

## **The impact of crises on marketing: an exploratory study of an emerging market**

### **Abstract**

Marketing performance in times of crises is an important research issue in contemporary marketing. The main idea in papers dealing with crisis marketing behavior is highlighting the crucial role of marketing in a crisis context. Our study shows that this is not always the case. There are different types of situations where a simplification of marketing is evident, the system of marketing in a company deteriorates, and marketing is downgraded to a function of mainly sales, and these situations are obviously not exceptions. The present study is aimed at understanding the reasons for the evident contradiction between crisis marketing theory and some empirical cases. The other objective is to understand the mechanisms of marketing simplification in times of crisis. The paper focuses on marketing behavior of companies operating in Russia during the current (2014-2017) crisis, and takes into account the specifics of the marketing environment and the influences from the system of management on marketing, one of its subsystems.

*Key words: Marketing behavior, crisis marketing performance, crisis marketing theory, emerging markets.*

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## Introduction

Problems, issues and phenomena related to marketing performance during economic crises are of special interest and significance for academics and a challenge for marketing and management executives. With respect to the current crisis, it seems that Russian colleagues agree that during a crisis the role of marketing significantly grows and that the marketing tools available to marketing are highly important. At least, this is the “mainstream” idea broadly presented.

However, our own observations of the marketing activities of some Russian enterprises (often) seem not to be in line with this statement. Furthermore, in certain situations one could have the impression that the role marketing plays in a crisis even diminishes. Consequently, those observations made us skeptical both about the real role of marketing and the true perception of its role during a crisis (despite the widespread emphasis of its role).

The main objective of this research is to explore why and how marketing changes in a crisis context using several different cases. We focus on mechanisms and interactions between the management system and marketing and try to explain contradictions between the ideas of crisis marketing theory (CMT) and a number of empirical observations.

Our research aims to explain the evident contradictions between what marketing is supposed to be in times of crisis (judging by CMT assumptions) and what it is in reality. The results show simplified marketing as a type of marketing performed in a special context and the explanation of the mechanism accounting for the selection of this type of behavior demonstrated by a company. In the second part of the study we try to find out whether this type of marketing behavior or its features can be identified in other marketing environments (with a higher degree of maturity).

## Methodology of the study

Our study is based on crisis marketing theory which emphasizes the crucial role marketing is supposed to play in times of crisis. The study consists of two parts.

For the first part, interviews were undertaken with the CMOs, CEOs and CFOs of 13 companies working in Russia. The companies selected at this stage operate in markets with a relatively low degree of the maturity of the marketing environment. Although this part of the study was challenging from an organizational point of view due to the structure of the sample, it gave us the necessary insight to understand the role of a crisis context and mechanisms that influence marketing both from outside (the crisis context) and inside the company (the system of management). Interviews with the CEOs were an important source of information and gave us an insight into reasons behind why decisions were taken. As a result of this part of the study, we identified simplified marketing as a type of marketing activity during a crisis.

In the second part, we mainly tried to identify features of simplified marketing in a context with a higher degree of marketing maturity. For this reason, and with regard to some organizational difficulties, in the majority of cases interviews were conducted with marketing representatives only (i.e., CMOs and/or marketing department employees) of the 19 companies (for the analysis, however, we also selected 13 of them). We focused on changes concerning the structure and volume (share in revenue and its absolute amount) of marketing budgets, marketing goals, planning horizon, (new) managerial procedures, marketing positions and changes related to them. In interviews, we tried to identify both differences in these points before and during the crisis and the reasons for it.

At different stages during the study secondary data and observation techniques (mystery shopping and site visits) were used but the main research method during both stages was the in-depth interview. We believe that different techniques dealing with this type of research should pay more attention to the particularity of the data to be collected. (Andreani and Conchon, 2005a, 2005b; Cresswell, 1994; Denzin, 1978; Park and Park, 2016) Although a semi-structured questionnaire was elaborated, in many cases we used a memory-based technique. In particular, while interviewing CEOs and CFOs we tried not to use (not to show) the questionnaire, reproduced it by memory, did not take any notes and recorded results immediately after the interviews had taken place. This technique is more preferable than PAPI and similar procedures because allows the atmosphere to be less formal and more confidential and also takes into account that some respondents might feel restricted while discussing questions of “business intimacy”. No statistical tools were used in this exploratory research. For the purposes of the interpretation, we used techniques of logical analysis (a hypothetico-deductive method involving vertical and horizontal analysis).

