MEASUREMENT OF ENTERPRISE COMPETITIVENESS

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Summary

As a result of intensified processes of integration of the Polish economy with the global economy, triggered among others by Poland's accession to the European Union, the issue of competitiveness of enterprises, at both the national and international level, has acquired particular significance. Although the membership in the EU structures offers entrepreneurs a lot of opportunities in the context of an expansion of a range of activity, at the same time companies are facing stronger competitive pressures because of even greater openness of Poland's economy. Competitive processes, although inherently positive (competition drives innovation- and efficiency-oriented changes), force entrepreneurs to change their market behaviour and to make decisions through the prism of development of competitiveness.

Key words: enterprise, competitiveness, market.

Introduction to competitiveness

Despite the fact that the concept of competitiveness has long been present in the social and economic awareness, analysis of the pertinent literature does not provide a clear answer to the question of what competitiveness is – its definition is ambiguous, which is demonstrated in the following overview. Therefore, competitiveness is for example:

– an ability to produce products that will pass the test of international competitiveness, and citizens will benefit from a constantly increasing standard of living;[2]

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[2] Tyson L., *Who's Bashing Whom: Trade Conflict in High Technology Industries.*Institute of International Economics, Washington, 1992.

– an ability to efficiently achieve objectives on the market competition arena;[3]
– it is related to the adaptation of a product to the requirements of the market and competition, especially in terms of product range, quality, price and use of optimal sales channels and methods of promotion[4];
– it is rivalry among existing competitors which takes the familiar form of jockeying for position – using tactics like price competition, advertising battles, product introductions, and increased customer service or warranties. Rivalry occurs because one or more competitors either feels the pressure or sees an opportunity to improve position; [5]
– an enterprise's ability to face competition from other entities, maintaining and expanding the market share and achieving the resulting profits[6];
– an ability to achieve or maintain a competitive advantage, which can be treated as a synonym for competitive ability of the company, if understood that way.[7]

Topic of competitiveness' measurement

Lack of a clear definition of competition and competitiveness significantly affects the multitude of concepts and approaches to the issue of measurement of competitiveness. For example Gierszewska and Romanowska[8] propose to evaluate competitiveness from the perspective of resources (the strategic potential in the form of appropriately selected and competitive resources and an enterprise's capacity to use them in an innovative and effective manner is the source of success, i.e. competitiveness), presenting three concepts of competitiveness:

1. core competences,
2. core capabilities,
3. distinctive skills.

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[3] Stankiewicz M. J., *Konkurencyjność przedsiębiorstwa. Budowanie konkurencyjności przedsiębiorstwa w warunkach globalizacji*. TNOiK „Dom Organizatora", Toruń, 2005, p. 36.

[4] Pomykało W. (Ed.). *Encyklopedia Biznesu*. Fundacja Innowacja, Warsaw1995, p. 117.

[5] Porter M. E., *Competitive Strategy. Techniques for Analyzing Industries and Competitors.* Free Press, New York, 1998, p. 17.

[6] Nowakowski M. K., *Biznes międzynarodowy – obszary decyzji strategicznych*. Key Text, Warsaw 2000, p. 32.

[7] Dzikowska M., Gorynia, M., Teoretyczne aspekty konkurencyjności przedsiębiorstwa – w kierunku koncepcji eklektycznej? *Gospodarka Narodowa, 4/ 2012(248), p. 4.*

[8] Gierszewska G., Romanowska, M. *Analiza strategiczna przedsiębiorstwa*. PWE, Warsaw1997.

A similar position is adopted by M. Bratnicki[9], who argues that in modern economy competitive advantage is affected by:

- core competences that define and support the development of distinctive capabilities, processes and resources and at the same time weaken the status of activities which do not create added value;
- compression of time, shortening of the product development cycle, duration of operation and time of response to market changes;
- continuous improvement through a learning process;
- collaboration with partners (including suppliers, customers) and complementing one's competences with that of the partner.

