



SYSTEMIC COMPETITIVENESS IN THE MICRO AND MESO LEVELS OF FOOD PROCESSING SMES IN THE BI NATIONAL REGION CIUDAD JUAREZ, CHIHUAHUA, MEXICO, EL PASO, TEXAS, UNITED STATES.

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Abstract

The document presents a study of competitiveness, in the bi national region of Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua Mexico - El Paso Texas United States, under the Small and medium Enterprises (SMEs) context of food processing in this area, highlighting reticulated factors of the strategic planning (SP) for the measurement of the same in the micro and meso levels factors of systemic approach of competitiveness, taking into account the uniqueness, structures, and the infinity of individual variables in the region and the type of business, showing the importance of the food industry for the economy of both cities. From comparing the two cities, it has been observed inequality and competitiveness levels below the optimum. It discusses theoretical literature concerning competitiveness and its relation to planning including international competitiveness of the School of Harvard, the World Economic Forum and IMD Business School, the systemic competitiveness of the German Development Institute. The above contribution relates to improvements in competitiveness.

Keywords: Systemic competitiveness; planning; SMEs; bi national region Ciudad Juarez - El Paso.

1. Introduction

The bi national region of Ciudad Juarez (CJS) Chihuahua, Mexico - El Paso (ELP), Texas, United States has been known along its historical relationship, to present quick, paradoxical and complex changes, such as the "territorial mutilation" in 1848 in which Mexico gave up 51% of its territory to the United States, through economic expansion of the U.S. since 1870, the "Prohibition" in the years 1920-1933, the gambling prohibition in Mexico in 1939, among other phenomena that had direct impact on the bilateral relationship. Nowadays the region has been formed as a dynamic border, complicated, but with promising prospects, such the data of the *National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico, 2010 (INEGI, Instituto Nacional de Geografía y Estadística)*, that determined it as the second border in order of economic importance to both countries. Such is the activity that currently, competitiveness has become a requirement for companies stationed in the region. So the study of *food processing SMEs (FPS)* "is relevant to scientific research, given its location and space in which it develops" (Barajas, 2009: 436).

On the other hand, in 2008, *Mexico's Secretary of Economy (SE, Secretaria de Economía)* determined that SMEs contributed to employment by 47% that represents the 31% of gross domestic product (GDP), although data is not updated: " the importance of SMEs is justified not only by their level of participation of job creation in the regions, but also as an engine of economic development" (Tomta, 2009: 160). And the author still indicates: While small and micro-enterprises are a "95% of all business units" (156). In contrast, the case of SMEs in the United States according to the Small Business Administration (SBA), small businesses hire just over half the private sector workforce, which is a characterization of its economy to allow formation of small businesses, some of which then become big business (See Headd, 2000:46).

In this context it raises the problem of the *Food Processing SMEs (FPS)* in the region CJS-ELP, it show a development of competitiveness below the optimal required, based on the economic, geographic, political, social and technological characteristics of the regional environment, independently of global

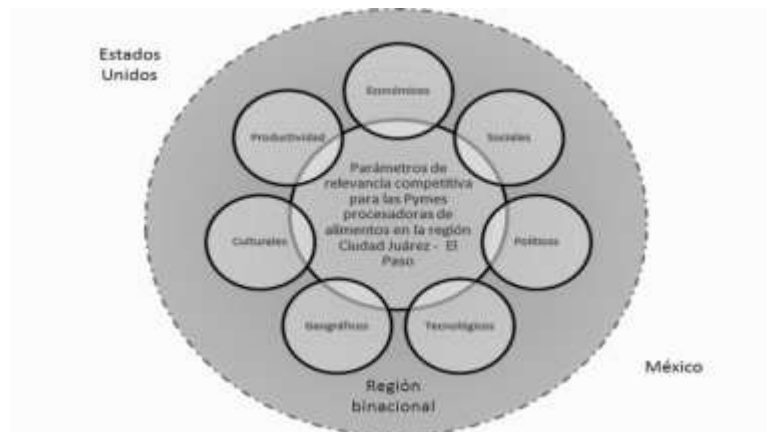
competences, while management in the *strategic planning* aspect (SP), which is defined by Restrepo (2010: 91), as "the set of activities that determine the strategy to realize the vision of future" negatively impacts productivity, and so they can perform better, is required to optimize the indexes substantially, while at the same time with the terms of territory, including physical capital, human capital and knowledge or technical processes. Which would raise the level of regional competitiveness, coupled with the above SMEs in the border area become more relevant, as the regional trade is internationalized by the *maquiladora* program operating in the region. This is defined as: "A series of companies established in Ciudad Juárez as assembly plants, which operate under Mexican laws and assembled acting as cost centers under U.S. law" (CFN, 2008).

