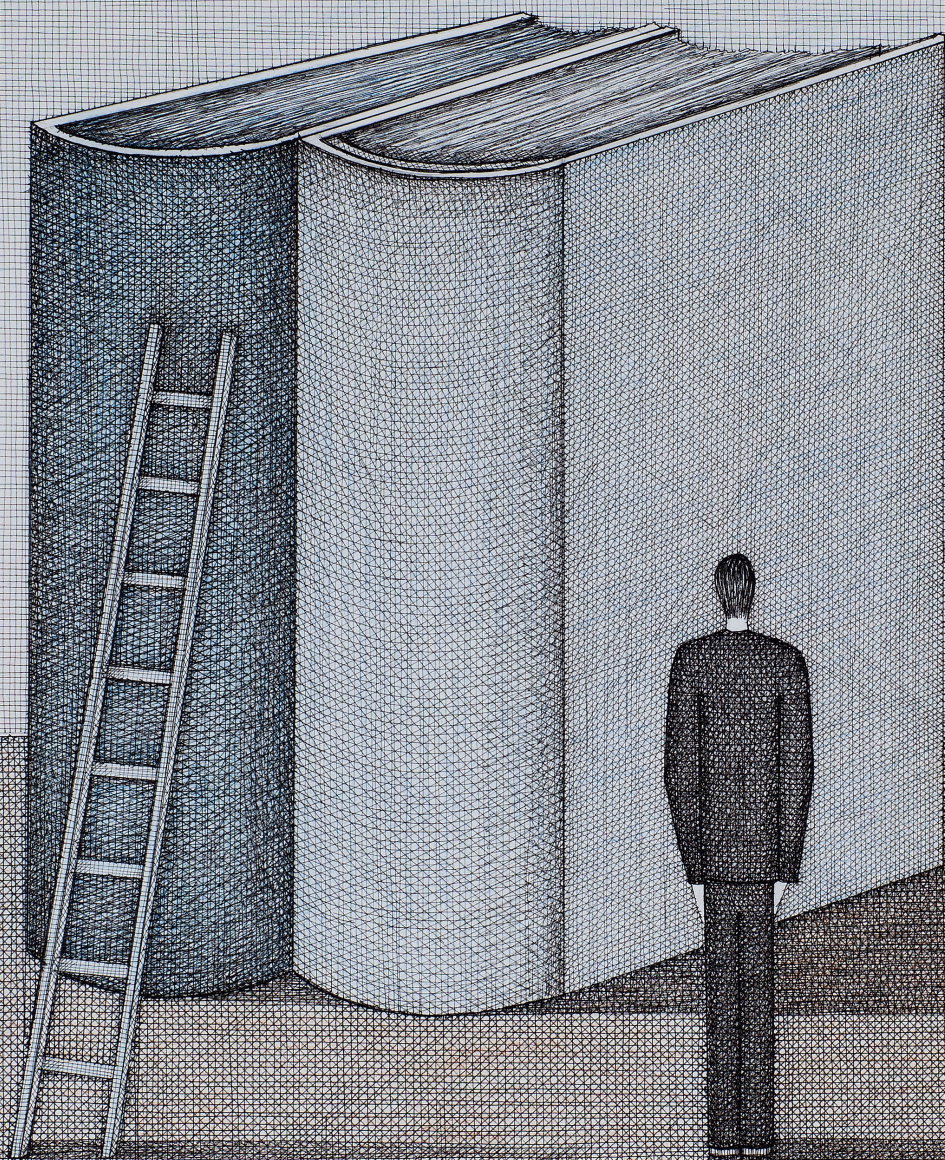


The Role of Cultural Institutions and Events in the Marketing of Cities and Regions

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Influence of the initiative “New7Wonders” on image and intention to visit the city

Introduction

The attractiveness of a destination is decisive in tourists' choice (Cooper, Gilbert & Wanhill, 1993; Gunn, 1994; Inskeep, 1991; Lew, 1987; McIntosh & Goeldner, 1990; Mill & Morrison, 1992; Page, 1995). In some cases, the main attraction of a destination is based on elements inherited or created in the past in the form of natural heritage (coasts, beaches, mountains, natural parks, etc.), while in others attraction is created or reinforced by the construction of theme parks, organization of events (sports, concerts, exhibitions or other cultural manifestations) and other activities.

According to Buhalis & Costa (2006), one of the main trends that will condition the future of the tourist industry is the creation of mega-attractions with a strong capacity to draw large numbers of tourists. A good example of large events is the recent initiative to choose the “Seven Wonders of the Modern World” (New7Wonders) among the non-natural mega-attractions. The choice of the “New7Wonders” is an unprecedented initiative that has had worldwide repercussion. The idea was inspired by the “Seven Wonders of the Ancient World”, a list drawn up by Phylon of Byzantium two-hundred years before the birth of Christ, bringing together a number of extraordinary monuments created by man (Great Pyramid of Giza, Hanging Gardens of Babylon, Statue of Zeus at Olympia, Temple of Artemis at Ephesus, Mausoleum of Maussollos at Halicarnassus, Colossus of Rhodes and Lighthouse of Alexandria). Only the Great Pyramid of Giza is still standing.

According to the New7Wonders webpage (http://www.new7wonders.com/classic/en/about_us/milestones/), a Swiss-originated Canadian filmmaker and aviator Bernard Weber launched the project in September 1999. On January 1, 2006, the New7Wonders

Foundation said the list had been narrowed to 21 sites, by a panel of six of world leading architects from five continents. The list was later reduced to 20 removing the Pyramids of Giza — the only remaining of the 7 Ancient Wonders of the World — from the voting and designating it an Honorary New7Wonders Candidate.

