

Georgian wine museum is making a strategic decision

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Abstract

Purpose — This case study focuses on a strategic decision for the eventual establishment of the National Wine Museum in Tbilisi, Republic of Georgia. Currently, there is no national museum of wine in Georgia. Instead, this ancient wine region showcases its deep-rooted wine history through travelling interpretive exhibitions around the world. The purpose of this case is to explore strategic options and financial consequences of the development of a new stationary wine cultural museum center in Georgia.

Design/methodology/approach — The research case compares two wine regions – the country of Georgia and the Bordeaux region in France – both well-known for their millennial wine-making traditions, rich culture and history. The testimonial on the recently opened La Cité du Vin in Bordeaux is presented side by side with a description of an ongoing practice of travelling Georgian wine artefacts collections exhibits. The case is based on the analysis of transcripts from several first-person interviews both in Georgia and in France, supplemented by reports from the Georgian National Museum and La Cité du Vin. Secondary financial data, governmental reports, wine production and export statistics, the number of tourists and the cultural environment of both regions have also been used.

Findings — The case presents materials for a strategic choice to be made: whether Georgia needs to open a stationary wine museum in its capital city or to continue showcasing its wine artefacts through traveling exhibitions. The new wine museum venture appears costly and market expectations are uncertain. Yet, the example of La Cité du Vin proves that attracting private donors, benefactors and establishing supporting collaboration can help overcome financial barriers. Innovative strategies (e.g. reinforcing the educational role of wine museum; combining a museum model with a cultural center structure) could also be considered as options.

Practical implications — Financial barriers often prevail in case analyses and overshadow other, possibly better, alternatives. The analysis of a similar context in a different wine region exemplifies how these barriers can be resolved. However, to ensure the best strategic model for a particular market, the cultural environment, wine education needs awareness, and market evaluations should be considered.

Originality/value — This case study provides a detailed review of different cultural contexts for wine museums and demonstrates that crafting a unique museum model requires strategic planning, marketing analysis and entrepreneurial thinking.

Key words – wine museum; wine tourism; strategic choice; decision making; innovative projects