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OPTIMISING SOFT POWER IN INDONESIA: THE ROLE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE DIGITAL DIPLOMACY OF WONDERFUL INDONESIA AFTER THE PANDEMIC

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Abstract: The post-COVID-19 pandemic marked the beginning of accelerated digital transformation in public diplomacy. The Wonderful Indonesia campaign used digital technology to strengthen the national image and increase the number of international tourists. This study examines the application of artificial intelligence (AI) in the Wonderful Indonesia communication strategy and its contribution to strengthening Indonesia's soft power. Using a descriptive qualitative approach based on a literature study and secondary data, the study analyses the campaign through Joseph S. Nye's soft power framework, operationalised through four indicators: attraction, agenda setting, engagement, and data-driven decision making. The findings show that generative AI strengthens cultural attraction through personalised, multilingual content; that global platforms such as Netflix shape international perceptions of Indonesia; that chatbots such as TIWI and platforms such as Opland and MaiA enable two-way engagement and data-based marketing decisions; and that these practices extend Indonesia's cultural influence as part of modern public diplomacy. The study also notes persistent challenges, including unequal digital infrastructure and literacy, fragmented data, platform control over narratives, privacy risks, and the risk of cultural commodification. It concludes that AI can strengthen Indonesia's soft power when managed strategically, inclusively, and sustainably, offering insights into the integration of intelligent technology into national soft power strategy.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, digital diplomacy, soft power, Wonderful Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

As digital technology has advanced, global diplomacy has developed significantly. The digital transformation during the COVID-19 pandemic pushed many countries to adopt digital technology to sustain diplomatic communication and promote their foreign policies under conditions of physical restriction (Jaumotte et al., 2023). Digital technology, initially adopted as an emergency solution during the pandemic, gradually became a core component of contemporary diplomacy strategies that have been retained into the post-pandemic period (Bjola & Manor, 2022). The post-pandemic era shows a paradigm shift in diplomacy, from physical interaction and conventional media towards technology-based diplomacy (Serra, 2022). This phenomenon reflects the fact that the adoption of digital platforms in global diplomacy has made the delivery of messages across countries more effective.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become an important instrument that strengthens international communication strategies as a further development of the digitalisation of diplomacy. AI enables governments and diplomatic actors to analyse big data, map public sentiment, personalise diplomatic messages, and design messages tailored to the characteristics of their target audiences (Bano et al., 2023). One of the latest innovations in this field is the use of Generative AI (GenAI), which enables the automatic production of diplomatic content in text, visual, and audio forms (Manor, 2025). In the context of digital diplomacy, GenAI enables states to create cultural representations and foreign policy narratives that are more attractive and more accessible to the global public (Frey, 2024). The use of AI, including GenAI, extends the reach of communication and increases the effectiveness of information delivery by personalising content and predicting trends relevant to international markets (Hedling & Bremberg, 2021). This transformation therefore reflects a shift in the dissemination of information towards diplomacy that is intelligent, data-based, and responsive to global dynamics.

Amid global dynamics that demand efficiency and precision in the delivery of international information, AI appears to have become a strategic instrument in contemporary diplomatic practice. Several advanced countries, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and South Korea, have integrated AI into their public diplomacy during the pandemic, particularly in cultural campaigns, crisis management, and tourism promotion (Bjola & Manor, 2022). In line with this trend, Indonesia has begun to adopt a similar approach through the Wonderful Indonesia campaign as an instrument of public diplomacy and a means of strengthening national soft power (Firdaus et al., 2023). In recent years, the campaign has shown digital innovation through AI, including monitoring the responses of international tourists using social media analytics, personalising promotional content on the basis of market preferences, and using interactive chatbots on the national tourism information platform (Jaelani et al., 2024). Although its application remains more limited than in advanced countries, the use of AI in Wonderful Indonesia reflects a new direction in Indonesia's digital diplomacy strategy that is more adaptive, data-based, and open to the integration of intelligent technology.

