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Local Wisdom, Food Identity, and Occupational Pathways of Traditional Dessert Entrepreneurs in Phetchaburi, Thailand

Chutamas Peeraphatchara[1]
Patcharanun Youngworawichian[2*]
Anupol Kaewya[3]

[1]Faculty of Home Economics Technology, Rajamangala University of Technology Phra Nakhon Bangkok, Thailand
[2]Institute of Research and Development, Rajamangala University of Technology Phra Nakhon Bangkok, Thailand
[3]Islamic College of Thailand, Office of the Basic Education Commission, Ministry of Education Bangkok, Thailand
*Corresponding author
Email: patcharanun.y@rmutp.ac.th

Abstract

This qualitative study examined the local wisdom, food identity, and occupational pathways of traditional dessert entrepreneurs in Phetchaburi, Thailand. The objectives were to investigate the wisdom underlying Phetchaburi dessert-making and its transmission, to analyze the food identity of traditional desserts, and to examine how local wisdom develops into occupational pathways. Fifteen dessert entrepreneurs were selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews and analyzed using narrative analysis, with triangulation and member checking employed to enhance credibility. The findings revealed that Phetchaburi dessert wisdom constitutes practice-based knowledge transmitted through families, observation, hands-on practice, education, and training. Dessert identity is constructed through local ingredients, food resources, production techniques, taste, and cultural narratives, and is adapted through product development, packaging, and product presentation. Occupational pathways develop through self-initiated businesses, family-based enterprises, and community enterprises, with their development shaped by market demand and institutional support. The study proposes the L-I-C-P Pathway as a framework linking Learning (L), Identity (I), Conservation and Creativity (C), and Occupational Pathway (P).

Keywords: *Local wisdom; Food identity; Occupational pathways; Phetchaburi desserts; Narrative analysis*

1. Introduction

Phetchaburi traditional desserts represent an important component of a local food culture that has been accumulated and transmitted through families, communities, and entrepreneurs over time. Their distinctiveness lies in their taste, reputation, production techniques, craftsmanship, cultural narratives, and use of local ingredients such as palm sugar, coconut, and eggs. These characteristics connect the desserts with local food resources, community livelihoods, and the everyday lives of people in Phetchaburi Province. The province's recognition as a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy further reinforces the significance of its desserts as cultural capital, supported by biodiversity, high-quality local ingredients, intergenerational food knowledge, and efforts to safeguard local culinary recipes (UNESCO, 2021).

With its geographical diversity comprising mountains, coastal areas, and lowlands, Phetchaburi is known as a "city of three flavors," referring to sourness from locally grown limes, sweetness from palm sugar, and saltiness from sea salt. These food resources form part of the province's broader culinary cultural capital and contribute to local identity, gastronomic tourism, and economic development (Mungsri, 2022; Royal Thai Government, 2023). Within this broader culinary context, traditional desserts are particularly associated with locally available ingredients and dessert-making knowledge transmitted across generations. This direction is consistent with the Phetchaburi Provincial Development Plan 2023–2027, particularly Development Issue 4, which emphasizes participatory development toward an internationally recognized creative city through art, culture, tourism, local identity, resource-based development, and area-based potential (Phetchaburi Provincial Office, Strategy and Information for Provincial Development Group, 2024). Collaboration among government agencies, the private sector, and local entrepreneurs has likewise strengthened Phetchaburi's position as a gastronomic tourism destination and increased opportunities for local income generation through its membership in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network of Gastronomy (Chanwong et al., 2024).

Although Phetchaburi traditional desserts are widely known among consumers and tourists, the production of certain desserts remains confined to specific knowledge holders or entrepreneurs, potentially limiting their transmission and continuity (Krikate et al., 2020). Dessert-making wisdom is largely transmitted through family and community-based practice rather than formal learning, reflecting the intergenerational transmission of intangible cultural heritage (Interatep et al., 2016; Labrador, 2022). At the same time, changing consumer preferences and social conditions require entrepreneurs to adapt products and their presentation while maintaining traditional knowledge and identity.

Previous studies indicate that local food functions as a medium for communicating place, ingredients, ways of life, and social perception. Tagong and Sirisawatapichayakul (2023) found that local food identity in tourism contexts is associated with ingredients, cooking processes, taste, ways of life, and the perceptions of both insiders and outsiders. Chomshome et al. (2024) similarly found that Thai dessert entrepreneurs communicate identity through expertise, narratives, ingredient selection, packaging, and digital media. In the context of gastronomic tourism and the creative economy, local food contributes to competitiveness, cultural heritage preservation, sustainability, digital transformation, and destination branding (Dordai et al., 2026).

