

Refereed article

Taiwan with a Side of New Public Diplomacy — The Gastrodiplomacy of Taiwan’s Representative Offices as Served in Berlin, Bern, and Vienna

Martin Mandl

Summary

This paper is about the presentation of Taiwanese cuisine abroad. This is important for two reasons: (1) according to the concept of gastrodiplomacy, a country can use its national cuisine as a form of public diplomacy, and (2) Taiwan’s national identity is described as “contested and largely undefined at home and abroad” (Rawnsley 2017: 991). As one part of the nation’s identity-building process, its national cuisine is undergoing a process of “making and shaping.” The Taipei Representative Offices, Taiwan’s de facto embassies and consulates in German-speaking Europe, function as an important intermediary in shaping Taiwan’s image — including that of its cuisine — among foreign audiences. This paper analyzes the role of food in newsletters sent out by the Berlin, Bern, and Vienna offices in 2017 and 2018. The results of this analysis contribute to our understanding of the roles played by food in public diplomacy in general and in the Taiwanese context in particular. Moreover, it makes a significant contribution to research on the characteristics of Taiwanese cuisine and how it is constructed by political actors in an “attempt to distinguish it from others” (Chen 2011: 316).

Keywords: gastrodiplomacy, public diplomacy, Taiwan, Taipei Representative Offices, Taiwanese cuisine, content analysis

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Amuse-bouche

This paper is about the presentation of Taiwanese cuisine abroad.¹ This is important for two reasons: (1) according to the concept of gastrodplomacy (Chapple-Sokol 2013, 2016; Rockower 2012), a country can use its national cuisine as a form of public diplomacy, and (2) Taiwan's national identity is described as "contested and largely undefined at home and abroad" (Rawnsley 2017: 991). As one part of the identity-building process, its national cuisine is undergoing a process of "making and shaping" (Hsiao and Lim 2011: 329; cf. Copper 2020: 18–24). Therefore, answering the research question — "How are Taiwan's de facto embassies in Berlin, Bern, and Vienna using food to present Taiwan to German-speaking audiences?" — can contribute to our understanding of the use of food in public diplomacy in general and in the Taiwanese context in particular. It also nourishes the discourse on the characteristics of Taiwanese cuisine and how it is constructed by political actors in an "attempt to distinguish it from others" (Chen 2011: 316).

In 2010 President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) declared "taking Taiwan's food to the world a policy priority" (Caltonhill 2011a: 37; Marchant 2010; *Taiwan Today* 2010). The same year, *Taiwan Today* — the newspaper-like international information outlet of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) — described a plan to internationalize the nation's food. This was seen as "an opportunity to push its diverse culture into the global spotlight and rebrand the way [Taiwan] is seen in the world" (*Taiwan Today* 2010).

Taiwan's public diplomacy is limited not only by the "One-China principle" (see also, footnote 4 below). Rawnsley (2000, 2012, 2014, 2017) has explored the "disabling environment" (cf. Nye 2011: 99) that limits Taiwan's public diplomacy and soft power outreach both from the inside and on the international stage. Promoting its food may be one possible way of engaging with an international audience beyond the conflictual context of the cross-strait relationship with the People's Republic of China (PRC). As a vehicle for cultural understanding, food is an engaging and (politically) comparatively safe topic to discuss and promote (Chapple-Sokol and Maher 2015; Coffin, Dobson, and Portela 2014; Haugh, Inge, and Madow 2014). Directly referencing Taiwan's food, the *Taiwan Today* (2010) article concludes that the push and rebranding are "an essential ingredient in [the Ma administration's] recipe for Taiwan's future prosperity." This represents a

1 The author expresses his sincere gratitude for the input, critical commentary, and overall support received in the preparation of this article, most notably from Professor Agnes Schick-Chen (University of Vienna), Prof. Rüdiger Frank (University of Vienna), Prof. Su Heng-an (National Kaohsiung University of Hospitality and Tourism), Director Lee Cheng-yu (Foundation of Chinese Dietary Culture), the staff of the respective Taipei Representative Offices, and the anonymous reviewers. This research was supported by the Research Fund of the Dean's Office of the Faculty of Philological and Cultural Studies, University of Vienna.

future that — ten years later — still relies on the degree to which the Taiwanese government is able to overcome its disabling environment and “strengthen its formal and informal ties [abroad]” (Rich and Dahmer 2020).

Ma’s food-centric public diplomacy outreach went together with an economic stimulus plan titled “Gourmet Taiwan” (美食國際化; “internationalization of delicacies”), bringing together key government agencies including the Ministry of Economic Affairs, the MOFA, the cabinet-level Overseas Compatriots Affairs Commission (僑務委員會),² and the Government Information Office of the Executive Yuan (行政院新聞局, GIO). The vision was to inspire “world cuisine to come together in Taiwan (世界美食匯集台灣)” and promote “Taiwanese food that the world admires (讓全球讚嘆的台灣美食)” (NDC 2010b: 12) both locally and internationally, thereby creating jobs and private investment in new restaurants and international brands (NDC 2010a, 2010b; *Taiwan Today* 2010).

The GIO was dissolved in 2012,³ with its key public diplomacy agency, the International Information Service, transferred to the MOFA and thereby under the same authority as Taiwan’s network of Representative Offices. In the absence of official diplomatic relations,⁴ the Taipei Representative Offices (TROs; also: Taipei Economic and Cultural Offices, TECOs) are Taiwan’s alternative diplomatic missions abroad. The Offices and their staff represent and promote Taiwan and offer consular services to its citizens. As such, these de facto embassies and consulates are a perfect starting point for any enquiry into Taiwan’s public diplomacy outreach on the ground.

