

Chapter 10

Wine Tourism and Wine Vacation as a Cultural and Creative Industry: The Case of the Bullas Wine Route



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Abstract Wine is a part of the Mediterranean culture that has gradually taken root in other parts of the world. Every single wine is an artistic creation that emerges in a terroir, combining a sample of physical and cultural traits such as grape variety, soil, planting, yields and winemaking. It reflects a culture, based on natural conditions, knowledge, and rituals that are passed on through generations, forming part of the cultural identity and heritage.

Academic interest in wine tourism has grown as the wine industry has developed, diversifying its supply of services. This interest has partly been generated by the concern for creating value and the need to look for sustainable business activities allowing local development. Thus, most of the literature has an economic focus, interpreting wine tourism and wine tourism vacation as a way to revitalize rural areas in decline, a context of direct sale and promotion, or a marketing opportunity to position the brand using a specific image.

The link between culture, intangibles and the economy is complex and requires an open approach. Thus, in this chapter, our purpose is to present wine vacations and wine routes as a product of the wine industry that leverages local cultural traits to create wealth, contribute to sustainable development and preserve cultural heritage.

To achieve this goal we use a case study of the Bullas Wine Route in Murcia (Spain). Archaeological discoveries date the existence of vineyards and wine activity in this area to the Roman era. More than 200 traditional wineries still remain,

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some of them are in operation since the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. History and Culture form the framework of a recent innovative wine route project based on a participative and sustainable model of social, economic, and environmental development. This case study has been selected as it presents ethnographic, historic, cultural, recreational, productive, social, landscape and environmental synergies, conforming an initiative of great interest.

Keywords Wine vacation and tourism · Route of wine · Case study of Bullas Wine Route (Murcia Spain) · Cultural heritage · Sustainable development

10.1 Introduction

The global financial crisis has demonstrated the need for new sectors to drive innovation and economic growth. The cultural and creative industry has been successful in innovating and exporting creative technologies to other industries (Fleischmann, Daniel, & Welters, 2017). Companies have reacted by applying user-led innovation processes that allow them to increase markets, quality of products (which better meet customers' preferences) and reduce risks (Sniukas, 2016).

Rural contexts pose specificities that need place-based analysis and confirm the importance of place-making processes. Following Woods (2007), globalization produces new ruralities and the reconstruction of rural spaces under a globalized environment. This has to be led by focusing on the interaction between local and global actors, human and nonhuman actors, in a hybrid relational model where networks (based on economic, social, ecological and cultural streams) connect rural locations with other parts of the world, permitting the mobilization of local resources and the creation of new development paths. These new trajectories in rural transformation require the re-dimensioning of capital, resources and rural connections to profit from the geographical opportunities and to encourage rural heritage commodification.

Rural actors can respond to socio-economic changes and political incentives by innovating and restructuring their spaces to engage in the service economy as tourist entrepreneurs (Hjalager, 1996). Rural landscapes and environments are perceived as genuine and authentic, constituting a context for a range of recreational activities for non-rural visitors (Silva, 2014).

The link between culture, intangibles and economy is complex and requires an open approach. Thus, in this chapter, our purpose is to present wine vacations and wine routes as a product of the wine industry that leverages local cultural traits to create wealth, innovate, contribute to sustainable development and preserve the cultural heritage. In this sense, wine routes should be considered part of a cultural and creative industry.

To achieve this goal we use the study case of the Bullas Wine Route in Murcia (Spain). Archaeological discoveries date the existence of vineyards and wine activity in this area to the Roman era. History and Culture form the framework for a

recent, innovative wine route project based on a participative and sustainable model of social, economic and environmental development. This study case has been selected as it presents ethnographic, historic, cultural, recreational, productive, social, landscape and environmental synergies, conforming an initiative of great interest.

This chapter is organized into six main sections. After this introduction, the second section is devoted to defining the concept of cultural and creative industries. The third section presents a review of the academic literature in order to establish the relationship between culture and cultural heritage in the wine sector. The fourth section describes the “Wine Routes of Spain” product, in which the Bullas Wine Route is integrated. The fifth section presents the study case and we discuss the information collected and its contributions to the literature. The sixth section presents the main conclusions.