However, research that connects the learning of local wisdom, dessert identity, and occupational pathways among Phetchaburi dessert entrepreneurs remains limited. Such a perspective is necessary for explaining how household-based culinary knowledge is transformed into occupational capital, income generation, identity communication, and food culture preservation within a changing economic context. This study therefore aims to investigate the local wisdom, food identity, and occupational pathways of Phetchaburi

traditional dessert entrepreneurs in order to synthesize the process through which household-based knowledge is transformed into occupational capital and local economic value.

2. Research Objectives

This study aimed to:

1. examine the local wisdom and transmission of Phetchaburi traditional dessert-making;
2. analyze the food identity of Phetchaburi traditional desserts; and
3. investigate the learning process through which local wisdom develops into occupational pathways among Phetchaburi traditional dessert entrepreneurs.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Local Wisdom and Knowledge Transmission

Local wisdom refers to knowledge developed through observations, experimentation, and adaptation within a specific community and is closely related to its social, cultural, and environmental contexts (Eiewsriwong, 2013). In traditional dessert-making, such wisdom is embedded in skills, ways of thinking, practical techniques, and contextual understanding. It is transmitted across generations through everyday life, beliefs, trial and error, repeated practice, and adaptation to local conditions. Local wisdom therefore extends beyond technical knowledge to encompass values, attitudes, and ways of understanding inherited practices.

Labrador (2022) explained that the transmission of intangible cultural heritage should be understood as intergenerational learning through practice and through the participation of local knowledge holders. In heritage-based learning, families and communities serve as important spaces for knowledge transmission. Peeraphatchara et al. (2022) found that Khanom Kong-making wisdom was inherited within families, while those who did not receive direct transmission learned through observation, informal apprenticeship, and repeated practice. Similarly, Netsawang and Niyaboon (2022) found that Thai traditional dessert-making has been transmitted through the selection of ingredients, production methods, and quality maintenance, while also being adapted to suit contemporary contexts. Nevertheless, the transmission of Thai dessert wisdom still faces several limitations, including inconsistent production processes, scarce or costly ingredients, a lack of successors, storage problems, and the discontinuity of production, which may cause some desserts to decline in popularity or risk disappearing (Krikate et al., 2020). These concepts provide an analytical basis for examining how Phetchaburi dessert entrepreneurs learn, accumulate, transmit, and adapt local dessert-making wisdom.

3.2 Food Identity and Cultural Capital

Food identity refers to the distinctive characteristics through which food communicates its connection to a particular locality. These characteristics may include ingredients, taste, production techniques, ways of life, locality, and cultural narratives (Tagong & Sirisawatapichayakul, 2023). Food therefore functions not only as a product for consumption but also as a medium through which relationships among people, place, local resources, and cultural meanings are communicated.

Chomshome et al. (2024) further indicated that Thai dessert entrepreneurs communicate identity through expertise, ingredient selection, shop names, packaging, and digital media. These elements enhance the marketing potential of Thai desserts and support gastronomic tourism. In Phetchaburi, locally available food resources form part of the province's culinary cultural capital and contribute to its recognition as a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy (UNESCO, 2021).

3.3 Occupational Pathways and Local Food Entrepreneurship

The occupational pathways of local food entrepreneurs are shaped by production skills and the accumulation of multiple forms of capital, including wisdom capital, family capital, social capital, cultural capital, and market capital. Entrepreneurs must be able to transform inherited knowledge into quality products, build consumer trust, and adapt to changing market conditions. Studies on gastronomic tourism indicate that local food plays economic, cultural, social, and sustainability-related roles by generating income, strengthening community identity and pride, supporting intergenerational knowledge transmission, and connecting food production with tourism and destination development (Dordai et al., 2026). The occupational pathways of Phetchaburi dessert entrepreneurs should therefore be regarded as a process through which local wisdom is transformed into occupational capital and cultural capital.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design based on narrative inquiry. This approach was appropriate for examining the lived experiences of dessert entrepreneurs and interpreting the meanings embedded in their stories. Narrative inquiry enables researchers to transform deeply embedded personal and occupational experiences into explicit knowledge through systematic interpretation (Creswell, 1994).

4.2 Key Informants

The key informants were 15 traditional dessert entrepreneurs in Phetchaburi Province, selected through purposive sampling based on the following criteria: (1) having experience in making Phetchaburi traditional desserts; (2) being involved in producing, selling, transmitting knowledge of, or developing traditional dessert products; and (3) being willing to provide information about their learning experiences and occupational pathways.

The selection sought to capture variation in both geographical areas and entrepreneurial characteristics. The informants were drawn from five districts: Mueang Phetchaburi, Tha Yang, Ban Lat, Ban Laem, and Cha-am with three informants from each district. These districts were selected because they had traditional dessert entrepreneurs relevant to the scope of the study. Kaeng Krachan and Nong Ya Plong districts were not included because relatively few dessert entrepreneurs meeting the scope of the study were identified in these areas.

