





















Whereas analysing how COVID-19 impacted marketing management in Lithuania, [European Marketing Agenda \(2021\)](#) states that the primary effect was the budget reduction in general, secondary – reallocation of spending, and tertiary – reorganisation of marketing processes. The Lithuanian priorities remained consistent with those observed in the previous year. The dominant topics for Lithuania were: digital marketing (43%), brand strategy and management (32.2%), innovation and product development (20.7%), following the priorities of social media marketing (20.7%), and marketing planning best practices (19.8%). Less focus was placed on big data and digital transformation compared to other countries. Based on the research, conducted by Lithuanian Marketing Association and KOG Institute ([Balčiūnienė, 2020](#)), 22% of the surveyed companies in Lithuania (N=270), have radically changed their marketing strategy, yet the majority (59%) made minor changes to it. The main changes happened in business restructuring (33%) and online commerce (24%). Almost half of the surveyed companies (44%) have reduced their advertising budgets, and 28% said that their budgets had not changed or had been redistributed to other advertising channels, yet 11% indicated that they increased their budget during the crisis. The marketing budget has been reduced to external agencies and consultants: 44% of organisations reduced or stopped cooperation, i.e., 37% reduced, 7% completely stopped, and only 9% said they had increased their cooperation. According to the research results, one-fifth of companies indicated that the functions of marketing staff had been expanded or redistributed, the workload had increased, and employees had been given new tasks. However, 14% stated that the marketing team had shrunk or stopped existing at all due to savings or workload reductions. On the other hand, the importance of the marketing manager's role has strengthened. Given the Lithuanian Marketing Association and KOG Institute research, the marketing manager in a crisis period significantly contributes to the strategic decision-making and implementation of the organisation: almost a third of them develops and plans strategic actions (28%), a quarter (24%) actively participates in decision-making, and nearly a fifth (17%) contributes with their ideas and recommendations to the overall organisation's performance ([Balčiūnienė, 2020](#)).

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Seeking to determine the organisations' marketing management changes induced by the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, exploratory research was applied. The questionnaire research method was chosen to conduct the research. A questionnaire was comprised by the authors based on the marketing management aspects that might have been influenced by the crisis as implies the theoretical analysis. Additionally, given that organisations' overall performance is related to marketing management, the questionnaire consisted of the three main parts:

- Questions regarding the changes that appeared in organisations' overall performance induced by the COVID-19 crisis.
- Questions regarding the changes in organisations' marketing activities induced by the COVID-19 crisis.
- Demographic questions.

The same questions were provided for the three time periods:

- 1) the time period of the first COVID-19 wave compared to the time before the pandemic;
- 2) the time period between the two waves of COVID-19 compared to the period of the first COVID-19 wave;



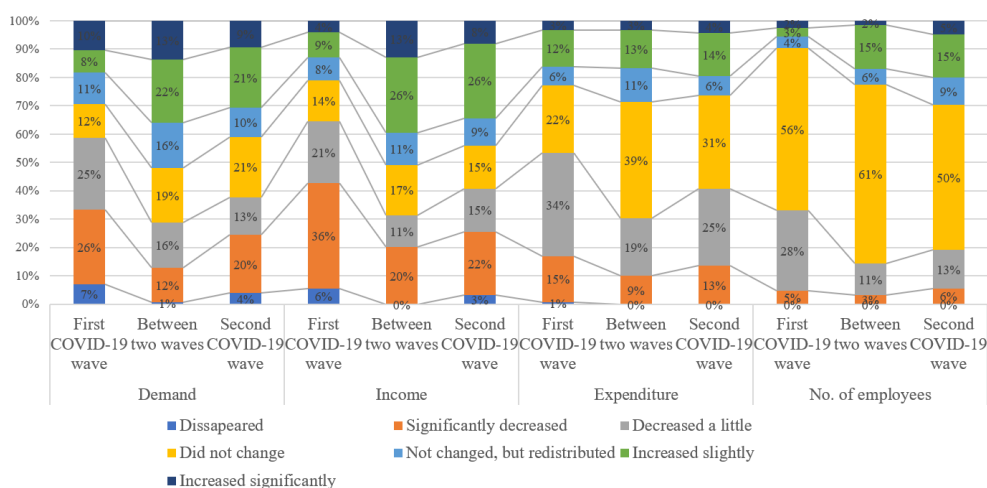
As it can be seen, most of the respondents are CMO's (35%), CEO's (18%), and specialists in marketing (22%). Most of the respondents are from the B2B sector (42%). Actually, 31% of the respondents are from the B2C sector and 22% – are working in both B2C and B2B sectors. Respondents work in companies of various sizes: 31% of companies are very small, 25% – small, 27% – medium, and 26% – large companies. Industries which the respondents represent also vary, i.e., 15% of companies operate in the marketing industry, 9% – in manufacturing, 6% – in each of these industries: engineering, culture, and education. The rest 58% of companies cover different industries each represented by few percent of respondents: accounting/finance/audit; insurance; IT; accommodation and meals; medicine, health care, beauty services; pharmacy, life sciences; real estate; human resources; trade/services; warehousing/logistics/transport; construction; law; tourism, entertainment; media, and publishing. Finally, most of the respondents' companies are not outsourcing or outsourcing up to 25% of marketing activities (respectively 33% and 31%).

