OTA: Web conversion optimization with the UX design solution

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Cíl práce:	The focus of the thesis will be on the web conversion optimization with the help of UX web design principles. Using the mixed method of qualitative research combined with the own web analysis, the author will prepare recommendations on improving the conversion strategy for the OTA. The output of this work will be a plan for improving the performance of the website of a selected Czech OTA.

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OTA: Web conversion optimization with the UX design solution

Bachelor's thesis

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Abstract

BIBEN Karina. OTA: Web conversion optimization with the UX design solution. Bachelor's thesis. College of Polytechnics Jihlava. Economics and Management study programme. Thesis supervisor: Mgr. Anica Djokic, MBA. Level of professional qualification: Bachelor academic degree. Jihlava 2017. 49 pages.

The aim of this work is to shed light on the theory and practical techniques that play a significant role in converting web visitors into customers. As this thesis is approaching better business solutions for the travel industry, the outcome will be a plan for better web performance of a selected Czech OTA.

This paper is divided into three parts. The first part represents the theoretical background and clarifies definitions related to online promotion, website performance and the user experience design. Second part, methodology, explains the research and evaluation methods, that are executed in the third part. The third, practical part contains a survey, analysis and the plan for a selected OTA.

Key Words

Marketing mix. Online Promotion. UX design. Web conversion optimization. OTA.

The great myth of our times is that technology is communication. - Libby Larsen

It's supposed to be automatic, but actually you have to push this button. - John Brunner

Preface

Usability matters. In my own experience as a Web user, frequent frustration made me realize how crucial good user interaction and satisfaction can be for the online business. Therefore, this study conveys the highly practical content based on qualitative research and modern literature with the Web usability principles comprising users' behaviour tendencies. I hope this study will inspire marketers and web-designers for creating and maintaining a positive user experience for the purpose of customer satisfaction and retention.

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Introduction

Constantly evolving technologies and the way people are using them are changing the world of digital media at a phenomenal pace. Digital technology is transforming not only the ways how people access the information, but how they interact with one another. This fact creates challenges and also exciting opportunities for marketers to get to their customers who are beginning to use digital media without giving it a second thought.

This paper investigates the factors that determine a successful user interaction with the company's promotion tool – website. The specific objective of this study is to highlight the importance of a user-centred design and usability practices in converting web visitors into customers.

The first part of this paper is dedicated to the theoretical background and discloses the factors that indicate the remarkable changes in the way that people choose and buy products and services. The literature review provides an overview of tendencies and psychological factors that influence customers' online purchasing behaviour.

The last, application part, critically examines the Web performance of the selected online travel agency in terms of user interaction with the website. The examination is conducted by the user-centred design pre-evaluation, interviewing and testing. The output of this study proposes changes in the conversion strategy for the online travel agency.

Part 1. Literature review

1. Marketing mix

Firstly, it's important to describe the theoretical background and to define 'marketing' and 'marketing mix' to establish the essence of their main components. Phillip Kotler identified marketing as a *"a process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want by creating and exchanging products and value with others.*"[1]. Initially, in early 50s marketing was viewed as just one of several essential functions supporting production, likewise with finance and human resources. The key role of marketing was to induce demand for products. Professor Neil Borden at the Harvard Business school determined company's activities that can have an impact on buyer's decision. Borden proposed to compile those activities into a *"marketing mix"*. Although, many activities constitute the marketing mix, scholars have sought a classification that will make it easier to see the *"forest among the trees"*. Professor Jerome McCarthy, in the early 1960s, proposed a marketing mix consisting of four Ps: *product*, *price*, *place* and *promotion*. However, since Neil Borden conceived the infamous "marketing mix" term in the 1950s and Jerome McCarthy introduced the four Ps in the 1960s, marketing concepts have sustained particular transformations while adapting to the changing environment. McCarthy's four Ps concisely disclosed the generic practices of product management in those days: *"develop a product, determine the price, do the promotion, and set up the place of distribution"*. As business was on the upturn during those two decades, nothing more was needed from marketing other than those strategies.[2] In more recent times further elaborations and transformations have been proposed. According to Philip Kotler's studies, the definition of marketing mix implies a *"set of marketing tools that the firm uses to pursue its marketing objectives in the target market.*[3]

In the tourism industry, the operation of marketing principles stands for the formulation of marketing mixes (viz. product, place, price and promotion) based on users' behavioural profile. The formulation and cohesion of these so devised mixes for various target groups

[1] KOTLER, Philip. *Principles of Marketing*. 2nd ed. Prentice Hall Europe, 1999. ISBN 0-13-262254-8 p.15

KOTLER, Philip., KARTAJAYA, Hermawan and SETIAWAN, Iwan. *Marketing 3.0: from products to customers to the human spirit.* Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley, c2010. ISBN 9780470598825. p.26

[3] KOTLER, Philip. *Kotler on marketing: how to create, win, and dominate markets.* New York: Free Press, c1999. ISBN 0684850338

lead ultimately to the satisfaction of their expectations and the subsequent brand building. The relative success of the marketing effort primarily lies in marketing communication for the development of great brands. The brands, if seen through the customers' eyes and mapped multi-dimensionally, may not only help organizations to manage the quality of products and services they represent, their positioning in the market place and the appeal of their advertising campaign, but may also provide a powerful new way to think about the overall brand strategy. The marketing concept holds that the key to achieving organizational goals consists in determining the needs and wants of target markets and delivering the desired satisfactions more effectively and efficiently than competitors.[4]

It is now necessary to clarify the prime marketing tools that have been determined by Jerome McCarthy as the *"4Ps"* of a *"marketing mix"* and to show a more detailed account of the marketing mix in the tourism industry.

Product

According to the definition provided by Kotler and Armstrong, *product* represents *"the totality of goods and services that the company offers the target market"*.[5] While being established as the most fundamental marketing tool, *product* embodies anything that can be displayed to a market to satisfy a need or demand. Generally, the word *product* is perceived as a tangible, physical object. Although, the concept of *product* does not pursue an example of physical objects only – anything capable of satisfying a need can be named a *product.* In addition to tangible items, *products* contain services, which render activities or benefits for sale that are primarily intangible and do not engender the ownership of anything. This clarification has been exemplified in the work undertaken by Philip Kotler, Gary Armstrong, John Saunders and Veronica Wong. The examples of banking, airline, hotel and household appliance repair services were acknowledged. It also has been broadly defined that *products* comprise other entities such as *places, persons, organizations, activities* and *ideas.* Consumers decide which performance to watch on television, which political party to vote for, which places to visit on vacation, which organizations to support through contributions and which ideas to embrace. To such a degree the term *product* encompasses physical goods,

[4] BISHT, N.S., BELWAL, Rakesh and PANDE, Sweta. *Internet Marketing of Tourism*. Mumbai: Global Media, 2009. ISBN 9789350243121.pp.28-32

[5] KOTLER, Philip. *Principles of Marketing*. 2nd ed. Prentice Hall Europe, 1999. ISBN 0-13-262254-8. p.110

services and a variety of other vehicles capable to satisfy consumers' needs and demands. *Product* entails a solution to a need, rather than an item. A physical product is only a tool to solve a consumer problem.[6]

Principal products that recreation and tourism businesses provide are recreational experiences and hospitality. Different people perceive differently the factors that create quality, recreational experiences and hospitality. In order to decide about the content of the services, the needs and desires of the target markets must be considered primarily. These should not be based on the preferences of the principal or necessarily on what the competition is providing. Rather the decision requires a happy amalgamation and synchronization of the study of buyer's needs with the marketer's innovation. Tourism products are intangible ones and more difficult to market than tangible products such as automobiles. The intangible nature of services makes quality control difficult but crucial. It also makes it more difficult for potential customers to evaluate and compare the service offerings. In addition, instead of moving the product to the customer, the customer must travel to the product (area/community). Travel is a significant portion of the time and money spent in association with recreational and tourism experiences and is a major factor in people's decisions on whether or not to visit a business or community.[7]

Price

The term *"price"* has come to be used to refer to the *"amount of money that customers have to pay for the product or service"*. Price embodies the only element in the marketing mix that produces revenue, whereas other elements are producing costs. All profit organizations and many non profit organizations set prices on their products and services as a means of covering the costs of operations. It is a more flexible tool too with respect to the other parts of a marketing mix and can be used as a major determinant of buyer's choice. Pricing problems are the most difficult ones facing the modern marketing executives and amount for a greater percentage of their time while facing cutthroat competitive conditions. The points of difference arise in the case of service marketing when prices are quoted for different components of the services. The possibilities of bundling and de-bundling in these with

[6] KOTLER, Philip. *Principles of Marketing*. 2nd ed. Prentice Hall Europe, 1999. ISBN 0-13-262254-8.

