

## SPECIFICS OF THE RHYTHMIC GYMNASTICS DEVELOPMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF THE US SPORTS SERVICES MARKET

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*The US sports services market is one of the largest and most dynamic in the world, having a significant impact on global trends in sports and physical culture. The high concentration of income in the leading professional leagues creates an imbalance between mass and spectator disciplines and niche sports, in particular rhythmic gymnastics. In this context, there is a need to study the specifics of the rhythmic gymnastics' organizations and clubs, identify key problems and barriers to their development, as well as providing recommendations for increasing the competitiveness of this sport in the US sports services market. The aim of the study is to analyse the current state and trends in the development of the sports services market in the United States, identify the features of the activities of sports organizations and clubs specializing in rhythmic gymnastics, identify key barriers to its development, and develop recommendations for improving the competitive position of rhythmic gymnastics in the context of a commercialized sports industry. The study employed the following methods: analysis of statistics and reports of leading international organizations, content analysis of academic publications and strategic documents in the field of sports management, as well as systemic generalization for drawing conclusions and providing recommendations. It was found that the US sports industry in 2018–2024 demonstrates stable positive dynamics, despite the crisis phenomena of 2020, maintaining leadership in the global market. The peculiarities of rhythmic gymnastics clubs, which combine educational-recreational and commercial models, but are inferior in financial stability and marketing capabilities to professional leagues, are identified. The key problems of the development of rhythmic gymnastics in the USA are determined: insufficient institutional support, low media presence, cultural specifics of demand, and competition with mass sports. This gave grounds for providing a set of recommendations: digitalization of the media dimension, partnership with business, internationalization of activities, integration into the system of educational programmes, and diversification of funding sources.*

*The study proves that increasing the competitiveness of rhythmic gymnastics in the USA is possible if digital technologies, partnership business models, as well as educational and cultural integration are combined. This will contribute not only to the commercial growth of the discipline, but also to the establishment of its unique cultural image in the global sports space.*

**Key words:** sports organizations, competitiveness, sports market, sports management, institutional support.

### **Квач Ольга. Специфіка розвитку художньої гімнастики у контексті ринку спортивних послуг США**

*Ринок спортивних послуг у США є одним із найбільших і найдинамічніших у світі, справляючи суттєвий вплив на глобальні тенденції у сфері спорту та фізичної культури. Висока концентрація доходів у провідних професійних лігах створює дисбаланс між масовими й видовищними дисциплінами та нішевыми видами спорту, зокрема художньою гімнастикою. У цьому контексті постає потреба у вивченні специфіки функціонування організацій і клубів художньої гімнастики, визначенні ключових проблем і бар'єрів їх розвитку, а також у формуванні рекомендацій щодо підвищення конкурентоспроможності цього виду спорту на ринку спортивних послуг США. Дослідження має на меті проаналізувати сучасний стан та тенденції розвитку ринку спортивних послуг у США, визначити особливості діяльності спортивних організацій та клубів, що спеціалізуються на художній гімнастиці, виявити ключові бар'єри її розвитку та розробити рекомендації щодо підвищення конкурентних позицій художньої гімнастики в умовах комерціалізованої спортивної індустрії. У процесі дослідження застосовано комплекс методів: аналіз статистичних даних та звітів провідних міжнародних організацій, контент-аналіз наукових публікацій і стратегічних документів у сфері спортивного менеджменту, а також метод системного узагальнення для формулювання висновків і рекомендацій. Встановлено, що спортивна індустрія США у 2018–2024 рр. демонструє сталу позитивну динаміку, попри кризові явища 2020 року, зберігаючи лідерство на світовому ринку. Виявлено особливості функціонування клубів художньої гімнастики, які поєднують освітньо-рекреаційні та комерційні моделі, проте поступаються у фінансовій стабільності та маркетингових можливостях професійним лігам. Сформульовано ключові проблеми розвитку художньої гімнастики у США: недостатня інституційна підтримка, низька медійна присутність, культурна специфіка попиту та конкуренція з масовими видами спорту. На цій основі запропоновано комплекс рекомендацій: цифровізація медійного виміру, партнерство з бізнесом, інтернаціоналізація діяльності, інтеграція у систему освітніх програм, диверсифікація джерел фінансування.*

*Дослідження доводить, що підвищення конкурентоспроможності художньої гімнастики у США можливе за умови поєднання цифрових технологій, партнерських бізнес-моделей та освітньо-культурної інтеграції. Це сприятиме не лише комерційному зростанню дисципліни, але й формуванню її унікального культурного образу у світовому спортивному просторі.*

**Ключові слова:** спортивні організації, конкурентоспроможність, ринок спорту, спортивний менеджмент, інституційна підтримка.

