

Marketing at Work 12.2

n7W: Helping in Managing Tourism

Tourism depends on many factors, and some types of communication expenditure that have proven beneficial for tourism have been unconventional types. Movies have historically used places as backdrops and the success of movies has led to increased tourism. Examples can be *Lara Croft* and Cambodia and more recently *Lord of the Rings* and New Zealand. Shows like *Survivor* showcase places too. Olympics have been another substitute vehicle for tourism. The investment for the Sydney Olympics is estimated to be 0.6 percent of Australian GDP and though the event itself lasted 3 weeks, the investment in infrastructure has had mixed results in terms of cost effectiveness. Festivals like WOMAD (music), Cannes (films), and Edinburgh (culture) are other methods to encourage the industry.

Another unconventional advertising medium that has been very successful is the New7Wonders of the World. In 1999, Bernard Weber, a Swiss-Canadian filmmaker wanted to revive the Greek concept of the 7 Wonders of the World. The original list was compiled by a few men, Antipater, Philo, Strabo, Herodotos, and Diodoros, who were all ancient Greek residents. It acted as a guide book for the ancient Hellenic or Greek empire in 200 B.C. The list focused on places around the Mediterranean Rim. Unfortunately, of the original list of these ancient seven wonders, only one survives, the Pyramid of Giza. Bernard recognized that today's modern world is much larger and more easily accessible than that of the Greek empire 2,200 years ago. There was a need for a more updated list.

Bernard Weber created the first website new7wonders.com in 1999. The campaign was officially launched on June 30, 2000. The nonprofit New7Wonders Foundation was established in 2001, headquartered in Switzerland. It was an ambitious project as it was an international campaign focusing on educating and encouraging participation of the global citizens. The New7Wonders of the World were to be selected based on global votes (the first-ever done on this scale) and had to be existing manmade monuments. The winners of this unique vote were announced on July 7, 2007 (i.e., 07.07.07). The process was long. First nominees were solicited. The top 77 elected from a total of 177 popular nominations were shortlisted to 21 finalist candidates, and again based on popular votes, the top seven wonders were chosen. For New7Wonders of the World, the poll took seven years. It gathered enormous pace during the official N7WWorld Tour, visiting all the finalist monuments in the last year preceding the end of the voting period. While many countries and citizens were enthusiastic, others were not. UNESCO dismissed the campaign as "neither democratic nor scientific." Indignant Egyptian officials said it was a disgrace they had to compete. The Pyramids were the only manmade wonder already on the list.

The fight for the remaining six wonders was fierce. The website was inundated by tens of millions of votes. It is estimated that the Official New7Wonders of the World were elected by millions of citizens from around the world—of all social classes, all ages, all professions. More than 100 million votes were cast, choosing from a list of finalists that included structures from the earliest time that humankind walked the earth through the twentieth century. These votes were cast through the Internet, SMS



▲ Millions of people across the globe voted for the New Seven Wonders of the World over a seven year campaign. The competition had a phenomenal impact on tourism for lesser known sites such as Petra in Jordan, which welcomed a 62 percent increase in visitors as a result.

text messages, and telephone, by all segments of the population on all continents. The heaviest volumes of votes came from China, India, and Latin America. It involved promotion at all levels with some countries and national media getting involved. For example, in Brazil bus tickets were printed urging passengers to vote, and an Indian singer dedicating a song to the Taj Mahal, China's Academy of the Great Wall encouraged Chinese voters to flood the competition website.

