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Marketing tools in shaping the competitiveness of small enterprises in the economy and agricultural sector

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Abstract. The development of competitive small enterprises under institutionally unstable conditions primarily depends on the effectiveness and functionality of marketing tools for product distribution. The issue of product marketing remains highly relevant due to significant artificial constraints on sales opportunities caused by the impact of war, which disruptively regulates the competitiveness of business entities in Ukraine. This article aimed to determine the trajectory of structural changes in the entrepreneurial system and to characterise the role of marketing tools in shaping the competitiveness of small enterprises. The study used economic-statistical and comparative analysis methods, as well as a systematic approach, to assess the dynamics of small businesses and the impact of war on their competitiveness. The research framework included an analysis of innovative marketing tools such as market segmentation, digital technologies, partnership initiatives, and eco-oriented strategies. Organisational and economic assessments of institutionalisation trends in small enterprises within Ukraine's economy have been conducted, with particular emphasis on developments in the agricultural and rural sectors. The capacity of enterprises to operate efficiently has been substantiated through the implementation of innovative marketing tools aimed at reducing transaction costs in exchanges. Key areas of focus included market segmentation based on consumers' environmental preferences, the adoption of digital marketing

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tools, the development of partnership initiatives with eco-oriented companies, securing funding for eco-projects, and the introduction of loyalty systems to stimulate demand. The practical significance of this study lies in its potential application by entrepreneurs, marketing specialists, and economic analysts in developing effective strategies for enhancing the competitiveness of small enterprises. This can be achieved through the integration of innovative marketing tools, adaptation to environmental requirements, and optimisation of business processes in wartime conditions

Keywords: entrepreneurship; structure; sustainable development; Green Deal; ecosystems; food security

Introduction

The economic resilience of enterprises, and their ability to function effectively in volatile market environments, depends on the efficiency of management in achieving the necessary balance of benefits and costs. In Ukraine, due to the emergence of destructive barriers during wartime, additional problems have arisen for entrepreneurs related to the institutional instability of the market transaction organisation system. To adapt to these conditions, through strategies ensuring the achievement of the main entrepreneurial goal – profit generation – the priority of developing and implementing effective management decisions becomes crucial. In this context, small enterprises are highlighted as a distinct segment of the business ecosystem, the competitiveness of which is determined by the specific institutional capabilities of this type of business entity. In the context of addressing the existing problems of small enterprise operations in ensuring their access to product distribution channels, particularly in the agri-food sector, it is important to develop and implement effective marketing tools. This problem is relevant, as the ability of enterprises to compete effectively depends on marketing tools. The conceptualisation and expansion of marketing knowledge are linked to the need for continuous improvements in the mechanisms of implementing market strategies to achieve profitability in business operations. This issue has become particularly significant for small-scale businesses.

The development of theoretical marketing concepts and their implementation signifies a constructive ideology for building the competitiveness of small businesses in Ukraine, as small entrepreneurship plays a key role in establishing an economic foundation that ensures employment, the production of goods and services, and contributes to the recovery of territories by enhancing their economic stability and self-sufficiency. The effective development of small businesses depends on access to funding, the use of marketing tools, intellectual resources, and flexible management. Despite the significant contribution of the agricultural sector to increasing competitiveness and creating jobs, the integration of marketing tools for various subgroups of agricultural enterprises is insufficiently addressed in the analysed research papers. It is important to focus efforts on developing strategies that consider local production characteristics, financial capabilities, and the needs of agricultural enterprises. Such an approach will enable the creation of a more inclusive marketing model that will contribute to strengthening the market positions of small businesses.

The issue of small business development is being explored by researchers in various vectors of functional manifestation of activity and significance for the economy and society. M. Bahorka & I. Abramovych (2024) emphasised that a modern comprehensive competitive strategy should unite and harmonise goals and objectives at different levels and also create conditions for involving small businesses in the organised market. M. Kyzym *et al.* (2019) argued that considering three key indicators of small and medium-sized enterprise activity – the volume of sold products, the number of employees, and the number of enterprises – allows for the calculation of intermediate relative indicators, such as the volume of sold products per enterprise, the number of employees per enterprise, and the volume of sold products per employee. I. Gontareva *et al.* (2023) identified three stages of enterprise strategy formation: situational analysis of the external and internal environment of the enterprise to assess opportunities and threats; the development of marketing strategies to reach the target market, including segmentation and differentiation; the development of instrumental strategies for effective positioning, considering product, price, distribution channels, and promotion methods.

