

IMPACT OF MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS ON THE COMPETITIVENESS OF AGRIBUSINESS IN UKRAINE

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Abstract

This study explores the impact of marketing communications on the competitiveness of agribusinesses in Ukraine, focusing on two key companies: MHP SE and Agroliga Group. It examines how strategies like branding, customer loyalty programs, and digital marketing influence financial performance and market competitiveness. Using secondary data from 2018 to 2023, including company reports and industry publications, the research employs comparative analysis, descriptive statistics, and correlation analysis to evaluate the relationship between marketing investments and key performance indicators (KPIs), such as revenue growth, profit margins, and export growth. The findings reveal a positive correlation between higher marketing communication investments and competitiveness. MHP SE demonstrates superior results through its integrated digital marketing strategy, outperforming Agroliga Group's more traditional branding approach. The study underscores the significance of brand perception, customer loyalty, and digital engagement in enhancing market position and competitiveness.

Keywords: *Marketing Communications, Competitiveness, Agribusiness, Brand Perception, Customer Loyalty, Digital Marketing.*

JEL Codes: *M31, Q13, L66, D22, F14, O13.*

Introduction

Economy of Ukraine is built on its agriculture; with agribusinesses a central part of the domestic or international markets (Gagalyuk et al., 2022). The agribusiness sector in Ukraine comprises large multinational companies like MHP SE and a range of small local players, like Agroliga Group. They play an important role in providing Ukraine with food security and in contributing to the country's global export capacity (Mamonova, 2023). However, firms in these industries have increasingly become competitive not only because of the product endowments they possess, but also due to their marketing strategies, brand positioning and their customer loyalty (Prokopenko et al., 2023). The marketing communications on the competitiveness of agribusiness in the country of Ukraine is the focus of many recent studies.

The market strategies of the firms are required to be optimized by technologies such as E-learning and digitalization (Iskakova, 2024). Agribusiness relies heavily on marketing communication to get an edge over the myriad

choices in the market, to form strong relationships with customers, and to grow market share. Because of this global competition, which is incredible in intensity, and is further accelerated by the advance of digital media, agribusinesses are forced to adapt and be able to integrate a firm strategy of effective marketing communication to enable it to increase and protect its competitiveness. Also the natural resource utilization is more associated with agriculture is necessary to achieve inclusive growth (Fitrianasari et al., 2024). The role of innovation and efficient use of resources for economic sustainability can't be ignored (Yurko & Riabtsev, 2024). So, this study explores the relationship between marketing communications and the competitiveness of agribusinesses in the country of Ukraine by focusing on two representative companies: MHP SE and Agroliga Group. The selection of these two companies allows for a important comparison between a large integrated agribusiness (MHP SE) and a smaller regionally focused company (Agroliga Group). These both operate in the same national

context but their marketing communication strategies differ significantly in terms of budget allocation, tools and channels used, audience targeting and the integration of corporate social responsibility (CSR) into their branding efforts.

Recently, the Ukrainian agribusinesses have increasingly had to deal with a saturation of the market, an increased competitiveness of international firms, and a changing consumer preference (Dmytriieva & Sviatets, 2023). Although there is an increasing awareness that marketing contributes to improving business performance, there is a paucity of empirical research on how marketing communications specifically affect competitive ability of agribusiness firms in Ukraine. The gap in literature calls for detailed analysis of how marketing communication strategies influence key performance indicators of revenue, profit margins, and brand perception, and which factors contribute to a company's ability to compete such as locally or internationally.

The current study with a purpose to provide a structured comparative analysis, evaluates both companies across key following dimensions of marketing communication:

- Annual marketing budget and investment scale.
- Use of digital and traditional communication tools.
- Strategic focus on CSR and sustainability messaging.
- Target audience segmentation and geographic reach.
- Measurable outcomes like brand perception, revenue growth and international expansion.

The purpose of doing this is to ensure that the differences between both of them are not only described but analyzed using consistent and comparable metrics.

Consequently, the primary objectives of the current study are:

1. To examine the impact of marketing communications on the competitiveness of agribusiness firms in Ukraine.

Purpose of this is to investigate how marketing strategies like branding, customer loyalty and digital marketing contribute to the financial performance and competitive position of agribusinesses.

2. To conduct an organized comparison of the marketing communication strategies of MHP SE and Agroliga Group.

The purpose is to identify the specific differences in their marketing approaches. Those are investment intensity, communication channels, brand messaging, customer targeting and use of CSR and evaluating how these differences translate into variations in competitiveness, brand positioning and market outcomes.

The purpose is to analyze how the marketing investments and communications strategies of these two companies differ and how these differences relate to their market performance.

3. To assess the role of brand perception and customer loyalty in enhancing competitiveness.

This is intended to evaluate how effective marketing communications contribute to building brand reputation and customer trust, which ultimately influence market competitiveness.

4. To provide policy recommendations for agribusinesses and government stakeholders to enhance the effectiveness of marketing communications in improving competitiveness.

The indicators selected in current work are revenue growth, profit margins, and export share. They are standard metrics for evaluating competitiveness. Revenue growth reflects the firm's ability to attract new customers or increase demand through effective marketing. Profit margins indicate operational efficiency, often enhanced by better customer loyalty and brand differentiation, and the outcomes of strategic marketing communications. And the export share measures market expansion capabilities and international competitiveness. That is facilitated by branding and digital outreach.

