

**NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF LIFE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES
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Faculty of Agricultural Management

APPROVED BY
Dean of Agricultural
Management Faculty

ALLOWED TO DEFENCING BY
Head of Administrative Management and
International Activity Department

_____ **Anatolii OSTAPCHUK**
« ____ » _____ 2025

_____ **Olena KOVTUN**
« ____ » _____ 2025

MASTER'S QUALIFICATION THESIS
on topic

«Management of the company's international competitiveness »

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Guarantor of educational
programme, PhD in Economics,
Associate Professor

_____ Larysa DIBROVA

Scientific advisor of master’s
qualification thesis, PhD in
Economics, Associate Professor

_____ Alona TIURINA

Performed by

_____ William Santiago Orellana
GARCIA

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ABSTRACT

This thesis consists of an introduction, three sections, conclusions, a list of references, and appendices. It includes 67 pages, 9 tables, 5 figures, and 51 references.

Coca-cola is the leader of the industry because of the vast global presence. However, there are some important challenges because of some dependence on traditional soda, particularly in fast growing markets. There is need to the company not to stay static in its product positioning due to the growing demand for low calorie/sugar free and organic drinks. There is need for Coca-cola to continue with its diversification of product lines with the introduction of healthier choices and also move to fast growing segments of the market like plant-based drinks, and the company can meet the growing changes in consumer preferences and continue to have competitive advantage against its rivals.

The **purpose of the master's thesis** is to theoretically substantiate and identify effective strategies and tools that will help increase the Coca-Cola's international competitiveness, adaptation to the globalised environment, ensure sustainable development and implement innovations. Objectives of the study:

- to study the concept of international competitiveness in the business context;
- to determine features of company competitiveness in global markets;
- to identify key decision-making criteria in competitiveness management;
- to give a general characteristics of the company and internal environment analysis;
- to analyses state of the company's external environment and its impact on company activities;
- to assess the problems in managing the international competitiveness of a company;
- to propose strategies and possible solutions to identified problems;
- to provide decision-making for improving the company's management system;

- to determine the expected results and feasibility of the proposed measures.

The **object of research** is the system of managing the international competitiveness of the Coca-Cola company. The **subject of the research** is theoretical and practical approaches to managing the international competitiveness of a company, considering internal and external factors.

Research methods: theoretical generalization, structural and comparative analysis, graphical and statistical interpretation, forecasting, logical synthesis, and case-based examination.

The information base includes academic literature, statistical data, international standards, corporate documents, analytical calculations, and reliable Internet sources, financial data of Coca-Cola company.

The practical significance of the research lies in its applicability for improving Coca-Cola's global supply operations, increasing stability, reducing risks, and supporting more efficient decision-making in international markets.

The research results were approved at the VI International Scientific and Practical Online-Conference for students, PhD students and young scientists "Modern management: challenges and opportunities" (Kyiv, NUBIP of Ukraine, 4 November 2025).

The main provisions and results of the study are reflected in the conference proceedings: GARCIA W., TIURINA A. Management of the company's international competitiveness. Modern management: challenges and opportunities. Proceedings of the VI International Scientific and Practical Online-Conference for students, PhD students & young scientists, 4.11.2025 - K.:NUBiP of Ukraine, 2025.

KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS, PRODUCT DIVERSIFICATION, OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY, GEOPOLITICAL RISKS, DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION, SUSTAINABILITY, DECISION-MAKING, MARKET LEADERSHIP.

РЕЗЮМЕ

Ця магістерська робота складається з вступу, трьох розділів, висновків, списку літератури та додатків. Вона включає 67 сторінок, 9 таблиць, 5 рисунків та 51 літературних посилання.

Coca-Cola є лідером галузі завдяки своїй широкій глобальній присутності. Однак існують деякі важливі виклики через певну залежність від традиційних газованих напоїв, особливо на швидкозростаючих ринках. Компанія не повинна залишатися статичною у позиціонуванні своїх продуктів через зростаючий попит на низькокалорійні/безцукрові та органічні напої. Coca-Cola повинна продовжувати диверсифікацію своїх продуктових лінійок, впроваджуючи більш здорові варіанти, а також переходити до швидкозростаючих сегментів ринку, таких як рослинні напої, щоб відповідати зростаючим змінам у вподобаннях споживачів і продовжувати мати конкурентну перевагу над своїми суперниками.

Метою магістерської кваліфікаційної роботи є теоретичне обґрунтування та визначення ефективних стратегій і інструментів, які допоможуть підвищити міжнародну конкурентоспроможність Coca-Cola, адаптуватися до глобалізованого середовища, забезпечити сталий розвиток та впровадити інновації. Завдання дослідження:

- дослідити поняття міжнародної конкурентоспроможності в контексті бізнесу;
- визначити особливості конкурентоспроможності компанії на глобальних ринках;
- систематизувати ключові критерії прийняття рішень в управлінні конкурентоспроможністю;
- дати загальну характеристику компанії та проаналізувати внутрішнє середовище;
- проаналізувати стан зовнішнього середовища компанії та його вплив на діяльність компанії;
- оцінити проблеми в управлінні міжнародною конкурентоспроможністю компанії;
- запропонувати стратегії та можливі рішення виявлених проблем;

- забезпечити прийняття рішень для вдосконалення системи управління компанією;

- визначити очікувані результати та реалістичність запропонованих заходів.

Об'єктом дослідження є система управління міжнародною конкурентоспроможністю компанії Coca-Cola. Предметом дослідження є теоретичні та практичні підходи до управління міжнародною конкурентоспроможністю компанії з урахуванням внутрішніх і зовнішніх факторів.

Методи дослідження: теоретичне узагальнення, структурний та порівняльний аналіз, графічна та статистична інтерпретація, прогнозування, логічний синтез, розгляд конкретних кейсів.

Інформаційна база включає наукову літературу, статистичні дані, міжнародні стандарти, корпоративні документи, аналітичні розрахунки, інтернет-джерела, фінансові дані компанії Coca-Cola.

Практичне значення дослідження полягає в його застосовності для поліпшення глобальних операцій з постачання Coca-Cola, підвищення стабільності, зменшення ризиків та підтримки більш ефективного прийняття рішень на міжнародних ринках.

Результати дослідження були апробовані на VI Міжнародній науково-практичній онлайн-конференції для студентів, аспірантів та молодих вчених «Сучасний менеджмент: виклики та можливості» (Київ, НУБіП України, 4 листопада 2025 року).

Основні положення та результати дослідження відображені у матеріалах конференції: ГАРСІЯ В., ТЮРІНА А. Управління міжнародною конкурентоспроможністю компанії. Сучасний менеджмент: виклики та можливості. Матеріали VI Міжнародної науково-практичної онлайн-конференції для студентів, аспірантів та молодих вчених, 4.11.2025 – К.: НУБіП України, 2025.

КЛЮЧОВІ СЛОВА: МІЖНАРОДНА КОНКУРЕНТОСПРОМОЖНІСТЬ, ДИВЕРСИФІКАЦІЯ ПРОДУКЦІЇ, ОПЕРАЦІЙНА ЕФЕКТИВНІСТЬ, ГЕОПОЛІТИЧНІ РИЗИКИ, ЦИФРОВА ТРАНСФОРМАЦІЯ, СТАЛІСТЬ, ПРИЙНЯТТЯ РІШЕНЬ, ЛІДЕРСТВО НА РИНКУ.

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INTRODUCTION

The relevance of this topic is determined by rapid changes in the global beverage industry and the growing need for transnational corporations to maintain an effective system for ensuring the competitiveness of their enterprises. Coca-Cola, which operates in more than 200 countries, depends on a stable and well-coordinated global supply system to ensure constant product availability and maintain its competitive position in international markets. Current global conditions, such as transport disruptions, differences in national infrastructure, growing expectations for sustainable development, increased market uncertainty and the acceleration of digital technology, have exacerbated the challenges faced by international companies. These factors make improving the competitiveness of Coca-Cola products a critical strategic objective and a relevant topic for scientific research.

The company's hybrid operating structure, which combines centralised concentrate production with decentralised regional bottling partners, creates significant advantages but also introduces vulnerabilities that require systematic assessment. While this structure allows Coca-Cola to adapt effectively to local conditions and respond to the market, it also requires a high level of coordination, accurate forecasting, technological integration, and risk management. Therefore, the aim of the study is to identify internal and external factors that affect Coca-Cola's competitive effectiveness and to develop solutions that strengthen its long-term market position.

The **purpose of the master's thesis** is to theoretically substantiate and identify effective strategies and tools that will help increase the Coca-Cola's international competitiveness, adaptation to the globalised environment, ensure sustainable development and implement innovations. Objectives of the study:

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Research methods: theoretical generalization, structural and comparative analysis, graphical and statistical interpretation, forecasting, logical synthesis, and case-based examination. The information base includes academic literature, statistical data, international standards, corporate documents, analytical calculations, and reliable Internet sources, financial data of Coca-Cola company.

The practical significance of the results lies in the possibility of applying the proposed recommendations to improve the efficiency and resilience of Coca-Cola's global supply chain. These findings can support operational decision-making, enhance logistics performance, reduce risk exposure, and contribute to the overall competitiveness of the company in international markets.

The research results were approved at the VI International Scientific and Practical Online-Conference for students, PhD students and young scientists "Modern management: challenges and opportunities" (Kyiv, NUBIP of Ukraine, 4 November 2025).

This master's qualification thesis consists of an introduction, three sections, conclusions, a list of references, and appendices. It is presented on 70 pages of computer text and contains 9 tables, 5 figures, and 51 references.

SECTION 1: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF MANAGEMENT OF THE COMPANY'S INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS

1.1. The concept of international competitiveness in the business context

International competitiveness is a multidimensional concept that describes a company's ability to operate successfully in foreign markets, respond effectively to global challenges, and maintain sustainable performance in the international business environment. It reflects not only the ability to produce goods and services that meet global standards but also the capacity to innovate, adapt, and strategically position the firm within complex and rapidly changing world markets. In today's globalized economy, international competitiveness is shaped by economic, technological, institutional, and organizational factors that collectively determine a company's potential to outperform competitors and achieve long-term international growth.

From a business perspective, international competitiveness is defined as the firm's capability to secure and retain a competitive position in international markets through effective use of resources, strategic decision-making, and operational excellence. This involves aligning internal strengths with external opportunities, managing risks, and adapting to the institutional characteristics of each national market in which the company operates. Scholars emphasize that international competitiveness is not a static attribute but an evolving capacity shaped by continuous organizational learning and strategic renewal [3]. Companies must constantly upgrade their capabilities to maintain relevance in environments defined by innovation, disruption, and intensifying global competition.

A foundational theoretical framework explaining international competitiveness is the resource-based view (RBV), which argues that companies achieve superior performance when they possess valuable, rare, and difficult-to-imitate resources. These resources include technological assets, brand equity, managerial expertise, supply chain capabilities, and knowledge systems. Firms that

effectively leverage such internal strengths build competitive advantages that support global expansion and market stability [7]. For multinational enterprises, resource advantages must be transferable across borders and adaptable to different regulatory and cultural environments. Coca-Cola, for example, benefits from a globally recognized brand, large-scale production capabilities, and a highly integrated supply chain — resources that enhance its international competitiveness.

Another important theoretical perspective is institutional theory, which highlights the influence of national environments on corporate performance. International firms must adapt their strategies to local regulations, infrastructure, governance systems, and cultural norms. The literature indicates that firms capable of institutional adaptation strengthen their competitive position by reducing operational risks and aligning their practices with local expectations [22]. For companies like Coca-Cola, which operates in over 200 jurisdictions, institutional adaptability becomes essential to maintaining supply continuity, minimizing compliance costs, and sustaining market presence.

Innovation capability is considered one of the strongest drivers of international competitiveness. Firms that continuously innovate — either through new products, technologies, digital solutions, or supply chain processes — can respond more rapidly to consumer needs and global market changes. Research shows that innovation enhances operational efficiency and supports a differentiated competitive strategy in international markets [6]. As industries digitize, companies must invest in artificial intelligence, data analytics, and advanced production technologies to remain competitive. Innovation also supports scalability, enabling firms to expand more effectively into foreign markets.

Closely connected to innovation is knowledge management, which refers to the company's ability to acquire, share, and apply knowledge across its global operations. Effective knowledge integration strengthens international coordination, accelerates problem-solving, and fosters organizational learning. Studies highlight that multinational organizations with advanced knowledge systems gain advantages in adapting to global market shifts and improving strategic decision-

making [23]. Firms operating internationally must create mechanisms that allow them to collect information from diverse markets, analyze patterns, and adjust their strategies accordingly.

Supply chain efficiency is another essential element of international competitiveness. In highly globalized industries, the ability to coordinate sourcing, production, transportation, and distribution across borders determines the reliability and cost-effectiveness of international operations. Companies with efficient supply chains reduce delays, lower operational costs, and improve product availability. The literature indicates that firms with strong logistics networks and diversified suppliers perform better in global markets [12]. Efficient supply chains also enhance resilience, allowing companies to withstand disruptions caused by geopolitical tensions, market shocks, and natural disasters.

