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Study on Local Food System: A Case Study of a Traditional Farmer's Market

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Abstract: In recent years, with the acceleration of globalization and the surging international situation, the traditional food system is facing unpredictable risks and impacts, and the development of local food system has reduced the local dependence on the global food system to some extent. The driving force behind this phenomenon, apart from the implementation of government policies, is undoubtedly local consumers and producers. This study uses Giddens' reflexivity as an analytical tool to explore the behavioral motivations and practice paths of different actors in the local food system. It is found that the consumers and producers in the farmers' market give full play to their individual initiative in a system restricted by "globalization". Starting from their own needs, they promote the various actors within the network to build a local food system containing multiple ideas. This set of behaviors is not generated by individual will, but is passively formed by the influence of local food culture, global knowledge transmission and manufacturing standards, so that local producers and consumers become a close link in the system.

Keywords: Local Food System; Food System; Reflexivity; Farmer's Market.

1. Introduction

Under the development wave of global food system, food is processed, transported and sold through a ring, and its natural original appearance and production place gradually become blurred. In this case, many concepts have been developed in people's social life: such as slow food[1], the alternative agro-food networks[2], and the foodshed[3]. Each of these concepts reflects: producers, sellers and buyers began to shift from early productivism to post-productivism, trying to escape the role of the bottom stage and the passive in the food production chain, and establish alternative food systems outside the mainstream food system. In this new system, elements such as environmental ethics, environmental justice, local culture and diverse farmland landscape were integrated, and finally formed local food systems. In recent years, community-supported agriculture in North America[4], Foodbox Schemes, Farmers' Market; TeiKei, Japan[5]; The landless peasant movement (MST) and the food civil rights movement in South America[6]; India's seed autonomy movement, seed banking network, etc [7]. The emergence of these organizations shows that producers and the diet public around the world increasingly value the need for a new thinking and operation mode between agriculture and diet. At the same time, as the global population grows, incomes increase and urbanization accelerates, there is great pressure on the global food system, and the transition to a more inclusive, resilient and sustainable food system is necessary [8]. According to the SDGs, this transition should be in addition to ensuring consumer access to safe, nutritious food and increasing farmers' income, but also protect natural resources and mitigate the negative effects of climate change[9]. In food system in the role of the shift of the general public, policy makers and researchers: in the globalization of highly risky modernization, the community gradually return to the trust, monitoring space, through the network, social media flow space and provide global vision, through their own practical experience, connected to each other, and share information and time knowledge, and food and agricultural experience, formed a bottom-up action network, and change the current food system operation mode[10].

In this paper, the reflexivity as an analysis tool, using open interview method to explore around the farmers market in different nodes of food system actor behavior motivation, series process and implementation path, trying to answer people in the context of global food system, how to produce reflection and question, and then take action. Zhuanxin farmers 'market is taken as the research case site to explore how the local traditional farmers' market is the core of the development of the local food system, in order to provide reference for the construction of the local food system and the transformation of the farmers' market in China.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Local Food System

In the 1970s, frequent food safety scandals in Europe and the United States caused consumers to distrust the global food supply system, demanding to shorten the long and opaque food transport chain and improve the quality of food. The transformation of consumer demand has promoted the rise of the concept of the local food system[11]. There is no universal international definition of a local food system because there are different "local" scales. But overall local food system generally associated to three proximity factors: geographical proximity (e.g., location, distance between food production and consumption), relationship proximity (e.g., the close relationship between subjects within the food system) and value proximity (e. g., origin, traceability, freshness, quality). By reviewing the existing literature, it can be found that the characteristics of local food system cover five dimensions: Functionally, it represents health and taste; Ecologically, it pays attention to the distance of food miles, variety diversity and landscape change. In aesthetics, it has diversity and difference; Ethically, it pays attention to the authenticity of food, and mixes the identity and solidarity with the human community. Politically, it can change the growing, processing and marketing processes of traditional food systems, and has

the influence to change production and consumption patterns. Hinrichs[12]think that the operation of the local food system is actually about reconnecting food and place. At the same time, local food systems are usually conceptually constructed in the discourse of "confrontation", as sustainable, small-scale, morally based, natural, democratic and local structure of localized food systems used to replace large-scale, consumption-oriented, industrialized, unfair and technology-oriented global food systems[13]. In other words, the local food system is a response and resistance to the global food system. Its purpose is to reconnect food with the local, making local production and consumption a sustainable production and marketing system, and ultimately promote the local economic, social and environmental development. From a sustainable perspective, local and regional attention is not only an attempt to counter and resist "global power", not only the beginning of the process of rebuilding more agricultural ecosystems, but also the starting point of integrating space and nature into the same production process[14].

