

POST-PANDEMIC ECONOMIC RECOVERY THROUGH CULTURAL DIPLOMACY: THE CASE OF INDONESIA'S TOURISM PROMOTION IN RUSSIA

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic caused a significant decline in international tourist arrivals to Indonesia, severely impacting the country's tourism sector. In response, cultural promotion has emerged as a strategic tool in public diplomacy to aid economic recovery and attract foreign visitors, particularly from Russia. This study evaluates the effectiveness of Indonesia's cultural promotion efforts in Russia in revitalizing the tourism sector post-pandemic. A qualitative case study approach was employed, utilizing document analysis and secondary sources from the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The findings reveal that Indonesia's cultural promotion initiatives—such as festivals, exhibitions, and digital media campaigns—have successfully generated interest among Russian tourists. These programs have enhanced Indonesia's visibility and cultural appeal, contributing to a gradual increase in Russian tourist arrivals. However, challenges remain, including budget limitations, shifting geopolitical dynamics, and competition from other destinations. Despite these obstacles, public diplomacy plays a vital role in shaping Indonesia's international image, fostering bilateral relations, and supporting economic growth through tourism. To further enhance the impact of cultural promotion, this study recommends strengthening institutional collaboration between tourism and diplomatic agencies, optimizing digital-based promotional strategies, and diversifying cultural diplomacy initiatives to reach a broader audience. With the right policies and strategic implementation, cultural promotion can serve as a key catalyst for the recovery of Indonesia's tourism sector, ensuring long-term sustainability and economic resilience in the post-pandemic era.

Keyword: COVID-19, Cultural promotion, Indonesia, Public diplomacy, Russia, Tourism.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic profoundly impacted the global tourism industry, including Indonesia's. International travel restrictions, lockdowns, and economic downturns led to a significant decline in tourist arrivals (Aeni, 2021). Indonesia, which relies heavily on its tourism sector for economic growth, experienced severe financial losses. Since the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the total number of international tourist arrivals from January to May 2020 declined by 53.36% compared to the previous year (BPS, 2021). The crisis underscored the vulnerability of tourism-dependent economies and the need for strategic recovery measures. In response, cultural promotion emerged as a key strategy in Indonesia's public diplomacy efforts to revive the tourism sector.

Indonesia's tourism industry has historically benefited from cultural diversity as a unique selling point (Syafei, 2020). The country is home to thousands of ethnic groups, each with distinct traditions, arts, and heritage. These cultural elements serve as powerful attractions for international visitors seeking immersive experiences. Before the pandemic, Russian tourists grew interested in Indonesia's cultural and natural landscapes (BPS, 2024). However, the post-pandemic period requires a more targeted and strategic approach to sustain and expand this interest.

Russia has emerged as a significant market for Indonesia's tourism sector in recent years. Russian travelers are known for their high spending habits and preference for long-haul destinations (Shkvarya, M.V, & Tyrkba, 2018). Bali has been a favoured destination among Russian tourists due to its cultural richness and tropical appeal. However, competition from other destinations and economic and geopolitical uncertainties pose challenges to sustaining this market. Indonesia has intensified its cultural diplomacy efforts in Russia to overcome these obstacles. By expanding the tourism sector through public diplomacy with Russia, Indonesia can generate employment opportunities in tourism, attract more significant investment, and boost national revenue through foreign exchange earnings and tourist expenditures during their stay in the country (Manurung, Bainus, Kantaprawira, & Rezasyah, 2022).

Public diplomacy is crucial in shaping a country's image and fostering international engagement. As a form of soft power, cultural diplomacy allows nations to promote their identity and values to foreign audiences (Orîndaru, et al., 2021). In Indonesia-Russia relations, cultural promotion has become essential for strengthening bilateral ties. Indonesia aims to attract Russian tourists and stimulate economic recovery by leveraging cultural assets. This approach aligns with the broader goal of enhancing Indonesia's global presence through people-to-people connections (Gorenburg & Schwartz, 2019).

Cultural diplomacy initiatives between Indonesia and Russia have expanded in the post-pandemic era. Various programs, including cultural festivals, art exhibitions, and culinary promotions, have been introduced to rekindle Russian interest in Indonesia (Makhasi, 2018). Digital platforms have also played a critical role in disseminating cultural narratives to wider audiences. These efforts are designed to attract tourists and strengthen cultural understanding between the two nations. By positioning Indonesia as a culturally rich and welcoming destination, these initiatives contribute to long-term diplomatic and economic benefits.

Despite these efforts, several challenges hinder the effectiveness of cultural promotion in Russia. One of the primary issues is the limited budget allocated for cultural diplomacy initiatives. Financial constraints affect the scale and reach of promotional campaigns, making it difficult to compete with other countries investing heavily in tourism marketing. Additionally, bureaucratic hurdles and administrative inefficiencies further slow down the execution of promotional programs. Overcoming these limitations requires more muscular coordination between government agencies and private stakeholders (Nikolskaya, et al., 2020). Enhanced collaboration can ensure a more comprehensive and impactful cultural diplomacy strategy.

The second challenge is digital transformation of cultural promotion that presents both opportunities and challenges. Social media, virtual tours, and online cultural events have become essential for reaching global audiences (Konovalova, Yudina, Bushueva, Ukhina, & Lebedev, 2018). However, the effectiveness of digital campaigns depends on strategic content curation and audience engagement. Poorly executed digital marketing efforts may fail to capture the attention of potential travellers. Therefore, Indonesia must invest in high-quality digital storytelling to enhance its cultural branding in Russia.

