

STRONGER AND FASTER GROWTH:



LEVERAGING  
**THE NEW 7  
WONDERS  
BRAND**

GLOBAL DATA ANALYSIS OF  
THE NEW 7 WONDERS BRAND

IMPACT ON TOURISM AND  
ECONOMIES

A REPORT BY

**CURIOSITAS**

2020

# OVERVIEW OF THE NEW7WONDERS PROJECT

The New7Wonders concept began in 2000 as a millennium project. Using the internet, a global voting campaign was run whereby, for the first time, mankind could participate in choosing a set of natural and manmade wonders – thus creating a global memory of the most important, democratically chosen wonders of the world.

To date, over 600 million votes have been cast and the New Wonders have created economic, social, educational and tourism value for their regions.

The winners are all equally ranked as the top seven in their category and the status remains in perpetuity. In the spirit of democracy there is no participation fee and no licensing fee once elected, although standards and rules must be observed to maintain the status.



## NEW 7 WONDERS OF THE WORLD (N7WW)

More than 100 million people voted for the manmade New 7 Wonders of the World. The winning sites appear across four continents and represent ancient and medieval empires. They are architectural marvels of monumental scale and all are amongst the most visited tourist attractions of their country. These sites are popularly known as modern additions to the ancient Seven Wonders, of which only the pyramids of Giza remain. All the structures are also UNESCO World Heritage Sites. No sites in Africa made it onto the list. The winners were announced on 7.7.07, July 7<sup>th</sup> 2007 – in Lisbon, Portugal, after seven years of public voting.



## NEW 7 WONDERS OF NATURE (N7WN)

Following the success of the New7Wonders campaign, a new campaign was launched in 2007 to vote for the seven natural wonders of the world. 440 sites from 220 countries were nominated and global voting was done via internet, SMS and MXit (in SA) resulting in more than 500 million votes to select the New 7 Wonders of Nature. The winners were announced on the 11.11.11, November 11<sup>th</sup> 2011.

Visitor numbers to the N7WN sites are harder to assess as sites are either open access or cover a wide area and thus data is difficult to obtain. Some sites have limited access due to capacity issues. Visitor numbers given are an indication as to visitation trends.



# IMPACT OF THE NEW7WONDERS ACCOLADE

It is clear that New7Wonders is a differentiator that is able to capture the attention and interest of travellers, which can then be converted into tourism arrivals.

## 1. DIRECT INCREASE IN VISITOR NUMBERS

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) estimates that there were 1.4 billion worldwide international tourist arrivals in 2018, up from 940 million in 2010, a growth of 50%. Many New 7 Wonders sites achieved significantly higher arrivals than the average global growth.

All sites confirmed that visitor numbers increased during the campaign and have continued to do so after the campaign and that there were significant benefits beyond visitor arrivals – increased tourism demand has transferred into increased employment with positive impact on the local economy. Many sites, particularly the smaller sites, confirmed the increase in interest in the destination as a whole and not just the site itself.

For the New 7 Wonders of the World the increase in visitors spans both domestic and international tourist arrivals. Significantly, domestic visitors have increased for many sites – the Great Wall, Cristo Redentor and Taj Mahal in particular.

New7Wonders sites are able to withstand tourism shocks such as the regional decrease in tourism seen in Jordan.

Many of the New 7 Wonders of Nature are open access sites and thus visitor numbers are difficult to pin down. Table Mountain, Ha Long Bay, the Amazon and Jeju Island all have multiple entries, not all of which have dedicated and counted access sites. In addition, many have had to control and cap visitor numbers to manage tourism pressure and protect the very nature that they are celebrating.

Labuan Bajo, the access point for Komodo National Park, has seen an increase of international arrivals from 16 700 in 2010 to 163 000 in 2018, fulfilling the Indonesian government's intention of creating secondary tourist attractions beyond Bali. Similarly, the inaccessible town of Iquitos on the banks of the Amazon River in Perú has seen a significant increase in tourism and the Puerto Princesa Underground River has managed to use the New7Wonders accolade to differentiate itself from the myriad other Philippine islands that compete for tourism.