Lbery [15]explore the link of food and place, he points out that due to the focus on food safety, consumers increasingly demand for geographical relevance products, additional local (locality) products can directly reflect the geographical source and quality, "local" increasingly become food quality assurance, most consumers identified in the production of food is usually more than global food quality. Benedek[16]believed that the relocalization food system does not cause great changes to society, but has a slow and gradual positive impact on society, economy, culture and environment, and will bring benefits to producers and consumers at different levels.

It can be found that the local food system, as a form of "resistance" to the global food system, is rooted in the development of "nature" and "local", coupled with the special meaning and cultural meaning given by human beings, and thus connects the producer-consumer network and then forms a complete local food system. Therefore, in addition to producers and consumers, the local social culture, community organizations, and the support of local groups also play a very important role. In recent years, with the rise of practice and research on local food systems around the world, scholars have found that complete localization of food systems is impossible, and only cosmopolitan localism is feasible. Therefore, making good use of different levels of food systems, seeking balance and complementarity among them, and achieving diversification of food sources are the starting points for formulating sustainable food development strategies in a culturally diverse world city.

2.2. The Reflexivity of the Local Food System

The most important significance of Giddens's reflexivity study is to return theory from a grand narrative to the realm of everyday life and help people explain behavior in everyday life[17]. The Reflexive Modernization he proposed refers to the sensitivity of most social activities and the relationship between man and nature to make periodic corrections according to new knowledge and information, and becomes a construction element in the institutional or structural transformation[18]. That is to say, the actors with decision-making ability in the structure can change the structure at a critical moment because they have the ability to reflect and remeasure the conditions of existence. In his opinion, under the forces of modernization and globalization, the distance between time and space is compressed. Although many things happen in a distance, they can maintain a high degree of interactive relationship with the near place. This mechanism can be called “action at distance”[19].This role is rid of specific distance through the "withdrawal mechanism" (such as network information and expert guidance). However, under the influence of globalization, these mechanisms, as part of reflexive modernization, enable ordinary people who are "laymen" to receive, accumulate and share the professional knowledge of "experts" at the same time, and then apply this knowledge to modern life.

Through the reflexivity theory, combined with the experience of participating in observation and in-depth interview, this paper attempts to present the context of the formation of local food system around the farmers' market and the participants' practice process: how the local people from a restricted "big" system, play their own initiative, to their own needs to form the need, induce action and practice, constitute a network of ideas, eventually form toughness "small" system.

3. Research Design

3.1. Study Area

In a lot of research in the food system, "face to face direct sales" is usually seen as to help local food mileage, expand the local food market channels, at the same time, in the process can also achieve local sustainability goals, such as protection of cultivated land, maintain the diversity of local agricultural varieties, community economic stability and enhance the safety and toughness of regional food system[20]. At present, the most mature form of direct selling in China is the farmers 'market. As long as supermarkets and grocery stores became the main places for food distribution, the farmers' market dominated the production and trade of regional food. In recent years, with the importance of the local food system in the country and the search for healthier, fresher and more reasonable consumer demand, the farmers' market has been revitalized and gradually become the center of the construction of the local food system[21].

The case site of this study is Zhuanxin farmers market, which is the largest farmers' market in the main urban area of Kunming. It was put into use in 1998 and has a history of 23 years, with an average daily flow of 30,000 and 100,000 person-times before the Spring Festival. The surrounding old buildings are dense, with dense traffic network and complex personnel composition, which are mainly the elderly[22].

