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## **RETAIL IN TIMES OF WAR: RESUMPTION OF BUSINESS ACTIVITY**

*Retail trade, as the final stage of the movement of goods, plays a crucial role in ensuring the efficiency of the state's economy and the well-being of its population. In the conditions of war, the uninterrupted operation of retail enterprises has become the foundation for the survival and further development of manufacturing enterprises in the FMCG market and a guarantee of food security in Ukraine. During the war, domestic retail underwent specific stages of survival and development, responding to external challenges in unique ways and employing unconventional approaches and solutions to overcome them. The aim of the article is to determine the life trajectory of retail during the war, systematize the approaches of domestic retailers to adaptation and business activity recovery. In the research general*

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## **РИТЕЙЛ В УМОВАХ ВІЙНИ: ВІДНОВЛЕННЯ ДІЛОВОЇ АКТИВНОСТІ**

*Роздрібна торгівля як завершальна ланка товароруху відіграє ключову роль у забезпеченні ефективності функціонування економіки держави та добробуту її населення. В умовах війни безперерійна діяльність підприємств роздрібної торгівлі стала базисом для виживання та подальшого розвитку підприємств-виробників на ринку FMCG та запорукою продовольчої безпеки в Україні. За час війни вітчизняний ритейл пройшов певні стадії виживання та розвитку, специфічно реагуючи на зовнішні виклики, використовуючи нестандартні підходи та рішення щодо їх подолання. Метою статті є визначення життєвої траєкторії ритейлу під час війни, систематизація підходів вітчизняних ритейлерів до адаптації й відновлення ділової активності. В процесі*



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*scientific methods, including theoretical generalization, systematization, and grouping; abstraction, analysis, and synthesis; statistical method; deduction and induction methods were used. The main challenges of retail in various spheres of activity were considered, and survival and recovery methods under heightened political risks were generalized. A life trajectory of the trading business in times of war has been constructed, encompassing four main stages driven by the dynamics and contradictions of changes in the trading business's external environment. Ways to overcome (reduce the negative impact) retail challenges in the conditions of martial law were systematized. It has been established that the key principles of survival and development for retail in the context of full-scale war in Ukraine are flexibility, maneuverability, adaptability, and the use of a situational approach to overcome unforeseen challenges. Systematizing the positive experience of restoring business activity in retail during times of war allows its direct application or adaptation for various market segments, industries, and individual enterprises in the dynamic nature of changes.*

*Keywords:* retail, retail challenges, life trajectory of trading business in times of war, adaptation, business activity recovery.

*дослідження використано загальнонаукові методи: теоретичного узагальнення, систематизації та групування; абстрагування, аналізу та синтезу; статистичний; дедукції та індукції. Розглянуто основні виклики ритейлу в різних площинах діяльності та узагальнено методи виживання й відновлення в умовах підвищених політичних ризиків. Побудовано життєву траєкторію торговельного бізнесу в умовах війни, яка містить чотири основних етапи, зумовлені динамікою та суперечностями змін зовнішнього середовища торговельного бізнесу. Систематизовано способи подолання (зниження негативного впливу) викликів ритейлу в умовах воєнного стану. Встановлено, що ключовими принципами виживання та розвитку ритейлу в умовах повномасштабної війни в Україні стали гнучкість, маневровість, адаптивність, використання ситуативного підходу для подолання неочікуваних викликів. Систематизація позитивного досвіду відновлення ділової активності ритейлу в умовах війни дає змогу прямо його використовувати або адаптувати для різних сегментів ринку, галузей та окремих підприємств у мінливих умовах.*

*Ключові слова:* ритейл, виклики ритейлу, життєва траєкторія торговельного бізнесу в умовах війни, адаптація, відновлення ділової активності

**JEL Classification:** D81; L81; M29.

## **Introduction**

It is difficult to define a more significant obstacle to the normal development of the economic system than war. In contrast to the traditional causes and factors causing crisis phenomena in the economy, war can generate a systemic crisis as a chain reaction of negative consequences affecting, if not all, then most spheres of social and economic life of society. Retail trade during the war became a kind of outpost of the national economy; it largely ensured its survival and played an extremely important social and economic role.

