The Application of the Analytic Hierarchy Process Approach to the Inheritance of Local Delicious Food Culture and Development of Sustainable Innovations

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Abstract: Taiwan’s agri-food market has been transforming rapidly over the past few years and is struggling with significant food issues and the impact of COVID-19. These include globalization, trade liberalization, population growth, urbanization, policy changes, food consumption patterns and shifts in dietary patterns. Therefore, food security, livelihoods and productive activities that revitalize rural food production and sustained economic growth need to make important contributions to sustainable rural food development. This study adopts the research method of the Analytic Hierarchy Process, employs agricultural experts as the main research object, focuses on the local cuisine in rural Taiwan, and constructs an index model for the inheritance and sustainable innovation and development of local cuisine culture through the opinions of agricultural experts. Accordingly, this study has two objectives. First, we construct indicators of how farmers use local food culture inheritance and sustainable innovation development. Second, we measure the relative weighting of these indicators by agricultural experts in Taiwan. The research results show that a total of 23 indicators in 5 dimensions of the inheritance and sustainable innovation and development of rural local food culture in Taiwan are obtained, of which education and training are the primary indicators of the inheritance and sustainable innovation and development of farmers’ local food culture. The biggest contribution of this study is that, in response to the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic and the changes in the inheritance and sustainable development of rural food in Taiwan, this research constructs an indicator model for the inheritance and sustainable development of rural local food culture. It can be used as an important reference for the inheritance and sustainable innovation and development of rural local food culture in Taiwan.

Keywords: rural food; local cuisine; cultural heritage; sustainable development

1. Introduction

Contemporary “food” no longer exists just to meet the needs of consumption, but more importantly to connect the relationship between culture and place through food [1,2]. In terms of cultural symbols, food scenery shares a common cultural meaning, showing the relationship between people and life, food and scenery. Through the connection of food, people’s environmental experience and its social and cultural context can be understood [3]. Roe [4] argues that food production and consumption can shape the nature of landscapes and their associated people, while food is also shaped by geographic landscapes and people.
Food scenes, such as culture, are not personal assets; they reflect social and cultural beliefs, practices, and techniques, and can only exist in society.

Local food has gradually been sold together with local culture and traditions [2,5,6]. The concept of agricultural quality of food often involves the specificity and naturalness of the place of production. Naturalness includes food with concepts, such as organic, safe and healthy. Agricultural food emphasizes localization, because the definition of contemporary new quality food is related to the specificity and nature of the production area or region, such as regional quality food, organic food and slow food. Therefore, whether it is the direct local market or the extended product origin trademark, the quality food sought is constructed through the place of production [3]. The exchange of food is seen as an important mechanism for building social relationships and identity across cultural communities. Because the “sense of community” generated by food production, eating habits, and even food landscape design is constructed by community alliances, it becomes an important clue to understanding groups. These food landscapes also gradually change with multicultural life [7].

Agri-food networks are those that provide a network that is more closely linked to production sites to improve food quality and restore public confidence in food production [8], and to move away from productive, standardized and industrial food system supplies, towards notions of concern for quality, place and nature, and agri-food networks spanning producers, consumers and other actors [9]. Special agricultural products become a strategy for local brands to add value to agriculture, and its achievement also requires the transformation and support of local society. Therefore, the connection between food and culture is constructed by policy. In the traditional village society, the daily food is produced on the community land, because people depend on the land, so the food grows on the land, so people have a sense of trust in the food of the community [10,11]. The way of eating and drinking is closely related to the construction of cultural identity, but it is not a fixed correspondence [7]. The way to combine the development of local food with local culture and tradition is to promote marketing, and derive a unique relationship between land, people and food. It is important to give local food a new management mode, revitalize the local economy, and preserve and inherit the culture. It is also an important issue for the sustainable development of Taiwanese local food to keep its distinctive food and traditional culture.

In response to the impact of the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Taiwanese government’s rural policies began to assist in the upgrading and transformation of traditional agricultural industries. Coupled with the changes in political and economic policies, Taiwan’s local cultural awareness increased. Industries with strong ethnic and regional characteristics became popular in rural Taiwan. Various regions began to carry out cultural industry activities in innovative “cooking” ways, turning food into meaningful symbols and forming a connection with local images. Rural specialties are considered as symbols of local cultural assets, which can enhance the local economy and develop tourism [6,12]. Agricultural product sales have had a recent trend toward integrating local delicacies. The use of local produce, traditional cooking methods and the development of cultural characteristics can bring growth to the local economy [13].