For the analysis of research results, the authors applied descriptive statistics and logistic regression analysis. Microsoft Excel and IBM SPSS Statistics software products were used for the statistical analysis of the questionnaire research results.

#### 4. RESEARCH RESULTS

##### *Changes in organisations' overall performance induced by the COVID-19 crisis*

Analysing the distribution of evaluations of the impact of COVID-19 on organizations' performance indicators, namely demand, income, expenditure, and a number of employees (see Figure no. 1), it is obvious that during the first COVID-19 wave all the above-named indicators decreased a little or significantly. A little or significant decrease in demand experienced 51% of organisations, a little or significant decrease in income experienced 57% of organisations, a decrease in expenditure – 49% of organisations, and in a number of employees – 33% of organisations.



**Figure no. 1 – Distribution of evaluations of the impact of COVID-19 waves on the organizations' performance indicators**

Yet the number of employees is the only indicator that did not change in most of organisations (56%) during the first COVID-19 wave. Between the two COVID-19 waves most of the organisations slightly increased their demand and income (respectively up to 22% and 26%), whereas expenditure and the number of employees did not change (respectively in 39% and 61% of organisations). It is worth mentioning that 20% of organisations witnessed a significant income decrease between the two COVID-19 waves. Hence, for nearly a quarter of organisations income increased slightly, and for one-fifth of organisations the income decreased significantly after the first wave. During the second COVID-19 wave, demand significantly decreased (20%), did not change (21%), and increased slightly (21%) for nearly the same number of organisations – one-fifth of companies. Thus, a smaller percentage of organisations experienced a demand decrease (slight or significant) during the second COVID-19 wave if compared to the first COVID-19 wave. During the second COVID-19 wave, 22% of organisations recorded a significant income decrease (a little or significant decrease recorded 37% of organisations), while 26% of organisations increased slightly their income. Hence, again, income decreased for a smaller percentage of organisations (slightly or significantly) during the second COVID-19 wave if compared to the first COVID-19 wave. Expenditure did not change during the second COVID-19 wave in 31% of organisations, whereas 38% of organisations recorded a little or significant decrease in expenditure. Finally, during the second COVID-19 wave the number of employees did not change in half of the organisations, increased slightly or significantly in 20% of organisations, decreased slightly or significantly in 19% of the surveyed organisations.

The results of sales channels of organisations (Figure no. 2) show that before the first wave of the crisis 61% of organisations used both channels – online and physical stores. During the first wave of COVID-19, this percentage dropped to 39% while the percentage of firms using only online channels increased from 13% to 49%. Between the first and second COVID-19 waves the percentage of organisations that used both channels – online and physical stores – increased up to 68%. On the contrary, the percentage of organisations using only online channels dropped to 20%, i.e., decreased compared to the period during the first wave of COVID-19 but increased compared to the period before the pandemic. In fact, the percentage of organisations using both channels (online and physical stores) remained the same during both waves of the pandemic (39%), whereas 50% of organisations used only online channels. However, the percentage of organisations using only physical channels has been constantly dropping at each analysed period – 26% before the crisis, 13% during the first wave, 12% percent between the two waves, and 11% during the second wave of COVID-19.

Distribution of evaluations of the impact of the COVID-19 wave on channels of organisation is presented below in Figure no. 3. The survey results prove that during the first wave of COVID-19, between the two waves, and during the second wave of COVID-19 most of the organisations did not change the place of their business but made online business more active compared to the period before the pandemic.

