

Rethinking prices during an economic crisis: Calculation as a new mode of consumer behaviour in Russia

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Abstract

Using qualitative data, this study explores Russians' reactions to increases in consumer prices caused by the current economic crisis. The financial turbulence has reinforced doubts about the fairness of market prices and the overall legitimacy of the market order in Russia. Suspicion and cynicism about the State and seller behaviour become the main mode of price perception, encouraging proactive, calculating price behaviour. Respondents' narratives reveal that proactive price behaviour is considered to be a sign of social competence, financial independence, and high cognitive capacity. Proactive pricing behaviour allows consumers to use their purchasing power for resistance to market injustice and social insecurity and to increase personal chances for sustainability.

KEYWORDS

calculation, consumer creativity, consumer cynicism, consumer suspicion, economic crisis, price, pricing behaviour, proactive, Russia

1 | INTRODUCTION

In 2015, the consumer confidence index in Russia dropped dramatically (-32%), indicating a growing crisis in consumer trust.¹ However, despite pessimistic expectations, and severe restrictions in consumer choices today's indicators of protest potential due to economic deprivation have decreased to the lowest point since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Only 12% of Russians are ready to participate in protests regarding the economic problems.² As far as social resilience approached as collective phenomenon, neglecting individual dimension (Hall & Lamont, 2013, p. 13), this numbers point to civic apathy and oppression of Russian citizens. This study provides insights into individual discontent and argues that it would be premature to conclude that on the micro-level of everyday experience Russian citizens remained reluctant to protest and refuse to deal with market injustice caused by the crises of 2014–2016. Inter alia they are switching to more creative ways of coping with increases in prices. And it restores the attention of social resilience scholars to tactics and strategies which arise and get executed at the level of separate individuals and gives a key to the

prerequisites of social resilience in post-Communist societies with their long history of State paternalism and forced collectivism.

Scholars studying consumer activism tend to focus on consumer choices about producers and/or products, reflecting their lifestyle and beliefs (Izberk-Bilgin, 2010; Micheletti, 2003). Little attention has been paid to the prices per se. Meanwhile empirical studies of consumer markets indicate that prices have cultural and cognitive dimensions (Velthuis, 2003). They address the social identity of actors, mark various types of economic behaviour, mediate social relationships and sustain social boundaries (Wherry, 2008). All this provides grounds to argue that one aspect of consumer behaviour is what we call pricing behaviour as the totality of price choices, available for the given social actor, which depends on cognitive and semantic categories in which the actor evaluates the legitimacy and interprets the meanings of monetary value of market goods and services.

Flagrant violation of stability in consumer prices is experienced as an emergency since in a market economy rapid and unpredictable changes of prices wreak havoc and foretell demand and supply shocks that may jeopardize social integrity and political order (Kharas, 2011; McCormack, 2015). A price emergency problematizes the extent to which responsibility for the economic safety of the population rests with individuals, and may be attributed to the State (Fassin, 2009; Thompson, 1971).

¹Russian Federal State Statistics Service. URL: <http://www.gks.ru/>, accessed on December 19, 2016.

²Levada center <http://www.levada.ru/2016/09/16/protestnyj-potentsial-4/>

When established order of market prices is dismantled consumers shift from routinized 'intuitive' price perception ('acting sensibly') to a reflexive attitude to prices—'making sense' (Smith, 2011). This study is intended to demonstrate that rising reflexivity and activity of consumers within making decisions on market prices (including boycotting of speculative prices) leads to enhanced personal autonomy in a situation of economic and political turbulence.

2 | HISTORY OF POST-SOVIET RUSSIA AS A HISTORY OF CRISES

The history of the new Russia started with a price emergency³ and showed a whole series of crises. The collapse of the Soviet system and the beginning of the transition to a market economy in 1992 was accompanied by the liberalization of prices, which led to hyperinflation (in January 1992, the inflation rate was 2509%). The next crisis point occurred in 1998, when the government of the Russian Federation declared a technical default on the main types of government debt instruments. One more time, Russians suffered from a sharp increase in prices (the inflation rate reached 84%). Overall, the first years after the collapse of the Soviet Union were characterized by a high level of economic instability accompanied by critical welfare issues.