Core competences

An examination of an enterprise's competences from the perspective of a source of its competitive advantage is the subject of interest and research of academics studying the concept of competency-based competition, which is an element of the theory of competence-based perspective. This theory focuses on the analysis of the inside of an organization, in which the sources of competitive advantage are sought – a unique combination of resources and capabilities of an enterprise determines the strength and sustainability of competitive advantage.

G. Hamel and C. K. Prahalad are considered the authors of the concept of key competences. In their article entitled "The Core Competence of the Corporation"[10] published in 1990, they proposed a definition of the concept of the core competences and showed that they can contribute to the development of a company's major products and services, and that additionally they can be used to create new ones[11]. According to the authors the competences include, for example, collective learning in an organization, especially relating to opportunities to integrate multiple technologies and to coordinate diverse production skills. In addition, core competences are also these resources and capabilities of an enterprise which, due to their level and unique quality, contribute to the implementation of products and processes referred to as the core ones, giving an enterprise competitive advantage in the market.

In the literature we can find other combinations of core competences:

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[9] Bratnicki M., *Kompetencje przedsiębiorstwa. Od określenia kompetencji do zbudowania strategii*. Placet, Warsaw 2000, p. 14.

[10] Hamel G., Prahalad C. K., The Core Competence of the Corporation. *Harvard Business Review, 68, 3/ 1990,* pp. 79–91.

[11] Trocki M., *Outsourcing*. PWE Warsaw, 2001, pp. 75–78.

According to J. B. Quinn and F. G. Hilmer[12], core competencies are:

– skill or knowledge sets, not products or functions. They are primarily intellectual in nature and relate to the overall operation of an enterprise;
– a flexible platform capable of adaptation or evolution in areas important to the customer;
– a limited number of activities in the elements of the value added. An increase in the complexity of performed tasks makes it necessary for managers to focus on three to five skills. Each competence requires intensive management, therefore, distraction cannot be accepted. This could result in higher operating costs;
– unique sources of development in the value chain. Enterprises try to find places with market imperfections or knowledge gaps that can be filled by investing especially in intellectual resources;
– areas where a company can dominate. Enterprises should focus on these activities which are important to customers and which they can perform more effectively than their competitors. Thus core competences should be built until the enterprise gains a clear advantage over other potential suppliers;
– elements important to customers in the long run. Core competences should relate to the values preferred by customers, which is achieved by analysing customers' value chains;
– embedded in organizational systems. In order to be maintained competences must be included in the organizational culture and connected with the organizational structure and management systems.

According to J. L. Thompson and B. Richardson, maintenance of competitive advantage is related to the necessity of continuous assessment of an ability to use competences and to combine them in an appropriate manner. Therefore, it is necessary to develop and manage the following competences:

– strategic awareness and ability to exert control,
– ability to satisfy shareholders/stockholders,
– competitive strategy,
– implementation of strategy,
– commitment to quality and customer,
– functional competences,
– avoidance of failure and crisis,
– ethical and social responsibility.[13]

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[12] Quinn J. B., Hilmer F. G., Strategic Outsourcing. *Sloan Management Review, vol. 35, no. 4/ 1994,* pp. 45–47.

[13] Thompson J. L., Richardso, B., Strategic and competitive success: towards a model of the comprehensively competent organization. *Management Decision, 34/1996,* pp. 5–19;

On the other hand, according to A. B. Escrig-Tena and J. C. Bou-Llousar[14], core competences are:

- leadership – competences in this area include the ability of superiors to articulate and communicate the vision and strategy of an enterprise, and to support the subordinates in their implementation;
- enacting organizational environment – focus on the customer provides information about the environment;
- development of employees' know-how – promoting conditions supporting creativity of employees, which at the same time enhances their work;
- external cooperation skills – creating partner relationships with customers and suppliers;
- creation of a collective mind – taking actions conducive to teamwork;
- organizational commitment – execution of projects conducive to identification with the goals and values recognized to be important in an enterprise;
- enhancement of learning how an organization works – operation according to highly structured processes of problem solving and creating conditions for teamwork, which is conducive to learning about a company;
- flexibility in the design of new products (tangible and intangible) – shortening the time of execution of individual operations;
- building the reputation of an enterprise – attention to positive relationships with customers, suppliers, contractors and employees, as well as creation of conditions for achieving high efficiency.