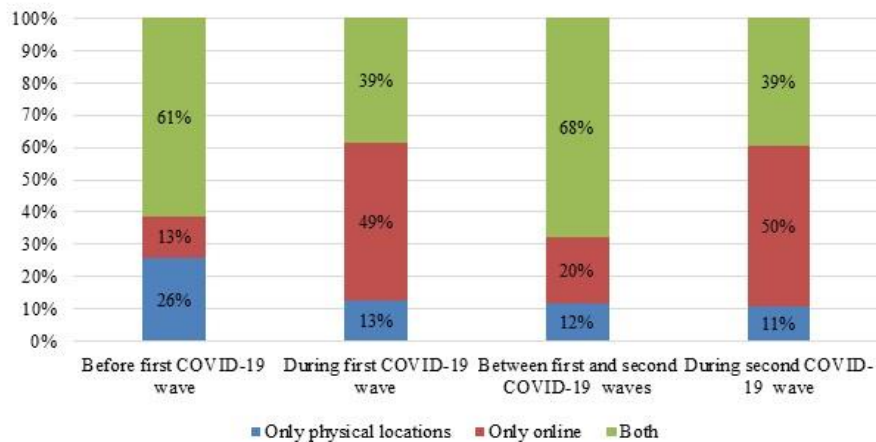


Figure no. 2 – Sales channels of organisations

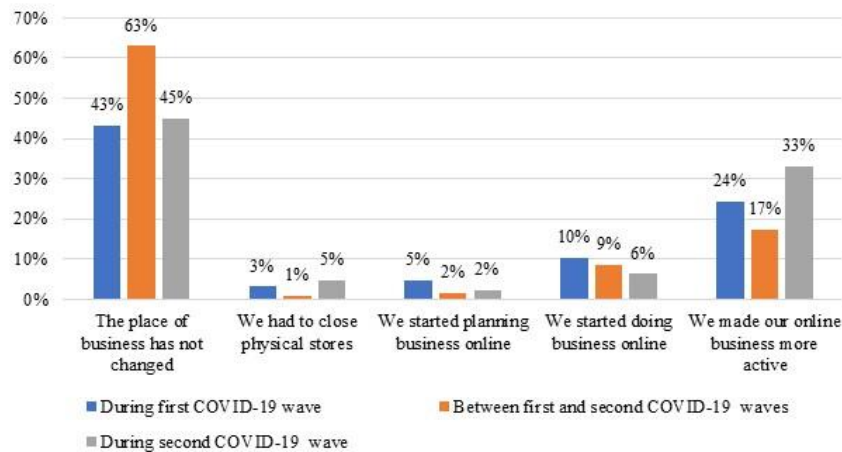


Figure no. 3 – Distribution of evaluations of the impact of COVID-19 waves on channels of organisation

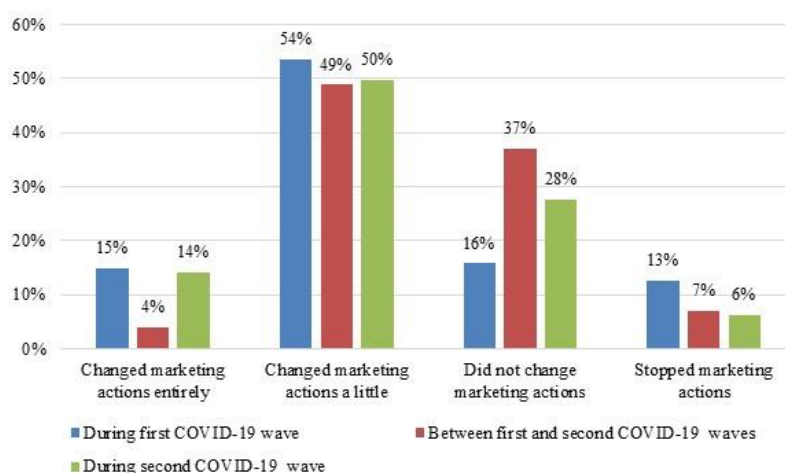
When asked to specify what other impact the COVID-19 waves had on their organisations' performance, the respondents pointed out an increase in mobile customers, a decrease in the growth of the company as well as a decrease in the number of customers with impulsive buying behaviour. Moreover, there was a growing need for specialised employees to work with online channels and social media. Respondents also revealed psychological consequences and an increased number of online rivals.

#### *Changes in organisations' marketing activities induced by the COVID-19 crisis*

More than three-quarters of respondents indicated that the role of the marketing manager in the context of strategic organisational decision-making and implementation did not change or became even more important during the pandemic period.

