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CULINARY HERITAGE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: ANALYSIS OF THE CHALLENGES IN DUITAMA AND SOGAMOSO, BOYACÁ, COLOMBIA

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ABSTRACT

Duitama and Sogamoso, in the department of Boyacá, Colombia, represent, through the customs and traditions surrounding their cuisine, an intangible heritage that illustrates their cultural identity. Despite this, it has not been considered an important factor in the sustainable development of these regions. This study proposes to generate a projection mechanism through an action plan that revitalizes culinary traditions from a sustainable perspective, in collaboration with local actors and representatives of the tourism sector. Using a qualitative approach with a descriptive scope and action research design, the sampling unit was made up of 120 knowledge bearers associated with traditional cuisines and professional chefs. The emerging results constitute a series of threats that put many of the practices associated with culinary heritage at risk of extinction, including: the incorporation of technology and industrialization of food, changes in consumption habits, and the continued disappearance of knowledgeable individuals. Based on this analysis of the situation, collective strategies are presented for the revitalization, safeguarding, and dissemination of the traditional cuisines of the peoples under study, as a result of the initial objective of growing their cultural heritage. In conclusion, it is essential to preserve and revitalize the culinary heritage and the entire social fabric that emerges through the different manifestations associated with it, projecting sustainable strategies and cultural tourism practices

1. Introduction

The culinary heritage is the actual embodiment of the identity of the community. Culinary traditions not only help in preserving cultural identity but also help in maintaining ties with the soil and the methods by which the community has organized itself. In the case of the community of Boyaca, especially the cities of Duitama and Sogamoso, culinary heritage is a part of the collective memory, deeply connected with peasant farming, which is essential for local production and preparation of foods. But, the growing influence of food industrialization and production of goods due to ultra-processing are having an impact on these practices, causing a disconnect between the two.

Not only does the degradation of the gastronomic heritage lead to cultural vulnerability, but also to restrictions on sustainable development taking local features into consideration. The revival of the gastronomic heritage may result in the creation of circular economy, responsible tourism, and sustainability, which is why traditional cuisine becomes a useful instrument for implementing regional development strategies. Its preservation and promotion may stimulate regional economic growth, increase social cohesion, and protect regional food biodiversity.

Numerous authors have highlighted the role of gastronomic heritage within cultural tourism and sustainable development of territories. Authors like Putri and Wijoyo (2023), as well as Mathew (2024), argue that culinary practices with local customs serve to reinforce the cultural identity of the communities against the globalized model. In recent times, studies from Colombia have been warning about the danger that traditional cuisine faces as the silent loss advances and may cause the extinction of traditional knowledge along with the deterioration of the local agricultural system (Bravo et al., 2020; Pivarski et al., 2023).

However, despite all this work that has been done in the field, very little has been achieved in terms of carrying out research in the area of action research on the subject matter, especially in intermediate towns like Sogamoso and Duitama. In addition to that, there is a poor correlation between the empirical knowledge gathered by the experts in gastronomy and the policy matters on tourism and culture of the local authorities.

The main issue that needs to be resolved within the context of this research is that neither of the cities of Sogamoso nor Duitama acknowledges the significance of culinary heritage for sustainable development. Despite the existence of rich culture in the form of knowledge, recipes, and cuisine that carry high cultural values, the emergence of the consumption dynamics in industry and reduction in the number of knowledge carriers pose a danger. The reduction in the number of knowledge carriers poses another risk – the lack of chances to develop a sustainable economic model.

This research is important due to its relevance to culture, development, and sustainability. By adopting a qualitative and participative methodology, the goal was to know the views, experiences, and proposals of the gastronomic experts of Duitama and Sogamoso, both chefs and tradition bearers, concerning the potential of local food as an element of social change. Altogether, 120 gastronomic experts were consulted, thereby obtaining access to diverse sources of knowledge and experience. The importance of this research does not only lie in identifying a threatened cultural heritage, but also in proposing actions to revalue and sustainably use it.

Therefore, the general objective of the current research study can be identified as an effort aimed at developing an action plan whose aim will be the recognition of gastronomic heritage in relation to the concept of sustainable development from the community and visitors' perspective in the city of Duitama and the city of Sogamoso. The following objectives have been defined as a result: First, the traditional culinary knowledge that exists in the two communities must be identified. Second, it is necessary to conduct an analysis of reasons for the decline of such heritage. Finally, an action plan that would help in recovering, disseminating, and utilizing this heritage in a sustainable manner through interaction with the representatives of the local community must be developed. The project will help to develop sustainable local culture and contribute to cultural

identity.

1.1 Theoretical reference

The issue of culinary heritage is quite ambiguous in terms of culture, because it includes elements of history, symbolics, society, and territory, for example. The consideration of this issue shows how the community establishes its identity, perpetuates heritage by passing it down from generation to generation, and creates links with the nature surrounding it. Speaking about the interdisciplinarity of this study, it can be stated that it falls within the area of cultural studies and sustainable development, for traditional cuisine may serve not just as an indicator, but also as an instrument to reshape reality.

The theoretical foundation applied to the current study includes three dimensions that provide grounds for further exploration of the relationship between the culinary heritage and sustainable development as a manifestation of the identity, tradition, and memory of the culture. In this context, the culinary heritage is recognized as living heritage that gets endangered in the period of food globalization. The second dimension involves the relationship between heritage and sustainability as an opportunity for promotion of sustainable development in terms of economics, society, and environment. Finally, the third dimension explores the impact of cultural tourism on the valuation process of culinary heritage in relation to stimulating local development through authentic experience and heritage sustainability.

1.2 Culinary heritage: identity, tradition, and memory

Being one of the manifestations of heritage, cuisine refers to the set of knowledge, skills, techniques, products, and symbols that get transferred from generation to generation. As for cuisine, apart from being the method used by a community for feeding itself, it is also a way for interpreting the world, creating social links, and celebrating one's past. Cuisine is considered to be a total cultural fact by Potîng (2024) and Partarakis et al. (2021). This is due to the fact that it includes such aspects as life styles, ways of living, and connections with nature, as well as types of communities' organization.

