

STAGES OF IMPROVING THE MECHANISMS FOR ENSURING THE COMPETITIVENESS OF SMALL BUSINESS ENTITIES PROVIDING MEDICAL SERVICES

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Abstract. *This article examines the issues of ensuring and enhancing the competitiveness of small businesses providing medical services, as well as improving the mechanisms for achieving this. The study analyzes the modern features of competition in the healthcare services market, the organizational and economic capabilities of small medical clinics, and the effectiveness of their management processes. Based on a review of scientific literature, the importance of value-based healthcare, innovative management, and digital transformation in fostering competitiveness is substantiated. The research findings indicate that the process of ensuring competitiveness in small business entities is carried out through the intricate interplay of organizational and economic mechanisms, control and information systems, and management decisions. Furthermore, it is established that the stages of improving competitiveness comprise analyzing the market and competitive environment, defining strategic measures, and revising existing mechanisms. The results obtained have practical significance for enhancing management efficiency and developing sustainable competitive advantages in small medical clinics.*

Keywords: *medical services market; small business entities; competitiveness; organizational and economic mechanisms; value-based medical service; digital transformation; service quality; management efficiency.*

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the increase in the private sector's share within the healthcare system and the deepening of market relations have led to the issue of competitiveness becoming a priority in the activities of small businesses providing medical services. For small medical clinics, maintaining stable operations in a competitive environment depends not only on the price factor but also directly on the quality of service, treatment outcomes, level of customer care, and management effectiveness. Therefore, there is a need to develop mechanisms for ensuring competitiveness on a scientific basis and to gradually improve them.

A shift in the competitive paradigm within the medical services market is being observed in global scientific research. Specifically, the concept of "value-based healthcare" proposes evaluating competition through treatment outcomes and resource utilization efficiency rather than service volume or price. This approach enables small business entities to develop quality-and-result-based advantages over large clinics. Concurrently, digital transformation and the implementation of information technologies are becoming crucial factors in enhancing the adaptability of small medical businesses. In the context of Uzbekistan, however, the process of ensuring competitiveness in small medical clinics is often carried out through fragmentary

management decisions rather than systemic mechanisms. The insufficient development of professional management, information bases, and service strategies is limiting the market position of these entities. Therefore, this study aims to identify mechanisms for ensuring the competitiveness of small business entities providing medical services and to scientifically elucidate the stages of their improvement. The results of this research will be significant in developing practical management decisions.

Literature review. Within the framework of research conducted on this topic, work has been carried out in various areas to ensure competitiveness, among which the works of Porter and Lee are particularly noteworthy. In their research, the authors propose the "Value-Based Health Care" model as a modern paradigm of competitiveness. They demonstrate that for small business entities, competition should be measured not only by price or the number of services but also by the treatment outcome achieved for each unit of funds spent. This serves as a fundamental stage in forming a "quality and results" mechanism for small enterprises to compete against large clinics. Among local scholars who have conducted research on the economic stability and development prospects of small businesses, Abdurahmonov, in his work analyzing the economic potential of small medical business entities, identifies resource optimization and specialization as the first stage of ensuring competitiveness. His research highlights mechanisms for small businesses to gain leadership in narrow market segments. This study is of great importance in analyzing economic levers of state support for entrepreneurship in the healthcare system. Among the scholars who have studied innovative mechanisms and technological transformation features, Inakov, in his works, investigated the role of innovation management in increasing competitiveness. According to the author, the next stage in ensuring competitiveness is the innovation of management processes. He proposes a model for using intelligent systems in decision-making to increase the adaptability of small entities in the medical services market. This mechanism allows for quick responses to market changes. In terms of ensuring competitiveness through direct digitalization and implementation of international standards, "Digital transformation in healthcare services: Strategic guidelines for small enterprises," published in 2025 by the World Health Organization, also defines the technological stage of competitiveness. The organization's research interprets digital transformation-based e-health and data analysis information systems as the primary means for small businesses to reduce costs and increase service transparency. These international standards create a foundation for small business entities to compete not only in the local but also in the international medical tourism market. In the study titled "Foreign experience in managing the quality of medical services in small business entities" by local scholar Tursunov A., which analyzes the experience of developed countries, he considers the concept of "service quality" as the decisive stage of competitiveness. Based on foreign experience, he proposes a mechanism for creating a "loyal customer" base by improving communication and service quality in small medical clinics. This mechanism ensures the entity's viability, especially in a highly competitive market environment.