Moreover, the language and cultural barriers also pose obstacles to effective promotion. While many Russian tourists are interested in Indonesian culture, limited access to information in Russian reduces engagement (Hosamani & Vadiraj, 2013). Translating promotional materials and offering Russian-language tourism services can significantly enhance accessibility. Partnerships with Russian travel influencers and media platforms can amplify Indonesia's cultural appeal. These strategies can bridge the communication gap and foster stronger cultural connections.

Academic research on the effectiveness of cultural diplomacy in tourism recovery remains limited. While previous studies have highlighted the role of soft power in international relations (Rasyidah, 2019; Yakup & Haryanto, 2019; Nowak, Sahli, & Sgro, 2003), few have examined its direct impact on post-pandemic tourism. Empirical data on the correlation between cultural promotion and tourist influx is essential for evidence-based policymaking. This paper aims to fill this gap by analyzing the effectiveness of Indonesia's cultural promotion in Russia. Understanding these dynamics can provide valuable insights for policymakers and tourism stakeholders.

This paper also examines the role of Indonesia's diplomatic missions in Russia in promoting cultural tourism. Embassies and consulates are vital in organizing cultural events and facilitating bilateral cooperation. Their initiatives often serve as the first engagement point for Russian audiences interested in Indonesia. Understanding these diplomatic efforts' operational challenges and successes can help refine future strategies. Strengthening institutional capacity within diplomatic missions is essential for sustaining long-term cultural relations (Schubert, Brida, & Risso, 2011).

Additionally, this paper explores Russian tourists' perceptions of Indonesia's cultural attractions. Understanding tourist motivations and preferences can help tailor promotional strategies more effectively. Cultural familiarity, accessibility, and perceived safety influence travel decisions. By aligning promotional efforts with these preferences, Indonesia can enhance its competitive advantage in the Russian market. A tourist-centric approach to cultural promotion can yield more sustainable tourism growth.

As global tourism gradually recovers, competition among destinations has intensified. Countries worldwide are investing heavily in promotional campaigns to attract international travellers. Indonesia must leverage its unique cultural identity to stand out in this competitive landscape. A well-structured cultural diplomacy strategy can enhance Indonesia's position as a top destination for Russian tourists. Strategic branding and consistent engagement are key to maintaining visibility in the Russian market.

This paper underscores the interconnectedness of culture, economy, and diplomacy. The effectiveness of cultural promotion in tourism recovery reflects the broader role of public diplomacy in global engagement. Indonesia's experience offers valuable lessons for other nations seeking to leverage culture in post-pandemic recovery. By refining its cultural diplomacy strategies, Indonesia can maximize the benefits of tourism as an economic and diplomatic tool. The insights from this study contribute to both academic discourse and practical policymaking. In conclusion, cultural promotion is critical to Indonesia's public diplomacy strategy in Russia. Despite challenges, strategic investments in cultural diplomacy can yield significant economic and diplomatic returns. This study provides an in-depth analysis of the effectiveness of these efforts and offers recommendations for future improvements. Strengthening cultural engagement with Russia can reinforce Indonesia's position as a global tourism leader. As the world moves toward a post-pandemic recovery, cultural diplomacy remains invaluable for fostering sustainable growth.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research approach (Saleh, 2019) to analyze the effectiveness of Indonesia's cultural promotion in Russia as a strategy to develop the tourism sector. The research focuses on Indonesia's participation in international tourism exhibitions such as the Moscow International Travel & Tourism (MITT) Expo, Otdykh Leisure, and Festival Indonesia in Russia as key platforms for cultural promotion. These events serve as strategic avenues for showcasing Indonesia's cultural heritage and tourism potential to Russian audiences. The study examines how these promotional efforts increased Russian tourist interest and supported Indonesia's post-pandemic tourism recovery, specifically during the 2022–2023 period, when global travel restrictions eased and tourism activities resumed.

This study employs a literature review method, relying on secondary data sources to ensure a comprehensive analysis. The collected data includes official government reports, academic literature, media publications, and industry analyses related to Indonesia's tourism promotion in Russia. The primary sources include reports from the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy of the Republic of Indonesia, the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in the Russian Federation, and international tourism organizations. Additionally, media coverage, travel industry reports, and event documentation are analyzed to assess the effectiveness of Indonesia's participation in international tourism fairs and festivals (Gerring, 2017).

To analyze the collected data, this study applies thematic analysis to identify key patterns and narratives related to Indonesia's cultural promotion strategies. The analysis focuses on themes such as the role of cultural diplomacy in tourism development, the impact of international exhibitions on Indonesia's tourism branding, challenges in penetrating the Russian market, and recommendations for strengthening future cultural diplomacy initiatives. By systematically categorizing and interpreting qualitative data (Knopf, 2006), the research provides an in-depth evaluation of how Indonesia's cultural diplomacy efforts in Russia contribute to the recovery and growth of the tourism sector.

