
Good managerial and operational practices as a source of competitive advantage for a transport enterprise in the logistics services market

Dobre praktyki zarządcze i operacyjne jako źródło przewagi konkurencyjnej przedsiębiorstwa transportowego na rynku usług logistycznych

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Abstract:

Research objectives and hypothesis/research questions

The aim of this article is to identify and systematise good managerial and operational practices applied in transport enterprises, as well as to assess their significance for building competitive advantage in the logistics services market. Referring to this aim, the author formulates the following research question: what good managerial and operational practices support the development of competitive advantage in a transport enterprise? The article assumes that the competitive advantage of a transport enterprise emerges primarily when managerial and operational practices form a coherent system of activities combining cost efficiency with service quality and adaptive capability.

Research methods

The article applies a qualitative analysis of secondary sources. The adopted research procedure combines a purposive review of academic literature with content analysis of industry reports and descriptions of business practices available online.

Main results

The analysis conducted makes it possible to assess the adopted hypothesis positively. The competitive advantage of a transport enterprise emerges primarily when good managerial and operational practices form a coherent system of activities that combines cost efficiency, service quality, reliability, flexibility

and adaptive capability. The answer to the research question indicates that practices of digitalisation and telematics, route optimisation, fleet management, service quality management, work with drivers, customer service, regulatory compliance and green logistics are of particular importance. With reference to the aim of the article, it can be stated that good practices constitute a bridge between the enterprise's resources and competitive advantage. Resources themselves, such as a fleet, information systems or a customer base, do not guarantee advantage. Only their skilful use in repeatable organisational practices makes it possible to achieve better punctuality, higher reliability, lower costs, fewer disruptions and greater customer satisfaction. In a transport enterprise, advantage is therefore not the result of a single action but the effect of systematic process improvement. The conclusions of the analysis also indicate that price remains an important but insufficient criterion of competition. In the long term, a transport enterprise builds its market position through trust, quality, safety, reliable information, flexibility and the ability to solve problems.

Implications for theory and practice

The analysis of sources makes it possible to distinguish several groups of good practices that strengthen the competitive advantage of transport enterprises.

Keywords:

competitive advantage, good managerial practices, operational management, transport enterprise, logistics services

Abstrakt:

Cel badań i hipotezy/pytania badawcze

Celem artykułu jest identyfikacja i usystematyzowanie dobrych praktyk zarządczych i operacyjnych stosowanych w przedsiębiorstwach transportowych oraz ocena ich znaczenia dla budowania przewagi konkurencyjnej na rynku usług logistycznych. Odnosząc się do celu, autor postawił pytanie badawcze: jakie dobre praktyki zarządcze i operacyjne sprzyjają budowaniu przewagi konkurencyjnej przedsiębiorstwa transportowego? Ponadto przyjął hipotezę, zgodnie z którą przewaga konkurencyjna przedsiębiorstwa transportowego powstaje przede wszystkim wówczas, gdy praktyki zarządcze i operacyjne tworzą spójny system działań łączący efektywność kosztową z jakością usług i zdolnością adaptacji.

Metody badawcze

W artykule zastosowano jakościową analizę źródeł zastanych. Przyjęta procedura badawcza łączy celowy przegląd literatury naukowej z analizą treści raportów branżowych oraz opisów praktyk gospodarczych dostępnych w zasobach internetowych. Takie podejście jest uzasadnione charakterem problemu badawczego, który dotyczy identyfikacji i usystematyzowania praktyk stosowanych w przedsiębiorstwach transportowych, a nie pomiaru statystycznej zależności między zmiennymi.