Strategic internationalization theory explains how companies expand across borders and use global networks to reinforce competitiveness. Successful internationalization requires choosing appropriate market entry modes, managing cross-border operations, and aligning global strategies with local conditions. Research suggests that multinational corporations gain competitive strength by combining global scale advantages — such as centralized production — with local adaptation strategies, which improve responsiveness to regional consumers and regulatory environments [20]. Managing this balance is critical for sustaining long-term competitiveness in diverse markets.

Another important dimension is risk management and resilience. Global companies operate in uncertain environments affected by currency fluctuations, political instability, supply shortages, and sudden regulatory changes. Competitiveness depends on the firm's ability to anticipate and manage such risks effectively. Studies demonstrate that firms with strong risk mitigation systems — such as multi-sourcing, contingency planning, and scenario analysis — are better able to sustain international operations and maintain market share during disruptions [5]. Building a resilient operating model is therefore fundamental to international competitiveness.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability practices increasingly influence global competitiveness, particularly in industries with strong environmental and social impacts. Companies that prioritize ethical behavior, responsible resource management, and environmental protection improve their brand reputation and gain consumer trust. Research indicates that sustainability enhances competitive performance by aligning corporate practices with global expectations and regulatory requirements [16]. In international markets, CSR creates long-term value by strengthening stakeholder relationships and reducing reputational risks.

Finally, brand equity plays a critical role in shaping international competitiveness. Strong global brands attract customer loyalty, differentiate companies from competitors, and support premium positioning in foreign markets. Studies show that firms with high brand equity perform better in international settings because consumers perceive their products as reliable, consistent, and trustworthy [26]. A powerful brand enables companies to enter new markets more easily, negotiate favorable distribution agreements, and sustain competitive advantage.

Table 1.1

Core components of international competitiveness (summary)

Component	Short Description
Resources & Capabilities	Internal strengths — technology, brand, knowledge — that create long-term advantage
Institutional Adaptability	Ability to adjust to national regulations and local conditions
Innovation	Continuous development of new products, technologies, and processes
Supply Chain Efficiency	Effective global sourcing, production, and logistics coordination
Risk Management	Preparedness for geopolitical, economic, and operational disruptions
Brand Equity	Strong global brand recognition that supports competitiveness
Knowledge Management	Transfer and application of organizational learning across countries
Sustainability	Environmental and social practices that strengthen reputation

Source: systematised by the author based on [5; 6; 7; 12; 16; 22; 23; 28]

In summary, international competitiveness in the business context is defined by a company's ability to align its internal resources with global opportunities, adapt to diverse institutional environments, innovate continuously, manage risks, operate efficient supply chains, maintain strong brand equity, and engage in sustainable practices. For multinational enterprises like Coca-Cola, competitiveness is achieved through a strategic combination of organizational capabilities, technological advancements, coordinated global operations, and responsiveness to external forces. Understanding these theoretical foundations provides a basis for analyzing Coca-Cola's competitive position and identifying practical strategies to enhance its international supply chain efficiency in subsequent sections.

1.2. Features of company competitiveness in global markets

Company competitiveness in global markets refers to the ability of a firm to achieve and sustain superior performance while operating across diverse international environments. In the contemporary global economy, competitiveness is shaped by a complex and interconnected set of internal and external features that determine a firm's capacity to compete effectively, respond to market dynamics, and generate long-term value. As global markets become increasingly integrated and volatile, firms must develop adaptive capabilities, strategic agility, and resource configurations that allow them to maintain a stable competitive advantage across borders. The global competitive landscape is no longer defined solely by cost efficiency or product differentiation; instead, it encompasses innovation, institutional adaptability, supply chain strength, sustainability practices, brand equity, and knowledge management.

A fundamental feature of company competitiveness is the possession of internal strategic resources and capabilities that enable sustained advantage. According to the resource-based view, firms achieve competitiveness when their

resources are valuable, rare, difficult to imitate, and embedded within organizational processes [7]. These resources include technological expertise, managerial competencies, global supply chain capabilities, market intelligence, and strong brand recognition. In international markets, these capabilities must be scalable and transferable across different institutions and regulatory systems. Firms that effectively mobilize their internal strengths are able to maintain strong competitive positions even under conditions of economic turbulence, technological shifts, or regulatory pressures. Companies with advanced internal capabilities tend to outperform competitors because they can leverage unique assets to create differentiated market value [3].

Another core feature of global competitiveness is the ability to adapt to institutional environments. Firms operating internationally face significant differences in regulations, governance quality, cultural norms, infrastructure conditions, and consumer expectations. According to institutional theory, firms that can modify their strategies and operational practices to align with local institutional requirements gain legitimacy and reduce operational risks [22]. Institutional adaptability includes compliance with national policies, responsiveness to regulatory changes, and the ability to manage diverse political and legal environments. Companies lacking such adaptability often struggle to maintain competitiveness, particularly when entering emerging markets or countries with unstable regulatory systems. In this context, institutional fit becomes an essential determinant of long-term international performance.

Competitiveness in global markets is also strongly influenced by innovation capability, which refers to the firm's ability to develop new products, technologies, and processes that support differentiation and efficiency. Innovation expands a company's strategic options, enabling it to respond rapidly to changes in global demand, technological disruptions, and intensified competition. Firms that continuously innovate maintain relevance in international markets and build competitive barriers that slow down rivals [6]. Innovation capability includes investment in research and development, digital technologies, data analytics,

automation, and new business models. In highly dynamic markets, innovation becomes a prerequisite for sustaining consumer interest and operational excellence. Without innovation, firms risk losing competitive ground to more agile and technologically advanced competitors.

Another essential feature is global supply chain efficiency, which directly influences cost structures, responsiveness, and market reach. In global markets, firms must coordinate complex logistical systems involving sourcing, production, transportation, inventory management, and distribution across multiple countries [12]. Efficient supply chain management reduces delays, lowers expenses, increases product availability, and strengthens resilience against external shocks. Because global supply chains are exposed to geopolitical risks, natural disasters, and infrastructural gaps, resilience becomes a key aspect of competitiveness [5]. Companies with strong supply chain networks can ensure consistent product delivery even during disruptions, strengthening consumer trust and safeguarding business continuity.

To better illustrate the key features of global competitiveness, the following table 1.2 presents a conceptual overview of the most important determinants, synthesizing theoretical insights from international business literature:

Table 1.2

Key features of company competitiveness in Global Markets

Feature	Core Meaning	Strategic Importance
Internal Capabilities	Unique resources, skills, and organizational strengths	Create sustained advantage and support global expansion.
Institutional Adaptability	Ability to align operations with national environments	Reduces risks and improves market acceptance.
Innovation Capability	Development of new products, technologies, and processes	Enhances differentiation and accelerates responsiveness.
Supply Chain Strength	Efficient sourcing, logistics, and distribution	Ensures product availability and reduces operational vulnerabilities.
Risk Resilience	Preparedness for disruptions and uncertainties	Supports stability and continuity in global operations.

Source: systematised by the author based on [5; 6; 7; 12; 22]

A further defining feature is risk management and organizational resilience,

essential for firms competing internationally. Global markets are inherently unstable due to fluctuations in exchange rates, trade restrictions, political tensions, sustainability regulations, and unexpected crises. Firms must develop risk management strategies that include multi-sourcing, scenario planning, geographic diversification, and flexible logistics networks [5]. The ability to absorb and recover from shocks becomes a competitive asset, as firms capable of ensuring operational continuity during disruptions gain stronger market positions.

Another important feature of competitiveness is brand equity, which significantly shapes consumer behavior and market access. A strong global brand enhances trust, decreases perceived risk, and facilitates customer loyalty. According to branding research, global firms benefit from recognizable brand identity because it signals reliability and quality, enabling easier entry into new markets and supporting premium pricing strategies [26; 45]. Brand equity also amplifies the effectiveness of marketing campaigns and increases bargaining power with distributors and retailers.

Knowledge management is also fundamental to global competitiveness. Firms operating across diverse markets accumulate valuable insights and experiences. The ability to capture, share, and apply this knowledge across organizational units enhances strategic decision-making and operational learning [23]. Companies that institutionalize knowledge-sharing systems outperform competitors because they develop consistent best practices and reduce inefficiencies across global operations.

Finally, competitiveness in global markets increasingly depends on sustainability and corporate responsibility. Firms are expected to adopt environmentally responsible practices, reduce emissions, optimize water and energy use, and ensure ethical labor conditions. Companies committed to sustainability benefit from improved reputational capital, regulatory compliance, and consumer acceptance [16]. Sustainability becomes not only an ethical requirement but also a strategic determinant of long-term competitive advantage.

Another fundamental feature of company competitiveness in global markets

is the ability to establish strategic coherence across all international operations. Strategic coherence refers to the alignment between a company's global objectives, its organizational structure, and its market strategies. Companies with strong strategic coherence ensure that each international unit contributes to overall corporate goals rather than operating in isolation. This alignment enables firms to leverage global strengths — such as brand reputation, technology, or supply chain capabilities — while tailoring strategies to local market conditions. Research emphasizes that multinational enterprises able to maintain strategic coherence achieve higher operational efficiency and more stable international performance [20]. When firms integrate their strategies across national boundaries, they can consolidate resources, reduce duplications, and improve strategic focus across the global network.

Competitiveness in global markets also requires effective governance systems, which establish control mechanisms, decision-making structures, and accountability frameworks across multinational operations. Governance influences how strategies are implemented, how risks are monitored, and how coordination is managed between headquarters and international subsidiaries. Studies highlight that strong governance mechanisms prevent organizational fragmentation and support better alignment between global and local priorities [11]. Companies operating internationally must ensure that governance practices support transparency, cross-unit coordination, and compliance with international and national standards. Without effective governance, operational inconsistencies emerge, weakening competitiveness and increasing exposure to institutional risks.

In addition, cultural intelligence and cross-cultural management have become critical features of international competitiveness. Firms operating in diverse markets must understand local consumer preferences, negotiation styles, business norms, and communication patterns. Cultural intelligence enables managers to make informed decisions that resonate with local markets and avoid misunderstandings or cultural conflicts. Multinational enterprises that cultivate cross-cultural competence gain advantages in customer relations, talent

management, and partnership formation. Cultural adaptation supports more effective marketing strategies and strengthens brand acceptance in foreign markets. Research notes that cultural alignment also reduces coordination barriers and facilitates smoother global operations [15].

Another important feature of global competitiveness is financial stability, which supports long-term international growth. Financially stable firms can invest in expansion, innovation, and capacity-building even during periods of global downturn. Financial strength also improves bargaining power with suppliers, distribution partners, and governments. In competitive international environments, companies must allocate capital strategically, balancing investments in technology, infrastructure, market development, and risk mitigation. Financial performance becomes a foundation for operational resilience and global expansion capability [26]. Companies lacking financial stability often struggle to sustain international competitiveness due to limited flexibility in responding to external shocks.

Furthermore, market intelligence and global analytics have become increasingly important for maintaining competitiveness. Firms need to understand global trends, identify emerging opportunities, and anticipate potential threats. Market intelligence includes collecting data on consumer behavior, competitor activities, regulatory changes, and technological developments. Advanced analytics allow companies to identify patterns, evaluate market potential, and adjust strategies accordingly. Knowledge-driven competitiveness is especially important in fast-changing markets, where firms must rely on real-time information to guide decisions [1]. Data-based decision-making enhances strategic agility and allows international firms to foresee disruptions before they escalate.

The global competitive environment also rewards firms that invest in technological integration, combining digital tools with operational processes to improve efficiency, speed, and quality. Technological competitiveness includes adopting AI, machine learning, automation, enterprise systems, and intelligent logistics technologies. Digital transformation accelerates decision-making, reduces errors, and enhances end-to-end visibility across global supply networks. Firms

that fail to adopt modern technologies risk falling behind competitors who utilize advanced digital systems to optimize costs and increase responsiveness [8]. Technology has thus become a strategic determinant of international competitiveness.

To summarize these core ideas, the following table 1.3 presents a second conceptual overview of additional key features that shape a firm's competitiveness in global markets:

Table 1.3

Additional determinants of competitiveness in Global Markets

Competitiveness Feature	Essential Meaning	Strategic Advantage
Strategic Coherence	Alignment of global goals with local actions	Ensures consistent performance and unified direction across markets.
Governance Quality	Strong control, compliance, and decision systems	Reduces risks and improves global coordination.
Cultural Intelligence	Understanding and adapting to national cultures	Strengthens customer relations and market acceptance.
Financial Stability	Capacity to invest and withstand global shocks	Supports expansion, innovation, and resilience.
Market Intelligence	Data-driven awareness of global trends	Enables timely strategic decisions and opportunity recognition.
Technological Integration	Adoption of digital systems and automation	Increases efficiency and competitiveness globally.

Source: systematised by the author based on [1; 8; 11; 15; 20; 26; 45]

A further feature shaping company competitiveness is global talent management, a firm's ability to attract, develop, and retain skilled employees across geographic locations. Competitiveness is enhanced when companies cultivate diverse talent pools, promote cross-border mobility, and implement training programs that strengthen managerial capabilities. High-performing global firms rely on internationally experienced managers who understand both global strategy and local market dynamics. Research suggests that talent management systems aligned with global objectives foster innovation, collaboration, and operational excellence [18]. Companies without strong global talent structures

often face greater challenges in implementing international strategies effectively.