Considering the need to implement functional strategies in the context of cost management and competitiveness, as noted by I. Yatsiv & S. Yatsiv (2024), allows agricultural enterprises not only to optimise operational costs but also to ensure sustainable development through innovation and effective unit management. Particular attention is paid to the connection between functional strategies and cost management, which is key to increasing the competitiveness of agricultural enterprises. This is an important aspect for ensuring long-term competitive advantages in the market. M. Bahorka & I. Abramovych (2024) identified three stages of enterprise strategy formation: the first stage involves a situational analysis of the external and internal environment of the enterprise to assess opportunities and threats, the second stage focuses on developing marketing strategies to reach the target market, including segmentation and differentiation, and the third stage involves developing instrumental strategies for effective positioning, considering product, price, distribution channels, and promotion methods.

I. Burtnyak *et al.* (2024) highlighted that the application of peak pricing stimulates competition among small businesses, helping them adapt to uneven customer flows and improve service. Additionally, through the use of seasonal analysis and model modifications, small businesses

can more effectively regulate purchase intensity, which contributes to the stabilisation of their operations and enhances their competitiveness. D. Wenyang *et al.* (2024) emphasised that the development of e-commerce stimulates competition among market participants, encouraging them to improve business models and offer higher-quality services. At the same time, through the attraction of foreign investment and the strengthening of the economy, entrepreneurship gains new opportunities for innovation, particularly in the areas of trade, finance, and information technology. K. Yeshko *et al.* (2024) demonstrated the importance of using digital technologies through three key aspects: technological, institutional, and infrastructural, as the implementation of modern information systems, compliance with international requirements, and ensuring effective data exchange are critical elements for increasing the competitiveness of small businesses in the economy, including the agricultural sector. The competitiveness of small businesses and the development of e-commerce demonstrate the interdependence between business adaptation to market changes and the improvement of innovative approaches. In the context of economic challenges related to the war, the implementation of such strategies becomes more complex due to significant infrastructural and financial constraints. This necessitated the conduct of this research, the purpose of which was to develop approaches to forming an effective strategy for the development of small agribusiness, taking into account competitiveness, the implementation of marketing tools, and ensuring sustainable development.

Materials and Methods

The data used in this study were obtained from national statistical sources, such as the State Statistics Service of Ukraine (Economic statistics..., n.d.) to acquire statistical data on the number of registered enterprises, as well as data on the dynamics of the Ukrainian individual entrepreneur economy during the war (Every third FOP..., 2024), and data from correspondent.net (The number of..., 2023) regarding the number of businesses opened in Ukraine. The study covered the period from 2018 to 2023 and focused on analysing the dynamics of small business development in Ukraine, including the impact of global crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and local challenges caused by the full-scale war.

The research was based on economic-statistical and comparative methods of analysis. In particular, the economic-statistical method was used to assess quantitative changes in the dynamics of small business development by activity volumes, while the comparative method facilitated the identification of specific changes in the structure of small businesses, considering the impact of macroeconomic factors. Comparative analysis was used to identify changes between groups of economic entities (by enterprise size and types of activity) over time, which facilitated the analysis of changes and the comparison of indicators across years, enterprise categories, and types of activity. The application of a systems approach allowed for the

structuring of data by categories (large, medium, small, micro) and the study of interrelationships between general trends and the specifics of changes in agriculture. This approach made it possible to identify key trends in the structure of economic entities for the period 2018-2022, in particular, the impact of external factors (e.g., war) on the dynamics of business development in the agricultural sector and the economy as a whole. The analysis of marketing tools was also conducted using a systems approach. The main focus was on the use of modern tools such as search engine optimisation (SEO) marketing, customer relationship management (CRM) systems, Big Data, content marketing, and social media marketing (SMM). Based on the collected data, tables were created to demonstrate the dynamics of small business development, its adaptation to crisis conditions, and the effectiveness of marketing tool applications.

The following sources were used for the analysis: scientific publications to study current research on the topic (Ruban, 2023; Karpenko & Matviichuk, 2024; Mykhailenko, 2024) and data from the IMD World Competitiveness Ranking (WCR) to assess the ability of countries to create a favourable environment for business and promote prosperity (Rankings out..., 2024). The assessment of this ranking was based on criteria such as economic performance, government efficiency, business efficiency, and infrastructure, which allowed for the evaluation of how countries adapt to changes in the global market and measure their competitiveness over time. The analysis of scientific publications to form the theoretical and methodological basis of the study allowed for the examination of the studies of Ukrainian and foreign scientists, particularly on the development of small businesses, innovative marketing strategies, and sustainable development. The analysis revealed gaps in existing scientific sources, particularly insufficient attention to the adaptation of innovative marketing strategies for small agricultural enterprises in wartime conditions. The use of a multi-component methodological approach ensured the acquisition of comprehensive results, which allowed not only for the analysis of the current state of small businesses but also for the formulation of practical recommendations to enhance their competitiveness.