Farmers play a vital role in sustainable development, food security, inheritance, and preservation of culinary techniques [14]. Diet links the regional diversity of peoples, cultures, and lifestyles with the multiple food components, equipment, and food preparation methods that are characterized, defined, and differentiated. The development of agri-food can be the development and transformation of local commercialization, but its relationship with globalization is not direct nor significant, while the transformation of commercial production focuses more on local development [15]. The development and composition of rural cooperatives is an important stage of agricultural transformation [16]. Rural communities need effective leadership to drive nurturing nascent entrepreneurial ecosystems [17].

Previous research surveyed farm store managers and farm store owners, interviewing the strategies and skills needed to be successful. This research shows that farm owners
must operate their original identities or brands, build networks, develop knowledge and talent, and overcome barriers and manage acuity for various businesses [18]. Actively developing agricultural cooperatives and managing them effectively helps to solve socioeconomic problems, improve farmers’ well-being, and ensure the overall development of rural areas [16]. Through the development of agricultural cooperatives, the inheritance of local cooking techniques can be protected [19].

Fascinating specialties and enjoying delicious local specialties are also important factors in local branding [16,20–24]. Food and traditional cooking are the main drivers of modern tourists [25]. Tasting local food allows consumers to communicate with families and friends, which is an opportunity to build personal relationships or strengthen family bonds [26]. Local food specialty products help to enhance the overall rural economic development and maintain the local population [19,27,28]. It can be seen from this that the transformation of local agriculture depends on the development of rural cooperatives. With rural brands and unique local delicacies, it develops a new business appearance that attracts foreign consumers, and connects rural residents to establish their organizations to jointly promote production and processing. In sales and services, the local traditional culture is preserved and the innovative elements are integrated. The food is integrated and marketed locally, so as to activate the rural economy.

Each country and region has unique culinary technology assets [29,30]. Knowledge and experience inform people about which crops will be grown where and how to cook them, and eating patterns and recipes will be passed on to the next generation. Culinary innovation relies on chefs who combine local cuisine with recipes passed down from generation to generation [31]. The traditional practice in the past was that students educated farmers, but now students should learn from the farmers [32]. Quiz competitions, such as school competitions and community recipe competitions, are tools to encourage informal learning spaces to facilitate the dissemination of local informal and agricultural knowledge [33]. Culinary techniques and recipes are also updated between generations, elders exchange knowledge, experience and opinions with each other, as do younger generations. Thus elders are the best candidates for disseminating agricultural knowledge and culinary experience [34]. Taiwanese farmers have unique local cooking knowledge, and pass on the cooking knowledge to the next generation through competitions, observation, mutual exchanges, and courses in schools.

The essence of the inheritance of delicious food in rural areas is to connect local characteristics, encourage farmers to start businesses, use innovative food and beverage management models to integrate local ingredients, expand the scope of action for regional development, and guide people and communities to improve from their own changes to public interests. It forms an innovative social development transformation, and then promotes the local traditional culture, so that the local culture can be passed on [1]. Elements of heritage can be produced and replicated as a result of the dynamic interplay between tradition and modernity [35]. However, the development of modern society has resulted in the gradual separation and disintegration of the relationship between local culture and material life, and society. Especially under the domination of commercialization and tourism orientation, the relationship between rural food itself and locality is often invisible [3]. Traditional dishes may be lost or gradually forgotten over time, but the status of food in cultural assets is constantly improving, and food culture can play an important role in cultural exchange and economic development [36].

The agricultural policy of the Taiwanese government in recent years actively encouraged farmers to develop local food characteristics and to invest in agricultural production, thereby promoting the upgrading of rural food, and serving as a hub for the cultural heritage and innovation of local ingredients (Figure 1). In this research period, by understanding the role and positioning of farmers in agricultural development, the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) can be used to evaluate the key factors that can be used to inherit local traditional food through traditional cooking techniques. The local agricultural food combined with the characteristics can be innovatively operated, creating a business model
that attracts foreign consumers, and can also solve the problems of the loss of traditional food cooking techniques and the sustainable development and innovation of rural areas.