3.2. Methodology

The study interviews were from September – December 2022, covering weekends and weekdays. A total of 41 people were interviewed randomly, among which 23 were consumers (Table 1), numbered 1-23 respectively. There are 18 sales staff of various agricultural trade product stores (4 deli owners, 4 fruit shop owners, 4 meat and poultry shop owners, and 6 vegetable shop owners), numbered 24-41 respectively.

4. Research on the Local Food System Centered on Farmers' Markets

4.1. The Shift of Consumer

4.1.1. Global Food System Risk

Global food crises and scandals have sprung up and come forth in recent years, and during the interviews in this study, many respondents expressed many concerns about vegetable

and meats with agricultural residues, food additives, and excessive supermarket packaging. Through the disclosure and report of the information media, consumers feel the unavoidable risks in the current diet[23].

Table 1. Sampling results of interviewing consumers (N=23)

Variable	Type	Scale (%)	Variable	Type	Scale (%)
sex	man	47.8%	age group	10-19 Years old	8.6%
				20-39 Years old	39.1%
	woman	52.2%		Age 40-59	30.4%
				60-79 Years old	21.7%
Basic personal information	work	43.4%	Interview time	7: 00-12: 00	50%
	retire	30.4%			
	student	13.0%		12:01-19:00	50%
	unemployed	8.6%			

"I often (in the short video software) see market supervision administration to check the restaurants. It's too dirty! I dare not eat takeout, can buy food to do their own it, wasting time better than eating into the hospital."(Number 1)

"We come here to buy many days' food and share some with my daughter. I don't think the food my daughter bought online is safe." (Numbers 7 and 8)."(Number 7 and Number 8)

Respondents generally agreed that food in farmers' markets, especially fruits, vegetables, meat and dairy products, were fresh rather than over-processed or over-cleaned foods and was therefore a safe and healthy option. But at the same time, their measure of "safety" is more subjective, mostly based on the trust between producers and consumers.

"Their family has been selling here for seven or eight years, and I have been buying here from work to retirement. We're acquaintances. I'm sure I trust them more. Every time I come directly to buy their food, I don't wanna go to other places." (No. 5)

"I have no experience in buying vegetables, the most is to see whether there is water on the vegetables or whether there is fresh soil on the roots of the vegetables, feeling that the vegetables are very fresh, unlike overnight vegetables. And there will be reviews of the shop owners online, and I will not patronize those with bad reviews." (No. 2)

Consumers 'motivation to buy food at farmers' markets goes far beyond the pursuit of price, with respondents paying more attention to the freshness and quality of food. Due to the propaganda of food safety in recent years, consumers increasingly demand for geographical relevance products, additional local products, can reflect the geographical source of products and quality, people also tend to believe the safety of this kind of food[24].

4.1.2. Community Practice under the Reality and Network Framework

Interaction patterns and behavior pattern in daily life are often taken for granted by us, but with the repetition of these specific behavior, people will accept them, as a result, the space of the past and future, connecting the inside of the crowd[25]. Compared with large supermarkets or grocery stores, the biggest characteristic of farmers' markets is that the seller is the producer. Face-to-face reality communication makes the integrity of producers directly verified in the experience of consumers, and gradually build trust. It can be said that farmers' markets connect people and places, allowing actors in this space to define themselves, share experiences with others, build trust and form communities [26].

"*When buying something online or in supermarkets, I will click on the details page to see its brand, production date and certification mark, especially the reviews. If I see any negative reviews, I immediately don't want to buy it. But here, I don't have to worry about all that because I have been buying from these few sellers all the time. The shop owners even share market gossip with me. We've developed a kind of emotional connection, and I trust them a lot."*(No. 3)

"In recent years, Zhuanxin market of agricultural *products has become more and more famous, and the farmers planting costs are also high, so the prices of vegetables have increased a bit. But I can still accept it and don't want to buy from elsewhere. I'm so familiar with these sellers that I can afford a higher price. The seller whom I often buy from has changed two or three varieties of Chinese cabbages. They find ways to grow tastier ones for us, which is not easy… I felt like they are friends, and they even teach me how to grow scallions at home."*(No. 5)

It can be found that consumers have formed a slightly biased sense of trust in the producers in the farmers' market. The two establish friendship links through actions and language expression, and strengthen the connection between each other in the process of transaction and communication. Most of the food network is created by consumer or eating groups who pursue similar food production methods and know each other and are often loyal, persistent and have a form of friendship to producers. In this relationship, the establishment of familiarity and trust between consumers and producers includes: private spontaneous joint purchase and farmers' market self-purchase.