The initiative had important repercussions due to the press campaign undertaken, including announcements in such prestigious journals as National Geographic, and the commitment of numerous personalities, celebrities and institutions. Personalities such as the King of Spain or the popular singer Shakira, among others, announced their vote for the Alhambra. Between September 2006 and March 2007, Mr. Weber visited every monument on the finalist list and presented his project to the directors of each monument and the political authorities of the country concerned. The initiative was also highly present on each monument's webpage, and some websites were even created for the occasion (e.g. www.porquelaalhambra.com — La Alhambra; www.petrablog.com/vote-for-petra — Petra). Many monuments, such as the Alhambra, Sydney Opera House, Machu Picchu and Chichén Itzá printed postcards and pamphlets, and several printed information about the campaign on their entrance tickets. Posters promoting the votes were also hung throughout Jordan and Peru, while information about the “New7Wonders” campaign was prominently distributed in Chinese universities. Several European capitals saw posters promoting Chichén Itzá as a “New7Wonders” candidate on buses and in their underground or subway stations. On the basis of a popular vote by Internet, SMS and telephone, with the participation of over 100 million people, the results were released on 07-07-2007 in a ceremony held in Lisbon (Portugal). In random order, the “New Seven Wonders” were announced as: The Great Wall of China, Petra, Chichén Itzá, the Statue of Christ Redeemer, the Roman Colosseum, Machu Picchu and the Taj Mahal. The whole process is open to criticism and was criticised. First of all, because of the prior selection process and how it was carried out; secondly, because of the variety of monuments and the difficulty in comparing styles and contexts, in which they were made or their significance; thirdly, the voting system was debatable, as, for example, it allowed an individual to vote as many times as they were prepared to pay for the telephone call or SMS, not forgetting the dubious guarantee and transparency of the voting process. In 2007 the foundation started a similar contest, called “New7Wonders” of Nature, with nominees solicited through December 31, 2008. The 21 finalists were then the subject of voting until the summer of 2010.

An event of these characteristics may have a positive impact on the global image of the destination and the intention to visit a monument, if the monument finds its way onto the final list. For example, through one of its spokesmen (Jean Paul Benavente), the Regional Directorate of Foreign Trade and Tourism (Peru) stated that the distinction of Machu Picchu as one of the Wonders of the Modern World meant that the number of tourists rose by 20% (rather more than 900,000 tourists).

But what happens when the monument is not chosen as a New Wonder of the Modern World? Are the global image of the destination and the intention to visit it harmed? Does this depend on situational factors such as involvement with the initiative or involvement with the monument? It could be argued that, having learnt the result of the voting, the change produced in destination image and in the intention to visit the monument depends on the degree of involvement with the initiative and with the monument. Indeed, involvement is considered as the relational variable most predictive of consumer behaviour (Evrard & Aurier, 1996; Martin, 1998) and has been shown to have a clear influence on variables such as information search and consumer risk perception (Dholakia, 2001), the evaluation of product quality (Charters & Pettigrew, 2006), the purchase decision process (Bauer, Sauer & Becker, 2006), product knowledge (Park & Moon, 2003), and brand com-

mitment (Warrington & Shim, 2000). Involvement is also considered a key variable moderating information processing and the formation of attitudes and behaviour itself (Petty, Wheeler & Tormala, 2003; Petty, Cacioppo, Strathman & Priester, 2005). So, the individuals that showed more involvement with the initiative should be those most affected by the results. However, higher involvement with the monument should make it harder to modify the destination image and intention to visit the monument, since these opinions are deeply rooted and are resistant to persuasive information that attempts to change them (Sherif & Sherif, 1967; Albarracín, Johnson & Zanna, 2005, Oskamp & Schultz, 2005).

The aim of this study is to understand the impact of the “New7Wonders” initiative on the overall image of the destination and intention to visit the monuments that were not chosen as “Wonders of the Modern World”. To this end, we designed a study, in which a sample of participants responded to a number of questions before and after knowing the definitive results. Likewise, we measured the interviewees’ involvement with the event and with the monument in order to determine the possible moderating effect.

1. The influence of “New7Wonders” on tourist behaviour

Although it could be thought that reaching the list of twenty one finalists to become a new wonder is in itself a success, the final result can be a disappointment when one is convinced that a monument will finally be chosen as one of the seven wonders. This is the case of the monuments in the most voted top ten, according to reports made periodically by the “New7-Wonders” foundation to those responsible for the short list of monuments. According to the information published in the press (e.g. <http://www.smh.com.au/news/travel/opera-house-fading-in-race-to-be-new-wonder/2007/06/14/1181414439693.html>) on the last report on voting, the top ten included the Acropolis, the pyramid of Chichén Itzá, the Colosseum in Rome, the Eiffel Tower, the Great Wall of China, Machu Picchu, the city of Petra, the Moais on Easter Island, Christ the Redeemer and the Taj Mahal. In addition, in those countries with short-listed monuments the residents included them as favourites, as shown by the odds given in betting shops. Taking the Alhambra in Spain as an example, the Spanish betting shop www.miapuesta.com included the Alhambra as one of the favourites. Therefore, being on the shortlist or simply being a favourite for ethnocentric reasons meant that not being chosen as a new wonder in the final vote would be considered as negative information.

1.1. Negative Information, Image of the Destination and Intention to Visit the Monument

Tourist demand seems to be sensitive to events such as terrorism or political violence in a country (Richter, 1983; Enders, Sandler & Parise, 1992; Ryan, 1993; Pizam & Fleischer, 2002; Sloboda, 2003; Ready & Dobie, 2003; Lee, Oh & O’Leary, 2005; Rupp, Holmes & DeSimone, 2005; Gut & Jarrell, 2007; Araña & León, 2008), but, when it comes to analyzing the impact of negative information resulting from less extreme events, such as advertising, there is much less literature. Nonetheless, over forty years ago Arndt showed that negative information damages a brand image, giving consumers more reasons to purchase competing brands (Arndt, 1967). In a different context, Faber, Tims & Schmitt (1993) and Yoon, Pinkleton & Ko (2005) argued that negative political advertising can have important nega-

tive consequences on the candidates' image and on voting intention. This happens because negative information creates negative associations in consumers' minds (Mizerski, 1982) that ultimately deteriorate not just the brand image, but also the intention to purchase it (Okada & Reibstein, 1998). Recently, however, it has been shown that the effect of negative information is conditioned by its importance. Specifically, when negative information is severe, the result is a decrease in brand attitude. Otherwise, when negative information is mild, it has no effect on brand attitude (Zhang & Taylor, 2009).

Previous research has also shown how negative information can neutralize positive information (Reidenbach, Festervand & MacWilliam, 1987). Indeed, consumers give five times more importance to negative information, than to positive information. This means that one piece of negative information can neutralize five pieces of positive information (Ahluwalia, Burnkrant & Unnava, 2000; Fiske, 1980; Klein, 1996; Skowronski & Carlston, 1987). Together, these findings suggest that the influence of negative information is much stronger than that of positive information.

