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Does Intergenerational Cultural Feedback Promote Farmers' E-commerce Participation Behavior?

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Abstract

With the vigorous development of the internet economy, rural areas are facing new opportunities and challenges. An increasing number of farmers are selling their agricultural products online, not only delivering high-quality produce to consumers but also significantly increasing their income. However, many middle-aged and elderly farmers, due to unfamiliarity with network operations or lack of understanding of sales procedures, still rely on traditional sales methods. In this context, the cultural feedback from children plays an important role. Therefore, this study, based on 529 survey data from kiwifruit growers in Meixian County, Baoji City, Shaanxi Province, uses a binary Logit model for empirical analysis to explore the impact of intergenerational cultural feedback on farmers' e-commerce participation behavior. The results confirm that intergenerational cultural feedback is an important factor in promoting farmers' e-commerce participation behavior, providing empirical support for promoting farmers' e-commerce sales activities.

Keywords

Intergenerational Cultural Feedback; E-commerce Participation Behavior; Binary Logit Model.

1. Introduction

In the context of global digital transformation, the internet economy is developing rapidly, and rural areas are deeply affected. With the continuous innovation of information technology and the gradual improvement of network infrastructure, rural areas are facing new opportunities and challenges. E-commerce, as a key component of the internet economy, has opened up new paths for rural development. Many farmers have seized this opportunity to sell agricultural products through e-commerce platforms, greatly expanding the market range of agricultural products and thereby increasing their income levels. Numerous empirical studies have shown that the e-commerce model can effectively activate the vitality of rural economic development and significantly promote farmers' income growth [1,2].

However, the development of rural e-commerce is not smooth sailing. Under the "intergenerational division of labor" model, the outflow of young and middle-aged labor force has led to middle-aged and elderly groups becoming the main participants in small-scale peasant economy [3]. Many middle-aged and elderly farmers are at a clear disadvantage in the field of e-commerce. Due to their growth environment and educational background, they are relatively unfamiliar with network operations and lack sufficient understanding of the e-commerce sales process, including store registration, product listing, customer interaction, and logistics distribution. Therefore, facing this emerging business model of e-commerce, they often adopt a cautious attitude and still mainly rely on traditional sales methods, such as selling in local markets or waiting for acquisition merchants to come to their door. This has to a large extent hindered the widespread popularization and in-depth development of rural e-commerce, leading to a significant age-structural difference in the development of rural e-commerce [4,5].

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In the rural social structure, intergenerational relationships are an important bond to maintain family and social stability. Intergenerational feedback, as an important manifestation of intergenerational relationships, refers to the feedback behavior of the younger generation to the older generation in various aspects such as economic support, life care, and emotional comfort. Intergenerational cultural feedback refers to the process in which the younger generation teaches the older generation new cultural knowledge, skills, and lifestyles. In the context of the bottleneck in the development of rural e-commerce, whether intergenerational cultural feedback can become a key factor in promoting farmers' e-commerce participation behavior is worth in-depth exploration. From a theoretical point of view, the younger generation usually has richer network knowledge and skills. If they can provide necessary support and assistance to their middle-aged and elderly parents in the field of e-commerce, it may effectively promote the participation of middle-aged and elderly farmers in e-commerce activities.

There are already some studies at home and abroad focusing on the relationship between intergenerational relationships and rural economic behavior. Some studies have deeply analyzed the role mechanism of intergenerational support in rural family economic decision-making [6], and there are also studies focusing on the impact of rural labor force flow on family intergenerational economic relations [7]. However, research on the impact of intergenerational cultural feedback on farmers' e-commerce participation behavior is still insufficient.

This study, based on 529 survey data from kiwifruit growers in Meixian County, Baoji City, Shaanxi Province, takes the e-commerce participation behavior of the surveyed farmers as the specific research object and uses a binary Logit model for empirical analysis. The aim is to explore the impact of intergenerational feedback on farmers' e-commerce participation behavior in depth, hoping to provide solid empirical evidence for farmers to carry out e-commerce sales activities and provide strong support for the formulation of relevant policies, thereby promoting the healthy development of rural e-commerce and helping to implement the rural revitalization strategy.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Basis of Intergenerational Cultural Feedback

