

Can the Enhancement of Governmental Administrative Efficiency Optimize the Digital Business Environment?

-- An Empirical Analysis Based on Provincial Government Data from 2010 to 2022

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Abstract: This study selects the balanced panel data of 30 provincial administrative regions in China from 2010 to 2022, systematically analyzes the impact of government administrative efficiency on the digital business environment, and further explores the moderating role of government digital attention. The findings show that: the improvement of government administrative efficiency significantly optimizes the digital business environment; government attention to digital has significantly enhanced the positive effect of government administrative efficiency on the optimization of the digital business environment; there are significant regional differences in the role of government administrative efficiency in optimizing the digital business environment, with the role in the central regions, western regions and underdeveloped regions being significantly higher than that in other regions. This study enriches the relevant theoretical research by revealing the role path of government administrative efficiency in the construction of the digital business environment, and provides practical references and policy implications for enhancing government governance capacity, promoting coordinated regional development, and facilitating high-quality economic development.

Keywords: Government Administrative Efficiency; Digital Business Environment; Government Digital Focus; Moderating Effect.

1. Introduction

Against the backdrop of the current era of deep integration of the world economy and rapid advancement of digital technology, digitalization is profoundly reshaping the operation mode of the economy and society. The digital business environment, as a new model of economic governance in the digital age, is an integrated system based on information technology, aiming to provide efficient, convenient and fair operating conditions for enterprises and market entities[1]. Optimizing the digital business environment is not only a core means to enhance regional competitiveness, but also an important approach to stimulating market vitality and promoting high-quality economic development. The report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China pointed out that "high-quality development is the primary task for building a modern socialist country in all respects" and that "we should accelerate the development of the digital economy, promote the deep integration of the digital economy and the real economy, and build digital industrial clusters with international competitiveness". Therefore, the construction of the "digital business environment", which represents the sum of the external environment for the development of the digital economy, has received attention. How to build and optimize the digital business environment has become a key topic in public administration and policy research.

At present, academic research on the digital business environment mainly focuses on three aspects: First, theoretical interpretation of the construction of the digital business environment. The relevant research has conducted rich discussions on the concept of digital business environment, the logic of change, the dimensions of

evaluation, prominent problems and optimization measures[2-4]. These studies provide a theoretical basis for optimizing and adjusting the direction of digital business environment construction. Second, research on the measurement of the digital business environment. Zhao et al. based on different perspectives and drawing on recognized evaluation indicators at home and abroad, constructed a systematic and comprehensive evaluation system for the digital business environment, and quantitatively analyzed and calculated the overall, provincial and regional scores of China by combining data from 31 provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions[5-6]. Third, research on the mechanism of action of the digital business environment. Research has shown that the optimization of the digital business environment has a positive promoting effect on the scale and quality of manufacturing exports, the innovation and entrepreneurship activities of the youth group, the green development of the circulation industry, and the digital transformation and innovation capacity of enterprises[7-10]. In summary, most of the existing research has focused on analyzing the economic and social effects of the digital business environment, while the exploration of its optimization paths is relatively insufficient. The role of the government in the construction and optimization of the digital business environment needs to be further studied.

The construction and optimization of the digital business environment cannot do without the effective support of the government's governance capacity. Especially in a national governance system like China, which emphasizes government leadership, the improvement of government administrative efficiency plays a crucial role in optimizing the digital business environment. On the one hand, efficient government administrative actions can reduce institutional transaction costs and improve resource allocation efficiency,

thereby providing institutional guarantees for the digital business environment. On the other hand, the government's ability to adopt digital technologies and provide public services will directly affect the depth and breadth of digital business environment construction. However, existing research has paid insufficient attention to the relationship between government administrative efficiency and the optimization of the digital business environment, and lacks relevant theoretical evidence to further guide the deepening of related practices. Therefore, more research is needed to follow up.