**Introduction.** The sports industry is turning into one of the most dynamic sectors of the global services market, which combines commercial, social, and cultural factors of development. The United States of America (USA) occu-

pies a leading position in the global sports market, forming a unique model of sports services, where the emphasis is on both mass physical culture and professional sports. At the same time, rhythmic gymnastics, which traditionally

developed in European and post-Soviet countries, did not occupy a priority place among popular sports in the USA for a long time. It was inferior to such disciplines as basketball, American football, and artistic gymnastics. This creates a special research problem: the need to identify the specifics of the formation and development of rhythmic gymnastics in the USA in the context of the sports services market.

The relevance of the issue under research is determined by several factors. First, rhythmic gymnastics is gaining increasing popularity among young people in the USA as a form of aesthetic sport and a tool for the development of physical culture. This stimulates the demand for specialized coaching programmes, sports clubs, as well as the children's and youth sports industry. Second, the US sports services market is characterized by a high level of commercialization and competition, which requires organizations in the field of rhythmic gymnastics to adapt to business management models, marketing strategies, and innovative approaches to working with clients. Third, the lack of established traditions and systematic support for rhythmic gymnastics at the state level creates additional barriers to its integration into the American sports space, while opening up opportunities for private initiatives and entrepreneurial forms of development.

The existing problem is that rhythmic gymnastics in the USA does not yet have such an institutional and social basis as in countries with strong schools of this sport. Therefore, there is a need to study the mechanisms of its development, the features of integration into the sports services market, as well as to determine the prospects for increasing the competitiveness of this sport in American sports industry.

The issues of rhythmic gymnastics development in the global context are reflected in numerous studies, giving grounds to outline key areas of analysis and identify gaps in the current academic discourse. In the work of Chiriac et al. [1] emphasized the importance of psychomotor abilities as a decisive factor in the performance of technical elements in rhythmic gymnastics. The authors emphasize that the combination of motor coordination, accuracy, and the ability to control movements forms the basis of the success of female athletes, which indicates a high dependence of results on psycho-physiological characteristics.

Çimen Polat et al. [2] proved in their study that the systemic application of technical training using gymnastic objects for eight weeks has a positive effect on the speed of reactions of female athletes. The obtained results showed a noticeable improvement in simple, selective, and discriminatory reactions, which emphasizes the importance of an integrated approach in the development of cognitive motor qualities.

Potdevin et al. [3] analysed the activities of experienced rhythmic gymnastics coaches, focusing on specific professional practices. The researchers found that the success of female athletes is largely determined not only by the intensity of the training process, but also by the pedagogical strategies chosen by the mentors. So, the coach's role goes beyond technical training and covers a wide range of pedagogical and psychological tasks.

Mizomov and Ochilova [4] consider the introduction of innovative pedagogical technologies into the training process of young gymnasts. The authors emphasize that the use of current approaches enhances children's interest, while contributing to the formation of sustainable motivation to engage in sports. This indicates the importance of pedagogical innovations in the long-term development of the discipline.

A slightly different perspective is offered by de Oliveira et al. [5], who raise the issue of the correlation between academic approaches and cultural perceptions in rhythmic gymnastics. Researchers show that the idea of the "ideal body" in this discipline does not always correspond to scientifically based criteria, which creates risks of excessive standardization and the formation of stereotypes in the sports environment.

Sterkowicz-Przybycień and Fundament [6] made an important contribution to the understanding of the physical fitness of female athletes. They demonstrated that the level of physical fitness largely depends on the age and sports achievements of gymnasts. This gives grounds to consider age as a key parameter in the construction of training programmes, which ensures a gradual increase in sports results.

In general, the analysis of academic literature shows that researchers' attention is focused mainly on the physiological, cognitive, and pedagogical aspects of gymnasts' training. At the same time, recent academic literature does not sufficiently cover the issue of the functioning of rhythmic gymnastics as a segment of the sports services market, in particular in the USA, where its development is influenced by the specifics of the cultural environment and the peculiarities of consumer demand. This gap determines the relevance of the conducted study.