Five years after Ma’s announcement, a poll of CNN’s Facebook audience concluded that the world’s best food was not to be found in France, Italy, or Japan, but in Taiwan. In comparison to the other countries, the actual numbers show a surprising mobilization of *taicai* (台菜; “Taiwanese food”) aficionados. Taiwan secured first place with 8,242 votes. This constituted a 6,714-vote lead over the Philippines, who came in second (1,528 votes). Italy, the famed home of pasta and pizza, came in third with a mere 810 votes (CNN 2015). Taiwanese food fans had mobilized in ten times the number Italy’s supporters did.

Whether this mobilization is directly related to the Gourmet Taiwan plan is beyond the scope of this study. The CNN poll nonetheless exemplifies the potential of food-related messages in line with the call for a *new* public diplomacy (cf.

2 In 2012 first renamed the Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission, then, later the same year, the Overseas Community Affairs Council; acronym (OCAC) and Chinese name remained unchanged.

3 For a comprehensive account of the consequences of this, see Rawnsley (2017: 991–998).

4 Following the shift in international recognition during the 1970s, the Republic of China (ROC, Taiwan) would lose official diplomatic relations with, and de jure embassies in, all but 14 United Nations member states. Beijing’s interpretation of the One-China principle does not allow diplomatic recognition of both the ROC and the PRC at the same time. In Europe, Taiwan’s only remaining de jure embassy is the Embassy of the Republic of China (Taiwan) to the Holy See (中華民國駐教廷大使館).

Frederick 1993; Melissen 2005; Nye 2004; Schneider 2006; Sharp 2005; Wei 2017). Gastrodiplomacy can thus be a valuable addition to — though not the sole focus of — Taiwan’s public diplomacy repertoire.

Gastrodiplomacy as a field was defined by Rockower (2012), Chapple-Sokol (2013, 2016), and Pham (2013). The latter positioned gastrodiplomacy as “a government’s practice of exporting its national culinary heritage as part of a public diplomacy effort to [1] raise national brand awareness, [2] encourage economic investment and trade, and [3] engage on a cultural and personal level with everyday diners” (Pham 2013: 5). The conceptualization of gastrodiplomacy inherited a vagueness, though, when differentiating public diplomacy from cultural diplomacy and its own location therein. As such, in an interview only a year later, Pham herself put gastrodiplomacy “under the umbrella of *cultural diplomacy*” (Haugh et al. 2014: 56, italics added for emphasis). Rockower likewise defines gastrodiplomacy as a “concerted *public diplomacy* campaign” but declares it to “combine culinary and *cultural diplomacy*” (2012: 236, italics added for emphasis).

For this author, cultural diplomacy is only one tool in the public diplomacy toolbox (cf. Gienow-Hecht and Donfried 2010; Ostrowski 2010). Gastrodiplomacy likewise is not limited to cultural exchange and may also include aspects of nation-branding and economic promotion (exports, tourism) as mentioned in Pham’s (2013) definition. Such a conceptualization of gastrodiplomacy is also in line with Leonard, Stead, and Smewing’s (2002: 9–10) four levels of public diplomacy impact: the first level is the creation of familiarity among a foreign audience; the second the fostering of appreciation for one’s own perspective; the third the initiation of engagement through trade, education, or tourism; the fourth level, the eventual generation of influence.

In the analysis of the outward-oriented content of the TECO messages, the conceptualization above holds an additional advantage. Assuming a singular “national culinary heritage” allows us to describe the image of Taiwan’s food as it is constructed in the German-speaking context without delving into the political processes and discussions shaping (and contesting) this image at home. The latter would be part of an interesting line of research in the field of “gastronationalism” (cf. Byrkjeflot, Pedersen, and Svejnova 2013; Cwierka 2006, 2014; Cwierka and Yasuhara 2020; De Soucey 2010; Ichijo 2020; Ichijo and Ranta 2016; Kim 2019), but is beyond the scope of this paper.

Pham’s definition as well as Leonard, Stead, and Smewing’s impact levels also hint at the power limitations of gastrodiplomacy. Ultimately, all forms of public diplomacy can only open the door to the targeted audience, inviting them to engage further with the sending country. The power to “accept or decline the message” (Rawnsley 2016: 30) and to engage with the sender remains with the recipient though (Nye 2004; Rawnsley 2016). Here, additional research on the impact of

gastrodiplomacy might close an existing gap in the public diplomacy literature; however, this is beyond the scope of this particular study.

Taiwan's cuisine

Rockower (2010a, 2010b, 2011), in addition to defining the field of gastrodiplomacy, also described Taiwan's particular gastrodiplomatic efforts and potential. What his analysis is missing, however, is an examination of what constitutes Taiwan's cuisine. Or, in other words, what is actually being promoted and exported here?

Chen (2008, 2011) identifies distinctive periods in the formation of Taiwan's national cuisine closely related to the ethnic politics of the respective eras. Hsiao and Lim (2011) build on Chen's periodization to compare postcolonial developments in the cuisines of Malaysia and Taiwan. During Japanese colonialism, class distinctions were reflected in the respective categories used for Taiwanese dishes: "Taiwanese cuisine" (臺灣料理) was the category for local (as opposed to national, which was Japanese) banquet and high-class restaurant dishes. "Taiwanese food" (臺灣人家庭的食物), however, was what ordinary people ate (Chen 2008; Hsiao and Lim 2011: 314–319). A similar distinction prevailed under early Kuomintang (國民黨) rule: "Jiangzhe cuisine" (江浙料理) — referring to the culinary traditions of Jiangsu (江蘇) and Zhejiang (浙江) Provinces — became the new national standard. "Taiwanese dishes" (臺菜) were again downgraded to describe the local, unsophisticated foods of street vendors and home cooking (Chen 2008: 174–179; Hsiao and Lim 2011: 319–321).