This study also, on the basis of findings, provides actionable insights for companies to improve their marketing strategies and for policymakers to create conducive environments for growth in the agribusiness sector.

The study aims to uncover not only what makes each company's marketing strategy unique but also which elements are more effective under specific competitive conditions.

This provides practical benchmarks for firms of different scales seeking to improve their competitiveness through marketing communications.

This study focuses on two Ukrainian agribusiness companies: MHP SE and Agroliga Group. This study covers the time period of the last five years, from 2018 to 2023 when the companies have been continuously working on their marketing strategy. Specifically, the study examines secondary data such as company reports, financial statements, marketing publication, and other sources in the industry. The geographic orientation is of Ukraine and this information on the international competitiveness of these firms in the agribusiness sector.

This contribution to understanding the agribusiness as a sector, and the relationship between marketing communications and competitiveness within the agribusiness in particular in Ukraine, is its significance (Vovk et al., 2024). Yet marketing communications studies have mostly been concerned with consumer goods and services industries, and the impact of marketing communications on agribusinesses, particularly in Ukraine, remains poorly explored. Since Ukraine is one of the key agribusiness players in the world and takes on important roles in the marketing of agribusinesses, it is very crucial to understand how marketing communications affect the competitiveness of these businesses and help them survive in today's intensified market (Kuzyk, 2023; Buka et al., 2023; Sitnicki et al., 2024).

After introduction, this article is organized as follows: a literature review on marketing communications, competitiveness in agribusiness, and branding strategies; a research design detailing data collection and analysis methods; results and discussion on the impact of marketing communications on MHP SE and Agroliga Group's competitiveness; and a conclusion with policy recommendations, study limitations, and suggestions for future research.

Theoretical Framework or Literature Review

Extensive research has been done on the relationship between marketing communications and the competitiveness of the business in many industries. From the standpoint of agribusinesses marketing communications are an important part of serving as a means to increase brand

recognition, attract customers, and grow the sales of an agribusiness. This section reviews the extant literature about marketing communications with its implications for competitiveness of agribusinesses; with an additional focus on the challenges and opportunities unique to the agribusiness industry in Ukraine.

Marketing Communications in Agribusiness

Marketing communications are a diverse range of activities that aim at making known to your target audience the message of your brand (Eagle et al., 2020). In agribusiness marketing communications are important in building brand awareness, raising consumer product awareness and even providing a loyal customer base. Morokhova et al. (2023) classifies marketing communication strategies into major areas: The 5Ps consist of: advertising, direct marketing, public relations, sales promotions and digital marketing. Each of these elements has its effect on a firm's power to contend in the marketplace. Advertising will make a company more visible and attract new customers, while public relations will offer a recommendation of a company and help the audience build confidence about it.

Not only does marketing communications have to take place, so too must it communicate the value of agriculture products, which are often subject to supply, demand, and seasonal variation (Weiss et al., 2020). Moreover, agribusinesses are usually operating in competitive markets where branding and communication to get a competitive advantage is of utmost importance (Aghazadeh et al., 2022).

The Role of Marketing Communications in Competitiveness

Many studies have investigated the link between digital marketing communications and competitiveness (Devterov et al., 2024). Competitiveness of a firm is a firm's ability to outperform other firms in the market (Ali et al., 2022). This is where marketing communications work to keep this competitiveness alive and make it brand better by helping firms differentiate their products, build strong brand identities, and create an emotional pull with the customers. Tahir et al.

(2024) maintains that building a strong brand identity engages customers to be loyal to a brand, and also helps a company get a premium pricing in the marketplace.

Effective marketing communication in the agribusiness sector will increase market share and improve performance financially and for export potential. Agribusinesses can use marketing investments to change from one market condition to another, innovation of new products and expansion their customer base. Such as digital marketing strategy has proven positive in helping agribusinesses find new market entry and customer engagement in rural and remote areas (Gadanakis, 2024).

In addition, in agriculture, marketing communications are important as they help to build trust, which is much needed in that business, due to consumer concern regarding the origin and quality of food products (Wu et al., 2021). It is possible to improve the agribusiness' reputation and gain competitive advantages by communicating them through sustainability practices, traceability and product quality.

Marketing Communications in the Context of Ukraine's Agribusiness Sector

Ukraine has a large and important agribusiness sector; agricultural exports contribute a large share to GDP. Grain, sunflower oil and other agricultural products are major exports and the world's top producers for Ukraine, according to the World Bank (2020). Yet, given its large-scale production capacity, Ukraine's agribusinesses confront problems in the areas of competition, market volatility and modernization. Marketing communications infrastructure for the agribusiness sector, and SMEs in particular, is underdeveloped as a potential obstacle.

Recent studies also suggest that all larger agribusinesses in Ukraine, such as MHP SE, have spent a considerable amount on marketing initiating digital marketing and public relations, while it seems that the smaller companies still use traditional methods of marketing and it's hard for them to reach a broad audience (Kuzmenko et al., 2018). Broad structural differences between Ukraine's agribusiness sector are reflected in this disparate marketing communication strategy:

large enterprises prevail due to their greater production capacity and financial resources.

