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Wine Tourism in the Valencian Community: A Comparative Analysis

El enoturismo en la Comunidad Valenciana: Un análisis comparado

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ABSTRACT

Wine tourism is increasingly considered as a strategic element in the wine producing countries of the Old World. In the case of Spain, several researchers have studied the role of wine routes in boosting the competitiveness of a territory, increasing wine production, improving the quality of life of citizens and the respect for the environment. However, to the best of our knowledge, there are no previous studies that have analyzed in a unified way the wine routes of the Region of Valencia, that is, the wine routes of Alicante and Utiel-Requena. To overcome this research gap, the study comparably analyzes these wine routes in terms of attracting wine tourists and the economic impact generated in the period 2017-2021, also relativizing the data to the average of the total Spanish wine routes. The results of the research show that both routes attract a lower number of wine tourists than the average of the Spanish wine routes. In addition, it should be noted that the Utiel-Requena route generated a higher economic impact compared to the Alicante wine route between 2017-2019, with this trend reversing in 2019. This study, therefore, contributes to the improvement of scientific knowledge in several ways, given that, first, the research provides new knowledge in the field of wine tourism in Spain and, second, there are no previous studies that have analyzed in a unified way the wine routes in the Region of Valencia.

Keywords: Wine tourism; wine routes; wine industry; Region of Valencia; economic impact.

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RESUMEN

El enoturismo es considerado cada vez más un elemento estratégico en los países productores vinícolas del Viejo Mundo. Para el caso de España, varios investigadores han estudiado el papel de las rutas del vino para impulsar la competitividad de un territorio, aumentar la producción de vino, mejorar la calidad de vida de los ciudadanos y el respeto al medio ambiente. Sin embargo, hasta donde alcanza nuestro conocimiento, no existen estudios previos que hayan analizado de forma unificada las rutas del vino de la Comunidad Valenciana, es decir, las rutas del vino de Alicante y Utiel-Requena. Para superar este vacío en el conocimiento científico, el estudio analiza de forma comparada dichas rutas del vino en términos de atracción de enoturistas y de impacto económico generado en el periodo 2017-2021, relativizando además los datos a la media del total de rutas del vino españolas. Los resultados de la investigación ponen de manifiesto que ambas rutas atraen un número de enoturistas inferior a la media de las rutas del vino españolas. Además, cabe destacar que la ruta Utiel-Requena generó un impacto económico superior en comparación con la ruta del vino de Alicante entre 2017-2019, invirtiéndose esta tendencia en 2019. La presente investigación contribuye, por tanto, a la mejora del conocimiento científico de varias maneras, dado que, en primer lugar, la investigación aporta nuevos conocimientos al ámbito del enoturismo en España y, en segundo lugar, no existen estudios previos que hayan analizado de forma unificada las rutas del vino pertenecientes a la Comunidad Valenciana.

Palabras clave: Enoturismo; rutas del vino; industria del vino; Comunidad Valenciana; impacto económico.

I. INTRODUCTION

Wine tourism refers to the symbiosis between wine production and tourism, being an experience linked to visits to vineyards, wineries and wine demonstrations in which wine tasting plays a fundamental role (Hall et al., 2000). Therefore, while winemaking is a manufacturing activity, wine tourism is a service sector activity that acts as a support to the direct sales channel in wineries.

Currently, wine tourism is considered one of the most developed tourism typologies, given that it is linked to the new patterns of tourist demands associated with short and more frequent trips focused on the search for experiences (Festa et al., 2020). In Australia, which is the fifth largest wine-producing region in the world, more than eight million tourists visit wineries each year, with more than one million wine tourists traveling to Australia from overseas, a figure that has tripled in the last two decades (Wine Australia, 2020). In the case of California (United States of America), the Napa Valley alone generated \$54.8 billion for the state in 2021, as well as 875,000 direct and indirect jobs (Wine Institute, 2021). These countries are encompassed within the so-called New World countries and are the pioneers in terms of vineyard technification and innovative practices in the development of wine tourism (Jesús-Contreras et al., 2020). In contrast, the Old World wine producing countries, such as France, Italy and Spain, are characterized by the maintenance of traditional wine production methods, as well as by a low dynamism of wine tourism (Charters, 2009).

However, wine tourism is increasingly seen as a strategic element in Old World wine producing countries (Gómez et al., 2019). In fact, European wines are no longer deeply anchored to the daily customs of the people to be what it represents in New World countries: an instrument of social stratification, evasion and pleasure (Ballesteros-Torres, 2021). As a result, the wine regions of the Old World have begun to diversify their activity through, among other means, wine tourism. In fact, the growing importance of wine tourism, given its recognized capacity to increase winery sales and favor rural development, has aroused the interest of academics from different disciplines, such as geography, economics, sociology and business management. The first research in the field of wine tourism dates back to the 1990s, focusing on the influence of wine tourism activity in rural areas and on the behavior of wine tourists (Hall, 1996). Thus, among the pioneering works on wine tourism, the books *Wine Tourism Around the World* (Hall et al., 2000) and *Explore Wine Tourism* (Getz, 2000) stand out for their relevance and disruptive character in the field, as well as the research carried out by Charters & Ali-Knigh (2002), Carlsen (2004), Getz & Brown (2006) and Mitchell & Hall (2006).

This type of tourism has been conceptualized from different points of view. On the one hand, there is a current of scholars who consider this activity as a trip aimed at discovering wineries, wine regions and the traditions of the territories (e.g. Bruwer & Alant, 2009; Hall et al. 2000; López, 2010). On the other hand, other scholars conceive such activity as a cultural experience that, in addition, serves as a local development strategy as well as a wine distribution channel (e.g., Carrasco et al., 2019; Getz & Brown, 2006; Santos et al., 2019). In the present research, we conceive of wine tourism as an activity linked to the enjoyment of the vine, the wine and the winery that aims to increase the competitiveness of the winery (it acts as a distribution channel for the direct sale of wine), territorial development (favoring the territory in which the activity takes place) and innovation (by representing a new product offered to the market).

The first scientific works related to wine tourism correspond to Australian and North American authors, given the notoriety of the activity in these wine-growing territories. However, more and more European authors are devoting their efforts to the understanding and comprehension of wine tourism activity, as is the case in Spain, where several researchers have studied the role of wine routes in boosting the competitiveness of a territory, increasing wine production, improving the quality of life of citizens and respect for the environment (Guerrero & Albert, 2012; Jiménez & Sevilla, 2008; Portela & Domínguez, 2020; Romero, 2017). However, there are several gaps in the academic literature that deserve to be addressed. In particular, to the best of our knowledge, there are no previous studies that have analyzed the wine routes of the Valencian Community, i.e., the Alicante and Utiel-Requena wine routes, in a unified way, given that, as demonstrated in later sections of the research, these routes have been analyzed separately.

There is a double interest in analyzing the wine routes of the Valencian Community in a unified way. Firstly, these routes are to be analyzed for their historical, heritage and wine value in the regions where they are located. Secondly, the aim is to compare the number of tourists they are able to attract, as well as the economic impact they are able to generate, comparing their results with those of the average of all the Spanish wine routes. The study, therefore, aims to answer the following four research questions: (1) Which wine route of the Valencian Community attracts a greater number of tourists? (2) Which wine route of the Valencian Community generates a greater economic impact? (3) Is the number of tourists on

the wine routes of the Valencian Community higher than the average of the Spanish wine routes? and (4) Is the economic impact generated by the wine routes of the Valencian Community higher than the average of the Spanish wine routes?