Another important dimension is strategic partnerships and alliances, which enable companies to access new resources, capabilities, and markets. Partnerships with suppliers, distributors, governments, and local companies can accelerate international expansion and strengthen competitiveness. Alliances also support knowledge exchange and innovation, allowing firms to combine strengths and share risks. In global markets characterized by complexity, partnerships become essential tools for achieving strategic objectives and improving operational efficiency [5]. Firms that fail to build collaborative networks may struggle to adapt to global shifts and competitive pressures.

In global markets, companies must also manage reputation and trust, essential intangible assets that influence competitiveness. International stakeholders — including consumers, partners, regulators, and investors — evaluate companies based on ethical conduct, transparency, product quality, and social responsibility. A positive global reputation enhances consumer preferences, supports regulatory compliance, and increases access to business opportunities. Poor reputation, on the other hand, can significantly weaken competitiveness and restrict market access [14]. Therefore, maintaining corporate reputation is a strategic necessity.

Finally, global strategic flexibility is essential for maintaining competitiveness. Flexibility refers to the ability to reconfigure systems, resources, and strategies in response to unexpected events. Flexible firms are better positioned to explore new markets, adjust supply chains, revise strategies, and innovate under pressure. Flexibility is particularly important in environments characterized by geopolitical shifts, regulatory changes, or supply chain interruptions [19]. Companies that maintain rigid structures are more likely to lose competitiveness when faced with global instability.

1.3. Key decision-making criteria in competitiveness management

Effective management of international competitiveness requires that strategic and operational decisions are guided by clear, structured criteria rather than intuitive judgment alone. In multinational corporations such as Coca-Cola, decisions about market entry, supply chain configuration, product portfolios, and sustainability strategies must simultaneously support global competitiveness and the efficiency of international supplies. Therefore, identifying key decision-making criteria becomes a methodological bridge between the theoretical foundations of competitiveness and their practical implementation in day-to-day management. The literature on international business, resource-based strategy, and global logistics emphasizes that competitive decisions are multi-criteria by nature and must balance financial, operational, institutional, and reputational considerations [3; 19; 20]. For a company operating in more than 200 markets, the ability to define and consistently apply such criteria is crucial for maintaining a stable competitive position.

A first group of decision-making criteria relates to strategic alignment and internal resources. According to the resource-based view, firms gain and sustain competitiveness when their decisions reinforce the development and deployment of valuable, rare, inimitable, and well-organized resources [20]. In practice, this means that major corporate decisions must be evaluated in terms of how they strengthen core assets such as brand equity, technological capability, supply chain know-how, and managerial expertise. For Coca-Cola, strategic projects — such as expanding a regional bottling network or investing in digital forecasting systems — are competitive only if they enhance these internal capabilities and support the company's long-term positioning in the global beverage industry. Thus, one of the key criteria in decision-making is the consistency of any initiative with the firm's long-term resource base and global competitive strategy, as highlighted in global strategy research [21]. Decisions that do not reinforce core capabilities or that dilute scarce resources can weaken the company's competitiveness even if they promise short-term gains.

A second category of criteria concerns market and consumer orientation. International competitiveness ultimately depends on the firm's ability to satisfy heterogeneous consumer preferences, adapt to local demand structures, and maintain strong brand recognition [29; 41]. Consequently, management decisions must be assessed by their expected impact on customer value, brand perception, and market access. Studies on Coca-Cola's marketing strategy show that successful decisions in key markets such as China and the United States combine product adaptation, pricing strategy, and logistics flexibility to align with local consumption patterns [30]. Therefore, when managers consider new product launches, packaging formats, or distribution models, they apply criteria related to consumer health trends, willingness to pay, cultural acceptance, and channel coverage. In addition, research on country-of-origin image and brand equity indicates that decisions affecting perceived quality, reliability of supply, or ethical conduct directly influence how consumers evaluate global brands [22; 45]. For Coca-Cola, this implies that supply-chain and operational decisions are judged not only by cost and efficiency, but also by their consequences for brand trust and consumer loyalty.

A third group of criteria is defined by institutional and country-level conditions. Institutional theory underscores that multinational firms must adapt their strategies and operations to national regulations, governance quality, customs procedures, and broader policy frameworks [4; 18; 22; 29]. As a result, key decisions — such as locating production facilities, selecting logistics corridors, or determining the degree of local sourcing — are evaluated against criteria such as regulatory stability, transparency, ease of doing business, and trade regime predictability. For Coca-Cola, the attractiveness of a particular country as a production or distribution hub depends not only on market size but also on customs clearance times, infrastructure reliability, and environmental standards that may affect future operations. Research on state capitalism and governance in transition economies shows that institutional volatility can significantly increase operational risks and alter the cost–benefit profile of investment decisions [19]. Consequently,

institutional risk, regulatory compliance costs, and the alignment between corporate policy and national sustainability norms become central criteria in competitiveness-oriented decision-making.

Closely connected to the institutional dimension is a fourth set of criteria linked to supply chain efficiency, risk, and resilience. Global logistics literature demonstrates that performance in international markets is strongly influenced by the reliability, speed, and cost structure of cross-border supply flows [7; 12]. For a company like Coca-Cola, decisions on supplier selection, transport modes, inventory policies, and bottling capacity must be evaluated using criteria such as lead time, service level, cost per unit, capacity utilization, and vulnerability to disruption. Research on risk management in emerging markets emphasizes that multi-sourcing, regional diversification, and redundant transport routes are critical for suppressing supply interruptions and preserving competitiveness under volatile conditions [5; 6]. Therefore, when managers evaluate alternative supply configurations, they compare options in terms of risk exposure, recovery time after disruptions, flexibility to respond to demand shocks, and compatibility with existing logistics infrastructure. In this sense, resilience indicators — such as the presence of backup suppliers, safety stock strategies, and scenario-based contingency plans — are now core decision-making criteria, not merely operational details.

A fifth category of decision-making criteria relates to innovation, digitalization, and knowledge management. Studies on corporate innovation and global competitiveness highlight that firms maintaining a high rate of product and process innovation achieve superior brand value and market leadership [8]. At the same time, research on big data and analytics demonstrates that data-driven organizations can significantly improve performance by converting large information flows into actionable insights [1; 3]. Consequently, when Coca-Cola evaluates strategic options — such as investing in new bottling technologies, adopting automated warehouses, or implementing advanced forecasting algorithms — management assesses the expected contribution of these initiatives to the firm's

innovation capacity and analytical sophistication. Relevant criteria include the degree of technological upgrade, the scalability of solutions across regions, the compatibility with existing digital platforms, and the potential for organizational learning. Knowledge management literature further stresses that decisions should be evaluated in terms of how they support knowledge sharing, training, and internal diffusion of best practices across the global bottling system [20]. Thus, a project that strengthens digital competencies, standardizes data architectures, and facilitates cross-regional learning receives higher priority in competitiveness management.

A sixth group of criteria focuses on sustainability, ethics, and corporate social responsibility. In contemporary global markets, environmental and social performance shape brand reputation and influence long-term competitive advantage [15; 16]. For a beverage producer whose operations depend heavily on water, packaging materials, and energy, decisions about supply sources, packaging design, and distribution methods must be evaluated according to sustainability indicators. These include carbon intensity of logistics routes, water use efficiency, recyclability of packaging, and supplier compliance with environmental standards. Empirical studies show that responsible supply strategies strengthen brand equity by building consumer trust and aligning corporate behavior with societal expectations [16; 44]. For Coca-Cola, this means that projects which reduce emissions, support circular packaging, or improve water stewardship are not only environmental initiatives but also competitiveness decisions, because they influence regulatory acceptance, stakeholder relations, and access to environmentally conscious consumer segments. As a result, sustainability metrics are increasingly integrated into the multi-criteria frameworks used to rank strategic options.

Seventh, financial and performance-oriented criteria remain essential in evaluating decisions related to international competitiveness. Financial analysis of Coca-Cola indicates that supply-chain optimization directly affects cost-of-goods-sold ratios, profitability, and overall company valuation [31]. Consequently,

decisions are systematically compared in terms of expected impact on revenue growth, margin improvement, capital intensity, payback period, and risk-adjusted return. However, modern approaches to competitiveness management emphasize that financial criteria must be combined with strategic and operational indicators rather than used in isolation [11]. For example, an investment with a moderate short-term return may still receive a positive evaluation if it substantially improves resilience, digital capabilities, or sustainability performance, thereby strengthening long-term competitiveness. In this sense, financial metrics function within a broader decision-making system that incorporates both tangible and intangible dimensions of competitive strength.

Finally, the literature on governance and strategic management accounting highlights the importance of criteria related to organizational coherence and accountability in decision-making [11; 25]. In multinational corporations, fragmented or conflicting decisions taken by different units can weaken competitiveness by generating inconsistencies in brand positioning, supply practices, or sustainability commitments. To avoid this, companies such as Coca-Cola use governance-based criteria that assess whether proposed initiatives fit corporate policies, clarify responsibilities between headquarters and bottlers, and can be monitored through transparent performance indicators. Decisions are therefore evaluated not only in terms of “what” they achieve, but also “how” they will be implemented, who will be accountable, and how results will be measured and communicated. This reinforces strategic coherence across the global system and ensures that competitiveness management is not reduced to isolated local initiatives.

In summary, the identification of key decision-making criteria in competitiveness management converts abstract theoretical concepts into practical tools for guiding corporate choices. For Coca-Cola, these criteria include the reinforcement of core resources, consumer and brand impacts, institutional and country-level conditions, supply-chain efficiency and resilience, innovation and digitalization potential, sustainability implications, financial consequences, and

governance coherence. Using such a multi-criteria framework allows the company to compare alternative strategies in a structured way and to justify decisions in terms that are consistent with both academic insights and Ukrainian methodological standards for management research. As subsequent chapters of the thesis turn to empirical analysis and practical recommendations, these criteria provide a logical basis for evaluating how specific strategic and operational measures can strengthen Coca-Cola's international competitiveness through more efficient and resilient supply systems.

SECTION 2: ANALYSIS OF MANAGEMENT OF THE COCA COLA COMPANY'S INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS

2.1. Internal environment analysis of the Coca Cola company

Coca-Cola is one of the world's most recognizable multinational corporations and a leading player in the non-alcoholic beverage industry. The company's products are sold in more than 200 countries and territories, with a portfolio that includes carbonated soft drinks, juices, waters, sports and energy drinks, teas, coffees and functional beverages [33]. Over more than a century, Coca-Cola has built a powerful brand, a diversified product range and a sophisticated system of international operations that together form the internal foundation of its international competitiveness.

From an organizational perspective, Coca-Cola operates with a hybrid model that combines centralized control of key intangibles with a decentralized network of bottling partners. The Coca-Cola Company owns the main trademarks and formulas, defines the global strategy, develops concentrates and syrups, and manages high-level marketing and innovation. Bottling partners – some owned by Coca-Cola, others independent – are responsible for manufacturing, packaging, local distribution and relationships with retailers and food-service outlets [33]. This structure allows the firm to achieve economies of scale in concentrate production and global branding, while leveraging local knowledge, infrastructure and regulatory familiarity at the national and regional levels (fig. 2.1). Research on multinational governance indicates that such a division of roles can support international competitiveness if clear coordination mechanisms, incentive systems and performance controls are in place between headquarters and partners. For Coca-Cola, this organizational architecture is thus a central internal determinant of international competitiveness, since it integrates global strategic coherence with local responsiveness.

The company's resource base is dominated by strong brand equity, large-

scale production capabilities, advanced supply-chain know-how and accumulated marketing expertise. Brand equity is repeatedly identified in the literature as a strategic resource that provides differentiation, reduces perceived risk for consumers and supports price premiums [8; 28]. In Coca-Cola's case, the brand has become a global symbol associated with refreshment, familiarity and emotional attachment, which facilitates entry into new markets and stabilizes demand in existing ones. At the same time, the extensive production and bottling infrastructure allows large volumes to be manufactured and distributed efficiently, which supports competitive pricing and consistent product availability. The combination of strong brand value and operational capacity forms a core internal platform for international competitiveness.