"Every time I come here, I will post notes on RED. As long as the name of Zhuan Xin is put on the notes, it will increase a lot of popularity so that people will discuss which store has good food in the comments. We also have a group where people we know on RED or Weibo, each of whom inviting some of their own friends or relatives to join the group. Everyone in the group is a food market enthusiast, and we will communicate with each other in the group about the prices of vegetables, meat or other special food in different markets. We even organize some group purchases by contacting familiar sellers, and what we buy is fresh, cheap and unique from the market."(No. 16)

"We, the regular customers, have *a group in which the boss will deliver to us sometimes when we don't have time to come to the market. During the pandemic, the boss packed and delivered vegetables to us, which were affordable and fresh. Every morning, he posts what he sells today and at what price in the group. Although I don't buy them every day, the vegetables in the photo look fresh, and just looking at them improves my mood."*(No. 19)

Activities rooted in real communication will give

consumers an interest in planting activities and buying processes, and this increase in interest in agricultural issues can trigger a broader behavioral change among consumers, including an increased willingness to mobilize friends or family members to participate in the local food system. The development of the Internet makes this willingness easy to achieve. In the context of information globalization, people's perception of space are shaped by network and social media[27], It breaks through the limitations of time and space, and the internesting of virtual space and real space enables the single mobile individual in the real community and network community who pursue similar food purchasing ways or food quality [28, 29]

4.2. The Shift of Producers

4.2.1. Trading under Self-identity

In recent years, researchers have found that the development of local food systems can help increase personal identity in addition to helping farmers increase their income. The German philosopher Alex Honneth believes that as long as individuals can contribute to a healthy society through their work, their personal identity will improve, which translates into increased personal happiness[30]. Based on the theory of Honneth, producers mainly enhance their self-identity in two ways. First, through the traceability of goods, consumers can directly recognize the role and importance of producers (farmers) in the food system. In turn, traceability can help consumers to make fully informed purchasing choices, thus allowing them to more fully participate in the formation of an inclusive local food system. Finally, consumers purchasing food in farmers' markets show greater interest in the food nurturing, production and marketing process, and this increased interest in the agricultural food system may trigger broader behavioral changes, including communication skills and willingness to participate in citizen mobilization[31]. Through these changes, producers will directly feel their social contributions and then enhance their self-identity.

"Nowadays, everyone is busy and I don't have much to do in front of the vegetable stall every day. I thought about picking the vegetables clean so that they look better. Later, I thought it would be better to wash them all together, so customers don't have to spend too much time processing them at home. And then I thought about cutting them up and putting them in boxes with complementary stir fried seasonings so that I can increase the price. It's convenient for them and profitable for me."(Vegetable shop owner, No. 27)

"My store used to not sell cooked food, but only raw meat, while next door is a cooked food shop. The business of this store is much better than ours, and they can basically sell out their cooked food every day. We have a good relationship with the shops in our row, and we often chat and eat together. The neighbors persuaded me to make cooked food together, and they would teach me the skills, so I got started quickly, and now my sales are pretty good too. We don't feel competition among each other. I can ask them anything that I don't understand, and we have no reservations with each other."(Cooked food shop owner, No. 32)

It can be found that the communication and reflection between producers have changed the original type of operation, rapidly developed new sales products, and increased their personal income. This examination, experiment and reflection has gradually created or practiced a mature trading model and a resilient local food network.

4.2.2. A Shift in the Mode of Production

In contrast to Giddens's belief that "reflexivity" is mobilized by the learning and replication of individuals or groups, Baker[32]believes that reflexivity can be divided into two stages: in the first stage, people are passive to face unintentional and unknown "side effects" in the process of modernization, which are unexpected and never occur; in the second stage, individuals or groups gradually turn from passive to active because of self-awareness and phenomenon, and then respond to these "side effects".

