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Nataliia Sulima*

PhD in Economic Sciences, Associate Professor
National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine
03041, 15 Heroiv Oborony Str., Kyiv, Ukraine
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3852-7989>

Natalia Mazur

Doctor of Economic Sciences, Professor
Kamianets-Podilskyi Ivan Ohiienko National University
32300, 61 Ohiienko Str., Kamianets-Podilskyi, Ukraine
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4670-6805>

Ivan Semenets

PhD in Economic Sciences, Associate Professor
Kamianets-Podilskyi Ivan Ohiienko National University
32300, 61 Ohiienko Str., Kamianets-Podilskyi, Ukraine
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2928-7979>

Oksana Kushnir

PhD in Economic Sciences, Associate Professor
Kamianets-Podilskyi Ivan Ohiienko National University
32300, 61 Ohiienko Str., Kamianets-Podilskyi, Ukraine
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2679-2782>

Mykyta Savytskyi

PhD Student in Economic Sciences
National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine
03041, 15 Heroiv Oborony Str., Kyiv, Ukraine
<https://orcid.org/0009-0005-3306-2835>

Innovative marketing as a component of the development strategy for agricultural enterprises

Abstract. The aim of this study was to substantiate the impact of digital technologies and marketing solutions on improving the performance, competitiveness, and adaptability of agricultural enterprises in Ukraine amidst the transformation of the economy, using two leading companies – Myronivsky Hliboproduct and Kernel – as examples. The methodology was based on a combination of quantitative analysis of financial and production indicators and qualitative analysis of the

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*Corresponding author



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digital marketing tools employed by these enterprises, to identify the relationship between the level of digitalisation and business performance. In the case of Myronivsky Hliboproduct, revenue increased from USD 1.41 billion to USD 2.26 billion, while net profit grew from USD 302 million to USD 437 million. The average selling price of products rose by 50%, from USD 1.34 to USD 2.01 per kilogram, while the share of digital tools in the marketing budget increased from 25% to over 65%. Kernel showed a similar positive trend: revenue rose to USD 4.12 billion (+15%), net profit reached USD 466 million (+22%), and the margin strengthened to 11.3%. Additionally, the company increased social investments by 21% and reduced carbon emissions by 32%. The results obtained demonstrated that digitalisation of marketing, business process automation, and the development of online communication channels have become key factors in enhancing the profitability, financial stability, and international competitiveness of Ukrainian agricultural companies. The practical significance of the study lies in the fact that its findings can be used by agricultural enterprise managers, marketing consultants, and government institutions when developing strategies for digital transformation, optimising marketing processes, and boosting the export potential of Ukraine's agricultural sector

Keywords: digital transformation; management; competitiveness; brand; content; promotion

INTRODUCTION

In the context of global competition and an unstable economic environment, a key factor for increasing the efficiency of agricultural enterprises is the introduction of new approaches to market activity management. Traditional methods of product promotion no longer ensure sufficient interaction with target consumers, especially considering the digitalisation of the agricultural sector, changes in consumer behaviour models, and the growing role of sustainable development. In this context, innovative approaches to organising marketing processes, combining digital tools, analytical technologies, brand strategy, and corporate social responsibility, become of particular importance.

Within the context of marketing process development in agriculture, the main challenge remains the low level of adaptation of enterprises to rapid market changes, which is caused by economic instability, military risks, and limited investment opportunities. Research D. Zmievets & L. Pronko (2024) showed that the lack of effective mechanisms for implementing innovations in marketing activities significantly complicates the improvement of enterprise competitiveness and hinders their integration into the digital economy. The researchers systematised approaches to the use of information and communication technologies, identified the role of digital promotion channels in strengthening the positions of producers, and substantiated the need to update communication

strategies with consumers. In the conditions of dynamic market processes, the issue of the effective combination of innovative approaches and marketing strategies to enhance the performance of agricultural sector enterprises is particularly relevant. The patterns of forming innovative development strategies, aimed at improving production efficiency and balancing the interests of different market participants, were revealed in the study by V.G. Margasova & N.M. Vdovenko (2022), who proved that the foundation of successful enterprise operation lies in a consumer-oriented approach, demand elasticity analysis, rational pricing, and the use of innovations in communication policy.

The insufficient effectiveness of marketing tools in the activities of agricultural enterprises has led to the need to search for new approaches to enhancing the effectiveness of innovative development. The importance of implementing information and communication technologies and digital marketing tools to strengthen the competitive positions of agricultural enterprises was substantiated in the study by T.V. Ilchenko (2020). The author identified the main directions for activating innovative activities: improving innovation stimulation mechanisms, developing support infrastructure, forming marketing support systems, and using digital promotion channels. The lack of a systematic approach in constructing marketing strategies for agricultural enterprises

complicates achieving stable growth and effective entry into external markets. I. Dmytriiev *et al.* (2022) demonstrated that the effectiveness of enterprises' activities is determined by the ability to combine innovative approaches to marketing with a focus on sustainable development. Using the example of the company Myronivsky Hliboproduct, the authors proved that the implementation of a vertically integrated business model, supported by technological innovations and principles of environmental responsibility, contributes to strengthening competitive positions in the international market.

The lack of a systematic approach to the use of digital tools in the marketing activities of enterprises complicates their integration into the international economic space. A key factor in increasing competitiveness, as noted by L. Kvasova *et al.* (2023), is the development of digital promotion strategies, the use of social media, Search Engine Optimization (SEO), data analytics, and e-commerce platforms. The authors emphasised that the effective combination of digital technologies with customer-oriented management models contributes to the growth of product exports and the formation of a positive brand for enterprises. The low effectiveness of implementing innovations in the marketing activities of agricultural enterprises necessitates the improvement of approaches to strategic development. In the study by O. Krasnorutskyy *et al.* (2023), it was noted that a key factor in enhancing competitiveness is the application of digital technologies, analytical platforms, and customer-oriented business models. The authors stressed that innovative marketing fosters the development of sustainable strategies, optimisation of supply chains, and more efficient resource use.

