

PART 2: TE MANAHUNA TODAY



2.1. About TMKU

The purpose of TMKU is to develop a long-term strategic Destination Management Plan (DMP) for the Te Manahuna/Mackenzie District as part of a wider tourism journey that includes Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park, the upper Waitaki Valley and Burkes Pass.

The long-term goal of TMKU is to achieve a vibrant, dynamic, and sustainable future: one that speaks to visitors and our community – mana whenua, locals, farmers, adventure seekers, artists, and conservationists.

TMKU explores options to chart the way forward regarding Te Manahuna’s visitor economy and will be used to inform investment planning across agencies to:

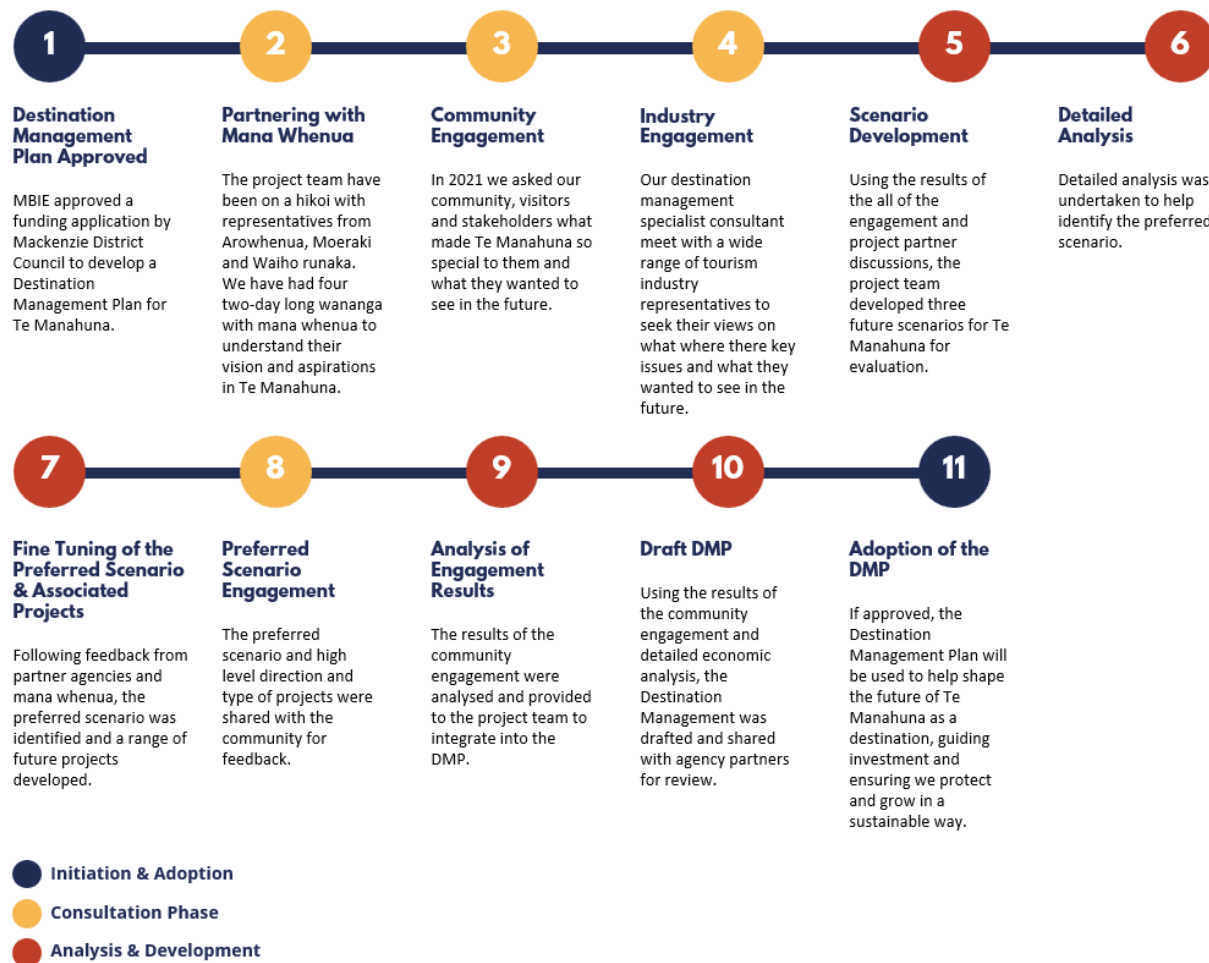
- manage pressure on infrastructure, conservation values, communities, and the environment;
- deliver on community aspirations for Te Manahuna;
- deliver on the strategic priorities of the member agencies and mana whenua;
- protect the cultural values and history within the environment; and
- recover from the COVID-19 event in the form of a reset to value-based tourism.

