



Marketing Communications Strategy in Increasing the Number of Visits to Rice Tourism Destinations

Ike Purwaningrum¹, Mujahid¹, Fitriana¹

¹Master's Program in Communication Science, Postgraduate Faculty, Fajar University, Indonesia



*Corresponding Author: Ike Purwaningrum

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Abstract

This research aims to analyze the marketing communication strategy of the Rice Field Tourism Destination in Gunung Mulia Village, as well as the inhibiting and supporting factors of these strategies in increasing the number of tourist visits. The research method employed is qualitative descriptive, with data collection through in-depth interviews, observations, and document studies. Data analysis utilizes content analysis. The research findings indicate that out of the 5 promotions mix in the marketing communication strategy, only three are implemented by D'Wish, namely advertising strategy, sales promotion, and direct marketing. Meanwhile, personal selling, public relations, and publicity have not been applied. The primary inhibiting factor affecting the implementation of the entire strategy is budget limitations, leading to selectivity in choosing marketing communication strategies. On the other hand, there are supporting factors contributing to the success of D'Wish's marketing communication strategy. These include affordable entrance tickets, the absence of competitors in the surrounding environment, and the availability of social media as an effective platform for advertising and promoting D'Wish. This research provides recommendations for destination managers to consider developing a more holistic and optimal marketing communication strategy to overcome budget constraints and leverage the advantages of existing supporting factors.

Introduction

North Penajam Paser Regency (PPU). In the past, perhaps the name of this district was very foreign to hear. However, in recent years, North Penajam Paser Regency (PPU) has been discussed very often by many people, because one part of the territorial area of this district has been designated as the capital of the new Republic of Indonesia, called Nusantara. Before becoming an autonomous region, PPU district was part of the Kutai Sultanate area which then became part of Balikpapan City and finally entered the Paser Regency area. This district is also one of the young districts in East Kalimantan Province, because on March 11 2022, this district was just designated as one of the 13th autonomous regions in East Kalimantan Province. Apart from being known as the Capital of the New Nation, PPU Regency also has very strong customs with unique historical values to study. The area is still very green and fresh with its friendliness and local wisdom, which also makes the people of PPU district heterogeneous, consisting of various ethnicities and cultures, but still within the same family ties. PPU district has now developed rapidly. Not a few people thought that the PPU district could be as successful as it is now. Twenty-one last year, the PPU district was only part of the non-district taken into account. But now, at this age, PPU has turned into a district that is rich in innovation and potential, one of which is tourism potential.

Tourism is an activity that directly touches and involves the community and has various impacts on local communities (Siregar, 2021). Apart from that, tourism can also be said to be a driving energy for development in an area. According to (Mahendrayani & Suryawan, 2018a) tourism is an important sector in economic development, because tourism is closely related to all economic sectors, so it makes many important contributions to the regional economy. The tourism sector contributes to foreign exchange earnings, increasing business opportunities and various employment opportunities, as well as increasing income for central and regional governments, including PPU districts (Fahlevy, 2022).

PPU Regency has a lot of tourism potential, both natural tourism and artificial tourism that is worth visiting. One of the tourist attractions worth visiting is the "Gunung Mulia Village Rice Field Tourist Destination" which is abbreviated as "D'Wish" (Prihadi et al., 2023). The area of the D'Wish location is ± 2 Hectares (Ha), where this location is land belonging to Gunung Mulia Village which was built using village funds and was inaugurated on June 21 2021. This D'Wish tourist attraction is managed by 3 elements, namely the Gunung Mulia Village Government, the Village-Owned Enterprise (BUMDES) Sidomulyo Gunung Mulia Village and the tourism awareness group (Pokdarwis) Gunung Mulia Village.

Judging from the name, D'Wish is definitely located in Gunung Mulia Village, precisely in Babulu District, North Penajam Paser Regency. This tourist attraction utilizes the agricultural sector as its main object, so of course the natural scenery typical of agricultural areas and various related activities therein will be the main objects highlighted (Irawan & Hartoyo, 2022; Mukmin, 2022). Apart from that, D'Wish also provides several facilities such as a row of beautiful gazebos, a canteen, parking area and also several children's games, such as a children's swimming pool and playground (Riazi et al., 2021).

