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## ENTERPRISE COMPETITIVE POSITIONING BASED ON KNOWLEDGE RESOURCES IDENTIFICATION

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Received 15 July 2021; accepted 21 August 2021; published 30 August 2021

**Abstract.** Competitive advantages of modern companies are determined by a set of resources that discover the uniqueness of the company in the market and find out its competitive position. The authors conceptualized the process of determining the company's competitive position based on the identification of knowledge resources. Competitive positioning is understood as the process of forming, maintaining and strengthening the company's competitive position based on the audit of key knowledge resources (their types, location, carriers and directions of movement), which form key areas of the company's competence and create sustainable competitive advantages. The sequence of the enterprise competitive positioning on new resources of knowledge which reveals stages of competitive position definition is offered. The tools and methods of estimating knowledge resources in the competitive positioning of the company are formed. The matrices of the company's competitive position are constructed, which determine the competitive advantages and competitive weaknesses of the company. Criteria for interpreting the results of the company competitive positioning based on knowledge resources are proposed. They identify main company's competitive advantages and weaknesses. In the article resources of knowledge that form company's competitive advantages and weaknesses are defined. Competitive advantage matrices are built. Criteria for the results of company's competitive positioning on new knowledge resources interpreting are suggested.

**Keywords:** competitive advantages; competitive positioning; identification; measurement; knowledge resources

**Reference:** Vartanova, O., Kolomytseva, O., Bilyk, V., Budnikevich, I., Vasylchenko, L., Burtseva, T. 2021. Enterprise competitive positioning based on knowledge resources identification. *Entrepreneurship and Sustainability Issues*, 9(1), 529-541. [http://doi.org/10.9770/jesi.2021.9.1\(33\)](http://doi.org/10.9770/jesi.2021.9.1(33))

**JEL Classifications:** M21, M31

**Additional disciplines:** mathematics, management

## 1. Introduction

Main trends in the modern business environment are characterized by volatility, complexity, unpredictability and chaos, or to put it in another way, Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity (VUCA). Changes, which are intensified by revolutionary technological transformations are associated with a gradual transition to a new, sixth technological order, post-industrial society and digitalization of the economy, which radically change the conditions and opportunities for companies competition. Modern scientific view of ensuring the competitive advantage of enterprises and their competitive positioning proves that the classic schools of strategic management, effective in the late twentieth century, are ineffective in the XXI century, because unpredictable and unpredictable changes in the business environment often make strategic management processes irrelevant. strategic positioning, strategic planning. The development of strategic management schools followed the changes that took place in the environment, which concerned both the productive forces of society and, consequently, the factors of competitive advantage, and the very essence of competitive relations. Modern approaches to ensuring the companies competitive advantage are based on the concepts of resource and competence approaches to company management (Hamel & Prahalad, 1994; Teece, 2007; Coyne et al., 2007; Tidd, 2016, etc.), which postulate the fact that stable, unique and difficult to simulate competitive advantages are determined by a unique set of intangible success factors for each company, such as key capabilities and competencies (Teece, 2007; Hamel & Prahalad, 1994; Coyne et al. 2007; Tidd, 2016, etc.). The high level of information and telecommunication technologies development has caused acceleration of introduction processes and distribution, copying by competitors of new science-intensive technologies and scientific developments. In these conditions, the competitiveness of a modern company, its role as an "intellectual leader" in the industry is determined by the availability of internal resources of knowledge, which together create a stable and long-term competitive advantage (Leonard-Barton, 1988). Thus, today in the scientific community there is a consensus on the internal organizational origins of the company's competitive advantages based on the use of intangible assets, among which the most important are knowledge, intellectual property and capabilities (Teece, 2007).

