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THE LIPSTICK ECONOMY IN LITHUANIA AND POLAND: TRENDS AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the "lipstick effect" through a survey of consumers in Lithuania and Poland. Data analysis and comparative methods were used to examine the similarities and differences between these markets. Consumer behaviour during economic downturns was examined, focusing on purchase patterns of inexpensive luxury goods and financial planning strategies. The results reveal significant differences between Lithuanian and Polish consumers. The study took into account key factors influencing purchasing decisions, such as the importance of well-being, price sensitivity and the influence of advertising on purchasing decisions, among others. It showed the need for differentiated approaches when adapting one's strategies in different markets, which, as in the case of Poland and Lithuania, are located within the same region, yet exhibit distinct consumer behaviour patterns requiring tailored marketing strategies. The conclusions drawn in this article contribute to the understanding of consumer behaviour in Eastern European markets during times of economic uncertainty. They can serve as a reference for companies in adjusting their marketing strategies, providing valuable data for economic analysts and marketers operating in these countries. Although the study provides important insights, it does not exhaust the complexity of the "lipstick

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effect" phenomenon and should be treated as a foundation for further empirical and theoretical research.

Key words: lipstick effect, luxury goods, consumers, Lithuania, Poland.

JEL: L1, D12, M31.

1. Introduction

Lipstick effect is a psychological-economic indicator that emerges during periods of economic downturn or crisis. The concept suggests that during such times, consumers tend to choose not to buy expensive luxury goods while still seeking small, affordable indulgences—such as cosmetics—to improve their mood and overall well-being. The "lipstick effect" can be regarded as a secondary economic indicator, following the substitution of high-cost products with lower-cost alternatives. This phenomenon illustrates the interplay between consumer behaviour and psychological coping mechanisms in challenging economic environments (Nufer, 2021). These observations are consistent with research on post-crisis consumption patterns, which indicates that consumers tend to maintain selected purchasing habits while optimizing expenses and seeking value (Mróz, 2016; Celinska-Janowicz, Dolega, 2024). Furthermore, the emergence of "smart shopping" behaviour confirms that consumers rationalize their choices without fully abandoning non-essential consumption (Mróz, 2010; Mróz, 2016). Recent analyses suggest that the "lipstick effect" is not a fixed concept, but one that evolves with changing circumstances (Morris, 2022). Additionally, modern consumer behaviour is increasingly shaped by digitalization and influencer marketing, which significantly affect purchasing decisions, especially in the cosmetics sector (Ratajczak et al., 2023; Prusak et al., 2022; Matiukaite et al., 2024).

The aim of the article: to explore the lipstick economy in Lithuania and Poland, analysing consumer behaviour and trends while comparing the two markets.

Objectives of the article:

1. To analyse the concept of the "lipstick economy" and its relevance in Lithuania and Poland.
2. To compare survey data from both countries, highlighting similarities and differences in consumer behaviour.
3. To identify key trends influencing consumer choices during economic fluctuations.

Methods: analysis of theoretical sources, comparative analysis, case study.

2. Analysis of original research

Consumer behaviour is influenced by various economic conditions, especially during financial crises. When faced with economic uncertainty, individuals adjust their spending habits, balancing essential needs with discretionary purchases. This study explores how consumers in Poland and Lithuania respond to financial difficulties, particularly in the context of purchasing affordable luxuries. The analysis covers several key aspects: changes in consumer behaviour during economic downturns, the psychological and emotional role of small luxury purchases, the influence of advertising and social factors on spending decisions, and strategies for financial planning in uncertain times. The findings provide insights into how consumers prioritize their expenditures, the extent to which they rely on marketing and promotions, and their approaches to balancing savings with indulgences.

2.1. Consumer behaviour during economic crisis

The chart illustrates consumer purchasing behaviour in Poland and Lithuania during an economic crisis. It compares the percentage of respondents who would continue buying familiar products, opt for cheaper alternatives, or stop purchasing certain items altogether. The data highlights differences in price sensitivity and adaptability between consumers in both countries.

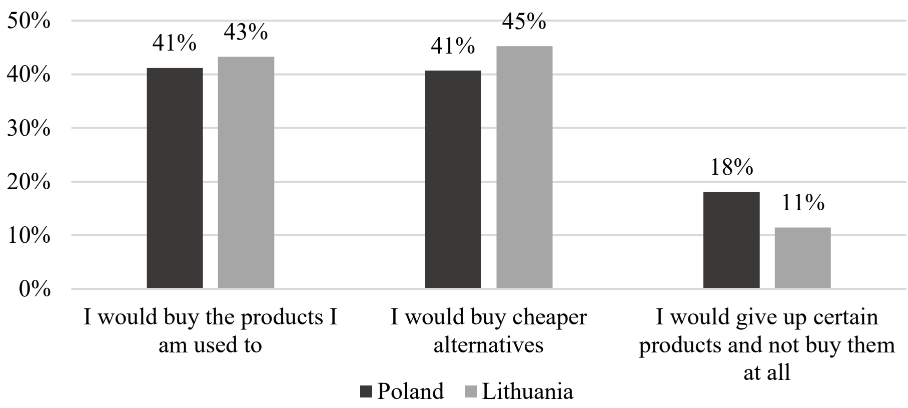

Figure 1. Consumer behaviour during economic crisis in Poland and Lithuania
Source: own work based on figures from the authors' study.

The analysis of consumer behaviour in Poland and Lithuania during an economic crisis reveals differing approaches to purchasing decisions. The survey results indicate that a significant portion of respondents in both countries would continue buying the products they are accustomed to, with 41% of Poles and 43% of Lithuanians expressing this preference. This suggests a strong attachment to familiar brands and products, even in times of financial strain.

At the same time, many consumers indicated a willingness to seek cheaper alternatives. This trend is particularly noticeable in Lithuania, where 45% of respondents stated that they would opt for more affordable products, compared to 41% in Poland. This suggests that Lithuanian consumers may be slightly more price-sensitive when faced with economic challenges.

