

The Role of Online Shopping in Supporting and Promoting Agricultural Development in Backward Areas of China

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Abstract: This essay tries to explain how online shopping aids and fosters agricultural growth in China's underdeveloped regions. The essay first explains the idea of online shopping and discusses its state of growth both domestically and internationally before analyzing the value and benefits of online shopping for agricultural development. Based on this, the article suggests various online shopping applications for agriculture, such as online shopping platforms, rural online shopping, cross-border online shopping, etc., and explores the particular contributions that each of these applications has made to the advancement of agriculture in underdeveloped regions. The paper claims that by extending sales channels, reducing distribution costs, and improving the efficiency of agricultural product circulation, online shopping may considerably assist agricultural development. Online shopping can help farmers understand market demand better, improve the added value of agricultural products, and effectively address issues with information asymmetry and poor logistics. As a result, farmers' incomes will rise, and the agricultural and industrial structures will be optimized and modernized. Backward regions are especially guilty of this. The article also emphasizes the challenges that online shopping still has in promoting agriculture in impoverished areas, including a lack of proper policy support, poor infrastructure, and limited farmer network literacy. In summary, online shopping plays a significant supporting and boosting role in the growth of agriculture in China's underdeveloped regions. Through in-depth research and practice, we can find more online shopping application modes and provide more effective ways for agricultural development in backward areas.

Keywords: online shopping, China agriculture, live streaming bandwagon

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

The rise of online shopping in China has not only brought dynamism to the urban economy but has also played a positive role in rural and backward areas, further boosting economic growth and improving people's lives.

The first benefit of rural online shopping is that it helps agricultural products advance. Platforms for rural online shopping give farmers a chance to defy the conventional sales strategy. Through these platforms, farmers may sell their agricultural goods directly to city dwellers, cutting out the intermediary and raising the added value of their supply [1]. This has not only led to an increase in

farmers' incomes but also encouraged them to invest more time and effort in improving the quality of their produce, thus further promoting the upward mobility of agricultural products.

Secondly, the spread and development of online shopping can improve the lives of rural residents. Rural communities now have access to more goods and services because to the growth of online shopping. Access to metropolitan goods is easier for rural dwellers, raising their level of living. Additionally, online shopping sites provide a selection of practical purchasing options, making it simpler for those living in rural areas to get the products they need, whether they be household items or common consumer goods [2].

Additionally, it might undersell the benefits of online shopping for rural development and poverty reduction. By constructing Internet infrastructure, supporting the growth of online retailers, and providing training to rural inhabitants, the Chinese government has aggressively supported initiatives to reduce poverty through online shopping and strengthened online shopping development in underdeveloped areas. In addition to increasing rural inhabitants' income, this effort has promoted rural area development. A number of industries, including agricultural products, handicrafts, and specialty goods, are covered by online shopping poverty alleviation projects in rural regions, giving locals business chances and employment opportunities.

Online shopping can, more crucially, support digital and intelligent agriculture. The growth of digital and smart agriculture is a result of the expansion of online shopping. Farmers in rural areas can obtain agricultural information, buy agricultural supplies, and apply smart technologies to increase agricultural output by using online shopping sites. This has improved agricultural product output and quality while also raising farmer incomes and the economic climate in rural areas.

In conclusion, online shopping not only played a huge role in the urban economy but also created opportunities in rural and poor areas, facilitating the upward mobility of agricultural products and improving the lives of rural residents, as well as strengthening online shopping poverty alleviation programs, which strongly supported poverty alleviation efforts in China [3]. Both the overall expansion of China's economy and the sustainable development of rural areas have benefited from this development trend.

1.2. Purpose and Significance

Online shopping exists to support and encourage the growth of agriculture in underdeveloped areas of the nation, to raise farmer incomes, to enhance the structure of the rural economy, and to encourage the development of rural economies. Online shopping can assist farmers in marketing their agricultural goods in local and even international markets, boosting sales and earnings. Online shopping can also assist farmers in better understanding market trends and demand so they can modify their production schedules and sales tactics [4]. Online shopping is important for agricultural development in China's underdeveloped regions because it can break down geographical barriers and increase awareness of local agricultural products, enhancing their visibility and reputation.