The informants represented three types of enterprises: SMEs, micro enterprises, and community enterprises. They also varied in gender, age, and occupational experience, as presented in Table 1. The number of informants was determined based on data saturation. Data collection ceased when the interview data became recurrent and no substantively new themes relevant to the research objectives emerged. Such variation enabled the study to capture diverse learning experiences, modes of local wisdom transmission, and occupational pathways among Phetchaburi traditional dessert entrepreneurs.

Table 1 Characteristics of the Key Informants

Code	District	Gender/Age	Experience (years)	Enterprise Type
P1	Tha Yang	Female/61	23	SME
P2	Mueang Phetchaburi	Female/53	30	SME
P3	Mueang Phetchaburi	Female/48	19	SME
P4	Ban Lat	Male/49	21	SME
P5	Ban Laem	Female/57	37	Micro
P6	Mueang Phetchaburi	Female/56	35	Community enterprise
P7	Ban Lat	Female/60	26	Community enterprise

Code	District	Gender/Age	Experience (years)	Enterprise Type
P8	Cha-am	Female/59	30	Community enterprise
P9	Ban Lat	Female/61	28	Community enterprise
P10	Cha-am	Female/60	32	Micro
P11	Cha-am	Female/60	34	Micro
P12	Ban Laem	Male/39	17	Community enterprise
P13	Tha Yang	Male/51	25	Micro
P14	Tha Yang	Female/57	24	Community enterprise
P15	Ban Laem	Female/39	11	Micro

4.3 Research Instrument

The research instrument was a semi-structured interview guide developed based on the research objectives and a review of relevant literature on local wisdom, food identity, and occupational pathways. The interview guide covered learning experiences in dessert-making, transmission of local wisdom, local ingredients and specific techniques, the identity of Phetchaburi desserts, product and market adaptation, and occupational development. The interview guide was reviewed by three experts in Thai desserts, food business, and qualitative research to assess its content validity, relevance to the research objectives, and clarity of the questions. It was then revised according to the experts' suggestions and pilot-tested before being used for data collection.

4.4 Data Collection

Data were collected through individual in-depth interviews with the key informants, together with field notes. Before data collection, the researchers explained the study objectives, the scope of the research, the rights of the informants, and the confidentiality procedures. Consent was obtained for participation and audio recording. Codes P1–P15 were used in place of the informants' real names to protect their identities.

To enhance credibility, data triangulation was conducted by comparing information across informant groups and data from interviews, observations, photographs, and video recordings of ingredient preparation and dessert-making processes. Investigator triangulation was conducted among the three researchers to compare and discuss interview findings. Member checking was also undertaken by returning the interpreted information to informants for verification.

4.5 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using narrative analysis. The interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and read repeatedly to understand the informants' experiences and contexts. The researchers then examined the sequences of events, turning points, and meanings appearing in the narratives in relation to local wisdom learning, transmission, identity, adaptation, and occupational pathways. Key themes were synthesized according to the research objectives.

5. Results

The findings are presented according to the three research objectives: (1) local wisdom and its transmission in Phetchaburi traditional dessert-making; (2) the food identity of Phetchaburi traditional desserts; and (3) the occupational pathways of Phetchaburi traditional dessert entrepreneurs.

5.1 Local Wisdom and Transmission of Phetchaburi Traditional Dessert-Making

The findings revealed that Phetchaburi traditional dessert-making wisdom is practice-based knowledge accumulated through experience and transmitted through three interconnected learning contexts: family-based learning, informal observation and self-practice, and education and training. These learning processes enabled entrepreneurs to

develop practical knowledge of ingredient selection, heat control, sensory judgement, and product adaptation. The transmission of such wisdom subsequently extended beyond individual learning to family succession and public knowledge-sharing through community, educational, and tourism-related activities.

Family-based learning constituted the primary foundation of dessert-making wisdom. In the past, learning often began within the household, particularly from mothers or other female family members, because cooking and dessert-making were closely associated with women's roles in traditional society. Dessert-making was not as common as everyday cooking; however, in families with skilled dessert makers or entrepreneurs, younger family members could acquire knowledge through observation and participation. One informant described this learning process as follows:

"...I am the second generation. It started with my mother making desserts as a supplementary occupation. I learned from that time. After I grew up and graduated from university in fisheries science, my passion brought me back to help with the family business and create my own brand..." (P4)

This narrative shows that family-based learning can become occupational capital when learners possess personal interest and are able to integrate inherited knowledge with new experiences and business practices.