## 2. NEGATIVE IMPACTS

All sites interviewed felt that there were no negative impacts from the accolade. It should be noted, and perhaps emphasised, that there are no ongoing costs for being a New7Wonders finalist. There are no ongoing “membership fees” which is rare. Additionally, the accolade is valid in perpetuity, although standards and rules must be observed to maintain the status. However, most sites have commented on the increased demand resulting in over tourism or tourism pressure during peak season. This has resulted in measures being put in place from infrastructure upgrades to extensive capacity management plans and in some cases, daily capacity caps.



## 3. NEW7WONDERS IS SEEN AS A CREDIBLE AND LEGITIMATE ACCOLADE

More than 600 million votes were cast globally during both campaigns. Credibility and legitimacy of the accolade is paramount to its status and national stakeholders interviewed felt that the accolade had, and still has, credibility. However, this is no longer highlighted and many stakeholders have forgotten this important aspect of the campaign. For example, one stakeholder noted, “now that I think about the fact that this was a global vote; it should be an important part of the narrative – gives genuine legitimacy”.

Credibility is further conferred by the fact that all sites are recognised UNESCO World Heritage Sites and many are included in a wide range of bucket lists. Creators of bucket lists draw inspiration from New7Wonders and the two influence each other, resulting in top of mind awareness. For example, 13 of the 14 New7Wonders are included in the top 100 bucket list ideas for 2020.

## 4. NEW7WONDERS CONFERS ICONICITY TO A DESTINATION

The New7Wonders accolade firmly cements a site as an iconic site. Iconicity has many elements, including that the attraction's brand is better known than its precise location; it has longevity and the ability to flatten seasonality. An iconic attraction is also unique; is nationally and regionally recognised and has the ability to draw visitors, particularly from outside the region. In other words, the attraction is the main purpose of the visit.