Results and Discussion

A clear understanding of the stages of enterprise strategy formation and effective cost management is key to ensuring its competitiveness. However, the current economic difficulties caused by the war create additional challenges for the implementation of these strategies, complicating the operation of enterprises and affecting their financial capabilities. The war has led to the destruction of enterprise infrastructure, a significant reduction in production, disruption of supply chains, increased unemployment and inflation, reduced tax revenues, low solvency of the population, and much more. The National Bank of Ukraine reports that in wartime conditions, the economy loses 50% of "unreceived" gross domestic product (GDP). In 2022, the Ukrainian economy experienced the most significant decline in

history, with a real GDP contraction of 29.1%, which led to a return of the economic level to the early 2000s, while the need for recovery and reconstruction after a year of war are estimated at 411 billion US dollars (Poharska, 2023).

The occupation of parts of eastern and southern Ukraine and the destruction of infrastructure have led to significant losses for both large and small enterprises. These regions were historically important industrial and economic centres of the country, concentrating a significant number of factories, plants, agricultural enterprises, and small businesses. According to data from Ye. Ruban (2023), the Donetsk Region lost 8.2 thousand entrepreneurs, Kharkiv – 7.1 thousand, Kherson – 4.5 thousand, Luhansk – 3.7 thousand, and Zaporizhzhia – over 2 thousand. In contrast, during this period, more new individual entrepreneurs (IEs) opened in other regions than closed. The largest increase was recorded in Kyiv – plus 12.9 thousand, followed by the Lviv Region, where the number of IEs increased by 12.3 thousand, and the Dnipro Region, which completes the trio of regions with an increase in entrepreneurs – plus 8.6 thousand (The number of..., 2023). The largest losses are concentrated in enterprises in sectors such as metallurgy, the chemical industry, machine building, and agriculture (Andriienko *et al.*, 2024). Many companies have lost production capacities, access to resources, workers, and sales markets, and the destruction of transport and energy infrastructure has further complicated the restoration of production in these regions.

Small businesses are the most common element of a market economy. Small entrepreneurship creates a significant number of jobs, fills the market with necessary products and services, satisfies customer demand, and stimulates economic development. In times of crisis, it contributes to the stability of the country's economy. Small enterprises are usually classified into several key categories. The main criteria are: the number of employees, annual revenue, asset volume, and industry (The Commercial Code of Ukraine, 2003). In most cases, small enterprises are considered to be those with up to 50 employees and an annual revenue that does not exceed the threshold established by law (for example, in Ukraine – up to 10 million EUR). Small businesses can be classified by level of innovation, scalability, environmental focus, or level of digital technology

use. In the agricultural sector, enterprises that focus on the green course, traditional production, or export-oriented models are separately identified. This classification allows for a more accurate assessment of the needs of enterprises, their contribution to the economy, and the identification of support areas from the state or investors. The implementation of “green” economy principles opens up new perspectives for small enterprises, necessitating the integration of environmental approaches into their operations. Global economic processes are increasingly oriented towards sustainable development, posing new challenges for small businesses. The implementation of “green course” provisions in enterprise competitiveness formation strategies requires the use of effective marketing tools that consider a range of key aspects. Marketing platforms are also used to attract green investments, such as bonds directed towards eco-projects. This includes an emphasis on “green” financial instruments, such as green bonds, and the promotion of such initiatives through digital and social channels. At the same time, small businesses need to develop partnerships to finance environmental initiatives. A differentiated approach to marketing for various business structures allows for the creation of personalised offers that meet their needs.

The rational use of resources and the reduction of environmental impact are key elements of modern marketing strategies. This involves creating products and services that adhere to the principles of sustainable consumption and informing consumers about environmental benefits. Integrating waste management into marketing contributes to the formation of a positive brand, for example, through the use of recycled materials or the organisation of recycling. Furthermore, promoting environmentally friendly goods and services that support natural ecosystems helps companies build a strong image. The use of social media to disseminate information about environmental innovations and sustainable development increases brand trust, especially through transparency in environmental reporting. Transparency and regular reports on reducing environmental impact contribute to building trust among customers. Table 1 presents the main marketing tools that can be used to build the competitiveness of small businesses, particularly in the agricultural sector, as well as in other sectors of the economy.