However, the importance of effective marketing communication in improving competitiveness of Ukrainian agribusinesses has been growing in spite of these challenges. This is what MHP SE, one of Ukraine's leading agribusiness companies, did for instance: use integrated marketing communications in order to strengthen you position in domestic and international markets (Semykina, 2020). Part of that includes strong branding, advertising and consumers interacting through digital channels. However, smaller plays such as Agroliga Group use digital marketing is shown to be less than using traditional media channels for example, print media and face to face selling to local customers (Skrynnik et al., 2021).

Impact of Marketing Communications on Competitiveness in Agribusiness

Agribusiness being one of them, digital marketing is crucial in the modern marketing communications (Buzaubayeva et al., 2023). Agribusiness has become a vital competitive tool of being able to engage their customers through digital channels, including social media, websites and online advertising. Digital marketing enables businesses to enhance the quality of their products and also deepen consumer engagement through personalized approaches and targeted communication strategies. This personalized interaction is crucial for building strong consumer trust and loyalty, fostering long-term relationships that ultimately strengthen brand reputation and product credibility in competitive markets (Potwora et al., 2023). Digital Marketing helps agribusinesses to connect with new audiences, boost customer engagement and raises awareness of your brand (Kuzyk, 2023). Besides, it provides for a quick response from firms to market changes and customer requirements.

Hermawati et al. (2021) found that firms in the agribusiness sector investing in digital marketing penetrated the market faster with a rate of faster market penetration and sustained higher levels of profitability. However, for instance, companies based in Ukraine, that were driven by social media marketing and online presentation, enjoyed higher visibility, particularly at the expense market. Its meaning shows us how

important the digital marketing communication is for the competitiveness of agribusiness in Ukraine.

Another essential marketing communication consists of branding. In a competitive market, a well-established brand can assist to differentiate it within a market thereby driving customer loyalty and long-term profitability. In the agribusiness sector, where product homogeneity can be high, branding provides firms an opportunity to distinguish themselves. The brands that send out message successfully about their commitments like sustainability, quality, and local origin are typically brands that generate maximum customer loyalty (Ishaq & Di Maria, 2020).

Gaps in Literature

Although research on how marketing communications help agribusinesses achieve competitiveness is well developed, the contents of this issue are quite few when it comes to comparative analysis of large and small agribusinesses in Ukrainian context. For the most part past studies have focused on individual firms or specific marketing tactics, neglecting to examine more general impacts of marketing communications on competitiveness across all company size categories. Furthermore, although digital marketing is identified as a major strategy, the application of the digital marketing here in small and medium sized agribusinesses in Ukraine is not sufficiently researched.

It is hoped that this review of the literature will highlight the significance of marketing communications to the improvement of the level of comparability of agribusinesses. Distinctive marketing strategy, especially in brand, digital marketing, and CSR, has a huge hand in the firm's differentiation, customer loyalty and financial performance. Whilst large agribusinesses such as MHP SE in Ukraine have used marketing communications in order to build their edge over competitive firms, smaller firms have difficulties in following suit, given resource limitations. These finding constitute a strong empirical base on which to base the empirical analysis conducted in this case study which analyzes how marketing

communications influence the competitiveness of the agribusinesses in Ukraine.

Methodology

Research Design

Using secondary data sources and comparative case study methodology, the impact of marketing communications on competitiveness of the Ukrainian agribusiness sector is analyzed. The analysis focuses on two agribusiness firms: MHP SE, a large company with heavy market utilization, and Agroliga Group, a small company with less marketer use. It helps the comparative design for assessing the economic advantage of these firms from available secondary data from public reports, industry analyses and financial databases, without visit to the stakeholders.

Data Collection

Financial performance indicators such as revenue, profitability, market share, and export volume were obtained from the published annual reports of MHP SE and Agroliga Group. The said data provides quantitative insights into the economic outcomes associated with varying marketing communication strategies. Also reports on marketing expenditures, brand development efforts, and CSR initiatives for both companies were gathered from company websites, CSR reports, and third-party industry evaluations. These reports outline approach of each firm in order to building brand presence and competitive positioning (MHP SE, 2018–2023; Agroliga Group, 2018–2023). Ukraine's Ministry of Agrarian Policy and Food and global market intelligence firms (e.g., Statista, Business Monitor International) provided insights into the competitive landscape of Ukraine's agribusiness sector, market trends, and growth drivers. These reports also helped benchmark company performance within the broader sector. Also, secondary sources, such as online review platforms, customer feedback reports, and social media analysis from industry research firms, were reviewed to assess brand awareness and customer engagement for both firms. These sources provide proxy indicators of customer loyalty and brand perception, especially for MHP SE (Ukrainian

Agribusiness Club, 2023; Bloomberg Terminal, 2023).

Furthermore, publications by Ukrainian government agencies and trade associations (e.g., Ukrainian Agribusiness Club, 2023) provided contextual information on sector-specific policies, export conditions, and competitive dynamics. This information helped situate the companies' performances within Ukraine's agribusiness regulatory framework. Export volume and market share data for MHP SE and Agroliga Group were derived from national trade statistics and market research databases such as (Ukraine's State Statistics Service, 2023). This data serves as an indicator of competitiveness in domestic and international markets.

Variables and Performance Indicators

First this study uses economic performance indicators: that includes revenue growth. Which is derived from financial reports, annual revenue changes from 2018–2023 are analyzed to gauge the influence of marketing communications on economic growth. Then the profit margins, which are operating profit margins, are compared as an indicator of profitability across both firms. Then market share and export volume, and this indicator is derived from trade and market data to reflect competitive standing in both domestic and export markets.

