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## External Environment as a Factor of Ensuring the Competitiveness of Organizations in the Regional Market of Medical Services

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**Abstract:**

*The relevance of this study is due to the problem of providing and increasing the competitiveness of enterprises operating in the regional market of medical services, which is possible only with a constant study of the characteristics of the market and factors of the external environment and is an indispensable criterion for survival in a competitive environment. The purpose of this article is to study the practical application of instrumental approaches to assessing the external environment of organizations in the market of medical services to the population of Magnitogorsk.*

*The leading methods to study this problem are the methods of strategic analysis of the external environment, special methods of sociological expert study, tabular and graphical methods of visualizing the results of the study. The study covered medical centers operating in the territory of Magnitogorsk, Chelyabinsk region. The article substantiates that the use of strategic analysis methods to assess external environmental factors allows the organization to timely extract information about the business environment at the regional level and to develop programs for the development of the organization in the short and long term.*

*Adapted, considering the specifics of medical organizations, methods form a unified system that facilitates a comprehensive assessment of the external environment and ensuring competitiveness. The study proved that the applied methods of strategic analysis can be used to conduct comparative competitive analysis and develop strategic development plans aimed at increasing the competitiveness of regional medical centers. The materials of the article can be useful for the leaders of medical organizations to ensure sustainable development and increase the efficiency of economic activity in a changing external environment.*

**Keywords:** *competition, competitiveness, business, services, marketing, the external environment.*

**JEL Classification:** *R11, L8, L83, M31*

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## 1. Introduction

The most important condition for the prosperity and sustainable development of any nation is the health condition of the population (Rakhimova, 2014). The process of economic transformations taking place in Russia in recent years presupposes a comprehensive development of new economic relations in all parts of the economy aimed at the formation of an adaptive management system. This, in its turn, contributes to creating the conditions necessary for effective business activity (Biybosunova *et al.*, 2015). The close interrelation of the medical services sphere to the population with practically all aspects of the economy life support is increasing importance for the development of the national economy and requires the development and implementation of the strategic management concept and the implementation of regional policies in this field. The successful development of the medical service segment from the position of the modern market economy and management proceeds from the growing role of the individual as a consumer and the producer of services in this area, considering the specific features of the particular region (Danilchenko, 2013). The thing that widely reflects a certain genesis is: on the one hand, society and the state form a strategy for the development of the medical services segment for the population in the form of external purposes and control them; on the other hand, the health services, having its own purposes, can function fully only in the presence of activity external goals, when in the process of practical activity there is a continuous transformation of external and internal purposes, factors, criteria (Mikhailova, 2010; Theriou, 2015).

In the papers (Velichko *et al.*, 2012; Vasilieva, 2015; Kuznetsova, 2014) it is noted that the success of an economic entity directly depends on knowledge of the specifics and market conditions, on the degree of influence on the medical organization of environmental factors, on achieving competitiveness and on the implementation of competitive advantages ensuring its stable market position, including on the degree of ownership of modern methods and methods for assessing and accounting for external environmental factors. Analysis and consideration of the external environment of the organization, the creation of competitive advantages over the opponent becomes a strategic direction of the enterprise in the field of ensuring the competitiveness of the national economy (Velichko *et al.*, 2012; Vasilieva and Kuznetsova, 2016) is the initial process of developing and timely adjusting the development strategy of the enterprise, allowing it to achieve its purposes, moving to a higher level of development (Biybosunova *et al.*, 2015; Zimina, 2014; Vovchenko and Panasenkov, 2013).

But at the same time, there is an insufficient number of studies of the influence of external environment factors on the activities of individual medical organizations and comparative analysis at the regional level. Regarding this, the problem of studying the influence of external environment factors on the activities of medical services organizations at the regional level is relevant.

The purpose of this paper is to study the practical application of instrumental approaches to the assessment of external environmental factors of organizations operating in the market of medical services. The objects of the study are medical centers operating in the territory of Magnitogorsk, Chelyabinsk region. The subjects of the study are external environmental factors. To solve the tasks set in the paper, the system, structural and functional approaches, methods of strategic analysis of the environment, special methods of sociological study, tabular and graphical methods of visualizing the results of the study were used.