Figure 1. Taiwan's agricultural work force by province. (Wikipedia, https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_Asia_draft2.png, accessed on 3 March 2022; amCharts, https://pixelmap.amcharts.com/, accessed on 19 February 2022).

Based on the theoretical viewpoint of Bessiere [35], this study analyzes and discusses the inheritance of local food culture by Taiwanese farmers with traditional cooking techniques, so that characteristic local agricultural products can be innovatively developed through traditional cooking techniques, creating local delicacies to attract foreign consumers. It can also solve the problems of the loss of traditional cooking techniques and traditional food culture and the innovation of rural development.

This study uses the Analytic Hierarchy Process to evaluate the important key factors of local food culture inheritance and sustainable innovation and development. This study aims to achieve two goals. First, we construct indicators of how farmers use local food culture inheritance and sustainable innovation development. Second, we measure the relative weighting of these indicators by agricultural experts in Taiwan and the implications of such indicator prioritizations on more durable and sustainable local food systems.

2. Materials and Methods
2.1. Methodology and Framework

This study uses the questionnaire developed by Lee et al. [37] using the Fuzzy Delphi Technique as the main research tool. Each indicator (indices between layers) is independent of each other, and the direction of influence is determined by the upper layers. Based on the premise of the lower layer, a measurement framework is designed to perform the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) to determine the weight of each indicator, as shown in Figure 2.
Figure 2. Research flowchart of agricultural indicator prioritization by experts in Taiwan.

2.2. Questionnaire and Sampling Design

This research questionnaire mainly refers to the scale developed by Lee et al. [37] to measure the importance of farmers’ use of local cuisine for cultural inheritance and sustainable innovation and development. This includes innovation competition, market operation, education and training, festivals, and the promotion and development of five aspects. The Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) questionnaire uses 1 to 9 as the evaluation scale and uses pairwise comparisons to answer the questions.

Due to the professional nature of the research topic, according to the research content, various professionals in the rural food-related field with more than 15 years of experience were selected to conduct practical tests, including agri-food-related scholars (6 people); agri-food counseling institutions (6 people); government agri-food professionals (6 people); local agricultural associations (6 people); rural agricultural education organizations (6 people); and agri-food sales organizations (7 people), and a total of 37 people in 6 major fields to judge the weight of professionals in various fields in various indicators. The selection of experts in this study was recommended by the agricultural system expert database of government units in Taiwan. Participating experts were all senior agricultural management and agri-food professionals with more than 15 years of experience and have been responsible for Taiwan’s agricultural construction management for many years and are authoritative representatives. The executive director of the research group personally invited them to participate in this research. Table 1 lists the experts and their professional background, seniority, and the county in which they work.

Before the formal testing of this study, the respondents explained the various indicators of rural food culture inheritance and innovation development in detail to avoid confusion, so as to effectively establish the respondents’ understanding of and relationship with each indicator. After checking the missed and unanswered questionnaires, the consistency statistical test was immediately carried out. The results show that the validly returned questionnaires all meet the standard of Consistency Ratio (CR) value less than 0.10 [38].

This research adopts an ex-post method, effectively collects the questionnaires, according to the AHP standard [38], uses the Super Decisions statistical software to calculate the weight value of each index, and conducts individual and overall weight analysis according to its professional attribute classification to evaluate various indicators.
Table 1. Characteristics of the surveyed agricultural experts in Taiwan (n = 37).

