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# **The Use of the Expects Concept in Designing and Assessing Web 2.0 Sites for Destination Management Organisations**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The advent of Web 2.0 has revolutionized many areas of marketing, among them product design, distribution, and communications. Understanding what the consumer/tourist wants has thus become increasingly important. To that end, a new concept has been proposed, that of expects—expects being short for expectations or expectancies—, to better render the complexity of purchase behaviour. Web 2.0 has also given rise to the phenomenon of social networks. In the wake of these interactive tools, many Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) have designed photo and experience sharing sites. Using three sites as case studies, this article demonstrates the usefulness of the expects concept for analyzing sites, including the identification of their appeal and the evaluation of their theoretical potential in attracting and retaining users.*

**Keywords:** *needs; expects; Web 2.0; photo sharing; social networks; destination experience.*

## INTRODUCTION

Developments in technology are increasingly influencing the way consumers process, buy, and exchange information, a phenomenon that also applies to the field of tourism (World Tourism Organization, 2008). Demand patterns are also changing, as more and more travellers seek travel experiences based on sophisticated information searches (Cantoni & Kalbaska, 2010). Tim Berners-Lee invented the World Wide Web in 1990 primarily as a tool for information exchange that would allow to solve problems collectively. Web 2.0 can be seen as no more and no less than a continuation of this legacy (Charest, Bédard, 2009). Web 2.0 describes the second generation of web services that enable communication and information exchange between users (Lee & Gretzel, 2006). The two main features of Web 2.0, namely, user-generated content (UGC) and social networking capabilities, are transforming both the tourism demand and supply in that they change the way people search, read, evaluate, disseminate, write, and use information (Sigala & Marinidis, 2010).

The use of Web 2.0 tools seems to have become essential for Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) wishing to attract a clientele that is increasingly interested in experiences made by other travellers (Cox et al. 2008). According to a report published by PhoCusWright in June 2009, one third of the U.S. American DMOs studied are already offering visitors the possibility to share photos and videos on their site. As of 2010, more than 63% of DMO sites are expected to allow tourists to post comments (Péloquin, 2009).

The goal of this paper is to introduce the *expects* concept—*expects* being short for expectations or expectancies—and to show how it can be used to analyze the content of DMO Web 2.0 sites. The conclusion presents a comparative analysis of the three sites and outlines the benefits that a more systematic use of the *expects* concept could have provided in the development of the content, product design, and marketing approach. The sole purpose of this analysis is to illustrate the usefulness of the *expects* concept in this specific instance. We do not claim that this comparative analysis of the selected sites is statistically reliable, it being the result of a consensus reached by multiple experts.

## LITERATURE

### Human motivation

Do people really have *needs*? They must, otherwise they would not be so preoccupied with needs and talking so much about them on a daily basis. From a phenomenological perspective, consumers experience needs and make every attempt to satisfy those needs. Marketing literature largely agrees that consumers have needs and that understanding those needs determines the success of any marketing effort. Most, if not all, of this literature is based on the definition of needs derived from Maslow's theory of human motivation (1954). However, how useful are needs as a concept for understanding the complexity of consumer behaviour?

In *Consommation et image de soi – Dis-moi ce que tu achètes...* (Consumption and self-image – Tell me what you buy...), the first book of a trilogy on consumption, Duguay (2005) presents the weaknesses of the needs concept espoused by traditional marketing scholars. The most significant of these flaws is that needs are considered as being inherent and as clearly distinguished from *desires* or *wants*. By contrast, Maslow, in the context of his theory of motivation, presents a new approach to this topic as follows:

[D]rives do not range themselves in an arithmetical sum of isolated, discrete members. They arrange themselves rather in a hierarchy of specificity. What is meant by this is that the number of drives one chooses to list depends entirely on the degree of specificity with which one chooses to analyze them. The true picture is not one of a great many sticks lying side by side, but rather of a nest of boxes in which one box contains three others, and in which each of these three contains ten others, and in which each of these ten contains fifty others, and so on. Or another analogy might be that of a description of a histological section under various degrees of magnifications. Thus we can speak of a need for gratification or equilibrium; or more specifically of a need to eat; or still more specifically of a need to fill the stomach; or still more specifically of a desire for proteins; or still more specifically of a desire for a particular protein; and so on. Too many of the listings that we now have available have combined indiscriminately needs at various levels of magnification. With such a confusion it is understandable that some lists should contain three or four needs and others contain hundreds of needs. If we wished, we could have such a list of drives contain anywhere from one to one million drives, depending entirely on the specificity of analysis (Maslow, 1954, p. 70-71).

