives abroad via Instagram media tends to focus on network formation activities that include activities such as holding forums, exhibitions, and meeting activities. On the other hand, economic diplomacy activities oriented towards regulatory management, such as those related to trade or investment agreements and product sales (salesmanship), are still very rarely carried out. These findings indicate that Indonesia's digital economic diplomacy practices led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs still have a tendency to be in the second stage and have not moved much to the third stage nor strengthened the first stage.

To explain the findings and arguments above, this article will be divided into three main parts. First, a discussion regarding the conceptual framework to explain digital economic diplomacy; second, the pattern and distribution of Indonesia's economic diplomacy through Instagram media during the period of 2015 to 2022 (August), and third, an analysis regarding Indonesia's economic diplomacy strategy through Instagram media.

## **Digital Economic Diplomacy: Utilisation of Social Media as an Instrument of Diplomacy**

Diplomacy as a concept has a long history that has shifted over time. At the beginning of its development, the concept of diplomacy was often associated with negative connotations such as secrecy, deception and privilege (Leira, 2016). In subsequent developments, demand to prioritise new diplomacy which focuses more on openness and cooperation has arisen, and begins to include several new issues such as economics, trade and science (Leira, 2016). Economic diplomacy itself is an integral part of traditional diplomacy, even though there are several fundamental differences between the two. First, economic diplomacy is a type of diplomacy that is very sensitive and reactive to market mechanisms and changes (Bayne & Woolcock, 2012), therefore if the market offers other more attractive alternatives, economic diplomacy may underperform (Odell, 2000). Second, economic diplomacy depends on the immense involvement of the private sector (Rashid, 2005), where the existence of the private sector as one of the main actors can increase the complexity of coordination between actors in economic diplomacy. When compared to traditional diplomacy which usually only involves elements within the country, especially the bureaucracy, economic diplomacy is apt to be more complex and dynamic.

Conceptually, there are various definitions of economic diplomacy. Okano-Heijmans (2011),

for example, defines economic diplomacy as a foreign policy practice and strategy based on the premise that economic or commercial interests and political interests mutually reinforce each other and should therefore be seen as connected. Slightly different from Heijmans, Rana and Chatterjee (2011) provided a narrower definition by viewing economic diplomacy as a group of activities aimed at advancing the national economic interests of a country. In this meaning, economic diplomacy does not have a political function as in the previous definition. Berridge and James (2003) define economic diplomacy as 'diplomatic activities related to economic policy, including involving the work of delegates in economic forums such as the World Trade Organization (WTO). This multiplicity of definitions shows that providing definite boundaries and definitions regarding economic diplomacy is very important to carry out in research. In this research, the definition from Heijmans, Rana and Chatterjee will be

used, considering that this definition is narrower and in line with Indonesia's economic diplomacy which is considered to be traditional in nature (Killian, 2012).

Apart from the definition aspect, one of the main challenges in the study of economic diplomacy is related alone to the limitations of economic diplomacy. In practice, many activities can be categorised as economic diplomacy, such as trade/export promotions, FTA negotiations, and providing foreign aid. This ultimately brings up confusion because even though many researchers use the term 'economic diplomacy', mostly what the meaning is quite different from what it is supposed to be. Several researchers then proposed the need to divide genre/variants (strands) in economic diplomacy, to clarify the boundaries of the study that will be conducted. Some of the variant divisions that appear in the study of economic diplomacy include the following:

**Table1. Variants of Economic Diplomacy**

Variants of Economic Diplomacy	Type of Activity/Instrument Used		
	Lee & Hocking ((Lee & Hocking, 2010)	Rana & Chatterjee (Rana & Chatterjee, 2011)	Okano-Heijmans (Okano-Heijmans, 2011)
Trade Diplomacy	Formulation of global trade regulations	Formulation of global trade regulations, and trade agreements (FTA/RTA)	Formulation of trade regulations at bilateral & multilateral levels; negotiating tariffs, quotas, investments, export-import licenses and other trade barriers
Commercial Diplomacy	Trade promotion; investment promotion;	Trade promotion; investment promotion; business support &	Trade promotion; investment promotion; business advocacy; tourism promotion;

	tourism promotion	local/global network formation; nation-branding	promotion of sustainable investment
Financial Diplomacy	The formation (and failure) of global financial institutions	Formulation of global financial regulations	Currency swap agreements; exchange rate policy; sale & purchase of government debt securities; asset freezing; delay/withholding of payment
Consular Activities	Regulation of cross-country human traffic	-	-
Negative Sanctions	-	-	Embargo; boycott; suspension of foreign aid; capital control; preparation of a blacklist
<i>Positive Inducements</i>	-	-	Foreign aid (grants, loans, debt relief, humanitarian aid); providing technology access; granting membership in international organisations