Obviously, the solution of the problems of forming the company's competitive advantages and company's competitive positioning on the basis of knowledge resources is in the plane of knowledge management. The most difficult task of competitive positioning is the audit of knowledge resources that are potentially able to form the competitive advantages of the company and determine its competitive position. Thus, the aim of the study is to conceptualize the company's competitive positioning based on the knowledge resources identification and the creation of competitive positioning tools. Realization of the set article purpose demands the decision of the following tasks, which are solved in article:

- conceptualization of the competitive positioning process on the basis of knowledge resources;
- formation of a competitive positioning procedure based on knowledge resources;
- improvement of methods of the company's knowledge resources identification and their application in the competitive positioning process and formation of competitive advantages;
- determination of the company's competitive position based on the identification of knowledge resources.

## 2. Methodology

To solve the tasks set in the study, general scientific and special research methods were used: analysis and synthesis, competence approach (in the conceptualization of the research subject); knowledge audit and expert survey (to identify the company's knowledge resources); scoring, scaling, rating, assessment of knowledge at the level of codification and diffusion (to assess knowledge resources); matrix method and method of comparison (to form a company's competitive position).

The methodology for identifying and measuring the company's knowledge resources is quite complex. Some authors consider the measurement of knowledge resources at the level of individual companies (Tidd, 2016) and at the level of their own practical experience (Henderson & Cockburn, 1995) in an attempt to link intra-firm and industry analysis (Leonard-Barton, 1988). However, measuring internal knowledge resources through industry efficiency is not always appropriate, as knowledge resources are internal sources of competitive advantage as a unique set of knowledge, capabilities and business attributes for each company.

Measurement of the company's knowledge resources, capabilities and competencies can be carried out on the basis of various methods, in particular, on the basis of assessing the impact of intangible assets on company performance (Henderson & Cockburn, 1995), which is also difficult to measure the contribution of intangible assets specific type.

A significant contribution to the methodology of measuring knowledge resources, capabilities and competencies was made by Ukrainian scientists V. Verba, O. Grebeshkova: "Problems of identification of enterprise competencies" (Verba & Grebeshkova, 2004) and "Diagnostics of enterprise competencies" (Verba & Grebeshkova 2007), who proposed to form the company's competitive advantages based on compliance with the internal balance of different hierarchical levels competencies (Verba, Grebeshkova 2007), as well as O. Malyarchuk and A. Nalyvayko et al. (Malyarchuk, 2013; Nalyvayko et al., 2017), who offers measurement of companies knowledge resources based on SPACE-analysis, evaluation of enterprise resources on the criteria of value, uniqueness, mobility and organization (VRIO-analysis technique, supplemented by an integrated indicator of the strategic status of enterprise resources – Sr), which allows to form a company's strategic position based on the availability of resources that are of strategic importance to the company (Malyarchuk, 2013). This approach makes a significant contribution to the practice of strategic and competitive positioning of the company based on the resource approach, forming a practical tool for their identification and diagnosis (Nalyvayko et al., 2017).