The transformation of public diplomacy through the Wonderful Indonesia campaign, which integrates AI technology, including GenAI, is a strategic phenomenon that deserves in-depth study in the context of international relations. Although the evidence shows great potential for introducing cultural narratives and extending Indonesia's influence globally through digital means, academic studies that specifically examine AI's contribution to strengthening national soft power remain limited. Understanding technological advances to support tourism promotion and, at the same time, to shape international public perceptions of Indonesia's identity and cultural values needs to become a priority. The urgency of this study therefore lies in the need to evaluate the extent to which the use of AI, including GenAI, in the Wonderful Indonesia campaign can contribute to strengthening Indonesia's soft power in a

measurable and sustainable way. Against this background, the research question of this study is: How does Artificial Intelligence (AI) strengthen Indonesia's soft power through the Wonderful Indonesia digital diplomacy campaign in the post-COVID-19 pandemic era?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Two Clusters in the Literature on Digital Diplomacy

The transformation of public diplomacy in the post-COVID-19 pandemic era has shifted the focus of academic study from conventional social media towards the adoption of intelligent technology based on Artificial Intelligence (AI). In the digital diplomacy literature, earlier studies fall broadly into two main clusters. The first cluster focuses on conventional digital diplomacy based on two-way communication and multi-platform strengthening (Melissen, 2005; Salsabila & Febtyandi, 2021). The second cluster examines the integration of AI and Generative AI (GenAI) in the public diplomacy of advanced countries, such as the United States and South Korea, emphasising operational efficiency and big data sentiment analysis (Bjola & Manor, 2022; Bano et al., 2023; Woo, 2025a, 2025b).

Nevertheless, there is a specific gap in the literature on how AI adoption is executed in the context of the tourism diplomacy of a developing country such as Indonesia. Research on the Wonderful Indonesia campaign has so far been limited to evaluations of pre-AI digital tourism promotion (Firdaus et al., 2023). In addition, a fundamental academic debate has emerged: whether the adoption of AI in public diplomacy substantively transforms the mechanisms through which cultural attraction and the legitimacy of national values are formed, or merely increases the operational efficiency of existing promotion.

The conceptual novelty of this article lies in its explanation of the conceptual relationship between AI as a catalyst and mediator of digital communication and the strengthening of soft power. This article critically distinguishes between operational outputs, such as the automation of multilingual content production and the speed of chatbot services, and soft power outcomes, such as changes in perception, cultural affinity, and the emotional engagement of international audiences. The study thus offers an integrated analytical framework that positions AI technology not merely as a technical tool, but as part of a dynamic public diplomacy strategy.

Theoretical Framework: Nye's Soft Power and Four Operational Indicators

Tourism promotion has now become part of national soft power diplomacy in the eyes of the world. The concept of soft power was first introduced by Joseph S. Nye in the 1990s as a form of a state's non-coercive power to influence other actors through the attraction of its culture, national identity, and widely acceptable foreign policies (Nye, 1990). Unlike hard power, which relies on military and economic strength, soft power works through persuasion and the projection of a positive national identity (Nye, 2008). In the context of tourism, soft power is a

relevant concept, because this sector acts as a channel of cultural diplomacy that conveys national identity, social and cultural values, and the appeal of destinations to a global audience (Baruah, 2024).

The main framework of this study is rooted in Joseph S. Nye's soft power theory (1990, 2008), which defines a state's ability to influence others through non-coercive attraction derived from three main pillars: culture, political values, and foreign policies. In this study, soft power is the final outcome of public diplomacy that Indonesia seeks to achieve. To explain the delivery mechanisms and operational instruments, this study uses the framework of contemporary public diplomacy and digital diplomacy (Melissen, 2005; Bjola & Manor, 2022; Hassan & Batool, 2024). Digital diplomacy is positioned as the delivery mechanism that facilitates direct interaction between the government and the international public through digital spaces.

The integration of digital diplomacy and AI technology in the Wonderful Indonesia campaign can be examined through more measurable soft power indicators. First, attraction is reflected in the delivery of cultural values, culinary traditions, and natural beauty through interactive media that are attractive and relevant to the global public. Second, agenda setting is evident in efforts to shape Indonesia's image through international digital platforms such as Netflix, where Indonesian cultural messages are packaged in popular narratives. Third, engagement is realised through two-way interaction with tourists via chatbot applications and user-centred tourism information services. Fourth, data-driven decision making can be seen in the use of the Opland application, which enables marketing decisions based on tourist preference data.