Political change from the 1980s initiated the third and current wave of the conceptualization of Taiwanese food. Particularly after the year 2000, "Taiwanese cuisine became a symbol of nationhood" (Chen 2011: 328) through the proliferation of ethnic cuisines and a localization of what is regarded as "haute cuisine." Prominent dishes became recognizable as belonging to regions, counties, and cities in Taiwan, along with a new national identity and in response to globalization (Chen 2011; Hsiao and Lim 2011: 321–327). The menus of the 2000 and 2004 presidential inauguration banquets most prominently reflect this: "Every one of the dishes on the menu has a story to tell [...] about its ethnic origins (Hakka or aboriginal) or local [Taiwanese] origins" (Hsiao and Lim 2011: 323).

The discourse introduced above highlights recent changes within Taiwan. Can we assume that this form of localization and indigenization also prevails in the ways that Taiwan presents its cuisine abroad then? The German-language Taiwan Tourismbüro (Taiwan Tourism Office) webpage on Taiwanese specialties confirms this:

Travelling in Taiwan, you definitely have to try the numerous *local* delicacies and specialties. Culinary specialties showcasing the *native* character of the island are a new trend in Taiwan. The use of *local* ingredients is a special feature

of *Taiwan's new cuisine*. (Taiwan Tourismbüro 2019; author's own translation, italics added for emphasis)

At the same time, however, it does so only on a subpage titled *Regional Specialties* and together with introductory texts on (a) *Tea*, (b) *Northern Chinese Cuisine*, (c) *Eastern Chinese Cuisine*, (d) *Western Chinese Cuisine*, and (e) *Other Culinary Styles* (Taiwan Tourismbüro 2018; author's own translation). So even for an agency trying to promote Taiwan through its cuisine, there appears to be no clear definition of what constitutes “Taiwanese cuisine” exactly. This observation is in line with Taiwan's initially described “contested and largely undefined [national identity]” (Rawnsley 2017: 991) in general, and the continuous “making and self-shaping and even self-reshaping [of its national cuisine]” (Hsiao and Lim 2011: 329) in particular.

Interestingly, despite the “indigenization” (Chen 2011: 317–321) of Taiwan's food, a distinction between “cuisine” and “snacks” still prevails. The English-language *Tastes of Taiwan* webpage of the Taiwan Tourism Bureau (2018, 2019), for example, still separated out “Gourmet Cuisine” and “Taiwanese Snacks,” listing a number of examples of each.

Table 1: *Tastes of Taiwan*

Gourmet Cuisine	Taiwanese Snacks
Dongpo Pork (東坡肉)	Danzai Noodles (擔仔麵)
Meat Rice Dumplings [zongzi] (粽子)	Shrimp Pork Soup (肉羹)
[Xiaolongbao] Dumplings (小籠包)	Coffin Board (棺材板)
	Taiwanese Meatballs (肉圓)
	Steamed Sandwich (刈包)
	Stinky Tofu (臭豆腐)
	Oyster Omelet (蚵仔煎)

Source: Author's own compilation, based on Tourism Bureau (2018).⁵

To the best of this author's knowledge, no comprehensive attempt to categorize the food-related messages generated by Taiwan for international audiences has yet been made. In answering the research question — “How are Taiwan's de facto embassies and consulates in Berlin, Bern, and Vienna using food to present Taiwan to German-speaking audiences?” — this paper contributes to filling this gap.

5 The 2018 list of “Taiwan Snacks” would be expanded to 23 dishes in 2019, also including “braised pork rice” (Tourism Bureau 2019) with a picture depicting the common “minced pork rice” (魯/滷肉飯) rather than actual “braised pork rice” (焢/爌肉飯). In 2020, the website was again updated and renamed *Food*, but still distinguished between “Gourmet Cuisine” and “Taiwan Snacks” (Tourism Bureau 2020).

Representation of Taiwanese food in TRO publications

About the publications

As the country's de facto embassies and consulates, the TROs function as an important intermediary in Taiwan's relations with the world. Many of these Offices publish periodical newsletters, distributed electronically to recipients in local governments, the media, universities, cultural institutions, nongovernmental organizations, as well as to interested individuals, embassies, and Taiwanese expats and exchange students. Some of the content is adapted from Taiwanese government sources like *Taiwan Heute*, the German-language edition of *Taiwan Today*, and Radio Taiwan International. Local embassy staff research and write additional content, particularly when there are local events and specific focal points.⁶ These periodicals are therefore an insightful window into how authorities represent Taiwan — or want it to be represented — in the wider world. In order to provide a fully comprehensive analysis, this paper limits itself to the representation of Taiwanese food (and drink) in the periodicals of Taiwan's TROs in the capital cities of the German-speaking countries in Europe.

Taiwan maintains eight Offices in these particular countries: four in Germany, one in Austria, and three in Switzerland. Of the three Swiss Offices, two are located in French-speaking Romandy and service the international institutions in Geneva. The main Office in each country, and seat of the de facto ambassador (representative), is located in each nation's capital city: Berlin, Bern, and Vienna respectively. During the focus period of this paper, 2017–2018, all three of these offices published periodicals in German titled either *Taiwan Newsletter* or *Taiwan Nachrichten (Taiwan News)*. Table 2 below lists the relevant publications, initial publication dates, frequency, approximate number of pages per issue, number of issues, and number of articles in these issues respectively. The geographical focus on German-speaking Europe provides two research benefits: (1) the language and cultural target area of these periodicals is predefined, and, at the same time, (2) German-speaking Europe comprises three independent countries.

The predefined cultural and language target area allows for a clearer distinction of the intended audience. English-language websites, for example, are accessed internationally and therefore do not allow for such a clear distinction of the target demographic. With the focus on the German-language circulars, big international centers of diplomatic attention (like Washington, D.C., and Brussels) are hence excluded. Therefore the results of this study are more representative of Taiwan's widespread diplomatic efforts. The three German-speaking capitals are likewise not renown "culinary trendsetter[s], such as Paris, London, and New York" (Cwierka and Yasuhara 2020: 8), where culinary promotion might normally be prioritized.