Główne wyniki

Przeprowadzona analiza pozwala pozytywnie odnieść się do przyjętej hipotezy. Przewaga konkurencyjna przedsiębiorstwa transportowego powstaje przede wszystkim wtedy, gdy dobre praktyki zarządcze i operacyjne tworzą spójny system działań łączący efektywność kosztową, jakość usług, niezawodność, elastyczność i zdolność adaptacji. Odpowiedź na pytanie badawcze wskazuje, że szczególne znaczenie mają praktyki cyfryzacji i telematki, optymalizacji tras, zarządzania flotą, zarządzania jakością usług, pracy z kierowcami, obsługi klienta, zgodności regulacyjnej i zielonej logistyki. W odniesieniu do celu artykułu można stwierdzić, że dobre praktyki stanowią pomost między zasobami przedsiębiorstwa a przewagą konkurencyjną. Same zasoby, takie jak flota, systemy informatyczne albo baza klientów, nie gwarantują przewagi. Dopiero ich umiejętne wykorzystanie w powtarzalnych praktykach organizacyjnych pozwala uzyskać lepszą terminowość, wyższą niezawodność, niższe koszty, mniejszą liczbę zakłóceń i większą satysfakcję klientów. W przedsiębiorstwie transportowym przewaga nie jest więc rezultatem jednorazowego działania, lecz efektem systematycznego doskonalenia procesów. Poza tym wnioski z analizy wskazują, że cena pozostaje ważnym, ale niewystarczającym kryterium konkurencji. W długim okresie przedsiębiorstwo transportowe buduje pozycję rynkową przez zaufanie, jakość, bezpieczeństwo, wiarygodną informację, elastyczność i zdolność do rozwiązywania problemów. Oznacza to, że strategia oparta wyłącznie na obniżaniu stawek może być ryzykowna, jeżeli nie towarzyszą jej inwestycje w kompetencje, technologię, relacje z klientami i jakość operacyjną.

Implikacje dla teorii i praktyki

Analiza źródeł pozwala wyróżnić kilka grup dobrych praktyk, które wzmacniają przewagę konkurencyjną przedsiębiorstw transportowych.

Słowa kluczowe:

przewaga konkurencyjna, dobre praktyki zarządcze, zarządzanie operacyjne, przedsiębiorstwo transportowe, usługi logistyczne

Introduction

The market for logistics and transport services is one of the areas of the economy that is particularly sensitive to changes in the environment, while competition within it is especially complex. Transport enterprises operate simultaneously under cost, quality, regulatory, technological and demand pressures, and their performance depends both on the efficiency of resource management and on the ability to coordinate operational processes on an ongoing basis and adapt to prevailing conditions. A contemporary carrier is a participant in a logistics system in which the customer expects not only a competitive price but also punctuality, predictability, safety, continuity of service, reliable information about service execution and the ability to respond flexibly to changes in orders and disruptions. For this reason, the competitive advantage of a transport enterprise is increasingly interpreted as the result of combining operational efficiency, service quality, specific human and organisational competences, technology and customer relationships, while its market performance is the consequence of both strategic decisions and everyday operational activities, such as route planning, fleet management, organisation of drivers' work, control of fuel consumption, communication with customers and the handling of events that disrupt the course of transport.

Addressing the issue of good managerial and operational practices is justified by changes taking place in the logistics services market. Rising energy costs, demand volatility, stricter regulations in road transport, driver shortages and pressure to reduce emissions mean that transport enterprises must seek sources of advantage in process efficiency, service quality and adaptive capability. The literature indicates that sustainable advantage results not so much from a single resource as from difficult-to-imitate configurations of resources, competences and organisational routines (Barney, 1991; Peteraf, 1993; Teece, Pisano, Shuen, 1997). In relation to logistics, service, integrative and information capabilities, which influence the value perceived by the customer, are also important (Mentzer, Flint, Hult, 2001; Wong, Karia, 2010).

The aim of this article is to identify and systematise good managerial and operational practices applied in transport enterprises and to assess their significance for building competitive advantage in the logistics services market. The main research question was also formulated, namely: what good managerial and operational practices contribute to building the competitive advantage of a transport enterprise in the logistics services market? Furthermore, the following hypothesis

was adopted: the competitive advantage of a transport enterprise emerges primarily when managerial and operational practices form a coherent system of activities that combines cost efficiency, service quality, reliability, flexibility and the ability to use data.

The article is theoretical and empirical in nature. The first part presents the essence, sources and manifestations of competitive advantage and then relates them to the specificity of a transport enterprise. The next part describes the research methodology, presents the results of a qualitative analysis of secondary sources and discusses a catalogue of good managerial and operational practices. The final parts contain a discussion of the findings in the light of the literature, conclusions, research limitations and proposed directions for further analysis.