The full-scale war unleashed by Russia against Ukraine has become quite a test for domestic business. A number of adverse factors, exogenous and endogenous, simultaneously affected the system of business activities and caused severe and sometimes catastrophic consequences. This fully applies to retail, which is very sensitive to any crisis processes. The relevance of research on the mentioned subject is confirmed by the fact that retail trade has a critical impact on the socio-economic state of the country, creates

a resource for its development, and provides the most basic needs of the population.

The results of the analysis of the latest scientific publications showed that the issue of the impact of the war on business is very important and concerns various aspects of the activities of domestic enterprises. At the same time, the authors mostly focus on certain aspects of business activity as a whole, without focusing on specific areas or industries.

The advantages of using a process approach to management in general and the management of business processes of an enterprise in war conditions are revealed by Kotlyk A., & Gres G. (2022).

Vatchenko B. and Sharanov R. (2022) considered the theoretical, methodological and practical principles of anti-crisis management of an enterprise in war conditions. The authors defined the differences between a traditional crisis and a wartime crisis at the enterprise, characterized the main elements of the mechanism of anti-crisis management of the enterprise in the wartime period; four phases of the operation of the enterprise during the war are defined and the features of anti-crisis management in each of them are indicated.

Kostenko Yu. and Korolenko O. (2022) analyzed the factors of financial stability of enterprises under martial law and defined new criteria for its assessment. Neskorodeva I. and Yan Buyun (2022) focused on the analysis of the business environment in Ukraine during the war and post-war period, the assessment of the impact of threats to the recovery of entrepreneurial activity.

With regard to scientific research on the problems of Ukrainian retail during the war, individual issues are considered in the article by Pavlova V. (2022), which characterizes the state of activity of trade enterprises during the war, shows the dynamics of changes in March-May 2022, and analyzes changes in the product profile in the studied period.

The issue of retail development under the conditions of martial law in Ukraine in the context of modern threats and opportunities, strong and weak aspects of activity is considered in the work (Biliavska & Mykytenko, 2023). Modern retail trends are characterized from the point of view of consumer behavior research.

The research of Proskurnina N. (2018) deserves special attention, which examines the development of retail trade in the conditions of the dynamic nature of changes, which may well be adapted to the retail challenges associated with war.

Scientific work aimed at studying the conditions of retail operation during the war, factors of its adaptation and recovery, is still being formed. The continuation of martial law in Ukraine actualizes the need to research the stages of retail development, non-standard models, and methods of adaptation to new challenges, scaling and growth.

The aim of the article is to determine the life trajectory of retail during the war, to systematize the approaches of domestic retailers to adaptation and restoration of business activity.

During the study of the main problems and challenges of retail during the war, general scientific methods were used: theoretical generalization, grouping and systematization; abstraction – to highlight the most significant factors of stability of Ukrainian retail; analysis and synthesis – to build the life trajectory of retail; statistical method of collecting and processing information on the state and trends of retail trade in Ukraine during the martial law; deductions and inductions – to form the conclusions of scientific research.

A hypothesis is put forward about the existence of a specific life trajectory of retail during the war, which includes separate stages formed under the influence of relevant events and in response to them.

Scientific publications of domestic researchers, statistical data of the Association of Retailers of Ukraine, the State Statistics Service of Ukraine, and other open sources of information served as the information base of the study.

The main part of the article contains three subsections. In the first subsection, a study of the main challenges and problems of retail during the war was conducted; the most relevant business risks were systematized and grouped within five planes: asset ownership, logistics and supply, personnel, market conditions (industries), financial support, government regulation. The second is devoted to a comprehensive analysis of the external environment, which made it possible to build a model of the trajectory of the life cycle of retail during the war. In the third, the key factors of the stability of Ukrainian retail as a set of methods that contributed to its adaptation, restoration and development are highlighted.

### **1. The main challenges and problems of trade business during the war are a combination of external and internal processes**

Ukrainian retail has demonstrated considerable vitality, anti-crisis and adaptability to negative changes caused by military aggression on the part of Russia, restoring business activity. In this article, retail business activity is considered as a complex characteristic of the industry, associated with a wide range of efforts of companies in this field of activity aimed at survival, functioning and development in the conditions of dynamic changes in the external environment.

Analyzing the stage already passed, it is possible to highlight and systematize the main problems and challenges faced by retailers during the full-scale war (*Figure 1*).