The results of the interviews were categorized into two parts. On the one hand, we identified similarities and differences between both clusters. On the other hand, relations between factors (causes and results) in terms of the interaction between the macro-level, the system of management and its subsystem of marketing were established.

Since the first part of the study aimed at understanding the mechanism that leads to marketing simplification, we deliberately considered only cases where this type of activity was evident. However, this does not mean that this might

be the only type of marketing in this cluster (hereafter referred to as C1). In the second part of the research however we identified two sub-clusters: the first one (hereafter referred to as C2.1.) was, as a matter of fact, almost similar to C1; the second cluster (hereafter referred to as C2.2.) stands out.

Our attention was not focused primarily on some successful crisis marketing tools. Rather, we tried to consider changes in a broader range of marketing activities as a series of interactions between a company and its customers, which differs from the approach that is widely used in publications within CMT (notes on L2.4 and L2.6 can be found in the “Literature review”).

Both studies are related to the current crisis in Russia, although we generalize this experience when it seems appropriate and use the word “crises” or “a crisis” for it.

**Literature review**

The present study is based on the ideas of crisis marketing theory (CMT). Under CMT, we can understand the scope of the theoretical and empirical contributions on marketing performance during times of crisis.

For our purposes, we used the criteria “maturity of marketing context” and “type of research” to characterize the main ideas of CMT and considered different groups of publications, as shown in Table 1 (to make the text more reader-friendly we used “L”, which stands for “literature”, in contrast to “C”, which stands for “Cluster”, as already mentioned).

**Table 1**

Types of CMT papers

Type of contribution	Maturity of marketing context		
	Russian and some CIS markets	Mature markets	Emerging markets
Theoretical contribution	L1.1	L1.2	L1.3
Empirical research	L2.4	L2.5	L2.6

A theoretical platform of CMT is built by publications in L1.2. Their authors assume that marketing plays a crucial role in times of crisis, its role increases in crises, and cuts of marketing budgets in these times is a (strategic) mistake, whereas (additional) investment into marketing during crises times pays off, especially after times of crisis. (Castor, 2008; Correa et al., 2013; Rhodes and Shelter, 2009; Wilkinson, 2010; Hollis, 2008; Shrager, 1991; Ferrell and Hartline, 2002; Ang et al., 2000; Hooley et al., 2008; Roberts, 2003 among many others) It is evident that the authors in L1.2 take for granted the premise that marketing environment is mature in any situation; therefore, an objective need for marketing is high. This might be true for mature markets but is not always the case in markets with a lower degree of both marketing maturity and objective necessity in marketing.

As a matter of fact, we hardly see any difference between these ideas and those in L1.1 (Russian academics), although they are related to two different marketing environments. The dominant idea in publications of the sub-group L1.1 is on the leading role of marketing at all times, including during crises. A certain degree of mistrust on the part of Russian practitioners towards academic works (as the results of our interviews with CEOs show) means that something might be wrong with that academics’ approach in which marketing tools from a mature context are suggested to be automatically imported into Russian markets as a remedy and a “panacea”. (Badot and Cova, 2008)

The same idea is broadly presented in L1.3; authors of this sub-group work on the same premise as their colleagues in L1.2. Obviously, their suggestions imply a high level of marketing maturity of the environment. (Köksal and Özgül, 2007; O'Malley et al., 2011; Mitran and Bebeșelea, 2012; Naidoo, 2010) In some cases, the authors do not pay sufficient

attention to the crisis context, which is also not an exception in publications on crisis marketing. (Tomše and Snoj, 2014; Mitran and Bebeșelea, 2012)

Publications of groups L2.4 – L2.6 illustrate and prove some basic ideas and principles of CMT in empirical examples. The problem, however, is that they often consider some tools or fragments of performance only. In this sense, from the point of view of a fragmentary approach, our findings with regard to C2.2 seem to be in line with the ideas of authors in L1.2: in almost all companies in this part of the study there are successful examples of new creative and inventive crisis marketing tools. However, we believe that the illustration of some tools (only), no matter how successful they might be, cannot be used as evidence of the role marketing really plays in times of crisis: for this purpose, a broader perspective is needed. It seems sometimes that publications in L2.4 and L2.6 were deductively aimed at proving the role of marketing in times of crisis (as well) in full compliance with the ideas in L1.2.

The sub-group L2.4 contains some critical approaches towards marketing. As a matter of fact, these publications are very “diffusive” (i.e. quite rare), are not focused primarily on marketing (often they are presented by consultants in management or even related areas) and do not reflect “mainstream” ideas on the crucial role of marketing that are so widespread among Russian marketing academics.

