NEGOTIATING DIASPORA CUISINE

Positionalities of Indonesian Restaurant Owners in The Hague

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ABSTRACT

Restaurants serving diaspora cuisine are vital cultural and symbolic spaces for the diaspora community, especially in cities heavily influenced by present and historical migration. The owners of these restaurants are placed in key roles to carry out the responsibilities of managing such a space while dealing with their own business endeavours. In pursuit of enriching current studies of gastronomy and the diaspora identity, this thesis examines how the owners of Indonesian restaurants in The Hague have positioned themselves in the diaspora cuisine landscape of the city.

To answer the research question, semi-structured expert interviews were conducted with the owners, or their counterparts, of 12 Indonesian restaurants in The Hague that spanned approximately 14 hours. The thematic analysis revealed that these owners do not have full autonomy over their positionalities which have instead been established through a negotiation with their diners, their competitors, structural constraints, and cultural responsibilities based on family legacy and their personal diaspora identity. This negotiation then manifests in a fragile balance of dual identities of being a culinary ambassador for the diaspora cuisine and being a viable entrepreneur, which, when compounded by tensions with other stakeholders, can manifest in an incoherent identity of the diaspora cuisine due to inconsistent representations across the network of restaurants. The ability of the owners to position themselves and represent their cuisine is also hindered by external limitations, such as immigration policies and import regulations.

This thesis contributes to existing literature and definitions on diaspora identity and diaspora cuisine, with a particular focus on culinary authenticity, memories, and entrepreneurial strategies. Additionally, this thesis calls for more acknowledgement to be given to the restaurant owners for their key roles in the construction of their diaspora cuisine, and for stronger institutional aid in support of their journey.

KEYWORDS: Diaspora, Identity, Restaurant, Cuisine, Authenticity

Word Count: 20,326

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1.0: Introduction

A dish, no matter how simple, can pique all five traditional senses. The *kerupuk udang*, for example, is an Indonesian deep-fried snack that can fill any silence with a crunch loud enough to inspire its onomatopoeic name. Its shrimpy fragrance replicates its taste and can leave you wanting for more even if it leaves with you with oily fingertips. But more than just the snack itself, just seeing it on a plate can evoke a sense of nostalgia, especially if you are an Indonesian living abroad, far away from your homeland.

As living creatures, establishing the importance of food in our lives does not need any further scientific backing. However, aside from being a source of daily sustenance, food plays a vital role in the construction of our social identity (Coveney, 2024, p. 1-16; Edles, 2004, p. 55-57). When designed as a collective in the form of a cuisine, food attains further characteristics of being an intangible cultural heritage that evolves through generational input (Ronchetti, 2015, p. 33). But the usefulness of food is not limited to familial networks, it can also act as a medium to express the broader community's cultural identity to those unfamiliar with it (Kittler et al., 2004, p. 202; Reddy & Dam, 2020, p. 4-6). Such a characteristic promises the relevancy of cuisine for diaspora communities in countries with colonial pasts and ongoing migration.

The Netherlands, in particular, fulfils these two prerequisites for being the former coloniser of Indonesia, then the Dutch East Indies, through the Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC), and presently being the home to a large Indonesian diaspora community. Much of this Indonesian diaspora community is situated in The Hague (DHIC, 2024, Table 7 & 8; Edelman & Edelman, 2011). Furthermore, as an indication of how pertinent the role of cuisine is in conjunction with the diaspora, The Hague also boasts one of the largest portions of Indonesian restaurants outside of Indonesia (Kementerian Luar Negeri, 2024, p. 7). As such, the presence of a large Indonesian diaspora community and the establishment of a robust Indonesian restaurant scene in The Hague are definite. What is not as transparent, however, is the relationship between these two. As a step into exploring this relationship, this thesis posits that the owners of Indonesian restaurants—with one foot in the identity-making of the Indonesian diaspora community, and the other in the entrepreneurial world of the restaurant business—are key actors in mediating the connection between diaspora identity and its represented cuisine.

Therefore, to further analyse the roles that the owners of Indonesian restaurants play and to understand the interplay between diaspora identity, culinary representation, and entrepreneurial intent, this thesis seeks to answer the following question: *How do owners of Indonesian restaurants in The Hague position themselves in the diaspora cuisine landscape of the city?*

Current research regarding gastronomy primarily focuses on traditional and historical local cuisines (Kuhn et al., 2024), thus overlooking the contributions of diasporic communities. Research done on the relations between gastronomy and diaspora have also undermined the role of restaurant owners who actively curate and mediate the cuisine through their business practices (Grandi, 2023, p. 2-3). A classic example of diaspora cuisine studies are Chinatown studies, which have been explored from the perspective of ethnic enclaves and diverse ethnicities (Wu et al., 2020). However, such studies focus more on the culinary expressions within the Chinese diaspora cuisine and are also broad generalisations of geographical landscapes (Cho, 2010, p. 49-50). In the context of The Hague especially, a city known for its multiculturalism and international character, the study of Indonesian restaurants can reveal how the owners negotiate their visibility and adapt the cuisine within a diverse culinary landscape. This would result in different adaptations and transformations compared to Chinatowns that have been specifically created as an ethnic enclave to help its diasporic community assimilate to the host environment (Terzano, 2014). Therefore, this thesis strives to contribute to cementing the link between diaspora identity and cuisine by representing the relationship as interdependent, rather than two isolated concepts, and to present restaurant owners as having a key piece of authority in the negotiation of these concepts.

Aside from its scientific relevance, by answering the research question, this thesis seeks to highlight the complex positionalities behind the Indonesian diaspora cuisine whereby these restaurants should not be perceived as neutral businesses but socially relevant spaces where diaspora identity is actively negotiated and constructed through cuisine. Restaurant owners should be acknowledged and validated as key actors with the responsibility of shaping the diaspora cuisine, and as such, the diaspora identity, and should not be dismissed as simply commercial entities. Additionally, this thesis intends to shed more light on greater policy sensitivity and institutional support for these restaurant owners, who may not have the resources to fulfil their cultural responsibilities.

To facilitate a thorough understanding of how the research question has been answered, this thesis will proceed with the theoretical framework which discusses literature on the diaspora and gastronomy before defining the terms of diaspora community, identity, and cuisine, and how they may operate alongside and be represented through the entrepreneurship of restaurant owners. Then, in the methodology section, the research strategy and its focus on the restaurant owners in The Hague will be further elaborated on. Here, a qualitative approach has been implemented with semi-structured expert interviews with the owners (or their equivalent, when unavailable) of 12 different Indonesian restaurants in The Hague. Their answers have been valuable in crafting the cyclical relationship between diaspora identity and cuisine, and how both may be negotiated, represented, and perceived in various forms. It is in the findings and discussion sections that the experiences and positionalities of the restaurant owners will be explored to answer the research question, before concluding with recommendations and future outlook.

2.0: Theoretical Framework

2.1: Identifying the Diaspora Community

Early definitions of the term *diaspora* can often be condensed down to persons residing outside of their homeland (Walker, 1986, p. 16). These definitions, however, can lead to the erasure of distinctions between groups, as critiqued by Safran (1991, p. 83) who argued that such a simplistic approach would create a blanket term for several groups with unique circumstances, including expatriates, political refugees, and ethnic and racial minorities. Instead, Safran (1991, p. 83-84) suggested six characteristics that a group of people should possess before being labelled as diaspora. These characteristics were the community's dispersal from their homeland to foreign regions, retention of a collective vision of their homeland, alienation by host society, desire to return to homeland, commitment to maintenance/restoration of homeland, and belief that their ethno-communal consciousness was defined by their personal or vicarious relationship with their homeland. Alongside these characteristics, Safran (1991, p. 91) also posits the concept of the homeland myth which suggests that while the homeland may not be a viable place to return to, the longing that the diaspora have for it strengthens the unity and consciousness of the community further. As such, from his studies on the diaspora, it can be understood that Safran's definition of a diaspora community highlighted their yearning for their homeland and placed them in contestation with their host community.

This yearning, however, may not be applicable for all collectives of migrants. As argued by Hua (2005, p. 195), there have been various cases where their homeland might be associated with painful experiences that strain any potential longing that the migrants could have. These cases lead to the question: Would these collectives of migrants then not be considered as diaspora communities? Other academics, such as Radhakrishnan (1996, p. 211-212), also stressed the importance of holding a critical lens to definitions of the diaspora that place the homeland as their focal point. In today's contemporary era, considering how migration may be motivated by varying reasons, it would be appropriate to not assume a catch-all for every diaspora community and the individuals within them.

Therefore, straying away from definitions that suggest attachment to certain spatial locations, this thesis also looks towards Sökefeld's (2006, p. 267-269) definition that builds on the concept of a diasporic consciousness by redefining it as a discourse developed through a collective imagination formed by social movements based on opportunity structures, mobilising practices, and frames that emphasise memory. Here, a migrant does not

immediately constitute a diaspora but is able to adopt that identity once they have assimilated into that diaspora community. Compared to Safran's (1991, p. 83-84) interpretation, this definition of diaspora as a built collective imagination places more agency on individuals within the community as social actors. By taking into consideration that individuals may develop their own diasporic identity, an unsavoury situation—following an overarching definition that erases the nuances of sub-groups within the diaspora community—is avoided.

Rather than pitting Safran's (1991, p. 83-84) homeland-centric definition of diaspora against Sökefeld's (2006, p. 267-269) concept of a socially constructed diasporic consciousness, a potential middle-ground between the two definitions may be found. The concept of the homeland is still significant in studying how the diaspora mediates these ties when integrating into their host country (Hua, 2005, p. 196-197; Leoussi & Smith, 2010, p. 55-56). Leoussi and Smith further corroborates this argument by highlighting the existence of a diaspora culture that is unique and original and can be traced to the reconciliation of transnational and national identities. This concept of a reconciliation also hints at a gradual process that may span across years, which suggests variances in perspectives across generations. The existence of a variance is supported by case studies on first, second, and even the in-between '1.5' generations (individuals who immigrate out of their homeland during their adolescence period) that concluded a distinction in sociocultural characteristics and psychological experiences in migrant communities, thus affecting their self-identification as a diaspora (James, 2005, p. 245-247; Park, 1999, p. 139-164).

Hereafter, the diaspora community refers to a collective of persons who reside outside their homeland and who actively translates its social connections, cultures, and imaginations within the context of their host country. This definition retains Safran's (1991, p. 83-84) emphasis on the significance of values that the community carries with them from their homeland, even across generations. Simultaneously, this definition underlines the importance of the diaspora community's attempts, failures, and successes of integrating these values into their lives and practices in the host country, rather than placing them at full contestation against the latter. As Sökefeld (2006, p. 270-271) posits that mobilised cultural practices can facilitate the development of diasporic consciousness, gastronomy—especially the subset of diaspora cuisine—is an undeniably relevant field to explore when understanding the evolution of the diaspora community.

2.2: Navigating Diaspora Cuisine

Similar to the case of the diaspora, tying a single definition to the concept of diaspora cuisine can be a complicated process. This process can be unravelled by first understanding the broader field of gastronomy, which acts as a conceptual entry point into the study of diasporic communities and their co-construction of experience.

2.2.1: Gastronomy as a Cultural Lens into the Diaspora Community

Though gastronomy has been identified to be a multidisciplinary science (Coveney, 2024, p. 101; Koerich & Müller, 2022, p. 2), Sökefeld's (2006, p. 270-271) emphasis on identifying mobilised cultural practices directs this thesis's ongoing theoretical framework towards Müller's (2012, p. 27) explanation of gastronomy as an intangible cultural heritage with a focus on the preservation and development of traditional knowledge and skills inherent in food practices passed down through generations. Such hereditary undertones indicate that the transgenerational aspect of gastronomy includes an absorption of characteristics based on the environment each generation lives through (Ronchetti, 2015, p. 33).

The degree of absorption, however, is contingent on various factors. A study on Malay traditional food uncovered that children's reception towards their parents' teachings of gastronomy knowledge was dependent on their obligations of filial piety (Nor et al., 2012, p. 85). Furthermore, absorption of gastronomy knowledge may also be subjected to individualistic capacity to integrate new cultural patterns (Lin et al., 2021, p. 5). These observations suggest that gastronomy knowledge is dynamic in nature, rather than stagnating in form, and can reflect how its practitioners experience different environments, be it in private and public settings.

Furthermore, in recent studies, food has been proposed to be a cultural symbol that holds more significance over other markers in restating the social identity of its consumers (Coveney, 2024, p. 1-16; Edles, 2004, p. 55-57). These academics' reasonings align with Bourdieu's (1979, p. 169-175) argument that cultural and social preferences are not personal decisions but contingent on their upbringing and social class, and these preferences in turn narrate how socioeconomic groups distinguish themselves. The taste of luxury and the taste of necessity were the two specific categories that he identified, each referring to a distinct social status. Therefore, gastronomy should not only be studied through the lens of its cuisine constituents, but also as a form of cultural expression that reflects broader narratives of social differentiation.

2.2.2: Defining Diaspora Cuisine

Having established that gastronomy knowledge is a form of cultural expression shaped by its environment, and that a key feature of the diaspora community is their efforts to integrate into their host country, it would be apt to consider the cuisine of the diaspora community as a window into the evolution of their cultural and social structures. This parallel is further supported by academics who argue that cuisine is a vehicle for expressing cultural identity and meaning making across multi-cultural and multi-ethnic communities (Kittler et al., 2004, p. 202; Reddy & Dam, 2020, p. 4-6). However, the realm of diaspora cuisine requires more nuances than the meshing of these two key concepts.

When defining the diaspora cuisine, it would be ill-informed to assume that it merely replicates the cuisine of the diaspora's homeland. Such an assumption overlooks the culinary diversity and complexity inherent in the homeland's gastronomic landscape, implying a level of homogeneity that rarely exists. As stated by Mintz (1996), "all so-called national cuisines take from regional ones" (p. 114). Mintz's declaration pinpoints the flaw of a *national cuisine* being a blanket term for a collective of regional cuisines, similar to Safran's (1991, p. 83) critique of the earlier definitions of diaspora. When studying the introduction of Korean cuisine to Westerners, Oum (2005, p. 114) opted to loosely describe the prerequisite to Korean food as being recognised in tandem as Korean by the general public through shared dining and imagined standards. Oum settled on this definition after recognising that a national cuisine is often curated by the state rather than being organically developed through collective habits of the society. Hence, much like the distortion in a game of telephone, as the national cuisine itself may fail to capture the full spectrum of regional and cultural culinary nuances, the diaspora cuisine consequently cannot fully encapsulate these subtleties.

Conclusively, rather than a static reproduction of the homeland's cuisine, the diaspora cuisine should therefore be understood as a dynamic cultural process, much like how the basis for gastronomy is that it is a form of cultural expression shaped by its environment. As determined by Terenzio (2019, p. 170), observations of the evolution to the diasporic identity can be studied through specific aspects highlighted in members' cultural repertoires. Therefore, changes introduced by the diaspora community to the cuisine they reproduce also mirrors what they deem important enough to preserve and what may be adapted. As such, diaspora cuisine can be defined as an ever-dynamic process of cultural hybridity where the diaspora community actively re-imagines the cuisine of their homeland in the context of their host environment, a re-imagination which articulates their own diasporic identity.