Another notable group of respondents expressed that they would give up certain products altogether. Here, 18% of Polish respondents and 11% of Lithuanians indicated that they would stop purchasing some items. This difference suggests that Polish consumers may be more inclined to reduce consumption in response to economic hardship, whereas Lithuanians are more focused on switching to lower-cost alternatives rather than cutting out purchases entirely.

The chart presents how financial difficulties influence consumer behaviour in Poland and Lithuania. It compares the frequency with which respondents treat themselves to small or cheap purchases as a way to cope with stress, ranging from frequent indulgence to strict saving. The data highlights differences in spending habits and financial coping strategies between consumers in both countries.

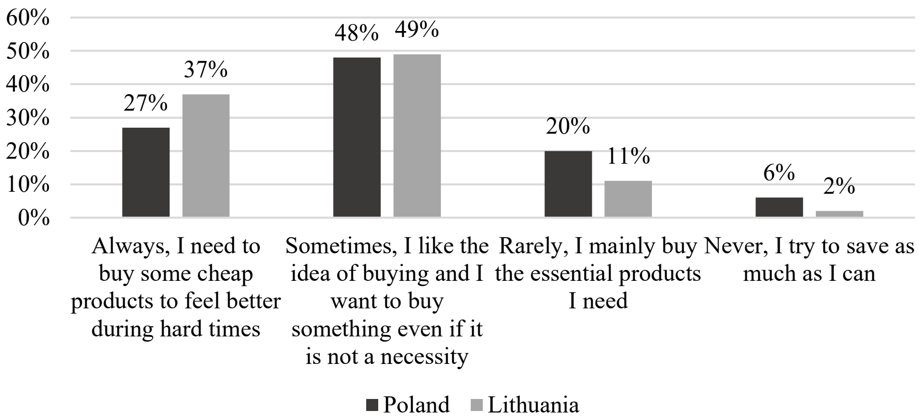

Figure 2. When facing financial difficulties, how often do you tend to treat yourself with small/ cheap purchases?

Source: own work based on figures from the authors' study.

The data presented pertains to responses to the question, "When facing financial difficulties, how often do you tend to treat yourself with small or cheap purchases?" The responses were divided into four categories: Always, Sometimes, Rarely, and Never.

In Poland, 27% of respondents indicated that they always feel the need to buy cheap products to feel better during hard times. The majority, 48%, stated that they sometimes like the idea of buying and want to purchase something even if it is not a necessity. A smaller group, 20%, rarely make such purchases, focusing mainly on essential products. Only 6% reported that they never indulge in such purchases and instead try to save as much as possible.

In Lithuania, 37% of respondents answered that they always need to buy some cheap products for comfort during financial hardships. A slightly higher percentage than in Poland, 49%, stated that they sometimes like to buy non-essential items. Only 11% rarely buy non-essential products, and just 2% reported that they never make such purchases.

When comparing the responses from both countries, it is evident that Lithuanians are more likely than Poles to always seek comfort in small purchases during difficult financial times. However, both groups show a strong inclination toward sometimes making such purchases, with over half of respondents in each country selecting this option. The percentage of individuals who rarely or never indulge in such purchases is higher in Poland, suggesting a slightly more cautious approach to spending during financial difficulties.

Overall, the findings illustrate varying strategies adopted by consumers in Poland and Lithuania when facing financial difficulties. While many prioritize continuity in their purchasing habits, a significant portion is willing to adjust their choices, whether by opting for cheaper alternatives or reducing consumption altogether. These insights highlight the importance for businesses to adapt their pricing and product strategies to align with evolving consumer behaviours during economic downturns.

Figure 3 shows data on what portion of the budget respondents are willing to spend on non-essential expenses during the recession. The responses are divided into five categories: Up to 10% of my income, 10–20% of my income, 20–30% of my income, Over 30% of my income and I would allocate nothing.

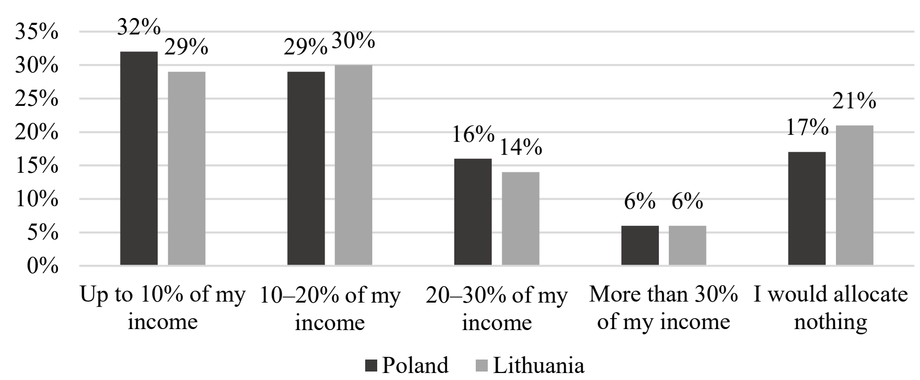

Figure 3. What proportion of your budget would you allocate to non-essential items during an economic recession?

Source: own work based on figures from the authors' study.

The data reveal that the majority of respondents in both countries – 30 in Lithuania and 29% in Poland – would allocate between 10% and 30% of their income to non-essentials during a recession. This underscores the general tendency in both countries to maintain moderate spending on non-essentials even in difficult financial times. A significant portion of people in both Lithuania and Poland, 29% and 32% respectively, indicated that they would allocate only up to 10% of their income to non-essentials. This suggests that cautious spending habits are fairly common. However, a notable minority of respondents would refrain from spending money on non-essentials altogether: 21% in Lithuania and 17% in Poland. This indicates a greater propensity among Lithuanians to eliminate discretionary spending altogether in the face of financial challenges. At the other end of the spectrum, a smaller group of respondents are willing to dedicate a larger share of their income to non-essential spending. In Poland, 16% of respondents said they would spend 20–30% of their income, compared to 14% in Lithuania. Additionally, only 6% of respondents in both countries are willing to spend more than 30% of their income on non-essential items.

These results suggest that while both countries exhibit similar spending patterns in some categories, Lithuanians appear to be slightly more conservative, with a larger proportion opting to eliminate non-essential spending altogether or to limit it to a minimum. Poles, on the other hand, are slightly more willing to allocate a moderate portion of their income to discretionary expenses. This difference may be due to cultural attitudes toward financial security or different levels of economic resilience and disposable income in the two countries.

