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Quality Sorting, Alchian-Allen Effect, and Geography

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Abstract

The positive relationship between product quality and the distance to market is generally considered evidence of either quality sorting or the presence of a specific cost (the so-called Alchian–Allen effect). However, reduced-form regressions using free-on-board (FOB) prices do not reveal which of these two mechanisms is the primary driver. In this study, we employ unique Japanese individual goods price data to separately identify the effects of quality sorting and specific costs. Our empirical analysis shows that high-cost producers produce high-quality goods as quality sorting suggests. However, the empirical results are inconsistent with a model where only quality sorting exists, but are consistent with one that also includes specific costs. We also find that the specific cost component in trade costs is more distance elastic than the ad valorem component. Our results are robust with respect to various measures of distance and specification.

1.   Introduction

Are the markets for high-quality goods more remote than those for low-quality goods? The response of many studies appears to be in the affirmative (Bastos and Silva (2010), Baldwin and Harrigan (2011), Manova and Zhang (2012), Martin (2012)). While this positive relationship between the quality of goods and the distance to market results only from simple observation, it does lead to a more primary concern when evaluating trade models and the specification of trade costs. This is because such an empirical relationship is inconsistent with the prediction of standard firm-heterogeneity models in the absence of a quality dimension and the specification of iceberg-type trade costs. Therefore, to reconcile the available empirical and theoretical evidence, we need to incorporate the form of quality sorting and the presence of specific trade costs into our modeling.

A quality-sorting mechanism implies the supply of high-quality goods to high trade cost markets. Because high-quality products are also highly profitable, and normally highly priced, they can overcome the significant trade costs associated with long distances to market. When measuring quality based on the average free-on-board (FOB) price, the observed price is typically high in remote markets. In contrast, in standard productivity–heterogeneity trade models, as distance increases, only highly productive, and hence low-cost firms, can provide supply. Because low-cost producers are able to set lower prices, the FOB price is lower in distant markets, which is not what the pattern of observed data suggests. Hence, it is necessary to incorporate quality in a firm-heterogeneity model to account for the supposed positive relationship between it and distance (Baldwin and Harrigan, 2011).

The presence of specific costs also accounts for the positive relationship between good quality and distance to market. The relative prices of high quality, and therefore higher-priced, goods are lower in distant markets when there are specific costs in trade. Hence, the relative demand for high-quality goods is also high in these markets. This enables firms producing high-quality goods to ship to these more distant markets, a process referred to as the Alchian–Allen effect (Hummels and Skiba, 2004). Importantly, this change in relative prices does not arise under iceberg-type trade costs.

However, largely because of data limitations, to our knowledge the Alchian–Allen and quality-sorting effects have not been jointly analyzed using individual pricing data. In the literature, the FOB price (the unit value) of export goods is regressed on the distance to market. Problematically, the positive relationship typically identified is driven by either the presence of specific costs or the situation where high-quality goods overcome the cost penalty associated with long distances to markets. Thus, we require a trade cost specification that consists of ad valorem and specific elements. In the absence of trade cost data and the proper specification of the trade cost function, we would be unable to correctly attribute variations in quality to distance. With the exception of Hummels (2001) and Hummels and Skiba (2004), such identification remains as yet incomplete because trade cost information is invariably unavailable and specific cost is not

included. The contribution of this study to the literature is then to analyze the quality-sorting and Alchian–Allen effects jointly and to identify these effects separately.

In the recent literature, several studies incorporate specific cost components in trade costs and assess their size and impact. For instance, Irarrazabal et al. (2015) show that the size of specific costs is large and significant, while Khandelwal et al. (2013) use specific costs to model quotas, which affect firm behavior differently to an ad valorem cost reduction. While our analysis shares a common motivation concerning the impact of specific costs, our focus is slightly different in being the identification of the impact of distance on ad valorem and specific costs. We argue that if the effect of distance on specific costs is large, a framework excluding specific costs may be severely misspecified.

In this paper, we first follow Anderson and van Wincoop's (2004) suggestion for use of the price of production (at the source or origin). The use of source and market price data enables us to measure trade costs because there is actual delivery between these areas. As examples of the use of origin information, Donaldson (2018) uses salt price data in India while Atkin and Donaldson (2015) employ price data in Ethiopia, Nigeria, and the United States (for which source prices are also available). Elsewhere, Kano et al. (2013) specify wholesale vegetable price data in Japan, including a detailed description that allows for the identification of identical products in different locations. Because price differentials reflect both ad valorem and specific costs, it remains necessary to identify these costs separately. Then, our strategy is again using origin price. By utilizing the optimal price formula, we are able to obtain information on production costs from the price data. Moreover, while price differentials are linear in ad valorem trade cost terms, there is an interaction term in the form of specific trade costs multiplied by production costs. Hence, the production costs derived enable us to separate ad valorem costs from specific costs.

There is also an additional identification problem in that if shipping is too costly, producers may not even supply high-quality goods to distant markets. This self-selection bias is absent in most of the literature, with the exception of Helpman et al. (2008), Johnson (2012) and Kano et al. (2013, 2014). To overcome this, we employ unique micro data on agricultural product (vegetable) prices in Japan. As in Kano et al. (2013, 2014), this data set contains market and origin prices, as well as information on the region where a product is produced. Thus, we can establish product delivery patterns and consider the selection bias arising from delivery choices.

The analysis in this paper begins with reduced-form regressions as in the existing literature. Our origin price is approximately equivalent to the FOB price in this literature used to measure product quality. Therefore, we first simply regress origin prices on the distance to markets and find that our vegetable qualities are, as in the literature, also positively associated with the distance to market. We then estimate a structural model to obtain the ad valorem and specific cost components separately. We use the origin price and markup formula to back out the cost of production and utilize the derived production cost to identify the ad valorem and specific costs.

The empirical analysis shows that the technology parameter connecting production costs

and quality is positive: high-cost producers produce high-quality goods as suggested by Baldwin and Harrigan (2011). However, the empirical results are inconsistent with a model where only quality sorting exists, but are consistent with one that also includes specific costs. That is, the magnitude of the increase in quality associated with production costs is too low under an iceberg-type specification to account for the positive link between quality and distance. This suggests that while there is a quality-sorting mechanism, we need the model with specific costs to obtain consistent empirical results. Our estimations also show that the specific cost component is more distance elastic than the ad valorem component, which is qualitatively consistent with the specification in Hummels and Skiba (2004). In addition, the size of the technology parameter with no specific costs is higher than with specific costs. That is, without specific costs, we could overestimate the rate of quality improvement by incurring cost. Thus, our contribution is not only to detect properly the relationship between quality and distance, but also to correctly identify the technical relationship between quality and production costs.

Existing studies such as Irarrazabal et al. (2015) have also identified the significance of specific costs. The identification strategy in Irarrazabal et al. (2015) is to utilize the property that the presence of specific costs changes the demand elasticity. To identify this, Irarrazabal et al. (2015) estimate the size of the specific costs relative to the ad valorem costs using the data variation in FOB (producer) prices and destinations (trade costs). Our study is notable in that we estimate the ad valorem and specific components separately and then identify how these costs are sensitive to distance. Additionally, we also estimate the elasticity of substitution parameters and thus obtain the key parameters in the heterogeneous-quality model, including the quality elasticity with respect to production costs, the elasticity of substitution, and the distance elasticity. As these determine the behavior of the heterogeneity model, our estimates yield a benchmark for evaluating the implications of existing theoretical models.

Of course, our results relate in part to the characteristics of the data employed. In particular, we use price data for agricultural products. Thus, the reason for the rather weak effect of quality sorting in our analysis is that vegetable production is constrained by geographic conditions. While some farmers may produce high-quality goods using superior technology (e.g., greenhouses), farmer productivity is generally associated with costs not quality. Thus, the demand side may matter more. Specific costs make the price of high-quality goods relatively lower, thereby creating relatively high demand in remote markets. Hence, the presence of specific costs in our model encourages farmers able to produce high-quality goods to deliver their products to distant markets. In addition, because of the use of domestic data, transport costs represent the major part of trade costs and these largely depend on quantity, not the value of goods. This may contribute to a large distance-elastic specific cost.

The remainder of the paper is as follows. In Section 2, we discuss the reduced-form regressions representing the relationship between quality and distance. In Section 3, we set up a structural model for our estimations. For clarifying our argument on reduced-form analysis and

building a structural model, we conduct Monte Carlo exercises to reveal the identification issues and demonstrate the bias in the standard model in Section 4. Section 5 introduces our data set, and Section 6 details the specification of our model. Section 7 reports the estimation results, and Section 8 provides some robustness checks. In Section 9, we evaluate the welfare improvements associated with the reduction in trade costs using general equilibrium model simulations. The final section provides some concluding remarks.