10.2 Cultural and Creative Industries: Definition and Role in Economic Development

The concept of “cultural industry” comes from the Frankfurt School. Since T. Adorno and M. Horkheimer first developed the idea of the culture industry in 1944, the term has taken on a broader meaning, not without controversy and tensions. These authors’ intention was to describe the standardized mass production of cultural merchandise, such as films, radio programs, magazines (Su, 2015), identifying different branches of culture, forming a system that transcended the notion of art towards a concept of business. Following Hesmondhalgh and Pratt (2005: 6), all industries can be considered cultural because they produce goods and services that share the network of meanings and symbols that we know as culture, but it is also possible to recognize that the core concern in cultural industries is the symbolic, aesthetic and artistic nature of the output.

In the late 1990s, the term “creative industries” was coined to refer to “those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property” (DCMS, 2001, 5). These sectors were reduced in 2015 to a list of nine: Advertising and Marketing; Architecture; Crafts; Design: Product, Graphic and Fashion design; Film, TV, Video, Radio and Photography; IT, Software and Computer Services; Publishing; Museums, Galleries and Libraries; Music, Performing and Visual Arts (DCMS, 2015, 32).

Nevertheless, a wider conception explains that culture and economy are inherently interwoven (Pitts, 2015). Cultural and creative industries have been intrinsic to the development of modern industrial economy. Moreover, creativity and culture cannot be isolated from production and consumption but are common to them (Freeman, 2012). Following Galloway and Dunlop (2007), there are five competing conceptions that allow creative and cultural industries to be defined as a separate

industry: creativity, intellectual property, symbolic meaning, use-value and joint goods. Creativity is not an exclusive trait of the creative industry, but what differentiates it here is the role it plays. Neither is intellectual property specific to the cultural and creative industry; in this case, the distinction is in its creation and use. Thirdly, the symbolic meaning refers to goods whose economic value derives from their cultural value, with the latter being preeminent. A further trait refers to the value of use offered by cultural and creative goods. Finally, the symbolic and functional values form a joint element.

None of the previous qualities is exclusive to the cultural and creative industries and they seem potentially applicable to all industries, but the difference is the cultural nature of the good or service. What makes an industry “cultural” is its consumption, more than its production (Miller, 2009): consumers demand commodities for their material and social needs and also for the symbolic power derived from them (Pitts, 2015). The costs of cultural products are less related to their resources and more to establishing taste (Freeman, 2012).

Considered an industry, cultural and creative activities are increasingly being positioned at the vanguard of global economic growth, constituting a factor for economic growth (Fleischmann et al., 2017; Flew, 2014; UNESCO, 2013). In 2015, their value was calculated as 3% of world GDP, creating more than 30 million jobs (EY, 2015). It is one of the most dynamic sectors, whose growth rate exceeds the average overall growth rate in many developed and developing countries (Yu, Jin Hong, Zhu, & Guo, 2014).

Besides this direct contribution to economic growth, authors are now focusing on the indirect contribution of creative industries by means of innovation (Lee & Rodríguez-Pose, 2014). Industries that purchase creative services present a stronger performance (Bakhshi, McVittie, & Simmie, 2008). In general terms, the impact of creative industries on innovation systems stems from “knowledge spillovers” and “learnt innovation” (Lee & Rodríguez-Pose, 2014).

The relationship between cultural and creative industries and economic growth is robust: European regions with the highest income levels have the greatest concentration of creative and cultural industries (Power, 2011), with this being a circular relationship (Marco-Serrano, Rausell-Kosterb, & Abeledo-Sanchis, 2014). This means that the prosperity of a region drives the growth of employment and income creation in cultural and creative industries.

Nevertheless, the estimates of the size and economic contribution of the cultural industry to the global economy depend on the definition of the term. Different models (see Throsby, 2008) propose different classification systems to define cultural industries. Among them, the Concentric Circles Model identifies four layers into which the different activities can be classified: the core creative arts, other core cultural industries, wider cultural industries and related industries. Museums, heritage services and architecture are included in the second, third and fourth circles respectively. Considering that wine routes comprise a sample of activities related, among others, to visits to cellars and wineries (some of which are true monuments): visits to wine museums and interpreting centres, recipient agencies, guided tours, visiting centres at the vineyards and tasting services. They all revolve around wine,

which is a unique and creative product that depends on *terroir* characteristics and oenologist *savoir-faire*. Thus, we can conclude that wine routes are part of the cultural and creative industry.