It needs to also be noted that the boundary of the area designated as TMKU extends beyond the Mackenzie District TLA boundary into parts of the Waitaki TLA and Waimate TLA. The Waitaki Destination Management Plan is also near completion at the time of publishing the TMKU DMP. Discussions have been held between Mackenzie District Council and Waitaki District Council to ensure that where possible, initiatives for future product development are well aligned and future synergies achieved for marketing, noting that some key products such as the A2O start in the Mackenzie and finish on the coast in Waitaki, by way of example.

2.2. An iterative, collaborative process

In developing TMKU, the project team worked alongside those directly involved in the visitor economy, along with the broader community and a variety of government agencies. It involved an eleven-stage process, which is summarised in Figure 3.

Figure 3: TMKU’s process





The Greedy Cow, Takapō



Hydro Cafe, Twizel



Matuka Lodge, Twizel

2.3. A collaborative methodology

TMKU involved extensive and ongoing consultation. The engagement was undertaken with mana whenua, the local tourism industry, the broader industry as well as residents and domestic visitors. Domestic and international visitor perceptions were examined through an extensive data scraping exercise of online data sources. The consultation was undertaken through a variety of formats including face-to-face interviews, workshops, focus groups, community drop-in sessions and surveys over 15 months.



100 local residents through drop-in sessions & workshops



50 local businesses through interviews, drop-in sessions & workshops



110 tourism industry stakeholders through interviews & workshops



Central government agencies including Tourism New Zealand, DOC, Waka Kotahi, LINZ and MBIE



Local councils (Mackenzie and Waitaki)