The indicators of attraction, agenda setting, engagement, and data-driven decision making are used to measure the effectiveness of Indonesia's digital diplomacy campaign. All four remain rooted in the three soft power pillars proposed by Joseph Nye, namely culture, political values, and foreign policy. These three pillars are not operational indicators, but resources of soft power that explain the positive distinctiveness a state possesses. The four indicators above, by contrast, are strategic manifestations, that is, how that power is applied and measured in diplomatic practice (Melissen, 2005). In this regard, Indonesian culture is the main strength, while the values of openness, friendliness, and diversity are conveyed through digital-based tourism diplomacy policy.

With regard to how Artificial Intelligence contributes to strengthening Indonesia's soft power through the Wonderful Indonesia campaign, the analysis and discussion in this study are organised according to the operational soft power indicators relevant to contemporary digital diplomacy practice. Drawing on Joseph S. Nye's thinking on soft power, this study uses four analytical indicators, namely attraction, agenda setting, engagement, and data-driven decision making. Organising the analysis around these indicators aims to assess effectiveness in building cultural attraction, shaping international public perceptions, increasing the engagement of global audiences, and supporting strategic data-based decision making. The

discussion therefore begins with the attraction indicator as the main foundation of soft power, which derives from the representation of Indonesian culture and national identity in the global digital space.

Table 1. The soft power framework: Nye's three pillars and four operational indicators

Indicator	Definition	Manifestation in the Wonderful Indonesia Campaign
Attraction	The delivery of cultural values, culinary traditions, and natural beauty through interactive media that are attractive and relevant to the global public.	Cultural content, multilingual narratives, and visual stories delivered through interactive platforms and global streaming services.
Agenda setting	Efforts to shape Indonesia's image through international digital platforms, where Indonesian cultural messages are packaged in popular narratives.	Indonesian films and series on Netflix, framed for global audiences through platform algorithms and recommendation systems.
Engagement	Two-way interaction with tourists through chatbot applications and user-centred tourism information services.	The TIWI chatbot and tourism information services that respond to user questions and preferences in real time.
Data-driven decision making	Marketing decisions based on tourist preference data.	The Opland application, which supports marketing decisions with data on tourist preferences and market behaviour.

Source: Developed from the framework discussion in the text. All four indicators remain rooted in Nye's three pillars (culture, political values, and foreign policy), which are resources of soft power rather than operational indicators.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to understand the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology in the digital diplomacy of Wonderful Indonesia. The study also relates this role to the strengthening of Indonesia's soft power after the pandemic. The qualitative approach was chosen because it is suited to exploring meaning, narrative, and communication strategies that are non-numerical in nature. The main focus of this study lies in observing the integration of AI into digital tourism communication, analysed through the strength of narrative, visuals, and cultural representation in the context of international relations. This study seeks to explore the cultural and political meanings of the use of AI technology, particularly GenAI, in promoting Indonesia's identity and culture internationally.

The data collected in this study are secondary data. Secondary data were collected through a literature study and reports from relevant government institutions, particularly the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemenparekraf). To enrich the information, the data sources in this study were supplemented by government press releases, content analysis of the official Wonderful Indonesia social media, and articles from relevant news portals and academic journals. The data analysis technique used is content analysis. The purpose of this analytical model is to identify patterns of cultural narrative and communication strategies used as part of the campaign. By emphasising the strength of narrative, visuals, and digital media, this study aims to provide a critical understanding of the use of AI as a means of shaping Indonesia's image and nation-building in the global arena, rather than merely as a technological application.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings and discussion are presented in sequence. There is a close relationship between the tourism campaign programme, the role of soft power digitalisation, the implementation of digital diplomacy, and the analysis of the need for sustained soft power strengthening. Each is described briefly below.

The Wonderful Indonesia Campaign

In recent years, the tourism sector has become one of the drivers of national economic growth and has contributed to improving the social welfare of Indonesian society. To strengthen the competitiveness of tourism at the global level, the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemenparekraf) launched the Wonderful Indonesia campaign in January 2011. This was a new strategy for introducing Indonesia's cultural and natural potential to the international world (Kusumaningrum et al., 2024).

The campaign replaced the previous slogan, Visit Indonesia Year (VIY), which had been used since 1991 and was last activated in 2008. The change of slogan reflects an effort to rebrand Indonesia's tourism image through a more sustainable marketing strategy (The Jakarta Post, 2008). While the VIY campaign relied more on conventional media, such as television and print media, with a one-way public diplomacy approach, Wonderful Indonesia places greater emphasis on a multi-platform approach based on digital media. This approach enables two-way communication with a global audience (Salsabila & Febtyandi, 2021). This phenomenon shows that Wonderful Indonesia has evolved in its marketing strategy and has also developed into a digital-based tourism diplomacy campaign, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the transformation of global communication.

