

Article

Cultural Identity: A Case Study in The Celebration of the San Antonio De Padua (Lajas, Perú)

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Abstract: This study presented the first analytical experience of cultural changes in the Lajas population by analyzing their social perceptions and cultural manifestations. Moreover, an increase in the number of visitors and tourism generated new interactions that often have unknown impacts on a particular community and its people. A qualitative methodology consisting of observations and semi-structured interviews was employed to evaluate the evolution of customs during the celebration of Lajas population religious functions between 2003 and 2018. The study results revealed that in the town of Lajas, while the population recognized ways in which their customs have changed in recent decades, they were unable to determine whether or not such changes affected their cultural identity and the preservation of their cultural heritage. Further, on analyzing the obtained data and comparing it with the proposed theoretical framework, we observed a gap between social participation and public administration management, the transformation of the existing model to a centralized management control model, and the creation of an official identity. Hence, such observations are necessary to lay the foundation for future studies to avoid negative impacts and generate sustainable management strategies that would justify the effort in conserving cultural identity.

Keywords: cultural identity; heritage; popular religious festival; cultural change; Peru



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1. Introduction

Cultural identity is complex and can be defined in different ways, and in the current interaction context of globalization and technological development, where social interaction and sociocultural manifestations are in increasing evolution and are exposed in virtual environments, any social group can harbor multiple cultural identities [1]. Generally, a community's cultural identity is characterized by its beliefs, customs, values, and symbolic traditions of everyday life [2–6]. In this sense, traditions, due to their significant potential, are very important in sociocultural, economic, and political expressions in a territory [7]. Crouch [8] regarded nonrepresentative geography as the set of symbols, images, or metaphors that a group communicates as a part of its daily practices. For UNESCO [9], cultural identity is a concept derived from material and spiritual elements, inherited within a social group that represents a strong authenticity [10] and facilitates the understanding of a culture and increases the community's value. Therefore, cultural identity is a determining characteristic of a region; it encompasses its own specific features and contrasts different peoples' customs [11], alongside identifying the expressions that are the results of social interactions between different communities [12]. Hence, cultural manifestations will always constantly interact [13], change, and evolve.

This study was based on identifying and analyzing the evolution of some of the original elements that characterized the cultural identity of the Lajas people; in particular,

cultural change will be determined by studying the San Antonio de Padua religious festival over the past 15 years.

In general, festive celebrations express important symbolic elements that are part of people's daily lives, and these elements aid in determining a social structure and the values that identify it [14]. In fact, studies on festive celebrations [15–17] reveal the cultural wealth of communities. Thus, by researching the transculturation process, we can identify the ways in which a given culture has transformed or the cultural elements that have survived [18]. This process involves reflecting on social behaviors and catalysts for cultural change from different perspectives such as social, economic, environmental, and technological. Festive celebrations in general, and religious ones in particular, are an expression of cultural identity and, according to Ramírez [18], are linked to preserving memories and those breaks that invent possible futures. In this sense, processes such as globalization, which include widely diverse components, including the demystification of many celebrations [19], compels us, as researchers, to identify their cultural originality [20,21].

In that sense, in Peru, in the communities of Saccacca-Paru Paru, Misminay, and Amaru in Cusco and Raqchi in Puno, the local inhabitants exhibit their ancestral practices through religious festivals and artistic expressions that distinguish them from each other in the rural space. These communities are the product. After interacting with tourists, they modify their heritage with the modernity that they bring [22], so that, after mutual learning experiences, they build their own personal identity, all of which are an expression that reflects the identity of the people, their way of learning, behavior, and self-identity that are constantly changing [23]. Likewise, the Festival of the Virgen de la Candelaria is the most important identifying reference of the inhabitants of Puno-Peru [24], along with Lake Titicaca, the offering to Pachamama, Alasitas, and Zampoñas [25]. The veneration of the Virgen de la Candelaria is widely spread across other cities' borders, such as Lima, Arequipa, and Tacna, where the residents of these cities live and teach their devotion in their communities [26].