1. Literature review

1.1. The essence, sources and manifestations of competitive advantage

Competitive advantage is one of the fundamental categories of management studies because it helps explain why some enterprises achieve better results than others despite operating under similar market conditions. It is therefore not the result of a one-off sales success, but a relatively durable position of an organisation that becomes visible in comparison with its rivals. The literature emphasises that competitive advantage is relational, because it exists only when it can be referred to other market actors, and dynamic, because its sources and manifestations change together with technology, sector structure, customer preferences and competitors' actions (Hunt, Morgan, 1995; Porter, 1985). The classical understanding of competitive advantage, consistent with the positional school of strategic thought, links it to the ability to achieve above-average performance through a favourable position of the enterprise within the sector and the ability to implement a cost leadership, differentiation or focus strategy (Porter, 1985). This approach therefore stresses such alignment of the enterprise with the structure of the sector, the nature of competition and customer needs that enables it to achieve superiority over market rivals through lower costs or through a unique value proposition for which the customer is willing to pay more. However, advantage understood in this way is not a simple effect of applying a lower price or offering a higher-quality product. Contemporary research clearly emphasises the importance of resources, competences, routines, relationships and adaptive capabilities of organisations in building sustainable price or quality advantages (Barney, 1991; Peteraf, 1993; Teece, Pisano, Shuen, 1997).

Thus, since the 1990s, the resource-based view has gained dominant importance in the theory of strategic management. It seeks the sources of enterprise success within the firm, that is, in the broadly understood resources at its disposal.

In general terms, it is based on two assumptions that reveal the essence of achieving competitive advantage, namely that enterprises within a sector differ from one another in terms of the resources they possess and, secondly, that because of the limited mobility of these resources, such differences may be long lasting. Peteraf emphasises that competitive advantage requires resource heterogeneity and limited mobility of resources between enterprises (Peteraf, 1993). In this view, advantage is rooted in the organisation, and the sources of sustainable competitive advantage should be sought in resources that are strategically valuable, rare, difficult to imitate and properly developed and used within the organisation (Barney, 1991). A special role in this respect is played by intangible resources, such as knowledge, reputation, customer relationships, information systems, employee experience and the ability to coordinate processes.

The above observations make it possible to distinguish two categories of competitive advantage: resource-based advantage and market-based advantage. The fundamental difference between them lies in the fact that they are realised at different moments of business activity and achieved in different areas. The former occurs in the sphere of the enterprise's resources, whereas the latter occurs in its target market. Moreover, these advantages remain in a mutual, two-way relationship in which an achieved resource-based advantage determines the acquisition of market-based advantage and, conversely, market-based advantage results from resource-based advantage. Therefore, in an enterprise characterised by relatively high and durable competitiveness, both should occur jointly (Glabiszewski, 2005). This means that the competitive advantage of an enterprise consists simultaneously of the partial advantages it achieves, namely resource-based and market-based advantages. This concept thus integrates the assumptions of the positional and resource-based schools of management.

The resource-based view is complemented by the concept of dynamic capabilities. Teece, Pisano and Shuen (1997) indicate that in a changing environment, the mere possession of resources as sources of competitive advantage is not sufficient if the enterprise is unable to reconfigure, integrate and renew them. Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) further specify that dynamic capabilities may take the form of specific organisational processes, such as the development of new services, strategic decision-making, learning, alliance formation and resource reconfiguration. This perspective is particularly important for transport enterprises because their advantage depends not only on owning vehicles and related infrastructure, but also on the ability to adapt rapidly to changing conditions of service provision, including fluctuations in fuel costs, driver availability, regulatory changes, customer expectations and technological development. Advantage therefore results from the ability to learn, react quickly and transform operational data into managerial decisions, for example from the ability to rapidly adjust routes, types of services, technologies, service procedures and cooperation with customers.

