

Capstone Project Milestone Report: Prediction of Hotel Cluster Based on User Search History

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1. Introduction:

1.1 Problem definition:

The project proposal is based on an ongoing sponsored competition from Kaggle. The client, Expedia wants to predict which hotel cluster is booked by the customer, based on customer's previous bookings and clicks. A click means a user clicked a link to see hotel details on a hotel information site page. The service provider has predefined hotel clusters based on historical price, customer star ratings, geographical locations relative to city center, etc. New hotels which have no historical data are considered as outliers.

1.2 Business need:

Hundreds of people look for hotel either for work purpose or for vacation. And numerous options appear when a potential customer search for hotel that will fit his need. This project will help the client to offer a system, that would make the hotel selection process easier for a potential customer.

2. Data source:

For this project, dataset from a sponsored competition on Kaggle is used. The dataset is divided into training and test set based on time. Entries from 2013 and 2014 are in training set, while test data are from 2015. There is another significant difference between the two dataset. Both booking and click events of the users are included in training set, but the test set only has the booking events. An additional dataset is supplied in the competition which contains the feature extracted from hotel reviews.

2.1 Data description:

There are 24 fields in the given data and the description of fields are as below.

Table 1: Field name and description of train / test set

	Field name	Description
1	date_time	Timestamp
2	site_name	ID of the Expedia point of sale (i.e. Expedia.com, Expedia.co.uk, Expedia.co.jp, ...)

3	posa_continent	ID of continent associated with site_name
4	user_location_country	The ID of the country the customer is located
5	user_location_region	The ID of the region the customer is located
6	user_location_city	The ID of the city the customer is located
7	orig_destination_distance	Physical distance between a hotel and a customer at the time of search. A null means the distance could not be calculated
8	user_id	ID of user
9	is_mobile	1 when a user connected from a mobile device, 0 otherwise
10	is_package	1 if the click/booking was generated as a part of a package (i.e. combined with a flight), 0 otherwise
11	channel	ID of a marketing channel
12	srch_ci	Check-in date
13	srch_co	Checkout date
14	srch_adults_cnt	The number of adults specified in the hotel room
15	srch_children_cnt	The number of (extra occupancy) children specified in the hotel room
16	srch_rm_cnt	The number of hotel rooms specified in the search
17	srch_destination_id	ID of the destination where the hotel search was performed
18	srch_destination_type_id	Type of destination
19	hotel_continent	Hotel continent
20	hotel_country	Hotel country
21	hotel_market	Hotel market
22	is_booking	1 if a booking, 0 if a click
23	cnt	Numer of similar events in the context of the same user session
24	hotel_cluster	ID of a hotel cluster

To understand the fields of the given data, a quick glance at the Expedia site would be helpful.

