

# INDONESIAN CULTURAL DIPLOMACY THROUGH THE JOGJA-NETPAC ASIAN FILM FESTIVAL

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**Abstract.** This study aims to analyze the role of the Jogja-NETPAC Asian Film Festival (JAFF) in supporting Indonesia's nation branding through cultural diplomacy, using the nation branding design process theory proposed by Simon Anholt (2006). Nation branding in this context is understood as a structured strategy to build the nation's image globally through six stages: analysis and benchmarking, core identity definition, brand architecture and strategic messaging design, multi-stakeholder coordination, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative, with data collection techniques including interviews, content observation, and document studies. The results of the study indicate that JAFF has played a role in the fifth stage, namely the implementation stage, through programs such as the JAFF Market, Masterclass, Pitching Forum, and cross-national film screenings which serve as mediums of Indonesia's cultural diplomacy. JAFF has successfully highlighted national values of diversity, pluralism, equality, and creativity. However, the study also found that JAFF has not fully carried out the stages of initial image analysis, brand architecture design, strategic coordination, or measurable monitoring and evaluation. JAFF is not yet integrated into a formal national nation branding strategy designed by the Indonesian government. This highlights the need for an active role of the government in coordinating cultural festivals such as JAFF to become part of a structured, data-based, and sustainable cultural diplomacy strategy.

**Keywords:** Nation Branding, Cultural Diplomacy, Jogja-NETPAC Asian Film Festival, Soft Power, Nation Branding Design Process

## 1 Introduction

The acceleration of globalization has brought about an era where international boundaries are increasingly porous to the flow of culture, information, and values. In this context, cultural diplomacy emerges as a strategic tool for states to not only project soft power but also shape their image in the global community. Governments are investing in cultural outreach as a way to foster mutual understanding, promote their national identity, and pursue foreign policy goals through non-coercive means.

Countries like the United States, China, France, and South Korea have demonstrated the power of cultural diplomacy by exporting cultural products such as music, cinema, language, and art. These efforts are not merely cultural expressions; they are calculated instruments of soft power aimed at strengthening international relations. Indonesia, as a culturally rich and diverse nation, holds immense potential to employ similar strategies to elevate its presence and influence on the world stage.

One key platform in Indonesia's cultural diplomacy arsenal is the Jogja-NETPAC Asian Film Festival (JAFF). This annual event not only promotes Indonesian cinema but also acts as a conduit for cross-cultural dialogue with other Asian nations. JAFF provides a space for storytelling that reflects Indonesian values, identity, and contemporary issues, thereby offering the international audience a lens through which to understand Indonesian society [1].

At the heart of such efforts lies the concept of soft power, a term introduced by Joseph Nye, which emphasizes the ability to shape preferences and build attraction through cultural appeal rather than military or economic force. Cultural festivals like JAFF embody this approach, leveraging artistic expression to cultivate goodwill and build long-term partnerships between countries. However, the effectiveness of cultural diplomacy is contingent upon strategic planning, integration with national branding efforts, and coherent messaging. Without a formalized nation branding framework, the impact of events like JAFF may remain limited to cultural appreciation, rather than achieving broader diplomatic or reputational goals. To fully capitalize on its potential, Indonesia must ensure that such initiatives are embedded in policy, coordinated across sectors, and evaluated for long-term effectiveness.

## 2 Method

This study employs a qualitative-descriptive methodology to explore the Jogja-NETPAC Asian Film Festival (JAFF) as a platform for Indonesia's cultural diplomacy. A qualitative approach allows for an in-depth understanding of the social, cultural, and political dynamics embedded in the festival. The research focuses on how JAFF contributes to the implementation of soft power and cultural diplomacy by analyzing narratives, themes, and public engagement embedded within its programs.

Data collection consisted of three primary methods: in-depth interviews, content observation, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with JAFF participants, including festival attendees, organizers, and cultural stakeholders, to gather insights into their experiences and perceptions regarding JAFF's

role in promoting Indonesian identity. Content analysis was carried out using materials from JAFF's official platforms such as websites, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter), which offered rich data on the festival's activities, messaging, and audience interactions.

Document analysis was also integral to the methodology, including reviews of academic literature, government publications, and festival reports. This triangulation of sources strengthened the reliability of findings and allowed the research to position JAFF within the broader framework of nation branding as outlined by Simon Anholt. The study assessed how the festival aligns with the six phases of Anholt's nation branding model: benchmarking, identity setting, brand design, stakeholder coordination, implementation, and monitoring.

To analyze the data, the researcher adopted a thematic analysis approach. Interview transcripts and observational notes were coded according to recurring themes, such as cultural representation, identity projection, and international engagement. These were then cross-referenced with theoretical frameworks including soft power and constructivist identity theory to determine how JAFF's cultural narratives support or fall short of Indonesia's strategic nation branding objectives [2].

