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Comparative Analysis on Trade Facilitation Level of RCEP Member Countries

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Abstract

With the formal signing of RCEP, the free trade zone with the largest population and the largest development potential in the world was born. The trade system of various countries gradually showed an open development trend, and trade facilitation gradually penetrated into many fields of international trade. This paper finds that: from the trade facilitation level of RCEP member countries from 2004 to 2020, the trade facilitation level of relevant countries is relatively different, among which the countries with relatively high scores are Japan, South Korea, Singapore and other countries, while the countries with relatively low scores are Indonesia, Cambodia, Laos and other countries. However, whether countries with high or low levels of trade facilitation, the average level of trade facilitation water in relevant countries has increased in recent years.

Keywords

Trade Facilitation; RCEP Member States; Principal Component Analysis; Level Comparison.

1. Introduction

On November 15, 2020, with the formal signing of the regional comprehensive economic partnership agreement (RCEP), the free trade zone with the largest population, the most diverse membership structure and the greatest development potential in the world was born, which means that about one third of the global economy has formed an integrated market, and the trade systems of various countries are gradually showing an open development trend. As the total amount of international trade between countries continues to increase and trade ties continue to be close, the impact of tariff barriers restricting the development of international trade on trade development gradually decreases, which promotes the government and researchers to pay attention to the orderly and rationalization of trade procedures, and gradually forms "trade facilitation". As for trade facilitation, the academic community has not clearly defined its concept. Referring to the methods of Yang Jijun et al. (2020) and Wang Wei (2015), this paper takes Logistics Port efficiency and customs transportation efficiency as the main connotation of trade facilitation. After expansion on this basis, it gradually covers many contents, such as international trade environment, national policy transparency, customs supervision environment, customs clearance efficiency and so on. At the same time, the rapid development of network technology has promoted the continuous close connection between Internet technology and financial infrastructure, and gradually deepened its impact on international trade. It can be seen that trade facilitation has gradually penetrated into many fields of international trade.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Based on the Perspective of Trade Time and Trade Cost

When exploring trade facilitation indicators, many researchers focus on trade time and trade cost, and believe that the higher the level of trade facilitation of a country, the shorter the time

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it takes to carry out international trade and the lower the related trade cost. Among them, bank (2020) found that the extension of international trade time will reduce the overall flow of international trade and inhibit the export of time sensitive products. When the export trade of products is delayed for more than 24h, the total export trade of national time sensitive products will decrease by 1%. Zeng Qian (2019) measured the development level of national trade facilitation by the time required for the completion of goods export trade procedures, and explored the impact of trade facilitation influencing factors on China's goods export trade. When analyzing the impact of trade facilitation on China's national economy, Dai Changming (2021) adopted the customs clearance time of the world bank as the evaluation standard.

2.2. From the Perspective of Comprehensive Evaluation Indicators

Compared with the previous mention that many scholars use a single variable and single index to evaluate the degree of trade facilitation, more researchers believe that comprehensive evaluation indicators can more appropriately and comprehensively reflect the level of national trade facilitation. Kong Qingfeng and Dong Hongwei (2015) used the transnational trade index released by the world bank to measure when studying trade facilitation. This index mainly refers to the time and trade cost spent transporting a standard container from the most developed city to the export port, which is mainly composed of relevant document approval and preparation, cargo transportation, customs clearance and port operation, and finally subdivided into international trade facilitation soft environment Hard environment and inland cost. Li Hui and Fu Hua (2017) believe that compared with the international trade of other industries, manufacturing products have significant trade particularity. When measuring the degree of trade facilitation of national manufacturing products, the universality of trade barriers, airport infrastructure and the burden of customs procedures are used as evaluation indicators. The popularity of the Internet and the popularity of the international trade barrier (Duval) are the main indicators used in the evaluation of the international trade barrier.

2.3. From the Perspective of Measurable Evaluation Indicators

Measurement evaluation index refers to the construction of a "comprehensive" evaluation index after synthesizing the indicators that can reflect the level of trade facilitation, so as to comprehensively reflect the level of trade facilitation. The measurement methods include simple average method, weighting method and principal component analysis method.