Data triangulation is applied by cross-referencing multiple secondary sources, such as government reports, academic studies, and industry publications, to ensure research reliability (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Ethical considerations are maintained by accurately citing all sources and ensuring transparency in data interpretation. By employing a rigorous qualitative approach based on secondary data analysis, this study offers valuable insights into the role of cultural diplomacy in promoting Indonesian tourism in Russia and its broader implications for post-pandemic economic recovery.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Post-Pandemic Public Diplomacy Strategies in Promoting Indonesian Culture in Russia

Tourism serves as both an economic driver and a bridge for cross-cultural exchange, fostering deeper diplomatic relationships between nations. Cultural interactions through tourism contribute to people-to-people diplomacy, which can enhance bilateral cooperation beyond the tourism sector itself (Samimi, Sadeghi, & Sadeghi, 2011). Strengthening cultural appreciation between Indonesians and Russians lays the foundation for collaborations in trade, education, and other areas. Given these potential benefits, Indonesia has actively engaged in cultural diplomacy as a strategic tool to promote its tourism sector in Russia.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Indonesia's cultural diplomacy efforts in Russia largely relied on direct engagement through physical events. The country actively participated in major international tourism exhibitions such as the Moscow International Travel & Tourism (MITT) Expo and OTDYKH Leisure (OTDYKH Leisure, 2025). These events served as key platforms for Indonesia to promote its tourism destinations, cultural heritage, and travel opportunities while engaging directly with Russian travel agencies, investors, and potential tourists. The Indonesian government collaborated with tourism industry stakeholders, including airlines, hotels, and tour operators, to provide a well-rounded travel experience and attract Russian visitors. Additionally, the Festival Indonesia in Russia played a significant role in fostering cultural exchange through performances, culinary showcases, and traditional craft exhibitions, creating meaningful interactions between Indonesians and Russian audiences.

However, the pandemic disrupted these initiatives, necessitating a shift in diplomatic strategies. As international travel and large-scale events were suspended, Indonesia adapted by leveraging digital diplomacy, hosting virtual cultural exhibitions, online performances, and digital marketing campaigns to maintain engagement with international audiences. When travel restrictions eased, Indonesia resumed participation in in-person events, such as the 2022 Indonesia Festival, marking its return to international tourism exhibitions after a two-year hiatus (Jayadi, 2022). Changes were also made to visa policies; prior to the pandemic, Indonesia offered visa-free entry for Russian tourists, but due to health concerns, this was replaced with a Visa on Arrival (VoA) system to balance safety measures with efforts to revive tourism (Adani, Astutiningsih, Wahyono, & Sunaryo, 2022).

Indonesia's cultural promotion in Russia is part of its broader public diplomacy strategy, in which government and related institutions actively engage with foreign audiences to shape perceptions and foster mutual understanding (Roy, 1991). Public diplomacy is crucial in promoting Indonesia's tourism sector in an increasingly competitive global market where soft power plays a vital role. Through cultural exhibitions, artistic performances, and tourism fairs, Indonesia aims to establish a strong cultural presence in Russia, making the country more attractive as a travel destination (Purwasito & Kartanawati, 2019). The impact of public diplomacy in tourism extends beyond simple marketing; it involves long-term efforts to build cultural affinity and strengthen bilateral relations. In the post-pandemic era, these initiatives play a key role in restoring international tourist confidence and encouraging travel.

Indonesia has consistently participated in international tourism exhibitions held in Russia. After a two-year absence due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Indonesia resumed its involvement in international exhibitions in 2022 (Jayadi, 2022). A key event, the Indonesia Festival, serves as a collaborative initiative between Indonesia and Russia to promote tourism while showcasing the country's rich cultural diversity to Russian audiences. The festival highlights various aspects of Indonesian culture, including traditional dances, music, visual arts, handicrafts, and culinary experiences (Dinnie, 2022). Artists, musicians, dancers, student associations, and cultural representatives actively contribute to the event, delivering captivating performances to engage and attract visitors.

One of Indonesia's main public diplomacy strategies in Russia involves participation in international tourism exhibitions such as the MITT Expo and OTDYKH Leisure (OTDYKH Leisure, 2025). These events provide a strategic platform to engage with Russian travel agencies, investors, and tourists, effectively communicating Indonesia's unique cultural identity. The Indonesian government collaborates with key tourism industry stakeholders, ensuring a comprehensive travel experience that enhances cultural promotion efforts and leads to tangible increases in tourist arrivals.

Beyond exhibitions, the Festival Indonesia in Russia plays a significant role in strengthening Indonesia's cultural diplomacy. Unlike traditional tourism fairs, this festival emphasizes people-to-people

engagement, allowing direct interaction between Indonesians and Russian audiences. Through cultural performances, culinary showcases, and craft exhibitions, the event provides an immersive experience that goes beyond visual representations of tourist destinations (Rahmi, 2016). This cultural exchange fosters a deeper appreciation of Indonesian traditions, customs, and artistic expressions, creating an emotional connection between the two nations and making Indonesia a more desirable travel destination for Russian tourists.

Additionally, cooperation extends to the governmental level, particularly through visa policies. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Indonesia offered visa-free entry to several countries, including Russia, to facilitate tourism. However, the pandemic prompted a policy revision, replacing visa-free access with a Visa on Arrival (VoA) system (Adani, Astutiningsih, Wahyono, & Sunaryo, 2022). This adjustment aligns with Indonesia's tourism promotion strategy, simplifying entry procedures for Russian tourists and enhancing their travel experience. By streamlining visa regulations, Indonesia seeks to generate greater interest among Russian travelers, ultimately contributing to tourism growth.

The success of public diplomacy in tourism promotion depends on the messages and narratives conveyed through cultural promotion activities (Prabhawati, 2018). Indonesia strategically emphasizes themes of hospitality, exoticism, and cultural richness to attract Russian tourists seeking unique travel experiences. These narratives are reinforced through storytelling techniques in promotional materials, digital campaigns, and on-site interactions during exhibitions and festivals. By highlighting authenticity and cultural depth, Indonesia differentiates itself from competing destinations. Aligning promotional content with Russian travelers' interests—such as adventure tourism, eco-tourism, and historical exploration—further enhances the effectiveness of Indonesia's public diplomacy initiatives (Madani, 2019).