### **3 Results and Discussion**

#### **3.1 JAFF and the Implementation of Cultural Diplomacy**

The Jogja-NETPAC Asian Film Festival (JAFF) has successfully emerged as a significant actor in Indonesia's soft power diplomacy, primarily through its diverse and inclusive programming. The festival provides a platform for Indonesian and Asian filmmakers to present narratives that reflect socio-cultural realities, indigenous traditions, and contemporary issues. These representations serve not only as artistic expressions but also as cultural dialogue tools that resonate with both domestic and international audiences. By facilitating intercultural encounters and exposing foreign audiences to Indonesian values such as tolerance, pluralism, and creativity, JAFF embodies the core of cultural diplomacy—building bridges through culture [3].

JAFF's emphasis on Southeast Asian collaboration, community storytelling, and socially conscious themes enhances Indonesia's image as an inclusive and dynamic nation [4]. Events such as panel discussions, masterclasses, and the JAFF Market further reinforce Indonesia's position as a hub for regional cultural exchange. In this regard, JAFF plays a pivotal role in expanding Indonesia's diplomatic presence through non-traditional, people-to-people engagement. Its ability to attract regional participation and attention from foreign cultural stakeholders illustrates the festival's soft power impact beyond national borders.

#### **3.2 Alignment with Nation Branding Strategies**

Despite its cultural diplomacy achievements, JAFF's integration into formal nation branding strategies remains limited. According to Simon Anholt's six-phase model—ranging from benchmarking and identity definition to implementation and evaluation—JAFF has made the most impact in the implementation phase. However, the absence of structured benchmarking, stakeholder mapping, and strategic messaging has left JAFF disconnected from broader governmental branding efforts [5]. There is no clear master narrative linking JAFF with Indonesia's official cultural diplomacy or public diplomacy agenda [6].

While JAFF organically reflects elements of Indonesian identity, such as multiculturalism and artistic innovation, it operates largely independently of national image building policies [7]. The festival lacks measurable indicators and coordination mechanisms that would align it with Indonesia's tourism campaigns, foreign policy messaging, or international cultural cooperation frameworks. Consequently, although JAFF advances cultural engagement, it does not fully function as an instrument of competitive identity as envisioned by Anholt.

#### **3.3 Challenges and Opportunities for Policy Integration**

Several challenges hinder JAFF's elevation as a formal diplomatic tool. The first is institutional fragmentation—JAFF's organizers, while culturally competent, do not always have direct access to national policy discussions or funding channels that support long-term branding initiatives [8]. Additionally, budgetary constraints and inconsistent infrastructural support reduce the scalability and sustainability of its programs. Another concern is the risk of cultural domination by more prominent film industries, which may overshadow local voices and diminish Indonesia's unique cultural appeal if not strategically curated [9].

Nonetheless, these challenges present opportunities for future development. The Indonesian government can enhance JAFF's role by formally integrating it into a national cultural diplomacy roadmap. This could include designated funding schemes, inter-agency coordination mechanisms, and metrics for evaluating cultural impact. Furthermore, establishing JAFF as part of a global cultural diplomacy portfolio—alongside traditional arts, culinary diplomacy, and language promotion—would broaden Indonesia's narrative footprint [10]. Aligning JAFF's themes and goals with Indonesia's diplomatic vision would allow the festival to operate not just as a cultural event, but as a key node in the country's soft power architecture [11].

#### 4 Conclusions

The Jogja-NETPAC Asian Film Festival (JAFF) has proven to be a valuable platform for advancing Indonesia's cultural diplomacy objectives. Through its consistent programming and emphasis on regional collaboration, JAFF effectively presents Indonesia as a nation that values creativity, diversity, and intercultural understanding. The festival plays an important role in introducing global audiences to Indonesian cultural narratives, serving as a bridge between local filmmakers and international communities. These contributions align well with the principles of soft power, demonstrating Indonesia's capacity to engage diplomatically through cultural expression.

However, while JAFF has successfully implemented aspects of cultural diplomacy, its alignment with broader national branding strategies remains partial and informal. The absence of structured benchmarking, clear identity messaging, and multi-stakeholder coordination limits the festival's potential as a fully integrated soft power tool. JAFF currently operates more as an independent cultural initiative rather than as a strategic instrument within Indonesia's official foreign policy or nation branding framework. This represents a missed opportunity for the government to leverage existing cultural capital within a structured diplomatic agenda[6].

Challenges such as limited funding, lack of institutional support, and minimal policy integration continue to hinder JAFF's potential impact. Additionally, the threat of cultural homogenization in an increasingly globalized film industry could marginalize Indonesian narratives if not properly safeguarded. To address these issues, it is essential to establish a coordinated policy mechanism that links cultural festivals like JAFF with the nation's soft power and public diplomacy strategies. This includes adopting Anholt's nation branding model as a framework for long-term planning and evaluation.

In conclusion, JAFF holds significant promise as a cultural diplomacy tool, but its potential can only be fully realized through stronger institutional collaboration, policy support, and alignment with Indonesia's strategic identity objectives. The Indonesian government should take proactive steps to formalize the role of JAFF in its nation branding efforts, ensuring that cultural diplomacy becomes an intentional and measurable component of international relations and influence in the global arena. With the right strategic support, JAFF can continue to evolve as a powerful asset shaping Indonesia's image and influence in the global arena. With the right strategic support, JAFF can continue to evolve as a powerful asset in shaping Indonesia's image and influence in the global arena.

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