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Harmider L. D.^{a}, Honchar L. A.^a, Serhieieva O. R.^b, Okhotnik S. I.^a***METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH TO ASSESSING THE COMPETITIVE
ADVANTAGES OF FOOD INDUSTRY ENTERPRISES**^a **Ukrainian State University of Chemical Technology (Educational Scientific Institute “Ukrainian State University of Chemical Technology”), Dnipro, Ukraine**^b **Alfred Nobel University Dnipro, Ukraine**

This article presents a comprehensive and structured analysis of theoretical foundations and methodological approaches to the formation and evaluation of competitive advantages of enterprises in the food industry, particularly under conditions of economic instability, reduced consumer purchasing power, and intensifying market competition. Special attention is paid to the operational specificities of the bakery industry, where enterprises must simultaneously respond to changing consumer demands and optimize internal resources. The authors propose a refined and multidimensional definition of the concept of “competitive advantages of an enterprise,” which encompasses tangible and intangible assets, organizational capabilities, and core competencies that determine long-term competitiveness. The paper evaluates and compares various methodological tools for assessing enterprise competitiveness – including analytical methods, graphical models, benchmarking techniques, and the 4P marketing mix framework (Product, Price, Place, Promotion). A case study of LLC “Zaporizhzhia Bakery No. 3” is presented, assessing its position in the market relative to key regional competitors through weighted criteria within the 4P framework. The results demonstrate a relatively strong competitive position but also highlight shortcomings in areas such as branding, discount policy, and promotional activities. Based on this analysis, the authors suggest strategic directions for enhancing competitive advantage management, including product quality improvement, technological modernization, cost optimization, expansion of the product range, and the development of more effective marketing communications. The methodological approach proposed in the study offers practical value for decision-makers in the food sector striving to improve performance and ensure sustainable development in complex market environments.

Keywords: competitive advantages, competitiveness, assessment methods, bakery market, 4P method, strategic management.

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Problem statement

Under conditions of high competition, the formation and development of competitive advantages of an enterprise is a key function of its management, because in order to achieve success in tough competition, one must be the best in a certain field of activity. Depending on the type and scale of the

enterprise’s activities, competitive advantages can be unique tangible or intangible assets of the enterprise, intellectual capital, human resources, special competence in areas of activity important for this business (equipment, trademark, property rights to raw materials, flexibility, adaptability, personnel qualifications, etc.).

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Ensuring competitive advantages of an enterprise in the market of goods and services creates for it the opportunity to be the first, to respond in time to changes in the external environment, to adapt better than its competitors to the influence of negative factors of the macroenvironment. In conditions of fierce competition, the one who manages to gain significant competitive advantages usually wins not so much from competitors as from consumers. No company can exist if there is no demand for its products (services), just as there can be no talk of market opportunities if there are no competitive advantages. The main feature of a company's competitive advantages is its recognition in the market and protection from the influence of other competitors. The emergence of a company's competitive advantages under modern conditions usually occurs under the influence of many factors. The factor or condition that determines the properties of an object or process are elements of the production and economic system (technology, personnel, financial resources, etc.) and elements of the business system (competitors and their capabilities, industry market, etc.).

Considering the above, the relevance of researching the competitive advantages of enterprises producing bread and bakery products in the context of economic recession, military operations, and a decrease in the solvency of the population is extremely relevant.

Analysis and research of publications

Domestic and foreign researchers do not have a unified approach to defining the concept of “competitive advantages”. The general theoretical principles of “competition”, “competitive advantages” and “competitiveness” are considered and formulated in numerous works by M. Porter [1], M. Katz, J. R. Salanchyk, G. Chesbrough, V. Kim, J. Dunning, M. Harvey, F. Luati, M. Kramer and others.