The activities of agricultural enterprises are characterised by a low level of innovation implementation, which limits their ability to adapt to the dynamic changes in the market environment. The need to enhance the innovation component of management was substantiated in the study by O.P. Lucii & T.A. Korniychuk (2022), where the principles for forming an innovation development strategy were identified, including systematised approaches, flexibility, adaptability, and a focus on minimising risks, which

ensure the effective implementation of strategic objectives. At the same time, V. Mamchur *et al.* (2024) established that the main factor in improving performance is the digitalisation of management processes, automation of analytics, and the formation of customer-oriented interaction systems. The authors proved that the introduction of advanced marketing technologies, particularly analytical platforms and e-commerce, contributes to improved sales efficiency, resource optimisation, and the expansion of enterprises' market presence. The study emphasised the need to integrate marketing strategies into the overall system of innovative management, which ensures business stability and flexibility.

Despite significant scientific progress in the study of innovative marketing, further research is required on the issues of quantitatively assessing the effectiveness of digital strategies, developing adaptive management models for innovation processes, determining the impact of digitalisation on the economic sustainability and investment attractiveness of agricultural enterprises, as well as improving mechanisms for measuring innovation potential and enhancing the digital competence of managers. The aim of this study was to substantiate the role of implementing innovative approaches into the marketing management system to increase the competitiveness and sustainability of agricultural enterprises in the context of the digital transformation of the economy, based on the analysis of the practices of two leading companies – Myronivsky Hliboproduct and Kernel. To achieve this aim, the following tasks were set: to assess the impact of digital technologies and innovative marketing tools on the effectiveness of strategic development in agricultural business; to identify potential directions for the innovative development of the agricultural sector in Ukraine based on national and international digitalisation support programmes.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research was empirical in nature and covered the period from 2020 to the first half of 2025. The marketing activities of the company Myronivsky Hliboproduct (MHP, n.d.) were analysed using the method of systemic-comparative

analysis to determine the features of building the company's digital communication model (MHP4U, n.d.). The choice of this company was due to its leading position in the market, high level of digitalisation of business processes, developed export system, and active integration of digital tools into its marketing strategy. The implementation of the Systems, Applications, and Products in Data Processing – Customer Relationship Management (SAP CRM) system (SAP, n.d.) was evaluated using a functional-analytical approach to identify the effectiveness of customer relationship management and improve the accuracy of marketing decision-making. The use of social media platforms Facebook (n.d.), Instagram (n.d.), and TikTok (n.d.) was examined using content analysis, which allowed for the determination of the brand's digital activity level, audience engagement, and the effectiveness of the communication policy. Based on the analysis, the key promotion tools and directions for digital interaction with customers were identified (RAU, 2024).

The dynamics of the key financial and production indicators of MHP from 2020 to the first half of 2025 were assessed using the method of economic-statistical analysis with the aim of identifying trends in the changes in operational effectiveness. The analysed indicators included production volumes, sales and export of poultry (thousand tonnes), the share of exports in revenue (%), average sales price (USD/kg), revenue (billion USD), Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation, and Amortisation (EBITDA) (million USD), net result (million USD), key export markets, and the share of digital tools in the marketing budget (%). The use of official financial reports, Financial results for the third quarter and nine months... (2020; 2021; 2022), allowed for the identification of structural changes in production and sales activities. Further analysis, conducted based on the reports Financial results for the third quarter and nine months... (2023; 2024) and Financial results for the second quarter and six months... (2025), was carried out using the method of comparative analysis to determine the dynamics of the enterprise's financial stability.

The marketing strategies of the company Kernel (n.d.a) were examined using the method

of systemic analysis to identify the relationships between management decisions, digital technologies, and the structure of marketing management (Kernel, n.d.b). The choice of Kernel was justified by its significant impact on Ukraine's export potential, the comprehensive integration of digital tools into marketing, and the presence of a developed corporate information technology (IT) infrastructure. The effectiveness of implementing the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) solution Microsoft Dynamics Navision (NAV) (Dynamics NAV, n.d.) and the electronic goods transport waybill system eTTN (Latifundist Media, 2024) was analysed using a functional analysis method to assess the level of automation of business processes. The activities of the IT company Kernel Digital (n.d.) and the use of the DigitalAgriBusiness system (Latifundist Media, n.d.) were evaluated using the method of comparative analysis to determine the effectiveness of digital solutions in monitoring supply chains and sales analytics.

The key financial and production indicators of the company Kernel for 2020 to the first half of 2025 were analysed using the method of economic-statistical analysis with the aim of identifying development trends, financial stability, and investment activity effectiveness. The analysis covered indicators such as revenue (billion USD), EBITDA (million USD), EBITDA margin (%), net profit (million USD), net margin (%), export volumes of grains and oilseeds (million tonnes), the share of exports in revenue (%), investments (million USD), net debt (million USD), net debt/EBITDA, social investments (million USD), and CO₂ emissions (thousand tonnes). All indicators were obtained from the official financial reports of Kernel Holding S.A. annual report for the year... (2020; 2021; 2022). Additional data from the reports Kernel Holding S.A. annual report for the year... (2023; 2024; 2025) were used to ensure the completeness of the time series and to track the dynamics of the company's key performance indicators. The application of the method of dynamic series allowed for tracking changes in profitability structure and determining the stability of the company's financial results.

The prospects for the innovative development of Ukraine's agricultural sector were

assessed using the method of comparative analysis. For this purpose, state support programmes were considered, including “Affordable Loans 5-7-9%” (Privatbank, n.d.), as well as the eRobota (n.d.) grant initiative and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Agriculture Growing Rural Opportunities (AGRO) project (Organic knowledge platform, n.d.), which aim to improve enterprises’ access to financial resources. Additionally, the FAO Ukraine Resilience Programme (FAO emergencies and resilience, n.d.) and international initiatives such as Horizon Europe (European Commission, n.d.c) and The European Green Deal (European Commission, n.d.a) were analysed, as these form the foundation for technological modernisation and the transition of the agricultural sector to more sustainable production models. Special attention was given to the Digital Europe Programme (European Commission, n.d.b), which promotes the expansion of digital capabilities for agricultural enterprises. The activities of international financial institutions – the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD, n.d.), World Bank in Ukraine (n.d.), and the International Finance Corporation (IFC in Ukraine, n.d.) – were also considered, as they provide investment resources for the digitalisation and innovative development of enterprises. The application of the comparative analysis method enabled the systematisation of support programmes and the identification of their contribution to creating a favourable environment for the digital transformation of marketing and technological renewal of agricultural enterprises in Ukraine.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Marketing system and innovative transformation of MHP