⁶ Interview with two independent TRO press officers, June 2019.

With the practical advantages outlined above, German-speaking Europe is also representative of one large, one small, and one non-European Union country. All three diplomatic missions are staffed by MOFA employees, with a single de facto ambassador heading the respective delegations and (multiple) Offices in each country. The conclusions of this study are therefore not limited by the peculiarities of one individual country, nor by one individual representative's sphere of influence. The latter are the ones who ultimately approve each newsletter before distribution.⁷ Overlapping findings, on the other hand, thus allow for conclusions beyond the individual representative's sphere of influence.

Table 2: Capital city TRO German-language periodicals

Office	Publication Title	Since	Frequency	Pages	No. of Issues	No. of Articles
Berlin	<i>Taiwan Newsletter</i>	2013	Weekly	1	102	431
Bern	<i>Taiwan Newsletter</i>	2017	Monthly	2	12	69
Vienna	<i>Taiwan Nachrichten</i>	2017	Biweekly (2017), Monthly (2018)	3–6	36	194

Source: Author's own compilation.

An additional temporal limitation for analysis is set by the publications themselves. As the Bern and Vienna Offices did not begin distribution until 2017,⁸ the representative corpus is limited to the years 2017 and 2018. The temporal limitation offers additional implications for the results: any foreign-targeted messages from this period can be linked to the first President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) administration.⁹ This clear-cut timeframe thus allows for potential later comparison with other administrations too.

Method

Using content analysis (Mayring 2015; Rössler 2017), this paper examines the above-defined sampling unit for the representation of food and drink therein. In a first step, each periodical and its articles are given a unique identifier in the form of a three-letter code for the issuing Office followed by a two-digit year, two-digit issue number, and a consecutive number for the respective article (e.g. DEB 17-14-3 identifies the 3rd article in the 14th issue of 2017, Berlin Office).

7 Interview with two independent TRO press officers, June 2019.

8 TECO Vienna ceased publication in early 2019 "to focus manpower on other projects" (email message to the author, April 2019).

9 President Tsai, member of the Democratic Progressive Party (民主進步黨, DPP), assumed office in May 2016 and was reelected for a second term in 2020. Her party suffered a major defeat in nationwide local elections in November 2018. This study is therefore also linked temporally to a period of political power consolidated in the hands of the DPP.

Each article is put according to its prevailing general topic into one of ten categories based on typical newspaper sections. This step allows for a detailed overview of the structure of the periodicals themselves. It also makes it possible to link food messages to broader topics. The full list of categories and the descriptions applied is available in Appendix A. The entire corpus is then scanned for articles that include references to food. In a second step, individual food-related sentences (including image descriptions but not actual images) in each identified article are highlighted and allocated a consecutive number¹⁰ (e.g. DEB 17-14-3/2 referring to the second food-related statement in the article example used above).

Table 3: Food occurrences in TRO periodicals 2017–2018

Office	Publication Title	Food Actual			Food Related		
		I	A	S	I	A	S
Berlin	<i>Taiwan Newsletter</i>	9	9	17	23	25	35
Bern	<i>Taiwan Newsletter</i>	3	5	5	6	8	11
Vienna	<i>Taiwan Nachrichten</i>	28	34	224	7	7	19

Notes: I = Issue; A = Article; S = Sentence.

Source: Author's own compilation.

Two types of food references are found in the corpus: (1) food actual and (2) food related. “Food actual” is where *actual* dishes and ingredients are mentioned. “Food related” are instances where the TRO authors found it worth mentioning that, for example, President Tsai made a statement at a particular *lunch* or *dinner* (DEB 17-06-2; DEB 17-22-1) or that the ambassador invited Swiss members of parliament to a *banquet* (CHB 17-01-3). Thus, the respective events were food related without the individual sentences actually talking about food itself.

The food-related messages might be interesting for a study of culinary diplomacy in the original sense of closed-circle, official-to-official exchange, like state dinners and national day banquets, or for an analysis of the meaning of food in relationship-building. For this paper, the further analysis intentionally excludes this content. What is of interest here is the former type of sentences (“food actual”) referencing Taiwanese cuisine.

To make sense of these food-actual references on both dimensions under scrutiny here, the sentence-level recording units as described above are further categorized into an inductive coding cycle. Initially, 18 codes were created based on a

¹⁰ Since these two formal coding units do not allow for subjective interpretation, a second coder and an interrater reliability test were omitted at this stage.

25 percent sample of the material corpus. These were necessary to organize the material and gain initial understanding. The codes were then further refined and applied to the entire corpus with the help of Atlas.ti software. Not all of these are mutually exclusive, and for this reason sentences usually have four or more labels. Of the original 18, seven codes proved significant to answering the research question and thus form the basis of the discussion below.

Table 4: List of significant codes

Code	Description	Grounded ¹¹
Contrasting Taiwan with China	The sentence contrasts Taiwan (or an attribute thereof) with China (however defined).	6
Culinary Arts as/and Culture	Food as a form of culture/art in itself or as part of a larger cultural and arts context. Food in relation to culture/arts.	61
Dish-Specific	The sentence refers to a specific dish or ingredient.	148
Food as a Highlight (of Taiwan)	Taiwan's food is explicitly depicted as a highlight of (a possible trip to) Taiwan. For implicit depictions, see "Taiwan as a Culinary Destination."	77
Local/Ethnic Reference	The sentence connects food with a reference to a particular locality, ethnic group, or minority (as opposed to "Reference to Taiwan" as a whole).	85
Reference to Taiwan	The sentence connects food with a reference to Taiwan as an (national) entity. For local/ethnic/minority reference, see "Local/Ethnic Reference."	47
Taiwan as a Culinary Destination	Taiwan is depicted favorably as a culinary destination; also implicitly (thus including "Food as Highlight (of Taiwan)" above).	140

Source: Author's own compilation.