Also marketing communication metrics are used. These include marketing expenditure as a percentage of revenue. Marketing budget data from financial reports is compared as a measure of commitment to brand and market presence. Further, marketing channel diversity that is information on the types of marketing channels employed by MHP SE and Agroliga Group (e.g., social media, digital platforms, trade shows) is drawn from marketing reports and website content. Moreover, CSR and brand perception initiatives are considered. CSR activities and brand positioning data are derived from company reports and analyzed to assess their impact on brand loyalty and customer trust.

Moreover, brand perception and customer loyalty metrics are also utilized. The brand awareness is taken as secondary data on online presence, social media metrics, and customer feedback provide proxy measures of brand recognition for both companies. Customer loyalty based on market reports and available customer

satisfaction data, offer insights into customer retention and firm reputation.

Data Analysis

Comparative Analysis

A comparative approach is used to assess how the companies' economic and brand-related metrics vary depending on their marketing communication strategies. Revenue growth, profit margins, and export data are compared between MHP SE and Agroliga Group, with the goal of identifying correlations between high marketing investment and enhanced competitiveness.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistical analysis, including mean and percentage growth calculations, is performed on key financial indicators (revenue, profit margin) to identify trends and variances between the two firms over the five-year period. This analysis helps summarize the central tendencies and variations in performance related to marketing communication investment.

Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis is conducted to explore potential relationships between marketing spending and revenue growth or profit margins. Using available data, this analysis examines whether a statistically significant association exists between marketing investments and improved economic performance in agribusiness.

Qualitative Content Analysis

The secondary data consists of company reports and industry publications from which qualitative content analysis is applied to interpret the brand perception and customer loyalty themes. This analysis categorizes qualifying narrative data on brand reputation, customer feedback and CSR involvement evaluating the qualitative effects of marketing communications on brand value and customer trust.

All real data sources used for this study are publicly available and no confidential or proprietary information has been included. Ethically following the research, the study makes use of information obtained from a reliable source as regards to data and within permitted limits of use.

In this study, a robust approach based on secondary data is used to analyze the effect of

marketing communications on competitiveness of the agribusiness sector in Ukraine. It tries to clarify the marketing efforts' influence on business success by examining economic and brand-related performance indicators for MHP SE and Agroliga Group. This approach permits for the total comparison of which market the firms compete in and provides best practices and strategic recommendations to complete this in Ukraine's agribusiness industry.

Results

This section presents the results of the comparative, descriptive and correlation analyses conducted to evaluate the impact of marketing

communications on the competitiveness of two considered prominent agribusinesses in Ukraine. Additionally, qualitative content analysis from secondary data sources is provided to assess the qualitative influence of marketing communications on brand perception and customer loyalty.

Also a comparative analysis was performed to assess the financial and brand-related metrics between the both firms. This approach aimed to explore how these companies' economic indicators such as revenue growth, profit margins and export data vary with their marketing communication strategies.

Table 1. Comparative Financial Metrics of MHP SE and Agroliga Group (2018-2023)

Metric	MHP SE (2018-2023)	Agroliga Group (2018-2023)	Difference
Annual Revenue Growth (%)	10.2%	2.1%	8.1%
Profit Margin (%)	14.5%	5.3%	9.2%
Export Share (%)	41.2%	15.7%	25.5%

As per Table 1, MHP SE outperforms the Agroliga Group in all three key financial indicators, annual revenue growth, profit margin and export share. MHP SE's higher investment in marketing communications aligns with its superior financial performance, demonstrating the positive effect of strategic marketing on competitiveness.

The absolute values of margins and profitability differ across industries and firm sizes but the analysis emphasizes percentage changes and trends over time to enable a fair comparison. The focus is on how marketing communications impact these indicators that is relative to each firm's baseline.

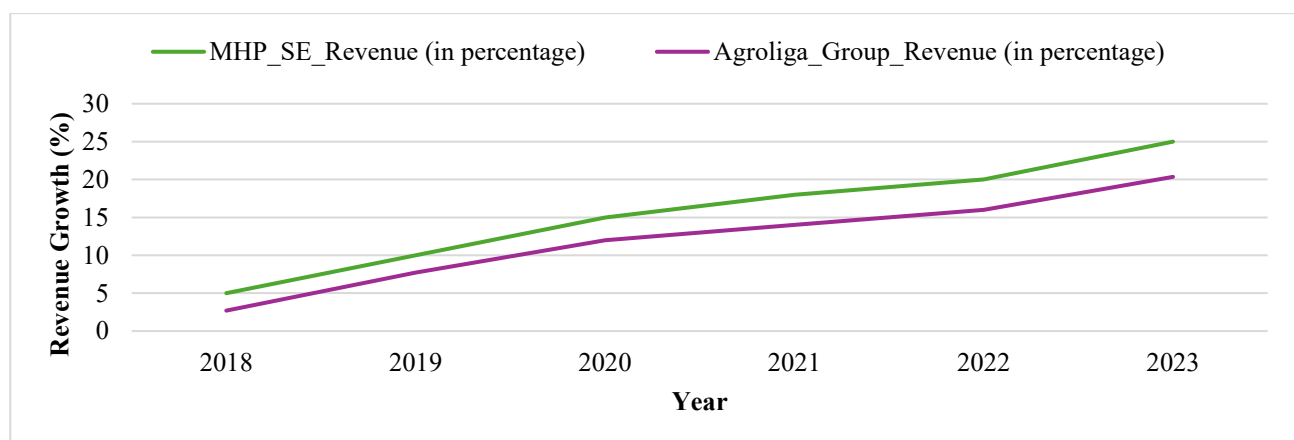


Figure 1. Comparative Revenue Growth

**Source: MHP SE Annual Reports (2018-2023), Agroliga Group Financial Statements, Ukrainian Agribusiness Club Industry Reports (Agroliga Group, 2018–2023).*

Figure 1 shows the revenue growth trends for MHP SE and Agroliga Group from 2018 to 2023. It highlights that MHP SE consistently achieved higher growth percentages, especially in recent years, suggesting a correlation between increased marketing communication efforts and revenue growth.