2.   Quality and Origin Price

It is often difficult to measure the quality of products. This is because quality measure data are not readily available for most goods (and a certain level of aggregation suffers from the composition of goods with different-level qualities) and it is not obvious what characteristics of goods are valued most highly by consumers (e.g., high-powered or fuel-efficient cars). It is rare that a particular measure of quality represents the quality of goods properly (Crozet et al. (2012)). As discussed in detail later, our data set is price data from vegetable wholesale markets and these data contain detailed information about several product characteristics, including size and grade. However, because of the unobservable nature of product quality and seasonality, our product characteristics are not sufficient to capture the quality of goods. This is important because unobservable product quality may contribute to the price differences between goods sharing the same product characteristics. For example, on May 2, 2007, two bulk lots of cabbages produced in Aichi Prefecture with size "L" and grade "excellent" traded in the Aichi market. While these product characteristics are identical, the average prices of the cabbages per kilogram (kg) were 124.6 and 138.3 yen, respectively. This ten percent price difference could be attributed to unobservable factors.[1] Therefore, we adopt an approach taken by the trade literature, which is that the price in origin (often the FOB price) serves as a proxy for product quality. If the origin price is high, it then reflects high-quality goods.

The importance of the origin price information for product quality can be also shown by the link between market price and product characteristics, such as the size and grade of goods and the origin price. If the origin price is a significant factor for the market price, even after incorporating goods characteristics, it likely captures certain aspects of unobservable quality. Thus, we regress market prices on the index of high quality, that of large size, and the origin price. In addition, because the origin price for goods shipped locally is identical to the market price, we use only that sample of goods shipped to different regions. We identify the product characteristics using the name of the characteristics, such that a grade name including "*syu*" (excellent) indicates that the product is high quality and a size category including the letter "L" designates a large size. We construct

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[1]With respect to seasonality, cabbages produced in Aomori prefecture with size "L" and grade "A" traded in the Aomori market from July 2007 to November 2007. Once again, the product characteristics were the same, but the prices were 73.5, 105.0, 78.8, 63.0, and 57.8 on July 13, August 7, September 14, October 3, and November 5, respectively.

an index variable such that the high quality index takes a value of one if the grade characteristics include the name "excellent" and zero otherwise, and the large size index takes a value of one if the size category is equal to or larger than size "L" (such as "2L") and zero otherwise. Table 1 reports that origin prices are significantly positive after controlling for product characteristics, which implies that the origin price captures an important element of product quality. We turn to

	Cabbage	Cabbage	C-cabbage	C-cabbage	Lettuce	Lettuce
High Q	0.127	-0.034	0.12	0.101	0.052	0.204
	(0.011)	(0.013)	(0.018)	(0.026)	(0.024)	(0.036)
Size L	0.093	0.003	0.206	0.049	0.096	-0.019
	(0.01)	(0.016)	(0.015)	(0.027)	(0.015)	(0.017)
Origin P		0.592		0.575		0.508
		(0.008)		(0.011)		(0.011)
Num. of obs.	15841	8009	10803	5676	11565	6484
R-squared	0.52	0.722	0.532	0.737	0.394	0.609
Region-specific effect	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 1: The Relationship between Market Prices and Product Characteristics

the key relationship between the origin price and the distance to market. A positive relationship between FOB prices and distance has been obtained in a number of previous studies, including Bastos and Silva (2010), Baldwin and Harrigan (2011), Manova and Zhang (2012), and Martin (2012). Now, we conduct similar exercises using regional price data, which contain the price set in the origin market (the production site). The focus is on the relationship between the origin price and the distance to markets. We plot these variables to observe the pattern of quality and distance to market. We also employ regressions after controlling for region-specific effects, in which the origin prices properly capture the quality of the product. Therefore, our empirical exercise is comparable to that in the literature.

As mentioned, we use vegetable wholesale price data for Japan. In Japan, vegetables trade in a wholesale market in each prefecture, so we can obtain the price in the production prefecture (the origin price) and the price in the market (the market price). The origin price is used to measure quality, and from the market price information, the distance to market from the origin can be calculated. We depict the key observation in the relationship between quality and the distance to market using Figure 1. We plot the log of distance on the horizontal axis and the log of the origin price on the vertical axis. All figures illustrate a positive relationship between distance and origin price. Thus, there is a positive relationship in our data set.

Next, we report the results of the reduced-form regressions. As in the extant literature, we regress the price at the source on the distance to the destination:

$$\ln p_{jj} = const + \ln D_{nj} + dum_n + dum_j + e_{nj}, \tag{1}$$

where p_{jj} is the price in region j, $const$ is a constant term, D_{nj} is the distance between origin j and the market n, dum_n is a market-specific term, dum_j is a source-specific term, and e_{nj} is the error
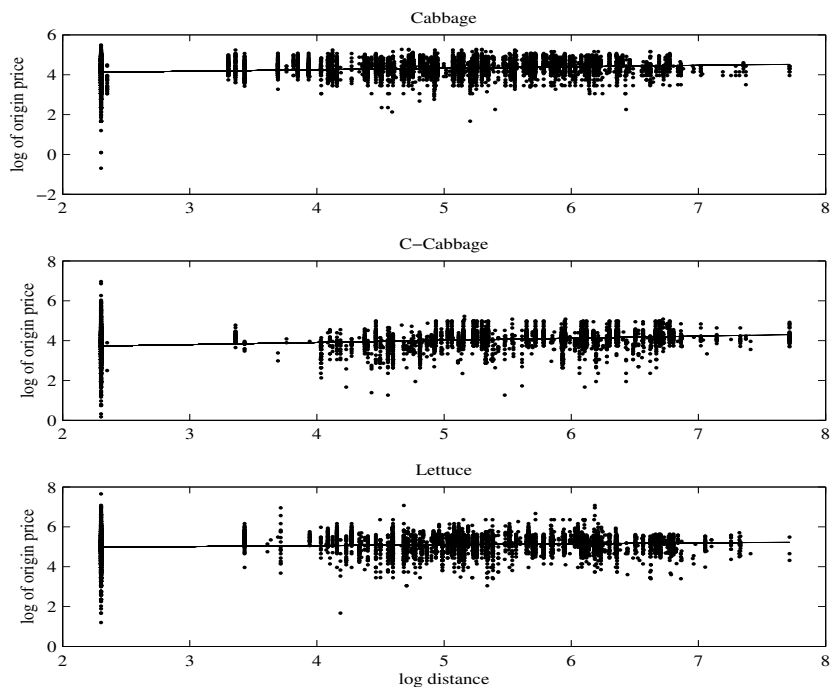
Figure 1: Logs of Distance and Source Price Relationship

term. Because we use the source price, p_{jj}, where there is an interregional supply in the source prefecture j and a supply of the same product to market n from source j, p_{jj} can act in a similar fashion to the FOB price in the literature. Using OLS, we find that there is a positive relationship between quality and distance, as reported in Table 2. Note that because Figure 1 illustrates the fitted value for the regression not controlling for region-specific effects, the positive relationship may result from regional shocks. However, we also estimate the regressions after including origin- and market-specific effects. The estimates reflecting regional-specific effects also display a positive relationship, as shown in Table 2.

	Cabbage	Cabbage	C-cabbage	C-cabbage	Lettuce	Lettuce
Distance	0.074	0.007	0.106	0.01	0.046	0.008
	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.03)	(0.005)	(0.003)	0.004
Num. of obs.	15841	15841	10803	10803	11565	11565
R-squared	0.065	0.494	0.105	0.504	0.019	0.364
Region-specific effect	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes

Table 2: Origin Prices and the Distance Relationship

As discussed in the literature, several models can potentially explain this positive link. One of the possible candidates is quality sorting; that is, high-quality producers are able to supply

their goods to costly markets. Another is the presence of specific costs, which makes the relative price of high-quality goods lower in costly markets. Unfortunately, the results of the reduced-form regressions do not provide us with any information about the structural parameters, such as distance elasticity. Hence, the precise mechanism underpinning this empirical observation is unclear. The purpose of this analysis is then to identify the important structural parameters using quality heterogeneity models.

3.   Model

We adopt a standard monopolistic competition, producer heterogeneity, product quality model following Baldwin and Harrigan (2011). An additional feature is the introduction of specific costs. Assume there are N regions, and in each region, n, there is a continuum of producers whose mass is expressed by M_n.

A Cobb–Douglas constant elasticity of substitution (CES) utility function expresses the preferences of consumers in region n:

$$U_n = (\int_{\omega \in J_n} (c_{nj} q_n)^{(\sigma-1)/\sigma} d\omega)^{(\sigma/(\sigma-1))\mu} Z^{1-\mu}, \tag{2}$$

where J_n is the set of products delivered to region n, c_{nj} is the consumption of region j's goods in region n, q_n is the quality of these goods, and Z is the consumption of numeraire goods. Given the budget constraint, $\mu Y_n = \int p_{nj}(\omega) c_{nj}(\omega) d\omega$, the demand function is:

$$c_{nj}(\omega) = \frac{p_{nj}^{-\sigma}}{q_n^{1-\sigma}} \frac{Y_n \mu}{P_n^{1-\sigma}}, \tag{3}$$

where $P_n = (\int (p_{nj}/q_n)^{1-\sigma})^{1/(1-\sigma)}$ and Y_n is the income of the consumers in region n. This signifies that as the quality of goods improves, consumer demand increases. Quality thus acts as a demand shifter in this setting.