This devotion to the Saints in Peru, in patron or religious festivities, fulfills several functions within the community: the first is the integration function of individuals, migrants, and locals, who live together for a common reason: to bring out the festivity; the second is to achieve prestige within the group, by assigning important roles to prominent figures within the town (residents recognized by the community or by economic solvency) and who organize and pay for part of the activities of the festival; and third, to achieve a "popular sacrament" where the people preserve a genuine sense of the festive [27].

The religious identity of a particular people is manifested through the established forms of organization and ethical norms about the divine. In addition, it influences a person's meaning of life, and their way of understanding and explaining their reality is characterized by the expressions of feelings, attitudes, and moods and by a set of symbolic elements, beliefs, and rites that build a spiritual value, especially at a time of religious celebration as is the case of the present study. [16,27,28]. A religious manifestation is part of a group and individual self-perception (constructed authenticity) found in a religious festival, in a specific space and time; it also adds value to the overall experience, and the participants identify with particular local expressions [29–31].

Lajas is a town located in the province of Chota, department of Cajamarca, in Peru's northern highlands. With agriculture and livestock being its traditional occupations, Lajas is surrounded by mountains, and the Chotano and Lajeño Rivers intersect in its territory, thereby providing water to about 11,093 inhabitants [32]. The Churucancha cultural site, the thermal and medicinal baths of Chancay, and its natural landscape are some of the town's main attractions.

The San Antonio de Padua Patron Saint Festival in Lajas-Cajamarca was first celebrated in the 19th century when the town was founded in 1856. María Rivasplata, one of the community's founders, gave up her land in exchange for a festival for San Antonio de Padua. The celebrations lasted for three days in July [33]. Currently, the festival

lasts for six days since, in 2003, the local priest, Fernando Idrogo, decided to extend the celebration's duration.

The Lajas Festival consisted of three days of prayer to San Pedro. But, in 2003, more days and activities were included, sponsored mainly by representatives of the Catholic Church and a group of the faithful. In recent years, the festival has grown, and the local government, as well as other political agents, began to participate in the organization of less religious activities. The festival did not have a butler to manage this type of performance, this figure being more present in other types of minor festivities and in other districts of the area.

Since its inception, the San Antonio de Padua festival has been adapting to social changes, and new traditions are being developed that the population assumes as its own. Every year, this festival has been experiencing an increase in the number of attendees, primarily from the province of Chota and mostly from the nearby towns.

Therefore, the main objective of the study was to analyze the festival's evolution since 2003 when the celebrations of this festival were extended to six days; it is an exploratory and descriptive study of the past 15 years. Research was specifically conducted on the evolution of intangible cultural manifestations of certain customs related to religious practices, music, and gastronomy, and the social participation and perception of the celebration's development were analyzed. These aspects allowed us to expand the degree of knowledge about the cultural identity of Lajas through the San Antonio de Padua festival, thus facilitating more complete research on its evolution, impacts, and future effects.

Theoretical Framework

Currently, cultural manifestations are a determining factor in the social and economic development of many communities; therefore, managing these cultural assets is a fundamental part of understanding and preserving them. Management actions facilitate awareness of preserving a town's customs and can generate a balance between the value of local expressions and visitors' identity [12,34–36].

The conservation of a community's cultural and heritage expressions depends on numerous factors. One of the factors is the ways in which a community deals with the cultural changes produced by new experiences in different social spaces such as tourism [37]. In fact, culture and heritage are currently a form of sustainable local development, namely, social, economic, cultural, and environmental [38–41]. These relationships have evolved, and currently, several tourist destinations include this type of resource in their offerings through a diverse array of tourist products. Popular secular or religious festivals are also part of this offering and have become increasingly important as a resource due to the vast and different activities that are accessible to different segments of the population [42].

Religious celebrations are a part of the cultural tourism products offered, and therefore, according to García [43], they have a value-in-use, thereby generating opportunities for social exchanges and revitalizing the economy under the umbrella of a series of symbolic values that exist; these scenarios promote changes such as acculturation or transculturation.