In view of this, this paper, based on relevant data, explores whether the improvement of government administrative efficiency can optimize the digital business environment and further analyzes the moderating effect of government digital attention. The findings have several implications: (1) An in-depth analysis of the intrinsic connection between government administrative efficiency and the digital business environment provides a new perspective on how government administrative efficiency affects the construction and optimization of the digital business environment in the digital economy era; (2) Through the study of the digital business environment, it calls on scholars to pay attention to the research on this emerging topic of the digital business environment, thereby establishing a more complete and practical evaluation system for the regional digital business environment; (3) It provides a reference for improving government governance, stimulating the vitality of the digital economy, and allowing residents to enjoy more benefits of the digital economy, and has rich practical value.

2. Theoretical Analysis and Research Hypotheses

2.1. Government Administrative Efficiency and Digital Business Environment

Government administrative effectiveness is a comprehensive evaluation indicator, which refers to the extent to which the government and its staff demonstrate their working ability and functional performance in the process of achieving the goals, as well as the manifestation of the efficiency, effectiveness and effect achieved in this process[11]. Administrative efficiency is an important indicator of the quality and efficiency of government work and plays a crucial role in creating a good market environment, stimulating economic vitality and optimizing the allocation of social resources. In recent years, the Chinese government has significantly reduced approval procedures, streamlined institutional setup and delegated administrative powers through a series of reform and the optimization of administrative institutions, aiming to enhance the efficiency of market resource allocation and increase the satisfaction of enterprises and the public. This improvement in administrative efficiency can directly reduce institutional transaction costs for enterprises and create favorable conditions for the optimization of the digital business environment.

First, the improvement of government administrative efficiency can further optimize the efficiency of resource allocation and reduce transaction costs. The optimized administrative management system can significantly reduce the time cost and economic expenditure of enterprises in market entry and daily business operations by streamlining administrative approval procedures and enhancing the

efficiency of policy implementation, which helps to enhance the confidence of market entities and attract more investment[12]. In recent years, innovative measures such as "one-window acceptance", "one-network processing", and "separation of licenses and permits" have emerged, which have optimized the market access process for enterprises, significantly shortened the approval time, and further reduced the burden on enterprises and the public. These innovative measures have significantly enhanced government administrative efficiency and played an important role in promoting the optimization of the digital business environment.

Second, when the administrative efficiency of the government improves, the intensity of supervision increases and market behavior is standardized. An increase in government administrative efficiency means an enhancement in regulatory capacity. By promoting the deep application of digital technology in market regulation, the government can effectively curb market failure, reduce information asymmetry and unfair competition, and create a more transparent and fair market environment for enterprises[13]. The introduction of the innovative approach of "Internet plus regulation" enhances the government's service capacity and level, helps to create a fair competition, orderly, open and transparent market environment, reduces the operating costs and market risks of enterprises.

Third, high administrative efficiency of the government will provide high-quality public services and stimulate market vitality. High levels of administrative efficiency are reflected in the improvement of the quality of public services. By enhancing the digitalization of government services, the government provides precise and efficient policy consultation, data support and resource connection services to enterprises. This not only meets the demands of enterprises in terms of digital infrastructure, innovation support and talent supply, but also enhances enterprises' trust in policies and stimulates market vitality [14-15]. Through means such as data sharing, big data analysis and artificial intelligence assistance, "no review required" can precisely match eligible individuals or enterprises, enabling policies and services to precisely find people and enhancing the sense of gain and satisfaction of enterprises and market entities with various policies that benefit enterprises and the people. This innovative model of government services has driven the development of government services towards digitalization, intelligence and precision. Based on this, this paper proposes research Hypothesis 1:

H1: The improvement of government administrative efficiency can significantly optimize the digital business environment.

2.2. Moderating Effects of Government Digital Attention

The government, as a public organization, shows attention, importance, and support for a particular matter in the process of distributing attention, identifying and adapting to trends, and generating social impact[16-17]. Government digital attention refers to the extent to which the government pays attention to and supports areas such as digital technology, digital transformation, and digital governance. With the vigorous development of the digital economy, the government's attention to the relevant areas has been increasing, reflecting the government's distribution of attention to the relevant areas, actively promoting the

formulation and implementation of relevant policies, and providing important policy guidance and direction.