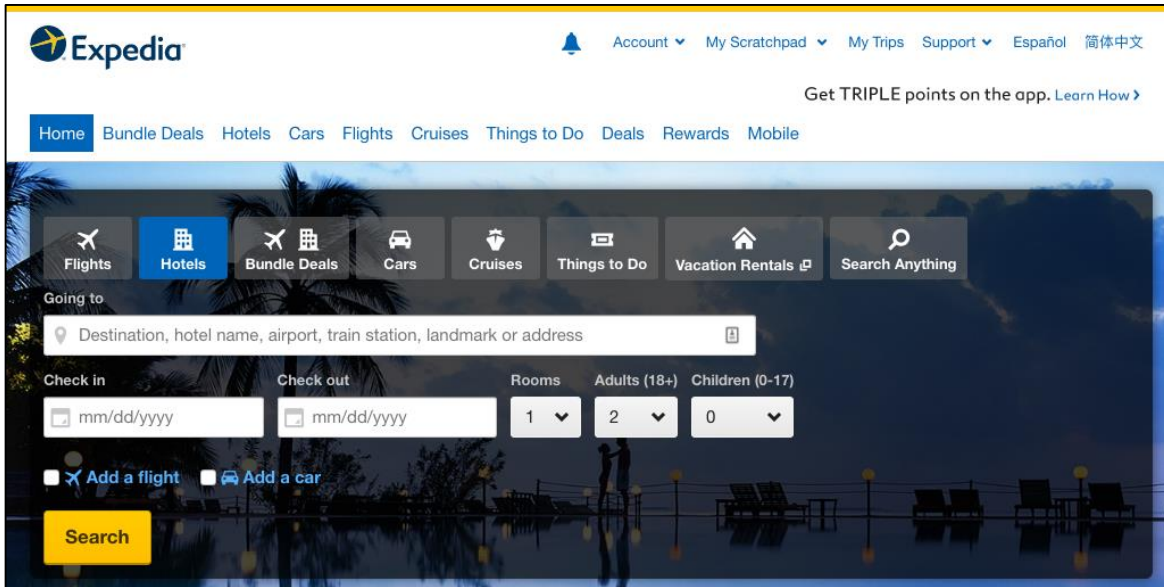


Figure 1: An example of Expedia interface to search or book hotels online

The first option that draws user's attention while using Expedia website is 'Going to' tab. This tab maps to the 'srch_destination_type_id', 'hotel_continent', 'hotel_country' and 'hotel_market' field. The second important features of the site are 'Check in' and 'Check out' tab, which map to 'srch_ci' and 'srch_co' respectively. Three tabs right next to 'Check out' tab, map to 'srch_adults_cnt', 'srch_children_cnt' and 'srch_rm_cnt'. The tab named 'Add a flight' maps to 'is_package' field. The user related fields like 'user_location_country', 'user_location_region' etc. and 'is_booking', 'is_mobile' etc. fields are related to the user who is using the site. The 'date_time' field gives the information about when the user made that search. The first three rows of training set are attached (figure 2) to have an idea about the entries in data fields. The test set has the data fields except 'is_booking', 'cnt' and 'hotel_cluster'.

3. Data exploration:

The amount of data has a very important influence on data analysis technique to be chosen in such case. Here, both the train and test set given by Kaggle competition are large. The training set has more than 37 million rows and 24 fields. On the other hand, the test set has more than 2 million rows with 22 fields. Moreover, the training set has events from year 2013 and 2014, where the test set has events from year 2015. However, due to the absence of 'is_booking' and 'hotel_cluster' field in test set cannot be used to validate any model developed.

	0	1	2
date_time	2014-11-22 22:00:24	2014-10-13 15:25:05	2014-07-10 23:26:18
site_name	30	2	25
posa_continent	4	3	2
user_location_country	195	66	23
user_location_region	991	174	48
user_location_city	47725	46432	4924
orig_destination_distance	NaN	110.51	NaN
user_id	1048	3313	3972
is_mobile	1	0	1
is_package	0	0	0
channel	9	1	9
srch_ci	2015-06-26	2014-10-24	2014-08-13
srch_co	2015-06-28	2014-10-26	2014-08-14
srch_adults_cnt	2	2	2
srch_children_cnt	0	0	1
srch_rm_cnt	1	1	1
srch_destination_id	8803	11835	8278
srch_destination_type_id	1	1	1
is_booking	0	0	0
cnt	1	1	1
hotel_continent	3	2	2
hotel_country	151	50	50
hotel_market	69	633	368
hotel_cluster	59	17	63

Figure 2: The example of training set

The click and booking events in train set are not equally distributed and this is quite natural as people use to browse a lot before they finally decision to book any hotel. The below bar-chart shows the count of click and booking events.