[7] BISHT, N.S., BELWAL, Rakesh and PANDE, Sweta. *Internet Marketing of Tourism*. Mumbai: Global Media, 2009. ISBN 9789350243121.p.30

respect to the nature of their delivery make the price discriminations possible to a considerable extent. The phenomenon is nearly absent in the goods sector as generally a fixed price is charged from the target group for a standardized product.[8]

Historically, price has been the most significant factor affecting buyer choice, This is still true in poorer nations, among poorer groups and with commodity products. However, non-price factors have become more important in buyer-choice behaviour in recent decades. Therefore, the most common mistakes that companies make while handling pricing are: pricing that is cost-oriented; prices that are not revised often enough to reflect market changes; pricing that does not take the rest of the marketing mix into account; and prices that are not varied enough for different products, market segments and purchase occasions.[9]

The services are associated generally with a high level of fixed cost but a lower marginal cost. This also opens room for different prices being charged by different marketers for the same service. Moreover, services can be bundled and de-bundled much more easily than goods. In such cases, there is ample scope to charge different prices for aggregated services on the component basis.[10]

Place

Place refers to the various activities the company undertakes to make the product accessible and available to target customers. It generally stands for location and accessibility. Place includes retail outlets, wholesalers, transportation, warehousing, inventories, order processing procedures and over all supply chain management or logistics in general. Place decisions render access to products or services easier and more convenient. Keeping in view the nature of services, it is rather better to replace the word place with *accessibility* as a marketing mix element. The inherent nature of inseparability of services makes tasks more complex than the manufactured goods, since consumption of services takes place at the point of its production.

In the tourism industry, distribution problem is concerned with transmission of information about products to interested groups, besides dealing with a number of factors such as

[8] BISHT, N.S., BELWAL, Rakesh and PANDE, Sweta. *Internet Marketing of Tourism*. Mumbai: Global Media, 2009. ISBN 9789350243121.

[9] KOTLER, Philip. *Principles of Marketing*. 2nd ed. Prentice Hall Europe, 1999. ISBN 0-13-262254-8.

[10] BISHT, N.S., BELWAL, Rakesh and PANDE, Sweta. *Internet Marketing of Tourism*. Mumbai: Global Media, 2009. ISBN 9789350243121.p.31

locations of points-of-sale, place decisions generally involve such decisions like physical location, intermediaries, non-locational decisions, some movement of goods that can either be necessary to produce a service or the purposeful movement of goods as service itself. Majority of the tourism businesses world over do not recognize attracting tourists to their destinations by improving on the place part. Instead of focusing on tour and travel oriented services or opening up different channels of distributions, they focus mainly on serving the tourist and that too after the arrival of the visitor. If failed on this account, then the resulting bad experience makes the condition grimmer.[11]

Promotion

Promotion refers to the *"various activities that company undertakes to communicate the merits of its product and persuade target customers to buy it"*[12]. Promotional activities enclose all communications from the marketers to the environment regarding their marketing organization or regarding the products. The basic purpose of promotion is to create a favourable environment for the organization by the creation of awareness so as to drive customers, employees, suppliers and financers support organization's products, and to secure better co-opetition (co-operation + competition) at various levels. The basic process of promotion is communication and may be acquired through advertisements, publicity, public relations, personal selling and sales promotion. Promotion aims at informing prospective customers about the products and services, informing existing customers about changes, in generating interest and, at large, in persuading them for first and repeat purchase.

The principle of promotion applies for the services as well. However, services demand some distinctive attention arriving from their distinguishing characteristics. Services being intangible demands greater promotions to avoid customers' presumed perception of high level of risks in the buying process. Development of strong brands, good words-of-mouth, trials, and effective PR and testimonials are generally considered as the remedial measures. Another difference arises from customers' not being able to evaluate the intangibles as they find difficulty in isolating the service offer and the service provider from one another. Promotion in such a case is sincerely required to promote the service providers, the services offered, and

[11] BISHT, N.S., BELWAL, Rakesh and PANDE, Sweta. *Internet Marketing of Tourism*. Mumbai: Global Media, 2009. ISBN 9789350243121.

[12] KOTLER, Philip. *Principles of Marketing*. 2nd ed. Prentice Hall Europe, 1999. ISBN 0-13-262254-8.p.110

for the resulting associations. Visible production processes in case of services become an important tool of promotion in itself as being real-time it creates greater effect than a formal demonstration of products. The promotion of services is generally more constrained by legal and voluntary controls' because of the possibilities for fraud and infringements of rules. Such components if present at all in the services, requires to be kept out from formal promotions. Most often it is found that a resort promoting tourism does provide the open bar facility within its premises without even having a license, however, this can't be promoted in formal communications to the target groups. While promoting tourism, the information being provided should be accurate, having importance for the potential or existing visitor and of practical use. Misrepresentation often leads to dissatisfied customers and poor referrals. One must not make any claims one cannot live up to.[13]

1.2 Promotion

Designing and developing a product or service that has all the features to attract a customer is an essential requirement, however not sufficient. Marketers must learn how to communicate effectively with their customers, getting the message across to them, and ultimately retaining or capturing new customers. Promotion constitutes a key part of a marketing mix. Companies are using promotion tools in order to communicate with their target market. They often hire advertising agencies to develop effective ads, sales promotion specialists to design sales-incentive programmes, direct-marketing specialists to develop databases and interact with customers and prospects by mail and telephone, and public relations firms to develop corporate images. Companies train their salespeople to be friendly, helpful and persuasive. For most companies, the question is not *whether* to communicate, but *how much to spend* and *in what.*[14] Establishing the long-term relationships with customers is a crucial issue in a marketing strategy. Even though, one may have a product that the customer buys once or twice in a lifetime, it is indispensable to maintain a positive relationship. This customer also has an impact on his surroundings and his opinion may affect a number of other potential customers.

[13] BISHT, N.S., BELWAL, Rakesh and PANDE, Sweta. *Internet Marketing of Tourism*. Mumbai: Global Media, 2009. ISBN 9789350243121.

[14] JANOUCH, Viktor. *Internetový marketing*. 2nd ed. Brno: Computer Press, 2014. ISBN 978-80-251-4311-7.p.57

Promotion contains its own *"mix"*, that consists of the specific blend of personal selling, advertising, sales promotion and public relation tools that the company uses to follow its marketing objectives. The detailed examination of the promotional mix has been defined and introduced in the existing literature as follows:

- ***Advertising.*** Any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods or services by an identified sponsor.[15]
- ***Personal selling.*** Oral presentation in a conversation with one or more prospective purchasers for the purpose of making sales and building customer relationships.
- ***Sales promotion.*** Short-term incentives to encourage the purchase or sale of a product or service.
- ***Public relations.*** Building good relations with the company's various publics by obtaining favourable publicity, building up a good corporate image, and handling or heading off unfavourable rumours, stories and events.[16]
- ***Direct marketing.*** Direct connection with the targeted individual consumers to obtain an immediate response and cultivate long-lasting customer relationships. It encompasses the use of direct mail, telephone, direct-response television, e-mail, the Internet and other tools to communicate directly with specific consumers.[17]

However, nowadays several major factors are changing the face of a marketing communications. First, in this digital, wireless age, consumers are changing. They can use the Internet and other technologies to seek out information on their own rather than replying on marketer-supplied information. Furthermore, they can easily connect with other consumers to exchange brand-related information or even to create their own marketing messages.

Second, there is a change in marketing strategies. As mass markets have fragmented, marketers are shifting away from mass market. The relationship with customers is now developing in more narrowly defined micro-markets. Tremendous improvements in information technology are speeding up the movement toward segmented marketing. Today's

[15] KOTLER, Philip. *Marketing for hospitality and tourism*. 5th ed. Boston: Pearson, 2010. ISBN 978-0-13-245313-4.p.358

[16] KOTLER, Philip. *Principles of Marketing*. 2nd ed. Prentice Hall Europe, 1999. ISBN 0-13-262254-8.pp.756-783

[17] KOTLER, Philip. *Marketing for hospitality and tourism*. 5th ed. Boston: Pearson, 2010. ISBN 978-0-13-245313-4.p.358

marketers can keep closer track on customer needs, amass detailed customer information, and adapt their offerings to narrow target groups.

Finally, the remarkable changes caused by communication technologies are shown in the ways in which companies and customers communicate with each other. The digital age has generated a host of new information and communication tools, from cell phones, and iPods to the Internet and satellite and television systems. Companies now have an access to the new exciting media for interacting with targeting consumers. At the same time, new communication technologies give consumers more control over the nature and timing of messages they choose to send and receive.[18]

Thanks to a wealth of new digital technologies, nowadays direct marketers can reach and interact with consumers just about anywhere, about almost anything and at anytime. The following list represents several exciting new *digital direct marketing* technologies: e-mail, mobile phone marketing podcasts and vodcasts, and interactive TV(ITV)[19]

1.3 Online Promotion

As it has already been introduced in the previous section, recent technological advances have created a digital age when Web has fundamentally changed customers' notions of the product information and service. Consequently, marketers were given with the new way to create a communication and build relationships with customers. A number of studies have postulated that all kinds of companies now market online. Click-only companies only operate on the Internet. They include Expedia and Priceline. It is hard to find a company today that doesn't have a substantial Web presence.[20]

Advertising and technology have converged to define a new marketing landscape that is just beginning to mature and is still gravid with opportunity. Marketing strategies and practices are changing to guide marketers in taking advantage, anticipating and leveraging the disruptive technologies. [21]Technology affords marketers new and exciting platforms that

[18] KOTLER, Philip. *Marketing for hospitality and tourism*. 5th ed. Boston: Pearson, 2010. ISBN 978-0-13-245313-4.p.359
[19] KOTLER, Philip. *Marketing for hospitality and tourism*. 5th ed. Boston: Pearson, 2010. ISBN 978-0-13-245313-4p.481