First, the government's increased attention to digital will incorporate the development and promotion of the digital economy into the decision-making agenda, and scientifically and efficiently allocate digital resources. When the government pays close attention to and attaches great importance to the development of the digital economy, it will formulate and introduce a series of policies and systems related to it, continuously promote the construction of digital infrastructure, strive to eliminate information silos across departments, and provide more convenient and efficient public services for market entities[18]. In addition, as the government's focus on digitalization increases, it will improve digital technologies and equipment such as big data analysis and artificial intelligence, which can enhance the efficiency and scientific nature of government decision-making, optimize government service processes[19].

Second, the increase in government digital attention can provide sufficient material and non-material resources to enhance the implementation of digital economy policies. The increase in government digital attention will not only guide a large amount of material and immaterial resources to gather in related industries and enterprises, but also send important signals to the market to enhance the confidence of enterprises and market entities[20]. In addition, the increase in government digital attention will enhance the supply of appropriate digital economy policies to avoid resource misallocation and reduce uncertainty. Only by providing the intensity of digital economy policies that are in line with productivity can we enhance policy execution and create a favorable digital business environment in the process of local governments' step-by-step policy implementation[21]. Based on this, this paper puts forward the following research hypotheses:

H2: The increase in government digital attention enhances the role of improving government administrative efficiency in optimizing the digital business environment.

3. Research Design

3.1. Model Building

3.1.1. Base Model Construction

To investigate the influence effect of independent variables on dependent variables in this study, the following benchmark model is constructed in this paper:

$$DBE_{it} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 AE_{it} + \alpha_2 X_{it} + \mu_i + \delta_t + \varepsilon_{it} \quad (1)$$

In equation (1), DBE_{it} represents digital business environment; AE_{it} represents governmental administrative efficiency; X_{it} represents control variables; μ_i and δ_t respectively represent individual fixed effect and time fixed effect; ε_{it} represents random perturbation terms.

3.1.2. Moderating Effects Model

To explore the moderating effect of government digital attention, this paper constructs the following model:

$$DBE_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 AE_{it} + \beta_2 GDA_{it} + \beta_3 (AE_{it} \times GDA_{it}) + \beta_4 X_{it} + \mu_i + \delta_t + \varepsilon_{it} \quad (2)$$

In equation (2), GDA_{it} represents government numerical attention, and the meanings of the remaining variables are basically the same as in equation (1).

3.2. Variable Selection

3.2.1. Explained Variable

Digital business environment (DBE). Through searching,

reading and analyzing the papers of scholars such as Zhao et al.[5-6], five first-level indicators and 13 second-level indicators are selected to jointly form the digital business environment indicator system. In addition, the digital business environment index was measured by using the entropy method. When conducting robustness tests, the indicator system for the digital business environment was reconstructed and re-measured for relevant tests.

3.2.2. Core Explanatory Variables

Government administrative effectiveness (AE). Government administrative effectiveness refers to the government's ability to achieve policy goals and serve the public by rationally allocating resources, optimizing processes, and enhancing decision-making and execution efficiency when performing public management functions. The article measures government administrative efficiency by "1- (administrative management fee/total fiscal revenue)", and the larger the value, the higher the government administrative efficiency.

3.2.3. Moderating Variables

Government digital attention (GDA). TAO et al. conducted an in-depth study on government digital attention and how it is measured [21-22]. By drawing on relevant research, this paper collects and organizes the government work reports of 30 provinces to determine the word frequency related to the digital economy. With the help of Python software, the government work reports are segmented, and the word frequency proportion of key words is statistically analyzed to quantify the government's attention to digital figures. The higher the proportion of word frequency, the more the government attaches importance to and supports the development of the digital economy, and the higher the government's attention to digitalization.