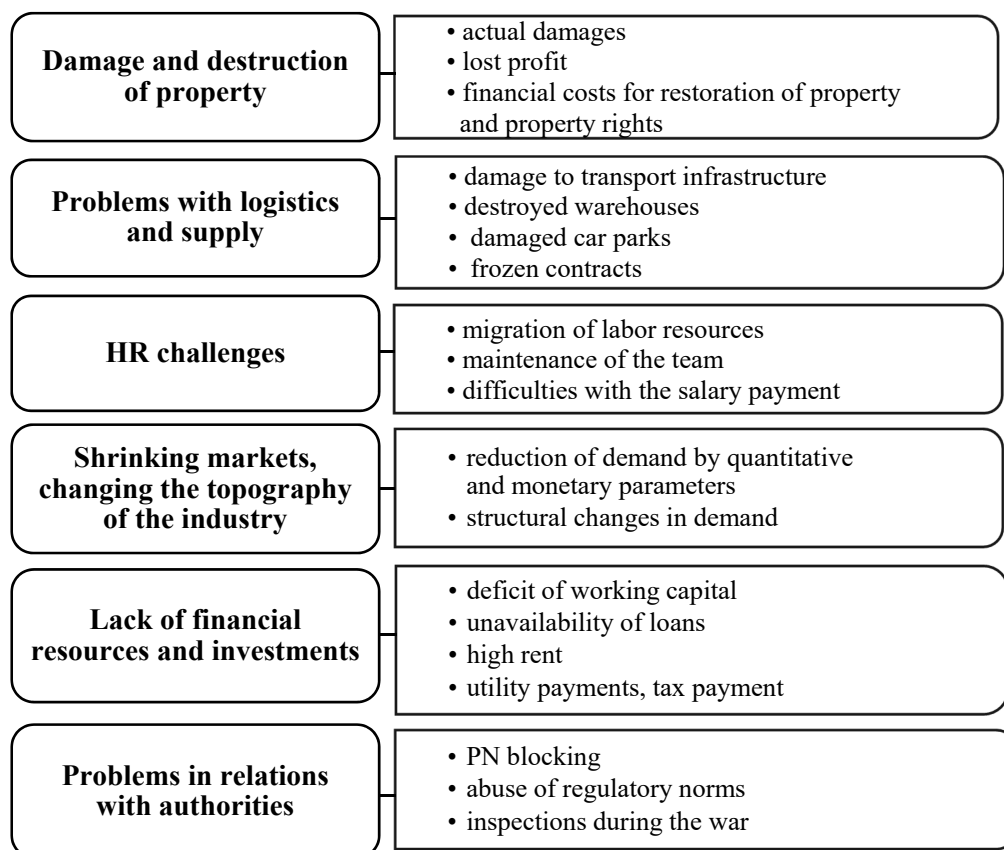


Figure 1. The main challenges of retail during the full-scale military aggression of Russia on the territory of Ukraine

Source: compiled by the authors based on (Yermakova, 2022a; Yermakova, 2022b; Vinokurov, 2023; How trade in Ukraine changed during the war, 2023; Kyiv School of Economics, 2023; Research on the state of business in Ukraine, 2023; Investment facilitation for development, 2021; State and needs of business in the conditions of war, 2023).

Thus, according to the data of the Association of Retailers of Ukraine (Yermakova, 2022a), during the first month of the war, the drop in the volume of retail sales reached a mark of 50 %, and the number of trade facilities that ceased their activities was 30%. In particular, 3.973 out of 13.674 stores did not work. The largest number of closed objects was observed: in the jewelry segment – 85 %; in fashion retail (clothing, footwear and fashion accessories sellers) 72 % of stores were forced to close; in the retail of household and digital appliances – 50 %; in non-food retail (building materials, cosmetics, and household goods) 30–35 % of trade facilities did not work.

The destruction of product supply chains has become a significant problem for Ukrainian retail. The lack of commodity resources makes trading itself impossible. The main logistical challenges faced by retailers include: refusal to stockpile, because when goods in warehouses increase, the volume of frozen finances increases and the risk of an attack and loss of assets increases; difficulties with the purchase of goods due to the limitation of the

range and circle of suppliers, the blocking of ports and the burden on the railway infrastructure; destruction of bridges and roadways; shortage of fuel.

