

Research Article

Preserving Gastronomic Heritage through Culinary Entrepreneurship

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Abstract. Gastronomic heritage has become an important component in strengthening cultural identity and tourism destination competitiveness. However, previous studies have primarily emphasized gastronomy as a tourism attraction, while the role of culinary entrepreneurs in preserving gastronomic heritage remains underexplored. This study aims to examine how culinary entrepreneurship contributes to preserving gastronomic heritage through a phenomenological approach. The research was conducted at Singkong Keju D-9 in Salatiga, Central Java, involving the business owner as the main participant. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation, and analyzed using phenomenological data analysis. The findings reveal that culinary entrepreneurship preserves gastronomic heritage through four interconnected practices: revalorizing local food, preserving culinary authenticity, knowledge sharing, and community empowerment. These practices collectively transform local food into cultural and tourism assets while maintaining product authenticity, transmitting culinary knowledge, empowering local communities, and strengthening the identity of gastronomic destinations. The study further demonstrates that culinary entrepreneurs serve not only as economic actors but also as custodians and transmitters of gastronomic heritage. This research contributes to gastronomic tourism literature by proposing a research findings framework that explains the relationship between entrepreneurial practices and gastronomic heritage preservation, providing practical implications for developing sustainable gastronomy tourism destinations based on local cultural heritage.

Keywords: Community Empowerment; Culinary Entrepreneurship; Destination Identity; Gastronomic Heritage; Gastronomic Tourism; Knowledge Sharing; Local Food.

1. Introduction

Kivela & Crotts (2005) explain that gastronomic tourism is a form of tourism that provides visitors with meaningful travel experiences through the exploration of local food as an integral part of their journey. From this perspective, food is viewed not merely as a means of satisfying physiological needs but also as a medium through which tourists can understand the culture, traditions, and distinctive characteristics of a destination.

Wolf (2002) argues that the development of culinary tourism has become an important economic opportunity capable of enhancing destination attractiveness through the utilization of local food resources. Culinary products that reflect the uniqueness and identity of a region create added value for the tourism industry while strengthening the competitive position of destinations in the global tourism market.

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2017) emphasizes that gastronomy represents a strategic resource for sustainable tourism development because it integrates cultural, economic, and community dimensions into a comprehensive tourism experience. Furthermore, the Guidelines for the Development of Gastronomy Tourism published by the World Tourism Organization and the Basque Culinary Center (2019) state that gastronomy tourism development should be supported by preserving local culinary identity as an essential component of a destination's cultural heritage.

Medina & Tresserras (2007) argue that gastronomic heritage encompasses not only traditional food but also local knowledge, culinary techniques, cultural values, and social practices that are transmitted across generations. Therefore, preserving gastronomic heritage plays a significant role in safeguarding cultural identity while enhancing the attractiveness of tourism destinations.

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Utami (2018) explains that the sustainable preservation of cultural heritage strengthens local identity and provides added value for the development of cultural tourism. Nevertheless, modernization, globalization, and changing consumption patterns pose significant challenges to the continuity of traditional cuisine if they are not accompanied by sustainable preservation efforts.

Robinson & Getz (2013) note that most studies on gastronomic tourism primarily focus on tourists' experiences in consuming local food and its contribution to the overall travel experience. This perspective positions gastronomy mainly as a tourism product rather than as a form of cultural heritage that requires long-term preservation.

Saeroji & Wijaya (2017) demonstrate that gastronomy plays an important role in shaping destination identity through the uniqueness of local culinary resources. Likewise, Sufa et al. (2020) emphasize that successful gastronomy tourism development requires collaboration among local communities, cultural resources, and entrepreneurs to create authentic tourism experiences. However, these studies have not comprehensively explained how entrepreneurial practices contribute to the preservation of gastronomic heritage.

This condition indicates a significant research gap regarding the role of culinary entrepreneurs in preserving gastronomic heritage. Entrepreneurs are generally perceived as economic actors whose primary objective is profit generation. In practice, however, they also contribute to maintaining the quality of local products, transmitting culinary knowledge, encouraging innovation while preserving traditional values, and empowering local communities through community-based business development. These roles suggest that culinary entrepreneurship represents an important mechanism for sustaining gastronomic heritage while strengthening destination identity.