2.2. The Role of Affordable Luxuries in Consumer Well-being

The next chart shows non-essential items that would be important to respondents during an economic recession and that would be difficult to give up completely. Participants were able to choose from several categories: cosmetics and personal care products, entertainment (cinema, concerts and other recreational activities), sweets and confectionery, clothing and accessories, and tobacco, alcohol and fuel. While these are not essential goods for survival, their importance varies according to lifestyle, culture and individual habits.

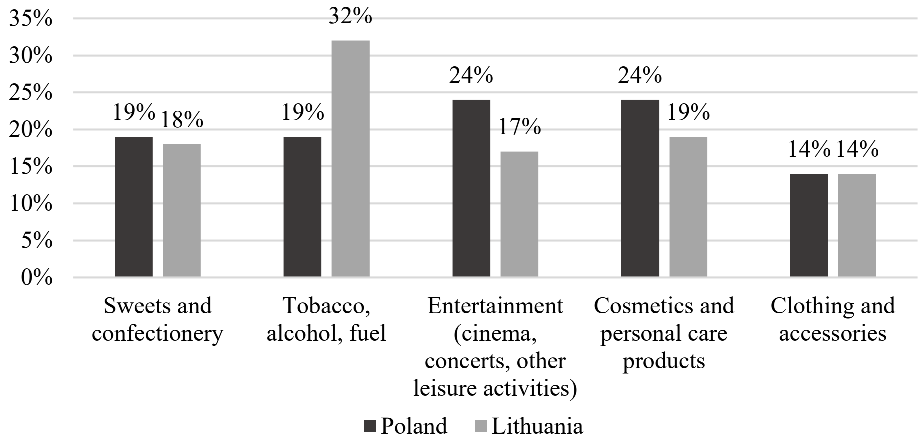

Figure 4. Which non-essential items would be important to you during an economic recession and difficult to completely give up?

Source: own work based on figures from the authors' study.

The results from Lithuania clearly show that the most difficult category to give up is tobacco, alcohol, and fuel, with as many as 32% of respondents selecting this option. This suggests that habits such as smoking and alcohol consumption, as well as practical transportation needs, play a significant role in daily life. The second most important categories are cosmetics and personal care products, along with entertainment, both chosen by 19% of respondents. This indicates that maintaining personal appearance and having access to leisure activities remain essential for many, even during financial hardship. Sweets and confectionery received 18% of the votes, showing that while they are a valued part of daily life, they could be reduced if necessary. Clothing and accessories were ranked the least important, with only 14% of respondents selecting them, suggesting that purchasing new clothes is not a priority in difficult times. In Poland, the distribution of preferences is slightly different. The most important categories are cosmetics and personal care products, along with entertainment, both receiving 24% of the responses. This suggests that Poles place greater emphasis than Lithuanians on maintaining their appearance and having access to enjoyable leisure activities. The second most significant categories are sweets and confectionery, as well as tobacco, alcohol, and fuel, both receiving 19% of the votes. This shows that these goods are less of a priority in Poland compared to Lithuania, where tobacco, alcohol, and fuel were considered far more essential. The least important category in both countries was clothing and accessories, with 14% of respondents indicating it as difficult to give up, suggesting that, during an economic downturn, consumers tend to cut back on clothing purchases first.

When comparing the two countries, some clear differences emerge. Lithuanians place much greater importance on tobacco, alcohol, and fuel, possibly due to consumption habits or a higher dependency on personal transportation. In contrast, Poles are more likely to prioritize cosmetics and entertainment, which may reflect a stronger emphasis on personal appearance and leisure activities. A common pattern in both countries is the relatively low importance of clothing and accessories, suggesting that in challenging economic times, people tend to reduce spending on fashion in favour of other, more valued categories.

The chart examines consumer perceptions in Poland and Lithuania regarding the impact of small luxury purchases on mood and confidence. It compares the percentage of respondents who believe such purchases have a positive effect, those who are unsure, and those who see no impact. The data highlights differences in attitudes toward indulgent spending between the two countries.

The data presented pertains to responses to the question, "Do you believe that small luxury purchases like cosmetics, sweets, or accessories have a positive impact on your mood or confidence?" The responses were divided into four categories: Agree, Partly Agree, Disagree, and I don't have an opinion.

In Poland, 30% of respondents agreed with the statement, suggesting that they believe small luxury purchases do positively affect their mood or confidence. The majority, 40%, partly agreed, indicating that while they may see some benefit in such purchases, they are not fully convinced. A smaller group, 15%, disagreed, reflecting that they do not believe these purchases have a positive impact. Interestingly, 15% of Polish respondents also indicated that they didn't have an opinion on the matter.

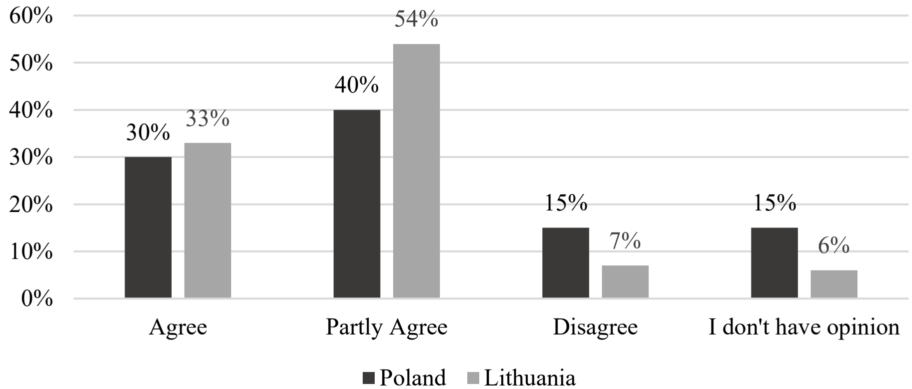

Figure 5. Do you believe that small luxury purchases like cosmetics, sweets or accessories have a positive impact on your mood or confidence? (%)

Source: own work based on figures from the authors' study.