Table 1. Marketing tools in building the competitiveness of small businesses

Tool	Characteristic	Application	Applicable to enterprises in which industries and sectors
SEO marketing	Search engine optimisation to improve website visibility in search engines	Increasing brand awareness, attracting customers online	All industries, including agriculture
Product innovation	Development and implementation of new products that meet modern market needs	Creating competitive products	Agricultural enterprises (e.g., seeds, fertilisers)
Technology innovation	Use of modern IT technologies to optimise processes	Automation and efficient management	Mainly the agricultural sector (field management)
Service innovation	Introduction of consulting or other additional services	Expanding the range of offerings	All industries, with a focus on agriculture
Innovations in marketing for agricultural enterprises	Implementation of modern marketing solutions (targeting, CRM) for the agricultural sector	Increasing sales and customer reach	Only for the agricultural sector

Tool	Characteristic	Application	Applicable to enterprises in which industries and sectors
High-quality content marketing	Creation of informative and entertaining content for the audience	Building brand trust	All industries
SMM marketing	Use of social media to promote products and communicate with customers	Brand promotion through platforms	All industries, including agriculture
Big Data technologies	Analysis of large data volumes for personalised marketing	Creating targeted offers for customers	All industries
CRM systems	Organisation and management of customer relationships	Increasing customer loyalty	All industries

Source: compiled and supplemented based on I. Golyseva (2021), O. Karpenko & Y. Matviichuk (2024)

The proposed marketing tools, categorised by their application in the agricultural sector and general small enterprises, highlight the importance of adapting modern technologies, such as SEO, SMM, Big Data, and CRM, for both agricultural and other small businesses to enhance their competitiveness. Analysing the main aspects of small business development, D. Mykhailenko (2024) revealed (business climate, technological innovation, financing, export and digitalisation). The analysis of these aspects allowed for the identification of several key areas of small business development. Firstly, a favourable business climate, which is a determining factor, includes legal stability, transparency of market processes, and support from regulatory bodies. Such a business climate not only facilitates the operation of small enterprises but also stimulates investment, which positively impacts the economy. Another important area is the implementation of cutting-edge technologies, as the use of innovation allows enterprises to remain competitive, improve the quality of their products and services, and optimise production processes. This opens up new opportunities for growth and market expansion. At the same time, access to financing remains a challenge for small businesses. High interest rates and complex credit procedures are significant obstacles. In this context, state support in the form of developing financial infrastructure and affordable lending programmes is an important condition for enterprise growth. Access to foreign markets enables small businesses to diversify risks and increase sales volumes. The simplification of customs procedures, export consultations, and free trade agreements contribute to expanding opportunities for exporters. Separately, the importance of

digitalisation should be noted, as the use of digital technologies allows for increasing the efficiency of business operations, reducing costs, and strengthening their competitive positions. State support in this area can include access to technology, training programmes for entrepreneurs, and the development of digital infrastructure.

The successful implementation of small business development aspects largely depends on state support, particularly in the form of simplified administrative procedures and tax incentives. The state can significantly improve the business climate by creating favourable conditions for small businesses, thereby stimulating entrepreneurship development and attracting investment. The state has begun to actively support small businesses through tax breaks, grants, and business recovery programmes. In July 2022, it invested 10 billion UAH in the development of small and medium-sized businesses through grants, as reported by the Ministry of Economy of Ukraine (Ambartsumian, 2024). Receiving this type of funding helps businesses maintain jobs and continue their operations even in the face of economic instability caused by external factors such as war or crises. International organisations, institutions, and individual countries also provide significant resources to assist Ukrainian entrepreneurs. The main areas of this support include funding, consulting assistance, training, and assistance with entering international markets. Data from the State Statistics Service of Ukraine on the number of active business entities by their activity volumes in 2018-2022 (Economic statistics..., n.d.) allow for tracking the dynamics of small business development in changing economic environments (Table 2).