All coding was done by the author himself. A second coder received a random sample of 25 percent of second-level records (sentence-level) for interrater reliability testing. The results show an interrater agreement of 85 percent (356 out of 420 yes/no decisions). This is significant, since the probability of randomly reaching the same or a better agreement is below 0.01 percent ($p < 0.000001$).

With the approach outlined above, this paper attains the two initially discussed insights: (1) an understanding of how Taiwan's cuisine is used to familiarize, generate appreciation among, or engage foreign — in this case German-speaking — audiences, and (2) comprehension of whether the outlined indigenization of Taiwanese cuisine also prevails in this particular construction established for an international audience.

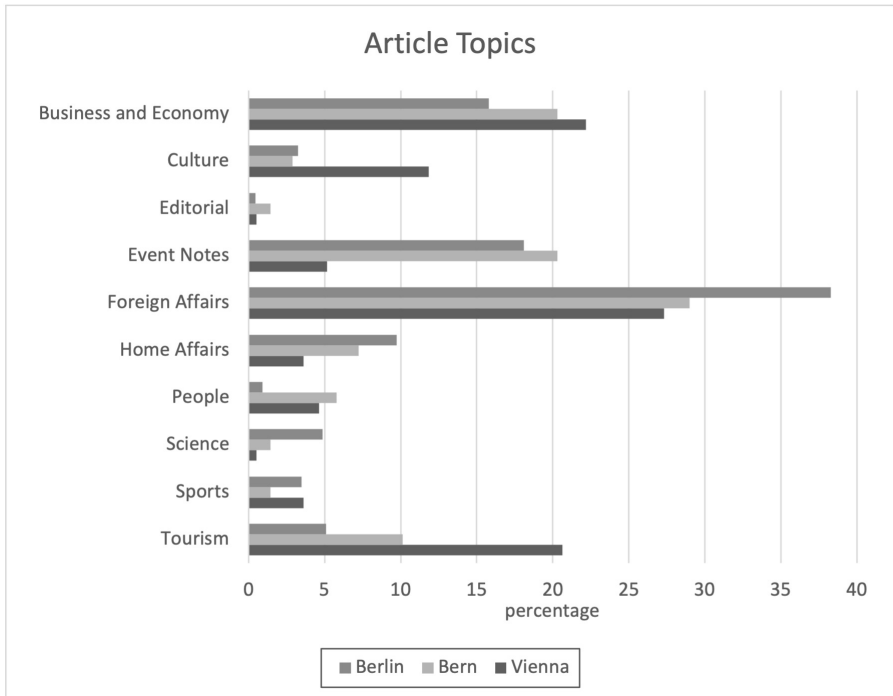
¹¹ "Grounded: Code frequency or 'groundedness.' It shows how many quotations are linked to a code" (Friese 2018: 38) in Atlas.ti.

Findings

Where food is used

Table 2 above illustrated the heterogeneity of the publications in terms of size and frequency. This becomes even more telling when we look at the general topics dealt with in the various articles.

Figure 1. Share of article topics for each office

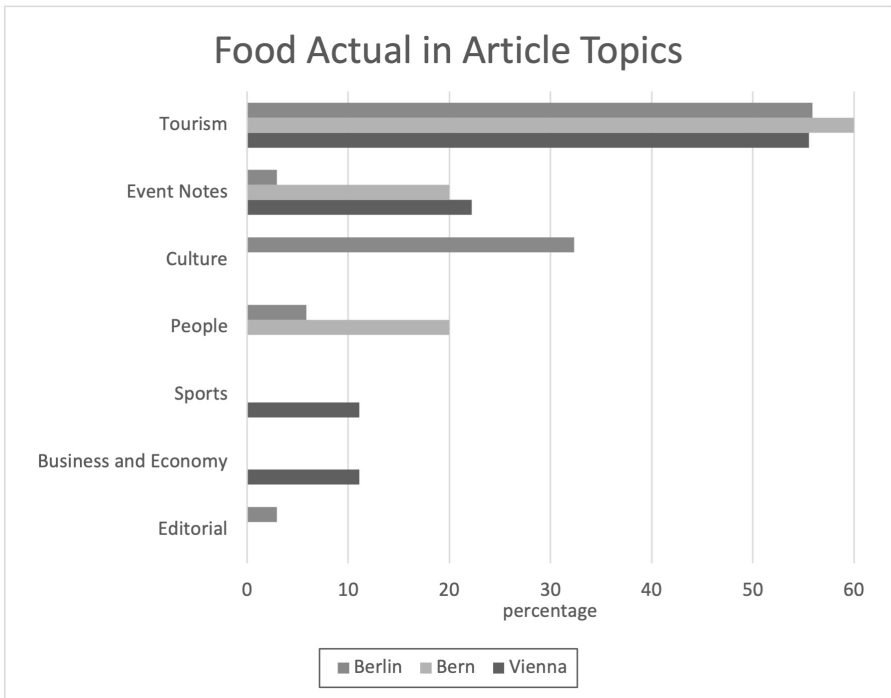


Source: Author's own compilation.

Figure 1 shows that “Foreign Affairs” (including cross-strait relations and international organizations) is the topic most frequently addressed in articles by all three Offices. Berlin, however, appears to place particular emphasis on the topic: 38.3 percent of articles are concerned with foreign affairs, as compared to 29 percent in Bern and 27.3 percent in Vienna. “Business and Economy” is the focus of 16.6–20 percent of articles, and in Berlin and Bern a comparative number feature events held by the embassy or participated in by the ambassador. In this aspect, the Berlin and Bern Offices are doing much more in-house promotion than Vienna, where only 5.2 percent of articles reported on events in Austria in which the de facto ambassador participated.