This phenomenon can be observed in Singkong Keju D-9, a culinary enterprise located in Salatiga, Central Java, which has successfully transformed cassava from an ordinary local food into a widely recognized gastronomic product. Beyond product innovation, the enterprise has stimulated the development of a cassava-based culinary cluster, created economic opportunities for local communities, and facilitated knowledge transfer by sharing entrepreneurial experiences with other business owners. These developments are consistent with the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy's efforts to promote gastronomy tourism and strengthen regional culinary identity as part of destination competitiveness.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to explore how culinary entrepreneurship contributes to the preservation of gastronomic heritage through the conservation of local food products, knowledge transfer, community empowerment, and the strengthening of destination identity. A phenomenological approach was employed to understand the lived experiences of a culinary entrepreneur whose business practices generate not only economic value but also contribute to the sustainability of gastronomic heritage. The findings are expected to enrich the literature on gastronomy tourism, particularly by highlighting the strategic role of entrepreneurs as key actors in preserving gastronomic heritage.

2. Literature Review

This section reviews previous studies related to gastronomic heritage, culinary entrepreneurship, and tourism. It also identifies the research gap that provides the foundation for the present study.

Gastronomic Heritage in Tourism

Gastronomy is an essential element of tourism development because it connects food with the culture, history, traditions, and identity of a destination. In the context of tourism, gastronomy is understood not merely as the act of consuming food but also as an experience through which visitors can appreciate local values by observing food production, preparation, presentation, and the stories associated with culinary products. Kivela & Crotts (2005) explain that gastronomic tourism has evolved as a form of tourism experience that enables visitors to understand the distinctive characteristics of a destination through its local cuisine.

Wolf (2002) argues that culinary tourism has become one of the major attractions capable of enhancing the economic value of tourism destinations. The uniqueness of local cuisine not only attracts tourists but also differentiates one destination from another. Therefore, gastronomy tourism development should focus not only on increasing tourist arrivals but also on preserving the culinary characteristics that represent the identity of a destination.

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2017) emphasizes that gastronomy is a strategic resource for sustainable tourism development because it promotes a balance between economic benefits, cultural preservation, and the well-being of local communities. Likewise, the Guidelines for the Development of Gastronomy Tourism published by the World Tourism Organization and the Basque Culinary Center (2019) state that successful

gastronomy tourism development depends on a destination's ability to preserve its local culinary identity as part of its cultural heritage.

Gastronomic heritage encompasses not only traditional food products but also local knowledge, culinary techniques, social practices, and cultural values transmitted from one generation to the next. Medina & Tresserras (2007) explain that gastronomic heritage constitutes an important component of cultural identity with significant historical and social value. Therefore, preserving gastronomic heritage involves not only safeguarding traditional food but also protecting the knowledge, meanings, and cultural practices embedded within it.

Utami (2018) argues that preserving cultural heritage contributes to strengthening local identity while enhancing the attractiveness of cultural tourism destinations. Nevertheless, globalization, changing lifestyles, and the increasing dominance of modern food products pose significant challenges to the continuity of traditional cuisine. Consequently, preservation efforts should seek to balance innovation with the sustainability of cultural values to ensure that gastronomic heritage remains relevant to both local communities and tourists.

Based on these studies, gastronomic heritage can be understood as an important component of cultural heritage that contributes to shaping destination identity. The preservation of gastronomic heritage depends not only on the existence of traditional food but also on the individuals and institutions that safeguard culinary knowledge, product quality, and cultural values. Therefore, the sustainability of gastronomic heritage requires the active involvement of multiple stakeholders, including culinary entrepreneurs, local communities, and government institutions, to ensure that gastronomy continues to serve as both a tourism attraction and a representation of local cultural identity.

The Role of Culinary Entrepreneurs in Gastronomic Heritage Preservation

Culinary entrepreneurship refers to entrepreneurial activities that extend beyond economic profit by emphasizing product development, innovation, and value creation based on local culinary resources. Within the tourism context, culinary entrepreneurs occupy a strategic position by connecting local resources with the experiences enjoyed by tourists. Through the products and services they provide, culinary entrepreneurs introduce local cultural identity while enhancing the attractiveness of tourism destinations.

Hall & Sharples (2003) argue that local food has become an essential component of the tourism experience because it represents the culture, traditions, and identity of a destination. Consequently, culinary entrepreneurs have the responsibility not only to maintain product quality but also to communicate the cultural values embodied in local cuisine to visitors.