Table 2. Number of operating business entities by activity volumes in 2018-2022

Category	Years					Deviation (+; -) 2022/2018
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	
Large enterprises, units						
All of Ukraine	446	518	512	610	494	48
Including agriculture, hunting, and related services	23	34	36	49	39	16
Medium enterprises, units						
All of Ukraine	16,476	18,129	17,946	17,811	15,037	-1,439
<i>of which, individual entrepreneurs</i>	419	378	344	309	254	-165
Including agriculture, hunting, and related services	1,988	1,966	1,830	1,793	1,483	-505
<i>of which, individual entrepreneurs</i>	5	2	3	3	3	-2

Continued Table 2

Category	Years					Deviation (+; -) 2022/2018
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	
Small enterprises, units						
All of Ukraine	1,822,671	1,922,978	1,955,119	1,937,827	1,716,977	-105,694
<i>of which, individual entrepreneurs</i>	1,483,297	1,560,650	1,599,411	1,585,105	1,470,330	-12,967
Including agriculture, hunting, and related services	67,585	66,675	65,255	63,118	46,856	-20,729
<i>of which, individual entrepreneurs</i>	20,938	20,348	19,366	18,887	16,635	-4,303
Of which, micro-entrepreneurs, units						
All of Ukraine	1,764,737	1,864,013	1,898,902	1,880,858	1,671,558	-93,179
<i>of which, individual entrepreneurs</i>	1,471,965	1,550,633	1,591,031	1,576,208	1,465,345	-6,620
Including agriculture, hunting, and related services	62,505	61,570	60,163	57,863	42,212	-20,293
<i>of which, individual entrepreneurs</i>	20,851	20,257	19,278	18,819	16,585	-4,266

Source: compiled based on data from the Economic statistics / Economic activity / Agriculture, forestry and fisheries (n.d.)

The analysis of this table can serve as a basis for identifying key trends, such as the increase or decrease in the number of small businesses, their adaptation to crisis conditions, and the impact of external factors on business structure, which will be important for formulating policies to support small entrepreneurship in Ukraine. In 2024, more new businesses were registered than in the corresponding period before the start of the full-scale war, when 186,144 cases were opened. After a sharp decline at the start of the invasion, the number of registrations levelled off and has remained stable for the second year in a row (Every third FOP..., 2024). Despite the hostilities and power outages, businesses have adapted to these challenging conditions and continue their operations and even

continue to develop. Looking at Table 3, the real statistics of new individual entrepreneurs IEs over the last four years are evident.

The full-scale invasion and the past global problem, which caused significant problems in the economy not only in Ukraine – COVID-19 – pushed many entrepreneurs towards digitalisation. Businesses that face problems operating offline are actively moving into the online space. Small businesses that provide services (consulting, education) have completely switched to remote work, which has allowed them to continue operations even in combat conditions. Small agricultural enterprises play a key role in ensuring employment and food security, which is relevant in the face of current economic challenges.

Table 3. Number of new IEs 2021-2024

Number of new IEs			
January-August 2021	January-August 2022	January-August 2023	January-August 2024
186,144	132,666	193,521	193,192

Source: compiled based on the Every third FOP closes in the first year of operation (2024)

Table 4 presents an analysis of the factors that hinder agricultural entrepreneurship in Ukraine, which is a key source for analysing the main obstacles to the development of the agricultural sector. The agricultural sector, which is of strategic importance to the Ukrainian economy, faces the need to implement modern approaches to enhance sustainability and competitiveness. One of the key areas is the integration of environmental practices into entrepreneurial

activity, which would include: conducting an audit of activities to assess the current state of environmental friendliness of processes; developing an environmental strategy for the enterprise, focused on optimising resource use and waste recycling; certifying products according to international quality and environmental standards; actively communicating achievements through digital platforms, which will allow for the formation of a positive image among consumers.

Table 4. Factors restricting agricultural entrepreneurial activity in Ukraine for 2018-2024

Impact factor	Years						
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024*
Agriculture (% of enterprises)							
Insufficient demand	9	11	9	8	16	21	24
Weather conditions	28	26	29	28	25	24	18
Lack of labour	4	4	3	3	3	5	10
Lack of materials and equipment	3	2	3	2	5	3	2
Financial constraints	26	23	24	21	25	24	23
Other factors	23	23	28	24	43	45	44
No barriers	36	37	35	40	25	24	23

Impact factor	Years						
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024*
Crop production (% , enterprises)							
Insufficient demand	7	9	7	6	13	20	23
Weather conditions	30	30	34	32	27	27	22
Lack of labour	2	3	2	2	3	5	8
Lack of materials and equipment	2	2	1	1	5	3	2
Financial constraints	23	20	20	16	21	19	20
Other factors	22	22	26	24	45	46	47
No barriers	39	39	37	42	28	26	23
Animal husbandry (% , enterprises)							
Insufficient demand	15	17	17	15	24	24	26
Weather conditions	17	15	18	18	21	17	10
Lack of labour	7	6	6	3	3	7	15
Lack of materials and equipment	4	2	6	4	7	5	1
Financial constraints	36	28	32	32	38	36	30
Other factors	26	26	32	27	44	46	36
No barriers	28	33	30	35	20	18	23

Note: * – data is presented for the first quarter of the current year

Source: calculated by the author based on data from the Economic statistics / Economic activity / Agriculture, forestry and fisheries (n.d.)