To the group L2.4 we also allocated surveys of a non-academic nature. Among others, we considered contributions made in the framework of the Gaidar Forum-2017 (which is a famous discussion platform for academics, practitioners, and top Russian politicians, annually held at RANEPA, Moscow), a number of secondary studies conducted for commercial purposes (i.e. “Consumer market of Russia and rating of retail chains FMCG” conducted by Infoline research Agency in the Fall of 2016, a representative research of Russian real estate agencies (both construction and sellers)). A difficulty with this group of sources was obtaining permission to use their results in publications.

It seems evident that the existing CMT, both for mature and emerging markets, needs still to be revised in some aspects. We hope that our suggestions would be helpful for this; they concern (1) the idea of the necessity to consider a broader scope of marketing performance (and not only some of its fragments) and (2) relating marketing performance to the criterion of the “objective necessity” in marketing and the maturity of marketing context in which the marketing is being performed. This approach might help to establish more confidence in CMT from practitioners, make CMT’s ideas and principles more reliable and avoid phenomena (with reference to our Western colleagues) such as “marketing fundamentalism”, “marketing colonialism”, “marketing panaceas”, “marketing myopia” (Badot and Cova, 2008), and “marketing incrementalism” (Dholakia, 2009). There is a need for a less declarative theoretical platform for marketing in times of crisis. (Bradlow, 2009) Some essential ideas of general marketing need to be revised for the specifics of times of crisis (Bradlow, 2009; Mitran and Bebeșelea, 2012) and better tailored to the real needs of practitioners (Dholakia, 2009), though they are true for some aspects of marketing applied not only in times of crisis.

### Findings

Companies in all clusters worked in the same macro-context. Its characteristics might be considered common to any (economic) crisis context. The “crisis-like” type of the consumer behavior, the actual or expected loss of the company’s income, as well as some negative changes in Russian financial and monetary systems had created new challenges for management (an “input” from the macro-environment).

In C1 we identified a survival type of corporate strategy. Companies in C1 had to struggle for their financial survival. The unexpected changes in economic and financial systems of the country coincided with the necessity of these companies to pay credit in Euro. – As a result, cash-flow generation became an absolute priority and a primary task for a company’s survival, on the one hand, and cost cuts on the other. As a consequence of the lack of a clear understanding of perspectives and the duration of the crisis, the planning horizon in these companies was reduced to a much shorter-term perspective.

In both clusters, the marketing executives interviewed saw three types of influence from management upon a company’s marketing system: expectations from marketing, changes within the system of management that influence marketing mostly, and the result of these influences. The following characteristics were common to all companies: (1) change of strategic goals, (2) an absolute priority of cash-flow generation and commercial KPIs and (3) cost cuts. In the new context, new evaluation criteria were introduced (explicitly and/or implicitly) in all companies: cash-flow generation and the speed with which costs transformed into sales. From the perspective of the majority of the marketers, marketing was mainly influenced by the following factors (“input”): dominance of a shorter term perspective, lack of clarity about longer perspectives, necessity to adjust marketing to the new managerial priorities, and a short-term perspective for the evaluation of results. Consequently, marketing goals and new priorities in marketing activities were changed.

A tendency to switch to more undemocratic management tools was evident in both clusters, but especially in C1.

Many marketers in C1 reported of a number of examples when marketing decisions were “patronized” or overseen by a non-marketing manager (as a rule, in many cases it was the financial chief officer, in some cases the role of marketing “patronage” took one of the company’s owners. (For sure, this decision could not but diminish the role of marketing director within the company and demotivate marketing staff. [Zehir &Savi, 2004]) In addition to this, in C1 marketing was perceived by non-marketer respondents as not playing a significant role in their markets. In general, the position of marketing in each company in C1 was reduced to a secondary role: marketing was expected to generate sales (with stress placed on lead generation). In many cases, we had the impression that a magic formula to create sales was expected from marketing.

In contrast to C1, marketing in C2.2 reportedly did not lose its position and authority in companies to the same extent as was the case in C1. All respondents characterized the criteria of “subjective necessity” in marketing as “high”, “quite high”, “high enough”, “above the average”. CEOs in all companies of this cluster reportedly considered marketing a necessary managerial tool. In general, respondents evaluated management in all companies of C2.2 as “progressive”, “quite efficient”, “professional” and “result oriented”. Several efficient modern managerial tools were successfully introduced and used in these companies. In all cases, managerial decisions became significantly more cost-conscious. (Of course, it had positive influences, e.g. in terms of efficiency and use of new tools (agile cost management)). In contrast to C1, a company’s behavior and strategic changes in their activity can obviously be qualified as an adjustment to a new context aimed at the optimization of all business activities, including marketing.