The process of re-imagining and negotiating cuisine suggests an act of co-construction, whereby culinary experiences are managed through relationships (Mannur, 2013, p. 14). For the diaspora cuisine, this co-construction would fall both within the diaspora community as well as between them and their host community. The physical and symbolic spaces in which these forms of co-construction are facilitated therefore becomes significant, as diasporic culinary creations, while rooted in homeland traditions and intrinsically linked to the diaspora ethnic identity, are also shaped by and integrated into the spatial representations of their new environment (Terenzio, 2019, p. 173). Alfonso (2012, p. 202) also argued that the adaptation of national culinary traditions within the new context of the host country serves to construct narratives of belonging and foster a sense of pride, thereby establishing a diasporic space where the national identity of their homeland can be effectively enacted. This emphasis on space draws another question: What exactly is this space for the diaspora community in which their cuisine is created and consumed, and who are responsible for this space? To answer this question, exploring the realms of restaurants and their owners is fundamental.

2.2.3: Entrepreneurship and Co-Constructing Experiences in Diaspora Cuisine

Cho (2010, p. 49-50) warned her readers to avoid homogenising broad geographical areas, such as Chinatown to be singular diasporic spaces for the Chinse diaspora. Instead, she offered individual Chinese restaurant as countercultural settings, which provides alternative spaces for cultural expression through the dynamics of the culinary experience. Here, Cho's argument suggests that the owners of a restaurant—the entrepreneurial food producer—are organically bestowed with the creative agency of reimagining their traditional cultural heritage in response to the demands of their host environment. Grandi (2023, p. 2-3) adds to this discussion on the importance of restaurants with his observation that diaspora members would be inclined to join the food sector as it offers the best opportunities for social mobility, which ultimately places many of them in entrepreneurship or chef roles in restaurants where they can present the cuisine of their homeland. Chen and Elston (2013, p. 303-304) also suggested that non-economic factors, such as cultural values, social networks, and ideological aspirations often play a significant role in shaping entrepreneurial intent. This aligns with Kloosterman's (2010, p. 41) argument that entrepreneurial opportunities emerge from the interplay of socio-economic and institutional forces. Many diaspora entrepreneurs recognise growing demands for culturally specific goods and services within their communities and, due to their cultural knowledge and linguistic fluency, are well-positioned to meet such needs. It must be noted that these entrepreneurs often prioritise serving their diaspora clientele—not

necessarily because of greater profit potential, but because of shared language and cultural familiarity, which would make day-to-day operations more convenient (Samaratunge et al., 2015, p. 794). These factors collectively highlight how entrepreneurship in the food sector by diaspora members is shaped by a unique combination of business opportunity and social embeddedness within their community.

The argument that entrepreneurs in the food sector, in particular, hold a great portion of responsibility in anchoring culinary experiences is also supported by Bourdieu (1979, p. 283-291) who noted that entrepreneurs dealing cultural services would adhere to the established order and continue to hone a respectable social status for themselves through consolidating both economic and symbolic capital. His findings suggest that the gastronomy practitioner's identity can be reaffirmed through their food practices and that those in food commerce stand to gain from maintaining the status quo. Consequently, this would also imply that food entrepreneurs, such as restaurant owners, occupy a crucial responsibility in shaping the cultural value of food which, in turn, may limit or expand the cultural capital that their diners have access to, thus affecting the latter's capacity for self-identification.

However, the cultural value of food is not only curated by the producer but also influenced by its consumer. Upon synthesising their and other academics' theoretical frameworks, Müller and Koerich (2022, p. 8-9) suggested that the cultural value of food is additionally attached to the set of the consumer's cognitive and symbolic reactions towards the mediums, such as ingredients and recipes, that the gastronomy knowledge is communicated through. This attachment would suggest that consumers are co-curators in the cultural value of the food through their reactions that are then perceived and acted upon by the producer, to the extent that the producer is perceptive of the consumers' reactions. Likewise, restaurant owners—as entrepreneurs—function not only as business operators but also as cultural intermediaries and within this role, they become responsible for the preservation and promotion of their culinary heritage while adapting to commercial realities.

2.3: Representations of Diaspora Cuisine

Now, while the concept of diaspora cuisine allows for creative agency and brings cultural benefits to its consumers and producers, it has drawn criticisms of acculturation—defined as alterations of customs and social institutions during the interaction of cultures (Redfield et al., 1936, p. 149-152)— when the reimagined dishes diverge significantly from their traditional counterparts. As Mannur (2013) puts it, many diaspora members still "remain deeply invested in the ontological coherency of their culinary memories" (p. 14). This suggests that fears of acculturation are based on a steadfastness to the memory of the diaspora's homeland, even if such culinary traditions have evolved since the diaspora's departure. These fears are also based on the notion that the dynamic nature of the symbolic construction behind gastronomy presents a potential risk of diaspora cuisines being reductively perceived by dominant narratives as stereotypes of their traditional forms (Brownlie et al., 2005). As such, the authenticity of diaspora cuisine must be questioned; how it should be defined and maintained.

Sutton (2001, p. 146-147) highlights that some cookbook authors have asserted that the marker of authenticity is the preservation of traditional cooking techniques, thus leaving no space for alterations. Heldke (2014, p. 12-13) also suggests that the term *restaurant authenticity* contributes to this stringent track as it pinpoints accurate recipe replication as the prerequisite for authenticity. Meanwhile, others offer the notion that within the field of gastronomy, authenticity has not been condensed into a single tradition but is instead split into various tracks, depending on the identity of the chef (Ray, 2016, p. 159-160). To elaborate, authenticity of a general chef is based on their ability to create novel dishes while authenticity of an ethnic chef can be derived from their ability to recreate cultural dishes. Similar to Ray's argument, Imai (2015) suggests that culinary authenticity should be established as agent-based, rather than place-based, especially in today's globalised world of dispersed networking activities. Considering these opposing camps, authenticity can be understood in two distinct ways: through standardised and measurable systems, which creates a rationalised form of authenticity that quickens the practices' global spread (DeSoucey et al., 2019, p. 10-11), and through individual perceptions of immeasurable value, where authenticity is subjective and depends on how effectively such value is communicated across (Su, 2018). Preetha and Lazarus (2024, p. 54-56) and Sutton (2001, p. 146) have backed the subjectivity of culinary authenticity by stating that the authenticity is fundamentally determined by the emotional resonance between consumer/producer and the dish to create the diasporic experience.

To sum up this discussion, Ray's (2016, p. 38-39) comment on authenticity remains true: "The search for authenticity is an anxiety produced by access". Ultimately, the contrasting viewpoints across academics and the general public suggest that authenticity relays a variety of definitions when applied to diaspora cuisine. To mediate across these viewpoints, Heldke (2014, p. 14-15) states that one should not stick to a specific definition as it would prevent the evolution of culture. Therefore, as it is important to understand various perspectives on culinary authenticity, the discussion should focus more on achieving a nuanced and inclusive understanding of the dynamic interplay between tradition, adaptation, and the perspectives of the diaspora community. In particular, the representation of diaspora cuisine by restaurants owners, with their intrinsic ability for cultural mediation, should be studied closely.

Figure 1: Strategies of Negotiation (Long, 2005, p. 37-44)

For a clearer outlook on the different ways that the diaspora cuisine may be represented, Long (2005, p. 37-44) highlighted five strategies that restaurant owners tend to employ when traversing foodways: Framing, translation, explication, menu selection, and recipe adaptation. While each strategy depicts a different angle for representing the cuisine, it is not necessary for each and every strategy to be employed. Nevertheless, it is likely that the order shown in Figure 1 would be used as it follows the diner's step-by-step experience of the restaurant, from its spatial design to the menu it offers. As such, the following portion of the theoretical framework will explore how each of the strategy may manifest and the respective consequences on the diaspora identity and the authenticity of the diaspora cuisine.

2.3.1: Framing through Restaurant Design

The first strategy of framing refers to the design of the spatial context, otherwise known as the exterior and interior design of the restaurant. While cognitive responses may be tied to the consumer's involuntary reaction to a sensory aspect of the food (Kaneko et al., 2018, p. 12), they can also be context-sensitive as different locations of consumption can affect the emotional pull of the food (Low et al., 2022, p.10-11). Furthermore, while symbolic reactions towards food may be varied based on cultural constitutions, these values can also change based on the setting of the food (Allen et al., 2008, p. 127-128; Fifita et al., 2020, p. 669; Wang & Wan, 2025, p.7). This context-sensitivity of both cognitive and symbolic reactions can be tied back to Ronchetti's (2015, p. 33) emphasis on the impact of the gastronomy practitioner's environment. This suggests that the experience of a dish may vary significantly depending on the setting; a feature that is adjustable in restaurants through changes in spatial design.

Grandi (2023, p. 3) especially praised the restaurant space for its flexibility in delivering a multisensorial experience that showcases cultural diversity. Long (2005, p. 38) stated that the restaurant design is generally dependent on the demographics of diners that the owners expect, and it can be used to elevate either elements of familiarity or unfamiliarity within the dishes that they serve. This strategy has also been supported by other academics, as the restaurant can become a "visually and acoustically rich social space" to craft the diner experience on a symbolic level through the performance of the staff (Vyletalova et al., 2023, p. 118). For example, restaurants with a target group of non-diaspora diners would prefer to use stereotypical motifs with spacious seating arrangements that are standard to Western expectations. Such familiar settings would help to ease diners into exploring unfamiliar menus. Alternatively, for restaurants that seek to appeal to the diaspora, the design would be more region-specific and include motifs that may be exclusively understood by in-groups, so as to emphasise the dishes' connection to their homeland (Heldke, 2014, p. 2-3).

Aside from the physical design of the restaurant, framing also includes the composition of the staff. Heldke (2014, p. 2-3) discovered that diners frequently ascribe a heightened level of culinary expertise to restaurants whose staff visually comprise of the community from which the cuisine originates from. Simultaneously, as posited across by Cinotto (2013, p. 194), this conveyed heritage then becomes a reference point as restaurant owners can instil symbolic meanings in their food that will resonate with the diaspora diners' sense of belonging, cultural identity, and integration into the host community. This instilment

is enhanced by the image of restaurants being “transnational culinary and cultural refuge” that evoke nostalgia across diners (Hess et al., 2023, p. 98). The concept of nostalgic imaginaries underscores the context-sensitive nature of symbolic reactions (Wang & Wan, 2025, p. 7), and in a diasporic context, the restaurant becomes a stage for performing and reinforcing cultural symbols. Therefore, restaurant spaces are not just producers of sustenance but vehicles for conveying cultural narratives and memories across the diaspora and host community.

Through framing, the explicit directing of the diners towards the act of consumption would only serve to further develop the cultural fragrance of the dishes—a concept borrowed from Iwabuchi (2002, p. 27)—which would evoke positive, albeit stereotyped, associations to the homeland. This would suggest that successful efforts in manipulating the space to encourage the diners to consume the menu inadvertently establishes the restaurant’s influences on the diaspora cuisine and the place identity of the homeland. Acts of consumption, especially that of haptic cues of which culinary ventures are included in, is also a form of cultural labour performed by the diners to holistically immerse themselves in the story presented by the setting (Zimmermann & Reijnders, 2025, p. 12-18). Zimmermann and Reijnders argued that presented realities may transform the visitors’ imagination into a legitimate layer of the location’s place identity. Applying this concept to restaurants, it can be understood that restaurants of diaspora cuisine may also function as cultural portals, offering both owners and diners temporary escape from their immediate surroundings and transporting them to the imagined cultural reality of the homeland. The concept of *staged authenticity* can be key in understanding the extent of this impact, whereby the diners’ experiences are based on their own desires that have been catered to by the restaurant owners (MacCannel, 1973, p. 597). Therefore, the restaurant owners become cultural brokers in the development of the place identity of not only their restaurants, but also the homeland in which the cuisine originated from, thus creating an environment that shapes how their diners perceive and understand their diaspora cuisine.

2.3.2: Menu Choices and Culinary Adaptation

Long's (2005, p. 38) second strategy of translation focuses on restaurant owners' attempts to integrate unfamiliar dishes into the larger foodways system of the host community through portraying the dishes under common labels. While this strategy suggests an appeal towards the host community, the reverse is also possible. For restaurants who seek an audience that enjoys unfamiliar dishes, foreign suffixes will be attached to otherwise familiar dishes. This strategy is often employed with the third strategy of explication which is the contextualisation of the dishes through providing the diners with explanations and anecdotes of the foreign food system and culminate in the fourth strategy of menu selection where particular dishes thought to be well-suited for the diners are hand-picked by the staff (Long, 2005, p. 39-42). The dishes are further filtered through with the fifth strategy of recipe adaptation where the ingredients and preparation methods are orchestrated to adapt to the foodways of the diners (Long, 2004, p. 43). These strategies were utilised by diasporic restaurant owners to navigate acclimatising their traditional menu to their host environment—a motivation that restaurant owners tend to have to socially embed themselves within the host community by presenting their cross-cultural foodways and strengthening ties with their diners (Muhammad et al., 2015, p. 371; Vyletova, 2023, p. 152). It is through these strategies that the restaurant owners practice their *culinary citizenship*, a privilege that is granted to the individual to assume positions of power based on their culinary expertise (Mannur, 2007, p. 13). Such strategies, however, run the risk of rendering the cuisine monolithic.

In his study of cookbooks in India, Appadurai (1998, p. 17) declared that the subtleties of cuisine are especially lost when produced in a restaurant, especially in the case of regional nuances boiled down to a national cuisine marketed by the restaurants. This situation occurs when the menu is limited to a certain number of dishes and restaurant owners can only afford to serve metonymical representations of the cuisine, a strategy that also falls under Long's (2005, p. 37) observation of a menu selection. This concept of metonymical representations can be applied in the context of cuisine whereby specific dishes are chosen for their symbolic resonance and accessibility, translating the otherwise abstract concept of culinary tradition into a tangible and easily recognisable form for diners (Harrison et al., 2020, p. 54).

However, for further nuance, this thesis also considers Alfonso's (2012, p. 176-202) argument that diaspora communities would attempt to resist pressures from their host country to change the culinary practices that they had carried over from their homeland. He also added on that frustrations may be felt by the diaspora when hoping to re-create the original flavours of their cuisine due to differences in accessibility to ingredients. This suggests that adaptations in cuisine may not be a matter of choice by the diaspora community and is instead driven by necessity. Furthermore, cultural heritage mediated through the restaurant is not a fixed set of traditions or customs but actively constructed and imagined through narratives and representations posited by the restaurant owners. These processes of construction and imagination are especially relevant as the property of taste in food enciphers and contextualises memories of the homeland (Sutton, 2001, p. 101-102). Here, the unreliability of memories must be stressed upon as there are cases where the diaspora perceives the cultural essence of their homeland to be frozen in time and therefore will therefore fixate on the "ontological coherency of their national cuisine" (Katrak, 1997, p. 263-275). This potential for inaccurate reflections of the homeland suggests that any adaptations may also be done unconsciously and based on incomplete knowledge. However, it can also be argued that any misalignments of this nature simply elevate the essence of diaspora cuisine, whereby any distinctions from the original cuisine and character of the homeland serves to further highlight the autonomy of the diaspora community—inclusive of restaurant owners and diners—in developing and presenting the diaspora cuisine.