Te Rūnanga o Arowhenua, Te Rūnanga o Moeraki and Te Rūnanga o Waihao

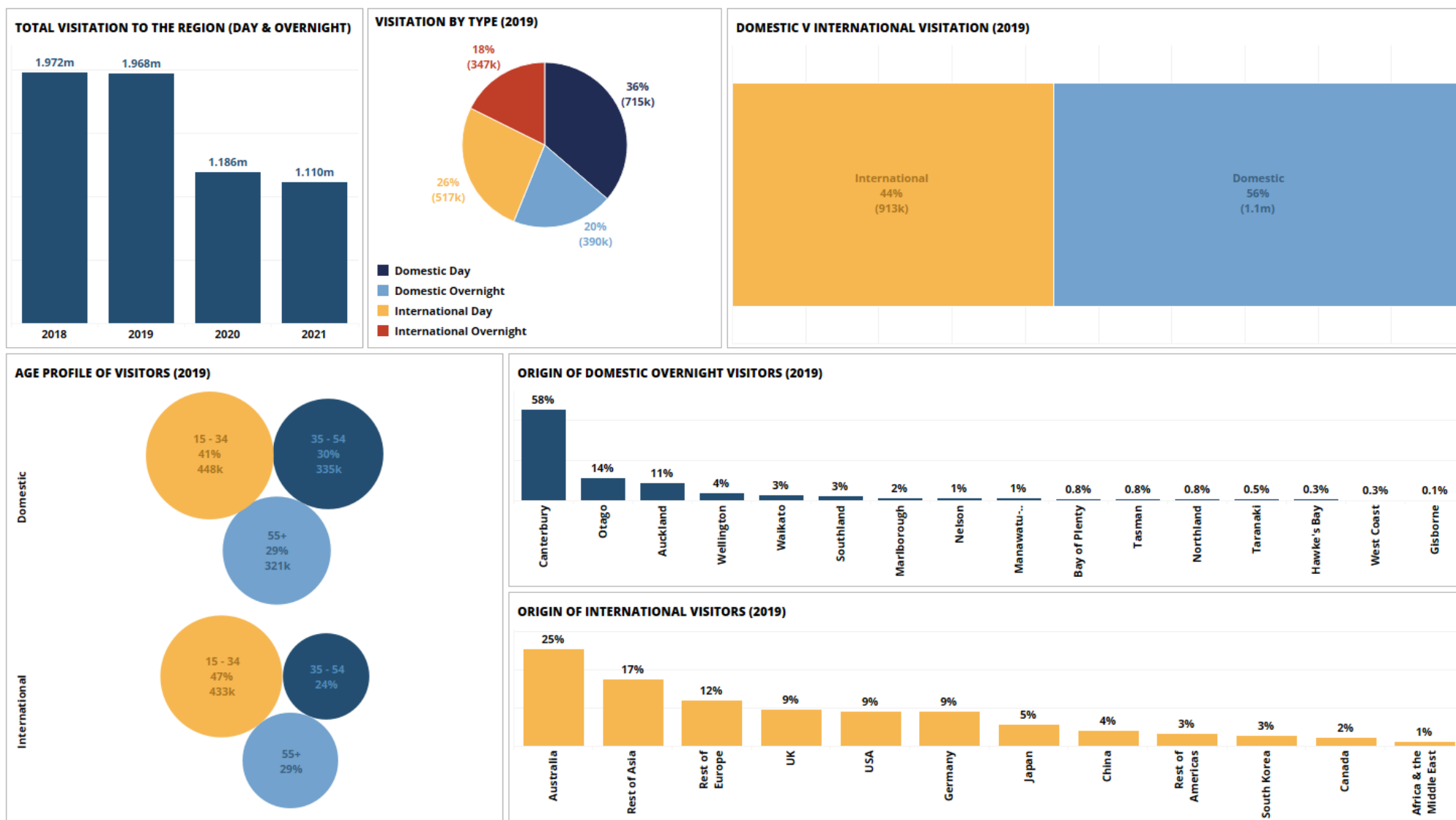


Consumers via a data scraping exercise of over 43,750 reviews



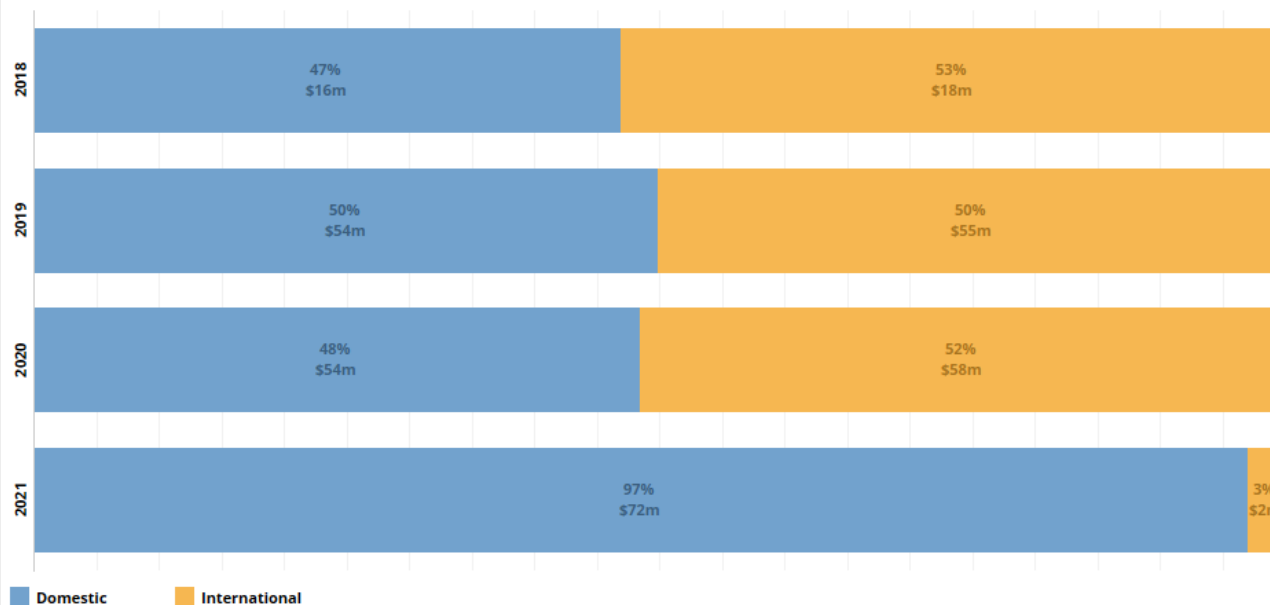
Over 50 sessions with the Project Governance Group & Project Working Group