“Tourism” is a category highly relevant to this study. As shown in Figure 2 below, the majority of food-related information is found in these articles. In Berlin only 5.1 percent of articles are on tourism, compared to 20.6 percent in Vienna. One possible explanation for this is the existence of a separate TRO in Frankfurt, focused on serving the tourism and airline industries and running the German-language tourism webpage mentioned earlier. This possibly allows Berlin to focus elsewhere. However, the Frankfurt Office did not start distributing periodicals until March 2019 (email to the author, October 2020).

Figure 2. Food occurrence per topic for each Office



Source: Author’s own compilation.

As mentioned earlier, tourism-related articles provide the majority (55.6–60 percent) of food content in all three Offices. For the Vienna one, food content also features prominently in “Culture” articles (32.4 percent). All three Offices also use food mentions in the “Event Notes” (Berlin 22.2 percent, Bern 20 percent, Vienna 2.9 percent); Bern (20 percent) and Vienna (5.9 percent) in the “People” category as well. Berlin further referred to the food of Taiwan in “Sports” as well as “Business and Economy” articles (each 11.1 percent). Vienna also featured food in their “Editorial” section (2.9 percent). In all three Offices, “Home Affairs,”

“Foreign Affairs,” and “Science” articles show no mention of food. Absolute food-occurrence numbers for Bern and Berlin are comparatively low compared to those for Vienna.

How food is used

The preceding section showed the areas in which TRO newsletters reference food. The analysis now addresses how these references are used. For this purpose, an initial examination of the material resulted in 18 codes, of which seven proved significant for further analysis (see Table 4 above). Each sentence with an actual food mention (246 in total, see Table 3 above) was categorized according to at least one of these codes with the help of Atlas.ti. As the description in Table 4 shows, codes are not mutually exclusive but intended rather to capture key components of food-related messages to an international (in this case German-speaking) audience.

Dish-Specific

The most common type of food mention was “Dish-Specific,” a code that appeared 148 times, thus including sentences referring to specific dishes or ingredients. Appendix B shows computer-generated word clouds of the most commonly used terms (in German) — which will hence be analyzed here. A minimum threshold¹² and stemming¹³ were applied to group keywords and limit repetition, and German capitalization is also omitted. English equivalents of the key terms are listed in italics, with the corresponding German words given in brackets. To ensure clear identification, the Chinese characters for names of dishes, people, and places have also been added.

Taiwan is the most frequently used term in “Dish-Specific” sentences, with 32 recurrences, followed by *zongzi* (粽子) — a dish of rice and meat steamed in a bamboo leaf, which is found 20 times. This exceptional frequency can be traced to a number of articles on the Dragon Boat Festival and events related to it (organized in Taiwan and Europe, particularly Austria) actively engaging local non-Taiwanese audiences in the production and consumption of the dish. This also explains several recurrences of the terms *bamboo leaf* (bambusblatt), *sticky rice* (klebereis), and *dragon boat festival* (drachenboot^{f14}) — all related to the production and consumption of *zongzi*. *Tofu* (tofu, stinkend, stinky) and *tea* (tee, teeplantag*) are also prominently listed in the publications together with specific dishes like *oyster omelet* 蚵仔煎 (austernomelett*, oachian, aust*), *minced pork rice* 滷肉飯 (fan,

12 The threshold determines the minimum frequency a word has to have for it to be displayed (Friese 2018: 87).

13 “Stemming is the process of reducing inflected (or sometimes derived) words to their word stem, base or root form — generally a written word form. The stem need not be identical to the morphological root of the word; it is usually sufficient that related words map to the same stem, even if this stem is not in itself a valid root” (*Wikipedia*, quoted in Friese 2018: 87).

14 The asterisk (*) indicates a stemmed version of a German term.

lurou, luroufan, sojasauc*), *xiaolongbao dumplings* 小籠包 (teigtasch*, din, fung, tai¹⁵, xiaolongbao), *ice cream* (eis, eisgele*), *beef noodle soup* 牛肉麵 (niuroumian), *Chinese new year cake* 年糕 (reiskuch*), and *bantiao noodles* 板條 (reis, reismudeln, sojasauc*).

In addition, we also find several appearances of preparation methods within this category, such as *braising* (geschmort), *steaming* (gedampft*), and *boiled* (gekocht), as well as mentions of the attributes of the presented foods, like *special* (besond*), *popular* (beliebt), *well-known* (bekannt), *delicious* (kostlich*), and *specialty* (spezialitat*). Finally, a number of reoccurring place names link certain foods to particular localities. These will be analyzed more closely below with regard to the indigenization of Taiwanese cuisine.

Localizing and indigenizing Taiwan's food

According to Chen (2008, 2011), after decades of foreign dictate, Taiwan's food has recently been indigenized through a proliferation of ethnic cuisines and localization. One of the Vienna Office articles reflects on this, writing: "Taiwan's cuisine unites diverse influences such as the Minnan [閩南], Hakka [客家] and Teochew [潮州] cuisines of mainland China, with Japanese dishes playing an important role as well" (ATV 17-05-5; this and all subsequent newsletter translations by the author himself). This is in reference to a 2015 CNN article about the vote mentioned above. In comparison to the original CNN article, the sentence offers an interesting additional layer: the original in fact talks about "the cuisines of the Min Nan, Teochew, and Hokkien *Chinese communities*" (CNN 2015, italics added for emphasis) rather than referring to mainland China as an entity distinct from Taiwan.

Article ATV 17-05-5 continues to explore the historic roots of Taiwanese cuisine, directly linking *oyster omelet* to Koxinga (國姓爺, also Zheng Chenggong 鄭成功, 1624–1662). A Ming loyalist, Koxinga opposed the Manchu conquest of China and defeated the Dutch in Taiwan in 1661, founding the Kingdom of Tungning (東寧王國) in an attempt to reestablish Ming rule over mainland China. He and the succeeding regime remain a prominent although contested part of Taiwanese history (cf. Kang 2016).