In Lithuania, 33% of respondents agreed with the statement, showing a slightly higher belief in the positive impact of small luxury purchases compared to Poland. A larger portion, 54%, partly agreed, suggesting that more people in Lithuania have a nuanced view of these purchases, acknowledging some benefits without full conviction. Only 7% disagreed, and just 6% did not have an opinion, indicating less uncertainty compared to Poland.

When comparing both countries' responses, it is clear that Lithuanians are more likely to agree or partly agree with the statement. In total, 87% of Lithuanian respondents either agreed or partly agreed, compared to 70% in Poland. This suggests that Lithuanians are more inclined to believe that small luxury purchases can positively impact mood or confidence. A smaller percentage of both countries (around 15% each) disagreed or lacked an opinion, highlighting that there is a relatively low level of scepticism or uncertainty about the question. The overall trend shows a general tendency in both countries to see some benefit in small luxury purchases, although Lithuanians seem more convinced of their positive impact.

The chart explores how economic conditions influence spending on beauty and luxury products in Poland and Lithuania. It compares the percentage of respondents who significantly adjust their spending, those who make partial changes, and those who remain unaffected. The data highlights differences in economic sensitivity and spending habits between consumers in both countries.

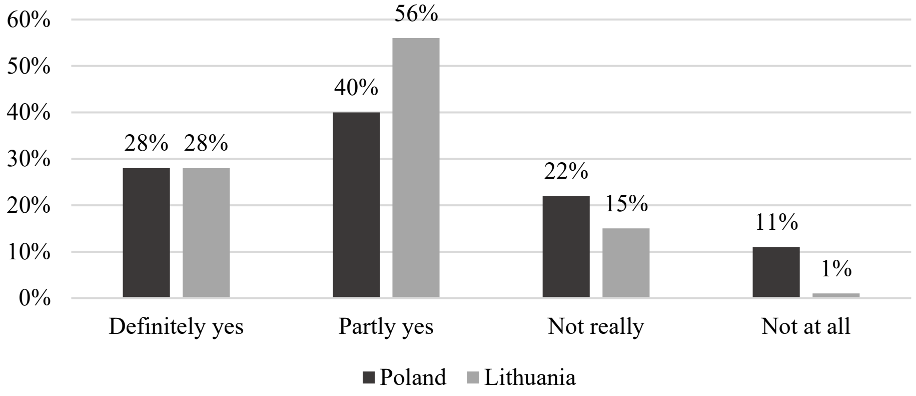

Figure 6. In your opinion, does the current state of the economy influence your spending habits on beauty or luxury items? (%)

Source: own work based on figures from the authors' study.

The chart presents responses to the question, "In your opinion, does the current state of the economy influence your spending habits on beauty or luxury items?" The data is split by two countries: Poland and Lithuania, with responses categorized as "Definitely yes," "Partly yes," "Not really," and "Not at all."

In Poland, 28% of respondents said that the economy definitely influences their spending on beauty or luxury items. A significantly larger portion, 40%, partly agreed, indicating that while the economy has some effect, it is not the sole factor influencing their purchasing habits. Only 22% of Polish respondents claimed that the economy does not really impact their spending habits, and just 11% said it has no effect at all.

In Lithuania, 28% of respondents answered that the economy definitely influences their spending on luxury or beauty items, a similar proportion to Poland. However, a much larger percentage, 56%, partly agreed, showing a stronger belief in the impact of the economy on spending. Only 15% of Lithuanians claimed that the economy does not really affect their purchases, and just 1% answered that it does not affect them at all.

When comparing both countries, we observe that a larger portion of Lithuanian respondents (56%) partly believe the economy influences their spending, compared to 40% in Poland. The percentage of people who feel that the economy definitely influences their purchases is slightly higher in Poland (28%) than in Lithuania (28%), but the difference is minimal. In general, the majority of both Polish (67%) and Lithuanian (84%) respondents acknowledge some level of influence from the state of the economy on their spending habits. The data suggests that while there are variations in the degree of influence, the overall trend shows that both Polish and Lithuanian respondents are notably affected by the current economic situation when it comes to luxury and beauty item purchases.

The next chart illustrates how consumers in Poland and Lithuania perceive "affordable luxury" products during times of economic uncertainty. It highlights differences in attitudes toward small indulgences and discretionary spending during financial instability.

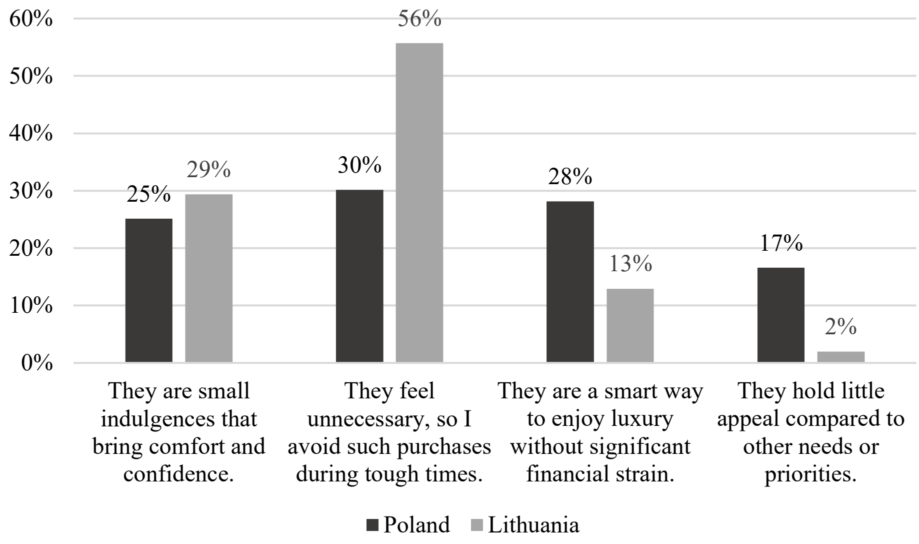

Figure 7. Consumer perception of "affordable luxury" during economic uncertainty
Source: own work based on figures from the authors' study.