Music and dance, as a cultural manifestation, express sensorial and jointly, a collective feeling that motivates an emotional psychophysiological reaction, which leads to living an experience of connection between the participants [6]. Its roots occur in specific cultural or social ecosystems [44,45], creating from this, socio-musical identities. In this sense, music finds a collective identity expressed in an image, in a dance, in speech, in an attitude towards things, this being a form of socialization, of self-definition that generates a sense of belonging [46]. Peruvian folk music expresses in its lyrics a symbol of social connection and its melody, harmony, and rhythm are a vehicle for the expression of identity. Thus, in the district of Lajas the Huayno, the norteña marinera and cumbia sanjuanera are known and valued.

Gastronomy, within a community, is an element of social construction that, associated with a particular context of the communities, reflects a trace of its identity through the form of cultivation, the selection of products, the typical dishes, and the forms to serve and

consume [47]. Naturally, typical gastronomy not only encompasses the typical dishes and drinks of a locality, but it is also a tangible representation of its eating customs, traditions, techniques, and lifestyles of the people [48].

Cultural identity in relation to citizen participation shows a dialogue and interaction without social classes, where social resilience in the face of changes allows reorganization and maintenance of its structure and group identity [49]. Likewise, it helps to the decentralization of power in local authorities and connects the needs of the population with the public administration, since it allows knowing the local reality through the opinion of the population, which helps to make better decisions regarding public policies [50]. To achieve this, the population needs to empower itself through citizen science that promotes open and democratic knowledge within the reach of the population, who participate in part of the exercise of power, debates, and local management plans [51]. Likewise, citizen participation in festivities, cultural, musical, sports, and other activities may have economic benefits and is a great opportunity to promote tourism-related business [52].

In this sense, as a Latin American benchmark of intercultural analysis, Ortiz [53] proposed the theory of transculturation as a way of explaining the complex phenomena and transmutations experienced by the Cuban and Spanish cultures and other European arrivals. Ortiz [53] analyzed the changes in the economic, institutional, ethical, religious, linguistic, and psychological aspects of life in Cuba and described transculturation as the result of different phases of the transitional process from one culture to another, thus consequently giving rise to the creation of new cultural phenomena. Transculturation, as a concept, does not imply that a certain culture is inclined toward another, but instead, it implies the transfer between two active cultures that mutually contribute, thereby supporting and cooperating toward a new reality of civilization (Malinowski as cited in Ortiz [53–55]).

García, as cited in Côté [56], called “hybridization” the sociocultural process in which separate social structures combine to create new structures that bear no resemblance to the former one because they are also hybrids.

Croucher and Kramer [57] propose the theory of cultural fusion, where human beings, when adapting to a new environment and coming from a different one, maintain a dynamic of interaction that allows them to decide what to take from a new culture, what to change, what to maintain, so from this intercultural decision process, a cultural fusion is born, where each society is the consequence of a set of subcultures open to change and in constant social adaptation. Let us also consider communication, technology, and the systemic migration [58], among other factors that contribute to social interaction. This theory maintains three conditions: socialization with the new culture, dependence on the dominant culture/environment, and the existence of communication between both cultures. Previously, Le Bon [59] in his mass psychology theory mentioned that when an individual is related to a different social group, he adopts some characteristics of the new group and of the environment he has entered. [60].

Likewise, it is worth noting the cultural theory and the model of power relations of Favre, Swedlow, and Verweij [61] who establish that power is based on culture, formed from social action, and where the sociocultural structure is reflected in public bodies and is commonly accepted by society itself.

All these approaches that try to explain the phenomenon of cultural exchange are the result of a complex network of relationships between different actors who are involved in one of the scenarios generated by celebrating a religious holiday such as residents, tourists, and public administrators, as in our case study. The relationship is multidimensional, and the results of their study analysis are uncertain because they depend on the interests of each group. Fuller [62] confronted this problem by focusing on defining the characteristics of the receiving community and then analyzing elements such as actors and their roles, the standardization of cultural heritage, and culture or conflicts in the community.