Similar to C1, new managerial priorities (explicitly or implicitly) were related to sales generation in a shorter-term perspective. As a matter of fact, sales creation and promotion became the main priority of marketing in C2.2, as well. All respondents underlined a much stronger orientation at (sometimes too extensive) lead generation and the use of more aggressive marketing tools. Trade marketing activities and any marketing activities targeted at sales promotion became of the absolute importance, as well. Companies’ managers demonstrated a bigger readiness to experiment and to take risks while creating (new) marketing tools and to support these experiments with resources necessary; responsibility for the result was always given to marketing manager (even if the decision had been imposed upon her/ him.) In some cases, tools were described as being not always appropriate (but imposed on marketing) and sometimes deceitful. In C2.2, as well, (new) expectations (in many cases perceived as emotional pressure) were noticed: “new” marketing was expected, some of these expectations were hard to fulfil; similar to the situation in C1, some CMOs in C2.2 had the impression that a “miraculous” solution was also expected from them; some new managerial tools and procedures were evaluated as a managerial obstacle. In many cases, symptoms of a “soft patronage” were reported, which was especially true during budget approvals.

Changes in interactions with the sales department (exaggerated expectations of lead generations from marketing as a condition to create sales) and a tendency, with regard to lead generation and promotional activities, to organize brainstorming in many cases (true for C1) were initiated by representatives of non-marketing departments. Ideas were imposed and pushed. Some interviewees among the marketers in both clusters reported having received accusations of being too slow or not creative enough from CEO. In general, there was a lot of proof of decisions that were taken too impulsively (some were imposed upon the marketers). There were cases reported when marketing was considered more responsible for sales than the sales department (mainly because of insufficient leads generated).

Aggressive sales training were introduced in companies that had not employed it previously or (in most cases) used it only occasionally (sometimes, CMOs were charged with this new function). In some cases, the share of training expenditures within a marketing budget became even bigger, though (aggressive) sales training replaced other forms of training (i.e. service, product, motivational, etc.) in some cases.

Some marketing decisions taken or (imposed on marketing) by the company’s manager(s) obviously were able to destroy or to weaken the company’s positioning. That step was in many cases considered as acceptable in the contemporary context (more in C1, less in C2.2). While being targeted at sales promotion with any tools available, the company’s management was ready to consider questions of (target) positioning as something secondary.

### Discussion

There are different marketing environments (C1 versus C2.1 and C2.2) and there are variances of management behavior during a crisis in the cases investigated. At the same time, different types of management (and marketing) behavior can be identified even in the same marketing environment (C2.1 and C2.2). Differences were related to the role of the maturity of the marketing environment, to different financial situations in companies, and to the perception of marketing by CEOs. Apart from companies struggling for their existence due to some severe financial situation (C1, C2.1), other companies (C2.2) did not face such severe financial restrictions. With regard to corporate strategies in C1 and C2.2, we use terms such as “survival” and “adjustment” (which, in its turn, is similar to corporate strategies of optimization), reciprocally.

Despite some internal differences – in this regard we mentioned the level of financial restrictions and the criterion of a “subjective necessity” in marketing – there are similarities, which allows us to talk of “typical” crisis management behavior. Common features that are relevant both for management and marketing include (1) budget restrictions, (2) priorities of a company with a focus on short to mid-term sales, (3) lack of clarity about long-term market perspectives, and (4) risk to take some marketing decisions which are true from the point of view of CMO but do not correspond with some new corporate priorities.