The need to study the influence of external environmental factors is largely determined by the fact that organizations do not exist in a “limited vacuum”, but effectively function in a complex and dynamic society. What, in turn, requires an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the organization, its capabilities and threats, as well as their correlation with the challenges of the external environment.

## **2. Literature Review**

Modern management theory will make study of the external environment a significant role to achieve the success and stability of the organization. Specialists note that the formation of a market competitive environment and its assessment from the position of the external environment are inextricably linked with the search for effective methods of enterprise management based on the improvement and optimization of existing business processes, which is possible provided that the achievements of modern strategic management are used (Velichko *et al.*, 2012; Kuznetsova *et al.*, 2017; Kolchanova and Kolchanova, 2016).

Management of sustainable development of participants in the market of medical services is a dynamic process that requires constant monitoring of the status of the medical organization's activities in the context of the external environment (Kuznetsova, 2016). Organizations today face unprecedented challenges in maintaining commercial survival and success. Because of the rapid changes taking place in the current market and arising in business practice for organizations, it is important not to lag the trends of changes in their external environment (Zhang *et al.*, 2011). This has a different effect on the activities of organizations. On the one hand, numerous companies leave the business because the changes taking place in their business environment have not allowed them to react quickly to them. On the other hand, rapid and active detection of a signal-free environment and an immediate response or counteraction to threats can lead organizations to success and prosperity (Vasilieva, 2015; Zhang *et al.*, 2011). The ability to adapt to changes in the external environment is the main condition for prosperity and the competitiveness of business and other spheres of life, and the main purpose of business organizations is not only to derive profit from their activities, but also to increase growth and survival in a changing external environment (Eruemegbe, 2015).

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The external environment is a set of factors that are exogenous in relation to the organization and influence organizational efficiency (Njoroge *et al.*, 2016); the initial conditions faced by entrepreneurs in any economy (Alkali, 2012). Regardless of the industry in which organizations compete, the external environment affects firms, as they seek to ensure strategic competitiveness (Hitt *et al.*, 2011). The external environment of organizations is an integrated, dynamically developing characteristic, which includes a complex of social, technological, economic, political and legal factors that are beyond the control of business and impose their limitations on the activities of the organization. The survival and success of an organization depends on the skillful interaction of the company's management with the external environment and timely responses to changes in this environment, analyzing and accounting for its impact on the organization and business in general (Kuznetsova and Alekseeva, 2016; Kuznetsova, 2015; Srimuk and Choibamroong, 2014).

The problem of studying external environmental factors and their impact on the functioning of organizations, including the medical profile, on increasing their competitiveness has recently been actively discussed by scientists and practitioners. Jonas Lazauskas, Bureika Gintautas, Valiūnas Valdas, Pečeliūnas Robertas, Matijosius Jonas, Nagurnas Saulius (2012) note that the ability of enterprises to adapt in a changing external environment, responding to direct changes in market external environment factors and maintaining a stable position on it is largely related and determines the level of competitiveness of these enterprises. Melecke (2013) notes that the study of external environmental factors in the context of competitiveness analysis brings important information about key problems in the region on the one hand and the development of the competitiveness potential of the enterprise on the other.

The organization can continue to exist only if it finds an efficient technology of production and management (Grubich and Shrolik, 2015). In addition, the activity of an enterprise in an external competitive environment can and should be concentrated in the sphere where it can preserve or gain (multiply) the competitive advantage (De Villiers, 2002). In the process of developing development options, organizations should consider not only capabilities and threats, the present and the future, internal potential, strengths and weaknesses, but also competitive advantages that provide an opportunity to be market leaders (Voiculet *et al.*, 2010).