The economic situation improved during the next decade (1998–2008). Having recovered from the 1998 crisis, Russians entered the "golden age of consumption". During the 1998–2008 period, real incomes of Russians tripled, which successfully surpassed the 10% consumer inflation rate. Russian society transformed from the 'society of those who had enough food to eat' into the 'society of the well-dressed' (Krasilnikova, 2013). All these processes were interrupted by the 2008 crisis. However this time the decrease of incomes was modest (5% by August 2009 on the background of 12%–13% annual increase of real disposable income in previous years) and got eliminated by the end of year 2009 (Zubarevich, 2015).

In 2015, economic activity in Russia decreased sharply once again. The drastic ruble depreciation (in 2014, the ruble lost 60% of its value against the U.S. dollar), which started in 2014, continued in 2015 and pushed inflation to 16%. Average income per capita totaled RUB30,803 (approximately EUR 416) in 2016. As stated by the Federal Service of State Statistics, by the end of 2016 Russians' real disposable incomes decreased by 12,7% since October 2014 – the last period of real income growth. Thus, the current economic situation observed in Russia provides a vivid empirical case for clarifying the social meanings used by Russians to interpret the increase in consumer prices fueled by the economic crisis and to disclose how consumers in Russia cope with prices, and react to the new round of economic instability.

³The Soviet economy functioned with state-regulated prices for the vast majority of goods and services. Radical liberalization of consumer prices was introduced on January 2, 1992, and resulted in an inflation rate of 239.1% by the end of 1992. Russian Federal State Statistics Service. URL: http://www.gks.ru/wps/wcm/connect/rosstat_main/rosstat/en/figures/prices/, accessed on May 27, 2016.

3 | RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This article is based on data from 31 in-depth interviews (narrative and semi-structured) with economically active residents of Moscow (ages 18–65). Research geography imposed certain restrictions on the external validity of the findings. According to national statistics, the per-capita income of Moscow residents is almost two times higher than the per-capita income in Russia as a whole.⁴ This fact was taken into account in the interpretation of research results that do not claim to represent the situation in the Russian regions.

Data collection and analysis were carried out following the logic of grounded theory. The last provides a 'thick description' of the investigated social phenomenon and allows to discover explanatory hypotheses about its functioning (Charmaz, 2006). The findings obtained in this type of study are evaluated not so much by the criterion of validity and reliability (which are very difficult to meet in qualitative research; see, e.g., Hammersley, 1992) but by the legitimacy of the demand for the polysemy of the studied representations of the social life. The plurality of the representations of social reality achieved in such studies enriches the scholarly discussion with new explanative categories and creates new testing grounds for understanding fundamental social entities that is particularly important for those phenomena that, just like prices, are studied in an interdisciplinary manner.

In grounded theory, sample design involves the intention to ensure representativeness not of social groups but of the social meanings that are used by individuals to interpret events in the surrounding world. In this context, the size of the sample and its structure remain open at the beginning of the study (Guest, Arwen, & Johnson, 2006; Thomson, 2011). Moreover, scholars deliberately disengage from excessive theorizing when they enter the field fostering the emergence of explanatory categories from the data instead of forcing them (Dunne, 2014).

For selecting respondents, the theoretically driven snowball sampling technique was followed. For obtaining a saturated description and reducing the possibility of selection bias associated with snowball sampling, maximum heterogeneity was also ensured in other socio-demographic (gender, age, education, marital status, income level) characteristics of the respondents at the field stage of research.

The data were gathered from June to August 2015 and from January to March 2016. The interviews included two stages. In the first stage, the respondents were asked to speak about their personal sensitivity⁵ to the circumstances of the current crisis and to give details on any purchases made recently with a request to pay special attention to the process of making price-related purchasing decisions. In the

⁴Russian Federal State Statistics Service. URL: http://www.gks.ru/wps/wcm/connect/rosstat_main/rosstat/en/figures/prices/, accessed on May 27, 2016.

⁵In November 2015, the percentage of Russians who claimed to be affected by the economic crisis to some degree reached 75%; 31% of Russians were affected by the crisis to a large extent. Only 10% of the population considered themselves immune to the economic crisis. URL: <http://www.ranepa.ru/images/docs/monitoring/ek-monitoring/monitoring-march-2016.pdf>, accessed on May 27, 2016.

second stage, the respondents were asked questions from different thematic clusters (interpretation of the observed increase in prices, assessment of its validity, their strategies for optimizing prices and their understanding of the consequences of the economic crisis for the future). On average, the interviews lasted for 55 min. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. A total of 430 pages of text were analysed. The narratives were then analysed in the form of open, axial and categorical coding using WEFT QDA software.