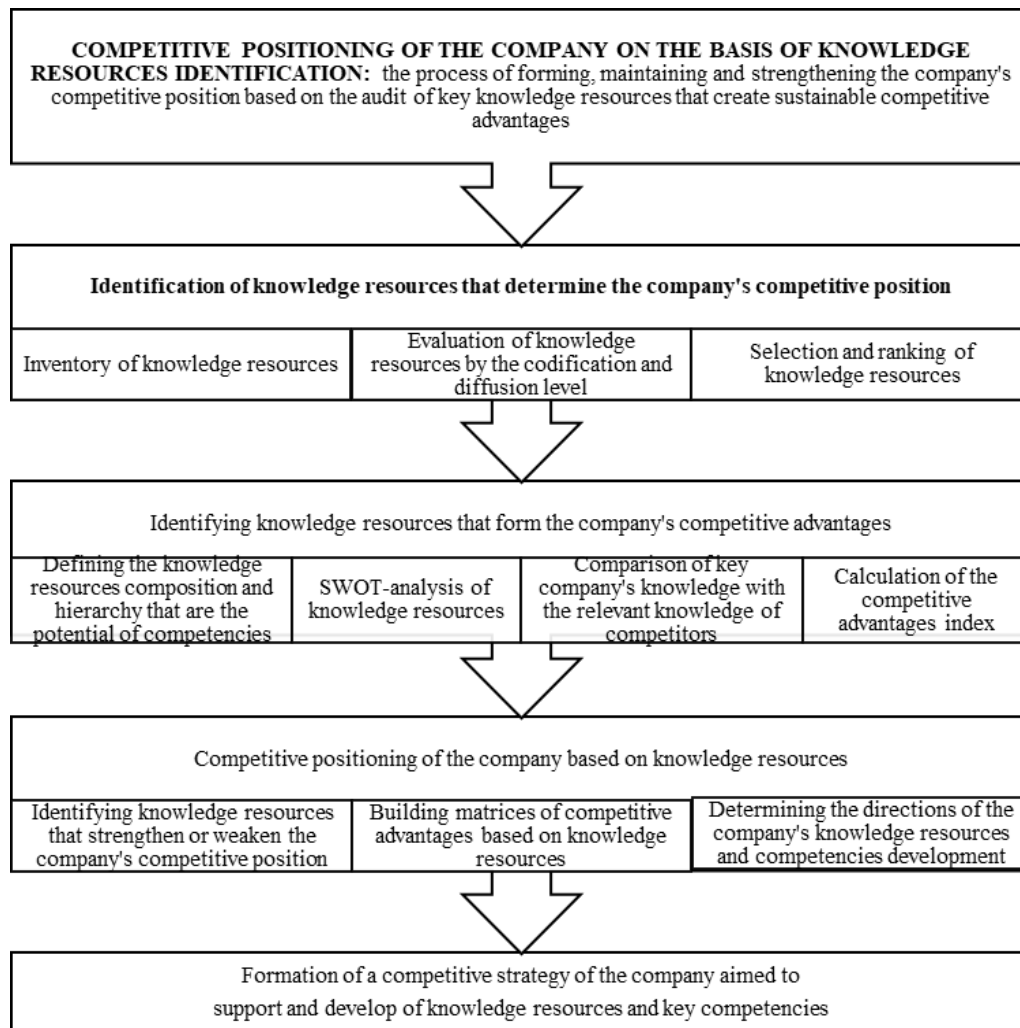
In forming the methodology for identifying knowledge resources in the company's competitive positioning, we applied the concept of the social learning cycle and the M. Boisot approach (Boisot, 1995) on the processes of codification and diffusion of knowledge in the social learning cycle. It is formed in two directions: codification (the level to which information can be compressed and expressed explicitly) and diffusion (the degree of information dissemination between a number of agents) (Boisot, 1995). Evaluation of knowledge sources on the scale of codification and diffusion allowed to identify those knowledge that are crucial for the formation of sustainable competitive advantages.

The concept of the company competitive positioning based on the identification of company's knowledge resources predicts determining the whole set of knowledge resources, business processes and business attributes that can be transformed into competitive advantages (Vartanova, 2020; Vartanova et al., 2020; Vartanova & Kolomytseva, 2019; Vartanova & Salita, 2013; Vartanova & Rekiyanov, 2015; Vartanova & Rekiyanov, 2016; Acharya et al., 2020; Jeannerat & Kebir, 2020; Bolade, 2021), the definition of their location, media and methods of analysis. Conceptualization of the company's competitive positioning on the basis of knowledge and competencies made it possible to form a sequence of competitive positioning of knowledge resources identification.