Digital platforms have played an increasingly important role in amplifying Indonesia's cultural promotion in Russia. Social media campaigns, virtual exhibitions, and influencer collaborations complement traditional public diplomacy efforts (Antara News, 2022). Platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Russian social networks like VKontakte are used to showcase Indonesian culture and tourist destinations (Medhiatika, 2018). By employing targeted advertisements and localized content, Indonesia reaches a broader Russian audience beyond those attending physical events. Integrating digital diplomacy with offline cultural promotions enhances engagement and strengthens Indonesia's visibility in the Russian market (Sutrisnawati, Budiasih, & Ardiasa, 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic has also reshaped the dynamics of Indonesia's cultural promotion in Russia, necessitating new approaches to public diplomacy. Travel restrictions and health concerns temporarily disrupted traditional tourism promotion methods, prompting a shift toward hybrid and virtual engagement. Online cultural festivals, virtual reality tourism experiences, and interactive webinars became essential in maintaining Indonesia's presence in the Russian tourism market. These adaptations sustained interest in Indonesia as a travel destination and demonstrated resilience in cultural diplomacy efforts (Sugiyarto & Amaruli, 2018). As the world transitions into the post-pandemic recovery phase, lessons from these digital initiatives can be integrated into long-term public diplomacy strategies.

A significant challenge in implementing public diplomacy strategies in Russia is navigating the geopolitical and economic landscape. Russia's international relations, economic conditions, and travel policies influence outbound tourism trends and destination preferences. As Indonesia seeks to expand its market share in Russian tourism, understanding local socio-political dynamics is crucial for effective. The ability to adapt promotional strategies to align with Russia's economic fluctuations and travel restrictions determines the success of Indonesia's cultural diplomacy. Addressing these external factors requires continuous collaboration between diplomatic missions, tourism authorities, and private-sector stakeholders (Embassy of Indonesia in Addis Ababa, 2024).

Indonesia's cultural promotion efforts in Russia are also aligned with broader bilateral relations and diplomatic initiatives. The Indonesian Embassy in Moscow plays a crucial role in facilitating cultural exchanges and strengthening ties between the two countries (Djegadut, 2023). Cultural diplomacy initiatives are often linked to broader economic and trade cooperation efforts, creating synergies between tourism promotion and investment opportunities. Positioning cultural promotion within the larger framework of Indonesia-Russia diplomatic relations enhances its credibility and effectiveness. By

integrating cultural diplomacy into foreign policy, Indonesia ensures the sustainability of its public diplomacy initiatives (Malik, 2017).

Public diplomacy in tourism is not only about showcasing cultural attractions but also about shaping perceptions and addressing stereotypes that may influence travel decisions. Some Russian tourists may have preconceived notions about Indonesia based on limited information or previous experiences. Through direct engagement, storytelling, and cultural immersion, Indonesia seeks to positively reshape these perceptions (Ismail, Mulyaman, & Sarudin, 2022). Building a trust-based relationship with the Russian travel market requires consistent messaging and sustained engagement, reinforcing Indonesia's image as a welcoming and safe travel destination.

While Indonesia's public diplomacy strategies in Russia have shown significant progress, sustaining long-term engagement remains a challenge. The success of cultural promotion depends on continuous innovation, adaptability, and responsiveness to market trends. Institutional support, policy alignment, and funding are essential for maintaining momentum. Strengthening collaboration between government agencies, tourism stakeholders, and cultural institutions ensures a cohesive approach. Future strategies should emphasize deeper engagement through educational exchanges, cultural collaborations, and policy dialogues, further enhancing Indonesia's influence in Russia's tourism market. remains key to long-term success.

The Impact of Indonesian Cultural Promotion in Russia on Economic Recovery Through Tourism Post-COVID-19

Although the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted Indonesia's economy across various sectors, tourism was among the most severely affected. The emergence of COVID-19 posed both a significant setback and a formidable challenge for Indonesia's tourism industry, leading to a sharp decline in international tourist arrivals. Travel restrictions, border closures, and quarantine policies severely constrained global mobility, drastically reducing tourism-generated revenue. The impact extended to related industries, including hospitality, restaurants, and other tourism-dependent businesses, which suffered substantial losses. Additionally, the aviation sector faced considerable financial setbacks due to widespread flight cancellations and reduced passenger volumes, forcing national airlines to incur significant losses and implement layoffs to mitigate financial distress. Since the onset of the pandemic, Indonesia's tourism-related foreign exchange earnings have experienced a steep decline, and according to data from the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, the country's tourism revenue dropped sharply as a direct consequence of the COVID-19 outbreak, as shown below:

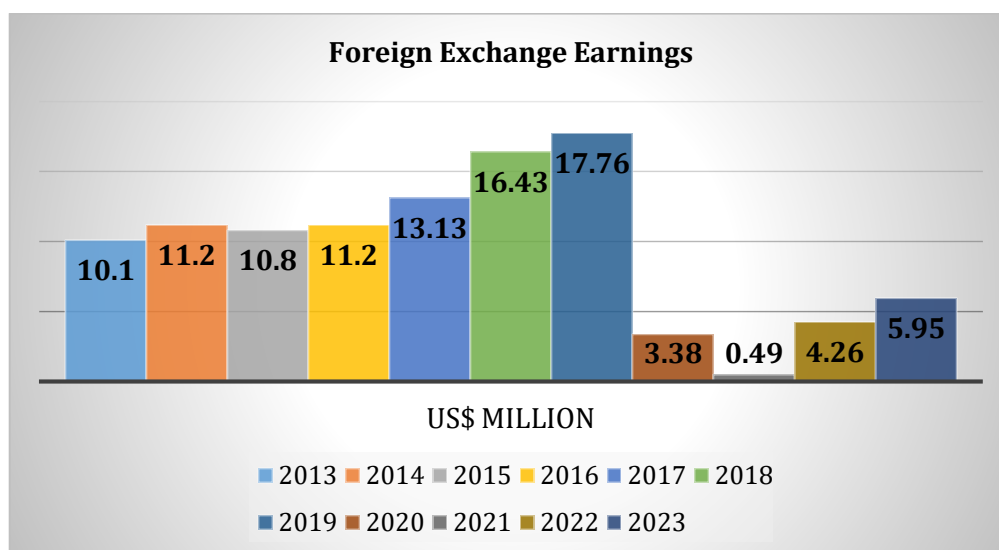


Figure 1. Indonesia's Tourism Sector Foreign Exchange Earnings from 2013 to 2023

Source: Kementerian Pariwisata dan Ekonomi Kreatif (2024) Processed by the Author

Before the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, Indonesia's tourism sector experienced steady growth and was one of the fastest-growing and most stable contributors to the national economy. The sector's contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) continued to increase, generating significant economic benefits. Investments in tourism infrastructure, including airports, hotels, and transportation networks, were consistently expanded to support the industry's growth. Enhanced connectivity and the integration of digital tourism promotion became key priorities, positioning the tourism sector as a major driver of economic expansion and job creation. However, these achievements faced significant setbacks with the onset of the pandemic. Travel restrictions and the closure of tourist destinations led to a severe downturn in the industry, posing substantial challenges that required strategic adaptation and innovation to restore the sector's vitality in the post-pandemic era (Zubaidah, Yenriani, Putri, & Pangastuti, 2021).

The Indonesian government has made significant efforts to promote the nation's cultural heritage globally to strengthen tourism. One of the primary strategies to achieve this objective is tourism promotion that highlights Indonesia's natural beauty and rich cultural diversity. The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy has spearheaded various promotional initiatives to showcase Indonesia's artistic heritage, traditional performances, and culinary traditions. Art exhibitions, cultural festivals, and traditional performances are frequently incorporated into promotional campaigns, emphasizing Indonesia's uniqueness and cultural richness to international audiences (Kistanto, 2017). The overarching goal is to introduce tourist destinations, cultural attractions, and the latest developments in Indonesia to the global community. By doing so, Indonesia aims to enhance its international appeal while reinforcing its national branding as a premier cultural and tourism destination.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted global tourism promotion, necessitating innovative approaches to maintain engagement with target audiences. Indonesia adapted by incorporating virtual tourism experiences, online cultural events, and hybrid promotional models. These strategies allowed Indonesia to sustain interest in its destinations even when physical travel was restricted. The success of these digital innovations suggests that they should remain a permanent component of Indonesia's promotional toolkit. Hybrid marketing strategies that combine in-person events with digital engagement create a more resilient and adaptable promotional framework (Pambudi, Masteriarsa, Wibowo, Amaliyah, & Ardana, 2020).

Between 2017 and 2019, the number of Russian tourist arrivals in Indonesia reached a significant level, reflecting the steady growth of Indonesia's tourism sector. However, in late 2019 and early 2020, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted the global tourism industry, including the flow of Russian visitors to Indonesia. In 2022, the Indonesian government initiated economic recovery efforts by normalizing social activities and resuming domestic and international travel while maintaining health protocols. During this period, the number of Russian tourists visiting Indonesia increased compared to the previous year. By 2023, from January to September alone, Russian tourist arrivals had already reached 120,072 visits, indicating a strong post-pandemic recovery in the tourism sector. The following data presents the number of Russian tourist arrivals in Indonesia from 2017 to 2022:

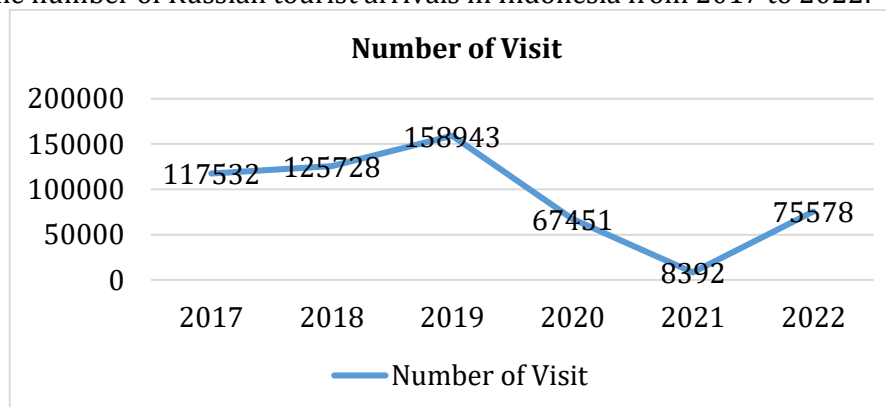


Figure 2. Russian Tourist Arrivals in Indonesia

Source: Badan Pusat Statistik (2025)

The effectiveness of Indonesia's cultural promotion in Russia relies on a combination of strategic messaging, audience engagement, and diplomatic collaboration. Tourism promotion is about showcasing attractions and crafting compelling narratives that resonate with the target market. Indonesia employs multi-platform strategies to maximise outreach, including international exhibitions, cultural festivals, and digital campaigns. These initiatives are tailored to Russian tourist preferences, emphasising Indonesia's exotic landscapes, cultural diversity, and hospitality. Integrating online and offline promotional strategies ensures Indonesia maintains a strong presence in the Russian tourism market (Yamali & Putri, 2020).