We assume that producers produce a differentiated product, face local demand $x_{nj}(z)$, and maximize their profits. There is also a numeraire goods sector, in which a unit of goods is produced using a unit of labor. Thus, wage rates are set to one. On the cost side of the differentiated goods sector, producers must pay production and trade costs. The trade costs consist of ad valorem and specific costs. With regards to specific costs, we also assume that as in Irarrazabal et al. (2015), there is a perfectly competitive transport service sector. This service is available in every region, producers use t units of labor to supply goods of each unit, and thus producers have to incur additive trade costs t per unit of supply. We express the profits from market n using:

$$\pi_{nj} = (p_{nj} - a_{nj}\tau_{nj} - t_{nj})x_{nj} - f_{nj}, \tag{4}$$

where τ_{nj} is the ad valorem component, t_{nj} is the specific component in trade costs, and a is the unit production cost.

Producers facing the local demand function (2) maximize their profits by setting the optimal price in market n:

$$p_{nj} = \frac{\sigma}{\sigma - 1}(\tau_{nj}a_j + t_{nj}). \tag{5}$$

Because we assume each producer makes a single product, we can replace the product index ω with the producer's productivity. This is the price of the good produced by a production cost a producer that consumers pay. We assume that there are no interregional trade costs for within-region trade such that $\tau_{jj} = 0$ and $t_{jj} = 1$:

$$p_{jj} = \frac{\sigma a_j}{\sigma - 1}. \tag{6}$$

Thus, by inverting the above price formula, we can express the cost level of the producer. Using this implied cost enables us to recover the quality level. In our data set, as we can observe the market price and the place of production, we can use the above relationship to identify the specific cost component separately from the ad valorem component.

We assume that product quality consists of two components: namely, observed and unobserved characteristics. A certain characteristic is related to quality (e.g., Crozet et al 2012; Hummels and Schaur 2013). Because we consider that the sizes and grades of goods are observed and together capture some aspects of goods quality, the quality (q_n) is a function of both observed and unobserved characteristics, $q_n = \xi_{nj}q_{nj}$, where ξ_{nj} is an observed factor (e.g., grade and size of goods) and q_{nj} is unobserved. The latter quality factor, q_{nj}, is assumed to be associated with production costs. Quality sorting implies that high-cost producers produce high-quality goods, and we thus assume a monotonic relationship between quality and production costs:

$$q_{nj} = h(a_j). \tag{7}$$

This is required to estimate the quality-sorting model. If the relationship between costs and quality is not monotonic—for example, a U-shaped relationship—then we cannot identify the parameter that determines the quality-sorting pattern. We further assume a parametric form of $h(.)$. As in Baldwin and Harrigan (2011), we suppose that the quality of products is a function of that cost level as follows:

$$h(a_j) = a_j^{1+\theta}. \tag{8}$$

Thus, if $\theta > -1$, then high-cost producers produce high-quality goods. If $\theta > 0$ and specific costs are zero, then high-cost producers will deliver their products to more remote markets than low-cost producers because the rate of quality improvement exceeds the increase in cost. This provides the mechanism for quality sorting: high-cost producers produce high-quality goods, so they are more profitable than the goods of low-quality producers and accordingly can reach more costly markets. If there are specific costs, then even if $\theta < 0$, high-cost goods can also be highly profitable. We discuss this possibility in Sections 5.1 and 6.

We do not model quality as an endogenous choice, whereas in Kugler and Verhoogen (2012) and Lugovskyy and Skiba (2015), producers choose the quality level. Because our analysis employs data on agricultural products, the environment, which is exogenous to producers, largely determines the quality. Moreover, the resulting relationship from endogenous quality choice exhibits the same relationship between quality and production costs. Hence, we focus on empirically detecting the relationship between quality and cost.

With regard to trade costs, the key idea is that by using source and market prices, we can measure trade costs using price data. We normalize interregional trade costs by local trade costs incurred for local delivery. Thus, all trade costs are relative to the local cost of delivery. In addition, because price is a monotonic function of production costs, we can replicate costs using price data. However, we assume a monotonic relationship between quality and production costs leading to the possibility of measuring quality using source price data. While quality can also be measured using explicit product characteristics (Crozet et al. (2012)), we derive the implied quality level using the source price information. As discussed in Section 2, this is mainly because there are unobservable quality characteristics.

The price differentials between markets and sources are:

$$\frac{p_{nj}}{p_{jj}} = \tau_{nj} + \frac{1}{a_j}t_{nj}. \tag{9}$$

Hence, in the price differential equation, while we include the ad valorem term in the equation directly, the specific component is interacted with the cost term. This serves to identify the ad valorem and specific terms separately.[2]

The preceding price differential equation is observed only when there is actual delivery from j to n. Thus, we need to consider the producer's delivery decision. The profit function is:

$$\pi_{nj} = \frac{(\frac{\sigma}{\sigma-1})^{1-\sigma}(\tau_{nj}a_j + t_{nj})^{1-\sigma}}{q_n^{1-\sigma}}\frac{Y\mu}{\sigma P_n^{1-\sigma}} - f. \tag{10}$$

If profit is positive, there will be delivery from source j to market n. We construct a delivery decision variable, V_{nj}:

$$V_{nj} = [\frac{(\frac{\sigma}{\sigma-1})^{1-\sigma}(\tau_{nj}a_j + t_{nj})^{1-\sigma}}{q_n^{1-\sigma}}\frac{Y\mu}{\sigma P_n^{1-\sigma}}]/f. \tag{11}$$

If $V > 1$, then there is delivery from j to n. As Irarrazabal et al. (2015) show, because of specific costs, even the lowest-cost producer ($a \approx 0$) earns finite profits. Thus, other than the above condition, there is a further selection condition, i.e., whether producer costs are sufficiently low

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[2]In the extant literature, FOB prices measure quality. The role there is the same as in this analysis. However, there is a slight difference between the FOB and source price. By definition, the FOB price, p_{FOB}, satisfies the following equation: $p_{market} = \tau \times p_{FOB} + t$. Thus, $p_{FOB} = (\sigma/(\sigma-1))(a + t/\sigma\tau)$. However, because the source price is the price set for the source market without trade costs, $p_{source} = (\sigma a/(\sigma-1))$. Hence, while the source price does not depend on trade costs, it remains in the FOB price.

to obtain profits to cover fixed costs. We assume that this condition holds to focus on the entry condition.

To close the general equilibrium model, we assume that each consumer supplies one unit of labor for production, that there is a transport service sector using one unit of labor to ship one unit of goods, and that this service is freely used across regions as in Irarrazabal et al. (2015). This ensures that the wage rate is equal to one and there is a trade balance. However, to focus on the identification of trade costs, we simply analyze individual producer behavior. Regional fixed effects in the estimations capture the general equilibrium effects. For explicit treatment of the general equilibrium effects, we conduct Monte Carlo exercises to reveal how large trade cost reductions increase welfare in a later section.

4.   Data

We conduct our empirical research using product-level data. We employ a daily data set of the wholesale prices of agricultural products in Japan known as the "Daily Wholesale Market Information of Fresh Vegetables and Fruits."[3] This daily market survey reports the wholesale prices and quantities sold of some 120 different fruits and vegetables. We use the 2007 report representing 274 market-open days.

The main advantage of this data set is that it includes information about individual product characteristics and detailed categorizations, such that we can classify each vegetable by brand, size, grade, and source region. For example, the cabbage category typically includes "cabbage," "red cabbage," and "spring cabbage." For cabbage, our data set reveals that cabbages of size "6" and grade "syu" (excellent) were produced in Aichi Prefecture and traded in the Aichi and Tokyo markets on July 1, 2007, and that the prices of this type of cabbage were 31.5 yen per kg in Aichi and 36.8 yen per kg in Tokyo. Thus, we can calculate the price differential between these two locations, which we believe reflects the trade costs between the two prefectures.

Comparing the prices in different locations to infer trade costs is meaningful if the goods are identical and if the prices of these goods are comparable. As discussed, our data have a high degree of categorization, which is useful for the purpose of measuring trade costs. Furthermore, because our data represent information on agricultural products, goods can differ depending on the date of production. However, we do not have exact information on the production date, so we assume that these goods differ when trading dates differ. Because consumers may consider vegetables available on different dates differently, the information in our data set provides us with the identification of an identical product in terms of many product characteristics.

The price differential, p_{nj}/p_{jj}, that reflects trade costs is obtained by the difference between the wholesale price in the source prefecture j, p_{jj}, and that in the consuming prefecture n, p_{nj}.[4]

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[3]Our data set is identical to that employed in Kano et al. (2013, 2014).