### **3. Main part**

The implementation of the competence approach in the company's competitive positioning allows to solve a number of specific scientific and applied problems. In particular, the consideration of knowledge resources as a source of the company's competitive advantages and the formation of competence key areas on their basis allows to identify strategic knowledge resources that underlie the company's competitive success, to determine the company's competitive position, key areas of competence and its competitive benefits (Vartanova, 2020; Rekiyanov, 2011; Rekiyanov, 2008; Buzko & Rekiyanov, 2007), Kolomytseva & Pepchuk, 2017; Kolomytseva,

2016). This understanding of the applied tasks of the company's competitive positioning on the basis of competency approach allowed to clarify the terminological meaning of this concept as a process of forming, maintaining and strengthening the company's competitive position based on audit of key knowledge resources (their types, localization, media and directions), definite key areas of the company's competence and create sustainable competitive advantages. In this context, the basis for the company's competitive positioning are the company's knowledge management processes, which allow to create incentives to improve the company's ability to innovate, combine knowledge sources with their needs, create conditions for effective knowledge exchange and assess their contextual effectiveness. The sequence of company's competitive positioning based on the identification of knowledge resources is given in Fig. 1.



**Figure 1.** Conceptualization of the company's competitive positioning on the basis of knowledge resources identification

Source: own research

The criteria for selecting knowledge resources that can be used to build a competitive position of the enterprise is their uniqueness (Moore, 2006; Otenko & Preobrazhenska, 2012). We offer to evaluate the uniqueness of knowledge according to the criteria of knowledge codification and diffusion. Codification is the degree to which

information can be compressed and expressed explicitly (plain text is more codified than images, and numerical information is more so than utterances). Diffusion of knowledge is the degree of information dissemination between a number of agents who are employees of the enterprise. Therefore, we have applied the approach to evaluation and scale of knowledge codification and diffusion for machine-building companies, which is proposed by Joe Tidd in the book "From strategic management to strategic competence: measuring technological, Market and Organization Innovation" (Tidd, 2016).

**Table 1.** Scales of codification and diffusion of the company’s knowledge

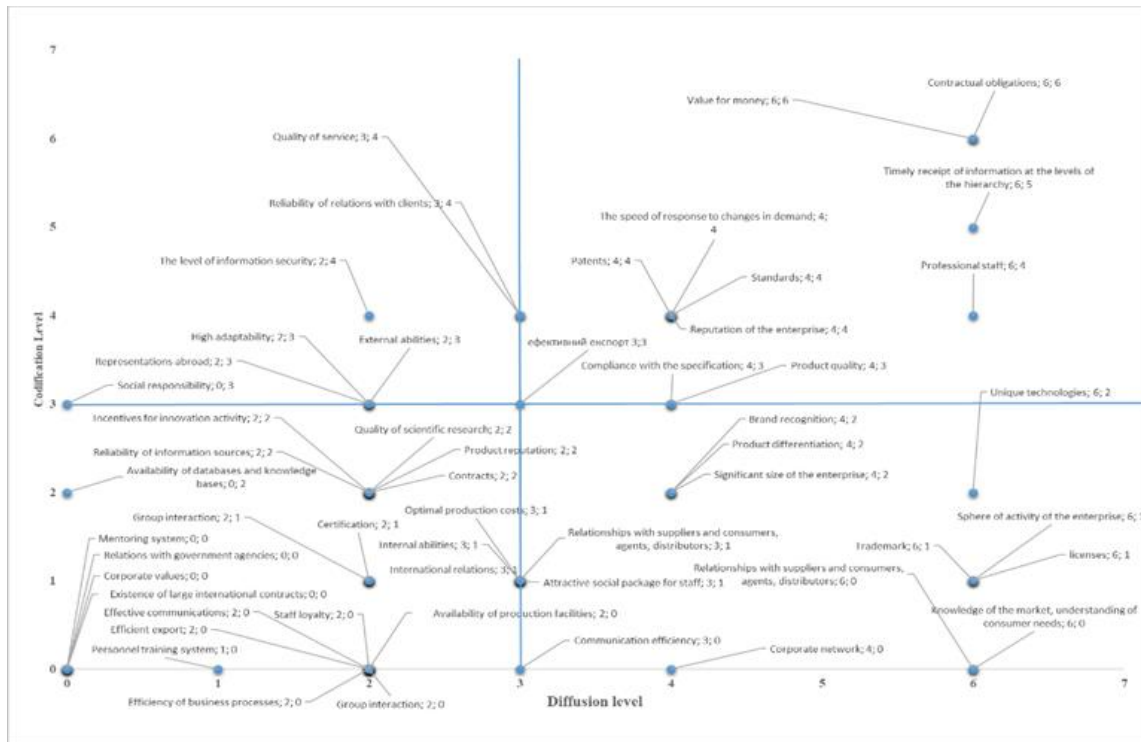
Knowledge codification	Value	Knowledge diffusion	Value
<i>Codified knowledge</i>		Common knowledge:	
Can be fully represented by information technologies	6	Known to all companies in all industries	6
Can be partially represented by information technologies	5	Known to many companies in all industries	5
Can be systematically described	4	Known to many companies in many areas	4
Can be clearly described	3	Known to many companies in several areas	3
Can be shown and described orally	2	Known to small number of companies in several areas	2
Can be demonstrated	1	Known to small number of companies in one area	1
Are in the minds of employees	0	Known to only onel company in an industry	0
<i>Uncodified knowledge</i>		Uncommon knowledge	

