MUNISS – Topic 9 – Team 25: How to „live Brno“?

Making the region and the city more attractive for young people

English summary (written by Martin Fencl)

The project focuses at the problem of low level of public awareness of ways how to fully enjoy life the city of Brno has to offer. Our project is based on the assumption, that Brno is a city that can compete with other important cities in Europe when it comes to accessibility, cultural events, infrastructure, places with great historical importance and reasonable prices.

However after conducting the SWOT analysis few principal problems arise. Some of them are the following:

- Absence of comprehensive official city guide that would highlight important and enjoyable places and events in Brno,
- Unsatisfactory state of street navigation,
- Problems with some tourist oriented facilities.

Hence our team has divided the practical part of the project in following chapters:

- Niche oriented city circuits,
- Navigation – orientation
- City facilities,
    - “Life important” touristic facilities,
    - Informational center,
    - Usability and content of city websites.

Niche oriented city circuits

Everyone can find information about few interesting historical sights in Brno such as Spilberk Castle or Cathedral of St. Peter and Paul. However it is very hard for a common tourist to find the not so well known places that can be incredibly enjoyable. The problem with them is that they are niche specific hence the general tour guides ignore them.

We think it is the right time to change this situation. Our project outlines concept of useful maps filled with tips for interesting places divided in six categories. The categories have been chosen according to general profiles of different groups of people that visit Brno – tourists, sportsmen, gourmets, music lovers, architects and tourists who enjoy regions as a whole.

To make our concept understandable we have prepared complete city tour guide specific for one visitor category – for tourists. The places highlighted in presented guide have been divided in categories such as attractions, souvenirs and scenic views. One can find beautiful photos of Brno on the internet when planning the visit of a city – but how often does he really get to the places where those pictures were taken? If one plans to visit Brno finding such places should be really easy with a city guide like the one we present.

The draw up of complete city tour guide for one category should ensure that the city officials, who review our project, get the idea of what is this all about. To make the creation of other niche specific tour guides easy we have prepared collection of 150 carefully selected tips for enjoyable locations in Brno and close surroundings. These tips were collected by students, who enjoy active life in Brno and are ready to share their knowledge of "how to live Brno".

Our project should be primarily focused at the target group of young foreigner tourists – that is one of the reasons, why the tips have been selected by young people, who already know Brno. We believe that the right way how to make a great city guide for young people is to let the young people participate.

Navigation – orientation

The city of Brno has a lot to offer, but lacks in directing the visitors to it. It is hard to discover the city, when you actually get lost. We think the problem with navigation and orientation in Brno has two parts.

First, the street navigation across the city center is not perfect. Even the most important touristic locations are often not mentioned on the navigational directions near these places. We want to change that. In order to do this we have conducted detailed analysis of routes between popular entrance points in the city (such as the Main station) and the best known travel targets in the center of the city of Brno. We have identified critical places regarding the navigation and orientation and prepared suggestions for improvements in the street navigation.

Second, many travelers visit Brno when traveling by train as an interchange station. They spend very often quite some time in the lobby of a station when waiting for consequential connection. There are many wonderful places they could visit in the meantime, as they are just a few minutes of walk away from the building of the Main station – places such as Denis Gardens or Cathedral of St. Peter and Paul with its outlook post in between the towers. But the not so well informed tourists are simply not aware of this fact and they miss out a lot. That's why we suggest local visual propagation of such places. Marketing efforts could start with very little money actually being spent, as we have identified few crucial spots, where the propagation based on use of visually appealing imagery of promoted places should take place for a maximum effect regarding the considered problem.

City facilities

We have identified three topics that should be getting more focus from the city officials – "Life important" touristic facilities, Informational center and Usability and content of city websites.

As "life important" facilities from the viewpoint of tourists and for the purpose of this project we consider facilities that help to satisfy basic needs of tourists such as vendors of tickets for the public transport, public toilets and support for comfortable cycling in and across the city.

We have analyzed the usability of ticket vendors from the viewpoint of foreigner users. The **ticket vendors** should be easy to use and should support common payment methods. The easiness of use is tightly connected to the whole ticket system based on tariff zones and time bound expiration of tickets. We have concluded that the usability of ticket vendors and ticket system as a whole is complicated and should be improved for sake of the comfort of Brno residents and the tourists. Especially the tourists can get confused with many different available tickets. The ticket vendors should also support modern payment methods, such as those based on the use of debit and credit cards.

Brno has serious problem of delicate nature – absence of **public toilets** on some well visited places. This can lead many tourists to desperate use of toilets in unrepresentative restaurants or gambling clubs, which the city is unfortunately full of. To improve this situation we have prepared map of public toilets in the center of the city and conducted analysis of their positions in connection to the heat map of places frequently visited by tourists. The analysis was followed by formation of suggestions connected to the topic of public toilets.

