

Premise

In this age of information, anyone with a personal computer and an Internet connection can publish thoughts, opinions, stories, pictures, movies and other information on the World Wide Web. In the travel industry, where much is based upon reputation and consumer experience, it is crucial to maintain a high level of information awareness as negative reviews and erroneous news reports have the potential to cause devastating effects on company reputation and business revenue.

Many organizations are aware of the information gathering aspect of the Internet, but fail to recognize the role of the Internet as a medium for consumers to share information with others. The Apollo project concerns the collection and dissemination of time-sensitive, strategic information for the tourism and travel industry.

Our concern is that false, or incorrect information may be published on the web, without being noticed by those who it harms or is targeted against. Or, that there is information that is otherwise useful to an organization that is never read or considered, which is also potentially harmful. Throughout the research and development conducted on our system, we have explored the needs of the tourism and travel industry, the information sharing behavior of the online community, and how a system might be developed to best take advantage of the community to meet the needs of the industry.

Assessment

The goals of our assessment were to:

- Determine if there is a need for this system
- Evaluate what information needs the tourism and travel industry has

Several tools were used to understand the needs of the travel community. Our initial data collection depended on the feedback from clients evaluating sample reports early trials of the system had generated. Contacts would be provided with a set of articles or news results produced from the system, along with a questionnaire investigating different facets of their own information need. For our design we need to understand the client and their business, what information is important to them, what information is time sensitive, and so on.

To supplement the responses from our contacts, we also evaluating news, blogs, and review websites relating to travel and tourism around the world. By establishing what information is most prevalent in travel news, we were able to further understand the goals of our target community.

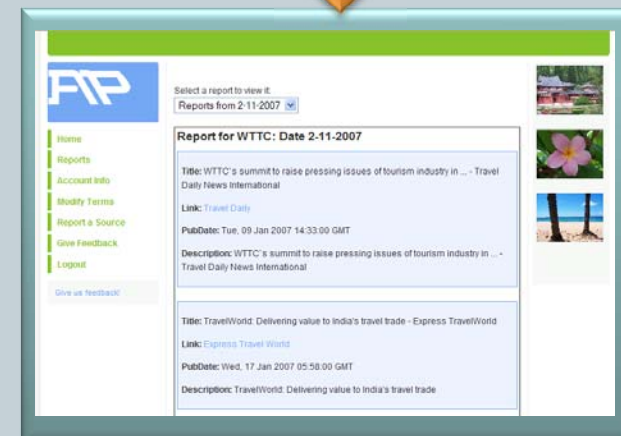
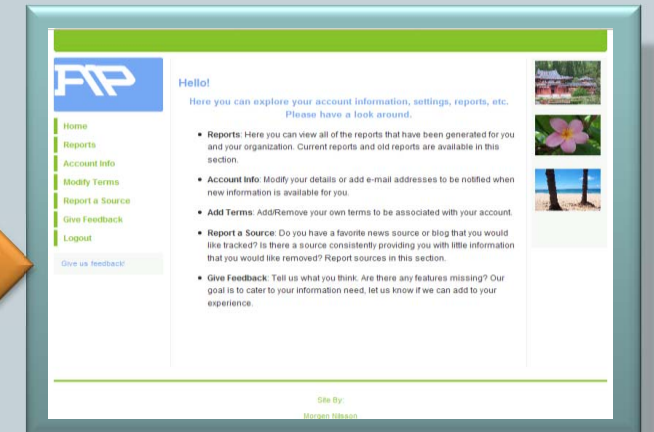
We found that clients are most often interested in: Local news, news about their own location or areas of interest, reviews, blogs, opinions published concerning their resorts or organization, natural disasters and international news that relates to them or their organization.

Design

The overarching goal of the system is to collect and disseminate information to our users as soon as it becomes available. The basic system continuously evaluates thousands of sources for any new information concerning our client.

Once a new, relevant item is found, it is recording and compiled into a report for the client

A front-end was developed to allow the users to interact with the system through a web site. This would allow new members to sign up, and for members to log in, view new and old reports, add relevant terms to their own account, and to provide feedback.

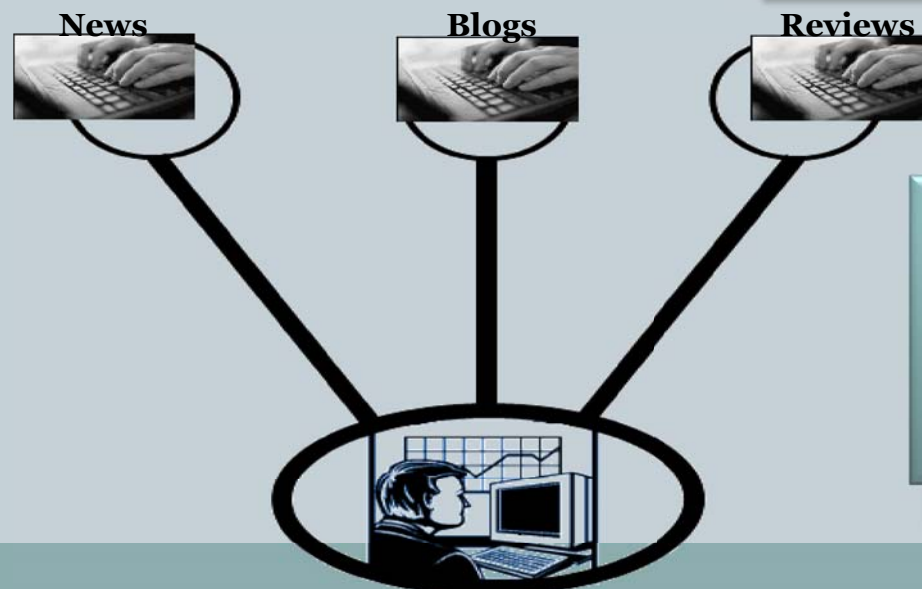


Evaluation

The system is under continual evaluation by ourselves and our clients. We initially began evaluating what the systems output would be when we sent sample reports to our contacts, allowing us to further refine our sources of information, and how we filter this information for the user.

Reports - The main interaction the system has with its users is through the generated reports. We continually evaluate the content of these reports to ensure its applicability and usefulness.

Front-end – An easy, attractive interface for the user to review their reports is the overarching goal of the user interface. This element is still under construction and evaluation prior to release.



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ITB - Berlin

To further investigate the needs of our target population and to immerse ourselves in the travel industry, we traveled to ITB (Internationale Tourismus-Börse) in Berlin. ITB is the largest international travel and tourism tradeshow in the world. At the conference we also had the opportunity to

present our supporting research and findings that we have compiled through the course of the quarter, as well as outline the system we have been developing. research concerning the needs of the industry, the goals of our system based upon those needs, and how well the system accomplishes these goals.

With over 160,000 attendees, we were able to During the conference we conducted many discuss our system and the information needs informal interviews, and were able to further of the world-wide industry with those who establish the need for our system and the constitute it. We participated in ITB as it was research supporting it. a tremendous opportunity to expand our