First, simple average method. In order to accurately and comprehensively reflect the level of trade facilitation, the researcher Bank (2015) took the lead in building an index system to evaluate the level of trade facilitation, specifically adopted the primary indicators port efficiency, e-commerce, customs environment and trade rules, and combined with the simple average method to convert these primary indicators affecting trade facilitation into comprehensive indicators. Bourdet (2011) followed the method of Bank (2015) to construct the evaluation index system of trade facilitation, subdivided the secondary indicators, standardized the secondary indicators, and used the simple average method to measure the comprehensive indicators to obtain the level of trade facilitation of the study country. Fuenzalida (2018) handled the secondary indicators of trade facilitation evaluation according to the simple average method in the global competitiveness report, and finally obtained the comprehensive level of trade facilitation.

Second, give weight method. When constructing the comprehensive evaluation index system of trade facilitation level, some researchers use the results of literature measurement to assign the primary index. When studying the comprehensive evaluation index system of trade facilitation, Tong Jiadong and Li Lianqing (2014) assigned 5.6% to the customs environment, 15% to the e-commerce environment, 20.7% to the regulatory environment and 55.7% to the port efficiency according to the research results of fuenzalida (2018), and finally obtained the comprehensive level of trade facilitation. Tu yuanfen (2020) combined with the research of the

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above scholars, gave the weights to the above four indicators: e-commerce value of 5.8%, customs environment value of 6.2%, regulatory environment value of 24% and port efficiency value of 61.7%.

2.4. Literature Summary

By summarizing the relevant literature on the construction of trade facilitation evaluation indicators, it can be found that the indicators to measure trade facilitation have gradually changed from the initial single evaluation indicators to more comprehensive and representative comprehensive evaluation indicators. The general indicators initially used by many researchers mainly judge a single aspect of import and export trade, such as specific customs clearance time, inland cost, etc., without comprehensively considering the impact of trade-related systems, infrastructure quality level, customs environment and other factors. Compared with general indicators, measurement indicators are considered more comprehensively, but there are different measurement methods that affect the final evaluation results. Some scholars use the simple average method to calculate the primary and secondary indicators, and do not fully consider the differences of each indicator. The weighting method mainly refers to the improvement and Optimization Based on the previous analysis of the weights of many primary trade indicators and the research of Wilson (2016). This method does not fully consider the applicability of indicators and ignores the different situations in different countries, resulting in the lack of a more perfect and scientific theoretical basis for the weighting method. Principal component analysis covers many relevant indicators of trade facilitation, and analyzes the problem of multicollinearity, which is scientific.

3. Trade Facilitation Reform in RCEP Member Countries

Table 1. RECP Agreements and Provisions Related to Trade Facilitation

Related agreements	Main contents related to trade facilitation
Chapter IV of RCEP agreement	Promote the implementation of simple customs procedures and streamline transit procedures
Chapter VIII of RCEP agreement	promote trade in telecommunications services and reduce barriers to trade in services
Chapter XII of RCEP agreement	Promote the level of e-commerce among parties and reduce tariffs on e-commerce
RCEP general agreement on trade	It mainly expounds the regulatory issues of trade facilitation
Agreement on technical barriers to trade	It is mainly the formulation of technical standards and rules and the agreement on reducing trade barriers to promote trade facilitation
Agreement on rules of origin	Clarifying the origin of trade in goods and trade in services involves the implementation subject of trade facilitation
Pre shipment inspection agreement	The inspection procedures before shipment are specified in detail to connect the different standards of both sides of the goods trade, so as to facilitate the clearance and entry of goods

Data Source: according to the content of RCEP agreement and relevant website information.

Since the establishment of RECP, the overall goal has remained unchanged and is committed to promoting the steady development of Global trade liberalization. The purpose of RCEP trade agreement has gradually derived the concept of trade facilitation, which is reflected in many legal and regulatory systems, such as customs valuation agreement, rules of origin agreement, technical barriers to trade agreement, pre shipment inspection agreement, etc., as shown in the table below. However, there is no clear trade facilitation agreement in RCEP agreement.