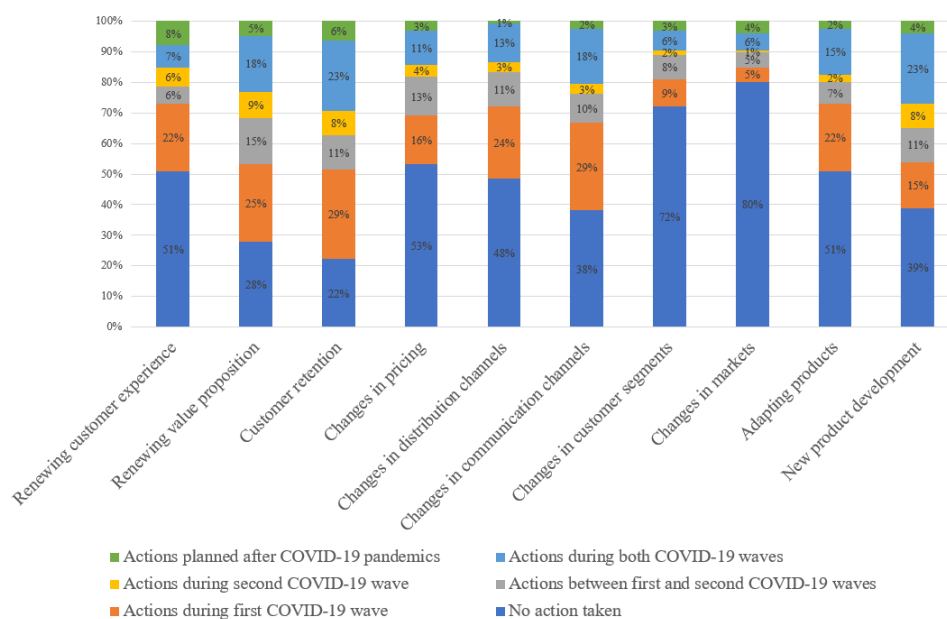
When asked to evaluate the impact of COVID-19 on the marketing strategy, 20% of respondents revealed that it had a substantial impact on the marketing strategy, 72% responded that it had a little impact on the marketing strategy, 27% declared that it had no impact on the marketing strategy, and 2% of respondents did not know the impact of it or it was confidential. The respondents who indicated a substantial or little impact on the marketing strategy during the first COVID-19 wave, specified such issues as a decreased advertising budget, decreased activities, reorganised communication channels, and the focus on e-commerce. However, the respondents who indicated a substantial or little impact on the marketing strategy during the second COVID-19 wave, pointed out such issues as an increased advertising budget (contrarily to the first wave), no changes (as they had been already adapted after the first wave), even greater focus on e-commerce, positioning organization's stability, or again a decreased advertising budget.

The distribution of evaluations referring to the marketing strategy changes due to the pandemic crisis is presented below in Figure no. 4. Nearly half of the organisations changed their marketing actions a little during all analysed periods – the first wave, between the two waves, and during the second wave. Findings reveal that 37% of organisations did not change their marketing actions between the two waves of COVID-19, 28% did not change their marketing actions during the second COVID-19 wave, and 16% did not change the actions during the first wave. The rest of the organisations that are not included in the percentages provided in Figure no. 4 did not know whether their marketing strategy was changed.



**Figure no. 4 – Distribution of evaluations of the marketing strategy change due to the COVID-19 crisis**

Marketing actions that have been taken by organisations due to the COVID-19 pandemics are presented in Figure no. 5.



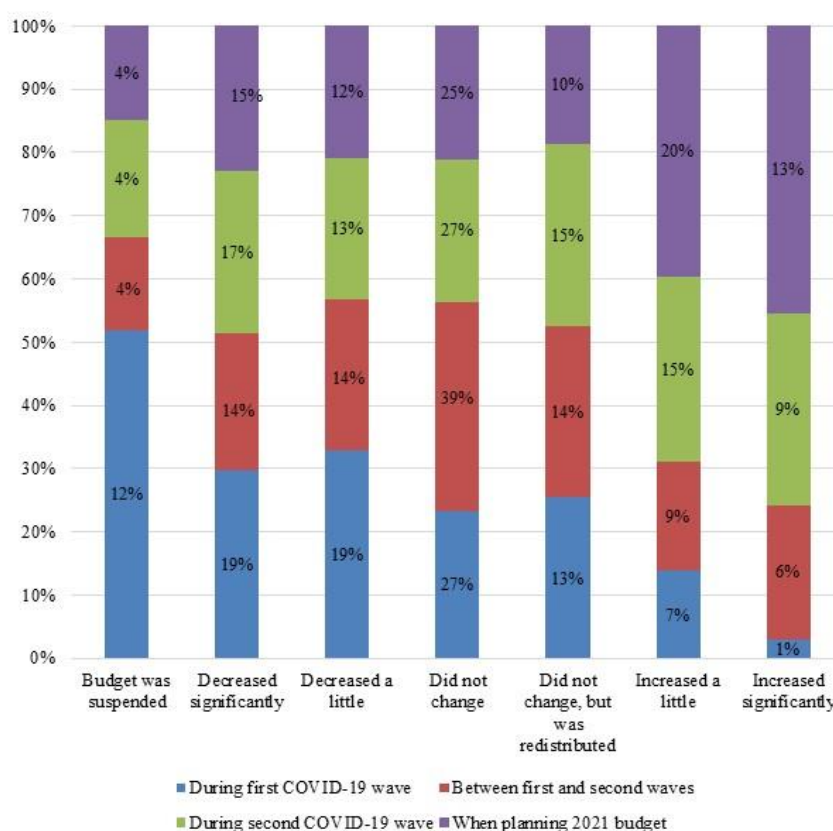
**Figure no. 5 – Marketing actions taken due to the COVID-19 pandemic**

In this respect, such actions as focusing on renewed customer experience or making changes in pricing and distribution channels, were not taken by most organisations or were taken during the first COVID-19 wave. Actions related to renewing value proposition, customer retention, changes in communication channels, product adaptation and new product development, were not taken by most of organisations during the first wave or both waves. In fact, most of organisations did not make changes in customer segments or markets during all analysed periods.

