Gathering user feedback regarding Statistics Austria’s website

Submitted by Beatrix Tomaschek, Statistics Austria

1. Statistics Austria conducted an online user survey from 24th June until 19th July 2010 in order to evaluate Statistics Austria’s website www.statistik.at from the user’s point of view and to ask them for potential improvements. In addition to this, an expert review was carried out to reveal further issues concerning usability and to optimize the user experience.

2. Methods
   a) User survey in German and English
   b) Expert review

I. User survey in German and English

3. The user survey was carried out as an online questionnaire in German as well as a shortened version in English. The questionnaire contained questions about the usage, handling and potential of the website and was available on the website from 24th June until 19th July 2010. Respondents were solicited via an online prompt to take part in the survey as well as by email invitation (invitations sent to all newsletter subscribers as well as other “heavy-users”).

4. The German version contained 44 questions (of those: 27 filter questions, 7 demographic questions) (length of time: approx. 10 – 15 minutes), whereas the English one contained only 11 questions (4 of them demographic).

5. Issues addressed in the German version:
   - method of accessing the website (bookmark, search engine, etc.)
   - purpose of today’s visit
   - frequency of use of Statistics Austria’s website
   - evaluation of overall impression
- evaluation of statements regarding corporate image, ease of access, visual design, comprehensibility, expectations, font design, trustability
- text length
- recommendations for improvement
- for recurring visitors: former actions taken on the website and evaluating them:
  o data downloads
  o publications: download and order process
  o RSS feeds
  o navigation
  o website search
  o index search (Index A-Z)
  o ease of access of information
  o mobile use
  o social media
- demographics: sex, age, education, country, purpose of use, branch of industry

6. Issues addressed in the English version:
- frequency of use of Statistics Austria’s website
- information needs
- evaluation of information structure / the ease of access of information
- evaluation of overall impression
- recommendations for improvement
- demographics: country, purpose of use, sex, age

II. Expert review

7. Usability experts additionally reviewed Statistics Austria’s website regarding usability criteria and guidelines by different methods, such as heuristic evaluation, cognitive walkthrough and web user interface principles and guidelines.

8. In the expert review, the following issues were analyzed:
   - structural composition of the website
   - layout in general (navigation, content areas)
   - position and arrangement of content and functions
   - arrangement, form and behavior of interaction and navigation elements
   - visual design (graphical design, icons, graphics)

III. Results

a) User survey in German and English

9. Overall, 625 (German) responses were gathered, 272 on-site (44%) and 353 (56%) from “invited” users. Unfortunately, the English version had only 19 answers.

10. The following results are based on the German evaluation:
56% of respondents were male and nearly 3 out of 4 are aged 18 to 49 years (18-34 years: 37%, 35-49 years: 37%). Regarding the educational attainment, 26% of the respondents have ISCED 3A/4A and a further 62% ISCED 5A/5B graduation.
11. 74% use the website for business related reasons, whereas 14% use it out of personal purpose and 12% for school/university. 42% of the respondents visit the website several times a month, 15% (nearly) every day and 16% several times per year.

12. Surprisingly, “typing in the URL” was no. 1 (60% of onsite users) among the most common methods for accessing the website, followed by “bookmark” (12%) and “via search engines” (11%). The primary reason for visiting the website is to look for information (79%), especially statistical results and publications. The most common topics of interest are data on population, income, labor market and prices.

13. 78% of respondents stated that they do like the overall impression of Statistics Austria’s website (23% stated that they like it very much, 55% said they like it). Further positively stated issues were trustability, font design and comprehensibility of web content. Potentials for improvement are seen in the visual design of website as well as the navigation and ease of access.

14. 71% stated that the length of texts is appropriate (neither too long nor too short).

15. Former actions taken on our website were mainly search for information (78%), data download (62%), download of publications (54%) and database queries (42%). Only 4% have already subscribed to RSS feeds on our website and 12% have ordered publications. On the whole, all of those actions were rated positively.

16. Regarding the method of access, navigation (45%) and search (42%) were used equally; a further 14% use bookmarks (multiple answers were possible).

17. Questions on the subject of navigation and search showed potential for improvement: efficiency of navigation as well as search results are the main issues to be addressed.

18. 18% are interested in information via social media, especially Youtube (10%) and Facebook (8%) are of interest, 1% would like to follow us on Twitter.

b) Expert review

19. Regarding the homepage, the consistency in corporate design, the availability of different search approaches, as well as the clear overview on available content, were assessed positively. The design is clear and signifies reliability.