Consequently, the overall manuscript aims to examine the inclusion of the PE

parameters related to competitiveness in the FPS located in the bi national region CJS-ELP. For this reason FPS as an economic activity base their competitiveness on "the organizational pattern of the same with their environment, competitive relevance factors and the interaction between these with society, being the last one, the one that generates competitive advantage" (Ferrer, 2005 : 150), interpreting the parameters as measurable factors within the environment among which the economic, social, political, and cultural strengths productive and, therefore, it should be noted that competitiveness is not characteristic of SMEs (see Figure 1), or the territory itself, the premise is that within it, you can find some potential in companies, actors, and institutions that can develop or not according to the way people interact and organize among these.

Figure 1

Parameters of competitive relevance and interaction of these with the SME, society and the region



Source: The authors based on Ferrer (2005)

On this border and SMEs scenario some questions arise; Are SMEs operating in ELP more competitive than the ones operating in CJS? What influence does the SP has in these companies as a trigger for their competitiveness? Are the FPS using the SP within its work schedule more competitive? In this sense, hypotheses are generated: a) The management of FPS that operate in the city of ELP are more

competitive than those in CJS because of the best use of their SP, b) the SP has a direct relationship with the indicator competitiveness indicator in the FPS. It is desirable to note that the approach to the phenomenon should not only be seen from the economy and administration but also consider the field of socio-cultural and technological differences.



2. Background

The bi national region CJS - ELP offers a global perspective to the FPS. In Table 1, shows the competitiveness from the perspective of the World Economic Forum (FDM, 2011) between Mexico and the United States in 2011-2012. Mexico is ranked No. 58 in the world rank ascending eight places compared to the penultimate report, opposite to the United States who has fallen from fourth to number five in the

mentioned period, attributing the phenomenon to the global economic slowdown which is reflected in this country, because "the U.S. government is incurring to omissions to address the weaknesses in the business environment, which is making the country a less attractive place to invest and lose some important competitive advantages"(Schumpeter, 2012).

*Table 1
Ranking in the U.S. and Mexico in the World Ranking according to the Global Competitiveness Index Competitiveness Index (GCI)*

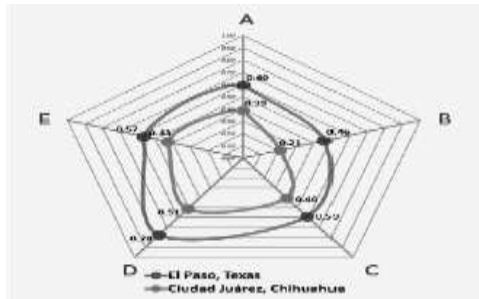
United States		Report period	Mexico	
Score	Position		Score	Position
5.43	5	2011-2012	4.29	58
5.43	4	2010-2011	4.19	66

Source: World Economic Forum Reports (2011).

Figure 2, schematically presents the competition between CJS and ELP, and both ranking in the competitiveness rank of the 64

cities or towns that are on the borderline United States - Mexico, according to a study to Border Governors Conference the (2010).

*Figure 2
Competitive Analysis in Ciudad Juarez and El Paso Texas, a comparison of border cities*



Source: Border Governors Conferece (2010).

At the same time Figure 2 shows how the city of ELP has a rise in position in the ranking of competitiveness compared with CJS, highlighting data from the U.S. Census listed in 2010, the Texas town with a strong and dynamic road infrastructure as well as increased training of its workforce because the development of an emerging biomedical industry has fostered business opportunities in the city of El Paso, coupled with this, economic growth is perceived in the city since this same organism mentioned as the second with highest economic growth in the

country, attributing the phenomenon to increase troops in Fort Bliss, one of the most important military bases of the United States, due to the culmination of the war with Iraq, for which it is noted that according the page of (Census Bureau, 2012), the base had 8.591 soldiers until 2011, while the Economic Development Corporation of El Paso (REDCO, 2012) records the arrival of over 24,000 in the period from 2010 to 2012, which increases as more investment from the government to the city, and the opening of new branches of Juarez companies that expanded



operations to the same from the year 2008, creating more sources of jobs in the region. The opposite case of Ciudad Juarez where competitiveness has declined attributing the phenomenon to economic and social factors due

to the climate of violence and insecurity that has occurred in the last four years. "National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) estimates that from about 11 000 businesses, a 30%, closed its doors for the same reason" (Payan, 2011).