[20] KOTLER, Philip. *Marketing for hospitality and tourism*. 5th ed. Boston: Pearson, 2010. ISBN 978-0-13-245313-4.p.485
[21] KOTLER, Philip, KARTAJAYA, Hermawan and SETIAWAN, Iwan. *Marketing 4.0: moving from traditional to digital.* Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. ISBN 9781119341208.p.46

allow them to connect with people in increasingly diverse and relevant ways. However, digital marketing is not about understanding the underlying technology, but rather about understanding people, how they're using that technology, and how the company can leverage that to engage with them more effectively. It is significant to learn to use the tools that are at disposal – but understanding people is the real key to unravelling the potential of digital marketing.[22]

The following list demonstrates the major forms and elements of online promotion available nowadays:

- **Website:** The website has become an essential part of a promotional mix that represents the fundamental platform to which all of the online promotional tools and activities are referred. The Website can be considered as direct marketing tool, as it enables sales, contrives to adjust its content and form to the individual visitor, and also permits to measure its efficiency[23].
- **Pay-per-click search advertising (PPC)**: Pay-per-click advertising offers a company an approach to buy the way on to the search results pages for chosen keywords or key phrases. Depending on the business and what keywords are defined to rank for, this can be an extremely effective way of generating search engine traffic quickly, although as the medium continues to gain in popularity more competitive keywords are becoming prohibitively expensive for smaller businesses.
- **Affiliate marketing and strategic** partnerships: how to partner with other organizations and websites in mutually beneficial relationships to promote company's products or services.
- **Online public relations:** using online channels like press releases, article syndication and blogs to create a positive perception of a brand and/or position company as an authority in its particular field.
- **Social networking:** a relatively new marketing opportunity, but one that can potentially offer highly targeted advertising to niche social groups based on profile information they volunteer through sites like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and others.

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[22] RYAN, Damian and JONES, Calvin. Understanding digital marketing: marketing strategies for engaging the digital generation. Philadelphia: Kogan Page, 2009. ISBN 9780749453893.p.3,p.13.

[23] KARLÍČEK, Miroslav. *Marketingová komunikace: jak komunikovat na našem trhu*. 2., aktualizované a doplněné vydání. Praha: Grada Publishing, 2016. ISBN 978-80-247-5769-8.

- **E-mail marketing:** E-mail marketing is performed in sending a commercial message to a target group. It is an important tool in the digital marketer's arsenal when it comes to appealing to the potential customers or maintaining continuous relationships with the existing ones. However, several lines of evidence claims a certain crisis in the wake of perpetual spam "bombardment".[24]

2. Website

The previous chapter has clarified the term *marketing mix* and demonstrated the position of the *online promotion* in marketing. It is now necessary to uncover one of the online promotion components – ***Website.*** For most of the companies, the first step in conducting online marketing is carried out in the creation of a Website. However, beyond simply creating a Website, marketers must design an interactive site and find ways to get consumers to visit it, stay around, and come back often. Therefore, it is significant to explain the following Website's performance components:

- **Search Engine Optimization (SEO):** Represents the process of submitting a Website correctly to the search engines for the purpose of getting as much qualified traffic as possible from the search engines. A recent literature review concluded that most Internet searchers visit only Websites that are listed in the top ten or top twenty of the sites in the major engines. Statistics also show that if the Website is not optimized to rank well within the top twelve search engines, some of its best customers may not be able to find it. Consequently, it has been proved that the companies with the bright Internet marketing campaign may expect the qualified traffic and the greater return on investment, than those that are implementing merely traditional marketing efforts. Unlike advertising or PR, which gives a short burst of traffic, SEO can increase the traffic to a company's Website for month or years.[25]
- **User Experience Design (UX)**: The term *UX* relates to the designing of an effective Website. The key matter of an effectiveness in this case lies in providing enough value and excitement to get consumers who come to the site to stick around and come back again. It can be also simply identified as an overall effect created by the

[24] RYAN, Damian and JONES, Calvin. *Understanding digital marketing: marketing strategies for engaging the digital generation*. Philadelphia: Kogan Page, 2009. ISBN 9780749453893.

[25] LEVINSON, Jay Conrad. *Guerilla Marketing: Easy and Inexpensive Strategies for Making Big Profits from Your Small Business*. 4th ed. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2007. ISBN 0618785914.pp.249-250

> interactions and perceptions that someone has when using a product or service. The authors of the professional handbooks have established *User experience* as a fancy term for what people often describe with words like “love” or “hate”; or phrases such as, it’s “easy to use,” or “a pain in the butt.” For instance, when someone says a product is user friendly, he is basically referring to the user experience. Users' perceptions of the product is impacted by how it looks, how it functions, and how well it serves its purpose in the personal need that it satisfies. As most researchers believe, we transact so much of our lives through technology that how easy or difficult it is to use is what really matters.[26]

The intention of this paper does not refer to finding out the ways how to make people find a Web, but rather the ways to significantly increase the chance that, once they arrive, they’ll become more than just a passing statistic. Therefore, the following part of this paper moves on to examine and describe in greater detail the *User Experience* design of a Web site.

2.1 UX

Today's Web users are prone to quickly abandon any Website that doesn't measure up. Consequently, companies are facing a challenge in retaining their Web's visitors. It is significant to constantly update the site, to keep it current and useful. A key challenge is designing a Website that attracts consumers on first view and is interactive enough to encourage repeat visits. Marketers and designers are integrating their ideas to create a sophisticated Website that combines text, sound, and the animation to capture and hold attention.[27] The creation of the user's interaction with the product refers to the already introduced term *"User experience design"*. In the professional practice, the field of user experience encompasses several disciplines, such as: visual design, information architecture and the usability analysis. Modern websites have rapidly become huge multifaced structures. Competing websites often offer similar functionality, but one will win out because it provides a superior user experience. This is where the Web is headed, a sort of evolution of website design. A creation of a successful user experience requires a lot of detailed work. Those details are contributed to what users will notice again and again. Previous surveys such as

[26] KOTLER, Philip. *Marketing for hospitality and tourism*. 5th ed. Boston: Pearson, 2010. xxiii, 683 s. ISBN 978-0-13-245313-4.p.489
[27] KOTLER, Philip. *Marketing for hospitality and tourism.* 5th ed. Boston: Pearson, 2010. xxiii, 683 s. ISBN 978-0-13-245313-4.p.488

that conducted by Steve Krug (2006) have shown that most users search for something useful and clickable; as soon promising candidate is found, users click. If the new page doesn't meet their expectations, the "Back" button is clicked and the search process continues. Therefore, experts are emphasising on the key elements that the online marketers should pay attention to in order to make the users' Website interaction more effective and to encourage revisits[28]:

- **Content:** Users appreciate quality and credibility. They are even inclined to tolerate advertisements and a poor design if they see high-quality content. As previous studies established, websites with the second-rate designs but high-quality content gain a lot of traffic during the years. Content appears to be more important than the design that supports it.
- **Navigation:** When users analyse a Web page, they are tend to go through it intuitively. *"They don't read it, they scan it"* [29]. Users search for some fixed points that can guide them through the content on the rest of the page. If a Website doesn't meet users' expectations, then the designer has failed to perform his of her job, and the company will lose money. The higher the cognitive load needed by users and the less intuitive the navigation, the more likely users will leave the website in search of alternatives.
- **Context:** The site's layout and design. Visual design should be also consistent. It tells users how to interact with the Website. A well constructed interface will stave users off learning how to use the website and let them actually use it.

2.1.1 "What should we know about people" according to Steve Krug

By drawing on the concept of Web usability, Steve Krug has been able to unveil the psychological facts that have a significant impact on the Web users' behaviour.

Fact #1: "We don't read pages. We scan them"

One of the very few well-documented facts about Web use estimates that people tend to spend very little time *reading* most Web pages. Alternatively, we scan (or skim) them, in a search of words or phrases that catch our eye. The exception may be related to the pages that

[28] FRIEDMAN, Vitaly. *The Smashing book. Freiburg: Smashing Magazine*, 2013. ISBN 978-3-944540-57-3.

[29] KRUG, Steve. *Don't make me think!: a common sense approach to Web usability*. 2nd ed. Berkeley, Calif: New Riders Pub., c2006. ISBN 978-0-321-34475-5.

contain documents like reports, stories, or product descriptions. The reason of this behaviour has been explained within three facts:

- **We're usually in a hurry.** Much of our Web use is motivated by the desire to save time. As a result, we just don't want to dedicate our time to reading anything more than it is necessary.
- **We know we don't *need* to read everything.** On most pages, we are only interested in a fraction of what's on the page. We're just looking for the bits that match our interests, and the rest of it is irrelevant. Scanning is how we find the relevant bits.
- **We're good at it.** We have been scanning newspapers, magazines, and books all our lives to find the parts we are interested in, and we know that it works.

We tend to focus on words and phrases that seem to match the task at hand or our ongoing personal interests. And of course, the trigger words that are hardwired into our nervous systems, like "FREE", "SALE", and "SEX" and our own name.

