

Midterm Project Report

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First and Home



Most professional football fans do not choose to align with a specific team when they first become interested in the sport. Instead, they are encouraged from a very young age--either by their parents, their friends, or their communities--to value one team above all others. Rather than being a conscious decision, the formation of team allegiance tends to be a socially guided process, and that socialization recurs throughout the fan's engagement with their team. Heere and James have noted, "Team identity may be caused by the symbolic power of sport teams to represent an associated group identity, such as university, work, gender, or nationality, among others....It is important to acknowledge that identification with a sport team is driven through the same underlying constructs as identification with any other group, a notion common to

social psychology.” (4) Supporters of the Green Bay Packers and Buffalo Bills, for example, are notorious for congregating for hours in the parking lot before a game in below freezing conditions simply to drink beer with one another. This act of ‘tailgating’ is only tangentially related to the competition itself--it is essentially a pretense to spend time with friends. Football fans are also particularly willing to don costumes or body paint in support of their teams, as one can see in the example above. All of these behaviors are methods of group identification, which is a vital component of fandom. Many researchers have demonstrated a strong proclivity for fans to treat supporters of their own team as ingroup members, and fans of opposing teams as outgroup members, “A number of researchers have reported fan behavior consistent with those exhibited by other groups. Sport fans have been shown to categorize themselves and others as ingroups and outgroups (Voci, 2006). Sport fans strive for a positive social identity, and attempt to avoid a negative identity. When the ingroup is threatened, sport fans derogate outgroups to protect their self-esteem (Branscombe & Wann, 1994; End, 2001), and show elevated ingroup favoritism (Dietz-Uhler & Murrell, 1999; Levine et al., 2005; Markman & Hirt, 2002; Wann & Dolan, 1994). This research suggests that sport fans view themselves and other fans of the same sport team as sharing an important group identity.” (Branscombe, 178).

It is important to note that these behavioral trends cannot be universally applied. Academics have suggested that team identification is more pronounced in cultures where individualism is more highly valued than collectivism. Since collective societies raise individuals to identify with familial and societal units, group identity is already well entrenched from a very young age, “The “we” group or the ingroup that constitutes the core of collectivism (Brewer & Chen, 2007) refers to an extended family rather than a sports fans’ community. Therefore, people in a collectivistic society meet their social needs by integrating into their family. In contrast, people with an individualistic cultural value tend to initiate behaviors independently of others (Roth,

1995; Steenkamp, Hofstede, & Wedel, 1999) and are more likely to identify with a sport team to meet their social needs. In an individualistic society, sport fandom may mobilize quasi intimate relationships between individuals.” (Gau, 589) This may be why American football--a sport that has not experienced much growth in popularity beyond the United States--exhibits particularly strong examples of group identity, compared to other sports.

Sociologists have also measured fan loyalty in population migration, and have discovered that one’s connection remains quite strong, even when an individual experiences lifestyle or community changes, “Sport may serve as one of the cultural markers linking migrants to their places of origin and may be evidence of sentimental attachment regardless of whether the move is domestic or international.” (Tainsky, 811) Because of this, moving to a different city is unlikely to change one’s allegiances. Tainsky et al. discovered that “individuals who previously resided in a market were more likely to tune into a telecast featuring a team representing that city.” (811) These individuals often yearn for some kind of group identification that can reconnect them with their former communities, and team affiliation has proven itself to be an effective vehicle.

Therefore, a great need exists for this population segment to discover outposts of sympathy, where they can rejoin their former ranks and celebrate their team in the company of ingroup members. It is especially important for those who reside in metropolitan areas that are comprised primarily of outgroup populations. To serve this need, we want to develop a web app that can help expatriated fans to locate directions and reviews of public meeting places--generally bars--where they can watch their team’s games in the company of like-minded individuals.

Problem space: how to solve this?

The internet and the technologies it facilitates provide a natural conductor for accomplishing this. Naturally, fan socialization has spilled over to the internet and its many social media outlets. In the wake of the New Orleans Saints' Superbowl victory, YouTube became flooded with clips of packed barrooms exploding in hugs, high fives, and communal celebration. Forums on sites such as ESPN and nfl.com are notorious for generating extended discussions on team performance, the merit of individuals who comprise that team, and the relative strengths and weaknesses of the team's opponents. Twitter feeds and Facebook updates are often rife with promotional chants and boasts of future exploits on game days.