Ridwan and Primiana (2015) note that the process of analyzing the external environment is intended to identify two variables, namely, the capabilities and threat, that allow the organization to be monitored not only in the short term. We should also follow the view that the external environment can include changes in the international economy, changes in technology, changes in the national economy, national culture and traditions, industry / sector characteristics, legislation and regulation of activities, changes in trade union activities and competitors (Genç, 2014). All this determines the essential characteristics of managing the external environment (its aspects), which are necessary for the development of an appropriate

organizational strategy (Handriani, 2011). The study of the main elements of the external environment of the degree of their influence on the organizations promotes the growth of their competitiveness, allowing identifying potential capabilities and threats for the organization's activities necessary for the development of the concept and strategy of its development (Kuznetsova, 2015; Cetindamar and Kilitcioglu, 2013).

Analysis of the external environment allows you to control external factors in relation to the organization, to anticipate possible threats and potential capabilities of the organization. It also allows timely development of situational plans in case of occurrence of not foreseen situations, as well as development of measures to turn potential threats into potential capabilities.

### **3. Materials and Methods**

Modern approaches to the study of the influence of external environment factors do not give an unambiguous interpretation in the definition of the assessment tool. The study of the environmental factors influence on the functioning of the organization is a necessary part of a comprehensive analysis of the company's activities, which allows to get an answer to the main question - what place does the organization occupy in this segment of the market and how can it build its further strategic line of behavior under the influence of external environmental factors.

It is expedient to conduct the study in two stages. Within the framework of the first stage, the experimental base of the study should be defined, and the prevailing factors should be identified and the degree of their influence on the activity of the investigated object. Methods used at this stage: PEST analysis, compiling a profile of the environment, determining a weighted assessment of the impact of factors on the medical organization.

At the second stage it is proposed to identify the modern localization of the organization in its life cycle by assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the organization, as well as the capabilities and threats from the external environment. The use of the SWOT-analysis method plays a special role in assessing the external environment of enterprises at this stage.

PEST-analysis as a tool for assessing the external environment includes the ability to form an objective view of the market real state of medical services to the population now and assess the prospects for its development from the perspective of differently directed aspects: socio-cultural, demographic, technological, economic, political and legal. The essence of the method of compiling the profile of the environment is that the scale of expert assessments determines the degree of advancement of the organization and the most powerful competitor. As a criterion, profile mapping is used. The main advantage of the enterprise assessing method is its visibility.

SWOT-analysis is considered by the authors as a method that allows identifying the modern localization of the organization in its life cycle by assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the organization, as well as the capabilities and threats from the external environment (Kuznetsova, 2017; Kuznetsova *et al.*, 2015; Gudov *et al.*, 2012). The authors also use a toolkit of sociological and statistical study, without the results of which it is impossible to present public opinion on the most important issues and problem points of functioning of medical organizations.

The methods suggested by the authors will allow to assess the effectiveness of the functioning of the medical services for the population and to identify the problems of competitiveness of enterprises in this sector when interacting with the external environment.

#### 4. Results

In accordance with the purpose of the study, we will analyze the influence of external environmental factors on the activities of organizations operating in the market of medical services in Magnitogorsk.

Today in Magnitogorsk, the companies that position themselves as related to the medical sphere of activity there are 96: of them, 35 private medical centers, 3 centers of manual therapy, 14 centers of health and cosmetology, and 44 dentist centers. The same number includes branches based on city hospitals (offices, offices) dealing with diagnostics, specialist advice, dental services, plastic surgery, cosmetology, health, treatment with alcohol, tobacco and drug addiction, or providing medical services for market analysis. This fully corresponds to the all-Russian trends in the percentage of distribution of medical organizations in the spectrum of paid medical services (Kuznetsova, 2016).

The medical centers of Magnitogorsk, which have a similar spectrum of services provided and oriented toward similar groups of consumers, have been chosen as the investigated objects: MC “Dr. Life”, “Tet-a-Tet”, “Family Doctor”, “Ocean of Health”, “Health”, and “Private Clinic 16” (hereinafter referred to as MC of Magnitogorsk). With the help of PEST analysis, we will conduct a study of the political, economic, socio-cultural and technological aspects of the external environment of the medical organization at the regional level (Table 1).