Classical kitchens are also spaces of memories. The recipes, kitchen utensils, cooking processes, and culinary rituals help create relationships within families, peasant knowledge, indigenous knowledge, and knowledge that adapts to the natural rhythms of the environment. According to Wijayakusumah and Suryantini (2022), the kitchen is also an archive full of senses and symbols in which collective memories of struggle, plenty, and defiance are written down. Such memories have something to do with oral traditions, the indispensable means of the transfer of knowledge, especially in the countryside where knowledge holders such as mothers and grandmothers play an essential role in local culture.

However, it is faced with the risk of extinction in many different places across the globe due to bad urban planning, migration, the mechanization of food preparation, and homogeneity of taste. As per UNESCO (2010), the absence of specific laws aimed at safeguarding this kind of intangible cultural heritage, along with the lack of mechanisms that can maintain it, results in its degradation on a daily basis. In the case of Colombia, various researchers (Moreno et al., 2024; Panoschi 2025) suggest that even though it is a rich component of culture, preserving and enjoying it has become rather difficult.

Despite this perspective, cuisine continues to be an instrument through which culture can reclaim its identity and reconnect with nature. The appreciation of distinct cuisines does not solely depend on the documentation of these cuisines; rather, it requires an interpretation of these cuisines in connection to learning, society, and community development, as outlined by Chauhan et al. (2025). Cuisine can again be an avenue for cultural defiance and societal change, provided that the significance of the ethnographic reasoning on which it is based is validated. Hence, for this to be achievable, it becomes important for culinary professionals to become involved in this initiative, so that they can enrich their work with fresh meaning within the contemporary setting, while

maintaining its intrinsic nature.

1.3 Heritage and sustainability: a strategic relationship

The concept of sustainability is founded on an appropriate connection between the social, economic, and environmental aspects, which are intrinsic elements of resource management and development. Indeed, culinary culture can be a crucial component in establishing sustainable development frameworks that take into account indigenous knowledge. Cultural sustainability, one more aspect of sustainability in general, according to Hristov & Chirico (2022), fosters the continuation of traditions, cultural diversity, and symbolic capital.

Cultural heritage from the environmental perspective aids in maintaining biodiversity and ensuring sustainability. The traditional cuisine, made up of seasonal ingredients, makes full use of food or production methods that do not harm the environment, according to Rehman et al. (2022). Such cuisine encourages sustainable consumption and the use of local products that may be endangered due to the abandonment of local farming techniques. Hence, protecting traditional cuisine also entails protecting local ecosystems and sustainable production/consumption processes.

From the standpoint of economics, culinary heritage may become a source of economic growth through the creation of short marketing loops allowing small community-based sectors to carry out social economy projects thanks to the development of unique tourism products. The results of research by Cheng et al. (2025), for instance, demonstrate that the promotion of the traditional cuisine may become a basis for economic development for small entrepreneurs, chefs, and craftsmen, on condition that benefits are distributed equally and commoditization of knowledge is not involved. In this context, the concept of sustainability means that culinary heritage restoration should be viewed as an empowerment process.

On a social level, culinary heritage acts as an instrument to avoid community disintegration and closing of venues for interaction and learning because traditional kitchens are places of intergenerational communication and community making, places in which identity creation takes place through reconnection with the past and the land. In this respect, for (Zocchi et al., 2021), traditional cooking practices belong to a system of local knowledge that can be harnessed as a resource in order to build community resilience in the context of global threats. It is thus necessary to develop the connection between culinary heritage and sustainability.

1.4 Cultural tourism and appreciation of culinary heritage linked to local development

The role of cultural tourism has been established as one with significant potential in this regard, one of the methods to help develop the identity of the territory, offer diversity within the local tourism offer, and continue to be an asset for the transformation of localities through its development. This being the case, among the different options, it can be said that traditional cuisine is one of the resources most appreciated by visitors since it helps them connect with the lifestyle of the locality. According to Hernández et al. (2021), when it comes to gastronomic tourism, it must be known that the food experience does not encompass all the social practices and stories that enrich the tourist experience.

The importance of Latin American traditional cuisine as a potential source of tourism development has been emphasized due to the authentic character, diversity, and relationality of it. In the opinion of Coelho (2025), indigenous food will be a great opportunity for creating a tourist attraction, since it could be integrated into such activities as culinary trips, festivals, classes, as well as farmers' markets and community gardens. This approach will have a positive economic and social impact on the society since it will help restore culinary value.

In contrast, the integration of gastronomic heritage in cultural tourism requires much thoughtfulness and involvement on the part of planners. Inappropriate exploitation of the gastronomic heritage by means of business activities can lead to the emergence of processes such

as decontextualization, inauthenticity, and misuse of knowledge. As Zhang et al. suggest, the ethics must guide sustainable gastronomic tourism practices including stakeholder involvement, intangible heritage preservation, and profit-making possibilities. It is crucial to understand that economic aspects are not the only aspect to be considered when organizing cultural tourism planning.

In relation to the case study of Duitama and Sogamoso, the opportunity for promoting culinary heritage to boost tourism is quite significant, although it is still untapped. This may be due to a number of factors, but the main problem is that of exploiting the potential of the culinary heritage, which requires building competencies within the community, increasing network efficiency, and developing appropriate policies.

As it follows from the analysis of the thematic fields presented above, there is a diversity of perspectives through which one may analyze the significance of culinary heritage for sustainable development processes, as, firstly, it represents one of the key components of identity, knowledge, and memory, and secondly, it implies certain ways of promoting sustainable development and cultural tourism. One may say that the approach to culinary heritage taken into account here is based on the idea that such a tradition should be considered not merely as heritage from the past but also as means of meeting present-day challenges.

It is, thus, necessary to proceed with developing the integration of actions that will acknowledge the heritage value of gastronomy as the essential element for developing structures for communal, educational, production, and tourism activities. The recovery of gastronomic information, coordination of training processes, conservation of the natural environment, and development of sustainable tourism circuits require the participation of various stakeholders, including specialists, organizations, local governments, and tourists. It is only possible to define and transform traditional foodways as heritage and a social change factor in municipalities such as Duitama and Sogamoso through a participatory process.