The problem of achieving competitive advantages in the bakery market of Ukraine is considered primarily from the point of view of forming an optimal production program of the enterprise, which is covered by many domestic scientists. In particular, among Ukrainian researchers, it is worth noting the contribution to the solution of the problem of such scientists as [2, 3]: S.T. Duda, A.I. Ilyina, T.V. Polinchuk-Yarova, T.I. Sabetska, O.B. Siverska, O.O. Sotnichek, G.A. Semenov, V.K. Stanchevsky, M.O. Pankova, A.G. Semenov, R.V. Feschur, E. Frayt, I.O. Chayun and I.Yu. Bondar, L.A. Shevchuk. It is worth noting that most scientists, when studying competitive advantages, focus on production and market opportunities. In the works of these authors, the problem of achieving competitive advantages was solved taking into account the limited

production capacities and other resources.

Despite the significant number of scientific works devoted to the formation of competitive advantages of an enterprise, currently there is no single methodological approach to assessing the competitive advantages of enterprises in the bakery market in Ukraine.

The purpose of the article

This study aims to substantiate the theoretical and methodological foundations of managing the competitive advantages of a manufacturing enterprise. Achieving the goal involves solving the following tasks: to determine theoretical approaches to the content of the concept of competitive advantages of an enterprise and to substantiate methodological aspects of assessing competitive advantages.

Statement of the main material

Approaches to defining the concept of “competitive advantage of an enterprise” currently differ depending on what a particular scientist focuses on in the process of revealing its essence. We consider the most successful in terms of revealing the essence of the competitive advantage of an enterprise as such to be the factor-result and value-oriented approaches, whose supporters interpret competitive advantages as the presence of value properties or a set of factors that allow an enterprise to occupy and maintain better, compared to others, competitive positions in the market. At the same time, we consider it inappropriate to link competitive advantages exclusively to the rivalry of an enterprise with direct competitors (as in the definition proposed by A. Voichak and R. Kamyshnikov); to define competitive advantages through their concentrated manifestation (as in the definition by V. Golik) to be vague; unfounded underestimation of social and other types of effects, provided that the emphasis is on economic indicators (profit, etc.) that provide competitive advantages (as, for example, in the definitions of A. Thompson and A.J. Strickland, K. Yelin).

Taking into account the above, we propose that the concept of “competitive advantages of an enterprise” define the set of tangible and intangible assets (resources), organizational capabilities and key competencies of an enterprise, its areas of economic activity and competitive goods and/or services that provide it with advantages of both economic and social, technical, etc. nature over competing enterprises in the market. The distinctive characteristics of these advantages, in our opinion, are as follows:

- relative (or comparative) nature;
- binding to specific conditions of competition (temporal, geographical and territorial, regulatory and legal, etc.);

- subjection to the ambiguous (in time) influence of a multitude of heterogeneous factors, some of which are beyond the control of the enterprise;
- dynamism (depending on the stage of the competitive advantage life cycle);
- orientation towards ensuring certain effect(s) (social, economic, organizational and managerial, etc.) or their combinations;
- compliance with key success factors in the industry market;
- the reality of formation and acceptability considering the internal potential of the enterprise and its chosen strategy competition, external environment.

Usually, as a result of transformations in business conditions, the main sources of competitive advantage also change.

Having analyzed existing research and publications related to the assessment of competitive advantages, we have identified modern methodological approaches to assessment.

The key methods for assessing the competitiveness of an enterprise include methods based on: the life cycle of a product (service); assessment of the competitiveness of a unit of production; market share; theory of effective competition; competitive advantage; benchmarking method; consumer value, etc. A separate group consists of methods for assessing the competitiveness of an enterprise based on the theory of effective competition by J. M. Clark. This theory focuses only on developing a criterion for the existing level of competitiveness of an enterprise, sufficient to support effective economic activity, since it is the result of the enterprise's activities that shapes the state of the industry [4].

Faskhiev X. and Popova O. emphasize that most methods of assessing the competitiveness of an enterprise are based on the application of coefficients of analysis of production activity, financial condition, investment efficiency, etc. [5].