The present research contributes to the improvement of scientific knowledge in several ways. Firstly, the research contributes new knowledge to the field of wine tourism in Spain. Secondly, to the best of our knowledge, there are no previous studies that have analyzed the wine routes belonging to the Valencian Community in a unified way. Thirdly, the research allows us to know the situation of the routes analyzed in relation to the average of all the Spanish wine routes. Fourthly, the research allows us to identify a series of shortcomings in order to improve both visits to wineries and visits to wine museums. Fifthly, the study is useful both for professionals in the wine sector and for public officials who want to know the current situation of the wine routes of Utiel-Requena and Alicante, as well as the elements that can improve the functioning of both wine routes.

In order to achieve the research objectives, the research is structured as follows. After this brief introduction, Section 2 describes the origin and characteristics of the Utiel-Requena and Alicante wine routes. Section 3 reflects on the research that has analyzed these wine routes. Section 4 presents the methodology, Section 5 the main results and the discussion. Finally, Section 6 details the conclusions, limitations and future lines of research.

II. WINE TOURISM IN THE VALENCIAN COMMUNITY: THE UTIEL-REQUENA AND ALICANTE WINE ROUTE

The region of Utiel-Requena, also known as *Plana de Utiel* or *Meseta de Utiel-Requena*, is located in the interior of the province of Valencia, covering an area of 1,726 km². There are nine municipalities with a total of more than 37,000 inhabitants, distributed as follows: Requena (20,235), Utiel (11,478), Camporrobles (1,204), Venta del Moro (1,194), Sinarcas (1,105), Caudete de las Fuentes (711), Fuenterrubles (694), Villagordo del Cabriel (582) and Chera (490).

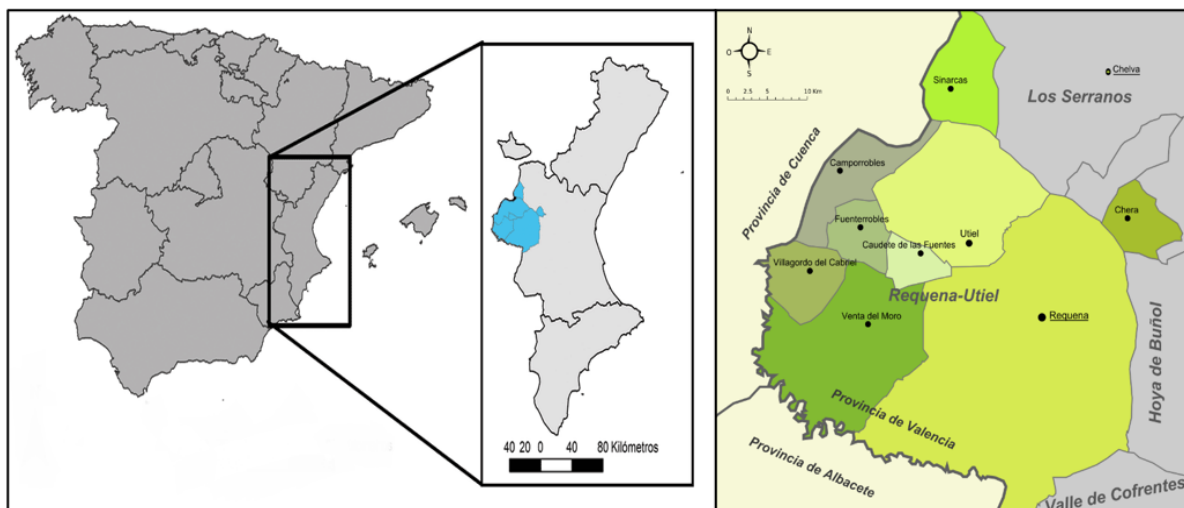
The cultivated area in this region represents barely a third of the territory (65,000 hectares), given that the region is dominated by pine and kermes oak forests, as well as wasteland as a result of the abandonment of certain marginal areas (Collantes & Agramunt, 2014). The vineyard area amounts to 36,000 hectares, while almond trees (14,000), olive trees (6,000) and cereals (9,000) play a less important role. It should be noted that the best lands, the tertiary and quaternary plains in the central part of the region, are used for vineyards in a monoculture regime, giving a special character to the landscape, as well as to the society and economy of the region. The vineyard landscape that currently exists in the region is the result of the vineyard planting process that began in the mid-18th century, which intensified from 1850 to the present day (Piqueras, 2013).

The interest in developing wine tourism dates back to the end of the nineties of the last century, when there was an important crisis in the wine sector and, as a consequence, important extensions of vineyards began to be uprooted (Collantes & Agramunt, 2014). It was then that wine tourism began to be considered as an activity that could help to economically diversify the territory, while at the same time preserving the environment in which it takes place. In this context, the design of what would later be known as the Utiel-Requena wine route began to form part of the pioneering project of the wine routes of Spain, developed by

the Spanish Association of Small and Medium Wine Cities (ACEVIN, for its acronym in Spanish) and the former Ministry of Industry, Tourism and Trade (Ruta del Vino Utiel-Requena, 2022). In fact, when the tourism product was officially launched in 2008, the Utiel-Requena wine route was one of the first routes to form part of the project, along with the routes of Bullas, Condado de Huelva, Penedès, Jumilla, La Mancha, Marco de Jerez, Montilla-Moriles, Navarra, Rías Baixas, Ribeiro, Ribera del Duero, Rioja Alavesa, Somontano and Tacoronte-Acentejo (see Figure 1).

Wine tourism is intertwined with other types of tourism in the region, such as rural, cultural and adventure tourism. Thus, while rural tourism is carried out homogeneously throughout the region, the other typologies are developed in particular areas of the region, such as the Parque de las Hoces del Cabriel (where adventure tourism predominates) or the municipality of Requena (where wine tourism is combined with cultural tourism). Therefore, the Utiel-Requena wine route is not identified with the classic concept of wine tourism, defined as signposted routes and advertised with special panels (López, 2010), but responds to a socio-territorial entity in which tourism is intertwined with other types of wine tourism to generate economic, social and environmental wealth in the territory in which it takes place.

Figure 1. Utiel-Requena wine route



Own elaboration

The operational management of the wine route has been outsourced to a private company since 2013, which is in charge of managing the corporate website (Ruta del Vino Utiel-Requena, 2022). Currently, the tourist offer of the Utiel-Requena wine route consists of 14 wineries, 10 museums, 6 rural accommodations, 4 restaurants, 3 information points, 2 wine shops and 1 hotel (see Table 1). The offer from the wineries is homogeneous in most cases, since all of them have fixed opening hours and the most common activities are visits to wineries, vineyards and tastings. In addition, most visits to wineries must be arranged in advance, since they do not open their doors without an arranged visit. Few wineries offer other types of activities or combine packages with other agents such as restaurants or tourism companies. In terms of accommodation, a distinction is made between hotels and rural lodgings. These are small establishments managed by local entrepreneurs. Of the seven establishments, there is one hotel and six rural lodgings. There are two wine shops on this route, one located in Requena and the other in Utiel. There are three tourist information

points: the wine route itself located in Requena, the information point in Utiel and the tourist information point in Requena.