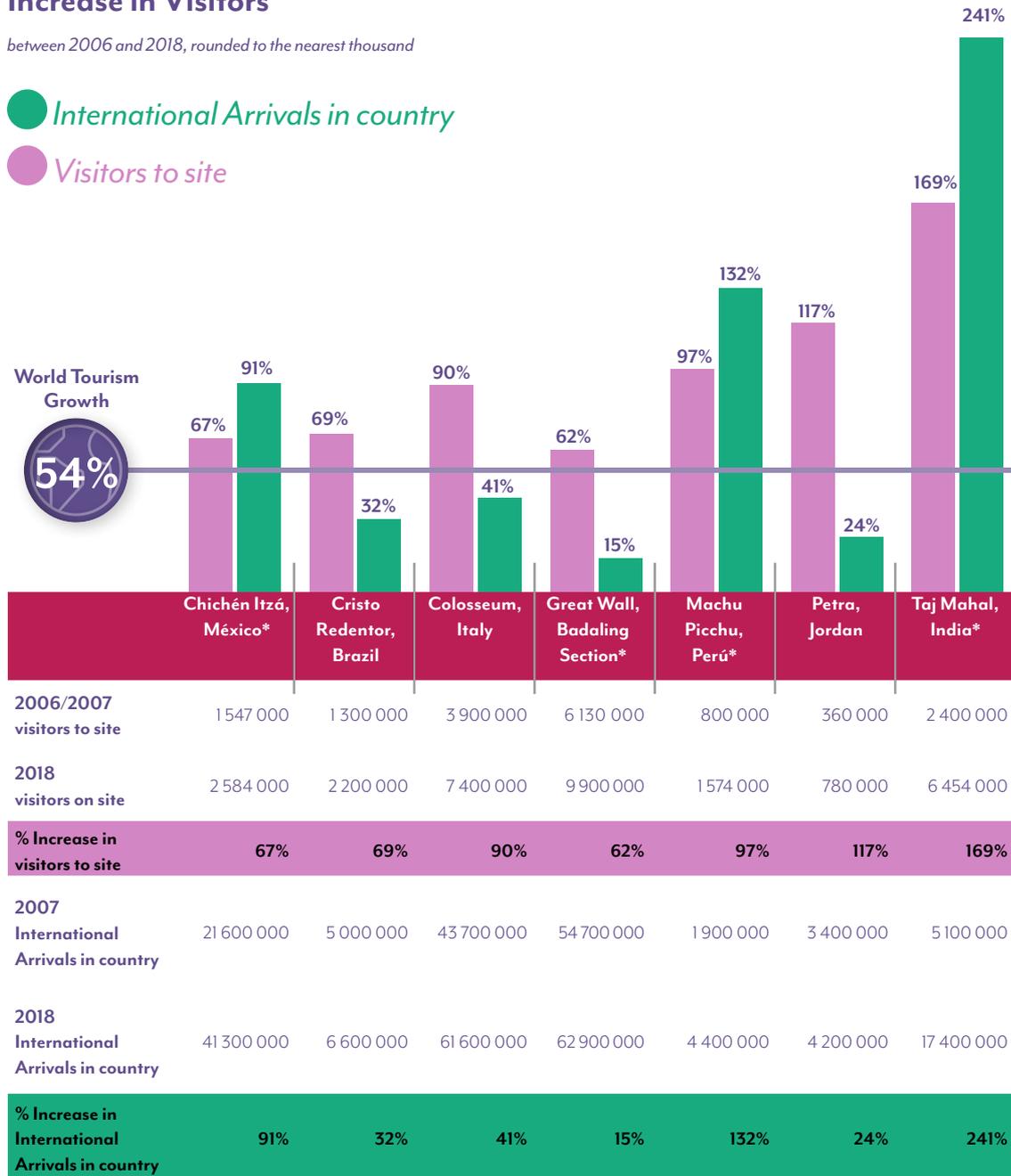
Iconicity is often used by tourism bodies to promote the country by using a universally recognised symbol of a destination. Authentic destination icons are recognised by both international and local tourists as well as local citizens as such. Iconic attractions become “must see” attractions and draw international media attention and relatively large numbers of visitors thus having great economic impact. Iconic attractions are rare and valuable. In a world with a myriad of tourism drawcards, the power of an icon to draw attention to a region should be leveraged for its broader tourism value.

