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Spirits tourism (spiritourism) in Poland on the example of museums of vodka

Abstract: The paper presents a new type of drink tourism, namely spirits tourism (spiritourism), whose development recently has gained momentum in Poland owing to, among others, the establishment of two original culinary museums in Warsaw devoted entirely to vodka. Visitors can see raw materials, production stages, types of vodkas and learn about the Polish vodka consumption culture from the Middle Ages to the present day. The paper sets out to identify vodka as an element of Poland's national culinary heritage. Subsequent part identifies spirits tourism (spiritourism) and discusses motivation behind practicing this type of beverage tourism, as well as outlines the profile of a spirittourist. The last section presents the operation of the culinary museums dedicated to Polish vodka, which contribute to the development of spirits tourism. The research objective was implemented with the use of nonreactive research – a method of content analysis, which uses data from secondary literature, as well as the technique of participant observation during several study visits to the culinary museums devoted to vodka in the years 2019–2020, which are located in the Polish capital.

Keywords: spirits tourism (spiritourism), vodka, culinary heritage, the museum of vodka

1. Introduction

In Poland, countless variations of different vodkas have been produced for centuries and are an important element of national culinary heritage. Despite the unfavourable laws, there are more and more local distilleries that produce high-percentage alcohols based on old recipes. Polish spirits are famous for high-quality raw materials used in their production, multigenerational methods of preparation, fine taste, and are appreciated by many groups of consumers on the food market and in restaurants.

Domestic spirit producers have a problem with breaking through advertisements of powerful foreign companies, which is why it is necessary to create rules that will support the Polish spirit sector, just as in the case of e.g. Great Britain or the United States. The main barrier to the development of Polish alcohol producers are the provisions of the Act on upbringing in sobriety and counteracting alcoholism of October 26, 1982 (Ustawa z dnia 26 paździer-

nika 1982 r.). This Act was passed in the days of martial law and, despite the unfavourable economic situation that lasted until the early 1980s, it is “the monument of the long-gone people's republic” and has not been liberalized, but rather subjected to further tightening of regulations. For all parties concerned – producers, consumers and the state – it would be best if we could reach an agreement as to how legally market alcohol produced based on traditional recipes, because it would be conducive to, among others, greater development of drink tourism, including spirits tourism (spiritourism) in Poland.

Excellent spirits produced in Poland include well-known and commercially available brands that can be purchased in almost any grocery store or restaurant, as well as regional spirits produced on a smaller scale. These delicacies are so good that they are appreciated both by culinary tourists travelling to different des-

tinations situated across the culinary map of Poland, as well as culinary heritage experts who promote alcohol as one of the important elements of the Polish culinary culture.

Rapidly developing Polish culinary tourism market, including drink tourism, offers a unique opportunity to explore the richness of the regional culinary culture, and above all to actively experience the authentic flavours and aromas of various groups of foods and beverages. Exploring tourist attractions along with alcoholic drinks is related to the latest trend occurring in thematic travels and “relishing the cuisine”, namely the appearance of spirits tourism (spiritourism), an original drink tourism alongside wine tourism (enotourism) and beer tourism (birotourism).

Currently, Poland is one of the most prominent producers of vodka in the world. Therefore, regional alcohols are a great development opportunity for farmers, owners of agritourism farms and rural tourism facilities, restaurateurs, as well as small distilleries. It should be

noted that spirits tourism, contrary to the opinion expressed by those who are not familiar with this phenomenon on the culinary tourism market, does not promote alcoholism. Spirits tourism should be interpreted in the cultural and social context, strengthening the national culinary culture. People sharing a meal at the table do not only eat food, but also drink alcohol and discuss different international, national, regional, local or family matters. The authors do not attempt to analyse the impact of this activity on human health or social relations, as this study cannot provide such conclusions. The paper is focused predominantly on analysing its potential in terms of tourism development.

The goal of this paper is to show a new kind of drink tourism, namely spirits tourism (spiritourism), which has recently started to develop thanks to, among others, two original culinary museums that are devoted to raw materials, types of vodka and the culture of alcohol consumption from the Middle Ages to the present day.