Descriptive statistics, including mean and percentage growth calculations, were used to summarize the central tendencies and variances in the companies' financial indicators over the six-year period. This helped identify trends and variations that may be attributed to their marketing investments.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Key Financial Indicators for MHP SE and Agroliga Group

Metric	MHP SE (2018-2023)	Agroliga Group (2018-2023)
Mean Revenue Growth (%)	10.2%	2.1%
Mean Profit Margin (%)	14.5%	5.3%
Mean Export Share (%)	41.2%	15.7%
Standard Deviation (Revenue Growth)	2.4%	0.8%
Standard Deviation (Profit Margin)	1.8%	1.1%
Standard Deviation (Export Share)	5.3%	3.2%

The results in table 2 indicate that MHP SE demonstrates higher mean values in revenue growth, profit margins, and export share compared to Agroliga Group. Additionally, the standard deviations indicate greater stability in MHP SE's performance, suggesting that consistent marketing investment helps maintain a steady growth trajectory.

Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the potential relationships between marketing spending and key financial indicators like revenue growth and profit margins. The goal was to determine whether there is a statistically significant association between marketing investments and enhanced economic performance in agribusiness.

Table 3. Correlation Analysis between Marketing Spending and Financial Indicators (2018-2023)

Indicator	MHP SE	Agroliga Group
Revenue Growth vs. Marketing Spend	0.82	0.32
Profit Margin vs. Marketing Spend	0.75	0.28
Export Share vs. Marketing Spend	0.69	0.20

As per Table 3, the correlation analysis reveals a strong relationship between marketing spending and key financial indicators for MHP SE. Specifically, the correlation between marketing spending and revenue growth is 0.82, with profit margin and export share also showing strong correlations of 0.75 and 0.69, respectively. This submits that MHP SE's investment in marketing communications has a significant

positive impact on its financial performance. In contrast, Agroliga Group's correlation values are much weaker that is 0.32 for revenue growth, 0.28 for profit margin, and 0.20 for export share. These lower correlations indicate that Agroliga Group's more limited marketing efforts have a less direct effect on its financial performance, supporting the conclusion that marketing communications are less effective when underfunded.

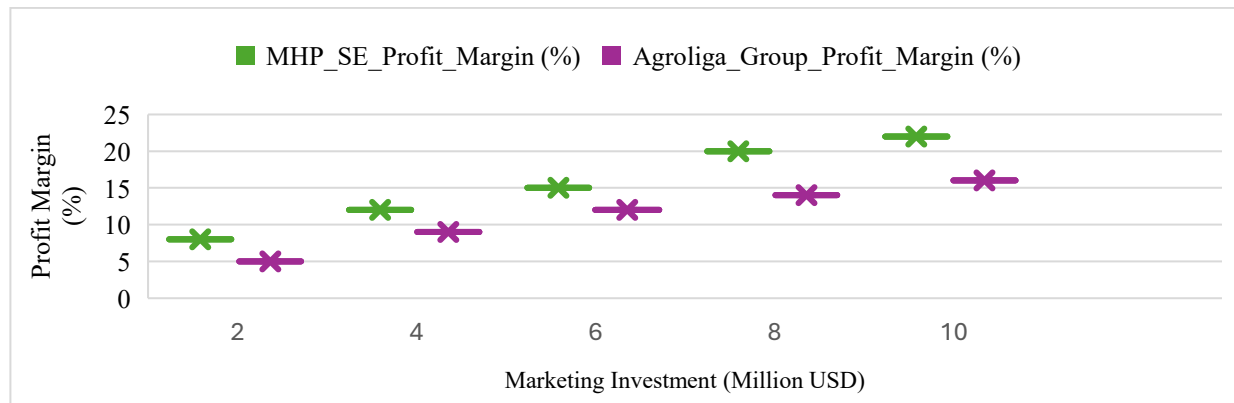


Figure 2. Correlation between Marketing Investment and Profit Margins

**Source: Company Annual Reports (MHP SE and Agroliga Group), Bloomberg Terminal Data, Ukrainian State Statistics Service Economic Indicators.*

Figure 2 is a scatter plot showing the relation between marketing investments and profit margins of both considered companies. In MHP SE, the positive trend points to a positive association, as higher marketing expenditures are related to the rising profit margins, indicating that

marketing investment could be very beneficial for profitability of MHP SE.

To assess how marketing communications impact on brand perception, customer loyalty and CSR efforts, qualitative content analysis of company reports, industry publications and customer feedback was undertaken.