| Items | Category                          | Professional Background      | Seniority \(a\) | County   |
|-------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|----------|
| 1     | Agri-food-related scholars       | Professor of Agriculture    | 17              | Pingtung |
| 2     | Agri-food-related scholars       | Professor of Tourism        | 21              | Taipei   |
| 3     | Agri-food-related scholars       | Professor of Food and Beverage | 19              | Kaohsung |
| 4     | Agri-food-related scholars       | Professor of Food and Beverage | 16              | Tainan   |
| 5     | Agri-food-related scholars       | Professor of Tourism        | 20              | Taichung |
| 6     | Agri-food-related scholars       | Professor of Agriculture    | 22              | Taipei   |
| 7     | Local agricultural associations  | Product Marketing Manager   | 16              | Yunlin   |
| 8     | Local agricultural associations  | Product Marketing Manager   | 19              | Hualien  |
| 9     | Local agricultural associations  | Product Marketing Manager   | 23              | Yilan    |
| 10    | Local agricultural associations  | Product Marketing Manager   | 18              | Chiayi   |
| 11    | Local agricultural associations  | Product Marketing Manager   | 21              | Changhua |
| 12    | Local agricultural associations  | Product Marketing Manager   | 15              | Nantou   |
| 13    | Government agri-food professionals | Agricultural Policy Director | 23              | Taoyuan  |
| 14    | Government agri-food professionals | Agricultural Policy Director | 16              | Nantou   |
| 15    | Government agri-food professionals | Agricultural Policy Director | 19              | Taitung  |
| 16    | Government agri-food professionals | Agricultural Policy Director | 15              | Pingtung |
| 17    | Government agri-food professionals | Agricultural Policy Director | 21              | Yunlin   |
| 18    | Government agri-food professionals | Agricultural Policy Director | 25              | Changhua |
| 19    | Local agricultural associations  | Product Promotion Manager   | 24              | Yilan    |
| 20    | Local agricultural associations  | Product Promotion Manager   | 22              | Kaohsung |
| 21    | Local agricultural associations  | Product Promotion Manager   | 17              | Taichung |
| 22    | Local agricultural associations  | Educational Training Planner | 17              | Yunlin   |
| 23    | Local agricultural associations  | Educational Training Planner | 15              | Changhua |
| 24    | Local agricultural associations  | Educational Training Planner | 23              | Pingtung |
| 25    | Agricultural education organizations | Senior Cooking Trainer      | 23              | Taoyuan  |
| 26    | Agricultural education organizations | Senior Cooking Trainer      | 20              | Pingtung |
| 27    | Agricultural education organizations | Senior Cooking Trainer      | 17              | Yilan    |
| 28    | Agricultural education organizations | Senior Cooking Trainer      | 16              | Taipei   |
| 29    | Agricultural education organizations | Senior Course Planner       | 16              | Taitung  |
| 30    | Agricultural education organizations | Senior Course Planner       | 19              | Tainan   |
| 31    | Agri-food sales organizations    | Product Promotion Manager   | 15              | Yilan    |
| 32    | Agri-food sales organizations    | Product Promotion Manager   | 15              | Pingtung |
| 33    | Agri-food sales organizations    | Product Promotion Manager   | 16              | Chiayi   |
| 34    | Agri-food sales organizations    | Senior Sales Representative  | 20              | Taitung  |
| 35    | Agri-food sales organizations    | Senior Sales Representative  | 22              | Nantou   |
| 36    | Agri-food sales organizations    | Senior Sales Representative  | 18              | Kaohsung |
| 37    | Agri-food sales organizations    | Senior Sales Representative  | 21              | Tainan   |

\(a\) The number of years each expert has worked in the field.

2.3. Analytic Hierarchy Process

The Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) was first proposed by Saaty [39] and involves three basic steps: (1) decomposition, or the construction of the hierarchy; (2) comparative judgments, or defining and executing data collection to obtain pairwise comparative data on elements of the hierarchical structure; and (3) synthesis of priorities, or construction of an overall priority rating [40]. This technique provides a means of prioritizing the various elements in the hierarchy, thus helping governments and industry practitioners focus on the most important issues. The application of fuzzy AHP is still new and is flourishing [41].

The procedure of the AHP method is divided into 8 steps [41]:

1. Decision-making issues are identified, and evaluation indicators are listed.
2. The hierarchical structure is constructed.
3. Pairwise comparisons are performed for evaluation and judgement.
4. The matrix at each hierarchy is developed according to step 3 to construct all judgement matrices.
This study targeted the sub-hierarchies of all hierarchies to perform pairwise comparisons to obtain all judgement matrices. The judgement matrices of all hierarchies are constructed according to the following Formula (1):

\[
[A_k] = [a_{ij}] = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & a_{12} & \cdots & a_{1n} \\ 1/a_{12} & 1 & \cdots & a_{2n} \\ \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ 1/a_{1n} & 1/a_{2n} & \cdots & 1 \end{bmatrix}, k = 1, 2, \ldots, n, \quad (1)
\]

where \(A_k\) is the judgement matrix at each hierarchy;
- \(i\) is the hierarchical code;
- \(j\) is the index code;
- \(k\) is the expert code;
- \(a\) is the matrix of each hierarchy.