Competitive advantage manifests itself in various dimensions. The most obvious manifestation consists of economic results, such as profitability, revenue growth, a stable portfolio of contracts, market share, the ability to acquire new customers, brand recognition and the ability to maintain margins despite competitive pressure. In the resource-based view, however, it is emphasised that financial performance is rather the effect than the essence of advantage itself. The sources of advantage are, of course, resources and dynamic capabilities, whereas its manifestation is the way in which the market responds to the enterprise's offering (Barney, 1991; Newbert, 2007). This means that the analysis of advantage should include both performance measures and quantitative and qualitative symptoms of differentiation through product, price, distribution and promotion. In logistics, an important measure of advantage is service quality, understood as the conformity of service performance with customer expectations, reliability, information availability, flexibility and the ability to solve problems (Mentzer, Flint, Hult, 2001; Stank, Goldsby, Vickery et al., 2003).

In contemporary transport enterprises, competitive advantage cannot be limited solely to price. Price is important because transport services are often compared by customers in terms of transport cost. However, excessive focus on price may lead to margin erosion, limitations on investment in the fleet, deterioration of drivers' working conditions and weakening of service quality. More durable advantage requires combining cost efficiency with operational reliability, the ability to meet deadlines, safety, transparent communication and innovation. In this sense, good managerial and operational practices become a mechanism for transforming resources into customer value.

1.2. The specificity of a transport enterprise as an entity competing in the services market

A transport enterprise operates in a sector in which the service is strongly dependent on infrastructure, time, resource availability and operational risk. Unlike many intangible services, transport requires maintaining a fleet, employing or contracting drivers, ensuring regulatory compliance, monitoring fuel costs and responding to external disruptions. This means that competitiveness is created simultaneously at the economic, technical, organisational and relational levels.

One of the most important features of the sector is its high sensitivity to fuel costs. Energy costs directly influence the unit cost of transport, and their volatility makes it difficult to calculate rates and plan contract profitability. The literature on road freight transport costs indicates that fuel costs, drivers' wages, vehicle depreciation, road charges, insurance and fleet maintenance costs form a cost structure in which planning errors quickly translate into deteriorated performance (Izadi, Nabipour, Titidezh, 2020). Consequently, good practices in eco-driving, fuel consumption monitoring and route optimisation have both cost-related and environmental dimensions.

A second characteristic feature is the strong regulatory nature of the market. Drivers' working time, posting rules, safety requirements, environmental standards and documentation obligations create the framework within which the enterprise must organise its activities. Regulations restrict managerial discretion, but at the same time they may become a source of advantage for entities that are able to manage compliance and risk efficiently. Regulatory compliance is therefore not merely an administrative cost, but also an element of credibility in relations with customers and business partners.

The third factor is driver availability. Driver shortages limit transport capacity, increase wage pressure and make it more difficult to maintain stable service quality. Research on the impact of labour shortages on logistics indicates that shortages of human resources may worsen punctuality, increase costs and limit the scale of operations (Wang, Wood, Wang, 2022). In a transport enterprise, personnel management is therefore not reduced to an administrative function, but constitutes a condition for delivering the value promised to the customer.

The fourth element of the sector's specificity is the importance of the technical condition of the fleet. Vehicles create the basic capacity to provide the service, and their reliability affects safety, punctuality, service costs and the image of the enterprise. Practices of preventive fleet maintenance, inspection planning, monitoring of vehicle parameters and fleet renewal are directly linked to the level of operational risk. The literature emphasises that the operational capabilities of logistics operators are an important source of competitive position because they enable stable service provision and rapid responses to change (Wong, Karia, 2010).

The fifth distinguishing feature is the need for effective planning of routes and schedules. A transport enterprise competes through its ability to reach the right place at the right time while maintaining rational costs and complying with legal constraints. Route optimisation makes it possible to reduce empty runs, travel time, fuel consumption and emissions, but it requires appropriate data and analytical competences (Pečený, Meško, Kampf et al., 2020; Álvarez, Serrano-Hernandez, Lerga et al., 2024). This is precisely why digitalisation and telematics are becoming one of the main instruments of competition in road transport.