3.2.4. Control Variables

In addition to the above-mentioned key variables, the article also referred to relevant studies to eliminate as many variables as possible that might cause homology errors[23-25]. Eventually, it chose government size (EXP), financial development level (FIN), industrial structure (IND), and informatization level (INF) as control variables.

3.3. Data Sources and Explanations

The article selects panel data from 30 provinces in China from 2010 to 2022 to study the impact of enhanced government administrative efficiency on the digital business environment. Given that the digital business environment indicator system constructed in this paper is a multi-dimensional indicator system, considering the availability and completeness of the relevant indicator data, up to the stage of data collection and organization, 2022 is the year with the most up-to-date and comprehensive data access; Due to the lag in data release and access, 2022 was chosen as the cut-off year for the study to ensure consistency and comparability of the research. The main sources of data for this study are the China Statistical Yearbook, the China Tax Yearbook, the China Education Statistical Yearbook, relevant statistical bulletins and government work reports over the years. In addition, the outliers were excluded, and the missing data were processed mainly using linear interpolation or moving average, resulting in 380 observations.

4. Empirical Analysis

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the data of each variable in this study. The mean of the digital business environment (DBE) was 0.114, the standard deviation(SD) was 0.102, and the minimum(Min) and maximum(Max) values were 0.013 and 0.542, respectively. There are significant differences in the level of digital business environment among different regions in

China. The mean value of government administrative effectiveness (AE) is 0.658. The standard deviation(SD) is 0.136. The minimum(Min) value is 0.131, and the maximum(Max) value is 0.904. It can be seen that the improvement of government administrative efficiency has a different effect on the optimization of the digital business environment in different periods and regions. In terms of government digital attention, there are also differences in government digital attention among the 30 provinces in China.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of variables

VarName	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
DBE	380	0.114	0.102	0.013	0.542
AE	380	0.658	0.136	0.131	0.904
GDA	380	0.425	0.319	0.013	1.761
EXP	380	0.248	0.101	0.106	0.758
FIN	380	3.379	1.088	1.678	7.578
IND	380	0.474	0.097	0.286	0.839
INF	380	0.067	0.136	0.015	2.513

4.2. Benchmark Regression Results

After the Hausman test of the article, a bidirectional fixed-effect model was selected for regression analysis. To avoid the problem of collinearity, correlation tests were conducted, and the results showed that VIFs were all less than 10, that is, there was no multicollinearity problem among the variables in the article. The benchmark regression results are shown in

Table 2. Columns (1) and (2) of Table 2 represent the regression results before and after the control variables were added. The results show that the regression coefficients of columns (1) and (2) are significantly positive at the 5% level, so the improvement of government administrative efficiency significantly optimizes the level of digital business environment in the region, as verified in previous H1.

Table 2. Benchmark Regression Results

	DBE (1)	DBE (2)
AE	0.102** (1.978)	0.109** (1.985)
EXP		0.003 (0.034)
FIN		0.013 (0.954)
IND		-0.043 (-0.479)
INF		-0.005 (-0.679)
_cons	0.144*** (3.012)	0.099 (1.066)
Year	YES	YES
Province	YES	YES
N	380	380
R ²	0.883	0.884
Adj. R ²	0.869	0.868

Note: ***, ** and * respectively indicate that the regression results pass the significance test at the confidence levels of 1%, 5% and 10%. The values of t are reported in parentheses in the table, and the same applies to the following table

4.3. Robustness and Endogeneity Tests

4.3.1. Robustness Test

1. Replace the benchmark regression model

In this paper, the Oprobit model is used to replace the baseline regression model to re-regression the sample. Column (1) of Table 3 shows that the coefficient of government administrative efficiency is significantly positive at the 1% level, and there is still a significant positive correlation between government administrative efficiency and the digital business environment. The empirical results are robust.