**Table 1.** PEST analysis of the Magnitogorsk MC

P. Political and legal factors	E. Economic factors
- Imperfect and complex tax system leading to the establishment of high prices	- Change art. 248.1 of the Tax Code of the Russian Federation of the organization (cancellation of the tax rate 0%)
- State support of small business	- Inflation - 4.1% as of April 2017.
- Influence of Roszdravnadzor of Chelyabinsk region, Rospotrebnadzor of Chelyabinsk region, state influence of	- Exchange rates: U.S. dollar: - May 2017 - 56.9518 rubles;

Federal Compulsory Medical Insurance Fund (verification) - State regulation in the field of medicine (FL №5487-1 as of 22.07.1993г. “The Fundamentals of the Russian Federation Legislation on the Protection of Health of Citizens”, Government Decision No. 350-P “On the Territorial Program of State Guarantees of Providing Free Health Care for Citizens of the Russian Federation in the Chelyabinsk Region,” Russian Government Resolution No. 27 “Rules for the Provision of Paid Medical Services to the Population by Medical Institutions”, etc.)	Euro - May 2017 - 62.1515 rubles.
S. Social and cultural factors	T. Technological
- Preferences of services ultimate consumer - Education level of the country's population - Demographic situation (the growth of the Magnitogorsk population, as of January 01, 2016 - 417.563 thousand people, as of January 01, 2017 - 418.283 thousand people).	- Scientific and technical progress in the sphere of rendering services (electronic record, online services) - Unique medical equipment - Adaptation of new technologies - Improvement (propose of new) types of medical services to the population

Let us single out the factors that can be evaluated as the most obvious threats and capabilities for the activities of the organizations studied (Table 2, Figure 1).

**Table 2. Matrix of the profile of the environment of the MC “Dr. Life”**

The environmental factor	Importance for the industry, A	Impact on the organization, B	Directivity of influence, C	Degree of importance, D = ABC
<b>Political and legal factors</b>				
Imperfect and complex tax system that leads to the establishment of high prices	3	3	-1	-9
State support of small business	1	3	+1	+3
<b>Economic factors</b>				
Change of the art. 248.1 of the Tax Code of the Russian Federation of the organization (cancellation of the 0% tax rate)	3	3	-1	-9
Inflation - 7.3% as of April 2016.	3	1	-1	-3
<b>Social and cultural factors</b>				
Preferences of ultimate	1	3	+1	+9

consumers of services				
Education level of the country's population	3	2	+1	+6
<b>Technological factors</b>				
Scientific and technical progress in the sphere of rendering medical services	3	2	+1	+6
Unique medical equipment	3	3	+1	+9
Adaptation of new technologies	3	1	+1	+9
Improvement (proposal) of new types of medical services to the population	3	2	+1	+6

\* *Criteria for rating by:* - importance of the industry - large (3 points), moderate (2 points), weak (1 point) - influence on the organization - strong (3 points), moderate (2 points), weak (1 point), absence of influence (0 points) - directional influences - positive (+1), negative (-1). The integral estimation (D) is the result of multiplying the expert estimates.

A windowed estimate of the influence of external environmental factors on the activities of the MC is presented in Table 3. Further, we will use the SWOT-analysis technique to obtain a more complete picture of the influence of external environmental factors on the activity of the medical center: the definition of internal capabilities, strengths and weaknesses, the capacity of the organization (Table 4).

The application of PEST and SWOT analysis techniques allows the organization to extract timely information about the environment, the business environment at the regional level and to develop the development programs of the organization in the short and long term.

## 5. Discussion

The study of the influence of external environmental factors on the activities of organizations in the regional market of medical services (for example, MC Magnitogorsk) allows us to formulate several conclusions. The basis for formulating the conclusions is to answer the above question - how the results of the study will help the company's management to develop a development strategy to increase competitiveness and strengthen their positions in the target market segment. The question posed allows us to note the fact that this sector of business is very promising. To date, the medical care sector of the population is trying to win niches in which it can develop more efficiently.