The opinion of respondents on whether the global recommendation to decrease the marketing budget during the crisis was followed in their organisation, has distributed the following: 43% of respondents confirmed positively, 38% of respondents replied negatively, 9% of respondents did not know, and 9% of respondents answered they do not have the marketing budget.

Overall, 113 respondents revealed how the COVID-19 crisis has affected their companies' marketing budget. As it can be seen in Figure no. 6, during the first COVID-19 wave, 27% of organisations did not change it, 38% of organisations decreased it (significantly or slightly), and 12% – suspended it.

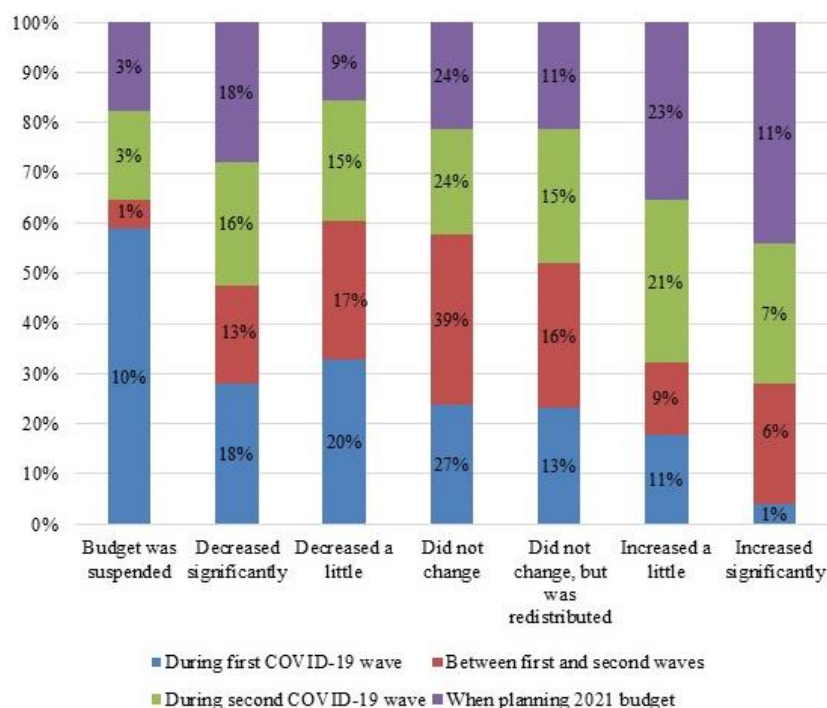




**Figure no. 6 – Distribution of evaluations of the marketing budget change because of the COVID-19 crisis**

Between the first and second waves of COVID-19, most of the organisations (39%) did not change their marketing budget. During the second COVID-19 wave 27% of organisations did not change it, 30% – decreased it (significantly or slightly), and 4% – suspended it. The marketing budget was redistributed in 15% of organisations, whereas 24% of organisations increased it (significantly or slightly). The same can be observed when we analyse the planning of the 2021 budget, i.e., 25% of companies did not change the budget, 27% of organisations decreased it (significantly or slightly), and 33% of organisations increased it (significantly or slightly).

In general, 78% of respondents revealed that they have an advertising budget. The evaluations of their advertising budgets' changes caused by the COVID-19 crisis are presented in [Figure no. 7](#).

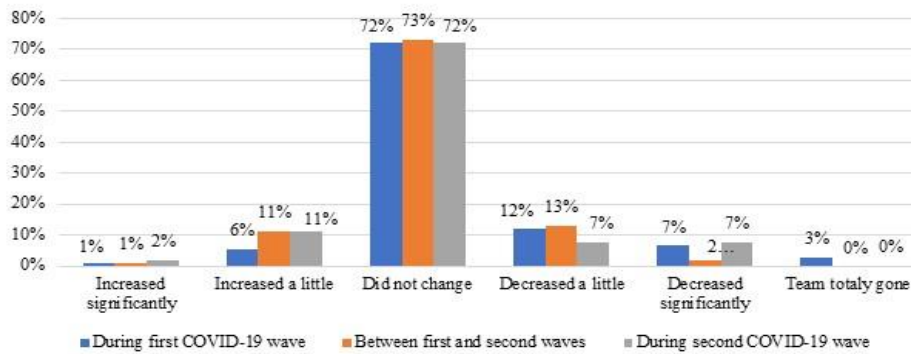


**Figure no. 7 – Distribution of evaluations of the advertising budget's changes caused by the COVID-19 crisis**

Hence, the results have distributed as follows: during the first COVID-19 wave, 27% of organisations did not change this budget, 38% – decreased it (significantly or slightly), and 10% – suspended it. Between the first and second waves of COVID-19, most of the organisations (39%) did not change their advertising budget. During the second COVID-19 wave, we observe a similar tendency, i. e. 24% of organisations did not change it, 31% – decreased it (significantly or slightly), and 3% – suspended it, whereas 15% of companies redistributed it, and 28% – increased it (significantly or slightly). Moreover, when planning the 2021 budget, 24% of organisations did not change anything, 27% – decreased the budget (significantly or slightly), and 34% – decided to increase it (significantly or slightly).