2. Materials and Methods

The investigation will adopt a qualitative research methodology, which is ideal for providing insights on the visions, meanings, and lived experiences of the social actors, which provide a better understanding of the culinary heritage based on the perspectives of those responsible for maintaining or practicing it. The choice is correct since it conforms to the ideas advanced by Senthilkumar et al. (2024), where they suggest that it is appropriate for investigating cultural events that take place in particular settings, considering that it highlights the interpretation of local contexts and the narratives of its social actors. On the other hand, the applied scope was descriptive, which was characteristic of the conditions or factors responsible for either preserving or losing the culinary heritage in Duitama and Sogamoso, per the assertions made by (Almansouri et al., 2022).

Methodologically, the design is situated against the backdrop of the recommendations offered by action research in favor of the creation of knowledge as a space where possibilities of social transformation can arise through direct actions carried out by community protagonists themselves. Methodologically speaking, the design described hereafter follows the approach outlined by Schimperna (2020) and is inspired by the principles of the reflective cycle of diagnosis, action, and evaluation in order to bring about meaningful transformations of the realities studied. In our study, such action is embodied by the strategic improvement plan that aims at conserving, rejuvenating, and exploiting the culinary heritage, assisted by a wide range of experts in gastronomy.

The sample of the study was 120 subjects who occupied the position of chefs and traditional experts in the municipalities of Duitama and Sogamoso, and these subjects were identified via the technique of convenience sampling, which is one of the common techniques utilized in qualitative studies aimed at accessing relevant informants with known experience of dealing with a particular phenomenon. The initial population included 230 potential participants, and from this population, only those subjects who had more than five years of experience with preparing traditional dishes

and transferring local cooking skills were taken into account. Also, these subjects had to be regarded by the community as authorities of traditional gastronomy, to have lived permanently in one of the two municipalities for their whole life and to be willing to participate in every stage of the study.

Regarding the application of the qualitative method for conducting the research, one can claim that it was rather appropriate as there was a need to acquire diverse and detailed information concerning the issues being researched. In particular, semi-structured interviewing is considered to have been one of the major methods of data collection in the process of research. The purpose of this tool was to detect the elements affecting the role of culinary heritage as an asset for achieving sustainable development. The instrument involved 15 main content questions grouped into several blocks including culinary practices, changes in food customs, sustainability beliefs, and conservation measures. Moreover, in order to make sure the instrument would be valid, the authors submitted it for consideration to some experts in the sphere of gastronomy and methodology, analyzing its validity, credibility, relevance, and consistency. Another method applied included the focus group. To validate the improvement plan suggested in the framework of the second phase of the research, several chefs and local experts were invited to share their ideas. A questionnaire was used to give voices to key informants.

This process took place in a sequence of three phases that were interconnected with each other. Firstly, the phase that is considered to be diagnostic had as its main task to study the food culture of Duitama and Sogamoso regarding sustainable development. It should be emphasized that the study paid attention to current trends in this respect and identified risk factors that influence traditional cuisine significantly and include industrialization of food, changing the eating habits and the extinction of traditional cooks. The second phase, aimed at formulating a strategy, used the results of the diagnosis as its foundation, and was supposed to develop proposals about how to promote traditional cuisine as living heritage and involve education, cultural tourism, increasing the level of production and utilization of local products into consideration. The last third phase, in turn, was implemented after validating the action plan developed as a result of diagnosis with participation of gastronomic experts, chefs and traditional experts in order to make the plan culturally relevant, feasible and sustainable.

Conclusively, the approach adopted was one which aimed at conducting an all-encompassing and interactive study on the subject matter since it incorporated the integration of theory-based knowledge with the participation of social participants. With the use of the qualitative technique, descriptive attributes, and action research strategy, it became possible not only to conduct an in-depth study on the problems encountered concerning the gastronomic culture of Duitama and Sogamoso but also make recommendations on how to improve and utilize the same sustainably, based on the research objectives.

3. Results

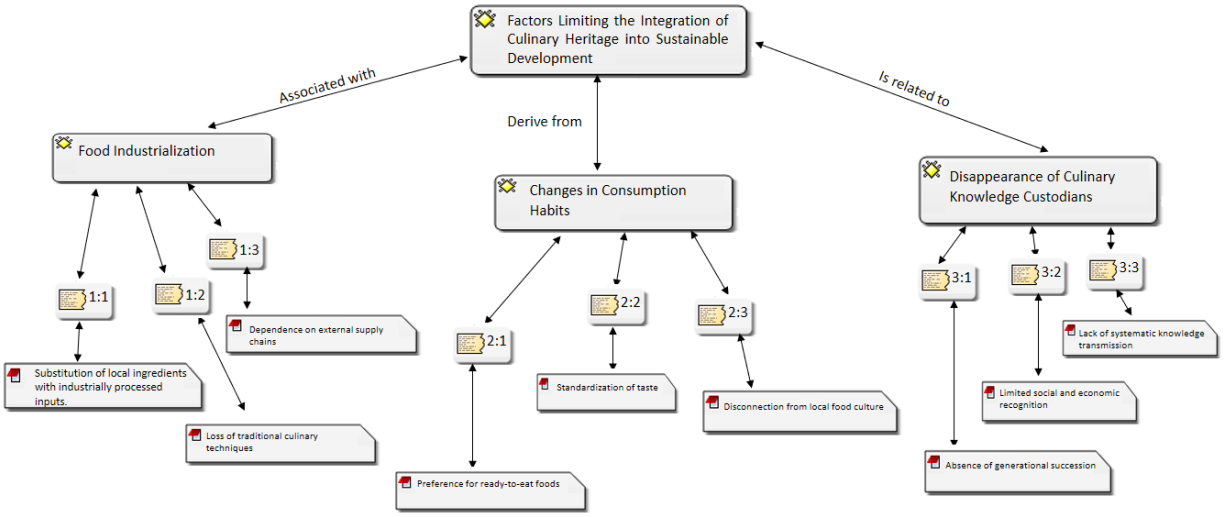
The results obtained during the research have been produced as a consequence of the three phases of the methodology design. Thus, the achievement of this condition allows for achieving consistency among the research goals, procedures, and results. In other words, it is the approach towards the result presentation that allows for understanding the entire research process from analyzing the culinary heritage and needs to developing the improvement strategy through involving the stakeholders in it and, eventually, assessing the efficiency of the suggested measures.

