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received: 10.07.2019  
acceptance: 09.08.2019  
published: 20.09.2019

Annals PAAAE • 2019 • Vol. XXI • No. (3)

JEL codes: Q11, Q13, E31

DOI: 10.5604/01.3001.0013.3516

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## PRICE COMPETITIVENESS OF SELECTED FOOD PRODUCTS AND CATERING SERVICES – THE CASE OF POLAND AND LITHUANIA

Key words: price, competitiveness, food products, catering services

**ABSTRACT.** The aim of the study is to compare price competitiveness in Poland and Lithuania based on selected food products and catering services. Special attention was paid to selected parameters characterizing both countries and retail prices of products available under specific brands in selected retail outlets. Secondary and primary studies were carried out for the purpose of the research. Empirical research in the field of price competitiveness of selected food products and catering services was carried out in Poland and Lithuania in May and June of the current year. As a hypermarket, Carrefour was selected in Poland, while in Lithuania – Maxima, and as a supermarket, Carrefour Express (Poland) and IKI (Lithuania). The selection of these stores was made on the basis of retail trade reports in Poland and Lithuania presenting the largest retail chains. Based on our research, it can be pointed out that the products available on the Polish market were mostly characterized by lower prices compared to products present on the Lithuanian market. This indicates their greater price competitiveness.

### INTRODUCTION

Price is an important element of competitive competition on the food market. This is due to its perception in two areas. In the first approach, price is analyzed from the point of view of the producer and business activity [Garbarski et al. 2006, Michalski 2004], including the perspective of achieving and maintaining gained competitive advantage [Górska-Warsewicz 2013]. The second approach refers to the consumer perspective in the context of cost associated with the purchase of a specific product or service [Karasiwicz 1997, Jeznach 2007]. However, in the modern food market, price should not only be analyzed through the prism of internal and external business conditions related to competitive competition. Consumer perception and the treatment of price as a communication message are important issues. Price should be analyzed as a parameter of quality, prestige and belonging to a specific socio-economic group [Górska-Warsewicz 2004,

2005]. Consumer perception of price is part of the definition of competitiveness, saying that it is “a lasting ability to design, produce and sell products (services) whose prices, quality and other values are more attractive than relevant products (services) offered by domestic and foreign competitors” [Kisiel 2005, p. 15]. In this context, it is also important to define competitiveness, which “means both the ability of companies, industries, regions, nations or supranational groupings to meet international competition, as well as provide a relatively high rate of return on input used and relatively high employment on a sustainable basis” [Stankiewicz 2005, p. 36].

The aim of the study is to compare price competitiveness in Poland and Lithuania based on selected food products and catering services. Special attention was paid to selected parameters characterizing both countries, average retail prices and prices of products available under specific brands in selected retail outlets. The choice of Lithuania for price comparisons is determined by geographical location and accession to the European Union, at the same time.

## RESEARCH MATERIAL AND METHODS

Secondary and primary studies were carried out for the purpose of the research. The scope of secondary research concerned the analysis of basic indicators for Poland and Lithuania, including area and population size, population density, percentage of the economically active population, indices of average gross nominal and real wages and salaries, price indices of consumer goods and services, Gross Domestic Product, as well as data on export and import. The material was statistical data available in statistical yearbooks issued by the Central Statistical Office in Poland and the statistical portal published by the Lithuanian Statistics Institute.

Empirical research in the field of price competitiveness of selected food products and catering services was carried out in Poland and Lithuania in May and June of the current year. As a hypermarket, in Poland, Carrefour was selected, while in Lithuania – Maxima, and, as a supermarket, Carrefour Express (Poland) and IKI (Lithuania). The selection of these stores was made on the basis of retail trade reports in Poland and Lithuania presenting the largest retail chains. Two food products (yoghurts and milk chocolate), characterized by the occurrence of international and local brands, were selected for analysis. Due to the different size of yoghurt and chocolate packaging available under different brands, the retail price for 1 packaging and the price per 1 kg of product was presented. Prices in Lithuania are given in Euro, while prices in Poland are converted into Euro at the National Bank of Poland exchange rate (1 EUR = 4.2583 PLN, exchange rate from 1.07.2019). The analysis of price competitiveness of food services in Poland and Lithuania concerned selected restaurants and cafes. In both cases, network and non-network enterprises were selected. Regional and international dishes were included.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