Bessière (1998) explains that gastronomy is an important element of cultural heritage that contributes to local identity formation and regional development. From this perspective, culinary entrepreneurs are not merely food producers but also custodians of culinary traditions through the use of local ingredients, the preservation of traditional cooking techniques, and the transmission of culinary knowledge across generations.

Everett & Aitchison (2008) emphasize that the relationship between food, culture, and tourism destinations has become increasingly important in achieving sustainable tourism development. Culinary products that preserve local characteristics provide more authentic experiences for tourists while reinforcing the image of destinations as gastronomic tourism attractions.

Similarly et al. (2002) argue that innovation within the culinary sector does not necessarily require altering the character of traditional food. Instead, innovation can be achieved by creating added value while maintaining the cultural identity of local cuisine. Such an approach enables culinary entrepreneurs to enhance competitiveness without compromising the authenticity that distinguishes their destinations.

Despite these developments, previous studies on culinary entrepreneurship have primarily focused on business development, product innovation, marketing, and competitive advantage. Relatively little attention has been given to the role of culinary entrepreneurs as key actors in preserving gastronomic heritage. In practice, entrepreneurial activities also include maintaining the quality of local products, transmitting culinary knowledge to future generations, empowering local communities, and sustaining regional culinary identity.

Drawing upon these perspectives, the present study views culinary entrepreneurs not merely as economic actors but also as cultural actors who contribute to preserving gastronomic heritage. This perspective provides the foundation for examining how entrepreneurial practices sustain local food products, facilitate knowledge transfer, strengthen community participation, and reinforce the identity of gastronomic tourism destinations.

3. Proposed Method

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative approach using a phenomenological method to explore the lived experiences of a culinary entrepreneur in preserving gastronomic heritage through culinary entrepreneurship practices. A phenomenological approach was selected because it enables researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' lived experiences and the meanings they attach to those experiences. This approach provides comprehensive insights into how culinary entrepreneurs perceive and interpret their roles in sustaining gastronomic heritage.

Research Site and Participant

The study was conducted at Singkong Keju D-9, a culinary enterprise located in Salatiga, Central Java, Indonesia. The research site was selected purposively because the enterprise has successfully transformed cassava, a local agricultural product, into a gastronomic product with economic value while contributing to the strengthening of the region's culinary identity. The primary participant was the owner of Singkong Keju D-9, who possesses extensive experience in developing a culinary business based on local food resources. Supporting information was obtained through field observations and documentation related to the enterprise's operational activities.

Data Collection

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using an interview guide developed according to the research objectives. Field observations were undertaken to understand business operations, production processes, and the entrepreneur's interactions with the surrounding community. Documentation, including photographs, archival records, and supporting documents, was used to complement and validate the interview and observational data, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of gastronomic heritage preservation practices.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed following a phenomenological analysis process. The analysis involved data reduction, coding, categorization of meanings into thematic findings, and interpretation of the participant's lived experiences. The resulting themes were subsequently compared with findings from previous studies to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the role of culinary entrepreneurship in preserving gastronomic heritage.

Research Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of the data was ensured through methodological triangulation by comparing evidence obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation. In addition, the researcher continuously reviewed the interpretation of the findings to ensure that the identified meanings accurately reflected the participant's experiences. These procedures were undertaken to enhance the credibility, consistency, and trustworthiness of the research findings.

Research Flow

The research began with identifying issues related to the preservation of gastronomic heritage, followed by the selection of the research site and participant. The subsequent stage involved data collection through in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation. The collected data were then analyzed using a phenomenological approach through coding, theme identification, and interpretation of the participant's lived experiences. Finally, the findings were synthesized, discussed, and interpreted to explain the role of culinary entrepreneurship in preserving gastronomic heritage.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 1. Emergent Themes of Culinary Entrepreneurship in Preserving Gastronomic Heritage.

Theme	Description	Supporting Evidence
Revalorizing Local Food	Transforming cassava into a gastronomic product with higher cultural and economic value	Product innovation and business development
Preserving Culinary Authenticity	Maintaining ingredient quality and traditional production values	Careful selection of cassava and production consistency
Knowledge Sharing	Sharing entrepreneurial experience and culinary knowledge	Mentoring UMKM and motivating entrepreneur
Community Empowerment	Creating employment opportunities and strengthening local communities	Local workforce involvement and business mentoring

Strengthening Gastro- nomic Destination	Supporting Salatiga as a gastro- nomic destination	Development of D-9 and Café Telo
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Revalorizing Local Food through Culinary Entrepreneurship

The findings indicate that culinary entrepreneurship plays a significant role in the revalorization of local food through innovation while preserving the cultural identity embedded in the product. In the case of Singkong Keju D-9, cassava, which has traditionally been regarded as an ordinary staple food, has been successfully transformed into a gastronomic product with economic value and has become one of Salatiga's culinary icons. This transformation not only increases the market value of cassava but also reshapes public perceptions of local food as an integral part of the tourism experience.