Table 1. Utiel-Requena wine route member institutions

Wineries/Municipalities	
Bodega Sierra Norte	Calderón (Requena)
Finca Hoya de Cadenas	Las Cuevas de Utiel (Utiel)
Bodegas Emilio Clemente	Requena
Viñedos y Bodegas Vegalfaro	El Derramador (Requena)
Bodegas Coviñas	Requena
Dominio de la Vega	San Antonio (Requena)
Bodegas Chozas Carrascal	Requena
Murviedro Bodega Histórica	Requena
Bodegas Neleman	Casas del rey (Venta del moro)
Bodegas Nodus	Caudete de las Fuentes
Vera de Estenas	Utiel
Pago de Tharsys	Requena
Bodega Cerrogallina	Requena
Bodegas Utielanas	Utiel
Wine stores and shops/Municipalities	
Panadería Alberto Landete	Utiel
Bodega Benito	Requena
Hotels/Municipalities	
Hotel Restaurante El Tollo	Utiel
Rural accommodation/Municipalities	
La Caseta de Tharsys	Requena
Alojamiento - Restaurante Casa Cabriel	Villargordo del Cabriel
Casa Rural La Parra 1923	El Pontón (Requena)
Casitas-Refugio La Purísima	Requena
Centro de Turismo Rural Las Viñuelas	Sinarcas
Casa Rural el Pollo de Enmedio	Utiel

Museums and exhibition spaces/Municipalities	
Museo Municipal de Requena	Requena
Museo del Parque Geológico	Chera
Palacio del Cid. Museo del Vino de Requena	Requena
Ecomuseo del Hábitat Tradicional	Sinarcas
Centro de Interpretación Parque Natural de las Hoces del Cabriel	Venta del Moro
Bodegas Subterráneas de Puerta Nueva y Ayuntamiento	Utiel
Cuevas de la Villa de Requena	Requena
Museo de la Vid y el Vino "Bodega Redonda"	Utiel
Museo Municipal Utiel	Utiel
Parque Temático Arqueológico El Molón	Camporrobles
Restaurants/Municipalities	
Restaurante El Vegano	Utiel
Restaurante Despensa de Sofía	Requena
Restaurante Genaro	Fuenterrobles
Restaurante Airpull Aerodromo de Requena	Requena
Tourist Information/Municipalities	
Tourist Info Utiel	Utiel
Ruta del Vino Utiel-Requena	Requena
Tourist Info Requena	Requena

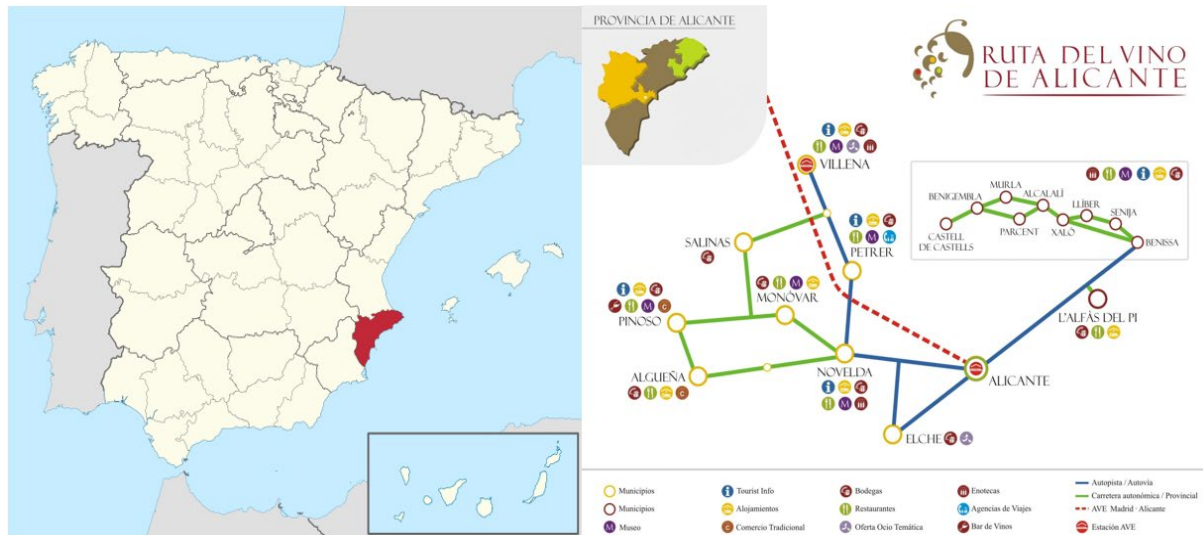
Own elaboration

Alicante's wine activity dates back to ancient times, as evidenced by the archaeological remains found in the excavations in the Marquesado area, where amphorae have been found that prove the wine activity of the region, or the archaeological site of Benimaqua de Denia, where the oldest wine press in the Iberian Peninsula and one of the oldest in Europe was found (Tomas-Miquel & Expósito-Langa, 2015). Moreover, the wines of this region have a "royal appellation" as cardinals, kings and illustrious writers testify to its fame and excellent valuation (Vergara & Gil, 2018). Such is the wine production in this province during the 19th century, its period of splendor, that practically all the towns had areas dedicated to its cultivation, creating in Cocentaina the first oenological station in Spain and in 1932 the Alicante Denomination of Origin, which currently covers a registered surface area of more than 10,500 hectares with 40 certified wineries (Ruta del Vino de Alicante, 2022).

Alicante's wine tourism activity is structured through the Alicante wine route. This route is made up of several municipalities belonging to the regions of Medio and Alto Vinalopó, located in the west of the province, and to the regions of Marina Baja and Alta, located in the north of the region (see Figure 2). In particular, the municipalities that make up

the wine route are: Algueña, Monóvar, Novelda, Pinoso, Salinas, Petrer, Villena and Elche, in the Vinalopó regions, and Alcalalí, Alfàs del Pi, Benissa, Benigembla, Castell de Castells, Llíber, Murla, Senija, Parcent and Xaló, in the Marina regions.

Figure 2. Alicante wine route



Own elaboration

The territory in which this route runs is characterized by its tourism potential, treasuring a varied cultural, heritage and gastronomic offer (Martínez & Fernández-Poyatos, 2017). In this way, the route allows capitalizing on the existing wine heritage in the region, coinciding with the process of patrimonialization experienced by the wine tourism sector in the last decade (Contreras & Medina, 2021; Suremain, 2017; Thome-Ortiz, 2017). In fact, the province of Alicante is considered by the Tourism Spaces Plan of the Valencian Community as a territory with the capacity to develop tourism products that allow diversifying its economy and, at the same time, contribute to tourism competitiveness (Guerrero & Albert, 2012). Likewise, the geographical area of the oenological route enjoys good land communication with the main cities in its surroundings (Alicante, Elche and Murcia), as well as by air, as it is located near two international airports (Alicante-Elche International Airport and San-Javier International Airport). To these factors, it is necessary to add the proximity of the route to the coast of the province, the Costa Blanca, being a consolidated "sun and beach" tourism product that, therefore, can act as an engine for the development of other complementary tourism offers (Guerrero & Albert, 2012).

The origins of the Alicante wine route date back to 2006, when the town council of Pinoso carried out a prospective study in order to develop a wine tourism activity through the integration of gastronomy and the cultural offer of the municipality. The first action carried out by the consistory was its entry into ACEVIN through the figure of partner. Subsequently, in 2007 it was getting the adhesion of the wine municipalities of the regions of Vinalopó and Marina, passing from being a local to a provincial project. This new tourism product themed around the world of wine culminated in 2009 with the support of the Provincial Council of Alicante, the Alicante Provincial Board of the Costa Blanca and the Regulatory Council of the Alicante DO, since these three organizations signed a collaboration agreement with the wine-producing municipalities of the Alicante province to design and institutionalize the Alicante

wine route. As a result of the signing of the agreement, the Alicante wine route Association was formed, an entity on which the rest of the organizations that make up the route depend and, in turn, a fundamental requirement to meet the criteria demanded by ACEVIN in order to certify the wine route as a wine route of Spain. The members of this association committed themselves to meeting the following four medium and long-term objectives (Puche & Soro, 2012): (1) to be the main wine route in the Valencian Community in terms of number of tourists and quality of the tourism product, (2) to create a network of collaborations between public and private institutions related to the tourism and wine industry, (3) to obtain funding to ensure the permanence of the tourism product over time, and (4) to design strategies that allow the appropriate distribution of tourist flows in the province. At present, the wine route is made up of 22 wineries, 17 restaurants, 10 rural lodgings, 9 information offices, 4 museums, 4 wine cellars, 4 hotels (see Table 2).