The digital transformation of the Wonderful Indonesia campaign has become increasingly prominent since the COVID-19 pandemic, when physical interaction was restricted globally. In this situation, Kemenparekraf began to optimise the use of digital technology to maintain the existence of Indonesia's tourism diplomacy (Nanda et al., 2023). Changes in consumer

behaviour, with consumers now more active in digital spaces, appear to be pushing the campaign to adapt through the use of social media, interactive videos, and engaging content that follows global trends. One of the fastest interactive innovations in providing information is the use of AI and GenAI technology. AI and GenAI support the provision of information to analyse tourism trends, personalise content according to the interests of the global public, and produce contextual visual narratives (Kusumaningrum et al., 2024). This initiative by the Indonesian government aims to build digital diplomacy that is responsive and flexible in keeping with the times and global dynamics (Chaska, 2025). The use of AI and GenAI technology has now become an important pillar of modern public diplomacy communication.

Soft Power in AI-Based Tourism Diplomacy

As AI-based digital technology has developed, states now have the ability to extend the reach of their soft power through faster and more interactive communication strategies. South Korea is one example of a country that has successfully used the power of popular culture, such as Korean dramas and K-Pop music, which has contributed to an increase in the number of foreign tourists (Yao, 2021). To support this trend, the South Korean government has developed several AI-based tourism applications, including the multilingual chatbot service "Visit Seoul", which acts as a virtual tour assistant that can tailor destination recommendations (Woo, 2025a). On Jeju Island, similar technology has been applied through AI-based airport kiosks that provide tourism services in 13 foreign languages and are available only at Jeju International Airport (Woo, 2025b). South Korea's efforts show that technological innovation can strengthen soft power strategy through digital cultural diplomacy that directly touches the experience of international tourists.

Amid this global trend, Indonesia has adopted a similar strategy through the Wonderful Indonesia campaign, which is now integrated with digital communication through AI technology. One prominent AI initiative is the launch of a chatbot by Kemenparekraf called TIWI (Thoughtful Indonesia Wonderful Indonesia), designed to provide Indonesian tourism information services 24 hours a day (Waranggani, 2020). In addition to the TIWI chatbot, an application called Opland has been implemented in the Borobudur area, an AI platform that helps businesses develop tour packages and marketing strategies based on tourist trend data and global market behaviour preferences (Dhaniswara, 2023). These initiatives show that the use of AI technology improves the effectiveness of communication within Wonderful Indonesia and encourages the transformation of national tourism towards an approach that is more adaptive, data-based, and responsive to global market dynamics.

In addition, Kemenparekraf has established a strategic partnership with Netflix as part of its digital cultural diplomacy efforts. Through this collaboration, various visual contents highlighting Indonesia's cultural and tourism wealth are shown to a global audience. The drama series *Gadis Kretek*, for example, presents the story of the *kretek* industry as Indonesia's cultural heritage, wrapped in a historical narrative and national identity.

Meanwhile, the film *Ali & Ratu Ratu Queens* represents the dynamics of the Indonesian diaspora in New York while retaining local cultural values, and the culinary documentary *Street Food: Asia* presents the story of Mbah Satinem, a legendary *kue lupis* seller from Yogyakarta, as an authentic representation of Indonesia's culinary traditions (Hendriyani, 2022). This collaboration extends the reach of Indonesia's promotion internationally and shows how the power of visual narrative can be used as an instrument of soft power through global and algorithmic digital media.

Digital Diplomacy as an Instrument for Strengthening Soft Power

In the era of digital transformation, the concept of diplomacy has shifted significantly from a traditional model towards a more interactive and technology-based practice. Digital diplomacy refers to the use of information and communication technology, particularly digital media, by state actors to convey foreign policy, build the national image, and reach out to the global public directly (Hassan & Batool, 2024). This concept derives from public diplomacy, which focuses on strategic communication with the international public beyond formal diplomatic channels (Chahine, 2010). Through digital diplomacy, a state acts as a facilitator of interaction, cultural narrative, and global collaboration based on digital platforms, rather than merely as a sender of messages.