These findings suggest that innovation in culinary entrepreneurship does not necessarily involve altering the fundamental characteristics of traditional products. Instead, innovation is achieved by maintaining the primary raw material while improving product quality, diversifying product offerings, and enhancing consumer experiences. This approach demonstrates that culinary entrepreneurs can create added value without compromising the gastronomic identity that distinguishes a destination.

These findings are consistent with Kivela and Crotts (2005), who argue that gastronomy forms an essential component of the tourism experience by enabling visitors to understand the identity of a destination through its local cuisine. In this context, cassava is no longer perceived merely as an agricultural commodity but has evolved into a symbol of Salatiga's culinary identity, thereby strengthening the destination's tourism appeal.

Furthermore, the interview findings reveal that product innovation is not interpreted as abandoning local food traditions but rather as a strategy to expand the utilization of cassava while preserving its identity. Hardadi explained that business development has been undertaken by maintaining Singkong Keju D-9 as the main cassava-based culinary destination while simultaneously expanding innovation through the Café Telo concept. As he stated, "My dream is to build something like KFC. What I really want is Café Telo. However, I want D-9 to remain here because my hope is that this place will continue to attract visitors."

This statement indicates that the business expansion strategy is intended not only to increase business capacity but also to preserve D-9 as a culinary landmark of Salatiga. By maintaining D-9 as the center of cassava-based culinary tourism, business innovation contributes to preserving gastronomic heritage while simultaneously enhancing destination attractiveness. In this regard, culinary entrepreneurship generates not only economic value but also serves as a mechanism for preserving local food identity through sustainable product development.

The findings demonstrate that the revalorization of local food extends beyond increasing product value to include the construction of cassava as a symbol of destination identity. Culinary entrepreneurs therefore act as mediators between economic interests and cultural heritage preservation, ensuring that local products remain relevant and competitive within the tourism industry. This finding supports Wolf (2002), who argues that transforming local food into a tourism attraction enhances both economic value and cultural identity. Likewise, Richards (2015) emphasizes that innovation in local culinary products is an important strategy for creating authentic tourism experiences while preserving the cultural roots of local communities.

Preserving Culinary Authenticity

The sustainability of gastronomic heritage depends not only on entrepreneurs' ability to develop innovative products but also on their commitment to preserving the authenticity of raw materials and maintaining product quality. The findings reveal that Hardadi considers cassava quality to be the most important factor in maintaining consumer trust while preserving the identity of Singkong Keju D-9. Consequently, the production process prioritizes not only output quantity but also the consistent quality of the raw materials used.

Hardadi explained that maintaining product quality remains the greatest challenge because cassava is an agricultural commodity that is highly influenced by natural conditions. Although sourced from the same variety, cassava quality varies according to soil conditions, seedlings, fertilization, cultivation practices, and environmental factors. He explained, "Sometimes the soil, seedlings, fertilization, and cultivation methods still do not produce the expected results. Even when we use the same seedlings, the outcome can still be different. That is why we are continuously learning."

He further emphasized that product quality cannot be determined solely through visual inspection of the raw materials. Cassava that appears to be of good quality may not necessarily produce satisfactory results after processing. As he explained, "Cassava may look good to the naked eye, but after it is cooked, the results are not always good. Since it is a natural product, its quality is never entirely under our control."

These findings indicate that preserving gastronomic authenticity involves more than maintaining traditional recipes. It also requires entrepreneurs to consistently maintain product quality despite the uncertainties associated with natural raw materials. In this context, authenticity is understood as an ongoing commitment to preserving the original characteristics of a product through continuous quality management.

The findings broaden the understanding of culinary authenticity. Authenticity has often been interpreted primarily as preserving traditional recipes or cooking techniques. However, this study demonstrates that authenticity is also established through careful selection of raw materials, continuous quality control, and a long-term commitment to product consistency despite natural variations. Consequently, preserving gastronomic heritage depends not only on maintaining traditional cuisine but also on entrepreneurial practices that sustain product quality and consumer trust. These findings support Medina and Tresserras (2007), who argue that preserving gastronomic heritage involves safeguarding raw material quality, production techniques, and the cultural values embedded in local cuisine. Accordingly, Hardadi's practices illustrate that authenticity is an ongoing process sustained through a continuous commitment to product quality.