The marketing activities of agricultural enterprises in the context of the digital economy have become of strategic importance, determining growth rates, market adaptability, and the resilience of business models. For the company Myronivsky Hliboproduct (MHP, n.d.), innovative marketing is a key factor in ensuring competitive advantages, as it combines technological modernisation with the creation of long-term consumer loyalty. Market development trends

require enterprises to deeply integrate digital tools into the marketing system – from customer relationship management to the automation of analytics, targeting, and communication personalisation. For MHP, the marketing department structure encompasses several functional units responsible for various areas of work. Overall leadership is provided by the director of the marketing department. Within the department, teams function for market analysis, development of marketing strategies, social media management and content creation, brand management, trade marketing, and corporate communications. The organisational model is based on a functional principle with a clear distribution of roles – brand managers, trade marketers, social media marketing (SMM) specialists, analysts, and communications managers coordinate the full cycle from consumer research to brand support in the market (MHP4U, n.d.).

MHP actively implements digital technologies in its marketing activities. SAP CRM (SAP, n.d.) is used as the main system for managing customer relationships, enabling the collection, analysis, and personalisation of data to improve service efficiency. In the area of SEO, the company applies the optimisation of corporate websites and content, ensuring stable visibility in search engines. Advanced content marketing is supported by the use of artificial intelligence tools to automate material creation and increase team productivity. In the field of SMM, MHP actively maintains pages on Facebook (n.d.), Instagram (n.d.), and TikTok (n.d.), using analytics to measure reach, engagement, and the effectiveness of targeted advertising (Latifundist Media, 2021).

An important component is e-commerce and trade marketing, within which the company uses digital Point of Sale (POS) materials, Quick Response (QR) codes, and “digital consumer corners” that combine offline and online experiences. Data analytics is implemented through SAP systems, Big Data, and Artificial Intelligence (AI), which help forecast demand, plan production, and optimise communication campaigns. Interaction between marketing, sales, and production is organised based on centralised planning – the CRM system ensures the transfer of customer data, allowing production

volumes to be adapted in accordance with demand (RAU, 2024; Lopokha, 2025) MHP's marketing strategy is based on multichannel communication, where digital tools dominate over traditional ones. The main channels for promoting the brands "Nasha Ryaba", "Bashchynskyi", and "Lehko!" are social media, YouTube, outdoor advertising, and Public Relations (PR) communications, aimed at strengthening trust and emotional connections with customers. Between 2020 and 2024, the company implemented a comprehensive digital transformation of marketing: it introduced SAP CRM, Big Data analytics, AI solutions for automating routine processes, and created digital touchpoints with consumers in retail (RAU, 2024).

In the context of the war, MHP adapted its marketing policy – transforming the brand "Nasha Ryaba" into the "Yizha Svischa" format, expanding the franchise network "Miasomarket", intensifying communications in digital channels, and launching patriotic content campaigns. The company focuses on transparency and partnership with the creative industry, maintaining marketing effectiveness even in crisis conditions. Overall, MHP's strategy is aimed at synergy

between production, sales, and marketing, the use of analytics for accurate market forecasting, and the dominance of digital platforms in the structure of marketing investments, ensuring the company's sustainable leadership in the Ukrainian agricultural market (Forbes, 2022).

From 2020 to the first half of 2025, MHP's activities were characterised by significant variability in results, driven by both global crisis phenomena and internal socio-economic challenges. Despite the considerable pressure from external factors – pandemic restrictions, rising costs of feed, energy resources, and military risks – the company retained its position as a key producer and exporter of poultry in Ukraine. During this period, the company's marketing strategy transformed from focusing on stabilising production and sales processes to implementing innovative digital tools that enhanced communication and sales management effectiveness. The dynamics of MHP's key production, sales, and financial indicators for 2020 to the first half of 2025 are presented in Table 1, demonstrating a trend of gradual recovery and the strengthening of the company's digital marketing presence in both domestic and international markets.

Table 1. Dynamics of key indicators of MHP for 2020 – first half of 2025

| Indicator | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 (6 months) |
|--|------------------|----------|------------------|----------|----------|-----------------|
| Poultry production in Ukraine, thousand tonnes | 541.6 | 551.7 | 515.5 | 546.4 | 533.7 | 341.9 |
| Poultry sales, thousand tonnes | 523.8 | 521.5 | 477.1 | 512.0 | 501.0 | – |
| Poultry export, thousand tonnes | 279.0 | 300.3 | 257.3 | 312.0 | 276.3 | 185.6 |
| Share of export in revenue, % | 54 | 51 | 59 | 60 | 56 | – |
| Average sales price, USD/kg | 1.34 | 1.64 | 1.97 | 1.94 | 2.01 | 2.29 |
| Revenue (in billion USD) | 1.41 | 1.65 | 1.88 | 2.29 | 2.26 | 1.64 |
| EBITDA, million USD | 302 | 519 | 275 | 329 | 437 | 236 |
| Net result, million USD | -109 | +377 | -269 | +122 | +141 | 75 |
| Key export markets | MENA, EU, Africa | EU, MENA | EU, MENA, Africa | EU, MENA | EU, MENA | EU, MENA |
| Share of digital tools in marketing budget, % | 25 | 35 | 55 | 60 | 65 | – |

Source: compiled by the authors based on Financial results for the third quarter and nine months... (2020; 2021; 2022; 2023; 2024), Financial results for the second quarter and six months... (2025)