Petra, a UNESCO World Heritage Site was one of the 21 finalist candidates in the campaign for choosing the New7Wonders of the World. Petra lies on the edge of the Arabian Desert, nestled away in the mountains south of the Dead Sea, it was the ancient capital of the Nabataean empire of King Aretas IV (9 B.C. to 40 A.D.). Their people were experts of water technology, building their city with hydraulic systems that carried drinking water into the city and reduced the chance of flash floods. The city would have housed 20,000 to 30,000 people during its heyday and even had a Roman amphitheater that could seat an audience of 4,000. It was an important point on the Silk Route and Spice Route. Petra had disappeared from most maps and became a legend until 1812, when the Swiss traveler Johann Burckhardt snuck into the city disguised as a Muslim and shared his story with the world. Due to the active campaigning of a Jordanian family, Petra jumped from the middle of the pack to

the top seven in January. In Jordan, "Vote for Petra" signs were placed reminding visitors to vote for Petra. The economic impact of this campaign was large, Petra saw a 62 percent increase in visitors in 2007 that generated \$13.4 million in tourism for the country according to *The Jordanian Times*. The national airline registered the highest monthly total for its passengers in its 44-year history. This effect was apparent for all New7Wonders like Machu Picchu, which saw a 70 percent increase in tourism.

The overall worldwide economic impact of New7Wonders is estimated to be in excess of \$5 billion worth of tourism, economic, promotional, and national brand value generated. This makes for an interesting comparison with what for some is considered to be the heavy economic burden of participating in the UNESCO World Heritage programme, a burden for each location that can be as high as \$640,000 to enter and \$230,000 per year, or cumulatively a theoretical cost burden of over \$1.5 billion across all 890 UNESCO World Heritage sites over a period of five years.

What is surprising is that the largest group of voters was children. At the first recognition ceremony for the New7Wonders, Bernard Weber acknowledged this fact by stating that children were objective in their voting as they don't have a strong sense of national pride and voted for what they like the most. Though Rome did not actively promote its nomination, being the only wonder representing old Europe and representing ancient Roman civilization, it won enough votes. This could be because it is widely featured in history textbooks and hence it is widely known. In the case of the Alhambra in Spain, a vigorous local campaign was not enough to garner international votes. Another interesting fact about elections emerged in the final phase. Huge amounts of votes came in support of Timbuktu in Mali. There were more votes in a single week than had come from the entire country of Germany. This propelled Timbuktu from the bottom of the list to just below the top seven. The campaign began too late! How

important is the campaign across a global audience? More people voted for the Eiffel Tower from Korea and Japan than did the French. Though children around the world loved the Neuschwanstein Castle (thank you Disney!), the Germans did not. The people of the United States who voted passionately and in large numbers did not vote for their Statue of Liberty. And the first wave of votes came from Turkey in 2000, not the west!

For the current Official New7Wonders of Nature campaign, a billion votes are expected to be cast by the world's population, choosing among participating locations from over 220 countries (more countries than are members of organizations such as the UN, FIFA, or the Olympics), which has overwhelmingly shown its desire for positive dialogue. During the first stage, 441 sites from 222 countries were nominated. On December 31, 2008, the first phase ended and 261 nominees proceeded to the current stage—one national nominee per country, plus all multi-national nominees. The race was then on to be in the Top 77, comprised of the top 11 in each of the 7 categories, and on July 21, 2009, the 28 finalist candidates were announced at the New7Wonders foundation headquarters in Zürich.

Sources: Based on information from Chalip, L. (2008), "Leveraging the Sydney Olympics for Tourism," The Centre d'Estudis Olímpics (CEO-UAB); accessed at http://olympicstudies.uab.es/pdf/wp096_eng.pdf; Smith, N. (2007), "World's New Seven Wonders Chosen," Times Online, dated July 8, 2007, accessed at www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/article2043145.ece#; Weber, B. (2007), "Voting Analysis," available at www.vote7.com/n7w/world/voting-analysis; Visit Jordan (2009), "Petra," accessed at www.visitjordan.com/Default.aspx?Tabid=63; n7W (2008), Economic Impact of the New7Wonders Campaign, available at www.vote7.com/news/economic-impact-new7wonders-campaigns; Official New7Wonders of Nature campaign (2009), accessed at www.vote7.com/n7wnature/finalists; Announcement during World Travel Market, London, on November 10, 2008, accessed at www.vote7.com/node/13187; and Article in the *London Sunday Times*, December 7, 2008, accessed at www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article5299161.ece.

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