2.4: Diaspora Culinary Landscape of the City

Through this thesis's theoretical framework, it has been established that the diaspora cuisine is a medium of co-constructed cultural expression through which the diaspora identity is negotiated and represented. Restaurant owners, as diaspora entrepreneurs, are at the forefront of this negotiation with both their diaspora and host community, as they hold the responsibility of curating the physical and symbolic space in which the diaspora cuisine is represented—their restaurants—as well as the components within the cuisine itself. Following the definition of the diaspora as being part of a larger community yet with potential individualistic processes and results of identity construction through cultural practices (Safran, 1991, p. 83-83; Sökefeld, 2006, p. 270-271), it is vital to explore the different approaches that these entrepreneurs take to develop their positionality in the wider diaspora culinary landscape of their environment. In the case of The Hague, this wider diaspora culinary landscape refers to the making of the cuisine, the shaping of spaces in which the cuisine is represented in, and the connections built with stakeholders, including competitors and diners that may constitute the diaspora and host communities. It is expected that the study of these varied approaches would then shed more light on the complex interplay of cultural identities, practices, and spaces.

3.0: Methodology

3.1: Research Strategy

This thesis adopts a qualitative research approach to explore how owners of Indonesian restaurant in The Hague position themselves within the city's diaspora culinary landscape. A qualitative methodology is well-suited for this research due to its ability to capture negotiations of meaning-making and identity (Bryman, 2016, p. 620-621) — dimensions that are central to the diaspora cuisine and its spatial and cultural embeddedness.

The Hague was selected as the primary site for this study due to its historical and contemporary significance to the Indonesian diaspora in the Netherlands. As early as 1996, South Holland—in which The Hague is located—had the highest concentration of individuals born in the former Dutch East Indies/Indonesia, and at that time, the people of Indonesian origin accounted for 5.5% of the city's population, compared to the national municipal average of 1.97% (Edelman & Edelman, 2011). More recently, 2022 statistics estimated that there were approximately 349,000 individuals with Indonesian migration background residing in the Netherlands (CBS, 2023, Table 1). While current precise numbers specific to The Hague may not be available, the city registered 16,092 Indonesian citizens as of 2024 (DHIC, 2024, Table 7 & 8), which suggests an enduring and significant diasporic presence. Simultaneously, studies have also shown that the diaspora in the Netherlands do not have one single identity, but instead two separate identities: Ethnic and national (Berry et al., 2023, p. 117). The duality of their identities emphasises further significance into exploring how restaurant owners may negotiate their diaspora identity.

The Hague is also a prime context for examining how diasporic identities are transmitted through everyday cultural practices, especially gastronomy. According to Bruneau (2010), cities with concentrated diasporic iconography provide ideal settings for investigating how diasporic communities interact with their host environment. Indonesian restaurants in The Hague serve as key cultural touchpoints in this regard. As of 2024, the Netherlands hosted 393 Indonesian restaurants—reportedly the highest concentration outside Indonesia—with a substantial number located in The Hague (Kementerian Luar Negeri, 2024, p. 7). Therefore, these demographic, cultural, and strategic factors position The Hague as an ideal case study in the investigation of the research question: *How do owners of Indonesian restaurants in The Hague position themselves in the diaspora cuisine landscape of the city?*

3.2: Method and Data Collection

To complement the existing literature, this study employed semi-guided expert interviews to collect primary data, drawing on narratives and reflections from owners of Indonesian restaurants in The Hague as they would be key informants of their positionality (Bewley, 2002, p. 345-346). These interviews aimed to uncover how the restaurant owners perceive, adapt, and represent the Indonesian cuisine within the Indonesian cuisine within the diasporic context of the city. Qualitative or semi-structured interviews allow for flexibility in exploring participants' perspectives and experiences while maintaining a consistent framework for gathering relevant data (Bryman, 2016, p. 470-472). With a predetermined list of questions, while allowing participants to elaborate on their answers and introduce new topics that might be relevant, this format is essential for uncovering unanticipated insights and gaining a richer understanding for the subject. This is especially important when understanding the dynamic interplay between tradition, adaptation, and the perspectives of the diaspora community, since there is no consensus on the definition of culinary authenticity.

There were 12 interviewees in total that were attained through the purposeful sampling strategy of combining criterion sampling with snowball sampling (Patton, 2002, p. 243-244). Under criterion sampling, certain criteria were applied to select the interviewees. Firstly, the interviewee must be the owner or be within the upper-management team of their restaurant. This criterion ensures that the interviewee is an entrepreneur responsible for the management of the restaurant, thus resulting in a higher degree of freedom in their representation of the space and the menu. Secondly, the interviewee's restaurant must mainly focus on serving Indonesian cuisine and market itself as such. This criterion ensures that the restaurant depicts itself as a representative of Indonesian cuisine. Thirdly, the interviewee's restaurant must be situated within The Hague. Lastly, for more insights into the relationship between the diaspora identity and the representation of the cuisine, this thesis sought to select interviewees that might identify themselves as part of the Indonesian diaspora community.

These criteria were followed closely during the search, which was conducted through browsing through social media, such as Instagram accounts, and other platforms of user-generated content, such as Tripadvisor, with the inputted key term of 'Indonesian/Indonesisch restaurant' and the set geographical parameter of The Hague. After the initial sample pool of 41 restaurants was settled upon, their contact details were attained through their websites and social media pages. When such details were not available online, a visit to their restaurant sufficed in obtaining their contact. 11 of the interviewees were selected through criterion

sampling, while snowball sampling was used to build on the initial sample by asking the interviewees to recommend other potential persons who meet the research criteria, of which only an additional one fit the set criteria (Bryman, 2012, p. 418-420; Parker et al., 2019). Thereafter, interviews were scheduled within the period of mid-February to mid-April, at which point saturation was reached. This state of saturation was deemed to be reached when no new information was uncovered during the iterative process of examining the data conducted whilst in the midst of the interviews (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 61-62).

The interviews were first transcribed using Google NotebookLM using the prompt "Please transcribe the following audio file with time stamps and label separate dialogues with 'Interviewee' and 'Interviewer'". They then had to be cleaned manually due to the multilingual nature of the conversations, as they were conducted primarily in English and Bahasa Indonesia (which the interviewer is native in), with the occasional use of Dutch phrases. When the Dutch terminology exceeded the interviewer's comprehension, clarification was sought directly from the interviewee. Conducting the interviews in the interviewees' mother tongue was a deliberate methodological decision, in an attempt to minimise language barriers and maximise the richness of the interviewees' cultural expression (Welch & Piekkari, 2006). For the ease of the viewer's reading, the quotes will be fully translated in English while their original form will be added to the footnotes for reference.

3.3: Operationalisation

To align with the core research question, the interview guide was developed around three key concepts: Perceptions of Diaspora Cuisine, Perceptions of Diaspora Identity, and Representations of Diaspora Cuisine (Appendix A – Interview Guide). These key concepts were derived from both theoretical frameworks and key issues identified in the literature review. They provided a structured yet flexible framework to explore how gastronomy intersects with identity-making and cultural representation, thus forming the basis of the different positionalities that the restaurant owners can adopt.

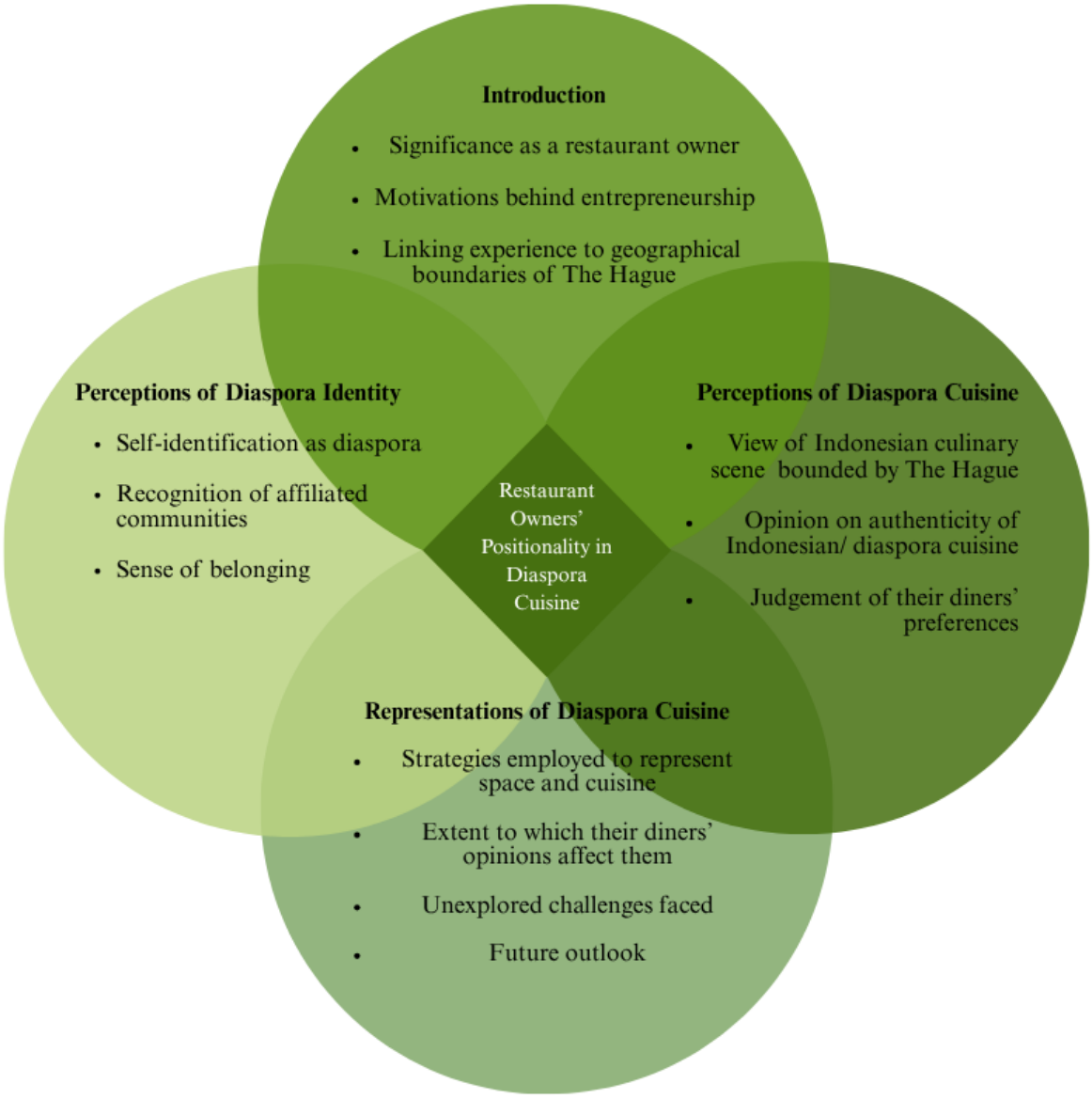

Figure 2: Framework of Concepts

The interview guide began with an explorative introduction into the interviewee's experience with their restaurant. When applicable, the decision of opening or inheriting the restaurant were discussed, thus revealing any non-economic motivations that tied into their connections with their diaspora community (Grandi, 2023, p. 2-3; Chen & Elston, 2013, p. 303-304; Kloosterman, 2010, p. 4). Though information on the interviewee's background may be available online, this opener allowed them to express their personal thoughts on their journey with their restaurant and this information served as the foundation for the key concepts then discussed in the interview.

Through the first key concept 'Perceptions of Diaspora Cuisine', the interviewee's experiences and opinions of the Indonesian culinary scene in The Hague were focused on. Considering that diaspora cuisine is built on the re-imagining of the homeland cuisine in the context of their host environment, it is therefore important to cross-examine the beliefs each interviewee holds towards the Indonesian cuisine and diaspora cuisine (Terenzio, 2019, p. 170; Oum, 2005, p. 114). This cross-examination also included their views on authenticity and their appraisal of their diners' perceptions towards the cuisine. These personal beliefs and judgement on their targeted clientele would then act as the prelude to questioning the basis behind their respective representations of the diaspora cuisine that may emerge from different factors, such as fears of acculturation or desire to meet their diners' expectations (Brownlie et al., 2005; Preetha & Lazaurus, 2024, p. 54-56; Ray, 2016, p. 159-160; Sutton, 2001, p. 148-147).

The second key concept 'Perceptions of Diaspora Identity' provided an outlet for the interviewee to comment on their diaspora identity and their relations with the diaspora community, which also included their diners and the owners of other Indonesian restaurants. As the diaspora identity may be individualistic and contain variance, it is important to clarify how the interviewee may define 'diaspora' rather than adhering rigidly to a standardised labelling (Park, 1999, p. 139-164; James, 2005, p. 245-247). Ensuite, ascertaining the extent to which the interviewee feels diasporic, and a part of the community would also be valuable information when understanding how they have represented their cuisine.

The third key concept 'Representations of Diaspora Cuisine' followed the overarching set of strategies suggested by Long (2005, p. 37-44): Framing, translation, explication, menu selection, and recipe adaptation. These strategies were not explicitly mentioned to the interviewee but instead, they were prompted to elaborate further on their decision-making behind any forms of representations in the restaurant space and cuisine. For a deeper understanding of their motivations and future considerations, the interviewee was also asked

about other challenges they might be facing and how they might foresee the progress of their restaurant and the state of the diaspora cuisine in The Hague.

While the interview guide may suggest a sequence to the key concepts covered, the semi-structured approach to the interviews refunctioned the guide into a conversational scaffold rather than a rigid script (Bryman, 2012, p. 472-473; Ryan et al., 2009). Therefore, the interviews were conducted in an iterative fashion whereby a previously discussion key concept was revisited when appropriate. Interviewees were also encouraged to elaborate on relevant areas as this flexible approach allowed for more open-ended responses. Prior to each interview, participants were informed—both via the consent form and verbally—about the general focus of the research, which included their views on Indonesian cuisine and the challenges and opportunities of operating a restaurant in the diasporic context. However, they were not informed that the interview would explicitly cover questions on strategies, adaptations, and positionality in regard to their diaspora identity. This ensured that they would have organic answers rather than pre-planned ones. Furthermore, each interview began with broad, exploratory questions before gradually progressing to specific prompts. This structure was designed to ease the interviewees into the discussion, thus ensuring a critical yet comfortable space for reflecting on complex issues such as personal identity and cultural belonging.

After the transcripts were cleaned, the data was analysed with ATLAS.ti 25. A hybrid coding approach was then adopted in the data analysis (Appendix B – Code Guidebook). The process began with deductive coding, informed by theoretical frameworks and prior literature related to the diaspora and diaspora cuisine (Bryman, 2012, p. 24-27). Concurrently, to encourage the organic surfacing of themes, inductive coding was used to add to the list (Boyatzis, p. 67-70). This dual strategy allowed the research to remain open to new interpretations while ensuring relevance to the existing body of knowledge, whereby similar as well as differing viewpoints across the interviews conducted were identified (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). To further develop a framework for the codes, thematic analysis was used to interpret the data and build on the initial concepts used in the interview guide (Clarke & Braun, 2017, p. 297-298). ATLAS.ti was also used to create visual aids, where the relevant themes and patterns were structured together in a thematic map to interpret the research findings and make the links more prominent. Through this thematic map, three dimensions of positionality within the landscape of the diaspora cuisine were uncovered: ‘Opening Up a Restaurant’, ‘Spatiality and Networks’, and ‘Representations of Diaspora Cuisine’ (Appendix C – Thematic Map).