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Different terms are distributed among multiple agreement contents, and the text of relevant terms is relatively abstract, without strong operability and coordination.

Although some provisions related to trade facilitation have long been involved in RCEP laws and regulations system, the concept and problems of trade facilitation were formally put forward at the first ministerial meeting in 2011. At that time, the main discussion was that if the cost of trade clearance was reduced, the complicated trade procedures could be reduced. At this meeting, many Member States believed that in order to reduce the cost of trade circulation, we should reduce the formalities of cross-border commodity flow and avoid customs clearance obstacles. By 2013, the Council for trade in goods of RCEP Member States held the following five points in the seminar on trade facilitation: first, the documents and data requirements for customs clearance of goods are cumbersome; 2, The transparency of customs clearance of goods is low, and the import and export requirements are not clear; III; The level of audit control, analysis and evaluation of goods import and export is low; 4, The popularization of informatization is limited; 5, The cooperation between customs and other departments is inefficient. By 2015, RCEP member states have gradually realized the importance of the efficiency of goods movement, transportation and customs clearance, and believe that improving the relevant technical level and infrastructure construction is the key to improving trade facilitation. Due to the limited enthusiasm of some member states in promoting trade facilitation, trade facilitation has not achieved good results. By 2018, the leaders of the ten ASEAN countries had negotiated and formed the framework agreement for trade facilitation negotiation, so as to build effective binding rules and improve the efficiency of trade transactions.

4. Measurement of Trade Facilitation Level of RCEP Member Countries

As there is no unified definition for trade facilitation at this stage, the scope of trade facilitation is also relatively broad, and there is no export trade statistics for trade facilitation. Based on the previous theoretical research, this section selects four primary indicators to evaluate trade facilitation and subdivides them into 14 secondary indicators to calculate the degree of trade facilitation of Cambodia to RCEP member states.

4.1. Construction of Index System

Table 2. Composition of Primary and Secondary Indicators of Trade Facilitation Evaluation System

Primary index	Secondary index	Score range	Indicator source
Institutional environment (R)	Government credibility(R_1)	1-7	GCR
	Judicial independence(R_2)	1-7	GCR
	Efficiency of dispute settlement(R_3)	1-7	GCR
	Policy transparency(R_4)	1-7	GCR
infrastructure (I)	Quality of highway facilities(I_1)	1-7	GCR
	Port facility quality(I_2)	1-7	GCR
	Aviation facility quality(I_3)	1-7	GCR
	Quality of railway facilities(I_4)	1-7	GCR
Customs Administration (C)	Size of trade barriers(C_1)	1-7	GCR
	Complexity of customs procedures(C_2)	1-7	GCR
	Irregular payments and bribes(C_3)	1-7	GCR
information technology (T)	Availability of new technologies(T_1)	1-7	GCR
	Adaptability of new technologies(T_2)	1-7	GCR
	Network penetration(T_3)	1-100	GCR

Data source: obtained by combing the relevant data in the global competitiveness report

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This paper fully refers to the ideas of many research scholars on measuring the level of trade facilitation, combined with the trade facilitation agreement issued by the world trade organization, and constructs a comprehensive and systematic evaluation index system of trade facilitation, including 4 primary indicators and 14 secondary indicators. This paper sets four first-class indicators: institutional environment (R), customs management (c), infrastructure (L) and information technology (T), and obtains 14 second-class evaluation indicators according to the actual situation of trade, as shown in Table 4-2. The higher the scores of primary and secondary indicators, the higher the level of trade facilitation in this field.