In short, we can expect that a negative event such as not being chosen as one of the "New Seven Wonders of the Modern World" will affect both the destination image and the intention to visit the monument. We therefore propose that:

- H1:** *The fact that a monument has not been elected one of the Seven Wonders of the Modern World will affect the global image of the monument's tourist destination.*
- H2:** *The fact that a monument has not been elected one of the Seven Wonders of the Modern World will affect intention to visit that monument.*

Nonetheless, there are a number of factors expected to moderate the impact of negative information on image and intention (Richins, 1984; Till & Shimp, 1998), of which involvement has been one of those to receive most attention in disciplines such as marketing and psychology.

Researchers have used the concept of involvement to attempt to better understand consumer behaviour; giving rise to different definitions, measurements and manners of making the concept operative. Several authors have distinguished between enduring and situational involvement (Richins, 1984; Dholakia, 2001; Yoon, Pinkleton & Ko, 2005). The first of these originates in the work of Sherif (Sherif & Cantril, 1947; Sherif & Hovland, 1961; Sherif & Sherif, 1967), for whom involvement is a characteristic of an individual, occurring when the question or social object has intrinsic importance, personal significance or is expected to have consequences for her/his life. Situational involvement, on the other hand, has been defined as an inner state indicating the amount of interest, excitement and drive aroused by a stimulus or situation (Mitchell, 1979) and, unlike enduring involvement, it is characterised by occurring at a particular moment in time, after which it disappears. In the context of this research, involvement with the "New7Wonders" initiative is a short-duration, situational-type involvement, whereas involvement with the monument could be considered enduring, especially if we consider individuals living in the country where the monument is located.

Both types of involvement have been shown to have important consequences on formation and change of attitude (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981; Petty et al. 2005). Thus, enduring involvement moderates the degree to which information persuades an individual. Social judgment theory (Sherif & Sherif, 1967) suggests that individuals with a high degree of involvement are less affected by the information they process, presumably because they have firmly established attitudes. However, when individuals have less involvement, change of attitude can occur more easily. Inoculation theory (McGuire, 1964)

makes a similar prediction to that of social judgment theory, although the argument used is different. Specifically, inoculation theory establishes that, when individuals have a high degree of involvement with an object, their better understanding and experience with it allows them to argue against the information to which they are exposed.

On the basis of the foregoing, it is to be expected that the fact that a monument has not been elected as one of the "New Wonders of the Modern World" will affect the global image of a destination and intention to visit the monument. However, this effect will be attenuated by involvement with the monument. According to the theory of social judgment, when involvement with the monument is high, the global image of the destination and intention to visit the monument will not be affected, since the subjects have well formed opinions that are hard to change and resistant to persuasive information which, in this case, is negative. However, when involvement is lower, if the monument has not been chosen as one of the "New Wonders" the overall image of the destination will suffer, as too will intention to visit the monument. Therefore, it can be proposed that:

H3: *Involvement with the monument will moderate the relation between not being chosen as one of the "Seven Wonders of the Modern World" and the global image of the tourist destination. Specifically, when involvement with the monument is high, the fact that it has not been elected a new wonder will not have a significant effect on the global image of the destination, whereas when involvement with the monument is low, the fact that the monument has not been elected will have a significant, negative effect on the global image of the destination.*

H4: *Involvement with the monument will moderate the relation between not being chosen as one of the "Seven Wonders of the Modern World" and the intention to visit that monument. Specifically, when involvement with the monument is high, the fact of not being elected a new wonder will have no significant effect on intention to visit it, whereas when involvement with the monument is low, the fact that the monument has not been elected will have a significant, negative effect on the intention to visit it.*

In addition, it is expected that there is a positive relationship between the impact of negative information and situational involvement. In this context, the principles of associative learning and the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) are useful to explain how negative information may weaken evaluations of a destination and the intention to visit a monument.

Associative learning is based on the conception of memory as a network of interconnected nodes (Anderson, 1976; Collins & Loftus, 1975; Rumelhart, Hinton & McClelland, 1986). In the context of this research, the tourist destination considered and monuments found there would be connected nodes. An event such as "New7Wonders" would appear in this scenario and, by means of repetitive communication, an associative union would be built up between the monuments and tourist destinations (Domjan & Burkhard, 1986; Klein, 1991; Martindale, 1991; Rumelhart, Hinton & McClelland, 1986). Once this union is formed, the ensuing result regarding the monument's not being elected as a "New Wonder" could lead to lower intention to visit and a weakening of the global image of the destination considered.

On the other hand, the ELM (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981; Petty et al., 2005) suggested that people engage in attitude formation and change via one of two relatively distinct routes in their elaboration likelihood model of attitude change. When people are both motivated and able to process message arguments (high situational involvement), they consider the merits of message arguments centrally as part of their decision-making process. When message recipients are unmotivated or unable to process message arguments centrally (low situational involvement), they may still engage in attitude formation or change. However, in this case

recipients will consider peripheral aspects of the message or communication environment rather than centrally process message arguments. These peripheral cues might include, for example, characteristics of the product endorser such as attractiveness or credibility (Petty, Cacioppo & Schumann, 1983). Therefore, individuals will evaluate information proceeding from an event such as “New7Wonders” carefully and diligently when their involvement with the initiative is high. However, when the involvement is low, individuals will base their attitude on aspects foreign to the message (peripheral cues). If the message refers to a negative fact (e.g., the Alhambra is not one of the Seven Wonders of the Modern World because 100 million votes cast throughout the world have so decided), the result will be a weakening of the destination image and intention to visit the monument if the involvement with the initiative is high. On the other hand, if involvement with the initiative is low, the message arguments will have little relevance, because the individuals will change their image of the destination or their intention to visit the monument on the basis of the peripheral cues.