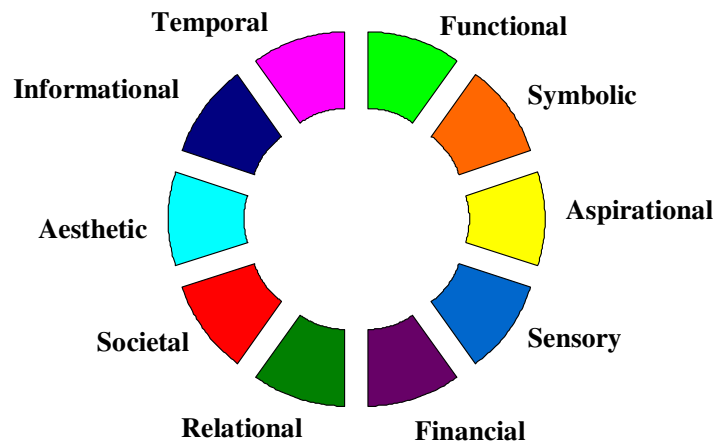
Maslow considers needs, drives, and desires to be different manifestations of the same reality, some being more specific than others—a stance we strongly agree with. Thus, if marketing can influence desires and wants, it can promote the emergence of new needs, and the creation of these needs is relatively easy given that “the human being is never satisfied except in a relative or one-step-along-the-path fashion” (Maslow, 1954, p. 69).

### **Conceptual developments of the expects concept**

In his trilogy on consumption (2005, 2007, 2009), Duguay proposes the concept of expects—standing, as mentioned, for expectations or expectancies—to better render the complexity of behaviour motivation. The concept is inspired by the author’s experience with partners and clients for over 20 years and by the theoretical work of prominent scholars in the fields of psychology and sociology, such as Jean Baudrillard (1968), Bernard Cathelat (1992), and Robert Rochefort (1995).

Unlike needs, which are wrongly deemed to be inherent, and to be thus linked exclusively to a person, expects, while originating from an individual, result from an intimate interrelation between the object of said expects, such as a product, and that person. Furthermore, expects are also derived from personal (e.g., self-image), social (e.g., reference groups), and cultural (e.g., advertising) influences. The concept can be used to study and understand motivations behind behaviour or preferences, such as a preference for a specific product design, or a like or dislike for a certain website design. Of course, different market segments may also have different preferences. The author identified 10 categories of expects, which he represents in a circular graphic called the “Ring of Expects” (see Fig. 1). The choice of a circular shape is neither the result of chance, nor is it an aesthetic concern. It is meant to emphasize the fact that no particular type of expect predominates in any given decision.

A *functional* expect is a requirement of a utilitarian nature, wherein the product must fulfil its function to the user’s satisfaction. A *symbolic* expect is a requirement of a representative nature in that the products are expected to confer a certain image to their buyers, owners, or users.



**Fig. 1** The Ring of Expects (Duguay, 2007b)

*Aspirational* expects are also requirements of a symbolic nature. However, the symbolism here is rooted in the deepest aspirations of oneself, such as image, esteem, identity, and self-worth. *Sensory* expects designate requirements of a hedonistic nature, and are thus linked to all forms of pleasure. *Financial* expects are related to economic matters. With regard to consumption, this includes the retail price of a product as well as payment, consumers' financial resources, and their sensitivity to price. Thus, in terms of investment, greed for fast profits, the usual motivation for speculation, is also a form of financial expect.

*Relational* expects reflect the interactions that a person may or may not want with other human actors. In terms of consumption, this could concern the relationship of a customer with a salesperson during the buying process and with other clients while using the product. *Societal* expects encompass a broad range of concerns centred on collective welfare, such as environmental protection (e.g., the fight against pollution and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions), corporate social responsibility, and social equity.

*Aesthetic* expects are related to beauty, a highly subjective concept influenced by the vagaries of fashion, cultural values, and personal preferences. *Informational* expects express the desire to have access to advice, instructions, data, news, and opinions from other users, about a product, company, or cause. Finally, *temporal* expects highlight the place of time or, more specifically, the perception of time, in everyday life. It may be related to the passage of time: hours, days, weeks, months, or years. It may also seek to immortalize a moment or to suspend time.