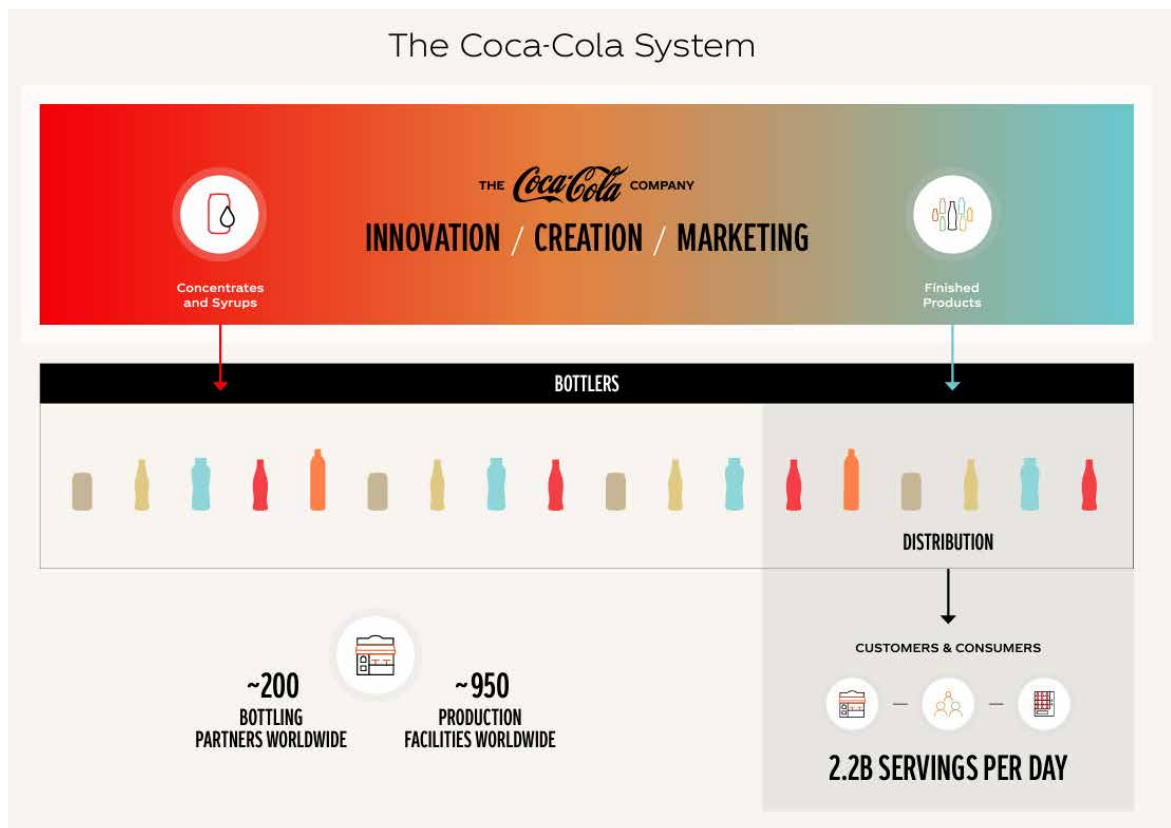


Fig. 2.1. Coca-Cola's company system [33].

A crucial element of the internal environment is the international supply and logistics system. Coca-Cola coordinates global sourcing of ingredients, concentrate production, regional bottling, warehousing and distribution to retailers through a multi-layered network of facilities and partners. The literature on global operations shows that supply-chain design and management have become key drivers of

competitiveness, particularly when firms operate across heterogeneous institutional and infrastructural conditions [6; 7; 12]. For Coca-Cola, decentralised bottling and regional production capacity provide resilience against country-specific shocks, regulatory changes and transport disruptions. The company can adjust production volumes between plants, adapt packaging formats to local regulations and modify distribution routes in response to changes in demand or infrastructure constraints. As a result, the supply chain is not merely a support function but a core competitive asset that enables reliable product availability, high service levels and cost control in international markets.

Digitalisation and the use of advanced analytics further reinforce the competitiveness of Coca-Cola's internal environment. In recent years, the company has invested in big-data platforms, forecasting tools and real-time monitoring systems that support demand planning, inventory management and route optimisation. These digital capabilities enable managers to integrate large volumes of sales, weather and promotional data, improving the accuracy of sales forecasts and production schedules. At the logistics level, tracking technologies and optimisation algorithms help reduce lead times, minimise stock-outs and increase asset utilisation [7; 12]. From the perspective of competitiveness management, such digital transformation strengthens the quality of decision-making and increases the responsiveness of the supply chain to changing market conditions.

Knowledge management and organisational learning are another significant internal dimension. Operating with hundreds of bottling partners and serving diverse markets requires systematic mechanisms for sharing best practices, standardising quality and transferring innovations. The literature on knowledge-based competitiveness emphasises that firms with institutionalised learning processes and cross-regional knowledge exchange adapt more quickly to environmental change and maintain stronger performance over time [18; 20]. Coca-Cola has developed training programmes, joint planning systems and standard operating procedures that support coordinated action across regions. Cross-regional workshops, benchmarking initiatives and digital knowledge

platforms are used to diffuse successful marketing campaigns, production technologies and logistics solutions throughout the bottling system [33]. In this way, knowledge becomes an internal strategic resource that enhances the company's ability to respond to regulatory changes, competitive pressures and shifts in consumer preferences.

Financial strength and stability also play a critical role in shaping Coca-Cola's internal environment. Analyses of the company's financial statements (table 2.1) show stable profitability, strong cash flows and robust balance-sheet indicators, despite macroeconomic fluctuations and changes in consumer behavior [34]. This financial position provides the capital needed for continuous investment in innovation, digital transformation, capacity expansion and sustainability projects.

Table 2.1

The Company's results of operations for 2022-2024, thousands \$

Indicators	2022	2023	2024	Change 2024-2023
Net sales	6,200,957	6,653,858	6,899,716	245,858
Cost of sales	3,923,003	4,055,147	4,146,537	91,390
Gross profit	2,277,954	2,598,711	2,753,179	154,468
Selling, delivery and administrative expenses	1,636,907	1,764,260	1,832,829	68,569
Income from operations	641,047	834,451	920,350	85,899
Interest expense (income), net	24,792	(918)	1,848	2,766
Mark-to-market on acquisition related contingent consideration	32,301	159,354	59,166	(100,188)
Pension plan settlement expense	-	112,796	-	(112,796)
Other expense, net	8,867	5,738	2,682	(3,056)
Income before taxes	575,087	557,481	856,654	299,173
Income tax expense	144,929	149,106	223,529	74,423
Net income	430,158	408,375	633,125	224,750
Other comprehensive income, net of tax	15,626	80,561	6,161	(74,400)
Comprehensive income	445,784	488,936	639,286	150,350

Source: calculated by the author based on [34]

Under conditions of increasing competition and regulatory pressure, the capacity to finance long-term projects and absorb short-term shocks is an important

determinant of international competitiveness. Coca-Cola can maintain marketing campaigns, R&D programmes and infrastructure modernisation even during periods of economic crisis or demand volatility, whereas weaker competitors may be forced to cut strategic investments.

At the same time, the internal environment of Coca-Cola is not free of constraints and challenges. The complexity of the global bottling network generates significant coordination costs and potential misalignments between headquarters and local partners if governance mechanisms are insufficiently robust. Differences in management culture, information systems and investment capacity among bottlers can lead to heterogeneous performance levels and variations in implementation of corporate strategies (fig. 2.2). In addition, the broad diversification of product categories – towards low-sugar, functional and environmentally friendly beverages – increases the complexity of procurement, production planning and inventory management [8]. Each new category may require specific ingredients, production lines and quality-control procedures, which must be integrated into existing operations without undermining efficiency.

BOTTLING INVESTMENTS GEOGRAPHIC FOOTPRINT

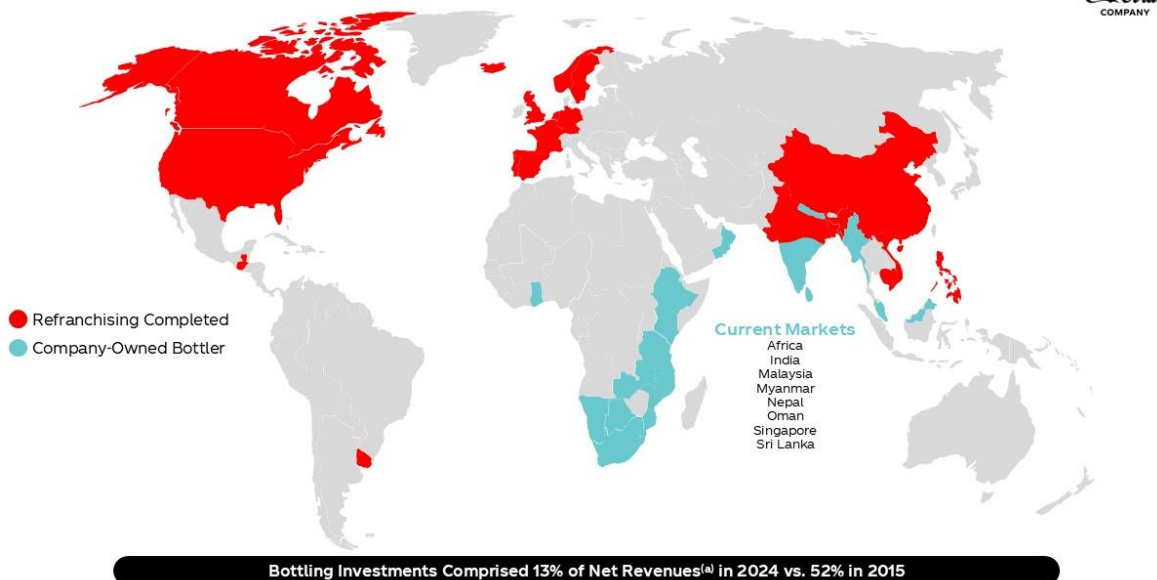


Fig. 2.1. Coca-Cola's company bottling investments group [33].

Sustainability commitments and corporate social responsibility add another layer of internal demands. Given its dependence on water resources, packaging materials and energy, Coca-Cola faces strong expectations from governments,

NGOs and consumers regarding its environmental and social performance [35]. The company has adopted programmes in water stewardship, circular packaging, emissions reduction and responsible sourcing, which require investments in new technologies, changes in operational routines and stricter supplier standards. Although these initiatives strengthen brand reputation and help secure the social licence to operate, they also impose internal adaptation costs and managerial challenges. The need to monitor environmental performance across thousands of facilities, coordinate recycling systems and engage communities creates additional complexity for internal management.

Human capital and organisational culture are equally important elements of the internal environment. Coca-Cola's long history and global expansion have produced a large pool of experienced managers and specialists in marketing, logistics, finance and technical functions. This human capital supports the implementation of complex strategies and the management of diverse teams in different institutional contexts. However, the rapid evolution of digital technologies, analytics and sustainability requirements makes continuous skill upgrading indispensable. If training, incentives and career development are not aligned with these new competencies, the company may face gaps in digital and sustainability capabilities or resistance to organisational change. The literature underlines that firms which fail to renew their human capital base risk losing the advantages derived from past experience and established routines [20].

Building on the preceding characterization, it is important to move from a descriptive view of Coca-Cola's internal environment to a more diagnostic perspective that highlights how specific internal factors function as strengths or weaknesses for international competitiveness. Modern strategic management recommends integrating resource-based analysis, value-chain thinking and performance indicators in order to evaluate the quality of internal conditions and their contribution to competitive advantage [7; 12]. For a global corporation with a complex network of operations such as Coca-Cola, this means assessing not only the existence of resources and capabilities, but also their effectiveness, coherence

and adaptability to changing international conditions.

First, the very elements that form Coca-Cola's main strengths – its global brand, diversified portfolio and extensive bottling network – also generate significant internal complexity. The coordination of hundreds of product variants, packaging formats and local marketing campaigns requires sophisticated planning systems, strong governance and continuous communication between headquarters and regional units [33]. If these coordination mechanisms are insufficient or fragmented, the result can be duplication of efforts, inconsistent brand messages or suboptimal allocation of production and logistics capacities. In other words, internal complexity becomes a latent weakness that can erode responsiveness and increase costs. This is particularly relevant when the company must react quickly to regulatory changes, health-related debates or sudden demand shifts, where rigid internal procedures may slow down decision-making.

Second, the modernization of the international supply chain — through digitalization, automation and advanced analytics — creates a dual internal dynamic. On one hand, investments in big data platforms, AI-based demand forecasting and real-time tracking significantly improve planning accuracy and inventory management, thus supporting cost efficiency and service reliability. On the other hand, the integration of such technologies across diverse bottling partners with different legacy systems, technical capabilities and financial resources can be challenging. Disparities in digital maturity within the network may generate bottlenecks, incompatible data formats and uneven performance levels between regions. This reveals an internal risk: if modernization is not implemented in a harmonized way, the company may face a “two-speed” supply chain, with advanced regions and lagging partners coexisting, which complicates global coordination and reduces the overall benefits of digital transformation.

Third, the shift toward healthier, low-sugar and functional beverages has important implications for Coca-Cola's internal environment. The development of new recipes, product categories and packaging solutions requires R&D capacity, sensory testing, regulatory expertise and close collaboration with suppliers of

specialized ingredients. While the company has made considerable progress in diversifying its portfolio beyond traditional carbonated drinks, this diversification increases complexity in procurement, production planning and quality control. Each new category may demand specific production lines, storage conditions or shelf-life management, all of which must be integrated into existing operations. If internal processes are not sufficiently flexible, the launch of innovative products can encounter operational constraints that slow down time-to-market or increase costs, thereby weakening the competitiveness benefits expected from innovation.

Fourth, sustainability commitments and corporate social responsibility act simultaneously as internal strengths and managerial challenges. Initiatives in water stewardship, circular packaging, carbon reduction and responsible sourcing reinforce Coca-Cola's brand, improve stakeholder relations and align the company with global environmental trends [35]. However, implementing these commitments across thousands of facilities and suppliers requires deep changes in internal routines: investment in new equipment, redesign of packaging formats, stricter procurement standards and enhanced monitoring of environmental performance. These transformations demand financial resources, technical expertise and change-management capabilities at both corporate and local levels. In the absence of coherent internal systems, sustainability programmes may remain partial or symbolic, failing to deliver the expected competitive benefits and even exposing the company to reputational risk if commitments are not met consistently.