Social capital refers to the resources and support that individuals or groups obtain through social relationship networks, which can include information, trust, norms, and mutual assistance [8]. Intergenerational cultural feedback, as part of social capital, enhances the interaction and support within families, providing necessary resources and motivation for middle-aged and elderly farmers to better adapt to and participate in e-commerce activities [9]. For example, technical support and knowledge sharing provided by children can be seen as a form of social capital. This capital not only helps middle-aged and elderly farmers overcome technical barriers but also enhances their social trust and willingness to cooperate [10]. The accumulation and utilization of social capital play an important role in the development of rural e-commerce. Intergenerational cultural feedback, by enhancing the social capital within families, provides more opportunities and resources for middle-aged and elderly farmers, promoting their participation in e-commerce activities.

The concept of intergenerational cultural feedback can be traced back to the research on intergenerational relationships by sociologist K. Mannheim. Mannheim pointed out that social changes and cultural evolution have led to significant differences in values, lifestyles, and knowledge structures between different generations, providing space for cultural transmission between generations [11]. In modern society, with the rapid development of information technology, the younger generation's advantage in digital technology is becoming increasingly

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evident. They can teach the older generation new technologies and knowledge, and this reverse cultural transmission is called intergenerational cultural feedback [12].

2.2. The Role of Intergenerational Cultural Feedback in Rural E-commerce

In the development of rural e-commerce, the role of intergenerational cultural feedback is gradually emerging. Studies have shown that the younger generation's children, by teaching their parents network operation skills and e-commerce knowledge, can significantly improve the technical confidence of middle-aged and elderly farmers, thereby enhancing their willingness and ability to participate in e-commerce [13,14]. For example, children can help their parents register e-commerce platform accounts, upload product information, handle orders, and communicate with customers. This technical support and guidance help middle-aged and elderly farmers overcome the digital divide and successfully carry out e-commerce business [15]. In addition, some scholars believe that children can also provide cultural feedback through knowledge updating [16], psychological support [17], and resource networks [18]. Since the main object of this study is the e-commerce participation behavior of farmers, this study focuses on the cultural feedback in the form of technical support.

2.3. Related Research at Home and Abroad

There are already a large number of studies at home and abroad focusing on the impact of intergenerational relationships on rural economic behavior. Internationally, Thalhammer and Schmidt-Hertha [19] studied the intergenerational support of the elderly in Germany in the use of digital technology and found that the support of children significantly increased the frequency of the elderly's use of digital technology. In China, Zhou Yuqiong and Ding Haiqiong [20] conducted a survey study on Chinese families and found that intergenerational feedback is widely present in rural families and has a significant promoting effect on the elderly's use of digital technology. In addition, Chen Yase et al. [21] studied the impact of intergenerational economic interaction on the elderly's use of the Internet and found that economic support and emotional support are important contents of intergenerational feedback, which can effectively improve the elderly's Internet usage rate.

2.4. Research Gaps and Future Directions

Although existing studies have provided the mechanism of intergenerational cultural feedback in different contexts, and the role of intergenerational cultural feedback in rural economic behavior has become increasingly clear, the specific impact on farmers' e-commerce participation behavior still needs further exploration. There are significant differences in the effects of intergenerational cultural feedback in different regions and cultural backgrounds. Especially in rural China, with the continuous improvement of Internet infrastructure and the rapid development of the e-commerce market, how intergenerational cultural feedback affects the e-commerce participation behavior of middle-aged and elderly farmers, and how this impact is moderated by other control variables in the family and society, are all worth in-depth research. Therefore, this study analyzes the practical survey data from Meixian, Shaanxi, to reveal the specific mechanism of intergenerational cultural feedback in rural e-commerce participation.

Future research can further explore the differences in intergenerational cultural feedback in different regions and cultural backgrounds, and how to optimize the effect of intergenerational cultural feedback through policy intervention and social support to promote the healthy development of rural e-commerce. In addition, research can focus on the application of intergenerational cultural feedback in other fields, such as health education and financial literacy, to further expand its research scope and application value.