3. Methodology

The method is divided into two sections. 1) Review of literature and history as a basis for the conceptual development of the project, 2) design of the instrument and field work. The first shows a history and review of literature on the competitiveness of FPS in the bi national region, while in the second part, it develops an analysis of two FPS in CJS, and two ELP. For this will take the measuring instrument of Wight, (1993:21-30) which has been adapted to local requirements, taking as reference 19 reagents of the instrument, divided into five sections oriented at reviewing the influence of competitive relevant parameters of a company, such their productivity of the same, as well as economic, technology and training, taking as reference the strategic planning section of the business. The instrument displays measurable qualitative characteristics in determining the kind of business class (A, B, C, and D) to which it belongs.

Class A: Considered companies that take into account relevant factors of

competitiveness in their strategic planning, involves an intense customer focus and a constant feedback of schedule against reality; Class B: are companies that take into account factors of competitive relevance in strategic planning only a formality, realized by line managers and directors at least once a year, but feedback is not perceived or track as planned; Class C: are contemplated infrequently but favoring some guidance of how to run the business, is planning to very short term and very operational issues only; Class D; nonexistent or completely eliminated in the normal operation of the company, working under a resolution scheme of everyday problems. Also the instrument raises competitive factors relevant of micro and meso levels by way of check points such as the commitment to excellence (planning, productivity), business strategy and vision (basic patterns of organization) Benchmarking (analysis market), sustainable competitive advantage (new technology trends); progressive formal strategic planning (company policy).

4. Literature Review

This refers to the competitiveness, which has existed throughout the years, but "today the concept has been enriched with contributions, on one hand, from the experiences locally, regionally and nationally, and on the other hand, the dimensions micro, meso, macro and meta. Also there are the contributions of different disciplines such as economics, geography, sociology and management "(Diaz, 2010: 92). Pretending to present the term competitiveness as an attitude of modernity, from the Anglo-Saxon liberalism and individualism-that drives

economic actors to look for differences to generate skills, however it should be noted that one thing is the competition with its referent, with homogeneity , and another thing to be competitive in every respect with differentiating (brands, innovation, trade secrets), making an argument that goes through Harvard School, the World Economic Forum and IMD Business School, the systemic competitiveness of the German Institute development, and regional competitiveness and relates with territoriality from the new economic geography.

Competitiveness, is not recent the interest in its study, "since this is rooted in the thoughts of economists in the mid-nineteenth century on the causes of the dominance position

of one country or another at any given time" (Labarca, 2007:162). The reported use of the term international competitiveness (relying on a look at the Macro) begins in the eighties. "In



America, the theme was used enthusiastically by both academia and by the public and private sectors, although many disparate concepts and little theoretical rigor. Early in the next decade will propose the diamond of competitiveness as theoretical model ". (Diaz, 2010: 95)

The Diamond of the competitiveness of the Harvard School proposed by Michael E. Porter, professor at the Institute for Strategy and Competitiveness of the Harvard Business School, published *The Competitive Advantage of Nations* (1990) to discuss the competitiveness of nations and propose his famous diamond of competitiveness, highlighting the classical theories of international trade and their own studies and business competitiveness. The Competitive advantage: How to achieve superior performance (Porter, 1985) and Competitive Strategy (Porter, 1980). The importance of the book lies in its visibility, becoming a guru of the subject. Its importance lies in its aspirations, methods and contributions. It is the first study of international competitiveness that has theoretical pretensions and weight academic, and that makes contributions that generalize and explain patterns from international competitiveness and its role in development, referring to the theory of absolute advantage that develops Adam Smith in his text *Research of the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776) and the theory of comparative advantage on the contributions of David Ricardo latter developed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Porter studied large territorial units economic relations. He proposes a theoretical model to explain what in his opinion the classical theories of trade do not satisfactorily explain: the location of production and by extension the success of economies.

The measurement of competitiveness from the World Economic Forum who publishes an annual study on the global competitiveness develops out of 90 indicators grouped into 12 subject areas, or pillars, of which two thirds are qualitative data obtained through surveys to employers and third is quantitative information that is obtained through public official statistics. As competitive economies are those that have successfully placed factors driving the productivity enhancements on which present and future prosperity is built. The Global Competitiveness Report published since the early eighties and methodology has been changing

over the years to take the Harvard. Although the relationship of the indicator with the Harvard School occurs through the same Michael Porter, who participated in the study for several years resulting in the Report, the last one seems to leave the diamond model of competitiveness for a more complex view.