Core capabilities

G. Stalk, P. Evans and L. E. Shulman perceived competitiveness differently, adopting the perspective of resources. They are the authors of the concept of core capabilities. They interpreted this concept as a set of strategic processes of an enterprise created by many people working in different departments of a company, thus building a value chain of an organization. To create a value chain it is necessary to build a special system supporting cooperation between different departments. The authors also emphasize the

Byczkowska M., Soboń J., *Enterprise development issues on the german- polish border* in: Innowacionnoje razwitje Rasji: usłowia, protiworjeczija, prioritjety, cz. III; Moskwa 2013.

[14] Łoboda M., Sitko-Lutek A., *Kompetencje i luka kompetencyjna organizacji.* In A. Sitko-Lutek (Ed.), *Polskie firmy wobec globalizacji. Luka kompetencyjna*, PWN Warsaw, 2007 pp. 21-31.

importance of employees' capabilities and a flexible and dynamic nature of the activities taken in response to changes in the environment. In their view, it is reasonable to remain in close contact with customers and to gain an ability to predict changes in the market. Moreover, it is in the interests of an enterprise, in view of its competitiveness, to develop those capabilities that will allow it to build a leading position in the market relying both on its flexible human resources and management based on processes (e.g. quick identification of the surrounding conditions, immediate response to any changes, rapid movement between markets).[15]

Distinctive competences

One of the key issues for strategy building is the determination of core competencies, i.e., those elements of competition, which, as the company believes, decide about its strength and will be useful in achieving its strategic objectives. It is important that core competencies meet the following three conditions:

- they represent a significant contribution to the creation of benefit (or value) for the customer;
- they are difficult to be copied by competitors;
- they have a universal character (they are effective regardless of the industry in which they are implemented).[16]

R. Owczarek presents another look on the issue of measuring of an enterprise's competitiveness[17]. In his view, competitiveness is illustrated by a set of aggregate measures of competitive potential in the following form:[18]

1. Sphere of strategic analysis – an ability to monitor and forecast changes in the industry on an international scale;
2. Sphere of strategy formulation:

[15] Bednarz J., Klasyczne a nowe teorie przewagi konkurencyjnej przedsiębiorstw. In H. Treder (Ed.), *Problemy współczesnej gospodarki światowej*, Prace i Materiały Instytutu Handlu Zagranicznego UG, No 30: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego; Gdańsk 2011, p. 119; Czyrka K., *Zarządzanie potencjałem ludzkim osób niepełnosprawnych w organizacjach*, PWSZ, Gorzów Wlkp. 2013, p.56-60

[16] Kasiewicz S., *Zarządzanie operacyjne w dobie globalizacji.* Difin Warsaw 2002, p. 85; Hill, Ch. W., Jones, G. R. *Strategic management theory. An integrated approach*. Houghton Miffin Co, Boston1992.

[17] Owczarek R., *Ruch prawniczy, ekonomiczny i socjologiczny,* ROK LXVI, 2/2004, pp. 176–177.

[18] These indicators should be defined for the enterprise concerned and its most closely related competitors. See more: Palaščáková, D., *The creation of quality management system in the context of regional competitiveness of regional university environment of the Slovak republic*. [in:] Kvalita Inovácia Prosperita. Roč. 13, č. 2, 2009, s. 55.

a) use of cooperation at various stages of creation of values,
b) use of services provided by external experts/consulting firms,
c) level of costs,
d) characteristics of the products;
3. Sphere of production and logistics – extent of use of services provided by the world's most competitive suppliers and subcontractors;
4. Sphere of technology:
a) level of expenditure on research and development,
b) scope of use of information management systems;
5. Sphere of marketing:
a) density and range of distribution channels,
b) ability to build close relationships with key customers,
c) ability to seek new customers in foreign markets,
d) level of expenditure on marketing activities,
e) use of the Internet for advertising, promotion and sales;
6. Financial sphere – the possibilities of financing development with sources that are cheapest on an international scale;
7. Sphere of intangible factors[19]:
a) reputation (image, renown) of the company,
b) internationalization of an enterprise's organizational culture (logo, name of the company, products offered and the adoption of the international perspective).

