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Naturally Polish - an unexpected boom for natural wine in Poland.

Motivation

Poland is an emerging wine market. It was historically (and culturally) associated with liquors, most prominently vodka, but in recent years alcohol consumption patterns became similar to these of Western European countries. In that, there was a huge rise in popularity in beer and wine. Recently, Polish customers are moving away from cheap generic wine brands, looking for natural, ecological and local wines. However, Poland is a marginal climate for winegrowing. While global warming helped with extending the growing season to achieve ripeness even for *vitis vinifera* varieties, it also decreased rainfall, causing serious problems in some of the warmest (and therefore most suitable) parts of the country. Moreover, there is no much tradition of winegrowing, oenology and winemaking. Still, against all odds, there are successful producers who manage to produce high quality wine in Poland.

I am Polish and I love to promote Polish wine internationally. I believe the tiny but high-quality production, especially the quirky, modern wines, deserve attention all over the world. With this thesis I want to help the world discover Polish wine, as well as provide some instructions for Polish producers on how to succeed.

Objective

This thesis investigates factors for change of patterns of alcohol consumption in Poland as well as crucial components to achieve success in production and sales of Polish natural wine.

Methodology

As resources about Polish wines are available mostly in Polish, this thesis is based on information from two Polish books, Polish wine magazines *Ferment* and *Winicjatywa* and interviews with winemakers and wine sellers.

The only internationally source used are Jancis Robinson Purple Pages, which provide somewhat crude description of Polish wine industry.

In this thesis I focus on natural wine. However, formalization and codification of natural wines is extremely hard. Indeed, there are several organizations certifying and approving natural wines. There are also associations of organic, biodynamic, ecological, etc wine producers. In European Union, vineyard can be, as any other agricultural land, classified as organic after a lengthy certification procedure.

As this is a very hard navigate and confusing for a consumer, in this thesis I have included all of wine production that is conscious of sustainability and mindful of the nature.

Results

In this section I describe three Polish wineries, focused on wine production that is conscious of sustainability and mindful of the nature as well as example of importers and sellers of natural wine in Poland.

Dom Bliskowice is a small boutique winery, located close to Vistula river in the middle of its run (and roughly half way between Warsaw and Krakow. It has always been dedicated to production of natural wine but also paid attention to other thing a successful wine needs – an image. It has a meticulous visual identity including corks printed with an easily recognizable logo. The labels are designed by young artists, brave, hard to overlook, easy to remember and to promote on social media. Their image is vivid, natural, focused on disturbing the stiff wine world.

Winnice Kojder is a different type of winery, much more pragmatic and down to earth, very much influenced by German winemaking style. This is not only because of the proximity of Germany (the winery is located in the Western Pomerania region, some 20 km from the German border and less than two hours drive from Berlin). Also, since the family owning it has long lasting ties to Berlin and Germany. Their image is of everyday luxury and mindfulness of nature.

Winnica Jura, located in Rybna, some 30 km from Krakow, is a small boutique winery owned by Joanna and Marcin Miszczak. On 4 ha, located on the gentle slope of a limestone hill, they grow several hybrids (e.g. Hiberna, Johanner) as well as Riesling, Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Pinot Gris. Cultivation was made without artificial fertilizers and sprayings and with maximum use of organic procedures. It is now fully certified as an organic agriculture. Their image is funky, energetic and modern.

Conclusions

When starting the work on this thesis I have selected three wineries, that produce organic or natural wines, are located in different parts of Poland, have different focus and target groups. I anticipated this thesis to form an overview and provide some guidelines. However, during the course of the research work it became quite clear that there are three factors of success that all of these share – wine, image and social media.