4 | EMPIRICAL RESULTS

'To Not Be Deceived...'

When the inflation rate remains at an acceptable and habitual level, prices become routinized, and customers evaluate the prices in relation to available income rather than the political and institutional framework of the national economy. General instability reinforces doubts about the legitimacy of both the market order and political regime that maintains it.

Without any prodding within the interviews, the respondents voice the problem of high inflation, rising consumer prices, and 'market mayhem' within the current crises. Suspicion becomes the mode of price perception. One of the most notable semantic categories in the narratives of the in-depth interviews is the category of deception. Growing grievances lead to the dissolution of routinized social order and trigger changes in valuation.

Narratives indicate that disappointment and resentment constitute the emotional disposition of the current crisis. Disappointment results from ruined ideas linked to consistent patterns of life during the pre-crisis period, and to the change from an enjoyable life to "survival" as a primary life concern. The respondents see the collapse of the ruble, the Russian national currency, as causing the rising prices and a radical decrease in their purchasing power. Global prices have not changed, while their ruble equivalents have grown. In this sense, the respondents feel disadvantaged in their own position compared with the situation in other countries: 'O Lord, how rogue we have become!' This conviction is clearly revealed in contrast to the perception of the 'ordered' and 'fair' prices in Europe.

The narratives of Moscow residents voice recollections of the Soviet past with its planned economy, in which the prices of goods, as the respondents remember, did not change for decades. Respondents admit that consumers were also deceived in the Soviet Union but insist that the general repressive atmosphere and total state control did not leave room for blatant manifestations of deception. Today the respondents are dissatisfied with the authorities' 'declarative' attempts to control prices during the economic crisis. For example, the increase in gasoline prices against the background of falling oil prices in this oil-producing country is perceived by consumers as a sign that the government is trying to compensate for failed political decisions by putting increased pressure on the population.

They long for the days of stability, for the system of institutions that restrained sellers' opportunism, although this feeling looks more like nostalgia.

Another reason for consumer suspicion is distrust of seller behaviour. The respondents compare prices in different cities, in different stores (off-line and online), discuss the prices for similar product categories, and discover wide variations. They consider prices to be detached from any objective grounds and explain them with market manipulations. Economic and geopolitical instability only exacerbates the suspicion that 'the stores are simply using the current mess with prices and are trying to cash in on people'.

Consumers seem to be constantly on guard waiting for the next 'price maneuver'. A particularly acute consumer reaction is caused by the rise in prices, when justification sounds false, such as the rising prices for local goods, which the stores explain by the changing exchange rate, or a very sharp change in prices, which occurs in full view of consumers and is disproportionate to the increase in the exchange rate. Consumers feel frustrated confronting changes in prices for goods that were produced long before the economic crisis, since the production date can easily be seen from the manufacturing and expiration dates.

Another group of situations customers categorize as an attempt of deception are the cases when the price proposed by the seller does not correspond to the quality of the goods offered for sale. The tension in the relationship between the price and the quality of goods is taken into account by consumers. Faced with the purchase of really poor-quality goods (expired, flawed, not meeting quality standards promised by the manufacturer) or low-quality goods, the prices of which do not make it possible to judge the low quality in advance, consumers feel perplexed and believe that price noise and confusion are a trick of the seller. They easily 'uncover' the seller's motivation. Following a cognitive stereotype, typical of the Russian day-to-day situation, according to which the seller (as a generic agent) serves as the offender of a 'fair' exchange, consumers consider that 'profit at any price' is the merchant's priority. Responsible for setting the ultimate price, the seller becomes the object of criticism even if she is not involved in changes in pricing policy. A clouded and sometimes even plainly wrong idea of how the pricing mechanism works (Bolton, Warlop, & Alba, 2003) only adds confidence in the guilt of the sellers.

In addition to budgetary constraints, consumer price behaviour is directed by consumers' desire to avoid asymmetry with the seller in terms of market competence, that is, to not be deceived. As one of the respondents expresses it: 'There are becoming fewer and fewer fools in this country' (Sergey, 55 y.o., middle income).

I know that I will be deceived both at the market and in a tent [small shop] near my home. But at the market being cheated by 100 grams will be at the price of 100 rubles per kilogram of apples, and in the tent at the price of 300 rubles per kilogram. So, I'd rather go to the market. (Galina, 53 y.o., middle income).