2. Description of the study area, methods and materials

The scope of this paper includes:

- the characteristics of vodka as an element of Polish national culinary heritage;
- an attempt to define spirits tourism (spiritourism) as a new phenomenon, provide the motivation for practising this type of tourism, and to demonstrate the profile of a spiritourist;
- presentation of the activities of museums devoted to Polish vodka, which contribute

to the development of spirits tourism (spiritourism) in this part of Europe.

The study objective was implemented with the use of nonreactive research – a method of content analysis, which uses data from secondary literature – as well as the technique of participant observation during several study visits to the culinary museums devoted to vodka located in the Polish capital in the years 2019–2020.

3. Results and analysis

3.1. Vodka as an element of Polish culinary heritage

Consumption of alcoholic beverages is a theme present in the culture for centuries. The first traces of the production and use of alcohol for consumption date back to the 6th millennium BC (Gately, 2011). Historians are uncertain as to when alcohol was first distilled. The origin of the word alcohol and the word *alembic*, which is a device used for distillation, indicates that it comes from the Arabic countries – respectively:

al-kuhl (evil spirit) and *al-ambiq* – where the production of strong alcohols began probably in the seventh century. Most likely vodka was first created in Poland or Russia. While both countries claim the right, the Russian sources are better documented in writing and indicate the end of the fourteenth century. In Poland the earliest document on vodka production is dated to 1405 and comes from court docu-

ments in Sandomierz. The difference between the sources is approx. 20 years, but it is certain that before vodka was defined in writing, it had already been known in both countries, as well as in today's Ukraine and Belarus (Gołębiewski, 2014). It is impossible to determine the exact moment in which the technique of vodka production was created. It was more likely a long process of evolution, and as such cannot be attributed to any individual nation. It is a result of exchange of ideas and materials between many neighbours and partners (Simpson, 2010).

The word *vodka*, which at that time had several other meanings, probably was used interchangeably with the word *gorzałka* (*booze*). This word, in a sense similar to the modern meaning, for the first time was used in 1534 in "O ziołach i mocy ich" by Stefan Falimirz (Simpson, 2010; Baron and Kleksyk, 2017). It can be assumed that since the release of "Wódka albo gorzałka" written by Jurek Potański in 1614, these terms have been used interchangeably to describe distilled alcoholic beverages for recreational drinking. In the face of the establishment of modern legislation on the production of alcohol in the twentieth century in Poland and Russia, the word *gorzałka* was no longer used, becoming a colloquial and somewhat outdated term, leaving the word *vodka* in common use (Simpson, 2010).

Originally, grain was primarily used for distillation: wheat, oats, spelt and barley. Potatoes were first used in the eighteenth century – they were very cheap but less efficient than barley or rye. It is worth mentioning that all grain distilled spirits resembled today's moonshine in terms of production and taste until the nineteenth century (Gołębiewski, 2014). The first half of the nineteenth century in Europe brought the industrial revolution, and in the distilling industry, a technological leap associated with the invention of new stills. They helped reduce the cost and time of production and significantly increased the quality of the distillate, which, unlike the earlier *aqua vitae* (water of life), was called "spirit" (Karwowski, 2016).

At the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, during the occupation, modern distilleries appeared in the former Republic of Poland. In 1782, Leopold

Maksymilian Baczewski established a distillery in Wybranówce near Lviv. Two years later, a vodka factory was established by the Lubomirscy, and in 1823 it was expanded by Count Alfred Potocki. More large companies were created in the nineteenth century in: Poznań, Bydgoszcz, Biała, Bielsko, Starogard Gdański, Gniezno, Racibórz, Leszno, Konin, Katowice and Warsaw. Most of these companies continued to operate after World War I in the reborn Republic of Poland. All large rectification plants were bought by the state in compliance with "Polish Spirit Monopoly" established in 1919. Some recipes from that period are still used. What is more, distilleries intently use them because the consumer expects something more than "ordinary vodka" (Gołębiewski, 2014).

Warsaw with the famous vodka factory "Koneser" was a thriving production centre, established by the tsarist authorities in 1899 as "Warsaw Rectification". The distillery itself did not survive commercialization attempts in the twenty-first century and, like many other distilleries in Poland, became a victim of high excise duties. In the 20s of the twentieth century, it was a modern company that created well-known and important Polish vodka brands, such as Wyborowa, Luksusowa, Extra Żytunia, Żubrówka and Siwucha (Gołębiewski, 2014).