Table 2. Alicante wine route members

Wineries/Municipalities	
Bodegas Francisco Gómez	Villena
Bodegas y Mistelas Riko	Xaló
Bodegas Volver	Pinoso
Bodegas Enrique Mendoza	Alfaz del Pi
Bodega Las Virtudes	Villena
Bodegas Monóvar	Monóvar
Bodegas Sierra Salinas	Villena
Vinos de Algueña	Algueña
Casa Cesilia	Novelda
Bodegas Bocopa	Petrer
Bodega Casa Corredor	Caudete
Finca Collado	Salinas
Las Virtudes Bodega	Villena
Les Freses	Jesus Pobre
Bodegas Faelo	Elche
Bodegas Parcent	Parcent
Pinoso Bodegas Wineries	Pinoso
Bodegas Sierra Salinas	Villena
Bodega Santa Catalina del Mañan	Monóvar

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Bodegas Xaló	Xaló
Bodegas El sequé	Pinoso
Finca Balaguer	Villena
Wine stores and shops/Municipalities	
Enoteca Coop. A. Petrer	Petrer
La Bodega de Cervantes	Villena
Quiero Delicatessen	Villena
Rincón de Viña	Alicante
Hotels/Municipalities	
Hotel Restaurante Casa Serrella	Castell de Castells
The Cookbook Hotel	Calpe
Hotel Restaurante Casa Julia	Parcent
Hotel Restaurante Salvadora	Villena
Rural accommodation/Municipalities	
Casa del Maco	Benissa
Casa Les Olives	Benichembla
Casa Rural Entre Vinyes	El Pinós
Ecoalbergue La Mola	Novelda
El jardín de las eras	La Algueña
El Mirlo Blanco	Villena
La Casa de los Aromas	Villena
La Façana	Biar
Noguera Casa Rural	Xaló
Riurau de María	Parcent
Museums and exhibition spaces/Municipalities	
Casa del Mármol y del Vino	Pinoso
Masserof Inn Museo	Xaló
Museo Escultor Navarro Santa Fe	Villena
Museo etnológico	Alcalalí

Restaurants/Municipalities	
Restaurant Bon Aire	Benigembla
Restaurante Único	Albir
Restaurante Óscar	Calp
Restaurante Bar Auroch	Villena
Restaurante Bar Warynessy	Villena
Restaurante Botánico	Novelda
Restaurante Casa Sanchiz	Monóvar
Restaurante Di Trevi	Villena
Restaurante La Cuina del Galvez	Petrer
Restaurante La Pedrera	Monóvar
Restaurante La Teja Azul	Villena
Restaurante Les Pedreres	Petrer
Restaurante Mesón La Despensa	Villena
Restaurante Miguel Ángel	Villena
Restaurante Nou Arcos	Alicante
Restaurante Nou Racó	Monóvar
Restaurante Xiri	Monóvar
Tourist Information/Municipalities	
Ayuntamiento de Petrer	Petrer
Ayuntamiento Teulada Moraira	Moraira
Tourist Info Benissa	Benissa
Tourist Info Calpe	Calpe
Tourist Info El Pinós	Pinoso
Tourist Info L'Alfàs del Pí	Alfaz del Pi
Tourist Info Monóvar	Monóvar
Tourist Info Vall del Pop	Xaló
Tourist Info Villena	Villena

Own elaboration

III. THE ACADEMIC STUDY OF WINE TOURISM IN THE VALENCIA COMMUNITY

Scientific production on the wine routes belonging to the Valencian Community (Utiel-Requena and Alicante) is very scarce. In fact, only seven articles have been identified from the literature review (see Table 3).

Firstly, it is worth noting that, despite the scarcity of academic articles, there is a certain parity between the articles focused on the Alicante wine route (57.14%) and Utiel-Requena (42.86%). Secondly, the age of the articles is striking, given that the most recent one dates from 2016. This highlights the need to advance in the knowledge of the wine routes at present. Thirdly, the fact that these routes have not been analyzed in a unified manner deserves special attention. The only article based on a comparative study is that of Puche & Yago (2016), analyzing the wine tourism activity of Alicante and the Altiplano of Yecla-Jumilla as they are two regions geographically close and with certain similarities from a historical point of view. The lack of studies that analyze the wine routes of the Community of Valencia in a unified way represents an opportunity to continue advancing in the understanding of wine tourism activity in this autonomous community. Fourthly, the studies identified have an initiatory character in the field, given that most of them aim to analyze the viability and potential of these routes in the territories in which they are developed (Guerrero & Albert, 2012; Melián-Navarro & Millán Vázquez de la Torre, 2007; Millán Vázquez de la Torre et al. 2008). Fifth, the nature of the research carried out is mainly descriptive, given that most of the studies are aimed at describing the current situation of a given route (Guerrero & Albert, 2012; Melián-Navarro & Millán Vázquez de la Torre, 2007; Puche & Yago, 2016).

The analysis of the articles on the subject under study reveals three shortcomings: (1) there is a need to update the scientific production on the subject, given that the existing articles are more than five years old, (2) there are no previous studies, to the best of our knowledge, that have comparatively analyzed the wine routes of the Valencian Community and (3) the existing articles have focused on analyzing the potential and viability of the wine routes, leaving in the background aspects of utmost relevance such as the tourist attraction capacity, the economic impact or the average expenditure on the routes analyzed. To overcome these deficiencies, the present research aims to carry out a comparative study between the Alicante and the Utiel-Requena wine route to determine the tourist attraction capacity, the economic impact and the capacity to arouse interest in purchasing on each of the wine routes.

Table 3. Publications in academic journals on wine tourism in the wine routes of the Valencian Community

Authors	Journal	Wine Route	Objective
Melián-Navarro & Millán Vázquez de la Torre (2007)	Revesto	Alicante	This paper characterizes the wine cooperative movement in the Alicante DO, as well as the study of the wine tourism activity as a possible means of income in addition to the traditional one: wine production.

Millán Vázquez de la Torre et al. (2008)	Revista Turismo Visao e Aço	Alicante	The research presents an econometric study with the aim of evaluating the viability of the wine tourism activity in the wine-growing area belonging to the Alicante DO.
Clemente-Ricolfe et al. (2009)	Papers de Turisme	Utiel-Requena	The purpose of the research is to study the differences within the potential market of wine tourists in the province of Alicante, distinguishing between the current market and the people willing to engage in wine tourism, as well as to identify the maximum price they would be willing to pay.
Guerrero & Albert (2012)	Cuadernos de Turismo	Alicante	This paper aims to describe the commitment of the province of Alicante for the creation of the wine route, focusing the interest on the driving municipality: Pinoso. In particular, it analyzes the degree of implementation of the wine tourism activity in the municipality, detecting necessary measures to maximize the opportunities that this type of tourism can offer.
Clemente-Ricolfe et al. (2012)	Journal of Wine Research	Utiel-Requena	This study evaluates the differences in the potential market for Valencian wine tourism, distinguishing between the actual market and people willing to practice wine tourism. Among these, it should be noted that in the potential market there is a higher percentage of middle-aged men with university studies and medium-high income.
Collantes & Agramunt (2014)	Cuadernos de Geografía	Utiel-Requena	The study analyzes to what extent the Utiel - Requena wine route contributes to the territorial articulation of the region. For this purpose, a review of the concept of territorial articulation is carried out, as well as several interviews to public and private agents related to wine tourism in this wine route.
Puche & Yago (2016)	Cuadernos de Turismo	Alicante	The study is based on a comparison between the wine routes of Alicante and Murcia, given their potential to generate socioeconomic growth and a valuation of the landscape and heritage. This potential is based on the integral use of all territorial resources and the application of local development policies.