Thus, the grains of pricing behaviour that may be defined as proactive (Crant, 2000), emerge at the level of empirical data. The culture of

suspicion and cynicism regarding market prices and sellers' price-setting decisions forces some Moscow residents to become more calculating. Cynicism is a 'powerful critical tool' (Odou & Pechpeyrou, 2011), encouraging everyday consumer creativity. A hunt for market prices is implemented in order to 'beat the system' and to restore justice.

5 | CALCULATION AND PRUDENCE AS NEW MODES OF PRICE BEHAVIOUR

A comparison of the narratives of respondents who faced the impacts of the economic crisis on their wealth in varying degrees showed that the members of low-income groups were more inclined to take a passive stand on changing prices ('we complain; what else can we do?'), while respondents whose incomes dropped during the economic crisis but were still considered sufficient tried to find active ways of coping with the new situation.

The *status quo* of a crisis price is being challenged in the perception of these 'ready to change' consumers. Such consumers start to look for opportunities for resistance. The analysis of the narratives shows that price monitoring is based on the consumers' convictions and not simply on the financial constraints or the desire to keep up with the targeted budget. As one respondent stated, 'I am aware that we just paid 80 euros for a dinner in the restaurant, but when my friend buys peaches for 12 euros per kilogram, something dies inside of me.' (Kristina, 25 y.o., middle income).

Thus, the respondents conceptualize proactive pricing behaviour as a sign of social competence, financial independence, and high cognitive capacities. The formula 'a sucker would buy expensive food in a bad place, while a smart person would find where it is cheaper' develops as a new maxim of consumer behaviour. The imperative of prudence is set against two norms of price behaviour widely distributed in Russia in the 1990s. The first norm prescribed striving for conspicuous consumption with excessive prices, while the second mandated the motive of economic austerity, natural for the period when the general population did not have enough money to buy goods (Barsukova, 1998).

Since today all groups function in the mode of budget cuts, it is essential to detach the situation of forced economizing triggered by budgetary constraints from price reflexivity. According to the data, this distinction can be reduced to the opposition of *total economizing* that prescribes economizing wherever possible, and *selective economizing*, when individuals rely on clear ideas of how one may reduce financial costs without losing quality of life. The first refers to the impact the crisis has in terms of resources while the latter - in terms of beliefs (Koos, 2017). Whereas *total economizing* is justified by the lack of money or negative personality traits (like greediness), *selective economizing* is justified by the idea of wilful, information-based consumer decisions:

She [friend] bought the cheapest baby crib. I asked her, did she not feel bad saving on the child? And she replied that they would in no way save on the child. But she read a bunch of articles and books, and having asked for a bunch of reviews

and having analyzed everything, she understood the differences between the cribs. All of these differences can be made with your own hands. The main thing is that the frame should be normal. (Anna, 27 y.o., middle income)

In the new economic situation, the capacity for maintaining the habitual level of consumption, its standards and variety, is perceived as a new indicator of prosperity. While in stable periods consumers problematize the reliability of the link between the price and quality of selected goods, in the current crisis 'to afford to think about quality as such' becomes a specific form of luxury. Assessing the main changes in price behaviour these days, the respondents articulate that the current economic crisis forced the transition from making everyday purchases without paying attention to prices to careful calculating prices ('go through the store and analyze').

The benchmark points used by the different respondents for evaluating the changes in their pricing behaviour are not the same. A comparison of the narratives by respondents of different ages showed that the representatives of the older age groups (over 50 y. o.) assess the current conditions by comparing them with the Soviet period ('when prices only fell') and with the experience of surviving the 1998 and 2008 crises. The previous experience of overcoming the economic crises makes their assessment more life-affirming. At the same time, respondents who gained their economic independence during the economic growth of the Russian economy in 2000–2008 perceive the current crisis as an acute painful fracture in their planned life trajectory.

More acute price sensitivity in a crisis triggers a series of optimization strategies. Moscow residents are beginning to engage personally in retail audits of prices. The practice of comparing the value of the same goods in the outlets of different retail chains has emerged. The need for efficient management of resources forces demand for calculative tools and devices (Callon & Muniesa, 2005; Karpik, 2010). Discount stores, loyalty programs, price bonuses and sales also become included in the monitoring scope as opposed to the pre-crisis period. Specialized mobile applications that allow users to carry out comparative price analysis, to track promotions and discount programs in a variety of stores, as well as keep records of cash expenses, are in demand in this context.⁶ The use of these applications is a new fashionable trend. Following it becomes a form of 'self-upgrading'.