Even though it hasn't been opened for long, reviews of this tourist spot have been seen on several social media such as Instagram, Facebook and You Tube, making it an interesting place to visit (Febriyantoro, 2020). The existence of agrotourism activities in this place can also broaden horizons and provide different tourism experiences for visitors. The rice fields are still very beautiful and the air is fresh in the rice field areas, of course this is a new destination for tourists who are tired of the hustle and bustle of life, while enjoying the sunset in the rice fields (Harun et al., 2022).

From Table 1.1, it can be seen that the number of visitors who come to D'Wish fluctuates from year to year. When D'Wish first opened in June 2021, the number of entry ticket sales reached 13,330. However, in 2022, there will be a decrease in ticket sales from January to December by 17.64%, with total sales reaching 10,979 pieces. 2023 shows improvement with an increase of 69.83% in entry ticket sales, reaching 22,637 pieces. It should be noted that ticket sales for 2023 are calculated only for the 9 months until September 2023.

Table 1. Recapitulation of Entry Ticket Sales for Gunung Mulia Village Rice Field Tourism

No	Month	Year/Percentage					
		2021	(%)	2022	(%)	2023	(%)
1	January			1.142	8,57%	1.098	8,22%
2	February			932	6,99%	685	5,14%
3	March			1.090	8,18%	569	4,27%
4	April			226	1,70%	3.069	23,03%
5	May			2.059	15,45%	3.527	26,46%
6	June	2.641	19,81%	992	7,44%	5.138	38,54%
7	July	4.209	31,58%	920	6,90%	4.671	35,04%

8	August	2.048	15,36%	463	3,47%	2.042	15,32%
9	September	1.406	10,55%	506	3,80%	1.840	13,80%
10	October	1.241	9,31%	832	6,24%		
11	November	867	6,50%	595	4,46%		
12	December	918	6,89%	1.222	9,17%		
Amount		13.330	100,00%	10.979	82,36%	22.637	169,83%

Source: Bum Sidomulyo Village, Gunung Mulya Village

These fluctuations could be caused by various interacting factors. Changes in the economic conditions of the community, the dynamics of tourism trends, as well as the changing characteristics and behavior of the community can be the causes of these fluctuations. Apart from that, the effectiveness of marketing communication strategies also plays a key role in attracting visitor interest. The phenomenon of a decrease in the number of visitors in 2022 may reflect the challenges or lack of certain attractions at that time (Reinhold et al., 2023). On the other hand, the increase in visits in 2023 shows potential improvements in strategy, both in terms of marketing, marketing communications, and other factors that influence visitor interest in D'Wish. In this context, it can be seen that the success of fluctuations in tourist visits can be attributed to promotional activities and the existence of tourism products (Subawa et al., 2021).

In 2023, this increase may be due to innovation in the tourism products offered and increased advertising activities. In addition, tourism product innovation can also include adding new attractions, improving services, or developing unique experiences that are attractive to visitors. Therefore, further analysis can be carried out to identify specific factors that contribute to the decrease and increase in the number of visits to these destinations. As stated in (Sumiyati & Murdiyanto, 2018) it cannot be denied that the decline in the number of visitors to a tourist attraction can be caused by various factors, including the emergence of new tourist attractions, lack of promotion or the use of inappropriate marketing communication strategies. Apart from the problem of opening new tourist attractions and lack of promotion, the problem of tourism marketing communication strategies is also a very important factor to pay attention to, because marketing communication strategies are techniques for how to design starting from how to plan, implement, evaluate to monitoring the use of the marketing communication mix. (marketing communication mix) is used, so that tourists are interested in visiting a marketed tourist attraction (Irpan et al, 2021).

Apart from that Priatmoko et al. (2023) also stated that marketing communications is a driving force for increasing sales so that the goals of tourist attractions can be achieved. Knowledge of marketing communications becomes important for tourists when they are faced with several problems, such as the decline in income of tourist attractions caused by a decrease in consumer purchasing power for a service, resulting in a slowdown in the growth and development of these tourist attractions. Furthermore, (Mahendrayani & Suryawan, 2018) stated that increasing the number of visits is very necessary in order to increase income to build tourism support facilities, improve the quality of human resources and improve the lives of local communities at the Sangeh Tourist Attraction. One of the causes of the slow increase in the number of visits is that the promotions carried out by the management are still very limited (Fachrurazi et al., 2022).