The results indicate that 25% of Polish respondents and 29% of Lithuanians view affordable luxury as small indulgences that bring comfort and confidence. Meanwhile, a significant portion of consumers – 30% in Poland and 56% in Lithuania—consider such purchases unnecessary and prefer to avoid them during economic hardships.

A notable share of Polish consumers (28%) see affordable luxury as a smart way to enjoy luxury without significant financial strain, whereas only 13% of Lithuanians share this view. Additionally, 17% of Polish respondents and just 2% of Lithuanians state that such products hold little appeal compared to other financial priorities.

Overall, the findings suggest that Lithuanian consumers are more likely to cut back on affordable luxury purchases in difficult economic times, while Polish consumers show a more balanced perspective, recognizing both the necessity of cutting back and the potential benefits of small indulgences.

2.3. Influence of advertising and social factors on purchasing decisions

The next chart illustrates the key factors that influence consumer decisions to purchase small, affordable luxuries during economic downturns in Poland and Lithuania. It highlights differences in motivations between the two groups.

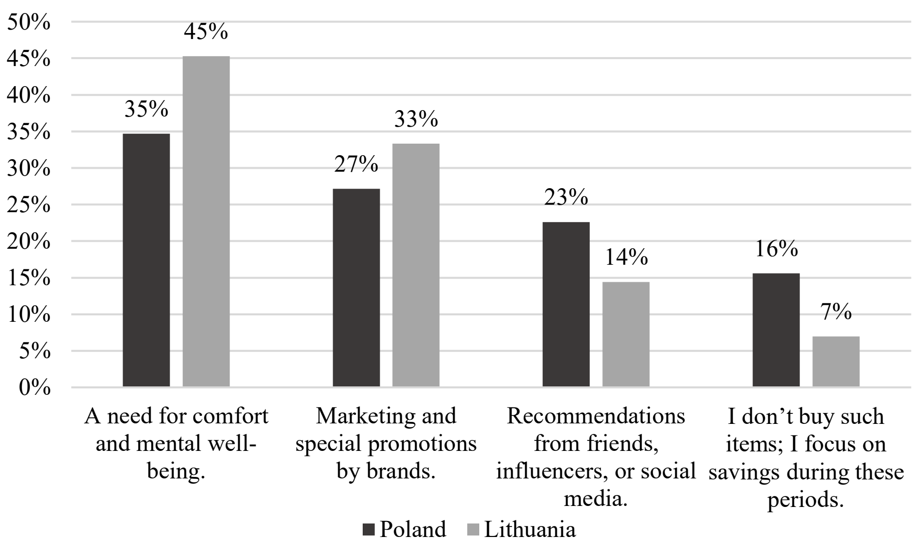

Figure 8. Factors influencing the purchase of small, affordable luxuries during economic downturns

Source: own work based on figures from the authors' study.

The most significant factor for both countries is the need for comfort and mental well-being, cited by 35% of Polish respondents and 45% of Lithuanians. Marketing and special promotions by brands also play a crucial role, influencing 27% of Poles and 33% of Lithuanians.

Social influences, such as recommendations from friends, influencers, or social media, affect 23% of respondents in Poland but only 14% in Lithuania. Additionally, some consumers prefer to avoid such purchases entirely and focus on savings instead—this is the case for 16% of Poles and only 7% of Lithuanians.

Overall, the findings suggest that emotional well-being is a strong driver of small luxury purchases, particularly in Lithuania, while Polish consumers are more influenced by social recommendations and are more likely to prioritize savings during economic uncertainty.

Research on the perception of small pleasures during economic hardships, conducted in Poland and Lithuania, reveals that for the majority of respondents, such expenses are not a priority, although there are notable differences between the two countries.

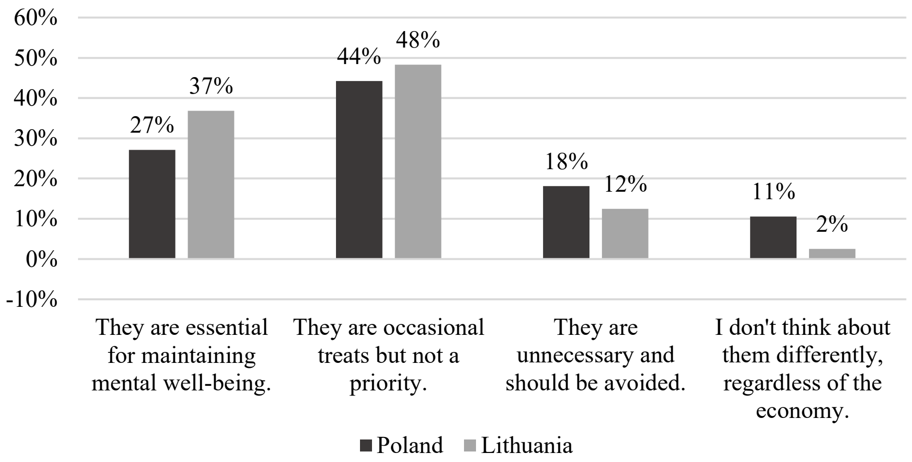

Figure 9. How do you perceive small, affordable luxuries (e.g., books, treats, or accessories) during economic challenges?

Source: own work based on figures from the authors' study.

In Poland, the largest group of respondents (44.22%) considers small pleasures to be occasional indulgences, primarily used to boost mood, but not essential during financial difficulties. Similarly, in Lithuania, 48.26% of respondents share this view, indicating that these expenditures take a backseat to more essential needs.

The second-largest group in both countries highlights the importance of small pleasures for maintaining well-being. In Poland, 27.14% of respondents state that these minor luxuries are an important part of life, even in challenging times. In Lithuania, this percentage is notably higher at 36.82%, suggesting that Lithuanians may place greater value on small comforts as a means of enhancing their quality of life.

Conversely, 18.09% of respondents in Poland believe that small pleasures are unnecessary and should be sacrificed during economic difficulties. In Lithuania, this perspective is less common, with only 12.44% of respondents sharing this opinion. These findings indicate that Poles are more likely than Lithuanians to limit spending on non-essential items. The smallest groups in both countries are those who maintain their approach to small pleasures regardless of economic conditions – 10.55% in Poland and just 2.49% in Lithuania.