Source: Tidd (2016)

## Results

Approbation of the company’s competitive positioning formed methodology on the basis of resources identification is carried out according to the machine-building enterprise of the Cherkassy area – “Smilyansky electromechanical plant” LLC. The company manufactures components and parts for electric motors and generators, provides repair services. The purpose of the study is the competitive positioning of the machine-building enterprise of Cherkasy region on the basis of knowledge resources identification. As a result of the strategic session and the survey of the company's employees, 56 knowledge resources were identified, which were named by the respondents.

Thereafter, the initially defined list of 56 knowledge resources of the researched company is not final, because we are interested only in those knowledge that are able to create a competitive advantage of the company over competitors, and therefore are quite unique. We propose to evaluate knowledge sources according to the criteria of codification (degree of codification of knowledge; unique knowledge is uncodified) and diffusion (degree of knowledge prevalence; unique knowledge and technologies are not diffuse) of knowledge, using the proposed scales of codification and diffusion. Thus, the sources of knowledge that are able to form the company’s competitive advantages and its competitive position in terms of codification and diffusion are rated from 0 to 3; it is knowledge that is codified by no more than: “Can be clearly described” and differentiated by no more than: “Known to many companies in several industries”. The results of the knowledge resources assessment of “Smilyansky Electromechanical Plant” LLC (Cherkasy region) according to the level of codification and diffusion are presented in Fig. 2.



**Figure 2.** The results of the knowledge resources assessment of “Smilyansky Electromechanical Plant” LLC (Cherkasy region) by the codification and diffusion level  
 Source: own research

So, as can be seen from the data of Fig. 2, we are interested in knowledge resources, which according to the results of the codification and diffusion level assessment were in the lower left quadrant of the matrix. This quadrant contains knowledge resources that are relatively unique and uncommon in a competitive environment, and, accordingly, are sources of enterprise competence and its competitive advantages. Thus, 15 knowledge resources of the enterprise were selected, their rating was determined and evaluated according to the criterion of the enterprise key competence (on a five-point scale) (Table 2).

According to the research concept, the most significant resources of enterprise knowledge (are quite unique, uncommon and to the greatest extent meet the criteria of competence, have a high rating (Otenko & Poltava, 2005; Widet & Holliford, 2003; Peppard, 2010) are located in the lower right quadrant of the matrix. Such knowledge includes: availability of databases and knowledge bases, certification, product quality, market knowledge, understanding of consumer needs, availability of significant international contracts, availability of production facilities, financial capabilities, turnover of the enterprise. According to the results of the study, none of the pre-selected knowledge resources received a low score (in this case, we get a list of knowledge resources that either need to be developed (especially if they have a high rating) (see Table 3).