This paper introduces the indicators at all levels of trade facilitation evaluation:

1. Institutional environment: when the national policy is open, inclusive and the legal system is scientific, the system shows that the country has a perfect and reasonable trade institutional environment. After setting the primary indicators of institutional environment, this paper subdivides four specific secondary indicators, namely government reputation, judicial independence, dispute settlement efficiency and policy transparency. (1) Government reputation mainly refers to the National People's recognition of the government's credibility. The higher the score of this index, the higher the people's recognition of the government. The country has a good institutional environment and plays a role in promoting international trade. (2) Judicial independence mainly refers to whether the national Ministry of justice can exercise independent judicial power and whether it is subject to other interference. The higher the score of this index, the less likely the national judicial department is affected by various factors. (3) The efficiency of dispute settlement mainly refers to the efficiency of the government in dealing with foreign trade disputes. The higher the score of this index, the higher the efficiency of the government in solving disputes. (4) Policy transparency mainly refers to the openness of national policies, which can also reflect whether the national policy environment is perfect. The higher the score of this index, the less information asymmetry in the national market, which is conducive to the country's international trade.

2. Infrastructure: this indicator mainly measures the perfection of the quality of national highway, railway, port and aviation infrastructure. After setting the primary index of infrastructure, this paper subdivides four specific secondary indexes, namely the quality of highway facilities, port infrastructure, air transportation facilities and railway facilities. (1) The quality of highway facilities mainly refers to the quality level and perfection of highway transportation infrastructure within the country. The higher the score of this index, the higher the quality level of highway transportation infrastructure and the higher the highway transportation capacity. (2) The quality of port infrastructure mainly indicates the quality level and perfection of port infrastructure along the national coastline. The higher the score of this index, the better the port transportation infrastructure and the higher the port transportation capacity of the country. (3) The quality of air transport facilities mainly indicates the quality level and perfection of the national coastline air transport infrastructure. The higher the score of this index, the better the country's air transport infrastructure and the higher the air transport capacity. (4) The quality of railway facilities mainly refers to the quality level and perfection of railway transportation infrastructure within the country. The higher the score of this index, the higher the quality level of railway transportation infrastructure and the higher the capacity of railway transportation for international trade goods.

3. Customs management: this indicator mainly measures the customs clearance efficiency of the country's international trade involving the import and export of related goods. After setting the primary indicators of customs management, this paper subdivides three secondary indicators, namely, the size of trade barriers, the complexity of customs procedures, and unconventional payment and bribery. (1) The size of trade barriers mainly indicates the implementation degree of relevant measures taken by importing countries to restrict foreign goods from entering their own market in order to maintain the domestic market share of local

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products. (2) The complexity of Customs Procedures refers to the complexity of various inspection and approval procedures required for products related to international trade to enter the territory. (3) Unconventional payment and bribery mainly reflect the illegal degree of unconventional payment and bribery paid by the exporting country during the customs clearance of the imported country in order to expand the market in the importing country in the process of international trade transactions. This indicator can reflect the efficiency of international trade customs clearance. The lower the score of this indicator, the lower the efficiency of customs clearance.

4. Information technology: this indicator mainly measures the network popularization of international trade participating countries and the informatization degree of trade-related processes. After setting the primary indicators of information technology, this paper subdivides three secondary indicators, namely the availability, adaptability and network penetration of new technology. (l) The availability of new technologies indicates the difficulty of enterprises participating in international trade in obtaining and applying new technologies. (2) The adaptability of new technology reflects whether enterprises participating in international trade can better adapt to the changes brought by new technology to enterprise production, R & D and operation after acquiring and applying new technology. The higher the score of this index, the stronger the adaptability of relevant enterprises to new technology and the higher the acceptance of new technology. (3) The Internet penetration rate reflects the Internet penetration rate of all walks of life in the domestic trade participation. The higher the score of this index, the higher the application degree of Internet technology in the country. In the subsequent analysis and processing, the above indicators should be standardized and standardized.