2. Research methodology

The article applies a qualitative analysis of secondary sources. The adopted research procedure combines a purposive review of academic literature with content analysis of industry reports and descriptions of business practices available online. Such an approach is justified by the nature of the research problem, which concerns the identification and systematisation of practices used in transport enterprises rather than the measurement of statistical relationships between variables.

The theoretical perspective is formed by three strands. The first is the resource-based view, which allows good practices to be interpreted as a way of using material and intangible resources (Barney, 1991; Peteraf, 1993). The second is the concept of dynamic capabilities, according to which competitive advantage depends on the enterprise's ability to adapt and reconfigure resources in a changing environment (Teece, Pisano, Shuen, 1997). The third is the logistics service quality perspective, which points to the importance of reliability, punctuality, information, flexibility and customer relationships (Mentzer, Flint, Hult, 2001; Fernandes, Moori, Filho, 2018).

The research material was selected purposively. The analysis included articles on competitive advantage, logistics capabilities, logistics service quality, telematics, intelligent transport systems, route optimisation, green logistics and road transport management. In addition, reports and descriptions of practices published by industry organisations and enterprises operating in the logistics services market were used, including DHL, DSV, Girtaka, IRU, Transporeon and Transport Intelligence.

The analytical procedure comprised four stages. In the first stage, the practices most frequently recurring in the literature and industry materials were identified. In the second stage, they were assigned to areas of transport management and operations. In the third stage, their potential significance for competitive advantage was assessed by referring to the categories of cost, quality, reliability, flexibility, customer relationships, innovation and regulatory compliance. In the fourth stage, the findings were synthesised in the form of a catalogue of good practices and discussed in the light of the literature.

A limitation of the adopted methodology is its dependence on the availability of secondary sources. Corporate materials may have a promotional character, and for this reason they were interpreted cautiously and confronted with academic literature. The study does not include such methods as a survey or interviews with transport managers, but it provides a basis for further empirical verification of the impact of the identified practices on competitiveness measures.

3. Results: Good managerial and operational practices of transport enterprises

The analysis of sources makes it possible to distinguish several groups of good practices that strengthen the competitive advantage of transport enterprises. They are both managerial and operational in nature. Managerial practices concern the design of the enterprise's operating system, strategic decision-making, and the management of resources, relationships and risk. Operational practices refer to the everyday execution of transport services, that is, route planning, vehicle dispatching, transport monitoring, cost control and customer service. A summary of the identified good managerial and operational practices of transport enterprises is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Catalogue of good managerial and operational practices of a transport enterprise

Area of practices	Examples of activities	Significance for competitive advantage
Digitalisation and telematics	TMS, GPS, electronic document flow, driving style analysis	Better process control, faster response to disruptions, transparency for the customer
Route optimisation	Route planning, reduction of empty runs, load consolidation	Lower costs, greater punctuality, emission reduction
Service quality management	Measurement of punctuality, complaint handling, customer information	Higher customer satisfaction, greater loyalty, reputation
Driver management	Training, eco-driving, working time planning, motivation	Safety, stability of transport capacity, reduction of turnover
Fleet management	Preventive maintenance, technical monitoring, vehicle replacement	Lower risk of breakdowns, better reliability, lower service costs
Operational flexibility	Dynamic route redesign, reconfiguration of transport schedules, use of reserve transport capacity, provision of replacement vehicles, adjustment of service to changing customer requirements	Increased adaptive capability of the enterprise, mitigation of disruptions, improved service continuity, growth in perceived reliability and customer value
Compliance and risk	Documentation control, safety procedures, monitoring of regulations	Credibility towards customers, reduction of sanctions and operational risk
Green logistics	Eco-driving, reduction of empty runs, emissions reporting	Cost efficiency, image, compliance with ESG expectations

Source: own elaboration based on the analysed literature and industry sources

The first group consists of digitalisation practices and the use of telematics. TMS systems, GPS monitoring, electronic document flow, driving style analysis and data integration with customers reduce information asymmetry and increase the transparency of the transport process. Studies indicate that telematics supports operational control, reduces fuel consumption, improves safety and enables more precise planning (Miler, Kisielewski, Brzozowska et al., 2020; Osińska, Zalewski, Świdorski, 2020). Practical examples, such as the use of telematics solutions in enterprises operating in road transport, show that operational data can be used to improve driver behaviour and fleet efficiency (Teletrac Navman, 2024).