The usability issues were categorized into 4 groups:
1.) Major problems (adjustment absolutely necessary)
   → no major problems detected
2.) Significant problems (adjustment is strongly advised)
   a) search (search buttons, error tolerance, visualization of results)
   b) links (inconsistencies, labeling of PDF documents)
   c) organization of content (difficult to differentiate content on homepage)
3.) Minor Problems (adjustment is desirable)
   a) window width (scalable but no minimum and maximum width at the moment)
   b) text alignment (text flows around the “Zum Thema” boxes)
   c) color contrast (not W3C compliant)
   d) content (individuals content areas are difficult to make out)
   e) navigation (order in “Publikationen & Services”, back navigation undetached)
   f) content assignment (specific documents are not assigned to the “logical” topic)
g) downloads (information on data type, size, publication date, short summary)
h) print button (providing button also at the top of the site)
i) mailing lists (inefficient (un)subscribing for more than one topic)
j) font size (buttons for enlarging the font size)
k) sitemap (“error” in sitemap)

4.) Nice to have
   a) consistency (inconsistent use in formal representation, e.g. EUR vs. €)
b) “entrance” pages for statistics (provide short overview of main topics)
c) access of press releases (provide filters for topic and date)
d) archive (provide an archive to shorten lists of available documents/tables)
e) news on homepage (filter, stating main topic for each post)
f) newsletter (difficult to find)
g) publication dates (difficult to find)

Further potential for improvement:
- redesign of homepage
- calendar of publication dates
- interactive charts
- social media
- mobile version
- videos
- tutorials
- personalization
- permanent feedback form
- “first visit” section
- hotlines
- handicapped accessibility
- support
- fun activities

20. The results of the Usability Study were presented to Statistics Austria’s Top Management in July 2010. Decisions on actions were taken within approximately 2 months.

IV. Actions taken
21. A re-design of the homepage has been carried out, along with improvements of most of the identified trouble spots. Screenshots (before and after) of selected issues are available in the appendix.

V. Significant problems:
2a) search: a fuzzy search was implemented to improve search results (e.g. “lories” delivers the results for “lorries”); the search buttons were adapted
2b) links: PDF documents have to be labeled (incl. their size); link formats on homepage revised
2c) organization of content: visual separation of the different content areas

Minor problems:
3a) window width: still scalable but with minimum and maximum width
3b) text alignment: in process → content of “zum Thema” boxes will be displayed in tabs at the lower end of each site, therefore this issue is not further relevant
3c) **color contrast**: contrasts were adjusted
3d) **content**: the homepage was re-designed
3e) **navigation**: order of navigational elements revised in “Publikationen & Services”, back navigation more detached
3f) **content assignment**: multiple assignments
3g) **downloads**: information on data type and size implemented; but no short summary (publication date available in the documents)
3h) **print button**: 2\textsuperscript{nd} print button on top not yet implemented – is **planned to be done** in combination with other buttons, e.g. “bookmark this”
3i) **mailing lists**: (un)subscribing process improved by providing checkboxes
3j) **font size**: not required/desired because of scalable font size already available
3k) **sitemap**: error removed

**Nice to have:**

4a) **consistency**: reinforced monitoring
4b) **“entrance” pages**: in process (is expected to be launched in July)
4c) **access of press releases**: in process (is expected to be launched in June)
4d) **archive**: has been planned for years, implementation postponed
4e) **news on homepage**: obsolete because of homepage re-design
4f) **newsletter**: positioning of the newsletter more conspicuous (on homepage)
4g) **publication dates**: implemented on homepage

**Further potential for improvement:**

- redesign of homepage
- calendar of publication dates: small version on homepage, link to full version
- interactive charts: new interactive charts are constantly produced;
- social media: the use of social media will be evaluated
- mobile version: use of website currently fairly good, therefore no need at the moment
- videos: two web videos (use of ICT in households, census 2011) available
- tutorials: not planned at the moment
- personalization: not planned at the moment
- permanent feedback form: not planned at the moment
- “first visit” section: information for first time visitors available in the “help” section
- hotlines: phone support available via “contact” section
- handicapped accessibility: information on accessibility in the “help” section
- support: available on each site in the footer section
- fun activities: “Did you know” section with statistical facts, such as the smallest village or the number of cows in Austria
VI. APPENDIX

Improvements on search (2a)

Adaptation of search buttons:

Implementation of a fuzzy search:

Labeling of PDF links (2b)
Homepage re-design
Homepage as of July 2010:
VII. Adaptations
- More modern visual design by adding a bigger picture on top, new design of navigational bar, footer with chart of Austria as well as adaptation of the header including a translucent search box
- New section: „Wussten Sie schon?“ (Did you know…?) with funny and/or interesting statistical facts
- Grouping of links into tabs: Links, Tools, Erhebungen (surveys)
- Categorization of content areas into „Menschen und Gesellschaft“ (people & society), „Wirtschaft“ (economy), „Energie, Umwelt, Innovation, Mobilität“ (energy, environment, innovation, mobility) and „Internationales“ (international), to enable a better overview and find topics more easily
- The latest 3 press releases are shown with a short summary
- News regarding new publications, new statistical data, press conferences etc. in 1 big, 3 smaller as well as 3 headline-only sections
- Calendar of publication dates
- Meltwater newsfeed: current press articles from Meltwater are shown in this section (manually chosen)
Beatrix Tomeschek, Statistics Austria

New homepage (April 2011):

![Homepage Image]

**Österreichische Forschungsquote 2011 voraussichtlich 2.7% des BIP**

For future and experimental data acquisition (FAK) users, there is a high demand in the Austrian Republic of Austria in the years 2011 voraussichtlich erneut mehr als 2.0%. Data are available in PDF format. Starting 2011, the official website of the Austrian Researchquote (ARQ) will be updated every 3 months with new data. For 2011, the Forschungsquote (FQ) was increased to 2.7%.