On the basis of the foregoing, the following hypotheses can be proposed:

- H5:** *The involvement with the “New7Wonders” initiative moderate the relation between not being chosen as one of the “Seven Wonders of the Modern World” and the global image of the tourist destination. Specifically, when involvement with the initiative is high, the fact that the monument has not been elected as a new wonder will have a significant, negative effect on the destination’s global image, whereas in other involvement conditions the fact that the monument has not been elected as a new wonder will not have a significant effect on the global image of the destination.*
- H6:** *The involvement with the “New7Wonders” initiative will moderate the relation between not being chosen as one of the “Seven Wonders of the Modern World” and the intention to visit the monument. Specifically, when involvement with the initiative is high, the fact that the monument has not been elected as a new wonder will have a significant, negative effect on the intention to visit it, whereas under other involvement conditions the fact that the monument has not been elected as a new wonder will have no significant effect on the intention to visit it.*

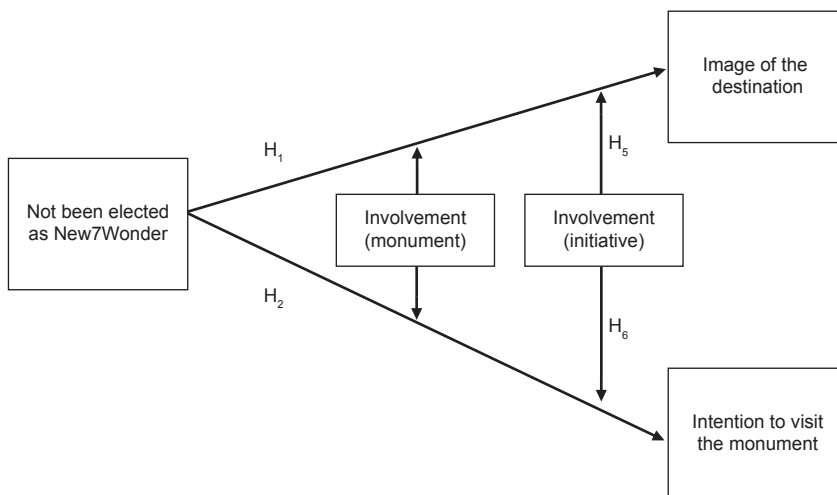


Figure 1. Diagram of proposed hypotheses

In order to test the above hypotheses, we carried out a longitudinal study, in which a sample of residents of mainland Spain responded to two questionnaires at two different times. The first survey was carried out a week before the results of the “New Seven Wonders of the Modern World” initiative were made known, and the second the week after the results were made public. In both cases it was a telephone survey using a computer assisted telephone interview (CATI) procedure with random selection. The interviewees had to fulfil the conditions of being over eighteen years of age and being aware of the “New7Wonders” initiative. Average response time was eight minutes for the first survey and seven for the second.

A sample of 415 people responded to the first survey, representing a 24% response rate, of which 199 questionnaires were found useful after the second survey, representing 52% drop-out-rate. The sample consisted of 51% women and 49% men. Approximately 36% of the interviewees were aged between 18 and 35, 35% between 36 and 55, and 29% were over 55. Sex and age quotas were used. Regarding education levels, 19% had primary education, 35% secondary education, and 46% university education. The sample had a high percentage of highly educated individuals because the participants had to be aware of the initiative in order to take part in the survey, which biases the object population towards individuals interested in culture-related news or events.

1.2. Construct Measurements

To achieve the objectives proposed, a longitudinal observational study was carried out consisting of two dependent variables (global image of the tourist destination and intention to visit the monument) and three independent variables: time of measurement, involvement with the monument and involvement with the “New7Wonders” initiative.

The image has been defined as an overall impression going beyond the sum of the parts (Oxenfeldt, 1974), and, accordingly, some authors have defined it as an overall attitude or impression that individuals acquire about a specific place (Dadgostar & Isotalo, 1992). The image is based on beliefs and feelings of tourists about the destination, among other factors (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a; Lin, Morais, Kerstetter & Hou, 2007) and, therefore, the sum or the mean of the attributes defining the destination may not be a suitable measurement of the destination’s overall image (Bigné, Sánchez & Sánchez, 2001). For this reason, we chose to measure the overall image on a 0–10 point three-item semantic differential scale, whose extreme values were: negative/positive, bad/good and unfavourable/favourable. Similar measurements of image were used by Baloglu & McCleary (1999a), Baloglu & McCleary (1999b) and Bigné, Sánchez & Sánchez (2001). On the other hand, intention to visit the monument was measured using a single item on a 0–10 point semantic differential scale (Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Ng, Lee & Soutar, 2006).

Independent variables in this study include the time of measurement, involvement with the monument and involvement with the “New7Wonders” initiative. The first was measured asking for each dependent variable before and after the results of the “New7Wonders” of the modern world were made public. The difference between the two measurements was the announcement of the new wonders. The second variable — involvement with the monument — was handled using the monuments not included in the list of the “New Seven Wonders”: the Alhambra (Granada, Spain) and the Acropolis (Athens, Greece). The first represented a monument with high involvement for the (Spanish) people interviewed, whereas the second is a monument of lower involvement, as it is located in another country. Regarding involvement with the initiative, this was measured using

four items on a 0–10 differential semantic scale (unimportant/important, worthless/valuable, useless/useful, uninterested/interested) taken from other studies (Zaichkowsky, 1985b; 1994; McQuarrie & Munson, 1987; 1992).

1.3. Reliability

We tested the reliability of the scales used by means of both the Cronbach's alpha and the Dillon-Goldstein's rho. For the destination image measurement, the data were grouped together because the measurement tool was used on two different monuments (Acropolis and Alhambra) in two different situations (before and after the release of the final results). The results showed very high values in both cases (alpha = 0.97, rho = 0.98), proving that the tool was reliable. Therefore, a new variable was created averaging the items used to measure the destination image.

In the case of involvement with the initiative, both the Cronbach's alpha and the Dillon-Goldstein's rho gave very high values (respectively 0.94 and 0.92), also proving that the measurement of this concept was reliable. A new variable was therefore created for each interviewee averaging the scores reached for the four variables used to measure this construct. On this basis three groups were arranged using the percentile 25 and 75 respectively, which represented the individuals with low, medium and high involvement with the initiative.

Finally, given that the involvement with the monument was defined operatively using different monuments as reference to measure the image and the intention to visit, the differences in the measures of involvement with those monuments must be checked. The interviewees were asked to spontaneously recall the monuments that reached the final stage of the "New Seven Wonders" competition. Several studies have shown that spontaneous recall and involvement are positively related, which justifies this as a means of testing that the measurement of involvement was carried out correctly (Wright, 1974; Mitchell, 1980; Burnkrant & Sawyer, 1983; Petty, Cacioppo & Schumann, 1983). As expected, almost 80% recalled that the Alhambra was one of the monuments in the final stage, but only 3% remembered the Acropolis. Consequently, the manipulation of involvement with the monument was carried out correctly.