**Table 2.** Assessment of knowledge resources on the basis of competence

Knowledge resources	Rating	Assessment of knowledge resources on the basis of competence				Aggregate
2. Availability of production facilities	1	5	3	3	5	16
1. Financial opportunities, turnover of the enterprise	2	3	3	3	2	11
14. Certification	3	4	5	5	4	18
33. Availability of databases and knowledge bases	4	4	5	5	4	18
24. Product quality	5	4	4	5	3	18
47. Market knowledge, understanding of consumer needs	6	4	5	4	3	16
55. Existence of significant international contracts	7	3	4	5	4	16
48. Relationships with suppliers and consumers, agents, distributors	8	4	4	5	4	17
11. Contracts	9	4	4	5	4	17
21. Product reputation	10	4	5	4	4	17
23. Representations abroad	11	3	4	5	4	16
54. Export efficiency	12	3	2	4	3	12
44. Attractive social package for staff	13	4	2	4	3	13
56. Relations with government agencies	14	3	4	3	3	13
7. Trade mark	15	5	4	5	4	18

Source: own research

**Table 3.** The results of the knowledge resources assessment of “Smilyansky Electromechanical Plant” LLC (Cherkasy region) by the level of codification and diffusion

Knowledge resources	Rating	Assessment of knowledge resources on the basis of competence				Aggregate
2. Availability of production facilities	1	5	3	3	5	16
1. Financial opportunities, turnover of the enterprise	2	3	3	3	2	11
14. Certification	3	4	5	5	4	18
33. Availability of databases and knowledge bases	4	4	5	5	4	18
24. Product quality	5	4	4	5	3	18
47. Market knowledge, understanding of consumer needs	6	4	5	4	3	16
55. Existence of significant international contracts	7	3	4	5	4	16
48. Relationships with suppliers and consumers, agents, distributors	8	4	4	5	4	17
11. Contracts	9	4	4	5	4	17
21. Product reputation	10	4	5	4	4	17
23. Representations abroad	11	3	4	5	4	16
54. Export efficiency	12	3	2	4	3	12
44. Attractive social package for staff	13	4	2	4	3	13
56. Relations with government agencies	14	3	4	3	3	13
7. Trade mark	15	5	4	5	4	18

