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Benchmarking Collaborative Networks: A Key to SME Competitiveness

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Abstract

The adopted methods and techniques supporting competitive strategy should correspond to the indicated decision-making areas. Taking the above guidelines into consideration, a method is sought that would make it possible to: identify the current competitive position of the company; specify possible strategies that would lead to achieving the defined objective; indicate which of the specified strategies will most probably enable achieving this objective in a specified time. The applied method has to take into account the SMEs' knowledge and experience shortages in the development of competitive strategy, and limited access to expert knowledge. Therefore, it should use techniques that are based on the company's performance and automate the process of analysis and drawing conclusions by prototyping alternative strategies. Moreover, it is crucial for the selection and choice of competitive strategies to be individualised, namely to consider the company's characteristics—its strengths and weaknesses, as well as the nature of its operation in the market environment. It was for this purpose that the HRPm method (*Hierarchical-Regression Prototyping Method*) was developed as a process which uses the results from analysis of historical data (the company's performance) to support the decision-making process in terms of specifying competitive strategies. It is proposed in two versions—crisp (*the HRPm method*), which requires accurate data for analysis and fuzzy (*the FHRPM method*), which provides for inaccuracy of processed data and resulting fuzziness of outcomes.

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