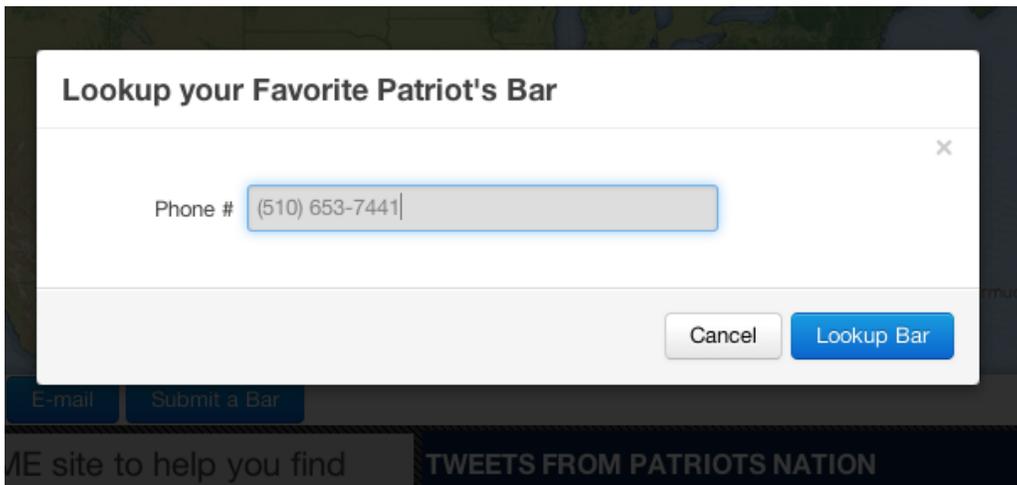
Our problem can be broken down into three modules: content generation, data visualization, and social media interaction.

1. **Content Generation**

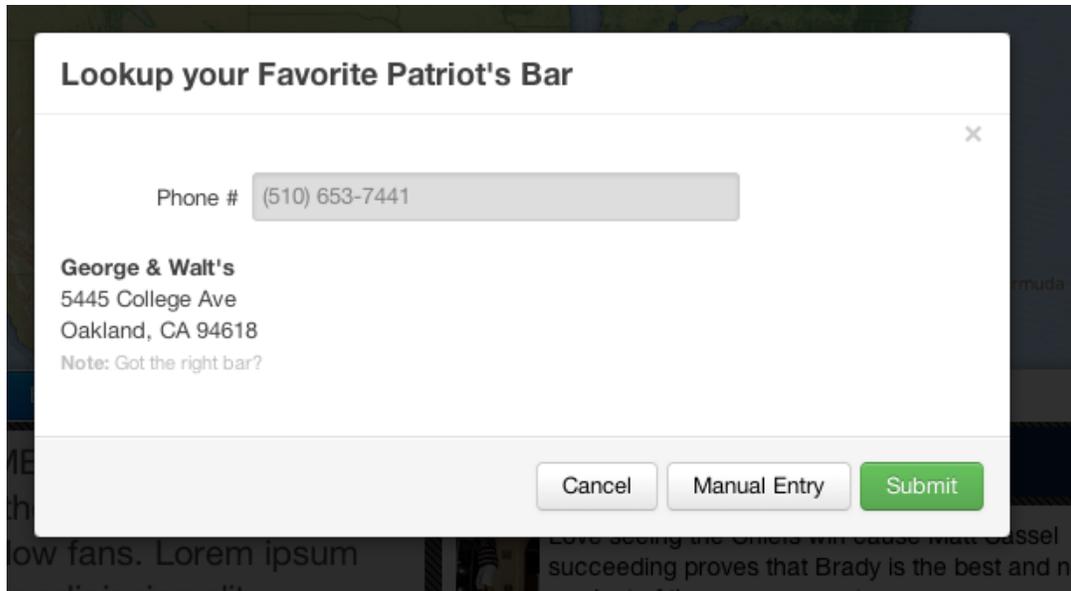
The main offering this application provides is the location of sports bar where fans of a certain team can congregate outside of their hometown. To be an effective social media tool First and Home must present users with the location of bars in most major cities for every sports team they may be interested in. As a developer team of three, we were able to generate a small set of data to begin with, but looked for a more scalable social media based solution to this problem. First and Home will implement a crowdsourcing strategy for content generation. The premise is that fans themselves know which places are best to congregate at, and it would be extremely difficult to locate and add every possible location to our database manually. By crowdsourcing this information, First and Home lets users across the country submit a bar they like to watch games at. Other users will then see this bar on the map and attend them to enjoy the game with friendly fans.

To ensure quality of and standardization of submissions we utilize the Yelp API. Yelp is

a social networking, user review, and local search web site, it has become the premier service for finding and rating local businesses. First and Home users will be able to hit the “Submit a Bar” button on the website and simply use a bar’s phone number to search the Yelp database. By accessing the Yelp database, First and Home gets a standardized set of data about each location, including its current address, operating hours, and recent reviews, as well as providing an easy to use interface that only asks the user for a phone number, rather than the entire set of information about their favorite bars.

A screenshot of a web application interface. At the top, there is a dark header with a map background. Below the header is a white modal window with the title "Lookup your Favorite Patriot's Bar" and a close button (X) in the top right corner. Inside the modal, there is a text input field labeled "Phone #" containing the number "(510) 653-7441". Below the input field are two buttons: a "Cancel" button and a blue "Lookup Bar" button. Below the modal, there is a dark footer with navigation links "E-mail" and "Submit a Bar", and a section titled "TWEETS FROM PATRIOTS NATION".