4.2. Principal Component Analysis and Determination of Index Weight

After completing the construction of the evaluation index system of trade facilitation degree, this paper calculates the Trade Facilitation Index of RCEP member states by combining the principal component analysis method, which is expressed by TFI below. This paper analyzes the independent component information through SPSS software. Because the network penetration rate of the secondary index selected in this paper is different from the scoring range of other indicators, the scoring range of this index is 0 to 100, so it is impossible to compare information and evaluate indicators directly through the original data processing. It is necessary to standardize each original index and give each index data comparability. The specific index standardization method is to divide the 14 secondary index data set in this paper by the upper limit of the value range, as shown in the following formula (1):

$$Y_i = X_i \Big/ X_i^{\max} \tag{1}$$

Where X_i refers to the original data of one of the 14 secondary indicators, $X_i^{\max}$ refers to the upper limit of the value of the indicator, and Y_i refers to the indicator data obtained after standardization, with a value range of 0 to 1. After completing the data standardization processing, kmo test needs to be carried out to clarify whether there is correlation between each index and judge whether the index can carry out principal component analysis. If it exceeds 0.8, it means that principal component analysis can be carried out later. Through the calculation and test of SPSS software, it can be seen that the kmo value of the index data used in this paper exceeds 0.8, indicating that the principal component analysis method is applicable to the index test. The specific results are shown in Table 3:

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Table 3. KMO Test

Secondary index	KMOvalue	Secondary index	KMOvalue
Government credibility (R_1)	0.904	Quality of railway facilities (I_4)	0.904
Judicial independence (R_2)	0.903	Size of trade barriers (C_1)	0.926
Efficiency of dispute settlement (R_3)	0.881	Complexity of customs procedures (C_2)	0.906
Policy transparency (R_4)	0.870	Irregular payments and bribes (C_3)	0.916
Quality of highway facilities (I_1)	0.968	Availability of new technologies (T_1)	0.831
Port facility quality (I_2)	0.923	Adaptability of new technologies (T_2)	0.845
Aviation facility quality (I_3)	0.907	Network penetration (T_3)	0.853

Table 4. Composition matrix of principal component analysis

index	F1	F2	F3
Government credibility(R_1)	0.823	-0.455	0.115
Judicial independenceR_2)	0.812	-0.289	0.073
Efficiency of dispute settlement(R_3)	0.840	-0.477	0.154
Policy transparency(R_4)	0.810	-0.301	0.152
Quality of highway facilities(I_1)	0.876	-0.045	-0.109
Port facility quality(I_2)	0.059	0.548	0.829
Aviation facility quality(I_3)	0.840	0.172	0.018
Quality of railway facilities(I_4)	0.885	0.086	0.183
Size of trade barriers(C_1)	0.782	0.146	-0.104
Complexity of customs procedures(C_2)	0.947	0.052	-0.068
Irregular payments and bribes(C_3)	0.884	0.181	0.068
Availability of new technologies(T_1)	0.849	0.335	-0.168
Adaptability of new technologies(T_2)	0.873	0.175	-0.025
Network penetration(T_3)	0.603	0.463	-0.473

In this paper, the principal component analysis of each secondary index is carried out by using SPSS software, and three indexes with eigenvalues more than 1 are extracted as principal components. When the total contribution rate of principal components exceeds 80% of the overall index, it indicates that the extracted principal components are representative and can reflect the data of the overall index. This paper can use the extracted three principal components to represent the overall secondary index data in the trade facilitation evaluation index system. Li Yuxin and Guo Yinghui (2013) took the proportion of the variance contribution rate of the principal component in the cumulative contribution rate as the specific index weight when building the trade facilitation evaluation index model. Referring to this method, this paper obtains the basic weight of different secondary indicators by dividing the contribution rate of a single indicator by the cumulative contribution rate, and normalizes it to obtain the proportion weight of different secondary indicators in the comprehensive evaluation index

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system. See Table 4 for details. The weight of each primary indicator is obtained by accumulating and adding the weights of different secondary indicators.