1.4. Hypothesis Testing

Some verification is necessary before testing the hypotheses proposed. The effects of independent variables could be camouflaged by the so-called "confusion variables". These are the characteristics of the interviewees that could indirectly condition their inclusion in one group or another. In this case, the literature suggests testing if such variables are in fact not associated with the groups identified. We therefore analysed the association between the assignation group (low, medium or high involvement with the initiative) and each one of the following demographic characteristics: age, sex and level of education. The results showed that the relation was significant for all of sex, age and level of education groups (Chi-Square statistics sex = 7.40; df = 2; $p < 0.05$; Chi-Square statistics age = 11.08; df = 4; $p < 0.05$; Chi-Square statistics education = 29.39; df = 4; $p < 0.01$). Since these socio-demographic characteristics could affect the results, the literature suggests eliminating their effect using the methodology of the propensity score, or by directly controlling their effect on the dependent variable(s) (D'Agostino, 1998; Winship & Morgan, 1999; Yanovitzky, 2005; Lindenmeier & Tscheulin, 2007; Frías, Rodríguez & Castañeda, 2008). The latter solution was chosen for this study, and so these variables will be included in later analyses in order to directly control the effects they have on the dependent variables.

Table 1. Least squares means and standard errors for destination image

Effect	Time	Inv. Monument	Inv. Initiative	Sex	Age	Education	LS means	SE	N
Time of measurement	Before						7.91	0.13	199
	After						7.94	0.12	199
Involvement with the monument		Acropolis					7.24	0.13	199
		Alhambra					8.62	0.11	199
Involvement with the initiative			Low				7.40	0.20	48
			Medium				8.02	0.15	104
			Hihg				8.37	0.19	47
Sex				Man			7.73	0.14	98
				Woman			8.13	0.13	101
Age					18–35		7.89	0.17	71
					36–54		8.12	0.17	70
					Over 55		7.78	0.18	58
Level of education						Primary	7.88	0.22	38
						Secondary	7.91	0.16	70
						University	7.99	0.15	91
Time of measurement × Involvement with the monument	Before	Acropolis					7.22	0.16	199
	Before	Alhambra					8.61	0.14	199
	After	Acropolis					7.26	0.15	199
	After	Alhambra					8.62	0.12	199
Time of measurement × Involvement with the initiative	Before		Low				7.13	0.28	48
	Before		Medium				7.92	0.19	104
	Before		Hihg				8.70	0.19	47
	After		Low				7.66	0.21	48
	After		Medium				8.12	0.16	104
	After		Hihg				8.04	0.25	47

Table 2. Least squares means and standard errors for intention to visit the monument

Effect	Time	Inv. Monument	Inv. Initiative	Sex	Age	Education	LS means	SE	N
Time of measurement	Before						7.57	0.14	199
	After						7.49	0.15	199
Involvement with the monument		Acropolis					6.19	0.19	199
		Alhambra					8.87	0.12	199
Involvement with the initiative			Low				7.14	0.23	48
			Medium				7.73	0.16	104
			High				7.71	0.23	47
Sex				Man			7.27	0.17	98
				Woman			7.79	0.16	101
Age					18–35		7.57	0.19	71
					36–54		7.71	0.19	70
					Over 55		7.31	0.20	58
Level of education						Primary	7.50	0.25	38
						Secondary	7.57	0.18	70
						University	7.52	0.17	91
Time of measurement × Involvement with the monument	Before	Acropolis					6.14	0.22	199
	Before	Alhambra					8.99	0.13	199
	After	Acropolis					6.24	0.21	199
	After	Alhambra					8.74	0.15	199
Time of measurement × Involvement with the initiative	Before		Low				6.94	0.28	48
	Before		Medium				7.66	0.18	104
	Before		High				8.11	0.22	47
	After		Low				7.34	0.25	48
	After		Medium				7.81	0.17	104
	After		High				7.32	0.30	47

Suggested hypotheses were tested by using a Linear Mixed Model on each dependent variable by means of the MIXED procedure of SAS. This tool allows specification of the main effects and relevant interactions from the viewpoint of the proposed hypotheses, as well as making correct estimates for cases, in which a different number of observations was available for each situation. In each case, the time of measurement (before or after knowing the results), involvement with the monument (Acropolis or Alhambra), involvement with the initiative (low, medium or high) and two interactions (time of measurement \times involvement with the initiative; time of measurement \times involvement with the monument) acted as independent variables. Moreover, as mentioned above, the effect of the interviewee's sex, age and level of education on the dependent variables was controlled directly including their main effect. The test of variance homogeneity did not hold for all the dependent variables. Although the F statistic has been shown to be robust in such situations, we decided to compare two models, one assuming homogeneity of the error variances (Model 1) and another, in which this assumption was relaxed (Model 2), which is possible thanks to the "group" option of PROC SAS MIXED. The results showed that, in the case of destination image, Model 2 was preferable, because the Likelihood Ratio Test (LR) was statistically significant (LR= 58.5 df = 20 p = 0.00). Regarding intention to visit the monument, Model 2 was also preferable (LR = 62.8 df = 20 p = 0.00). The results presented below are therefore based on a model assuming heterogeneity of the error variances between the groups of involvement with the initiative.

Table 1 summarizes the least squares means, standard errors, and number of observations in each situation, obtained using the model considered in the case of destination image. Table 2 refers to the intention to visit the monument. The comparisons between these means were carried out using the Tukey-Kramer method.

1.5. Overall Image of the Destination

In this section H1, H3 and H5 are commented. These are the hypotheses referring to the overall image of the destination concerned. The results show that the three main effects (involvement with the initiative, sex of the interviewee and involvement with the monument) and one interaction effect (involvement with the initiative \times time of measurement) were statistically significant (see Table 3). Comparison of means (see table 1) showed that the overall image of the destination was significantly lower among individuals less involved with the initiative ($D_{\text{low-medium}} = -0.62$ s.e. = 0.24 p = 0.03; $D_{\text{low-high}} = -0.98$ s.e. = 0.28 p = 0.00; $D_{\text{medium-high}} = -0.35$ s.e. = 0.24 p = 0.32); the overall image of the destination was higher among women than men ($D_{\text{man-woman}} = -0.40$ s.e. = 0.18 p = 0.03); and, finally, the image of the destination was higher for Alhambra compared to Acropolis ($D_{\text{Acrop-Alha}} = -1.38$ s.e. = 0.12 p = 0.00).