Source: Killian (2021)

In the classification above, there are three variants of economic diplomacy which have quite clear boundaries, namely trade diplomacy, financial diplomacy and commercial diplomacy. Commercial diplomacy is the focus of this research and includes three main activities, namely trade promotion, investment promotion and tourism promotion. This division is also in line with the determination of Indonesia's economic diplomacy priorities which include four main pillars, namely trade,

investment, tourism and development cooperation (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014). Therefore, although this research uses the diction of economic diplomacy, the main research object is related to commercial diplomacy, which tends to focus on export promotion, trade, investment and tourism activities.

Specifically, for developing countries, Rana (2012) identified 3 (three) stages that are usually prominent in the practice of economic diplomacy, including economic

salesmanship, economic networking and advocacy, and regulatory management and resource mobilisation. Economic salesmanship is related to economic diplomacy activities aimed at trade purposes and selling a country's products. It is likened to being a 'trader' (salesman), where the state diplomats focus on selling goods and services provided by their country. Economic networking and advocacy is an advanced stage where the state begins to focus on establishing business and economic networks as well as advocacy activities to assist and provide special support for the private sector. This can be conducted through meetings with a special agenda aimed at fostering long-term relations in the economic sector. The third stage is regulatory management and resource mobilisation. It is when the country begins to intensively manage regulations that encourage increased commercial benefits, for example through free trade agreements, including starting to reinforce the country's image and branding. In practice, countries will not always follow all these stages rigidly and can combine several stages at once. However, this kind of classification can help identify and organise the economic diplomacy practices and patterns of countries, particularly developing countries.

One aspect that also influences the practice

of economic diplomacy is the digital disruption that has shifted the patterns of the relations between countries. Previously, diplomacy relied heavily upon conventional methods such as face-to-face and written communication via letters or limitedly via email. However, digital innovation, including social media, has transformed conventional diplomatic patterns as they currently exist. Hocking & Melissen (2015) identified four fundamental changes in diplomacy as implications of digital disruption. First, changes in the environment in which diplomacy is carried out, that is regarding the information available and the actors involved in diplomacy. Second, related to the management of resources and information (knowledge and resource management). It is how information, knowledge and resources related to diplomacy are managed and utilised. Third, a shift in the diplomatic agenda which is starting to include digital issues such as cyber policy and cyber governance. Fourth, changes in the diplomatic structure, include re-organising and restructuring the functions in state diplomacy units, for example by creating a special section for e-diplomacy. These changes indicate a significant shift in modern diplomatic practice as a result of technological innovation.



As a branch of diplomacy, economic diplomacy is also experiencing changes as a result of digital disruption. Substantively, economic diplomacy interacts a lot with markets and the private sector, which uses digital technology extensively, so it is quite responsive to these changes. Zemanova (2020) found that rapid globalisation supported by slow global regulation has given rise to new practices and innovations in economic diplomacy, especially those related to e-commerce. This shows that countries will tend to utilise new channels if conventional methods – such as slow negotiation channels – feel stagnant. In this case, economic diplomacy has enormous potential, when compared to other branches of diplomacy, to utilise digital methods as one of its instruments. This can also be seen in the practice of Indonesian economic diplomacy, where, in the last few years, they have begun to actively utilise digital instruments.

### **Indonesian Economic Diplomacy: From Conventional Methods to Digital Methods**

Initially, Indonesia's economic diplomacy strategy tended to be traditional, although in several aspects its management began to shift towards a more innovative direction (Killian, 2012). However, since 2014, there

have been several fundamental changes as a result of the government's initiative to make economic diplomacy an important pillar of Indonesia's foreign policy. This shift aligns closely with President Joko Widodo's vision for foreign policy, which places a strong emphasis on pragmatic approaches that yield direct benefits for Indonesia. Jokowi's administration prioritises foreign policy strategies that are intrinsically beneficial to Indonesia, focusing on economic growth, development, and resilience. As a result, economic diplomacy has been transformed to prioritise concrete outcomes that support Indonesia's national interests, driving efforts to establish Indonesia as a key economic player on the global stage.