Research conducted in Poland and Lithuania on the impact of spending on small pleasures during economic crises reveals both similarities and differences in respondents' attitudes.

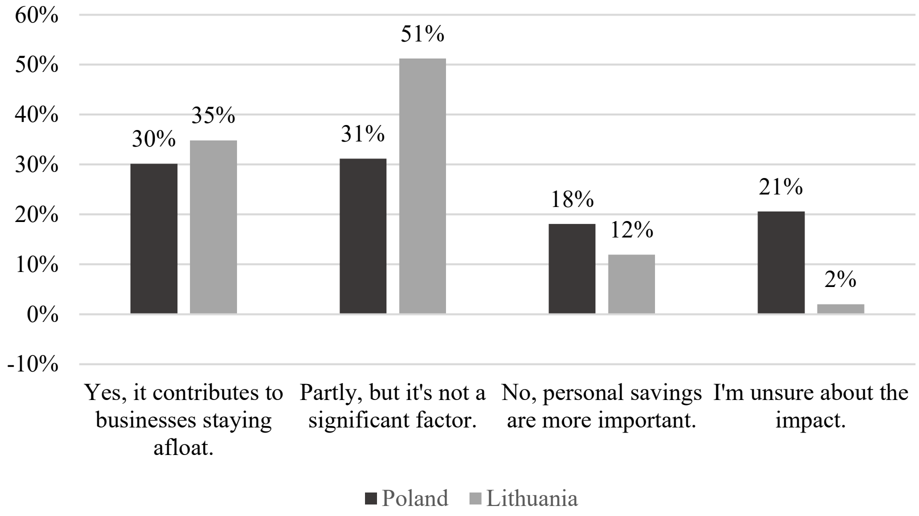

Figure 10. Do you believe spending on small luxuries helps support the economy during financial crises?

Source: own work based on figures from the authors' study.

In Poland, the largest group of respondents (31.16%) believes that spending on minor luxuries can have a positive, though limited, effect on the economy. Similarly, a significantly larger share of Lithuanians (51.24%) holds this view, indicating even greater awareness in Lithuania that such expenditures support local businesses, even if their overall impact on the economy is considered minor.

Slightly smaller groups in both countries think that small indulgences play a vital role in sustaining economic activity, especially for small businesses. In Poland, 30.15% of respondents share this belief, compared to 34.83% in Lithuania. These results suggest that people in both countries recognize the role of such spending in supporting small enterprises, although this perception is stronger in Lithuania.

A smaller percentage of respondents prioritize saving over spending on pleasures during a crisis. In Poland, 18.09% of respondents express this viewpoint, compared to only 11.94% in Lithuania. This difference could indicate greater pragmatism among Poles during tough times and a stronger commitment among Lithuanians to supporting the economy through consumption, even in small ways.

The smallest groups in both countries consist of those uncertain about the economic impact of spending on small pleasures. In Poland, 20.60% of respondents are unsure, while only 1.99% of Lithuanians express this uncertainty. This disparity may stem from greater economic knowledge or more decisive views among Lithuanian respondents on this topic.

Next, the following data shows the role of advertising in the decision to purchase affordable luxury goods during the economic downturn. The relationship between companies' marketing and consumers' decisions to buy a particular product is shown.

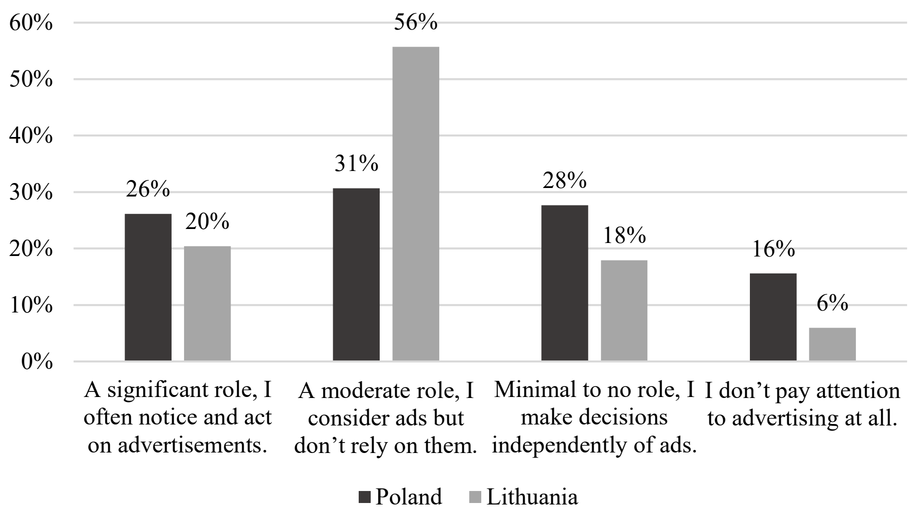

Figure 11. What role does advertising play in your decision to buy affordable luxury items during an economic downturn?

Source: own work based on figures from the authors' study.

In Poland, 26% of respondents said advertising plays a significant role in their purchasing decisions, while in Lithuania the figure was slightly lower at 20%. A larger proportion of respondents in both countries reported that advertisements play a moderate role, with 31% in Poland and a significantly higher 56% in Lithuania indicating that they consider ads but do not rely on them. This suggests that Lithuanians may be more influenced by advertising in their decision-making process compared to Poles. Meanwhile, 28% of respondents in Poland and 18% in Lithuania stated that advertising has minimal to no role in their purchasing choices, indicating a preference for independent decision-making. Additionally, a smaller portion of respondents reported that they completely ignore advertising. In Poland, 16% of individuals claimed that they do not pay attention to ads, while in Lithuania, this figure was only 6%.

These results suggest that while both groups acknowledge the influence of advertising, Lithuanians are more likely to consider advertisements in their purchasing decisions, particularly at a moderate level. Conversely, Poles appear to exhibit a slightly higher tendency to make independent decisions or disregard advertising altogether. These differences could stem from varying levels of trust in marketing, consumer habits, or cultural attitudes toward advertising in each country.