Figure 4: Te Manahuna Visitor Profile Summary ²

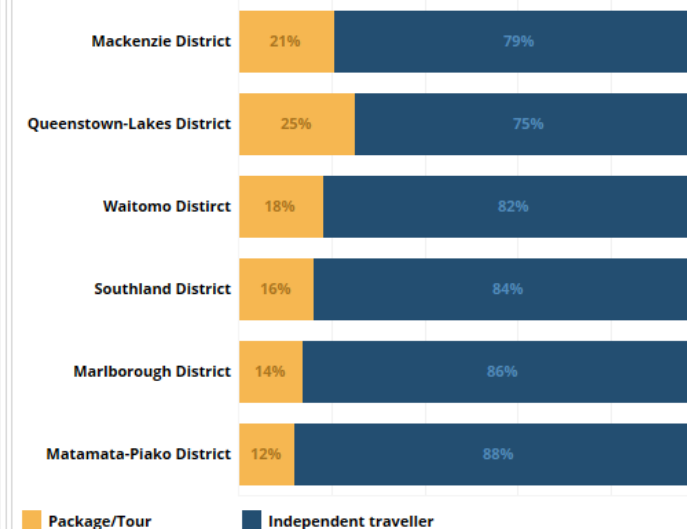


² Source data are included in Appendix 1.

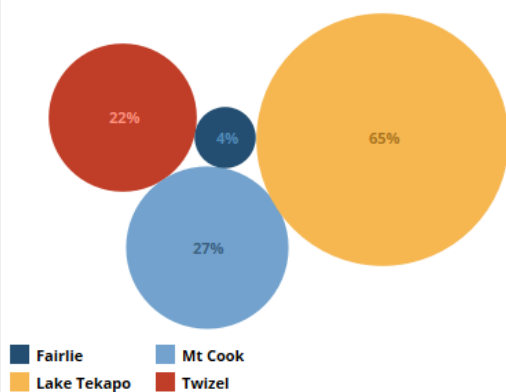
VISITOR SPEND



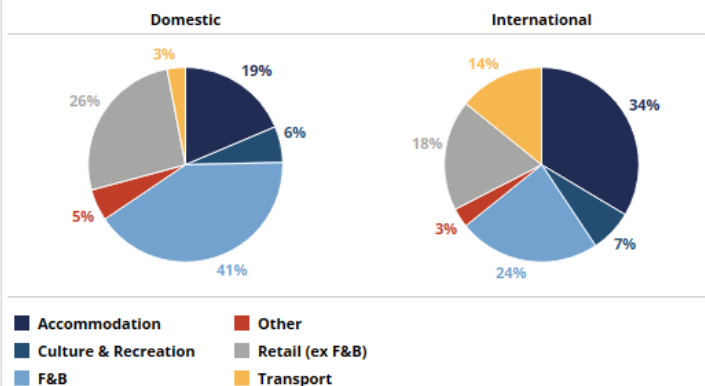
PACKAGED V NON-PACKAGED TRAVEL WITH COMPARATORS (2019, INTERNATIONAL ONLY)



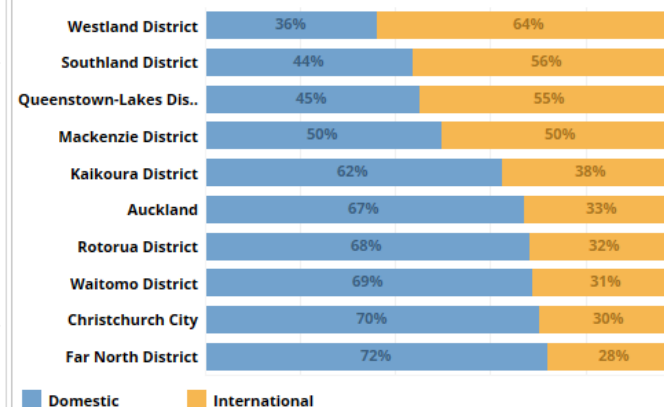
WHERE INTERNATIONAL OVERNIGHT VISITORS ARE VISITING?