In 2015, the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs formed a special team (task force) for economic diplomacy as a follow-up to strengthening Indonesia's economic diplomacy. Specifically, this task force has three main objectives, namely first, establishing better and more synergistic cooperation between government and non-government stakeholders; second, facilitating representatives as an extension of the central government to carry out market intelligence; and third, carrying out business matching and coordinating with related parties in a synergistic manner (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2015). In

Minister of Foreign Affairs Regulation No. 6 of 2021 concerning the Organisation and work procedures of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, there is a special position for expert staff in economic diplomacy, with its main task is to provide recommendations on strategic issues to the Minister related to the field of economic diplomacy (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia 2022).

Besides establishing a task force and appointing expert staff, the Indonesian government also raised discourse to integrate several economic and trade functions into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For example, in 2019, there was a discourse about moving the Directorate General of International Trade Negotiations (PPI) at the Ministry of Trade to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to encourage synergy between ministries in performing economic diplomacy (Rahma, 2019). Even though this discourse was eventually not implemented, this synergy effort was finally carried through the appointment of a new Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs who had a strong economic background. The election of Mehendra Siregar as Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2019 showed that there were endeavours to strengthen human resources in the economic sector at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, considering that he previously

served as Deputy Minister of Trade, Deputy Minister of Finance, and Head of the Investment Coordinating Board (BKPM). Seeing the character of economic diplomacy which needs to involve many other parties - especially stakeholders in the economic sector - this appointment also aims to bridge the problem of sectoral egos that often arise in the Indonesian bureaucracy.

In accordance with this, Indonesian representatives abroad have also begun to actively carry out economic diplomacy activities through exhibitions, business expos, and strengthening cooperation networks with the private sector. Embassies and consulates are also starting to compile market or economic intelligence to support this activity, namely reports containing general data related to market conditions and the economic situation of the countries concerned. Apart from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, other Indonesian representatives – such as the Indonesian Trade Promotion Center (ITPC) belonging to the Ministry of Trade – are also heavily involved in economic diplomacy activities, especially in carrying out export promotions. As of October 2022, Indonesia is recorded as having 19 ITPC offices abroad spread across the continents of Asia, Europe, America, Africa and Australia. (Ministry of Trade of the Republic of

Indonesia, 2022). For approximately five years, economic diplomacy activities - especially those led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs - have been running well and have relied heavily on traditional diplomatic methods and instruments such as exhibitions, direct negotiations and face-to-face meetings. However, towards the beginning of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic forced adjustments in various aspects of diplomacy, including economic diplomacy.

In the context of digital diplomacy, Indonesia is quite active in using social media as one of its main channels. There are four social media platforms frequently used by Indonesia's diplomatic actors: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. In this case, social media operates as a complement to traditional diplomatic activities rather than a replacement (Pohan et al., 2017), which means conventional methods are still employed. However, despite Indonesia's active use of social media for economic diplomacy, research on this topic remains scarce. A recent study in 2022 (Triwahyuni, 2022) examined Indonesia's digital economic diplomacy during the pandemic, but no comprehensive studies exist on Indonesia's overall digital economic diplomacy. This research aims to fill this literature gap, particularly focusing on

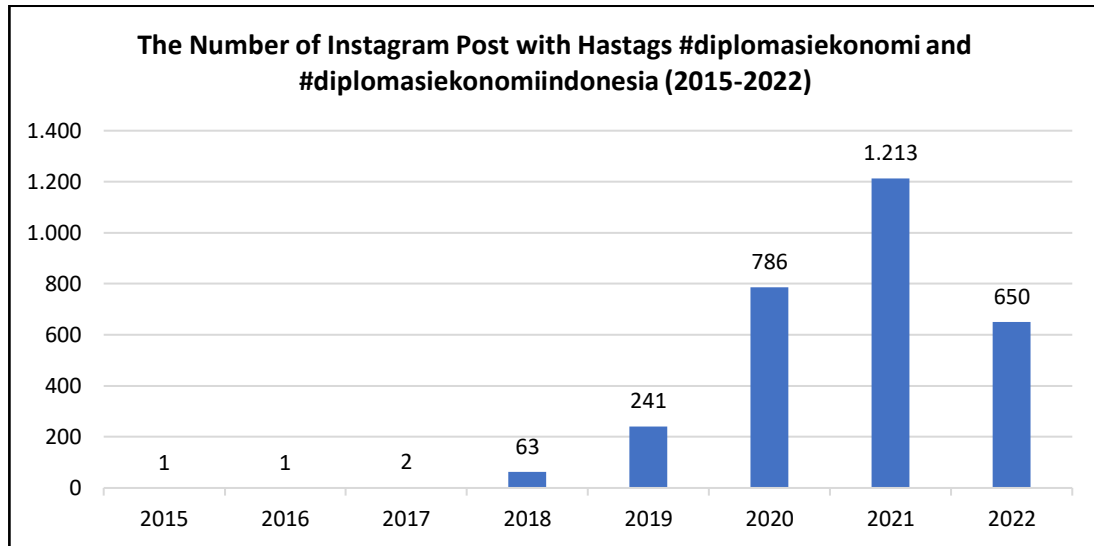
digital economic diplomacy in developing countries like Indonesia.