The aim of the research is to study the specifics of the rhythmic gymnastics' development in the USA in the context of the functioning and transformation of the sports services market.

The aim was achieved through the fulfilment of the following research objectives:

- analyse the current state and trends in the development of the sports services market in the USA;
- determine the features of the functioning of sports organizations and clubs specializing in rhythmic gymnastics in the context of the competitive sports services market;
- reveal the key problems of the development of rhythmic gymnastics in the USA (insufficient institutional support, cultural differences, specifics of consumer demand, etc.);
- provide recommendations for increasing the competitiveness of rhythmic gymnastics in the US sports services market.

**Materials and methods.** The study was based on the comprehensive use of empirical and theoretical approaches, which provided a multidimensional analysis of the sports services market in the USA and the specifics of the rhythmic gymnastics development in its structure. The research materials used statistics from international and national organizations, in particular:

analytical reports 2024 sports industry outlook [7], the 2020 IHRSA Global Report [8], and other specialized resources that reflect the market volumes, its dynamics, and revenue structure. The research employed the following methods:

- Statistical data analysis – to study the volume and dynamics of the US sports services market in 2018–2024, assess the country’s share in the global sports industry and identify the impact of pandemic factors on its development.
- Comparative analysis – to compare the development models of the US sports industry with other countries, as well as to determine the specifics of the rhythmic gymnastics organizations in the context of the overall structure of the sports market.
- Content analysis of academic publications and strategic documents – to identify theoretical approaches to understanding the competitiveness of niche sports and evaluate modern management practices that affect the activities of sports clubs.
- System generalization method used at the final stage to integrate the obtained results, draw conclusions, and develop practical recommendations for improving the competitive position of rhythmic gymnastics in the US sports services market.

So, the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods ensured the integrity of the study for identifying the main trends in market development and outlining the specifics of the functioning of rhythmic gymnastics in the USA under high competition and commercialization of the sports industry.

**Discussion.** The US sports services market occupies a leading position in the global sports industry and is characterized by a significant concentration of revenues in professional leagues, a large number of commercial fitness services, and rapid adoption of digital services. According to the results of 2024, the global sports industry was estimated at approximately \$170 milliard, and North America is one of the key players in this market [9].

The commercialization of professional sports in the USA is a defining feature of the market. League revenue sources include the sale of television and streaming rights, sponsorship deals, ticket sales, and merchandising. The rise in the value of media rights and new large broadcast contracts have become a significant factor in increasing league revenues in the first half of the 2020’s. Consulting reviews note that one of the biggest trends for 2022–2024 is the growing importance of digital content and investment in fan engagement through technology platforms [7].

Professional leagues demonstrate large absolute revenue values and determine the characteristic features of the market (Table 1). In particular, the National Football League (NFL) recorded figures in the tens of milliards of dollars: according to SportsBusiness Journal, the league’s total revenues exceeded \$23 milliard in the completed fiscal year [8]. Forbes and other industry publications have shown similar figures for individual years at \$18–20 milliard or more in 2022–2024 (depending on the methodology for calculating “national” and “total” revenues). Similarly, the National Basketball Association (NBA) has recovered from the pandemic downturn and in 2022–2024 generated more than \$10 milliard in annual league revenue. The data presented here indicate a high concentration of financial flows within a few leading sports leagues and competitions characterized by the status of “premium” sports properties [9].

The fitness club and mass sports services segment is a significant component of the domestic market. According to the International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association (IHRSA), the US led the world in terms of revenue and membership. In 2019, the estimated revenue of the health/fitness sector in the US was approximately \$32–35 milliard [10]. In 2020, there was a sharp decline caused by lockdowns. According to some estimates, the commercial revenues of the sector decreased to about \$14.6 milliard, after which the sector began to recover in 2021–2023 (adjusted estimates for 2022–2023 range from ~\$25 to ~\$40 milliard, depending on the calculation methodology and the inclusion of the digital/virtual segment).