Profane price monitoring often results in diversification of purchases: 'the same food set but in different stores'. Sometimes, it may mean rationalization of purchases according to a time scale:

'Before, I would buy tomatoes in a premium store near my home, but now I wait until the weekend, when I can make a trip to the market.' (Peter, 51 y.o., high income)

⁶Such applications include *Edadil* ('Knows everything about discounts and promotions on groceries'), *Multi-toplivo* (prices at gas stations), *Legkie pokupki!* ('Easy shopping!'—calculation of discounts in stores), *SnapUP* ('Save and track the products you love'), *Finansovyi schyotchik* ('Financial counter;'), *Goodbudget*, *EasyCost*, *m8—my money*, *My way*, *Money—Emoticon*, *Money Care*, *Daily Budget*, *Moni*, etc.

Thus, the search for the 'best' price in the current economic turbulence turns out to be a kind of game for adults with elements of excitement (Cochoy, 2015) and they become 'creative manipulators of the symbolic meanings of price' (Campbell, 2005). On the whole, the creativity of strategic improvisation with prices is a response to frustration and an attempt to re-establish habits (Dalton, 2004).

A noticeable trend is the return of even wealthy Muscovites to outdoor markets. Prices here may be lower than the store price by two to three times. Respondents attribute the relatively low prices at outdoor markets to their orientation toward a quick turnover of goods and their willingness to sacrifice the degree of price markup. Moreover, outdoor markets are a distribution channel for sanctioned products that are illegally imported into Russia. Markets not only give access to French Camembert cheese (instead of Russian-made) but also make it possible to express subjective disapproval of the import embargo imposed by the Russian government in 2014.⁷

Another practice that is gaining ground during the economic crisis is joint bulk purchasing. This may be a private decision of several households or horizontal cooperation taking institutionalized forms as specialized website portals and forums, on which consumers agree to purchase items together. Due to bulk purchasing and smaller trading margins for suppliers who are part of the emerging online community, goods become more affordable compared with traditional stores.

Crises contribute to rethinking the quality standards of various goods. As the interview data show, the attitude toward giving up overpaying for prestigious consumption was pertinent for all goods that surfaced during the discussion. Against the background of the stigmatization of 'mindless spending,' luxury goods purchases are declared to experience significant declines. Respondents from more affluent groups monitor store sales of higher-priced brands and buy shoes and clothing in stores for future use ('eight bags at once').

Redefining attitudes toward the attractiveness of the original product as opposed to the counterfeit may be behind the purchase at a lower price. When the counterfeited product looks only slightly different from the branded product, as, for example, in the instant coffee market in Russia, consumers make a choice in favour of lower prices, easing their demands for content and finding justification for the difference in taste ('I can't tell the difference whether it's a fake or just another crop of coffee, so why pay more?'). And there is a big difference compared with the substitution of cheaper pork for beef consumption, which is perceived as a concession in favour of a less healthy lifestyle.

Inasmuch as purchasing for a more reasonable price is always fraught with the danger of compromising on quality, the freedom of price choice is different for different categories of consumers. Thus, the narratives of the respondents with children reveal their desire to

maintain high-quality standards for purchased children's products by all means possible. Parents are willing to sacrifice their own consumption to the greatest possible extent in favour of their children.⁸ These effects become noticeable in the data when the attitudes of the respondents with children are compared with the attitudes of the child-free respondents. Associating success in times of crisis with individual resourcefulness in terms of optimizing the prices of purchased goods, the latter are clearly aware that their lack of children gives them some advantage.

The narratives manifest the idea that the current economic crisis is an important school of life, a driver of personal growth. The respondents stigmatize the Soviet past with its external locus of personal control, and the early post-Soviet past with its consumer boom and the value of wasting money as a criterion of life success. The economic crisis has promoted price calculation ('wise spending,' 'to buy cheaper, not to buy because it is cheap'), as well as an ability to enjoy it. 'Reasonable' pricing behaviour is contrasted with the formerly habitual 'relaxed life.' Today, for more affluent groups economizing becomes a subjectively satisfying choice: the 'fashion to economize.' According to the interview data, this mindset may be the basis for an entirely different, 'mature' type of economic behaviour in the future.