2. Materials and Methods

The methodology used in this study is based on the traditional qualitative techniques of the social sciences. In this sense, semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis were used. The type of sampling used was non-probability and convenience sampling (Kinnear and Taylor, 1998). In this sense, the selection of the key agents was determined by the degree of involvement, accessibility, and participation in the organization of the festivity and its visitors. Our study was exploratory and, therefore, preliminary, in order to increase the knowledge on the subject that concerns us in this work.

The research team has chosen this period of time, since it is from 2003 that the greatest interference of the municipality in the organization of the festival was identified, identifying progressive changes from the base date.

In the document analysis, analyzing texts, photographs, videos, and images related to the festival, which we were able to access, was essential, spanning from 2003 to 2018.

The analysis of results has followed the process of triangulation and coding of information through phrased codes and has considered the principle of information saturation, in addition to the technique of underlining and the hierarchy of colors.

In July 2018, interviews were conducted during the festival. The key agents selected for our study formed a sample of the inhabitants, the visitors, and the representatives of the sectors related to organizing the festival, such as the mayor or the parish priest and the representatives of the religious and civic committees.

We determined the diverse factors related to religious activities, clothing, entertainment, music, and gastronomy for data collection. All these factors were cultural manifestations that could be more easily converted into consumer goods and, at the same time, represent a clear expression of the community's cultural identity, thus providing us with the evidence of the evolution and sociocultural modernization. Community perception and participation were also recorded during the interviews conducted in writing and through videos. Further, the sample of key population agents was organized to set up semi-structured interviews, and a total of 43 people were interviewed. Age groups and the number of times the religious festivity of Lajas was attended have been considered, so the participants have been part of the process of cultural identity in Lajas (Table 1). The age groups are as follows.

Table 1. People interviewed during the celebration San Antonio de Padua festival in July 2018. Source: Created by the author, 2018.

Key Sectors and Agents	Sample (No. of Interviews)	Age	N° Veces en Festival Lajas
Young residents	4	20–25	10
Adult residents	6	40–60	20
Festival entertainers	2	40–50	8
Photographers	2	35–50	8
Bakers	3	30–60	15
Cooks	5	25–60	15
Bartenders	3	25–45	5
Civil and religious authorities	8	25–65	15
Visitors	10	25–55	4

3. Results

The study identified a clear evolution and transformation of the cultural manifestations in Lajas between 2003 and 2018. The most lucid aspects included changes in clothing (Figures 1 and 2), increased entertainment activities to meet the demand of those attending the celebration, the introduction of some gastronomic products, outsourcing music, and lesser attendees at the religious events. The increase in the number of visitors, their demands, and contact with locals are some of the reasons of the cultural changes that were observed.



Figure 1. Visitors and locals from Lajas in 2003 during the celebration.



Figure 2. Visitors and locals from Lajas in 2018 during the celebration.

While the use of traditional clothing (hat, poncho, and belt) is still preserved, particularly for holidays, competitions, and local public events, it has been replaced by other modern garments. In the past 15 years, the Lajas celebration has increased entertainment activities (Motocard competition, Miss Lajas Beauty Queen—rural queen (Figure 3)—music band competitions, bullfights, etc.) as opposed to more traditional activities such as the mad cow or jester bullfights.



Figure 3. Rural beauty queen competition in traditional dress (2013).