3.1 First Phase Results

The initial stage of the study, conducted to diagnose the situation, had a goal to describe the culinary heritage of Duitama and Sogamoso and to evaluate its influence on sustainable development. For this purpose, a semi-structured interview containing 15 questions was developed to examine the existing culinary tradition, the shifts in dietary behavior, and the factors that might endanger the preservation of the culinary heritage. The data collected from the key informants was then processed via Atlas.ti 7.0 qualitative research software.

The analysis process was performed in three interconnected steps: open coding, focused on the discovery of concepts derived directly from the language of the informants; axial coding, where connections among preliminary conceptual categories could be drawn; and selective coding, where all the data gathered was put into relation with central concepts. In such a way, it was possible to build a semantic network (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Semantic network based on interviews with informants



Note: The graph shows how these emerging categories have been generated from the results of analyzing the instrument used.

From the analysis done, it was found out that the barriers to the utilization of culinary heritage as a tool for sustainable development could be categorized in three ways. First is the factor of food industrialization as this has led to the intake of highly processed foods, leading to the impact of this kind of food production on traditional food preparations. Second is the shift in consumer behavior where the preferences of young consumers are moving towards instant and standard products, and also there has been the loss of traditional recipes through generations. Third, there is the issue regarding the progressive loss of people who act as stewards in the preparation of traditional foods, as these people lack successors and also because they are socially marginalized in society.

3.1.1 Results of the food industrialization category analysis

For analysis under the theme of food industrialization, an attempt was made to determine the impact of modernization practices in terms of the use of food on the retention of traditional culinary heritage in the municipalities of Duitama and Sogamoso. This was meant to determine the extent of the impact that the use of industrialized factors in the process of making typical regional foods would have had, as culinary heritage is an important component of culture in sustainable development (Sgroi, 2023).

Based on the logic of replacing locally manufactured products, taking into account the evidence from the interviewees, it is necessary to highlight the tendency towards the replacement of local ingredients with widely available products that require no further processing. Considering the evidence provided by the interviewees, it may be suggested that products such as flour, sauces, and other seasonings that come in packaging have led to the disappearance of fresh local products, which in turn has not only influenced the quality of taste but has had an impact on local farming as well. The findings presented here are associated with the issue discussed by (Lee et al., 2022).

Speaking about the disappearance of the knowledge on how to prepare food, it was stressed by the respondents that wood fire used for cooking, milling the grains, and even fermenting food products in a natural way had been supplanted by the latest technology whose main purpose is not cultural but rather efficient. It was stated that the above factors were not just related to the

transmission of knowledge from one generation to another but also had cultural implications.

Some sources mention that there are some rural communities where such methods are practiced, but not so often anymore. This issue correlates with the claim made by Nevot (2023) that food customs are actually social customs that create people's identity, and the loss of these customs has consequences outside of cooking practices.

As far as dependence on external supply chains is concerned, the respondents claim that there has been a replacement of local markets with big distributers and hypermarkets. This has resulted in a reduction in the demand for farm produce. The respondents argue that this trend undermines the economic well-being of the local families and diminishes the producer-consumer relationship, turning cooking into a process which happens outside of the territory. Young people in the region cannot even identify ingredients that belong to them anymore. In this respect, according to (Raftowicz et al., 2024), food globalization is associated with the homogenization of diets.

Conclusively, the findings reveal that the role played by the food industry is negative when considering the effect of the industry on the traditional foods of Duitama and Sogamoso in relation to taste and inheritance of knowledge from the indigenous people. Triangulation makes it clear that the most serious issues facing the conservation of the culinary heritage are the usage of substitutes for the ingredients in foods, failure to use traditional procedures, and dependency on external sources. Reflexively, one can note that, without any measures taken to promote traditional foods, this aspect of culture will soon be gone.

3.1.2 Results of analysis of the food industrialization category

Consumption Patterns Changes was another one of the categories that were taken into account with the aim of determining the effect of changes in culture and society, especially among the youth, on the consumption patterns of local foods in the municipalities of Duitama and Sogamoso. The above category is appropriate for a research study since it would aid in understanding how the development of culinary customs associated with culture as well as the establishment of consumption patterns which are immediate, standardized, and disconnected from territories have come about, thereby becoming a threat to cultural and food sustainability (Lindsey, 2024).

As stated in the literature, the preference for standard food products among young people is one reason why there would be less incentive to cook traditional dishes. As far as the views of the interviewees are concerned, this issue stems from the impact of urbanization, busy life style, and the influence of the globalization of the food chain. This issue has also been discussed by Kılıçhan et al., (2021), who state that food modernity results in standard consumption behaviors.

But, on the other hand, there are some interviewees who disagree with this view, claiming that while there has been a marked decrease in the sharing of recipes, there will be instances where some of the traditional meals will be prepared during religious festivals, food fairs, and even at home during get-togethers. However, what these interviewees say is that the number of such instances is decreasing rapidly and cannot turn the tide of eating processed foods around. The clash between tradition and modernity appears to agree with the views expressed by (Romero and Francis 2020).

Based on the results from this category, it is evident that the shift in consumer behavior, especially among the youth, plays a role in reducing the local food culture in Duitama and Sogamoso. It is notable that the rising preference for fast and processed foods coupled with the reduced practice of recipe transmission has resulted in weak food practices and thus weak cultural sustainability. Indeed, it is reflective that the sustainability of the food culture in the selected cities solely depends on the success of the educational program designed to revive cooking and recipe transmission as a living tradition.

3.1.3 Results of the analysis of the category "Disappearance of culinary tradition experts"

In the "Disappearance of culinary tradition experts" category, the aim was to determine the way the absence of generational replacement and the little importance attributed socially and economically to the people carrying the knowledge related to gastronomy are making the conservation of the culinary culture of Duitama and Sogamoso vulnerable. This category is analyzed with the purpose of demonstrating that the survival of the culinary tradition is not only a matter of products and techniques but also of people.

All informants are convinced that people familiar with cooking culture – namely older persons from rural areas – are dying off, leaving no one to pass on their knowledge. According to the informants, youth are not involved in studying traditional wisdom due to the awareness that these will not provide any benefits or that they do not fit their way of life. Thus, recipes, practices, and stories associated with regional culture become at risk of extinction. As noted by Newling (2024), tradition exists only when it is actively used and passed down to younger generations; otherwise, it is forgotten.