In the course of time it has continued to study the issue which has led to the creation of the concept of "systemic competitiveness", "questioning the approach based on the neoliberal economic policy prevailing in the latter part of the twentieth century, and under which the responsibility competitiveness is left primarily in the hands of companies and under the scheme of export-oriented industrialization (EOI) "(Garcia, 2002: 30). Systemic competitiveness: micro, meso, macro and meta focus, is a proposed model from the German Development Institute, later adopted by ECLAC, goes further to include two more analytical levels (meta and meso) being meta level which examines factors such as the ability of a society to integrate and the strategy, while the meso level studies the formation of an environment that can encourage, complement and increase efforts at the enterprise level.

However, the recognition of the technological and economic interdependencies between actors and institutions involved in food processing, leads to the necessity to provide a systematic approach to tackle the study with greater realism, overcoming traditional perspective by sector or economic branch, and in terms of "meso analysis" as it addresses Churches (2001:3) "Ultimately, the concept of systemic competitiveness is an analytic approach to understand the factors that contribute to a successful industrial development" (Labarca, 2011: 172). Combining this concept to the SP process in which "analyzes the internal and external situation of the company, set overall objectives and strategies are formulated and strategic plans necessary to achieve those objectives" (Restrepo, 2010: 90), while for (Ruiz, 2011) "the SP is a process in which members of an organization provide a future and develop the procedures and operations necessary to fulfill the vision of the organization" and therefore follows that SP is a useful tool to management, not to predict the future, but for a company to better



confront the competition and the changing competitive conditions or parameters specific to the environment.

One of the existing forms to organizations can confront and meet the challenge of competitiveness in the long term in the market and economic systems is through the design, implementation and application of a strategic management process, which can be conceptualized as a set of theories and structures supported by tools and techniques designed to assist managers in organizations in thinking, planning strategic action, a plan for the future. One of the most important reasons to plan strategically is that through it, you can avoid wasting resources.

The suggestive of this document is the examination of the food sector, its importance goes according to data compiled by Euromonitor International (2011), revealing that the domestic market of industrialized food worldwide is worth over fifty thousand million which tend to grow by 2.3% annually over the next five years. The firm shows the U.S. in the first place of consumption of these and Mexico in the tenth, indicating a potential to explore industry both globally and in the bi national region Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua - El Paso, Texas, United States which reflects a high dynamism in exports

5. Results and Discussion

The instrument was applied to CJS companies Embutidos La Hacienda, SA de CV; Chorizo El Rey, with company name Luis Mendoza Porras and in ELP, Cooked Pinto Beans and Burritos Crisostomo Co. The data reveal responses based on experiences of entrepreneurs and managers, competitive relevance factors, the results on the same show that have value for companies in the strategic planning of the same and which are essential factors for proper performance of FPS.

Figure 3 presents the productivity of the firms, taking into account the commitment to excellence (CE), the operational functions (OF), and decision making (DM). Results indicate greater dedication by aspects of productivity by the four companies, in the case of CE, *Embutidos La Hacienda* answered just not being totally committed, citing structural deficiencies that prevented it from having a good evaluation,