VISITOR SPEND BY PRODUCT AREA (2019)



TOP 10 DESTINATIONS WITH LARGEST PROPORTION OF INTERNATIONAL SPEND (2019)



2.4. Te Manahuna’s visitor profile

The visitor economy plays a vital role for Te Manahuna. Stimulated by the major tourism drawcards within its boundaries (Aoraki/Mount Cook and Lake Takapō), the region has historically enjoyed ongoing visitor growth, particularly from the international visitor market.

COVID-19, however, has had a major impact on tourism throughout the country and particularly impacted those destinations that typically attracted a strong international market; Te Manahuna is one of these destinations.

Figure 4 provides a summary of the visitor profile for Te Manahuna. Source data for this summary as well as more detailed data are included in Appendix 1 and Appendix 4.

Before COVID-19, visitation to Te Manahuna was growing, spurred on, in part, by the success of the 100% Pure campaign, the global tourism boom³ and social media profiling of New Zealand’s tourism icons (such as Aoraki/Mount Cook and Lake Takapō). In 2019, 1.97 million visitors undertook a trip to Te Manahuna, 36% of whom were domestic day trippers⁴. COVID-19 saw visitation to Te Manahuna decline, falling to a low of 1.1 million visitors in 2021 – a decline of 44% (or 862,000 visitors) between 2018 and 2021.

Total day trip travel (domestic and international) made up 62% of total visitation to Te Manahuna. While this is an important market, the overnight visitor market tends to contribute far more to the local economy (through spending on accommodation, additional food and beverage (F&B), transport etc.) while having a similar social and environmental impact footprint to the day market. To support the desire to focus on a higher-yielding visitor market, there needs to be an increased emphasis on ways to convert day trip visitors into overnight travellers.

Lake Takapō and Aoraki/Mount Cook have traditionally been the focus of the international visitor markets, with these destinations being strongly profiled online and via social media. Of the 1.97 million visitors to Te Manahuna, 65% stopped in Lake Takapō, followed by Aoraki/Mount Cook (27%), Twizel (22%) and Fairlie (4%).

Figure 5 provides a summary of international visitor flows in Te Manahuna in 2019. It shows that: half of Te Manahuna’s international visitor market only travelled to Lake Takapō; and only a small proportion of international visitors stopped in Fairlie and Twizel.

To help spread the economic benefits of the visitor economy more widely, there is a need, over time, to disperse visitors throughout Te Manahuna rather than just concentrating visitation in traditional visitor hubs, and when new product options are available throughout the region to support this.

The Australian and Asian markets made up the largest share of international visitors to Te Manahuna. In 2019, one-quarter of international travel to Te Manahuna was by Australians and a further 17% was by those from the “Rest of Asia”. While the Chinese market makes up only 4% of visitation, the spend profile of this market cannot be ignored, with Chinese visitor spending comprising 19% of total visitor spending.

Before COVID-19, Te Manahuna had one of the highest proportions in the country of its visitor spending originating from the international market – the only TLAs above were Westland, Southland, and Queenstown.