The second group consists of practices related to route optimisation and fleet utilisation. They include order planning with consideration of drivers' working time, vehicle availability, time windows, traffic intensity, fuel costs and the possibility of combining loads. Optimisation is not solely technical in nature because it requires organisational decisions concerning priorities, the handling of exceptions and communication with the customer. The literature indicates that optimisation

of transport processes improves cost efficiency and reliability and, at the same time, may reduce negative environmental impact (Pečený, Meško, Kampf et al., 2020; Álvarez, Serrano-Hernandez, Lerga et al., 2024).

The third area concerns the management of logistics service quality. Good practices include customer service standards, measurement of punctuality, complaint monitoring, ongoing information about shipment status, rapid response to disruptions and the development of long-term relationships. The concept of logistics service quality shows that customers assess not only the physical movement of cargo, but also reliability, information availability and the way in which problems are solved (Mentzer, Flint, Hult, 2001). Studies on logistics service quality confirm its importance for customer satisfaction and intentions to continue cooperation (Fernandes, Moori, Filho, 2018; Gaudenzi, Confente, Russo, 2020).

The fourth group consists of practices related to managing drivers and dispatchers. These include training in safe and economical driving, working time planning, attention to work ergonomics, communication with drivers, incentive systems and reduction of turnover. In conditions of driver shortages, human resources become a strategic resource because without a stable workforce an enterprise cannot maintain transport capacity or service quality. IRU industry reports indicate that driver shortages remain one of the key constraints on the development of road transport (IRU, 2024).

The fifth group consists of practices related to fleet management and technical maintenance. Regular inspections, predictive maintenance, monitoring of technical parameters, vehicle replacement and equipment standardisation reduce the risk of breakdowns and delays. For the customer, this is not a visible part of the service, but it directly affects its outcome. In the resource-based view, the fleet is not a source of advantage in itself if competitors can acquire similar vehicles. The source of advantage becomes the way in which the fleet is managed, the linking of technical data with transport planning and the ability to prevent disruptions.

The sixth area concerns operational flexibility. A transport enterprise must respond to changes in order volumes, customer delays, breakdowns, road restrictions and demand volatility. Flexibility means the ability to maintain service continuity under conditions of disruption, demand variability and individual customer requirements, including the ability to rapidly redesign a route, provide another vehicle, change the schedule or offer the customer an alternative solution. In the literature, logistics capabilities, including flexibility and integration, are treated as the basis for the sustainable competitive advantage of logistics operators (Sandberg, Abrahamsson, 2011; Wong, Karia, 2010).

The seventh group consists of practices related to regulatory compliance and risk management. They include monitoring legal changes, control of transport documentation, management of drivers' working time, safety procedures and

internal audits. Compliance with regulations may be perceived as a cost, but for institutional customers it is a condition of trust and risk reduction in the supply chain. An enterprise that efficiently manages compliance can build a reputation as a professional and reliable partner.

The eighth area comprises environmental practices and green logistics. They include eco-driving, reduction of empty runs, use of low-emission vehicles, planning of load consolidation, emissions reporting and cooperation with customers in reducing the carbon footprint. Green logistics increasingly combines the cost dimension with contractors' expectations and regulatory pressure. The literature indicates that environmental practices may improve operational efficiency when supported by management commitment and systemic management (Dekker, Bloemhof, Mallidis, 2012; Kanyepe, Gumbo, Nel, 2023).

4. Discussion

The results of the analysis confirm that good managerial and operational practices of transport enterprises should be interpreted as an integrated system rather than a set of separate tools. In relation to the resource-based view, this means that the source of advantage is not individual resources, such as vehicles, an information system or a customer base, but their configuration and the way they are used in processes. Advantage is particularly difficult to imitate when practices are linked to organisational experience, routines, a quality culture, the competences of drivers and dispatchers and customer relationships (Barney, 1991; Peteraf, 1993).