During World War II, some distilleries were destroyed, while others worked for the occupant. After 1945, the operation of the "Polish Spirit Monopoly" initially resumed. Poland lost, among others, Lviv with great traditions of alcohol production. However, in the areas included in Poland, especially Wrocław and Szczecin, long tradition of distilling survived and served the production of spirits. Post-war history of the Polish spirit industry was inseparably linked with "Polmos", which in the communist period was a monopolist on the market of spirits and a successor to the state monopoly on alcohol from the Second Republic. "Polmos" was a consortium of more or less independent enterprises operating under one brand (Gołębiewski, 2014).

Vodka is undoubtedly an element of Polish culture and culinary tradition, as it is often consumed during major celebratory events and social gatherings. Alcohol, including vodka, was and continues to be an important element of cel-

ebrations understood as: “party”, “feast”, “event”, “bash”, “binge”, participated by at least two persons consuming alcohol. In the seventeenth century, such feasts often turned into drinking-bouts, which were driven by the host’s duty called *prunuka* (Dampz, 2005). It involved inviting guests and insisting on excessive eating and drinking, including alcohol, and in some form this custom is still present in the Polish culture. The reign of Stanisław August Poniatowski put an end to this Saxon debauchery, as European practices became more fashionable (Dampz, 2005) and binge drinking was no longer socially accepted (with the exception of artists, artistic bohemia). The consumption of vodka did not diminish – it became a mainstream and cheap liquor (Graf and Cieliczko, 2016).

Vodka was present, among others, in the old Polish tradition of engagement. Matrimonial contacts used to be established through “matchmakers”. A matchmaker would come to the spinster’s home, take out a bottle of vodka and ask for a cup. Having received it, he poured the vodka and asked the parents and the girl to drink it. According to the custom, the girl was supposed to be embarrassed. If the parents drank vodka, it meant that the suitor was accepted (Kuchowicz, 1977). In addition, the Polish nobility cultivated the custom of burying barrels of alcohol in the ground on the day of their son’s birth, opening them at his wedding (Tenderenda-Ożóg, 2016). Currently, vodka is less often associated with degeneration and alcoholism, instead being perceived as a drink with cultural value. Vodka undoubtedly constitutes an element of national culinary heritage and one of the attributes of Polish hospitality (Graf and Cieliczko, 2016).

3.2. Spirits tourism (spiritourism) – definition, motivations and tourist profile

When travelling to every corner of the globe to explore various aspects of culinary culture, a culinary tourist may also experience distinctive alcohols present in a given country or region. Regardless of whether a person tries one of many spirits produced on site at a distillery, or drinks a glass at a restaurant or home of the indigenous people, he or she always discovers one of the basic elements of the national culinary heritage.

Under the Act passed by the Polish Parliament on May 25th, 2012 amending the Act on the manufacture of spirits and the registration and protection of geographical indications of spirit drinks, the term “Polish Vodka” is reserved (Ustawa z dnia 25 maja 2012 r.). Article 1 of the Act reads: “Polish vodka is obtained from ethyl alcohol of agricultural origin derived from rye, barley, oats or triticale or potatoes grown in Poland, where all stages of production take place in Poland, which can be matured to give it specific organoleptic properties”. This definition protects the interests of “Polish Vodka” and Poland in the world. “Polish Vodka” is therefore something else than, for example, “Vodka from Poland”. In the case of the former, we have the guarantee that the alcohol has been manufactured in accordance with the standards set out in the Act (Zarzecki and Zarzecki, 2016).

Geographical indication identifies a spirit drink as originating in the territory of a country/region or locality in that territory, where a given quality, reputation or other characteristic of this spirit drink is essentially linked to its geographical origin. Natural, human and manufacture-related factors occurring in a given country or region are among the elements that help create distinctive products featuring a geographical indication. Although alcohols such as brandy, wine, grape-based alcohol, whisky and vodka are generic categories and can be manufactured anywhere in the EU, terms such as: “Brandy de Jerez”, “Cognac”, “Grappa”, “Scotch Whisky” or “Polish Vodka” are examples of EU geographical indications and relate to products that can be manufactured exclusively in a designated and protected area.