1.3. Structure

The purpose of this paper is to study the role of online shopping in supporting and promoting agricultural development in backward areas of China. Firstly, the article introduces the concept and development history of online shopping and analyses its importance for agricultural development in backward areas. Second, through a review of relevant literature and case studies, the specific role of online shopping in supporting and promoting agricultural development in less developed regions is explored, including improving the efficiency of marketing agricultural products, promoting the modernisation of agricultural production and increasing farmers' incomes [5]. In addition, the article analyses the problems and challenges of online shopping for supporting and promoting agricultural

development in backward areas, such as information asymmetry, logistics and distribution problems, etc., and puts forward relevant suggestions for solving them. Finally, the article summarizes the whole text and looks forward to the future development prospects of online shopping in supporting and promoting agricultural development in backward areas.

1.4. Research Methods

By selecting representative cases of the supportive and promotional effects of online shopping on agricultural development, the success factors and influencing mechanisms are studied in depth. By describing and analyzing these cases in detail, the application and practical effects of online shopping in agricultural development can be visualized, providing empirical evidence for the subsequent theoretical analyses and policy recommendations and by conducting comparative studies on the support and promotion of online shopping for agricultural development in different regions or countries, the differences and commonalities can be identified. The comparative study can reveal the overall trend and law of online shopping for agricultural development and provide a reference for the agricultural development in other regions or countries through textual analysis of relevant literature, statistical data, government reports, etc., to obtain information about the support and promotion of online shopping for agricultural development. By organizing, classifying, and summarizing the text content, key information, and correlations can be mined to provide theoretical support and data support for the research.

In summary, this paper comprehensively uses case studies, comparative studies, and textual analyses to comprehensively and deeply explore the role of online shopping in supporting and promoting the development of agriculture in China's less developed regions. This comprehensive research method can not only provide rich empirical materials and theoretical support but also reveal the essence and law of the problem from different perspectives and provide a scientific basis and effective measures for solving related problems.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Online Shopping Development

In order to develop a new business model for the exchange of goods, services, information, and other things, online shopping refers to the use of computers, networks, mobile communications, and other information technology tools. Specific topics covered include data analysis, supply chain management, electronic payments, online customer support, and online shopping.

Platforms used for mainstream online shopping include those from Amazon, eBay, Walmart, Etsy, Target, Wayfair, and others. Platforms for domestic online shopping include Suning.com, Jindong, Alibaba, and Pinduoduo.

It is astounding to see how quickly online shopping has grown to be so popular in China. During the 13th Five-Year Plan period, China's online shopping achieved notable successes: online shopping turnover increased from 21.8 trillion yuan in 2015 to 37.2 trillion yuan in 2020; the national online shopping turnover will reach 11.8 trillion yuan in 2020; and China has maintained its position as the world's largest online retailer for eight years [6]; By 2020, online shopping will employ over 60 million people and the new industry, and it will also create a large number of new professions and jobs, serving as a significant "social stabilizer." Online retailing of physical goods will account for almost a quarter of all consumer retail sales, and it has become one of the main consumption channels for citizens.

China entered a new stage of development during the Fourteenth Five-Year Plan, and the domestic and global surroundings affecting the high-quality development of online shopping have undergone significant and complicated changes. Internationally, the global economy is rapidly transitioning to a

digital economy, a new round of technological revolution and industrial change is deepening, and online shopping-driven iterative technology advancement and application integration are still advancing.

2.2. Background and Current Status of Online Shopping in China's Agricultural Development

A significant topic is the history and current state of online shopping in China's agricultural development. The national agriculture products online retail sales in 2021 totaled 422.1 billion yuan, a 2.8% increase from the previous year, according to data monitoring of the sector. Many households now regularly acquire agricultural goods through online shopping. Urban and rural inhabitants' purchasing patterns and circumstances have changed as a result of the epidemic, and demand for online services and goods is only continuing to rise. Online shopping has emerged as a key tool for maximizing nations' consumption potential.