The following excerpt from *Consommation et nouvelles technologies – Au monde de l'hyper* (Consumption and new technologies – In the hyper world) allows to better understand this concept using the example of a highly popular technical object:

To illustrate the concept of *expects*, the purchase of an iPhone 3G (2008 model) could be motivated by the following expectations: ease of use (*functional* expect), the Apple brand (*symbolic* expect), the image of 'innovator' which the product confers to the buyer who wishes to project such an image of himself (*aspirational* expect), the vibrant colours displayed on the screen (*sensory* expect), the reduced price of 3G model compared to the 3GS (*financial* expect), the ability to connect to social networks such as Facebook and Twitter (*relational* expect), the fact that its liquid crystal display (LCD) does not contain mercury (*societal* expect), the product's rounded shape (*aesthetic* expect), the detailed technical

specifications available on the product's site (*informational* expect), and the different forms of instantaneous communication this product allows (*temporal* expect). Expects are extremely variable as are their relative weight. The choice will reflect expects from various categories, perhaps all, the influence of each being weighted by each buyer in every context (Duguay, 2009, p. 132). [translation]

## METHODOLOGY

In order to demonstrate the usefulness of the expects concept in analyzing the content of DMO Web 2.0 sites, the three following sites were chosen as case studies:

- Destination Québec (<http://www.destinationquebec.com/>)
- Community of Sweden (<http://www.communityofsweden.com/>)
- Wales 1000 Things (<http://wales1000things.com/>)
- 

Because the sole purpose of our analysis is to illustrate the usefulness of the expects concept, only one person rated the websites, namely, the author of the theory himself. Readers should note that the designers of all three sites most likely did *not* use the expects concept when developing the content and design of their web pages. Rather, the concept is generally applied after the fact to analyze content in terms of its appeal. The site analyses aim to identify, retrospectively, which expects are solicited through any form of content, be it textual or visual, of each home page. We used the English language versions of the three sites.

The application of the expects concept to analyze content *retrospectively*, as presented in this paper, requires no more than an intimate understanding of behaviour motivation and, of course, of the theory itself. Such analysis is qualitative in nature.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following results analyses present a brief background of the sites and an evaluation of the features and appeals which each employs to incite visitors to become members and to use the site to interact, share photos or comments, and even build relationships.

### **Destination Québec**

After the launch in 2005 of the BonjourQuebec.com site in the framework of a partnership between Bell Canada and the Quebec Ministry of Tourism, the latter decided, in 2008, to deploy a Web 2.0 strategy based on a two-pronged approach. On the one hand, it focused on the production of content and its dissemination through various networks (Wikipedia, Facebook, Flickr, etc.). On the other hand, it aimed to develop, by means of a user-driven site (Destinationquebec.com), the blog of the official site (Bonjourquebec.com), and a module allowing visitors to evaluate tourism establishments (Cormier, 2010).

The analysis of the Destination Québec site is based on the site as it was displayed on August 20, 2010. The site features a black header and footer, a mostly grey background, and makes limited use of rather dark shades of colours. Its content consists mainly of photos complemented by a few graphics and limited text. An in-depth analysis revealed the use of the following eight types of expects to promote site usage: functional, relational, informational, sensory, temporal, financial, aspirational, and aesthetic.

The header contains the title of the page, “Destination Québec,” and four frequently used hyperlinks: *Home*, *Log on*, *FAQ*, and *Français* (linking to the French version of the site), in addition to a search bar. Below the header, the main menu features four drop down elements: *Experiences* (photos or videos), *Categories* (classification of photos and videos by activity, such as camping, cycling and fishing, or by the type of tourist attraction, such as architecture, scenery, and museums), *Regions* (classification of photos and videos by region within the province of Quebec), and *Seasons* (classification of photos and videos by season).