## POLAND AND LITHUANIA – A COMPARISON

Poland and Lithuania are Baltic States, belonging to the European Union since May 1, 2004. Poland is a larger country in terms of area (312.7 thousand km<sup>2</sup>, compared to 65.3 thousand km<sup>2</sup> for Lithuania), population (38.2 million people vs. 2.9 million people in Lithuania) with a higher population density (122 people per 1 km<sup>2</sup> compared to 44 people per 1 km<sup>2</sup> in Lithuania). The percentage of the economically active population calculated in relation to the total number of employees in Poland in 2008 was 45.2%, in Lithuania it was 50.4%. The analogous indicator only calculated for persons over 15 was at a level of 56.4% and 60.6%, respectively. The minimum wage in Lithuania is higher than in Poland, a higher value for Lithuania was also observed in the case of indices of average gross nominal and real wages and salaries, price indices of consumer goods and services as well as indices of gross domestic product in constant prices (Table 1).

Table 1. Selected macroeconomic features – Poland vs Lithuania

Specification		Poland	Lithuania
Indices of average gross nominal wages and salaries:	previous year = 100	106.4	107.6
	2010 = 100	124.9	138.5
Indices of average gross real wages and salaries	previous year = 100	104.3	103.8
	2010 = 100	113.9	123.0
Gross monthly minimum wages and salaries [EUR]		380	453
Price indices of consumer goods and services	previous year = 100	102.1	103.9
	2010 = 100	109.6	112.6
Export	mln USD	230,792	29,919
	per capita	6,046	10,352
	% in world export	1.4	0,2
Import	mln USD	230,410	32,537
	per capita	6,036	11,257
	% in world import	1.3	0.2
Gross Domestic Product (current prices)	bln USD	524	47
	per capita in USD	13,650	16,713
Gross Domestic Product at purchasing power parity per capita (current prices) in international dollars		29,026	32,092
Indices of Gross Domestic Product (constant prices)	previous year = 100	104.8	104.1
	2010 = 100 (total)	125.3	128.3
	2010 = 100 (per capita)	125.8	138.7

Source: [GUS 2018]

## PRICE COMPETITIVENESS OF SELECTED FOOD PRODUCTS – POLAND VS LITHUANIA

Retail trade in Poland and Lithuania is characterized by the share of large retail chains. An additional aspect are ongoing consolidation processes. This is a consequence of retail chain consolidation, on the one hand, and the diversification of retail formats on the other. In addition to large hypermarkets, smaller formats are growing dynamically. The number of retail enterprises in Poland, at the end of 2017, was 284,286, including enterprises with 11 to 20 stores, 700, 21-50 stores: 315 and more than 51 stores – 174 enterprises [GUS 2018]. In Lithuania, the situation is similar, the largest retail chain Maxima Grupe has over a 40% share in the structure of retail trade.

A comparison of retail prices of natural yoghurts in Poland and Lithuania indicates lower prices in Poland, which should be explained as greater price competitiveness. This may result from the fact that the assortment is more diverse and the market offer is more developed. On the Polish market, in addition to natural yoghurts, there are also low-calorie yoghurts or those with a fat content of 0%, yoghurts with an increased protein content, organic yoghurt or lactose-free yoghurts. This indicates a different stage in the development of the yoghurt market in Lithuania compared to the Polish market, diversity of available brands and what is also important, a larger number of producers, which determines price competition.

The average price of milk chocolate in Lithuania was at a higher level than in Poland. For example, chocolate prices available under international brands in a hypermarket in Lithuania were by 21% (Milka) – 53% (Schogoten) higher compared to Poland. In the case of chocolates available under national brands (Wedel, Wawel, Vilnus, Laima), significant price differences were also recorded. This indicates the price competitiveness of chocolates available on the Polish market under international and domestic brands (Table 3).