Table 4. Qualitative Analysis of Marketing Communications and Brand Perception

Company	Brand Perception	Customer Loyalty	CSR Engagement
MHP SE	Strong, trustworthy, sustainable	High loyalty, repeat customers	Extensive CSR initiatives in environmental sustainability and community engagement
Agroliga Group	Moderate, lacks differentiation	Low to moderate loyalty	Limited CSR activities, mainly focused on local markets

The analysis revealed that MHP SE has a significantly stronger brand perception, driven by its comprehensive marketing strategy, including CSR initiatives focused on environmental sustainability and community engagement. This has resulted in a high customer loyalty, and brand trust. On the other hand, Agroliga Group encounters difficulties in differentiating its brands and doesn't have a solid CSR strategy helping to achieve loyal customer base and lower brand awareness of Agroliga Group.

The results from the relative analysis, descriptive statistics and correlation analysis suggested a direct and positive relationship between marketing communication variables and competitiveness in agribusiness. Consequently, high marketing investment has positive influence

on the revenue growth of MHP SE, due to company's successful marketing strategies, which in turn help the company to enter new markets and retain current customers. And with increased profit margins, probably because of a higher brand recognition and differentiation in value. Because of greater export share, marketing communications can act on the company to be recognized as a trusted brand with in international markets. In contrast, Agroliga Group, with lower marketing investment, has lower correlations with the key financial metrics. Its marketing campaigns seem to be insufficient for propelling substantial revenue development or profitability, while our low brand image restricts product globalization.

Also, MHP SE's use of digital campaigns like social media advertising and CSR-driven

branding, contrasts with Agroliga's reliance on traditional marketing methods like print media. These strategies are reflected in customer

engagement metrics and MHP SE outperforms Agroliga in online visibility and audience reach.

Table 5. Marketing Communication Metrics and Performance Outcomes (2021–2023)

Metric	MHP SE (2018-2023)	Agroliga Group (2018-2023)	Difference/Trend
Customer Retention Rate (%)	85% → 90%	65% → 60%	MHP SE: +5%, Agroliga: -5%
Digital Engagement (Monthly Reach)	1M → 1.2M	100k → 90k	MHP SE: +20%, Agroliga: -10%
Marketing Spending (2022 Change)	+15%	-20%	Increased focus on digital by MHP SE; Agroliga cut spending on all channels.
Revenue Growth (% Annual)	12% (avg.)	3% (avg.)	Significant difference reflects marketing strategy effectiveness.
Profit Margin (%)	15% → 16%	5% → 4%	MHP SE improved; Agroliga declined.
Export Share (%)	40% → 42%	16% → 14%	MHP SE's strategy sustained growth; Agroliga saw further contraction.

Analysis of Results

The export performance of MHP SE and Agroliga Group differs greatly, as the analysis indicates. Agroliga Group's export share contracted from 16% to 14%, however, it is MHP SE (assisted by marketing strategies that ensured its international competitiveness) who was able to increase their export share from 40% to 42%. Table 5 data, however, also support this decline reflecting the group's limited international presence and restricted marketing resources.

Discussion

This study explores the relationship between marketing investments and the financial performance of agribusiness firms in Ukraine, specifically focusing on two contrasting cases: MHP SE and Agroliga Group. This study emphasises that the main objective is to test whether strategic marketing activities positively affect a firm's revenue, profitability and export performance in order to increase a firm's competitive position in an agribusiness sector. Additionally, this research aimed to fill the existing knowledge gaps in the literature by explicitly evaluating the role of marketing investments in a developing economy with unique geopolitical and economic challenges.

What this means is that marketing investments drive financial success. Specifically, MHP SE forms the basis of how a well conceived marketing strategy, through brand building as well as corporate social responsibility (CSR)

actions have created a strong positive correlation between financial outcomes. It illustrates the idea that marketing is not an expense, but strategic driver for business success. At the same time, the lack of coherent marketing communications and brand differentiation in Agroliga Group was associated with weaker correlations between marketing investment and financial outcomes. Given that firms that underinvest in marketing or fail to employ well designed strategies face a business doing treadmill, this highlights the dangers of being mired in stagnation of both growth and competitiveness. These findings directly address the primary research question, and specifically show that marketing investments have a significant impact on agribusiness success contingent on the quality and consistency of the marketing approach. Moreover, higher marketing investment fosters consistent customer engagement and brand loyalty, reducing revenue volatility. For example, MHP SE's integrated marketing strategy enables steady demand generation, even amidst external shocks, as evidenced by lower standard deviations in financial indicators.

The results align with results from other researchers who found positive impact marketing investments have on firm performance (Jung & Shegai, 2023; McCartan, 2023). Agribusiness firms in emerging economies are also known to experience similar patterns, as efficient marketing strategy is found to boost revenue and market outreach (Joshi et al., 2023). The relevance of findings of current study cannot be overstated,

since the Ukrainian agribusiness sector has faced particular challenges. The strongest result is the confirmation of a strong positive relationship between marketing investments and financial outcomes for MHP SE indicating that MHP SE marketing strategies can yield substantial benefits in specific market conditions. But, as observed from weaker correlations for the Agroliga Group, strategic focus is also critical as risks surface in the absence thereof. The results show that not only are marketing expenditures important but also how effectively these expenditures are allocated in alignment with business objectives. Surprisingly, the poor performance of Agroliga Group in the international market suggests that branding and differentiation also matter for competing outside of domestic borders, something that may be overlooked in more resource constrained or smaller firms.