10.3 Culture and Cultural Heritage in the Wine Sector and Wine Routes

Global wine markets are undergoing radical transformations from the producer and consumer perspective, mainly as regards new actors, new preferences and a changing environment. More than three quarters of world trade, production and consumption are still related to the traditional European producers, but a growing proportion of the global market is being provided by “New World” countries (Anderson, 2004). The rapid growth of wine exports from countries without a tradition in production is remarkable.

In this context of growing competition, producers can leverage the regional brand image to strengthen their sale strategy, because the perceived quality of a region increases expectation of the quality of wines in sub-regions or denominations inside this region (Johnson & Bruwer, 2007).

The exploitation of cultural heritage and local identity has sometimes been related to marketing strategies of local wine producers (Riviezzo, Garofano, Granata, & Kakavand, 2017). The French concept of “*terroir*” is very important in viticulture as it refers to environmental conditions where grapes are grown (van Leeuwen & Seguin, 2006; Vaudour, 2002). The *terroir* encompasses not only physical conditions such as climate, ground, humidity and hydric conditions but also human action (the agronomics). It has been demonstrated that a great *terroir* emerges when there is a convergence of the socioeconomic conditions favourable for the establishing of a wine producing system oriented to quality (van Leeuwen & Seguin, 2006). In addition, with regard to relationships, the patterns that regulate, develop, stress or interrupt routinized ways of working explain how practices in the wine sector are interdependent, creative and emergent.

In this sense, a set of historical, environmental and economic conditions facilitates two different processes in wine production (also in other agricultural products): an enterprise can legally (by means of Denominations of Origin or Controlled Denominations) declare the heritage value of the characteristics of its *terroir* as a way of claiming its authenticity and by extension, its quality, while product salience establishes its uniqueness (Gade, 2008). In addition, the *terroir* offers wine producers certain potentialities as a way to exploit local identity and cultural heritage in their marketing strategies (Riviezzo et al., 2017).

The concept of cultural heritage, a growing phenomenon with a changing structure over time, has evolved from an objective idea to an organic, multifunctional concept, a socioeconomic dimension integrating the various perspectives from a great variety of academic fields that interact and complement one another, incorporating not only monuments but also people; not only the objects but also the

functions, and not only preservation per se but also preservation as a tool for sustainable use and development.

Culture and cultural heritage influence social and economic development by means of social capital construction, providing a variety of community meeting-points and spaces for social integration and inclusion, working as a source of identity and local pride and generating reasons for collective action.

Ordinary landscapes reveal the interaction of people and places, especially the places to which people belong and from where a part of their shared identity derives (Groth, 1997). Vernacular heritage is the expression of a community's culture as it draws on the relationship of people with territory (ICOMOS, 1999). In rural areas, it is composed of buildings representing old crafts, rural life and agricultural activities. Some now serve as monuments while others are used for tourism purposes and for commercial and entertainment uses (Cano, Garzón, & Sánchez-Soto, 2013).

This interaction between people and places leads the researcher to the concerns of wine tourism sustainability: minimizing the negative impact on the environment, committing to long-term economic development and respecting local culture. The World Wide Fund for Nature defines sustainable tourism and associated infrastructures as those that “both now and in the future operate within natural capacities for the regeneration and productivity of natural resources; recognize the contribution that people and communities, traditions and lifestyles make to the tourism experience; accept that these people must have an equitable share in the economic benefits of tourism; are guided by the wishes of local people and communities in the host areas” (Tourism Concern and WWF, 1992).

10.4 Wine Routes and Oenotourism in Spain

Wine is one of the signs of Spanish identity and its economic, social and environmental standing makes it extraordinarily important for the country (Plataforma Tecnológica del Vino, 2017). The surface of vineyards in Spain accounts for 30% of the total surface in the European Union and around 14% of the World's vineyards. Spain is also the world's leading exporter (in terms of volume) and the importance of the wine sector in the national GDP is 1%. However, its importance goes beyond these figures. The wine industry in many cases has facilitated settlement of rural populations, recovery of grape varieties in decline, environmental protection of ecosystems, investment in R + D + I and innovative business administration models, and the revaluation of the sense of belonging in the population involved in viticultural activities (Hernández, Alonso, & Pueyo, 2013). In addition, the wine sector has demonstrated potential to become an ally of other economic activities such as gastronomic and oenological tourism, creating, in turn, highly interesting synergies.