An important finding is also the confirmation of the significance of dynamic capabilities. Digitalisation and telematics do not create advantage automatically. Their value appears only when the enterprise is able to use data to change plans, reduce disruptions, improve driving style, anticipate risk and communicate with the customer. From this point of view, a TMS system or GPS monitoring are tools, whereas advantage is created by the capability to interpret data and translate it into decisions (Teece, Pisano, Shuen, 1997; Miler, Kisielewski, Brzozowska et al., 2020).

The findings also fit into the research stream on logistics service quality. The customer of a transport enterprise expects not only the carriage of cargo, but also predictability, information and efficient problem solving. Therefore, punctuality, reliability and communication become elements of market value that make it possible to distinguish a given enterprise from competitors offering similar rates. Convergent conclusions are found in the studies by Mentzer, Flint and Hult and in later analyses of the impact of logistics service quality on customer satisfaction (Mentzer, Flint, Hult, 2001; Fernandes, Moori, Filho, 2018).

The discussion of the findings also points to a tension between cost efficiency and customer value. Road transport is a sector characterised by strong price pressure, which is why enterprises must control fuel, labour, fleet maintenance and road charge costs. At the same time, sustainable advantage cannot be based solely on price reduction. Excessive cost reduction may worsen quality, safety, punctuality and the ability to invest in technology. Good practices should therefore combine cost efficiency with service quality rather than treat these dimensions as opposites.

The role of employees deserves particular attention. Driver shortages and the growing complexity of operations mean that personnel management is one of the conditions of competitiveness. Drivers' competences affect fuel consumption, safety, customer relations and punctuality, while dispatchers' competences determine the ability to optimise and respond to disruptions. In this sense, the human factor remains crucial even under conditions of progressing automation and digitalisation.

The analysis further suggests that the greening of transport is becoming an increasingly important element of competitiveness. It is not only a response to regulatory pressure, but also a way to reduce costs, build reputation and meet the expectations of customers who report emissions in their supply chains. Environmental practices may therefore strengthen competitive advantage if they are linked to route planning, fleet utilisation, eco-driving and performance reporting (Dekker, Bloemhof, Mallidis, 2012; Kanyepe, Gumbo, Nel, 2023).

5. Conclusions

The analysis conducted makes it possible to assess the adopted hypothesis positively. The competitive advantage of a transport enterprise emerges primarily when good managerial and operational practices form a coherent system of activities that combines cost efficiency, service quality, reliability, flexibility and adaptive capability. The answer to the research question indicates that practices of digitalisation and telematics, route optimisation, fleet management, service quality management, work with drivers, customer service, regulatory compliance and green logistics are of particular importance.

With reference to the aim of the article, it can be stated that good practices constitute a bridge between the enterprise's resources and competitive advantage. Resources themselves, such as a fleet, information systems or a customer base, do not guarantee advantage. Only their skilful use in repeatable organisational practices makes it possible to achieve better punctuality, higher reliability, lower costs, fewer disruptions and greater customer satisfaction. In a transport enterprise, advantage is therefore not the result of a single action but the effect of systematic process improvement.

The conclusions of the analysis also indicate that price remains an important but insufficient criterion of competition. In the long term, a transport enterprise builds its market position through trust, quality, safety, reliable information, flexibility and the ability to solve problems. This means that a strategy based solely on lowering rates may be risky if it is not accompanied by investments in competences, technology, customer relationships and operational quality.

The study has several limitations. First, it is based on an analysis of secondary sources and therefore does not allow quantitative measurement of the impact of individual practices on enterprise performance. Second, some of the practical materials come from corporate and industry sources that may emphasise the positive aspects of activities. Third, the analysis is synthetic in nature and does not differentiate enterprises in detail according to size, market segment, type of cargo or geographical scope.

Directions for further research should include empirical verification of the impact of selected practices on competitiveness measures, such as delivery punctuality, fleet utilisation, fuel consumption, number of complaints, customer retention and contract profitability. It would also be worthwhile to conduct comparative studies covering small, medium-sized and large transport enterprises, as well as analyses from the perspective of logistics service customers. Another interesting direction would be to examine which practices are universal and which depend on the specificity of the market, type of transport and level of enterprise digitalisation.

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