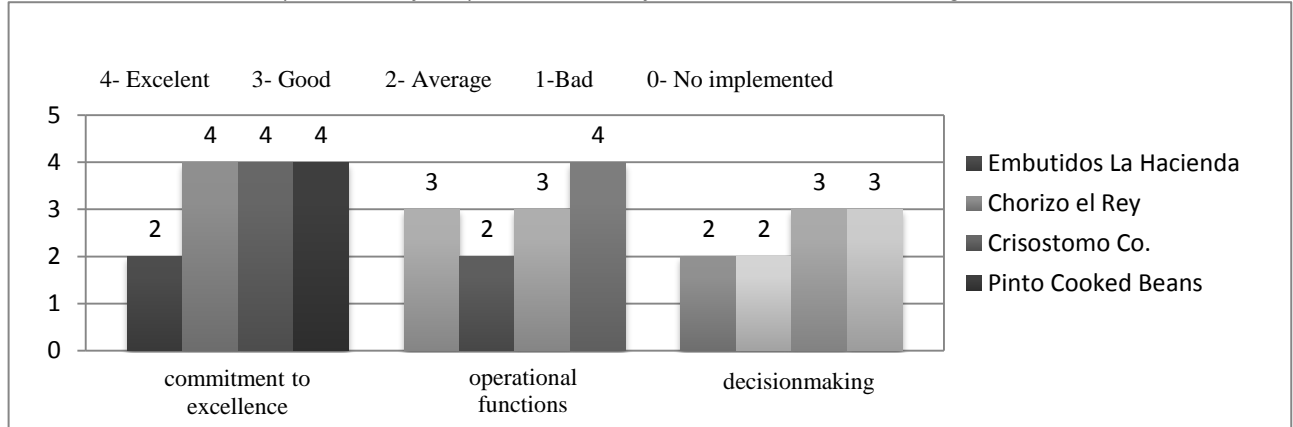
and imports for both countries, and is addressed by the (IMIP Juárez, 2007) as an important bi national community worldwide, with a population of over 2 million people, located between Franklin Mountains and the Sierra de Juarez, including two political jurisdictions (one in each city). "The significance of it, stands for the countless cultural, social, economic, educational and environmental as language, tradition, knowledge and technologies, as well as academic and professional training" (El Paso MPO, 2008). Both economies are closely intertwined communities through commercial, financial, industrial and services, which in turn are interdependent.

Moreover, Jaramillo (2005:104), "the SMEs are economic organizations that develop commercial and industrial activities of services combining capital, labor and means of production get a good or service that is intended to meet various needs for a sector and a market determined", meanwhile Andersen (1999) includes within its definition the words "choice, pursuit of goals, and profit." So are similarities in the definitions and can say, "are agents with logical, cultures, interests and specific entrepreneurship" (Gomez, 2010: 9). That is, the measurement of an SME in terms of size is valid according to the number of staff working in the same.

while in OF no consistency in the results existed since as seen only companies *Crisostomo* and *Embutidos La Hacienda* treasury and agree that their operational functions are performed well without achieving excellence, both emphasize that if they were better in this area, would more productive, while Chorizo El Rey believes that performs its functions in a traditional manner, opposite Beans Cooked pinto who scored excellent on this question for the case of MD is best seen in the last two companies which operate in the city ELP.



Figure 3
Productive parameters of competitive relevance for the PPA in the bi national region

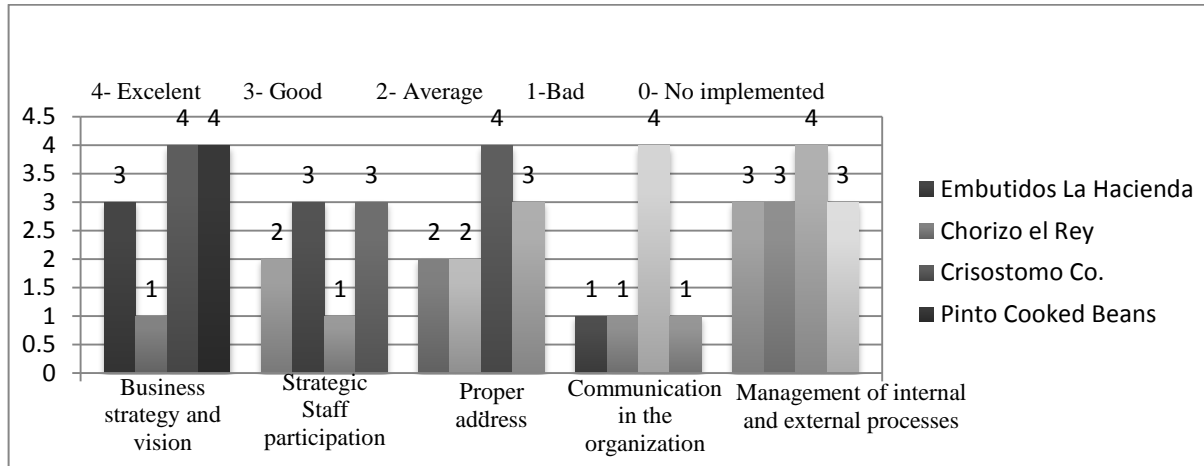


Source: BCRA to instrument Wight (1993)