The problem formulation in this research is: What is the marketing communication strategy for the Sawah Tourism Destination in Gunung Mulya Village, Babulu District, North Penajam Paser Regency in increasing tourist visits? What are the inhibiting and supporting factors for the marketing communications strategy of the Gunung Mulya Village Sawah Tourism

Destination in increasing tourist visits? The purpose of this research: To determine and analyze the marketing communication strategy of the Gunung Mulia Village Sawah Tourism Destination in increasing tourist visits. To find out and analyze the inhibiting and supporting factors for marketing communication strategies for the Gunung Mulia Village Sawah Tourism Destination in increasing tourist visits.

Methods

This research uses qualitative research methods which are descriptive and tend to use analysis through an inductive approach or research focus according to facts in the field. This research seeks to collect and analyze information to understand the phenomenon more deeply and comprehensively from a more subjective perspective, obtained from interviews and observations in the field with certain informants. Apart from that, documentary evidence and interviews were also used in this research, so that they can be used as supporting evidence in research activities.

Result and Discussion

Rice Field Tourist Destinations (D'Wish)

Sawah Tourism Destination or D'Wish is a tourist destination located in Gunung Mulia Village, Babulu District, North Penajam Paser Regency. This rice field tourist destination is approximately 54 km or 60 minutes from the capital city of North Penajam Paser Regency. The route to D'Wish can be traversed using land transportation, namely private cars or public transportation.

This tourist destination is managed by 3 elements, namely the Gunung Mulia Village Government, the Village-Owned Enterprise (Bumdes) Sidomulyo Gunung Mulia Village and the tourism awareness group (Pokdarwis) Gunung Mulia Village. D'Wish development began in 2021 and was built using village funds. This rice field tourism destination was officially opened by the Deputy Regent of North Penajam Paser for the 2018-2023 period, Ir. H. Hamdam on June 21 2021, which was built on village land covering an area of \pm 2 hectares and is located between 816 hectares of rice fields owned by residents.

As one of the business units of the Sidomulyo Village-Owned Enterprise (Bumdes), the existence of D'Wish is expected to be able to contribute to improving the economic welfare of the Gunung Mulia Village community, as stated in the Sidomulyo Bumdes Vision, namely to encourage the growth of economic businesses and the welfare of the Gunung Mulia Village community. sustainable development by making Gunung Mulia Village a strong center for trade, services, agriculture and community industry towards a prosperous, intelligent, healthy and skilled society through developing economic businesses, increasing capacity and competency of resources and institutions. The Bumdes institutional structure below can illustrate the existence of D'wish as one of the business units of Bumdes Sidomulyo, Gunung Mulia Village.

The rice field tourist destination offers natural tourism views in the form of a beautiful rural atmosphere, such as rice field areas with views of green rice plants accompanied by a gentle breeze. Apart from that, this destination is also combined with artificial tourist destinations which have their own uniqueness for visitors. Artificial tourism referred to in this case is entertainment infrastructure and other supporting facilities such as meeting rooms, culinary stalls and MSMEs, photo spots, children's swimming pools, fishing ponds, rows of beautiful gazebos for resting places, children's playgrounds (swings, slides, flying fox, electric bicycles, ATV motorbike games and several other types of games). Apart from that, there is also natural

fishing in the rice field irrigation routes. The entrance ticket to D'Wish is very cheap, namely Rp. 5,000/person.

D'Wish Management Marketing Communication Strategy in Increasing the Number of Tourist Visits

In (Firmansyah, 2020) every marketing manager or marketer needs to understand marketing communications management in order to develop a marketing communications strategy. In developing a marketing communications strategy or new product marketing strategy, a marketer or marketing manager needs to consider several factors related to selecting and determining the right marketing communications mix. Furthermore, (Silviani & Darus, 2021) also said that marketing communications has developed into a marketing mix that combines the 4Ps (product, place, price and promotion) and contains a promotional mix consisting of various types of tools. Marketing communications (marketing tools), namely advertising, sales promotions, public relations, personal sales and direct marketing. Then, to make it easier for researchers to compile research results reports, researchers compile research results per point based on the basic instruments used to achieve the objectives of the marketing communication strategy which is called the promotional mix.