In the paper we noted the fact of insufficient number of studies assessing the level of influence of external environmental factors on the activities of organizations in the regional market of medical services and conducting comparative analysis with competitors.



Figure 1. Matrix of the medium profile of the MC of Magnitogorsk

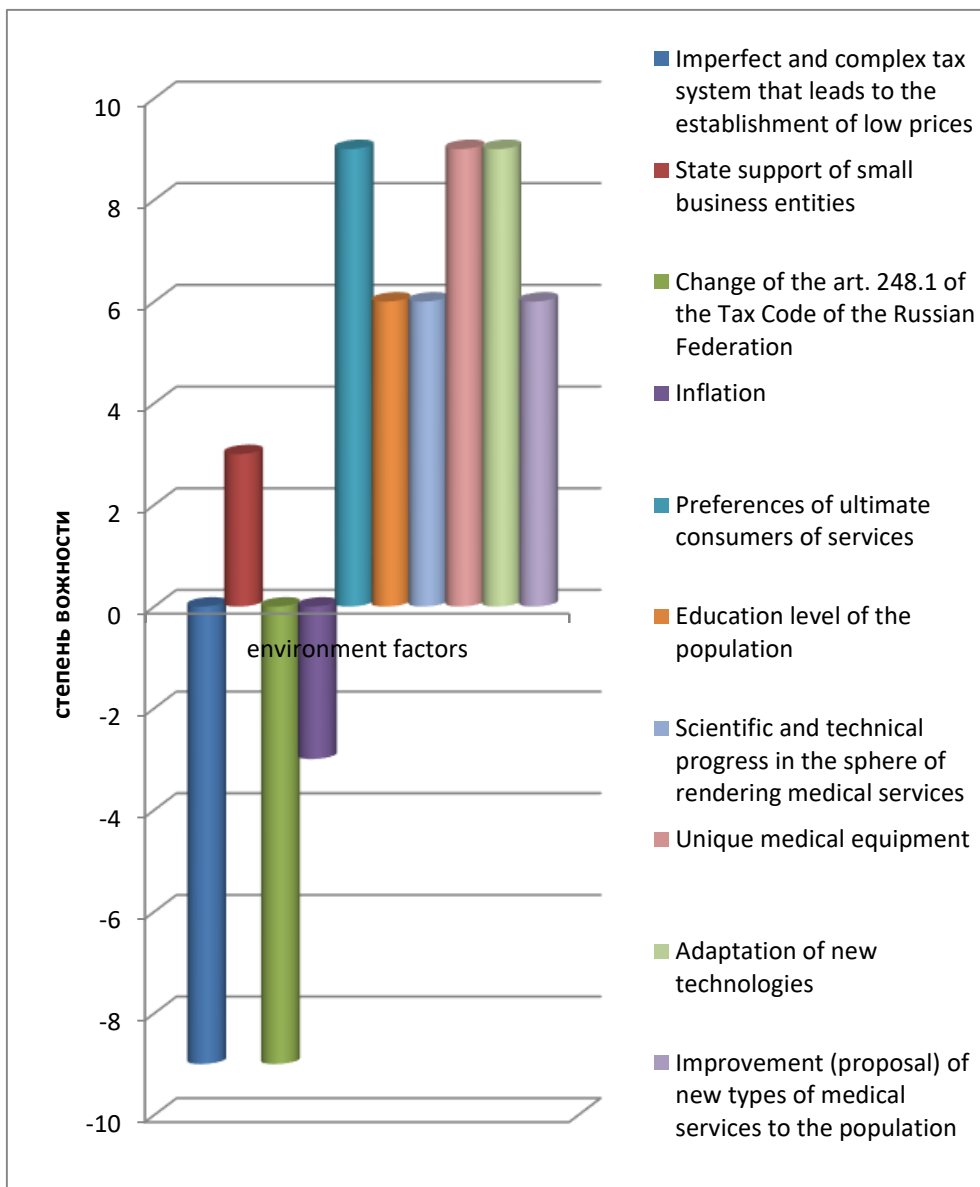


Table 3. Windowed estimate of the influence of external environmental factors in the MC Magnitogorsk