In the Indonesian context, the Wonderful Indonesia campaign is a concrete example of digital diplomacy practice integrated with an Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology approach. Initiatives such as the TIWI chatbot (Thoughtful Indonesia Wonderful Indonesia) show how the government uses technology to deliver tourism information in real time, strengthen engagement with the international public (Tan et al., 2025), and display cultural appeal directly through interactive multilingual services. The application of Opland by tourism businesses in Borobudur reflects the use of AI technology to design communication strategies based on market preferences and data analytics, in line with the principle of data-driven decision making in modern digital diplomacy (Al Midfa, 2024). In addition, Kemenparekraf's collaboration with Netflix extends the dimension of digital diplomacy through visual cultural narratives in content such as *Gadis Kretek*, *Ali & Ratu-Ratu Queens*, and *Street Food: Asia*. This is a subtle yet effective way of presenting Indonesia's identity to a global audience, shaping public perceptions (agenda setting) and strengthening nation branding based on digital storytelling (Kelechi, 2024).

Attraction: AI as a Strengthener of Indonesia's Cultural Appeal

Attraction appears to be the main element of soft power, derived from a state's ability to present its values, national identity, and culture attractively to the global public. The use of GenAI generally contributes in various aspects, from digital content production and personalised customer service to data-based predictive analysis. In practice, GenAI is increasingly used to produce adaptive tourism content, such as travel plans tailored to individual preferences, digital promotional materials, and simulations of virtual tourism

experiences (Susanto et al., 2025). This technology enables tourism service providers to prepare more detailed and personal travel recommendations, contributing to an improved tourist experience from the pre-travel stage (Suanpang & Pothipassa, 2024).

In the context of Wonderful Indonesia, Generative AI (GenAI) represents a significant technological development in the domestic tourism sector. AI-based social media analytics help the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemenparekraf) identify the interests of international tourists, for example the tendency of European tourists towards Indonesia's cultural heritage or the interest of Asian tourists in culinary experiences and urban experiences. On the basis of these data, GenAI is used to produce visual content and multilingual narratives tailored to the characteristics of social media platforms, such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube Shorts (Kementerian Pariwisata dan Ekonomi Kreatif, 2023). Through the algorithmic mechanisms of social media platforms, AI-based tourism content has the potential to reach a wider segment of the international audience, including groups of users who were not previously actively seeking information about Indonesia as a tourist destination. GenAI therefore functions as a strategic instrument for extending the reach of Indonesia's soft power digitally, rather than merely as a content production tool (Saosing & Nattawuttisit, 2025).

As part of the effort to strengthen the appeal of Indonesian tourism at the global level, the Indonesian government has also launched an Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based tourism platform called Meticulous Artificial Intelligence of Indonesia (MaiA). The platform is designed to personalise the travel experience of international tourists by providing destination recommendations, automatic travel planning, and activity suggestions tailored to individual user preferences. By using data analysis and AI algorithms, MaiA enables tourists to obtain a more efficient, relevant, and contextual pre-travel experience, while improving ease of access to information across languages (Travel and Tour World, 2025). From a soft power perspective, the presence of MaiA strengthens the attraction indicator by presenting Indonesia as a destination rich in culture and nature, and at the same time adaptive to technological innovation and the needs of global tourists. This initiative is in line with Joseph S. Nye's concept of soft power, in which cultural attraction is strengthened through innovative and responsive public policy, thereby increasing the legitimacy of Indonesia's policies in the eyes of the international public. Nevertheless, the effective use of MaiA still faces implementation challenges, particularly regarding the readiness of digital infrastructure and the level of technological literacy in various regions, which may affect the equitable distribution of the benefits of AI-based tourism (Mubarok et al., 2025).

After discussing how Generative AI contributes to strengthening Indonesia's cultural attraction as the foundation of soft power, the discussion now turns to the agenda setting indicator. The following subsection analyses how the use of AI and global digital platforms enables Indonesia to shape narratives, images, and international public perceptions of national identity and Indonesian tourism in the post-pandemic digital space.

Agenda Setting: Shaping Global Perceptions through Digital Platforms

The agenda setting indicator refers to a state's ability to shape its image, issues, and narratives on the international stage. In digital diplomacy, the role of AI is significant, because this technology enables a state to disseminate messages more widely and in a more targeted way through various digital platforms (Mamakou et al., 2025). With the support of algorithms and recommendation systems on digital platforms, the narratives conveyed by a state reach audiences who already have an interest, as well as international publics who previously had no direct connection with the image or issues of that state (Sánchez-Martín et al., 2025).