In addition to family-based learning, some entrepreneurs learned through informal observation and self-practice. They observed experienced dessert makers, assisted in temple kitchens or community activities, and practiced repeatedly. This form of learning resembles informal apprenticeship, in which learners acquire knowledge by observing and memorizing the practices of experienced persons without being formal students. This pathway is important because it enables people outside dessert-making families to enter the occupation. One informant explained:

"...In the past, I sometimes worked as a cook. I bought other people's desserts to taste and then tried to make them. I observed how others made them, learned informally, and later joined training programs. After I was able to sell the desserts, I established a housewives' group..." (P10)

This finding indicated that dessert-making wisdom is not restricted to family lineage. It can also emerge from individual interest, observation, and continuous practice until it develops into an occupation and a form of community-based economic activity.

Learning through educational institutions, training programs, and professional networks has also become increasingly important. Some entrepreneurs gained additional knowledge from home economics schools, colleges, universities, and training programs organized by local agencies or educational institutions. These learning channels enhanced technical skills, product management, product development, and production standards. They also helped entrepreneurs improve quality, extend shelf life, control costs, and adapt dessert formats to contemporary markets.

The transmission of wisdom has expanded from the household to the public sphere. In the past, dessert-making knowledge was usually transmitted within families or close groups, and many recipes and techniques were not systematically recorded. This rendered such knowledge vulnerable to loss when no successors continued the practice. At present, however, entrepreneurs increasingly recognize the importance of public knowledge transmission. They serve as demonstrators, trainers, and local wisdom instructors for students, community members, and tourists. In this way, dessert-making wisdom has shifted from household-based knowledge to the social and cultural capital of the locality. One informant stated:

"...I am fortunate to have many children. Two daughters work in Bangkok, but my middle daughter and youngest son help with production. One helps in the factory and

another helps in the shop. I teach them to follow the traditional Thai dessert style. Once they can do it, I gradually step back and let them try by themselves…" (P1)

Another informant emphasized the role of entrepreneurs in transmitting knowledge to society:

"…Regarding teaching opportunities, the province invited me to demonstrate dessert-making at the Phra Nakhon Khiri Fair. Sometimes I am invited as a trainer to teach Thai dessert-making to students from different university programs and secondary schools in Phetchaburi…" (P5)

Overall, Phetchaburi dessert wisdom is transmitted through interconnected learning contexts involving family-based learning, informal observation and self-practice, and education and training, while its transmission increasingly extends to community and tourism-related activities. These interconnected contexts support the continuity of dessert-making wisdom within changing social and economic conditions.

5.2 Food Identity of Phetchaburi Traditional Desserts

The findings revealed that the food identity of Phetchaburi traditional desserts comprises three elements: (1) the use of local ingredients, (2) the preservation of traditional characteristics, and (3) adaptation to social and market changes. These elements reflect how entrepreneurs maintain the distinctive characteristics of traditional desserts while responding to production conditions and consumer demands.

The first element, local ingredients, forms the foundation of Phetchaburi dessert identity. As Phetchaburi is known as a "city of three flavors" and possesses abundant agricultural resources, local ingredients play a central role in shaping dessert identity. Palm sugar, coconut, eggs, and aroma-enhancing materials such as traditional scented candles link the desserts with local production areas, food resources, and community livelihoods.

Coconut is an important ingredient used in both its flesh and liquid forms. Other parts, such as husks, shells, brown coconut skin, and remaining coconut water, can also be sold or reused within the local economy. This reflects the entrepreneurs' resource-conscious practices and their efforts to reduce waste. One informant explained:

"…Most coconuts come from local production areas in Pran Buri and Cha-am. They are delivered to the factory around six o'clock in the morning. We prepare about 300–350 coconuts a day from seven o'clock until noon. We use only the coconut flesh, but the coconut water, husks, shells, brown coconut skin, and leftover coconut water can all be sold or used further…" (P1)

Palm sugar is particularly significant because it imparts to Phetchaburi desserts their taste, aroma, color, and place-based image. Some entrepreneurs purchase pure palm sugar from farmers during the production season and store it for use throughout the year. Ingredient selection thus becomes a process for maintaining the continuity of identity. One informant stated:

"…Palm sugar is the main ingredient in dessert-making. We buy authentic palm sugar during its season, from the beginning to the middle of the year, and store it for year-round production. We have to calculate the quantity carefully and pack it properly…" (P2)

Eggs and traditional scented candles also contribute to dessert identity. Chicken and duck eggs are obtained from local farms and are essential for particular desserts. The type and proportion of eggs vary according to the techniques of each shop. Traditional scented candles impart aroma and help create the distinctive characteristics of old-style Thai desserts.