Tourism contributes significantly to Spanish employment and GDP creation, 13% and 11.1%, respectively (INE, 2006) and is one of the drivers of the national economy. Novel types of tourism associated with heritage, health or gastronomy

have boosted and diversified the supply of tourism products. More specifically, wine tourism has emerged as a force, linked to cultural tourism, eco-tourism, and gastronomic tourism and consisting of a variety of activities that relate leisure and recreation to wine production and culture (Hall & Mitchell, 2000). Over the last decade, the interest of the research community in wine tourism has grown as fast as the industry has developed and diversified, notably in Europe but also in the “New World”. In part, this interest derives from the concern for new sustainable economic activities supporting local development; in this sense, wine tourism can be a way to revitalize declining rural areas, a context in which to direct sales or a marketing opportunity at positioning the brand with a concrete image (Cavicchi & Santini, 2014).

Research in oenotourism has emphasized the representative consumer variables that affect the evaluation of the tourist experience, understood as an individual perception generated in the context of interactions and resource integration (Bjork & Sfantla, 2009). This is of great importance in wine tourism, where tourists demonstrate a higher degree of satisfaction and intention of recommending the experience when they have more control on what occurs during the reception of tourist services or when they actively participate in these services (Binkhorst & Dekker, 2009). In this sense, the value generated by the co-creation or the active participation in the experience is an integrated process between tourists, services providers and/or establishments (Mathis, Kim, Uysal, Sirgy, & Prebensen, 2016).

Founded with the support of the Ministry of Industry, Energy and Tourism and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Environment, the Spanish Association of Cities of Wine (*ACEVIN*, its acronym in Spanish) has developed the product “*Wine Routes of Spain*”. This consists of a selection of 27 routes located in winemaking territories, aiming to create a concept of tourism based on wine culture across all of Spain. This product offers various activities such as tours around villages with a rich cultural, natural, archaeological and artistic heritage that share the common denominator of wine.

Architecture is paired with wine in different ways across the *Wine Routes of Spain*: from the vernacular buildings devoted to wine production and storage to the most modern installations driven by ground-breaking architecture, the work of prestigious architects such as Frank O. Gehry (Bodegas Marqués de Riscal), Iñaki Aspiazu (Bodegas Baigorri), Santiago Calatrava (Bodega Ysios), Norman Foster (Bodegas Portia) or Richard Rogers (Bodega Protos).

Other expressions of culture and heritage are also present on the *Wine Routes of Spain*, which pass by cultural sites of notable value: the Roman site of Las Médulas (El Bierzo); the city of San Cristóbal de La Laguna (Tacoronte-Acentejo); the Cathedral of Jerez (Jerez de la Frontera); the Mosque-Cathedral of Cordoba (Montilla-Moriles); the Cultural Park of Vero (Somontano); the Don Quixote villages (La Mancha) or the numerous archaeological remains and medieval constructions in Navarra, Penedès, Rivera de Duero or Utiel-Requena.

Finally, the *Wine Routes of Spain* are located within areas of rich environmental and ecological heritage. In addition to the unique environment generated by vine cultivation, some of the routes pass by valuable natural environments such as the

Table 10.1 Partners of the wine routes of Spain

Partners of the routes	
Wineries	602
Accommodation	376
Restaurants	308
Thematic leisure	106
Museums and centres of interpretation	86
Tourism offices	84
Wine bars	79
Shops	65
Wine cellars (ENOTECAS)	53
Agencies for reception of visitors	35
Transport business	14
Services of wine therapy	12
Agrofood industries	12
Other services	11
Digital business	10
Tourist guides	9
Centres in vineyard for visits	6
Services of tasting	3
Total	1,871

Number and type

Source: ACEVIN (2018)**Table 10.2** Organizations member of the wine routes of Spain

Municipalities	543
Boards of regulation (origin denomination)	28
Other organizations	47
Total	618

Source: ACEVIN (2018)

Natural Park of the Mountains and Canyons of Guara (Somontano); the River Vero (Somontano); the Natural Park of Moncayo (Campo de Borja); the Duero River valley (Ribera de Duero).