For the measurement of social and cultural parameters shown in Figure 4, which are: Business Strategy and Vision (BEV), Strategic Staff Participation (SSP), Proper Address (PA), Communication in the Organization (CO) and Management of Internal and External Processes (MIEP) is evidence that the company *Crisostomo Co.* in ELP, is the best qualified, and only in SSP scored below normal due to a shortage of specialized staff within the company, however it is worth mentioning that this company has more personnel and other infrastructure, the manager mentioned that receive external consultancy to address most of the points, and likewise, Cooked Pinto Beans which also operates in ELP has ratings above normal, except in CO, because it is not convenient for them to have a high

communication strategy. Meanwhile firms in grades showed scattered CJS. For *Embutidos La Hacienda* it shows they have a good BEV but not a consistent SSP and PA which falls into the normal parameters, however for MIEP they get a good score, considering the process it takes. *Chorizo El Rey* also showed inconsistencies as it's shown in their observations, it has an unpublished vision and active participation of staff, and argues that all staff has over 15 years working for the employer, which shows they don't have a need for communication. As far as MIEP, it's perceived as being well and it's in the same range as in the other four companies. Finally CO has a bad grade as the employer says it is not much needed according to the operating characteristics of its establishment.

Figure 4
Social and cultural parameters of competitive relevance for FPS in the bi national region



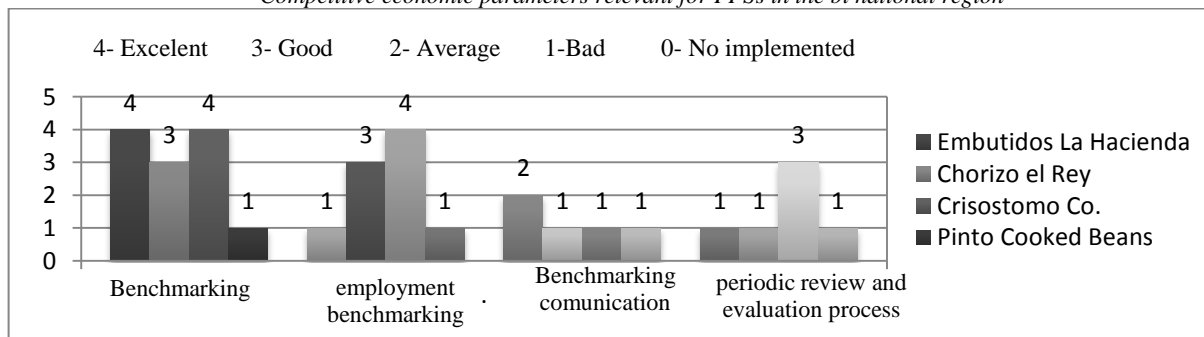
Source: BCRA to instrument Wight (1993)

Figure 5 is a comparison between companies, taking into account costs and prices of manufactured products, which are a benchmark to measure the economic importance within the company, among the aspects evaluated is Benchmarking (B), employment benchmarking process (EBP), benchmarking communication (BC), and periodic review and evaluation process (PREP). Note that in ELP, Cooked Pinto Beans establishes the process is almost invalid because it has no competition in ELP. Otherwise, El Crisostomo Co. who also has no direct competition but it does implement this process, shows that they now has an indirect competition, while evolution stands low in BC,

due to the constant rotation of workers within the same turn. As for the FPBs in CJS shows that if you perform, more out of necessity than strategy since it mentions the instrument in the case of the *Chorizo El Rey*, has a lot of competition, and constantly requires evaluating the prices and costs its competitors, however perceived irregularity in the process due to the PREP response qualifies as a program that has not established and does not give continuity. *Embutidos La Hacienda* replies that does a very good B and EBP, however it communicates very little (BC) and does not give continuity (PREP).

Figure 5

Competitive economic parameters relevant for FPSs in the bi national region



Source: BCRA to instrument Wight (1993)

In Figure 6, it shows how the four FPBs have a competitive advantage in the market, as well as showing a clear trend to incorporate more and better technologies to increase efficiency, but not all do it under the principle of maintaining a competitive advantage over their competition.