A key force behind the new rural development paradigm is online shopping. Rural online shopping fully utilizes the benefits of effectively tying together trade and production, matching supply and demand precisely, tying together domestic and international markets and remaining actively engaged in innovation. It also plays a significant role in supporting the new model of innovative development. Domestic macroeconomic transactions can be increased, and consumer growth can be successfully encouraged by the agricultural and rural online shopping market [7].

2.3. Status of Agriculture in China

The dilemmas and challenges of Chinese agriculture in backward areas are mainly in the following areas:

2.3.1. Poor Production Conditions

Many backward areas have inadequate farmland water conservancy facilities and poor irrigation conditions, resulting in low crop yields and poor quality. At the same time, there is a lack of modern machinery equipment and technical support, and farmers are not highly skilled, with outdated and inefficient methods of planting, breeding, and other management.

2.3.2. Limited Land Resources

China's land resources are limited, but the large rural population puts pressure on land use. In many backward areas, there is a large amount of unused land that is not being reasonably utilized, resulting in a waste of resources. At the same time, owing to the lack of scientific planning and rational layout, irrational land use also limits the development of agricultural production.

2.3.3. Single Structure of Agricultural Products

China's agricultural products have a relatively single structure, dominated by grain and bulk agricultural products, and lacking in high-value-added specialty and high-quality agricultural products. Owing to a lack of brand building and market promotion, the quality and competitiveness of many agricultural products are not on par with international standards. At the same time, the distribution channels for agricultural products are not smooth, leading to serious stagnation in sales.

2.3.4. Low Incomes of Farmers

Owing to low agricultural productivity and unstable prices of agricultural products, the income level of farmers is relatively low. Farmers face problems such as rising production costs, poor distribution channels, and insufficient market demand, making it difficult to grow their economic income. At the same time, the lack of rural public service facilities and social security systems increases the pressure on farmers' livelihoods [8].

2.3.5. Serious Environmental Pollution in Agriculture

Traditional agricultural production methods use more chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and other chemical substances, leading to increasingly prominent problems of environmental pollution of soil and water sources. Problems such as excessive pesticide residues and heavy metal pollution threaten the quality of agricultural products and food safety. At the same time, improper handling of agricultural production waste, such as agricultural film, has also had a negative impact on the environment.

3. Online Shopping to Support Agricultural Development in Backward Regions of China

3.1. Increased Market Expansion and Sales Channels

Online shopping develops a platform for online sales that connects agricultural products to the market directly, bringing farmers and customers closer together and lowering the cost of communication for middlemen. Farmers can enhance their income by selling their agricultural products directly to consumers. With the help of rural online shopping, farmers can access market data more rapidly and mitigate the dangers brought on by information asymmetry in market exchanges. For agricultural products and byproducts in rural areas, rural online shopping offers more sales channels and market data, and can more effectively address the issue of agricultural product sales.

Farmers in Longnan City, Lixian County, Gansu Province, for instance, sold local apples through an online shopping platform to boost their incomes and become wealthy; by the end of 2021, 78 online shopping enterprises in Lixian County had opened 2,990 online shops on online shopping platforms, with more than 3,000 small and micro-enterprises and more than 100 types of agricultural products sold online; the market for agricultural products had also been strengthened, with the county's agricultural industry [9].

In addition, according to the Ministry of Commerce's big data monitoring data, the online retail sales of agricultural products reached RMB422.1 billion in 2021, a year-on-year increase of 2.8%. This indicates that online shopping is increasingly being used in China's agricultural sector.

3.2. Quality Improvement and Traceability Management of Agricultural Products

Through online shopping platforms, farmers may better promote their products and raise the quality and visibility of their offerings, which is one of the many ways that online shopping serves to improve the quality management and traceability of agricultural products. To help consumers better understand the production process and product quality of agricultural products, online shopping platforms can also offer traceability management services for agricultural products. Online shopping platforms can also give farmers more practical sales channels, enabling their goods to reach a wider market.

The use of the Chinese online shopping site Pinduoduo for agriculture is one example of how online shopping serves multiple purposes in enhancing the. Pinduoduo is a Chinese online shopping company dedicated to assisting agriculturally disadvantaged communities improve the quality and

traceability of their agricultural products. It distributes agricultural products using a group buying approach.