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3. Data Sources and Variable Selection

3.1. Data Sources

The data for this study were derived from a field survey conducted among kiwifruit growers in Mei County, Baoji City, Shaanxi Province. The sampling method employed a combination of stratified sequential sampling and random sampling to select the sample. A total of 627 questionnaires were distributed to the farmers, and after screening and organizing, 613 valid questionnaires were obtained. The farmer questionnaire survey was conducted in a one-on-one household interview format. The survey content included aspects such as household characteristics, characteristics of the older generation, characteristics of the younger generation, intergenerational cultural reverse socialization behavior, and farmers' e-commerce sales behavior. To ensure that the younger generation has the ability to provide cultural reverse socialization in e-commerce sales, the following screening criteria were applied to the sample: First, the respondents must have children; Second, the oldest child must be over 18 years old. After screening, 529 valid data entries were obtained.

3.2. Variable Selection

Table 1. Variable defnition and descriptive statistics

	Variables	Defnition	Mean	SD
Dependent Variable	E-commerce Participation Behavior	Yes = 1; No = 0	0.327	0.471
Intergenerational Cultural Feedback	Older Generation's Online Shopping Frequency	Less than 6 times = 1; 7-12 times = 2; More than 12 times = 3	1.265	0.953
	Technical Support Provided by Younger Generation	Yes = 1; No = 0	0.642	0.497
Characteristics of the Younger Generation	Age of the Oldest Child	Unit: Years old	23.387	0.367
	Highest Education Among Children	Primary school and below = 1; Junior high school = 2; Senior high school = 3; Junior college = 4; Bachelor's degree = 5; Master's degree and above = 6	3.920	1.127
	Permanent Residence of Children	Other province = 1; Other place in the same province = 2; Local place in the same province = 3	1.668	1.672
	Children's Online Shopping Frequency	Less than 6 times = 1; 7-12 times = 2; More than 12 times = 3	2.311	1.880
Characteristics of the Older Generation	Age	Unit: Years old	57.625	1.546
	Education	Primary school and below = 1; Junior high school = 2; Senior high school = 3; Junior college = 4; Bachelor's degree = 5; Master's degree and above = 6	2.912	0.760
	Party Membership or Village Cadre Status	Yes = 1; No = 0	0.101	0.093
	Risk Attitude	Low = 1; Medium = 2; High = 3	2.730	0.541
Household Characteristics	Highest Level of Family Transportation	Bicycle = 1; Electric scooter = 2;Motorcycle = 3; Tricycle = 4; Car = 5; Truck = 6	4.328	0.946
	Broadband Access in Household	Yes = 1; No = 0	0.859	0.438
	Kiwifruit Planting Area	Calculated based on actual values (Unit: Number of plots)	5.237	1.734
Infrastructure	Location of the Nearest Logistics Point	Village = 1; Town = 2	1.853	0.416
	Convenience of Parcel Delivery and Collection	Yes = 1; No = 0	0.864	0.364

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The dependent variable in this study is whether the respondent has participated in e-commerce sales. Farmers who have engaged in e-commerce sales are coded as "1," while those who have not are coded as "0." The statistical results show that there are 168 kiwifruit e-commerce households, accounting for 31.76% of the valid sample; there are 369 non-e-commerce kiwifruit households, accounting for 68.24% of the valid sample.

The core independent variable in this study is the ability of intergenerational cultural reverse socialization. Since the older generation's familiarity with the internet is an important manifestation of intergenerational cultural reverse socialization, this study proposes to use the older generation's familiarity with the internet as a proxy variable for the manifestation of intergenerational cultural reverse socialization. The following two indicators are selected to measure the ability of intergenerational reverse socialization: First, the frequency of online shopping by the older generation; Second, whether the younger generation provides technical support. Characteristics of the younger generation, characteristics of the older generation, household characteristics, and infrastructure are used as control variables for analysis. The specific independent variables and descriptive statistics involved in this study are shown in Table 1.