"When it was first inaugurated, we often promoted the existence of D'Wish through Facebook and Instagram accounts, and every time people came to D'Wish, such as officials and other famous people, to help introduce D'Wish. Wish to society. However, the promotions we carry out are still lacking and not very extensive, because D'wish still does not have complete facilities or there are many lacking them. InshaAllah, next year, if everything goes smoothly including the costs to complete the complete facilities, we will of course carry out promotional activities on a large scale. "We are afraid that if we carry out large-scale promotions at this time, visitors who come to D'Wish will experience disappointment because D'Wish's conditions are still mediocre." (Head of Gunung Mulia Village).

"Meanwhile, in an effort to introduce and promote D'Wish to the public, D'Wish management is only limited to making posts on Instagram and Facebook, in the form of photos related to the facilities provided by D'Wish and also the new rides presented by D "Wish includes a children's swimming pool and other rides as well as events held at D'Wish." (Chairman of Village-Owned Enterprises).

"For promotional or marketing activities, I am not directly involved. Because, as Chair of Pokdarwis, I have the task of developing D'Wish myself. So, my job is to make proposals in order to obtain financial assistance to develop D'Wish. "But, as far as I know, colleagues who are part of the management of D'Wish have introduced D'Wish to the community through social media such as Facebook and Instagram." (Chair of the Tourism Awareness Group).

"I know D"Wish from posts on Instagram and Facebook. Apart from that, my friends who have been here also said that there is a D'wish rice field tour in Gunung Mulia Village." (D'Wish visitor).

(Soemanagara, 2006) said that personal selling is the improvisation of sales using person-to-person communication. Personal selling is very important in marketing communications and cannot be replaced by other elements. Companies can sell their products directly to consumers through sales people who are under the auspices of a sales manager who promotes their products directly to the target market.

"Currently we don't have personal selling staff, because we don't have the courage to recruit workers or employees. The reason is because D'Wish is still in the development stage, and the income currently earned is not sufficient to pay salaries and allowances for additional workers. "In the meantime, personal sales are only carried out by ourselves as managers, but only to officials who come here or close friends to help introduce D'Wish." (Head of Gunung Mulia Village).

"We don't have personal selling staff like that yet, because D'Wish is still in the development stage so the income generated is not yet sufficient to pay the salaries of these staff." (Chairman of Bumdes).

"I have never received an offer to visit D'Wish through sales marketing staff. I found out about D'Wish from social media and also from several of my friends who have visited here." (D'Wish visitor).

"Considering that the condition of the existing facilities at D'Wish is still incomplete, the management has not carried out massive promotional activities, because D'WISH is still in the development stage. The promotion we do is just posting on IG and FB. And for evaluation activities related to the promotional activities that we carry out, we have never carried out an evaluation. Meanwhile, we have never carried out promotional activities such as giving discounts to visitors. "However, the management does not charge any payment or it is free, especially for residents of Gunung Mulia Village." (Chairman).

"So far, D'Wish management has never held a sales promotion such as giving discounts or discounts to visitors. However, we only make it free for residents of Gunung Mulia village who want to visit here. "If the promotion takes the form of advertising on social media such as Facebook and Instagram, we have done it." (D'Wish ticket sales officer).

Inhibiting and Supporting Factors for D'Wish Management's Marketing Communication Strategy in Increasing the Number of Tourist Visits

In implementing a marketing communications strategy, an organization cannot ignore the complexity of its operational environment. A number of inhibiting and supporting factors are naturally present on the way to achieving marketing goals. These factors create dynamics that need to be understood and addressed in order for marketing efforts to be effective. Inhibiting factors and also supporting factors may come from internal and external parties of the organization, such as budget availability, product life cycle, type of product or service, consumer purchasing decisions, characteristics of the target audience, consumer readiness to buy the product, media preferences, regulations, competitors and media availability. Therefore, an in-depth understanding of these factors is important in designing effective marketing communications strategies. By identifying and managing enabling factors, organizations can maximize their potential for marketing success. Conversely, by identifying and addressing inhibiting factors, organizations can reduce risks and increase the resilience of their marketing strategies amidst changing market dynamics.

"Currently, the obstacle for us managers is a limited budget. If we only rely on visitors' entrance tickets, we will not be able to develop D'Wish tourism products, let alone carry out marketing activities. Currently, our marketing communications strategy is only limited to promotions on social media such as Facebook and Instagram. In the future, if D'Wish continues to develop and has better income, God willing, the marketing communication strategy to increase the number of visits will be further improved. In

the future, we also need staff to create content creators, so that in the future the promotions we carry out will also be more interesting." (Chairman).