Marketing behavior within these types of corporate strategies might seem different in many aspects. Within these two types of corporate strategies we characterize the marketing behavior in C1 with the term “simplification”, while for C2.2 we instead talked of a “modified marketing”. At the same time, despite the differences both in the marketing environment and in the system of management, on the one hand, and within these two marketing models, there are a number of similarities between them in C1 and C2.2. It is obvious that all significant characteristics of simplified marketing in C1 could be identified in C2.2. In other words, although, at first glance, these two types of marketing behavior, simplified and modified marketing, are being performed within different corporate strategies and seem to be different in many aspects, this is not true because of the two following reasons. *First*, although respondents in C2.2 were more likely to evaluate both management and marketing of their company with terms such as “appropriate”, “adequate”, “due to the crisis” etc., the differences between both types of marketing can be described with the words “more” or “less” but, as a matter of fact, in both cases the same characteristics can be used. *Second*, although all of our respondents in C2.2 underlined the importance of marketing in their companies and illustrated the use of some “progressive” tools, some features of, and tendencies towards, a deterioration of the system of marketing and the loss of marketing’s positions within a company were evident; as for the new creative and innovative tools, they all concerned (new) trade marketing mechanics, new forms of collaboration with suppliers and partners in trade marketing and closer relations with consumers aimed at lead and sales generation. Examples of closer relations with consumers were identified at the pre-sales stage only; moreover, there were some examples of trade-marketing activities that were not appropriate or even deceitful. Additional investments in marketing concerned some budget articles only (according to the new priorities) and usually these were made with funds diverted from other areas and activities that had lost their importance. It seems that other areas of marketing became of secondary importance. Similar to C1, in most C2.2 companies, cuts of commercially “*inevident*” projects (i.e., projects that did not have a clear or direct influence upon sales in a short-term perspective) and managers’ skepticism towards psychographic goals and projects were recorded. The idea mentioned above that marketing in a crisis context becomes more efficient might be true only with a short-term perspective in which it was used in all companies. As a matter of fact and despite the different viewpoints of some of our respondents, in both cases (but to a different extent, as already mentioned) positions of marketing within a company became more subordinate than before the crisis. New (explicit or implicit) expectations from marketing and (therefore) a new perception of it, on the one hand, and objective possibilities to correspond to these new (and obviously exaggerated) expectations, *influence*, directly or indirectly, and as a consequence reduce the position and the role of both the subsystem of marketing and the marketing officer in the company. – These are the reasons why the following terms are appropriate to describe the quality of marketing in C2.2: simplification, downgrading, deterioration, reduction of marketing to primarily serve sales needs, a step back. Therefore, both types of marketing are rather similar than different. From this point of view, we evaluate both patterns as variants of the same type of marketing. In other words, “modified marketing” as a type of marketing behavior appropriate within the corporate strategy of adjustment is a variant of the same marketing behavior, that of marketing simplification.

In the cluster with higher degrees of “objective” and “subjective” necessity in marketing there are symptoms of marketing simplification. Obviously, we deal with some quite universal characteristics and features inherent to crisis marketing performance (in general), and they are common to both clusters with different degrees of marketing maturity. We suppose also that a simplification of marketing performance in times of crisis seems to be a more widespread phenomenon than earlier assumed.

Let us once more emphasize the criteria of a “subjective” and “objective” necessity in marketing we use in our argumentation. The former is related to the perception of marketing by the decision-maker (in our case: CEOs only). We believe that this factor plays a significant role in an emerging market. In general, this question is related to the perception of marketing and its role as a success factor in a market by a decision-maker and reflects her/his experience and personal values; it does not necessarily correspond with the role marketing plays or might play in this very context. The perception of marketing by the company’s manager and new expectations from marketing with an emphasis on short-term sales and sales promotion dominate in both clusters and demonstrate the evident simplification of the marketing up to a number of some tools for the acquisition of potential clients.

In its turn, the external environment plays the main role in terms of the effectiveness of the marketing strategy. As mentioned earlier, the degree of the maturity of the marketing environments was different in both clusters. With respect

to C2.1, obviously the maturity of the marketing environment is not the primary reason for the selection of a marketing strategy. The main role is played by management. In other words, the quality of the system of management is the main internal factor of marketing success because this is the force that determines changes within the subsystem of marketing. Managerial input created premises under which marketing (especially in C1) was downgraded to a sheer function within short-term sales, with marketing simplification being identified in all companies in this cluster. In other words, the system of management is the main factor that determines the selection and use of a marketing strategy. The internal environment is the main determinant for the selection of a type of marketing behavior.

In this sense, the system of management can broadly create obstacles and limitations for marketing performance. It should be highlighted that such circumstances have had a negative influence on the results and effectiveness of marketing activities. From our point of view, this explains a (possible) contradiction between what marketing can and has to be, on the one hand, and what it actually is in the companies (we have interviewed), on the other hand. A successful marketing performance requires, therefore, a corresponding type of interactions between marketing and the system of management of a company. Marketing effectiveness, therefore, is related to the effectiveness and adequacy of the corporate level in a company; a corresponding quality level of internal environment determines the quality of marketing performance in many aspects.