Analytical methods are used to evaluate group criteria, as well as to evaluate the activities of competitors. The method is used if aggregate parameters that describe a certain property of the product are used to characterize the quality of the product.

The advantages of this method are:

- a) easy to use;
- b) availability of information necessary for assessment;
- c) allows you to evaluate individual properties of the product.

However, there are also disadvantages, namely: the assessment of the influence of parameters is not accurate, and this method is static.

Graphical methods for assessing the competitiveness of an enterprise include a method based on the construction of polygonal profiles. This technique does not contain simple and unambiguous criteria for assessing competitiveness, but is based on the use of indirect generalized indicators. In general, the advantage of using graphic methods in assessing the competitiveness of enterprises is their relative simplicity and clarity. However, graphic methods for assessing competitiveness do not allow establishing the general value of the competitiveness indicator of an enterprise. In addition, a disadvantage of graphic methods is the inability to predict future changes in competitiveness.

Also, one of the most modern approaches to determining the assessment of the competitiveness of an enterprise is the benchmarking method. Its essence is to establish the probability of success of an enterprise on the basis of research. One of the definitions of benchmarking characterizes it as a method of improving and applying the methods of work of other organizations. Benchmarking is an extremely useful tool, especially in a situation where it is necessary to review the internal efficiency of the enterprise and determine new priorities. Comparing performance indicators makes it possible to understand the vulnerable and rational aspects of the enterprise's activities in comparison with competitors, which allows you to find unfilled market niches, reach out to potential partners for production and technical cooperation, etc. [4].

Therefore, the advantage of benchmarking is that production and marketing functions become as manageable as possible when the best methods and technologies of other, leading enterprises in this industry are researched and implemented at one's own enterprise.

In our opinion, given the number of methods for assessing competitiveness, the assessment of an enterprise's competitive advantages by evaluating its products is of particular interest. The 4-P Method (Product, Price, Placement, Promotion) is suitable for assessing the competitiveness of an enterprise based on the analysis of 4 factors, namely:

- product (quality, technical parameters, warranty period, service life, safety, service);
- price (price level, payment terms, credit terms, types of discounts and discount percentage);
- sales (degree of market coverage, sales regions, intensity of sales channels, inventory management);
- marketing communications (advertising channels, targeted work with consumers, advertising budget, PR).

The assessment of values is carried out on the basis of expert surveys on a 5-point scale. The overall

competitiveness score is calculated by averaging the values of the four factors. Based on the obtained assessments, it is possible to determine the level of competitiveness of products, and on this basis, the economic security of the enterprise as a whole.

Thus, when analyzing the competitiveness of an enterprise, it should be noted that there are different methods of its assessment, which have their respective disadvantages and advantages, so their choice depends on the situation and the result, which is determined as the main and most significant. Along with this, it is proposed to pay special attention, first of all, to analytical and graphical methods.

Using the described methodological approaches, we conducted a study of the competitiveness of one of the food industry enterprises, namely LLC “Zaporizhzhia Bakery Plant No. 3”. LLC “Zaporizhzhia Bakery Plant No. 3” carries out its production activities on one industrial site. Today, in the structure of the enterprise there are two workshops that are successfully functioning: No. 1 – for the production of bread and No. 2 – for the production of bread from premium flour, bakery, butter, confectionery products.

The analysis showed that in 2019-2021, the enterprise had a positive dynamics of sales volume, cost of sales and net profit of the enterprise. However, for almost all types of products, there was a decrease in sales volumes in natural indicators, where the main factor was the growth of cost indicators due to the constant increase in product prices. The excess of the growth rate of cost over the growth rate of net income from sales is a negative trend in the development of the enterprise over the analyzed period of time. At the same time, the intensification of competition between enterprises makes market forecasting increasingly difficult. Therefore, the relevance of conducting a strategic analysis of the enterprise in order to identify its strengths and weaknesses is increasing.