3.4: Research Units and Ethical Considerations

Interviewee/Gender	Occupation	Description of Business	Interview Duration
Interviewee 1 (m)	Co-Owner (Alongside siblings)	Eatery at food complex	55 minutes
Interviewee 2 (m)	Co-Owner (Alongside mother)	Toko (Seats)	1 hour 15 minutes
Interviewee 3 (m)	Owner	Toko (No seats, Ex-restaurant)	45 minutes
Interviewee 4 (m)	Owner	Restaurant	2 hours
Interviewee 5 (f)	Ex-Owner (Handed business to daughter) / Supervisor	Restaurant	30 minutes
Interviewee 6 (m)	Owner	Restaurant	1 hour 45 minutes
Interviewee 7 (f)	Owner	Restaurant	1 hour
Interviewee 8 (m)	Executive Chef/ Consultant for Interviewee 7/ Culinary Ambassador	Restaurant (In Amsterdam)	50 minutes
Interviewee 9 (m)	Manager (Parents are owners)	Chain toko (Seats)	1 hour
Interviewee 10 (m)	Manager (Father is owner)	Restaurant	1 hour 20 minutes
Interviewee 11 (m)	Owner	Restaurant	1 hour 40 minutes
Interviewee 12 (m)	Co-Owner (Siblings own other chains, nephew of Interviewee 5)	Toko	50 minutes

Table 1: Overview of Interviewees (Anonymised)

As mentioned, through the purposeful sampling strategy, the sample pool consisted of a total of 12 interviewees. All of the interviewees fulfilled the criteria set forth by the paper in the initial stage of criterion sampling, saved for two interviewees. Interviewee 9 did not meet the criteria of being an Indonesian diaspora, however he still identified as a diaspora, albeit of a different nationality, and spoke of being active in the Indonesian diaspora community through his toko. Meanwhile, Interviewee 8 was contacted through Interviewee 7 by snowball sampling and while his restaurant may be located in Amsterdam, the interview was focused on his role as a culinary ambassador for the Indonesian cuisine in the Netherlands and his consultancy work for Interviewee 7's restaurant in The Hague. Though these two interviewees may not meet every criterion defined within the sampling strategy, the insights they provided in their interviews were still valuable and relevant to answering the research question.

Aside from adhering to the set criteria, this thesis strived to achieve diversity within the final selection of the interviewees to capture a wider range of opinions and experiences that would result in a richer study into positionality within the diaspora cuisine. This diversity manifested in a variety of forms, such as the range of ages, their gender, and the duration in which they were managing their restaurants. Additionally, their generation—in reference to whether they themselves were direct migrants or they were descendants of migrants—was also accounted for (Park, 1999, p. 139-164; James, 2005, p. 245-247). Furthermore, across the pool, variations in their restaurant type (full-service, quick-casual, and quick-service) were also considered due to existing research that showed that restaurant types affect intrinsic and extrinsic consumer variations and therefore can influence restaurants' operational strategies (Lee et al., 2020). Therefore, the label 'restaurant' in this thesis also encompassed eateries that labelled themselves as *warungs* (food stand) and *tokos* (shop/convenience store) to capture a wider range of entrepreneurial experiences.

The duration of the interviews ranged between 30 minutes to 2 hours, amounting to approximately 14 hours of recorded material. For ethical considerations, the interview processes involved the signing of informed consent forms that included briefs on the research topic and data use, and verbal consent was also given during the recordings. The transcripts and the use of quotes in the paper were also anonymised, and to prevent any potential data leaks, any sensitive or confidential information, that was deemed by the researcher as not relevant to the study, were also redacted.

4.0: Findings and Discussion

Rather than being a unanimous collective, each of the 12 interviewees verbalised unique perspectives towards their positionality in the diaspora cuisine landscape of The Hague. While such uniqueness might have highlighted individualistic motivations and approaches that could result in an incoherent and fragmented understanding of what constituted diaspora cuisine, the thematic analysis of the data laid evidence that there were several overarching patterns of shared logics and strategies that shape how the diaspora identity and cuisine is negotiated and expressed.

In reflection of this complexity, this findings chapter have been structured to explore the three dimensions of 'Opening Up a Restaurant', 'Spatiality and Networks', and 'Representations of Diaspora Cuisine'. The first section reveals the primary motivations behind the interviewees' establishing or continuation of the business, before branching into the spatial significance of The Hague and the social-business networks intertwining with the management of the interviewees' diaspora identity. These two sections then culminate in the strategies and approaches adopted by the interviewees to represent the diaspora cuisine. It is through these sections that the research question— "How do owners of Indonesian restaurants in The Hague position themselves in the diaspora cuisine landscape of the city?"—will be answered.

4.1: Opening Up a Restaurant

The interviewee's overarching motivation behind taking ownership of their restaurant lays the foundation to how they interpret and present the link between the spatiality of their restaurant, the diaspora cuisine and the diaspora community, which additionally bears respective sets of opportunities and challenges. Three types of motivation emerged despite the interviewees' varied phrasing as they relayed their passions, or lack thereof, behind running their restaurant. Though the interviewee may not be solely incited by a single type of motivation, a deeper analysis into their answers highlighted that, regardless, their restaurant management is largely influenced by one dominant over the two.

4.1.1: Role as a Culinary Ambassador

With significant relevance to the research question, the first type of motivation that emerged from the interviewees is the desire to have an active role in shaping and communicating a specific narrative of the Indonesian cuisine across to their diners, specifically that of the host community. This desire aligns with the argument that the translation of national culinary traditions by the diaspora community is often fuelled by seeking a sense of belonging and pride (Alfonso, 2012, p. 202).

> "I guess I am representing some form of, you know,
> the Indonesian cuisine here in the Netherlands.
> I think, yeah, obviously because of my heritage, I want this to survive in a way."
> (Interviewee 3)

Furthermore, this form of narrative-building indicates that the interviewees perceive Indonesian cuisine as a form of mediated intangible cultural heritage, which aligns with Müller's (2012, p. 27) stance on gastronomy being a medium for transmitting symbolic and traditional values. Considering how the cultural value of food is determined by its context-sensitive emotional pull (Low et al., 2022, p.10-11; Koerich & Müller, 2022, p. 2), interviewees who possess this motivation indicate that members of the diaspora are able to recognise that their role as a restaurant owner also provides them with the opportunity to be ambassadors of their diaspora cuisine. This awareness of their authority over altering and disseminating the cultural value of food highlights that Bourdieu's (1979, p. 283-291) argument still holds true, whereby food entrepreneurs are conscious of their jurisdiction to

control the amount of cultural capital that their diners have access to and would actively practice this autonomy through their restaurant practices.

At times, this motivation was tied to the pride of introducing the cuisine to the Dutch customers. Despite the Netherlands' shared past with Indonesia, a particular fixation on the novelty of the cuisine to The Hague still remains.

> "To have a physical shop here, especially the first and only one in Europe is something very amazing to have."
> (Interviewee 1)

> "It was, for me, a dream to introduce the street food of Indonesia to the Dutch."
> (Interviewee 7)

Katrak's (1997, p. 263-275) sentiments on the fragmentation of diasporic memory is visible in the responses of Interviewee 1 and 2, whereby the image of Indonesia retains an "enduring cultural essence" even though it has been contextualised within the host community of the Dutch for the past centuries. Such a motivation essentially seals the interviewee's narrative of presenting to the diners a diaspora cuisine that is still a novel and autonomous entity, separate from the Dutch landscape, rather than a cuisine that has already been intertwined in the country's history.

This approach also reveals a specific wish to construct a specific gastronomic narrative or discourse on the Indonesian cuisine, mainly highlighting the regional diversity of Indonesia or seeking to promote the cuisine within a broader culinary landscape. This display of initiative not only highlights the dominance that restaurant owners have over the presentation of their diaspora cuisine to the general public, including that of other diaspora members and the host community (Bourdieu, 1979, p. 283-291; Grandi, 2023, p. 3; Cinotti, 2013, p. 194), but that they are also actively trying to remedy the homogeneity that is perpetuated through the national cuisine of their homeland (Mintz, 1996, p. 114). Here, the interviewees have fashioned diaspora cuisine as a microcosm of their homeland cuisine where, in their restaurants, they have more autonomy over elevating the nuances that were previously undermined.

Through this motivation, it can be established that interviewees with this motivation are more focused on the gastronomy aspect of Indonesian cuisine. This indicates that they would be more prone to using their restaurant as a gateway to demonstrate their personal

understanding of the Indonesian cuisine, based on their culinary expertise, rather than relying on the preferences of their diners to shape any decision-making related to the presentation of the cuisine.

4.1.2: Continuing the Family Legacy

Through inheritance and/or present involvement across culinary, service, and business management, each interviewee spoke of the roles that their family members occupied in their restaurants. Some of the interviewees especially placed their family at the centrepoint of their motivations behind opening and running their restaurant.

> "My mom has always been entrepreneurial, my dad also, and after the divorce, me and my mom stayed together. We always knew that we would start a company again together… I think the most—the personal answer is me and my mom just wanted to show also to ourselves and the world that even if you fall – because the divorce was very taxing on us."
>
> (Interviewee 2)

Through these answers, it can be understood that the restaurant and the cuisine have acted as a custodian of ties between the interviewees and their family members. The connection between family and restaurant management is built on the foundation of tradition whereby preparing and sharing the cuisine is a form of cultural act that allows them to maintain a tangible connection to their history and culture that is maintained by their family (Müller, 2012, p. 27; Ronchetti, 2015, p. 33). This connection manifests in two forms: How their familial relations have shaped their restaurant management and how their bonds have been strengthened through shared restaurant management.

Given that the family legacy acts a focal point in the identity and operation of these Indonesian restaurants, the aspiration to retain ownership within the family is perceived by interviewees as a deeply meaningful decision, or at least a logical one. This sense of continuity manifests in some interviewees' inheritance of the restaurant. Within this pool of interviewees, they stressed upon the responsibility and obligation they faced to maintain the reputation that the restaurant had previously been associated with during their previous generations.

"We've been the consensus number one for a lot of people. And there's always the expectation that when someone else takes over, there always a chance that it might go downwards. Downhill. And especially as the son, it's very important that you keep that consistency and quality. Also, for myself, I never wanted to be less than before."
(Interviewee 11)

"Because it's… Even if you're with brothers or sisters, I think there's one designated survivor who has to take over the place. You know and I'm the oldest of a kid brother. He's 12 so he's far off from working in the restaurants but I do feel a pressure, also for him: If you want to take over the restaurants, I need to make sure you will be able to continue the restaurant business with me. So yeah, I do feel pressure, not even from my parents but also for him."
(Interviewee 10)

This obligation over inheritance particularly resonates with past studies on gastronomy knowledge being contingent on the successors' trait of filial piety (Nor et al., 2012, p. 85). While the focus on consistency does not necessarily signifies a detriment to innovation, this motivation to maintain the family legacy would explain an inclination to preserve the menu and spatial design as they have been throughout their family line.

"But I still want to take care of this restaurant because my children are managing it now."
(Interviewee 5)[1]

Other interviewees, particularly that of the older demographic approaching retirement such as in the case of Interviewee 5, may still continue to remain involved in the operations even during the inheritance process. Their intention to pass the business down to their children underscores their overarching preference for familial succession.

[1] Tapi tante masih mengawasin ini usaha karena anak-anak yang pegang sekarang.

These interviewees would also only consider the possibility of appointing external successors after exhausting all familial succession options. Within this pool of external successors, they would still prefer to keep the business within their immediate social circle, such as close family friends or trusted members of their diaspora community, before relying on entirely external candidates (Samaratunge et al., 2015, p. 794).

> "My colleague… His mother had this restaurant. They are just, they wanted to stop because their son, my colleague, did not want to inherit his mother's restaurant. So, they offered it to me."
> (Interviewee 4)[2]

This emphasis on intra-family transmission reflects broader cultural values surrounding heritage and the intergenerational preservation of entrepreneurial endeavours within the diaspora community. This emphasis on the maintaining a family legacy through intergenerational preservation has its challenges. In the case that neither family members nor close associates wishes to manage the restaurant, the owners would be confronted with a dilemma over the future of their business.

> "I'm old. This May, I will have my pension. I want to try selling the restaurant. It hasn't worked out because my child doesn't want to take over."
> (Interviewee 6)[3]

In one such case, Interviewee 6, who was unable to relinquish the restaurant to their child, was ultimately compelled to sell it to a buyer who expressed intentions to shift the restaurant away from its Indonesian roots. This scenario underscores the intrinsic contingent link between the restaurant's cultural identity and the family legacy. Ultimately, the motivation to maintain the family legacy across the restaurants highlights how food is described as being among the most important memories that the diaspora community carries with them to their host countries (Alfonso, 2012; p. 202; Terenzio, 2019; p. 170) These

[2] My colleague, his mother have this restaurant. They are just, dia mau stop karena their son, my colleague, ga mau terusin the restoran mamanya. Terus dia tawarin, ya, kepada aku.

[3] Sudah tua. Saya sudah ini nanti bulan Mei pensiun. Saya, saya mau coba jual restoran. Tapi belum laku karena anak enggak mau di sini.

embedded memories convert restaurants into heirlooms, thus ensuring that the family continues to have this connection point and vital community resources. Furthermore, keeping the restaurant within the family also helps them ensure that they have full control and representation of their cultural foodways within the community.

4.1.3: Financial Pursuits

While the interviewees may occupy the role of diasporic individuals, one must not forget that they are primarily business owners. For some interviewees, entrepreneurship is at the forefront of their decisions and their financial pursuits overshadows pure culinary exploration and a stringent adherence to family traditions.

> "I do not feel a pressure for… Oh, I need to be very Indonesian to make the Indonesians proud. No, I'm more connected to the profit in that way. Maybe a bit barbaric but yeah, I'm sorry."
> (Interviewee 10)

> "I've never had an interest in restaurants. Never had an interest in restaurants. My interest… I wanted to leave [redacted (previous company)]. If I leave… See, if I leave, I can't just leave like that if I don't have a job. That's why I took this excuse. I must do something and at that time, this restaurant was being sold. So, I took it."
> (Interviewee 6)[4]

Yet this passion for entrepreneurship is still influenced by their diaspora identity, whereby the established business serves as an enduring model of social organisation, offering opportunities for economic stability and enhanced social status within and for the diaspora community (Chen & Elston, 2013, p. 303-304; Kloosterman, 2010, p. 41).

> "But yeah, if you work in hospitality business in a European country, you should never let your personal principles dictate what others can or cannot eat. That's just being restrictive to yourself, to be honest."
> (Interviewee 11)

[4] I never have an interest in restaurant. Never interest in restaurant. No. My interest… Saya kepengin keluar dari [redacted]. Kalau keluar saya kan enggak bisa keluar gitu aja kalua enggak ada kerjaan. That's why saya ambil alas an. Saya harus do something, and then waktu itu ada restoran ini dijual. Jadi saya kebetulan.

Having a business-oriented mindset leads to a stronger influence of the social context on how the interviewees present their diaspora cuisine, otherwise known as the acculturation process, where owners adapt their menu to appeal to a broader market beyond their immediate diaspora community rather than basing the menu on their own culinary expertise or beliefs (Brownlie et al., 2005). This finding is aligned with previous studies where restaurant owners have been deemed to actively socially embed themselves within their host environment outside of their diaspora community (Mannur, 2007, p. 13; Muhammad et al., 2015, p. 371). Furthermore, the focus on financial viability and marketability of the restaurant brand might lead to spatial design choices that prioritise aesthetic appeal or broad accessibility over strict adherence to regional specifics.