Source: own research

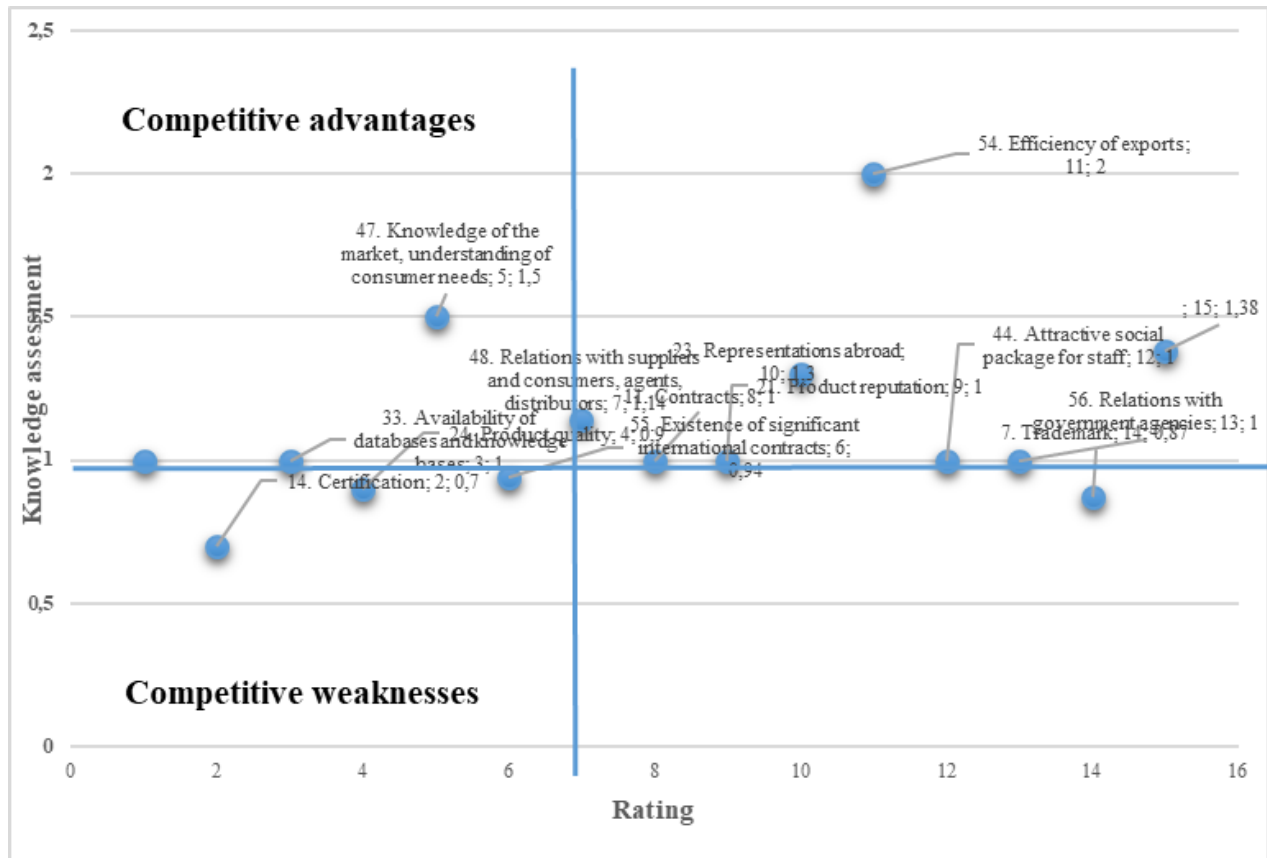
The author's approach to the enterprise competitive positioning based on the identification of knowledge resources involves not only the assessment of knowledge resources that affect the enterprise competitiveness, but also a comparative assessment of knowledge resources with relevant factors of competitors. This makes it possible to establish the competitive advantages of the enterprise, determined on the basis of knowledge and competencies. The main competitor of “Smilyansky Electromechanical Plant” LLC (Cherkasy region) is State Enterprise “Electrovazhmash” (Kharkiv). To assess the competitive advantages based on knowledge resources, we propose to use the Competitive Advantage Index (CAI), which is the ratio of the estimated level of knowledge resource of the studied enterprise to the corresponding assessment of the competitor's knowledge resource. If the value of CAI exceeds one, the company has an advantage in the corresponding resource and vice versa. Comparative assessment of knowledge resources of "Smilyansky Electromechanical Plant" LLC (“SEP” LLC) and SE "Electrovazhmash" is given in table 4.

**Table 4.** Comparative assessment of knowledge resources of “Smilyansky Electromechanical Plant” LLC and "Electrovazhmash” SE

Knowledge resources	Rating	Assessment of knowledge sources		CAI
		“SEP” LLC	SE "Electrovazhmash"	
2. Availability of production facilities	1	16	16	1,0
1. Financial opportunities, turnover of the enterprise	2	11	16	0,7
14. Certification	3	18	18	1,0
33. Availability of databases and knowledge bases	4	18	20	0,9
24. Product quality	5	18	12	<b>1,5</b>
47. Market knowledge, understanding of consumer needs	6	16	17	0,94
55. Existence of significant international contracts	7	16	14	<b>1,14</b>
48. Relationships with suppliers and consumers, agents, distributors	8	17	17	1,0
11. Contracts	9	17	17	1,0
21. Product reputation	10	17	13	<b>1,30</b>
23. Representations abroad	11	16	8	<b>2,0</b>
54. Export efficiency	12	12	12	1,0
44. Attractive social package for staff	13	13	13	1,0
56. Relations with government agencies	14	13	15	0,87
7. Trademark	15	18	13	<b>1,38</b>

Source: own research





**Figure 3.** Competitive position of “Smilyansky Electromechanical Plant” LLC (Cherkasy region) based on knowledge resources  
 Source: own research

According to the results of the enterprise knowledge resources identification and their evaluation in comparison with the direct competitor on the index of competitive advantages (CAI) The competitive position of "Smilyansky electromechanical plant" LLC on the basis of knowledge resources is defined. In the matrix shown in Fig. 3. competitive advantages are in the upper right quadrant, which houses the resources of knowledge that are highly valued and recognized as important for the competitiveness of the enterprise (rating - from 1 to 7). The competitive advantages of the company include: the presence of significant international contracts, product quality, availability of production facilities and certification.