The practice of agenda setting in the Wonderful Indonesia campaign appears clearly in the strategic collaboration between Kemenparekraf and the global streaming platform Netflix. Programmes such as *Gadis Kretek*, *Ali & Ratu-Ratu Queens*, and *Street Food: Asia* do more than promote tourist destinations; they frame Indonesia as a cultural space with a history, local identity, and complex social dynamics (The Jakarta Post, 2022). The narratives conveyed through this entertainment medium thus allow Indonesian cultural messages to be received more subtly, naturally, and without an instructive tone, making it easier to form positive perceptions among international audiences (Utami, 2019).

The algorithms used by Netflix appear to play a strategic role in the agenda setting process of the Wonderful Indonesia campaign. On the basis of data analysis and user preference patterns, the system enables content representing Indonesia to reach international audiences who previously had no interest in, or direct connection with, issues or information about Indonesia (Nelsa et al., 2025). This indicates that AI has a strategic role in shaping the reach of Indonesia's cultural narratives in the digital space, rather than merely serving as a means of disseminating content (Utami, 2019). Agenda setting in digital diplomacy therefore no longer relies entirely on formal diplomatic mechanisms, but develops through patterns of popular culture consumption facilitated by digital technology.

In terms of effectiveness, the agenda setting strategy in the Wonderful Indonesia campaign appears to contribute to increasing the exposure of Indonesian culture and presenting a positive image in the medium term. On the one hand, Indonesia is perceived as more than an exotic tourist destination: as a country with a diverse, dynamic cultural identity that is relevant to contemporary global issues (Wulandari, 2014). On the other hand, agenda setting through global commercial platforms appears to face structural limitations. This is because control over narratives does not rest entirely with the state, since the content shown depends on market interests, audience preferences, and the algorithmic logic of the digital platforms themselves (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

Although collaboration with global digital platforms such as Netflix strengthens Indonesia's position in shaping international public perceptions, the application of AI-based agenda setting strategies still demands strategic and targeted narrative management. States and governments therefore need to ensure that the cultural representations conveyed are not

dictated solely by the commercial interests of a platform, but continue to reflect the values, national identity, and long-term public diplomacy objectives of Indonesia.

After discussing how AI-based agenda setting strategies shape Indonesia's image, the analysis now turns to the engagement indicator. This indicator emphasises the importance of active involvement and two-way interaction between the state and the international public through AI, particularly tourists. In the context of Wonderful Indonesia, engagement is realised through the use of chatbot applications and user-centred tourism information services, which enable communication that is more responsive, personal, and sustainable.

Engagement: Two-Way Interaction through AI Services in Digital Diplomacy

The engagement indicator in digital diplomacy practice refers to active involvement and two-way interaction between the state and the international public. Unlike agenda setting, which emphasises the formation of perceptions and image, engagement positions the public as actors who interact directly with the state through digital platforms. In the context of tourism diplomacy, this involvement matters, because positive interaction can increase the trust, credibility, and emotional closeness of audiences towards the state concerned (Perdani, 2024).

In the Wonderful Indonesia campaign, AI-based engagement appears in the use of chatbots and digital tourism information services designed to respond to tourists' needs quickly and personally. One example is the launch of the TIWI chatbot (Thoughtful Indonesia Wonderful Indonesia) by Kemenparekraf (Rizqa, 2025). In general, chatbots function as virtual assistants that provide information about Indonesian tourism 24 hours a day, including destination recommendations, travel guides, and other supporting information for domestic and international tourists. Using AI technology, the TIWI chatbot appears able to tailor its responses to users' questions and preferences. This pattern of interaction shows a more personal and responsive communication experience, thereby strengthening tourists' engagement in Indonesia's digital tourism diplomacy ecosystem (Fibriasari et al., 2024).

The presence of the TIWI chatbot appears to reflect a shift in public diplomacy practice from one-way communication towards a more interactive pattern. Through AI technology, the Indonesian government can directly experience interaction with international tourists without limits of space and time, while providing more personal services (Wijaya, 2025). From a soft power perspective, this interaction contributes to forming Indonesia's image as a country that is friendly, adaptive to technological developments, and responsive to the needs of the global public (Rizqa, 2025).