Pinduoduo collaborates with farmers to buy agricultural products directly, avoiding the conventional middlemen and giving consumers price breaks. It does this by utilizing its substantial user base and strong supply chain skills. In addition, Pinduoduo offers technical assistance and training to farmers in order to help them enhance their management skills and planting methods, thus raising the caliber of agricultural output.

Pindu City has built a traceability system for the quality and safety of agricultural products in collaboration with local governments and businesses to face the challenge of traceability management of agricultural products. The system keeps track of all elements of agricultural product production, processing, and transportation, allowing consumers to know precisely where their food comes from and how safe it is. Customers can view full information and traceability data by just scanning the QR code on the goods.

This illustration demonstrates how online shopping sites like Pinduoduo can assist China's agricultural regions that are behind in terms of quality management and product traceability. Pinduoduo helps farmers provide better quality agricultural products and improves the traceability of their products by creating a traceability system, thereby increasing consumer confidence.

3.3. Promoting Agricultural Technology and Knowledge Dissemination

Online shopping can play multiple roles in facilitating the dissemination and exchange of agricultural technologies and knowledge. Through online shopping platforms, farmers can better understand market demand and the application of new technologies and products and better adapt their production plans and methods. At the same time, online shopping platforms can also provide farmers with more convenient channels for the exchange of technology and knowledge, facilitating and speeding up communication between farmers [10].

Take Alibaba's Taobao Village project as an example. The project aims to develop rural online shopping through an online shopping platform to increase farmers' income. The project also provides a number of training courses for farmers, such as how to use the online shopping platform and online marketing management, so that farmers can make better use of online shopping to disseminate agricultural knowledge and skills.

4. The Role of Online Shopping in Promoting Agricultural Development in Backward Areas of China

4.1. Funding and Financing Support

Online shopping platforms play a variety of roles in the financing and financial support of agriculture. First and foremost, an online shopping platform may help farmers sell their goods and get market information more easily, boosting their income. This makes it simpler for farmers to convince banks, funds, and other financial organizations of their creditworthiness and ability to repay loans so they can obtain additional loans and financial assistance. Secondly, online shopping platforms can offer traceability services for agricultural products, boost their reliability and quality, and increase investor confidence in them, resulting in increased financial support for farmers. Last but not least, online shopping platforms can offer farmers more practical means of payment and settlement, lower transaction costs, and improve the climate for funding and supporting agriculture.

4.2. Agricultural Supply Chain and Logistics Management

Analyzed are the benefits and role of online shopping in the logistics and supply chain management of agricultural products.

Online shopping has a variety of uses in the management and logistics of the agricultural supply chain. To ensure information sharing and efficient resource allocation, online shopping platforms can connect all facets of the agricultural supply chain, including production, processing, and marketing. This can raise the competitiveness of agricultural products on the market, increase production efficiency and quality, and lower production costs. Second, online shopping platforms can facilitate the distribution and delivery of agricultural products. [11], involving distribution, transportation, and warehousing. In order to better fulfill customer needs, this can minimize the time that agricultural products are in circulation and lower the cost of transportation. Last but not least, online shopping platforms can provide farmers with more adaptable sales channels including online sales and pre-sales. In order to maximize sales and earnings, they are able to adjust their sales approach in accordance with consumer demand and product attributes.

4.3. Policy and Support Measures

Governments and pertinent institutions have established a number of policies and support measures to promote the expansion of online shopping agriculture. The General Office of the State Council, for instance, published the Opinions on Accelerating the Development of Rural Online shopping and suggested a number of policies and initiatives to aid in the growth of rural online shopping, such as supporting infrastructure development, enhancing logistics and distribution services, and encouraging online shopping of agricultural products. Additionally, the Ministry of Commerce and the other seven departments released the Implementation Opinions on Accelerating the Development of Rural Online shopping and suggested a number of policies and initiatives to aid in the growth of rural online shopping, including promoting online shopping of agricultural goods and supporting infrastructure building.