Table 2. Natural yoghurt prices – Poland vs Lithuania

Poland				Lithuania			
Brand	packaging [g]	price [EUR per packaging]	price per 1 kg	Brand	packaging [g]	price [EUR per packaging]	price per 1 kg
Average retail prices*							
Average	150	0.31	2.08	Average	500	1.08	2.19
Supermarket**							
Mleczny przystanek	150	0.21	1.39	Vilkysky	200	0.65	3.25
Bakoma	150	0.33	2.18	Rokisio	200	0.65	3.25
Danone Activia	180	0.51	2.86	Pasaka	200	0.93	4.65
Danone mild	165	0.47	2.83				
Zott	180	0.34	1.89				
Danone	140	0.34	2.43				

Table 2. Cont.

Poland				Lithuania			
Brand	packaging [g]	price [EUR per packaging]	price per 1 kg	Brand	packaging [g]	price [EUR per packaging]	price per 1 kg
Hypermarket**							
Bieluch	180	0.28	1.55	Vilkysky	200	0.59	2.95
Bakoma	150	0.29	1.96	Alma	200	0.79	3.95
Łowicz	200	0.30	1.51	Amfora	200	0.79	3.95
Piątnica	150	0.30	2.02	Mniam	125	0.69	5.52
Bieluch light	180	0.30	1.68				
Sokulski fat 0%	180	0.37	2.07				
Danone Activia	180	0.42	2.34				
Danone mild	165	0.42	2.55				
Bakoma high protein	180	0.51	2.86				
Ekolukta	180	0.70	3.90				
Zott natural	180	0.32	1.76				
Zott Primo	150	0.42	2.80				
Bakoma fat 0%	170	0.47	2.75				
Głubczyce	150	0.16	1.08				
Piątnica	170	0.30	1.78				
Danone	140	0.40	2.83				
BioPiątnica	140	0.42	3.00				
Zott lactose free	180	0.36	2.02				
BioCarrefour	4 x 125	1.17	2.34				
Mleczny przystanek	150	0.21	1.39				
Bakoma fat 0%	170	0.47	2.75				

Hypermarket: in Poland – Carrefour, in Lithuania – Maxima, supermarket: in Poland – Carrefour Express, in Lithuania – IKI; 1 EUR = 4.2583 PLN (exchange rate from 1.07.2019)

Source: [GUS 2018, MPK 2019] and \*\* own study

Summing up this part of the analysis, the greater price competitiveness of products available on the Polish market is worth noting. This statement, in relation to balance and statistical data, is confirmed by studies cited in the literature [Judzińska 2016].

Table 3. Milk chocolate prices – Poland vs Lithuania

Poland				Lithuania			
Brand	packa- ging [g]	price [EUR per packaging]	price per 1 kg	Brand	packa- ging [g]	price [EUR per packaging]	price per 1 kg
Average retail prices*							
Average	100	0.86	8.59	Average	100	1.05	10.50
Hypermarket							
Chocolate Place	100	0,51	5.14	Schogoten	100	1.29	12.90
Milka	100	0.94	9.37	Laima	100	1.89	18.90
Wedel	100	0.74	7.40	Taitau	100	0.89	8.90
Goplana	90	0.96	10.67	Roschen	100	0.98	9.80
Wawel	100	0.68	6.79	Milka	100	1.13	11.30
Schogoten	100	0.84	8.43	Choc-in	100	1.08	10.80
Chocola!	100	0.82	8.20	Pergale	100	1.05	10.50
Belgian	100	1.78	17.82	Karuna	100	1.19	11.90
Lindt	100	2.06	20.64	Ruta	100	1.79	17.90
Millano	100	1.17	11.72	MioDelizzi	100	0.53	5.30
Sublime	100	0.40	3.97	Heidi	100	1.13	11.30
Alpen Gold	90	0.61	6.76				
Supermarket**							
Chocolate Place	100	0.58	5.85	Schogoten	100	1.24	12.40
Milka	100	1.17	11.72	Laima	100	1.99	19.90
Wedel	100	1.17	11.72	Roschen	100	0.99	9.90
Wawel	100	0.94	9.37	Milka	100	1.29	12.90
Sublime	100	0.44	4.44	Vilnus	100	1.25	12.50
Alpen Gold	90	0.68	7.54	Cachet	100	2.99	29.90