Fact #2: "We don't make optimal choices. We satisfice"

Web designers tend to assume that users will scan the page, consider all of the available options, and choose the best one. However, the reality is that most of time we don't choose the best option – we choose the first *reasonable option*, a strategy known as satisficing[30]. As soon as we find a link that seems like it might lead to what we're looking for, there's a very good chance that we'll click it. This behaviour has been explained as follows:

- **There's not much a penalty for guessing wrong.** Unlike firefighting, the penalty for guessing wrong on a Web site is usually only a click or two of the Back button, which makes satisficing an effective strategy. However, this assumes that pages load quickly; if they don't, we have to make our choices more carefully – this is one of many reasons why most Web users don't like slow-loading pages.
- **Weighing options may not improve our chances.** On poorly designed sites, putting effort into making the best choice doesn't really help. Users usually better off going with the first guess and using the Back button if it doesn't work out.[31]

[30] SIMON, Herbert Alexander. *Models of man: social and rational: mathematical essays on rational human behavior in a social setting*. New York: J. Wiley, 1957.

[31] KRUG, Steve. Don't make me think!: a common sense approach to Web usability. 2nd ed. Berkeley, Calif: New Riders Pub., c2006. ISBN 978-0-321-34475-5.pp.24-25

Fact #3: "We don't figure out how things work. We muddle through"

Facing any sort of technology, very few people take the time to read instructions. Instead, the forge ahead and muddle through, making up their own *vaguely plausible stories about what they are doing and why it works*[32].

Having defined what is meant by the user experience design, this paper now moves on to clarify the term *conversion rate optimization* and how it is tied up with the UX design.

3. Conversion rate optimization (CRO)

Online marketers use *conversion* as the term that describes an *instance of a visitor to a website performing an action that the company deems to be desirable*.[33] Conversion optimization can be exemplified and followed in several cases. For instance, in the case of blog, a conversion might be a subscription; for the online travel agency, the conversion will be seen in a sale of a product, as it performs as an online store; The question lays in determining how to convert a new visitor into a loyal customer and to boost conversion rates. *Conversion rate* tracks conversions. It shows the ratio of all website visitors to the number of visitors who performed the desired action. This paper intends to disclose the factors and *web design* elements that has an impact on the conversion rate optimization.

AIDA

One of the most popular approaches to sales is identified by the abbreviation *AIDA*, which stands for "Attention, Interest, Desire, Action" and guides to structuring a sales pitch. Much of the current literature on UX design suggests that AIDA approach can be used in a conversion funnel of a Web, where the website, instead of the salesperson, plays the key role in selling. The first stage that represents "Attention" is crucial and critical due to the speed with which a potential customer could navigate away from the website. The attention should

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[32] KRUG, Steve. *Don't make me think!: a common sense approach to Web usability.* 2nd ed. Berkeley, Calif: New Riders Pub., c2006. ISBN 978-0-321-34475-5.p.26

[33] FRIEDMAN, Vitaly. *The Smashing book. Freiburg: Smashing Magazine,* 2013. ISBN 978-3-944540-57-3.p.212

be grabbed by a strong and concise claim that the Website's solution is what the visitor should care and looking for. "Interest" and "Desire" are shown in creating a vivid picture of the real value that the customers will get from a product. The desire for the product will grow if the visitors succeed to imagine using and enjoying the benefits of a product. The final step is a call to "Action". Website visitors who are willing to buy just need the last clear bid of direction on how to make a purchase. At this stage, the sale should be executed, so *the call* to action is absolutely vital.

There is a large volume of published studies introducing the extended form of this approach, recalled to AIDAS, where letter "S" stands for "Satisfaction". It is doubtlessly necessary to get the customers, but getting those customers to return or tell their friends about the product is crucial for a business. The level of satisfaction also defines the *users' experience* in the interaction with the website.[34]

Feature Lists

There is a list of features to advertise while selling a product or service. People have to read and understand it. The main task here comprises making the list as easy as possible to prosses it. For instance, a number of experts suggest using icons or images. Aside the fact that icons and images look more interesting than text, authors reckon that icons beside features in lists work like bullet points: "They're little anchors on the page on which our eyes can easily focus." Experts also suggest using the short headings for each feature. This should be only a few words so that they are as fast to process as the icons. Likewise, it is impactful to provide a more detailed description underneath each heading, set in a smaller font and lighter contrast.

Social Proof

People are prone to feel more reassured and safer following others. A social proof can be used to help boost conversions by advertising that offered products or services are popular or that others have approved of them. For instance, user reviews are a great way to recommend products. It can be represented in a section which recommends items based on the other people's purchasing behaviour.

[34] FRIEDMAN, Vitaly. *The Smashing book.* Freiburg: Smashing Magazine, 2013. ISBN 978-3-944540-57-3.pp.212-214

Subliminal Suggestion

A study of the structural behaviour found that showing children a Santa Claus hat increased the tendency that they would share candy with other children. This is due to the fact that people make associations with certain images and objects, and by exposing people to carefully selected visuals, you can condition them to perform the behaviour and action you want. This idea can be used in designing a website. Designers must think not only about the decorative value of the images but what emotions they want the website's visitors to experience and if they are in the right frame of mind about the product.

Next Action

When the visitor has already went through different stages in the conversion prosses, that the website navigated them to, it is indispensable to provide them with an easy access to the process of closing the sale. Delaying closing the sale, brings a risk of destructing and confusing those people who have already made up their mind to make a purchase. Therefore, it is vital to provide enough closure opportunities for the final actions that the people are already intended to perform. For instance, to provide an easy access to the purchase, sign-up or subscription link on every page of the website, and perhaps in multiple places.[35]

4. Online Travel Agencies

OTAs are online companies who's websites allow consumers to book various travel related services directly via Internet. They are 3rd party agents reselling trips, accommodations, cars, flights, vacation packages etc. provided/organised by others.

Nowadays travel shopping via online agencies has become extremely popular. Especially in the last minute segment and also because of the frequent usage of the smartphones. Today consumers are on-the-go and the advantage of a booking engine and the reservation solutions provided by the OTAs is that it offers instant payment and booking confirmation.[36]

Examples of the most commonly known OTAs are:

[35] FRIEDMAN, Vitaly. The Smashing book. Freiburg: Smashing Magazine, 2013. ISBN 978-3-944540-57-3.pp.217-221

[36] *Xotels* [online]. 2014 [cit. 2017-04-27]. Available from: https://www.xotels.com/en/

- The Priceline Group (Booking.com, Priceline.com, agoda.com, KAYAK, rentalcars.com, OpenTable)
- Expedia, Inc. (Expedia.com, Hotels.com, Egencia, Hotwire, Trivago, Venere.com, CarRentals.com, Classic Vacations, Expedia CruiseShipCenters, Expedia Local Expert (LX), Wotif Group, Travelocity)
- TripAdvisor Inc (tripadvisor.com)
- Opodo (opodo.com)

Part 2. Methodology

The application part of this study was conducted through a survey and conveys its prime goal – to provide a selected OTA with a number of suggested improvements increasing the conversion rate, based on the knowledge of user experience design best practices. A user-centred design research and analysis was used in order to gain the insights about the OTAs' customers behaviour and to spark the inspiring ideas about how a Web design can meet the consumers' expectations. The survey was divided into two parts:

1. **Pre-evaluation of the OTA's website**

This part represents author's evaluation of the OTA's website according to the criteria suggested by the relevant literature and professionals' advices.

2. **User-centred qualitative research**

The qualitative research comprised interviewing and testing. The *interviewing* contained general questions concerning consumers' web behaviour for the indication of the evidence of general habits, biases, needs, perceptions and native worldviews while purchasing tourism products online. *Testing* of the selected OTA's website comprised questions within two scenarios and was performed in order to indicate the specific usability tendency:

1. *A reaction to a Home page.* The participants were asked to describe their intentions, comprehension of a Web's Home page out loud. Did they understand terminology? Did they feel like the Web page provides them a good navigation? Did they see the "clickable points", understand symbols like icons, links, buttons? How did they feel about the visual design (ex. colours)?
2. *Testing a task.* The participants were asked to think about the destination they were interested in. They later proceeded to the description of a product (selected

destination), from among all that the OTA offers. This part disclosed how participants perceived the product description and whether they were inclined to make a purchase from the selected OTA afterwards.

Part 3. Application part

e-Travel

Online travel agency e-Travel.cz has been operating on the Czech market since 2003. It possess itself being among the strongest affiliate retailers in the country. Since 2012, eTravel.cz belongs to the FISCHER tour groups. It offers a wide daily updated quality tours from dozens of travel agents. The offer includes tours to all major and less frequented tourist destinations.

Evidently, e-Travel has a good package of products to be shown on the market. Therefore, this study attempts to test the quality of promoting e-Travel's products on their website, detect the drawbacks and suggest what can be changed in order to make people satisfied with the website using experience and sequentially get to the higher conversion rate.

Survey

1. Pre-evaluation and suggestions to e-Travel

As part of the survey, this study has conducted a pre-evaluation of the e-Travel's web performance, adopting some facts from the literature research and the online marketing professionals' suggestions. The following list comprises the criteria and suggestions that are advised to take an account of for the more effective visitors' interaction on the e-Travel's web. The section of *Analysis* will later show whether these identified issues were confirmed by the user-centred qualitative research. The evaluation is partly illustrated, divided and briefly represented within the introduced sections:

1. ***Reciprocity:*** Give a gift (e.g. an e-book with map & ideas for trips in given destination) when people book online. This friendly gesture can be an effective persuasion tactic. A small token of appreciation can come back in your favour.