International tourism exhibitions such as the Moscow International Travel & Tourism (MITT) Expo and OTDYKH Leisure are pivotal in Indonesia's promotional strategies. These events provide a platform for engaging Russian travel agencies, investors, and potential tourists. By participating in such exhibitions, Indonesia strengthens its visibility and credibility in Russia's competitive tourism sector. The success of these events is measured not only by visitor numbers but also by the quality of interactions and partnerships established (The Jakarta Post, 2019). Effective participation in these exhibitions requires well-designed booths, engaging promotional materials, and knowledgeable representatives who convincingly communicate Indonesia's tourism appeal.

Beyond exhibitions, the Festival Indonesia in Russia is a key instrument in people-to-people diplomacy, essential for fostering cultural affinity. Unlike traditional tourism fairs, this festival allows Russian audiences to experience Indonesian culture firsthand through dance performances, culinary showcases, and artisan demonstrations. This immersive approach helps create an emotional connection with Indonesia, making it more attractive as a travel destination. Studies on cultural tourism suggest that personal engagement with a culture increases the likelihood of future visits. By incorporating interactive elements into the festival, Indonesia enhances the effectiveness of its cultural promotion strategy (Trisni, 2020).

Strategic branding ensures Indonesia remains competitive in the Russian tourism market. Effective tourism branding involves consistent messaging, visual identity, and targeted narratives that align with Russian travellers' expectations. Indonesia promotes itself as a destination for adventure tourism, wellness retreats, and cultural exploration, addressing the specific interests of Russian tourists. Campaigns emphasise unique selling points, such as Bali's beaches, Yogyakarta's heritage sites, and Komodo Island's biodiversity, reinforcing Indonesia's distinctiveness. A strong and recognisable brand presence increases destination appeal and strengthens long-term engagement with the Russian audience (Purnama, Khoirunnisa, Dewi, & Yulianti, 2020).

Strategic partnerships with Russian travel agencies and airlines enhance Indonesia's promotional effectiveness. Collaborative efforts with travel companies ensure that Indonesian tour packages are widely available and competitively priced for Russian travellers. Indonesia enhances its attractiveness as a preferred destination by offering exclusive travel deals, direct flight promotions, and package discounts. Additionally, partnerships with Russian airlines and travel agencies facilitate smoother travel experiences, reducing barriers such as visa concerns and flight accessibility (Susanto & Parmenas, 2021). Effective coordination with the travel industry strengthens Indonesia's market positioning and increases actual travel conversions.

Another critical factor in promotional effectiveness is targeted advertising and market segmentation. Understanding the preferences and demographics of Russian tourists allows Indonesia to tailor marketing efforts more precisely. Research indicates that Russian travellers are drawn to destinations offering nature, adventure, and cultural immersion, which aligns with Indonesia's tourism strengths (IndoNewsID, 2020). Data-driven marketing strategies help optimize advertising spend by focusing on potential travellers with the highest likelihood of visiting Indonesia. Customizing promotions based on traveller profiles ensures that marketing resources are utilized efficiently, maximizing return on investment.

The role of traditional media in Indonesia's tourism promotion should not be underestimated, particularly in reaching older demographics. Print publications, television broadcasts, and travel magazines remain influential among Russian travellers seeking in-depth destination information. Collaborations with Russian travel journalists and media outlets enhance credibility and storytelling depth, offering well-researched insights into Indonesia's attractions (Fanaqi, Pratiwi, & Firmansyah,

2020). Documentary features on Russian travel channels showcasing Indonesian destinations can provide long-lasting promotional value. A balanced mix of digital and traditional media ensures Indonesia reaches a diverse audience across multiple age groups and travel preferences.

The economic impact of tourism promotion is a crucial measure of its effectiveness. Successful promotional strategies contribute to increased tourist arrivals, higher tourism revenues, and stronger bilateral economic ties. The Indonesian tourism sector benefits from direct visitor spending and increased investments in hospitality, transportation, and cultural industries. The spillover effect of tourism promotion extends to local artisans, culinary entrepreneurs, and tour operators, who experience increased demand for their services. A well-executed promotional strategy, therefore, has far-reaching economic implications beyond short-term visitor numbers.

Tourism is not merely a sector centred on recreation and entertainment; it is also a strategic industry with a substantial impact on a nation's economy. The economic growth of a country is closely linked to the advancement of its tourism sector, contributing to increased revenue, job creation, economic diversification, and foreign exchange earnings. Various industries, including accommodation, restaurants, transportation, and tourist attractions, generate significant income from domestic and international visitors. This influx of revenue stimulates national economic growth, reinforcing tourism's role as a key driver of economic development (Wibowo, Rusmana, & Zuhelfa, 2017).

The development of the tourism sector plays a crucial role in addressing a country's trade balance by increasing foreign exchange earnings. The influx of international tourists to Indonesia leads to transactions conducted in the local currency, which are converted into foreign exchange reserves. These earnings can be utilized to repay foreign debt or strengthen national reserves, ensuring economic stability. Indonesia's cultural promotion efforts in Russia are a strategic instrument to enhance the tourism sector, ultimately contributing to economic stabilization and growth. A thriving tourism industry drives overall economic expansion by creating employment opportunities and generating revenue from tourist expenditures. Consequently, tourism significantly contributes to Indonesia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), reinforcing its position as a vital component of national economic development.