One of the main changes seen in Indonesia's economic diplomacy during the pandemic or since the beginning of 2020 is the increasing use of digital instruments in Indonesia's economic diplomacy activities. At the end of 2019, the Ministry of Trade began developing the InaExport application as a platform that connects Indonesian business people with foreign parties digitally, especially for the private sector in the non-oil and gas sector (Widi, 2022). In mid-2020, InaExport was officially launched after previously conducting outreach regarding its use to Indonesian representatives abroad (Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, 2022). Apart from InaExport which was initiated by the Ministry of Trade, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also developed its application, Ina-Access, which focuses on the three main pillars of Indonesian economic diplomacy, namely trade, tourism and investment. These applications were created as a form of digital transformation of economic diplomacy activities, especially during the pandemic. Apart from digital applications, Indonesian economic 'diplomats' are also starting to actively use social media - especially Instagram - as a medium for economic diplomacy.

Our data shows that the number of posts using the hashtags #economicdiplomacy and #indonesianeconomicdiplomacy on

Instagram began to increase from 2018 to mid-2022.

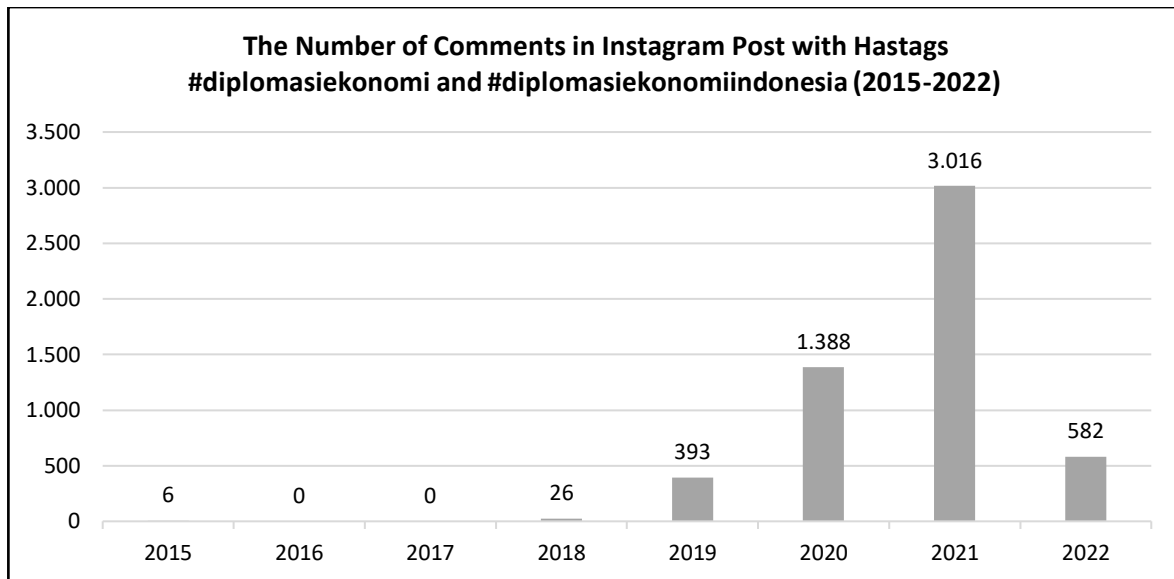
**Figure 1. The Number of Instagram Posts**