4. Empirical Analysis

4.1. Model Construction

The participation of farmers in e-commerce sales is a binary variable ("Not Participate" = 0, "Participate" = 1). Therefore, to verify the impact of intergenerational cultural feedback on whether farmers participate in e-commerce sales, this study constructs the following binary Logit model:

$$ln\frac{p_i}{1-p_i} = \propto_i + \sum_{j=1}^{n}\beta_{ij}X_{ij} + \varepsilon_i \quad (1)$$

Table 2. Binary Logit Model Regression Analysis Results

Variable	B	Std.Error	Sig.	Exp(B)
Older Generation's Online Shopping Frequency	0.328**	0.109	0.003	1.389
Technical Support Provided by Younger Generation	0.489*	0.214	0.022	1.63
Age of the Oldest Child	0.315	0.336	0.348	1.371
Highest Education Among Children	0.348***	0.091	0	1.416
Permanent Residence of Children	-0.114	0.147	0.437	0.892
Children's Online Shopping Frequency	0.267*	0.122	0.029	1.306
Age	0.015	0.014	0.277	1.016
Education	0.09	0.139	0.517	1.094
Party Membership or Village Cadre Status	-0.1	0.352	0.777	0.905
Risk Attitude	-0.188	0.2	0.348	0.829
Highest Level of Family Transportation	0.067	0.111	0.545	1.07
Broadband Access in Household	0.521*	0.235	0.027	1.683
Kiwifruit Planting Area	0.13**	0.047	0.006	1.139
Location of the Nearest Logistics Point	0.268	0.252	0.288	1.307
Convenience of Parcel Delivery and Collection	0.266	0.29	0.359	1.305
Constant	-7.305	1.927	0.000	0.001
Pseudo R2	0.563			

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In equation (1), p represents the probability that a farmer participates in e-commerce sales, and 1−p is the probability that a farmer does not participate in e-commerce sales. X_i is the independent variable, representing the i-th variable affecting the farmer's participation in e-commerce sales; β_{ij} is the estimated coefficient, which can be obtained through maximum likelihood estimation; $\propto_i$ is the intercept term; and ε_i is the error term.

The SPSS statistical analysis software was used to perform a binary Logit regression on the 529 consumer data points surveyed. The results are detailed in Table 2.

4.2. Analysis of Logit Model Results

In terms of intergenerational cultural feedback, the regression results show that the online shopping frequency of the older generation and the technical support provided by the younger generation have a positive impact on farmers' e-commerce participation behavior at the significance levels of 0.01% and 0.05%, respectively. This indicates that when the younger generation teaches the older generation about the internet and its applications, it can significantly increase the probability of the older generation participating in e-commerce sales. Currently, the younger generation is usually more proficient in the internet than the older generation. By teaching internet knowledge to the older generation, they can enhance the older generation's ability to operate the internet, thereby promoting the sale of agricultural products through e-commerce networks. Moreover, the higher the online shopping frequency of the older generation, the more likely they are to engage in online sales. This may be because the degree of cognition of online sales is closely related to whether online sales are conducted. The older generation who frequently shop online have a better understanding of online shopping and e-commerce sales knowledge, which is more conducive to their use of the internet to sell their own agricultural products.

Regarding the characteristics of the younger generation, the highest education level of the children and their online shopping frequency have a significant positive impact on whether the respondents participate in e-commerce sales. This suggests that the higher the cultural level of the younger generation, the greater the possibility of the respondents participating in e-commerce sales. Generally speaking, the higher the cultural level, the stronger the value creation ability. For the sale of kiwifruit, compared with traditional methods such as unified purchase and individual sales, e-commerce sales usually bring higher profits to farmers. Younger generations with higher cultural levels are more likely to suggest that their parents use online sales. In addition, the online shopping frequency of the younger generation represents their familiarity with the internet, which will also indirectly affect their parents' understanding and acceptance of the internet, thereby promoting the occurrence of the older generation's e-commerce participation behavior.

In terms of family characteristics, broadband access in the household and the planting area of kiwifruit have a significant positive impact on whether the respondents participate in e-commerce. The premise of e-commerce sales is to have basic network conditions. In addition to mobile internet, broadband, as a basic network connection device, can help farmers create a basic network usage status, which is convenient for the e-commerce sales of agricultural products. Moreover, the larger the planting area of kiwifruit, the greater the possibility of farmers participating in e-commerce sales. The online sales process is more complicated than traditional sales, requiring continuous attention and handling of sales matters, and involving additional costs such as the purchase of packaging materials and payment of express fees. Farmers with small planting areas, due to the small sales volume, often choose unified purchase to simplify the process and reduce costs; while farmers with large planting areas can obtain considerable profits after deducting costs through stable e-commerce sales, so they are more inclined to use e-commerce methods to sell kiwifruit.