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of engagement through AI chatbots appears to depend on more than the availability of technology. Effectiveness is also assessed on the basis of the quality of interaction produced among users on global digital platforms. In practice, the communication model built through chatbots such as TIWI still tends to be functional and informative, focusing only on the delivery of data and basic services (Sutantri, 2025). A

communication model that could deepen audiences' closeness to Indonesian identity through emotional, narrative, and reflective engagement still appears relatively limited. This shows that the use of AI in engagement in the Wonderful Indonesia campaign needs to be combined with communication strategies based on storytelling and cultural approaches, so that the interaction built is not merely transactional (Wilopo & Nuralam, 2025).

In addition to effectiveness and practice, there are other challenges in strengthening engagement for the Wonderful Indonesia campaign using AI. Two challenges appear to persist among large parts of the global public: unequal access and digital literacy (Aziz et al., 2025). This is because not all tourists, particularly those from regions with limited technology, can make optimal use of AI-based services. This situation requires the state to ensure that digital innovation in tourism diplomacy remains inclusive and can reach various layers of the international audience (Nur et al., 2023).

Overall, the engagement indicator shows that the use of AI through chatbots and digital tourism information services has created a space for intensive two-way interaction between Indonesia and international audiences. Nevertheless, the sustainability of this engagement depends heavily on the state's capacity to improve the quality of digital communication, broaden the inclusiveness of access to technology, and link the use of AI to the delivery of more attractive and persuasive cultural narratives.

After discussing the role of AI in building involvement and two-way interaction through the engagement indicator, the analysis now turns to the data-driven decision making indicator. The following subsection examines how data generated from digital interaction and the use of AI technology are used by the government and tourism actors as a basis for strategic decision making in digital diplomacy and the strengthening of Indonesia's soft power.

Data-Driven Decision Making: AI as the Basis for Digital Diplomacy Policy

The data-driven decision making indicator generally emphasises the use of data as the main basis for formulating digital diplomacy policy and strategy. In the context of soft power, data-based decision making enables a state to design policies that are more adaptive to the dynamics of international public preferences. Artificial Intelligence (AI) plays an important role in this process through its ability to process large amounts of data, analyse audience behaviour patterns, and generate strategic insights in real time (Grgic, 2025).

In implementing the Wonderful Indonesia campaign, the application of AI enables the government, particularly Kemenparekraf, to analyse and process data from various digital platforms. These digital platforms include social media, tourism applications, and chatbot-based services such as TIWI (The Jakarta Post, 2022). The data generated from these platforms reflect various indicators of tourist behaviour, such as information search patterns, levels of digital interaction, destination preferences, and audience responses to promotional content (Sutantri, 2025). Through the use of AI-based analytics, these findings can serve as a basis for formulating promotional strategies, determining market segmentation, and

adjusting tourism diplomacy narratives to align with the characteristics and needs of global audiences (Pratiwi et al., 2025). Strategically, this data-based approach strengthens the effectiveness of Indonesia's digital diplomacy, because every decision taken is supported by empirical evidence. Within Joseph Nye's soft power framework, the use of data enables a state to manage attraction and engagement systematically. Public diplomacy policy therefore becomes more credible and relevant to the needs of the international public (Hikmawan et al., 2024).

Nevertheless, the application of this data-based indicator also appears to face several challenges. First, data integration across platforms remains fragmented, so the potential for optimal data use has not yet been fully realised. Second, limited human resource capacity in data analysis and AI use can hamper the process of translating data into strategic policy. Third, data governance and privacy protection are important aspects that need attention, particularly in the context of cross-border data collection (Zavodna et al., 2024).

In addition to these three challenges, there is a risk that excessive dependence on data and algorithms may neglect the qualitative dimension of cultural diplomacy, including the symbolic value of the state, historical context, and cultural sensitivity. The use of AI in decision making therefore needs to be balanced with normative and cultural considerations, so that Indonesia's digital diplomacy strategy is not purely technocratic (Aziz et al., 2025).

Overall, the data-driven decision making indicator shows that the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has strategic potential as a main foundation for strengthening Indonesia's digital diplomacy through the Wonderful Indonesia initiative. When applied in a coordinated way, based on ethical principles, and ensuring inclusiveness, this data-based approach can contribute to increasing the state's legitimacy internationally, and to the practice of Indonesia's soft power diplomacy in the global digital ecosystem in a sustainable way.