The economic impact of the sector goes beyond the direct revenues of leagues and fitness companies. The sports industry stimulates employment in related industries (tourism, hospitality, sports equipment retail, media, and technology platforms), creating thousands of direct and indirect jobs. Analytical reviews and official BLS data predict moderate to above-average job growth in subgroups related to sports services (coaches, instructors, media specialists, club personnel) during 2024–2034.

Summarizing the above statistics, it is appropriate to structure the key characteristics of the development of the US sports services market in the form of an analytical table. This clearly outlines the dominant trends and determine which of them create opportunities or barriers for the development of rhythmic gymnastics as a segment of the sports industry.

In conclusion, the USA is characterized by high concentration of revenues in professional leagues and the media/sponsorship segment; a powerful but cyclical fitness services market, which suffered a shock in 2020

Table 1

**Selected dynamics of key indicators of the US sports services market, 2018–2022**

Indicator/Year	2018	2020	2022	2024
Fitness sector /health clubs (USA)	35	14.6	40.1	41.2
NFL	15.0	12.2	18.0	23.1
NBA	8.8	6.4	10.0	11.3

*Source: developed by the author based on [7; 8]*

**Key characteristics of the development of the US sports services market (2018–2024)**

Criterion	Characteristics	Identified Trends	Analytical significance for “less commercial” sports
Revenue Concentration	Predominance of NFL, NBA, MLB, NHL in the overall market structure	High share of revenue in professional leagues; dependence on media rights and sponsorship	Limited access of less popular sports to investment and media space
Fitness and Wellness Services	Health & fitness clubs segment (IHRSA)	Gradual recovery after the 2020 slump	Creates opportunities for integrating rhythmic gymnastics as a service in club programmes
Economic Impact	Integration with tourism, entertainment, equipment manufacturing	High multiplier effect of the sports industry	Rhythmic gymnastics can develop as a “co-product” in connection with the fitness industry and educational services
Digitalization	Use of streaming, social networks, mobile applications	Active transformation of sports services business models	Provides tools for popularizing rhythmic gymnastics among young people through online platforms
Sociocultural Context	Popularity of team sports, cult of health	Growing attention to women’s sports and mass programmes	Can increase interest in rhythmic gymnastics as a “feminine” and aesthetic sport

and is gradually recovering; strong integration with related sectors of the economy; active digital transformation, which modifies the business models of sports services. These factors create both barriers and opportunities for “less commercial” sports, in particular rhythmic gymnastics.

The specifics of sports organizations and clubs specializing in rhythmic gymnastics in the USA are determined both by the general patterns of development of the sports services market and by the specifics of this sport [11, p. 81]. Unlike massively commercialized segments, such as professional leagues in American football or basketball, rhythmic gymnastics is positioned mainly as an educational, recreational, and aesthetic direction. This leads to a different business model for organizations: they operate not so much through sponsorship contracts and the sale of television rights, but through a system of membership fees, individual payments for training and participation in competitions, as well as cooperation with educational institutions and the fitness industry. In the USA, rhythmic gymnastics is integrated into a broader sports and health infrastructure, where private clubs, training studios and specialized academies play a key role, which simultaneously perform the functions of sports training and recreational leisure.

An important factor is competition for customers within the market of children’s and youth sports and fitness services for women. Parents and young athletes, choosing between gymnastics, dancing, figure skating or cheerleading, are guided by both the cost of classes and the possibility of a further sports career or obtaining educational grants [12]. That is why American rhythmic gymnastics clubs pay special attention to image formation and improving the quality of coaching programmes, attracting certified specialists, as well as implementing innovative training methods. The importance of digital platforms is growing: video broadcasts of training, online competitions, integration of mobile applications for monitoring results contribute to increasing customer loyalty and create additional sources of income.

Another feature is the close integration of rhythmic gymnastics with the educational system. In many cases, clubs cooperate with schools and colleges, offering programmes as

part of physical education or as an elective. This allows them to expand their audience, while forming a personnel reserve for national teams [13]. At the same time, organizations are characterized by dependence on local economic and socio-cultural conditions: in large agglomerations, clubs have access to a wider market of clients, while their activities are often limited by a lack of resources and low solvency of the population in less populated regions.