Under the framework of these three aspects of heritage, the *Wine Routes of Spain* offer a varied set of services that can be described in the following dataset (Tables 10.1, 10.2 and 10.3):

All these data demonstrate the quantitative importance of the *Wine Routes of Spain* product, the analysis of which should also consider its qualitative importance. More than 600 wineries utilize this context for promotion and direct selling and as a marketing opportunity in order to position their brand with a specific image, as suggested by Cavicchi and Santini (2014). The magnitude of the services complementary to winemaking activities is also remarkable if we consider that they are all developed in rural environments, outside the scope of traditional Spanish tourist destinations, contributing to the sustainable development and maintenance of population in rural areas.

Table 10.3 Accommodation; number and type

Category	Number	Seating
Hotels 5*	8	952
Hotels 4*	51	4049
Hotels 3*	40	2296
Hotels 2*	31	903
Hotels 1*	11	180
Guest houses	12	308
Apartments	33	449
Rural houses	166	1066
Hostels	3	46
Camping	4	427
Other seating	17	116
Total	376	10,792

Source: ACEVIN (2018)

10.5 The Bullas Wine Route

10.5.1 The Context of the Bullas Wine Route¹

The Bullas Wine Route is structured around the relatively recently established Bullas Denomination of Origin. It covers the municipalities of Bullas, Calasparra, Caravaca de la Cruz, Cehegín, Lorca, Moratalla, Mula, Pliego, Ricote, Cieza and Totana, all of which are in the province of Murcia. They were awarded the certificate of denomination of origin in 1994 and belong to the *Wine Routes of Spain* consortium.

Located in the Southeast of Spain, between the Mediterranean Sea and the mountains of the interior of Andalusia, the area has very hot summers. However, the climate is colder than in the province's other Denomination of Origin, as it has sudden icy winds coming down from the mountains. Rain is scarce but torrential. Under these conditions, vineyard cultivation is a traditional and ancient activity in the area, well adapted to its soils, altitude (ranging from 400 to 810 m) and scarcity of water. The more traditional and predominant system of cultivation is non-irrigated and the most typical grape variety is the red *Monastrell*, indigenous to this denomination of origin, and characterized by its intense blue-purple colour which constitutes the symbol of identity of these wines.

Due to the natural conditions and the limited farming area, wine production in this Denomination of Origin is limited in the context of Spanish total production (0.11%). The majority is bottled and destined to the national market. Only 24% of the production is exported. However, the uniqueness of the *Monastrell* grape adds

¹The information in this section comes from the *Regulatory Board of the Denomination of Origin of Bullas*, the *Ministry of Agriculture, Fishing, Food and Environment* and the *Mancomunidad de la Valle del Ricote*.

an element of differentiation, which allows production to be included in the exclusive segment.

The village of Bullas (11,500 inhabitants) is located 56 km northwest of the city of Murcia (a medium-size city, capital of the province with the same name). The first human settlement in Bullas dates back 4000 years. There are also remains of Roman settlements in archaeological farming villas such as *Fuente Mula*, *Fuenblanquilla*, *La Loma* or *Los Cantos*. A number of marble statues found at the last of these archaeological sites, one of which was called “Boy Bacchus” or “The Grape Boy”, evidence the relationship of this territory with wine production since the Roman era. The architectural remains permitted the documentation of a 1500 m² rectangular *praetorium*, belonging to a rural villa built around a central patio. The analysis of the archaeological remains dates the villa’s foundation to the period of the Claudius and Nero administrations (first and second centuries of the Christian era). In addition, Bullas is 20 km from Caravaca de la Cruz, a Templar city that is one of the World’s five holy cities.