2. Replace the measure of the explained variable

The digital business environment was remeasured by replacing the explained variable indicators, and the results can be obtained in the second column of the table below. After replacing the measurement indicators of the digital business environment, government administrative efficiency was significantly positively correlated with the digital business environment at the 5% level, and the regression results were basically consistent with the original conclusions, indicating that the previous research conclusions have strong robustness

and the aforementioned analysis is reasonable.

4.3.2. Endogeneity Test

To address the endogeneity problem, this paper uses the explanatory variable lagging by one period as the instrumental variable for a two-stage least squares regression. The results of the 2SLS first-stage regression of the instrumental variable: where the IV coefficient is significantly positive, verifying the correlation of the instrumental variable. As shown in column (4) of Table 3, after considering and addressing the endogeneity issue, the coefficient of the impact of government administrative efficiency on the digital business environment remains significantly positive at the 5% level, and the improvement of government administrative efficiency still significantly optimizes the level of the regional digital business environment. In addition, the p-value corresponding to the K-P rk LM statistic is 0.0000, therefore there is no problem of insufficient identification of instrumental variables in this study; The C-D Wald F statistic is greater than the critical value at the 10% level of the Stock-Yogo weak identification test, this study passed this test. Thus, the previous H1 is verified again.

Table 3. Robustness and endogeneity tests

	DBE (1)	DIE (2)	AE (3)	DBE (4)
AE	13.078*** (7.314)	0.123** (2.498)		0.168** (2.236)
IV			0.671*** (11.489)	
K – P rk LM				50.077
P value				0.0000
C – D Wald F				212.557
Stock – Yogo				[16.38]
_cons		0.131* (1.786)	0.472*** (7.381)	0.014 (0.141)
Control	YES	YES	YES	YES
Year	YES	YES	YES	YES
Province	YES	YES	YES	YES
N	380	380	347	347
R ²		0.899	0.967	0.900
Adj. R ²		0.885	0.962	0.885

4.4. Heterogeneity Analysis

The article explores the regional heterogeneity of the impact of enhanced administrative efficiency on the digital business environment from the perspectives of regional location and economic development status. When making regional divisions, China's regions are divided into eastern, central and western regions respectively for regression. In addition, based on the median per capita GDP of each province, regions with a per capita GDP higher than the median are classified as developed regions, and regions with a per capita GDP lower than the median are classified as underdeveloped regions for assignment regression. It can be seen from the first column, the second column and the third column in the following table: the improvement of

government administrative efficiency has a stronger effect on optimizing the digital business environment in the central regions and western regions. The results from columns (4) to (5) show that the effect of improving government administrative efficiency on optimizing the digital business environment is more pronounced in less developed regions. To explore the underlying causes of this phenomenon, it may be due to the imbalance and disparity in development among different regions in China. The eastern region, compared with the developed regions, has a relatively developed economy and a relatively well-developed market mechanism. The development of the digital business environment may rely more on market forces and innovation-driven forces, and the influence of government administrative efficiency may be relatively weak. The western region, which is relatively

underdeveloped in terms of economy, has an imperfect market mechanism, and the government plays a more important role in it. The improvement of government

administrative efficiency may more directly promote the improvement of the digital business environment.

Table 4. Heterogeneity Analysis

	Regional heterogeneity			Heterogeneity in economic development levels	
	DBE East (1)	DBE Central (2)	DBE West (3)	DBE Developed regions (4)	DBE Underdeveloped regions (5)
AE	0.002 (0.009)	0.166** (2.447)	0.111*** (3.014)	-0.198 (-1.439)	0.143*** (5.321)
_cons	0.687** (2.567)	-0.053 (-0.707)	-0.140*** (-3.374)	0.349* (1.773)	-0.122*** (-4.218)
Control	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Year	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Province	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
N	139	103	138	192	188
R ²	0.915	0.946	0.889	0.932	0.910
Adj. R ²	0.894	0.930	0.862	0.919	0.893

4.5. Moderating Effect Test

In the second column of the following table, the (AE×GDA) between government administrative efficiency and government digital attention is significantly positive at the 1%

level. This is sufficient to draw a conclusion: the higher the government's digital attention, the better the effect of improving government administrative efficiency on optimizing the digital business environment. Thus, the previous H2 is verified.