Source: see Table 2

## RETAIL PRICES OF SELECTED CATERING SERVICE PRODUCTS – POLAND VS LITHUANIA

When comparing the gastronomic market in Poland and Lithuania, it should be noted that there is a large variation in the total number of catering establishments. In Poland, the total number of catering establishments amounted to 70,108, of which 28.7% (20,127) were restaurants, 27.7% (19,410) – bars, 6% (4,221) – canteens and 37.6% (26,350) catering outlets. The number of McDonald's restaurants accounted for 421 outlets in 2018, [MPK 2019]. Taking into account the Polish population (2018 – 38,171,000), there were 545 residents per 1 food enterprise [GUS 2018]. In Lithuania, the total number of catering establishments was lower – 8,445, including 14 McDonald's restaurants [MPK 2019]. Taking into account the Lithuanian population, it means there are 342 residents per 1 food enterprise [MPK 2019]. Such diversity in the number of catering establishments translates into the price of regional and popular enterprises as well as those offered in the restaurant chain, presented in Table 4. Similarly, coffee prices, both in non-chain cafes and in chains, are shown in Table 5.

To compare prices, similar regional dishes were selected in Polish and Lithuanian gastronomy. They are prepared in each of the countries in a slightly different way, but, in general, they are dishes of the same character. Analyzing data on regional dish prices (Table 4), it was shown that prices of regional dishes in Lithuania are lower by 6-63%, depending on the dish. This diversity may result from portion size but, above all, from the fact that regional dishes in Poland are usually served in restaurants, i.e. facilities where prices for meals are higher. In Lithuania, regional dishes are often served in bars, canteens and catering outlets. It should be noted that in Poland and Lithuania consumers have similar culinary tastes and many similar items appear in the offer of many objects, such as pancakes, Bolognese pasta, burgers, salads and french fries etc. Comparing the prices of these dishes, it was also found that, in Lithuania, they are lower by 13% for some salads and up to 60% for burgers. Only Lasagne with meat had a higher price in Lithuania. Omelet also had a higher price, which, however, results from the additions offered to it. In the case McDonald's restaurant chain (Table 4), the prices of offered products in Lithuania were higher, with the exception of cheaper French fries. The reason may be the small number of branches, and thus the supply of products from outside Lithuania, which translates into price.

Comparing the prices of coffee in the non-chain cafe and café chain (McDonald's) in Poland and Lithuania (Table 5), both coffee prices in Lithuania were lower by 11-45.7% and 5-30%, respectively. The reason can be related to the lower portion size of coffee offered in Lithuania in the case of the no-chain café.

Summing up the price data for selected dishes and drinks in Poland and Lithuania, it is necessary to indicate, on the one hand, price differences and, on the other hand, activities that differentiate portion size. This applies to international chains as well as restaurants and cafes operating in a given country. The structure of the restaurant service market in Poland and Lithuania is also important, characterized by a greater intensity of international networks in Poland compared to the Lithuanian market.