Table 5. Total variance explained by principal component analysis

principal component		Initial sum of squares loading			Extract sum of squares load	
	characteristic value	Contribution rate	Cumulative contribution rate	characteristic value	Contribution rate	Cumulative contribution rate
1	8.925	63.749	63.749	8.925	63.749	63.749
2	1.335	9.535	73.283	1.335	9.535	73.283
3	1.050	7.503	80.787	1.050	7.503	80.787
4	0.631	4.505	85.292			
5	0.504	3.594	88.885			
6	0.414	2.958	91.843			
7	0.353	2.524	94.366			
8	0.262	1.876	96.242			
9	0.183	1.307	97.549			
10	0.113	0.809	98.358			
11	0.089	0.636	98.994			
12	0.061	0.437	99.431			
l3	0.050	0.355	99.787			
14	0.044	0.313	100.000			

Table 6. Primary index weight and secondary index weight

Primary index	Secondary index	Secondary index weight
Institutional environment(0.2530)	Government credibility(R_1) Judicial independence(R_2) Efficiency of dispute settlement(R_3) Policy transparency(R_4)	0.061 0.065 0.063 0.066
infrastructure(0.2885)	Quality of highway facilities(I_1) Port facility quality(I_2) Aviation facility quality(I_3) Quality of railway facilities(I_4)	0.073 0.049 0.081 0.087
Customs environment(0.2403)	Size of trade barriers(C_1) Complexity of customs procedures(C_2) Irregular payments and bribes(C_3)	0.072 0.084 0.087
information technology(0.2182)	Availability of new technologies(T_1) Adaptability of new technologies(T_2) Network penetration(T_3)	0.082 0.083 0.055

4.3. Measurement Results of Trade Facilitation Composite Index

According to the above calculation method, we can obtain the trade facilitation level of RCEP member states from 2004 to 2020. Due to space constraints, this paper focuses on five years and lists the scores of comprehensive indicators of trade facilitation of various countries. From table 7, we can see the following two characteristics: first, there are relatively large differences

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in the level of trade facilitation among relevant countries, among which the countries with relatively high scores are Japan, South Korea, Singapore and other countries, while the countries with relatively low scores are Indonesia, Cambodia, Laos and other countries. Second, whether countries with high or low levels of trade facilitation, the trade facilitation water of relevant countries has increased on average in recent years.

Table 7. Trade Facilitation Index of RCEP Member States

	2012year	2014 year	2016 year	2018 year	2020 year
Malaysia	0.381	0.347	0.334	0.415	0.597
Indonesia	0.383	0.389	0.381	0.346	0.419
Singapore	0.360	0.566	0.752	0.682	0.814
Brunei	0.381	0.417	0.406	0.474	0.455
Cambodia	0.330	0.322	0.394	0.312	0.390
the Philippines	0.360	0.405	0.392	0.429	0.454
Vietnam	0.335	0.345	0.359	0.387	0.413
Thailand	0.327	0.371	0.374	0.292	0.406
Myanmar	0.388	0.356	0.376	0.295	0.443
China	0.329	0.565	0.568	0.645	0.743
Japan	0.808	0.749	0.757	0.606	0.917
Laos	0.367	0.364	0.389	0.357	0.409
New Zealand	0.349	0.366	0.398	0.533	0.657
Korea	0.608	0.502	0.533	0.787	0.863
Australia	0.351	0.386	0.376	0.406	0.591

Data source: calculated by the author according to principal component analysis

5. Research Conclusion

This paper mainly studies the comparative relationship between the trade facilitation levels of RCEP member countries, and carries out the following research work. Firstly, this paper combs the index measurement of trade facilitation in detail through literature review. Secondly, this paper introduces the reform process of trade facilitation in RCEP member countries. Finally, this paper probes into the trade facilitation level of RCEP member countries from the four dimensions of institutional environment, customs environment, infrastructure and information technology. This paper finds that: from the trade facilitation level of RCEP member countries from 2004 to 2020, There are relatively large differences in the level of trade facilitation among relevant countries, among which the countries with relatively high scores are Japan, South Korea, Singapore and other countries, while the countries with relatively low scores are Indonesia, Cambodia, Laos and other countries. However, whether countries with high or low levels of trade facilitation, the average level of trade facilitation water in relevant countries has increased in recent years.

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