An equally difficult challenge for retail trade was the personnel problem, which had a controversial nature. So, on the one hand, the decrease in the number of operating trade businesses and the loss of their solvency led to a significant reduction in personnel, on the other hand, due to significant external and internal migration of the population in the labor market of certain regions, the lack of qualified workers became noticeable. Thus, during the war, almost 20 % of Ukrainian retailers reduced their staff by more than 10 % (Yermakova, 2022b). The war led to the deformation of market institutions, including the labor market.

Among the mentioned, the most difficult to solve is the problem of a significant reduction of solvent demand in the domestic market. This situation leads to a decrease in the income of trade business entities, a decrease in the profitability of their activities, and financial and economic stability. The reasons for this situation were changes in the quantitative (population size) and qualitative (decrease in citizens' incomes) parameters of demand. This thesis is confirmed by the fact that the real population of Ukraine has decreased due to forced migration and temporary occupation of its territories. Thus, according to UNHCR data, about 4.9 million Ukrainian citizens received temporary protection status in European countries until January 3, 2023 (Vinokurov, 2023). Due to the increased level of unemployment (30 %) and the decrease in the level of wages, the incomes of the citizens who remained in the country also decreased significantly.

Separately, it is worth paying attention to the transformation of the trade landscape due to structural changes in demand. In the conditions of danger and saving money, the population rapidly changed its purchasing priorities, giving preference to goods and services that satisfy basic needs (food products, goods for life support and communication, etc.).

The result of the financial activity of most retail enterprises in the conditions of a full-scale war was losses. Thus, according to the Association of Retailers of Ukraine, the losses of large enterprises in the industry exceeded UAH 50 billion, real losses are much higher, since data on small network and non-network enterprises are not taken into account. About 60 % of the losses fall on food chains, at the same time, food trade recovers faster than other retail (How trade in Ukraine changed during the war, 2023). According to experts' calculations (Kyiv School of Economics, 2023), as of February 2023, the amount of losses caused by trade increased to USD 2.6 billion.

Retail companies, like the rest of domestic business, have very limited recovery opportunities due to a lack of funding. The criticality of the financing situation is confirmed by the results of a survey of entrepreneurs in various industries. The lack of financial resources in the country hinders

business recovery the most: customer insolvency (46.9 %), unavailability of credit funds (37.5 %) and equity. The average weighted need of business in additional financing as of June 2023 was USD 1. 052. 623 (Study of the State of Business in Ukraine, 2023).

The problem of confrontation between national trade networks, on the one hand, and manufacturers and suppliers of food products, on the other, due to payment terms for delivered goods, remains unresolved. The reduction of goods turnover in the conditions of war and the lack of working capital do not always allow prompt payment for deliveries. The retail sector operates under the conditions of regulatory restrictions on activity, in particular in terms of shortening the terms of payments for socially significant goods; the wartime government imposed a 10 % retail surcharge on basic products, such a surcharge does not cover all business costs.

The conditions of bank lending do not allow solving the liquidity crisis of trade business in modern conditions, because the cost of bank loans increased during the full-scale war, and the state support program by providing loans under the 5-7-9 program cannot overcome the problem.

The lack of funds within the country, the reduction of direct foreign investment in Ukraine in 2022 compared to 2021 by more than 80 % requires the search for other ways of financial support. The problem could be partially solved if Ukraine joined the initiative of investment facilitation for development (Investment facilitation for development, 2021), introduced within the framework of the WTO, the purpose of which is the adoption of the Agreement on the Simplification of Investment Procedures.

Thus, credit restrictions and investment freezes due to war risks became a significant obstacle to the development of business activities in the field of retail trade. However, companies that do not invest in development are guaranteed to lose market share.

A significant number of business owners during the martial law in Ukraine testify to the presence of problems related to the unpredictability of the state's actions, which impair the efficiency of operations. In particular, the risks associated with the tax and customs systems have increased significantly in the field of retail trade. One of the biggest obstacles that the state puts before business is the blocking of tax invoices in the VAT system, RACMS (the risk assessment criteria monitoring system) due to the criteria put forward by the state, and non-compliance with court decisions. Such actions of the tax service put enterprises that are counting on receiving a tax credit from VAT in even more difficult conditions. The policy regarding inspections by tax authorities is also inconsistent.

