Cost and Compliance Optimization in Saudi Textile Imports: The Role of SABER Registration and Category Grouping

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Abstract:This research paper analyzes the role of Saudi Arabia's SABER registration system in streamlining textile imports, with a particular focus on the fashion industry. The study highlights how compliance efficiency, cost optimization, and quality assurance are achieved through category-based grouping of textiles, reducing paperwork and eliminating redundant testing. By registering three categories (plant fiber, synthetic fiber, and animal fiber) under SABER, multi-brand importers can achieve significant operational gains while maintaining smooth customs clearance and enhancing competitive advantage.

I. INTRODUCTION

Saudi Arabia's fashion and textile sector is rapidly expanding, supported by Vision 2030 initiatives and a consumer-driven market. However, the complexity of historical import regulations created delays, increased costs, and redundant procedures. The SABER electronic platform, developed by SASO, was introduced to simplify certification of conformity (PCoC) and enable hassle-free imports. This paper examines how SABER enhances efficiency, especially through category grouping, enabling importers to reduce compliance costs and clearance lead times.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Global trade facilitation measures such as digital certification and risk-based inspections reduce lead times and costs. Studies by institutions like the World Bank and WTO emphasize that minimizing border compliance improves competitiveness. In the GCC region, Saudi Arabia has been a leader in adopting digital systems such as SABER. While existing literature covers trade facilitation broadly, this study focuses specifically on textile imports and SABER's unique grouping mechanism.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study uses a comparative approach, analyzing textile clearance processes before and after SABER implementation. It models cost structures for multi-brand textile importers under two scenarios: (1) individual certification per HS code, and (2) category grouping into three classifications. The analysis relies on publicly available SABER fee data, customs clearance timelines, and SASO guidelines.

IV. FINDINGS

➤ Lead Time Reduction: Clearance processes that previously required weeks are now completed within hours or days.
➤ Cost Optimization: Importers pay approximately SAR 574 in government fees plus SAR 400–500 in conformity body fees, totalling roughly SAR 1,000 annually per category. Registering three categories covers multiple HS codes and eliminates repetitive payments.
➤ Grouping Advantage: Multi-brand importers sourcing from one country can register three categories annually regardless of the number of brands or HS codes, resulting in significant cost savings and smoother clearance.

V. DISCUSSION

The integration of SABER has shifted compliance from an administrative burden to a strategic advantage. Large retailers benefit from centralized sourcing strategies, while SMEs gain predictable cost structures. Category grouping allows a single registration to cover multiple HS codes and brands, creating economies of scale and encouraging efficient sourcing practices.

VI. CONCLUSION

SABER has transformed textile import compliance in Saudi Arabia, offering faster clearance, reduced paperwork, and optimized costs through category grouping. Registering only three categories annually ensures predictable

compliance expenses and enhances quality assurance. This system strengthens the competitiveness of Saudi Arabia's textile industry under Vision 2030. Future research may investigate integrating AI and blockchain technologies into SABER for enhanced transparency.

REFERENCES

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