The second element, preservation of traditional characteristics, is reflected in ingredient selection, taste, aroma, and production techniques. Entrepreneurs avoid preservatives and maintain traditional techniques such as stirring, roasting, smoking with scented candles, and using natural ingredients. This preservation was evident in the continued use of traditional ingredients and preparation methods. For example, some entrepreneurs prepared coconut milk

themselves rather than using commercially processed coconut milk in order to maintain the traditional characteristics of the desserts. One informant explained:

"…For the ingredients used in dessert-making, we emphasize traditional ingredients. For example, we prepare the coconut ourselves and extract the coconut milk by hand rather than using commercially prepared coconut milk, because this helps maintain the traditional characteristics…" (P6)

Traditional aroma was also regarded as an important characteristic that should be preserved. Another informant stated:

"…Traditional Thai desserts require natural aromas, including those from flowers such as jasmine and ylang-ylang. After some desserts are prepared, they are also scented with traditional Thai scented candles…" (P11)

For example, Khao Tu is made from roasted jasmine rice, finely ground and mixed with aromatic coconut and authentic palm sugar, then stirred to achieve an appropriate texture and smoked with traditional scented candles. In this context, tradition refers to the preservation of core elements: main ingredients, production techniques, taste, aroma, and cultural value. Each entrepreneur usually has approximately three to four signature desserts that represent the memory, credibility, and identity of the business.

The third element, adaptation to social and market changes, reflects how entrepreneurs maintain traditional identity while responding to contemporary consumer needs through product development, health-conscious recipes, packaging, and product presentation. Regarding product development, some entrepreneurs collaborated with academics or supporting agencies to extend shelf life. For example, Alua, which previously lasted approximately two weeks, could be developed to last up to 45 days. This innovation helped entrepreneurs manage production during high-demand festivals and improve inventory control. One informant noted:

"…For Alua, it normally lasts only two weeks. During festivals, it sells very well, but we cannot produce enough because there are many steps and we must wait for it to dry. We could not keep stock because it spoiled quickly. After joining this development project, it could last up to 45 days…" (P5)

In terms of health, some entrepreneurs recognized that modern consumers prefer less sweet products or have health limitations. They therefore experimented with reduced-sugar desserts or alternative sweeteners. One informant stated:

"…Making sweet desserts that are not too sweet is difficult. For Thong Yip, I had been thinking about this for a long time. When university lecturers came to discuss reducing sweetness in desserts, I was pleased. Now we have developed two products…" (P9)

Adaptation also involved changes in product size and presentation in response to the preferences of younger and health-conscious consumers. One informant explained:

"…Younger consumers do not prefer large pieces of Thai desserts because they are more health conscious. We therefore make them smaller. For example, Khanom Chan used to be prepared in trays and cut into large square pieces, but now we use smaller molds or roll the pieces into attractive flower shapes…" (P3)

Packaging has likewise been adapted in response to changing consumer needs and market conditions. Entrepreneurs have moved beyond simple plastic bags toward more secure, attractive, and travel-friendly packaging suitable for souvenirs. Some have also considered environmentally friendly materials as part of packaging development. One informant explained:

"…Packaging is also important because customers sometimes buy the desserts as gifts. We therefore need to move beyond the plastic packaging used in the past toward environmentally friendly materials. Eco-friendly packaging can also attract greater customer interest…" (P14)

Desserts are also arranged in baskets, trays, and other containers to increase their value as gifts and respond to tourism markets. These adaptations demonstrate that the identity of Phetchaburi traditional desserts is not static but is continuously negotiated between the preservation of local wisdom and responses to changing consumer, market, and social contexts.

To illustrate how these identity elements are expressed in actual products, Table 2 presents selected Phetchaburi traditional desserts in relation to their characteristic ingredients, preparation techniques, and sensory characteristics. The examples demonstrate how ingredients and traditional practices contribute to the distinctive characteristics of Phetchaburi desserts.

Table 2 Selected Phetchaburi Traditional Desserts and Their Identity-Related Characteristics Source: Developed by the authors (2026)

Dessert	Identity-Related Characteristics
Mor Kaeng 	Made with eggs, palm sugar, coconut milk, and steamed taro. Its characteristic identity is reflected in the use of palm sugar and coconut milk, together with traditional preparation that produces a golden-brown surface, soft texture, distinctive aroma, and moderately sweet taste.
Khao Tu 	Made with roasted rice powder, coconut, and palm sugar, followed by traditional scented-candle smoking. Its identity is expressed through characteristic local ingredients and traditional techniques that produce a soft, chewy texture and distinctive aromas of roasted rice, palm sugar, and scented candle smoke.
Thong Yod 	Prepared from egg yolks and Thong Yod flour and cooked in syrup. Its traditional characteristics are reflected in the egg-based preparation technique, glossy golden drop-like appearance, soft texture, and aroma associated with jasmine-scented water.
Med Kanoon 	Prepared from mung beans, coconut milk, and sugar, shaped to resemble jackfruit seeds, coated with egg yolk, and cooked in syrup. Its identity is reflected in the traditional preparation technique, characteristic golden-yellow appearance, soft texture, and aroma of egg, mung bean, and jasmine-scented water.