Alongside this, the application of effective marketing tools is important: market segmentation, the use of digital marketing, the expansion of partnerships, and the attraction of funding for ecoinitiatives. This will create a solid foundation for the adaptation of small agricultural enterprises to modern challenges and enhance their competitiveness. Ukrainian enterprises are actively seeking new opportunities in foreign markets. To achieve this, a strategy for applying marketing tools in the context of sustainable development should be developed, focusing on the following areas: segmenting the market based on consumers' ecological preferences and targeting marketing campaigns at eco-conscious audiences; using digital marketing tools, such as content marketing, SEO, and targeted advertising, to promote organic products among international and local audiences; developing partnerships with other eco-oriented businesses and participating in sustainable development initiatives to increase market visibility; attracting funding through grant programmes and loans for eco-projects, enabling the introduction of innovations and advanced technologies in production; implementing loyalty systems for eco-conscious customers, including bonuses or discounts for choosing environmentally friendly products, thus stimulating sustained demand. The outlined actions help small businesses adapt to market challenges, identify the directions of the "green" course in the strategy of forming enterprise competitiveness, and increase competitiveness in the long term. In many cases, this is a forced step due to the decrease in purchasing power in the domestic market. Export expansion is supported by state and international programmes, which help entrepreneurs enter European and other markets.

Small businesses actively use marketing tools to remain competitive in a rapidly changing environment, indicating the integration of technological advancements,

market knowledge, and the effective use of financial resources, as this allows them to create innovative products, services, and business models (Branzova, 2024). These types of enterprises, focusing on the economic potential of new cultures, are able to meet the needs of emerging markets. This approach, according to T. Kuzmin *et al.* (2024), not only ensures their stability but also opens up new opportunities for scaling. The topic of the chosen study correlates with the results of the study by T. Kuzmin *et al.* (2024), as marketing tools contribute to the adaptation of small businesses to new markets and the expansion of their opportunities, but the difference lies in the emphasis, which focuses on competitiveness through marketing, while T. Kuzmin *et al.* (2024) emphasised the role of meeting the needs of emerging markets for business stability and scaling. Social sustainability in the context of small businesses, particularly in the agricultural sector, remains a challenging aspect to implement, as it often faces conceptual and practical difficulties. Researchers K. Kuipers *et al.* (2024) attempted to integrate the social component into sustainable development strategies and encountered ambiguity in understanding the multifaceted role of farmers, who act not only as entrepreneurs but also as active members of their communities, which complicates the development of effective policies. The results of this study and the research of K. Kuipers *et al.* (2024) share common aspects, as the absence of clear and measurable goals can also limit the effectiveness of small business marketing strategies. The experience of integrating the social component is useful for Ukraine, as considering local social values and interaction with communities will contribute to the sustainable development of entrepreneurship. O. Sakovska & O. Shpykuliak (2020) fragmented interests and outlined that the lack of clear and measurable goals limits the possibility of forming a holistic strategy for the sustainable development of

entrepreneurship that would meet both regional and global challenges. The research materials align with the article of I.F. Balaniuk *et al.* (2021), as they also emphasised the importance of considering social values and the specifics of interaction with communities when applying marketing tools to enhance the competitiveness of small businesses in the economy and agricultural sector, which is a key factor in their social sustainability and adaptation to the regulatory environment. It is appropriate to agree with the assertion of D. Wenyang *et al.* (2024) that for small businesses, e-commerce and marketing tools become key factors in economic growth, as they contribute to attracting foreign investment and developing new sectors. The high correlation between investment, GDP growth, and e-commerce confirms their interdependence, which is a significant argument for small businesses to integrate electronic commerce into their operations. It can be agreed that information support systems play a key role in the application of marketing tools to enhance the competitiveness of small businesses in the economy and agricultural sector, as they provide access to the analytical data necessary for making strategic decisions (Chudyk *et al.*, 2024).