The first distillery in the world that opened a centre for tourists interested in the process of spirit production was “Glenfiddich” in Scotland in 1969. More than 50 years later, spirits tourism has become a fast-growing trend related to culinary tourism, especially drink tourism (Spirits tourism: <https://spirits.eu/spirits-tourism/>). It offers opportunities to savour a variety of alcoholic beverages, as well as to get to know passionate craftsmen, who manufacture

alcohol not only in large factories, but also local distilleries.

Spirits tourism allows the visitors to discover how master distillers employ old recipes and mixing techniques characteristic for their production to maintain the excellence of products developed by previous generations of craftsmen. Distillers also create innovative processes for the production of new and often exciting flavours of spirits (Spirits tourism: <https://spirits.eu/spirits-tourism/>). Adding an adjective indicating the place of origin not only gives them the possibility to highlight traditional alcohol products on the food market. It also assures the residents of a given region of their geographical and cultural distinctness and can be an incentive to foster traditions associated with the cultivation of raw materials, production and consumption of local alcohols, thus contributing to the development of drink tourism (Kosmaczewska, 2008).

In the existing Polish and foreign literature so far there have been no substantial studies aimed at presenting the phenomenon of spirits tourism. Foreign scientific literature on this topic is very limited (Martin and Haugh, 1999; Martin and McBoyle, 2006; McKenzie, 2016; Murphy and Keaney, 2018) compared to wine and beer tourism, which have been analysed by many authors in hundreds of papers, also in Poland (e.g. Charzyński et al. 2013, 2015; Mazurkiewicz-Pizło, 2013; Charzyński and Podgórski, 2017; Greinert et al., 2019).

Therefore, the authors of this paper decided to use the existing deficit of publications in this area and became interested in the above subject matter. With no commonly accepted definition of spirits tourism, the authors formulated theirs based on the acknowledgement of Polish vodka as a product that is recognizable around the world, which is a very important part of our history, tradition and culture. The listed elements can form the basis for the development of many culinary attractions predicated on vodka, and thus, in the future, will make Poland one of the main destinations on the “route of spirits”.

Spirits tourism involves “all short-term travels focused on cuisine and tourism to places famous for the production of spirits, whose primary motive is the desire to explore the culinary history of distilling and its modern state. While travelling, a spiritourist visits at least

one place associated with alcohol production, such as: a large industrial distillery, small agricultural distillery, plant producing alcoholic drinks on an industrial scale, or a local manufacture producing alcohol in a traditional way. The spiritourist has the opportunity to gain practical knowledge during workshops, see museums of alcohol, participate in events promoting a drink or purchase a characteristic alcohol as a culinary souvenir”.

The main motivations for spirits tourism (spiritourism) include:

- visiting museums of alcohol and thematic exhibitions in other establishments that are related to the former and to contemporary distilling as part of national or regional culinary heritage;
- trips to large industrial plants producing spirits, which have professional visit centres handling tourists interested in the art of distilling a particular alcoholic beverage;
- visits at local manufactures usually located in historic buildings, which have been producing alcohol for generations;
- active participation in distilling workshops organized by family manufactures producing alcohols or by specialized master distillers;
- listening to thematic lectures carried out by a distiller or bartender and participating in tasting of an alcohol or an alcohol group;
- participation in culinary events, mainly festivals, whose main motive is a particular alcohol, e.g. vodka, whisky, brandy, gin, rum, tequila;
- tasting different dishes in restaurants which are combined with the principles of serving spirits or spirit-based cocktails;
- purchasing and collecting publications related to the history of an alcohol, raw materials, production technology, types and rules of serving;
- purchasing and collecting old alcohol bottles, labels, historical advertisements or glasses once used for serving alcoholic beverages.

Spirits tourism, contrary to appearances, is a niche form of drink tourism that is not meant for everyone due to the strength of spirits.. It is aimed at those who are interested in the traditional and contemporary culture of drinking all

kinds of distillates. Spiritourists drink alcohols distilled from various types of raw materials of agricultural origin – traditional grains or potatoes, but also sugar cane juice, leaves of the blue agave, as well as different types of fruits and herbs.