To assess the level of competitiveness of an enterprise, we will introduce criteria for scoring competitiveness factors (Table 1).

To assess the criterion of the competitiveness factor “Price”, we will analyze wholesale and retail prices for similar bakery products of the experimental enterprise and competing enterprises (Table 2).

To assess the level of competitiveness of products, we propose to conduct an assessment on a five-point scale taking into account the weighting indicator according to the «4P» concept in terms of three basic competitors (Table 3).

According to Table 3, it can be concluded that potential competitors of LLC “Zaporizhzhia Bakery No. 3” are

distinguished by a low level of competitiveness. Thus, the aggregated assessment of the competitiveness of LLC “Zaporizhzhia Bakery No. 3” is 4.51 points out of 5 possible, exceeding the level of competitiveness of LLC “Zaporizhzhia Bakery No. 5” products by 0.62 points or 13.75%, and the degree of competitiveness of LLC “Zaporizhzhia Bakery No. 1” products by 0.81 points or 17.96%.

Also, Table 3 shows that there are shortcomings in the competitiveness of enterprises in the baking industry, namely: 1P – insufficient development of the brand; 2P – lack of development of discount policy; 3P – insufficient level of market penetration; 4P – insufficient effectiveness of advertising and public relations.

The main direction of forming and improving the competitiveness management system of the Zaporizhzhia Bakery Plant No. 3 should, in our opinion, be an emphasis on the strategic priorities of the management system, since it is here that the development and implementation of promising competitive advantages are ensured.

Therefore, the primary tasks of increasing the competitiveness of the Zaporizhzhia Bakery No. 3 are:

- research and analysis of consumer and competitor demand and relations with the external environment;
- improving the organizational and technical level of production, management and logistics;
- detailed analysis of costs for each product range and stages of its life cycle and the implementation of resource-saving technologies;
- expanding the range of products and services;
- improving product quality;
- introduction of the latest technologies and equipment;
- effective advertising policy;
- reduction of production and other costs.

Also, the decisive factors in increasing the competitiveness of the products of the Zaporizhzhia Bakery Plant No. 3 are cost reduction, differentiation and system integration.

Thus, to increase the competitiveness of enterprises, it is necessary to develop and implement a comprehensive system of measures aimed at ensuring the quality of products or the quality of service provision. The development of a competitive market requires the creation of conditions for increasing the level of supply of high-quality goods and services, as well as ensuring publicity and information openness of the market on prices and quality. This will empower consumers to make informed choices, making price and quality key drivers of competition. The “price-quality” mechanism will allow stimulating research

on demand for various categories of products and services and conducting an analysis of the level of competition, improving the quality of the offered goods and services, finding the optimal balance between their price and quality. All this creates conditions for further improving the efficiency of work and increasing the competitiveness of the national economy as a whole. The conducted assessment of the competitiveness of the Zaporizhzhia Bakery Plant No. 3 LLC determined its level as sufficiently high.

Table 1

Criteria for scoring factors of enterprise competitiveness

Competitiveness factors	Points			
	5	4	3	2
Section "1P" – product				
Quality	The quality is excellent without deviations	Deviation within the permissible range	Good quality, but slight deviations are possible	Unacceptable deviations
Uniqueness	No analogues	There are analogues, but in small quantities	There are analogues, but in sufficient quantities	Full analogue
Packaging	Environmentally friendly packaging	Convenient packaging	Not very convenient packaging	Lack of packaging
Trademark	Recognition "excellent image"	Well acquainted	There are doubts when choosing	Completely unrecognizable
Assortment	Wide (39-50 items)	Sufficient (28-38 items)	Average (18-27 items)	Low (17-26 items)
Section "2P" – price				
Wholesale	Lower price	Average price	Highest price	-
Retail	Lower price	Average price	Highest price	-
Types of discounts	Permanent	Regular	Periodic	No discounts
Terms of payment	Payment deferral	Payment upon delivery	Prepayment	Barter
Section "3P" – sales channels				
Sales network success	Wholesale and retail trade	Retail	Own trading platforms (direct distribution channels)	-
Sales regions	Within the country	Within the surrounding areas	Within the region	By location of production facilities
Section "4P" – market promotion				
Advertising channels	Advertising in the media (TV, radio, Internet)	Printed advertising (banners, flyers)	Advertising on your own packaging	No advertising
Public Relations	Openness of information	Availability of feedback (call center)	Limited access to information	Lack of feedback