Knowledge Sharing through Culinary Entrepreneurship

The findings indicate that gastronomic heritage preservation is achieved not only through the provision of high-quality culinary products but also through knowledge sharing with local communities and fellow entrepreneurs. Hardadi views his entrepreneurial experience as valuable knowledge that should be shared to benefit others while encouraging the development of local food-based culinary enterprises.

Hardadi explained that he welcomes micro, small, and medium-sized enterprise (MSME) owners, university students, and community members who wish to learn about culinary entrepreneurship. Every visit is considered an opportunity to share experiences, challenges, and business strategies acquired throughout his entrepreneurial journey. As he stated; "Whenever MSME owners come here, I simply share my experiences. I tell them what I have gone through while building this business so they can learn from it."

This statement demonstrates that preserving gastronomic heritage extends beyond sustaining culinary products to include transmitting knowledge to future generations and other entrepreneurs. Knowledge related to raw material selection, business management, product innovation, and quality maintenance is directly transferred to the community. Thus, culinary entrepreneurs serve not only as custodians but also as transmitters of gastronomic heritage.

These findings broaden the understanding of gastronomic heritage preservation, which has traditionally been associated mainly with food products and culinary traditions. This study demonstrates that entrepreneurial knowledge, practical experience, and business values also constitute forms of heritage that should be transmitted to ensure the sustainability of gastronomy. Therefore, knowledge sharing represents a tangible contribution of culinary entrepreneurs to preserving gastronomic heritage within tourism destinations. These findings are also consistent with Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), who argue that knowledge sharing is a fundamental mechanism for creating and transmitting knowledge within organizations and communities. In this study, knowledge related to local food processing and entrepreneurial experience becomes part of the gastronomic heritage transmitted to society through direct interaction with culinary entrepreneurs.

Community Empowerment

In addition to facilitating knowledge transfer, the findings demonstrate that culinary entrepreneurship directly contributes to community empowerment. Hardadi has developed his business not only as an economic enterprise but also as a means of creating employment opportunities and encouraging community participation in business activities. This approach illustrates that successful culinary entrepreneurship generates broader social benefits beyond economic performance.

During the interviews, Hardadi explained that the growth of Singkong Keju D-9 has encouraged surrounding communities to participate in various economic activities associated with the culinary business. In addition to employing local residents, he also provides opportunities for community members to learn and establish their own businesses based on the knowledge and experience they have acquired. These practices demonstrate that culinary entrepreneurship serves as an effective instrument for community empowerment while strengthening local economic sustainability.

Community empowerment provides not only economic benefits but also strengthens social relationships between entrepreneurs and local communities. Community participation in production, distribution, and business development fosters a sense of ownership toward local culinary products. These findings indicate that gastronomic heritage preservation cannot

be separated from the active participation of local communities as integral components of the tourism ecosystem.

The findings suggest that culinary entrepreneurs function as community builders who connect economic development with cultural preservation. Through job creation, capacity building, and the development of businesses based on local resources, culinary entrepreneurship contributes to a more inclusive and sustainable tourism development.

Strengthening Gastronomic Destination Identity

The findings demonstrate that Hardadi's entrepreneurial practices ultimately contribute to strengthening Salatiga's identity as a gastronomic destination. The transformation of cassava into a signature culinary product, commitment to maintaining product quality, knowledge transfer to the community, and community empowerment collectively establish Singkong Keju D-9 as one of the city's culinary icons.

Business development has focused not only on increasing production capacity but also on enhancing destination attractiveness through innovation while preserving the characteristics of local food. Hardadi expressed his ambition to further develop the Café Telo concept while maintaining Singkong Keju D-9 as the primary center of cassava-based culinary activities in Salatiga.

These findings indicate that the identity of a gastronomic destination is shaped not only by the existence of distinctive local cuisine but also by the individuals who consistently preserve the sustainability of culinary products, knowledge, and cultural values embedded within them. In this context, culinary entrepreneurs act as key agents connecting local resources with authentic tourism experiences.