2.4. Spending strategies and financial planning in times of uncertainty

The chart below shows data on the frequency of planning purchases of small luxury goods during economic recessions. It highlights the differences in approaches to purchasing decisions in the two countries surveyed.

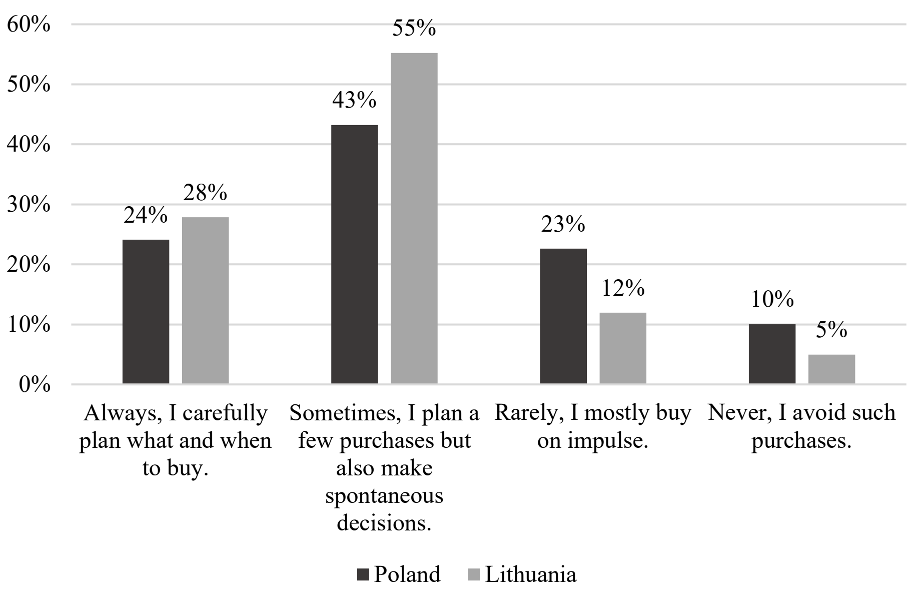

Figure 12. How often do you plan your purchases of small luxury items during economic recessions?

Source: own work based on figures from the authors' study.

A significant proportion of respondents – 28% in Lithuania and 24% in Poland – said they always carefully plan what to buy and when. This indicates a slightly stronger tendency among Lithuanians to be meticulous about such purchases. In addition, the largest group in both countries are those who sometimes plan their purchases, but still allow themselves to make occasional spontaneous decisions: 55% of Lithuanians and 43% of Poles fall into this category.

However, impulsive shopping is still present, especially in Poland. While 23% of Poles admit that they rarely plan and mainly make purchases on impulse, the figure is much lower in Lithuania, where only 12% of respondents say they buy luxury items spontaneously. This suggests that Poles may have a somewhat more relaxed approach to non-essential spending in difficult times.

At the most cautious end of the spectrum, a small minority of respondents avoid such purchases altogether – 10% in Poland and just 5% in Lithuania. This indicates that only a limited number of people in both countries completely forgo small luxury items, even in difficult financial times.

The analysis of spending on affordable luxuries during economic crises reveals differences between Lithuanians and Poles, as well as broader trends. The bar chart highlights country-specific approaches to balancing saving and spending, while the pie chart provides an overview of general financial preferences.

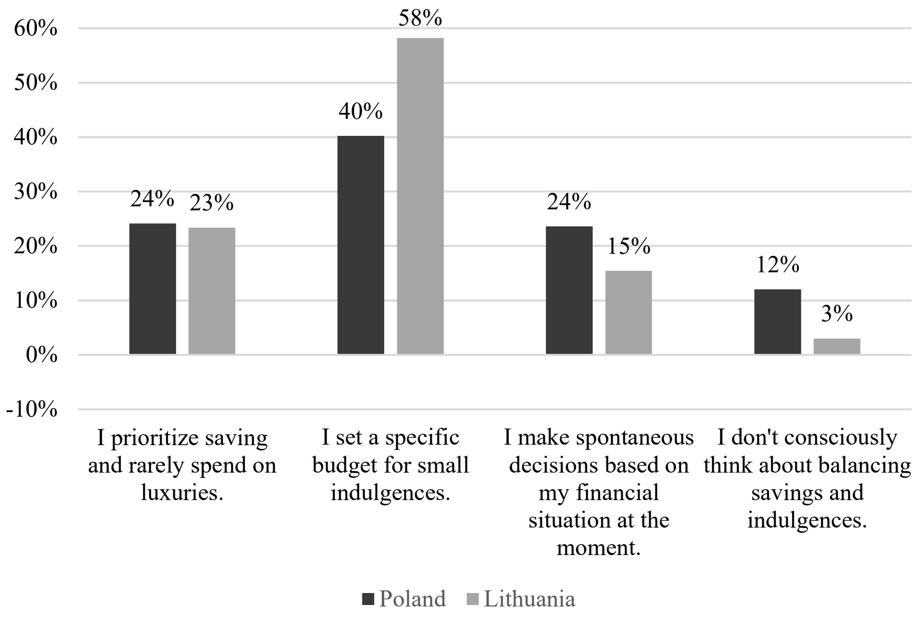

Figure 13. How do you balance spending on affordable luxuries with saving during economic crises?

Source: own work based on figures from the authors' study.

Lithuanians are more likely to plan a budget for small indulgences, with 58% choosing this option compared to 40% of Poles. Poles, on the other hand, show a more diverse approach – 12% do not consciously think about balancing savings and spending, whereas in Lithuania, only 3% fall into this category.

Spontaneous financial decisions are made by 15% of Lithuanians and 24% of Poles, indicating a greater tendency for reactive budgeting among Poles. Meanwhile, prioritizing savings over luxuries is similarly common in both countries – 23% of Lithuanians and 24% of Poles follow this cautious financial strategy.

The analysis of factors influencing the purchase of affordable luxuries during financial uncertainty reveals distinct preferences between Lithuanian and Polish respondents, as well as broader trends. The bar chart highlights country-specific variations, while the pie chart provides an overall perspective on consumer priorities.