Competitive weaknesses are placed in the lower right quadrant of the matrix (high rating and low score): financial opportunities and turnover, availability of databases and knowledge bases. These are the resources of knowledge that are of great importance to the company and are valued below competitors.

The obtained results of competitive positioning make it possible to classify the types of the company's competitive position according to the level of assessment of knowledge resources:

- strong position - not less than 50% of the company's knowledge resources can be assessed as strengths, not more than 20% of knowledge resources are assessed as weak relative to competitors;
- middle position - not less than 25-30% of the company's knowledge resources can be assessed as strengths, not more than 25% of knowledge resources are assessed as weak relative to competitors;
- weak position - less than 20% of the company's knowledge resources can be assessed as strengths, more than 25% of competencies are assessed as relatively weak.

The competitive position of the researched enterprise can be classified as strong / medium (conditionally 73.3% of knowledge resources are evaluated as strengths, no more than 20% of knowledge resources are evaluated as weak relative to competitors).

## **Conclusions**

The performed scientific research allows us to formulate the following conclusions.

Scientific novelty lies in the following research results:

- a principled approach to competitive positioning of the enterprise on the basis of competency and resource approaches is formed, it allows to consider the sources of the enterprise competitive advantages as a set of knowledge resources (competencies), determine their competitive position and establish areas of support and development of competitive position;
- an approach to understanding the competitive positioning of the enterprise is proposed, according to which the enterprise competitive position is presented as a set of knowledge resources that are evaluated and are stronger than competitors. This understanding of the applied tasks of the enterprise competitive positioning allowed to clarify the terminological meaning of this concept as a process of forming, maintaining and strengthening the competitive position of the enterprise based on the audit of key knowledge resources that form key areas of competence and create sustainable competitive advantages;
- a sequence of the enterprise competitive positioning on the basis of inventory and analysis of knowledge resources is formed, which reveals the stages of determining the enterprise competitive position and creates a theoretical basis for further research.

The practical value is inherent in the following research results:

- tools and methods for assessing knowledge resources in the competitive enterprise positioning are formed, in particular, the authors proposed the index of competitive advantages (CAI) usage to assess the knowledge resources that form the competitive advantages of the enterprise compared to its main competitors;
- matrices of the enterprise competitive position which define competitive advantages and competitive weaknesses of the enterprise are constructed. The resources of knowledge which form competitive advantages and competitive weaknesses of the enterprise are defined. Matrices of competitive advantages reflect the assessment of knowledge resources of the enterprise and their assessment in comparison with the main competitor;
- criteria for interpreting the results of the enterprise competitive positioning on the basis of identified knowledge resources was proposed, according to it the competitive position of the studied enterprise can be classified as strong / medium (73.3% of knowledge resources are assessed as strengths, no more than 20% of knowledge resources are assessed as weak).

The main limitations of the study are that the identification of knowledge resources and competencies of the enterprise in practice is a significant difficulty: “Core competence is clearly an important concept, and some companies seem to be able to make it work. But for most, it is like a mirage: something that from a distance appears to offer hope in a hostile environment, but that turns to sand when approached. Why do competencies seem so elusive? One reason may be that there is no clear basis for identifying them, nor any established way of gauging progress towards them ” (Coyne et al. 2007). Thus, the methodology of identification and measurement of knowledge resources and key competencies of the enterprise is still in its infancy, which determines the relevance of further research in this area.

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