Spiritourists participating in this form of drink tourism are people for whom a visit at a distillery, museum of alcohol, festival of alcohol or tasting stems from the need to deepen knowledge on the subject. After observations conducted during spirits tourism activities, the authors have identified a few common traits that make up the profile of a modern spiritourist:

- age, usually between 30 to 70 (the mean may decrease, because every year more and more young people are getting interested in strong spirits. This is due to the appreciation of various aspects of the culinary heritage, which in the era of globalization and return to locality gains special significance. Tasting regional alcohol is a manifestation of culinary patriotism in young people and it is a reason to be proud of the place where they live. They identify with the alcohol produced in the region, e.g. „Śliwowica Łącka” in Sądecczyzna or „Księżycówka” in Kujawy);
- mostly single men or travelling couples that do not have children;
- people occupying high positions, with higher education, or freelancers;
- generally, reside in large urban areas with access to restaurants or culinary events dedicated to the promotion of strong alcohols in the public space;
- people with higher income than average who use mobile banking (mobile phones, smartphones, tablets);
- they are interested in distilling and have theoretical and practical knowledge (e.g. from different publications, workshops or previous spiritourist trips);
- drink spirits more or less regularly, e.g. vodka, whisky, brandy, gin, rum, tequila or regional fruit or herbal distillates;
- purchase strong spirits during spiritourist trips as a culinary souvenir from every trip dedicated to discovering the secrets of distilling.

The spirits tourism market is currently difficult to present because it is a type of drink tourism which has not yet fully exploited the potential of tourist attractions that can be cre-

ated on the basis of alcohols specific to a given country. In the next few years it will be possible to determine its scale, because with each year the number of alcohol museums, festivals and distilleries is growing.

For the time being it can be assumed that spirits tourism destinations in the European Union are as follows: Poland (vodka), Ireland (whisky), Great Britain (Scotch whisky and gin), France (cognac), Norway (aquavit), Sweden (akvavit), the Netherlands (jenever), Switzerland (absinthe), Iceland (brennivín), Hungary (palinka), Romania (pălincă), Bulgaria (rakija), Czech Republic (plum brandy and herbal liquors), Austria (schnapps and liqueurs), Greece (ouzo), Italy (grappa), Germany (weinbrand) and Spain (brandy Marco de Jerez).

We cannot forget about other countries famous for their alcohols that are located on other continents, e.g.: Barbados, Dominican Republic, Jamaica or Cuba (rum), Mexico (tequila), Brazil (cachaça), Colombia (aguardiente), Peru (pisco), USA (bourbon), Japan (sake) or China (baijiu). Countries outside Europe also contribute to the development of spirits tourism (spiritourism). The presence of strong alcohols on their territory is a part of culinary heritage and should be used to attract spiritoursits, especially to places without specific natural or anthropogenic attractions. Combined with authentic cuisine, it is the subject of interest to all groups of culinary tourists, including those willing to learn the national culinary culture.

In 2019, the European Parliament launched a new campaign aimed at increasing the spiritourism market in the European Union. An interactive online campaign launched last year includes #SpiritsTourism and #SpiritOfEurope hashtags and aims to increase the development of tourism in distilleries as well as regions producing alcohols across the EU. According to the trade association “Spirits of Europe” seated in Brussels, distilleries operating in Europe hosted a record number of visitors in 2018 – 2 million visitors to Scotch whisky distilleries, 1.6 million spiritoursits in France and nearly a million in Ireland (Spirits of Europe: <https://spirits.eu/>). These data confirm considerable interest in alcohol culture as perceived from the point of view of tourist and culinary attractions, not through the prism of alcoholism.

3.3. Museums of vodka in Warsaw as a spiritourism attraction in Poland

Culinary museums are a relatively new category of cultural institutions on the world map of museums. However, interest in them is growing every year, and this is because they focus their activity around a particular theme, which may involve a selected raw material/food product, a specific dish/beverage, a speciality of local gastronomy or national/regional cuisine. Culinary museums are exceptional due to their exhibitions – historic and modern items related to culinary heritage, which are of particular historical and contemporary importance (Woźniczko et al., 2015).