Source: developed by authors

Table 2

Analysis of wholesale and retail prices for similar bakery products

Product	LLC “Zaporizhzhia Bakery No. 3”		LLC “Zaporizhzhia Bakery No. 5”		LLC “Zaporizhzhia Bakery No. 1”	
	Wholesale price, UAH	Retail price, UAH	Wholesale price, UAH	Retail price, UAH	Wholesale price, UAH	Retail price UAH
Bread “Olexandriyskiy” 600g	17.75	21.30	18.00	21.60	17.92	21.50
“Mustard” loaf	16.25	19.50	16.42	19.70	16.50	19.80
Bun “Pyshka with garlic”	12.67	15.20	12.83	15.40	13.00	15.60

Source: developed by authors

Table 3

Assessment of the competitiveness of the enterprise “Zaporizhzhia Bakery No. 3” using the 4P method

Competitiveness factor	Weighting factor	TDV “Zaporizhzhia Bakery No. 3”		TDV “Zaporizhzhia Bakery No. 5”		TDV “Zaporizhzhia Bakery No. 1”	
		points	weighted score	points	weighted score	points	weighted score
Section “1P” – product							
Quality	0.19	5	0.95	4	0.76	3	0.57
Uniqueness	0.16	4	0.64	4	0.64	3	0.48
Packaging	0.11	5	0.55	5	0.55	4	0.44
Brand	0.1	3	0.3	4	0.4	4	0.4
Assortment	0.1	5	0.5	4	0.4	5	0.5
Together	0.66	22	2.94	21	2.75	19	2.39
Section “2P” – price							
Wholesale	0.02	5	0.1	3	0.06	4	0.08
Retail	0.04	4	0.16	4	0.16	5	0.2
Types of discounts	0.03	3	0.09	4	0.12	4	0.12
Terms of payment	0.03	5	0.15	3	0.09	4	0.12
Together	0.12	17	0.5	14	0.43	17	0.52
Section “3P” – sales channels							
Sales regions	0.08	3	0.24	4	0.32	4	0.32
Sales network success	0.04	3	0.12	3	0.12	3	0.12
Together	0.12	6	0.36	7	0.44	7	0.44
Section “4P” – market promotion							
Advertising channels	0.07	3	0.21	2	0.14	4	0.28
Public Relations	0.03	4	0.12	5	0.15	4	0.12
Together	0.1	7	0.33	7	0.29	8	0.4
Sum	1		4.13		3.91		3.75

Source: developed by authors

Conclusions

In the bakery market, manufacturers are represented by three groups of competitors: large industrial manufacturers (bakery concerns and holdings), a significant number of bakeries and small manufacturers (bakeries, mini-bakeries, bakery and confectionery factories). In the context of a reduction in the volume of this market, an increase in the role of consumers and suppliers, competition between manufacturers of bread and bakery products is intensifying. Given these circumstances, it can be argued that interest in studying the outlined problem is growing. When developing a competitive strategy for an enterprise, it is worth remembering that most often this will not be a universal strategy, but different strategies that do not exclude each other can be used. The enterprise must determine which strategy will work best, taking into account its competitive position in the industry market, goals, available resources and capabilities [9,10].

For effective management of the competitiveness of an enterprise, the following practical tasks are relevant: to characterize the external and internal environment; to identify factors that strengthen or, conversely, reduce the economic stability of the enterprise; to build a system of indicators for assessing the level of competitiveness; to develop rationally combined strategic and tactical business decisions that would ensure an increase in the competitiveness of the enterprise.