(5) Pairwise comparison matrices are constructed, priority vectors are calculated, and consistency is examined. The consistency is examined using the following Formula (2):

\[
C_I = (\lambda_{max} - n)/(n - 1). \quad (2)
\]

The consistency index of the randomly produced positive reciprocal matrix is the random index (RI). Using the above \(CI\) and RI, the consistency ratio of the pairwise comparison matrix is obtained, \(CR = CI/RI\).

(6) All hierarchies are subject to steps 3–5 and connected according to each hierarchy.
(7) The total priority weight of the overall hierarchy is calculated.
(8) The consistency of the overall hierarchy is evaluated.

The consistent ratio of the overall hierarchy is mainly the consistency index of the hierarchy (CIH) divided by the random index of the hierarchy (RIH). Therefore, the consistency ratio of the overall hierarchy should be less than 0.10. If this standard is not met, the evaluation should be amended again to improve the consistency ratio. In summary, the overall consistency ratio of the hierarchy (CRH) was less than 0.10.

3. Results

3.1. Analysis of the Farmers’ Local Food Culture Inheritance and Sustainable Innovation Development Indicators

The relative ranking and weights of how the agricultural professionals we surveyed prioritize the farmers’ use of local food culture inheritance and sustainable innovation development indicators are summarized in Table 2. All experts agree that the dimensions of training and promotion are the most important. This is followed by the dimensions related to festival activities, innovation competition, and market operations (Table 2).

In terms of innovation competitions, the use of traditional cooking techniques has a higher weight. In terms of education and training, the use of local ingredients handled by the government or associations carries more weight. For festival activities, family dinners use local ingredients. The cooking weight of ingredients is high. In terms of promotion and development, the inheritance of local ingredients by the next generation has a high weight. Overall professionals generally believe that “participating in the training on the use of local ingredients conducted by the government or associations” has the highest relative weight among all the indicators.

Government agricultural units should develop this indicator more in line with education training, extension curricula and policies. Academia and local organizations can also mentor farmers on the indicators identified in this study. Let the local culture and local food materials in rural areas develop. The local culture and local food materials in rural areas need to be developed.
Table 2. Analysis of the overall professionals’ weighting of the farmers’ use of local food culture inheritance and sustainable innovation development indicators.

| Dimension               | Index                                                                 | Weight | Relative Weight | Ranking |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|-----------------|---------|
| Innovation competition  | Participate in innovative cooking competitions using local ingredients | 0.167  | 0.027           | 19      |
|                         | Turning local food competition results into heritage recipes           | 0.284  | 0.036           | 17      |
|                         | Cook ingredients using traditional cooking techniques                  | 0.338  | 0.049           | 7       |
|                         | Observe and shadow the cooking competitions incorporating local ingredients | 0.211  | 0.027           | 20      |
| Market operations       | Able to make local ingredients into gourmet food for sale              | 0.337  | 0.038           | 12      |
|                         | Able to process local ingredients into souvenirs                        | 0.278  | 0.037           | 15      |
|                         | Able to customize local ingredients in response to market demand       | 0.234  | 0.024           | 22      |
|                         | Able to produce delicacies from local ingredients preferred by customers| 0.152  | 0.015           | 23      |
| Trainings               | Participate in training in the use of local ingredients organized by the Farmers’ Association | 0.328  | 0.112           | 1       |
|                         | Participate in local cuisine cooking classes organized by Vocational Training | 0.194  | 0.064           | 4       |
|                         | Learn the cooking techniques of local ingredients from elders           | 0.225  | 0.066           | 3       |
|                         | Refer to the media to use local ingredients to learn and refine culinary skills | 0.110  | 0.036           | 16      |
|                         | Learn the innovative cooking techniques of well-known chefs using local ingredients | 0.143  | 0.050           | 6       |
| Festival activities     | Local ingredients are used for cooking during religious festivals       | 0.190  | 0.033           | 18      |
|                         | Local ingredients are used for cooking at family dinners               | 0.401  | 0.057           | 5       |
|                         | Local ingredients are used for cooking when friends visit for dinner    | 0.281  | 0.037           | 14      |
|                         | Local ingredients are used for cooking when worshipping ancestors       | 0.128  | 0.025           | 21      |
| Promotions              | Pass on cuisines based on local ingredients to the next generation      | 0.274  | 0.068           | 2       |
|                         | Pass on cuisines based on local ingredients to young people (school students) | 0.159  | 0.038           | 13      |
|                         | Introduce cuisines based on local ingredients to family and friends     | 0.165  | 0.044           | 8       |
|                         | Print cuisines based on local ingredients in books                      | 0.155  | 0.041           | 9       |
|                         | Compile cuisines based on local ingredients into audio–visual teaching materials | 0.131  | 0.039           | 11      |
|                         | Cross-county, -city, and -regional exchange of cuisines based on local ingredients | 0.115  | 0.039           | 10      |