"This D'Wish was inaugurated on June 21 2021, and was built on village-owned land using village funds, so this D'Wish purely belongs to the Gunung Mulia village government. Apart from village funds, some of D'Wish's tourism developments also come from financial assistance from the East Kalimantan provincial government, such as the construction of gazebos, children's swimming pools and other children's play rides. And, the entry fee to D'Wish is only Rp. 5,000,- of course this price can be reached by all levels of society. Then, especially for residents of Gunung Mulia Village, we provide free entrance tickets as a form of our appreciation for the support and togetherness in the local community. For this reason, if we only rely on income from D'Wish to develop D'Wish tourism, we still cannot afford it. "Furthermore, the promotion strategy that we can currently carry out is only through social media such as Instagram and Facebook." (Head of Gunung Mulia Village).

"I really enjoyed my visit to D'Wish, but I think it would be more interesting if there were new rides added here. The tourist experience would be more diverse, and this could be an additional attraction for me who already visits often. Apart from that, I hope that the management will also pay attention to other supporting facilities. For example, comfortable rest areas, quality places to eat, places of worship and clean toilets so that they can make the visitor experience better. With these improvements, I am sure D'Wish can become a good tourist destination more popular and in demand by many people." (D'Wish visitor).

"Actually, D'Wish offers a unique and interesting experience, but it seems less known to many people. I'm sure if there were more intense promotions, D'Wish could reach more potential visitors. "Perhaps by using social media or collaborating with influencers, D'Wish can be better known and appreciated by the wider community." (D'Wish visitor).

"Seeing the large number of visitors who came with their families, we took the initiative to create rides for children, including a special children's swimming pool. And it seems that the response from visitors to the games and children's swimming pool is very good. This can be seen from the increase in the number of tourist visits to D'Wish, especially when this vehicle opened." (Chairman).

"We, the management of D'Wish, are very aware that currently many people spend their time finding out about all developments through social media such as Facebook and Instagram. Therefore, as a proactive step, we have directed our marketing efforts to this social media. We hope "through pictures and videos on Instagram, as well as interaction through the content sharing feature on Facebook, is one of the effective steps to introduce D'Wish to the public." (Chairman).

"D'Wish has its own uniqueness that has not been found in nearby tourist destinations, especially in PPU Regency. We as managers are of course trying to provide a different and attractive travel experience for visitors." (Head of Gunung Mulia Village).

In facing the complexity of the tourism industry, developing an effective marketing communication strategy is the basis for managers of tourist destinations, in this case the Sawah Tourism Destination (D'Wish) in Gunung Mulia Village, Babulu District, North Penajam Paser Regency. In this context, marketing communication strategies are key in achieving the growth

and sustainability goals of this rice field tourism destination, especially in order to increase tourist visits.

Furthermore, in the dynamics of the modern tourism industry, the attractiveness of a destination no longer depends solely on natural beauty, but also on the effectiveness of marketing communications that are able to present unforgettable stories and experiences. Therefore, developing a holistic marketing communications strategy is the main basis for efforts to improve the image and popularity of a tourist destination.

Marketing communication strategies are not only a tool to increase visits, but also a way to position this destination as the main choice for tourists looking for a different and unforgettable experience. In this context, in-depth analysis will reveal the layers of this strategy, from the formation of destination identity and branding to involvement in tourism events and the use of social media as an effective communication tool.

In the midst of various challenges, such as budget limitations, understanding the impact of this marketing communication strategy on the success of Sawah Tourism Destinations is becoming increasingly important. How each element of the strategy responds to market conditions, creates local community involvement, and provides added value for visitors is the key question that will be discussed in this chapter.

Based on the research results, the marketing communication strategy carried out by the managers of the Sawah Tourism Destination (D'Wish) in Gunung Mulia Village, Babulu District, North Penajam Paser Regency in increasing the number of tourist visits, is still relatively lacking and has not been implemented optimally. The Head of Gunung Mulia Village realized that promotional activities aimed at introducing D'Wish tourism products were still lacking and not very extensive, because D'Wish still did not have complete facilities.