Eradication of corruption in Ukraine is a key economic priority. According to the survey of business representatives, 68.9 % of respondents believe that the government should first solve the task of eliminating

corruption; 48 % – to improve access to credit resources, 40.9 % – to carry out judicial reform. A significant part of business problems, the solution of which depends on the actions of the authorities, is in the area of reforms of the tax system, tax administration and tax audits of enterprises. The work of white businesses in Ukraine is also hindered by the inefficient activities of the State Customs Service (SCS), more than 50% of business representatives point to the need to restart the SCS, re-elect the manager at transparent competitions with the participation of international experts and re-certify employees, and implement a new customs IT system in order to minimize human factor (State and needs of business in the conditions of war, 2023). The state's inconsistency in determining the customs value of goods subject to duty and VAT and the long-term resolution of disputed issues negatively affect the activities of retail enterprises and relations with foreign trade partners. For the retail sector, the issue of transparency and efficiency of customs operations remains relevant, despite the reduction in foreign trade turnover, since the share of imported goods is high in the assortment in various segments of retail trade, except for food, which only for certain categories of goods has a critical dependence on imported supplies.

The general characteristics of the state of retail trade in Ukraine can be characterized by the results of monitoring the Retail Well-Being Index (RWBI), which takes into account such indicators as the attendance of shopping centers (shopping malls), the vacancy of spaces in shopping centers and the level of rental rates. In March 2022, this indicator was 16.7, while in December 2021 it was 39.9 (UCSC, 2023).

## **2. Life trajectory of trade business during the war**

Taking into account a number of key events that led to the mentioned problems and the corresponding business response to them, it is possible to hypothesize that retail went through certain stages of survival and development during the full-scale war. These stages can be defined as a specific life trajectory of a business during the war (*Figure 2*). Since general political and economic conditions of functioning have developed for all subjects of the domestic economy, it is natural that the stages of the life trajectory were the same for all of them. Although the response of individual businesses to relevant adverse events and conditions is somewhat different and depends, as a rule, on the established anti-crisis management system, flexibility and adaptability of the business model to external challenges.

To justify the validity of the proposed hypothesis, it is worth considering the characteristic features of each of the presented stages of the trajectory, the events that caused them, and the reaction of the trade business to them.



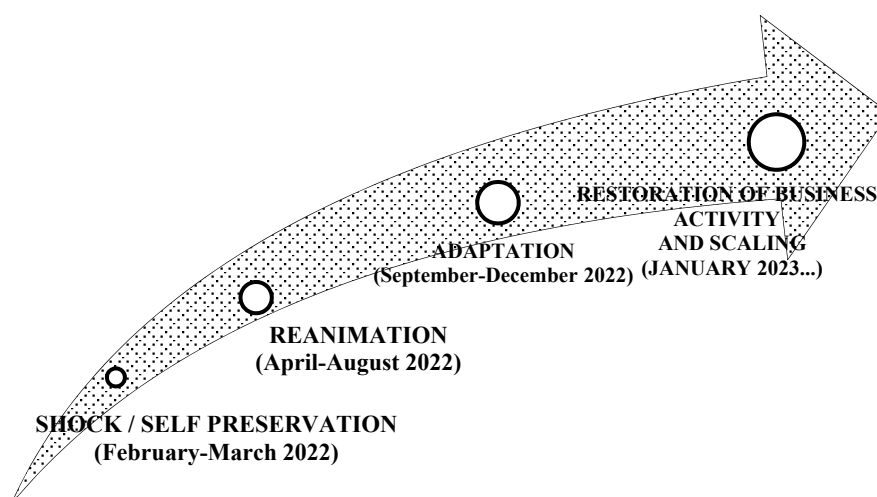


Figure 2. Life trajectory of domestic retail during the war

*Source:* compiled by the authors on the basis of (Kostenko, Korolenko, & Guz, 2022; State Statistics Service of Ukraine, 2021; UTG, 2023; Taranova, 2022; Business Support in Wartime, n.d.; Shvets, 2023; Osik, 2022; Gradus Research, 2022; Gordiychuk, 2022; Yermakova, 2023c; Analysis of markets in the YouControl system, n.d.) and own research.