4.2: Spatiality and Networks

As such, the three primary motivational typologies of the interviewees have been established: culinary ambassador, family legacy, and financial pursuits. Subsequently, this section will firstly examine how these motivations are further moulded by the interviewees' strategic location of The Hague as a site of operation for their restaurants and its implications for visibility, community engagement, and marketing positioning. Secondly, this section will also explore how the intersection of the interviewees' diasporic identity and their entrepreneurial agency influences the formation of their social-business networks. These networks ultimately contribute to how the interviewees navigate cultural representation, commercial success, and their belonging within the diaspora community.

4.2.1: Significance of The Hague

When questioned about the location of their restaurant, the interviewees were unanimous in their perception of The Hague being the site for Indonesian cuisine and restaurants across the whole of the Netherlands. Their observations highlighted an adherence to Bruneau's (2010) approach on the positive correlation between the degree of diasporic interactions with host environment and cities with concentrated diasporic iconography.

> "Indonesian restaurants in Den Haag are the most important across the whole of the Netherlands. If you look for some Indonesian restaurants, you must go to The Hague. Because here is the city of Indonesian cuisine, Indonesian restaurants."
> (Interviewee 6)[5]

> "Well, if you want to have really good Indonesian food in Holland, you have to come to The Hague because that's just… That's just the centre of all the Indonesian culture that came from way, way back."
> (Interviewee 3)

It can be understood that the spatial concentration of Indonesian restaurants in The Hague, based on historical and current assimilation, served as a justification for the interviewees' claim. Their claim also highlights the intensity in which restaurant owners

[5] Jadi Indonesian restoran di Den Haag itu, belangrijk from seluruh Belanda. If you look for some Indonesian restaurant, you must go to The Hague. Because here is the city of Indonesian cuisine, Indonesian restaurant.

perceive one another in the city's culinary landscape. Then, by virtue of strong association shared by many, The Hague has become a metonym of Indonesian cuisine (Harrison et al., 2020, p. 54). This metonymical representation provides the foundation for perceived authenticity whereby Indonesian restaurants are considered authentic just by being in The Hague. For interviewees motivated to be the culinary ambassador of the Indonesian cuisine, The Hague becomes the perfect place to exercise their culinary expertise through their 'culinary citizenship' as diners would view the Indonesian restaurants in the city as torchbearers for the cuisine (Mannur, 2007, p. 13). Furthermore, this association creates a cycle where new business owners would want to continue expanding within the city rather than elsewhere, thus creating a positive feedback loop where the existing concentration makes it a logical and attractive location for entrepreneurs (Kloosterman, 2010, p. 14).

But the location does not come without challenges. While the interviewees and their restaurants receive enhanced visibility from the city's established association with the Indonesian cuisine, this very association contributes to a saturated culinary landscape. This high concentration of Indonesian restaurants often results in a perceived homogeneity among diners, where nuanced regional differences are overlooked under the generalised label of Indonesian food (Mintz, 1996, p. 114; Oum, 2005, p. 114; Appadurai, 1998, p. 17). When the culinary diversity of the cuisine is flattened, opportunities for differentiation across the restaurants are effectively limited which leads to the erasure of complexity of the cuisine.

> "For The Hague, there are too many. Too many Indonesian restaurants."
> (Interviewee 4)[6]

> "Even though I give consultations, I'm not trying to make more competition across restaurants. Yeah, I don't. Because why? One reason, restaurants need to have their own stamp in food, from all the different flavours. . . . We can't do it like this. That's why in The Hague; there are too many small restaurants."
> (Interviewee 11)[7]

[6] Tapi kalua buat di Hague sih terlalu banyak ya. Banyak sekali restoran Indonesia.

[7] Terus yang penting walaupun saya konsultan tiap restoran itu, saya enggak enggak bikin apa kompetisi antara restoran. Ya, saya enggak karena apa, satu reason, restoran itu harus punya stampel sendiri dari makanan, dari apa semua rasa itu… Kita kan enggak bisa, kenapa di Den Haag banyak restaurant kecil-kecil.

Moreover, the demographic composition of diners is also affected by the city. The Hague's identity as a prominent tourist destination has been recognised by the interviewees and effectively, they are incentivised to prioritise the recognisability of the dishes in their menu so that their restaurants will be frequented by a broad range of tourists.

> "For me here, it's all tourists. I can count the number of Indonesians I get. It's tourists for me here. Here, tourists, too many of them are tourists. But in Rijswijk, 90% of them are Indonesians."
> (Interviewee 5)[8]

> "Yeah, some tourism, of course but it's a bit oddly placed because yeah, it's not in the centre of The Hague or anywhere close."
> (Interviewee 10)

Furthermore, the spatial dynamics within the city complicates matters whereby central and non-central areas attract different clientele, each with varying expectations. The added factor of tourists adds a layer of complexity to the co-construction of the cuisine, whereby they too become stakeholders in its representation, aside from the diaspora and host communities, and the owners of the restaurants themselves. Interviewees have demonstrated a critical awareness of these dynamics, and in some cases, they believe that the reputational advantages brought upon by the city's culinary branding have subverted the quality of their diaspora cuisine.

> "We are by far the city with the highest density of Indonesian space. It's very good to eat. But that doesn't mean it's always the best. . . . They go a lot to places in the city centre where the food is just not as good. But it's cheaper and closer and they have also more, I think maybe, dishes that are more comfort food."
> (Interviewee 11)

[8] Sama orang turis. Orang Indonesia bisa dihitung. Turis tante di sini. Jadi ini tuh turis kebanyakan turis. Tapi yang di Rijswijk 90% orang Indonesia.

Interviewee 11's criticism, which has been echoed by a few others as well, reflects the fear that restaurant owners have that the high density of Indonesian restaurants have also created a situation where the quality of the diaspora cuisine has been left unregulated. Just as Terenzio (2019, p. 173) had posited that the diaspora cuisine is negotiated through the balance of homeland traditions and adaptations, this unintended result can be understood as a byproduct of an unstructured integration into the host community. With The Hague being perceived as the Mecca of Indonesian diaspora cuisine, any impact on the quality of the cuisine by the restaurant affects the overall culinary identity of the diaspora community. This perception enforces a sense of responsibility onto the restaurant owners, whose actions and decisions do not just affect their own establishments but contribute to the broader reputation of the community. However, this shared responsibility does not exist in isolation. It is instead closely intertwined with how each owner perceives their diaspora identity, and their position within the social networks they operate in.

4.2.2: Ties to the Homeland and Contributions to the Network

While The Hague may have the largest concentration of Indonesian restaurant, it would not be apt to write them off as homogenous. There exists diversity and subgroups within this community of restaurants. In particular reference to the co-construction of the diaspora cuisine, what first sets these restaurants apart is the extent to which their owner identifies with their own diaspora identity. This self-identification influences not only their culinary decision, but also how they navigate relationships with their diners, their diaspora community, and their competitors. Focusing on the interviewees who have identified themselves as a diaspora from Indonesia, a key distinction emerged between those who had lived in Indonesia prior to migrating to the Netherlands and those who were born and raised in the Netherlands.

> "It's like a reminder, up until now I've eaten Indonesian food. Not eating Indonesian food, that's not possible. Potatoes and biefstuk, I don't like that. It's automatic to me. My time in Indonesia. Even though I've lived here for 35 years, I still long for Indonesia."
> (Interviewee 5)[9]

[9] Iya, tapi ya maksudnya pengat ya. Tante sampai saat ini makan Indonesia sih. Kalau enggak makanan Indonesia ya enggak bisa. Jadi kentang sama biefstuk tante sih enggak suka gitu. Jadi ya enggak tahu otomatis ya tante. Masa masih Indonesia gitu. Biarpun tinggal di sini sudah berapa 35 tahun tetap Indonesia gitu.

"I've become a Dutch citizen… But I still feel Indonesian."
(Interviewee 7)

The group that lived in Indonesia prior to migrating to the Netherlands expressed a deep emotional and cultural connection to Indonesia, and they articulated a longing for their homeland consistent throughout the years they have resided abroad, regardless of their change in citizenship. This sense of longing aligns with Safran's (1991, p. 83-84) homeland-centric definition of diaspora which emphasises the diaspora's desire and loyalty for their homeland, often placing themselves in contestation with their host country. In contrast, some of the interviewees born and raised in the Netherlands possessed strained ties to Indonesia despite acknowledging their Indonesian roots. Their confessions revealed a perception that 'true' Indonesian identity requires direct, lived experience within the Indonesian cultural environment—an immersion that they felt that they lacked.

"We are Indonesian, that's also the honest thing. But we are not into the culture."
(Interviewee 2)

"You're not really at home in that culture because you're obviously…
You're not an Indonesian yet. By blood, but you haven't lived the Indonesian culture."
(Interviewee 10)

The interviewees' internalised notion of cultural legitimacy underscores a diasporic consciousness shaped by exclusion from their perceived concept of cultural authenticity. Through Safran's (1991, p. 83-84) lens, these interviewees demonstrated a conditional diasporic identity – one that hinges on the belief that being a genuine Indonesian diaspora necessitates both cultural immersion and a persistent longing for the homeland. The culinary practices within the Indonesian cuisine, however, helps to bridge the distance. Regardless of the depth of their personal connection to Indonesia, some of the interviewees reported that their management in their restaurant, especially when preparing the dishes, reinforced their cultural identity.

"I missed Indonesian cooking. There's no gap because I'm now closer with the Indonesian culture. If I didn't work like this, I would have missed it even more and tried to search for it. That's why my goal is to help others feel closer to Indonesia here." (Interviewee 6)[10]

"I do feel closer with my Indonesian ethnicity when I'm there (in the restaurant)." (Interviewee 10)

Here, Sökefeld's (2006, p. 267-269) theory of socially-constructed diasporic consciousness is useful explaining this phenomenon, where diasporic identity is not static but evolving, mobilised through specific practices. In this case, the restaurants being an avenue for the interviewees to perform their culinary expertise allows for further cultural reidentification. Furthermore, aside from their own self-identification, there were instances where the interviewees were externally affirmed by the diaspora community through interactions with their diners.

"The first question they ask is… They see me flip the dough, right, of the martabak telur. And always, the first question is "Mas, how many years have you been here? From Jakarta, right."[11] And then I answer, "No, I was born and raised in the Netherlands... A lot of people think that I am straight from Indonesia because they find it weird that some Indonesian guy here in Europe can make that kind of food, speaking Indonesian fluently, and yeah, and then they get shocked if I talk to another customer who's Dutch and speaks Dutch fluently." (Interviewee 1)

These diners frequently assumed the interviewees' ethnic and cultural identity based on their perceived culinary skill and visible markers of heritage. As Heldke (2014, p. 2-3) had pointed out, such ethnic identity is often used by diners as a criterion for assessing the legitimacy of the cuisine served in the restaurant. In this context, the interviewees were

[10] Rasa kengan saya ke masakn Indonesia. Rasa apa dengan budaya Indonesia juga semakin dekat gitulah. Jadi enggak ada gap. Kalau misalnya sama sekali enggak kerja ini, saya pasti ya lebih, lebih kangen, lebih cara apa ya. Kalu ini kan saya goal saya tuh, juga mau orang-orang itu juga merasakan Indonesia di sini.

[11] And always, the first question is "Mas, udah berapa tahun di sini? Dari Jakarta ya".

perceived as inherently qualified to represent Indonesian food having been externally assessed, irrespective of their own personal level of cultural immersion. But this external assessment is not exclusive to the diaspora community, it has also been actively conducted by the host community.

> "But yeah, I use it as a selling point. Oh, you know, I've been to Indonesia, and they did the same over there and stuff and blah blah blah and people believe me right away because I do have, for Dutch people, I have the Indonesian look a little bit. And I do feel connected with the Indonesian kitchen if I'm talking about it that way."
>
> (Interviewee 10)

The interviewees' experience of having their culinary expertise coded by diners as a measure of their Indonesian identity highlights that the inverse of Heldke's (2014, p. 2-3) statement also holds true and contributes to Sökefeld's (2006, p. 267-269) findings. Not only is culinary authenticity judged based on racial or ethnic identity, but ethnic identity itself may also be validated through culinary practice. The interviewees' diasporic identities are thus co-constructed: shaped by both their own self-perceptions and by how others respond to and interpret their cultural performances of Indonesian culinary expertise. While this co-construction may benefit some interviewees by strengthening their ties with the diaspora community, others face the contrary. Interviewees who identify loosely with their homeland and are not externally assessed as a diaspora expressed a sense of detachment from their broader diaspora community.

> "(My mum's) never been raised Indonesian. So that also made us feel… Not so very connected to the classic Indonesian culture in that sense, you know, feeling and socialising with other Indonesians. I've never really done that in my upbringing. So, I think that's why we don't worry or contact other tokos because we don't… I don't have that need.[12] We don't search the community, the Indonesian community per se because we don't feel like we need it."
>
> (Interviewee 2)

[12] So, I think that's why we don't worry or contact other tokos because we don't… Ik heb die behoefte niet.

In several instances, this detachment has evolved into a form of purposeful self-alienation, which stems from the complex and often conflicting roles that owners of diaspora restaurants occupy—being both business competitors and diaspora community members. This dual positioning particularly frustrates those who view mediating the reputation of the Indonesian cuisine as a collective responsibility, rather than an individualistic endeavour.

> "And that's the thing with the Indonesian sector when you think about it, we let a lot of opportunities slide, which will which hurts the whole sector as a whole because we have to contend with, in Dutch, we say conculega, their colleagues but also, competitors in the fact that they keep the level of Indonesian food in general low the perceived quality and hence we will never be able to ask for more."
>
> (Interviewee 11)

Some interviewees expressed a sense of burden by the need to single-handedly manage their restaurants while simultaneously navigating a negotiation of implicit standards of authenticity shaped by the practices of other Indonesian restaurants. This balancing act exacerbates the tension that complicates the potential for solidarity within the Indonesian culinary scene that could culminate in strengthening the shared cultural consciousness within the diaspora community. Though there may be platforms for intracultural and intra-business exchanges within the diaspora community, such as ASPINA (Asosiasi Pengusaha Indonesia di Belanda[13]), the interviewees were generally critical of their effectiveness. In some cases, such initiatives have widened divisions within the community, rather than facilitating a strategic representation of the Indonesian cuisine in the diaspora context.

> "Indonesia is more corrupt and corrupt, and all talk. I'm more focused on my own business. I don't care about ASPINA. I don't care about the diaspora. I care about myself."
>
> (Interviewee 6)[14]

[13] Indonesian Employers Association in the Netherlands

[14] Indonesia is more corrupt dan corrupt and talking. Iya, saya lebih focus ke my own business. I don't care about ASPINA. I don't care about diaspora. I care about myself.

Interviewee 6, as an ex-member of ASPINA, was especially critical of the organisation's abilities to help diaspora businesses. His bleak perception of ASPINA has led to further resentment towards any efforts to collaborate with other restaurant owners and diaspora organisations, and these emotions have spilled over to his perceptions of the diaspora community as a whole.

