CS 247 Project II

Part II

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Critical Synthesis

Our initial design received mostly positive feedback. Users liked our clean, well-defined grid layouts and found the balance between too much and too little information to be just right. Our redesigned calendar (the one on the original website was very clunky and awkward) received a lot of feedback and we decided to combine our two ideas into one new design. We also removed the map as it didn't seem especially relevant to a special event hotel booking website and will be showing the location of the hotel on the map in the actual hotel page.

Another main point of feedback was our hotel search functions. We originally included basic filters such as price, distance, and ratings, but we thought we could help the user better perform their search with more advanced options. We performed some research and found that many users also care about promotions, reward programs, and amenities. We wanted to keep our advanced options bar clean and minimal, so in our first iteration we decided to toggle promotions with a checkbox, a dropdown menu with options for reward programs, and a search bar for amenities. We had considered laying out all the possible amenities, but realized that it would really clutter the user interface. Most amenities people are looking for are quite common so we thought a search bar would be ideal. A potential issue was that users may search for terms using colloquial language or different names, such as complimentary wifi vs free wifi, so in our backend we will loosen the criteria to search for hotels containing the keywords and also for hotels containing related or synonymous keywords. Since using a search bar for amenities has rarely been done before it was interesting to gauge user feedback.

However, the feedback received was that some of the advanced features were "80/20" items, so we decided to pivot directions. We simplified the filter bar, removing features such as the amenities search, and approached the hotel search dilemma from a social media perspective. In our second iteration, we displayed people's social media connections and famous people on the hotel search results, so users could see where other people are staying. A huge part of the experience is connecting with friends and new friends, thus where others are staying may be a sizable factor in deciding hotels. To avoid cluttering the interface, we are only showing a few faces but more would show up on hover. We hope that these changes would enable people to better connect with each other and have a more memorable experience at SXSW.

Additional Notes

- Twitter handles will show on hover in the hotel view pages
- A map of the hotel's location in relation to all of the conference activity locations will be shown on the hotel details page which will be visible upon clicking on the hotel's image
- All black boxes in the sketch mockups are photos of hotels – for whatever reason, some of our images would not export with the sketch files