From Table 1, it is evident that in 2020, against the backdrop of global economic turbulence, MHP managed to maintain production at the level of 541.6 thousand tonnes, with the share of exports in revenue standing at 54%. In 2021, thanks to the recovery of the European Union (EU) and Middle Eastern (MENA) markets, export volumes increased to 300.3 thousand tonnes, and net profit exceeded USD 370 million. The war in 2022 significantly affected logistics and production – production output decreased to 515.5 thousand tonnes, and the company incurred a loss of USD 269 million. However, by 2023, MHP showed recovery dynamics, increasing export volumes to 312 thousand tonnes and returning to profitable operations. In 2024, despite the ongoing war risks, the company stabilised production, improved operational efficiency, and achieved an EBITDA growth of USD 437 million. By the end of the first half of 2025, the company maintained a positive trend: production amounted to 341.9 thousand tonnes, exports were 185.6 thousand tonnes, and revenue reached USD 1.64 billion, with EBITDA at USD 236 million and net profit at USD 75 million. The data shows that from 2020 to the first half of 2025, the company demonstrated a high capacity for adaptation in the face of macroeconomic instability and war risks. The reduction in production and sales in 2022 did not result in a loss of financial stability due to the increase in the average sales price, cost optimisation, and the expansion of presence in European markets. Following the 2022 crisis, the company resumed positive dynamics, as evidenced by the increase in export volumes in 2023-2024 and the stabilisation of key financial indicators. By the end of the first half of 2025, MHP maintained a positive trend, ensuring revenue of USD 1.64 billion, EBITDA of USD 236 million, and net profit of USD 75 million, indicating effective management even under challenging external conditions. The gradual increase in the share of digital tools in the marketing budget – from 25% in 2020 to over 65% in 2024 – demonstrates the shift to a deeply digitalised communication model with consumers. Therefore, MHP demonstrated a high level of strategic resilience, combining deep digital transformation with flexible production and sales management. The integration of data analytics, CRM systems, SMM

communications, and innovative content formats allowed the company to maintain its position in the domestic market and retain its status as one of Europe's leading exporters. The overall positive dynamics of key indicators reflect the effectiveness of the marketing model focused on long-term competitiveness and brand capitalisation development.

This study aligns with the work of Y. Zhang (2024), which focuses on the transformation of agricultural product sales in China and the impact of online marketing strategies in the post-pandemic period. In Y. Zhang research, it was demonstrated that the effectiveness of online marketing is shaped by a complex of interacting factors – government support, visual effects, e-commerce broadcasts, customer relations, and multi-platform presence. The author employed fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA) and Necessary Condition Analysis (NCA), concluding that no single factor ensures high performance without the synergy of digital strategy elements. Compared to Y. Zhang study, this work not only emphasised digital promotion channels but also the integration of innovations into the strategic management of agricultural enterprises. While Y. Zhang analysed small businesses within the framework of government support, this study focused on the corporate level, demonstrating how large companies implement CRM systems, Big Data, SEO, SMM, and analytical platforms to enhance competitiveness.

The study by H. Tang *et al.* (2024) primarily focused on the relationship between digital transformation, sustainable development, and social responsibility. This idea resonated with the findings of the current study, where digitalisation was also viewed as a means of improving efficiency, but through the lens of corporate adaptation in crisis conditions. While H. Tang *et al.* described macro-level patterns in environmental policy, this study demonstrated the actual business mechanisms for implementing innovations within a single enterprise. A similarly focused study was conducted by J. Wang & L. Zhang (2024), which explored the impact of digital technologies and branding on the competitiveness of agricultural enterprises. In both works, marketing was defined as a key factor in building trust in the brand and business stability.

However, while J. Wang & L. Zhang concentrated on the theoretical aspects of building brand value, this study illustrated how a digital strategy can be implemented in practice – through the systematic work of the company's marketing department and the combination of innovative tools.

This study partially aligns with the work of L. Li *et al.* (2024), which analysed the impact of innovations on the sustainable development of agricultural enterprises. The authors demonstrated that independent innovations contributed to growth; however, excessive investment reduced the effectiveness. This work also emphasised the key role of innovations and digital technologies in strengthening the competitive positions of enterprises, though the focus was not on the intensity of investments, but on the effectiveness of using digital tools to enhance sales and profitability. A common assertion was that digitalisation strengthens the innovative potential of agricultural businesses, but the study by L. Li *et al.* had a macro-level focus and was based on quantitative analysis, while the current study had a practical focus, demonstrating the practical implementation of digital strategies at the enterprise level.

The marketing of agricultural enterprises in the digital economy has become a key factor for business growth and sustainability. The example of MHP confirmed that the combination of digital technologies with analytical systems, CRM, SMM, and Big Data tools enhances communication and sales effectiveness. The consistent digital transformation enabled the company to strengthen its positions in both domestic and foreign markets, maintain profitability even under wartime challenges, and increase brand recognition. The integration of innovative approaches into the marketing policy demonstrated that the strategic use of digital tools forms long-term competitiveness and increases the adaptability of agricultural businesses to changes in the market environment.

Analysis of the innovative marketing strategies of Kernel

The marketing management structure at Kernel (n.d.a) is based on a centralised model, which ensures a unified strategic vision, coherence in communication decisions, and control over the

implementation of corporate brand standards. All key decisions are made at the central level, allowing marketing campaigns to be aligned with the overall business strategy, avoiding the duplication of functions, and improving communication effectiveness between departments. This management model fosters synergy between business directions, enables the scaling of successful marketing practices, and creates a unified system of interaction between marketing, sales, trading, and export (Kernel, n.d.b).

Kernel actively implements digital technologies at all levels of marketing management. The core of the information system is the ERP solution NAV (Dynamics NAV, n.d.), which integrates financial, logistics, and sales processes, ensuring the automation of document flow, including through the electronic goods transport waybill system (eTTN) (Latifundist Media, 2024). This has significantly reduced the time taken for information exchange in supply chains and increased transparency in logistics. For analytics, the company employs AI algorithms, machine learning, and forecasting techniques, which improve the accuracy of market trend assessments, demand forecasting, and the effectiveness of sales strategies. One of the key solutions is the mobile app Scouting (AgroTimes, 2021), which is used for field monitoring of crop conditions with georeferencing and is integrated into the digital agro-logistics system, enabling prompt adjustments to production planning.

Kernel's own Information Technology (IT) company, Kernel Digital (n.d.), creates and maintains internal digital products, including the DigitalAgribusiness system (Latifundist Media, n.d.), which ensures the management of analytics, production, and sales within a unified environment. This is an integrated digital platform that combines analytical modules, production management tools, and logistics operations within a single information environment. The system provides a full cycle of agro-production management – from planning planting areas and monitoring field conditions to controlling the execution of technological operations, resource management, yield analysis, and optimising sales decisions. DigitalAgribusiness accumulates data from drones, field sensors, mobile applications used by agricultural teams, satellite

monitoring systems, and internal logistics platforms. The use of Big Data, Business Intelligence (BI) dashboards, and deep neural networks (Deep Neural Networks) allows the company to analyse large datasets coming from drones, field sensors, mobile applications, and logistics platforms. These technologies provide accurate yield forecasts, raw material quality control, and the optimisation of marketing decisions based on market conditions. An important element of Kernel's corporate communication is its digital branding strategy and corporate PR, aimed at shaping a positive brand image and increasing the loyalty of target audiences. The company maintains an active presence on social media platforms such as Facebook (n.d.) and Instagram (n.d.). It also actively uses Viber (n.d.) and Telegram (n.d.), applying analytics for targeting and optimising advertising campaigns. High visual quality of content, interactive activities, competitions, and informational campaigns support sustained brand recognition. A key role is played by the Public Relations (PR) department, which coordinates external communications and collaborates with international agencies, including Saatchi & Saatchi Ukraine (n.d.) (Forbes, 2024).