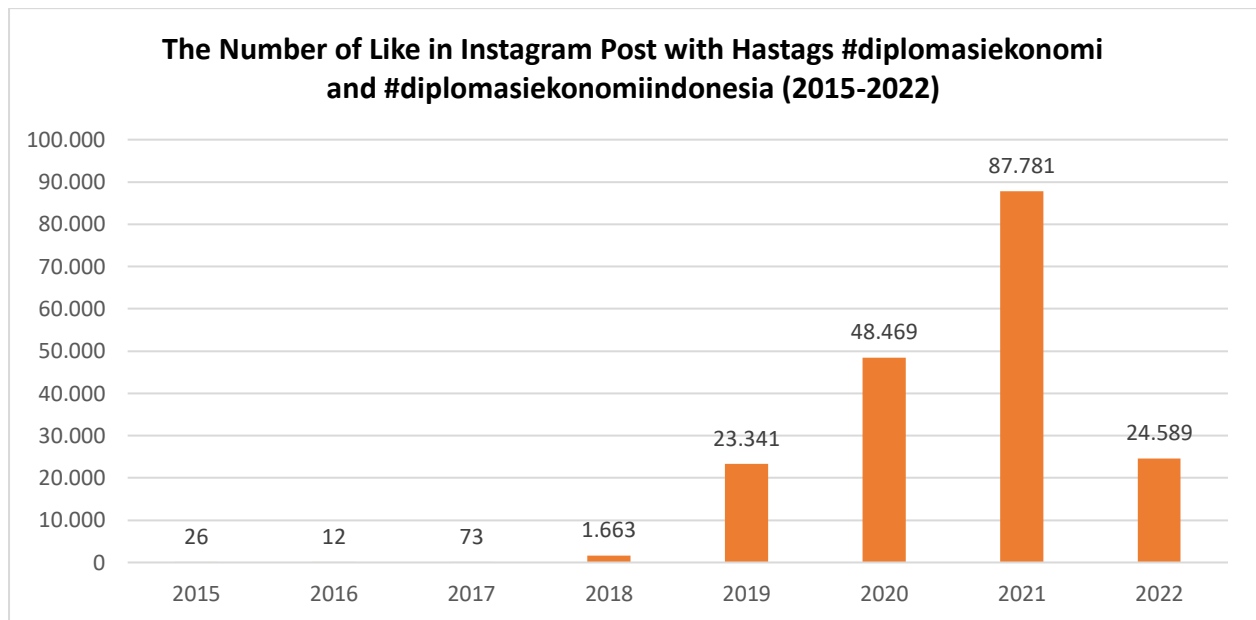
From the graph above, it can be seen that there was a steady increase for the two hashtags above every year, except in 2022. However, the data we collected for 2022 only extends to August, therefore, it does not represent the entire data for that year. Apart from the increase in the number of posts, there has also been an increase in total likes and comments related to the two hashtags above since 2018.

In addition to seeing an increase in the number of posts and engagement per year, we also identify accounts that have posts with the highest public engagement seen based on the number of likes and comments received. From this classification, the following data is obtained (see Figure 2 and 3).

**Figure 2. The Number of Comments on Instagram Posts**



**Figure 3. The Number of Like in Instagram Posts**



In general, there are three Indonesian representative accounts (see. Table 2) with the highest engagement figures, namely Indonesia in Phnom Penh (@Indonesiainphnompenh), Indonesia in Seoul (@Indonesiainseoul) and Indonesia in Nur Sultan (@Indonesiainursultan). The other two accounts are accounts of government officials who are outside the

focus of this research. These three Indonesian representative accounts then became the main database for qualitative data analysis in accordance with the research conceptual framework.

Apart from the distribution pattern of Indonesia's economic diplomacy via Instagram which tends to focus on the Asian region, another pattern that can be