<< I used to wear the hat, but not anymore. I stopped using it when I was young >> S1

<< When the festival was just beginning and in my youth, I used to always attend the processions, but over time he stopped going . . . >> S9

<<It has always been a fun and an excuse to celebrate >> S4

<<Yes, it helps the identity of Lajeña and the rapprochement of the population towards the Patron Saint . . . >> S14

In terms of gastronomy, typical local dishes are the best sellers at the celebrations, although an evolution is also noted as other types of products are introduced. For example, compared to alcoholic beverages such as chicha de jora, warinaque, or sugar cane liquor, beer and soda are also widely available. The same is true with respect to kitchen utensils, traditionally made with clay, are replaced with aluminum tools. Gastronomy is understood as an expression that unites and generates feeling and identity because behind each typical dish that is prepared, there are a series of cultural manifestations such as the preparation methods, supplies, ways of consuming, and serving (Figure 4) [47]. In these activities, each participant has a role, a skill, and together with other symbolic and sensory elements, each participant ensures that the difference between the country and city cuisine is noticeable; the transformation of the tangible and useful activities impacts techniques and lifestyles; for example, eating out more during the celebrations [48].



Figure 4. (a) The first image shows local people killing a pig (image 4). (b) shows the same process to cook the pork.

<<I believe that gastronomy unites the family, during the festival, the residents try to show off with the best typical dishes on their tables . . . >> S11

<<There are several [typical dishes] such as guinea pig with potatoes, chicharrón with cancha, and chiuche with milk. And to drink they always drink the chicha de Jora, the soft drink>> S6

<<I usually prepare the dishes the same way my mother-in-law taught me . . . >> S11

<<I always cook, my mom taught me>> S3

<<Yes, I usually have my hidden secrets that my mother-in-law gave me>> S11

<<I have always used the pots and wooden sticks, but the pots have changed because there is no patience to cook with firewood>> S12

<<Yes, in fact, almost all year round, our dishes are based on Lajeño products and rice, which is one of the few products that are brought from the coast>> S15

In terms of music, between 2003 and 2005, the most popular traditional music genres were the yaravi, huayno, and marinera (Figure 5) played by local groups.



Figure 5. Northern Marinera, dance folk (2012).

The music in Lajas between 2003 and 2005 included huayno (Figure 6) and local rhythms with percussion and wind instruments. Local groups played musical rhythms without lyrics, sometimes accompanied by clapping and whistling. Their members wore traditional clothing at festivals in Lajas, such as ponchos, hats, and belts.



Figure 6. Huayno, dance folk. (2003).

Commencing in 2006, after participation by the invited musical groups, with increasingly modern instruments and equipment, better sound, and popular lyrics, nationally recognized songs began to dominate, thus leading to a change in the preferences in the town of Lajas, along with increased attendance. In fact, beginning in 2006, musical groups from other cities were hired, thereby introducing other genres such as cumbia or sanjuanera music, with Colombian and Ecuadorian influences. Like gastronomy, traditional genres are a part of a cultural heritage and social cohesion [6,17,63]. Therefore, their loss may risk the social structure of Lajas, which may see their collective identity compromised [45,46,64]. Music and dance in Lajas are the product of a cultural fusion where the inhabitants within this dynamic of social interaction with other cultures have decided what to take, keep, or change, considering the rhythm of socialization with external cultures, their dependence on power, and the intensity of communication between them [57].

The level and mode of the population's participation in religious activities have also evolved. Some ceremonies such as baptisms and weddings increase during the celebrations. While the religious spaces have not undergone changes, the number of people interested in these celebrations has decreased compared with an increase in those only interested in entertainment.

Religion as a part of the cultural identity in Lajas is observed in the devotion to San Antonio de Padua, particularly in adults and seniors who also, while in the minority, maintain close ties with the church outside the celebrations. The San Antonio de Padua festival is held in religious spaces that are considered sacred, such as churches, chapels, or areas designated to worship San Antonio wherein there are no changes in terms of symbolism, images, songs, and rituals such as marriages and baptisms. However, since 2011, a decrease in the congregation was identified, particularly regarding the attendance of young people at church and scheduled religious events, while popular festivals and recreational activities are more popular. While this central aspect plays a fundamental role in the festival, religious traditions are shared through family heritage and this cultural manifestation is lived passionately by those who practice it within their own space and time [29]. The community's current expression has been built up on this aspect [30,31], in addition to the values developed in the Lajas community as a part of its sociocultural structure [14].