Own elaboration

IV. METHODOLOGY

In order to provide answers to the research questions posed, the study follows a quantitative approach with an exploratory scope, given that, as demonstrated in the previous section, the research addresses a topic on which there is no previous academic literature. Regarding the sources of information, secondary data sources have been used, since the review and combination of secondary sources can generate new knowledge (Andrews et al., 2012).

In order to study the number of tourists and the average expenditure of the routes analyzed, data provided by the Spanish Observatory of the Wine Routes of Spain (OTRVE, for

its acronym in Spanish) were used. In particular, the reports entitled *Analysis of Tourism Demand on the Wine Routes of Spain* were used. The data provided by these reports have allowed us to calculate the number of wine tourists on each of the routes and the average number of wine tourists per route, as well as the economic impact of visits to wineries and museums. It should be noted that the calculations have been made between 2017-2020, since although the reports used have been published since 2008, the information needed to make the appropriate calculations has been provided since 2017. The formulations used to perform the calculations of the present research are the following:

- Total Number of Wine Tourists (TNWT)= Number of Visitors at the Wineries on the route (NVW) + Number of Visitors at the Wine Museums (NVM)
- Economic Impact of Winery Visits (EIWV) = NVW * Average Price of the Visit (APV) + NVW * Average Spending per Visitor (ASV) at the winery
- Economic Impact of Visits to Wine Museums (EIWM) = NVM * APV + NVM * ASV
- Total Economic Impact = EIWV + EIWM

For the calculation of the economic impact, it is important to note that this work has focused on the partners of the route. In particular, within the route's partners, the wineries and wine museums have been analyzed for being the two agents on which the OTRVE provides information. In addition, in order to calculate this impact, the formulas shown have made it possible to determine the economic impact of visits to museums and wineries belonging to the wine routes based on the APV, on the one hand, and ASV, on the other, having been used in previous research, such as those of Martínez-Falcó et al. (2023a) and Martínez-Falcó et al. (2023b) to determine the economic impact of all existing wine routes in Spain and the effect of COVID-19 on the economic impact generated on Spanish wine routes, respectively.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

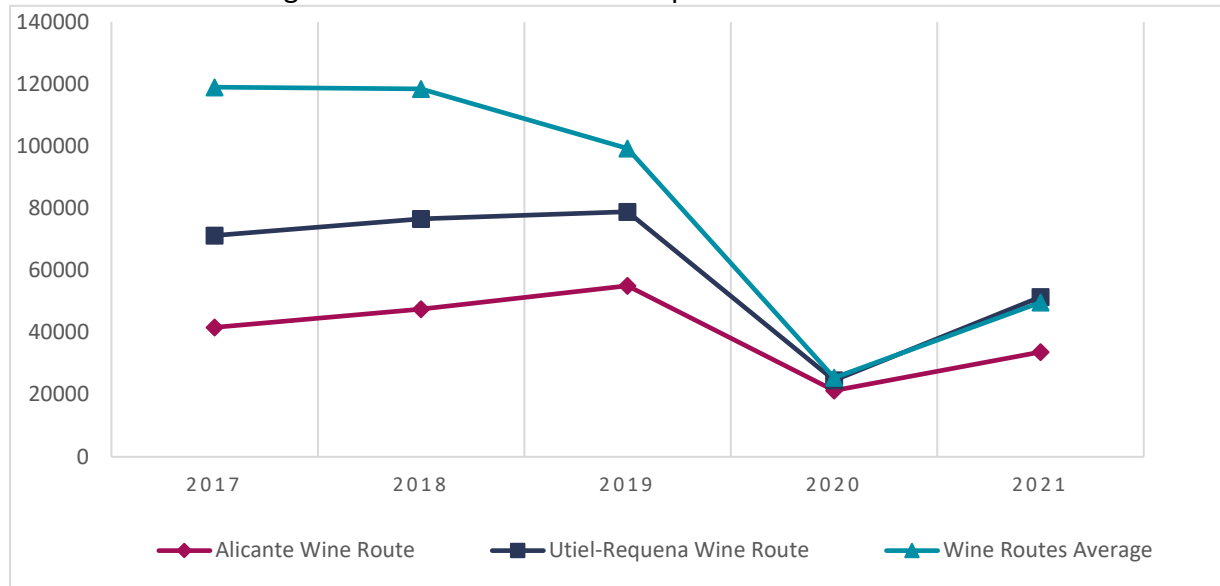
The results obtained in this research are presented in two blocks: (1) the capacity of attracting wine tourists of the wine routes analyzed with respect to the average of the total Spanish wine routes and (2) the economic impact of the wine routes analyzed with respect to the average economic impact generated by the total number of existing wine routes in Spain.

Regarding the first block, it is important to note first of all that both in the Alicante and Utiel-Requena wine routes the number of wine tourists during the period analyzed (2017-2021) is lower with respect to the average number of tourists per route (see Figure 3). Thus, while the average number of tourists is at 119,0010, the Utiel-Requena and Alicante wine routes were able to attract 71,295 and 41,662 respectively (see Appendix 1). However, both routes start since 2017 a process of convergence towards the average until 2019, given that while the number of wine tourists in both routes were increasing, the average number of wine tourists was decreasing.

Thus, if in 2017 the number of wine tourists in the Alicante and Utiel-Requena wine routes was 65% and 40% lower than the average, in 2019 this difference is reduced to 45% and 20% respectively. In 2020, on the other hand, there was a sharp drop both in the number of wine tourists in both routes analyzed and in the average number of wine tourists. This can be explained by the crisis derived from COVID-19, given that during the period of confinement and subsequent de-escalation there were mobility restrictions, with tourism being one of the

activities most affected by the pathogen. As can be seen, the average number of wine tourists and that of both routes was reduced approximately in the three cases to 24,000 wine tourists. In 2021, on the other hand, a process of recovery of wine tourism activity can be observed as a consequence of the improvement of the complicated situation caused by the coronavirus. It is important to note that this is the only year in the period analyzed in which one of the two routes analyzed, in this case the Utiel-Requena route, exceeds the data on the number of wine tourists.

Figure 3. Number of wine tourists on the Alicante and Utiel-Requena Wine Route relative to the average of Spanish wine routes



