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JEL Classification: M31, M21, L84, D81

*Starostina Alla, Panasiuk Yuliia***MARKETING CONSULTING AND FLEXIBLE EMERGENCY DECISION-MAKING
UNDER CONDITIONS OF UNCERTAINTY: AN EMPIRICAL REVIEW OF UKRAINIAN
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The business environment of Ukraine in the 2020s is characterized by turbulence caused by the war, global economic shocks, digitalization, and changes in consumer behavior. Under such conditions, traditional models of strategic management lose their efficiency, while marketing consulting emerges as a critical instrument for operational adaptation and business resilience. The aim of this study is to theoretically substantiate and empirically confirm the role of marketing consulting in forming systems of Flexible Emergency Decision-Making (FEDM) within enterprises undergoing crisis transformations. The methodological framework of this study is based on a survey of over 100 Ukrainian executives, business owners, and top managers conducted between April and September 2025. The findings show that 51% of respondents recognize the critical need for FEDM systems to stabilize their businesses, while only 15% fully trust external consultants. The primary barriers include mistrust, low perceived practical effectiveness of consulting, and the absence of a formalized set of emergency routines for rapid response to crisis signals. The empirical study confirmed the key hypotheses: traditional strategic approaches lose their practical effectiveness in high-velocity environments; the consultant's role shifts toward that of a “rehabilitator-consultant”; and distrust remains a significant barrier to cooperation with external consultants. The proposed model integrates the Dynamic Capabilities View (Teece et al., 1997), Resource-Based View (Barney, 1991), Bounded Rationality (Simon, 1957), and Agile Management (Rigby et al., 2016) frameworks. The scientific novelty lies in constructing a theoretical and empirical foundation for the transformational marketing consulting model as a mechanism of enterprise adaptation to systemic risks and uncertainty. The practical value lies in applying these results to develop an adaptive consulting model for FEDM implementation.

Keywords: marketing consulting, flexible emergency decision-making, adaptability, dynamic capabilities, crisis management, uncertainty.

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Introduction and formulation of the problem

Ukraine's business environment operates within a high-velocity context shaped by war, supply chain disruptions, financial instability, and accelerated digital transformation. According to Eisenhardt (1989), high-velocity environments are characterized by incomplete information, nonlinear change, and short-lived competitive advantages [1]. Under such conditions, firms must make rapid, adaptive decisions

based on limited data, often through tactical and temporary actions – emergency routines, from the foundational concept of organizational routines proposed by Nelson and Winter (1982) [5].

Within this framework, marketing consulting evolves from an analytical role to that of a rehabilitative consultant, providing knowledge transfer and facilitating quick decision-making cycles.

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The core research problem is to determine whether empirical evidence from Ukrainian businesses supports the transformational nature of marketing consulting, oriented toward forming and implementing FEDM, and to identify critical components for constructing a consulting model suited to high-velocity environments.

Analysis and research of publications

The research builds upon classical strategic management theories. Herbert Simon’s bounded rationality (1957) [2] emphasized that managers make decisions under constraints of time, resources, and information. Nelson and Winter (1982) [5] introduced the concept of organizational routines as repeatable patterns preserving organizational experience. Eisenhardt (1989) [1] highlighted the importance of speed and iterative decision-making cycles in high-velocity environments.

Teece, Pisano, and Shuen (1997) [3] developed the Dynamic Capabilities View, emphasizing the firm’s ability to reconfigure resources in response to shocks. Barney (1991) [7], in the Resource-Based View (RBV), identified knowledge, trust, and competencies as the sources of sustainable advantage.

Hamel and Valikangas (2003) [8] advanced the concept of organizational resilience, defining it as a firm’s ability to recover and reframe resources through experimentation. Rigby, Sutherland, and Takeuchi (2016) [9] connected these theories with Agile Management, portraying consultants as facilitators of fast, iterative decision-making.

However, within the Ukrainian context, empirical research on how consulting enhances adaptability and supports FEDM implementation under uncertainty, especially during wartime, remains limited. This study addresses this gap.