Furthermore, to make it easier for researchers to organize the discussion, the researcher compiled this discussion based on the basic instruments used to achieve the objectives of the marketing communication strategy which is referred to as the promotional mix. Marketing communications (marketing tools), namely advertising, sales promotions, public relations, personal sales and direct marketing (Silviani & Darus, 2021).

In implementing a marketing communications strategy, an organization cannot ignore the complexity of its operational environment. A number of inhibiting and enabling factors are inherently involved in the journey towards achieving marketing objectives. These factors create dynamics that must be understood and addressed so that marketing efforts can run effectively.

Inhibiting and supporting factors may arise from various sources, both internal and external to the organization, such as budget availability, product life cycle, type of product or service, consumer purchasing decisions, target audience characteristics, consumer readiness to purchase the product, media preferences, regulations, competition, and media availability.

Thus, a deep understanding of these factors is key in designing an effective marketing communications strategy. Identifying and managing enabling factors enables organizations to maximize their potential for marketing success. Conversely, by identifying and addressing inhibiting factors, organizations can reduce risks and increase the resilience of their marketing strategies amidst dynamic changes in the marketplace.

As stated in (Firmansyah, 2020) every marketing manager or marketer needs to understand marketing communications management in order to develop a marketing communications strategy. In developing a marketing communications strategy or new product marketing

strategy, a marketer or marketing manager needs to consider several factors related to selecting and determining the right marketing communications mix.

Conclusion

The Marketing Communication Strategy for Rice Field Tourism Destinations in Gunung Mulia Village, Babulu District, North Penajam Paser Regency in increasing tourist visits is advertising, sales promotion and direct marketing. However, these three marketing communication strategies have not been implemented massively and comprehensively by D'Wish managers, due to their limited budget. Meanwhile, marketing communication strategies in the form of personal selling and public relations/publicity have not been implemented by D'Wish managers. The main inhibiting factor or obstacle to the marketing communications strategy for the Gunung Mulia Village Sawah Tourism Destination in increasing tourist visits is budget limitations. With the limited budget that D'Wish managers have, this will of course have implications for all aspects, such as the aspect of developing tourism product innovation and also the aspect of implementing optimal marketing communication strategies, in order to attract visitor interest. With this limited budget, advertising and sales promotion activities, human resources (HR) personal selling and public relations personnel as well as the development of tourism product innovation are also limited.

As a destination that focuses on rice field tourism, developing new features and improving service quality is limited due to limited budgets. The implication is an inability to meet visitors' increasingly high expectations for authentic and engaging tourism experiences. Supporting factors for the marketing communication strategy of the Gunung Mulia Village Rice Field Tourism Destination in increasing tourist visits are preferences for media availability, consumer readiness to buy products and the absence of competitors. In conditions of financial constraints, the existence of social media appears as a promising strategic option. Social media, as a democratic and wide-reaching platform, opens up opportunities to reach a larger audience. D'Wish can utilize social media to build active engagement with potential visitors, convey attractive visualizations of destination experiences, and create attractive product promotions so as to broaden its appeal.

Suggestion

Diversifying funding sources through partnerships and local sponsorship is a key step. By establishing partnerships with local companies or businesses around the destination, D'Wish can obtain additional financial support. In addition, this partnership can create mutually beneficial collaboration between the tourism sector and local businesses. Support from local sponsors, both in the form of finance and services, can help overcome budget constraints. Implement a more creative marketing strategy by focusing on social media. Given the limited budget, D'Wish can utilize social media as the main platform for marketing campaigns. Creative approaches such as using attractive visual content or collaborating with tourism ambassadors or influential users can be economical and effective methods. Social media not only covers a wider audience but also allows for more intense interaction with potential visitors, creating more positive promotions and exposure.

Active participation of local communities who can support D'Wish promotional activities. Involving the local community in promotional programs, such as festivals or joint activities, can create positive support around the destination. This not only supports promotional efforts but also helps build positive relationships between D'Wish and local communities, which can be a determining factor in long-term success. Developing a sustainable innovation program is an important strategy that takes into account budget constraints. D'Wish needs to direct its

innovation towards changes that are efficient and have a big impact. Careful market research to identify current trends and visitor needs can provide the basis for innovation that is relevant to the characteristics of the destination. In this way, D'Wish can continue to increase its appeal, provide unique experiences, and remain relevant in the eyes of visitors.

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