The natural heritage complements this wealth of cultural attractions with natural sites such as “El Carrascalejo”, scattered with vineyards, ideal for hiking due to its signposted north-west green route; the natural waterfall of “El Usero”, an excellent place for swimming; and “Molino de Abajo” with interesting archaeological remains of a Roman Villa. In addition, the Bullas area is near the Ricote Valley, characterized by the gorges, vertical walls, ravines and gullies shaped by the Segura Riverbed, where numerous tourist routes, eco-routes and adventure tourism activities can be experienced.

The Bullas Wine Route comprises seven wineries, the Museum-house of Don Pepe Marsilla and the Museum of Wine. This acts as a centre for services and activities related to the tourist and cultural promotion of Bullas and its surrounding production area. The Museum includes a didactic exhibition on the processes involved in wine production, separating the traditional methods from current ones. It is located in an old winery dating from the nineteenth century (the Melgares de Aguilar family’s winery) and preserves most of its original elements covering an area of more than 1400 m². This winery can produce some 350,000 l of wine in its 112 clay barrels, being one of the biggest wineries in the region.

The Museum-house of Don Pepe Marsilla is an ethnographic museum in a nineteenth century house where visitors learn about the atmosphere and way of life in this rural area in the late nineteenth century. Another interesting place to visit is the “Bodega de la Balsa”, which is an old cellar currently housing the headquarters of the Regulatory Board of the Bullas Denomination of Origin.

The route also includes the following wineries: Bodegas del Rosario; Bodegas Madroñal; Bodega Molino y Lagares; Bodega Monastrell; Bodega San Isidro; Bodega Balcona. All of these can be visited and other activities can be experienced including wine tasting; wine tasting with comments from a sommelier; sale of wine and other products; events celebration; or visits to vineyards.

According to data from ACEVIN (2018) the Bullas Wine Route received 21,612 visitors, of whom a majority of 17,383 were interested in museums and 4229 in wineries. This trend is contrary to that of the total sample of Spanish wine routes,

where 65% of visitors were interested in wineries. The majority of visitors were Spanish (15,102), spending an average of €12.10, a long way from the €40.54 that visitors spend in Ribera de Duero wineries. November was the month with the largest number of visits.

10.5.2 The Bullas Wine Route

In order to complete the previous information, an in-depth interview was conducted with Francisco Carreño (Vice-president of the Bullas Denomination of Origin) and Francisco Puerta (Manager of Bodegas del Rosario, the most important winery in the Denomination of Origin). The following paragraphs summarize and discuss the information they provided.

The Bullas Wine Route is linked to the Bullas Denomination of Origin from a territorial point of view as all the route's villages, museums and wineries are included in the Denomination of Origin; they are also linked from an administrative point of view. For these places, the wine route constitutes an opportunity for profit and commodification of the rural heritage and the wine culture in the Bullas area, allowing rural actors to innovate and enter the tourism industry, as suggested by Hjalager (1996). This is highly important for establishing population, avoiding depopulation of rural areas and generating virtuous circles between cultural heritage, social capital and sustainable development.

The increase in the mean level of income makes potential clients appreciate this type of luxury goods and services, valuing not only the quality of wines but also the environmental and historic assets. Thus, following Silva (2014), new urban environments perceive this rural setting as unique, genuine and authentic; Carrasco (2005, 2007) explains how increased income increase moves societies towards post materialist values, allowing them to attach more importance to aspects related to sustainability and the ethical aspect of consumption, defining them as luxury goods as did Francisco Carreño.

The Bullas Wine Route, as a product, has a cultural nature (in line with Miller, 2009) where creativity has an important role to play in order to increase and enhance services: a wide range of aspects has still to be developed, such as the exploitation of the area as a land of frontiers (between Muslims and Christians in the Kingdom of Granada); wider integration with the Roman culture; appreciation of the natural local ecosystem as compared to the nearby desert ecosystem in Almería, etc. The value of the services on offer in the route stems from their cultural value (symbolic meaning) more than the cost of production.

The convergence between wine routes and wineries is evident and it is difficult to determine the benefits each provides for the other. However, it is undeniable that the route offers the wineries a unique vehicle for marketing and direct sales (as indicated by Riviezzo et al., 2017), and a bonus in intangibles as an image that, in a medium/long term, could have an effect on income. This is important for a denomination of origin like Bullas, with a reduced size in the global market and that sells most of its production in bottled form.