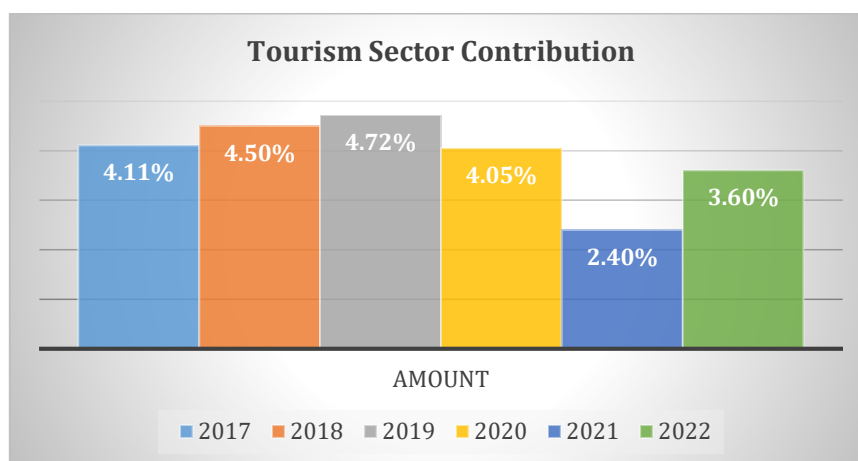


Figure 3. Proportion of Tourism Sector Contribution to Indonesia's GDP

Source: Kementerian Pariwisata dan Ekonomi Kreatif (2024) Processed by the Author

Despite the effectiveness of Indonesia's cultural promotion efforts, challenges remain in sustaining long-term engagement with the Russian market. Visa policies, economic fluctuations, and geopolitical dynamics can influence Russian outbound tourism trends. For instance, fluctuations in the Russian ruble and changes in diplomatic relations may impact travel affordability and sentiment. Adapting promotional strategies to external economic and political conditions is essential for maintaining momentum. Flexibility in marketing ensures that Indonesia can navigate uncertainties while sustaining a strong presence in the Russian tourism sector.

One of the key lessons from Indonesia's promotional experiences in Russia is the importance of sustained engagement rather than one-time marketing efforts. Short-term campaigns may generate

initial interest, but long-term engagement is necessary to convert interest into actual travel decisions. Continuous participation in tourism exhibitions, consistent online presence, and ongoing diplomatic efforts reinforce Indonesia's image as a premier travel destination. Indonesia strengthens its brand recall among Russian tourists by establishing regular cultural and tourism events. The key to long-term effectiveness lies in maintaining consistent and dynamic promotional efforts.

The effectiveness of Indonesia's promotional strategies in Russia is shaped by a multi-faceted approach combining exhibitions, festivals, digital marketing, media partnerships, and diplomatic collaboration. Strategic messaging, audience engagement, and sustained efforts ensure Indonesia remains a competitive destination for Russian travellers. While economic fluctuations and geopolitical shifts pose obstacles, adaptive marketing strategies help mitigate these risks. Future efforts should focus on enhancing digital engagement, expanding market segmentation, and strengthening travel industry partnerships. A well-integrated approach to promoting culture and tourism will continue supporting Indonesia's post-pandemic economic recovery and international tourism growth.

Navigating Barriers and Unlocking Potential: Indonesia's Cultural Promotion in Russia

Indonesia's cultural promotion in Russia presents challenges and opportunities in strengthening economic ties through the tourism sector. The effectiveness of promotional efforts depends on various external and internal factors, including market trends, policy frameworks, and economic stability. While Indonesia has successfully increased its cultural visibility in Russia, sustaining this momentum requires adaptive strategies. Addressing logistical barriers, policy restrictions, and economic uncertainties is crucial to maximizing promotional outcomes (Fan, 2008). At the same time, opportunities such as digital transformation and strategic partnerships offer potential for long-term growth.

One of the primary challenges in promoting Indonesian culture in Russia is the geopolitical and economic landscape. During periods of economic downturn, discretionary spending on international travel often declines, affecting the number of Russian tourists visiting Indonesia. Additionally, visa policies and travel restrictions can create obstacles that discourage potential visitors. To mitigate these challenges, Indonesia must adopt flexible and resilient tourism policies that accommodate changing geopolitical conditions.

Another key obstacle is the limited direct flight connectivity between Indonesia and Russia, which impacts accessibility for Russian travelers (Kementerian Perhubungan Republik Indonesia, 2021). The lack of frequent and affordable flight routes increases travel costs, making Indonesia less competitive than European destinations or other Asian countries. Airlines have been cautious about expanding routes due to market demand uncertainty and operational costs. Strengthening air travel agreements and encouraging strategic airline partnerships could enhance connectivity. Providing travel incentives, promotional airfare, or transit visa simplifications may encourage Russian tourists to choose Indonesia.

Language barriers and cultural differences also challenge Indonesia's tourism promotion efforts. Many Russian travellers prefer destinations where they can communicate easily in their native language, and Indonesia's tourism industry has yet to integrate Russian-language services fully. A lack of Russian-speaking tour guides, signage, and promotional materials may limit engagement with Russian tourists. Addressing this challenge requires investment in multilingual services, training programs, and tailored marketing content. Enhancing cultural understanding between both nations will further improve the effectiveness of Indonesia's public diplomacy initiatives (Gallarotti, 2011).