Even for interviewees with a strong sense of diaspora identity and a commitment to supporting the wider diaspora culinary scene in The Hague through the social-business networks, there are still visible tensions faced. As expressed by the interviewees, any efforts to uplift and professionalise the network are often met with resistance by the community.

> "Yesterday too, as the ASPINA member, I said to them "If you sell cheap, then your profit will be cheap." They don't understand management, margins, the costs of the food. We also have to know the employee costs. So, if we know, then we will know the turnover. It's not just a matter of cooking up sales. There are so many shortcomings in ASPINA. Then sometimes they think "Ah, it's already crowded, that's enough." No. Business has to grow."
> (Interviewee 8)[15]

Interviewee 8's experience as being a member of the diaspora social-business network highlights that while the diaspora identity can foster solidarity and mutual responsibility, it does not necessarily translate into effective collaboration. Instead, differing business philosophies act as a deterrence to effective collaboration (Kloosterman, 2010, p. 41), which in turn affects the representation of the diaspora cuisine and its ability to evolve cohesively while remaining competitive and credible. This impact on diaspora cuisine concurrently affects the diaspora identity-making, particularly for the restaurant owners, as the potential for expressing cultural identity, both within the diaspora community and towards the host society,

[15] Yang kemarin saya juga anggota ASPINA. Saya bilang, "Kalau kamu cuma jual murah, lu untungnya dapat itu." Mereka enggak tahu ya dimanagement apa, margin-nya apa, makannya berapa, mereka kadang-kadang enggak tahu. Terus kita juga harus tahu oke biaya pegawai berapa, biaya eksplorasi berapa. Berarti kalau kita sudah tahu biaya itu berarti kita tahu harus berapa omzet-nya. Terus kita bisa tahu kan bukan asal masak-masak jual-jual. Berarti itu yang penting sekarang banyak yang kekurangan di ASPINA itu. Terus kadang-kadang mereka itu sudah pikir, "Ah, sudah ramai, udah cukup." Bisnis kan harus berkembang.

through the cuisine becomes constrained (Kittler et al., 2004, p. 202; Reddy & Dam, 2020, p. 4-6).

This dynamic produces a paradoxical situation whereby the stronger the restaurant owner's attachment is to their diaspora identity; the more social obligation they possess to fulfil the expectations of their diaspora community. Yet, balancing entrepreneurial ambitions with these social obligation generations a precarious business terrain. This tension not only shapes the representation of diaspora cuisine but also feeds back into the owner's own identity formation and the broader identity of the community, thus producing a cyclical negotiation of positionality in identity and cuisine. This cyclical negotiation inevitably culminates in the visible and edible outcomes that the diners interact with, which can be otherwise recognised as the strategies that the owners have employed to represent their diaspora cuisine.

4.3: Representation of the Diaspora Cuisine

Through this section, the ways in which personal and communal narratives of identity and belonging are communicated through cuisine will be explored. These representational choices reflect not only the owners' strategic navigation of their social-business identities but also actively shape how the broader public, and the diaspora community itself, has come to define Indonesian diaspora cuisine in The Hague. Furthermore, the representation of cuisine is a complex issue does not stagnate, it is a process that the interviewees have to continuously deliberate over.

That being said, it would be a folly to reduce representation down to just the dishes served. Though food may be the primary attraction, successfully conveying their interpretation of Indonesian cuisine involves more than the dishes, it also includes the overall experience which the restaurant's branding and design contributes to. Therefore, similar to the elaborations in the theoretical framework, this section will follow the structure of Long's (2005, p. 37-44) strategies.

4.3.1: Framing through Restaurant Space

While their motivations may differ, all of the interviewees were deeply conscious of the significance behind the spatial design of their restaurant and took much pride in its maintenance and, when they deem it necessary, in its innovation. Their answers branched this concept of spatiality into three aspects: The restaurant's branding, physical design, and the staffing demographic. While their approaches to framing can be surmised in how they have organised the restaurant spatially, the variations between their tactics are based on the image of Indonesia they would like to put forth.

As Long (2005, p. 38) has stated, owners may brand and design their restaurants to frame their dishes with symbolic elements of familiarity or unfamiliarity. With these elements in mind, some interviewees fuelled by their entrepreneurship spirit focused more on the individualistic branding of their restaurant rather than using their restaurant as a medium to promote Indonesian cuisine. Under their management, the restaurant's identity as a marketable and coherent brand that can appeal to a broader audience take precedence over presenting a regionally specific portrayal of the Indonesian cuisine.

"I don't know if it's really a written rule, but if you see the restaurants that have the name Toko in it, they usually refer after the word to a place or something that is from Indonesia. And because back then, there wasn't a [restaurant name], we decided to, okay, let's give it that theme."
(Interviewee 9)

When asked about the inspiration of their restaurant's name, which incorporated the name of a specific region in Indonesia, Interviewee 9 shared that the choice was driven by an untapped marketing opportunity, whereby no other establishments had referred to that region at that point of time. However, despite the regional branding, the menu itself lacked dishes specific to that locale. When questioned, Interviewee 9 suggested that the region lacked any culinary specialties worth showcasing. This disconnect between branding and culinary content reflects a strategic use of Indonesian signifiers to enhance market appeal, rather than an intent to authentically represent regional food traditions (Appadurai, 1998, p. 17). This case also raises questions of positionality. Although Interviewee 9 is a mediator of the Indonesian cuisine in The Hague, he does not self-identify as part of the Indonesian diaspora. As such, he may not feel personally obligated to portray a culturally grounded depiction of the cuisine as it does not reflect his own cultural repertoire (Terenzio, 2019, p. 170).

"So, I said to my sister, don't you want to rebrand your toko to [restaurant's name] because I want to grow the branding, to grow the name, and then she also changed the name."
(Interviewee 12)

On the other hand, Interviewee 12, who has more direct familial and personal ties to Indonesia, encouraged his sister to adopt the same branding as his for her restaurant, suggesting an effort to create a cohesive and recognisable diasporic culinary identity. The decision to root the restaurant in both familial and cultural continuity, while maintaining his marketing logic, signifies it is possible to balance entrepreneurial strategies with a degree of cultural authority. By replicating the brand, Interviewee 12 is able to enforce a coherent diasporic identity across multiple businesses and help to shape how diaspora is recognised. This act reflects the evolving nature of diaspora identity, where the lines between business pragmatism and cultural expression are increasingly blurred.

"I want to change this place to become… More Indonesian. Right now, it's Chinese-style, there's a panda. The Indonesian city, I want it to be drawn."
(Interviewee 4)[16]

"I will make them come, Indonesian or non-Indonesian. By making it here, making them like the atmosphere. This is now not so nice. You see, it's boring. I want to invite them here for the atmosphere… I want to make them feel like they're in Indonesia."
(Interviewee 7)

Similar to how Interviewees 4 and 7 intend to redesign their restaurant to include more elements that indicate their homeland, other interviewees also recognised the importance of signposting 'Indonesia-ness' in their restaurant. They would therefore make intentional efforts to construct an environment that signals authenticity to their target audience. This is especially since diners would often rely on visual and material cues to assess the authenticity of ethnic restaurants (Vyletalova et al., 2023, p. 118).

"So, for example, the woodwork has been here from the start. My uncle acquired this. He acquired that, and he made this. This was handmade by employees from his factory. My uncle had a furniture factory, wood factory. So, this has been here for more than 30 years. I had nothing to do with it… I don't know where that originally came from, but he acquired it. This is really old and this was made in… Yeah, not in Surabaya. Yeah, but where was it again? I don't know the specific place. It was Pasuruan or Tretes. Something like there, Surabaya-ish. Somewhere there."
(Interviewee 11)

"To sell ourselves as a huiskamer, a living room restaurant as I said. So, I think when you were there, it really felt like it could be your grandma's living room with a lot of tables of course. But I mean, we had some van poppen, you know, the puppets, and we had some pictures from Indonesia."
(Interviewee 10)

[16] Nanti mau dirubah… More Indonesian. Ini kan, Chinese-style, ada panda. Iya, sekota. Tetapi tu, nanti mau dibikin.

On the topic of regional specifics, there can be a conflict between the desire or potential for showcasing the rich regional diversity within Indonesian cuisine and actual representation in the restaurant's physical space. Interviewee 11, though uncertain about the exact provenance of the woodwork in his restaurant, recognised it as having potentially originated from Surabaya. This design therefore frames his dishes with the regional specificity of Javanese culinary traditions. In contrast, Interviewee 10 sought to familiarise his restaurant through being a huiskamer (living room restaurant) while highlighting, albeit generic, cultural distinctions through Indonesian wayang (puppets) and pictures. However, when the generic Indonesian décor may not adequately support the specific culinary identity being marketed, this results in a perceived mismatch or contribute to a homogenous representation. This outcome supports Appadurai's (1998, p. 17) lamentations that restaurants tend to erase the regional subtleties of their cuisine upon enforced framing through their physical design.

Aside from the branding and physical design of the restaurant, having staff that looked visibly Indonesian also contributed to the imaginaries of the homeland, especially through the representations of the servers or the visuals of having open kitchens where the chefs can be visible identified as Indonesian.

> "We did have a really strict rule, which sounds maybe a bit stupid, that we only hired Indonesian staff. Why? It was because we didn't want to give the customers the idea that look, we are Afghans and we run this business, we think we know what we're doing. But we really always stayed in the background. People knew it was my mom's and dad's shop but out in front of everybody, was always Indonesian staff."
>
> (Interviewee 9)

Interviewee 9's approach of positioning Indonesian staff at the forefront of the restaurant highlights his awareness of his diners' expectations, corroborating how influential the perception of ethnicity as an authenticating factor can be (Heldke, 2014, p. 2-3). This decision also reflects his consideration of his positionality whereby, as he is not a diaspora of the Indonesian origin, he understands his presence may tamper with the narrative of belonging constructed through the dishes (Alfonso, 2012, p. 202).

"When I go to most of the Indonesian places, I notice that it just feels amateuristic. So, the people working there are Indonesian people that are just working there because they only qualified for the main prerequisite: You have to be Indonesian. But it doesn't mean you're good at that job. . . . But all the people that are working there are not per se the best people to work there. They just… Okay, check the box, I'm Indo. That's why it's authentic.
But not everyone who's Indonesian can cook.
Not everyone who's Indonesian is good at being a host or hostess."
(Interviewee 11)

However, not all of the interviewees have decided to frame their restaurant through Indonesian staffing. In fact, some interviewees have denounced the use of this strategy. For example, Interviewee 11 criticised his competitors for perpetuating the belief that the employment of Indonesian staff is a prerequisite for authenticity, and that such a business judgement renders the restaurant 'amateuristic'. His critique reveals a tension between the commercial desire to frame a restaurant as authentic and the unintended consequences that such a performative framing can have on the restaurant. This reflects a broader dynamic of staged authenticity (MacCannel, 1973, p. 597), where owners may selectively curate their restaurants to align with their diners' preconceived expectations, at the possible expense of operational quality.

At times, the interviewees' use of framing extended outside their restaurant space. Some interviewees opt to participate at events called *pasar malam*. In Indonesia, the term pasar malam is usually reserved for night markets but in the Netherlands, it often refers to festivals celebrating Indonesian heritage. While the choice to promote one's restaurant brand through a diasporic festival can be understood as increased exposure from the use of additional platforms, it also implies an attempt to elevate the cultural elements of their dishes by associating it with the larger branding of Indonesia.

"Last time, we used to have the Tong Tong fair, but now we don't have it. It's actually a good idea. For us and the people of the Netherlands, of Europe, to learn about our culture, and the culture of Indonesia. The dances, the songs, the cooking, to group together as a community would be good."

(Interviewee 7)[17]

The Tong Tong fair was a prominent pasar malam in the Netherlands that has since been permanently shut down. In Interviewee 7's reflections, she praised the fair for its capacity to frame Indonesian culture as a celebration of diasporic expression while simultaneously casting a layer of exoticism on it in relative to the Netherlands. Her account reflects the strategic framing of diaspora cuisine in festival contexts, where stall owners are able to signal familiarity of their dishes to fellow diaspora diners while emphasising exoticism to appeal to their host community (Long, 2005, p. 38). In contrast, other interviews were more critical of pasar malams as meaningful extensions of their restaurant branding and culinary identity.

"The last couple of times, there are maybe only two parties that have huge stands that take 80% of all of the visitors. I would like to see more diverse offerings on the pasar malam."

(Interviewee 2)

"We want to join and support, but it's too expensive. How can we contribute to the success of the cuisine and the tourism of it. They ask us to pay thousands for a few days. That's too expensive. We wanted to join the expo but because it's too expensive, we chose not to."

(Interviewee 4)[18]

[17] Jadi kayak lebih dulu kan kita ada event Tong Tong fair dulu ya di itu kan sekarang sudah enggak ada lagi. itu sebenarnya sangat bagus gitu loh. Buat kita dan ya buat masyarakat Belanda Eropa untuk memperkenalkan budida apa, budaya budaya Indonesia. Tarian lagu-lagu masakan itu sebenarnya untuk kumpul-kumpul tuh itu bagus, tapi sekarang enggak ada. Jadi kita enggak tahu gimana.

[18] Nah, itu juga kita kalau mau ikut itu mahal bayarnya. Oh, bagaimana kita mesti harus ini ya apa bisa bikin sukses atau ini apa berkontribusi dengan di sini apa di atau untuk Indonesia gitu kan. Promosi juga untuk kuliner Indonesia and apa, tourism gitu kan ya. Mereka mereka kita suruh ikut bayar untuk sekian ribu untuk berapa hari gitu kan. Itu… Enggak… Ini mahal sekali untuk kita gitu kan. Tadinya kita mau ikut untuk itu kan expo gitu untuk turis gitu ya. Tapi karena mahal kita ya enggak jadi.

Interviewee 2, in particular, criticised the growing standard of pasar malams prioritising well-established restaurant brands, which monopolises visitor attention and inadvertently marginalises smaller establishments. Interviewee 4 further adds to this discussion by highlighting how there are high barriers to entry for pasar malams, which could be a potential reason for the discrepancy on the type of restaurants represented. This critique points to the wider issue of representational homogeneity where even outside of traditional restaurant spaces, public representations of diaspora cuisine risks becoming repetitive. As a result, the perceived homogeneity of these festivals can undermine restaurants' efforts to frame themselves uniquely, thus reinforcing narrow expectations of what the diaspora cuisine should look like.

> "You have to protect your name. Because some people, if you open it in Tong-Tong or any other pasar malam, then when people complain in the pasar malam, the name of the restaurant also becomes negative. That's why the owner of [competitor] doesn't join such things."
>
> (Interviewee 6)

Similar to Interviewee 2, Interviewee 6 also acknowledges how a negative public perception of the pasar malam can affect restaurant branding. This fear underscores the fact that framing is not limited to the choices of the restaurant owner, such as the branding, design, and staffing demographics, but can also extend into external platforms, that are out of their control, such as their competitors and food festivals.

4.3.2: Menu Selection and Culinary Adaptations

While framing may account for how the diners may be attracted and introduced to the restaurant's identity, the rest of Long's (2005, p. 37-44) strategies—translation, explication, menu selection, and recipe adaptation—are the cornerstones of how diaspora cuisine is represented. Across the interviewees, it was clear that these strategies were purposefully incorporated into their restaurants' presentation of dishes.