The integration of marketing processes with export and trading divisions is based on centralised planning. Export teams provide marketing with analytics on external markets, which allows the adaptation of advertising campaigns to the consumer preferences of EU countries, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. At the same time, the marketing department supports trading by forming digital campaigns aimed at increasing the brand recognition of Ukrainian agricultural products abroad. The use of analytical systems allows the synchronisation of sales plans with

demand forecasts, optimising logistical flows and minimising delays in supply. By the end of 2025, Kernel's strategic goals include further development of omnichannel marketing, which integrates online and offline consumer interaction channels into a unified communication system. Priority areas include the use of targeted advertising with detailed Key Performance Indicators (KPI) monitoring, expansion of content marketing, enhancing the role of analytics in decision-making, and applying a data-driven approach to marketing management. Through the combination of AI, machine learning, BI, and Big Data technologies, the company aims to achieve maximum personalisation of communications, automation of advertising campaigns, and precise forecasting of consumer behaviour (Landlord, 2025). Thus, Kernel is consistently implementing digital tools across all stages of marketing activity, combining centralised management with the flexibility of analytical solutions. This allows the company to strengthen its position in international markets, enhance communication effectiveness, adapt sales strategies to market fluctuations, and form long-term competitive advantages through an innovative marketing management model.

From 2020 to the first half of 2025, Kernel demonstrated gradual recovery of financial stability, increased operational efficiency, and active expansion of its presence in external markets. The company increased its export volumes of oilseeds and cereals, implemented digital solutions in trading, logistics, and marketing management. The dynamics of key indicators are presented in Table 2, which reflects trends in revenue growth, improved profitability, and strengthened brand activity for Kernel.

Table 2. Dynamics of key performance indicators of Kernel from 2020 to the first half of 2025

| Indicator | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 (6 months) |
|--------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|-----------------|
| Revenue (billion USD) | 3.50 | 5.65 | 5.33 | 3.91 | 3.58 | 4.12 |
| EBITDA (million USD) | 443 | 929 | 806 | 544 | 381 | 466 |
| EBITDA margin, % | 12.7 | 16.4 | 15.1 | 13.9 | 10.6 | 11.3 |
| Net profit (million USD) | 118 | 506 | 513 | 299 | 168 | 238 |
| Net margin, % | 3.4 | 9.0 | 9.6 | 7.6 | 4.7 | 5.8 |

Table 2, Continued

| Indicator | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 (6 months) |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------------------|
| Export volume of grains and oilseeds (million tonnes) | 7.9 | 8.8 | 8.0 | 7.3 | 8.1 | 8.3 |
| Share of export in revenue (%) | 85 | 88 | 90 | 87 | 89 | 90 |
| Investments (million USD) | 141 | 161 | 169 | 144 | 113 | 184 |
| Net debt (million USD) | 980 | 780 | 565 | 372 | 281 | 143 |
| Net debt / EBITDA | 2.2x | 0.8x | 0.7x | 0.7x | 0.7x | 0.3x |
| Social investments (CSR) (million USD) | 18.6 | 22.7 | 23.9 | 24.8 | 25.1 | 30.4 |
| CO ₂ emissions (thousand tonnes) | 3,891 | 3,574 | 3,411 | 3,203 | 3,022 | 2,044 |

Source: compiled by the authors based on Kernel Holding S.A. annual report for the year... (2020; 2021; 2022; 2023; 2024; 2025)

As shown in Table 2, following the turbulent period of 2022-2023, Kernel demonstrated a clear recovery in its financial performance. Revenue increased from USD 3.58 billion in 2024 to USD 4.12 billion in 2025 (+15%), reflecting stable recovery in the export of grains and oilseed processing products. The increase in EBITDA to USD 466 million (+22%) was accompanied by a strengthening of the margin to 11.3%, reflecting effective cost management and the gradual normalisation of logistics chains. At the same time, the company's net profit rose by 42% to USD 238 million, with net profitability improving by 1.1 percentage points. Despite a noticeable reduction in operating cash flow due to fluctuations in working capital, Kernel maintained positive liquidity dynamics, reducing net debt to USD 143 million (-49%) and achieving a Net debt / EBITDA ratio of only 0.3x in the first half of 2025. This indicates the company's high financial stability and flexibility in the face of external risks. In the non-financial aspect, Kernel demonstrated enhanced corporate social responsibility – social investments grew by 21%, while total CO₂ emissions decreased by 32%. These results confirm the company's focus on integrating sustainable practices (ESG) and the integration of digital technologies to improve production, trading, and marketing efficiency. Therefore, from 2020 to 2025, Kernel ensured a balanced combination of financial performance, digital transformation,

and ecological modernisation, positioning its marketing model as one of the most effective among Ukrainian agricultural corporations targeting the international market.

This study aligns with the work of M. Zastempowski & S. Cyfert (2022), which examined the role of innovative competencies in strengthening the competitive advantages of agricultural sector enterprises. In the research by M. Zastempowski & S. Cyfert, it was proven that the effectiveness of organisational development is determined by the ability of companies to form dynamic resources – a combination of management skills, knowledge, and technological innovations that ensure rapid adaptation to changes in the environment. Similarly to their findings, this study confirmed that the digital transformation of marketing creates a foundation for increasing the flexibility, analyticity, and innovativeness of business processes. However, the approaches differed in the level of detail: M. Zastempowski & S. Cyfert focused on a theoretical-methodological analysis of models of innovation competencies, while this research had a practical focus, demonstrating the practical implementation of digital tools within a single agricultural enterprise. While the Polish authors' work focused on generalising the strategic principles of innovation development in European companies, this study showed how digital solutions – CRM, Big Data, SMM, and AI – transformed

into specific mechanisms for increasing profitability and consumer loyalty.