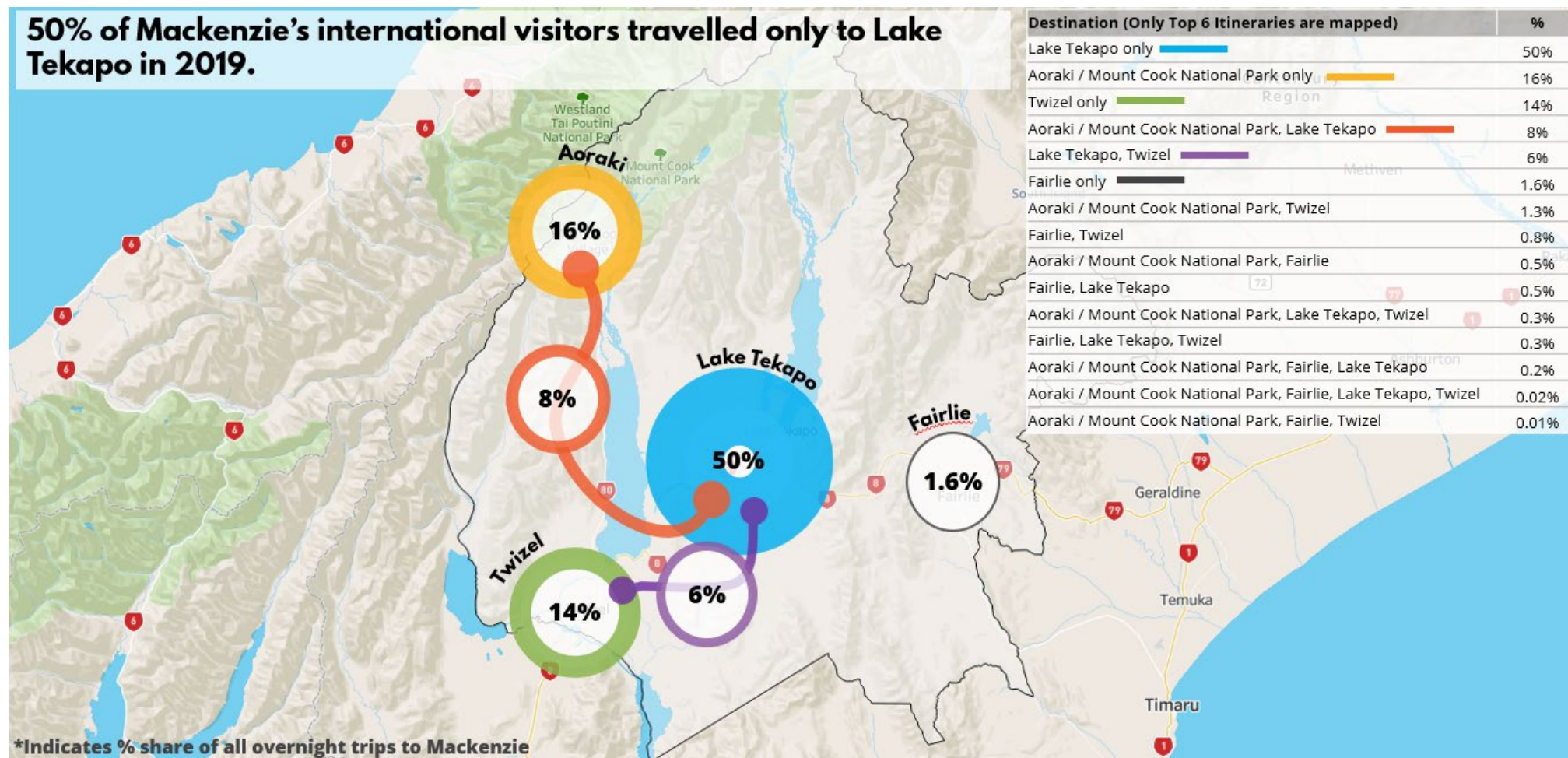
COVID-19 has shifted the focus many regional destinations had, with most pivoting to a stronger domestic market out of necessity. The domestic market also has a greater propensity to visit in the shoulder and low seasons, as opposed to the international market which tends to be heavily focused on peak visitation periods.

Importantly, COVID has offered Te Manahuna the opportunity to recalibrate total visitation and plan for the rebound in international visitation especially, which should have a far stronger focus on attracting overnight rather than day visitors. The same should also apply to domestic visitor markets.

To achieve this, however, will necessitate the introduction of new accommodation and attractions experiences along with enhancing a number of existing products so the appeal of the region grows.

³ Tourism’s boom is not universally welcome, The Economist, February 20, 2019, <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2019/02/20/tourisms-boom-is-not-universally-welcome>

⁴ A domestic day trip is defined by MBIE as a trip made within 1 day, outside the area in which the respondent usually lives or works day to day, involving travel of at least 40km one way from home, or travel by aeroplane or ferry service. By way of example, a resident from Christchurch who travels to Aoraki/Mount Cook for 5 hours and then returns home is considered a domestic day tripper to Mackenzie region.

Figure 5: International visitor stops and flows (2019)⁵

⁵ NZ International Visitor Survey

2.5. Te Manahuna’s tourism offering

Figure 6 provides a summary of Te Manahuna’s tourism offering. More detailed supporting data are available in Appendix 2 and Appendix 3.

Figure 6: Te Manahuna’s tourism offering