From the viewpoint of the hypotheses proposed for this study, the difference between destination image "before" and "after" the election of the "New Seven Wonders of the Modern World" was not statistically significant ($D_{\text{before-after}} = 0.03$ s.e. = 0.14 p = 0.86), and therefore H1 is not supported.

Secondly, the interaction between involvement with the initiative and time of measurement was statistically significant (see Figure 2). As proposed by H5 (see table 1), when involvement with the initiative is high, the overall image of the destination worsens significantly when comparing the "before" and "after" scores ($D_{\text{before-after}} = 0.66$ s.e. = 0.23 p = 0.03). On the other hand, for any other conditions, the difference between image score

“before” and “after” was not significant (Low Involvement, $D_{\text{before-after}} = -0.53$ s.e. = 0.29 $p = 0.42$; Medium Involvement, $D_{\text{before-after}} = -0.20$ s.e. = 0.16 $p = 0.87$). In consequence, H5 finds empirical support.

Table 3. Type III test for fixed effects (destination image)

	Num df	Den df	F	p-value
Time	1	196	0.04	0.85
Inv. Monument	1	198	129.01	0.00
Inv. Initiative	2	191	6.21	0.00
Sex	1	191	4.63	0.03
Age	2	191	1.12	0.33
Level of education	2	191	0.11	0.90
Time × Inv. Monument	1	198	0.05	0.82
Time × Inv. Initiative	2	196	6.57	0.00

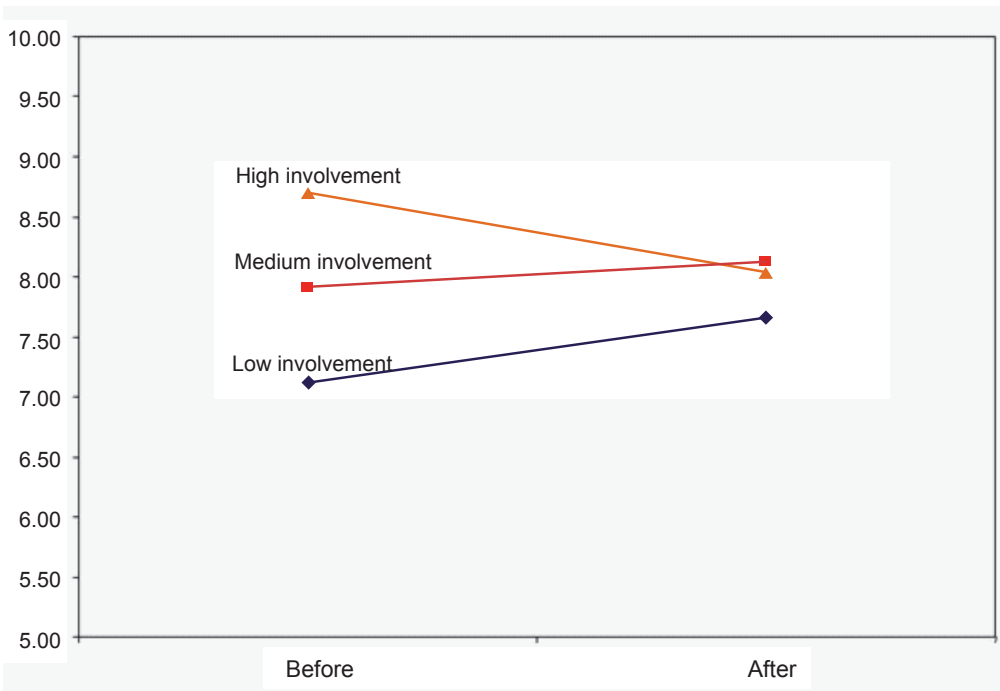


Figure 2. Overall image of destination according to involvement with the initiative and time of measurement

Finally, interaction between time of measurement and involvement with the monument was not significant and so H3 is not supported. As can be seen in Figure 3, when involvement with the monument is high (Alhambra), the fact that the monument was not elected as one of the “New7Wonders” did not affect the overall image of the destination ($D_{\text{before-after}} = -0.01$ s.e. = 0.15 $p = 1.00$), as predicted by H3. However, when involvement with the monument was low (Acropolis), the fact that it was not elected as one of the “New7Wonders” did not affect the destination image either ($D_{\text{before-after}} = -0.05$ s.e. = 0.17 $p = 0.99$), which is contrary to the proposal made by H3.

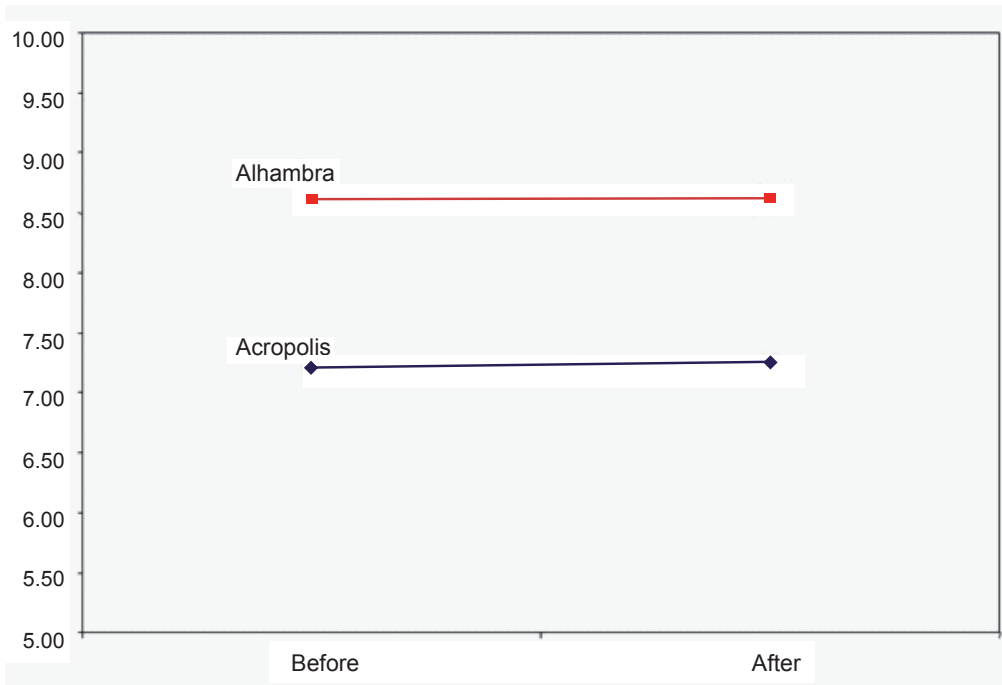


Figure 3. Overall image according to involvement with the monument and time of measurement

1.6. Intention to visit the monument

In this section H2, H4 and H6 are commented using a similar procedure to the previous section, but here the dependent variable is the intention to visit the monument. The results showed that two main effects (the interviewee’s sex and involvement with the monument) and one interaction effect (involvement with the initiative × time of measurement) were statistically significant (see Table 4).