One more important point raised from the interviews is the disadvantaged social and economic position of such knowledge keepers. As mentioned by the interviewees, in contrast with other specialists, traditional cooks do not have any recognition or any economic advantage, and so are disadvantaged. As the interviewees believe, the absence of value makes these individuals demotivated for preserving their culture in the future. This issue has been discussed in a study conducted by (Sathatip et al., 2025), according to which culinary heritage cannot survive without some mechanism of society's recognition.

Nevertheless, several people partly agree with this statement and claim that there are local activities such as food fairs where specialists are still engaged and share their experience with other people; however, it is not seen as something really important to ensure sustainability of preserving heritage. Most of the interviewed individuals believe that despite implementing such approaches, fast destruction of heritage will not be prevented. Such an opposition corresponds to the findings suggested by (Ibrahim et al., 2025).

From the above discussion, it is clear that the information collected from this particular section can be utilized in substantiating the claim that the absence of cooking experts threatens the survival of traditional food in both Duitama and Sogamoso. From the above observation, it is clear that cooking recipes are hardly transferred from generation to generation, while cooking experts are not appreciated. It can therefore be viewed as failure in cultural transmission. Reflectively, one may be prompted to inquire about the role of the society, scholars, and other institutions in safeguarding culinary culture.

As we have seen from the analysis done during the diagnostics stage, there is a tendency for the deterioration of the culinary culture of Duitama and Sogamoso. Several factors can be considered responsible for the trend, and these operate within the same principles of interactions. According to the new classification, the process of food industrialization, alterations in the consumption model, and lack of experts in the culinary culture are the major causes of the destruction of this culture. This means that the gastronomy has lost its credibility in relation to the new models of production and consumption.

Preliminary results indicate that there is a change in the composition, techniques, and distribution networks employed, together with the preference of the younger generation towards convenience and consistency with regard to eating practices, devoid of any intent of acquiring expertise in or crafting their meals. There is also the matter of the death of people responsible for the transmission of culinary information in a socially and economically obscure manner. The above findings correlate with the arguments put forth by Stalmirska and Ali (2023) on the influence of globalization on food practices, characterized by homogenization rather than diversity in cuisine.

Upon examining everything said above, it would be logical to conclude that the vulnerability of

culinary heritage in those mentioned above communities is relatively high. Such aspects as authenticity of taste, absence of communication chain and indifference towards bearers of culinary heritage may lead to danger of loss of culture associated with food. Thus, it is not only about culinary traditions, but also about cultural orientation.

Last but not least, during the diagnostic phase, it should be noted that there is the need for development of activities whose focus will be on maintaining, reviving, and enhancing the cultural heritage related to cooking practices within the society. This will involve the appreciation of cooking as live cultural heritage; creation of opportunities for the transmission of culture between various generations; increased utilization of local ingredients; and ensuring that experts become key players in sustainable development. The above will only be achieved through collective work by the community and other organizations.

3.2 Second Phase Results

The culinary representations found in the communities of Duitama and Sogamoso in Boyacá, Colombia, are the product of the daily and evolving interaction of inherited knowledge and converging social dynamics between elements such as peasant knowledge, colonialism, and the global avant-garde. A network of social relationships shaped by the daily experiences of individuals is the product that emerges through traditional cuisines in these territories. However, it is important to analyze the different factors that surround this heritage.

The results emerging from the first phase of the study reveal problematic situations that are seen as latent threats that could jeopardize the continuity and permanence of these communities' culinary heritage.

Among the factors threatening the continuity of culinary traditions in the department of Boyacá, Colombia, are the adoption of technological processes, the implementation of cutting-edge gastronomic techniques involving the use of chemical agents that cater more to the diner's experience than to the enjoyment of the food itself, and the continuous imposition of state regulations that affect popular cuisines. In addition to consumer trends toward low-fat and low-carbohydrate foods, continuous climate change is compounded by the scarcity of traditional inputs in the production of necessary foods. Furthermore, the permanent displacement to large cities for academic or work purposes, the aging and death of traditional food producers, and other factors are among the latent threats that undoubtedly put the tradition surrounding the culinary heritage at risk.

This could be due to the same economic, social, political, and environmental dynamics that are part of the changing models that have emerged from globalization. However, it is clear that, as a result of the aforementioned causes, uncontrollable problems are arising due to the plurality of actors involved in the gastronomic heritage processes in the territories of Duitama and Sogamoso.

Figure 2 below presents the factors that are threatening the disappearance of the heritage associated with traditional cuisines in the territories of Duitama and Sogamoso.

Figure 2: Factors that negatively affect the gastronomic heritage of the municipalities of Duitama and Sogamoso (Department of Boyacá – Colombia)



Note: The figure shows a word cloud related to factors affecting the continuity of gastronomic heritage in the municipalities of Duitama and Sogamoso (Department of Boyacá, Colombia).

From this perspective, it is pertinent to formulate targeted actions to safeguard culinary knowledge in the territories under study. To this end, a DOFA matrix was outlined (see Table 1), derived from the findings of previous stages of the study, which considers the strengths and opportunities presented by culinary heritage and its importance in the sustainable development of communities.

Table 1: SWOT analysis of cultural heritage associated with traditional cuisines in the municipalities of Duitama and Sogamoso-Boyacá (Colombia).

STRENGTHS (S)	WEAKNESSES (W)
F1. Resilience of culinary knowledge bearers F2. Continuity of culinary traditions, especially in rural areas F3. Interest among younger generations in pursuing careers in traditional gastronomy F4. Inclusion of traditional dishes in the culinary offerings of the municipalities of Duitama and Sogamoso F5. The taste for traditional ingredients and food preparations is maintained, especially among older adults.	D1. Difficulty in obtaining raw materials for preparations. D2. Limited intergenerational transmission of culinary knowledge. D3. Young people are disconnected from their culinary culture. D4. There is a preference for fast food, ultra-processed foods, and international cuisine. D5. Limited support from municipal authorities for promoting traditional cuisines as an element of sustainable development.
OPPORTUNITIES (O)	**THREATS (A)**
O1. Possibility of generating a sense of ownership through educational institutions aimed at young children. O2. Creation of sectoral roundtables promoting culinary heritage. O3. Strengthening of culinary expressions through regional and national public events. O4. Use of digital technologies and	A1. Rising prices of raw materials for food production. A2. Regulatory impositions that affect the continuity of culinary heritage. A3. Death or disappearance of knowledge bearers and breakdown of the social fabric. A4. Lack of recognition of heritage on a social and cultural level. A5. Replacement of traditional and local

platforms to promote culinary heritage. O5. Design and innovation in traditional gastronomic offerings projected into experiences for tourists, based on local uses and knowledge.	ingredients with imported products, coupled with the shift from artisanal to industrial utensils.