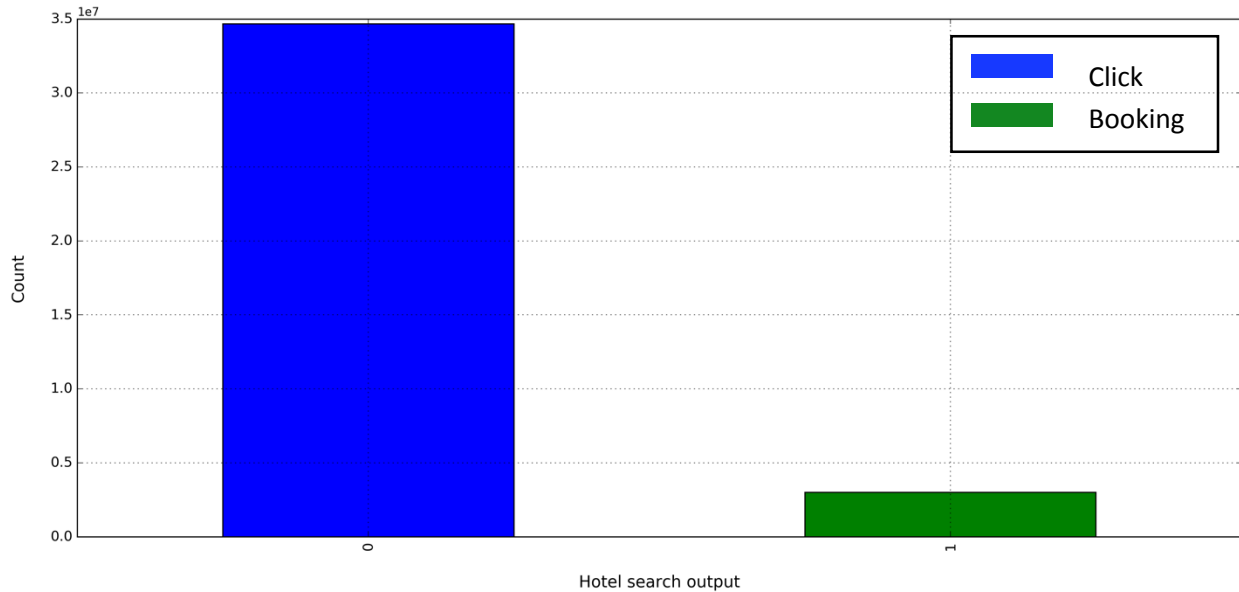


Figure 3: Count of click and booking events in the training set

People tend to search for hotels almost all over the year, but the figure 4 states that the search trend gradually increases during summer season and lasts till holiday season in the end of year.