Concerning the main effects, comparison of means (see table 2) showed that the intention to visit the monument was lower among men than women ($D_{\text{man-woman}} = -0.53$ s.e. = 0.20 $p = 0.01$); also, the intention to visit the monument was higher for the Alhambra compared to the Acropolis ($D_{\text{Acro-Alha}} = -2.68$ s.e. = 0.18 $p = 0.00$).

From the viewpoint of our hypotheses, the difference between intention to visit the monument “before” and “after” the voting results was not statistically significant ($D_{\text{before-after}} = 0.07$ s.e. = 0.14 $p = 0.60$) and therefore H2 is not supported.

Secondly, the interaction between involvement with the initiative and the time of measurement was statistically significant (see Figure 4). As predicted by H6, when involvement with the initiative was high, the intention to visit was significantly higher “before” knowing the results ($D_{\text{before-after}} = 0.78$ s.e. = 0.25 $p = 0.03$). However, for the other levels of involvement with the initiative, the difference between intention “before” and “after” was not significant (Low involvement, $D_{\text{before-after}} = -0.40$ s.e. = 0.28 $p = 0.68$; $D_{\text{before-after}} = -0.16$ s.e. = 0.14 $p = 0.87$). In consequence, H6 finds empirical support.

Table 4. Type III test for fixed effects (intention to visit the monument)

	Num df	Den df	F	p-value
Time	1	196	0.28	0.60
Inv. Monument	1	198	213.62	0.00
Inv. Initiative	2	191	2.93	0.06
Sex	1	191	7.04	0.01
Age	2	191	1.24	0.29
Level of education	2	191	0.05	0.95
Time × Inv. Monument	1	198	2.57	0.11
Time × Inv. Initiative	2	196	7.05	0.00

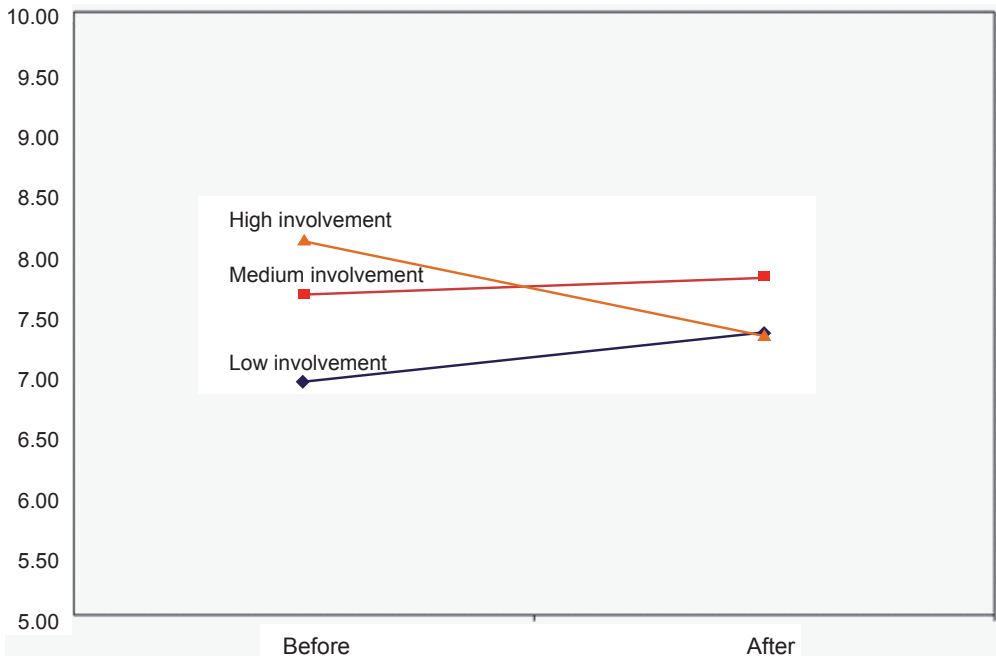


Figure 4. Intention to visit the monument according to involvement with the initiative and time of measurement

Finally, the interaction between involvement with the monument and time of measurement was not significant ($F(1, 198) = 2.57; p = 0.11$). As shown in Figure 5, the intention to visit the Alhambra did not vary significantly when the “before” and “after” scores were compared ($D_{\text{before-after}} = 0.25$ s.e. = 0.14 $p = 0.28$), as predicted by H4. However, the intention to visit the Acropolis was also similar on comparing the “before” and “after” means ($D_{\text{before-after}} = -0.11$ s.e. = 0.21 $p = 0.96$), and so H4 is not supported.