5.3 Occupational Pathways of Phetchaburi Traditional Dessert Entrepreneurs

The findings revealed three major patterns of occupational pathways among Phetchaburi traditional dessert entrepreneurs, represented by SMEs, micro enterprises, and community enterprises. These pathways differed in how entrepreneurs acquired dessert-making knowledge, entered the occupation, organized production, and developed their businesses.

Although their development differed, all three pathways were grounded in accumulated dessert-making knowledge, learning experiences, and the transformation of such knowledge into income-generating activities.

SME entrepreneurs developed through either self-initiated businesses or family succession. They generally began with small-scale or family-based production and gradually expanded production, employment, markets, and services in response to consumer demand. One entrepreneur explained:

"…I am from Phetchaburi but used to live in Bangkok. When I moved back here, I saw that Phetchaburi had many toddy palm trees, so I developed traditional desserts through self-practice and created a Thai dessert brand. I started with a small factory, expanded to a medium-sized one, and now have a dessert café serving local customers and travelers…" (P1)

Micro-enterprise entrepreneurs generally entered the occupation through personal interest, self-learning, observation, and repeated practice. Dessert-making often began as supplementary income and developed into a family occupation as customer demand increased. One informant stated:

"…I have always liked making desserts. I tried making them and took them to sell at a local market. People later came to my house looking for the desserts, so I turned it into my own business, with my son helping me. It became a family business…" (P5)

Community-enterprise entrepreneurs typically combined family or community-based dessert-making experience with collective organization and support from local agencies and educational institutions. Such support included training in food and dessert preparation, product development, packaging, and marketing. One informant explained:

"…I started making desserts when the district office supported us in forming a community enterprise. Universities also provided training in food and dessert preparation, while we practiced by ourselves as well. The group now earns income that is shared among members, and we also participate in events organized by the district and province…" (P12)

Overall, SME pathways emphasized business expansion and market adaptation; micro-enterprise pathways developed mainly through self-learning, family participation, and customer demand; and community-enterprise pathways were characterized by collective organization and institutional support. These pathways demonstrate different ways in which dessert-making wisdom is transformed into occupational opportunities.

6. Discussions

6.1 Local Wisdom and Transmission of Phetchaburi Traditional Dessert-Making

The findings show that Phetchaburi dessert-making wisdom is practice-based knowledge transmitted through family participation, observation, repeated practice, and sensory judgement, rather than through formal recipes or curricula. This supports Labrador's (2022) view that intangible cultural heritage is transmitted through intergenerational practice, and it aligns with Chimboonma (2024), who emphasizes systematic occupational learning through preparation, skills development, observation, and innovation. Preservation should therefore combine documentation with hands-on learning that enables learners to observe, practice, evaluate, and apply knowledge.

This transmission may be strengthened through training, mentoring, and digital learning resources. Janjam et al. (2025) found that continuous and flexible learning enhanced employees' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and performance. Although their study focused on the hotel industry, the findings support the use of video demonstrations, digital recipes, and online materials as supplementary tools, while direct practice remains essential for developing sensory and embodied skills. Entrepreneurs also adapt traditional wisdom through reduced sweetness, extended shelf life, improved packaging, café presentation, and

souvenir products, while retaining core ingredients, techniques, and taste. This is consistent with Chomshome et al. (2024), who highlight expertise, ingredient selection, packaging, and digital media in communicating Thai dessert identity.

6.2 Food Identity of Phetchaburi Traditional Desserts

Phetchaburi dessert identity is constructed through the relationships among food, place, local ingredients, production techniques, taste, and community life. Palm sugar, coconut, eggs, and traditional aroma-enhancing techniques function as cultural markers connecting the desserts with local resources, livelihoods, and Phetchaburi's reputation as a city of sweets. This corresponds with Klinjandang and Dabphet (2021), Nomnian and Pillai (2022), and Tagong and Sirisawatapichayakul (2023), who identify ingredients, recipes, techniques, taste, and community life as key dimensions of local food identity. It is also consistent with Phetchaburi's status as a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy, in which local ingredients and culinary traditions support creative economic development (UNESCO, 2021).