# New 7 Wonders of the World

## Increase in Visitors

between 2006 and 2018, rounded to the nearest thousand

● International Arrivals in country  
● Visitors to site



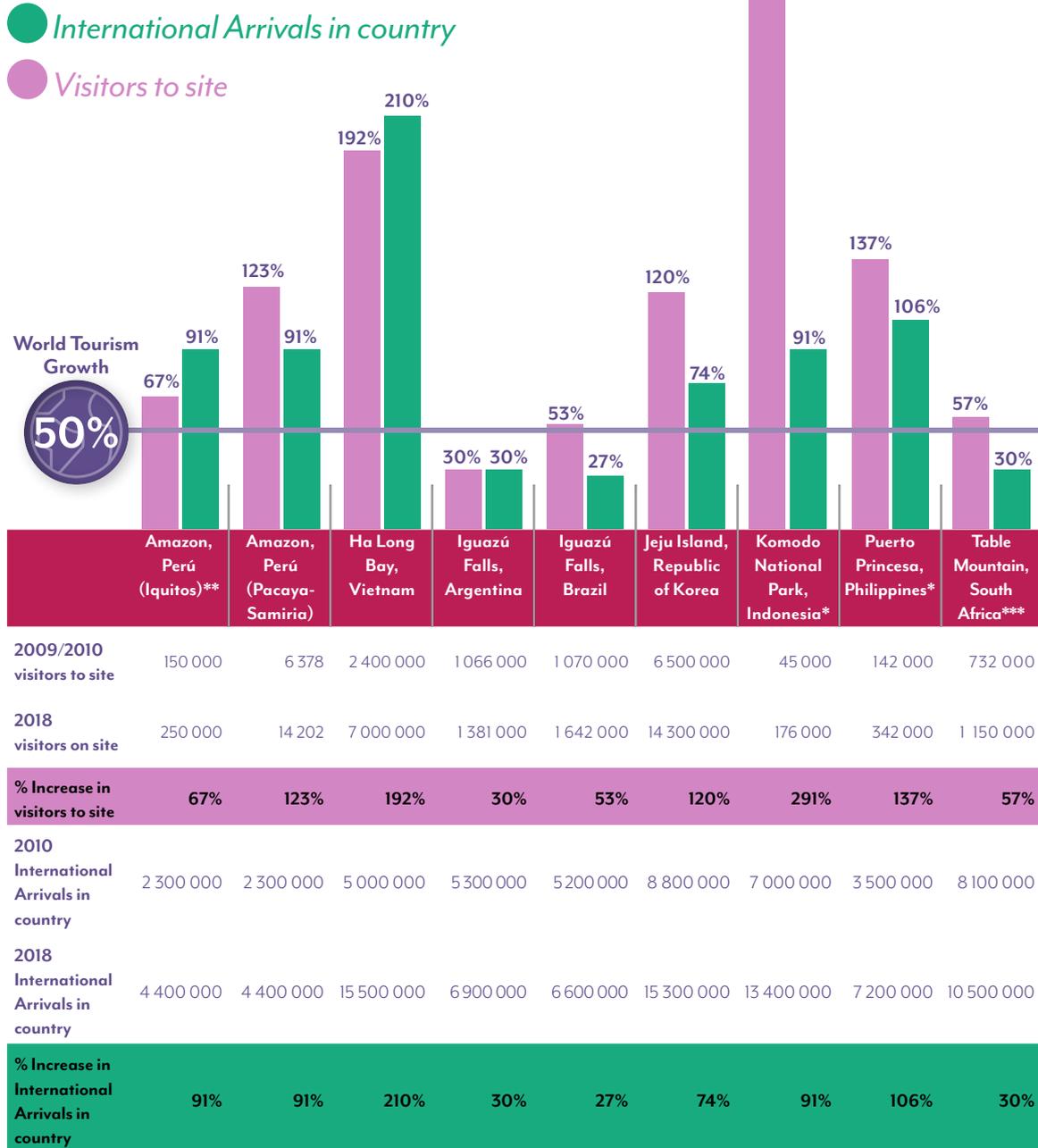
\*Capped entry: due to capacity constraints some sites have limited admissions.

Source: UNWTO

# New 7 Wonders of Nature

## Increase in Visitors

between 2010 and 2018, rounded to the nearest thousand



\*Capped entry: due to capacity constraints some sites have limited admissions.

\*\* 2012. No data available for 2018.

\*\*\* Entries to Table Mountain Aerial Cableway

Source for International Arrivals: UNWTO

## LEVERAGING OPPORTUNITIES



### STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT

#### OPPORTUNITY: RE-IGNITE THE CONVERSATION

Leveraging tourism stakeholders to understand the unique and rare accolade that New7Wonders confers will help each destination stand out in the cluttered world of tourism marketing.

*“This is a prestigious accolade, a status that money can’t buy and a power brand that can differentiate your site.”*



### BEST PRACTICE

#### OPPORTUNITY: CONNECT AND SHARE LEARNINGS WITH OTHER NEW7WONDERS SITES

The N7WW and N7WN are the most exclusive club. They share commonalities in how they use the accolade to benefit tourism and local businesses, and in how they deal with tourism pressure.

*“The airport should have a billboard, promoting all 7 Wonders with a reciprocal billboard in the other 7 Wonder destinations. There should be collective marketing collaboratives. All seven sites market the other seven. Have a marathon or a race at all of them. Have a challenge or an event where you can tick all the wonders off.”*



2021

#### OPPORTUNITY: CELEBRATE A DECADE OF N7WN

In 2021, it will be a decade since the New 7 Wonders of Nature were announced. There is an opportunity to use this marker as a goal to plan celebrations and projects around this, for example a conference or a bucket list competition.



### CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

#### OPPORTUNITY: LEVERAGE THE ACCOLADE FOR CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT AND NATIONAL PRIDE

The international voting process created an enormous amount of citizen engagement and national pride.

*“There was the benefit of creating social cohesion and a sense of local identity and pride.”*



### THE ULTIMATE BUCKET LIST

#### OPPORTUNITY: CREATE THE MOST DESIRABLE BUCKET LIST IN THE WORLD

Bucket lists serve as useful tools for marketing and New7Wonders sites are the ultimate travel list.

*“Quite frankly a Seven Wonder is bucket list material - once in a lifetime - I have to do this before I die. I don’t get that feeling with a UNESCO site.”*



### MARKETING

#### OPPORTUNITY: NEW7WONDERS BRAND IS IDEAL FOR THE MILLENNIAL TRAVELLER

The New7Wonders accolade provides a simple message above the clutter – this is a site worth seeing, one of only seven in the world. It is a fun, sexy, image-driven marketing tool that has greater appeal than UNESCO world heritage status.

*“New7Wonders has sexiness. It’s a short list of seven sites which talks to modern attention spans. It feels like you can photograph a N7W but not a heritage site.”*

#### OPPORTUNITY: PARTICIPATE IN TRADE SHOWS

Iguazú Falls commented that their participation in global trade shows under the New7Wonders banner has been fruitful. The licenced N7W trade show exhibits at leading global tourism trade shows.

#### OPPORTUNITY: USE THIS REPORT TO FEED STAKEHOLDERS

A report, signed off by New7Wonders, can be used by all sites for media and PR to remind stakeholders of the real benefits and success stories of this accolade.

#### OPPORTUNITY: SUPPORT 7 WONDERS DAY

New7Wonders encourages all sites to promote and support the official worldwide 7 WONDERS DAY which takes place every 7/7 (7th of July) each year. This is a simple yet powerful platform to remind the world about the importance of the voted Wonders.

## CONCLUSION

This research re-affirms that being voted as a New7Wonders site is a credible and legitimate accolade and a strong differentiator that can capture the attention and interest of travellers. Becoming part of an elite group of global sites that share this title has the power to elevate a site to iconic status, which in the tourism world is rare and valuable.

This iconicity is likely to become an even more important differentiator in a post COVID-19 world. The spread of the coronavirus in the early part of 2020 has precipitated a dramatic drop in global tourism, the effects of which will be felt for years to come.

The campaign has had an impact – all sites reported a direct increase in visitor numbers, and many agreed that they experienced significant tourism benefits such as increased employment and a positive impact on the local economy.

It emerged that whilst the years of the campaign generated a great deal of citizen engagement and national pride, the impetus has been lost and the accolade is not being fully leveraged. Particularly as 2021 will mark a decade since the campaign, all sites could benefit from reigniting the conversation, involving local stakeholders and embarking on various marketing initiatives to keep the value and the benefit of the accolade top of mind.

An opportunity also exists for all sites to reach out to each other and lead the conversation around best practice. As all sites share commonalities, particularly in how to deal with tourism pressure. Connecting and sharing learnings could benefit all involved and highlight best practice for the entire New7Wonders brand to be elevated.

## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>CTT</i>	<i>Cape Town Tourism</i>	<i>SANParks</i>	<i>South African National Parks</i>
<i>CoCT</i>	<i>City of Cape Town</i>	<i>TMACC</i>	<i>Table Mountain Aerial Cableway</i>
<i>N7WN</i>	<i>New 7 Wonders of Nature</i>	<i>TMNP</i>	<i>Table Mountain National Park</i>
<i>N7WW</i>	<i>New 7 Wonders of the World</i>		
<i>PPUR</i>	<i>Puerto Princesa Underground River</i>		

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