A fifth dimension concerns human capital and organizational culture. Coca-Cola's long history and global presence have generated a rich accumulation of managerial experience, technical knowledge and local market expertise. This constitutes an important internal strength, especially in the management of complex logistics operations and multi-channel marketing strategies. Nevertheless, the need to adapt quickly to digital technologies, new business models and evolving consumer expectations demands continuous skill upgrading. If internal training, talent development and performance incentives are not aligned with these new requirements, the company may experience capability gaps, resistance to

change or slower adoption of innovative practices. Research on knowledge management indicates that firms which fail to continuously renew their human capital base risk losing the advantages derived from past experience [20].

To consolidate these observations, the following table 2.2 summarizes the main internal strengths and weaknesses that shape Coca-Cola's international competitiveness, with particular emphasis on supply chain management, innovation and sustainability.

Table 2.2

Internal strengths and weaknesses affecting Coca-Cola's international competitiveness

Dimension	Internal strengths	Internal weaknesses / limitations
Brand and product portfolio	Iconic global brand; high recognition and loyalty across markets; diversified beverage portfolio	Portfolio complexity increases planning and coordination requirements; risk of cannibalization among products.
Organizational structure	Hybrid model combining centralized brand control and decentralized bottling network; strong local responsiveness	High coordination costs; potential misalignment between headquarters and local partners if governance is weak
Supply chain and logistics	Extensive global sourcing, regional production capacity, multi-modal transport and warehousing network	Operational complexity; vulnerability to bottleneck partners; dependence on infrastructure quality in some regions.
Digitalization and analytics	Deployment of big data platforms, forecasting tools and real-time tracking systems	Uneven digital maturity across bottlers; integration challenges between legacy systems and new technologies
Innovation and R&D	Increasing investment in new products (low-sugar, functional drinks) and packaging solutions	New products require specialized processes; risk of delays or higher costs if operations are not flexible enough.
Sustainability and CSR	Clear commitments in water use, recycling, emissions reduction and responsible sourcing	Implementation heterogeneity across countries; need for significant capital and capability upgrades
Human capital and culture	Experienced management teams; strong marketing and logistics know-how; established corporate culture	Need for continuous upskilling in digital, analytics and sustainability; potential resistance to organizational change.
Financial and investment capacity	Stable profitability and strong cash flows supporting long-term investment and innovation	Pressure to balance short-term financial targets with long-term strategic projects and sustainability investments.
Governance and control	Strategic management accounting, performance metrics and reporting systems	Complexity of monitoring a large partner network; risk of inconsistent implementation of policies at local level.

Source: systematised by the author based on [33-35]

The matrix in Table 2.2 shows that Coca-Cola's internal environment is characterized by a strong and diversified set of competitive advantages, but also by structural constraints and managerial tensions that must be actively managed. International competitiveness does not derive automatically from the existence of strengths; it depends on the company's ability to exploit these strengths while systematically addressing internal weaknesses. For example, the bottling network is a powerful mechanism for local adaptation, but only if coordination, digital integration and shared sustainability standards are ensured. Similarly, brand equity supports premium positioning, but it must be protected through coherent product quality, responsible marketing and reliable supply performance in all markets.

Table 2.3

Relative importance of main internal factors in Coca-Cola's international competitiveness, %

Internal factor	Estimated weight in international competitiveness	Brief comment
Global brand equity	18	Iconic global brand with high awareness and loyalty; facilitates entry into new markets and premium positioning.
Hybrid organizational structure	12	Combines central control of the brand with a decentralized bottling network; balances economies of scale and local adaptation.
International supply chain and logistics	20	Global network of sourcing, regional production and distribution; core driver of cost, service level and resilience.
Digitalization and advanced analytics	10	Use of big data, forecasting and real-time monitoring; improves planning, efficiency and decision-making quality.
Knowledge management and organizational learning	8	Training programs and diffusion of best practices among regions and bottlers; accelerates adaptation and innovation.
Financial strength	12	Stable profitability and strong cash flows; allows sustained investment in innovation, capacity and strategic projects.
Sustainability and corporate social responsibility	10	Initiatives in water stewardship, circular packaging, emissions reduction and responsible sourcing; reinforce reputation and social license to operate.
Human capital and organizational culture	10	Managers and teams with international experience in marketing, logistics and management; support implementation of complex strategies.

Source: systematised by the author based on [33-35]

In this sense, the management of Coca-Cola's internal environment can be interpreted as a continuous process of balancing centralization and decentralization, standardization and innovation, efficiency and resilience, financial performance and sustainability commitments. The company's current strengths in brand power, logistics capability, knowledge resources and financial robustness create a solid platform for international competitiveness. At the same time, the complexity of its operations, the uneven pace of digital transformation, the demanding nature of sustainability goals and the need for ongoing human capital development constitute internal challenges that require strategic attention.

In summary, the general characteristics and internal environment of Coca-Cola reveal a company whose international competitiveness is grounded in a powerful combination of brand equity, hybrid organisational structure, advanced supply-chain capabilities, digitalisation, knowledge resources and financial robustness. These strengths provide the basis for effective management of international competitiveness and support the development of efficient and resilient supply systems in diverse institutional environments. At the same time, internal complexity, the unequal pace of digital transformation, the demanding nature of sustainability commitments and the need for continuous human-capital development constitute challenges that must be addressed through coherent management strategies. A comprehensive understanding of these internal determinants is essential for the subsequent analysis of the external environment and for the formulation of practical recommendations aimed at improving the management of Coca-Cola's international competitiveness.

2.2. State of the organization's external environment and its impact on company activities

The external environment in which Coca-Cola operates is characterised by high dynamism, institutional diversity and growing uncertainty. For a company present in more than 200 countries, the external context is not homogeneous;

instead, it consists of overlapping global trends and specific national conditions that jointly influence demand patterns, cost structures, regulatory constraints and reputational expectations [33]. Managing international competitiveness therefore requires not only strong internal capabilities, but also the ability to interpret and adapt to these external forces in a systematic way.

From a technological standpoint, the worldwide diffusion of digital tools and data-driven business models has raised the operational standards for beverage companies. Retailers, logistics providers and competitors increasingly rely on big data, real-time inventory visibility, e-commerce platforms and automated planning systems. This external digitalisation trend affects Coca-Cola in several ways. First, retailers expect more accurate forecasts, shorter replenishment cycles and electronic data interchange, which forces the company to align its own planning and information systems. Second, competitors that succeed in using analytics to optimise prices and promotions can erode Coca-Cola's market share in specific channels if the company reacts more slowly. As a result, digital transformation is not only an internal initiative but also a response to external technological pressure that shapes the standards by which the company's performance is evaluated.

Geopolitical tensions, regionalisation of trade and recent shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic have also redefined the external environment of global supply chains. Disruptions in international transport, sudden border closures and volatility in freight rates have exposed the vulnerabilities of long, linear supply structures [37]. In this context, governments promote regional production and more resilient logistics networks, while corporations reassess their dependence on specific trade corridors and suppliers. For Coca-Cola, this external shift strengthens the rationale for a geographically diversified bottling system, but it also requires periodic reconfiguration of plant footprints, sourcing strategies and inventory policies. The company must assess exposure to geopolitical risk in each region and decide whether to increase safety stocks, develop alternative transport routes or invest in near-shoring in order to maintain stable service levels.

The regulatory and institutional environment is another powerful

determinant of Coca-Cola's competitive conditions. National authorities use regulation to address public-health concerns, protect consumers and pursue environmental objectives. This has led to a proliferation of sugar taxes, restrictions on advertising to children, mandatory nutrition labelling, packaging directives and recycling targets. For Coca-Cola, each of these measures has direct operational and strategic implications: sugar taxes influence product formulation and pricing; packaging rules constrain the choice of materials and formats; extended producer-responsibility schemes require participation in collection and recycling systems. Institutions also shape customs procedures, investment incentives and the general ease of doing business, which affect the cost and reliability of cross-border flows. The company must maintain continuous dialogue with regulators, monitor proposed legislation and anticipate how new rules will alter its supply, marketing and investment decisions in each market.

Economic conditions at global, regional and national levels exert a strong impact on beverage consumption and production costs. Variables such as GDP growth, inflation, unemployment and exchange rates influence household purchasing power and the relative attractiveness of branded products compared to cheaper alternatives [29; 30]. In emerging markets experiencing rapid income growth, demand for packaged beverages tends to increase, creating opportunities for Coca-Cola to expand production and distribution. Conversely, in periods of economic downturn or high inflation, consumers may downsize pack formats, substitute branded beverages with local brands or reduce discretionary spending altogether [36]. At the same time, fluctuations in exchange rates and commodity prices (sugar, aluminium, PET, fuel) affect the company's input costs and profitability. Managing international competitiveness therefore demands flexible pricing strategies, hedging policies and cost-efficiency measures that reflect the macroeconomic environment of each country.

Social and cultural trends represent a further dimension of the external environment with growing significance. Across many markets, consumers show greater awareness of health, wellness and nutrition, along with an increased

demand for transparency in product composition [42]. Public-health campaigns and media coverage linking sugar consumption to obesity and non-communicable diseases have intensified scrutiny of soft drinks. Simultaneously, there is rising interest in low-calorie beverages, functional drinks, plant-based options and products perceived as “natural” or “clean label” [43]. For Coca-Cola, these trends imply that traditional colas and full-sugar soft drinks can no longer sustain growth on their own. The company must adapt by reformulating existing products, reducing sugar content, expanding into new beverage categories and tailoring its communication to emphasise portion control, choice and responsible consumption. Social expectations thus directly influence R&D priorities, portfolio structure and marketing narratives.

Environmental pressures and sustainability expectations strongly shape Coca-Cola’s external context. Concerns about climate change, water scarcity, plastic waste and biodiversity loss have led regulators, NGOs and consumers to demand more responsible corporate behaviour [37]. As a large user of water and packaging materials, Coca-Cola is often at the centre of these debates. Governments introduce stricter limits on water extraction, impose carbon-pricing mechanisms and develop regulations that oblige producers to design recyclable packaging and contribute to waste-management systems [28]. Civil-society organisations and local communities monitor the company’s environmental performance and can mobilise against operations perceived as unsustainable. Consequently, sustainability has become a key external driver of how Coca-Cola must manage water use, energy efficiency, logistics routes and packaging design. Failure to align with environmental expectations would not only damage reputation, but could also result in operating restrictions or loss of the “social licence” to operate in certain regions [52].

The competitive structure of the beverage industry also defines important aspects of Coca-Cola’s external environment. The company faces rivalry from global players such as PepsiCo, from strong regional brands and from private-label products offered by large retailers [29, 40]. In addition, substitute categories —

bottled water, ready-to-drink tea and coffee, energy drinks and flavoured waters — compete for the same consumer occasions. Intense rivalry leads to high levels of advertising, frequent product launches, promotional campaigns and innovation in packaging and flavours. Retailers with significant bargaining power exert pressure on pricing and promotional conditions, affecting margins and route-to-market decisions. To remain competitive, Coca-Cola must continuously monitor competitors' actions, anticipate potential category shifts and ensure that its supply system can support rapid innovation and promotional intensity (Annex D).

Changes in retail and channel structures further complicate the external environment. In many developed markets, traditional grocery stores and supermarkets have been complemented or partially replaced by discounters, convenience chains, hypermarkets, e-commerce and quick-commerce platforms [41]. In emerging economies, informal trade – small shops, kiosks and mobile vendors – continues to play a central role, but modern trade is expanding. Each channel has different requirements regarding packaging sizes, delivery frequency, merchandising and data exchange. For example, e-commerce and quick-commerce demand smaller, more frequent deliveries and integration with digital order-management systems, while traditional trade depends on direct-store-delivery models and relationship-based selling [42]. Coca-Cola must design channel-specific logistics solutions and promotional strategies that fit the prevailing retail architecture of each country, adapting warehouse locations, fleet configuration and sales-force deployment accordingly.

Another external factor relates to country-of-origin perceptions and broader reputational dynamics. As a US-based multinational, Coca-Cola is associated not only with its own brand image but also with symbolic representations of American culture and business practices. Country-of-origin research shows that such associations can positively or negatively influence consumer attitudes, depending on local historical experiences and current political relations [43]. In some markets, American brands benefit from perceptions of high quality and innovation; in others, they may face scepticism or calls for supporting local products. This

external reputational environment conditions the intensity of communication efforts needed to maintain brand preference and may encourage the company to emphasise local sourcing, employment and community projects in its messaging.

Finally, the external innovation and collaboration ecosystem modulates the pace at which Coca-Cola can adopt new technologies and sustainable solutions. Universities, technology providers, packaging innovators and logistics start-ups represent potential partners for joint projects in areas such as biodegradable materials, low-carbon transport and digital route optimisation [44]. Public policies that promote innovation clusters, circular-economy initiatives and green financing create opportunities for collaborative experimentation. A rich external ecosystem facilitates access to emerging solutions and shortens development cycles; a weak or fragmented ecosystem can slow innovation and increase the cost of upgrades. Thus, the quality of the surrounding innovation environment influences Coca-Cola's ability to modernise its operations and respond proactively to sustainability and efficiency challenges [34].