Methodology. This study aims to examine ways to improve mechanisms for ensuring the competitiveness of small businesses providing medical services. The methodology is based on a scientifically grounded and systematic approach. The research process combines theoretical

and empirical methods, ensuring the objectivity and scientific validity of the research results. This methodology can serve as a foundation for similar studies in the future.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Several aspects of competitiveness formation in small businesses providing medical services have been studied by researchers. Our research primarily focuses on examining the characteristics of implementing management activities based on mechanisms aimed at fulfilling the tasks of forming, ensuring, and enhancing competitiveness. As a result of analyzing the organizational and economic mechanisms studied in this research, both individually and collectively, the following conclusions were drawn:

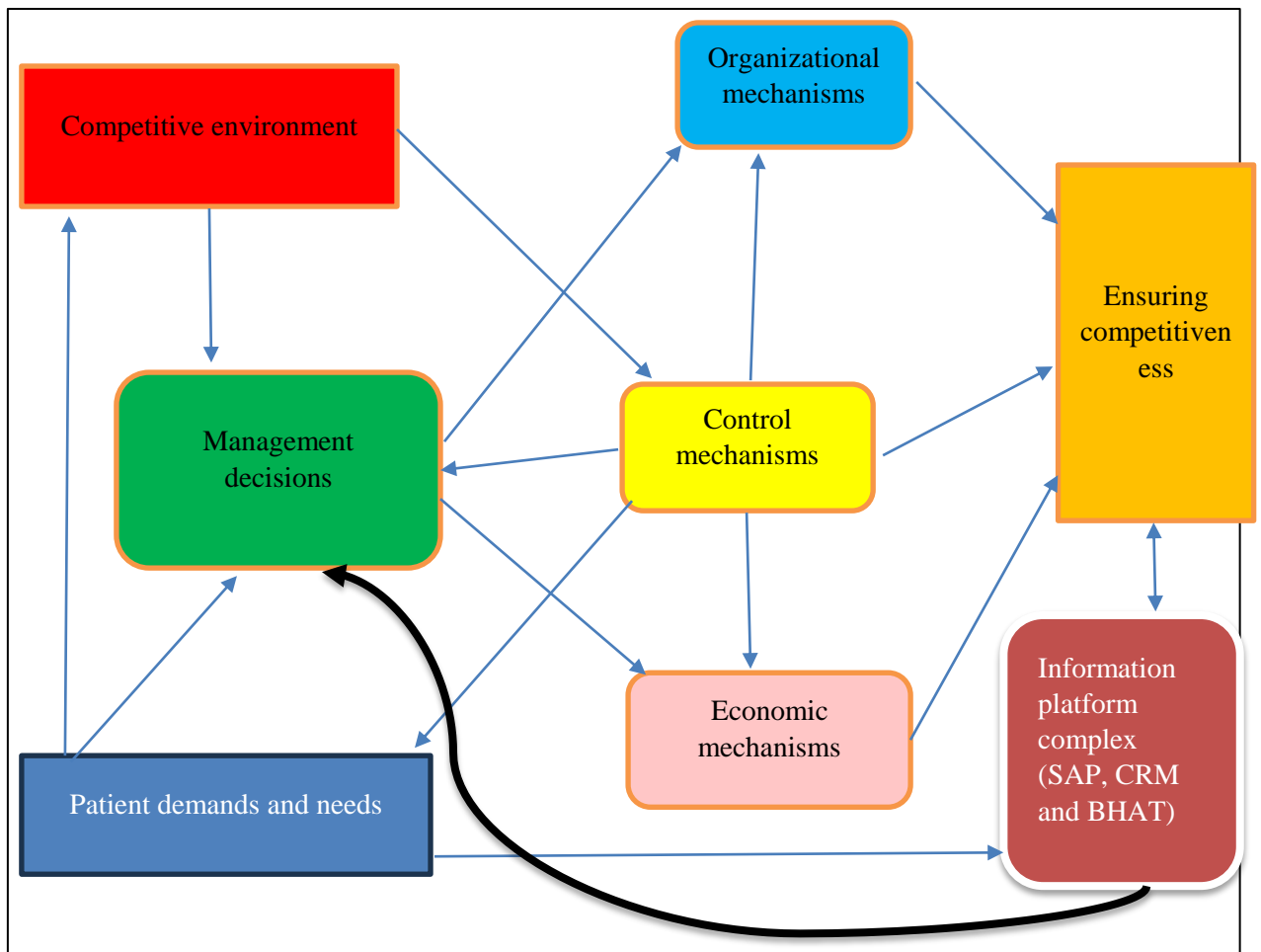
1. An information base is necessary to identify and assess the impact characteristics of organizational and economic mechanisms. When developing an information base, it is advisable to create an integrated landscape system that combines modern accounting information systems such as SAP, CRM, 1C, and 1Uz.

