



E-commerce Development Report of the Small and Medium Sized Enterprises of BRICS Countries

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1. Abstract

In the past few years, the rapid growth of e-commerce has attracted global attention. The effect and influence of BRICS' e-commerce and small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) development has also become increasingly prominent. To promote the development of SMEs and e-commerce and facilitate realization of the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals), this report provides a comprehensive analysis of the development and current status of BRICS' e-commerce and SMEs since the financial crisis. It also discusses the problems and challenges that the BRICS countries face in e-commerce development. Against a background of increasingly complicated global trade standards and agreement negotiations, this report explores related laws and regulations, presents an overview of the status of e-commerce in the BRICS, as well as trade rules and standard setting that will likely promote the rapid e-commerce development in BRICS countries. The report puts forward proposals to advance e-commerce and SME development. The first part of the report is an abstract; the second part discusses current global e-commerce development trends; the third part focuses on the status of SMEs and e-commerce in the BRICS; the fourth part addresses the main obstacles to the development of BRICS's SMEs; the fifth part concerns e-commerce laws and regulations in BRICS nations; and the sixth part provides recommendations for further strengthening e-commerce cooperation between BRICS countries and their SMEs.

1.1 Overall Situation

The rapid growth of e-commerce in global retail trade is attracting increasing attention. It is expected that the proportion of e-commerce in the global retail trade will increase from 7.4% in 2014 to 14.6% in 2020¹. Additionally, with the use of ICT, Artificial Intelligence and other modern information technologies, e-commerce will have profound impacts on global production networks and retail businesses. The development of mobile e-commerce and social media is changing lifestyle patterns and consumption. Emerging countries, especially BRICS nations, which account for 42.19%² of the world population, represent a large pool of potential consumers and

¹ Office of National Statistics (UK) © Statista, 2017

² Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences calculation based on the world population data published by United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects, the 2015*

Internet users. With increasing penetration rate of BRICS nations' mobile Internet, the development of e-commerce in these emerging economies has a bright future.

1.2 Essential Features of SMEs and e-commerce in BRICS countries

Although there are wide national differences in the development of BRICS's e-commerce, the momentum of overall growth is strong. The average rate of growth of BRICS e-commerce is around 20% (China has recorded an annual growth rate of above 37%), which is far above the global average. In terms of growth rates of e-commerce trade, China, India and South Africa are the fastest-growing markets. The growth rates of Brazil and Russia have fluctuated due to various factors. China and India have the largest e-commerce trade volumes while Russia, Brazil and South Africa have smaller trading volumes because of their relatively smaller economies. BRICS e-commerce has provided a platform for the development of SMEs, which has driven the generation of employment opportunities.

1.3 Main Problems Faced by e-commerce SMEs

The most common challenges faced in BRICS e-commerce development include lack of adequate data, logistics infrastructure, trust, regulations, cross-border customs clearance and talent. However, over and above these shared issues, each BRICS country has its own unique problems and challenges. For example, e-commerce development in Brazil is faced with customs and tax problems. In Russia, the language barrier in cross-border e-commerce in Russia stands out. In South Africa, payment and logistics in South Africa are a problem. In China, reputation and trust in e-commerce is coupled with improvements in consumer protection.

1.4 Rules and Standards of e-commerce Trade in BRICS Countries

Though individual BRICS countries have established varying laws and regulations

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