According to the results, 81% of respondents revealed that they have a marketing team or a department at their organisation. Evaluations of changes in their marketing department induced by the COVID-19 crisis are presented in [Figure no. 8](#). It is observed that 72% of organisations did not change the marketing department either during the first or the second waves, alike happened in between the COVID-19 waves – 73% of organisations did not change their marketing department.

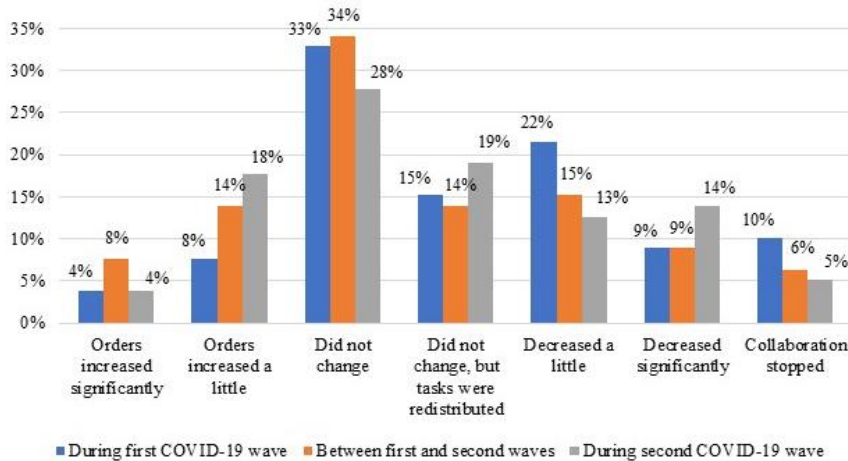
The main reasons that induced changes in the marketing department were pointed out as the company's growth, a decrease of marketing budget or workload. Analysing how the crisis has affected the marketing team's functions, it was revealed that communication became more intense, fewer marketing functions were outsourced, workers got more responsibility, there was a need for e-commerce growth, or it did not change at all.



**Figure no. 8 – Distribution of evaluations of the marketing department’s changes caused by the COVID-19 crisis**

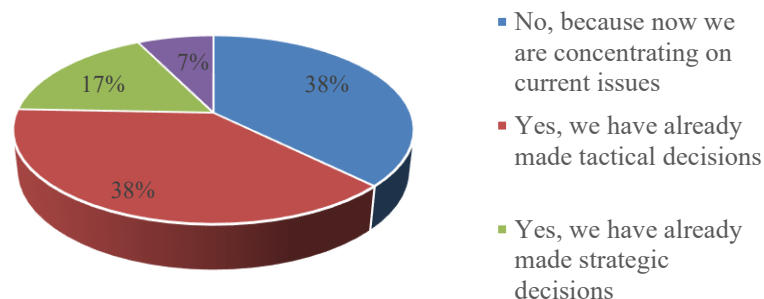
It’s worth mentioning that 48% of respondents indicated that before the crisis they collaborated with external agencies/consultants (see Figure no. 9). However, some respondents did not answer this question but expressed their opinion about collaboration with external agencies/consultants and its changes that were caused by the crisis. Overall, 62% of respondents provided an evaluation of the collaboration with external agencies/consultants and related changes that occurred because of the COVID-19 crisis. Hence, 34% of organisations did not change their collaboration with external agencies/consultants during the first wave and in between the two waves, whereas 28% of organisations behaved alike during the second COVID-19 wave. Besides, during the first COVID-19 wave, 22% of organisations decreased a little the number of orders related to external agencies/consultants’ collaboration. Respectfully, during the second wave, 19% of companies redistributed their tasks related to external agencies/consultants, and 18% of companies slightly increased the number of orders.

Explaining the reasons for such changes in the above-mentioned collaboration, the respondents indicated that moving services to the Internet has reduced their cost, and so have marketing budgets.



**Figure no. 9 – Changes in collaboration with external agencies/consultants due to the COVID-19 crisis. Distribution of respondents’ evaluations**

In the questionnaire, 123 respondents indicated whether they are already considering some post-crisis actions (see Figure no. 10).



**Figure no. 10 – Distribution of evaluations of the considered post-crisis actions**

As it can be seen, there are two equal parts of organisations, each with a percentage of 38% – one part is not considering post-crisis actions as they are still concentrated on current issues, whereas another part of organisations is planning post-crisis actions and have already made tactical decisions. Overall, 17% of organisations are planning post-crisis actions and have already made strategic decisions.