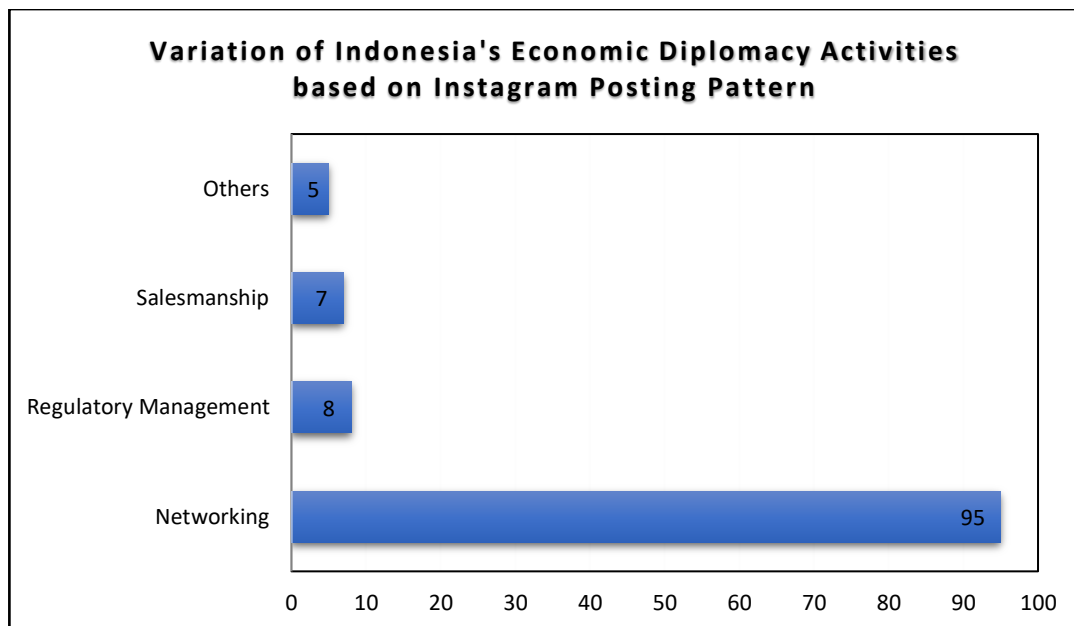
observed is related to the types and forms of uploads made by three Indonesian representative accounts abroad. In his writing, Rana (2012) identified three stages of economic diplomacy carried out by developing countries, namely

salesmanship, networking, and regulatory management. We then used this classification to group posts from the three main accounts above and found the upload pattern data (see Figure 4).

**Table 2. Indonesian Representative Instagram Accounts**

<b>Account name</b>	<b>Post Link</b>	<b>Number of Likes + Comments</b>
indonesiainphnompenh	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CAMbhjlH4jm/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CAMbhjlH4jm/</a>	9071
retno_marsudi	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/B2j23EnA_XT/">https://www.instagram.com/p/B2j23EnA_XT/</a>	5485
Indonesiainseoul	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CRNKZNVLh4j/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CRNKZNVLh4j/</a>	4712
Pramonoanungw	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/B3W4pZlIV1d/">https://www.instagram.com/p/B3W4pZlIV1d/</a>	2175
indonesiainnursultan	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CLmPLDbMv99/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CLmPLDbMv99/</a>	2168

**Figure 4. Instagram Posting Pattern**



In the 2015-2022 period, the majority of uploads were related to network formation or networking activities. These uploads cover approximately 83% of the total uploads, namely 95 uploads. These networking activities include activities such as meetings or banquets with foreign government representatives, seminars/workshops related to Indonesia and business matching/gathering activities with the private sector. The second most frequently uploaded was related to regulatory management – with a total of eight uploads (7%) – including information related to ratifying or signing economic cooperation activities and general information related to exports and imports. The fewest posts related to salesmanship were made – as many as seven posts (6%) – which included promotional activities for

certain products, companies or tourist attractions. Apart from these uploads, there were also five uploads (4%) that could not be classified into the research framework. These other posts include holiday greetings and general non-economic information but use the hashtag economic diplomacy.

### **Instagram Social Media as an Instrument of Indonesian Economic Diplomacy**

From the data presented above, there are two main findings regarding the use of Instagram social media by Indonesian representatives abroad. The first is related to Instagram upload patterns which focus more on networking activities and tend to be less on other activities. Referring to the three main pillars of Indonesia's economic diplomacy, namely trade, tourism, and investment as well as Rana's (2012) stage of commercial diplomacy in developing

countries, the stages that Indonesia as a developing country will usually go through are the sales stage, then the networking stage. and finally, the stage of rule formation (regulatory management). Specifically, Rana does not discuss the use of digital instruments in the practice of state economic diplomacy, but if we apply Rana's model to Indonesia's economic diplomacy through digital instruments, we can see a different pattern compared to traditional economic diplomacy models.

Looking at the Instagram posts of Indonesian representatives, it appears that Indonesia focuses more on the second stage, which is networking than the other stages. Posts related to salesmanship, which is the first stage, are actually in third position after regulatory management, which is the third stage. There are several possible reasons why the uploads of Indonesian representatives focus more on the networking aspect.