External strategic factors	Weight	Estimate	Windowed estimate
Capabilities			
State support of small business	0.075	3	0.225
Preferences of ultimate consumers of services	0.125	5	0.625

Education level of the country's population	0.05	2	0.1
Scientific and technical progress in the sphere of rendering medical services	0.1	4	0.4
Unique medical equipment	0.1	4	0.4
Adaptation of new technologies	0.125	5	0.625
improvement of new types of services	0.1	4	0.4
Total capabilities:			2.775
Threats			
Imperfect and complex tax system leading to the establishment of high prices and the washing out of the company's current assets	0.125	5	0.625
Change of the art. 248.1 of the Tax Code of the Russian Federation of the organization (cancellation of the 0% tax rate)	0.125	5	0.625
Inflation - 4.1% (as of April 2017)	0.075	3	0.225
Total threats:			1.475
Total estimate:	1.0	40	

**Table 4.** Matrix of decisions because of SWOT-analysis of the MC of Magnitogorsk

	<p>External capabilities (O):</p> <p>O1. increase the role of Research and Advanced Development in the strategy of development of competitive advantages of medical centers and increase the competitiveness of services provided, as well as the creation of new diagnostic programs for various diseases using unique equipment</p> <p>O2. increasing the quality and accessibility of services for the population of specific regions</p>	<p>External threats (T):</p> <p>T1. decrease of profitability of the main business process due to changes in customs procedures for the import of equipment and reagents</p> <p>T2. The appearance of strong competitors in the market</p>
<p>Internal strengths (S):</p> <p>S1. wide range of medical services</p> <p>Application of modern and high-quality diagnostic equipment</p> <p>S3. established tradition of high quality services</p>	<p>S1, O1. To bring to market a new service with new consumer properties</p> <p>S1, 3, O2. The analysis of the prices, training and stimulation of the personnel (requalification)</p> <p>S2, O1. Stimulation of personnel, promotions, advertising</p> <p>S2, O2. Enter into agreements with prevention and treatment facility (work on Compulsory Health Insurance , with insurance companies (Compulsory Health Insurance and Voluntary Medical</p>	<p>S1, T1. Search for new suppliers</p> <p>S1, T2. Analysis of prices, develop a program to capture free niches by advertising quality of services</p> <p>S2, T2. Analysis of prices, stocks, programs</p> <p>S3, T1. Find substitute services</p> <p>S3, T2. Personnel training, actions</p> <p>S4, 5, T2. Strengthening its position through active advertising and propaganda</p> <p>S5, T2. The emphasis in advertising on the company's impeccable reputation</p>

<p>S4. high level of quality control S5. marketing, the company's fame on the market S6. high market share</p>	<p>Insurance) S4, O2. Enhancing quality control S5, O1, 2. Development of a program to capture free niches of the market due to advertising quality of services S6, O2. Presentations, conclude agreements with medical and preventive institutions</p>	<p>S6, T2. Improving the customer service system, increasing the quality of services, market analysis</p>
<p>Internal weaknesses (W): W1. costs on the service W2. technical level of the repair service W3. lack of communication between the services range of the MC and changes in consumer preferences W4. the lack of regular information about the results of their work</p>	<p>W1, O1. Cost saving W2, O1. Make an emphasis in advertising on the quality of services, promotions (shortening the time of surveys) W3, O1. Analysis of consumer preferences W3, O2. Presentations in the regions, analysis of preferences W4, O1. Personnel training</p>	<p>W1, T1. Cost saving, control W1, T2. The emphasis in advertising on the quality of services and an impeccable reputation W3, T1. Analysis of consumer preferences, attract W3, T2. Analysis of prices and preferences, actions, programs, attract consumers W4, T1. Staff incentive (motivation) W4, T2. Personnel training, requalification, testing</p>