Purpose of the article

The purpose of this article is to empirically confirm the role of marketing consulting in developing systems of Flexible Emergency Decision-Making (FEDM) among enterprises operating in high-velocity environments. The study is also aimed at identifying the relationship between the level of environmental turbulence, the role of marketing consulting, and the level of trust in external consultants as a factor in business stabilization.

The study tests four hypotheses:

- H1: Traditional strategic management models lose efficiency in high-velocity environments, increasing the need for FEDM;
- H2: Marketing consulting evolves from an analytical to a rehabilitative role during crises;
- H3: Low trust is the main barrier to cooperation with external consultants;

- H4: Practical actions identified in the survey (e.g., export reorientation, remote work, automation) represent emergency routines that can form the foundation for FEDM systems.

Presentation of the main material

An online questionnaire was conducted among 100 respondents (N=100), including business owners, directors, and top managers across multiple sectors (April – September 2025). The questionnaire covered demographic data (Table 1), crisis factors, strategy planning, consulting collaboration formats, trust levels, FEDM necessity ratings, and open-ended responses on crisis practices.

Descriptive statistics (percentages) were applied. Hypotheses were verified through comparative analysis: each hypothesis was considered empirically supported if the majority of responses (>50%) aligned with the statement.

Table 1

Structure of the sample

Indicator	Category	%
Position	Directors	36
	Business owners	34
	Top managers	26
	Other	4
Industry	Services	32
	Retail	26
	Technology	24
	Manufacturing	16
Size	Micro	38
	Small	37
	Medium	23
	Large	2

Source: based in the author’s survey (2025)

Most respondents represented small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), providing a realistic picture of Ukrainian business under crisis conditions. 60% of firms have operated for more than three years, while 16% were founded during wartime, showing persistence of entrepreneurial activity despite uncertainty. Key challenges identified include:

- staff shortages – 51%,
- difficulties in finding new clients – 48%,
- challenges in entering foreign markets – 42%,
- financial constraints – 36%,
- logistics disruptions – 29%,
- market loss – 25%,
- raw material shortages – 16%.

Furthermore, 92% of respondents noted that business control became more complicated during wartime (50% “partially,” 42% “significantly”).

Only 37% had formal long-term strategies before the war; 50% followed general plans, and 13% acted situationally. Strategy development was handled primarily by strategic planning departments (51%), followed by top management (29%) and marketing teams (24%), which indicates low integration of decision-making levels.

Attitudes toward marketing consulting were ambivalent: 36% rated consultants’ effectiveness as low, 34% were neutral, and 36% recognized their significant role in business recovery. 45% had consulting experience, yet only 15% expressed full trust, 65% partial trust, and 20% no trust.

Preferred consulting formats: staff training (47%), rapid market analysis (43%), and creating internal consulting units (39%). Less popular: one-on-one advice (28%) and self-guided methodologies (19%).

The most important criteria for selecting a consultant are the number of successful projects, positive partner feedback, and market reputation. Education, academic publications, or professional experience have less influence, indicating the reputational nature of trust in the consulting field.

The survey results showed that most Ukrainian companies recognize the need to implement a system of flexible emergency decisions. About 51% of respondents rated the necessity of such systems at

4–5 points on a five-point scale, another 25% took a neutral position, and the remaining 24% do not see it as a critical need.

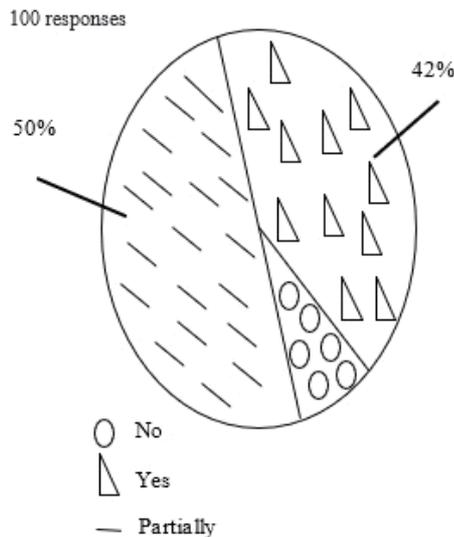
These results highlight a preference for interactive, practice-oriented consulting that combines learning, diagnosis, and rapid response. Open-ended responses identified frequent crisis strategies:

- export market reorientation,
- transition to remote work,
- automation of processes,
- cost reduction,
- activation of digital marketing,
- relocation to Western Ukraine.