The body of the page features two main elements preceded by a short presentation text in a wide column on the left hand side, *Recent Videos* at the top is followed by *Recent Photos* and five other components in a narrower column on the right-hand side: (i) a *Share* section with two buttons and *Photos* and *Videos*, both hyperlinked to the log on page; (ii) a dynamic *top picks* section presenting a selection of photos for about five seconds each; (iii) the *Infinitely Nature* video contest, in which users can present material between May 17 and August 31, 2010 and vote for their favourite video from September 6 to 30; (iv) a static map of the province of Quebec, hyperlinked to a larger version that can be zoomed and onto which a selection of photos are pinned; and (v) a *Bonjour Québec* logo, which includes Quebec’s flag, hyperlinked to Quebec’s Ministry of Tourism site (<http://www.bonjourquebec.com/>).

The footer contains four administrative type hyperlinks that commonly appear on sites: *Terms and conditions*, *Privacy*, *Photo credits*, *Contact us*, and *About us*. It also features a Quebec flag, in black and white instead of the official blue and white colours. Because of all these features, the *Destination Québec* site appears to be somewhat user-friendly. User-friendliness, or ease of use, is related to product utilization and, as such, aims to respond to users’ functional expects. Of utmost importance to a site, it ensures adequate traffic and use.

As mentioned, immediately below the main menu, two sentences, displayed in two parallel paragraphs, introduce the site’s purpose: “Share your travel memories and discover *Destination Québec* as seen and experienced by travellers from all around the world. Explore the 11955 contributions from other users illustrating 22 tourists regions, 23 categories and every season throughout the year.”

The first part of the first sentence, “Share your travel memories,” and the *Share* section presented earlier, are clear attempts to capitalize on the popularity of interactive social networks by promoting photo and video sharing. Interaction on the Internet is the hallmark of Web 2.0. It appeals to people’s relational expects, i.e., their desire to interact with other people. However, the *Destination Québec* site lacks the more advanced interactive functions that users of social networks are so fond of. This limits its relational appeal somewhat.

The remainder of the text quoted in the second last paragraph highlights the possibility to explore tourist sites in the province of Quebec as seen by Canadian and foreign visitors. Some people may find this feature useful in deciding on a destination, in which case the site satisfies their informational expects. The possibility to sort photos by category, region, and season facilitates this search for information.

The site also features a promotional event, namely, the *Infinitely Nature* video contest. This feature may be a form of pleasure for some people and, as such, appeals to sensory expects. Moreover, participation in this contest is based on a time limit that creates a sense of urgency, which is crucial for the effectiveness of this type of promotion. This promotional event is thus also associated with temporal expects.

Prizes are featured in the contest. The first prize is an HD Handycam camcorder valued at CAN\$779, the second prize a 32G iPod Touch valued at CAN\$547, and the third prize an Apple iPod Touch valued at CAN\$366. A participation prize, a Bloggie camcorder valued at CAN\$220 is also randomly awarded to those who take part in the popular vote. These incentives may appeal to people who seek monetary gain and, as such, are related to financial expects.

The prospect of featuring selected videos in the *Infinitely Nature* video contest appeals to two types of expects: sensory, because of the pleasure derived from having one's name mentioned, and aspirational, because of the pride felt and the potential effects on self-esteem.

This analysis of the Destination Québec site was concluded with an examination of its general appearance and its appeal in terms of beauty, which concerns aesthetic expects. As mentioned in the definition of the concept, the notion of beauty is subjective and dependent on individual preferences. That said, because of its black header and footer, mostly grey background, and limited use of rather dark shades of colours, we consider the appearance of this site to be somewhat austere. We estimate that the site will therefore appeal to conservative people.

### **Community of Sweden**

Aware of the change in the behaviour of travellers, who are increasingly seeking inspiration from communities, forums, blogs, and social media (Swedish Tourist Office, 2008), the Swedish Tourist Office decided in 2007 to launch a new digital strategy aiming to increase the destination's online visibility. The Swedish Tourist Office, which represents the national ministry of tourism and industry professionals, based its strategy on five considerations (Ziv, 2010): (i) choice of the most pertinent Web 2.0 applications for the destination; (ii) precise definition of the use and the objectives of each medium; (iii) customization of the modes of participation; (iv) dissemination of content through "widgets" and other applications; and (v) adoption of a proactive strategy through the creation of digital ambassadors.

The analysis of the Community of Sweden site (<http://www.communityofsweden.com/>) is based on the site as it was displayed on August 23, 2010, while still in its beta phase. The site features a light blue header, a white footer, a mostly white background, and makes use of lively colours to attract users' attention. Its content is a balanced mix of text, photos, and graphics. An in-depth analysis revealed the use of the following six types of expects to promote site usage: functional, relational, informational, sensory, aspirational, and aesthetic.