<<I manifest my faith by going to mass and praying for my family. Also, I attend the religious activities that I am invited to, when there are baptisms or marriages and to make the rosary in the Church. >> S6

<<I go to mass and light my candles to Saint Anthony of Padua in the church>> S11

<<Well, with my family I go to mass and sometimes to the processions. Those who mostly go to mass are adults. >> S6

Participation from the population is very important in all the above-mentioned activities. Both among parish and civic groups, the San Antonio de Padua festival has been determined based on the community's decisions through its representatives. In 2009, however, the festival began to be exclusively organized by a municipal committee, which designs and establishes the festival's program, along with the church, thus not involving the population. In fact, since the festival's inception, the population has been directly involved in religious and cultural activities. While this was still the working methodology in 2003, the progressive changes identified in the festival's organization have made the residents resemble more spectators than organizers. In this sense, the municipality's responsibilities increase as a managing body that undertakes the administrative roles, thereby controlling the activities with economic benefits and an opportunity to enact and implement tourism-related policies [52]; these celebrations thus act as an identifying trait of Lajas within the town's entertainment and tourism activities. Thus, for example, until 2013, the arena was made of wood and built by the inhabitants of Lajas themselves. As visitors increased, the arena was built with cement and was built by the local government.

<<I have not participated, because there is no custom and the contestants are in charge of public institutions and organizations such as the glass of milk of the communities. >> S10

<<The residents don't take care of that, the municipality has a group of people who organize the party every year. >> S11

<<Yes, we come to parade with our banner and our funds>> S2}

As a result of these policies, we must address the population's loss of interest and knowledge in managing and conserving their cultural assets, thus leaving it in the hands of the public administration [65]. Cultural identity and citizen participation demonstrate a dialog and interaction without social classes where social resilience in the face of change allows social structure and group identity to be reorganized and maintained [49]; in addition, this helps decentralize power among local authorities and connects the population's requirements to the public administration, as it fosters an understanding of the local reality through the population's opinion, thereby facilitating better decision-making when formulating public policies [50].

4. Conclusions

This study revealed several interesting issues. Moreover, two perspectives can be accepted as the most important: on the one hand, the evidence of cultural change in natural, dynamic, and evolutionary ways [66] and, on the other hand, the impacts of that change depending on the speed of its development, which was swift in our study, and the risk of losing the community's identity or of the community's cultural assets not being preserved that this aspect implies. However, there is a clear need to conduct an in-depth study to identify exactly what assets would comprise the Lajas cultural heritage and the opportunity to establish shared management with the municipality.

During the religious San Antonio de Padua celebrations, progressive interaction between the residents and the visitors is seen, which has resulted in some changes. In 2003, a large part of the population attended the festival for religious purposes, dressed in traditional local clothing, and the visitors' presence was less. However, the increased entertainment activities and the number of outsiders and the continuous influence of the external subcultures [16,22] led to frequent encounters and cultural changes [60]. Social interactions during the San Antonio celebrations reflect cultural manifestations that are changing as the community builds its own interindividual and collective identity models within its territory [7,12,13,23,39,57,60]. The population of Lajas is redesigning and creating its own celebration style, and this sociocultural process where social structures (residents versus other subcultures) combine to create new hybrid structures (García cited in Côté [56]). We may be facing a trend, i.e., inclining toward new forms of local expressions but with less of its own elements (or new elements of their own) that identify them, thus breaking the balance that must exist between valuing local elements and knowing how to interact with the external elements [12,34,36,39].