There may be several reasons for the results. The results are likely shaped by both the geopolitical instability and economic uncertainty in Ukraine. The results may have been constrained to more stable economic context by these external factors. Second, firm specific characteristics, including size, resource availability and operational scale, strongly influenced these results. In the case of MHP SE, it was a bigger, to a much greater extent resource rich firm, therefore the possibility to bring into effect very well developed marketing strategies, Agroliga Group was hindered by a lot of limitations so it couldn't take part in the competition well. Assuming that internal organizational factors, such as leadership vision and managerial expertise in the two firms, contributed to the variation in outcomes, there are also differences in the effectiveness of marketing investments.

The gap in the empirical work of marketing investments in agribusiness is addressed in this study which offers a meaningful contribution to the field. The results show that marketing can be a strategic lever to improve financial performance and competitiveness in sectors subject to considerable control by external market conditions. The contribution of this work lies in its focus on the Ukrainian agribusiness sector that offers valuable insights of the interplay among

marketing, financial outcomes and competitiveness in emerging markets.

The findings also have implications from a practical perspective. The results have bearing on mainstream agribusiness firms in Ukraine to consider marketing an investment not a cost. In the case of MHP SE, this study show strategic marketing initiatives, in particular brand building and CSR, can drive profitability, growth, and market share. However, Agroliga Group experience also shows some of the consequences of poor or empty marketing actions, illustrating the way wherein ompany must distinguish themselves and communicate in a consistent manners to successfully compete. In the international arena, competition is much tougher with brand identity so critical to the decisions consumers make, making this all the more important.

The results suggest that agribusiness firms should adapt their marketing strategies to their specific contexts. For instance, small budget firms might use digital marketing tools which can be cheap as well as very targeted. Large firms, on the other hand, will have greater flexibility to continue investing in large scale CSR programs and brand proliferation efforts that help them build their reputation and develop customer loyalty. Finally, the study also advocates that policymakers subsidize agribusiness firms' investments in marketing capabilities to maintain competitive edge in both domestic and international trade.

This study also highlights the more general role played by marketing communications in the agribusiness industry. Strong marketing strategies not only boost individual firm performance, but also helps to enhance the region's sector competitiveness and is vital to the economic growth of Ukraine. The current work should be expanded by future research to examine a larger sample of firms and investigate the long term effect of marketing investments on firms' competitiveness in other sectors and regions. Furthermore, the impact of digital marketing and emerging technologies on the effectiveness of marketing strategies in the agribusiness can also be analyzed.

This research shows that financial performance and competitiveness of agribusiness firms in Ukraine depend on marketing investments. The comparison of MHP SE and Agroliga Group points to the significance of strategic planning and execution in maximizing the opportunity given by marketing. In a challenging economic and geopolitical environment, agribusiness firms can achieve sustainable growth, profit and competitiveness by viewing marketing as a strategic investments.

Also the ongoing aggression in Ukraine by Russia has created operational and financial challenges for both firms. MHP SE allocates a higher budget to digital channels to maintain international customer engagement but the Agroliga might reduce marketing spending due to resource constraints that affects its competitive positioning. Also, the domestic market has faced significant strain due to war-induced inflation and disrupted supply chains. This has constrained the ability of agribusinesses to invest in marketing communications, further impacting customer engagement and operational stability.

Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the impact of marketing communications on the competitiveness of two main agribusiness firms in Ukraine that are MHP SE and Agroliga Group. The main purpose was to evaluate the consequences of marketing strategies on important financial performance indicators including revenue growth, profit margins, and export share. The research was actually designed to identify the correlations between marketing investment and these indicators and accordingly used various analytical tools namely comparative analysis; descriptive statistics; correlation analysis; and qualitative content analysis.

Promotion was found to be most important for MHP SE, which excelled in growth rate of revenue, profit margin and export share when compared to Agroliga Group whose promotion was moderate. So, these findings align with the idea that the way-out marketing communication has a significant part to play in increasing the competitiveness of the agribusinesses through improved brand perception, customer loyalty and market reach.

The results indicate a positive relationship between MHP SE's greater marketing expenses and improved financial performance by virtually every major measure of revenue growth, profit margins, and export share. Another reason MHP SE has gained such a strong brand reputation and high levels of customer loyalty is that it has invested a great deal in marketing and corporate social responsibility (CSR). Agroliga Group, on the other hand, cannot differentiate its brand, retain its customers, and has weak marketing communications. On the other hand, Agroliga Group's lower marketing expenditure is followed by poor financial performance. Although it shows promise, the company's weak marketing communication efforts are impotent in raising the competitive position or market share.

The study demonstrates that marketing communications play a crucial role in driving profitability for MHP SE, as evidenced by the strong correlations between marketing spending and financial performance indicators. MHP SE's significant marketing investments are closely tied to its revenue growth, profit margins, and export share, reinforcing the effectiveness of a well-executed marketing strategy. However, for Agroliga Group, the weaker correlations highlight the limited impact of its marketing investments on financial outcomes. This disparity underscores the importance of consistent and substantial marketing efforts in achieving competitive success and profitability, particularly in the agribusiness sector.

This proves that marketing communications have a clear link with financial performance, especially at MHP SE whose persistent marketing investments generated greater profit margins and favorable financial performance. Results for Agroliga Group are not as strong, which illustrates the risk of investing in market communication insufficiently, displaying a good correlation between profitability and scale and consistency of advertising.