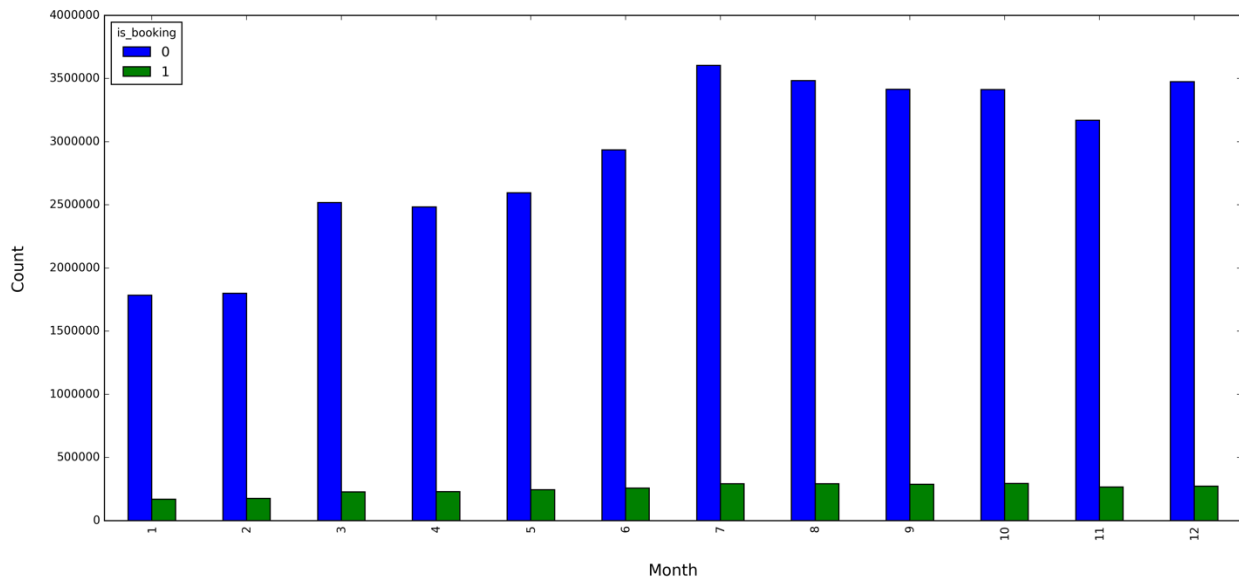


Figure 4: Trend of hotel search varies over month.

People also tend to search more during the start of a week, rather than end of the week. In figure 5, the ratio of booking events is presented as a ratio of total search event.

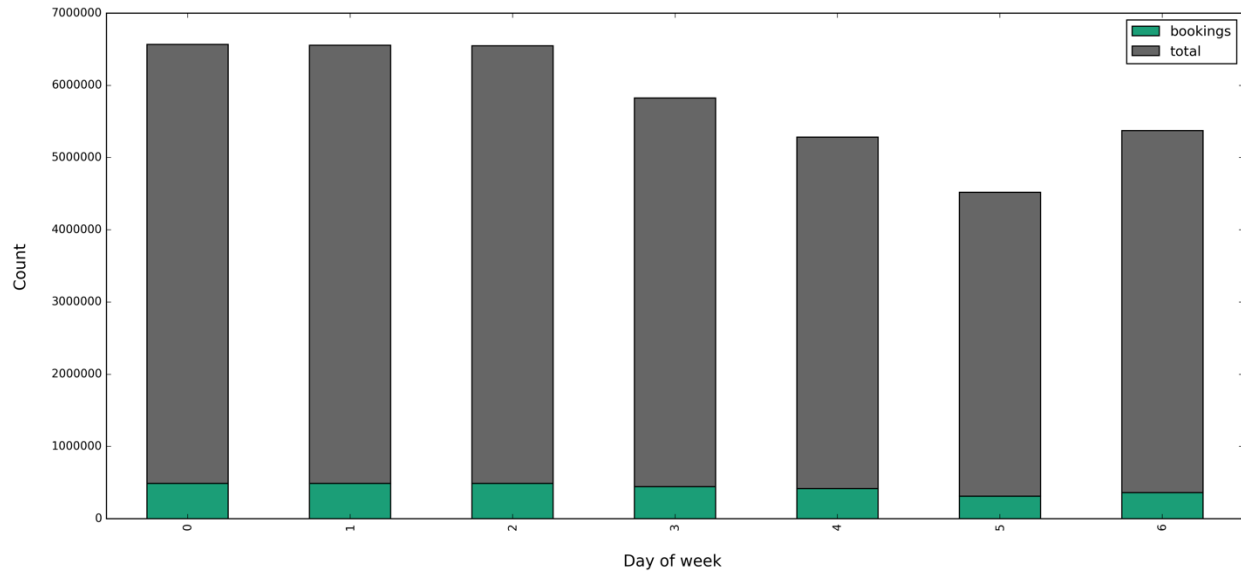


Figure 5: Trend of search and booking event over the days of week

Besides the monthly and daily trend, the location of hotel searched is another interesting finding. Even though the name of the continents is not given, user mostly search for hotels which are in continent 2 and 6 (figure 6).