> "[Pointing at menu] Ya, there's storytelling, see there's storytelling. When you make a menu, you make three kinds of dishes. For example, ikan pesmol Wast Java, ikan Bali, ikan asam pedas Kalimantan. One that's not spicy, medium, and spicy. . . . The menu helps to guide, easy to choose, communication, the visual to the guest. We have to think about that." (Interviewee 8)[19]

For example, interviewee's 8 demonstration of his menu showcased a clear execution of three of Long's (2005, p. 37-44) strategies. His menu consisted of 14 dishes, 5 different wine pairings and 3 cocktails, all categorised under clear titles, such as 'Street Food' and 'Amuses', as a form of explication to explain the occasion for which they would be ordered for. Explication has also been further utilised with a map of Indonesia printed on the background of the menu, with signposts to indicate which region of the country did the dish originate from. This contextualisation of the dish was further deepened with an explanation of the key ingredients for each dish. Additionally, translation was employed as each dish featured its name in its native language as well as its Dutch counterpart. Lastly, the strategy of menu selection was visible through the choice in specifically having a range of dishes that would appeal to different spice tolerances without having to rely on recipe adaptation for existing dishes. It is clear that these strategies were used to introduce Indonesian dishes to an unfamiliar audience while staying true to culinary traditions. However, this motivation may not be the same for every interviewee.

[19] Ya, there's storytelling, see there's storytelling. Jadi menu itu aku bikin tiga-tiga. Misalkan yang ikan ikan pesmol West Java ikan colo-colo Maluku, ikan Bali ikan ikan asam pedas Kalimantan. Tapi yang enggak pedas, medium and pedas. I don't like eh spicy bisa pilih yang satu lagi. Jadi orang yang so-so pilih yang medium. The menu make guiding, easy to choice communication, the visual to the guest. We have to think about that.

While the extent to which the strategies were incorporated differed across all of the interviewees, the decisions behind them can be drawn back to the concept of authenticity, be it the presence or lack thereof. Authenticity was a recurring concept throughout these strategies that increasingly emerged as a negotiated construct, rather than a fixed concept. The interviewees had varied ideas of what made Indonesian food Indonesian, especially when produced in the diasporic context, and they were well aware that their views could not be kept individualistic. Instead, their views had to be constantly reshaped by the expectations of their diners. The expectations of these diners were mainly based on two factors: Experiences with competing competitors who influence one another's benchmarks for authenticity, and the diner's personal memory of culinary experiences in Indonesia.

> "It's usually the negativity that comes from the people that have only come here like once or twice, you know, because they're not used to the taste that we do. They've been kind of… I wouldn't say 'ruin', but they kind of have been, you know, adjusted to other places or other tokos that might not use… Why, I don't know if they're using the traditional way but maybe, you know, just that everybody cooks in a different way and everybody has their own taste."
>
> (Interviewee 3)

When questioned about the feedback that his diners gave in regard to his dishes, Interviewee 3 stated that his diners were influenced by the differences in taste that they had experienced at the establishments of his competitors. His suggestion that the negativity can be contributed to variations in cooking and taste across the restaurants, highlights that the co-construction of cuisine is often not a cohesive process and positions the restaurants as competitors at odds. This case also provides more evidence that a lack of cooperation across the restaurant network, on the identity of the diaspora cuisine, can lead to commercial setbacks.

> "I believe all Indonesians can cook. But what's important is making your own stamp, make it your way. Your creativity. Don't copy. Sometimes, a lot of people copy. Like Indonesian restaurants in The Hague, they just look at the recipe and copy without understanding."
> (Interviewee 8)[20]

Interviewee 8 also criticised the ability of Indonesian restaurants to truly understand the type of dishes they are making, thus affecting integration of Indonesian dishes within the Netherlands' context. The example he gave is of the dish *ayam paniki*, sold by Indonesian restaurants in The Hague who are unaware of or did not consider communicating across the story of its historical origins in Sulawesi. As the word paniki is now associated with chicken meat, its original translation of bat meat is lost on both the restaurant owners and the diners. This case illustrates how Long's (2005, p. 38) strategy of translation can result in the unintended effects of misinformation, whereby even language employed in the cuisine becomes misrepresented. As such, it is clear that the actions of other restaurants have built an unstable foundation for the co-construction of the identity of diaspora cuisine, and these actions often manifest in the misuse of integration strategies.

Aside from the benchmarks set by competitors, some interviewees reported that diners of the diaspora background often judged the authenticity of their dishes based on symbolic cues, such as the use of key ingredients and how similar it tasted to the version they had in Indonesia. These cues reflect diners' preconceived notions and past experiences, which shape their interpretation of what is deemed 'authentic'. In some cases, interviewees have suggested that diaspora diners' judgment may also be fixated on an outdated or inaccurate understanding of Indonesia based on when they had previously lived there (Katrak, 1997, p. 263-275).

[20] The important thing also, saya bisa percaya semua orang Indonesia bisa masak. But yang penting bikin stempel sendiri. Bikin stampel sendiri. Stempel sendiri itu bikin your way. Your creativity. You don't copy. Kadang-kadang, orang banyak copy kan. Seperti restoran Indonesia di Den Haag, banyak lihat resep copy copy resep tapi kadang-kadang dia enggak ngerti.

"In Indonesia, it's popular or it has been popular, I don't know, a few years ago. But when you say sate bakso here, everyone will say it's a fake fusion thing because they base their understanding on the knowledge of 30, 40 years ago. I don't know how the effect is called, but there's a certain effect."
(Interviewee 11)

Interviewee 11 shared his account of dealing with diners who sought to dispute the credibility of their dishes being Indonesian as the diners had based their expectations of the presentation of the dishes on their memory of Indonesia in the past, rather than understanding that such culinary traditions can evolve in Indonesia and be presented likewise in the diaspora setting in the Netherlands. Consequently, restaurant owners frequently found themselves navigating these perceptions, balancing their personal culinary values with external expectations of their diaspora community even if the latter does not align with their beliefs.

When asked about non-diaspora diners, a few interviewees highlighted that those specific diners' notions of authenticity often aligned with what appeared unfamiliar to them as long as it stayed within the realm of possessing the "edibility of the exotic" (Long, 2005, p. 37). This would mean that the more unfamiliar the dishes are, the more credible the restaurant would seem to the diner of its Indonesian heritage.

"They're explorative. So, they know what's the authentic food now. Sometimes we offer them what's not on the menu. Here is some nasi goreng kambing. It's good. Try it."
(Interviewee 4)[21]

Here, Interviewee 4 utilised the strategy of menu selection by keeping only familiar dishes on the menu and only offering the more *exotic* ones to the diners that they deem more willing to try out unfamiliar Indonesian dishes. While these interviewees found it strategic to work within this framework, majority of the interviewees noted that their diners often exhibited resistance towards unfamiliar dishes, a perception that they often based on not being a part of the Indonesian diaspora. As a result, many owners defaulted to create a menu selection that is widely recognisable within the Indonesian cuisine.

[21] Iya eksploratif. Iya iya kayak gitu. Jadi mereka juga apa tahu sekarang makanan otentik gitu kan. Iya. Terus kadang-kadang kita suka tawarin karena enggak ada di menu gitu ya. Nah, ini nasi goreng kambing nih. Enak. Coba.

"I think it's more that they're unfamiliar with it. Because Indonesian food is so big. There are so many things, and I don't think many people like to try new things. No. So they know nasi goreng, sayur lodeh, they know that, and they will just eat that. But they won't try rawon or soto Betawi or there are a lot of good food as well, other good food. But Dutch people just won't try it."

(Interviewee 12)

This tendency links to the concept of metonymic dishes, wherein specific dishes function as shorthand representations of the entire cuisine (Harrison et al., 2020, p. 54). In particular, rendang was mentioned the most and interestingly, so was chicken cashew though the interviewees recognised that this dish was not traditionally Indonesian. A few interviewees admitted to featuring these metonymical dishes, not necessarily for a true representation of Indonesian cultural heritage but because they acted as signalling mechanisms that affirmed the restaurant's authenticity in the eyes of the diners.

This is not to say that all restaurant owners would turn to strategies of alterations to placate their diners. While some of the interviewees believed in the adage "The customer is always right", others had a stronger sense of personal culinary authority and actively devalued diners' criticisms, arguing that negative feedback often stemmed from a lack of cultural understanding rather than genuine flaws in the food.

"Yeah, "This is not the way you should make martabak manis" but yeah, it is. The older generation, they're quite stubborn because they always think they know better because they're very much older than the younger ones. So, it was very hard to convince her that this was the original martabak manis that she ordered."

(Interviewee 1)

The act of devaluing their diners' criticisms is reflected in the experience shared by Interviewee 1, who refused to concede to their diner's understanding of their dish *martabak manis* but instead attempted to convince her to accept their served version. His attempt at educating her can be understood as a form of explication. While it may not have been used in the way that Long (2005, p. 39-40) intended—that the owner would be describing the dish in a matter that appealed to the diner, rather than critiquing their memory of it—, this strategy

highlights the interviewee's decisiveness in constructing the identity of a diaspora cuisine as a key actor, rather than lending the culinary authority to their diners.

As a caveat, some interviewees do not value imbedding a sense of authenticity in their dishes, regardless of if it followed their personal understanding or that of their diners or competitors. These interviewees expressed the belief that true authenticity can only be found in Indonesia, prepared by Indonesians using Indonesian ingredients and techniques. This would suggest that diaspora cuisine in itself cannot reflect the authenticity of the homeland cuisine and must therefore develop its own sense of identity and authenticity.

> "And me and my mom think of it like, if a dish left the village in Indonesia, it's not authentic anymore. You know what I mean? It will always be reinterpreted if it's because of another chef, because the target audience is different, it will always change. So, for us, authenticity is in Indonesia, on the ground, in the heat, you know, eating with your hands. That is for us authentic."
>
> (Interviewee 2)

To add on to the discussion, a significant number of interviewees also expressed the view that modifications to the menu or ingredients—acts that would fall under Long's (2005, p. 37-44) strategies of menu selection and recipe adaptation—should not be interpreted as compromises, but as part of the natural evolution of culinary traditions. As pointed out by Interviewee 2, with consideration of the host community and operational constraints, such changes are often necessary. These adjustments were described not as flaws but acts of adaptation and creativity that sustained the accessibility of the cuisine to the diner demographics the interviewees targeted.

4.3.3: Structural Constraints to Representation

The sections prior have established that restaurant owners will incorporate a variety of strategies to negotiate the identity and representation of their restaurant and diaspora cuisine, and their decisions are often based on personal culinary expertise, benchmarks set by other competitors, and the expectations of their diners. However, there is an additional factor that further limits these parameters of negotiations: Structural constraints. Specifically, these structural constraints can be categorised into the financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, and Dutch policies for import and migration.

"I'm bankrupt. I'm broke, finance, I have no more money for the (restaurant) because at the time, for Corona, I have to pay the rent. No income but my cash flow has to pay. This… Bankruptcy.[22]
A lot of people are broke, yeah, a lot of people."
(Interviewee 6)

"In other kinds of restaurants, they lack the opportunity after Corona to renovate themselves, to try new things"
(Interviewee 11)

The Covid-19 pandemic has left the restaurant owners financially strained. These constraints have manifested particularly in the key elements of restaurant design, which contributes to the framing of the cuisine (Long, 2005, p. 37-38). As observed by Interviewee 6 and 11, restaurant owners lacked the funds to plan renovations, thus impeding their capacity to implement framing. This limits their overall ability to create their desired link between physical spatiality and cuisine. Therefore, the impact from the pandemic has become a tangible barrier to constructing a spatial narrative that aligns with the culinary heritage restaurant owners wish to offer.

In addition, Dutch immigration and labour policies have significantly restricted the ability of restaurant owners to hire culinary staff from Indonesia. Given that many diners have been expected by the owners to perceive the ethnic identity of the chef as a marker of culinary authenticity (Heldke, 2014, p. 2-3), these legal limitations can hinder the restaurant's ability to meet such expectations.

"That's why for the diaspora; I don't just want to promote the food. It's so that more chefs from Indonesia will come to the Netherlands and make it easier for us restaurant owners to find chefs who can really make authentic Indonesian food. Until now it has been difficult, only China can bring their Chinese chefs to the Netherlands"
(Interviewee 7)[23]

[22] This… Failliet.

[23] Maka itu yang diaspora itu saya maunya bukan hanya untuk memperkenalkan masakan. Jadi chef-chef dari Indonesia itu ya untuk didatangkan ke Belanda untuk kalau untuk mempermudah

"And I think if you have to give that salary in such a restaurant, it's not going to work out on your balance, it just doesn't fit because you have to pay them triple the amount of a normal chef. It's a very strange legislation and so that's why I think it's going to be pretty hard in the future. You're going to see a lot of Indonesian restaurants disappear because they're not able to find any qualified Indonesian staff."

(Interviewee 10)

Furthermore, beyond framing, it is possible that the restrictions on staffing will also lead to a misalignment in the how owner may want to present their personal perception of culinary authenticity. As emphasised by Interviewee 7, the ability to hire chefs from Indonesia is vital to maintaining the integrity of the diaspora cuisine. She expressed concern over what she perceived as unequal treatment in immigration policies, where she drew a comparison between Indonesia and China. Here, she claimed that Chinese restaurants appear to face fewer barriers in hiring chefs directly from their country of origin. This perceived disparity points to underlying frustrations and a sense of marginalisation, which has in turn shaped her aspirations to elevate the visibility of her diaspora cuisine in the broader culinary landscape in the Netherlands. This link between labour policy and the future of diaspora cuisine was echoed by Interviewee 10, who pointed out the dependency of Indonesian restaurants on the access to skilled Indonesian staff. His comment on the bleakness of the future outlook of the restaurants suggests that such a dependency is no longer feasible with the current labour regulations. As such, these labour constraints do not just affect day-to-day operations but can impact the strategic directions and long-term visions of restaurant owners.

In addition to labour restrictions, the design of the culinary experience itself has been shaped by material constraints, mainly rising import costs and restrictive import regulations.

"Raw materials that we're using are also getting more expensive in terms of import."

(Interviewee 3)

kita sebagai restoran owner mencari tukang masak chef yang benar-benar otentik masakan Indonesia. Oh, jadi saat ini kan susah, cuman Cina yang bisa masukin chef-chefnya Cina ke Belanda.

> "I don't know why. Because there's beef and at that time, salmonella or what. And they said it's not hygienic enough. The point is, it's all forbidden. Not even eggs from Indonesia. A lot of ingredients can't be imported, except for that mushroom bullion. So, we use that and mix it with vegetable bouillon."
>
> (Interviewee 4)[24]

As noted by Interviewee 3, the increasing cost of importing ingredients from Indonesia has placed additional financial burdens on their restaurant operations. Interviewee 4 further highlighted how the inability to access key ingredients, due to import restrictions, has been a cause for confusion when it comes to replicating traditional flavour profiles. This lack of access has forced them to substitute such key ingredients with local alternatives. In such cases, recipe adaptation becomes a product of necessity rather than intent (Long, 2005, p. 38-39). This undermines the restaurant owner's autonomy in their co-construction of the diaspora cuisine as their expression of the cuisine is conditioned by economic and regulatory pressures.