Chen's indigenization and localization of Taiwanese food is reflected throughout the embassy circulations. There are 47 sentences that mention food in "Reference to Taiwan" as a whole, while another 85 connect food to the particular localities or ethnic groups ("Local/Ethnic Reference") within Taiwan. The word clouds in Appendix B provide greater detail.

15 Related terms in brackets are sorted first by number of appearances, then alphabetically. Thus, here din, fung, and tai together belong to the brand name of Din Tai Fung (鼎泰豐,) a Taiwanese restaurant chain prominently known for its xiaolongbao dumplings and Michelin Guide listings.

Table 5: Localization of food in order of frequency

	Localizing References
Major Cities	Taipei (臺北): taipei, raoh*, shidong Tainan (臺南): tainan, anping Kaohsiung (高雄): kaohsiung, meinong Chiayi (嘉義) Taitung (臺東) Hualien (花蓮): huali*
Townships and Villages	Lukang (鹿港) Daxi (大溪) Jiufen (九份): jiuf* Ruisui (瑞穗): rueishuei, rui*, shuei* Dajia (大甲) Jiaoxi (礁溪)
Islands and Archipelagos	Kinmen (金門): kinm* Penghu (澎湖)
Hakka Minority	Hakka (客家): hakka, bantiao, hakkakuch*, hakkaspeis*

Source: Author's own compilation, based on the German word cloud for "Local/Ethnic Reference."

Among the Taiwanese localization of food content, "Contrasting Taiwan with China" is particular interesting. Only six times did texts make direct references to "Chinese" or "China" as an adjective or a noun referring to the language. Five occurrences depict China as a (past) source of traditional culture vis-à-vis a "modern and preserving" Taiwan: "Taiwan is known [...] for preserving traditional Chinese culture and for its culinary diversity" (DEB 17-10-1); "traditional Chinese landscape art was shown and traditional Taiwanese specialties were eaten" (CHB 18-04-6); "the dish was brought to Taiwan by soldiers from mainland China and continued to evolve as a way of remembering home" (ATV 17-05-5); "traditional flavors of Fujian cuisine combined with local [Kinmen] products" (ATV 17-10-4). One quote from a former scholarship student describes Taipei as "a modern but still traditional *Chinese* metropolis [with] good and inexpensive food, and friendly inhabitants" (ATV 18-11-4, italics added for emphasis). This is the only time the labels Chinese/China are used without an additional mentioning of Taiwanese/Taiwan in the same sentence. The final occurrence in this category includes only a reference to the Chinese language, introducing the Mid-Autumn Festival practice of eating pomelo.¹⁶

In addition to Taiwan as a whole, the food references also relate to specific localities and ethnic groups ("Local/Ethnic Reference"). The texts link dishes and culinary experiences to major cities, townships and villages, islands and

16 "The first syllable of pomelo [yòu 柚] in Chinese is a homonym for 'protect.' Consuming it [for Mid-Autumn Festival] bears the meaning of being protected [yòu 佑] by the moon" (ATV 18-08-4).

archipelagos, and the Hakka minority — as well as to Japan (in four instances; one presented above). While the food sentences still mention Taipei most often, the other localities in number go well beyond the traditional preeminence of the capital city — and even beyond the political dichotomy of Taipei and Kaohsiung. On the other hand, Hakka is the only ethnic group that receives statistically relevant attention. Other ethnic groups, mostly “Taiwanese aboriginal,” are mentioned only occasionally (in the context of their specific location), and did not reach the minimum threshold applied to this study.

Taiwan as a culinary destination

In addition to depicting specific dishes and localities, 140 out of 246 sentences also favorably depict Taiwan as a culinary destination — both explicitly and implicitly. The explicit statements (“Food as a Highlight (of Taiwan)”, 77) emphasize Taiwan’s “culinary diversity” (DEB 17-07-1) and its “distinguished cuisine” (ATV 17-01-1). Potential visitors are encouraged “to taste” (e.g. ATV 17-21-4; ATV 18-07-7) its local delicacies (e.g. ATV 17-14-4; ATV 17-15-4; ATV 17-18-4) at “Michelin-starred restaurants” (ATV18-03-3; ATV 18-03-5) or “lively night markets” (ATV 18-05-9). The night markets are a significant recurring theme and include references to Taipei’s Raohe Street Night Market (饒河街觀光夜市), Ningxia Night Market (寧夏觀光夜市), and Shilin Night Market (士林夜市) (ATV 18-03-5) with their “plethora of Taiwanese street snacks” (ATV 17-05-5; ATV 18-03-5; cf. Table 1 above). The sentences further encourage active engagement through *visiting* (besuch*, besucht*, tourist*), *tasting* (probi*), *eating* (ess*, isst), *enjoying* (geniess*), *exploring* (erkund*), *acquainting* (kennenzulern*), *participating* (nimm*), and *not missing* (verpass*) the foods and food-related events Taiwan is shown to *offer* (biet*) (cf. Appendix B, D4).

The remaining set of 63 sentences also depict “Taiwan as a Culinary Destination.” More or less implicitly, they draw a similar picture without directly inviting readers to actively engage or making in-sentence references to Taiwan. Within the context of the respective sentences or little previous knowledge about Taiwan, the text nonetheless connects specific foods and food occasions to a favorable image of Taiwan. Examples include increased standards of food safety (DEB 17-24-2), topics to be highlighted at the Taipei International Food Show (台北國際食品展) (ATV 17-14-3, DEB 17-30-2), and advertisement of local specialties without an explicit invitation to *visit* and *taste* as above (e.g. ATV 17-12-4, ATV 17-21-4, ATV 18-06-9).

Food and culture

The final category of this analysis looked at sentences that position food in relation to culture and arts. Sixty-one sentences refer to food as a form of culture and art in itself, or as part of a broader cultural and art context (“Culinary Arts as/and Culture”). More than half of the sentences in this category overlap with the promotion of Taiwan as a culinary destination, as introduced above.