5. Challenges and Countermeasures

5.1. Challenges to Online Shopping

China's online shopping promotion faces many challenges:

5.1.1. Inadequate Infrastructure Development

Despite China's tremendous online shopping achievements, the country still lags behind wealthy countries in terms of infrastructure development. The development of online shopping has been limited by problems such as uneven network coverage, slow broadband speed, and inadequate logistics and distribution infrastructure. Rural locations often have inadequate network coverage and logistics infrastructure, which limits the marketing and adoption of online shopping there.

5.1.2. Cybersecurity Concerns

As online shopping has grown quickly, cybersecurity concerns have risen to the fore. Consumers' trust in online shopping has increased as a result of risks, including cybercrime, data breaches, and cyberattacks. Online shopping platforms are also vulnerable to security risks, including cyberattacks and data leaking. Strengthening cybersecurity and establishing effective cybersecurity laws, rules, and regulatory processes is therefore crucial for the development of online shopping.

5.1.3. Issues with Trust and Reputation

Due to information asymmetries and transaction risks in the online shopping transaction process, consumers' trust in online shopping platforms is often poor. False advertising and the sale of knockoff goods are two issues that certain dishonest retailers have, and they cause consumers to suffer both financial losses and psychological distress. Therefore, the creation of a trustworthy online shopping platform, the improvement of consumer shopping experience and trust, and the strengthening of merchant monitoring and punishment are contemporary issues that require immediate resolution.

5.1.4. Lack of Talent

To support the growth of online shopping, a great number of experts are needed, including technical developers, operational managers, marketing staff, etc. However, there are now certain issues with China's online shopping talent introduction and training. College graduates lack the professional experience and skills that the online shopping industry requires, but on the other hand, the pay in the online shopping sector is rather low, which causes the loss of exceptional talents. Therefore, one of the major things to encourage the development of online shopping is boosting the training and introduction of online shopping talents and improving the professional quality and competence of practitioners.

5.1.5. Legal and Policy Framework

To govern and direct the development of online shopping, which involves numerous fields and players, a strong legal and policy framework is needed. China's legal framework in the area of online shopping is currently insufficient, and efforts to create and modify pertinent rules and regulations need to be stepped up. To further promote fair competition, safeguard consumer rights and interests, and uphold market order, it is necessary to clarify the government's roles and responsibilities in the growth of online shopping.

5.1.6. Low Level of Farmer Literacy

A challenge for online shopping in terms of farmers is the low level of cyber literacy among farmers. The number of rural Internet users in China reached 229 million by the end of 2019, according to a survey published by the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences, but the low Internet literacy of farmers has made it challenging for them to use online shopping platforms. According to a paper published by the Renmin University of China, for instance, there are now certain issues in China's rural areas, such as farmers' ignorance of online shopping, their lack of access to technology, and their lackadaisical attitude toward cybersecurity.

5.2. Relevant Solution Strategies

The low degree of computer literacy among farmers presents a difficulty for online shopping. According to a poll from the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences, 229 million rural Chinese people used the Internet by the end of 2019. Regarding the solution plan, the government and associated entities might take a number of activities. For instance, they can encourage infrastructure growth to improve the effectiveness of logistical distribution and network coverage. Enhance the growth of the financial services sector, support new payment methods, improve market and online shopping platform oversight, and protect consumer rights and interests by expanding personnel training investments.

Enhance farmers' quality and skills: The development of digital villages is advancing rapidly, and it is crucial to enhance farmers' digital literacy and skills. Digital technology is being gradually

integrated into all facets of agricultural production and rural life. Farmers' digital literacy and abilities are essential for fostering the endogenous growth of digital villages. Increasing farmers' digital literacy would help to revive rural industry. Strengthening legislative guidelines, encouraging talent to move to rural areas, and encouraging farmers' wide engagement in digital rural development through many channels and forms are just a few of the strategies to boost farmers' digital literacy and abilities. To increase the degree and effectiveness of farmers' digital proficiency, strengthen the training for digital knowledge and skills for rural cadres, new agricultural business entities, and farmers.