The header features a logo of Visit Sweden, Sweden's official site for tourism and travel information, which includes Sweden's flag, hyperlinked to that site. It also contains the page title "Community of Sweden" and two frequently used hyperlinks: *About* and *Contact*. Below the header, the main menu features eight tabbed elements: *Home*, *My page*, *Stories*, *Photos*, *Groups* (created by site users), *Forum*, *Members*, and *Widget* (snippet of html code that can be pasted into an external blog or site, allowing to display CommunityOfSweden.com content). It also features a search bar to the right of the tabbed elements and five left-aligned



hyperlinks at the bottom of the menu: *Startpage*, *Take the tour*, *About the community*, *FAQ*, and *Contact*.

The body of the page features eight elements. First, immediately below the main menu, a page wide *Welcome* screen allows users to either *Take the tour*, receive an invitation to join the Community of Sweden, or to log in. The *Welcome* screen also features a presentation text: “Share and enjoy photos, travel stories, tips and more from friends in Sweden and all over the world,” which is repeated in the footer. The background of this screen is a photo, presumably of Swedish tourist attractions, that changes with each page refresh. Below the *Welcome* screen, a page-wide *Last logged in members* screen, updated in real time, features the names and photos of those members. Photos are hyperlinked with each user’s profile (*My page*). Below the *Last logged in members* screen, a final page-wide *News Flash* screen displays what will presumably be recent or important tourist information. Because the site is in beta phase, the message displayed may not be representative of future content: “Done a lot of cleaning of inappropriate and non Swedish content. We’ve reached 16,000+ members now which is great but it also increases spam and such. Thank you all for reporting such content!”

The body of the page features four more elements displayed in three columns: *Editor’s Choice*, *Popular groups*, *Popular stories*, and *Explore Sweden*. At the time of viewing, in the left hand column, *Editor’s choice* displayed four items, *Crowdsourcing logo design*, *Sweden on YouTube*, *The white season*, and *In the spotlight*, using images, text, or both. All four items are hyperlinked to other pages. *Popular groups* and *Popular stories* are displayed in the centre column. The first lists groups created by members and the latter stories posted by users, both tagged by subject. Both items use text and photos and are hyperlinked to dedicated pages. *Explore Sweden* is an interactive map displayed in the left hand column. It features pinned photos. The map and photos can be changed to five different subjects, such as *Last 7 days*, *Winter*, *Spring*, *Summer*, and *Autumn*, using a slider. The last element of the page body is a convenient feedback button displayed on the left side of the page. It remains centred as users scroll down.

The footer repeats the presentation text featured in the *Welcome* screen and seven frequently used hyperlinks: *Take the tour*, *About*, *Help*, *Press*, *Privacy*, *Terms*, and *Advertise*. Emphasis is also put on the fact that the Community of Sweden is present on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, for which hyperlinked logos are provided. As in the header, but in the form of text, there is a hyperlink to Visit Sweden. All the above mentioned elements seamlessly integrate into an attractive and fully featured site that is also highly user-friendly. As such, it meets countless functional expects, such as ease of use, convenience, and performance for users, media representatives, and commercial advertisers.

Several features combine to meet users’ relational expects: the name of the site itself (“Community of Sweden”), the repeated use of words such as “share” and “friends,” the use of a membership status instead of a mere user registration, members’ individual pages (*My page*), the *Groups*, the *Forum*, the community’s presence on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, and the hyperlinked logos that link from these sites. The Community of Sweden site truly aims to encourage interactions between members and to capitalize on the popularity of existing social networks. The opportunity to become a member of a community, and of having one’s photo displayed while logged in, may also meet some people’s aspirational expects.

Many features also combine to answer users' informational expects: *News Flash*, *Editor's Choice*, *Popular groups*, and *Popular stories*, to name but these few. The fact that the site contains not merely photos, but also a narration of tourist experiences enhances its usefulness. Finally, the fact that photos on the *Explore Sweden* map may be sorted by theme and accessed directly from the home page facilitates the search for information.

The opportunity for members to get their story published in *Popular stories* appeals to two types of expects: sensory, because of the pleasure derived from having one's name mentioned, and aspirational, because the potential boost to one's self-image and self-esteem.