2. ***Social proof:*** Show testimonials (instead of "There are 2 reviews"). How many people have already given good reviews to the travel agency that provides the trip? Data from several studies proved that this tactic increases the conversion rate for about 5%.
3. ***Convenience:*** Use Anchor navigation instead of Tabs to display all content on one page without clicking too much.
4. ***Concise copy:*** Showing the core message will convey what you intended without losing someone's attention in huge unnecessary texts. This tactic has been clearly exemplified on the following illustration:

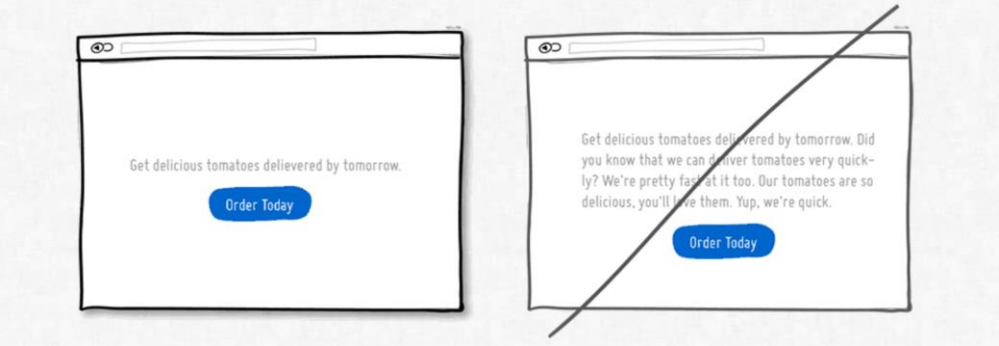


Illustration 1, source: http://goodui.org/

5. ***Consistency:*** Use one distinctive style for buttons and links, there are many variations across the e-Travel's website. When pressing buttons and shifting sliders, we learn to expect these interaction elements to look, behave and be found in the same way repeatedly. Consistency forms the way we learn to interact and as soon as it is taken away, we return back into learning mode all over again.
6. ***Recommend:*** Recommend e.g. best dates to visit the place instead of showing plain table full of options. It is good to emphasize and highlight certain options above others. This idea may effect the conversion for +14%.
7. ***Target:*** Tell who is the destination best for: Families? Active people? Beach lovers? The more specific you are about the target group, the higher will be your conversion. You might be actually able to connect more with the customers by communicating the qualifying criteria and hinting at a feeling of exclusivity.
8. ***Be personal:*** Travelling is all about feelings, emotions, dreams. While being generic in the content, you don't inspire people to travel. What can you as a traveller tell people about the place?

9. ***Be clear about meaning of colours:*** e-Travel's website has at least 10 colours for text, buttons, backgrounds. It's not clear what is clickable, important, or informative.
10. ***Structure:*** Headings should have a clear hierarchy, use distinctive styles and bigger headings to structure the content. Now it's quite overwhelming on the e-Travel's website. A good structure protects the user from too much irrelevant information. The division of a content was very well performed by a Ukrainian travel website *TripMyDream*:

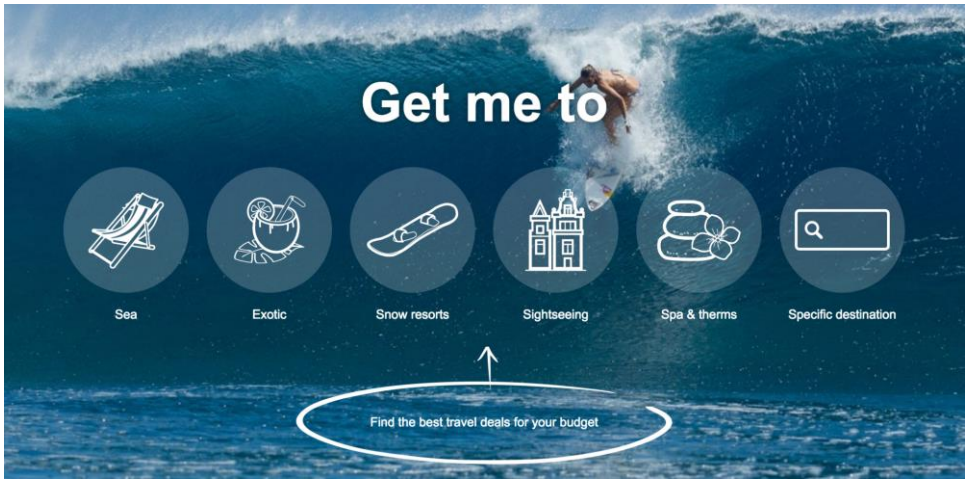


Illustration 2, source: https://en.tripmydream.com/

11. ***Be clear about the main CTA (call to action):*** Currently in the booking form the main button is small and below the average fold (it's not in the main viewport).
12. ***Talk about benefits, not features:*** Is the airport near the hotel? Tell people they will save time and enjoy the destination more. Is there an option to visit near places? Tell people they can get to know the country and its culture. People tend to care less about features than they do about benefits, as those are carried with more clearly defined value.
13. ***Loss aversion:*** People hate losing benefits. Persuasive psychology postulates an interesting fact that people are more likely to prefer avoiding losses than to acquiring gains. If the price is lower due to last-minute dates, tell them they will lose the great price tomorrow. Underlying the possibility of loosing a good chance might be even more effective than trying to provide a customer with something additional.
14. ***Scarcity and urgency:*** Tell people that there are only limited spots for the dates. If they hesitate, the trip will be full soon. It's a persuasion tactic which can be applied in order to make people act now rather than later. It also works because it touches upon

loss aversion in the same way - as we don’t like losing out on opportunities. This kind of urgency might also be one of those strategies that some look down upon as a pushy way of getting people to act. Nevertheless it’s available as a strategy to use and as long as it’s honest it’s valid.

15. ***Price anchoring:*** Are the prices discounted? Show the original price right next to the discounted one. It is also effective to start with a larger number and roll down towards a smaller price. Several observations suggest that our decision making is affected by the first quantities which come to our attention. People will realize faster that the real number is much lower. Evidences show that this practice increases the conversion rate up to 8.8%.
16. ***Use icon labels:*** Plain icons without labels are not clear about their meanings. For instance, there is an icon for last-minute discount on the e-Travel's website, but it has no label. People will ignore it if they don't understand its meaning. The example is illustrated on the following picture:

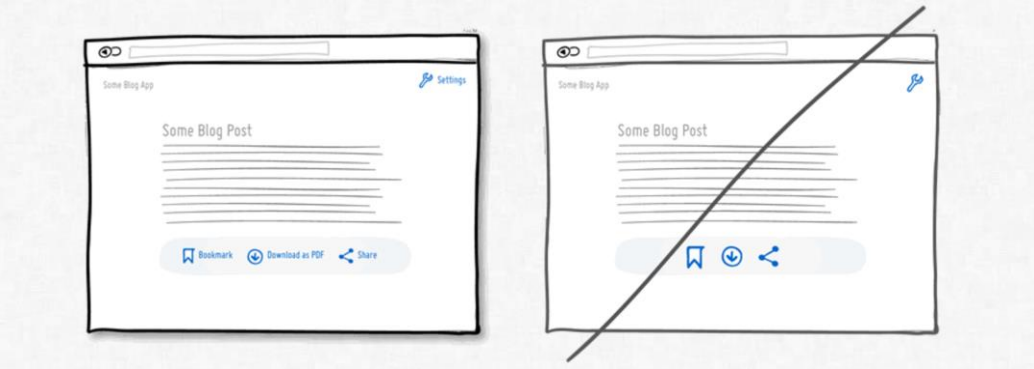


Illustration 3, source: http://goodui.org/

17. ***Reassure:*** While filling out the booking form, make sure people will see all benefits again right next to the form. Otherwise they might change their mind. Throw in a guarantee, tell your customers that they will be satisfied. Putting a positive spin on a sale close is definitely worth a try as a conversion tactic. It has been exemplified on the following illustration:

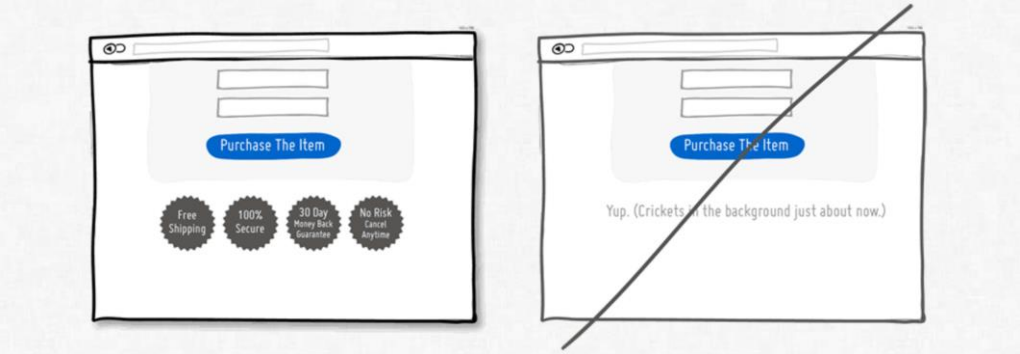


Illustration 4, source: http://goodui.org/

18. ***Price illusions:*** If the price seems quite high, you can calculate the price per day. Dominican Republic is a pricey destination, but when you tell people that they can visit this exotic destination for only 4.600 CZK per day (instead of showing just 46 000 CZK in total), they will realize that it's actually quite cheap.
19. ***Attention grabs:*** If the page is quite long (e.g. trip detail of booking form), show people a floating block with summary and main CTA (call to action). This way you will always make sure people can see the next step. E-Travel's website is missing out this tactic, which can actually effect the boost of conversion up to 29.7%. The following picture demonstrates an example of the implementation of the proposed tactic.