The first stage can be defined as a "shock" (February-March 2022), and the response of retailers to it as a reaction of self-preservation. In the last two pre-war years (2020, 2021), Ukrainian retail was among the most profitable sectors of the Ukrainian economy. In total, retailers received more than UAH 430 billion in gross profits for the year (State Statistics Service of Ukraine, 2022). Retail turnover, which characterizes not only the volume of activity of retail enterprises, but is also an important marker of the economic activity of the population, after the COVID-19 pandemic, also showed an annual growth of 10–12% (State Statistics Service of Ukraine, 2021, 2022).

However, after the start of full-scale hostilities on February 24, 2022, everything changed dramatically. A significant number of retail trade companies lost their infrastructure facilities (distribution centers, warehouses, stores, etc.). Some facilities were damaged, some were closed due to danger to staff and customers, and in some areas it was not possible to organize supplies.

During the 25 days of hostilities, 3 973 or 29 % of trade facilities/stores were closed for one reason or another (Yermakova, 2022a) (*Table 1*).

According to the Ukrainian Trade Guild, 26 shopping centers were affected by the full-scale war: 8 were destroyed and 18 were partially damaged. The amount of direct losses reached USD 402 million (UTG, 2023).

Under such conditions, it was extremely difficult to continue working. However, most retail enterprises managed to rebuild and optimize their activities and continue to function in the new conditions.

*Table 1.*

Changes in the number of retail trade facilities in Ukraine  
at the beginning of the war

Segment	The total number of objects until February 24, 2022	Active objects as of 03/21/2022	Closed objects by state on 21.03.2022	Closed objects, %
Retail market	3329	2749	580	17
Food (mini-markets, supermarkets)	3796	3171	625	16
Pharmaceutics (pharmacies)	2652	1928	724	27
Non-food (household goods, household chemicals, cosmetics)	1313	194	1119	85
Jewelry	1363	1163	200	15
Car refueling (gas stations, gasoline, fuel)	554	272	282	51
Consumer Goods (household, digital appliances)	510	142	368	72
Fashion (clothes, shoes)	111	76	35	32
Building materials (building materials)	46	6	40	87
Entertainment Centers (RC, cinemas)	13675	9701	3974	29

*Source:* compiled by the authors based on (Yermakova, 2022a).

The second stage of the life trajectory of domestic retail during the war can be defined as "resuscitation" (April-August 2022). The main resuscitation measures that contributed to the support of retailers at this time: business relocation; financial support from the state; cost optimization; solving problems with personnel; adjustment of assortment; entering the international market.

So, relocation has become a significant support for many businesses and for retail in particular. During this period, state and non-state programs to support business relocation were launched. The task of such initiatives was to ensure the full recovery of businesses relocated from the Eastern and Southern regions of Ukraine to the territory of Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk and Ternopil regions, taking into account the establishment of channels for the supply of goods. In particular, a group of MTI companies: Intertop Ukraine LLC, Pandora, and Foxtrot trading company, which partially relocated to the territory of Lviv Oblast, have a history of relocation (Taranova, 2022).

Certain financial support from the state became an important means of survival in the first months of the war (Business support in war conditions). The main forms of state financial assistance have become:

- payments to enterprises in the amount of UAH 6 500 per month for each employed internal migrant;

- credit programs with the possibility of receiving up to UAH 60 million at zero interest during martial law;
- tax changes and adoption of the draft law "On Amendments to the Tax Code of Ukraine";
- access to grant funds for business.

Optimization of expenses by reviewing their structure, rejection of non-essential items, and improvement of business processes and development of online sales ensured the solvency of retail trade enterprises.

Regarding the personnel problem. Due to the departure of a significant number of management personnel abroad and the need to resolve security issues for those who remained in Ukraine, the issue of remote work organization of the offices of trading companies arose. Operational personnel, in turn, needed evacuation from the combat zone and moral and psychological support, and the families of employees who were in the ranks of the Armed Forces had to be supported materially as well. A high level of social responsibility, care for personnel and preservation of the team was demonstrated by the majority of system trading companies, in particular: the chain of stores "Brocard Ukraine", the EVA line of stores (TOV "RUSH"), "Foxtrot", "Epicenter C" and others (Shvets, 2023).

In addition to the above, the challenges of structural changes in demand forced retailers to adjust the product offer on the consumer market, which involved: changing the assortment, diversifying suppliers, and adjusting the price policy. All this made it possible to restore sales volumes and continue trading activities.