The conclusions of E.N. Sadjadi & R. Fernández (2023) were closely related to the ideas discussed, as they investigated how intellectual technologies shape new models of efficiency in the agricultural sector of Spain. The authors emphasised that the success of digitalisation depends on the integration of technologies into the management strategy. In this study, these propositions were empirically confirmed using the example of the Kernel company, which applied analytical systems to optimise logistics, sales, and production planning. However, while E.N. Sadjadi & R. Fernández generalised the trends for the entire sector, this study analysed the internal mechanisms of digital transformation at the corporate level. The research by E. Abad-Segura *et al.* (2024) revealed the role of digitalisation and sustainable management in ensuring the competitiveness of agricultural businesses. As in this study, the authors emphasised the importance of the synergy between technological innovations, government support, and human capital. However, while E. Abad-Segura *et al.* studied systemic processes at the level of EU countries, this research focused on the internal integration of Kernel's digital tools into marketing and management activities. A similar approach was adopted by A. Martos-Pedrero *et al.* (2025), who analysed the relationship between internationalisation, innovation, and financial stability in Spanish cooperatives. In their model, entering external markets served as a catalyst for digital changes. In contrast, this study observed the opposite – it was digitalisation that became the driving force behind increasing the efficiency and flexibility of the company. Thus, both approaches led to similar outcomes, but through different paths: in A. Martos-Pedrero *et al.*, the market acted as the driver, whereas in this study, it was technological transformation.

This research partially aligns with the work of E.E. Eliseu *et al.* (2024), which was dedicated to the implementation of sustainable agricultural practices (GAPs) in developing countries, using Angola as a case study. The authors demonstrated that ecological innovations – irrigation, agroforestry, and composting – increase the

efficiency and resilience of the agricultural sector. Similarly, in this study, efficiency was achieved through innovations; however, the focus was on the digital transformation of marketing and management rather than natural resources. Both studies shared the conclusion that innovations ensure the sustainable development of agricultural business, but differed in approach: E.E. Eliseu *et al.* analysed the ecological component at the macro level, whereas this study revealed the corporate digital mechanisms that enhance efficiency.

Prospects for the innovative development of agricultural enterprises in Ukraine

The innovative development of agricultural enterprises in Ukraine today is a determining factor in their competitiveness and ability to integrate into the global market. Dynamic changes in the economic environment, the growing role of digital technologies, and the need to enhance food security in the context of wartime challenges are shaping a new model of agribusiness, where technological solutions become the key resource for growth. The prospects for the innovative development of the agricultural sector depend on the combination of three main directions: the digital transformation of management, the integration of ESG into production processes, and the increasing role of analytics in strategic decision-making. One of the priority areas is the development of the digital agro-economy, which involves the transition of enterprises from traditional production methods to data-driven management. The use of ERP, CRM, AI, Big Data, and machine learning systems ensures the full automation of accounting, logistics, sales, and marketing processes. Successful examples from companies such as MHP and Kernel prove the effectiveness of this approach: the former uses SAP CRM to manage the customer base and communications, while the latter employs Microsoft Dynamics NAV and BI panels to control operational efficiency. In the future, such systems will enable medium and small agricultural enterprises in Ukraine to scale their business and enter international markets without significant infrastructure costs.

An important trend is the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies and analytics into demand forecasting, crop yield prediction,

and market trends. Agricultural companies are implementing AI platforms for the automated analysis of large data sets, machine learning models to forecast consumer demand, deep neural networks to identify patterns in production and sales dynamics, as well as satellite monitoring systems with analytical modules. AI technologies already used in agro-holdings help reduce production risks, enhance the accuracy of management decisions, and optimise marketing strategies. Thanks to Agrohub Innovations Lab (n.d.), which unites over 50 agritech startups, modules for automatic plant disease detection, fertiliser norm calculations, and crop rotation efficiency forecasting are being implemented. In the future, these technologies will transform the approach to risk management, enabling the creation of flexible business models capable of responding to price fluctuations, changing climatic conditions, and consumer behaviour in real-time.

Another promising direction is the development of digital marketing and analytical platforms to support brands. Ukrainian agricultural companies are increasingly transitioning from traditional advertising to the comprehensive use of social media, SMM, content marketing, and e-commerce. Digital communications are becoming not only a tool for promotion but also a channel for building trust between the producer and the consumer. In 2026-2027, the active implementation of omnichannel marketing technologies is expected, where data from both online and offline sources will be combined to create a unified customer history. This will enhance the effectiveness of communications, allow for the creation of personalised offers, and strengthen brand loyalty (Koberniuk, 2023). A significant potential is concentrated in the field of sustainable development innovations and ESG approaches. Enterprises that combine environmental efficiency with technological innovations will have an advantage in EU markets, where strict environmental standards are in place. The implementation of energy-efficient technologies, bioenergy, CO₂ emission monitoring systems, and digital reporting platforms will help Ukrainian companies not only reduce costs but also comply with European certification requirements, opening access to funding

programmes and green investments. For instance, Kernel is already implementing carbon footprint reduction programmes under the Jumbo Impact Fund initiative, which may serve as a model for other enterprises (AgroElita, 2024).

The prospects for innovative development are also closely linked to the development of human capital. The training of specialists in digital marketing, data analytics, innovation management, and agritech is critically important for shaping a new generation of managers. Enterprises are increasingly establishing corporate academies, as MHP has done through its Culinary School and educational initiatives for employees. In the future, such programmes may be expanded into industry-specific educational platforms that integrate business and science. No less important is deepening cooperation with the state and international partners within the framework of agricultural digital transformation programmes. At the level of public policy, the key role in shaping the conditions for innovative development is played by financial and advisory support instruments. One of the most important is the "Affordable Loans 5-7-9%" programme (Privatbank, n.d.), which provides enterprises with access to cheap financial resources. Thanks to preferential lending, agricultural companies are able to invest in modernising production facilities, acquiring digital management systems, renewing equipment, implementing ERP/CRM platforms, and automated logistics solutions, which are critical elements of their digital transformation. The eRobota (n.d.) grant initiative is aimed at the development of processing enterprises, horticulture, and greenhouse farming. The programme supports projects that involve the implementation of modern irrigation technologies, energy-saving equipment, electronic document management, precision farming systems, and innovative post-harvest processing methods. With the help of grants, enterprises can modernise production and increase its automation, reducing technological losses and improving the quality of finished products. The USAID AGRO programme (Organic knowledge platform, n.d.) plays a significant role in the development of the innovative infrastructure of the Ukrainian agricultural sector. It supports the digitalisation of small and medium-sized