[4]All of the products are sold in markets, but not necessarily in their markets of origin. In this case, when we

The source price, p_{jj}, is the price we observe for product ω being delivered from the producer to the wholesale market in the source prefecture, j. If this product is also shipped to market n, then p_{nj} is also observed. Thus, we set $T_{nj} = 1$ for the pair (n, j) if we can calculate the price differentials, p_{nj}/p_{jj}.

	Cabbage	C-cabbage	Lettuce
Average market price	77.833	61.628	183.909
Average local price	67.431	50.671	168.855
Product entry			
No. of varieties	3	4	7
No. of size categories	63	50	71
No. of grade categories	34	50	46
No. of producing prefectures	47	46	43
No. of distinct product entries	1207	1001	903
Data truncation			
No. of $T_n j(l) = 1$ or 0	369343	241871	239703
No. of $T_n j(l) = 1$	15841	10803	11565

Table 3: Summary Statistics

We focus our exercise on three vegetables; namely, cabbage, Chinese cabbage (c-cabbage, hereafter), and lettuce. As discussed in Section 2, these are vegetables priced higher in the source region and shipped to more distant markets. Table 2 summarizes several descriptive statistics for these products, indicating that each product is highly categorized by product variety, size, and grade. There are various kinds of measures of the grades and sizes; for grades, we have not only "syu" (excellent) or "yu" (good), but also "A," "B," or "maru-syu" (good–excellent); for sizes, we have not only "L" or "M," but also numeric "4," "5," or "2L". The number of distinct product entries is thus quite large: 1,207 for cabbage, 1,001 for c-cabbage, and 903 for lettuce. Because the prices of vegetables with dissimilar characteristics are in fact different, even though vegetables might often be considered as a homogeneous good, in our case there is highly detailed product differentiation. This is consistent with the theoretical prediction by Antoniades (2015), in which there is a positive relationship between quality and price for heterogeneous products, but a negative correlation for homogeneous products. We also assume that these products differ when the trading date changes, so to a certain degree, our price differential data are the price differentials of identical products.

The average prices are 77.833 yen for cabbage, 61.628 for c-cabbage, and 183.909 for lettuce. There are also market prices in the data. Because we use origin prices to measure quality, Table 2 also reports the prices at the origin. The average origin prices are 67.431, 50.671, and 168.855 yen for cabbage, c-cabbage, and lettuce, respectively. Thus, market prices outside the origin region

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cannot observe both the market and source prices, we eliminate the product entry. If high-quality goods go to distant markets (i.e., prices increase by more in more distant markets than the increase in trade costs because of higher quality), then eliminating these observations may result in the under bias of the distance effect. Hence, our estimates serve as the lower bound of the distance effect.

are higher than those in the region. This is primarily because it is costly to ship goods to distant markets. Because trucks normally transport vegetables, and the truck transportation market in Japan is competitive, unlike Hummels et al. (2009), we do not need to consider markups in the transport sector. Our purpose is to address how much these price differentials reflect the shipping of high-quality goods to distant markets. Estimating a trade model to identify the key parameters should provide us with an answer to this question.

To understand the behavior of product shipment, we count the number of delivery $T_{nj}(\omega) = 1$ and nondelivery $T_{nj}(\omega) = 0$ cases. We identify product delivery $T_{nj}(\omega) = 1$ if the data report that the source prefecture of product entry ω sold in consuming region n is region j. If we observe no market price and only origin prices, then we set $T_{nj}(\omega) = 0$. As shown in Table 1, there are some 230,000 delivery and nondelivery cases for each vegetable. This provides the number of observations for our full-information maximum likelihood (FIML) estimation. Out of the total number of delivery and nondelivery cases, the number of delivery cases (15,841, 10,803, and 11,565 for cabbage, c-cabbage, and lettuce, respectively) is relatively small. Our data set thus suggests that product delivery is limited. It is therefore clear that product delivery is local to the source prefecture. This raises some concerns with sample selection, and an additional concern about delivery patterns. If products do not ship to markets directly, then the actual delivery distance will be much longer than that between the final market and origin. This will cause over bias in the distance effects. However, the share of transferred vegetables is low, normally less than 7 percent according to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.[5] Thus, the influence of transit goods in our data is not significant.

As briefly mentioned in Section 2, we use the characteristic names to identify quality. A grade name including "*syu*" (excellent) means that the product is high quality. For example, the grade name, '*maru-syu*", means "good–excellent", thus this is considered as high quality. Hence, if the grade characteristic name includes "excellent", then the high quality index takes a value of one and zero otherwise. Similarly, with regard to size, a size category including the letter "L" implies a large size. There are also other size categories such as "S" (small), "M" (medium), "LL", and "L6". We create an index variable such that the large size index takes a value of one if the size category name includes size "L" and zero otherwise. The categorized shares of high-quality and large-size goods are substantial. For instance, for cabbage, 33.5 percent of goods are high quality and 49.5 percent are large size.

We also measure product quality with the origin price (the price in the source region). The reason is that even if the products share the same characteristics, consumers' perceptions of quality may differ depending on unobservable factors or also on whether the product is available in the high or low season. For example, in the Tokyo market, the average price of cabbages of size "6" and grade "syu" (excellent) produced in Aichi Prefecture is only 42.842 yen in January, but 86.638 yen in April. Thus, the source price, not the product characteristics, can capture the variation

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[5] http://www.maff.go.jp/j/tokei/kouhyou/seika_orosi/ (in Japanese).

in quality associated with the season in which traded. Because local shocks affect local market prices, we need to control for such specific effects. If demand shocks occur locally, the price will be higher without any improvement of quality. We consider this by including market-specific effects and monthly dummies in our estimations. When supply shocks take place (i.e., through an increase in production costs), the price will also be higher. If the cost associated with quality improvement increases, the Baldwin and Harrigan (2011) framework that we employ will capture it. Conversely, source-region-specific effects reflect cost shocks unrelated to quality.

With regard to the distance between regions, we define the inter-prefectural distance as the direct distance between prefectural head offices in the prefectural capital cities.[6] We set the internal distance to 10 kilometers (km), which is shorter than the minimum inter-prefectural distance of 10.4 km (Kyoto–Shiga). We later use the Head and Mayer (2000) internal distance formula as a robustness check. Importantly, natural conditions, not just market conditions, may affect regional prices. For example, preferences and the production of vegetables may change according to the air temperature. We use daily temperature data for the market and the origin to control for these daily variations. As these are exogenous variables, they will also be helpful for identification of our selection models.

5. Empirical Specification

In this section, we specify the functional form of the transport cost functions and other elements for estimation. We assume that the ad valorem and specific components are a function of distance and other factors:

$$\tau_{nj} = D_{nj}^{\gamma_1} \exp(const_1 + \epsilon_{nj}), \tag{12}$$

$$t_{nj} = D_{nj}^{\gamma_2} \exp(const_2 + \epsilon_{nj}), \tag{13}$$

where $const_i$ is the constant term and ϵ_{nj} is the random component in trade costs.[7]

As we specify a monotonic relationship between price and production costs, we can invert this relationship in terms of price and insert it into the trade cost function. For simplicity, we assume that the remaining elements are common to the ad valorem and specific cost terms. Then, the log of the price differential equation is:

$$\begin{aligned}
\ln(p_{nj}/p_{jj}) &= ln(D_{nj}^{\gamma_1} \exp(const_1) + \frac{1}{a} D_{nj}^{\gamma_2} \exp(const_2)) + \epsilon_{nj} \\
&= \ln(D_{nj}^{\gamma_1} \exp(const_1) + \frac{\sigma-1}{p_{jj}\sigma} D_{nj}^{\gamma_2} \exp(const_2)) + \epsilon_{nj}.
\end{aligned} \tag{14}$$

Thus, using the variations in a (therefore p_{jj}), we separately estimate γ_1 and γ_2.

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[6] Available at http://www.gsi.go.jp/KOKUJYOHO/kenchokan.html

[7] As the minimum iceberg cost is one and the minimum specific cost is zero, the constant and unobservable terms are zero for iceberg costs and minus infinity for specific costs.

Because we do not observe factory (farmer) gate price in the data, we assume that the price differentials between the local price, p_{jj}, and the unobservable farmer gate price, p'_{jj}, are expressed in a similar way using local delivery costs, τ_{0j} and t_{0j}: $p_{jj}/p'_{jj} = \tau_{0j} + (1/a)t_{0j}$. We additionally assume that the farmer gate price depends on a local price and random component, ϵ_{0j}: $p'_{jj} = p_{jj}\exp(\epsilon_{0j})$. This enables us to investigate local delivery in an integrated fashion as the inter-prefectural trade case: $p_{jj}/p'_{jj} = p_{jj}/p_{jj}\exp(\epsilon_{0j}) = \tau_{0j} + (1/a)t_{0j} \iff \ln(p_{jj}/p_{jj}) = 0 = \ln(\tau_{0j} + (1/a)t_{0j}) + \epsilon_{0j}$. This treatment of intra-regional price differentials may cause a bias in the distance effect. While the true intra-regional price differentials are positive, treating these as zeros leads to overestimates. This is because the value of the dependent variable in the price differential equation is lower than its true value for small distance deliveries. Because ignoring local deliveries does not provide us an indication of the direction of biases, we deal with intra-regional price differentials in this form.