The competition in the internal environment of the US sports industry also plays an important role. Compared to spectacular and mass-supported sports, rhythmic gymnastics has fewer opportunities in the field of media communication and attracting investment. This creates certain barriers to expansion, while stimulating the search for new models of functioning. One of them is cooperation with sportswear and equipment brands focused on a niche market, as well as participation in international projects and cultural exchanges that contribute to the popularization of gymnastics as a combination of sport and art.

Against the background of these strategic vectors, it is necessary to consistently outline and detail the key problems and barriers that hinder the development of rhythmic gymnastics in the USA in order to further shape targeted management, marketing, and political solutions to overcome them.

The development of rhythmic gymnastics in the USA is constrained by a combination of structural, financial, institutional, and cultural factors (Table 3). Institutional weakness and fragmentation of the support network are determined by the insufficient integration of the sport into national funding and education systems. Unlike professional leagues, which generate significant media revenues and corporate sponsorship, rhythmic gymnastics clubs rely mainly on membership fees and local donor resources. This leads to limited investment in training infrastructure, equipment and training of coaching staff [14]. High fixed costs (hall rental, equipment purchase, professional fees) combined with a limited market for solvent demand creates financial vulnerability of organizations during economic shocks, as demonstrated by the 2020 pandemic period.



**Key issues and barriers to the development of rhythmic gymnastics in the USA**

Category of problems	Main manifestations	Development implications	Recommended measures
Institutional and political	Low level of state support; fragmented management; lack of unified standards	Inability to implement large-scale support programmes; weak coordination between clubs	Development of a national development strategy, standardization of certification, cooperation with federations and educational institutions
Financial and economic	Dependence on membership fees; limited sponsorship flows; low investment attractiveness	Financial vulnerability of clubs; limited infrastructure renewal	Revenue diversification model (partnerships, grants, paid online courses, crowdfunding)
Human resources	Shortage of certified coaches; weak training system	Uneven development of technical base; loss of talents	Coach training and certification programmes; internships abroad; motivational grants for teachers
Infrastructural	No specialized halls in the regions; high rental costs	Spatial inequalities; limited access for youth	Investment in local centres, shared use of space, mobile training programmes
Marketing	Low TV broadcasting presence; weak branding	Limited awareness, difficulties in attracting sponsors	Active digital marketing, creation of online content, cooperation with streaming platforms
Educational	Limited integration into college sports; few scholarships	Loss of potential female athletes to other sports	Development of college programmes, creation of scholarship schemes, partnership with universities
Socio-cultural	Stereotypes; low awareness of career paths	Limited participant base, unstable interest	Educational campaigns, promotion of the role of gymnastics for health and career
Technological	Insufficient implementation of video analysis, streaming	Lower quality of training, weak fan engagement	Integration of video analysis; digital platforms for training and content monetization
Competition for resources	Competition with more popular sports for space, attention, investments	Decrease in financial and human resources	Niche differentiation, branding with the fitness industry, creation of unique offers

The problem of staffing is twofold: a shortage of highly qualified coaches who use specific rhythmic gymnastics techniques, and the lack of transparent and standardized paths for professional development and certification. This leads to an uneven level of training in different regions of the USA and complicates the formation of an elite reserve. A separate aspect of the staffing barrier is the low attractiveness of a long-term coaching career due to limited financial incentives and social status compared to coaches of more popular sports.

The next important barrier is limited access to media space and marketing resources. Rhythmic gymnastics, as an aesthetic and individual sport, does not have a wide broadcast base in the US mass media, which reduces the visibility of athletes, makes it difficult to attract sponsors and generate mass interest. Low media representation increases the cyclical nature of funding and complicates the development of the brand of clubs and athletes.

An important factor is infrastructural and geographical inequalities. The concentration of clubs in large metropolitan areas creates spatial barriers to access in small towns and rural areas. This lowers the overall base level of mass participation and limits the breadth of recruitment. The cost of access to specialized halls and training also forms a socio-economic barrier, often making rhythmic gymnastics inaccessible to middle- and lower-income families.

Fragmentation of management structures, differences in licensing rules and safety standards make coordination between clubs, regional associations, and national authorities difficult. The lack of a single transparent reporting and accountability system limits the opportunities

for targeted government support programmes and for attracting large institutional investors. Unlike football or basketball franchises, rhythmic gymnastics clubs rarely have access to large-scale sources of income (media rights, large sponsorship packages, merchandising). The market for rhythmic gymnastics services is often fragmented into small consumer niches, which requires clubs to apply flexible and creative marketing strategies, while reducing their investment attractiveness.