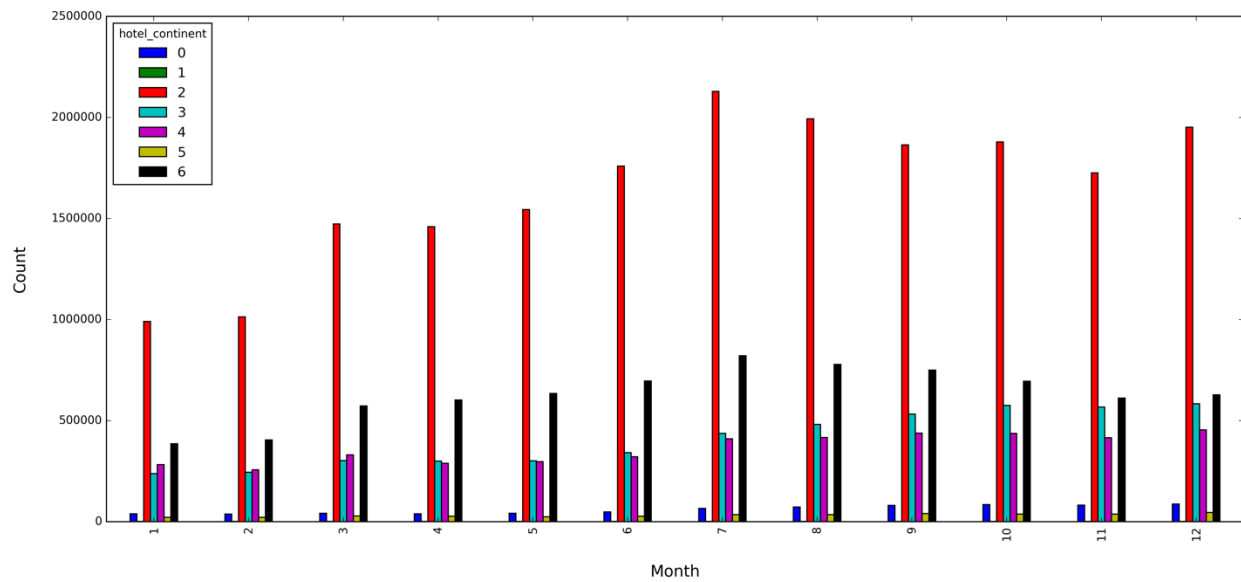


Figure 6: The search trend for hotels in seven continents over months.

4. Preliminary data analysis:

The given test set does not have all the fields those are present in the train set. So, it would be hard to evaluate any model using the test set. For this reason, the train set is planned to divide into 2 set; training and testing. As the given train set has 37 million rows, it is also hard to load and analyze the entire dataset due to memory outage. For this reason, 1% of the train data is randomly selected and then split into training and testing set in a 70%-30% ratio.

During the preliminary analysis, it was checked if any attributes have missing entries. Those attributes and 'date_time' attributes were not considered while the training set was fitting into machine learning model.

First of all, correlation of target attribute with rest of the attributes was checked before training any 'Linear regression' or 'Logistic regression' model. The absence of any correlation implies that, none of the regression techniques will be useful here.

Table 2: correlation check

Field name	Correlation coefficient
site_name	-0.022408
posa_continent	0.014938
user_location_country	-0.010477
user_location_region	0.007453
user_location_city	0.000831
orig_destination_distance	0.007260
user_id	0.001052
is_mobile	0.008412
is_package	0.038733
channel	0.000707
srch_adults_cnt	0.012309
srch_children_cnt	0.016261
srch_rm_cnt	-0.005954
srch_destination_id	-0.011712

srch_destination_type_id	-0.032850
is_booking	-0.021548
cnt	0.002944
hotel_continent	-0.013963
hotel_country	-0.024289
hotel_market	0.034205

So, Decision Tree is used for this purpose. The model doesn't give a good accuracy (0.12). Therefore, other metrics have been explored. After that, 'Support vector machine' classifier was trained. The evaluation metrics for both classifiers are given below. Attempts were taken to train using Naïve Bayes. But due to memory shortage of RAM, the process was terminated before it ends.