For example, with music, when a community identifies itself with local melodies, harmonies, and rhythms with their common and specific features [11,17] and, at the same time, accepts the blend of modern musical rhythms (regardless of whether traditional music is intended for cultural, religious, civic, or celebratory events and modern music is accepted for celebrations and fun), these aspects already reflect that, as a community, they are open to the possibility of adapting and building their own cultural identity in their territory through constant communication and social, cultural interdependence, etc. As Heisey [1] mentioned, cultural identity can even be globalized within a local context, and something similar occurs with religious identity, which, while it expresses beliefs and is established around different forms of organization and ethical norms, also includes more psychological aspects such as a community's mindset, in addition to an individual's mindset [16,27,28]. These remaining customs would affect the loss and transformation of the very spaces built to celebrate these religious activities, further affecting their authenticity [30,31,67].

This current reality, as Le bon [59] indicated, is the product of social adaptation to visitors' customs (a new influential social group), which are influenced by the atmosphere present during the festival.

As a future proposal, we must analyze ways in which the population accepts these changes. Answering this question will thus enable us to make proposals to manage Lajas resources. The progressive changes in the San Antonio's Lajas celebrations by municipal authorities (while these authorities are a part of the society and are an accepted and endorsed reflection by it as mentioned by Favre, Swedlow, and Verweij [61]) are creating new types of structure and power relations aimed in all probability to control and project an institutional image of the community.

The recent breakdown process, which has distanced the population from organizing and making decisions on the celebrations, should be reversed, and the population should be involved in the democratic municipal decisions. These aspects will help connect the people's demands to their representatives to improve joint decision-making [50,51]. To achieve this, the population needs to once again assume responsibility for promoting transparency within the reach of the population that participates in exercising power in the local management discussions and plans [51] through dialog and interaction without social

classes, thereby enabling local communities to value themselves and be resilient to change their structure and identity as a social group and thus be able to organize themselves despite changes over time [49].

Finally, with a cultural celebration, it is important that people have knowledge and awareness of traditional events that have been discontinued or changed. Each person must understand and be aware of the importance of cultural heritage [24]. Cultural heritage is a part of the individual, national, regional, and local identities. It is also essential to understand the historical past and the fragility of intangible cultural heritage. Thus, knowledge begins with the criteria from each person or agent who intervenes in local development, being perceptible and realistic, and knowing their physical environment (Hoffman and Prakash as cited in Jansen [68]). This aspect would help to avoid indifferent behaviors toward conserving cultural heritage. The interviews conducted for this study demonstrate that the population is still aware of the changes in the celebrations in Lajas as a result of cultural and entertainment activities that have occurred over the past 15 years, as a part of the local management, the interaction between cultures from its own environment, recognizing changes in music, or attendance at religious events. Therefore, instead of focusing on managing the celebration in terms of increasing the gap, emphasis should be placed on sensitizing the local population on using and managing its resources.

By adopting different cultural expressions, the people of Lajas change and adapt because a transitive process (transculturation) from one culture to another, thus creating new cultural phenomena [53]. They are aware of changes in their cultural expressions [20], and it is possible they will enjoy them. They know that with some scheduled activities, their social interactions are strengthened, particularly where they can express their musical, gastronomic, and religious traditions. This is part of the premises of the study by Morley et al. [13], a context where cultural manifestations are in constant interaction and constant change and evolution. However, this requires a more in-depth study of social perception to help us understand what is the real impact of the cultural change that we have observed in this exploratory study, including variables with which we can measure whether or not there is discontent among the population. The result would probably give us non-balanced scenarios on which to act and provide solutions.

These expressions are a part of their authentic intangible heritage [69]. It is necessary to analyze their past as a collective memory to date [21]. To achieve this, the population needs to participate in the democratic management channels and once again participate in this exercise of transparency in the local management [51,70,71].

Clearly, Lajas is attracting a greater number of visitors from its nearby territories. This aspect certainly requires local management strategies to be sought, which safeguard and boost its traditions as a resource. In-depth research on its assets also needs to be conducted to best adapt to modernity and economic knowledge of the environment that shows economic potential as a resource in the town's growing demand for entertainment. Studying the celebrations undoubtedly represents a starting point to reflect on the identity of the town of Lajas. It also establishes the basis for presenting management alternatives and appropriate transmission of traditions, in addition to researching potential visitors and the benefits for the entire community.

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