These are clear manifestations of emergency routines – short-term adaptive patterns that enhance resilience and ensure operational continuity. Regarding the hypothesis verification, empirical data confirms that.

H1 (Traditional strategies are losing effectiveness). The survey (Fig. 1) showed that more than half (51%) of respondents prioritize FEDM (Flexible Emergency Decision-Making), while 92% report increasing difficulties in business control. This empirically confirms that traditional long-term management tools, designed for stable and predictable business environments, are becoming less relevant in a high-velocity context. Therefore, H1 is confirmed.

Please answer the question: *have problems with business control arisen under the conditions of war and the socio-economic crisis?*



Do you agree with the statement that *the unpredictability of market changes requires a shift toward a system of making flexible emergency decisions in real time?*

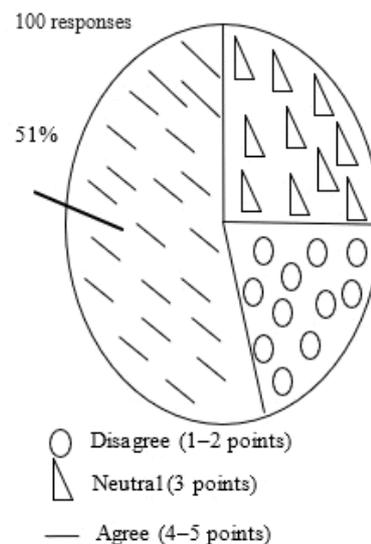


Fig. 1. Percentage of responses regarding the impact of war on business control and the transition to FEDM

Source: created by the author based on survey data

Theoretically, this aligns with Eisenhardt’s (1989) arguments on the importance of speed and iteration in decision-making [1] and with the concept of bounded rationality (Simon, 1957) [2], as managers rely on simplified procedures to achieve rapid results.

H2 (the consultant’s role is transforming from analytical-recommendatory to interactive–rehabilitative). The results on cooperation formats (training, express analysis, internal groups) indicate an expectation of the consultant’s practical and implementation-oriented involvement, emphasizing collaboration and partnership. This suggests a transformation of the consultant’s role toward business rehabilitation. Therefore, H2 is confirmed and aligns with the dynamic capabilities concept (Teece et al., 1997; Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000) [3; 4].

H3 (low trust in consultants as a barrier to cooperation). As shown in Fig. 2, the low level of full trust (15%) and high level of partial distrust (65% partial, and 20% complete distrust) confirm that trust is a critical barrier to the implementation of external interventions. H3 is confirmed; in practice, this means that marketing consulting should include mechanisms of transparency and accountability.

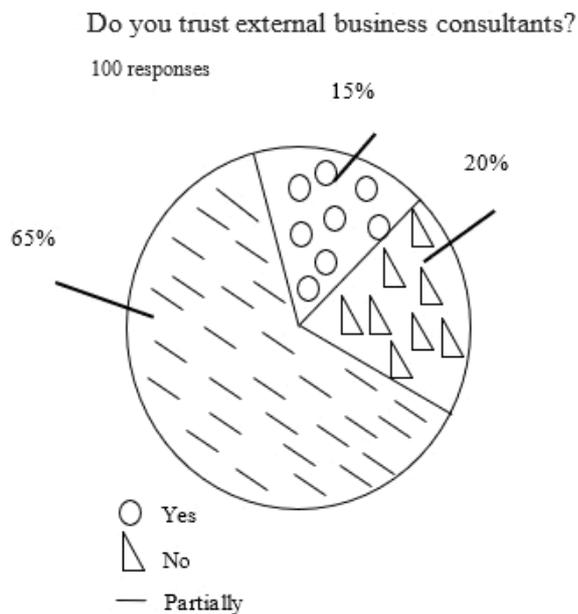


Fig. 2. Percentage of respondents’ trust in external consultants

Source: created by the author based on survey data

H4 (Emergency routines as a foundation for implementing Flexible Emergency Decisions Making – FEDM). In a high-velocity environment [1], organizational routines [5] transform into emergency routines – short-term adaptive actions ensuring rapid resource mobilization under uncertainty. The survey

recorded that respondents implemented several emergency tactics identical to such routines. However, the actions were found to be fragmented and insufficiently systematic. Therefore, H4 is partially confirmed: experimental routine practices exist but have not yet been institutionalized as a holistic FEDM system.