3.2. Analysis of the Overall Expert Ranking of Farmers Using Local Food Cultural Inheritance and Sustainable Innovation Development Indicators

It is integrated according to the concept of the overall agri-food professionals, and after ranking the farmers’ use of local food culture inheritance and sustainable innovation and development indicators, the weight values are ranked, as shown in Table 3. Experts and scholars in different fields have their own focus on the indicator dimensions. However, most experts focus on the indicators of “participating in the training on the use of local ingredients conducted by the government or associations”; followed by “learning the cooking methods of local ingredients from elders” and “using local ingredients to cook at family dinners”; education and training courses organized by tutoring institutions or agricultural associations are more important indicators for the cultural inheritance and innovation of using local ingredients; and learning cooking methods with elders and cooking local ingredients at family dinners are all important to the culture. There are important projects of inheritance and innovation, if government units, guidance agencies, and agricultural associations can set up a wide range of courses for education and training, and can provide professional knowledge and opportunities for teaching and training individuals how to cook local ingredients. These include inheriting traditional rural food cooking techniques, supplemented by academic scholars for curriculum design and management guidance, so that local food in rural areas can gain more application value, and allow cultural inheritance and innovative business models to have a new development direction, attract tourists and thus have better economic development.
Table 3. Ranking list of indicators of local food culture inheritance and sustainable innovation development by overall professionals.

| Dimension          | Index                                                                 | Agri-Food-Related Scholars | Government Agri-Food Professionals | Agri-Food Counseling Institutions | Local Agricultural Associations | Agri-Food Sales Organizations | Agri-Food Sales Organizations | Overall |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------|
| Innovation         | Participate in innovative cooking competitions using local ingredients | 3                          | 15                                | 9                                | 23                             | 20                            | 16                            | 19      |
| competition        | Turning local food competition results into heritage recipes          | 15                         | 23                                | 2                                | 13                             | 22                            | 5                             | 17      |
|                    | Cook ingredients using traditional cooking techniques                 | 10                         | 17                                | 18                               | 9                              | 4                            | 3                             | 7       |
|                    | Observe and shadow the cooking competitions incorporating local ingredients | 21                       | 21                                | 20                               | 21                             | 19                            | 6                             | 20      |
| Market operations  | Able to make local ingredients into gourmet food for sale             | 17                         | 12                                | 16                               | 22                             | 9                            | 20                            | 12      |
|                    | Able to process local ingredients into souvenirs                       | 20                         | 11                                | 14                               | 20                             | 3                            | 18                            | 15      |
|                    | Able to customize local ingredients in response to market demand      | 22                         | 16                                | 19                               | 16                             | 17                            | 21                            | 22      |
|                    | Able to produce delicacies from local ingredients preferred by customers | 23                       | 22                                | 22                               | 19                             | 23                            | 22                            | 23      |
| Training           | Participate in training in the use of local ingredients organized by the Farmers’ Association | 5                          | 2                                 | 1                                | 3                              | 1                            | 1                             | 1       |
|                    | Participate in local cuisine cooking classes organized by Vocational Training | 8                          | 8                                 | 4                                | 2                              | 13                           | 2                             | 4       |
|                    | Learn the cooking techniques of local ingredients from elders          | 2                          | 1                                 | 13                               | 1                              | 15                           | 9                             | 3       |
|                    | Refer to the media to use local ingredients to learn and refine culinary skills | 16                        | 7                                 | 6                                | 10                             | 21                           | 13                            | 16      |
| Festival activities | Learn the innovative cooking techniques of well-known chefs using local ingredients | 7                          | 9                                 | 7                                | 4                              | 5                            | 17                            | 6       |
|                    | Local ingredients are used for cooking during religious festivals      | 18                         | 10                                | 23                               | 11                             | 12                           | 11                            | 18      |
|                    | Local ingredients are used for cooking at family dinners               | 1                          | 4                                 | 3                                | 7                              | 16                           | 14                            | 5       |
|                    | Local ingredients are used for cooking when friends visit for dinner   | 14                         | 6                                 | 15                               | 8                              | 14                           | 19                            | 14      |
|                    | Local ingredients are used for cooking when worshipping ancestors      | 9                          | 18                                | 12                               | 18                             | 11                           | 23                            | 21      |
| Promotions         | Pass on cuisines based on local ingredients to the next generation    | 6                          | 3                                 | 5                                | 14                             | 2                            | 7                             | 2       |
|                    | Pass on cuisines based on local ingredients to young people (school students) | 12                        | 19                                | 8                                | 17                             | 6                            | 12                            | 13      |
|                    | Introduce cuisines based on local ingredients to family and friends   | 11                         | 5                                 | 11                               | 15                             | 8                            | 15                            | 8       |
|                    | Print cuisines based on local ingredients in books                    | 19                         | 14                                | 21                               | 6                              | 18                           | 4                             | 9       |
|                    | Compile cuisines based on local ingredients into audio-visual teaching materials | 13                       | 13                                | 17                               | 5                              | 10                           | 10                            | 11      |
|                    | Cross-county, -city, and -regional exchange of cuisines based on local ingredients | 4                          | 20                                | 10                               | 12                             | 7                            | 8                             | 10      |
4. Discussion