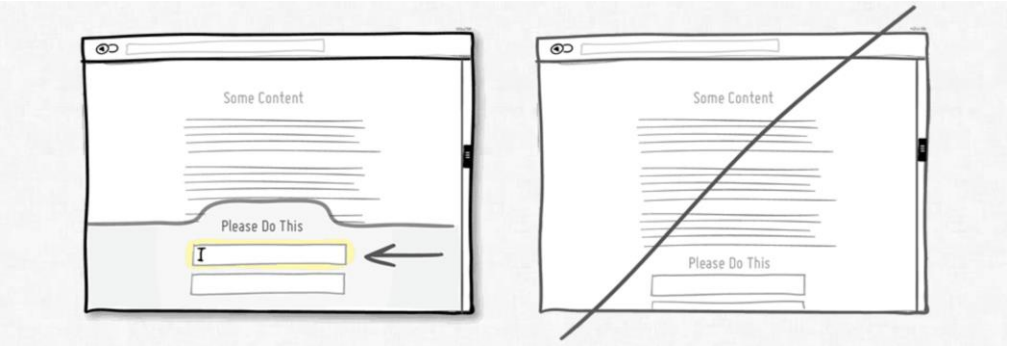


Illustration 5, source: http://goodui.org/

20. ***Extra padding:*** If the content is heavy, use more space to structure the page. People will feel that it's easy to read the page and will not get overwhelmed amount of text.
21. ***20. Social commitments:*** If the user books his trip, give him an option to share his new travel plan with others on Facebook. This way you will get extra audience curious about your offer. An example has been very well illustrated on the following picture:



Illustration 6, source: http://goodui.org/

22. ***Less choice:*** If there are hundreds of options (e.g. travel dates), suggest just 5 top dates (by season, price…) and hide the rest. Just provide people with an ability to open more options when they don't like the suggested ones. The more choices there are, the more confused customer might become while making decision.
23. ***Visual storytelling:*** Travelling is about fascinating images of the places. Don't just show the hotel, but also the beach, nature, cities, etc. Use big images to appeal the user and his imagination.

2. **User-centred qualitative research**

The qualitative research has been conducted in April, 2017. Six participants from Czech Republic ages twenty-five to forty-five were selected with an account of their relevance to the tourism industry. All the individuals participated in a leisure trip at least once.

Interviews

1. ***Have you ever bought a trip from an online travel agency?***

Three out of six respondents answered positively. Another interviewee has commented that he used to buy trips online, but only after previously visiting the travel agency's store, where he could have get some advice from a sales assistant. In this case we can not consider travel agency as an OTA, but just the traditional one with the web presence. **Additionally, this response may represent a fear to a certain extent when purchasing products from a company that performs exclusively online.**

2. ***Do you think it is safe to buy a trip from an OTA you haven't heard about before? Would you consider friends' recommendations/reviews?***

All six participants evinced an interest in buying a product even from the unknown OTA. However, four of them demonstrated a wish to get some reliable reviews concerning the company. One interviewee also argued that only the first impression is crucial for whether he continues browsing a Website. **Review requirement – conforms the suggestion from the pre-evaluation in the section *Social proof*.**

3. ***Is there anything that can make you leave the page immediately?***

Several interesting answers were received: "*If I see advertisements on the website, it won't seem trustworthy to me, I will leave immediately", "I will not stand pop-ups", "I hate when the website is messy and I don't know where to find what I need"*. These responses might be related to the website's navigation and its context. **It may also represent a certain sense of frustration when people are stroke by something unexpected or they are forced to think too much. Conclusively, this can be directly referred to Steve Krug's investigations that has been introduced in the theoretical part of this study.**

4. ***Will the modern design of a webpage give you a more trustful feeling at the first view?***

Four participants were unanimous in the view that the modern design will make them trust the Website more. Two of them alluded to the companies' good work for the online promotion. Other two out of six interviewees stated that they won't pay attention to the design, as the essence of an unveiled product is more important to them. **People still care about how the things look like. Though, it seems like visual perception is being so highly subconscious, that it makes it hard to justify what people really perceive as an influencing point according to their own assumptions.**

5. ***How do you assimilate colours in web visual design?***

One participant showed a complete indifference regarding colours set on the website. Others, expressed a negative impression from the wrong composition of colours and indicated some colour compositions that negatively influence them: "*a mix of bright colours", "black layout and white text", "red/black colour"*. **However, it makes it difficult to identify some common issues due to the diversity in people's sensations.**

6. ***How do you feel about reading long description texts? Would you prefer some icons instead/as an addition to a long text?***

Three interviewees signified a sort of contemptuous attitude towards long texts, prioritizing brief descriptions. Others were not against it but preferred some comprehensive icons next to the text. **This shows that people are influenced by visual issues, though those must be intuitively comprehensive.**

7. ***Would you like to read an information not just related to a product but to the whole destination?***

Only one respondent out of six showed disinterest in the information about the destination provided by OTA. He commented that his aim in this case is merely to read the description of a desired product. However, the rest of the interviewees indicated some points they would likely be happy about: ***a link to an independent website with reviews, some practical information about prices, withdrawal points etc.*** **This may not show "benefits" as was suggested in the pre-evaluation, but still people find this kind of information provided by an OTA very useful.**

A good example of the implementation of this idea was found at TripMyDream's website:

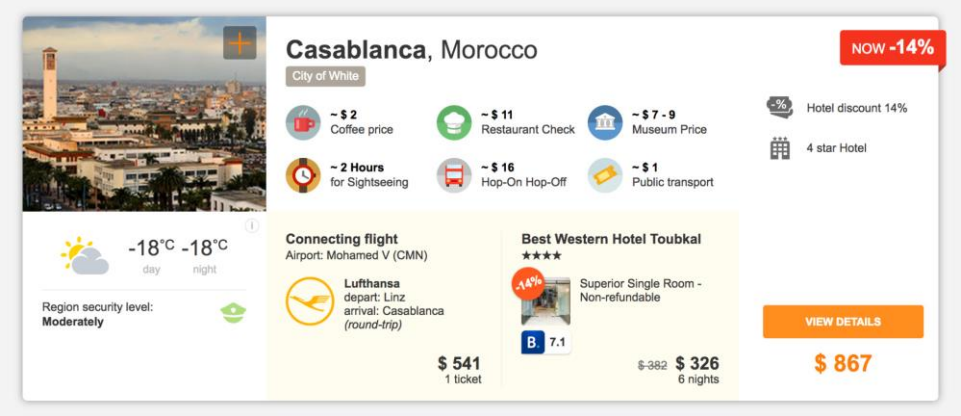


Illustration 7, source:https://en.tripmydream.com/

8. ***Would you be glad to get an information about the best dates to visit the destination? (season, prices)***

Four interviewees expressed an interest. Though, two of them would intend to check its relevance. **A majority expressed an interest, however a sense of intrust and the need "to check the relevance" comes up.**

9. ***Would you like to read stories from travellers to get inspired?***

Participants unanimously showed an interest, but three of them added that reviews would work for them even better. Although, one respondent suggested that some tips on a destination from ***locals*** could be a nice section on a website. **Here the "reviews" requirement can be seen again. Good idea about locals.**

10. ***Are you getting influenced by a feeling of loss? (Discount ends today)***

Five out of six participants admitted that *"the discount that ends today"* influences their purchase behaviour if they are interested in product. Although, two of them would be inclined to compare discounts on the other websites. **The *loss aversion* criteria from the pre-evaluation has been conformed within these answers.**

11. ***Would you like to see more pictures of the destination?***

Only one interviewee hasn't expressed an interest in images of the destination, preferring the relevant pictures merely of an accommodation.

12. ***Are you getting confused by a big choice of products shown at the first page?***

The views coincided mainly in a necessity to have a good division/comprehensive sections or a filter. **Coming back to Steve Krug's studies, people go for reasonable and easy options.**

Testing

Home Page

Home page represents the central reference point for navigating the website's content. The navigation path of a home page is crucial in leading visitors to the main section or themes. It is telling people immediately where they are, what the site is all about and how it can help them. Referring to the importance of this Website's part, the testing and the first set of questions was dedicated to the *Home Page* performance.