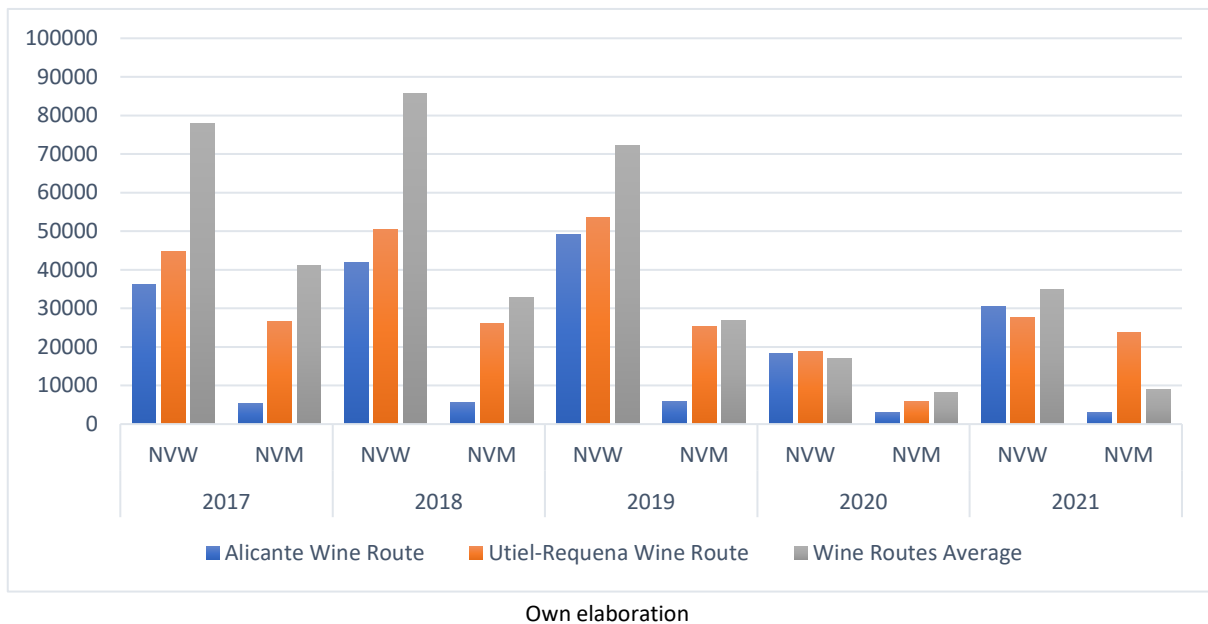
Own elaboration

If the data on the number of wine tourists in wineries and wine museums are disaggregated, it is possible to analyze in depth the pattern of demand for the tourist product of the wine routes analyzed (see Figure 4). Firstly, it can be observed that the fact that makes the difference between the two wine routes analyzed in terms of the number of wine tourists is the capacity to attract tourists to wine museums, given that although the number of wine tourists in wineries was similar in both routes, the number of wine tourists in wine museums was clearly higher in the Utiel-Requena wine route. In fact, there is a difference of more than 20,000 wine tourists in this item during the period analyzed (if we do not count the distortion effect of the year 2019). This can be explained by the difference in the offer of museums attached to the respective wine routes, since, as we have already explained in previous sections, while the Utiel-Requena wine route has 10 museums attached, the Alicante wine route has only 4. Therefore, the greater offer of museums in the Utiel-Requena wine route makes the number of wine tourists higher compared to the Alicante route.

However, despite the fact that the number of wine tourists in the wine museums of Utiel-Requena is higher than in Alicante, this item was only higher than the average in 2021. In other words, from 2017 to 2020 the average number of wine tourists attending wine museums was higher than the said wine tourists in the Utiel-Requena wine route and, evidently, in Alicante. Regarding the number of wine tourists in wineries, the Utiel-Requena wine route was able to attract from 2017 to 2020 more tourists to its wineries than the

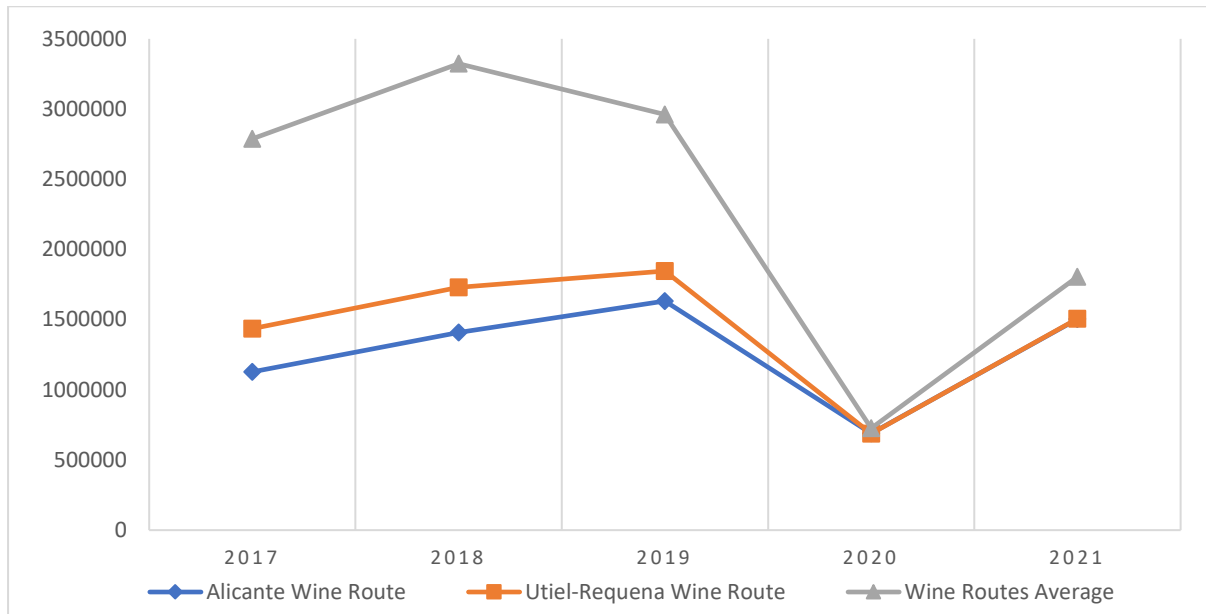
Alicante route. This fact is noteworthy since despite having the Alicante route with a clearly superior offer of wineries (22 wineries adhered in the Alicante route compared to 14 in the Utiel-Requena route), the Valencian route was able to attract a greater number of wine tourists. In 2021, however, this trend was reversed, as the Alicante route (30,574) surpassed the Utiel-Requena route (27,697) in the number of wine tourists in wineries. However, neither of the two routes was able to surpass the average number of wine tourists in wineries.

Figure 4. Number of wine tourists in wineries and wine museums on the Alicante and Utiel-Requena wine routes relative to the average of Spanish wine routes



Regarding the second block related to economic impact, firstly, it should be noted that the Utiel-Requena route generated a higher economic impact compared to the Alicante wine route between 2017-2019, reversing the trend in 2019. Thus, while in 2019 (the year of greatest economic impact for both routes) the Utiel-Requena wine route was able to generate €1,845,966.14, the Alicante wine route generated €1,632,203.43. In 2019, on the other hand, the Alicante wine route generated €689,075.40, compared to the €687,590.96 generated in Utiel-Requena (see Figure 5). Secondly, despite experiencing a process of convergence by both routes with respect to the average, there is a difference of more than €1,000,000 during the period 2017-2020. In 2020, on the other hand, the average economic impact of both routes decreased to approximately €700,000, experiencing a slight increase in 2021. As with the number of wine tourists, the sharp reduction in the economic impact has its origin in the COVID-19 health crisis, since the decrease in tourist flows was associated with a reduction in the economic impact of tourism activity. Thirdly, the process of rapprochement in economic terms of the Alicante wine route to that of Utiel-Requena during the period analyzed deserves special attention, given that, although in 2017 the existing difference amounted to 309,357.59€, it was subsequently reduced to 323,486.80€ in 2018, 213,762.71€ in 2019 and 1,878.07€ in 2021, reaching in 2020 to exceed the Valencian route by 1,484.44€.