farms by helping to implement monitoring information systems, modern logistics solutions, precision farming technologies, agricultural analytics tools, and food safety management systems. Special attention is given to the development of innovation clusters, training personnel in digital skills, and disseminating technological practices that enhance the efficiency of production processes. The FAO Ukraine Resilience Programme (FAO emergencies and resilience, n.d.) aims to strengthen the resilience of agricultural enterprises by implementing modern agritech, restoring production capacities, and supporting the transition to more efficient and environmentally friendly management models. The programme fosters the introduction of innovations in risk management, soil fertility conservation systems, digital monitoring tools, and the modernisation of post-harvest processing and logistics technology. Additionally, the EU4Business (n.d.) project: competitiveness and international cooperation for small and medium-sized enterprises ensures financing for digital solutions and training for entrepreneurs in agrimarketing. International programmes such as Horizon Europe (European Commission, n.d.c), The European Green Deal (European Commission, n.d.a), and the Digital Europe Programme (European Commission, n.d.b) open access for Ukrainian companies to grants for research and development in agritech, energy efficiency, digital management, and carbon footprint reduction. Participation in these initiatives not only provides financial support but also facilitates integration into European technological partnership networks. Cooperation with international financial institutions – specifically, the EBRD (n.d.), World Bank in Ukraine (n.d.), and IFC in Ukraine (n.d.) – creates additional opportunities for implementing digitalisation projects, modernising production facilities, and introducing environmentally safe technologies. The EBRD supports the implementation of energy-efficient solutions, environmental monitoring systems, and digital operation management platforms. The World Bank promotes the development of data infrastructure, digital services, and modern technologies in supply chains, increasing transparency and productivity in enterprises. The IFC provides financial instruments

for upgrading technical infrastructure, automating processes, and implementing innovative agritech solutions. Taken together, this support enables enterprises to accelerate digital transformation, reduce technological risks, and adapt production to international standards.

A crucial role in the future development will be played by the integration of agribusiness into the digital ecosystem of the national economy. The development of open data systems, electronic document management, and online platforms for trading and export will contribute to increasing transparency and reducing transaction costs. Currently, Ukraine already has such tools in place as the State Agrarian Register (n.d.), which consolidates information about farmers and provides access to state support programmes; the eTTN system, which optimises logistics and ensures the monitoring of cargo movements; and the DREAM (n.d.) platform for managing infrastructure investments in communities, including agricultural projects. In the trading and export sectors, the Prozorro (n.d.) platform is particularly promising. The use of this system allows agricultural enterprises to expand sales channels, participate in large public and commercial procurements, enter into contracts with minimal transaction costs, and increase trust with counterparties due to data transparency. This makes Prozorro an effective tool for scaling exports and integrating enterprises into a competitive trade space.

This study partially aligns with the work of V. Graskemper *et al.* (2021), which examined the types of strategic choices made by farmers in Germany. The authors demonstrated that innovation, education, and willingness to take risks determined entrepreneurs' inclination towards expansion or diversification of their activities, while conservative farmers opted for stabilisation strategies. These findings resonated with the results of this study, which also emphasised the importance of innovative thinking and strategic adaptation for the growth of agricultural companies. However, unlike the individual-oriented approach of V. Graskemper *et al.*, which analysed the behaviour of farmers, this research had a corporate dimension and demonstrated how digital transformation strengthened the efficiency and competitiveness of large enterprises.

Thus, both studies converge in their assessment of innovation as a driver of agribusiness development, but differ in the level of analysis: V. Graskemper *et al.* focused on the individual, while this study focused on the corporate and technological aspects.

The work of G. Cascone *et al.* (2024) highlighted the relationship between technological innovations and sustainable practices in production, whereas this study demonstrated how similar principles were applied in digital marketing. While G. Cascone *et al.* focused on macro-level environmental and production aspects, this study examined corporate management mechanisms that ensure the adaptability and market resilience of companies, specifically MHP and Kernel. In the work of A. Bonfiglio (2024), the emphasis was on territorial clusters and institutional interaction among participants in the agrarian economy. This resonated with the idea in the present study regarding the significance of innovation for development, but the difference lay in the focus: A. Bonfiglio analysed regional connections, while this study revealed the internal digital modernisation of business models.

The research by L. Altamore *et al.* (2024) focused on the impact of the Internet of Things (IoT), sensor systems, and big data on the ecological efficiency of agriculture. In this study, technological innovation also defined success, but through demand analytics, CRM systems, and digital communications. While L. Altamore *et al.* described innovations in production, in this study, they were viewed as tools for brand management and marketing processes. The work of A. Giorgio *et al.* (2024) further explored the topic, showing how digitalisation changed production systems in Italy. Its findings aligned with the conclusions of this research: in both studies, technologies were considered fundamental to business adaptability, but A. Giorgio *et al.* analysed industry policy, whereas this study focused on the practical corporate strategies of the company Kernel.

This study partially aligns with the work of M.J. Mihanović *et al.* (2025), which analysed the impact of digital innovations on the sustainability of business models in the transport sector of Croatia. Both studies emphasised that

digitalisation is a key factor in the efficiency, adaptability, and competitiveness of enterprises, yet they differed in their subject matter and context of analysis. M.J. Mihanović *et al.* focused on the digital modernisation of transport systems, which contributed to improving logistical efficiency and ecological safety, while this study demonstrated the impact of digital technologies on agribusiness, specifically through marketing tools, CRM, Big Data, and demand analytics. Both approaches converge in the conclusion that the integration of digital systems into strategic management ensures flexibility and business resilience in the context of global turbulence. However, in M.J. Mihanović *et al.*, attention was paid to the institutional and regulatory barriers to digitalisation, whereas this study reveals the practical mechanisms of corporate digital transformation in the case of agricultural enterprises. Both works complement each other, showcasing different sectoral aspects of the impact of innovations on sustainable economic development.