2. The characteristics of competition in the medical services market significantly influence the modification and improvement of organizational and economic mechanisms. Therefore, we believe there is a need for a systematic study of not only the competitive environment but also the specific needs of patient-clients. In this regard, it is advisable not to limit oneself to the demands and opinions of consistently loyal patients, but to consider trends in the overall demands and needs of patients, as well as to utilize the capabilities of information platforms of existing regulatory organizations.

3. Implementing necessary changes based on the results of ensuring competitiveness, the functional impact of mechanisms, and the characteristics of the external environment (actions of competitors and consumers) is carried out directly through the decisions and management solutions of the clinic administration. In this case, we believe that if the management lacks sufficient competence, it would be beneficial to temporarily engage experienced specialists on an outsourcing basis. It is worth noting that the absence of professional managers in most currently operating medical clinics in the region, with healthcare facilities being managed by doctors, in our opinion, remains a serious drawback in maintaining a sustainable competitive policy.

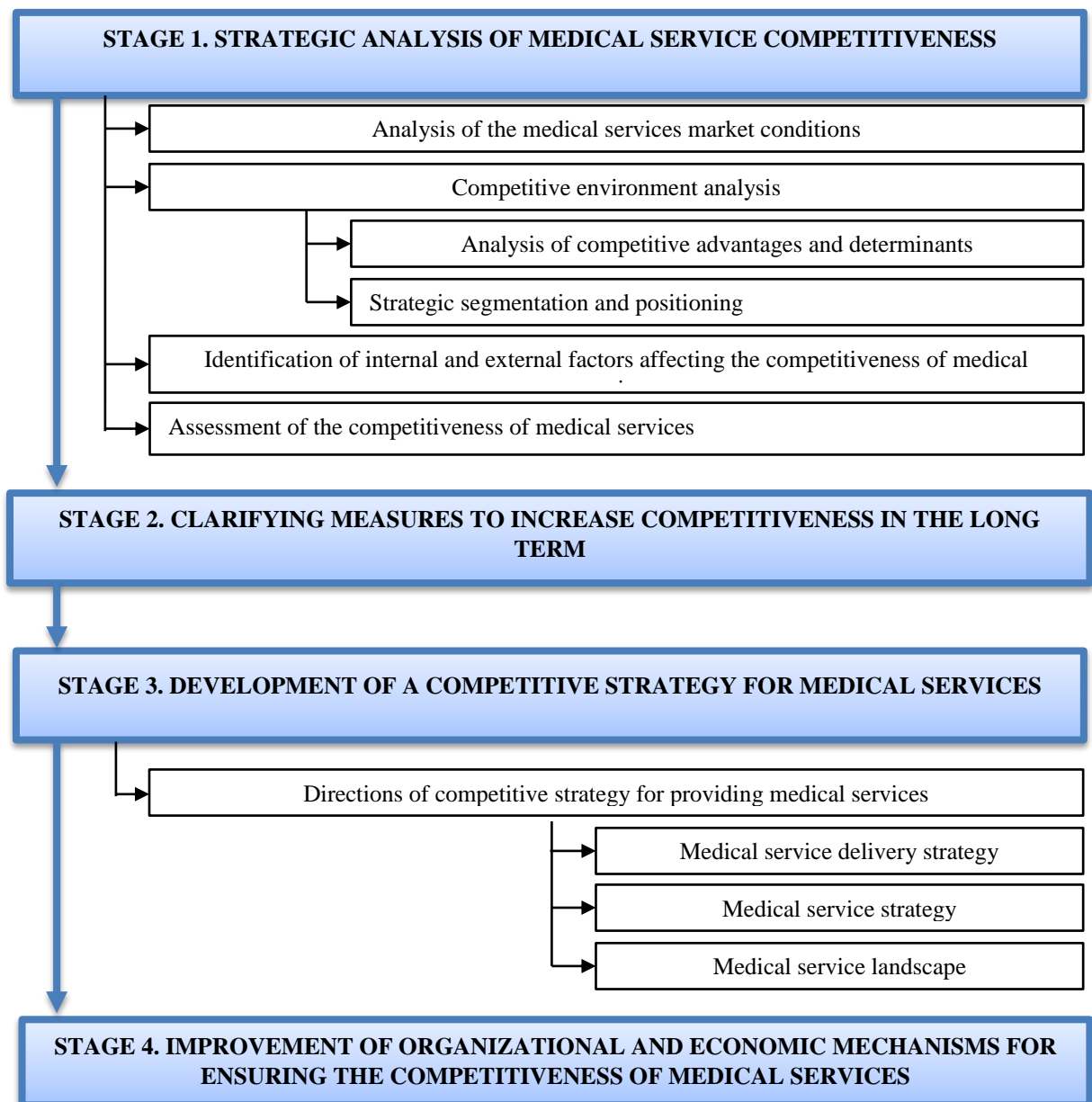
Based on our research, the process of ensuring competitiveness through mechanisms is carried out according to the relationships shown in the figure below.