*First*, traditionally, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was better trained and tended to have functions related to establishing networks and strengthening cooperation rather than trade. Historically, the diplomatic practice of the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been dominated by functions related to high politics such as security, sovereignty and border issues which are the core of classic

diplomatic activities. Economic diplomacy is a new variant of diplomacy that has only entered mainstream diplomatic discourse in the last few decades. For Indonesia, economic diplomacy only became one of the main focuses of diplomacy in 2011 or around 11 years ago, so several key skills related to this have not yet been fully formed. In some aspects, economic diplomats need competencies similar to international business actors (Svetlicic, 2011). Trading skills or salesmanship in economic diplomacy, for example, require several special competencies such as product knowledge, marketing skills and the ability to read the market. However, skills like these have not been the main focus in developing the capacity of Indonesian diplomats.

*Second*, Salesmanship activities are mostly carried out by other institutions, namely the Ministry of Trade through its representatives abroad, namely the Indonesia Trade Promotion Center (ITPC). ITPC is a technical implementing unit which is part of Indonesia's representatives abroad with the main task of increasing Indonesia's foreign trade, especially to encourage Indonesian exports (Indonesia Trade Promotion Center Barcelona, 2020). Hierarchically, ITPC is under the auspices of the Ministry of Trade and has existed since the 1980s, although it experienced a



long hiatus before being reactivated in the 2000s (Hapsari & Haqqi, 2015). With long experience and specific expertise related to market penetration and marketing techniques, ITPC is more appropriate for carrying out the salesmanship function than the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This can be seen from the uploads of several Instagram accounts belonging to ITPC, such as those belonging to ITPC Hamburg (<https://www.instagram.com/itpchamburg/>) and ITPC Milan (<https://www.instagram.com/itpcmilan/>) which uploads a lot of product information and Indonesia's tourism potential.

These historical elements and expertise also apply to regulatory management activities which are the third stage of economic diplomacy according to Kishan Rana's category. Regulatory management is closely related to aspects of governance and the formulation of global trade and investment regulations, which are traditionally closer to the role and function of the Ministry of Trade than the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Currently, negotiations and utilisation of trade agreements are still led by the Minister of Trade in accordance with Presidential Regulation No. 24 of 2022 concerning International Trade Agreement Negotiating Teams. In this regulation, the Minister of Foreign Affairs only functions as a member so that

de facto, detailed information and understanding regarding Indonesian trade and investment regulations will be owned by the Ministry of Trade.

*Third*, Mastery and technical skills related to the use of social media for diplomatic activities are still very limited among Indonesian diplomats. Juridically, the basis for managing social media for diplomatic activities has been regulated in Minister of Foreign Affairs Regulation No. 10 of 2018 concerning Digital Media Management of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia. However, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' use of digital media for diplomatic activities still requires strengthening in several aspects, especially related to infrastructure, incentive funds and the quality of human resources (Dwikardana et al., 2017). Apart from that, Indonesian diplomatic activities that utilise digital instruments also tend to be simple with the main objective being the dissemination of information rather than two-way interaction or specific political goals (Kurniawati et al., 2020). This tendency is also seen in the practice of economic diplomacy where social media posts do not yet show patterns or strategies to achieve certain goals. In this context, Instagram is only used for the information dissemination process without any other

additional purposes.

The second finding in this research concerns the distribution of Instagram accounts with the highest engagement, where the three Instagram accounts with the highest public engagement are managed by representatives of Indonesia who are in the Asian region and only South Korea can be categorised as a country with traditional market status for Indonesia.

The Instagram account with the first highest engagement belongs to the Indonesian Embassy in Phnom Penh. The hashtag of economic diplomacy towards Indonesia in Phnom Penh has increased since the formation of the Indonesia-Cambodia Business Club (ICBC). The ICBC club consists of more than 50 entrepreneurs operating in various fields, namely F&B, health products, beauty products, office equipment, construction, and the heavy machinery industry. The efforts of the Indonesian Embassy in Phnom Penh to encourage economic diplomacy by utilising social media are also by introducing the Facebook Fanpage Indonesia Product and Tourism Promotion (INDOPROCAM). Apart from that, on the website of the Indonesian Embassy in Phnom Penh, the 'Economic Diplomacy Information' menu has been added. This menu contains information related to trade cooperation, investment, tourism, creative economy and

employment, as well as how to do business, both in Indonesia and Cambodia.