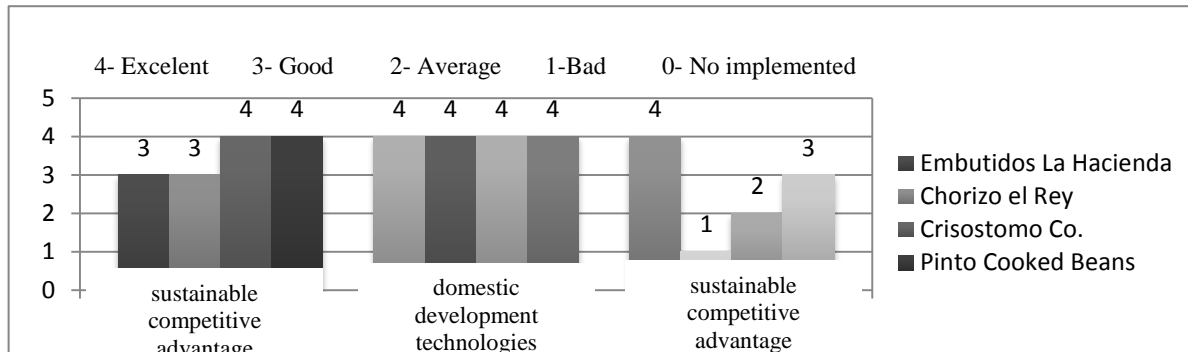
The premise is to optimize the costs to generate profits, but not maximize sales through these technologies. The evaluation of this parameter is taken into account factors such as sustainable competitive advantage (CSA), domestic development of skills and technologies (DDT) in



addition to the principle of sustainable competitive advantage (SCA). The results show high performance in equity and CSA for both CJS and ELP, demonstrating the culture of competition and constant innovation perceived in the United States, while the four self evaluated as excellent in DDT attributing to the dynamism of this phenomenon region. Finally there is a total discrepancy in the responses in SCA, being *Embutidos La Hacienda* the one with the higher rating because it suggests in the comments of the instrument as one of its top priorities. Opposite case is *Chorizo El Rey* who said they did not know the term. The results for companies in ELP were; *Crisostomo*, who answered with a reference to number two in its principle and Cooked Pinto Beans who answered with a number three which means it has a well established principle of competitive advantage, it

should be noted that none of these latter made observations.

Figure 6
Technological parameters of competitive relevance for FPSs in the bi national region

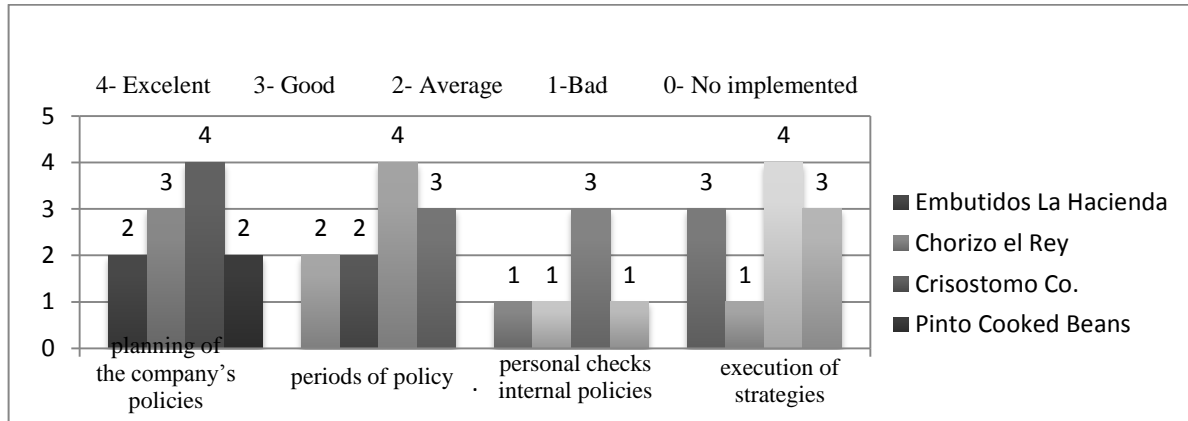


Source: BCRA to instrument Wight (1993)

Regarding the internal business policies in Figure 7, it marks a difference between companies in ELP and in CJS being the first ones with the better grade, implying they are better structured and managed by entrepreneurs. To evaluate this parameter, it was taken as reference the planning of the company's policies (PCP), periods of policy review (PPR), personal checks internal policies (PCIP) and execution of strategies (EE). The results show *Crisotomo Co.*, as the best company in this parameter, as it has a

well established policy agenda and is reflected in the advantageous results, followed by Cooked Pinto Beans, revealing PCIP deficiency but normal effects in others. As for Mexican FPBs, *Embutidos La Hacienda* shows normal levels in PCP and PPR but low in PCIP, however it can be implied that policies are being executed because of the outcome in EE. *Chorizo El Rey* has policies, but there is no control and execution of the same.