Figure 1. The process of ensuring competitiveness based on mechanisms in medical clinics



As shown in the diagram, control mechanisms have the greatest impact. The process is initially influenced by the competitive environment and patient demands and needs, while the final outcome is linked back to management decisions through the information complex. Overall, the process of ensuring competitiveness is repeated based on three cyclic complexes. The responsibility for improving mechanisms lies directly with the enterprise management, and this strategic task is carried out through the formation of a competitive strategy.

Figure 2. Stages of improving mechanisms for ensuring competitiveness in medical clinics



In the initial stage, strategic decisions and conclusions are drawn based on the analysis of the medical services market conditions, the state of the competitive environment within it, analysis of competitive advantages and elements in the services market, segmentation and positioning, factor analysis, and assessment of the competitiveness of medical services. In the subsequent stage, measures to improve competitiveness are identified, the directions of the competitive strategy are defined, and finally, based on the medical service strategy, service strategy, and characteristics of the service landscape, work is carried out to develop new mechanisms and improve existing ones.

Conclusion. According to the research results, ensuring the competitiveness of small businesses providing medical services is implemented based on organizational and economic mechanisms. The main conclusions are as follows:

- In forming and enhancing competitiveness, it is important to create an information base, for which it is advisable to integrate modern systems such as SAP, CRM, 1C, and 1Uz. This will enable clinics to analyze data in real-time.

- It is necessary to systematically study the competition in the medical market and patient needs (including changing trends). It is recommended to utilize digital platforms as well, not limiting efforts to loyal customers only.

Competitiveness outcomes are managed through leadership decisions. The absence of professional managers in most clinics (often managed by doctors) is considered a serious shortcoming, therefore it would be beneficial to attract experienced specialists through outsourcing.

The processes have a cyclical nature: control mechanisms have the main impact, the competitive environment and patient demands serve as the starting point, while the information complex provides the final connection.

The improvement stages are two-tiered, namely, the first - market and competition analysis (segmentation, positioning, factor assessment) and the second - identifying measures, determining strategy, and developing new mechanisms. This approach allows clinics to ensure a sustainable competitive advantage, but in practice, it requires enhancing management competency and strengthening digitalization. We believe that the research results can contribute to the development of small businesses in the medical services market of Uzbekistan.

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