So, the application of the PEST-analysis method helps the researched MC of Magnitogorsk to identify macro-environment factors that have a significant impact on their stable development:

- The following factors have the most positive effect on the activities of the MC: (+9): preferences of ultimate consumers of services; unique medical equipment, modern equipment; adaptation of new technologies (highly qualified trained personnel, remote communication with doctors of Chelyabinsk, Ufa, new methods of service (online recording);
- Maximum threats to the organization's activities (-9) are related to political, legal and economic factors: imperfect and complex tax system; change art. 284.1 of the Tax Code of the Russian Federation of the organization (cancellation of the tax rate 0%).

Capabilities from the external environment based on the results of PEST-analysis,

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which the organization can gain for itself, average (windowed estimate 2.775 points), threats from the external environment are minimal (1.475 points). Considering the maximum estimate of 5 points, we believe that the MCs under investigation can effectively withstand external threats and take advantage of capabilities from the external environment. Based on the SWOT-analysis matrix data, the following conclusions can be drawn.

Strengths of the work of medical centers that have the most positive impact on the results of work are a wide range of medical services, the availability of modern and high-quality diagnostic equipment, the high quality of diagnostics and service provision, a high level of quality control of diagnostics and services provision in the organization's management structure.

The weak sides of the MC work, which have the maximum negative impact on the results of work, are the costs for the service, the technical level of the repair service, the lack of communication between the services range of the MC and changes in consumer preferences, lack of communications and the lack of regular information about the results of their work.

Maximally positive capabilities for improving the work of the MC, which exert an intensive influence on the results of work and enhance the competitive advantages of the services provided, are the strengthening of the role of Research and Advanced Development by creating new programs for diagnosing socially significant diseases, taking into account the dynamics of socio-demographic indicators in service regions, and increasing the quality and accessibility services for diagnostics for the population in the context of regions.

The most significant threat to the effective operation of medical centers, which can exert an intensive negative impact on the results of work, is the threat of changing the forms of social interaction between stakeholders on the issues of training personnel in the field of medicine.

The carried-out study of factors influences of an external environment on activity of the organizations the market of medical services. Magnitogorsk is of great importance for the development of medical care enterprises, since the methods used can be used to conduct comparative competitive analysis and develop specific practical recommendations for the development of strategic development plans and to increasing the competitiveness of medical centers.

## **6. Conclusion**

At present, business is becoming more complex, diverse, functioning in a changing external environment. The management of medical companies notes that the successful operation of the medical center in a rapidly changing external environment largely depends on the use of modern and effective instruments of

strategic management that promote the formation and development of competitive advantages over the rival and ensure its stable market position.

In conclusion, it should be noted that the external environment of the organization is the functioning environment of the economic entity, consisting of a certain number of elements (which are situational in nature), both within it and inherent to it, and beyond. It has a permanent and direct impact on the functioning of the organization, sets the conditions for its operation and is the result of managerial decisions. And characterizes, as a rule, the functioning efficiency of the departments and divisions, and on their basis, the dynamics and tendencies in the development of the organization are built, which allow determining the overall result.

Thus, because of the study carried out by the authors:

- It is justified that the use of strategic analysis methods for the assessment of external environmental factors allows the organization to timely extract information about the business environment at the regional level and to develop programs for the development of the organization in the short and long term;
- Adaptation considers the specifics of medical organizations, study methods as a single system contributing to a comprehensive assessment of the external environment of the study medical centers;
- It is proved that the applied methods of strategic analysis can be used for conducting comparative competitive analysis and developing strategic development plans aimed at increasing the competitiveness of regional medical centers.

Study materials can be useful for managers of medical organizations to ensure sustainable development and increase the efficiency of economic activity in a changing external environment. About which it can be stated that the analysis of external environment factors of the organization has a complex character, is implemented based on a system approach, and uses a comparative analysis of its indicators and competitor performance in the dynamics of development.

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