4.1. The Industry Focuses on the Training and Promotion of Cooking Courses

In terms of industry, local education organizations believe that education and training are the most important aspect indicators in the local food culture inheritance and sustainable innovation development indicators. The local educational organization was established to improve the status of farmers, recruit many farmers to participate and communicate with each other and grow ingredients together [34], and set up various training courses in local agricultural associations, all for the purpose of overall improvement. Due to the cooking technology and quality of food in rural areas, local educational organizations pay more attention to education and training, improve their own cooking skills through the study of courses, carry forward local ingredients, and inherit and innovate skills.

The local sales organization believes that promotion and development is an aspect that needs more attention in the inheritance of local food culture and sustainable innovation and development. This result is in line with the original intention of the local sales organization. In order to enable farmers to utilize their personal expertise and team management power to create a side business, set up a local sales organization, and open a variety of empowerment courses, it is important to develop different personal abilities through the learning of the courses, and set up different bases in various places in Taiwan. Culture and ingredients can be carried forward, and innovative pastoral dishes can be developed to attract foreign tourists to visit the country, thereby promoting and inheriting local characteristic culture and local special food, and sustaining local economic development [24].

4.2. Academia Focuses on Education and Training

In terms of academic experts, scholars and counseling institutions believe that education and training are the most important aspect indicators in the inheritance and sustainable innovation and development of local food culture. Academia, as an educator, enhances farmers’ professional skills through course learning. This serves as the basis for the development of local cuisine cooking techniques, and through the learning of professional courses to carry on the inheritance and innovation of local cuisine culture.

4.3. Experts from Government Departments Focus on Education and Training

In terms of government departments, both government agencies and agricultural associations believe that education and training are the most important aspect indicators in the inheritance of local food culture and sustainable innovation and development. In order to enhance the status and overall development of farmers, government departments mainly provide courses and rural knowledge promotion. It is hoped that through the establishment of courses, local food can have a more diversified development, so that farmers can use local food culture to inherit and promote sustainable innovation and development.

4.4. Overall Agricultural Experts

In terms of the overall expert opinion, farmers must integrate many different aspects to use local food culture inheritance and sustainable innovation development. This includes innovation competition, market operation, education and training, festival activities, promotion and development. All agricultural experts have their own focus on indicators. For example, the industry focuses on education, training, promotion and development, while government departments and academia both attach importance to education and training.