The Bullas Wine Route serves to create an image of quality (following Johnson & Bruwer, 2007) helping the “Bullas Wine” brand to consolidate vineyards in the area. At the same time, the variety of grapes and wines help to maintain the diversity and biodiversity of the rich and diverse territory that is Spain. The Monastrell grapes and the historic assets give a distinctive quality to the Bullas wine and its route, distinguishing this route from others. Customers frequently have experience of other routes.

One of the strengths of the route, besides the above-mentioned natural, historic and cultural wealth, is the strong relationship between the people and the land. Many of the viticulturists only work part-time, but none wants to sell their vineyards. It is also worth noting the proximity of the route to the city centres of Murcia and Cartagena, which are well connected by road, complementing the product with their city-based tourist attractions. Belonging to the “Spanish Wine Routes” network is also a major strength.

The main threat to the route comes from the substitution of vineyards for almond trees. However, other opportunities are emerging such as: complementing agricultural activities with tourism activities; preparing the winemaker to offer accommodation services; widening the range of services (horse rides, hiking and trekking tours, etc.); connecting the Bullas Wine Route to the pilgrimage of the nearby city of Caravaca de la Cruz and the “Horses of Wine” fair; developing tourist and cultural activities around the idea of “land of frontiers”; connecting the route to outdoor activities of nature and adventure in the neighbouring Ricote Valley, etc.

Finally, the main weakness of the route lies in the lack of hospitality and the traditional, conservative character of individuals in the primary sector, who view all the changes with scepticism. In addition, it is necessary to take into account that the sun and beach tourism model (typical of the nearby coastal area) provides few advantages to the route as it cannot be oriented to mass tourism. The natural and cultural environment must be preserved, integrating the activities on the route into a sustainable development model across three pivotal points: economic activities, preservation and participation. The local and regional administration has an important role in the coordination, stimulation and integration of activities on the Bullas Wine Route into a sustainable development strategy.

10.6 Conclusions

The global crisis has forced local actors to find new paths for economic growth. The rural world presents particular dynamics and specific problems that demand place-making imaginative solutions. The cultural and creative industry can be a source of innovative and creative possibilities to be applied in the rural world, opening up a source of hybrid models connecting economic, social, ecological and cultural factors to construct new sustainable development models, allowing the commodification of cultural and natural heritage. Recent literature has highlighted the direct and indirect role played by cultural and creative industries in economic growth.

Creativity, innovation, knowledge spillovers and the virtuous circle of learnt innovation and work demonstrate the bidirectional positive relationship between economic growth and cultural and creative industries.

Cultural and creative industries are characterized by certain traits, which, while not being exclusive only to these industries, merge to form a unique combination of cultural and creative goods and services. Consumers demand this kind of goods not only for their material value but also for their symbolic value. In this context, we present the “Wine Routes” product as a cultural and creative derivative of the wine industry, which, by leveraging local cultural, natural and historic characteristics, is capable of creating wealth and contributing to the preservation of the natural and cultural heritage. The case study of the *Bullas Wine Route* provides an in-depth illustration of this approach.

Located in the southeast of Spain, this route integrates museums and interpreting centres, wineries, restaurants, and offers different services (guided visits, tasting, etc.), developed in municipalities belonging to the Denomination of Origin of Bullas, whose wines are characterized by the Monastrell grape. It forms a unique and creative product, around which all the services of the route are developed.

The wine route generates virtuous circles in the Bullas area between cultural heritage, social capital and sustainable development, working to avoid the depopulation of this rural area in the province of Murcia. Utilizing the archaeological remains, the cultural, ethnographic and natural capital, the route constitutes a cultural and creative product that complements the traditional wine production. It can be analyzed as a luxury service, perceived by visitors from the neighbouring urban environment as unique, genuine and authentic.

In addition, the route offers wineries the opportunity to develop a vehicle for marketing and direct selling, and a bonus in intangibles through the construction of a quality image. This is positive for the consolidation of vineyards, and the Monastrell grape, helping to maintain the biodiversity. Nevertheless, more creativity must be implemented in order to increase and enhance the services, creating a greater symbolic meaning for clients. As a cautionary measure, the expansion and development of the services must protect the natural and cultural environments, integrating them into sustainable development for the area.

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