In general, the evaluation of the total effect of the COVID-19 crisis on organisation's performance has distributed as follows: 29% of respondents indicated a positive effect, 61% indicated a negative effect, and 10% of respondents did not notice any effect on organisation's performance.

#### ***The influence of the marketing and advertising budgets' changes on the organisation during the first wave of the pandemic crisis***

In order to determine the influence of the marketing and advertising budget's change on organisations during the first wave of the pandemic crisis, logistic regression was applied (see Table no. 2). Regarding the influence of the marketing budget's change during the pandemic crisis (first wave) on the effect of the pandemic crisis on the organisation, the logistic regression model is statistically significant,  $\chi^2(1) = 15.698$ ,  $p < 0.05$ .

**Table no. 2 - Logistic regression results**

Independent variable	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Marketing budget change	0,702	0,195	12,974	1	0,000	2,018
Advertising budget change	0,746	0,215	12,097	1	0,001	2,109

The model explained 18% (based on Nagelkerke's  $R^2$  coefficient) of the variance in the positive or neutral effect of the crisis on the organisation and correctly classified 67.5% of cases. Nagelkerke's  $R^2$  coefficient is below 20% but considering that only one independent variable comprises the model predicting the effect of the crisis on organisation, it is acceptable. The increased marketing budget during the pandemic crisis is associated with an increased likelihood of a positive or neutral effect of the crisis on the organisation ( $\beta = 0.702$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). For each point increase on the marketing budget, the odds of having a positive or neutral effect of a crisis increase 2.018 times.

Regarding the influence of the advertising budget's change during the pandemic crisis (first wave) on the effect of the pandemic crisis on the organisation, the logistic regression model is again statistically significant,  $\chi^2(1) = 15.061$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . The model explained 20% (based on Nagelkerke's  $R^2$  coefficient) of the variance in a positive or neutral effect of the crisis on the organisation and correctly classified 69.8% of cases. Increasing the advertising budget during the pandemic crisis is associated with an increased likelihood of a positive or neutral effect of a crisis on the organisation ( $\beta = 0.746$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). For each point increase on the advertising budget, the odds of having a positive or neutral effect of a crisis on the organisation increase 2.109 times. Consequently, the marketing and advertising budget's change during a crisis (pandemic or not) must be a priority and very well thought through decision.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The analysis of the research results revealed that demand, income, and expenditure decreased in most organisations during the first COVID-19 wave, compared to the time before the pandemics. After the first wave of COVID-19, demand and income slightly increased in most organisations, yet, on the contrary, during the second wave demand and income decreased a little, but to a less extent compared to the decrease during the first COVID-19 wave. Therefore, it suggests that after the first COVID-19 wave a big part of organisations adapted to the pandemic situation.

The other trend brought by the COVID-19 crisis and visible from the research results is the growth of the number of organisations using online sales channels (or making it more active) and a decrease in the number of organisations using only physical stores. Of course, first of all, this trend was influenced by the regulations of the government, but it can be seen that the trend is visible even when the regulations of the government are suspended. Hence, organisations increasingly use the benefits of e-commerce and this trend has triggered a growing need for specialised employees to work with online channels and social media.

Additionally, the role of the marketing manager in the context of strategic organisational decision-making and implementation during the COVID-19 crisis became more important as well as the COVID-19 crisis has influenced companies' marketing strategies. During the first COVID-19 wave, changes were related to the decreased advertising budget, decreased activities, reorganised communication channels, and the focus on e-commerce. Meanwhile, during the second COVID-19 wave, changes were related to the increased advertising budget (only for a small part of organisations), the more serious focus on e-commerce, positioning organisation's stability, or again the decreased advertising budget for some part of organisations; in cases, even no changes were employed as companies have been already adapted after the first wave. The decreased marketing or advertising budget during the pandemic crisis does not surprise as more than one third of respondents revealed that they do not follow global recommendations not to decrease the marketing budget during the crisis. But what is interesting so is the fact that the decrease in marketing or advertising budgets was more intense only during the first wave of COVID-19. Nevertheless, the research results revealed that the decrease in marketing or advertising budgets might have influenced the negative outcomes of the pandemic on the organisations' performance. The results revealed that for each point increase on the marketing or advertising budget, the odds of having a positive or neutral effect of the crisis on the organisation increase substantially. Hence, the marketing and advertising budget change during the crisis (pandemic or not) must be a priority and very well thought through decision. This is

very important as more than a half of the companies have experienced the negative impact of the crisis on the organisations' performance. Consequently, this research is in alignment with the authors stating that organisations are cutting their marketing or advertising budgets during the crisis (Deleersnyder *et al.*, 2009; Kang *et al.*, 2020; Hunneman, 2020; Hoekstra and Leeflang, 2020), but actually, they should maintain or increase marketing or advertising spending during recessions (Deleersnyder *et al.*, 2009; Lamey *et al.*, 2012; Dekimpe and Deleersnyder, 2018), whether it is a financial or a pandemic crisis.