"People used to not care about where the vegetables were grown or whether pesticides were used. They just bought them based on appearance. But later, some people would ask me if pesticides were used. I wouldn't deceive anyone, so I directly said that some were used a little, and they wouldn't buy them. After that, I stopped using pesticides and grew some fresh and healthy vegetables, which were often sold out. I have a lot of regular customers who only buy my vegetables because they believe I won't lie and don't use pesticides."(Vegetable shop owner, No. 28)

"We used to grow *strawberries, which had many varieties, but only one or two were popular every year. We used to use pesticides on milk strawberries, otherwise they wouldn't grow as well and the yield wouldn't keep up. Pesticides were sprayed everywhere, and even with a mask on, I could still smell them, which made my nose uncomfortable. Sometimes I even felt like I was being poisoned! Now we don't grow strawberries anymore, only apples. People like to eat ecological apples, and we don't need to use pesticides, which is good for our health."*(Fruit shop owner, No. 34)

From the perspective of the whole local food system around the farmers' market, it connects the external feeling and internal perception of human beings together, highlighting the existence of region, space and community, so that the reflexivity of the local food system lies in the space where the food is connected. Among them, interpersonal trust, education, health and environment play a more important role.

In the above analysis of reflexivity and local food, reflexivity appears in the thinking logic of individuals, organizations, knowledge misappropriation, risk feedback and community. In the interview, it can be found that consumers and producers join community organizations due to various factors such as health, environmental protection and social responsibility. However, in the contemporary society, it can be seen that the reflexivity of individuals, organizations and knowledge networks is embedded in the operation of the overall modern life. Reflexivity allows them to realize that the development and application of science or technology is not entirely correct. But at the same time, because of the rapid progress of technology, everyone has the opportunity to understand, share, copy and apply. This impact enables producers and consumers to trigger reflexivity through more channels and change the original situation.

5. Conclusion

This paper adopts the reflexivity theory as an analysis tool, consumers are no longer pure unconscious, influenced by the recipient of advertising and publicity, local farmers' market as the local people "resistance" the trend of common turn. Through the interview analysis of this study, it can be found that: 1) These habitual eating habits and industrial production mode and operation management in modern society have been full of risks and irreversible harm. Therefore, in the

natural and human risks shared by producers and consumers, these unstable risks can be ignored or even offset through the interaction of farmers' markets and the connection of communities. 2) The operation of the local food system helps to solve social problems by providing fresh, nutritious and abundant food to all local people through different channels to achieve equal access to food; it helps to develop and improve the relationship between local producers and consumers based on equality and trust; it provides the opportunity to participate in the food system while enhancing social cohesion; it promotes the integration of social culture and food and enhances the economic vitality of the community. In general, the local food system uses its own sustainable development mode to connect the local ecology and culture. This sustainable ecological rationality must be associated with the trust, responsibility, respect and social interaction in the relationship between producers and consumers.

6. Discussion

In recent years, under the trend of green consumption, green production and other green lifestyles, environmental protection and sustainable development have gradually become another way of life for consumers to choose[33]. The logic behind this way of life and production practice is actually a process of constant adjustment and conflict between human beings and nature in order to try to achieve harmonious coexistence.

In the contemporary society influenced by globalization, information transmission, capital flow and space-time compression process, due to the influence of food for the human body can be directly and production of the environment, production of data, and the risk of processing and manufacturing associated, makes people gradually began to think about the legitimacy and rationality of modern global food system. In the process of local food production and consumption around the farmers' market, producers and consumers are faced with a series of ideal and reality, although they can keep close to the ideal state of environmental justice and social justice through the series of community network and the reflexivity of individuals. However, natural and human factors themselves are variables that are difficult to predict and resist. In terms of natural factors, the natural environment of the origin and the state of the seasonal terms have caused the possibility of uneven quality and quantity of crops. Consumers must purchase according to the current climate and crop growth state, which limits the diversity of consumers' food consumption to. In terms of human factors, first of all , the "must be presence" in the farmers' markets limits the frequency of consumers to purchase food; secondly, because most producers adopt pesticide-free or poor farming methods, the selling price is higher than that of ordinary agricultural products, which also limits the amount of consumers to buy to some extent.

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