[24] Ga tau kenapa. Karana ada sapi dan akhir itunya, salmonella atau gimana. Jadi ga ini, untuk Indonesianya. Terus kurang higienis. Pokoknya dilarang, telur dari Indonesia juga ga boleh. Banyak ingredients yang dilarang masuk ke sini, kecuali mushroom buillon itu, itu boleh. Jadi kita pake itu dan campur dengan groentenbuillon.

5.0: Conclusion

This study strove to answer the following research question: *How do owners of Indonesian restaurants in The Hague position themselves in the diaspora cuisine landscape of the city?* While navigating this question, this study drew from a theoretical framework that conceptualised diaspora identity, and diaspora cuisine through the lens of gastronomy. It further examined the cyclical relationship between identity and cuisine, whereby each continuously informs and reshapes the other, in which themes of co-construction and negotiating authenticity, as well as entrepreneurial strategies also became centre pieces in this dynamism. To then understand how these concepts could play out in practice, semi-structured expert interviews were conducted with the owners, or their counterparts, of 12 Indonesian restaurants in The Hague that spanned approximately 14 hours.

Although the research question may have initially implied a degree of agency in self-positioning, the findings revealed that the restaurant owners operate within a complex field of interdependent factors. In other words, their positioning was not solely based on their individual intent or personal culinary expertise, but a negotiated outcome influenced by the expectations of their diners, the intervention of their competitors, structural constraints, and cultural responsibilities. Though diaspora community was defined in the theoretical framework as mainly self-ascribed, the findings show that it can also be socially affirmed. Reflexively, the representation of diaspora cuisine also becomes co-constructed by broader social narratives between the owners and their diners and competitors. To illustrate how these concepts lead to the positioning of these restaurant owners, the findings can be further boiled down into three sets of dynamics.

Firstly, restaurant owners occupy a precarious dual role—regardless of their willingness— where they are seen as culinary ambassadors, that must translate Indonesian cuisine into diaspora cuisine within the context of the Netherlands in a manner that is deemed appropriate by stakeholders in their social-business networks, while navigating the demands of entrepreneurship to keep their business a commercial success. This duality manifests in decisions and strategies about restaurant branding, design, staffing, menu curation and adaptations, and participation in public events, such as the pasar malam. Despite varying levels of attachment to their diaspora identity, all owners are implicated in the representation of their diaspora cuisine and the negotiation of its perceived authenticity in respect to the cuisine of their homeland. This association still holds even in the case that the owner is not a diaspora of Indonesian origins, as it is their representation of the cuisine through their

restaurant that adds to the negotiation. However, this dual responsibility ultimately bears more weight on restaurant owners with Indonesian heritage because they maintain a sense of obligation to contribute to their family legacy through the restaurant, which also involves balancing cultural preservation and financial viability.

Secondly, though they may seek to fulfil dual responsibility that may be compounded by their obligations for family legacy, restaurant owners are caught in the tension between being members of their diaspora community and being competitors within the saturated culinary landscape of their city that has currently been rendered homogenous. In the absence of a cohesive institutional framework, these individuals are compelled to improvise representations of the diaspora cuisine on their own terms which often collides with the actions of their competitors. Such conflicts may result in an overall incoherent identity of diaspora cuisine, which causes confusion among their diners and consequently, affect the business of the restaurant owners.

Thirdly, the act of positioning within the diaspora cuisine landscape is shaped by external limitations. Immigration policies hinder the restaurant owners' ability to hire Indonesian chefs whose culinary expertise are deemed necessary for the menu curation and restaurant branding, and financial pressures, from events like the COVID-19 pandemic, restrict investments and imports of regionally specific ingredients. This undermines their capacity to build spatial narratives that fully reflect their intended cultural identities.

As such, when seeking to understand how owners of diaspora restaurants position themselves in the diaspora cuisine landscape of their city, it is important to understand the act of positionality is not necessarily a matter of complete agency or self-determination. Instead, positionality is shaped by intersecting layers of responsibilities—familial, cultural, social, and economic—that complicates the restaurant owners' roles as both diasporic individuals and entrepreneurs. It is also crucial to understand that the representation of diaspora cuisine does not remain an isolated act; it feeds back into the collective perception of authenticity and identity within the wider diaspora network. This cyclical dynamic, when infused with such tensions and pressures of navigating personal, communal, and commercial interest, contributes to discord across the network of Indonesian restaurants and result in a disjointed and potentially contradictory diaspora culinary landscape.

5.1: Future Outlook and Recommendations

Indeed, such discord within the diaspora culinary landscape does not lead to a positive future outlook. Mirroring the conceptual results of the findings, the interviewees themselves stated sombre expectations of the future—which includes a rapidly-increasing turnover of Indonesian restaurants and reduced quality in cuisine. In order to remedy these challenges and develop a more coherent representation of Indonesian diaspora cuisine in The Hague, this thesis offers the following recommendations:

Foremost, there should be increased reflexivity among the restaurant owners regarding their role as cultural mediators. Though some of the interviewees have already recognised this fact, others were not aware or purposefully chose to ignore it to focus on other priorities. However, it is vital to accept that their culinary choices throughout their restaurant and menu carry symbolic weight in shaping the broader narrative of their diaspora identity, especially as this narrative will later contribute to how receptive their diners will be towards their restaurant.

Once this reflexivity has been established, it is also pertinent to foster cross-collaboration and knowledge-sharing among restaurant owners to build a more cohesive culinary identity. This should not imply uniformity or homogeneity. On the contrary, it is about negotiating shared values and expressions of the diaspora cuisine. This cooperation would also mean a shift in focus away from rigid notions of authenticity, thus encouraging innovation and hybridity as necessary aspects of diaspora cuisine. Rather than a perceived pressure to replicate traditional dishes from Indonesia, there should be space for evolving culinary forms that reflect the lived experiences of diaspora communities.

While restaurant owners may hold great responsibility in weaving this diaspora culinary identity, this task should not be embarked on alone. There should instead be more support from institutional actors, such as the Indonesian embassy and The Hague municipality, to promote public education about diaspora cuisine and the symbolic function of restaurants as cultural spaces. While there may be festivals, such as the pasar malam, the barriers to entry should be reduced and there should be more initiatives like heritage campaigns and funding opportunities. The facilitation of these restaurants should not be just seen as short-term business ventures but long-term investments for the identity-making of the diaspora and preservation and commercial success of the diaspora culinary scene in The Hague.

5.2: Contributions to Current Theories

This thesis has contributed to theoretical frameworks on diaspora identity and diaspora cuisine by expanding on the cyclical relationship between the two. Building on the foundational definitions of diaspora community by Safran (1991, p. 83) and Sökefeld (2006, p. 267-269), this thesis emphasises the role of co-construction and external affirmations in shaping the diaspora identity. Diaspora identity is not only internally negotiated within the diaspora community, but also externally influenced by the host community through interactions during mobilised practices. This observation adds to past studies that imply that the diaspora cultural practices can be explained by the individual's agency in their identity-making (Alfonso, 2012, p. 202; Terenzio, 2019, p. 170). Within this process, certain sub-groups, such as restaurant owners, emerge as dominant actors, possessing disproportionate influence in mobilising diaspora consciousness and shaping cultural representation.

The findings give further nuances to the concept of diaspora cuisine by introducing more layers to current studies of gastronomic co-construction (Mannur, 2013, p. 14) that accounts for diner's memories that rely on fixed, rather than evolving, ontological coherency that can contradict hybridised culinary expressions of food entrepreneurs. This also extends existing theories of gastronomy and authenticity (Mintz, 1996, p. 114; Oum, 2005, p. 112), by revealing how diaspora cuisine can complicate assumptions of homogeneity in national culinary identities. The different definitions and interpretations of authenticity has also been further explored, as well as how they have contributed to the richness of the diaspora cuisine (Heldke, 2014, p. 14-15). Therefore, instead of viewing diaspora cuisine as a mere extension of the diaspora community's homeland's culinary tradition, this study has demonstrated that diaspora cuisine is the reinterpretation of the homeland cuisine through diasporic experience, commercial intent, and structural constraints.

Furthermore, this thesis contributes to the relevance of spatiality in diaspora studies, reinforcing Cho's (2010, p. 49-50) argument for analysing alternative, everyday spaces—such as restaurants—as key sites for cultural negotiation. Through the lens of symbolic and physical spatial representation, restaurants are re-conceptualised not just as businesses, but as platforms for enacting and interpreting diaspora cuisine and effectively, diaspora identity. Having established the significance of restaurants and their owners as key actors, this thesis also adds to studies on diaspora entrepreneurship by offering three categories of their intent that shape their practices: Ambitions of being a culinary ambassador, continuing family legacy, and financial pursuit. Long's strategies (2005, p. 37-44) have also been elaborated on

and demonstrated to continue to play out in a modern setting, albeit not applied linearly or passively. Instead, restaurant owners are able to dynamically toggle between different strategies based on the demographics of their diners and the constraints they have at hand. Ultimately, their actions lead back to the cyclical nature of diaspora identity and cuisine through a feedback loop where their culinary decisions impact perceptions of the diaspora cuisine, which in turn shapes their own and others' diaspora identities.

5.3: Limitations and Future Research

While this thesis sought to develop a coherent and all-rounded understanding of how owners of Indonesian restaurants in The Hague position themselves within the diaspora cuisine landscape, several limitations must be acknowledged.

Firstly, due to the researcher's own positionality as a member of the broader diaspora community, there is a possibility of insider bias. This insider status may potentially affect both the conduct and interpretation of the interviews, especially as many of the interviewees positioned themselves deeply within the diaspora community (Bourke, 2014, p. 6-7). To mitigate this, the research addressed her positionality during the interviews, when necessary, and avoided projecting assumptions onto the interviewees' own understandings of their positionality (Bourke, 2014, p. 7). Nevertheless, the dynamics of perceived familiarity may have still influenced the quality in which the interviewees expressed their views on their own diaspora identity.

Secondly, the paper's focus on The Hague as the primary site of investigation poses limits to how the findings may be generalised to broader studies on the diaspora. As The Hague has specific historical and socio-political relationships with the Indonesian diaspora community, this may not mirror the conditions found in other Dutch cities or in other diaspora communities globally. Future studies should take this context-sensitive limitation into account when checking for similar conditions in different sites of investigations.

Lastly, while the paper aimed to include a broad representation of Indonesian food establishments, it did not fully explore the differences between various types of venues, such as *warungs*, *tokos*, and formal restaurants. Future studies should further investigate how these distinctions, which resemble broader typologies of full-service, quick-service, and hybrid dining formats (Lee et al., 2020), influence the strategic positioning and cultural mediation practices of the owners.

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Appendices

Appendix A - Interview Guide

Introduction:

1. Could you tell me about your journey as a restaurant owner in The Hague?
   What inspired you to open an Indonesian restaurant in The Hague?
   How does your background influence your approach to your restaurant?

Perceptions of Diaspora Cuisine:

3. How would you describe the Indonesian culinary scene in The Hague?
   How does your restaurant fit into that scene?
   Do you see any gaps that your restaurant fills?
4. How do you define authenticity in Indonesian cuisine?
   Any variations when in the context as a diaspora cuisine in The Hague?
5. How do you feel about the current public awareness on what you constitute as authentic Indonesian food?
6. What kind of expectations or preferences do you believe diners have when coming to your restaurant?
   Do you notice any differences in the expectations of Indonesian diaspora members, local Dutch, or tourists?
7. Have you seen an increased interest in Indonesian cuisine over time?
   Do you think it leans more towards traditional Indonesian cuisine or fusion/modern dishes?

Perceptions of Diaspora Identity:

8. Would you refer to yourself as a diaspora?
9. How have you experienced this position of being a diaspora?
10. How is your relationship with the Indonesian community in The Hague?
    Any differences between the general Indonesian public and the community of Indonesian restaurants?
11. How do you think you are perceived as a diaspora?
    If you have received any comments, how did you choose to incorporate it?

Representations of Diaspora Cuisine:

12. What kind of considerations did you keep in mind when creating your menu?
    How do you communicate the cultural context of your menu to your customers?
13. What were the inspirations behind the design of the restaurant?
    How about the name of the restaurant?
14. What strategies do you use to market and promote your restaurant?
15. What kind of challenges do you face?
16. How do you think Indonesian cuisine will change in The Hague in the next 10 years?
17. What kind of policies do you believe can help to support or promote the visibility, representation and contribution of Indonesian restaurants in the city's cultural landscape?

Appendix B - Code Guidebook

Themes	Codes	Meanings
Perceptions	Authenticity	Mentions of owners' perception of authenticity in Indonesian cuisine.
	Criticism towards Diners	Mentions of criticisms that owners have towards the diners that visit their restaurants.
	Criticism by Diners	Mentions of criticisms that owners receive from their diners that visit their restaurants.
	Culinary Expertise	Mentions of owners' culinary expertise and practices they employ to improve it.
	Diners' Demographics	Mentions of Diners' demographics, on their ethnicity/nationality, be it Dutch or Indonesian or Indo-Dutch, or their differences in generations.
	Familiarity	Mentions of diners' preference towards the familiar.
	Indonesian Nostalgia	Mentions of nostalgia that owners/diners experience in relation to Indonesia when eating at the restaurants.
	Indonesian Validation	Mentions of affirmations or validations voiced by Indonesian diners.
	Preferences Development	Mentions of development in tastes and preferences of diners.
	Regional Nuances	Mentions of nuances and differences across regions/regional cuisines in Indonesia.
	Future Outlook	Mentions of the owners' perception of the future of Indonesian cuisine (in general and specific to Den Haag) and Indonesian restaurants in Den Haag.
Positionality	Diaspora Community	Mentions of the diaspora community and the owners' relationship with it, positive or negative.
	Competition	Mentions of competition that owners face, including other Indonesian restaurants, other diaspora restaurants, and the homecooking of the diaspora community.
	Family	Mentions of the owners' family in relation to the restaurant.
	Identity	Mentions of the owners' perception of their diaspora identity.
	Location	Mentions of Den Haag or how the location contributes to the restaurant and the Indonesian culinary scene.
	Motivations	Mentions of the motivations owners have when starting/taking over the restaurants.
	Responsibility	Mentions of the responsibility owners feel towards the Indonesian cuisine and the restaurant.
	Impact of Covid-19	Mentions of the effects on Covid-19 on Indonesian cuisine and restaurants in Den Haag.
Representations	Indonesian Touch	Mentions of Indonesian involvement in the making of the food.
	Menu Alterations	Mentions of alterations made to the menu based on diners' and/or owners' preferences.
	Metonyms	Mentions of specific dishes or restaurants that represent the whole category.
	Strategies	Mentions of the strategies (exclusive of food) that owners employ to maintain/promote their restaurants.
	Novel Idea	Mentions of new ideas that owners have unique to their other competitors.
	Pasar Malams	Mentions of pasar malams, including owners' past experiences and criticisms.
	Portal to Indonesia	Mentions of elements/experiences at restaurants in Den Haag that build diners and owners first impressions of Indonesia.
	Representation of Indonesian Cuisine	Mentions of how the owners represent the Indonesian cuisine in their restaurants.
	Spatial Design	Mentions of how the restaurant has been physically designed, e.g. interior design, name, menu layout.
	Logistical Challenges	Mentions of challenges that restaurants face, particularly in terms of logistics, such as finances, staffing, marketing, etc.
	Policies	Mentions of policies that aid/interfere in the restaurant business.

Appendix C - Thematic Map