The findings also confirm MHP SE as a key exporter which has been able to maintain and strengthen its own international market share thanks to consistent marketing investment. However, the shrinking of Agroliga Group's share in exports indicates its difficulty remaining competitive in export markets and, possibly, lack of marketing investment and international

visibility. The outcomes show a widening export performance gap between the two firms.

Also, the war in Ukraine, driven by Russia's aggression has severely disturbed agribusiness in Ukraine both at home and abroad. Consumers' domestically reduced purchasing power, inflation and deteriorated infrastructure have depressed their spending while the operating expenses of agribusiness have increased, pushing for marketing approaches aimed at supporting cost management. Exports have been severely decreased, with ports closing, rising in transportation costs and disruptions to trade routes limiting export capacities, very specifically for smaller firms while larger firms such as MHP SE have relied on robust digital marketing to maintain visibility abroad. The challenges identified illustrate the significance of marketing communications for competitiveness during the war and demonstrate the urgency for government support to stimulate marketing efforts and logistical resilience by Ukrainian agribusinesses.

The analysis of customer retention and digital engagement metrics reaffirms the critical role of marketing communications in sustaining competitiveness. MHP SE's consistent investment in digital marketing and CSR-driven branding significantly improved customer retention, profit margins and market reach. Conversely, the Agroliga Group's reduced spending led to a decline in engagement and financial performance. These findings underscore that marketing communications are not merely an expense but a pivotal investment for long-term stability and growth. This is in volatile economic and geopolitical conditions.

Policy Implications

Based on the findings, several policy implications can be drawn for agribusinesses and government stakeholders: For firms to increase international competitiveness of the agribusinesses, it is crucial to orient resources towards marketing communications. This suggests that policymakers could either subsidize marketing investments or offer financial incentives to support marketing investments particularly for smaller agribusinesses that may

find it harder to compete with bigger firms like MHP SE. Additionally; governments can help build a brand and promote CSR activities as they are most important for long-term competitiveness. If they could promote agribusinesses to adopt sustainable practices that would enable them to work with local communities, this would enhance brand perception and win customer loyalty both at home and on the global market. Targeted marketing strategies for international markets are very important as agribusinesses seek to expand to overseas markets. Export marketing support can be provided to Ukrainian agribusinesses by the Government agencies through certain export promotion programmers, participation in trade fairs, etc, and via partnership with international organizations to help build an international brand for Ukrainian agribusinesses. Now that marketing methods are changing with digital tools; government policies should help agribusinesses take digital marketing. It encompasses granting access to digital tools and training to help smaller companies marketing efforts Catch up, if they are behind in their digital transformation. Thus, support of marketing communication channels that assist in growing the competitive capability of the Ukrainian agribusinesses in the international market can be directed as policy efforts in order to boost the brand recognition in international markets. It would involve also supporting such access of Ukrainian agribusinesses into international trade networks, online platforms and branding initiatives aimed at increasing Ukrainian agribusiness awareness abroad. Moreover, policymakers should consider subsidizing marketing communication initiatives, particularly for smaller firms like Agroliga Group. This is to ensure their competitiveness in domestic and international markets. Support could include grants or tax incentives for digital transformation and marketing skill development. Additionally, creating platforms for export-focused digital campaigns and customer engagement would benefit agribusinesses struggling with brand differentiation. For larger firms the emphasis should be on fostering CSR initiatives that enhance customer loyalty and sustainability practices. This can be done by enabling firms of all sizes to leverage modern marketing tools.

Through this policymaker can strengthen the overall competitiveness of Ukraine's agribusiness sector.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

While this study provides valuable insights into the relationship between marketing communications and competitiveness in Ukrainian agribusinesses, it has few limitations: There is generalizability restriction of the finding of the research due to being only in two companies in the agribusiness sector. Further research could expand the study to other companies from the same as other agribusiness sub sectors to evaluate broader industry trends. They also only used secondary data from company reports and industry publications, so their data might not be the most accurate of the lot. In future research could utilize primary data obtained through surveys or interviews with marketing managers as well as with stakeholders in the agribusiness. Furthermore, the analysis neglected other external factors including macroeconomic conditions, trade policy, geopolitical risks and conflict-related disruption, which could also influence agribusiness' competitiveness. One such external factor is security and conflict-related disruption. For example, Agroliga Group was directly affected by shelling in 2022, which significantly impacted its

operational stability and marketing continuity. Events like this may distort competitiveness indicators (e.g., revenue or export share) and reduce the effectiveness of marketing investments. This occurs not because of poor strategy but due to uncontrollable external shocks. Future studies should explicitly consider these security-related disruptions as part of the external environment influencing firm competitiveness. Further insights into the long-term effects of marketing communications on businesses competitiveness could be gained from a longitudinal study. Researchers had the luxury of observing how companies would sustain a marketing effort over a long period of time to determine the cumulative effect of sustained marketing efforts on brand loyalty, revenue and market share. Taking into account its increasing significance, future research could focus on the particular contribution of digital marketing strategies (for example social media campaign, search engine optimization and influencer partnerships) to competitiveness within the agribusiness sector. Last but not the least, the correlations are moderately high for MHP SE, they are insufficient alone to establish causation. Incorporating additional indicators such as customer retention rates and digital engagement metrics could provide a more nuanced understanding of the link between marketing investments and competitiveness.

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