To link these external forces with specific managerial concerns, it is useful to examine how different functional domains inside Coca-Cola are exposed to the external environment. The following table 2.4 presents a conceptual distribution of the relative sensitivity of key activity domains to external factors.

Table 2.4

Estimated sensitivity of Coca-Cola's key activity domains to external environment factors

Activity domain	Estimated sensitivity to external environment, %
Product and portfolio management	22
Supply chain and logistics operations	24
Marketing and brand communication	18
Finance and risk management	16
Human resources and organisational development	10
Sustainability and corporate relations	10
Total	100

Source: systematised by the author based on [33-35]

The percentages are indicative and express the approximate share of total external pressure that each domain experiences in the company's global operations. Importantly, the domains in the table do not reproduce the same categorical structure used in the textual analysis above; instead, they focus on functional areas affected by external conditions.

These estimates suggest that supply-chain and logistics operations are the most sensitive domain to external conditions, reflecting the strong influence of trade disruptions, infrastructure and environmental regulation on Coca-Cola's ability to deliver products efficiently and reliably (fig. 2.3). Product and portfolio management also exhibits high sensitivity, due to the combined effect of health-related trends, fiscal measures and competitive innovation on what consumers are willing to buy and under what conditions. Marketing, finance, human resources and sustainability each absorb distinct external pressures, requiring coordinated responses across functions rather than isolated adjustments.

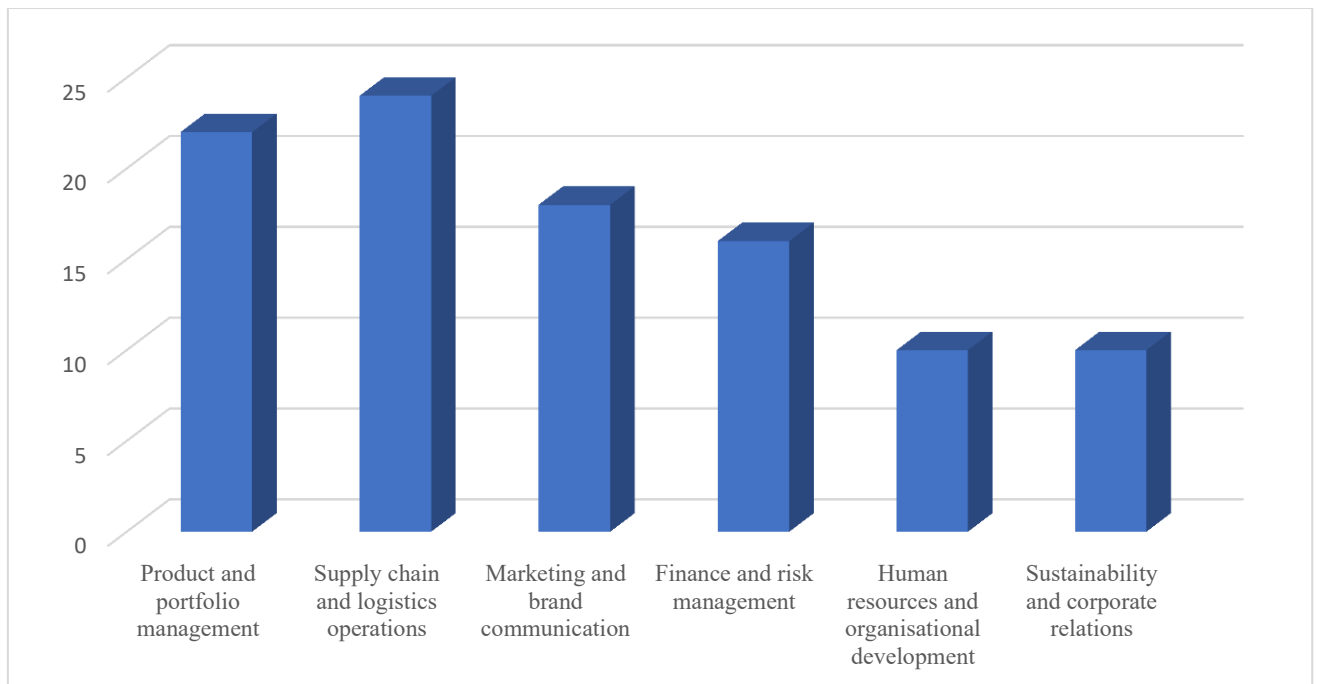


Fig. 2.3. Estimated sensitivity of Coca-Cola's key activity domains to external environment factors, %

Source: systematised by the author based on [33-35]

Overall, the current state of the external environment obliges Coca-Cola to manage international competitiveness as a dynamic alignment process between

internal capabilities and shifting technological, institutional, economic, social and environmental conditions. The company's capacity to interpret signals from this environment, quantify their impact on different activity domains and translate them into concrete strategic and operational decisions is a critical determinant of its long-term success in the global beverage market.

2.3. Assessment of problems in managing the company international competitiveness

Although Coca-Cola possesses a strong internal resource base and operates within a well-developed global system, the management of its international competitiveness faces a series of structural and emerging problems. These problems do not negate the company's strengths; rather, they indicate areas where the alignment between internal capabilities and external conditions is incomplete, fragile or under pressure. Identifying and systematising such problems is essential for designing targeted measures in subsequent sections of the thesis (fig. 2.4).

A first group of problems relates to strategic alignment between global competitiveness and supply-chain efficiency. Coca-Cola's declared strategic objectives emphasise brand leadership, portfolio diversification and sustainability, while day-to-day operational decisions are often driven by cost, service level and short-term financial performance [33]. This can create tensions when investments in resilience, regionalisation or environmentally friendly packaging increase costs in the short run but strengthen competitiveness in the long term. In practice, managers face trade-offs between price competitiveness, margin targets and sustainability or resilience goals. The absence of an integrated, multi-criteria framework for evaluating such trade-offs may lead to underinvestment in capabilities that are critical for future international competitiveness, such as digital integration or low-carbon logistics.

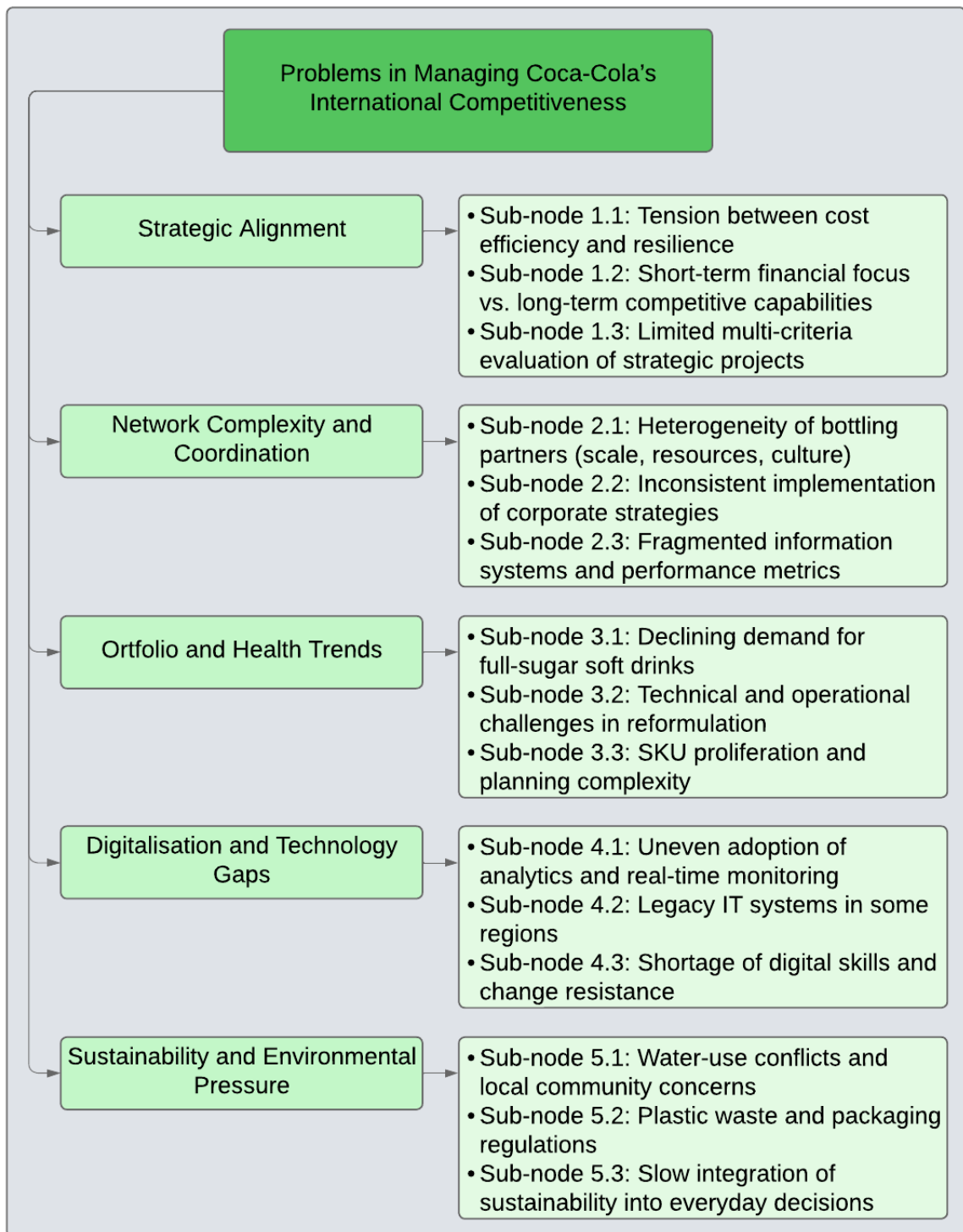


Fig. 2.4. Proposed structure for a problem map of Coca-Cola company

Source: systematised by the author based on [33-35].

A second set of problems arises from the complexity and heterogeneity of the global bottling network. The hybrid model combining central brand ownership with decentralised bottlers provides adaptability but also generates coordination challenges [33]. Differences in scale, financial strength, digital maturity and managerial culture among bottlers can lead to uneven implementation of corporate

strategies, particularly in areas such as innovation, quality, sustainability and data sharing. In some regions, limited investment capacity or resistance to change may slow the adoption of advanced analytics or new packaging formats, undermining the coherence of Coca-Cola's global competitive positioning [45]. Fragmented information systems and inconsistent performance metrics complicate benchmarking and hinder the use of data-driven decision-making across the network.

Third, Coca-Cola faces difficulties in adapting its product portfolio to rapidly evolving health and nutrition trends. While the company has introduced low- and zero-sugar variants, flavoured waters and functional beverages, the pace of change in consumer preferences and regulatory pressure (such as sugar taxes and labelling requirements) remains high [33]. In markets where public-health discourse is particularly strong, traditional colas may lose demand faster than the company can compensate through new categories. Portfolio transformation is constrained by technical challenges in reformulation, the need to maintain taste expectations and the complexity of managing multiple SKUs in production and distribution [45]. As a result, there is a risk that shifts in demand towards healthier options erode the competitiveness of legacy products more quickly than new offerings can consolidate their positions.

A fourth group of problems concerns digitalisation gaps and uneven technological integration. Although Coca-Cola invests in big data, forecasting tools and real-time logistics monitoring, these technologies are not adopted uniformly across all regions and partners [46]. Legacy systems, lack of skilled personnel and integration costs inhibit full end-to-end visibility in some parts of the supply chain. Without comprehensive data integration, the company cannot fully exploit advanced analytics to optimise inventory, routing and promotional effectiveness. This creates pockets of inefficiency or slower reaction times compared to competitors that may have more streamlined, digitally native operations.

Fifth, sustainability and environmental performance present both reputational and operational challenges. External pressure regarding water use,

plastic waste and carbon emissions continues to intensify [35]. Coca-Cola has set ambitious global targets, but implementation varies by country due to differences in infrastructure, regulation and partner capabilities. In certain locations, community concerns about water extraction or waste management can escalate into conflicts that threaten the company's social licence to operate. Internally, integrating sustainability criteria into everyday decisions on sourcing, packaging and logistics remains incomplete. If sustainability is treated as a parallel programme rather than a core dimension of competitiveness, there is a risk of fragmentation and slow progress relative to stakeholder expectations. (Annex C)

Sixth, the company must deal with heightened exposure to external shocks and systemic risks. Geopolitical instability, pandemics, energy price spikes and trade disruptions have shown that global beverage supply chains are vulnerable to sudden shocks [47]. While Coca-Cola's regionalised production footprint mitigates some risks, there are still bottlenecks in specific corridors, dependence on key raw materials and sensitivity to regulatory changes. The challenge lies in institutionalising robust risk-management practices — scenario planning, multi-sourcing, strategic safety stocks and flexible contracting — across all regions and partners [44]. In absence of such system-wide resilience, local disruptions can accumulate into service failures that harm brand reliability and competitiveness.