Figure 7
Competitive political parameters relevant for FPSs in the bi national region

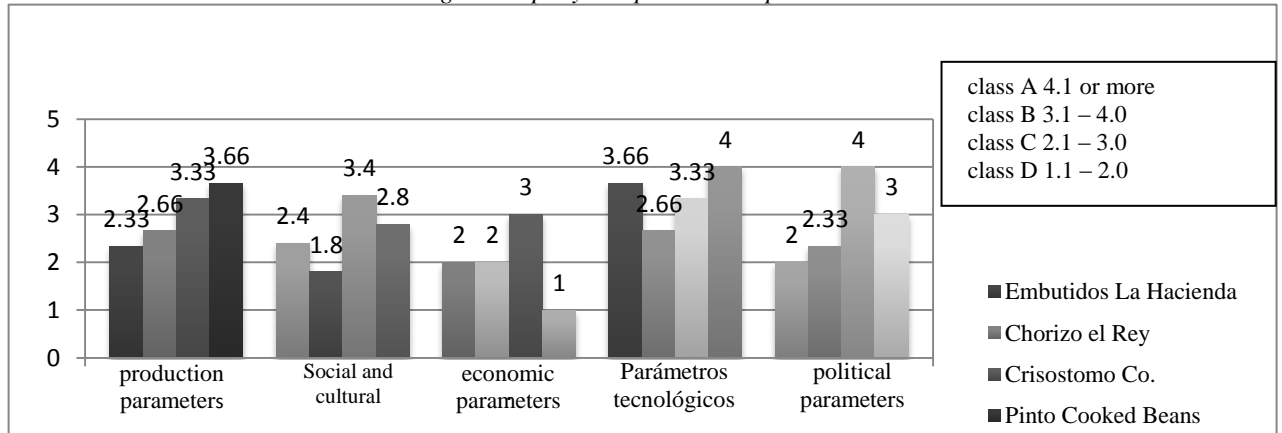


Source: BCRA to instrument Wight (1993)

Finally, Figure 8 shows FPBs in CJS with a 2.47 for *Embutidos La Hacienda* and a 2.29 for *Chorizo El Rey* of companies belonging to class C, that is, the relevant competitive parameters are contemplated as rare but encouraging certain direction of how to run the business, while FPBs for Cooked Pinto Beans in ELP with 2.89 also considered by the instrument as an enterprise class C but at .11 of achieving the type B which belongs to *Burritos Crisostomo Co.* with 3.41 points which according to instrument when taking into account the relevant competitive factors in strategic planning but only a formality,

by line managers and directors at least once a year. The lowest results were obtained in the social and economic parameters in where there is lack of information on employers to implement strategies. Opposite case where technological parameters was seen a better score attributing the phenomenon to aspects of globalization, where these SMEs compete with large companies, forcing them to constant improvement in this aspect. Finally, a fault is detected in the internal policies of CJS FPBs, not to be the case for the ELP.

Figure 8
Class according to company competitiveness parameters



Source: BCRA to instrument Wight (1993)

6. Conclusions

The manuscript is exploratory in nature. While it was not intended to go deep into every topic of

importance on competitiveness within the PPAs in the bi national region, its purpose is a first



approximation of the planning and management of its natural link with competitiveness. In addition to examining some of the basic reasons why those companies in the region CJS - ELP not considered competitive in the global marketplace. But you come to a first conclusion, the development and improvement of such SMEs is compromised by a number of factors, but which highlights the ignorance and apathy of employers towards improving relevant competitive parameters.

Although the companies evaluated are considered companies that takes into account relevant factors of competitiveness in their strategic planning, perceived deficiencies which is lost to the market and customer focus, giving more importance to internal productivity factors. The derivations suggest better planning in U.S. companies, as well as greater attention to the parameters of competitive relevance, therefore the PPAs in CJS have the opportunity to replicate or adopt appropriate planning model for

the ELP resemble in terms of conditions and that in this area there is a high level of competence and clearly perceived than those in the United States, are better in the above aspects.

Then the incorporation of these parameters through the measurement of controllable factors in strategic planning optimizing FPBs competitiveness in the bi national region, which in turn translates into opportunities for their approach to local and international market due to an inaccuracy in the incorporation of strategies that in the short term harm the employer's competitiveness in the bi national region Ciudad Juárez - El Paso, possibly due to lack of knowledge of the socio-economic and administrative context.

Definitely it requires going deep into the subject and promoting further research to reveal the specificities and needs of PPAs, which would help to discuss the Mexican economic engine and its opportunities of inclusion of value, issues that lie far beyond the scope of this document.

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