This analysis of the Community of Sweden site concludes with an examination of its appeal in terms of beauty, i.e., how well it responds to aesthetic expects. Because of its liberal use of lively colours and its bright appearance, we estimate this site to be aesthetically pleasing for a wide variety of people, and a brief analysis of the site's membership base did in fact reveal an age range from the early 20s to the late 70s. Furthermore, its look is inviting and conveys a sense of fun, qualities that are very appropriate when designing a DMO Web 2.0 site.

### **Wales 1000 Things**

Aware of the growing purchasing power of travellers and of the significant role of new communication tools in shaping the image of a destination, the Wales Tourist Board identified the digital challenge as a key in its development policy. From this perspective, it adopted the Push strategy, which aims to demonstrate leadership in the management of the destination's image. The strategy is being realized by means of the following actions and goals (Munro & Richards, 2010): (i) construction of the online community based on the authority and credibility of the DMO (user-driven site *Wales1000things*); (ii) improve client satisfaction throughout the purchase process, and more particularly during the post-purchase stage; (iii) highlighting of the destination's strong points and unique vernacular characteristics; and (iv) eliminate any negative perceptions.

The analysis of the Wales 1000 Things site (<http://wales1000things.com/>) is based on the site as it was displayed on August 24, 2010. The site features a red header, a very light shade of grey footer, a white background, and makes use of red elements to attract users' attention. Its content consists mainly of photos supported by a few graphics and limited text. An in-depth analysis revealed the use of six types of expects that promote site usage: functional, informational, relational, sensory, aspirational, and aesthetic.

The header merely features the title of the page (Wales 1000 Things), a search bar, and a logo/hyperlink of Wales Cymru, a site dedicated to holidays and short breaks in Wales. Below the header, the main menu features five tabbed elements, *Home*, *View Stuff*, *Add Stuff*, *Get Brochures*, and *Our Blog*, and a convenient *Tell a friend* button.

The body of the page features five main elements in a wide column on the left side, and two other components in a narrower column on the right side. Elements in the left column are displayed in three separate rows: (i) in the first row, a title, *Your photo & video adventures in Wales*, is followed by a short presentation text hyperlinked both to *View Stuff* and *Add Stuff*, with a clickable map of Wales. Clicking on one of Wales' four regions on the map links the user to the photos of that region; (ii) in the second row, an *Add stuff NOW!* button and, underneath it, a picture with the caption "Don't forget to get your mates to rate your stuff!"

that is hyperlinked to *View Stuff*. To the right of that row, in the *View and rate your favourites* section, a Flash animation clearly explains how to “view and rate your favourites”; (iii) in the third row, a display of eight photos, each depicting a different activity (e.g., cycling, fishing, mountain biking, walking) and linking to more photos of that activity. A *View overall top rated* button links to the ten best rated photos in the collection.

The right column contains two elements. First, a *Browse* section, allowing users to select photos among Wales’ four regions or among the eight different types of activities. Second, a *Get Brochures* button hyperlinked to a page that allows users to order brochures on Wales four regions and activities. The footer merely features four administrative type hyperlinks, namely, *Terms and Conditions*, *Privacy Policy*, *Accessibility Statement*, and *Contact Us*. The above-mentioned features integrate into a simple, visually pleasing site that appears to be user-friendly, thus responding to users’ functional expects in terms of ease of use. Users can quickly and easily link to the category of photos they wish to view.

As mentioned, the page body’s first row features a short presentation text that includes two sentences. The first sentence, “Thinking of coming? Take a wander round our gallery and grab a free magazine or PDF,” is an explicit appeal to informational expects, as is the clickable map of Wales, which opens thumbnail photos from the selected region. The desire to obtain information may also be satisfied by the *View Stuff* and *Add Stuff* sections in the main menu and by the *Browse* and *Get Brochures* sections in the left column.

The *Our Blog* section may also be very useful in terms of information; however, we fail to understand why it does not immediately link to the new blog page that has been set up. The repetition of features allowing users to obtain information makes it more convenient to perform this function.

The second sentence, “Already been? Share with us what you got up to by adding your stuff below,” is an appeal to relational expects, as is the *Add Stuff* section in the page body and in the main menu. The *View and rate your favourites* section is also an appeal to interactions with other users. Very attractive and well conceived, it makes it easy to understand how to rate photos in the site. Again, the repetition of features makes it easier and more convenient for users to interact on the site.