New opportunities to enter the international market also helped Ukrainian retail. Yes, even on the eve of the war, such domestic trading companies as: online retailer MakeUp took the risk of becoming international; Ukrainian online marketplace Rozetka.ua; Intertop is one of the largest operators of retail trade in the fashion segment in Ukraine (Osyk, 2022).

Thus, during the first six months of the war, Ukrainian retail demonstrated resilience to the challenges associated with a large-scale war and moved to the next stage of "adaptation" (September–December 2022). During this period, most national retailers resumed work, and retail trade was included in the TOP-10 areas of business activity during the war (2nd place). Business owners tried to keep their employees and the level of wages, looked for new sales markets, built new business relationships (Gradus Research, 2022).

A separate challenge during this period was the energy crisis associated with Russia's attacks on Ukraine's energy system. Therefore, retailers had to solve the issue of alternative energy supply. Thus, the largest Ukrainian grocery chain of supermarkets, ATB, allocated UAH 400 million for the purchase of diesel generators and Starlink terminals. Similar solutions were introduced by "Silpo" and other retailers (Gordiychuk, 2022). Thus, the

so-called "generator effect" was activated, which allowed the continuation of work and ensured the continuity of operational activities.

The next stage in the life trajectory of domestic retail during the war can be defined as "restoration of business activity and scaling." Signs of the recovery of business activity of economic entities in Ukraine appeared in the first months of the war, but this process began to acquire a systemic nature and features of scaling only at the beginning of 2023. The most important indicator demonstrating this trend is the development of trade turnover, which in January–March 2023, it was UAH 262 689 million, which is UAH 32 352.5 million (14 %) more than the similar figure in 2022 (State Statistics Service of Ukraine, n.d.).

After 14 months of the war, retail almost reached the pre-war state of operation, 16 265 of the 16 821 trade facilities of the entire industry were already working. The percentage of operating facilities was 97 %, respectively, closed – only 3 % (Yermakova, 2023c).

The intensification of business activity in the field of trade is also evidenced by the number of new registered businesses. According to the analytical system YouControl (Analysis of markets in the YouControl system), in the first half of 2023, 55 118 new entities were registered, the main type of economic activity of which is wholesale and retail trade.

### **3. Key factors of stability of Ukrainian retail**

In the conditions of mass emigration of employees and customers abroad, a decrease in purchasing power demand, interruptions in the supply of electricity, an increase in purchase prices, regulatory pressure, a lack of working capital and investments, overcoming the challenges of domestic retail was ensured by a set of measures applied in conditions of risk and uncertainty.

Due to real or potential damage (destruction) of property, there was a geographical redistribution of retail concentration in Ukraine. Many enterprises had to stop their activities, close individual trade facilities, relocate, and develop e-commerce. All management decisions were made in a very short time and mostly situationally, because not every company had a pre-developed plan of action in the most pessimistic conditions. In this area of challenges, an important issue is the possibility of compensation for economic losses due to the destruction and damage of property, loss of commodity assets, as well as lost profits by receiving reparations and compensations. However, the mechanism of compensation, which allows it to be provided in real terms, is still not working; collecting evidence and conducting court cases, can take many years. In such conditions, it is advisable to record the damage caused, collect evidence, carefully document

all damages in order to be ready to appeal to national and international courts for the protection of rights violated as a result of the war.

New realities since the pandemic restrictions forced traditional retailers to move in the direction of omnichannel sales and concentrate goods as close as possible to the end consumer, which made it possible to solve problems with logistics and supply in a short time. The war mostly caused import supply problems, and almost every company had to rebuild their supply chains. Mobility and flexibility, active networking made it possible to conclude direct contracts, use warehouses abroad instead of those lost during hostilities. One of the promising directions of retail development in the conditions of martial law are: development of own brands; access to international online sites; changing the product portfolio, including at the expense of internal suppliers; increasing the insurance stock of goods and using digital tools for effective interaction between the retailer and suppliers (experience of ATB company). Thus, a creative approach has become an advantage for solving a number of problems in this area.

Measures to overcome HR challenges and adapt to the new reality were the creation of safe working conditions; material and psychological support of employees and their families; provision of leave to preserve personnel, formation of a critical number of teams for work by booking conscripts; availability of option "B" with the possibility to sign documents instead of the manager. The experience of the OKKO Company, which attracted women drivers for the transportation of oil products and hired older people, is positive. At the beginning of the war, many retailers evacuated employees and their families, relocated with housing rental expenses covered.