According to the interviews, the current crisis is teaching Russians another, 'European' way of thinking. This concept emerges from the data and refers to the development of skills for more responsible behaviour in all areas. This calculative stance contributes to the expansion of personal responsibility regarding consumer competence to govern expenditures, replacing economic apathy and helplessness with sensible accounting. In this sense, it may be assumed that the development of proactive price behaviour at the individual level may contribute to the mechanisms that lie behind social resilience. The capacity to organize one's own costs more creatively and to compensate material discomfort with psychological satisfaction due to one's own resourcefulness and an increased level of self-control may expand the repertoire of anti-vulnerability strategies, such as relying on the domestic economy and social networks, inter-family transfers and the sharing economy, or heading for the shadow economy and cutting back consumption.

The findings of the qualitative research described in the article require further validation. Thus far, they can be triangulated through the data of large-scale representative surveys conducted in Russia today. These surveys confirm that this study tackled the main trends correctly. For example, in the first quarter of 2016, the Sberbank of the Russian Federation carried out the latest wave of the 'Ivanov'⁹ Consumer Confidence Tracker, which shows the state of consumer sentiment among middle-class Russians. The nationwide sample showed that 76% of 'Ivanovs' are sensitive to price levels. The percentage of those who at the time of the survey switched to buying cheaper goods reached 70%. The percentage of Russians who want to save money by purchasing food at a discount, more often, and in larger volumes, increased from 50% in the second quarter of 2015 to 60% in the first

⁷The embargo banned import of meat, milk, fish, vegetables, fruit and nuts from countries including the United States, EU, Australia, Canada, Norway, Iceland and Turkey to Russia.

⁸According to Euromonitor International, baby- and child-specific products is the only market that show retail growth (on 22%), reaching a volume of 20.2 billion rubles in 2015.

⁹The surname 'Ivanov' is chosen to represent the most common Russian family name. The Ivanovs represent middle-class Russia.

quarter of 2016. The percentage of customers who go to stores only to buy goods at discounted prices continues to increase (40% in the second quarter of 2015, 44% in the third quarter of 2015 and 44% in the fourth quarter of 2015).

The micro-data makes it possible to identify the meanings behind these behavioural tendencies, and the changes in the cognitive foundations of price behaviour which are developing during the economic crisis. These changes are hardly uniform. Some groups confronted with poverty risks, look for ways to cope with the need for total economizing. At the same time there are those who have felt the economic crisis to the full but still have some resources to maintain the usual consumer standards, is cherishing the grains of a new model of consumer behaviour. These Russian consumers are driven to reflexivity, calculability, and cynicism (Helm, Moulard, & Richins, 2015).

6 | CONCLUSIONS

Using the example of the economic crisis in Russia that has been escalating since 2014, this article has shed light on how consumers cope with price emergencies: the growth in and increased volatility of consumer prices. The analysis emphasizes that the clash with budgetary constraints and the need to calculate one's price behaviour is not resolved mechanically. Skepticism and suspicion become the main frame for price perception during the economic crisis.

Qualitative data reveals that the change in the scope of price behaviour is attributed by the respondents to the current crisis. On the one hand, this helps people overcome the consumer values of the post-Soviet period, equating the ability to buy regardless of prices and social success. On the other hand, it motivates Russian consumers to be more rational and responsible than before.

If in response to the 1998 crisis, Russians returned to the collectivist strategies of survival familiar from the Soviet period (Shevchenko, 2008), the data from the present study correspond to the results of studies indicating that today post-Communists are individualized similarly to people living in Western societies (Swader, 2013). Socially successful Russians have well learned 'the ethics of the isolated individual', and individualism is regarded as a basic strategy for life in Russia just as still recently in neoliberal countries (Grinberg, 2013). The pro-social effects of the current economic crisis in Russia are weak. Despite dissatisfaction with the current economic situation, there is a lack of seeds for an organized social movement in Russia as during the late Soviet period (Hilton & Mazurek, 2007). The current crisis instead became a trigger for changes at the micro-level, where every consumer, often by force but increasingly by free will, began to change her consumer behavior toward greater frugality. It seems to have triggered an adaptability of the Russians, who were not prepared for a crisis, but had the willingness to respond (Stark, 2014). This study, thus, provides important insights into how post-Soviet Russians, under conditions of mistrust in the state and the market create a specific form of social resilience in times of economic crisis.

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