The fact that members’ photos may be published in the *Top Rated* section may appeal to two types of expects: sensory, because of the pleasure derived from having one’s name mentioned, and aspirational, because of the potential boost to one’s self-esteem.

This analysis of the Wales 1000 Things site concludes with an examination of its appeal in terms of beauty, i.e., of how well it responds to aesthetic expects. Because of its bright and lively appearance and the use of at least one bright colour (red), we estimate the look of this site to be pleasing and appropriate in a tourism context for a variety of age groups. However, we feel that the use of more than one colour would greatly improve the site’s appearance.

## CONCLUSION

### Comparison of website appeals

Table 1 shows a comparison of site appeals based on the analysis of the three sites performed in Section 4 using the expects concept.

**Table 1**  
**Comparison of Website Appeals**

Ring of Expects (Fig. 1)	Destinationquebec	Communityofsweden	Wales1000things
Functional	+	+++	++
Symbolic	–	–	–
Aspirational	+	+	+
Sensory	++	+	+
Financial	+	–	–
Relational	+	+++	++
Societal	–	–	–
Aesthetic	+	+++	++
Informational	+	+++	++
Temporal	+	–	–

Legend: (– no appeal), (+ minimal appeal), (++ strong appeal), (+++ exceptional appeal)

Readers should keep in mind that each of the three sites target different market segments, which may explain why each one uses different appeals. This said, our analysis reveals that the Destination Québec site appeals to most types of expects—eight out of ten—exceptions being symbolic and societal. However, the intensity of these appeals are for the large part minimal, making Destinationquebec.com a good all around site that will please some types of users, which may explain its 11,978 contributions (photos and videos) as of August 27 2010. Apparently impressive, this figure is, however, not very meaningful. What would be more interesting to know is how many unique contributors (i.e., the number of distinct people who contributed content) there are and where these originate from. Moreover, the site lacks a focus on any specific type of expect, save sensory given its contest.

The other two sites, Community of Sweden and Wales 1000 Things, use a more targeted approach. Both appeal to only six types of expects and focus on just four, namely, functional, relational, informational, and aesthetic. The Community of Sweden site is less crowded than the Destination Québec site. It is also more user-friendly and provides more information (photos and comments) than both of the other sites. Finally, its interactive function is very advanced. These factors may explain why it has reached 16,000+ members in the beta stage.

The Wales 1000 Things site is less crowded than the Destination Québec site. It is also more user-friendly than the latter in terms of accessing specific information about an activity or a region. The use of a brighter background and colour makes it slightly more attractive. However, the nearly exclusive use of red makes it difficult for the site to attract attention on specific elements.

## **Implications for research and industry**

The expects concept provides a more in-depth understanding of behaviour motivation than existing theories, especially in the context of commercial activities. We applied the concept to analyze the content of already existing DMO Web 2.0 sites. The theory can be used just as easily to plan website content and design, and can also be used in the planning stage to develop products, promotional material, and sales argumentation, among others. Finally, the expects concept can be used to diagnose why a website or a product failed to attract users or why a communication failed to convince the targeted audience.

For example, use of the expects concept by a DMO wishing to build an interactive Web 2.0 site could result in a more effective site design with respect to layout, desired features, appearance, degree of interaction, and more. Of course, websites may target different audiences and promote different usages. This only makes the expects concept more useful, because it provides a more refined understanding of what different users are looking to find, in terms of content, design and complexity, in the sites they visit.

## **Limitations**

Applying the expects concept in this case merely required an intimate understanding of behaviour motivation and, of course, of the theory itself. Using it in the field and producing statistically reliable data requires the use of advanced quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. Thus, research on how to simplify those methods for easy use by the business community should be a priority.

The use of the expects concept does not preclude the use of traditional quantitative methods to evaluate website performance, such as number of unique visitors, time spent on a page, number of hyperlinks clicked, and many more.

Finally, measuring the true effectiveness and efficiency of DMO websites would entail a comparison of web traffic between sites, including well recognized and high-performing sites in the tourism industry. Unfortunately, detailed data is impossible to get from the sites themselves, presumably as this is a matter of confidentiality, with sites wishing to maintain a competitive advantage. Industry norms thus have yet to be determined. Collecting data on site performance in the tourism industry should also be a priority.

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