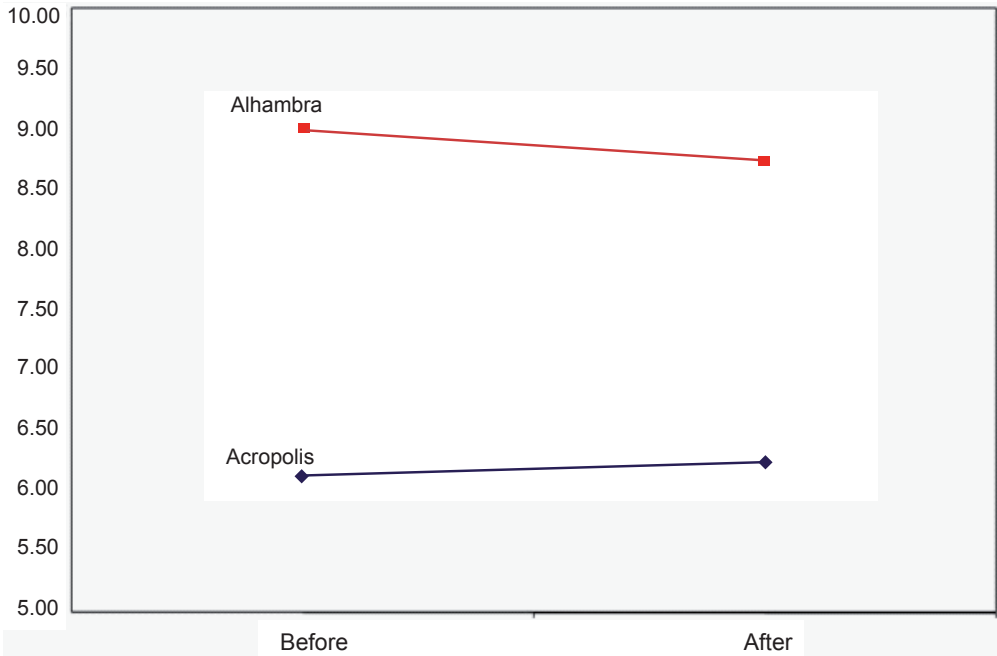


Figure 5. Intention to visit the monument according to involvement with the monument and time of measurement

Conclusion

This study analyzes the impact of an initiative such as the election of the “New Seven Wonders” on the intention to visit the monuments and the overall image of tourist destinations. It also examines the moderating role of variables such as the involvement with the initiative and the involvement with the monuments, and directly controls other characteristics of the interviewees, such as sex, age, and the level of education.

The results obtained show that destination image and intention to visit the monuments are not affected by the results of the voting, because the differences in “before” and “after” scores are not statistically significant. Consequently, H1 and H2 have no empirical support. One possible explanation for this result concerns the importance of an event like this for the interviewees. As pointed out in our literature review, it has recently been shown that the influence of negative information on the attitude towards a brand depends on the “severity” of that information. Specifically, negative information seems to affect brand attitude when it is “severe”, but not when “mild” (Zhang & Taylor, 2009). In the case of the “New7Wonders” initiative, not being chosen could be negative, but, at the same time, it is not serious.

The results provide empirical support for the hypotheses concerning the involvement with the initiative. Although the overall image of the destination “before” knowing the results of the election was similar to that obtained “after”, it should be noted that, as expected, this fact was conditioned by the degree of involvement with the initiative. Subjects with a high level of involvement with the initiative had a rather less positive image of the destination after knowing the voting results compared with the one they had before. However, this change in the overall image of the destination did not occur in those showing a low or medium level of involvement. We can therefore conclude that the impact of the “New7Wonders” initiative affected the interviewees in an uneven fashion. The fact that the monument was not present on the list of finalists negatively affected the overall image of the destination, but only for those most involved with the initiative.

Similar conclusions can be drawn for the intention to visit the monument. As in the case of the destination’s overall image, the intention to visit the monument was similar when the scores “before” and “after” knowing the voting results were compared. However, this result was also conditioned by the degree of involvement with the initiative. When the interviewees had a high degree of involvement with the initiative, the intention to visit the monument after knowing the results was lower than before. On the other hand, when the involvement with the initiative was low or medium, this change in intention to visit did not occur.

In the case of the Alhambra, which in this study represented the monument with high involvement, the intention to visit it and the overall image of the destination before and after knowing the result were similar. This can be explained by the theory of social judgment or inoculation theory, as discussed in the literature review section. Indeed, when tourists show a high degree of involvement with a monument, the intention to visit it and the image of the destination are well-formed, thus making it hard for them to change. In this case, the results of the study show that an initiative such as the election of the “New Seven Wonders” was not enough to cause a change in these variables.

However, in the case of the Acropolis, it was expected that the intention to visit the monument and the overall image of the destination would go down because, like the Alhambra, it was not on the most voted list and, moreover, these variables could change more easily as the interviewees showed low involvement with this monument. The results obtained were not consistent with this supposition, and both the intention to visit the monument and the destination’s overall image were similar on comparing their scores before and after knowing the results. A possible explanation for that could be, although the level of involvement with the Acropolis was lower than with the Alhambra, that the Acropolis is a very well-known monument, opinions of which are well-established and an event such as “New7Wonders” was unable to change them. We must remember that many of the experiments carried out to test ELM used fictitious products, attitude towards which was easier to change through manipulation of central or peripheral cues. However, given the characteristics of the event analyzed in this study, it was not possible to use a monument with a chance of being chosen as a “New7Wonder”, which was not elected and which, at the same time, was not well-known to the interviewees.

Despite the fact that interaction between the time of the measurement and the involvement with the monument was not significant, what was observed was the main effect of this last variable on both: the intention to visit the monument and the image of the destination. As might be expected, the intention to visit the Alhambra and the image of Granada were significantly higher than the intention to visit the Acropolis and the image of Athens. We could therefore conclude that, while involvement with the ini-

tiative seems to act as a moderating variable, the involvement with the monument has a direct effect on the intention to visit it and the overall image of the destination. This result is supported by earlier research. For example, Slama & Tashchian (1987) presented a model in support of this view, where enduring involvement directly influences subsequent consumer responses. Beatty, Kahle & Homer (1988) support a similar view, postulating that the consumer's ego involvement influences his or her purchase intention. In the specific case of negative information, Faber, Tims & Schmitt (1993) showed that enduring political involvement increases the impact of negative political ads on voting decisions.

This study has also revealed other results that were not initially proposed as hypotheses. Scores on destination image and intention to visit the monument are higher among women than men. However, neither the level of education nor the age of the subject seem to have any effect, at least directly, on destination image or intention to visit the monument. Moreover, the destination image was better among individuals more involved with the initiative, which is a result also obtained by other authors (Laczniak & Muehling, 1993; Muehling, Laczniak & Andrews, 1993; Poiesz & Robben, 1996).

Finally, this study helps to improve our understanding of how events with global repercussions such as the "New7Wonders" can modify the image of a tourist destination and the intention to visit a monument and, therefore, its tourist demand. Moreover, when such an event is not controlled by those responsible for the management of the monument in question, the risks increase considerably, meaning that the possible repercussions have to be carefully monitored, multiplying the efforts to maximise any possible positive impact and reducing the negative impact to a minimum. Further research could compare the results obtained in this study with the actual behaviour of tourists or with measurements more spaced out in time and, in this fashion, to analyse whether the short-term effects of an initiative such as "New7Wonders" are maintained over the long term.

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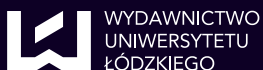
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