Based on the overall findings, the preservation of gastronomic heritage can be understood as a multidimensional process. Culinary entrepreneurship generates not only economic value through product innovation but also contributes to preserving culinary authenticity, facilitating knowledge transfer, empowering local communities, and strengthening destination identity. The relationships among these findings are synthesized in the Research Findings Framework presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Research Findings Framework: Preserving Gastronomic Heritage through Culinary Entrepreneurship.

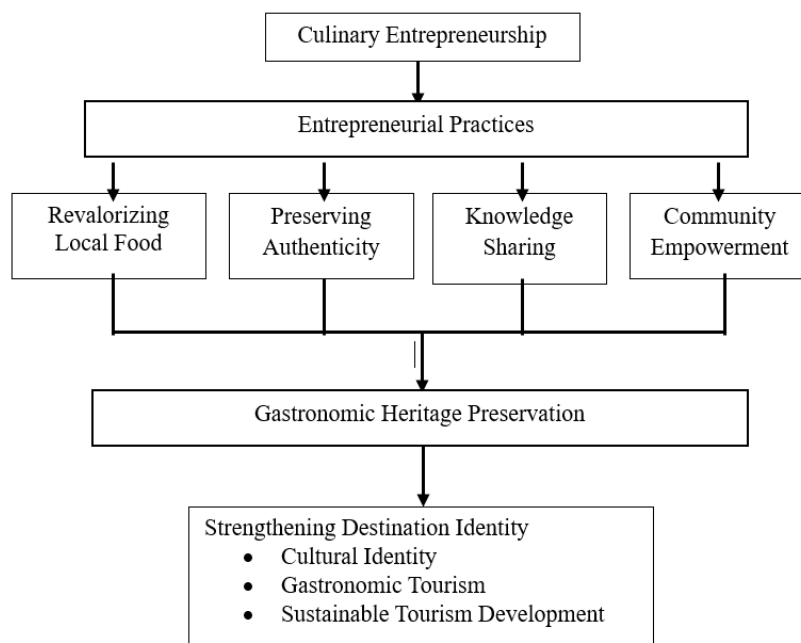


Figure 1 presents a synthesis of the research findings regarding the relationship between culinary entrepreneurship practices and gastronomic heritage preservation. The framework demonstrates that culinary entrepreneurship is manifested through four principal practices: revalorizing local food, preserving culinary authenticity, knowledge sharing, and community empowerment. Collectively, these practices constitute the process of gastronomic heritage preservation, which subsequently contributes to strengthening destination identity through the preservation of cultural identity, the enhancement of gastronomic tourism attractiveness, and the promotion of sustainable tourism development. Therefore, the framework illustrates that preserving gastronomic heritage depends not solely on culinary products themselves but rather on the integration of entrepreneurial practices, cultural values, and community engagement.

5. Conclusions

This study demonstrates that culinary entrepreneurship plays a broader role than merely generating economic value. Through a phenomenological study of Singkong Keju D-9 in Salatiga, Indonesia, four principal entrepreneurial practices contributing to gastronomic heritage preservation were identified: revalorizing local food, preserving culinary authenticity, knowledge sharing, and community empowerment. Together, these practices contribute to the preservation of gastronomic heritage while simultaneously strengthening the identity of gastronomic tourism destinations.

The findings reveal that culinary entrepreneurs function not only as food producers but also as custodians and transmitters of gastronomic heritage. These roles are reflected in their commitment to maintaining raw material quality, preserving the characteristics of local products, sharing entrepreneurial knowledge and experience with other business owners, and actively involving local communities in business development. Consequently, the preservation of gastronomic heritage depends not only on the existence of traditional culinary products but also on entrepreneurial practices that sustain knowledge, cultural values, and community participation.

The primary contribution of this study is the proposition that culinary entrepreneurship represents an important mechanism for preserving gastronomic heritage. Unlike previous studies, which have predominantly examined gastronomy as a tourism attraction or entrepreneurship as an economic activity, this study demonstrates that culinary entrepreneurs play a strategic role in sustaining the cultural identity of tourism destinations through innovation, knowledge transfer, and community empowerment. These findings enrich the literature on gastronomic tourism while providing practical implications for local governments and tourism stakeholders in designing sustainable destination development strategies based on gastronomic heritage.

This study is subject to several limitations. It focuses on a single culinary entrepreneur operating in Salatiga, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research is therefore encouraged to include multiple culinary entrepreneurs, a wider range of gastronomic products, and comparative studies across different destinations to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the role of culinary entrepreneurship in preserving gastronomic heritage.

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