Apart from the positions of toilets themselves the suggestions are connected also to the problem of distribution of informational maps by the Tourist information center of Brno. Maps available in the TIC make the search for public toilet much easier, as they give their users information about positions of the toilets. These maps should however be made easily accessible as they are available only on a few places, generally unknown to tourists. We give propositions in our project for places at which should be placed stands for free maps. These stands should be located in places commonly visited by tourists. By following our proposition should be ensured overall higher level of tourist education.

The support of cycling is generally not very solid in Brno. That is one of the reasons why we have focused at laying out plan for way of improving the experience of cyclists in Brno. If not the Brno itself than its close surroundings offer great roads perfectly suitable for cycling. These roads offer optimal terrain variances and breathtaking views. The problem is that it is often quite complicated to get to these roads safely when riding the bicycle across Brno with its low support of bike lanes. Our suggestion focuses at improvement of accessibility of cycling locations from Brno and is based on idea of a cycle bus. These buses are commonly used across the Czech Republic and offer improved comfort and safety for bikers at a low price. We have prepared routes for lines of cycle buses across Brno.

Touristic informational center has its own chapter in our project as we tried to analyze its usability. To do this we have been in touch with foreign students who wanted to get information about Brno. The result of their trying was a disaster. People who work at the TIC have not acquired the level of fluency in English that one would expect from somebody, whose work should be all about the foreigners. We have found out many other problems in the TIC, many of which are very easily fixable, especially those connected to the distribution of maps across the Brno. This topic (TIC) is strongly connected to some other parts of the project, which might be a sign, that the officials of Brno should place much more value on the operation of Touristic informational center than they do at the time.

Printed informational materials from the TIC are usually not available in other languages than the Czech, which is another way of undermining the process of fulfilling the purpose of the Touristic informational center – to actually inform tourists. Our advice is very simple – localize every material that could be useful for tourists in to languages as English, German, French and Spanish.

One of the many problems of the TIC is its location. General public offices are placed in the heart of Brno, but that does not mean they are easily accessible. On the contrary the offices are not directly reachable by public transport and are not on the main streets, despite being placed close to them.

Another aspect closely related to the Touristic informational center is the **problematic of street informational panels**. The idea behind them is to make information about interesting sights in the city easily accessible. The results is however hard to use and overpriced when considering its usability and usefulness.

We have prepared directions for improvement of these panels. These directions are based on the principles of usability and the idea of making the content easily accessible by using rather the visual form of communication instead of relying on the audio presentation, which is the main way of communication of the contemporary informational panels. Visual presentation offers the content in faster understandable way. Not everyone wants to spend an hour just standing by the informational panel, listening to long boring records.

In the chapter of Touristic informational center we have also prepared calculation of deployment of map stands in a manner mentioned above.

The usability and content of city websites is very important aspect, as we live in an age of the internet. Web presence has become an inseparable part of marketing mix. Users of internet are used to browsing through different websites, quickly leaving those that are boring and/or hard to understand. The content must be interesting and also presented in an interesting, easily consumable fashion. That is the reason why we have conducted complex user testing of set of four websites, given to us by one of the TIC officials as a list of websites important for presentation of Brno and south Moravia as a whole. The thorough testing was conducted and evaluated in cooperation with five test subjects, who fall into the target group (young foreigners) as of age.

Sample users have evaluated the usability, web design and quality of content of selected websites. Comments of users have been very important for us, as they helped us to understand the problems of examined web presentations. The official website of Touristic information center of Brno was rated worst among the participants of the user testing regarding the design and both the content structure and the content itself. Best rated website was however the one not owned by public office but run by private company.

We have prepared guidelines for improvement of websites in the test. Some of the examined web presentations need more improvement than other. Our advices should however help

every website that was tested to get on a higher level of usability, so that they could offer better user experience.

The internet marketing communication of Brno has many problems. One of them is poor search engine visibility of official websites made for tourists when it comes to search of common tourist phrases. This problem can be solved at least partially by consolidation of many website that the Brno and south Moravian region has in to single one or two web presentations of significantly higher quality.

Our assumptions of what needs to be improved in Brno have been verified by survey among people who have experience of spending time in Brno. Their answers have confirmed that we have selected range of topics that are really important and implementation of our project could help ensure better experience from Brno for both its residents and visitors.

Through the survey we have also gathered number of interesting ideas for improvements in the way the city of Brno communicates with its residents and visitors. These ideas can be used when implementing our project or for laying out the foundation of other projects aimed at further improvement of Brno as a whole.