We estimate the parameter, θ, with the self-selection condition because $q_{nj} = a^{1+\theta} = (p_{jj}(\sigma-1)/\sigma)^{1+\theta}$:

$$\ln V = \ln(\frac{\sigma}{\sigma-1})^{1-\sigma} + (1-\sigma)\ln((p_{jj}(\sigma-1)/\sigma)D_{nj}^{\gamma_1}\exp(const_1) + D_{nj}^{\gamma_2}\exp(const_2)) + (1-\sigma)\epsilon_{nj}$$
$$+ \ln(Y_n\mu) + (\sigma-1)\ln\xi_{nj} + (\sigma-1)((1+\theta)(\ln p_{jj} + \ln(\sigma-1)/\sigma) - \ln\sigma - (1-\sigma)\ln P_n - f_j,$$
$$(15)$$

where the fixed costs are assumed to consist of market and source fixed effects and a random component: $f_j = \exp(\lambda_n + \lambda_j - f_{nj})$, as in Helpman et al. (2008). The observed product characteristics, including the indexes of high quality and large size, are incorporated in $\ln\xi_{nj}$. We estimate the system of these nonlinear equations (equation (14) and (15)) using FIML. The variables specific to each region, such as Y_n or P_n, are controlled by prefecture-specific effects, and the fixed cost is decomposed into these regional-specific terms and a random component.

The source of selection bias is the fact that the error in the selection equation consists of the error from the price differential equation and other disturbances in the selection equation. The conditional expectation of price differentials is expressed by: $E[\ln(p_{nj}/p_{jj})|\ln V \geq 0] = E[\ln(D_{nj}^{\gamma_1}\exp(const_1) + \frac{\sigma-1}{p_{jj}\sigma}D_{nj}^{\gamma_2}\exp(const_2))|\ln V \geq 0] + E[\epsilon_{nj}|\ln V \geq 0]$. Because $E[\epsilon_{nj}|\ln V \geq 0] = corr(\epsilon, \eta)\frac{\sigma_\epsilon}{\sigma_\eta}E[\eta_{ij}|\ln V \geq 0]$ and $\eta_{nj} = (1-\sigma)\epsilon_{nj} + f_{nj}$, the error term in the price differential equation is correlated with that in the selection equation. Supposing that the delivery probability is expressed by $Pr = Pr(\ln V \geq 0)$ and the predicted probability is $\hat{Pr}$, then $\hat{\ln V} = \Phi(\hat{Pr})^{-1}$, where Φ is a standard normal distribution. We can express the bias term as an inverse Mills ratio: $E[\eta_{nj}|\ln V \geq 0] = E[\eta_{nj}|\eta_{nj} \geq -\hat{\ln V}] = \phi(\hat{\ln V})/\Phi(\hat{\ln V})$, where ϕ is the standard normal density (Helpman et al. (2008), Johnson (2012), Kano et al. (2013)). By construction and as a result of sample selection, these error terms are correlated, so we can capture the correlation by estimating the correlation parameter $\rho = corr(\epsilon, \eta)$.

5.1. Distance elasticity of quality for the threshold producer

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In the rest of this section, we discuss the interpretation of the estimating elasticity parameters. As discussed earlier, empirical studies generally show that there is a positive relationship between the distance to market and the quality of goods, such that the model provides us with the signs of the elasticity of quality with respect to the distance to markets. For the purpose of discussion, let us begin by deriving the elasticity in the case of no specific costs for the threshold producer. From the zero-profit condition, the threshold value of cost, a^*, is expressed by:

$$\frac{(\frac{\sigma}{\sigma-1})^{1-\sigma}(\tau_{nj}a^*)^{1-\sigma}}{q_n^{1-\sigma}}\frac{Y\mu}{\sigma P_n^{1-\sigma}} - f = 0. \tag{16}$$

By the implicit function theorem, we obtain the elasticity of costs with respect to distance from:

$$\frac{da^*D_{nj}}{dD_{nj}a^*} = \frac{\gamma_1}{\theta}. \tag{17}$$

Thus, the elasticity of threshold quality (q^*) with respect to distance is:

$$\frac{dq^*D_{nj}}{dD_{nj}q^*} = \frac{(1+\theta)\gamma_1}{\theta}. \tag{18}$$

If trade cost is an increasing function of distance $(\gamma_1 > 0)$ and the speed of quality improvement is relatively high $(\theta > 0)$, then this elasticity is positive.

In the presence of a specific type cost, the zero-profit condition is:

$$\frac{(\frac{\sigma}{\sigma-1})^{1-\sigma}(\tau_{nj}a^* + t_{nj})^{1-\sigma}}{q_n^{1-\sigma}}\frac{Y_n\mu}{\sigma P_n^{1-\sigma}} - f = 0. \tag{19}$$

Similarly, by the implicit function theorem, the elasticity is:

$$\frac{da^*D_{nj}}{dD_{nj}a^*} = \frac{\gamma_1 D^{\gamma_1}e^{\epsilon_1} + \gamma_2 D^{\gamma_2}e^{\epsilon_2}a^{*-1}}{\theta D^{\gamma_1}e^{\epsilon_1} + (1+\theta)D^{\gamma_2}e^{\epsilon_2}a^{*-1}}. \tag{20}$$

The sign of the above elasticity depends on not only γ_1 and θ, but also γ_2 and $1+\theta$. As long as $\gamma_2 > 0$ and $\theta > -1$, the elasticity will be positive, even if $\theta < 0$. Thus, observations of a positive link between quality and distance do not necessarily imply a high degree of quality improvement. Indeed, even if the quality improvement rate is low, the demand force captured by the presence of specific costs may account for the positive relationship. The presence of specific costs relaxes the condition that quality improvements create a positive link between quality and the distance to market.

We can illustrate this quality-sorting mechanism using the thresholds for distance, not productivity. Let us define the zero-profit distance, D^*, given the productivity, a:

$$(D^{*\gamma_1}a + D^{*\gamma_2})a^{-(1+\theta)} = (\sigma/(\sigma-1))^{-1}(\sigma P^{1-\sigma}f/\mu Y)^{1/(1-\sigma)}.$$

If $t = 0$, the above condition turns out to be: $D^* = a^{\theta/\gamma_1}(\sigma/(\sigma-1))^{-1/\gamma_1}(\sigma P^{1-\sigma}f/\mu Y)^{1/(1-\sigma)\gamma_1}$. Hence, if $\theta > 0$ and $\gamma_1 > 0$, then the higher the cost (a large a) is, and the longer the zero-profit distance (large D^*) is. If $t \neq 0$, then we obtain:

$$dD^*/da = -a^{-\theta-1}((-\theta)D^{*\gamma_1} - (1+\theta)D^{*\gamma_2}a^{-1})/(\gamma_1 D^{*\gamma_1-1}a^{1-\theta} + \gamma_2 D^{*\gamma_2-1}a^{-(1+\theta)}).$$

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The denominator of this expression is positive. So, if the numerator is positive, then the higher a is, the higher D^* is. This is true even if $\theta < 0$ as long as the second term in the numerator dominates the first term. Therefore, it is profitable to supply high-quality products to distant markets, even if the quality improvement rate is low.

6 Illustration of Bias

Before conducting the empirical analysis using actual data, we illustrate how trade cost data appear depending on the data-generating processes. We create a linear economy geographically sequentially separated into 47 regions on the integer line between 1 and 47. This linear economy implies that the distance between regions i and j, d_{ij}, is equal to $|j - i|$ with a minimum distance of 1 and a maximum distance of 46.

To understand the idea behind the positive and negative relationships between the quality of goods and the distance to markets, we generate the data using the model of both quality and specific costs from the previous section and an only-quality model for a positive or negative quality cost parameter (θ). We draw 4,700 ($= 100 \times 47$ prefectures) sets of Gaussian random variables for the fixed and trade cost components, f_{ij} and ϵ_{ij}, respectively, independently of their distributions. The elasticities of trade costs with respect to distance are set to 0.5 for the ad valorem and specific costs. The top panel of Figure 2 depicts the relationship between quality and distance when theta is positive ($\theta = 0.5$). As shown, both models create a positive relationship: the slope of the only-quality model is 0.236, and that of the model with quality and specific costs is 0.315. The middle panel plots the relationship between distance and quality for a large negative theta ($\theta = -0.5$). Both figures reveal a negative correlation: the slope of the only-quality model is -0.073, and that of the quality and specific costs model is -0.008. Thus, low-quality (low-cost) products ship to long-distance markets.