Phetchaburi desserts should also be understood within the province's wider foodscape. Sea salt farming, food festivals, and creative city branding contribute to cultural capital, livelihood security, and sustainable gastronomic tourism (Plaiphum & Tansuchat, 2023; Tansuchat & Plaiphum, 2023; Kittiprasan et al., 2025). Although these studies do not focus directly on desserts, they demonstrate that Phetchaburi's gastronomic identity is shaped by interconnected resources, labour, cultural practices, and tourism. Songcharoen et al. (2024) further indicate that symbolic design elements are important in communicating the identity of Phetchaburi as a Creative City of Gastronomy. Dessert identity should therefore be communicated through packaging, storytelling, visual design, and tourism experiences, as well as through product characteristics.

6.3 Occupational Pathways of Phetchaburi Traditional Dessert Entrepreneurs

The findings demonstrate how local wisdom is transformed into occupational and creative economic capital through household production, trial selling, family businesses, community groups, cafés, souvenir markets, and SMEs. Success depends on combining inherited knowledge with product quality, hygiene, cost management, packaging, marketing, and identity communication. This is consistent with Satjasomboon (2024), who links community product development with local capital, ingredients, design, and marketing, and with Netsawang and Niyaboon (2022), who found that Thai dessert wisdom can support occupational and community business development.

In gastronomic tourism, local food can generate income, preserve cultural heritage, and strengthen destination identity (Dordai et al., 2026; Fakfare et al., 2026). Leelaumpornsin et al. (2026) likewise emphasize marketing promotion for Thai desserts in Phetchaburi. However, commercialization must balance adaptation with authenticity. Product innovation, improved packaging, digital media, and tourism-oriented storytelling can increase market visibility, but excessive adaptation may weaken distinctive sensory and cultural characteristics.

The efficient use of coconut and other local ingredients also reflects sustainable entrepreneurship. Pattanananchai et al. (2025) identify environmental impact, waste management, consumer behaviour, and resource optimization as major themes in restaurant sustainability. Although their study concerns restaurants, it provides a useful framework for interpreting the reuse and sale of coconut by-products as practices that reduce waste, generate additional value, and support local suppliers.

Health and nutrition are also relevant to occupational adaptation. Dangsungwal et al. (2026) demonstrate the potential of linking Phetchaburi local foods with nutritional and antioxidant evidence. Although their study does not cover all desserts, it supports the integration of culinary heritage with scientific knowledge. This is particularly important because some Thai desserts are high in sugar, fat, and energy, which encourages product development through sweetness reduction, nutritional improvement, and ingredient substitution

(Layim, 2022). Such adaptation should also take into account health, environmental impact, and the preservation of food culture (Yin et al., 2020).

Based on these findings, the L-I-C-P Pathway explains how local wisdom is transformed into occupational pathways among Phetchaburi dessert entrepreneurs. The pathway comprises four components: Learning (L), Identity (I), Conservation and Creativity (C), and Occupational Pathway (P). Conservation and Creativity (C) represents the balance between preserving traditional ingredients, sensory characteristics, and production techniques and adapting products to contemporary conditions through changes in product size and form, sweetness, shelf life, packaging, and market presentation. This interaction enables entrepreneurs to retain the cultural characteristics of traditional desserts while responding to consumer and market needs. The pathway shows that occupational development is not a linear transition from tradition to business, but a dynamic process in which learning, identity, conservation, creativity, and market adaptation interact to create occupational opportunities.

Figure 1 The L-I-C-P Pathway of Phetchaburi Traditional Dessert Entrepreneurs Source: Developed by the authors (2026)