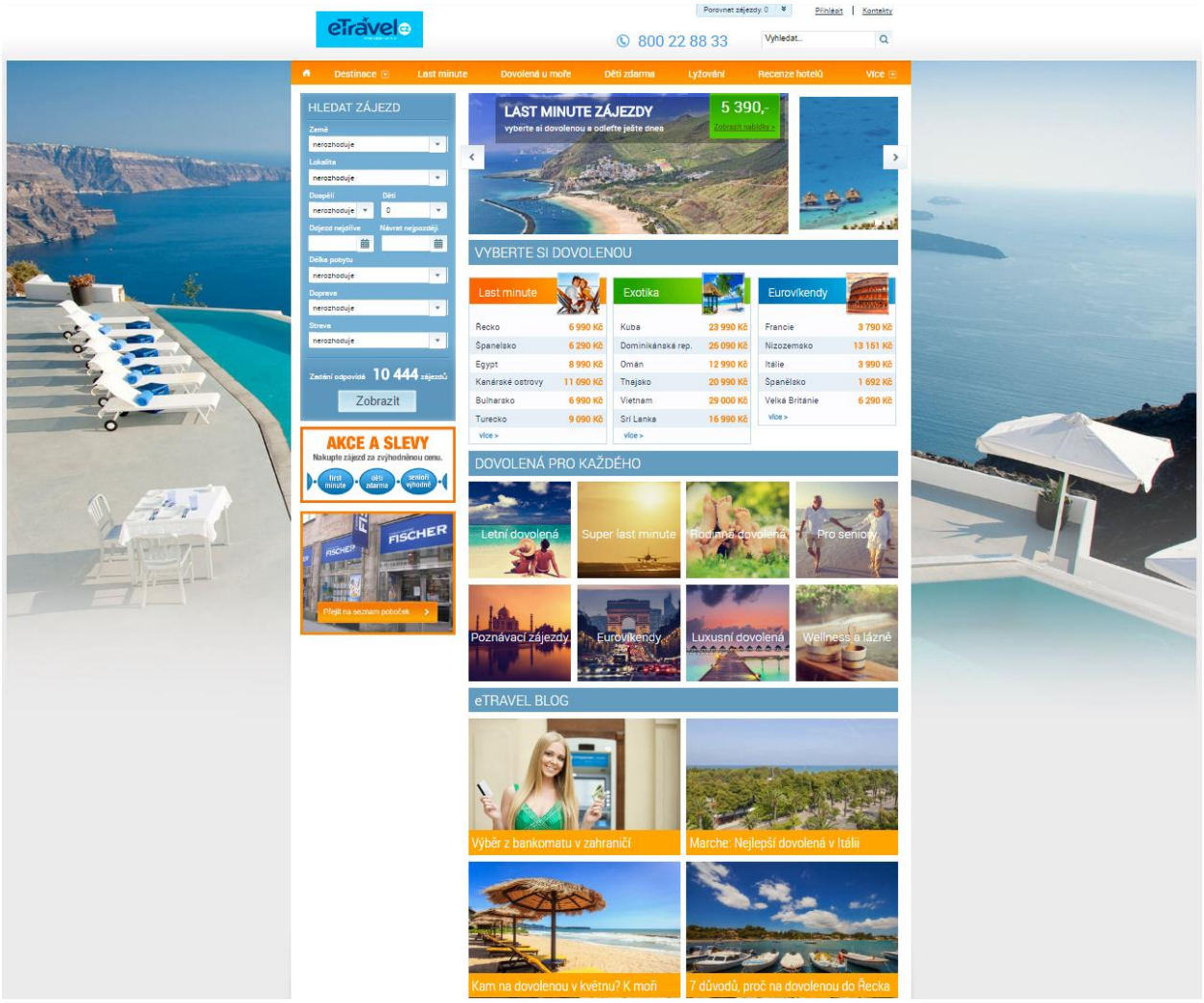


Illustration 8, source: https://www.etravel.cz/

1. **Imagine, that you have a certain amount of money, and you think about some destination to go to. You have been offered to look at this OTA's products. For now, you don't have to click any button. First, I would like to ask you to look at the page and tell me what strikes you and what would you click first?**

Five individuals have chosen filter *"Hledat zajezd"(Search a trip)* as a first step *(illstr. 9)* . One participant decisively aimed to the section *"Destinace"(Destination, illstr 10).*

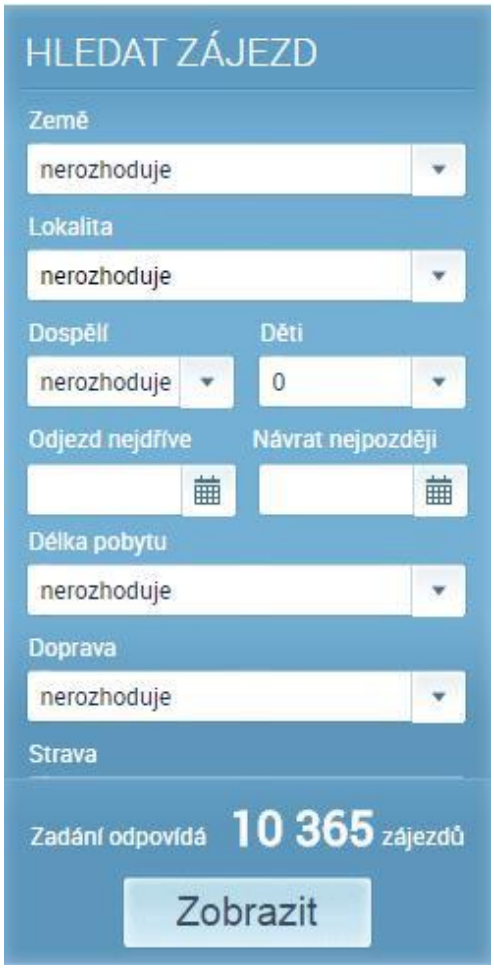


Illustration 9, source: https://www.etravel.cz/



Illustration 10, source: https://www.etravel.cz/

A few negatively influencing issues were indicated: **the white space above *(illstr. 8)*, the last minute moving banner *(illstr. 12)*, all the sections represented "in one go" and the colour composition of the Home page that unanimously stroke all the interviewees.** The following reactions conformed some of the pre-evaluation suggestions. Such as structure and consistency, and the meaning of colours, which appeared to be misleading on the e-Travel's Home page. The main filter was recognizable, however the fact is that there is too many option for the "search".



Illustration 12, source:https://www.etravel.cz/

2. **Now, let's say, you don't really have a certain destination to go to on your mind and you are browsing through the e-Travels offers. Which section will you go for?**

Four participants looked at *"Dovolena pro kazdeho"*(*Vacation for everyone, illstr. 13),* the other two went for *"Destinace"* and *"Vyberte si dovolenou"(Choose a vacation, illstr.14) "Vacation for everyone"* ***seems more visible but still not visually satisfying, according to the users' reaction, the headings on the pictures are not clearly presented.***

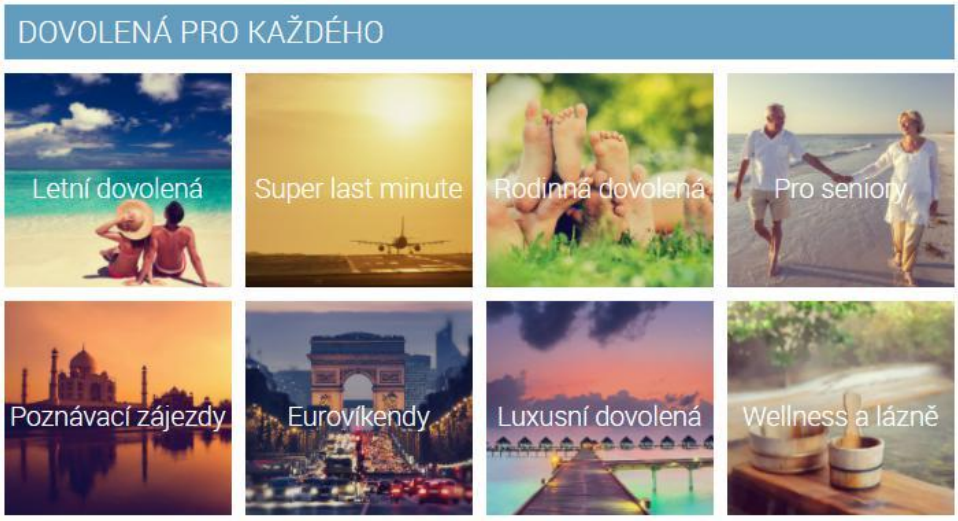


Illustration 13, source:https://www.etravel.cz/



Illustration 14, source:[*https://www.etravel.cz/*](https://www.etravel.cz/)

It was also suggested that the section on the *illustration 10* represents the same function as the section *"Dovolená pro každého" ,* which makes one of these sections' function useless.

3. **Let's go back to the filter and try to settle the requirements**

In all the cases, participants negatively commented on the filter usage (*illstr. 9*). The negative arguments were stated as the followings: ***"Why is not possible to type what I want?", "I can not type or settle my budget", "This filter annoys me, I want to type and not go through all the options!"***

Responses have identified a necessity to make filter more predictable in use or to make users able to find what they want as fast as possible (ex. Not searching by going through all the options as it currently works but typing the first letters of the destination that can automatically find the required one).