Summary

On the basis of the analysis of the four soft power indicators, namely attraction, agenda setting, engagement, and data-driven decision making, it can be concluded that the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the Wonderful Indonesia campaign plays a strategic role in strengthening Indonesia's digital diplomacy in the post-pandemic era. By improving the quality of cultural representation that is more personal and relevant (attraction), AI helps increase Indonesia's cultural appeal through the global digital space. At the same time, the use of global digital platform algorithms enables the state to influence the formation of perceptions and narratives about Indonesia more widely (agenda setting).

The use of AI through chatbots and digital tourism information services creates a space for more active two-way interaction between Indonesia and the international public (engagement), thereby strengthening trust among global audiences. In addition, the integration of AI into digital data processing enables the government to formulate tourism

diplomacy policies and strategies in a more adaptive, evidence-based way, responsive to the dynamics of international tourist preferences (data-driven decision making).

Nevertheless, the findings also show that the effectiveness of AI use in strengthening Indonesia's soft power diplomacy depends heavily on consistent management of cultural narratives. It also depends on improving human resource capacity, evidence-based data governance, and technological approaches combined with cultural values. AI therefore cannot be seen merely as a technical instrument, but as part of a public diplomacy strategy that requires policy direction, legitimacy, and cultural sensitivity. If managed inclusively, strategically, and sustainably, the use of AI through the Wonderful Indonesia campaign has the potential to become a main pillar in strengthening Indonesia's soft power and position in the global digital diplomacy arena.

Limitations

Several limitations qualify the analysis presented above. First, the evidence rests entirely on secondary sources: the study draws on government reports, press releases, news portals, and academic literature, and the author collected no primary data. Second, the indicators are used analytically rather than measured: the study traces attraction, agenda setting, engagement, and data-driven decision making through examples, but presents no metrics of reach, sentiment, or conversion that would allow the effectiveness of the campaign to be assessed. Third, the effectiveness of the AI tools discussed is constrained by uneven digital infrastructure and digital literacy, by the functional and largely transactional character of chatbot interaction, and by the structural limits of agenda setting through commercial platforms, where control over narratives rests partly with platform owners and their algorithms. Fourth, the use of data across platforms remains fragmented, human resource capacity in data analysis is limited, and questions of data governance and privacy remain unresolved; an excessive reliance on data and algorithms also risks neglecting the qualitative, symbolic, and historical dimensions of cultural diplomacy. These limitations are stated in the analysis above; they are gathered here so that the claims of the study can be read against them.

CONCLUSION

This article has analysed the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in strengthening Indonesia's soft power through the Wonderful Indonesia digital diplomacy campaign in the post-COVID-19 pandemic era. Using Joseph Nye's soft power framework, the study shows that the use of AI contributes significantly to four main indicators, namely attraction, agenda setting, engagement, and data-driven decision making.

For the attraction indicator, AI, particularly Generative AI, is able to increase Indonesia's cultural appeal through the production of digital content that is more personal, contextual, and relevant to the preferences of global audiences. For the agenda setting indicator, the use

of global digital platform algorithms enables Indonesia to influence international perceptions and narratives more widely through popular culture consumption mediated by technology. For the engagement indicator, the use of AI-based chatbots and tourism information services opens a space for more intensive two-way interaction between Indonesia and the international public, strengthening audience engagement and closeness. For the data-driven decision making indicator, AI serves as a basis for more adaptive and evidence-based policy making in digital tourism diplomacy.

Nevertheless, this study also stresses that the effectiveness of AI use in strengthening Indonesia's soft power cannot be separated from a number of challenges, such as the risk of cultural commodification, limited digital literacy and capacity, data fragmentation, and issues of data governance and privacy protection. The use of AI in digital diplomacy therefore needs to be managed strategically and inclusively, including by continuing to integrate cultural values and national interests.

Overall, it can be concluded that Artificial Intelligence (AI) has strategic potential as an instrument for strengthening Indonesia's soft power through the digital diplomacy of Wonderful Indonesia. If implemented consistently and sustainably, AI functions as a main pillar in strengthening the legitimacy, appeal, and position of Indonesia in the global diplomacy arena of the digital era, rather than merely as a technological tool.

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