An important issue is the evaluation of this type of marketing behavior. We suppose that this should be done in a future study by using appropriate data. However, we believe that the approach for this work shall be made from *different* perspectives and based on the following suggestions.

1. From the point of view of the evaluation of marketing evolution; in this sense simplified marketing is of course a step back.
2. From the position of the adequacy of marketing to actual necessities of a company. In the context given and with a number of restrictions (explicitly and implicitly) imposed upon marketing one could hardly expect another type of marketing.
3. From the perspective of adequacy to market. We assume that marketing performance and its results are related not to an "absolute", undefined, or "ideal" "volume" of marketing (as CMT expects from marketing) but rather to a "concrete", determined (by a concrete role of concrete market forces), necessary and sufficient "volume" of marketing in a concrete market context. This consideration has to become a platform for the evaluation of simplified marketing as a type of behavior, which is not the goal of this paper.

Another point concerns our suggestions within CMT and its approach. In C2.2, there are a number of examples of the elaboration of (new) creative and innovative tools that might seem to be in line with the assumptions of CMT. This is true only if we use a fragment-oriented approach, which often happens in publications L2.4 – L2.6. This is not the case if we evaluate a broader scope of marketing activities which, for our purposes, as mentioned earlier, was identified as a chain of interactions between a company and its consumers.

### Conclusions

There are different types of marketing performance in times of crises. On the one hand, simplified marketing is (probably) not the dominant type, while, on the other hand, there are different variants within simplified marketing. We suppose that features of simplified marketing are more common in a crisis context than assumed and might be met in markets with different degrees of maturity. For this reason, this type of marketing should not be neglected by CMT.

It is also evident that CMT focuses on "progressive" examples and illustrations of how marketing should be performed in times of crises rather than on the pre-conditions for it. In the context given, some of its assumptions, as mentioned earlier, might seem too idealistic and declarative. Therefore, there is a practical and a theoretical need to resolve the contradiction by focusing also on other types of both marketing environment and marketing behavior, even if they might seem peripheral to "mainstream" marketing. We believe that the suggestion to use a broader perspective on marketing activities instead of a rather fragment-oriented one would allow us to revise some of suggestions of CMT and make it better respond to practical necessities in such turbulent times.

Our interest consisted in understanding how simplified marketing comes into being, we also tried to explain the main interactions within this type of marketing behavior. Marketing simplification occurs within a special managerial context (which is enhanced by the "subjective" necessity in marketing). This is the main factor for the selection of the type of marke-

ting behavior. The external factor, i.e. the “objective necessity” in marketing and the adequacy of marketing to it, obviously plays a secondary role but it determines the company’s success and positions in a market. – The criteria of the necessity in marketing (both “objective” and “subjective” ones) should be taken into account by CMT.

This idea is especially important in terms of managerial implications. We believe that the results of marketing performance are related to the suitability of the marketing strategy and its tools to the specifics of the marketing environment (the “objective necessity” in marketing in a particular market). In its turn, the quality of the system of management and its interactions with marketing mainly impact the content and the quality of marketing. The quality of the system of management is able to influence marketing performance directly and indirectly in many ways. Let us emphasize once more the idea that a successful marketing can barely be possible with inadequate management. The market orientation of the system of management goes in line with its orientation regarding the needs of the system of marketing. This point has a special significance for emerging markets (considering the criteria of an “objective” and “subjective” necessity in marketing, which seem to be relatively low).

The limitations of our study are related both to the method used and to some specifics of the crisis context in which the companies investigated operate. We cannot make judgments on the dominance of some particular features within simplified marketing over some others, nor how widespread they are. It is not clear how far the external and internal factors (including the perception of the role of marketing) account for the selection of this type of marketing in reality. In a context with a higher degree of maturity of the marketing environment, features of simplified marketing were also presented, although to a lesser extent. Since there is evidence of marketing simplification in clusters with different degrees of maturity of marketing environment, we suppose that they might be present also in the marketing of companies operating in the most mature marketing environments. In this case, we might be able to conclude that marketing simplification, to a different extent, is a characteristic inherent to (any) crisis marketing performance. Even in this case, however, this conclusion would only be related to a specific country context. However, in order to make broader conclusions, a comparative research study would be required. In this sense, it is necessary to differentiate between mature and emerging markets, and to identify some Russia-specific features (if they exist). The result of this part of the study shall be the definition of specifics within marketing behavior which might be inherent to any type of marketing performed in any crisis context. In other words, comparisons between different clusters in different national contexts are necessary.

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