The most notable relationship is revealed in the bottom panel of Figure 2, which is generated under a moderately negative theta ($\theta = -0.15$). The left-hand-side figure is the model with quality and specific costs and reveals a positive relationship (the slope is 0.216). In contrast, the right-hand-side figure is the only-quality model and depicts a negative relationship (the slope is -0.045). Hence, we observe a positive relationship between quality and distance when the underlining data-generating process is from the model of quality and specific costs, even though the quality improvement rate is not high. In this sense, the positive relationship between quality and distance may result from either a strong ($\theta > 0$) or moderate ($\theta = -0.15$) quality improvement and the presence of specific costs.

To explicitly demonstrate the estimation biases when there is a moderate quality improvement ($\theta = -0.15$) and specific trade costs, we conduct Monte Carlo experiments using the model from the previous section to show that the estimates using a model without specific costs account for the bias. We first generate artificial data using the model with both quality and specific costs.
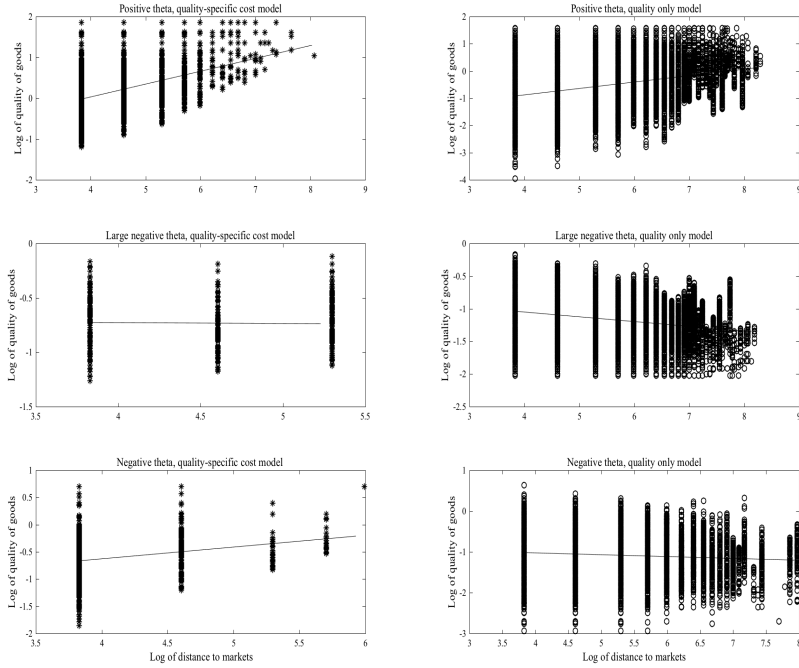
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Figure 2: Quality and Distance to Market Relationship under Different θs

We then estimate the model without specific costs, followed by an estimation using the true model with quality and specific costs. We assume that the shape of the demand function is common across the regions and characterized by an elasticity of substitution parameter of 3.75. Because we focus on estimates using a model with regional fixed effects, we characterize each region with aggregate price and aggregate real expenditure, both of which we set to 20.00. For simplicity, we ignore the cross-regional variations in productivity. We assume that in each region, a product is produced with a productivity level equal to 0.99 and a factor cost set to one. Gaussian random components appear in both the fixed and trade costs. In the fixed costs, the random term has a standard deviation of 0.65. Idiosyncratic random variations in trade costs are captured by a standard deviation of 0.25.

To validate the Monte Carlo experiment, we again draw 4,700 sets of f_{ij} and ϵ_{ij} and then calculate the price differentials and the selection equation under the hypothesized value of the distance elasticity of trade costs, being 0.3 for the ad valorem trade cost and 0.5 for the specific trade cost. In each Monte Carlo draw of the true value of the distance elasticity, we implement our estimations of the distance elasticity. The first is the FIML estimation without specific costs (an iceberg-type specification), and the second is the FIML with specific costs. By construction, the FIML estimation without specific costs suffers misspecification bias. Because the ad valorem component captures the trade cost associated with the specific component, there will be over

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bias in the distance elasticity of the ad valorem trade costs. Similarly, because the presence of specific costs delivers high-quality goods to distant markets, the elasticity of quality with respect to costs also captures this effect. If this quality elasticity is high, high-quality products are highly profitable, and thus shipped to distant markets. With specific costs, the distance elasticity of specific costs correctly estimates this Alchian–Allen effect. However, without specific costs, the positive relationship between quality and the distance to market will be included in the quality elasticity estimates.

Figure 3 depicts the non-parametrically smoothed densities of the distance and quality elasticity estimates with the Gaussian kernel. The top panel corresponds to the model with specific costs and the bottom panel to that without. The figures in the top panel show that the estimates using the true model are consistent and distributed around the underlying true value: the median value of γ_1 is 0.277 and that of θ is -0.171. However, the figures in the bottom panel reveal that the estimates using the model without specific costs are subject to severe over bias. As we have argued, while the true ad valorem distance elasticity is 0.3, the median value of the estimates is 0.536. Similarly, while the true quality elasticity is -0.15, the median is 0.591. We calculate the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) to evaluate the performance of the models. All BIC values under the true model estimations are lower than the values under the model with quality only, which suggests that the true model fits the data better than the quality-only model. Hence, the Monte Carlo exercise confirms the necessity of incorporating a specific cost component for drawing correct inferences on the distance and quality elasticities.

To allow for the situation where the quality-only model—and not the quality-specific cost model—generates the real data, we now consider the case where the quality-only model is the true model. Accordingly, we conduct a simulation where the data are generated by the model with only quality and then estimate it using the quality-only and quality-specific cost models. If the true data-generating process is from the quality-only model, there will be misspecification in the model with quality and specific costs, and we would wrongly attribute the distance relationship to the specific cost factor. To address this, we again calculate BIC under the quality-only model estimations (in our exercise, this is the true model) and under the model with quality and specific costs. We find that BIC under the quality-only model is lower than under the quality-specific cost model for 89 percent of the Monte Carlo trials. Moreover, the distance elasticity of specific cost has the wrong sign (it is negative). Accordingly, we are able to reveal if a model generates quality-only real data using BIC calculations and by checking the signs of the estimated parameters.

7. Results: Relationship between Quality and Distance

In this section, we report our estimation results. To demonstrate the importance of incorporating both goods quality and specific costs, we conduct our estimations using several different specifications: 1) structural estimation of a simple Melitz (2003) model, 2) structural estimation
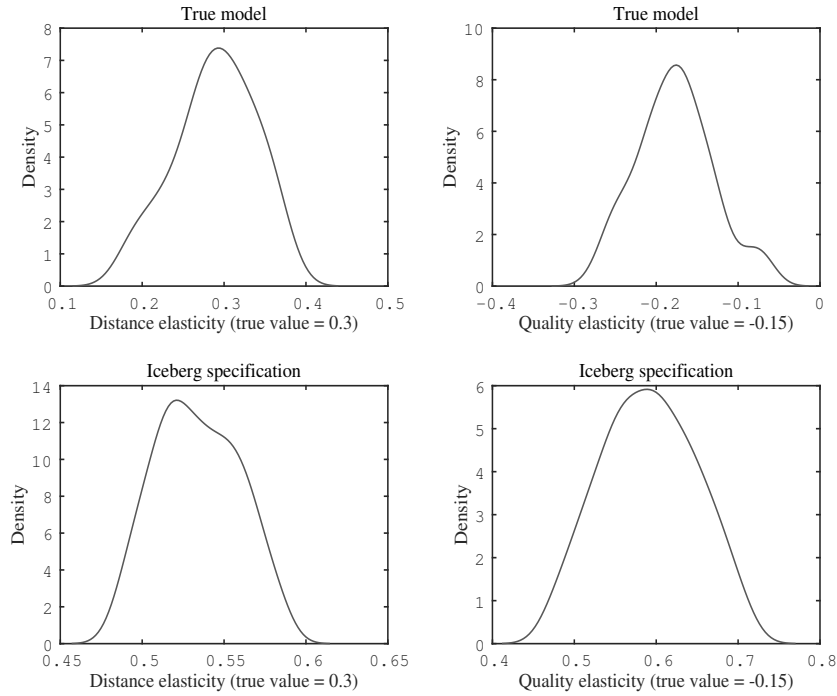
Figure 3: Kernel Densities of Estimators of Distance and Quality Elasticities

with a quality model (as in Baldwin and Harrigan (2011)), and 3) structural estimation of a firm-heterogeneity model with quality and specific costs. To compare the results with those in the extant literature, we begin by specifying no quality dimension and no specific costs.