The Indonesian Embassy in Phnom Penh chose social media as a means of promotion, because from existing data, the number of social media users in Cambodia is very high, namely around 9.7 million users, so it is hoped that information dissemination and promotion efforts will be easier to reach all groups of social media users in Cambodia. Through this media, it is hoped that Indonesian entrepreneurs who have products ready for export or tour packages can utilise INDOPROCAM to promote their various products. The use of social media is also considered quite effective as a means of promoting economic diplomacy, especially when all countries were hit by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. In this context, an important factor in the successful implementation of economic diplomacy at the Indonesian Embassy in Phnom Penh is collaboration between the government and the private sector. This is realized, among other things, in trade missions and promotional activities, carried out continuously through forums created via social media.

In contrast to the Indonesian Embassy in Phnom Penh, the strengthening of Indonesia's economic diplomacy in South Korea, especially through the Indonesian

Embassy in Seoul, has increased after the agreement of the Indonesia-Korea Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (IK-CEPA) at the end of 2020. The Indonesia-Korea Comprehensive Economic Partnership (IK-CEPA) negotiation agreement as a form of encouragement to increase trade and economic interactions with a focal point on facilitating investment and trade, market access for trade in goods and services, and cooperation and business formation, marks the economic relationship between Indonesia and South Korea (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2020). Indonesia's national interests through IK-CEPA are broadly aimed at increasing the productivity and competitiveness of Indonesian people in the international market. Bilateral economic cooperation within the IK-CEPA framework is one of the tools and processes of Indonesian economic diplomacy to support increased national economic growth through trade and investment.

Another effort made by the Indonesian Embassy in Seoul in economic diplomacy is also by adding creative and digital economic functions. Economic diplomacy is not only focused on activities that focus on identifying investment gaps and opportunities for developing product exports and imports but also uses digital

media as a means of promotion and information dissemination. The interesting thing about the innovation carried out by the Indonesian Embassy in Seoul in improving economic diplomacy cannot be separated from the background of the Ambassador of the Indonesian Embassy in Seoul who is currently on duty - Gandi Sulistiyanto - who is an entrepreneur. At the beginning of his term as Ambassador, he met and discussed more with influential business communities to discuss investment opportunities that could be achieved through economic diplomacy in South Korea.

Besides these two accounts, the third account with the highest engagement is the Indonesian representative account at Nur Sultan/Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan. However, based on further analysis, the hashtag #indonesianeconomic diplomacy that appears always goes hand in hand with another keyword, namely coffee. There is no specific information that only contains or is related to economic diplomacy in general. Indonesia's trade missions and export promotion to the Central Asian region tend not to be as aggressive as to other regions, especially because the exchange of information and communication regarding trade potential between Indonesia and Kazakhstan is still lacking. One of the main obstacles in the

export-import process from Indonesia and Kazakhstan is related to logistics, because Kazakhstan does not have a port and is landlocked, so the majority of export activities from Indonesia require a third country as a transit point. This also causes quite limited commodities that can be used as superior export products to Kazakhstan.

From the discussion above, it can be seen that there are two important aspects that play a role in high public engagement in economic diplomacy. First, the strong role of the private sector in economic diplomacy activities, both as policymakers such as at the Indonesian Embassy in Seoul and as partners such as at the Indonesian Embassy in Cambodia. This is of course driven by the expertise and experience of human resources involved in economic diplomacy activities, especially because business people tend to control the market landscape more than pure diplomats. Second, economic diplomacy activities that focus on certain commodities – such as coffee – can encourage higher engagement, especially for regions that do not yet have strong economic relations with Indonesia.

## **Conclusion**

The use of digital instruments in diplomacy – especially economic diplomacy – has experienced rapid development in recent years. The utilisation of social media such

as Instagram is one of the important keys related to this change. This research found that Indonesia – through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – has also utilised Instagram as a digital instrument for its economic diplomacy activities with a main focus on establishing networks and cooperation. Other economic diplomacy activities such as sales or trade promotions and the formation of regulations have not become the main focus of Indonesia's economic diplomacy activities through the medium of Instagram. Apart from that, the role and involvement of private actors are also key elements that encourage active economic diplomacy activities, including attracting higher public involvement on Instagram. In general, Instagram provides an interesting database to see the patterns, distribution, and activities of economic diplomacy in Indonesia – and other countries – holistically and at a macro level. However, several detailed aspects, such as strategies per region including superior commodities, still require research and a more micro perspective.

Furthermore, the 'failure' of social media to be used optimally in economic diplomacy should also be considered from the limitations of social media itself, not solely from the perspective of the actors using it. Therefore, further research could explore

how technical factors and social media algorithms affect the effectiveness of economic diplomacy, as well as the

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