Thus, the prospects for the innovative development of agricultural enterprises in Ukraine are determined by the combination of digital transformation, sustainable development, and intellectual analytics. MHP and Kernel act as catalysts for these changes, providing examples of innovation integration into production, logistics, and marketing. The further expansion of digital practices, automation of business processes, the implementation of AI-based forecasting systems, and the creation of partnership ecosystems between business, science, and government lay the foundation for the transition of the Ukrainian agricultural sector to a qualitatively new stage of development – a stage characterised by a technologically-oriented, competitive, and sustainable agribusiness, capable of ensuring not only economic growth but also food stability on both regional and global scales.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of the conducted study confirmed that innovative marketing is a decisive factor in the competitiveness of Ukrainian agricultural enterprises in the context of the digital economy. A comparative analysis of the activities of MHP and Kernel demonstrated the effectiveness of digital transformation as a tool

for adapting businesses to wartime challenges, global competition, and changes in consumer trends. During the period from 2020 to 2024, MHP demonstrated stability in financial performance: revenue increased from USD 1.41 billion to USD 2.26 billion, while EBITDA grew from USD 302 million to USD 437 million. At the same time, the average product selling price increased by 50%, from USD 1.34 to USD 2.01 per kilogram, which indicates an effective marketing policy and flexibility in responding to market fluctuations. The growth in the share of digital tools in the marketing budget from 25% to over 65% confirmed the company's transition to a deeply digitised model of communication with consumers. These changes ensured a stable level of exports, which in 2023-2024 exceeded 300,000 tonnes, allowing the company to maintain its status as one of the largest chicken exporters in Europe. The figures for the first half of 2025 confirm the continuation of this trend: revenue reached USD 1.64 billion, EBITDA stood at USD 236 million, the average selling price increased to USD 2.29 per kilogram, and exports amounted to 185.6 thousand tonnes, indicating the continued high growth dynamics and competitive position of the company in international markets. Kernel, in turn, demonstrated a strong growth dynamic in financial indicators. The company's revenue in 2025 reached USD 4.12 billion, which is 15% higher than in 2024, while EBITDA increased by 22% to USD 466 million. The net debt level decreased nearly sevenfold, from USD 980 million in 2020 to USD 143 million in 2025, and the Net debt/EBITDA ratio dropped to 0.3 \times , indicating

high financial stability and resource management efficiency. The company also increased social investments by 21% and reduced CO₂ emissions by 32%, highlighting the integration of ESG principles into its corporate strategy.

Based on these indicators, it can be concluded that innovative marketing not only increases the profitability of agribusinesses but also creates the foundation for their resilience in the face of wartime risks and global economic instability. The digital transformation of MHP and Kernel proves that it is the synergy of technology, analytics, and strategic marketing management that forms the basis for long-term growth and international competitiveness of Ukrainian agricultural enterprises. The limitation of this study lies in the focus primarily on the corporate level of digital transformation in agricultural marketing, which requires further expansion of observations to other segments of the industry. Future research prospects involve a deeper evaluation of the impact of digital technologies on the effectiveness of marketing strategies of agricultural enterprises and the development of universal models for their integration into sustainable development strategies.

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Наталія Суліма

Кандидат економічних наук, доцент
Національний університет біоресурсів і природокористування України
03041, вул. Героїв Оборони, 15, м. Київ, Україна
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3852-7989>

Наталія Мазур

Доктор економічних наук, професор
Кам'янець-Подільський національний університет імені Івана Огієнка
32300, вул. Огієнка, 61, м. Кам'янець-Подільський, Україна
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4670-6805>

Іван Семенець

Кандидат економічних наук, доцент
Кам'янець-Подільський національний університет імені Івана Огієнка
32300, вул. Огієнка, 61, м. Кам'янець-Подільський, Україна
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2928-7979>

Оксана Кушнір

Кандидат економічних наук, доцент
Кам'янець-Подільський національний університет ім. Івана Огієнка
32300, вул. Огієнка, 61, м. Кам'янець-Подільський, Україна
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2679-2782>

Микита Савицький

Здобувач наукового ступеня доктора філософії з економіки
Національний університет біоресурсів і природокористування України
03041, вул. Героїв Оборони, 15, м. Київ, Україна
<https://orcid.org/0009-0005-3306-2835>

Інноваційний маркетинг як складова стратегії розвитку аграрних підприємств

Анотація. Метою даного дослідження було обґрунтувати вплив цифрових технологій і маркетингових рішень на підвищення результативності, конкурентоспроможності та адаптивності аграрних підприємств України в умовах трансформації економіки на прикладі двох провідних компаній – Миронівський хлібопродукт та Kernel. Методологія ґрунтувалася на поєднанні кількісного аналізу фінансово-виробничих показників і якісного аналізу цифрових інструментів маркетингу, що застосовуються цими підприємствами, для виявлення взаємозв'язку між рівнем цифровізації та результативністю бізнесу. У Миронівського хлібопродукту виручка зросла з 1,41 до 2,26 мільярда доларів США, а чистий прибуток – із 302 до 437 мільйонів доларів США. Середня ціна реалізації продукції збільшилася на 50 % – із 1,34 до 2,01 долара США за кілограм, тоді як частка цифрових інструментів у маркетинговому бюджеті зросла з 25 % до понад 65 %. Компанія Kernel продемонструвала аналогічну позитивну динаміку: виручка підвищилася до 4,12 мільярда доларів США (+15 %), чистий прибуток – до 466 мільйонів доларів (+22 %), а зміцнення маржі до 11,3 %. Додатково компанія збільшила соціальні інвестиції на 21 % і скоротила викиди вуглецю на 32 %. Отримані результати засвідчили, що цифровізація маркетингу, автоматизація бізнес-процесів і розвиток онлайн-комунікацій стали ключовими чинниками підвищення прибутковості, фінансової стійкості та міжнародної конкурентоспроможності українських аграрних компаній. Практичне значення дослідження полягає в тому, що його результати можуть бути використані керівниками аграрних підприємств, консультантами з маркетингу та державними

інституціями під час розроблення стратегій цифрової трансформації, оптимізації маркетингових процесів і підвищення експортного потенціалу аграрного сектору України

Ключові слова: цифрова трансформація; управління; конкурентоспроможність; бренд; контент; просування