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5. Summary

5.1. Research Conclusion

After empirical analysis, the following conclusions can be drawn: children teaching their parents about the internet and its use, farmers themselves having a high online shopping frequency, children having a high level of education, children having a high online shopping frequency, broadband access in the household, and the expansion of kiwifruit planting area all help farmers use online sales methods when selling kiwifruit. It also proves the positive impact of children's "cultural feedback" behavior on farmers' online sales. Through this method, the knowledge level of rural surplus labor force and their ability to use the internet and its applications can be effectively improved, enabling farmers to obtain more profits while selling their own agricultural products, achieving the goal of increasing income and becoming wealthy.

This paper focuses on whether the feedback behavior of children has an impact on farmers' online sales of agricultural products. Through empirical analysis, the results show that whether children teach their parents to use the internet, the highest education level of children, and the online shopping frequency of children will significantly affect the effective implementation of their teaching parents to learn network operations, thereby affecting the online sales willingness and behavior of these farmers. Parents who have been taught by their children not only have a higher degree of trust and acceptance of e-commerce, but also can independently handle some simpler online sales links, such as simple communication with customers, placing orders, and shipping. The higher the education level of children, the more and deeper the teaching content they can provide to their parents, and such parents have stronger internet usage capabilities. In addition, the higher the online shopping frequency of children, the stronger their own grasp and familiarity with e-commerce. When teaching their parents, they can more detailedly and comprehensively explain the functions and usage methods of e-commerce platforms and APPs. At the same time, the inspection results show that for farmers, the online shopping frequency of the household head and the scale of kiwifruit planting also have a significant impact on their own online sales behavior of kiwifruit. Farmers who often contact online shopping are more familiar with the internet and online sales models, have lower resistance and higher trust, understand that online sales models can bring them economic benefits different from traditional sales channels, and therefore have a stronger willingness to sell kiwifruit online. However, in the field visits, we found that the broadband access rate of the surveyed farmers only reached 72.59%, and this data varies greatly between different villages. There are still economically underdeveloped villages that have not achieved 100% broadband access. Combining empirical analysis, it is concluded that broadband access has a positive impact on farmers' online sales of kiwifruit. Therefore, governments at all levels should strengthen infrastructure construction and special fund investment in this aspect, assign special personnel to educate farmers about basic network operations, and lay a solid foundation for further realizing the goals of agricultural modernization and e-commerce environment construction of agricultural products, thereby improving farmers' economic benefits and living standards. Online sales of kiwifruit can not only improve farmers' economic benefits and build local characteristic brands, but also solve the problem of agricultural product overstock to a large extent, which has strong practical significance for the future development of farmers and rural agriculture and the improvement of living standards.

5.2. Suggestions

(1) Strengthen the publicity and training activities of e-commerce sales. Governments at all levels should organize "E-commerce Popularization Training in Rural Areas" to enhance farmers' understanding of e-commerce, so that farmers are not resistant or afraid of online sales, and do not fall behind in the wave of e-commerce, creating their own wealth.

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(2) Rural self-organized mutual aid groups. Rural areas are typical "acquaintance societies," and people are more willing to help each other. Each village committee can establish a "Network Sales Skills Mutual Aid Group" according to the actual situation of the village, with villagers who have online sales experience serving as group leaders for organization and management. In addition, since children's feedback has a significant impact on farmers' online sales behavior, but the phenomenon of "empty-nest elderly" in rural areas is serious, the village committee can hire capable children for remote assistance, serving as nominal consultants, so that the farmers in the village can achieve common progress and improvement.

(3) Improve the rural logistics distribution capacity. Due to the special requirements for preservation of agricultural products, the requirements for logistics distribution capacity are extremely high. Therefore, governments at all levels should cooperate with relevant logistics transporters to build a rural logistics network, improve the coverage and equipment perfection of the rural logistics system, and ensure the cold chain transportation capacity for fruits and fresh produce, thereby expanding the sales scope of agricultural products and entering a broader market.

(4) Carry out village-enterprise cooperation and village-school cooperation. Governments at all levels should seek cooperation with relevant agricultural enterprises and agricultural schools, relying on the high-quality talents in enterprises and universities, and using their efficient information platforms to optimize the planting and sales models of agricultural products, enhance information exchange with the outside world, solve the channel problems of fruits and fresh produce, and achieve the branding of local agricultural products.

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