Note: The table presents the SWOT Matrix resulting from the analysis in the study.

This analysis of the DOFA shows that the culinary heritage of Duitama and Sogamoso has significant strengths that suggest its sustainability and preservation, given the resilience of the bearers of knowledge and the permanence of rural traditions, which form a necessary cultural support for sustaining and keeping traditional cuisines alive. Added to this is the interest of some young people in becoming professionals in traditional gastronomy, adding possibilities for the transmission and appropriation of this knowledge in formal and tourist settings. Together, these strengths have led to the rise of significant cultural and social capital, which has given rise to the reactivation of local and regional identities.

However, the matrix analysis also reflects the weaknesses and threats that are part of the same environment in which this heritage is preserved. The threats that limit the transmission of heritage to future generations are related to the difficulty in accessing raw materials, the disconnection of young people from their gastronomic culture, and the trend toward the consumption of ultra-processed foods. The weaknesses observed are accentuated by threats arising from the environment: inflation in raw materials, regulations that may in fact threaten certain practices, and the disappearance of the people who carry on culinary traditions, which may lead to alterations in the social and cultural fabric. In this context, it is clear that culinary heritage faces a fragile situation that requires urgent attention.

However, opportunities arise that can be exploited to turn weaknesses into strengths. The role of human capital training institutions in generating a culture of ownership, sectoral roundtables, the use of digital technologies (including the Internet and digital communication), and innovative gastronomic experiences for tourism are components that can serve as catalysts for sustainable development, i.e., as elements that would make it possible to overcome the weaknesses identified. In this sense, the SWOT matrix reflects existing weaknesses, but also serves as a basis for building an action plan capable of leading to the articulation of social, institutional, and community actors, with the aim of safeguarding traditional cuisines and their projection over time, as part of the cultural heritage of Duitama and Sogamoso.

Thus, based on the identification of these disparate dynamics between strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, an action plan is formulated to safeguard and promote the culinary heritage in the municipalities of Duitama and Sogamoso. This plan, which can be seen in Table 2, presents strategies that allow for the enhancement of the strengths and opportunities that were identified, as well as suggesting specific actions to mitigate weaknesses and counteract threats, thus constituting a cultural and social management tool for the promotion of traditional cuisine.

Table 2: Action plan and revitalization of the culinary heritage of Duitama and Sogamoso.

Criterion	Description
General Objective	Create a mechanism for strengthening communication between local community actors, businesses, local authorities, and academia, establishing effective actions in support of traditional cuisines as part of the cultural heritage of the municipalities of Duitama and Sogamoso.
Specific objectives	- Develop training and awareness-raising processes aimed at the community and other

	stakeholders on issues related to craftsmanship, values, identity, and sustainability. - Identify the weaknesses and threats that arise in the practice of traditional cuisines, whether in terms of artisanal trades, the culinary system, or other emerging dynamics of this heritage. - Develop projects that contribute to the revitalization of culinary traditions related to traditional cuisines. - Promote the recognition and dissemination of culinary heritage in Duitama and Sogamoso at the local and regional levels.
Improvement and revitalization plan	
Opportunities for improvement	The analysis revealed a limited local gastronomic offering, but a wide range of international cuisines with preparations and ingredients that differ from the local ones, in addition to the widespread use of industrialized and ultra-processed ingredients.
Quantification and subdivision of the problem	A large number of actors involved in the process converge on problematic situations such as industrialization versus culinary craftsmanship; the loss of knowledge due to the disappearance of its bearers; and the insistent attitude of young people in adopting forms and habits of food consumption that differ from traditional ones.
Root causes	- Lack of support from state entities in formulating policies that promote culinary heritage, and instead formulating regulations that affect its expression. - Increase in the production and consumption of ultra-processed and industrialized foods, which are particularly addictive among young people. - Breakdown of the social fabric due to the exodus of young people or their displacement from their place of residence. - Market behavior favoring industrial production over artisanal production.
Improvement goals	- Propose the inclusion of practices and customs associated with the popular cuisines of Duitama and Sogamoso in regional recognition lists as cultural heritage. - Promote traditional cuisines through participation in popular festivals and national fairs such as BOYACÁ EN CORFERIAS, FIC, and ANATO. - Propose projects for the formulation of public policies that protect and value traditional culinary knowledge and the people who carry it forward.

Definition and programming of solutions	- Participate in a regional fair every semester with displays and sales of traditional cuisine. - Design a course or academic program aimed at schools to promote local cuisine and food awareness. - Incorporate traditional cuisines into the development plans of the municipalities of Duitama and Sogamoso as a potential for sustainable development in the region. - Propose the creation of a sectoral roundtable to develop tools for strengthening expressions associated with culinary heritage.
Guarantee actions	- Create a public and academic document containing: traditional preparations, artisanal and ancestral uses and techniques, traditional utensils and equipment used in food preparation, endemic and traditional products, testimonies provided by bearers of culinary knowledge, and historical research on preparations that form part of the cultural identity of the territories. - Design of audiovisual material based on the participation of experts at regional and national fairs. - Proposal for a cultural tourism product that combines culinary heritage, tourism, and sustainability as a new experience for visitors.
Contingency actions	- Support the search for suitable human talent in the formation of technical teams for the development and verification of actions in favor of traditional cuisines. - If there are no resources, implement low-cost actions, sponsorship management, and applications for state incentives. - If there is a lack of interest, propose strategies for raising awareness, consciousness, and empowerment for each group of actors.