The problem of shrinking markets and changing the terrain of the industry in wartime is partly solved by diversifying products, updating the assortment according to customer needs, and reviewing and changing marketing strategies such as price reductions, promotional offers, advertising and product promotion, etc.

In conditions of limited access to financing, the emphasis shifted to the issue of controlling operating costs, reducing them, and closing unprofitable areas of activity. Financial support for expenses during martial law is more focused on the use of internal resources; external financing is possible at the expense of grants from the government or international organizations, soft loans under special government programs.

Problems in relations with authorities are difficult for an individual company to manage. This is a matter of interaction between business (unions, associations) and state authorities. Reducing the negative impact of this factor is possible with professional legal support of the company.

The conducted study of retail challenges during the war made it possible to systematize the practical experience of companies and outline the main ways to overcome them (*Table 2*).

*Table 2*

Ways of overcoming (reducing the negative impact) challenges of retail in the conditions of martial law

The main challenges of retail during the war	Coping methods/actions aimed at reducing negative consequences
Damage and destruction of property	Business relocation
	Fixing the damage caused, documenting all damages, collecting evidence for receiving compensation in the future
Problems with logistics and supply	Development of omnichannel sales
	Concentration of goods closer to the final consumer
	Reduction and optimization of logistics chains
	Use of warehouses abroad
	Access to international online sites with own brands
	Development of own brands
	Diversification of the product portfolio
	Increasing the insurance stock of goods
	Use of digital tools in working with suppliers
HR challenges	Creation of safe working conditions
	Material and psychological support of employees and their families
	Evacuation of employees and their families, coverage of housing rental costs
	Recruitment of older people and women to the so-called "male" positions
	Reservation of conscript workers
	Development of mobility of managers and staff
Shrinking markets, changing the topography of the industry	Change in marketing strategy
	Product portfolio optimization
	Geographical diversification of activities within the country
	Expansion of international partnerships and sales markets
Lack of financial resources and investments	Reduction of costs, primarily permanent
	Optimization of business processes
	Attracting grants from the government or international organizations
	Obtaining preferential loans
	Closing unprofitable areas of activity

*Source:* Compiled by authors based on (State of Business in Ukraine Survey, 2023; UCSC, 2023; Gradus Research, 2022).

Thus, in the conditions of war, retail companies had to abandon standard approaches to management and organization of current activities. Situational or scenario approaches, principles of rapid response to changes in external operating conditions, as well as flexibility, adaptability, maneuverability, mobility, unity of all levels of management, critical thinking and creativity are the basis of planning of all parameters of the managed activity process.

### **Conclusions**

The crisis caused by the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation into Ukraine radically disrupted the stability of macro- and microeconomic systems, including the retail sector. The main challenges for retail trade were factors such as damage and destruction of property – in just one month of hostilities, Ukrainian retail lost a third of its trading facilities in most market segments; destruction of commodity supply chains and, as a result, limitation of the assortment of goods, reduction of suppliers, shortage of fuel materials; personnel problems due to the migration of workers and consumers, during the war, almost 20% of Ukrainian retailers reduced their staff by more than 10%; transformation of the terrain of trade activity due to structural changes in demand; sharp deterioration of the financial condition (losses of large enterprises in the industry exceeded UAH 50 billion) and lack of financial resources; the unpredictability of the state's actions, in particular, in terms of regulation of the tax and customs systems.

The research confirmed the hypothesis regarding the gradual recovery and development of retail as a life trajectory that was formed during the war. The life trajectory of retail includes stages that are characterized by a change in its state: "shock" (February–March 2022); "resuscitation" (April–August 2022); "adaptation" (September – December 2022); "revival of business activity and scaling".

The scientific novelty of the obtained results lies in the construction of the life trajectory of retail during the war, the identification and structuring of ways to overcome the challenges of retail in various planes.

The results of the analysis of the state of retail show that the business responded as quickly as possible to every challenge caused by the war, abandoning standard approaches to management and organization of activities. This response to changes in the external environment made it possible to pass the point of no return, adapt and resume business activity.

The practical significance of the research lies in the possibility of applying the obtained results to the recovery of work by other companies in crisis conditions.

In the future, it is planned to focus attention on researching the problems of retail development in the context of the active use of innovative technologies.

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