Table 4. Selected prices in gastronomy (restaurants) – Poland vs Lithuania

Poland		Lithuania	
Specification	price in EUR per 1 portion*	specification	price in EUR per 1 portion
Regional dishes**			
Broth	1.88	Broth	1.50
Soup – red borsch	1.41-3.76	Soup – red borsch	2.00
Dumplings with different filling (potatoes, cabbage with mushrooms, duck)	5.38-6.55	Dumplings with different filling (pork, turkey)	3.00
Stuffed cabbage (in the set)	4.11	Stuffed cabbage (in the set)	4.90
Potato pancakes	4.46-7.51	Potato pancakes with sauce (ham sauce, mushroom sauce)	4.20
Potatoes with meat and salad	3.20-10.1	Potatoes with meat	3.70
Kartacze with meat	2.82	Zeppelins with meat/curd	4.70/ 4.50
Potato gratin	3.76	Potato gratin	3.90
Herring	3.78-4.46	Herring with fried potatoes	3.60
Popular dishes (no chain restaurant)**			
Pancakes with different ingredients	5.14	Pancakes with different ingredients	3.20-3.50
Bolognese Pasta	4.81-6.58	Bolognese Pasta	3.50
Goulash soup	5.87	Goulash soup	2.70
Lasagne with meat	1.88	Lasagne with meat	4.30
Ravioli	6.15-6.81	Ravioli with chicken	3.50
Baked (different ingredients)	5.16	Baked (with fish)	3.90
Burgers (vegan, with meat)	7.02-8.20	Burgers (buckwheat, meat)	3.30
Salad with tuna/chicken/Greek salad with feta/ Caesar salad with chicken	4.46-6.58	Salad with tuna/chicken/ Greek salad with feta/Caesar salad with chicken	3.60-3.90
French fries	1.17-3.76	French fries	1.60
Omelet (with vegetables)	2.35	Omelet (with bacon, tomatoes, mushrooms)	3.20
Chicken steak with grilled vegetables	7.04	Chicken steak with grilled vegetables	4.90
Restaurant chain (McDonald's)			
Hamburger 90 g	0.92	Hamburger 105 g	1.50
Cheeseburger 102 g	1.06	Cheeseburger 119 g	3.90
Big Mac 186 g	2.56	Big Mac 217 g	2.85
Big Tasty	-	Big Tasty 366 g	4.90
McChicken 159 g	2.44	McChicken 187 g	2.75
Filet-o-Fish 117 g	2.28	Filet-o-Fish 137 g	2.75
McWrap Classic 220 g	2.72	McWrap Classic 220 g	3.50
Salad Chicken Premium 244 g	3.38	Salad Cezario 271 g	4.20
Chicken McNuggets 96 g/ 144 g	2.32/2.70	Chicken McNuggets 107 g	3.50
French fries small 72 g	1.46	French fries small 80 g	1.00
medium 103 g	1.62	medium 114 g	1.30
large 144 g	1.78	large 150 g	1.60

\* 1 EUR = 4.2583 PLN (exchange rate from 1.07.2019), \*\* average prices from 4-5 catering establishments

Source: own study

Table 5. Selected prices in gastronomy (cafes) – Poland vs Lithuania

Coffee type	POLAND		Coffee type	LITHUANIA	
	portion size [ml]	price in EUR per 1 portion		portion size [ml]	price in EUR per 1 portion
No-chain café**					
Black coffee	300	2.00	Black coffee	250	1.20
Espresso	27	1.41	Espresso	30	1.10
Coffee latte	300	2.82	Coffee latte	250	1.60
Cappuccino	300	2.58	Cappuccino	250	1.40
Coffee with milk	300	2.58	Coffee with milk	250	1.40
Coffee with milk froth	300	2.82	Coffee with milk froth	250	1.40
Coffee latte with syrup	300	3.05	Coffee latte with syrup	250	2.20
Decaf	300	2.82	Decaf	250	2.50
Iced coffee	300	3.52	Iced coffee	250	2.50
Cafe chain (McDonald's)					
Espresso	30	1.53	Espresso	35	1.10
Double Espresso	60	1.86	Double Espresso	70	1.30
Black coffee	190	1.53	Black coffee	200	1.30
	270	1.86		300	1.60
	370	2.00		400	1.90
Cappuccino	200	1.06	Cappuccino	200	1.30
	300	2.28		300	1.70
	400	2.51		400	2.00
Coffee with milk	190	1.60	Coffee with milk	200	1.30
	270	1.86		300	1.60
	370	2.04		400	1.90
Flat white	200	2.23	Flat white	300	2.00
	300	2.47			
Café Latte	200	2.00	Café Latte	300	1.70
	300	2.47		400	2.00
	400	2.70			

\* 1 EUR = 4.2583 PLN (exchange rate from 1.07.2019), \*\*average prices from 4-5 cafes

Source: own study

## SUMMARY OF PRICE COMPETITIVENESS – POLAND VS LITHUANIA

When summarizing the results presented, reference should be made to broader issues, including the international competitiveness of a country. The Global Competitiveness Index 4.0 edition 2018 served as a basis for comparison [Schwab 2018]. In assessing the international competitiveness of countries, 98 indicators, divided into 12 pillars were taken into account. In particular following pillars were included: institutions, infrastructure, the adoption of information and communication technologies, macroeconomic stability, health, skills, the product market, the labour market, the financial system, market size, business dynamism, and innovation capability.