In the literature, we can also find a different look on the problem of measurement of competitiveness, as shown in the table below:

Table 1 Various approaches to the problems of measurement of competitiveness

288 globalisation tom 4	**Method of measurement/ description**
R. Grabowiecki	competitiveness of an enterprise is demonstrated by the achievement of sustainable ability to manufacture goods corresponding to the demand and the ability to sell these goods at a price that covers the costs and at the same time ensures profit that allows the owner to obtain dividends and to finance the development needs of the company (e.g. reconstruction and development investments, research on and implementation of new products and technologies, and marketing activities).
Thompson, Strickland	the concept of competitive position of an enterprise can be equated with the concept of its competitive strength.

[19] See more: Palaščáková, D., Kyrychuk, A., Rohačová, T.: *Globalisation processes and their impacton the competitiveness of Slovak Republic*. /in:/: "Actual problems of economics". No 2(152)/2014, p. 47-52.

	Competitive strength of an enterprise is determined by the comparison of a given enterprise with its rivals in terms of the degree of fulfilment of key success factors.
Baker and Hart	competitiveness of an enterprise depends on the extent to which factors related to its product/products or services (including capital, marketing skills, research-and-development expenditure, innovation of products, costs, quality of management – usually measured by profit ratios, measures of sales, market share, growth in exports) satisfy the demand of individual markets as compared to the competitors.
Otta	competitive potential of an enterprise is its capabilities of effective operation in a given market. The potential understood that way is one of the two coordinates (apart from the attractiveness of the market) used to determine the strategic position of an enterprise. An example of a set of factors characterizing the competitive potential of an enterprise is as follows: • market share, • relative quality, • level of service, • reputation, • efficiency of acquisition, • speed of execution, • mastery of technology, • availability of materials.
Boston Consulting Group; Shell	The concept of business strength is included in the matrix methods for assessing a strategic position. In the Boston Consulting Group matrix business strength was identified with a relative market share. This approach was considered too simplistic. In the Shell matrix business strength is determined by the following variables: • relative market share, • absolute market share, • relative level of the quality of enterprise's products, • relative level of sales prices, • ratio of research-and-development expenditure to sales, • ratio of expenditures on marketing to sales.
Gittus	argues that the world assesses a company's success primarily based on financial ratios. According to him, a competitive company is a company that reduced unit costs to a level that ensures reasonable profit and at the same time keeps the competitors at a distance.
Z. Pierścionek	Pierśnionek proposes a three-stage analysis of the assessment of a company's competitive position: 1. indicators of competitive position allowing assessment whether there is competitive advantage and how large it is; 2. analysis of direct factors that determine the competitive position of an enterprise on the market;

	3. analysis of indirect factors. The second and the third stage of analysis is the assessment of sources of competitive advantage. According to the author of the method, the indicators that determine the competitive position of an enterprise in the most complete manner are: • participation of an enterprise in the market (market segment) and trends in changes of its market share over a specified time period; • an enterprise's financial situation and trends in the change of the situation. At the same time it is important that both indicators are examined jointly, as an enterprise may have a relatively large market share as a result of low prices, but it still does not prove its sustainable competitive advantage. A large market share, stable or increasing, and a good financial position of an enterprise prove its high competitive position. A small market share continuing for a long time should be regarded as a weak competitive position. In contrast, a growing market share with positive financial results are interpreted as a strengthening of the competitive position and we see prospects for a good position in the sector. The second step in the analysis of the competitive position of an enterprise is an identification of the main factors determining the market share of an enterprise and its financial position against its competitors. The main factors are: • quality and modernity of a product, • price of a product, • system of sale and service, • reputation of an enterprise. The level of quality and modernity, price and marketing capabilities are determined, in turn, by the technology and organization of production, quality of the workforce, and most of all by the management system, organization, motivation, information. The third stage of the analysis of an enterprise's competitive position is the analysis of the impact of these factors.
Report on the Competitiveness of Community Industry	defines the competitiveness of a company as an ability to face the competition, which should be measured, at least in the first evaluation, by the acceptance of goods by the market.
NYSE Office of Analyses	argues that being competitive means to profitably sell products/ services at home and abroad.
matrix of General Electric/McKinsey	In the matrix of General Electric/McKinsey business strength is determined by the following internal factors: • market share, • sales service, • marketing, • service, • research and development, • production, • distribution,