Despite these challenges, digital transformation offers a significant opportunity to expand Indonesia's cultural and tourism promotion in Russia. The widespread use of social media, travel platforms, and online marketing tools enables Indonesia to reach Russian audiences more effectively. By leveraging platforms like VKontakte, Telegram, and Yandex, Indonesia can engage with potential tourists through localized and interactive content. Virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) experiences showcasing Indonesian destinations can further enhance digital engagement. A strong digital presence allows Indonesia to remain competitive in a rapidly evolving tourism market.

Strategic partnerships with Russian travel agencies, influencers, and cultural organizations can further amplify Indonesia's promotional efforts. Collaborating with Russian tour operators ensures that Indonesian travel packages are readily available and competitively priced. Working with Russian influencers, bloggers, and travel vloggers can enhance credibility and increase interest in Indonesian

destinations. Additionally, joint initiatives with Russian cultural institutions can create long-term engagement beyond tourism. Strengthening these partnerships will provide a sustainable foundation for future tourism growth and bilateral cultural exchange.

The cost of tourism promotion and budget constraints also present a challenge for Indonesia in maintaining a strong presence in the Russian market. Competing with countries with larger tourism marketing budgets, such as Thailand or Turkey, requires Indonesia to adopt cost-effective strategies. Utilizing public-private partnerships and sponsorship collaborations can help optimize promotional expenditures. Encouraging Indonesian businesses to co-invest in tourism marketing initiatives can expand funding opportunities. Effective budget allocation ensures that promotional efforts yield maximum impact and return on investment.

Another opportunity lies in leveraging Indonesia's diaspora in Russia to enhance cultural diplomacy efforts. The Indonesian community in Russia, including students, business professionals, and embassy representatives, can serve as informal ambassadors of Indonesian culture. Organizing community-driven events, culinary showcases, and language exchange programs can increase grassroots engagement. Encouraging diaspora participation in tourism promotion creates an authentic and relatable connection for Russian audiences. Strengthening diaspora networks can serve as a long-term cultural bridge between the two nations.

The COVID-19 pandemic has reshaped global travel behaviours, and Indonesia must adapt to new consumer expectations. Health and safety concerns remain a top priority for post-pandemic travellers, requiring Indonesia to enhance its health protocols and crisis management strategies. Establishing trusted travel certifications and transparent health measures will help restore confidence among Russian tourists. Additionally, flexible booking policies and pandemic-responsive travel insurance options can alleviate travellers' concerns. Adapting to these post-pandemic trends will ensure that Indonesia remains a competitive destination in the global market.

Indonesia's cultural heritage and artistic diversity are a strong foundation for its tourism appeal in Russia. Russian tourists often seek unique cultural experiences, making Indonesia's traditional arts, music, and crafts valuable promotional assets. Showcasing Indonesia's rich storytelling traditions, wayang performances, and batik craftsmanship can create deeper cultural engagement. Incorporating these elements into tourism marketing campaigns enhances Indonesia's distinctive brand identity. A stronger emphasis on cultural authenticity can set Indonesia apart from its regional competitors.

Indonesia faces challenges and opportunities in promoting its culture and tourism sector in Russia. Addressing logistical, economic, and language barriers is crucial for sustaining long-term growth. At the same time, leveraging digital marketing, strategic partnerships, and emerging travel trends presents new avenues for expansion. Policymakers and industry stakeholders must work collaboratively to optimize promotional efforts and overcome market challenges. A strategic and adaptive approach will ensure Indonesia's sustained success in the Russian tourism market.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this paper highlight the significant role of cultural promotion as a strategic tool in Indonesia's public diplomacy efforts to revitalize its tourism sector in the post-pandemic era. By engaging in international tourism exhibitions, such as the Moscow International Travel & Tourism (MITT) Expo and Otdykh Leisure, and organizing Festival Indonesia in Russia, Indonesia has successfully increased its cultural visibility and strengthened its appeal among Russian tourists. These initiatives have fostered cultural exchange and contributed to economic recovery by generating foreign exchange earnings and creating employment opportunities in the tourism sector. However, the effectiveness of these promotional strategies is influenced by various factors, including economic conditions, travel policies, and digital engagement.

Despite the successes of Indonesia's cultural promotion in Russia, several challenges persist, such as budget limitations, language barriers, and limited direct flight connectivity. Additionally, geopolitical uncertainties and economic fluctuations in Russia impact outbound tourism trends, requiring Indonesia to adopt adaptive and flexible marketing strategies. Digital transformation presents a crucial opportunity to overcome these challenges, as online platforms, virtual tourism experiences, and influencer collaborations have proven effective in reaching wider audiences. Strengthening institutional

collaboration, optimizing digital-based promotion, and expanding partnerships with Russian travel agencies, cultural organizations, and influencers are necessary to sustain Indonesia's competitive advantage in the Russian tourism market.

Indonesia's cultural promotion in Russia has demonstrated a strong potential for enhancing tourism-driven economic growth and bilateral cooperation. While challenges remain, strategic investments in cultural diplomacy, digital engagement, and tourism infrastructure can further amplify Indonesia's attractiveness as a preferred destination for Russian travellers. A comprehensive and adaptive approach, integrating traditional and digital marketing strategies, is essential for long-term success. By continuously refining its cultural diplomacy efforts, Indonesia can position itself as a key player in the global tourism industry, leveraging cultural heritage as a powerful tool for economic and diplomatic advancement.

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