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МЕТОДОЛОГІЧНИЙ ПІДХІД ЩОДО ОЦІНЮВАННЯ КОНКУРЕНТНИХ ПЕРЕВАГ ПІДПРИЄМСТВА ХАРЧОВОЇ ПРОМИСЛОВОСТІ

Гармідер Л. Д., Гончар Л. А., Сергієва О. Р., Охотник С. І.

У статті представлено комплексний і структурований аналіз теоретичних засад і методологічних підходів до формування та оцінювання конкурентних переваг підприємств харчової промисловості в умовах економічної нестабільності, зниження купівельної спроможності населення та загострення конкуренції на ринку. Особливу увагу приділено специфіці функціонування хлібопекарської галузі, де підприємства змушені одночасно реагувати на зміну споживчих потреб і оптимізувати внутрішні ресурси. Авторами запропоновано уточнене та багатовимірне визначення поняття «конкурентні переваги підприємства», яке охоплює як матеріальні та нематеріальні ресурси, так і організаційні можливості та ключові компетенції, що забезпечують довгострокову конкурентоспроможність. У роботі здійснено оцінювання та порівняння різних методів аналізу конкурентоспроможності підприємств, зокрема аналітичних підходів, графічних моделей, бенчмаркетингових технік і маркетингової концепції 4P (Product, Price, Place, Promotion). На основі цієї методики виконано оцінювання конкурентних позицій ТДВ «Запорізький хлібозавод №3» у порівнянні з основними регіональними конкурентами за системою вагових критеріїв. Результати дослідження підтверджують достатньо сильну конкурентну позицію підприємства, але також виявляють слабкі місця — зокрема в сфері брендування, політики знижок та просування продукції. Запропоновано стратегічні напрями вдосконалення управління конкурентними перевагами: підвищення якості продукції, модернізація технологій, оптимізація витрат, розширення асортименту, розвиток маркетингових комунікацій. Запропонований підхід має практичну цінність для управлінців харчової галузі, які прагнуть підвищити ефективність діяльності підприємства в умовах складного ринкового середовища.

Ключові слова: конкурентні переваги, конкурентоспроможність, методи оцінювання, хлібопекарський ринок, метод 4P, стратегічне управління.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH TO ASSESSING THE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES OF FOOD INDUSTRY ENTERPRISES

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This article presents a comprehensive and structured analysis of theoretical foundations and methodological approaches to the formation and evaluation of competitive advantages of enterprises in the food industry, particularly under conditions of economic instability, reduced consumer purchasing power, and intensifying market competition. Special attention is paid to the operational specificities of the bakery industry, where enterprises must simultaneously respond to changing consumer demands and optimize internal resources. The authors propose a refined and multidimensional definition of the concept of “competitive advantages of an enterprise,” which encompasses tangible and intangible assets, organizational capabilities, and core competencies that determine long-term competitiveness. The paper evaluates and compares various methodological tools for assessing enterprise competitiveness – including analytical methods, graphical models, benchmarking techniques, and the 4P marketing mix framework (Product, Price, Place, Promotion). A case study of PJSC “Zaporizhzhia Bakery No. 3” is presented, assessing its position in the market relative to key regional competitors through weighted criteria within the 4P framework. The results demonstrate a relatively strong competitive position but also highlight shortcomings in areas such as branding, discount policy, and promotional activities. Based on this analysis, the authors suggest strategic directions for enhancing competitive advantage management, including product quality improvement, technological modernization, cost optimization, expansion of the product range, and the development of more effective marketing communications. The methodological approach proposed in the study offers practical value for decision-makers in the food sector striving to improve performance and ensure sustainable development in complex market environments.

Keywords: competitive advantages, competitiveness, assessment methods, bakery market, 4P method, strategic management.

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