In the Global Competitiveness Index, Poland is in a higher position compared to Lithuania (Table 5). Of the 12 pillars, Poland was higher in ranking in areas such as: infrastructure, health, the product market, the financial system, market size, and innovation capacity. For the scope of this article, the pillar of product market is particularly relevant. In this area, Poland's higher position refers to such elements as: the distortive effect of taxes and subsidies on competition, the extent of market dominance, efficiency of the clearance process and service trade openness. However, Lithuania's higher position was recorded for two parameters: competition in services and prevalence of non-tariff barriers.

Table 5. Poland vs Lithuania in the Global Competitiveness Index 4.0 edition 2018

Global Competitiveness Index	Poland		Lithuania	
	score	rank/140	score	rank/140
General points: *	68.2	37	67.1	40
Institutions	57.1	53	60.9	41
Infrastructure	79.3	27	74.4	44
Adoption of information and communication technologies	54.4	68	75.8	18
Macroeconomic stability	100.0	1	100.0	1
Health	86.2	49	78.8	77
Skills	72.9	32	73.3	31
Product market	61.2	38	57.7	53
Labour market	59.8	62	65.2	32
Financial system	63.4	55	56.9	76
Market size	73.4	22	50.1	76
Business dynamism	61.5	55	64.5	44
Innovation capacity	48.7	38	47.4	42

\* rating from 0 to 100, where 100 is the best

Source: [Schwab 2018]

## CONCLUSIONS

Prices are an important tool for shaping competitive advantage due to their importance for manufacturing, trading and service companies as well as consumers. On the one hand, prices determine sales revenues; on the other hand, their perception refers to quality, prestige and results from the adopted quality and price positioning strategy. This study analyzed the price competitiveness of selected food products and food services in Poland and Lithuania based on primary data in the form of retail prices. The products available on the Polish market were mostly characterized by lower prices compared to products present on the Lithuanian market. This concerned both local and regional brands, as well as known and available brands on international markets. The reasons are to be found in price-income relations in Poland and Lithuania. In Poland, minimum and average wages are at a lower level compared to Lithuania. At the same time, the Lithuanian economy is characterized by higher rates of increase in retail prices with a different structure of retail trade and catering services than in Poland.

At the same time, the price competitiveness of products and services should be analyzed in a broader economic and social context. It is related to market development, innovation of the economy and the functioning conditions of the labor market, determining the approach to human capital. This implies international competitiveness of a given country, which should be considered as an area of further comparative studies of Poland and Lithuania.

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## KONKURENCYJNOŚĆ CENOWA WYBRANYCH PRODUKTÓW ŻYWNOŚCIOWYCH I USŁUG GASTRONOMICZNYCH – PRZYPADEK POLSKI I LITWY

Słowa kluczowe: cena, konkurencyjność, produkty żywnościowe, usługi gastronomiczne

### ABSTRAKT

Celem opracowania jest porównanie konkurencyjności cenowej w Polsce i na Litwie bazując na cenach wybranych produktów żywnościowych i usług gastronomicznych. Szczególną uwagę zwrócono na wskaźniki charakteryzujące oba kraje oraz ceny detaliczne produktów żywnościowych dostępne pod markami w wybranych sieciach detalicznych. Dla realizacji celu badawczego przeprowadzono badania wtórne i pierwotne. Badania pierwotne w zakresie konkurencyjności cenowej wybranych produktów żywnościowych i usług gastronomicznych przeprowadzono w Polsce i na Litwie w maju i czerwcu 2019 roku. Jako hipermarket w Polsce wybrano Carrefour, na Litwie – Maxima, natomiast jako supermarket – w Polsce Carrefour Express i IKI na Litwie. Wyboru sklepów dokonano na podstawie raportów handlu detalicznego w Polsce i na Litwie prezentujących największe sieci detaliczne. Bazując na przeprowadzonych badaniach należy wskazać, że produkty dostępne na polskim rynku charakteryzują się niższymi cenami w porównaniu do produktów dostępnych na rynku litewskim. To wskazuje na większą konkurencyjność cenową polskich produktów.

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