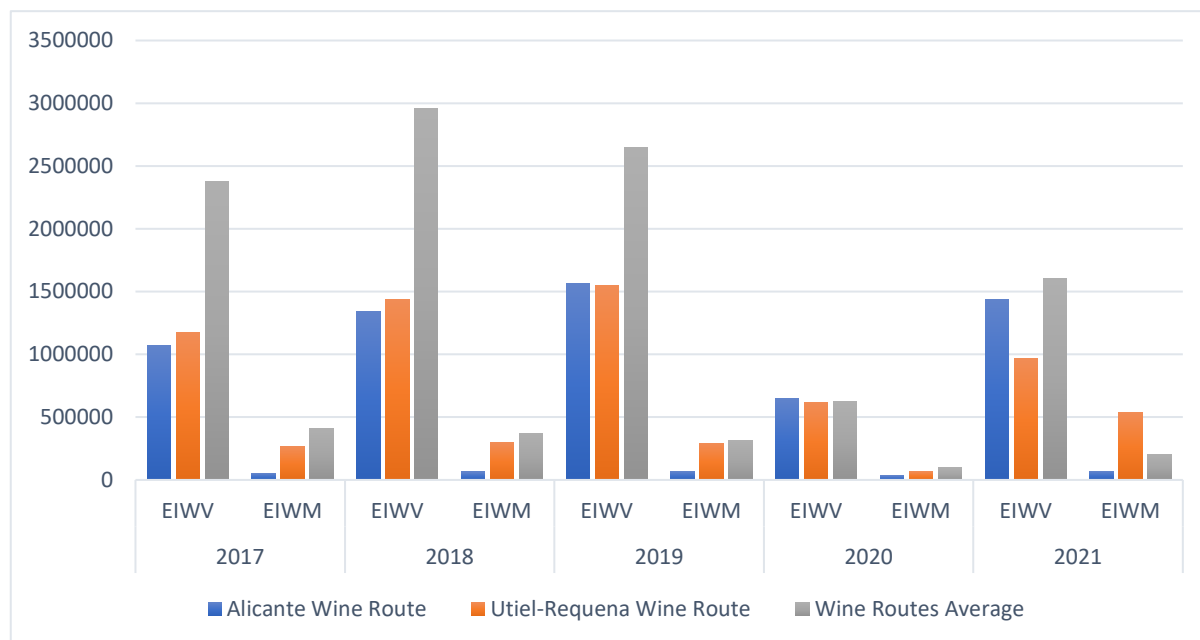
Figure 5. Economic impact of the Alicante and Utiel-Requena wine route relative to the average of Spanish wine routes



Own elaboration

If the economic impact derived from visits to wineries and visits to wine museums is broken down, the differences in terms of the economic value generated by each wine route analyzed can be seen in depth (see Figure 6). As can be seen, the impact of both routes is generated to a greater extent by visits to wineries. In fact, this item is similar for both wine routes, with slightly higher values for the Utiel-Requena route in the first two years studied and lower values for the Alicante route in the following three years. Only in 2019, the economic impact derived from visits to wineries, particularly that of the Alicante route, manages to be higher than the average impact of the Spanish wine routes. As regards the economic impact derived from visits to wine museums, the Alicante Wine Route plays a minor role, given the reduced number of wine tourists who visit its museums in relation to the Utiel-Requena wine route and the average of Spanish wine routes. As we have already pointed out above, this is due to the lower dynamism in terms of the offer of museums attached to this wine route. The Utiel-Requena route, on the other hand, is at levels close to the average, being even above the average in 2021. Therefore, the contribution of the wine museums is key for the Utiel-Requena route to generate a higher economic impact than the Alicante route.

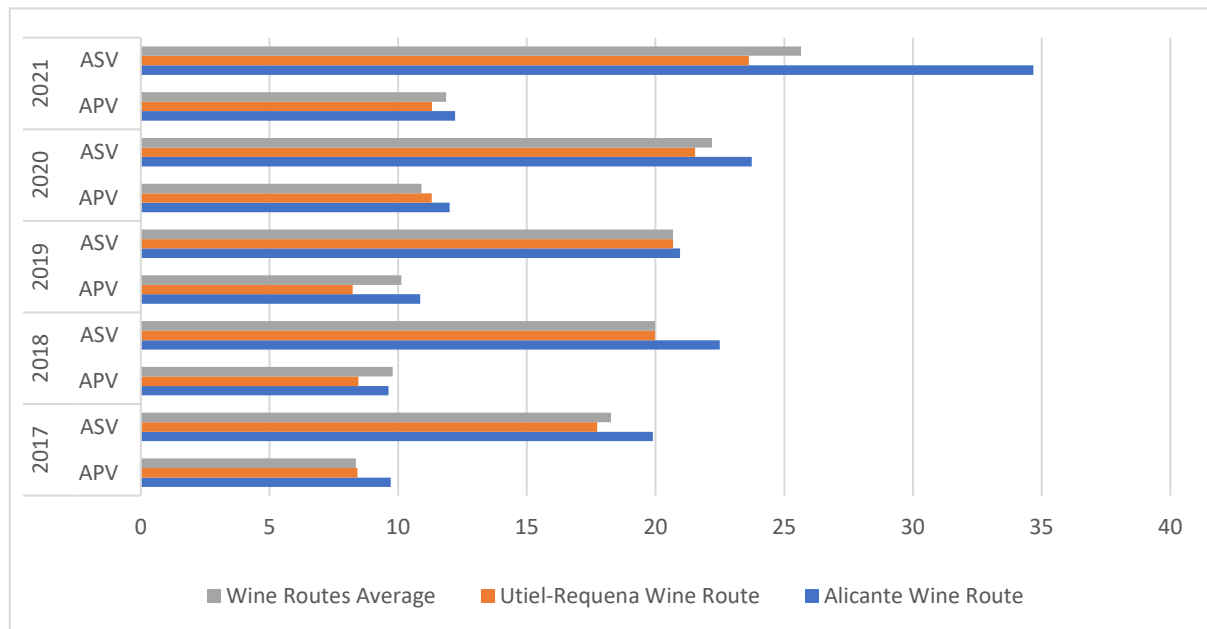
Figure 6. Economic impact of visits to wineries and wine museums relative to the average for Spanish wine routes



Own elaboration

The differences in the economic impact derived from visits to wineries can be explained by the number of wine tourists (which we have discussed above), as well as the price of the visit and the average expenditure after the activity. These two indicators also indicate the capacity of each wine route to charge a higher price than another, as well as the expenditure it is capable of generating once the wine tourism activity is over, thus highlighting the commercial skills existing in each route. In this sense, the Alicante route stands out for charging higher prices and encouraging higher spending than the Utiel-Requena wine route and the average for both indicators of the Spanish wine routes. Thus, since 2017 the price of the activity has experienced an increase of 25.74% and the expenditure after the realization of the activity of 74.27%. The Utiel-Requena route, on the other hand, charged a slightly higher price for the visit in 2017 compared to the average: €8.42 compared to €8.36 respectively (see Figure 7). However, from 2018 onwards, this item is below the average. The average expenditure, on the other hand, is always at or below the average values. This difference between the two routes in the average price of the visit and the average expenditure after the activity may be due to various factors such as: the difference in the development of commercial capacities and the degree of innovation on the part of the wineries, the attractiveness of their facilities, their proximity to the coast or the composition of the tourist packages, among others.

Figure 7. Price of the visit and expenditure after the visit of the Alicante and Utiel-Requena wine routes, relative to the average



Own elaboration

VI. CONCLUSIONS

This research is of great interest both for professionals in the wine sector, as well as for public officials who want to know the situation of the wine routes of the Valencian Community, allowing to know which route generated a greater economic impact, as well as a greater capacity of tourist attraction in the period 2017-2020. The research, therefore, also has a high implicit practical component, since it can serve as a guide for those wineries that are thinking of opening their facilities in the areas included in the Alicante and/or Utiel-Requena wine routes. In the same way, the research can be used by public administrations to, firstly, demonstrate the importance of wine tourism activity in the Valencia Community and, subsequently, to establish improvement actions to promote this activity.

The wine tourism activity in the Valencian Community is structured through the Alicante and Utiel-Requena wine routes, located in the provinces of Alicante and Valencia respectively. On the one hand, the Alicante wine route was certified in 2010 and is now well established as a tourism product that allows diversifying the economic activity of the region. On the other hand, the Utiel-Requena wine route was one of the founding routes of the Spanish Wine Routes tourism product in 2008, having been certified continuously since then. This route allows to articulate the wine tourism offer of the wineries located in the inland Valencian region of Utiel-Requena.