Conclusions

The empirical study (N = 100) confirms that Ukraine’s business environment is a high-velocity system where traditional strategic planning must be complemented by flexible emergency decision-making (FEDM) system [1; 2].

Marketing consulting evolves into a rehabilitative and adaptive role, fostering learning, partnership, and rapid operational change.

Most Ukrainian companies show a positive trend toward integrating flexible solutions into their management systems; however, the level of trust in consultants remains limited. The low level of trust (only 15% expressing full confidence) poses a serious barrier.

The findings identify core components for developing a transformational marketing consulting model under FEDM conditions:

- recognizing high-velocity conditions as a defining feature of the business environment;
- integrating continuous learning and rapid response implementation into consulting practice;
- promotion of cooperation and partnership with the marketing consultants;
- implementation of a transparency and accountability mechanism to overcome distrust of consultants;
- formalizing and institutionalizing emergency routines as standard FEDM processes.

This research advances marketing consulting theory by providing empirical validation for the adaptive role of consulting and the implementation of Flexible Emergency Decision-Making (FEDM) in environments of extreme uncertainty.

Potential directions for further scientific research include the following topics:

- development of metrics for evaluating the effectiveness of the Flexible Emergency Decision-Making (FEDM) system;
- construction of a transformational marketing consulting model with the implementation of FEDM in management practice;
- exploration of digital tools and artificial intelligence technologies in the process of transformational consulting;
- creation of educational programs and training models for preparing a new generation of “rehabilitator-consultants.”

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МАРКЕТИНГОВИЙ КОНСАЛТИНГ І ГНУЧКІ ЕКСТРЕНІ РІШЕННЯ В УМОВАХ НЕВИЗНАЧЕНОСТІ: ЕМПІРИЧНИЙ ОГЛЯД УКРАЇНСЬКОГО БІЗНЕСУ

Старостіна А. О., Панасюк Ю. М.

Бізнес-середовище України 20-х років ХХ століття характеризується турбулентністю, спричиненою війною, глобальними економічними шоками, цифровізацією та змінами споживчої поведінки. За цих умов традиційні моделі стратегічного управління втрачають ефективність, а маркетинговий консалтинг стає ключовим інструментом оперативного реагування та адаптації бізнесу. Метою дослідження є теоретичне обґрунтування та емпіричне підтвердження ролі маркетингового консалтингу у формуванні системи гнучких екстрених рішень (ГЕР) підприємств в умовах кризових трансформацій. Методологічною основою дослідження стало опитування понад 100 керівників, власників бізнесу та топменеджерів українських компаній у період із квітня по вересень 2025 року. Результати дослідження свідчать, що 51% респондентів визнають критичну необхідність системи ГЕР для стабілізації бізнесу, тоді як лише 15% повністю довіряють зовнішнім консультантам. Основними бар'єрами є недовіра, низьке оцінювання практичної ефективності консалтингу та відсутність формалізованого набору “екстрених рутин” задля швидкої реакції на кризові сигнали. Емпіричне дослідження підтвердило ключові гіпотези: традиційні стратегічні підходи втрачають практичну ефективність у high-velocity середовищі; роль консультанта зміщується до функції «консультант-реабілітатор»; недовіра є суттєвим бар'єром кооперації із зовнішніми консультантами. Модель базується на інтеграції концепцій Dynamic Capabilities View (Teece et al., 1997), Resource-Based View (Barney, 1991), Bounded Rationality (Simon, 1957) та підходів Agile Management (Rigby et al., 2016). Наукова новизна дослідження полягає у формуванні теоретико-емпіричної моделі як механізму оперативної адаптації підприємств до системних ризиків і невизначеності. Практична цінність дослідження полягає у можливості використання його результатів для розробки моделі маркетингового консалтингу в умовах прийняття ГЕР.

Ключові слова: маркетинговий консалтинг, гнучкі екстрені рішення, адаптивність, динамічні здібності, антикризове управління, невизначеність.

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