Finally, socio-cultural factors also affect the demand and reputation of this sport. The stereotyping of rhythmic gymnastics as a “feminine” and aesthetic discipline can simultaneously attract certain groups (parents seeking aesthetic and health-enhancing formats) and deter those who are oriented towards more spectacular or career-oriented sports options [15]. Furthermore, insufficient public discourse about professional career paths in gymnastics reduces the motivation of families to invest in long-term sports training.

Based on the analysis of the current state of the sports services market in the USA and the specifics of the functioning of organizations and clubs specializing in rhythmic gymnastics, the logical next step is to develop a set of recommendations aimed at increasing the competitiveness of this sport. Taking into account the identified problems – limited media coverage, weak investment attractiveness, insufficient integration into the digital space and a high level of internal competition in the US sports industry – it is proposed to focus on multi-level measures that combine organizational, marketing, financial, cultural, and educational mechanisms (Table 4).

Table 4

**Recommendations for increasing the competitiveness of rhythmic gymnastics in the USA**

Activities	Implementation tools and mechanisms	Expected results
Strengthening the media and digital support	Using social networks; online broadcasts of competitions; creating interactive content (virtual training, master classes); partnering with media companies; launching own online channels	Increasing awareness of rhythmic gymnastics; increasing market value in the advertising and sponsorship segment
Development of partnership models with business	Concluding agreements with brands of sportswear, equipment and accessories; organizing marketing campaigns; public events and demonstrations	Diversification of funding sources; increasing the commercial attractiveness of rhythmic gymnastics
Internationalization of the activities of clubs and federations	Participation in international competitions; cultural exchanges; grant programs; cooperation with international sports organizations	Strengthening reputational capital; attracting athletes and investors from abroad
Integration into the system of educational and recreational programmes	Cooperation with schools, universities, private educational institutions; creating sections for different age categories	Expanding the base of potential athletes; sustainable demand for club services; socio-cultural integration of gymnastics
Strengthening financial and economic sustainability	Implementing a multi-channel business model (membership fees, sponsorship, government grants, innovative products); financial planning; developing public-private partnerships	Reducing dependence on a single source of funding; strengthening competitive positions in the sports industry

So, the proposed recommendations are comprehensive in nature and are aimed at overcoming the identified barriers through a combination of media, organizational, partnership, and financial mechanisms. Their implementation will increase the competitiveness of rhythmic gymnastics in the United States, ensure the sustainability of its development, and form the basis for effective integration into the broader system of sports services.

**Results.** The study found that the US sports services market is the largest in the world and is characterized by a high commercialization, a significant impact on the national economy, and active digital transformation. An analysis of its development dynamics in 2018–2024 showed steady growth with a temporary decline in 2020 due to pandemic restrictions. An important feature is the high concentration of revenues in the leading professional leagues (NFL, NBA), while niche sports, which include rhythmic gymnastics, have limited access to the resources of the media and sponsorship segments.

A study of the specifics of the functioning of sports organizations and rhythmic gymnastics clubs in the USA showed that their activities are based on a combination of commercial and educational amateur models. The clubs are mainly focused on the middle class, actively interact with educational institutions, but are inferior in financial stability and the scale of marketing activities to professional

leagues. At the same time, rhythmic gymnastics in the USA retains the status of an elite sport that combines athleticism and an artistic component, which creates prospects for its positioning as a unique cultural and sports product.

The research identified key barriers to the development of rhythmic gymnastics in the USA: insufficient institutional support from the state and federations; limited media representation and low level of commercialization; competition with spectator sports; specific consumer demand, which gravitates towards more popular sports disciplines. At the same time, these challenges create space for the search for innovative models of functioning and integration with related sectors of the economy.

The results of the analysis gave grounds for providing recommendations to increase the competitiveness of rhythmic gymnastics in the US sports services market. These include strengthening the digital presence and use of media tools, developing partnership models with business, internationalizing the activities of clubs and federations, integrating into the system of educational and recreational programmes, and diversifying financial sources. The implementation of these measures will strengthen the position of rhythmic gymnastics in the US sports industry, increase its attractiveness for consumers and investors, and form sustainable development prospects in a competitive environment.

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