Firstly, with regard to the study of the capacity of attraction of tourists by the routes analyzed, the study provides evidence that in both the Alicante and Utiel-Requena wine routes the number of wine tourists during the period analyzed is lower than the average number of tourists per route. However, both routes begin since 2017 a process of convergence towards

the average until 2019, given that while the number of wine tourists in both routes was increasing, the average number of wine tourists was decreasing. This pattern is present, with certain exceptions, in the rest of the indicators analyzed. One of the main reasons that may explain the differences between the results of the routes of the Valencian Community and the results of the average of all the routes is the distorting effect caused by the first three wine routes in Spain, i.e. the Marco de Jerez, Penedés and Ribera del Duero, given that these three alone account for 50% of the number of wine tourists in Spain and, therefore, of the economic value they generate.

If we compare the number of wine tourists between the two routes of the Valencian Community, we can conclude that the Utiel-Requena wine route has a greater power of tourist attraction compared to Alicante. However, when the data on the number of wine tourists in wineries and wine museums is disaggregated, it can be seen that the fact that makes the difference between the two wine routes analyzed in terms of the number of wine tourists is the ability to attract tourists to wine museums, since although the number of wine tourists in wineries was similar in both routes, the number of wine tourists in wine museums was clearly higher in the Utiel-Requena wine route. This is explained by the difference in the number of museums attached to the respective wine routes, since, while the Utiel-Requena wine route has 10 museums, the Alicante wine route has only 4. The results reflect, therefore, a problem and an opportunity. On the one hand, the Alicante wine route will only be able to reach the tourist attraction capacity of the Valencian route if it increases its tourist offer of wine museums. On the other hand, the study shows the path that public institutions can follow to promote the development of the Alicante wine route: to add new museums to the route, if possible, and to promote the creation of new ones.

Secondly, regarding the economic impact generated by the routes, it should be noted that the Utiel-Requena route generated a greater economic impact compared to the Alicante wine route between 2017-2019, reversing the trend in 2019. As with the number of wine tourists, from 2020 onwards there is a sharp reduction in economic impact, having its origin in the COVID-19 health crisis, given that this had associated strong mobility restrictions that made tourist activity impossible. If the economic impact derived from visits to wineries and visits to wine museums is broken down, it can be concluded that the economic impact of both routes is generated to a greater extent by visits to wineries, i.e., these are the main element of the wine tourism product. In fact, the economic impact derived from visits to wineries is similar for both wine routes, with slightly higher values for the Utiel-Requena route in the first two years studied and lower for the Alicante route in the following three years. In terms of the economic impact derived from visits to wine museums, the Alicante Wine Route plays a minor role, given the reduced number of wine tourists visiting its museums in relation to the Utiel-Requena wine route and the average for Spanish wine routes. As we have already pointed out above, this is due to the lower dynamism in terms of the offer of museums attached to this wine route. The Utiel-Requena route, on the other hand, is at levels close to the average, being even above average in 2021.

Thirdly, from the analysis of the price of the visit and the average expenditure after the activity, it can be concluded that the Alicante route stands out for charging higher prices and encouraging higher expenditure than the Utiel-Requena wine route and the average of both indicators of the Spanish wine routes. This difference between the two routes in the average price of the visit and the average expenditure after the activity may be due to various

factors such as the fact that the Alicante wine route includes coastal municipalities, the difference in the development of the commercial capacities of the wineries, their degree of innovation, the attractiveness of their facilities, their proximity to the coast or the composition of the tourist packages, among others.

This research presents several theoretical and practical contributions. As far as the theoretical contributions are concerned, the study allows us to advance in the knowledge of wine tourism in Spain. In fact, to the best of our knowledge, there are no previous studies that have made a comparative analysis of the wine routes belonging to the Valencian Community. In terms of practical contributions, the research identifies a series of shortcomings to improve both visits to wineries and wine museums. In addition, the study can serve as a guide for both wineries and public institutions, given that while wineries can identify the potentialities and shortcomings of the wine tourism activity in the Valencian Community and, based on this, make investments to establish new wineries in the territory, public institutions can learn from the research the improvement actions to improve the wine routes in the region.

Despite the important contributions derived from the study, it suffers from certain limitations. In this regard, it should be noted that the research addresses the economic impact derived from visits to wineries and museums, with the total impact of wine tourism in the destinations that make up the routes being greater if other concepts such as lodging, restaurants or activity companies were considered. In addition, the information used is of a secondary nature from the OTRVE. To overcome these limitations, the authors wish to extend the analysis of the economic impact to all the agents involved in the wine routes of the Valencian Community, as well as to carry out a survey of the wineries belonging to these routes to find out the effect of wine tourism activity on their economic, social and environmental performance and, in this way, also obtain primary information.

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CONTRIBUCIONES DE LOS AUTORES:

The four authors of this study have contributed equally in all phases of the research process. Each has played an integral role in the conceptualization, methodology, data collection, analysis and writing of the paper.

APPENDIX 1

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Number of wine tourists					
Alicante Wine Route	41,662.00	47,507.00	55,068.00	21,334.00	33,696.00
Utiel-Requena Wine Route	71,295.00	76,627.00	78,904.00	24,628.00	51,492.00
Wine Routes Average	119,009.93	118,455.16	99,236.58	25,447.59	49,752.73
Economic impact					
Alicante Wine Route	1,127,214.10	1,407,201.77	1,632,203.43	689,075.40	1,504,296.94
Utiel-Requena Wine Route	1,436,571.69	1,730,688.57	1,845,966.14	687,590.96	1,506,175.01
Wine Routes Average	2,787,776.41	3,322,943.39	2,961,261.41	725,926.14	1,805,979.60

	2017		2018		2019		2020		2021	
	NVW	NVM	NVW	NVM	NVW	NVM	NVW	NVM	NVW	NVM
Alicante Wine Route	36,228.00	5,434.00	41,822.00	5,685.00	49,137.00	5,931.00	18,246.00	3,088.00	30,574.00	3,122.00
Utiel-Requena Wine Route	44,757.00	26,538.00	50,440.00	26,187.00	53,678.00	25,226.00	18,830.00	5,798.00	27,697.00	23,795.00
Wine Routes Average	77,904.22	41,105.70	85,746.48	32,708.68	72,330.71	26,896.23	17,130.34	8,317.25	34,930.00	9,041.55
	EIWV	EIWM	EIWV	EIWM	EIWV	EIWM	EIWV	EIWM	EIWV	EIWM
Alicante Wine Route	1,072,711.08	54,503.02	1,342,904.42	64,297.35	1,563,047.97	69,155.46	652,112.04	36,963.36	1,433,614.86	70,682.08
Utiel-Requena Wine Route	1,170,395.55	266,176.14	1,434,513.60	296,174.90	1,551,830.96	294,135.16	618,188.90	69,402.06	967,456.21	538,718.80

Wine Routes Average	2,375,48 6.20	412,29 0.21	2,959,38 1.87	369,93 5.17	2,647,65 1.43	313,60 9.99	626,36 8.66	99,557 .48	1,601,27 9.01	204,70 0.59
	APV	ASV	APV	ASV	APV	ASV	APV	ASV	APV	ASV
Alicante Wine Route	9.71	19.90	9.62	22.49	10.86	20.95	12.00	23.74	12.21	34.68
Utiel-Requena Wine Route	8.42	17.73	8.46	19.98	8.23	20.68	11.30	21.53	11.31	23.62
Wine Routes Average	8.36	18.27	9.79	19.98	10.12	20.68	10.90	22.19	11.86	25.65