	• financial resources, • image, • product range, • quality and reliability, • competence in the field of management.
STRATEGOR	Competitive advantage can be achieved when a company has a strong competitive position, understood as the sum of the strengths and weaknesses of an enterprise. A competitive position depends on the degree of mastery of key success factors. These factors can be divided into five major groups: • market position of an enterprise, • cost competitive position of an enterprise, • brand and deep-rooted market position, • technical competence and mastery of technology, • profitability and financial power. Changes both in key success factors and in the degree of their mastery by competitors should be taken into account in the assessment. Stability of competitive advantage of an enterprise is based on the stability of the advantage created or achieved by an enterprise. If this advantage is not sustainable and cannot be defended, the competitive position of an enterprise will be unstable. Competitive advantage depends not only on rarity, complexity and non-substitutability of resources, but also on their relevance to the market rules. This means that a company will not be able to ensure its stable competitive position if its advantage is not based on a factor of success that is sustainable and unaffected by the influence of changes in the environment. The publication cited also suggests that the concept of competitive position is associated with the already achieved competences in the field of competition (ex post), and the concept of competitive potential can be related to the competences examined prospectively (ex ante).

Source: own study based on Grabowiecki, R., Raporty nad konkurencyjności – Wpływ systemu finansowo-podatkowego na konkurencyjność polskich przedsiębiorstw przemysłowych. *IRiSS Warsaw1996; Bieńkowski, W., Reaganomika i jej wpływ na konkurencyjność gospodarki amerykańskiej. PWN Warsaw1995; Hax, A. C., Majluf, N. S., The Use of the Industry Attractiveness – Business Strength Matrix in Strategic Planning. In R. G. Dyson (Ed.), Strategic Planning: Models and Analytical Techniques. John Wiley and Sons Chichester, 1990; Pierścionek, Z., Strategia rozwoju firmy. PWE Warsaw 1996; Gorynia, M., Jankowska, B., Klastry a międzynarodowa konkurencyjność przedsiębiorstwa. Difin Warsaw2008.*

Conclusions

The measurement of competitiveness of enterprises is very problematic for several reasons:

– there is a countless number of indicators (this dissertation presents only a small number, referring to the pertinent literature[20]);

[20] Stępień B., Sulimowska-Formowicz, M., Metody pomiaru konkurencyjności przedsiębiorstwa. *Gospodarka Narodowa, 5-6/2004*; Brodowska-Szewczuk J., Konkurencyjność

– access to data is very difficult (especially as regards information on the competitors);
– there are many methodological problems (e.g. assigning importance to individual success factors and preparation of scales to measure competence of an enterprise[21]);
– competitive conditions change rapidly.

The above analysis of methods for measuring competitiveness requires that special attention be paid to the combination of resources of an enterprise in conjunction with the environment of an organization, not forgetting the dynamism of competitiveness. An enterprise's resources, to be valuable from a competitive point of view, must conform to the market in which a company operates, and their fusion and coordination should be attributively geared to achieving competitive advantage.

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[21] Gorynia M., Jankowska B. *Klastry a międzynarodowa konkurencyjność przedsiębiorstwa.* Difin Warsaw 2008.

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