**MARKETINGANSÄTZE**

10.04.2011
- Austrian Forschungsquote 2011 voraussichtlich 2.7% des BIP

**TERMINE/TERMINE**

10.04.2011
- Austrian Forschungsquote 2011 voraussichtlich 2.7% des BIP

10.04.2011
- Austrian Forschungsquote 2011 voraussichtlich 2.7% des BIP

**PRESSEPIEGEL**

New homepage (April 2011):
Beatrix Tomaschek, Statistics Austria

English version of homepage:

Mailing lists (3i)

Easier (un)subscribing for more than one topic by ticking the relevant boxes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wochenvorschau</th>
<th>anmelden</th>
<th>abmelden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>alle Themenberichte</td>
<td>anmelden</td>
<td>abmelden</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sie haben die Wahl...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wochenvorschau</th>
<th>anmelden</th>
<th>abmelden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>alle Themenberichte</td>
<td>anmelden</td>
<td>abmelden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... oder Ihre individuelle Auswahl:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bevölkerung</td>
<td>anmelden</td>
<td>abmelden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arbeitsmarkt</td>
<td>anmelden</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gesundheit</td>
<td>anmelden</td>
<td>abmelden</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bildung, Kultur</td>
<td>anmelden</td>
<td>abmelden</td>
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<td>SOziales</td>
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<td>abmelden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wirtschaft, Unternehmen</td>
<td>anmelden</td>
<td>abmelden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produktions, Dienstleistungen</td>
<td>anmelden</td>
<td>abmelden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handel, Verkehr, Verkehr</td>
<td>anmelden</td>
<td>abmelden</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finanzen, Steuern</td>
<td>anmelden</td>
<td>abmelden</td>
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<tr>
<td>Umwelt, Erneuerbare Energie</td>
<td>anmelden</td>
<td>abmelden</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forschung (F&amp;E), Innovation</td>
<td>anmelden</td>
<td>abmelden</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preise</td>
<td>anmelden</td>
<td>abmelden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vollwirtschaftliche Gesamtrechnungen</td>
<td>anmelden</td>
<td>abmelden</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Profil der Pressemittelaus: Abonnements für max.muehlmann@statistik.gv.at |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Presseaussendungsbereich | Presseaussendungsbereich |
| Presseaussendungen Arbeitsmarkt | Presseaussendungen Arbeitsmarkt |
| Presseaussendungen Gesundheit | Presseaussendungen Gesundheit |
| Presseaussendungen Bildung, Kultur | Presseaussendungen Bildung, Kultur |
| Presseaussendungen Wirtschaft | Presseaussendungen Wirtschaft |
| Presseaussendungen Rohstoffe, Energie | Presseaussendungen Rohstoffe, Energie |
| Presseaussendungen Land- und Forstwirtschaft | Presseaussendungen Land- und Forstwirtschaft |
| Presseaussendungen Produktion, Erzeugnisse | Presseaussendungen Produktion, Erzeugnisse |
| Presseaussendungen Handel, Dienstleistungen | Presseaussendungen Handel, Dienstleistungen |
| Presseaussendungen berufliche Abteilungen | Presseaussendungen berufliche Abteilungen |
| Presseaussendungen Verkehr | Presseaussendungen Verkehr |
| Presseaussendungen Energie, Umwelt | Presseaussendungen Energie, Umwelt |
| Presseaussendungen Forschung (F&E), Innovation | Presseaussendungen Forschung (F&E), Innovation |
| Presseaussendungen Informationen | Presseaussendungen Informationen |
| Presseaussendungen Nachrichten | Presseaussendungen Nachrichten |
| Presseaussendungen Öffentliche Finanzen, Steuern | Presseaussendungen Öffentliche Finanzen, Steuern |
| Presseaussendungen Vollwirtschaftliche Gesamtrechnungen | Presseaussendungen Vollwirtschaftliche Gesamtrechnungen |

...zu wählen

alle Pressemittelaus (alle Mailings umfasst alle oben genannten Themenbereiche, aber nicht die Wochenvorschau)
Newsletter (4f), calendar of publication dates

The newsletter is easier to find on the homepage and a calendar application provides access to the publication dates database:

Wussten Sie schon? (Did you know…?)

A few examples of this section (questions are currently revised and new ones added):

by clicking on „Antwort“ (answer) ➔