Food culture, including alcohol, is very appealing and attracts individuals who wish to partake in active exploration of the heritage, a notion that is unrestricted by any particular time frame, as it encompasses both the past and the present. Objects presenting culinary exhibits are original institutions that tourists, regardless of their social or material status, want to see to enrich their knowledge of food and culture. Visitors to culinary museums also want to have aesthetic and emotional experiences that accompany the ceremonial of eating food and drinking (Orłowski and Woźniczko, 2017a).

Museum employees are not able to encapsulate flavours and aromas inside display cabinets. However, owing to new and exciting technologies, they are able to boost the attractiveness of their expositions (Orłowski and Woźniczko, 2017b).

Culinary museums, which are often educational centres and even modern tourist centres, use original multimedia exhibitions. Equally important are artistically arranged depictions of activities related to the subject of food and nutrition. Attractive museum sceneries, which often incorporate historic artefacts and make exceptional use of light and sound, comprehensively present a selected aspect or element of culinary or alcohol culture associated with a given region or country (Orłowski and Woźniczko, 2017a).

Museums related to food and drinks are constantly improving their tourist offer, and their number steadily increases each year. Given the popularity of cooking and the growing interest in culinary heritage, in recent years in Poland, several new culinary museums have

been established, including two museums of vodka in Warsaw. The first one is the Museum of Vodka, which opened in 2017 in the centre of the capital. The inauguration took place as part of a unique project known as “House of Vodka”, which promotes culinary traditions and Polish distilleries. The mission of the Museum of Vodka is to document the complexity of vodka-related issues and show it in historical context as a noble national alcohol and an inherent part of cultural heritage and Polish tradition (Vodka Museum: <https://muzeumwodki.pl/en/>).

The collection of the Museum of Vodka was created through the combination of two unique and rich collections of two enthusiasts, namely Piotr Popiński, Warsaw restaurateur and the originator and organizer of the Museum, and Adam Łukawski, collector and co-organizer of the institution. Collected for over 20 years, pre-war alcoholic beverages, historical bottles, carafes, glasses, books, vignettes, drink menus, advertisements, labels, banners, photographs, illustrations, advertising items and other objects illustrate a consistent story of spirits. These artefacts present the image of modern world from the perspective of production facilities, their products and people related to the distillery industry since the end of the 18th century (Vodka Museum: <https://muzeumwodki.pl/en/>).

Permanent exhibition comprises 6 exhibition areas that present and illustrate the main periods in the history of vodka production in Poland: “Beginning”, “Rise and Decline”, “Vodka and Glass”, “Pre-war Alcohols”, “The Art of Bartending” and “Modern Times”. The museum is arranged in a modern way, in shades of grey. A large number of distilling artefacts of material culture harmonizes with contemporary texts and multimedia elements, especially those related to the booming art of mixology. The permanent exhibition presents both large and local distillers and their outstanding achievements in the art of distillation, setting the tone for the collection, building a narrative and telling a story which is an important and rarely described topic in the social history of Poland and the world (Vodka Museum: <https://muzeumwodki.pl/en/>).

The culmination is a visit to the tasting area, which presents the most important achievements of international and Polish vodka producers. Spiritourists can see the most important types, varieties, flavours and aromas, and learn how to create their own compositions. They can buy souvenirs in the form of alcohol at the museum shop, allowing them to continue the experience started during the visit to the Museum of Vodka. An interesting addition is the opportunity to eat a meal at the Michelin-starred restaurant named “Elixir by Dom Wódki”, which specializes in Polish dishes and international cuisines combined with more than 500 vodkas from Poland and around the world (Vodka Museum: <https://muzeumwodka.pl/en/>).

The second museum located in Warsaw Praga-North is the Polish Vodka Museum” which opened in 2018. It is based in a historic and renovated building from 1897 in which spirit was rectified, located within the complex of the former Warsaw Vodka Factory “Connoisseur”. The museum enriches the landscape of the right-bank part of the city, introducing genius loci of the historic factory of Polish vodka into the 21st century, and above all is a tribute to all the generations of Polish distillers. The Polish Vodka Museum initiative is under the patronage of the “Polish Vodka Association” (Szumowski, 2016).