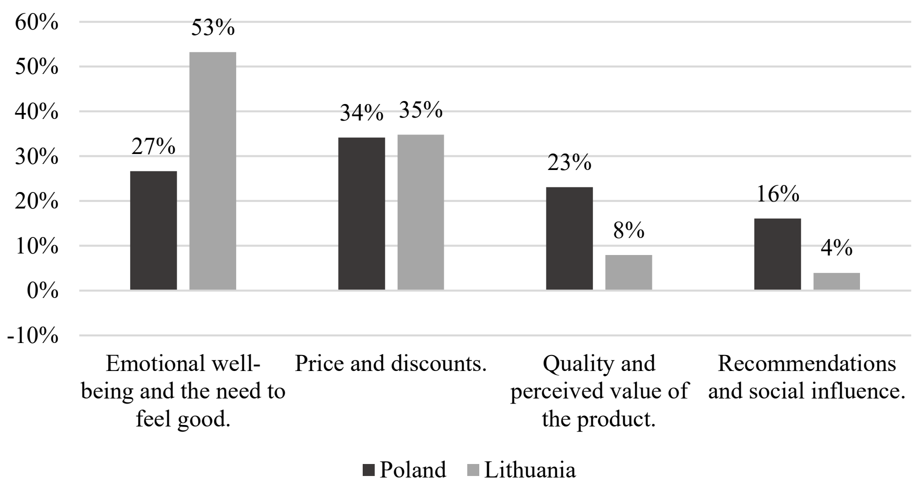

Figure 14. Which factor most affects your decision to purchase affordable luxuries during financial uncertainty?

Source: own work based on figures from the authors' study.

Lithuanians prioritize emotional well-being, with 53% selecting this factor, compared to 27% of Poles. This suggests a stronger focus on psychological benefits among Lithuanian consumers. In contrast, Polish respondents emphasize price and discounts (34%) and product quality and value (23%), whereas only 8% of Lithuanians consider quality a key factor.

The least influential factor is recommendations and social influence, chosen by just 4% of Lithuanians and 16% of Poles. While this plays a minor role overall, Poles appear slightly more influenced by external opinions.

These findings have key implications for businesses. Marketing strategies should emphasize emotional benefits for Lithuanian consumers while addressing price sensitivity and highlighting product quality for Polish audiences. Understanding these preferences can help tailor campaigns to better resonate with target markets, strengthening consumer engagement and driving sales.

Overall, the data highlight both similarities and subtle differences between the two nations. While planning is common in both Poland and Lithuania, Lithuanians appear to be somewhat more disciplined, with a higher percentage of respondents always planning their purchases and a lower tendency to buy on impulse. Poles, on the other hand, show a slightly greater willingness to make spontaneous purchases, even during economic recessions. These differences may be due to cultural attitudes toward financial discipline or to different levels of disposable income and economic resilience

3. Conclusions

The study analyses the "lipstick effect" and consumer behaviour in Lithuania and Poland during economic downturns. The results show significant differences between the two countries in their approaches to shopping during difficult economic times.

In both countries, a large proportion of consumers continue to buy familiar products during the crisis or switch to cheaper alternatives. This confirms the adaptive nature of consumer behaviour during economic downturns, where individuals seek to maintain stability while optimizing costs (Mróz, 2016). Lithuanians are more likely to make small, comforting purchases in the face of financial difficulties. This tendency corresponds with the stronger role of emotional and utilitarian factors in Lithuanian consumer decision-making processes (Ulbinaite et al., 2013), as well as with broader findings indicating that small luxury consumption contributes to maintaining psychological well-being (Magrizos et al., 2026). A key contribution of this study is the identification of relationships between results presented across different parts of the analysis. The frequency of small purchases is directly linked with the perceived impact on mood and confidence, indicating that higher purchase frequency is associated with stronger emotional benefits. Similarly, budget allocation corresponds with financial planning strategies, showing that Lithuanian consumers combine emotional consumption with structured financial planning, while Polish consumers demonstrate a more flexible and spontaneous approach. Furthermore, the importance of well-being as a key factor is closely related to the perception of affordable luxury products, confirming the central role of emotional drivers in consumer behaviour. Lithuanian consumers show higher sensitivity to economic conditions. This aligns with research on transition economies, where purchasing decisions are more strongly influenced by economic and structural factors (Vaiginiene et al., 2021; Vaiginiene et al., 2026). At the same time, Polish consumers demonstrate stronger influence from socio-demographic factors and brand engagement (Kacprzak, Dziewanowska, 2019; Razmus et al., 2020). Lithuanians also show a stronger tendency toward financial planning. This is consistent with studies on sustainable and rational consumption, which emphasize the importance of budgeting and value-oriented decision-making (Goryńska-Goldmann et al., 2023; Juszczuk, 2025). Overall, the study confirms that the lipstick effect is not a universal phenomenon but one that varies depending on economic, cultural and psychological context. In Lithuania, it takes the form of a structured and emotionally-driven coping mechanism, while in Poland it is more flexible and influenced by market-related factors such as price sensitivity, branding and social influence, including digital marketing and influencer activity (Ratajczak et al., 2023; Prusak et al., 2022; Matiukaite et al., 2024).

These differences reflect broader consumption patterns observed in Central and Eastern Europe, where consumer behaviour is shaped by both economic transformation and evolving cultural attitudes (Mróz, 2010, 2016). At the same time, the results indicate directions for future research. Further studies should focus on more detailed segmentation of the lipstick market and precise identification of consumer groups, as current research highlights a lack of specific data (Ratajczak et al., 2023). It is also necessary to deepen the analysis of digital marketing and influencer impact, especially among younger consumers (Prusak et al., 2022; Matiukaite et al., 2024). Additionally, future research should explore the relationship between the lipstick effect and sustainability trends, particularly in the context of eco-friendly consumption and willingness to pay for sustainable products (Hincica et al., 2024; Pileliene et al., 2024). Longitudinal studies could determine whether the lipstick effect is temporary or represents a long-term shift in consumer behaviour. Finally, further research should include psychological and demographic variables, such as compulsive buying tendencies, which significantly influence purchasing decisions (Tarka, Kukar-Kinney, 2022; Tarka, Babaev, 2021).

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