Table 3: Evaluation metric for classifier used

Evaluation Metric	Decision Tree	Support Vector Machine
Accuracy	0.12	0.036
Precision	0.1089	0.008
F1 Score	0.1112	0.008
Recall	0.1202	0.036

5. Summary and future steps:

Couple of observations are made during this preliminary data analysis phase. They are summarized below:

Down-sampling the data:

- The training set itself has more than 37 million rows and during preliminary analysis only 1% of the data was used. This could be a reason behind the failure of machine learning models. Besides, there are over 1 million unique users in the given dataset. Rather than randomly sampling the training and testing set, a different approach can be taken to preserve the full data of each user. A sample data set can be taken from the given data set selecting a certain number of users (user set) randomly. Then only picking the rows from the given dataset where that user_id is in random user set.
- Once the sample dataset is picked, it can be split into training and testing set.

Adding new feature:

- Among the 24 fields in the training set, the first field 'date_time' is an important attribute as it captures the information about the user. However, preliminary analysis this data fields was not used. Extracting the day of the week, day, month and year from this field will help to train the model in a better way.
- The duration of stay can be another useful feature while training model. This can be calculated from the difference of check out and check-in date.

Improve model:

- The machine learning models used during preliminary analysis did not give a good prediction. Multiple reasons might be responsible for this. One of them could be, presence of too many cluster. There are 100 clusters present in the training set. If only most popular cluster can be considered during training model, it could give us a better prediction.

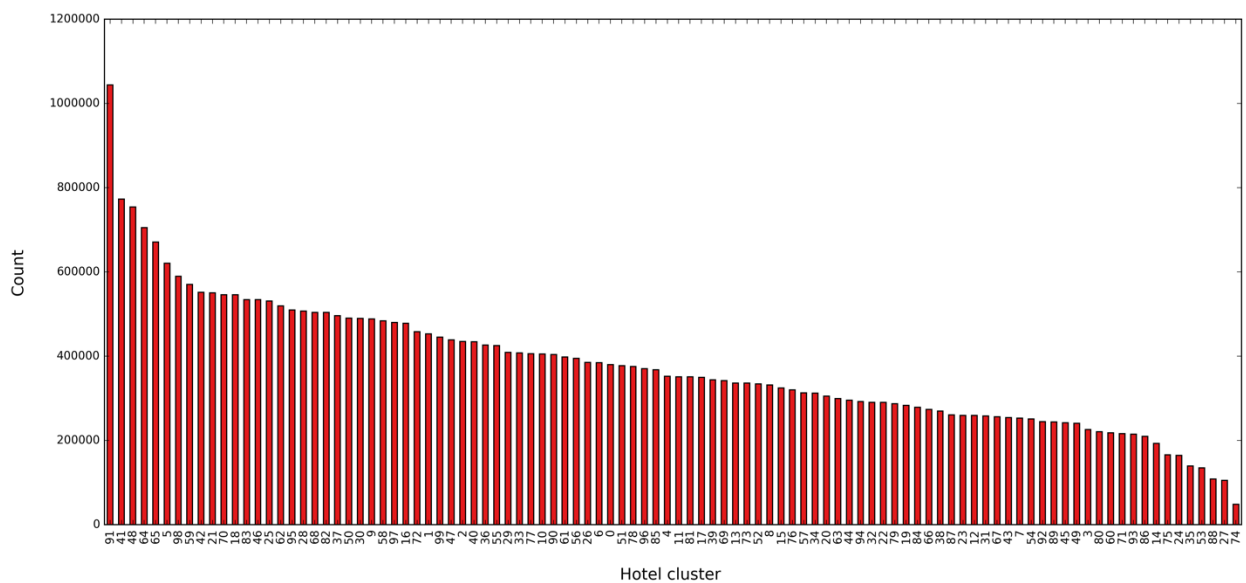


Figure 7: Frequency of hotel cluster

- Taking the ten most popular hotel clusters and turing them into binary classification problem might be helpful in better prediction.