The World Digital Competitiveness Ranking, according to IMD (Rankings out..., 2024), assessed 67 economies of different countries for their ability to implement technologies for economic and social transformations, taking into account the factors of knowledge, technology, and future-readiness, which influence the introduction of innovations and long-term value creation. Countries with high levels of governance, transparency, and a stable political environment, such as Switzerland and Singapore, consistently rank high due to their effective digital infrastructure and social adaptation to change. The integration of marketing tools, technological advancements, and market knowledge allows small businesses not only to withstand crises but also to leverage new opportunities for growth and scaling. The use of digital platforms, CRM systems, and analytics contributes to increasing business efficiency and flexibility. Thus, small businesses in Ukraine demonstrate high adaptability, an innovative approach, and the ability to remain competitive even in challenging conditions. This confirms their key role as a sector that ensures economic stability and social development.

The development of small entrepreneurship in Ukraine during wartime is characterised by significant challenges that create a high-risk environment for doing business. Despite this, small businesses remain an important element of economic and social stability, acting as a platform for job creation, providing the market with products and services, and adapting to new conditions by implementing innovations. To confirm these statements, D. Mykhailenko (2024) believes that small entrepreneurship is capable of creating an economic foundation that will provide jobs and support the production of essential goods and services. This is especially important for territories that require reconstruction, as the development of small businesses contributes to their economic stability and self-sufficiency.

Yu. Lopatynskiy *et al.* (2024) emphasised that a small agricultural enterprise can be successful if it is provided with high-quality human resources, focuses on the production of environmentally friendly products with minimal costs, and involves the creative approaches of employees to increase profitability. Effective human resource management and a focus on the sustainable development of agricultural enterprises can be supported through the implementation of modern accounting systems and cost monitoring, as noted by V. Nahornii *et al.* (2020), which allows for the optimisation of marketing activities and ensures accurate accounting to enhance their operational efficiency. O. Chygryn *et al.* (2021) argued that in the agricultural sector, enterprises are divided into three subgroups depending on their interest in using marketing tools to develop green competitiveness: large agricultural holdings that focus minimally on environmental positioning; producers who partially integrate a green image into their operations; and independent agricultural producers who actively use marketing tools to promote environmental advantages. This division reflects the different levels of motivation and willingness of enterprises to implement sustainable development principles. Financial security is highlighted as the main problem affecting business viability, indicating the need for stable access to funding to ensure growth. At the same time, the formation of a competitive policy for small businesses is based on intellectual resources, flexible management, motivation, and a stable basic element that supports enterprises even in conditions of uncertainty. This combination allows businesses to maintain competitiveness, adapt to changes, and sustain development despite financial challenges.

V. Borshchevskiy *et al.* (2022) argued that the economy during wartime and Ukraine's postwar development requires addressing complex problems, setting priorities, and fulfilling key tasks for the country's recovery and long-term stability. Summarising the aforementioned, it proves that the identification of priority development areas and the fulfilment of key tasks for economic recovery will only be possible if the importance of a systemic approach to these issues is considered, which will ensure the long-term stability and prosperity of the country. Small businesses in Ukraine are skilfully adapting to the challenges posed by hostilities, thanks to the implementation of innovative approaches, the establishment of new forms of cooperation, and the active use of digital technologies. Despite the significant losses suffered by enterprises due to hostilities, their high adaptability and ability to respond quickly to constant changes in the external environment allow them not only to keep the business afloat but also to find new ways for development and growth in the extremely difficult situation caused by the war. While generally agreeing with V. Borshchevskiy *et al.* (2022), it can be argued that in the context of rebuilding the economy towards recovery trends, it is necessary to coordinate the efforts of all stakeholders interested in the results, taking into account the sectoral aspect, for example, in the agricultural sector – thus, there is no agreement with the absolutisation of the author's proposals, which are

interpreted in a general context of understanding ways to solve problems. It is appropriate to partially agree with the research of O. Chygryn *et al.* (2021) – the arguments are generally constructive in a conceptual dimension, but it is difficult to agree that the category of business entities argues the motivation to “integrate a green image into activities”, since such motivation rather depends on the institutional conditions in which the enterprise operates, implementing measures for market transaction marketing. The solution to the issues of small business development depends not only on state support but also on the activity of entrepreneurs themselves. Business preservation is closely linked to the speed of adaptation to changing conditions, as small businesses in Ukraine face numerous macroeconomic challenges, the main of which is economic instability. Creating favourable conditions for small business development is one of the key ways to overcome the economic crisis in wartime conditions.