Note: The table presents actions that promote the continuity and revitalization of culinary heritage in Duitama and Sogamoso. Source: Prepared by the author.

The formulation of an action plan and the revitalization of the culinary heritage of Duitama and Sogamoso is constructed as a comprehensive proposal that seeks to bring together community, institutional, and academic actors to find a strategy for safeguarding traditional cuisines. The overall objective is to propose strengthening mechanisms based on communication and cooperation between knowledge holders, businesses, local authorities, and academia so that traditional cuisines are recognized not only as food practices but also as cultural expressions with characteristics of sustainable development.

The stated goals indicate a clear intention to train people and revive their cooking traditions. This is due to the fact that it pinpoints the problems that were previously prevailing in the community and which made the establishment of any cultural practices impossible. The problem includes failure to pass information from one generation to another, consumption of ready-made foods, and disconnection between young individuals and their culture. All these problems have been addressed this time around through conducting studies about culinary practices and making them public.

The improvement part of the plan provides an opportunity for a deeper analysis of structural issues in traditional kitchens related to the absence of government policies and the industrialization of food on one hand, and to the destruction of social links due to young people leaving the area on the other. As a solution to the problem created by the second issue, specific aims are outlined, including involvement in fairs, organization of educational events in schools, establishment of roundtable discussions in the sector, as well as creation of academic literature and films which support the culture of the region and help preserve its memories.

On a general note, it should be understood that this plan is seen as a means that helps in connecting the idea of preserving the traditional knowledge and the dynamics of sustainable development. The success of implementing this plan relies on the ability of the actors behind this to accomplish the plan and also the communities participating together with the institutions and the authorities. Apart from being an option to solve existing challenges, this plan aims at ensuring the sustainability of the culinary heritage of Duitama and Sogamoso.

3.3 Results of the third stage

Validation of the action plan was the third step of the process. The validation of the action plan was conducted through the use of a focus group consisting of experts in the field of gastronomy. These experts comprised renowned chefs, traditionalists, and even university professors. In the focus group meeting, there was deliberation regarding the different plans and strategies that were proposed at the previous stage. This deliberation would look into the cultural relevance and sustainability of the proposed plans. There were also discussions regarding possible modifications of the plans to make them broader in scope.

For those consulted, the action plan can be considered as being relevant to reality because it responds to the needs of the community and also is aligned with the findings from the diagnostic stage. For the experts consulted, the strategies outlined offer a clear possibility for the promotion of cultural identity and the recognition of traditional dishes as a means of development. As was mentioned by the experts, among other things that should be considered is the importance of continuity of the initiatives where there is institutional support and collaboration between them.

According to the views of different chefs participating in the research, the measures undertaken to educate and sensitize the younger generation are vital. The educational programs should start in schools to foster appreciation of local foods and ingredients. Some experts argued that the inclusion of a gastronomy program in schools can be a key means of reclaiming cultural heritage and avoiding the use of industrially processed foods.

As far as the traditional experts were concerned, they had no problem with the participatory approach followed by the plan because they see this as giving a voice to people who have for many years been responsible for keeping the culinary tradition alive in the region. In fact, as far as these experts were concerned, recording the recipes, equipment used, and traditional practices in writing was an important means of preserving the culture. However, the experts did insist that the process must also take place practically.

Several academics and members of educational institutions expressed their agreement with the plan, as it provides a comprehensive overview and correlates cultural, environmental, and economic dimensions. Specifically, they stated that cooperation between the plan and cultural tourism programs could generate new job opportunities and a sustainable gastronomic offering, but they also emphasized that gastronomic tourism projects must be consistent with the principles of authenticity and sustainability so as not to give a commercial and contextless character to the traditions of their localities.

For many of the experts, the proposal to create a permanent sectoral roundtable on culinary heritage was one of the most positively received measures. They argued that such a roundtable could provide an opportunity to organize and coordinate a series of meetings between the various stakeholders and advance the management of public policies that recognize traditional cuisine as a

conservator and promoter of the region's development dynamics. In their opinion, this working group would make it possible to sustain and give continuity to the processes of dialogue, consultation, and collective decision-making.

Among the comments made, several participants indicated that funding needs to be strengthened to ensure the viability of the improvement plan. In their opinion, fairs, festivals, and food shows should be accompanied by resource management strategies, sponsorship strategies, or coordination with public or private calls for proposals. They also recommended the incorporation of evaluation indicators that can measure the cultural, social, and economic impact of the actions promoted.

As for technical feasibility, they all recognized that such proposals were feasible provided that they could be carried out progressively and consistently with ongoing institutional backing. In this context, it is important to note that based on their suggestions, active cooperation from the local authorities and higher education establishments is necessary for guaranteeing that these efforts would not only remain project-based but become public policy initiatives.

Thus, one may note that the suggestions made by the members of the focus group had a considerable impact on the validation of the proposed action plan and the adjustment thereof from the point of view of logistics and feasibility. In particular, the suggestions offered by the experts aimed at improving the educational part concerning gastronomy, coordination of efforts by different organizations, participation of the community members, and financial sustainability of the program.

On the other hand, the validation of the action plan within the focus group constituted a decisive stage in the research process, as significant consensus emerged from the dialogue between academic knowledge and technical-traditional knowledge. The interaction between chefs, experts, and academics demonstrated that culinary heritage is, at least in a significant dimension, the culmination of a cultural legacy and, in turn, a strategic opportunity for sustainable development and the materialization of the social fabric. It was concluded that the collective appropriation of valid actions leads to the revitalization of traditional cuisines becoming an everyday, sustainable task linked to the cultural identity of Boyacá.

4. Discussion

Analysis of the results will provide an interpretation of the results collected during each of the three stages of the research within the context of the theory of the link between culinary heritage and sustainable development. The resulting triangulation of results allows one to assume that the decline in traditional foods in Duitama and Sogamoso is associated not only with the changes in the cuisine and economy, but is also accompanied by a loss of symbolic relationships necessary for maintaining the cultural identity of communities. This leads to the assumption that the preservation of culinary traditions is not only an important resource for ensuring sustainability of territories, but is also a part of other sustainable development legacy strategies.