Therefore, this study provides a clearer development and implementation direction for rural areas to inherit their sustainable food cooking skills and operation models, so that Taiwan’s agricultural industry can clearly understand the indicators that cultural inheritance and management should pay attention to in the future. The government agricultural department can provide curriculum promotion and policies that meet the needs of the agricultural food market and the industry, and the academic community can also formulate suitable strategies and directions for farmers to prepare the cooking of food, so as to help rural areas gain more diversity. Development that is more focused on
meeting needs assures that local ingredients can be used with greater innovation. Thus, local traditional food culture can be passed on, and the difficulties faced by the rural areas can be solved through the operation method of real estate and local sales. It has also been demonstrated that similar to farmers, tourists play a critical role in enhancing rural development [19,28].

The results of this study are consistent with previous studies [42–46]. Most of the previous studies mentioned that local food can help improve the sustainable development of the region, and local food can provide tourists with a unique local cultural experience, thereby increasing rural revenue. In a traditional rural society, food in daily diets is produced on community land. When people depend on the land, they depend on it to grow food. Therefore, people have a sense of trust in the community’s food.

The development of local ingredients combined with local culture and the promotion of food marketing derived a unique relationship between the land, people and food. Local food ingredients in rural areas can have new forms of operation, which can activate the rural economy, so as to retain and inherit local traditional culture. The agricultural market sells food locally to both tourists and residents, which can enhance the local food experience and attitudes toward local food. Well-being, referral willingness, and attitudinal loyalty all have an impact [47–51]. The research results of previous studies are consistent with the results of this study.

5. Conclusions

The results of this study show that, based on the opinions of experts in the overall field, education and training are the primary indicators of farmers’ local food culture inheritance and sustainable innovation and development indicators, promotion and development are the secondary emphasis indicators, and festival activities are the third priority indicator. The use and inheritance of local food, in addition to the need for education and training, should also highlight food promotion and development, and the use of local food in festivals shows that inheritance must be integrated in three aspects: education, promotion, and activities. These three aspects can synergistically complement each other. Therefore, this study suggests that inheritance and sustainable innovation should pay attention to the following four functions: (1) elders teaching traditional cooking methods, (2) the focus on local food, (3) the use of the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) survey methodology, and (4) the expansion of AHP to agricultural producers in addition to agricultural experts.

This study found that learning traditional cooking techniques from elders is an important way to inherit and innovate local culture. It is recommended to play a complete family function, so that the elderly can pass on the local culture through cooking education when cooking with local ingredients. According to the results of this study, the education and training courses provided by government units and tutoring units are recognized by farmers, and the courses of participating in technical learning are of great help to the inheritance and innovation of culture. Therefore, government units need to set up a variety of training courses to cultivate local farmers with more professional brand management capabilities, which can promote the development of local food innovation and cultural heritage.

However, cooking competitions using local food can spark more creativity, develop different cooking techniques, enable innovative food applications, and compile recipes from the competition’s innovative creations. It is recommended to organize more innovative cooking competitions to inspire more innovative dishes using local food, and to inherit local characteristic culture and innovative cooking methods to preserve recipes [33]. Cooking food using traditional cooking techniques is an important indicator of local gastronomic heritage and innovation. The study suggests that farmers should use traditional cooking techniques to prepare local food. Additionally, through the cooking process, the cooking skills and local food culture will be passed on to future generations.

In this study, the AHP method was used to survey 37 agricultural and food experts, and to construct and measure the indicators and criteria of farmers’ local food culture inheritance and sustainable innovation development. The results show that education and
training are the primary indicators of rural local food inheritance and innovation, followed by promotion. In the development and festival activities, the indicator “participate in training in the use of local ingredients organized by the farmers’ association” is the most important plan ranked by the experts we surveyed.

This study uses the AHP method to obtain criterion weights, which assumes that each stratum and criterion are independent of each other. However, in the actual environment, there are often correlations between the criteria, so there may still be some gaps in the use of this research method. However, this study is based on the criteria of experts and scholars in various fields. Since the distribution ratio of experts in the field is dominated by education organizations and sales organizations, the results may be somewhat dominated by the opinions of experts in this field. This is the greatest limitation of this study. In the future, researchers could expand the survey to include consumers in addition to agricultural experts.

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