SOUTH AFRICAN CULINARY IDENTITY: METHODOLOGICAL CHOICES FOR A FRAMEWORK SELECTION

ABSTRACT

South Africa consists of a melting pot of cultures, including an influx of immigrants from other African countries and cultures that have been around for the past few hundred years. It is a complex society of many ethnic races who converse in 12 official languages (including sign language), along with demographic differences such as religion, politics, and other cultural diversities. These diverse cultures with their unique food traditions have contributed to what is understood to be the everyday food culture of South Africans, the Rainbow Cuisine. Although this inclusive term is used informally to describe the country's cuisine, no formal National Culinary Identity has yet been developed for South Africa. Therefore, the purpose of this research was to present the methodological steps in the selection elimination process to find or develop, a new suitable framework that could be used in future research for the compilation and formulation of a South African Culinary Identity. The six framework development and refinement steps, developed by Ritchie and Spencer in 1994, were used to identify one framework from 27 eliminated frameworks which were not suitable for future use. However, the Sackett and Haynes Food Culture and Cuisine Model, used in their book American Regional Cuisines: Food Culture and Cooking, to determine the regional cuisines of North America, was identified as most suitable for application in a South African context. The suitability of the Sackett and Haynes model, applying the element of Foundation Foods, namely Starch, Protein and Principal Produce items, is discussed. Apart from the obvious advantages such as education, national pride, and economic applications (for example, product development and the protection of indigenous practices and heritage), National Culinary Identity could be used to promote and market the country as a unique and sustainable gastronomic travel destination, particularly to increase heritage tourism. Other uses are application in agricultural activity, branding identity and empowerment. Applying this model will also have a theoretical contribution in identifying other national cuisine identities that still have to be developed.

Keywords*: Cuisine; Culinary Identity; Framework Development; Food Heritage; Indigenous Foods; South Africa.*