The remaining 27 sentences link food items and food occasions to historical and mythological events, religious festivities and beliefs, and traditional family gatherings. Examples include the Mazu (媽祖) Pilgrimage in Dajia (大甲) (ATV 17-06-5), the traditional New Year rice cake (年糕) (ATV 18-02-13), and the iconic Koxinga (ATV 17-05-5). One sentence also refers to the Jadeite Cabbage (翠玉白菜) and Meat-shaped Stone (肉形石) in Taipei's National Palace Museum (ATV 18-05-9).

Conclusion

This paper has set out to answer the question of how Taiwan's embassies depict the country's food in presenting it to an international (in this case German-speaking) audience. Since, to the best of the author's knowledge, this paper is the first attempt at doing so, its first step was to map out the actual use of food in related publications (being "where" such references are made). This showed that food is predominantly represented in tourism-related content, in line with both familiarizing foreign audiences and triggering future engagement — as per Leonard, Stead, and Smewing's (2002) levels of impact.

Second, the paper identified some key dishes — including zongzi, oyster omelet, minced pork rice, and xiaolongbao dumplings. To the informed reader, these are very familiar from other sources on Taiwan's cuisine. At least the latter three form a reoccurring group of dishes often described as being "authentic Taiwanese." All four of these dishes have been prominently listed on the ROC Tourism Bureau webpage *Tastes of Taiwan* since 2019 (Tourism Bureau 2019). This tells a coherent food story, not only through embassy publications but also in correspondence with other sources.

Third, this food narrative is in line with the indigenization and localization of Taiwan's food as described by Chen (2008, 2011) as well as Hsiao and Lim (2011). China, if at all, is depicted as the source of some of the past influences, as is Japan. What is constructed as Taiwan's food culture today is a blend of these and of indigenous influences. The food items presented are linked to Taiwan as a (national) entity or to specific localities within Taiwan. Thereby, food as a symbol of national unity in diversity coherently relates to a culturally independent Taiwan. Within this food context, it successfully does this without resorting to its significant other, China, and the conflictual setting prevailing in the political realm. To a certain degree, Taiwan's embassies have, through food culture, thus managed to overcome an otherwise disabling international environment.

Fourth, in terms of localization, this paper has shown that when it comes to food, the traditional economic and political dominance of the two centers of Taipei and Kaohsiung is softened. This allows for a more diversified picture of Taiwan to be represented abroad. Again, we might speculate that this fits well into a larger effort to present Taiwan as a multifaceted and diversified society, in line with the

democratization of the 1980s or the legalization of same-sex marriage in 2019 for example.

Limitations to the scope of the findings are, however, set by the research design. Written in German, the content being analyzed here has a clearly defined target audience. It is not possible to conclude whether the results are comparable to Taiwan's outreach in other regions of the world. A first engagement with other sources allows positive assumptions to be made in this regard, but further research remains necessary.

Future scholarship could also relate these findings to the receiving side too. How is this food content received by readers, and what impact (if any) has it produced? Research along such lines would further minimize the gap between theoretical considerations and practical case studies in the fields of gastrodiploacy and public diplomacy.

Also, the actual food content is very unbalanced between the three Offices analyzed here. Therefore, while comparable narratives exist, the individual contributions of the authors and the general directions set by the respective ambassadors for the individual Offices appear to remain important. This confirms Rawnsley's (2017) notion of an "internal disabling environment," where seemingly uncoordinated efforts by its public diplomacy agents limit Taiwan's soft power output.

What this paper has not attempted to do is to make sense of the additional food-related content describing events in political and business contexts. Here, additional theorizing might open up new scopes of culinary diplomacy to be researched in the future. In terms of representing Taiwan's food to the German-speaking world in 2017 and 2018, Taiwan's national culinary identity might be less contested and undefined than Rawnsley (2017) suggests it is in other realms. In showing this and the other findings outlined above, this paper contributes greatly to our understanding of Taiwan's current use of food in public diplomacy. Maybe even more so, it shows how Taiwan can continue to move out of the shadow of the conflictual setting of the Taiwan Strait on the international stage.

To end on a quote by former vice president Chen Chien-Jen (陳建仁) (as quoted in DEB 17-30-2): "[Food] attracts people and draws attention to Taiwan from all over the world." Whether and how this attention can be translated into international leverage, particularly against an increasingly assertive China, is yet to be seen.

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Appendix A: Article categories and descriptions

Category	Description
Business and Economy	Article predominantly concerned with domestic and international business and the economy, including trade fairs and economic rankings.
Culture	Article predominantly concerned with domestic culture and its representation; applicable only when not predominantly related to political actors and/or tourism.
Editorial	Article expressing the local Offices' opinion on a topical issue or introducing a new format.
Event Notes	Event notes and invitations by the issuing local Office, including raffles.
Foreign Affairs	Article predominantly concerned with foreign policy, politics, and political actors, including cross-strait relations, international organizations, diplomatic relations, outgoing aid, international participation, and the military.
Home Affairs	Article predominantly concerned with domestic policy, politics, and political actors.
People	Article reporting on individual people and people-to-people exchange with regard to Taiwan and/or the respective Office's country; applicable only when not categorized otherwise.
Science	Article predominantly concerned with science and education; applicable only when not related to political actors and/or the economy.
Sports	Article predominantly concerned with domestic and international sports, and sports events.
Tourism	Article predominantly encouraging foreign incoming tourism or reporting on tourism activities, festivals, and hospitality.

Source: Author's own compilation.

D3. “Local/Ethnic Reference”



Note: Threshold: 2; stemming: yes.

Source: Author’s own compilation, using Atlas.ti.

D4. “Food as a Highlight”



Notes: Threshold: 2; stemming: yes.

Source: Author’s own compilation, using Atlas.ti.