



The Role of Intellectual Property Rights Protection on Intra-COMESA Trade: **The Case of Trademarks**

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Abstract

The relationship between trade and intellectual property rights is inconclusive. This paper, therefore, examines the effects of intellectual property rights, mainly trademarks, on intra- COMESA trade using the pseudo poisson maximum likelihood estimation technique. A panel data of 10 products, classified using the Standard International Trade Classification (SITC) Revision 3 for five selected COMESA countries and for the period 2000 to 2017 was used. At the aggregate level, the study could not establish the market power and market expansion effects of trademarks on imports. However, using disaggregated sectoral import data, the study confirms a positive link between trademark-related tobacco product imports and a negative relationship between trademark-related rubber and clothing product imports. Thus, the study concludes that strengthening of trademarks has a market expansion effect for tobacco products and market power effect for clothing, footwear and rubber products. The selected COMESA countries are therefore urged to strengthen intellectual property rights for tobacco products as this promotes intra-COMESA trade while a lax approach may be advocated for the promotion of trade in clothing, footwear and rubber products within the region.

Key Words: Intellectual Property Rights, Trademark, TRIPS Agreement, PPML, COMESA