Columns 1, 4, and 7 in Table 3 provide the results of a model without a quality dimension for cabbage, c-cabbage, and lettuce, respectively. The important parameters are the elasticity of substitution and the elasticity of transport cost with respect to distance. The substitution parameters are 4.957, 4.138, and 3.355 for cabbage, c-cabbage, and lettuce, respectively. These values are reasonable in the context of studies of individual product data. The distance elasticity parameters are 0.227, 0.325, and 0.343 for cabbage, c-cabbage, and lettuce, respectively. These are similar to the results in Kano et al. (2013). Thus, the distance effect is larger than that in the literature using price data (Engel and Rogers (1996), Parsley and Wei (1996, 2001), Crucini et al. (2010, 2015), and Atkin and Donaldson (2015)), and this may be because, unlike here, there is no controlling of the sample selection problem.

We now introduce quality, as in Baldwin and Harrigan (2011). The results are in Columns 2, 5, and 8 in Table 3. As shown, the estimates of the distance effect (0.228, 0.325, and 0.345 for cabbage, c-cabbage, and lettuce, respectively) and the elasticity of substitution (4.966, 4.149, and 3.363 for cabbage, c-cabbage, and lettuce, respectively) are almost identical to those without quality. The quality parameters turn out to be marginally negative, which suggests that high-cost

Parameter	Cabbage No Q, No S	Cabbage Q, No S	Cabbage Q, S	C-cab No Q, N S	C-cab Q, N S	C-cab Q, S	Lettuce N Q, N Ss	Lettuce Q, N S	Lettuce Q, S
γ_1	0.227	0.228	0.162	0.325	0.325	0.255	0.343	0.345	0.273
	(0.016)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
γ_2			0.516			0.629			0.556
			(0.006)			(0.007)			(0.007)
θ		-0.041	-0.192		-0.038	-0.213		-0.089	-0.249
		(0.003)	(0.005)		(0.003)	(0.004)		(0.005)	(0.006)
σ	4.957	4.966	5.226	4.138	4.149	4.377	3.355	3.363	3.526
	(0.021)	(0.023)	(0.006)	(0.02)	(0.014)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.014)
ρ	-0.84	-0.847	-0.85	-0.82	-0.826	-0.83	-0.859	-0.872	-0.875
	(0.0023)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Num. of obs.	369343	369343	369343	241871	241871	241871	239703	239703	239703
Log-likelihood	-21404.133	-21344.762	-20007.544	-21404.133	-21344.762	-13530.674	-22296.627	-22151.746	−21311.64
BIC	45538.815	45432.893	42809.734	31798.923	31740.91	29783.919	47132.622	46855.246	45224.584

"No Q, No S" is the model without quality and specific costs, "Q, No S" is the model with quality costs but without specific costs, and "Q, S" is the model with quality and specific costs. The figures in parentheses are standard errors.

Table 4: Estimation Results

producers produce high-quality goods. However, the rate of increase of quality is slower than that where high-cost producers deliver their products to distant markets. While the earlier reduced-form regressions demonstrate a positive link between quality and distance, the results here imply that this is not solely the result of quality sorting.

Finally, we estimate the model incorporating quality and specific costs. Columns 3, 6, and 9 detail the results. The distance effects for the ad valorem term are 0.162, 0.255, and 0.273 for cabbage, c-cabbage, and lettuce, respectively, whereas those for the specific cost term are 0.516, 0.629, and 0.556, respectively. Hummels and Skiba (2004) use a specification that ad valorem trade costs are only tariffs and that specific costs are distance-elastic trade costs. Our results are at least qualitatively consistent with their specification. The reason why specific costs are larger than those for ad valorem costs is partly that the major portion of regional trade costs in fact depend on quantity, not the value of the product. Unlike international trade costs, there are no tariffs and the amount (weight) and distance mainly determine the transport costs for vegetables.

The magnitude of the estimates of the quality parameter are also larger than before, being -0.192, -0.213, and -0.249 for cabbage, c-cabbage, and lettuce, respectively. As mentioned, if $\theta > 0$, the model exhibits quality sorting. If $-1 < \theta < 0$, then high-quality goods are produced by high-cost firms, although the increase in quality is not as rapid as the increase in costs. Thus, a positive θ is needed for quality selection without specific costs. However, as shown in Sections 5.1 and 6, the positive relationship between quality and distance may arise with specific costs, even if $\theta < 0$. Hence, when we combine the results for the distance effects with the negative values of θ, we conclude that the presence of specific costs relaxes the quality-sorting condition: even if θ is negative, high-quality goods can be shipped to high trade cost markets.

As we have seen, without taking specific costs into account, the technology parameter is

marginally negative. However, this is because the estimation of this parameter is biased without specific costs. If θ is large, high-cost firms produce quite high-quality goods; thus, they ship their products to costly distant markets. However, the reason why high-quality goods are shipped to distant markets may be that consumers have relatively high demands for these goods in costly transport cost markets. Thus, the omitted variable (the specific cost term) will cause the technology parameter to capture the positive link between distance and quality. Once we control for specific costs, we can identify the true technology parameter. In fact, high costs produce high-quality goods. However, this effect is not strong enough on its own account to counter the quality-sorting mechanism in our sample.

Two important parameters other than distance elasticity and technical parameters are the elasticity of substitution and the correlation parameter of the error terms. The elasticity parameters have values of 5.226, 4.377, and 3.526, for cabbage, c-cabbage, and lettuce, respectively, which are reasonable enough when using micro data. The absolute values of the correlation parameters are all more than 0.8, suggesting strong correlations. Thus, sample selection may invoke a serious problem for biased estimates.

With regard to the model fit, we calculate the BIC for each model. As shown at the bottom of Table 3, the BIC in the model with quality and specific costs is always lowest. As shown in Section 4, it is then unlikely that the data-generating process is a quality-only model. Hence, we conclude that the quality-specific cost models reveal the true mechanism underlining the interregional trade behavior.

8. Robustness Checks

The relationship between quality and distance may also depend on the choice of distance measure. If the quality and distance relationship is sensitive to the measure of distance, our results may not be considered robust. Thus, we specify a different measure of the distance between regions as a robustness check.

In the main analysis, our measure is direct distance. This may differ from actual road distance, which could be a better proxy for transport costs. For example, Ehime Prefecture (the author's home prefecture) is 666.1 km from Tokyo by direct distance. However, because prefectures are located on different islands, the actual shipping distance is much longer. In fact, the road distance between Ehime and Tokyo is 853.1 km. Thus, direct distance may cause an over bias in the distance effect. The fact that the distance effect is large may be simply because the actual distance is in fact longer, so each kilometer does not impose a significant burden on suppliers. While other transport modes are available (e.g., air), the most relevant type of transport in our analysis is by truck. Thus, we use the road distance data between major stations in the cities of prefectural head offices calculated in Tsukui and Nakamura (2009). Primarily, the distance for the route uses only regular roads. However, where this is not possible, highways are included. In addition, if there

is no bridge between the two prefectures, the ferry distance is included. We retrieved the data in 2009, so they fairly reflect the transportation environment in 2007.

Columns 2, 5, and 8 in Table 4 report the estimation results using this alternative distance measure. For the most part, and as expected, the effect of distance here is smaller than that previously found. However, the sizes of the estimates are similar to those using direct distance. Thus, the choice of direct or road distance does not represent a serious source of bias in our estimations.

Parameter	Cab Road dist	Cab HM dist	Cab HS spec	C-cab Road dist	C-cab HM dist	C-cab HS spec	Lettuce Road dist	Lettuce HM dist	Lettuce HS spec
γ_1	0.143	0.224	0.147	0.229	0.358	0.253	0.253	0.346	0.254
	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.004)
γ_2	0.511	0.623	0.463	0.602	0.746	0.638	0.539	0.64	0.561
	(0.006)	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.006)	(0.008)	(0.014)	(0.008)	(0.011)	(0.01)
θ	-0.204	-0.153	-0.174	-0.225	-0.169	-0.21	-0.26	-0.212	-0.201
	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.005)
σ	5.23	5.093	5.249	4.406	4.262	4.38	3.543	3.466	3.506
	(0.023)	(0.021)	(0.021)	(0.016)	(0.017)	(0.021)	(0.015)	(0.016)	(0.015)
β			0.318			0.002			0.423
			(0.02)			(0.003)			(0.018)
ρ	-0.849	-0.84	-0.846	-0.831	-0.823	-0.829	-0.876	-0.87	-0.871
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Num. of obs.	369343	369343	369343	241871	241871	241871	239703	239703	239703
Log-likelihood	-19137.024	-23108.713	-20015.983	-13068.583	-15862.707	-13532.449	-20723.304	-23451.615	-21483.46

"Road dist" uses road distance instead of the great circle distance, "HM dist" uses the Head–Mayer measure of internal distance, and "HS spec" is the model employing the Hummels–Skiba specification. The figures in parentheses are standard errors.

Table 5: Estimation Results

With regard to the distance measure, as discussed in the literature, the choice of internal distance may also be important. We now employ the Head–Mayer measure of internal distance: $D_{jj} = 0.376 \times \sqrt{area}$, in which $area$ is the geographic area of the prefecture. Figure 3 depicts the same relationship as Figure 1, which is the correlation between the origin price and the distance to market. The results show that the parameter estimates are qualitatively similar to our simple measure of internal distance used previously. Again, there is a positive relationship, as depicted by the solid line in Figure 1. Hence, our results are robust to the choice of internal distance measure.