Finally, measurement and governance of international competitiveness itself constitute a problem area. Traditional performance indicators — volumes sold, market share, margins — provide only a partial view of competitiveness in an environment where intangible assets, resilience and sustainability are increasingly important [3]. Coca-Cola faces the task of developing and using more comprehensive metrics that capture not only financial outcomes but also capability development, innovation intensity, environmental performance and risk exposure. Without such multidimensional measurement, top management may underestimate structural vulnerabilities or overestimate the sustainability of current competitive advantages.

In summary, the problems in managing Coca-Cola's international

competitiveness arise not from a lack of resources, but from tensions between long-term strategic goals and short-term performance pressures, from the complexity of coordinating a heterogeneous global network, from the speed of external change and from incomplete integration of digital and sustainability dimensions into the core management system. These problem areas must be addressed systematically in order to maintain and enhance the company's position in the global beverage market.

SECTION 3: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE MANAGEMENT OF THE COMPANY'S INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS

3.1. Proposed strategies and possible solutions to identified problems

On the basis of the problems identified in managing Coca-Cola's international competitiveness, it is necessary to formulate a set of mutually reinforcing strategies aimed at strengthening the alignment between long-term competitive objectives and day-to-day decisions in supply chain, portfolio management, digitalisation, sustainability and risk governance. The purpose is not to replace the existing business model, but to refine it so that internal capabilities and external requirements are connected through a more coherent management system.

A first key direction is the introduction of an integrated competitiveness management framework. Major strategic and operational initiatives should be evaluated according to a balanced set of criteria that includes cost and profitability, resilience, innovation, sustainability and capability development, rather than cost alone. This multi-criteria approach ought to be embedded in capital budgeting, network design and logistics decisions, so that projects which strengthen long-term international competitiveness — such as regionalisation of production, digital integration or transition to low-carbon transport — are not rejected solely because they increase short-term expenditure. The framework may rely on weighted scoring models and scenario analysis that combine quantitative indicators with expert judgement to compare alternatives under uncertainty. In this way, the tension between short-term financial pressures and long-term competitive needs can be reduced.

Another strategic priority is the deepening of coordination and standardisation within the global bottling network. To address heterogeneity in scale, resources and managerial practices, Coca-Cola should further develop

common operating standards, shared key performance indicators and joint planning mechanisms with its partners. One practical solution is the creation of a “network performance cockpit” that consolidates core indicators such as service level, inventory turns, digital adoption and sustainability metrics for all bottlers in a comparable format. Bottlers with superior results can serve as benchmarks, while those lagging behind receive targeted support, training and technology-transfer initiatives [33]. Formal cross-regional working groups focused on logistics, packaging and analytics would facilitate diffusion of best practices and reduce fragmentation in strategy implementation.

In response to rapid changes in health and nutrition trends, it is advisable to accelerate portfolio transformation through supply-chain-ready product design. New low- and zero-sugar products, functional beverages and portion-controlled formats should be developed through close collaboration between R&D, marketing and supply-chain units. Early consideration of ingredient availability, production-line flexibility, shelf-life requirements and packaging compatibility helps to minimise SKU proliferation and operational complexity. Modular formulation and packaging architectures — such as shared base recipes or common bottle families — can support local adaptation while preserving economies of scale. This approach allows the company to react to evolving consumer expectations without undermining the efficiency of its international supply system.

Closing digitalisation gaps requires defining a minimum digital standard for all bottlers and logistics partners. This standard would specify essential capabilities such as electronic data interchange, basic demand forecasting tools and real-time shipment visibility [46]. Implementation can follow a phased roadmap, starting with foundational data quality and connectivity, and later extending to advanced analytics, machine-learning forecasting and optimisation modules. Corporate digital centres of excellence may provide shared platforms, training and support, thus reducing duplication of IT investments and helping partners overcome capability barriers. Aligning performance incentives with digital metrics, such as forecast accuracy, stock-out reduction or route optimisation, would further promote

adoption.

Sustainability should be embedded into core decision processes rather than treated as a parallel programme. Environmental indicators need to be systematically integrated into procurement, packaging and logistics choices. This includes using carbon and water footprints as additional criteria when selecting suppliers, transport modes or facility locations, as well as developing internal “shadow prices” for CO₂ emissions and water stress to incorporate long-term environmental risks into economic calculations [35]. At the same time, Coca-Cola should intensify collaboration with suppliers, recyclers and local authorities to expand circular-packaging systems and reinforce water stewardship at watershed level. Linking part of management remuneration to environmental targets would signal the strategic importance of sustainability inside the organisation.

Finally, it is necessary to strengthen risk management and measurement of international competitiveness. A more systematic risk-management architecture should cover multi-sourcing strategies, alternative transport corridors, strategic safety stocks and flexible contracting with suppliers and logistics providers [48]. Scenario-based stress tests simulating border closures, energy price spikes or regional supply interruptions ought to be conducted regularly and linked to concrete contingency plans. At the same time, the measurement system should be expanded beyond traditional financial and volume metrics to include indicators of innovation intensity, digital maturity, resilience and sustainability performance. A concise competitiveness dashboard at corporate and regional levels — tracking, for example, the share of revenue from new products, forecast accuracy, recovery time after disruptions, packaging recyclability and water-use efficiency — would provide management with an early-warning system for structural vulnerabilities.

3.2. Decision-making for improving the company's management system

Improving the management system of a multinational company such as Coca-Cola requires that decision-making processes move from predominantly financial and volume-based criteria toward a broader, more integrated logic that reflects the multidimensional nature of international competitiveness. In an environment shaped by technological change, regulatory pressure, sustainability expectations and recurrent shocks, decisions about supply chains, investments, portfolio structure and organisational change must be evaluated not only in terms of immediate cost, but also in terms of resilience, innovation, environmental performance and long-term capability development. Consequently, the quality of the company's management system depends on how well its decision-making architecture internalises these wider criteria and operationalises them in everyday practice.

A first requirement is the institutionalisation of a structured, multi-criteria decision-making framework at corporate and regional levels. Traditional decision-making in operations and finance often prioritised cost minimisation, short-term profitability and volume growth. While these remain important, they are insufficient to capture the complexity of international competitiveness in a volatile environment. An improved management system should ensure that every major decision — such as the opening or closing of plants, selection of suppliers, redesign of logistics networks or introduction of new packaging technologies — is systematically evaluated along several dimensions: economic performance, risk and resilience, innovation impact, environmental and social consequences, and contribution to strategic capabilities. Practically, this can be implemented through decision templates and scoring models that require managers to quantify or qualitatively assess each dimension, reducing the risk that critical long-term factors are overlooked.

A second element concerns the governance structure of decision-making. In many large corporations, decisions affecting international competitiveness are dispersed among separate departments — finance, supply chain, marketing,

sustainability and human resources — each with its own objectives and information sources. For Coca-Cola, improving the management system means strengthening cross-functional decision bodies that bring together these perspectives, particularly for strategic choices with long-term implications. Joint committees at global and regional levels can be responsible for reviewing major investments, network redesigns or portfolio shifts, ensuring that financial, operational, marketing and environmental dimensions are considered simultaneously [33]. This collective governance reduces silo effects and increases the probability that decisions are aligned with the company's overarching competitiveness strategy.

Another important aspect is the temporal orientation of decisions. International competitiveness is built over long cycles of capability accumulation, innovation and brand development, yet many managerial decisions are made under the pressure of quarterly targets and short-term performance indicators [7]. To correct this bias, the company's management system should include mechanisms that explicitly evaluate the long-term effects of decisions and protect strategic investments from excessive short-term pressure. This may include multi-year roadmaps for digitalisation, portfolio transformation and sustainability, with clearly defined milestones and intermediate indicators that allow progress to be monitored without abandoning long-range objectives. Scenario analysis and stress testing can help decision-makers visualise how current choices will perform under different future conditions, encouraging more robust and forward-looking strategies [49].

In addition, the decision-making process must become more inclusive of sustainability and social responsibility considerations. As external stakeholders increasingly judge companies on environmental and social performance, decisions that ignore these dimensions can undermine legitimacy and brand equity. Incorporating environmental and social impact assessments into standard decision procedures — similarly to financial assessments — ensures that options with high environmental risk or negative community implications are identified early and

either redesigned or rejected. The use of internal “shadow prices” for carbon and water stress, as well as environmental-score requirements for suppliers and logistics partners, can translate abstract sustainability goals into operational decision parameters. In this way, sustainability becomes a concrete criterion embedded in routine decision-making rather than an external constraint treated after the fact.

Decision-making for improving the management system also involves the design of appropriate incentives and accountability mechanisms. If performance evaluations and remuneration are based exclusively on sales volumes and short-term margins, managers may systematically choose options that deliver immediate gains while weakening long-term competitiveness, for example by underinvesting in resilience or delaying necessary technological upgrades [50]. Aligning incentive systems with the multi-criteria framework is therefore essential: key performance indicators used in bonus schemes (Annex A) should include not only financial outcomes but also metrics of innovation (share of revenue from new products), digital maturity (forecast accuracy, system utilisation), resilience (recovery time after disruptions) and sustainability (packaging recyclability, water-use efficiency) [7; 33]. Clear assignment of responsibilities for achieving these targets at regional and functional levels further strengthens accountability and encourages consistent behaviour across the organisation.

To operationalise these concepts, it is useful to illustrate how decision-making weights might be distributed across different criteria in the improved management system. The following table 3.1 presents a conceptual example of the relative importance that could be assigned to key decision-making criteria when evaluating strategic projects at Coca-Cola. These percentages are indicative and can be adjusted to reflect corporate priorities, but they illustrate how a more balanced, competitiveness-oriented decision model differs from a purely financial one.

Table 3.1

Illustrative weighting of decision-making criteria for strategic projects at Coca-Cola

Decision-making criterion	Suggested weight in project evaluation, %
Financial performance (NPV, ROI, payback)	30
Supply-chain efficiency and service impact	20
Resilience and risk reduction	15
Innovation and capability development	10
Sustainability and environmental performance	15
Strategic alignment with corporate competitiveness	10
Total	100

Source: systematised by the author based on [33-35].

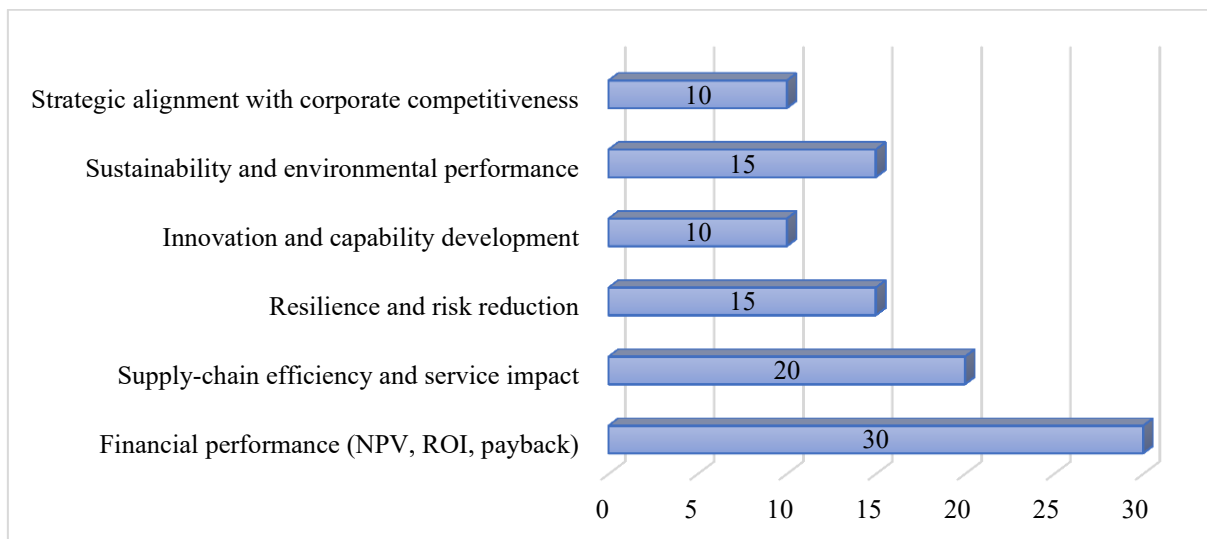


Figure 3.1. Illustrative weighting of decision-making criteria for strategic projects at Coca-Cola

Source: systematised by the author based on [33-35].

By adopting such a weighted, multi-criteria approach, the company's management system would be better equipped to select projects and policies that contribute not only to short-term financial results but also to the broader foundations of international competitiveness. Decisions would explicitly balance economic, operational, risk-related, innovative and environmental considerations, thereby aligning day-to-day management practices with the complex demands of the global beverage market in which Coca-Cola operates.

3.3. Justification of the feasibility and relevance of the proposed measures

The proposed measures for improving the management of Coca-Cola's international competitiveness are both feasible to implement within the company's existing capabilities and highly relevant to the current global business environment. Their feasibility is primarily supported by the firm's strong internal resource base — brand equity, financial strength, developed logistics network, digital initiatives and knowledge-management systems — while their relevance derives from the alignment with key external trends such as technological change, regulatory tightening, health-driven demand shifts and sustainability pressures.