Network security and building trust the following areas are where online shopping faces the greatest issues with regard to network security and building trust: First, there are problems with network security, including network attacks, data leaks, information tampering, etc. Second, problems with trust, include deceptive propaganda, fraud, and incorrect credit reporting. The following measures can be implemented as a countermeasure to these issues: first, enhance network security technology research and development and network security defense capabilities; Secondly, develop and reinforce the online shopping credit system and online shopping enterprise supervision; Third, strengthen consumer education and improve consumers' awareness of network security and risk prevention.

6. Conclusion

This essay focuses on how online shopping helps and encourages agricultural development in China's underdeveloped regions. First, we examine the state and trajectory of online shopping in China, highlighting its considerable potential despite its low level of popularity in rural areas. The significance of online shopping for agricultural growth is then covered, including how it can help with agricultural industrialization, provide sales channels for agricultural goods, and lower transaction costs. Then, we suggest how online shopping might help and encourage the growth of agriculture in China's underdeveloped regions.

By building rural online shopping platforms, providing online shopping training and technical support, and improving logistics networks, we can help farmers use the Internet for agricultural product sales and improve their income levels. In addition, online shopping can promote the integration and optimization of the agricultural industry chain and improve the quality and competitiveness of agricultural products. Finally, we discuss the challenges faced by online shopping in supporting and promoting agricultural development in China's backward regions, including inadequate infrastructure development, cybersecurity issues, trust and reputation issues, and talent shortages. In response to these challenges, we propose corresponding solutions, including strengthening infrastructure construction, improving laws and regulations and the policy environment, and enhancing talent training.

In summary, the role of online shopping in supporting and promoting agricultural development in China's backward regions cannot be ignored, but at the same time, it is necessary to solve the related problems and challenges in order to achieve sustainable development.

The research implications are as follows: 1) Examine the application potential of online shopping in the field of agriculture: By examining how online shopping supports and fosters the growth of agriculture in underdeveloped regions, we can better understand the application potential of online shopping technology in this sector and offer a theoretical foundation and useful advice for advancing the development of rural online shopping. 2) Optimization of the rural industrial structure: Online shopping, as a novel business model, can help farmers develop new markets and broaden existing distribution networks, thereby promoting the sale and distribution of agricultural products and raising farmers' income levels. Furthermore, the rise of online purchasing may promote the modernisation and improvement of rural industrial structures as well as the expansion of interconnected industrial

chains. 3) Finding a solution to the issue of agricultural product sales: Many regions in China have trouble selling their produce, particularly in outlying and underdeveloped areas where it is even harder to find a market. The study of online shopping to support agricultural sales in these regions can offer fresh approaches and solutions to the issue of agricultural sales. 4) Fostering rural economic growth: The growth of online shopping can propel rural economic growth, provide job prospects for farmers, and raise their standard of living. Additionally, the growth of online shopping can help build rural informatization, raise the information literacy and skill level of rural populations, and advance the modernization of rural areas.

The research limitations are: 1) Data acquisition challenges: Due to China's backward regions' relatively low levels of rural informatization, it is challenging to get pertinent data. As a result, the majority of the study's data came from qualitative research techniques like questionnaires and in-person interviews, which can be arbitrary and erroneous. 2) Geographical differences: Due to the country's vast geographic diversity, the study's findings will be influenced by factors such as the degree of economic growth, cultural traditions, and the acceptability of online shopping by farmers in various locations. As a result, the research's findings can be restricted geographically. 3) Restrictions on the research population: The majority of the study's participants are farmers and rural dwellers in underdeveloped regions, which may not adequately capture the state of agricultural development in rural areas today and its associated issues. As a result, the study's findings might have certain limitations.

In conclusion, this study has some research value for understanding how to support and promote online shopping for agricultural growth in China's underdeveloped regions, but there are still certain issues that require additional investigation and improvement. Online shopping's potential for the future has given China's farm industry a lot of hope. In other words, online shopping will become more and more significant in the future development of China's agriculture sector. The government and businesses should work together, enhance funding and support, encourage the growth of digital agriculture, and positively impact the strategy for rural regeneration.

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