Conclusions

In the context of the full-scale invasion and global challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, Ukrainian entrepreneurs have demonstrated a high capacity for adaptation and the digitalisation of business processes. The impact of hostilities on the Ukrainian economy has pushed small businesses towards active digitalisation, which has proven to be key in supporting entrepreneurial activity, particularly in the agricultural sector. Small businesses in Ukraine are skilfully adapting to the challenges posed by hostilities, thanks to the implementation of innovative approaches, the establishment of new forms of cooperation, and the active use of digital technologies. Despite the significant losses suffered by enterprises due to hostilities, their high adaptability and ability to respond quickly to constant changes in the external environment allow them not only to keep the business afloat but also to find new ways for development and growth in the extremely difficult situation caused by the war.

Enterprises are actively seeking new opportunities in international markets, which requires the development of a strategy for using marketing tools with an emphasis on sustainable development. In particular, this includes the following directions: market segmentation based on consumers' environmental preferences and targeting marketing campaigns at eco-conscious audiences; the use of digital marketing tools, such as content marketing, SEO, and targeted advertising, to promote organic products

among both global and local audiences; the development of partnerships with other eco-oriented companies and participation in sustainable development initiatives to enhance market visibility; securing funding through grants and loans for eco-projects, which will support the implementation of innovations and cutting-edge technologies in production; and the introduction of loyalty systems for eco-conscious customers, such as bonuses or discounts for choosing eco-friendly products, which will stimulate sustainable demand. The outlined actions will help small businesses adapt to market challenges and determine the directions in the strategy of forming competitiveness in the long term. Small agricultural enterprises have a significant impact on ensuring employment and food security. Their active inclusion in foreign markets, which is supported by state programmes, demonstrates a desire for development even in conditions of limited domestic demand. The totality of these factors contributes to strengthening small entrepreneurship and restoring the economy. It is worth emphasising that the successful development of small businesses depends not only on state support but also on the initiative of the entrepreneurs themselves. Their ability to react quickly to changes, implement innovations, and use modern approaches is crucial. The formation of favourable conditions for small entrepreneurship becomes a key factor in overcoming the economic crisis, which requires a comprehensive approach to supporting entrepreneurs in Ukraine. Prospects for further research in this area include two important directions. Firstly, it is advisable to focus on studying the effectiveness of integrating marketing tools for small agricultural enterprises in different regions of Ukraine, taking into account their specifics and access to digital technologies. Secondly, the analysis of the impact of international grant programmes on the development of the “green” course and the study of mechanisms for their effective implementation is relevant.

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Маркетингові інструменти у формуванні конкурентоспроможності малих підприємств в економіці та аграрному секторі

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Анотація. Розвиток конкурентоспроможних малих підприємств в інституційно-нестабільних умовах залежить насамперед від дієвості і функціональності маркетингових інструментів збуту продукції. Проблематика маркетингу продукції є актуальною з причин значного штучного обмеження можливостей реалізації через дію воєнного чинника, який в Україні деструктивно регулює формування конкурентоспроможності суб'єктів підприємництва. Метою статті було визначити траєкторію структурних змін у системі підприємницького господарювання та охарактеризувати ролі маркетингових інструментів у формуванні конкурентоспроможності малих підприємств. У дослідженні використано методи економіко-статистичного й порівняльного аналізу, системного підходу для оцінки динаміки малого бізнесу та впливу війни на їх конкурентоспроможність. База включила аналіз інноваційних маркетингових інструментів: сегментації ринку, цифрових технологій, партнерських ініціатив і екоорієнтованих стратегій. Здійснено організаційно-економічні оцінки тенденцій інституціоналізацій малого підприємництва в економіці України із виокремленням тенденцій аграрного, сільського сектору господарювання. Обґрунтовано здатність підприємств ефективно господарювати організовуючи впровадження інноваційних інструментів маркетингу для зменшення трансакційних витрат обміну. Розглянуто ключові напрями, такі як сегментація ринку за екологічними уподобаннями споживачів, впровадження цифрових маркетингових інструментів, розвиток партнерських ініціатив із еко-орієнтованими компаніями, залучення фінансування для еко-проектів та запровадження систем лояльності для стимулювання попиту. Практична цінність дослідження полягає у тому, що його результати можуть бути використані підприємцями, маркетологами та економічними аналітиками для розробки ефективних стратегій формування конкурентоспроможності малих підприємств, зокрема через впровадження інноваційних маркетингових інструментів, адаптацію до екологічних вимог і оптимізацію бізнес-процесів в умовах воєнного часу

Ключові слова: підприємництво; структура; сталий розвиток; «зелений» курс; екосистеми; продовольча безпека