4. **Would you be inclined to browse the rest of the page down to the section with the "e-travels blog"(*illstr.15*).**



Illustration 15, source:https://www.etravel.cz/

This question has been asked in 5 out of 6 cases when people stopped just on the sections placed above. **Consequently, this may show a lack of good navigation that would make visitors browse more and step to the sections that the Website aims to inspire them with to invoke satisfaction and further the desire to make the purchase happen.**

5. **Interviewees have been asked about the sections/buttons that they haven't mentioned out of loud or haven't noticed**

As the white-coloured words on the e-Travel's logo appear to be hardly recognizable (*illstr. 16)*, none of the participants paid attention to that line below the name. **Although, it actually represents the relation of e-Travel to the one of the most popular and reliable travel agencies in Czech Republic – Fisher. Which is something that may evoke a feeling of trust when users step into the previously unknown OTA's website.**

Illustration 16, source:https://www.etravel.cz/

The sections demonstrated below, hasn't got any participants' attention either, but rather confusion (*illstr.17*).



Illustration 17, source:https://www.etravel.cz/

Although, the section stands for "discounts", but unfortunately it is represented in the way that doesn't make people open it. Consequently, this section should be more visible or deleted as it doesn't make sense if users are not inclined to click on it.

Testing a task

In this part of web testing the same participants proceeded to the e-Travel's products offer. The illustration below demonstrates one of the offers from the destination – Sri Lanka (*illstr.18*).

Testing has identified the issues that appear to be incomprehensive for the web users:

Icon: it hasn't been clear for five out of six participants what this icon stands for. They later guessed that it might have been a discount or the last minute chance, however the time of its ending was not clarified. **Back to the pre-evaluation criteria it is possible to say that the use of "*icon labels*" would work. Plain icons without labels as seen through this testing are not clear about their meanings.**

Offered dates: The dates had been previously selected in the filter, however different dates were shown in the hotel description, which actually confused four out of six participants.

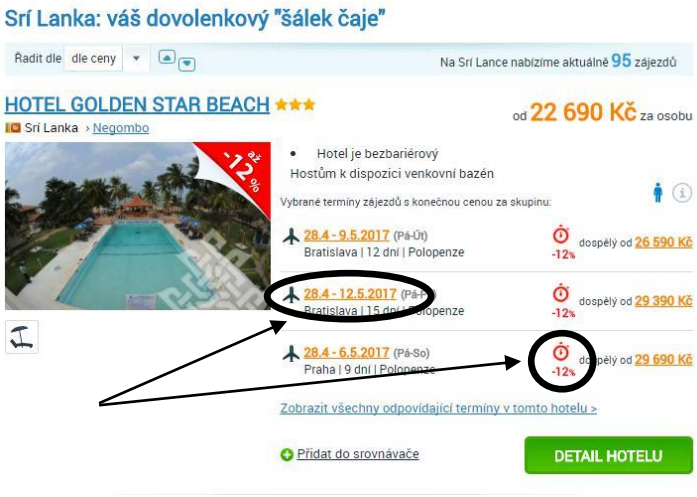


Illustration 18, source: https://www.etravel.cz/

Reservation: the reservation process confused four out of five participants. This study suggests that this occurs to happen due to the fact that e-Travel's website gives too many options and buttons in a different style. Consequently, users get misled with *how* and *where* to take the next action. **This issue has been previously identified by the pre-evaluation and presented in the criteria *"Consistency"*.**

Content: The descriptive information that is provided by e-Travel seemed irrelevant to the five out of six participants. **This investigation conforms the criteria *Concise copy* that has been suggested in the pre-evaluation, the main idea of which stands for showing the core message to users for not loosing their attention.**

After all, only one user out of six was more or less satisfied with the experience with the product description and the reservation procedure. The rest of the participants expressed dissatisfaction with the Web navigation and it's content in general. It became obvious that there are too many already introduced in this paper issues that are useless and are misleading users in the "action taking procedure". They are thinking more about *how* to do the next step instead of thinking more about *what* they want and getting inspired for the purchasing the offered product. Consequently, the dramatic point of these results is that five out of six users were not inclined to proceed with the purchase on the e-Travel's web without comparing it with the others afterwards.

Plan for "E-travel"

Testing of the e-Travels web has demonstrated a clear picture of the drawbacks that also has been identified in the pre-evaluation part. The summarization of the information obtained from the theoretical sources and the qualitative research conducted in this study, can be now represented in the detailed plan for changes that this paper suggests e-Travel to operate on its Website in order to get the better web performance and the higher conversion rate consequently.

The findings of this study suggest that in general e-Travel should take in account its **Navigation**, **Content**, and the **Consistency** of the style through out the website. A good *navigation* can be found in the fixed points that are guiding users through the content on the rest of the page. The issues that are misleading the navigation on the e-Travel's website currently are seen in the generic labels (*illstr. 19*), drop down menus (*illstr.20*) and too many sections on the home page with the similar purpose (*Dovolená pro každého*, *Vyberte si dovolenu*).



Illusration 19, https://www.etravel.cz/

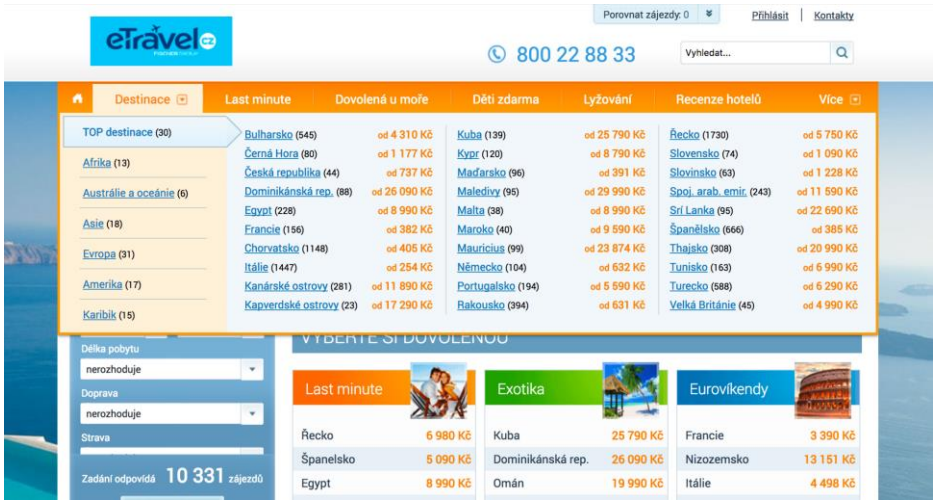


Illustration 20, https://www.etravel.cz/

This study offers an example of a good navigation (*illstr.21*)

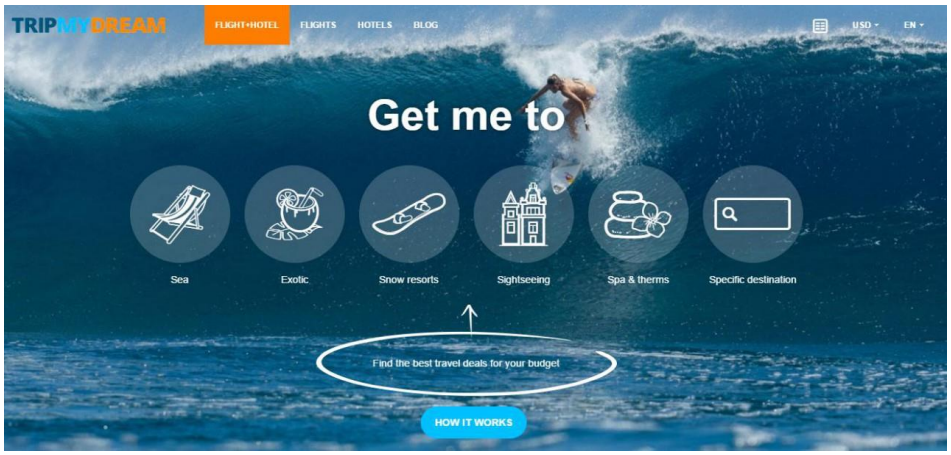


Illustration 21, source: https://en.tripmydream.com/?_ga=1.90219736.334840585.1492522182

Most of the *content* was indicated as irrelevant and overwhelmed. Texts should represent a brief description and even better if they are accompanied by an icon that is making a better impression.

Inconsistency in style has been also found on the e-Travel's website. This study suggests that all the buttons of the same meaning and significance should be designed in a similar distinctive style. When pressing buttons and shifting sliders, users learn to expect these interaction elements to look, behave and be found in the same way repeatedly. Otherwise, it takes them back to the mode of *"how something works"*.

Additional users' suggestions: a link to the independent site with the reviews, advices from the locals of the destination, a map of the whole destination (country) and the spots of the different hotels' placements.

Conclusion

The main goal of the current study was to determine the ways by which Czech OTA e-Travel may increase its conversion rate. Initially, the paper unveiled the best user experience design practices that are influencing the ways customers are interacting with the websites. The further user-centred qualitative research proved that creating and maintaining a positive user experience is crucial to the online businesses and their customers retention.

Consequently, the findings of this study have been analysed and applied in the strategy for the better user interaction and the higher conversion rate of the e-Travel's website.

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