Table 5. Test of moderating effects

	DBE (1)	DBE (2)
AE	0.111** (2.006)	0.144*** (3.195)
GDA	-0.009 (-0.853)	0.005 (0.396)
AE×GDA		0.476*** (7.739)
_cons	0.103 (1.098)	0.067 (0.835)
Control	YES	YES
Year	YES	YES
Province	YES	YES
N	380	380
R ²	0.884	0.912
Adj. R ²	0.868	0.899

5. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

5.1. Conclusion

Based on analysis and research on the improvement of government administrative efficiency for the optimization of

the digital business environment, this paper takes 30 provinces in China from 2010 to 2022 as samples and constructs a digital business environment index system covering digital infrastructure environment, digital innovation environment, digital government affairs environment, digital talent supply environment and digital

market environment as first-level indicators. The index of the digital business environment was measured using the entropy method. Based on this, this paper systematically analyzes the impact of government administrative efficiency on the digital business environment and its mechanism of action, and draws the following main conclusions:

First, The improvement of government administrative efficiency can promote the construction of a digital business environment, and this research conclusion remains valid after a series of related robustness analyses, considerations and solutions to endogeneity issues. Second, the moderating effect test shows that government attention to digitalization significantly enhances the promoting effect of government administrative efficiency on the optimization of the digital business environment. This suggests that in the process of promoting digital transformation, the government's emphasis on digital technology can amplify the improvement effect of administrative efficiency on the business environment. Third, compared with the eastern and developed regions, the enhancement of government administrative efficiency has a more significant effect on optimizing the digital business environment in central regions, western regions and the less developed regions. This indicates that in the context of significant differences in regional development levels, the improvement of administrative efficiency can more effectively make up for the shortcomings in digital construction and promote coordinated development among regions.

5.2. Policy Recommendations

In recent years, the Chinese government has successively introduced a series of strategic plans and policy measures aimed at promoting high-quality economic development. The government needs to focus on building and improving a multi-level supporting guarantee mechanism:

1. Strengthen the publicity and interpretation mechanism: Currently, the top priority is to enhance the depth and breadth of publicity and improve the accuracy and accessibility of interpretation. We should make full use of diversified communication channels to carry out targeted and interactive publicity and guidance for market entities, ensuring that enterprises can fully and accurately grasp the core essence, applicable conditions and application procedures of the policies. This move can effectively reduce the information asymmetry and compliance costs that enterprises encounter during the application process, and better ensure that enterprises fully enjoy the incentives, maximize the release of dividends, and stimulate market vitality.

2. Improve the implementation assessment and dynamic optimization mechanism: The key to the vitality of a policy lies in its implementation effectiveness and adaptability. By establishing a scientific and standardized implementation supervision and effect evaluation system, regularly collecting implementation data, monitoring feedback from market entities, and assessing economic benefits and social impacts, a closed-loop management is formed. Based on the assessment results, promptly identify the bottlenecks, difficulties in the execution process, as well as new challenges brought about by changes in the external environment, and then make necessary adjustments, supplements or optimizations. This dynamic adjustment process ensures that policies always have practical relevance and sustained effectiveness, and can flexibly respond to development needs.

3. Improve the legal guarantee system: Continuously

promote relevant legislative and amendment work, focusing on core issues such as property rights definition and protection, the safe and trustworthy circulation and compliant utilization of data elements, and the rule construction of digital transactions and consumer rights protection, to clarify legal boundaries and define the rights and responsibilities of all parties. Build a complete system with clear rights and responsibilities and strong enforcement, provide a stable and predictable institutional environment for market participants (including enterprises and individuals), effectively safeguard their legitimate rights and interests, and effectively prevent and defuse all kinds of legal risks.

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