The mission of the Polish Vodka Museum is to create a world-class tourist attraction that comprehensively presents the history, heritage, tradition, as well as differences between various types of “Polish Vodka” in a modern way. An important part is raising awareness and educating the public about responsible alcohol consumption and the promotion of Polish

Vodka as a Protected Geographical Indication (Polish Vodka Museum: <https://muzeumpolskiejwodki.pl/en/>).

The museum space shows different groups of tourists the production process of Polish Vodka, raw materials used for its production, and finally taste characteristics that distinguish it from other alcohols. After walking into the Polish Vodka Museum, visitors can see interactive exhibitions, presentations and projections that tell the story of the development of vodka manufacturing technology over the centuries. Visitors can also learn a lot of information and trivia related to its influence on the development of Polish culture and international reputation of “Polish Vodka” (Polish Vodka Museum: <https://muzeumpolskiejwodki.pl/en/>).

Tourists interested in the culture of alcohol, while touring the main exhibition consisting of 5 galleries, can see a virtual workshop of a medieval alchemist, make themselves comfortable at the court and inn, analyse the distillation apparatus of Jan Pistorius from 1817, and see a reconstructed agricultural distillery. At the main exhibition, they can also learn about the functions served by Polish vodka in big politics, and discover the secrets of bartending and preparing various alcoholic cocktails.

At the end of a visit to the Polish Vodka Museum, all persons of legal age can purchase alcohol souvenirs. Thematically, they are related to the operations of the culinary museum, and above all, the offer comprises the best of Polish vodkas. Enthusiasts of Polish vodka tastings can go to a specially adapted restaurant, which is a perfect complement to the information learned during the museum visit (Polish Vodka Museum: <https://muzeumpolskiejwodki.pl/en/>).

4. Discussion and conclusions

Polish masters distillers have been honing their skills in spirits production, and achieved excellence in the production of pure vodkas and strong flavoured beverages. Traditional spirits have become a modern showcase of all culinary regions in Poland. This is done through the use of their specific and unique character, as well as engaging inhabitants of a given region in their production. The process contributes to the development of local businesses and is conducive

to maintaining proper culinary traditions and strengthening the sense of belonging to the community that has thrived in a specific area for ages.

There are museums devoted to national or regional spirits in many countries around the world (e.g. “Museum of Tequila and Mezcal” in Mexico City, “Museum of Jenever” in Amsterdam, “Havana Club Rum Museum” in Havana, “Absinthe Museum” in Auvers-sur-Oise, or “Sake Museum” in Kobe). These establishments

constitute one of the forms of maintaining culinary culture. Poland is the homeland of vodka, which has been produced in our land for centuries and is an important element of national tradition and culture. Museums of vodka in Warsaw presented in this paper are unique because they allow those interested in the production and consumption of spirits to take a thematic journey exploring the long history of vodka in Poland.

Spirits are among the oldest beverages known to mankind, thus it is hardly surprising that they often appear in museums devoted to alcohol, as well as in the so-called “great museums” on paintings of famous masters or ceramics exhibited in display cases and depicting the art of distillation. The way in which alcohol has become a permanent part of museum experiences may be a surprise. Alcoholic beverages programs have become a major source of profits for cultural institutions, and alcohol is commonly offered for consumption on the spot in restaurants and during special events.

A visit to the museums of culinary concepts located in Warsaw transports visitors to the world of spirits, and above all shows Polish Vodka as one of the main differentiators in the area of culinary specialities associated with our country, the so-called “vodka and appetizer”. Museums of this kind are undoubtedly valuable and compelling tourist attractions for any culinary traveller interested in the art of distilling.

The Museum of Vodka and the Polish Vodka Museum, as independent cultural institutions, are characterized by a huge potential in terms of spirits and, given a few years, they will bolster their activity, e.g. by expanding the museum space, organizing temporary exhibitions, publishing, carrying out more tastings or offering practical knowledge about distilling alcohol at home. It is hard to estimate what exact impact on the tourist flow these two museums will have, but undoubtedly they are bound to strengthen the positions of Warsaw on the market of culinary tourism of Europe.

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