The introduction of an integrated, multi-criteria competitiveness management framework is feasible because Coca-Cola already operates with sophisticated planning, budgeting and performance-control systems at global and regional levels [33]. These systems can be adapted rather than replaced, by incorporating additional criteria such as resilience, innovation and environmental performance into existing decision templates and investment-approval procedures. Analytical tools required for multi-criteria evaluation — scenario analysis, risk assessment, scoring models — are already used in financial and operational planning (Annex B). Therefore, the proposed framework does not demand a radical technological transformation; it mainly requires methodological refinement and managerial training, which are well within the company's capacity. Its relevance is evident in the increasing volatility of the external environment and the need to balance short-term cost considerations with long-term competitiveness, especially in supply chain, digitalisation and sustainability domains.

Deepening coordination and standardisation within the bottling network is also a realistic measure. Coca-Cola has long experience in managing global–local relationships and already uses common quality standards and brand guidelines [34]. The proposal to establish shared key performance indicators, network-wide dashboards and cross-regional working groups builds on existing governance

structures. Bottlers have incentives to cooperate because improved benchmarking and support programmes can enhance their own efficiency and profitability. From a relevance perspective, this measure directly addresses the previously identified problems of heterogeneity, fragmented information and uneven implementation of corporate strategies, which weaken the coherence of the company's international competitiveness. In a context where regulatory, technological and sustainability requirements are tightening, a more unified and transparent network is essential.

The recommended “supply-chain-ready” approach to portfolio transformation is likewise feasible and pertinent. Cross-functional collaboration between R&D, marketing and supply chain is not new for Coca-Cola; what is required is a more systematic integration of operational constraints into early product-design stages. The firm possesses technical expertise in formulation, packaging and process engineering, as well as advanced forecasting and planning tools, which can support this integration. The relevance of this measure is reinforced by strong external trends towards healthier, low- and zero-sugar and functional beverages, combined with regulatory initiatives such as sugar taxes and mandatory nutritional labelling. If portfolio changes are not aligned with supply-chain capabilities, the company risks increased complexity, higher costs and slower response to demand shifts; consequently, the proposed measure is central to preserving both competitiveness and operational efficiency.

Closing digitalisation gaps through a minimum digital standard for bottlers and logistics partners is feasible because many core digital components — data platforms, forecasting engines, track-and-trace systems — already exist at corporate or regional level. The company can replicate proven solutions rather than develop them from zero in each region, using corporate digital centres of excellence as hubs for technology transfer and training. Cloud-based architectures and modular software allow progressive deployment without large, simultaneous investments by all partners. This measure is highly relevant, as external technological developments and competitive dynamics increasingly reward companies that can exploit data for demand sensing, route optimisation and

promotional effectiveness. Without a minimum standard, the network risks developing a “two-speed” structure in which digitally advanced regions coexist with lagging partners, undermining overall performance.

Embedding sustainability into core decision processes is also realistic in the current corporate context. Coca-Cola already publishes sustainability reports, sets global environmental targets and implements water- and packaging-related initiatives in many markets. The proposed measures — using carbon and water footprints as decision criteria, applying internal shadow prices and linking management bonuses to environmental performance — extend existing practices rather than introduce entirely new concepts. Their relevance is difficult to overstate: environmental regulation, stakeholder scrutiny and consumer expectations are intensifying, and companies that fail to integrate sustainability into core decisions face rising regulatory costs, reputational risks and potential access restrictions to key markets. For a beverage company highly dependent on water and packaging, proactive environmental management is a prerequisite for long-term competitiveness.

Strengthening risk management and resilience planning is feasible because the company already carries out risk assessments and contingency planning at various levels, especially after recent global disruptions. Institutionalising scenario-based stress tests, multi-sourcing strategies and alternative transport corridors builds on this experience and uses analytical tools that are familiar to corporate finance and supply-chain teams [51]. The relevance of this measure stems from the frequency and severity of shocks — geopolitical tensions, pandemics, energy-price spikes — that have demonstrated the vulnerability of global supply chains. Since brand value is closely tied to reliable product availability, resilience is not a purely operational concern but a central element of international competitiveness.

The table 3.2 indicates that all proposed measures combine relatively high feasibility with very high strategic relevance.

Table 3.2

Indicative feasibility and relevance of proposed measures for improving Coca-Cola's management system

Proposed measure	Implementation feasibility, %	Strategic relevance for international competitiveness, %
Integrated multi-criteria competitiveness framework	85	95
Network-wide coordination and standardisation among bottlers	80	90
“Supply-chain-ready” portfolio transformation	75	92
Minimum digital standard and phased closing of digital gaps	70	93
Embedding sustainability into core decision processes	78	97
Strengthened risk management and resilience planning	72	94
Expanded measurement system (competitiveness dashboard)	88	91

Source: systematised by the author based on [33-35].

Differences in feasibility reflect the varying levels of organisational change, investment and partner coordination required, while consistently high relevance values underscore the central role of these measures in addressing the structural and emerging challenges previously identified. Overall, the justification for implementing the proposed measures rests on a solid correspondence between what Coca-Cola is capable of doing, given its existing resources and experience, and what it must do to maintain and strengthen its position in an increasingly demanding and turbulent global beverage market.

CONCLUSION

The conducted research has shown that the international competitiveness of Coca-Cola is not the result of a single factor, but of a complex interaction between internal capabilities and an increasingly demanding external environment. The company's position in the global beverage market is grounded in strong brand equity, a hybrid organisational structure, a diversified product portfolio and an advanced supply and distribution system. At the same time, these strengths generate significant complexity and expose the firm to a wide range of operational, strategic and reputational risks. The core conclusion of the thesis is that managing international competitiveness today requires moving from a narrow focus on volume and short-term financial indicators toward an integrated, multi-dimensional management system.

The analysis of the internal environment demonstrated that Coca-Cola possesses a powerful set of tangible and intangible resources. Its global brand, financial stability, extensive bottling network, digital initiatives and knowledge-management practices provide a robust foundation for competitive advantage. However, this foundation is under pressure from the growing fragmentation of information systems, heterogeneity among bottling partners, rising sustainability expectations and the need for continuous innovation in response to health and nutrition trends. The company's internal strengths can therefore only sustain competitiveness if they are continuously renewed and coordinated through a coherent management framework.

The examination of the external environment revealed that Coca-Cola operates under a configuration of forces that includes technological acceleration, regulatory tightening, economic volatility, health-driven demand shifts, environmental pressures and intense competition. Digitalisation has raised expectations in terms of forecasting accuracy, service levels and transparency along the supply chain. Regulatory and institutional changes have introduced sugar taxes, packaging directives and environmental obligations that directly affect product design and logistics. Social and cultural shifts have increased the demand

for healthier, more responsible beverage options, while climate and resource concerns have placed water use and packaging at the centre of public debate. This external landscape reinforces the need for a management system capable of anticipating change and translating it into timely strategic and operational responses.

On this basis, the assessment of problems in managing Coca-Cola's international competitiveness identified several key tension points. There are persistent trade-offs between cost efficiency and resilience, short-term profitability and long-term capability development, centralised strategic intentions and decentralised implementation. Portfolio adaptation to health trends is constrained by operational complexity and the technical challenges of reformulation. Digitalisation progresses unevenly across regions and partners, creating a two-speed network where some segments benefit from advanced analytics while others lag behind. Sustainability initiatives, although present, are not yet fully integrated into core decision processes. Risk management practices exist but require further institutionalisation to cope with recurrent shocks. These problems do not invalidate the current model, but they demonstrate that incremental adjustments are no longer sufficient.

The proposed measures in the third section of the thesis directly address these weaknesses and provide a coherent direction for improvement. The introduction of an integrated competitiveness management framework allows strategic projects to be evaluated on the basis of financial performance, supply-chain efficiency, resilience, innovation, sustainability and strategic alignment. Strengthening coordination within the bottling network through shared indicators, common standards and cross-regional working groups reduces fragmentation and facilitates diffusion of best practices. Designing new products as "supply-chain-ready" from the outset connects portfolio transformation to operational feasibility. Establishing a minimum digital standard for all partners closes critical capability gaps and supports the use of analytics in everyday decisions.

Equally important, embedding sustainability into procurement, packaging

and logistics decisions transforms environmental commitments from peripheral programmes into central components of competitive strategy. Integrating risk management into regular planning cycles improves the company's ability to withstand disruptions and protect brand reliability. Expanding the measurement system to include indicators of innovation, digital maturity, resilience and sustainability aligns managerial attention and incentives with the real drivers of long-term competitiveness. Collectively, these measures shift the focus of the management system from reactive adjustments to proactive capability building.

The feasibility analysis indicated that these measures are realistic in light of Coca-Cola's existing financial resources, technological infrastructure, governance experience and global–local management practices. Many of the required tools and processes already exist in some form within the organisation and can be scaled, integrated or refined rather than created from zero. The relevance of the measures is equally clear: they respond to the most pressing external challenges and internal tensions identified in the diagnostic sections, and they are consistent with global trends in corporate governance, digital transformation and sustainability.

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ANNEXES

Annex A. KPI System for International Competitiveness Management

Table A.1

Key performance indicators and relative importance for Coca-Cola's international competitiveness

KPI code	Indicator name	Dimension	Relative importance, %	Measurement (short description)
FIN-01	Return on invested capital (ROIC)	Financial	12	Operating profit after tax / invested capital
FIN-02	Cost-to-serve ratio	Financial / Operational	10	Total logistics & distribution cost / net sales
SC-01	On-time in-full deliveries (OTIF)	Supply chain	11	OTIF deliveries / total deliveries
SC-02	Average order lead time	Supply chain	7	Days from order receipt to delivery
RES-01	Supply chain resilience index	Resilience	9	Composite score (multi-sourcing, backup routes, safety stock, etc.)
INN-01	Share of revenue from new products	Innovation	8	Revenue from products \leq 3 years / total revenue
DIG-01	Forecast accuracy (MAPE)	Digital maturity	8	Mean absolute percentage error of demand forecasts
DIG-02	Digital adoption rate of bottlers	Digital maturity	7	Bottlers meeting minimum digital standard / total bottlers
SUS-01	Recyclable or reusable packaging share	Sustainability	10	Volume of recyclable/reusable packaging / total packaging volume
SUS-02	Water-use ratio	Sustainability	8	Litres of water used per litre of finished beverage
GOV-01	Strategic alignment score of major projects	Governance / Strategy	10	Expert score 1–5 for alignment with corporate competitiveness targets
Total			100	

Annex B. Risk Matrix for International Supply Chain Management

Table B.2

Illustrative risk matrix for Coca-Cola's international supply chain (probability and impact in %)

Risk ID	Risk description	Category	Probability, %	Impact on operations, %	Overall risk level, %*	Main exposure region(s)
R-01	Border closures / trade restrictions	Geopolitical	35	70	24.5	Intercontinental corridors
R-02	Sharp increase in fuel and freight prices	Economic / Cost	55	65	35.8	Global
R-03	Water scarcity near production plants	Environmental	30	80	24	Water-stressed countries
R-04	Cyber-attack on logistics and planning systems	Technological	25	75	18.8	Global (central platforms)
R-05	Sudden regulatory change (sugar tax, labelling)	Regulatory	50	60	30	Selected national markets
R-06	Social conflict with local communities (water, waste)	Social	20	70	14	Plants near urban areas
R-07	Major supplier failure (ingredients or packaging)	Supply	28	68	19	Regions with high concentration of suppliers

*Overall risk level % = Probability % × Impact % / 100 (valor conceptual para comparación).

Annex C. Stakeholder Importance–Influence Matrix

Table C.1

Relative interest and influence of key stakeholders in Coca-Cola's international competitiveness

Stakeholder group	Interest in company performance, %	Influence on company decisions, %	Overall priority index, %*	Main focus area (short)
National regulators	85	90	87.8	Health policy, taxation, environment
Local communities	80	60	69.3	Water use, employment, environmental impact
Bottling partners	95	85	89.8	Profitability, stability, operational support
Retailers / key customers	90	88	89	Supply reliability, margins, category growth
NGOs / environmental groups	70	55	61.9	Packaging, climate, transparency
Employees	75	50	61.2	Working conditions, development, culture
Investors / shareholders	88	92	90	Financial returns, risk, ESG performance

Annex D. Dashboard Structure for International Competitiveness Monitoring

Table D.1

Relative weight of dashboard blocks in the overall competitiveness monitoring system

Dashboard block	Weight in overall dashboard, %	Example of included indicators (codes)	Main managerial purpose
Financial performance	20	FIN-01, FIN-02	Monitor profitability, capital efficiency and cost-to-serve
Supply chain performance & resilience	25	SC-01, SC-02, RES-01	Ensure service levels, efficiency and robustness
Innovation and portfolio dynamics	15	INN-01	Track contribution of new products to competitiveness
Digital maturity	15	DIG-01, DIG-02	Assess analytical capability and IT adoption
Sustainability and resource efficiency	15	SUS-01, SUS-02	Evaluate environmental performance and progress
Strategic alignment & governance quality	10	GOV-01	Check coherence of projects with long-term strategy
Total	100		