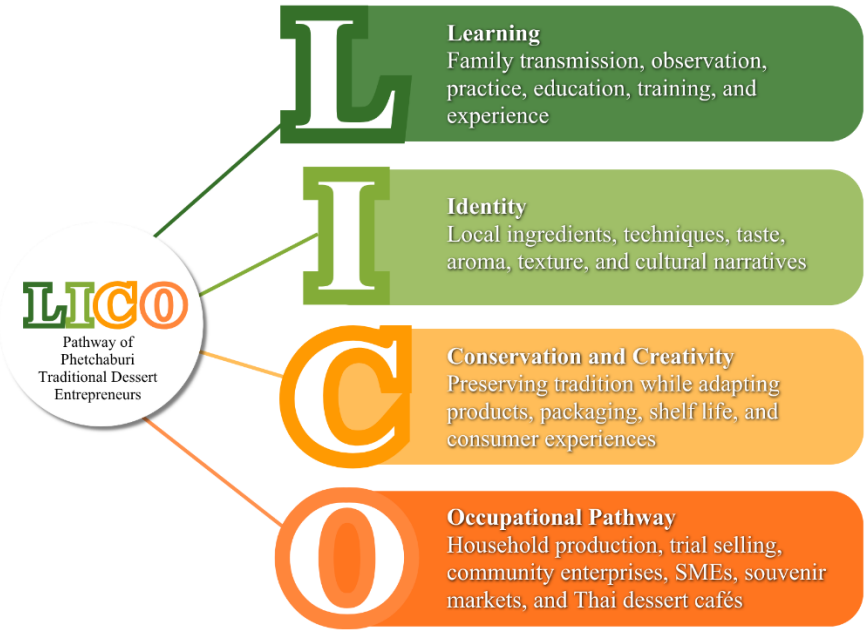

Figure 1 illustrates the L-I-C-P Pathway through which Phetchaburi traditional dessert entrepreneurs transform local wisdom into occupational pathways. Learning (L) occurs through family, experience, observation, education, and training; Identity (I) develops through ingredients, techniques, sensory characteristics, and cultural meanings; Conservation and Creativity (C) involves preserving traditional characteristics while adapting products and practices to contemporary consumer and market needs; and Occupational Pathway (P) emerges through SME, micro-enterprise, and community-enterprise development.

7. Conclusion

This study shows that Phetchaburi traditional dessert-making wisdom is practice-based knowledge transmitted through families, observation, hands-on practice, education, and training. This wisdom includes recipes, ingredient selection, production techniques, sensory judgement, taste, aroma, and texture, which together form the foundation of Phetchaburi dessert identity.

The identity of Phetchaburi traditional desserts is shaped by local ingredients, food resources, production techniques, and cultural narratives. Palm sugar, coconut, eggs, traditional

aroma-enhancing techniques, and specific methods connect these desserts with place, community livelihoods, and the province's reputation as a city of sweets. Entrepreneurs preserve this identity while adapting products through reduced sweetness, longer shelf life, improved packaging, and product presentation.

The occupational pathways of Phetchaburi traditional dessert entrepreneurs develop through routes, including self-initiated businesses, family-based enterprises, and organized community enterprises. These pathways demonstrate how dessert-making knowledge, learning experiences, market adaptation, and institutional support can transform local wisdom into occupational opportunities. The L-I-C-P Pathway, comprising Learning (L), Identity (I), Conservation and Creativity (C), and Occupational Pathway (P), explains how local wisdom is transformed into occupational capital, cultural capital, and economic value. Thus, Phetchaburi traditional desserts function not only as cultural heritage but also as a foundation for sustainable occupational development and the local creative economy.

8. Recommendations

8.1 Recommendations for Applying the Research Findings

First, the findings show that Phetchaburi dessert-making wisdom is accumulated through families, communities, and enterprises, especially in relation to ingredients, production techniques, and intergenerational transmission. Educational institutions, local agencies, and entrepreneurs should therefore collaborate to document local knowledge and organize learning activities for youth, community members, and interested learners. This would help ensure the continuity of Phetchaburi dessert-making wisdom.

Second, the identity of Phetchaburi traditional desserts is expressed through local ingredients, taste, production techniques, craftsmanship, and cultural narratives. Entrepreneurs, tourism agencies, and community economic development organizations should therefore communicate this identity through packaging, digital media, storytelling, and gastronomic tourism activities. This would increase consumer recognition, enhance product value, and strengthen the image of Phetchaburi as a gastronomic destination.

Third, the occupational pathways of entrepreneurs develop through family learning, hands-on practice, trial selling, and market adaptation. Relevant agencies, educational institutions, and entrepreneur networks should therefore provide training, mentoring systems, and knowledge-exchange platforms. These mechanisms would enhance entrepreneurial capacity and support the continuity of Phetchaburi traditional dessert occupations.

8.2 Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should examine the characteristics of the local ingredients that shape the identity of Phetchaburi traditional desserts, such as palm sugar, coconut, eggs, and aroma-enhancing materials. Such studies could clarify the relationships among ingredient quality, taste, texture, aroma, and dessert identity.

Further research should also investigate the recipes, production processes, nutritional value, shelf life, and sensory quality of Phetchaburi traditional desserts. This would support evidence-based product development that responds to contemporary consumers while preserving the original identity of the desserts.

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10. Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

11. The Author's Biography

Chutamas Peeraphatchara is a faculty member of the Master of Home Economics Program at Rajamangala University of Technology Phra Nakhon, Thailand.

Patcharanun Youngworawichian is an education officer at the Research and Development Institute, Rajamangala University of Technology Phra Nakhon, Thailand.

Anupol Kaewya is a teacher at the Islamic College of Thailand under the Secondary Educational Service Area Office Bangkok 1, Ministry of Education, Thailand.

The three authors share research interests in Home Economics, gastronomic tourism, and teaching and learning.

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