First phase results demonstrate that food industrialization, change in consumption trends, and disappearance of knowledge holders are factors that generate vulnerability regarding gastronomic heritage. Such scenario corresponds to the idea of Nevot (2023), who points out that the homogenization of taste all around the world has resulted in the decrease in gastronomic diversity and possibility of transferring knowledge between generations. Similar arguments can be made according to Lindsey (2024), who notes that modern consumption styles suggest standardization that harms the existence of local identity, something that has been mentioned by the informants who state that new generations prefer fast food over artisanal dishes. Likewise, the idea of Lee et al. (2022) regarding the substitution of local raw materials by industrial goods represents the loss of authenticity in flavor and local agricultural production. Through a reflective perspective, the first phase results demonstrate that the process of food globalization suggested by Stalmirska and Ali (2023) has favored the homogenization of culture, something that is currently threatening the sustainability of gastronomic heritage.

In this respect, the second stage of the process, which concentrated on the preparation of the action plan, decided to include the strategies for rejuvenating and preserving gastronomic heritage. The elaboration of such a plan was motivated by the necessity to define the aspects of culture, sustainability, and local development in a participative way. As indicated by Hristov and Chirico (2022), cultural sustainability occurs once there is an awareness of the need for integration between cultural diversity and the essence of any development strategy. This idea was supported in the findings as the need for community training and social awareness activities to reinforce food identity came to light. Likewise, Rehman et al. (2022) point out that sustainable food systems assist in protecting biodiversity and ensure the proper use of resources, both concepts being part of the objectives and lines of action of the plan formulated. In this context, Cheng et al. (2025) state that techniques related to the management of gastronomic heritage demand the elaboration of strategies that combine tradition and innovation, a characteristic that was considered within the proposal for cultural tourism and culinary education also included in the action plan.

Here, it should be noted that the use of triangulation in relation to insights from Zocchi et al. (2021) once again confirms the notion of using the traditional cuisines as a form of resistance to the processes of globalization. By combining the efforts of education, production, and tourism in the development of a locality, it will be possible to ensure that this process adheres to the concepts of sustainability and authenticity. Moreover, it becomes evident that it is very important for the sustainability of the culture to be able to collaborate among different government agencies, professionals, and the private sector. This approach also corresponds to the arguments presented by Senthilkumar et al. (2024), which state that the sustainability of cuisines is linked to ethics of the stakeholders.

Speaking of the validation of the action plan through focus groups with the involvement of chefs, specialists, and scholars, the appropriateness and rationality of its actions have been proven. Representatives of the discussed focus group attached particular attention to the importance of promoting education in culinary arts starting from an early age, taking into account the proposition suggested by Sathatip et al. (2025). Issues of sustainability and ethics must be addressed and integrated into the existing educational system since it is impossible not to teach future chefs how to cook food in a sustainable manner. Ibrahim et al. (2025) claim that the engagement of the local community in governance of cultural heritage is necessary since the former plays an important role in preserving sites. The above opinion is shared by the participants of the discussed focus group since all of them were in agreement regarding holding a discussion on the field regularly. The findings of the research confirm the necessity of combining practice and theory, as proposed by Højlund and Mouritsen (2025).

In this sense, the outcomes of all three phases from an intersecting point of view indicate that not only is the gastronomic legacy of Duitama and Sogamoso a cultural legacy but also a resource for fostering sustainable development. In this sense, the findings align with the research conducted by Putri and Wijoyo (2023), who found in the culinary tradition of a territory a potential resource for its territorial differentiation and the consolidation of group identity within globalization. Likewise, Coelho (2025) proposes that the culinary tradition of a region can serve as the foundation of gastronomic culture if the approach to it is based on authenticity and respect for social reality, which is consistent with the tourism promotion activities promoted in the Action Plan.

To be more exact, it becomes evident from the analysis that the preservation and development of the gastronomic culture require a complex approach to which the notions of education, environmental sustainability, innovation in production, and socialization are closely associated. On the basis of the empirical evidence and theories analyzed, it becomes possible to assume that the preservation of the traditions of the cooking culture requires not just preservation of recipes but the preservation of social and economic relations under which the mentioned cultural heritage was created. Therefore, the protection of the gastronomic culture of the towns of Duitama and Sogamoso can be seen as a potential way of developing the area.

5. Conclusions

As can be seen from the research, the gastronomic heritage of Duitama and Sogamoso is experiencing a radical change due to industrialization of food, changes in consumer behavior, and the disappearance of people familiar with the gastronomic heritage. All this has led to the fact that the transfer of gastronomic knowledge from generation to generation, as well as its connection with territory and culture, became so difficult that now there is a need to adopt ways of preserving local culinary memory as the context of intangible heritage and collective identity.

The development of the action plan itself is presented as one of the fundamental contributions to the dissemination of traditional cooking practices, as well as the manner in which the educational, tourist, and productive aspects can be articulated through a participatory process, in which the action plan aims to articulate traditional knowledge with technical and scientific knowledge, by formulating management strategies for the preservation and development of culinary heritage as an element of sustainable development in the community. Thus, the actions of education, dissemination, and empowerment of key stakeholders, along with cultural tourism promotion initiatives, among others, represent an innovative proposition for the revalorization of Boyacá's cuisine.

Validation of the action plan by the focus group of chefs, experts, and scholars was essential to its validity and cultural relevance as well as sustainability. Contributions of the experts included the necessity for incorporating training in traditional gastronomy from early ages, creating a consistent sectoral round table, as well as coordination among the community, scholars, and other organizations at the local level. Such factors make the action plan more inclusive in its nature, as well as the fact that the sustainability of any culinary heritage requires common effort as well as the social acknowledgement of the culinarians themselves.

In summary, from the results of the investigation, it is evident that the conservation of the cooking techniques is indispensable in creating an ideal framework for sustainable development in the municipalities of Duitama and Sogamoso since the use of tradition cuisine, being a cultural practice, may promote social cohesion, job creation, and even raise environmental awareness. To put it differently, it is crucial to preserve these practices not only because one wants to obtain a “cookbook” or “techniques” but also because one needs to revive the communal aspect and symbolism that forms the very identity of this territory.

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Data Availability: The qualitative data (focus group discussions and semi-structured interview transcripts) supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request to ensure the privacy of the 120 participants.