Regarding the change related to the marketing department, most of the organisations did not apply changes here. Those who did, indicated such reasons as the company's growth, a decrease in the marketing budget, or workload. Consequently, again this is related to the changes in the marketing budget. In the same aspect, the collaboration with external agencies/consultants is also related: nearly one-fourth of organisations decreased the number of orders when collaborating with external agencies/consultants because of the changed marketing budget. Despite the fact that most of the organisations have not changed their marketing departments, the COVID-19 crisis affected their marketing team's functions, namely: communication became more intense, fewer marketing functions were outsourced, they got more responsibility, there was a growing need for e-commerce. Thus, it could be stated that changed workloads, emotional state, and the general pandemic situation might have influenced employees' well-being. Nevertheless, the analysis of the research results revealed that most of the organisations are already considering post-crisis actions. These results are in alignment with the studies of the COVID-19 impact on marketing management in Lithuania during the first COVID-19 wave (European Marketing Agenda, 2021; Balčiūnienė, 2020), stating that the primary effect was a budget reduction in general and the main changes were made in online commerce. However, this research extends the results to the impact of COVID-19 on marketing management in Lithuania over a wider period of time.

When compared to other countries, it could be seen that digitalisation is the Top 1 priority when considering the main effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on marketing operations in Europe (European Marketing Agenda, 2021), and the results of this research support this statement, indicating that the increased focus on digitalisation is likely to be the general trend in European organisations. Moreover, *The Coronavirus on Advertising Report (2020)* revealed that 89% of companies indicated that their advertising budgets were impacted by the pandemic. In Lithuania, as it has been revealed by the research results, more than 70% of organisations' advertising budgets were impacted by the pandemic. Therefore, it is obvious that the results again are similar across European organisations and the pandemic crisis more or less affected most of the organisations' marketing and advertising budgets. *CMO Survey (2020, 2021)* stated that the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic did not change the outsourcing of the marketing landscape in the US. In Lithuania, more than 60% of organisations changed their collaboration with external agencies/consultants during the first COVID-19 wave mostly because of the marketing budget change. Moreover, *CMO Survey (2020, 2021)* stated that expected marketing hiring dropped to historic lows during the first wave, but in January of 2021 rebounded beyond the pre-pandemic levels in the US. In Lithuania, more than 70% of organisations reported that the structure of the marketing department did not change either during the COVID-19 waves. Finally, it could be stated that general and most evident trends induced by the COVID-19 pandemic across European organisations are digitalisation and the impact of the crisis on marketing and/or advertising budgets. Other marketing management aspects affected by the COVID-19 pandemic may slightly differ across European countries.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

The theoretical analysis revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic influenced marketing, and it had to search for new strategies how to adjust to new consumer behaviour patterns, the changed demand and supply. The pandemic period has dictated new decisions related to marketing strategy adjustment, search for marketing innovations, R&D, new product development, pricing, marketing channel redesign, reconsideration of corporate social responsibility as a part of the marketing strategy, re-evaluation of marketing and advertising budgets, as well as communication.

The research results lead to a conclusion that even though most of the organisations' performance indicators decreased in many organisations during the first COVID-19 wave, compared to the time before the pandemics, yet after the first COVID-19 wave, a big part of organisations adapted to the pandemic situation.

The analysis of the research results allows to conclude that organisations increasingly take advantage of the benefits of e-commerce and there is an apparent decrease in the number of organisations using only physical stores. Thus, the assumption could be made that the COVID-19 pandemics will bring nearer to the paradigm shift in a business-consumer relationship.

The received results revealed that most of the organisations do not follow global recommendations not to decrease marketing or advertising budgets during the crisis, especially during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemics. Nevertheless, a decrease in marketing or advertising budgets might have influenced the negative outcomes of the pandemic on the organisations' performance as for each point increase on the marketing or advertising budget, the odds of having a positive or neutral effect of a crisis on the organisation increase substantially. Therefore, the marketing and advertising budget change during a crisis (pandemic or not) must be a priority and very well thought through decision.

Based on the analysis of research results it could be stated that changed workloads, emotional state, and the general pandemic situation might have influenced employees' well-being. Moreover, the analysis results revealed that most of the organisations are already considering post-crisis actions, which is a positive sign for business.

The provided research results and recommendations are valuable for scientists as well as marketing practitioners. The provided insights will enable organisations to react appropriately to the crisis and perform suitable marketing actions. Moreover, the research results have indicated the changes which occurred in the marketing landscape, therefore, these findings create scientific value and provide a basis for further research.

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