Finally, we adopt a similar specification for the trade cost function as in Hummels and Skiba (2004), in which specific costs increase according to product value ($t_{nj} = p_{jj}^{\beta} D_{nj}^{\gamma_2}$). Because transport costs can be high for high-value goods, the log of the trade cost expression will be:

$$\ln(p_{nj}/p_{jj}) = \ln(\tau_{nj} + t_{ij}/a) = \ln(D_{nj}^{\gamma_1} + p_{jj}^{\beta} D_{nj}^{\gamma_2}/a) + const + \epsilon_{nj}. \tag{21}$$

If $\beta < 1$, then the specific transport cost increases as the value of the goods increases, but at a slower rate. This again confirms the Alchian–Allen effect. Columns 4, 7, and 10 in Table 4 report the results of the Hummels and Skiba (2004) specification. The parameter values for the
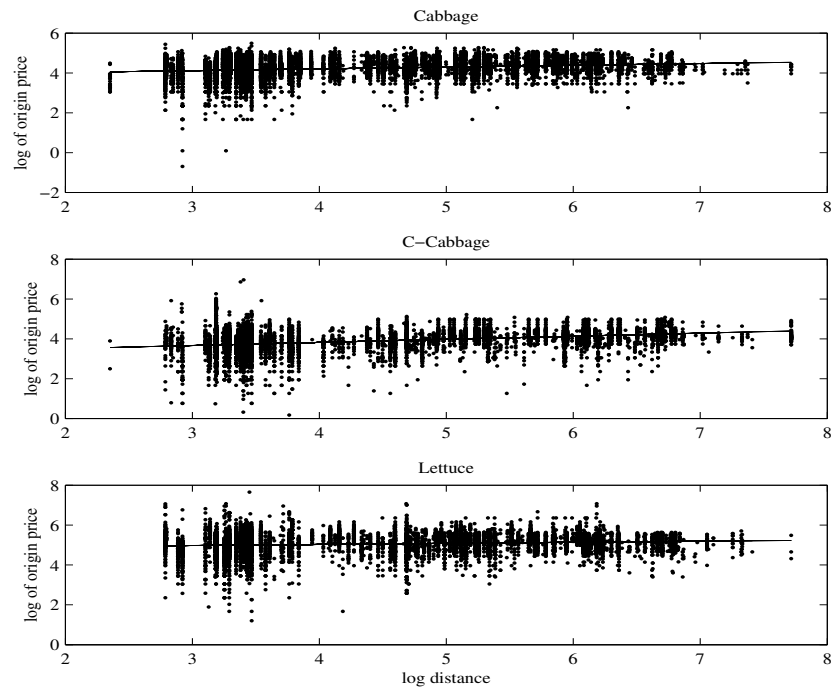
Figure 4: Logs of Distance and Source Price Relationship (Head–Mayer Internal Distance Measure)

distance elasticity and the elasticity of substitution are similar to those for the earlier estimations. The Hummels–Skiba parameters, β, are 0.318 and 0.423 for cabbage and lettuce, respectively. Hence, our results are also consistent with those of the Alchian–Allen effect. For c-cabbage, the Hummels–Skiba parameter is 0.002 and is not significant. Hence, our original specification may be the appropriate representation of the specific cost term. One remark is worth mentioning. While our estimates reveal large distance effects, these may in fact be the lower bounds of the distance elasticity. This is because we exclude price data, as there is no information available for local delivery. Because of this, we cannot calculate the price differentials between the origin and destination. This means that price differential data associated with long distances to market are not included in our analysis, which under biases the distance effect. Consequently, the direction of bias may not actually weaken our estimation results.

9. Policy Evaluation

How significant is the impact of policies reducing trade costs? To investigate quantitatively the gains from a trade cost reduction, we conduct Monte Carlo exercises using a three-region version of the model. To evaluate the welfare gains, we need to calculate the price indexes numerically. However, this involves some difficulty in the convergence of a model including all 47 regions. Fortunately, as our focus is an illustration of the magnitude of welfare gains, not the replication of the overall Japanese regional gains, we create a single core region located in the middle and two peripheral regions.

We set up Monte Carlo exercises using the program developed by Irarrazabal et al. (2015) and available via the website for Khandelwal et al. (2013). We assume that the numeraire sector produces one unit of goods from each unit of labor input and it is freely traded interregionally. The threshold value of production costs is given by equation (19). In the presence of specific costs, there is no closed-form expression for the price index, as in Irarrazabal et al. (2015), so we approximate it numerically in the following manner:

$$P^{1-\sigma} = \sum_i \int_{z^*}^{\infty} (p/q)^{1-\sigma} h(z), \tag{22}$$

where $z = 1/a$ and $\int_{z^*}^{\infty} (p/q)^{1-\sigma} h(z) = mean(p^{1-\sigma}|z^* < z) \times \#(z^* < z)/R$. Under restricted entry, firms earn positive profits. We assume as in Chaney (2008) and Irarrazabal et al. (2015) that profit is distributed through a global (national in our framework) fund to consumers. Dividends per share are assumed to be $\pi = \Pi / \sum L_i$, where Π is national profits. Because the number of entrants depends on the threshold value z^*, π is also a function of z^*. Hence, we approximate P and π using the definition of the threshold value, z^*, and solving the system of equation (22) and the π equation.

In our model, the unit distance is set to 1.5, so the closest region is 3 and the furthest is 4.5. From our estimation, we use the elasticity for the ad valorem cost, which is 0.2, and that for the

specific cost, which is 0.6. Then, the ad valorem cost for shipping is 24.6 percent to the next region and 35.1 percent to the farthest region. Because the specific trade cost t is 1.933 and 2.466 and the average price is 2.775 and 3.1 for nearby and distant market delivery, respectively, the ad valorem equivalent rate (t/p) is 69.7 percent for the closest region and 79.6 percent for delivery from one peripheral region to the other. We conduct 250 exercises and calculate the average welfare gains by comparing real income across three transition scenarios: 1) the friction to the no-ad valorem cost case, 2) the friction to the no-specific cost case, and 3) the friction to the zero friction case.

Table 5 details the average welfare gains as denoted by the percentage increase in each scenario. The first row reveals that the removal of ad valorem costs increases welfare, but only slightly. By contrast, and as shown in the second row, the reduction in specific costs, which includes a large proportion of trade costs, has a large impact, being 23 percent for the core region and 20 percent for the peripheral regions. Finally, the third row shows that the removal of all trade costs increases welfare by approximately 30 percent in this economy. As expected, when the impact of specific cost removal is large, the magnitude is substantial. Our Monte Carlo experiment thus suggests that specific trade costs are a more severe obstacle to trade than are ad valorem costs, as also shown in Irarrazabal et al. (2015).

Welfare gains (% increase)	Core	Periphery
Friction to no-ad valorem costs	0.12%	0.13%
Friction to no-specific costs	23.289%	19.927%
Friction to no-friction	29.746%	30.522%
Size of the trade costs		
τ	1.246	1.351
t/p(ad valorem equivalent)	0.697	0.796

Table 6: Average Welfare Gains

We should treat the results obtained with caution for two reasons. The first is that this counterfactual exercise draws on estimated parameters using agricultural product data. The distance elasticities for vegetables used here may be larger than are those for manufactured products. Large welfare gains depend on large distance elasticity, so our results can be maximum gains from reducing trade costs. The second reason is that we use a simple three-region model, where the geographical nature is also simplified. Thus, the results are more illustrative than quantitatively rigorous.

10. Concluding Remarks

The trade literature uses the iceberg-type trade (or transport) cost function. Under this specification, quality sorting is a mechanism thought to represent quality and the distance to markets. However, it is important to incorporate specific costs in this specification because of the

presence of the well-known Alchian–Allen effect. Our study thus attempts to identify the structural parameters of the quality heterogeneity model with these characteristics.

The main empirical test in the literature is the regression of FOB prices (unit values) on distance. Our study extends this analysis using a structural model to reveal whether it is the quality-sorting effect or the Alchian–Allen effect (or both) that drives the relationship between quality and distance. We also estimate the technical parameter that connects cost and quality and take into account selection bias associated with the choice of product delivery. The main findings indicate that specific costs are more distance elastic than are ad valorem costs, and that the presence of specific costs is the key element in the typical empirical observation of a positive link between quality and distance.

While our study reveals the importance of specific costs, further work is required. For example, we adopt a CES preference. However, pricing behavior also depends on market competitiveness and the levels of market income (e.g., Lugovskyy and Skiba (2015)). In addition, because firms may not pass the increase in production costs on to market prices, the estimation of the distance effect may be biased. Thus, to fully appreciate the effect of distance, we need to incorporate more general preferences (or demand structures), such as those considered in Arkolakis et al. (2015). Further research in this area is therefore required.

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