The user enters a phone number to look up the bar they would like to add to First and Home



First and Home queries the Yelp API, locating a bar named George & Walt's

Once a bar has been located through the Yelp API and submitted by the user, it is added to a hosted MySQL database. The database consists of three tables *bar*, *team*, and *teamBar*.

The *bar* table consists of a unique id, the bar address, phone number, gps coordinates, yelp id and yelp url. The *team* table consists of a unique id, the team name, the league the team plays in, and a url to the logo for team-specific page customization, the *teamBar* table implements the many to many relationship between a team and a bar, one bar can be the gathering place for many teams and each team will have fans at many bars, therefore the *teamBar* table consists of composite keys, one being a bar unique id and the other being a team unique id which creates a unique pair for every First and Home location.

Lastly to ensure a quality experience for First and Home users at bars they find on the service, a crowdsourced rating system will be implemented. Much like the vote up and down at digg.com, each bar will have its own "First and Home Score" where users will weigh on how legitimate, fun, and social each bar really is.

2. **Data Visualization**

We are using state-of-the-art information visualization tools and techniques to showcase the content captured in our database. As each piece of content - each individual bar - represents a physical entity, we decided to use interactive maps to showcase the content. This allows users to easily search for and navigate to bars near their physical location.

We determined that we needed a visualization platform with several key characteristics:

- power and speed to quickly display hundreds if not thousands of data points;
- a high degree of interactivity;
- a low price point (free being ideal) and few to no restrictions on use;
- extensive customization options to allow us to create a custom look and feel for First and Home; and
- interoperability with the database housing our content.

After evaluating several offerings including Google Maps, IBM's Many Eyes, Visual.ly, and others, we decided to use TileMill from MapBox. In addition to meeting our requirements, TileMill's ease of use allowed us to quickly prototype our solution.

Customization options are available with just a few lines of CSS-like code and the maps can be used online in a self or paid hosted environment as well as offline on mobile devices. Completed maps perform at a level equivalent to or better than Google Maps, which we feel is a critical comparison point for savvy Internet users.

3. **Social Media Interaction**

In addition to registering our application with the Twitter and Facebook APIs, we have also integrated a Twitter feed into the site. A simple Javascript function makes a JSON call to Twitter for public tweets referencing the team name. We use the callback to populate thumbnail images and the tweets themselves. We also wrote a series of regular

expressions to make the URLs live. This feature provides an outlet for fans to engage in friendly trash talk, promote their favorite players, and engage in a national level discourse with their ingroup.

Progress

We have a rough prototype developed and deployed to the following URL: <http://groups.ischool.berkeley.edu/fanFinder/Fan-Finder/current/>. The prototype is set up to only return results for the New England Patriots. While some of the UI still needs to be refined, we have the basic structure in place for the final phase of the application. The map at the top portion of the page allows users to find Patriots-friendly bars near their location. A Twitter feed below the map provides realtime updates of fan chatter and smack talk. Buttons that connect to popular social media sites are also included below the map, so a user can participate in the discussion.

For the final app, we plan to have approximately eleven teams represented across the top 34 metropolitan areas in the United States. We compiled our list based upon several criteria, including: team popularity, fan dispersion, and fan fervency.

Teams

Chicago Bears

Dallas Cowboys

Green Bay Packers

New England Patriots

New Orleans Saints

New York Giants

New York Jets

Philadelphia Eagles

Pittsburgh Steelers

San Diego Chargers

Washington Redskins

Items to be Completed

We still need to develop platforms for the ten other teams on our list. We plan to create subdomains for each that would render with the team name (e.g. <http://patriots.firstandhome.com>). Providing a direct URL will make our service easy and simple to use.

A fair amount of interface work still needs to be done. Specifically:

- The pop ups that currently appear with bar information could be further stylized to represent the First and Home brand;
- The header as it exists now is not very alluring or particularly well suited for a mobile application.
- As we add additional teams, we plan to develop “skins” for the site that mimic the color scheme of the selected team and, if possible, include the team’s logo in the aesthetic (although there may be unfortunate legal implications for doing that); and
- We need to think of a good use for the space currently occupied by the “Lorem Ipsum” text.

We also plan to implement a voting mechanism that will allow users to give a simple thumbs up/ thumbs-down evaluation of each of the featured bars. We have identified a custom library that would be perfect for this.

Finally, we need to build out a landing page for first time users that will explain the purpose of

the site and direct them to the team of their choice.allow them to their favorite team.

Problems faced

Branding

The initial working title for our application was *Fan Finder*, but when we discovered that the corresponding URL was unavailable, it forced us to rethink our naming strategy. The three of us were intent upon finding a product name that was marketable, yet did not rely upon fake words or dropped vowels--trends that, while they may be popular now, could eventually cause our product to sound dated or contrived in the future. After many suggestions and brainstorming sessions, we finally settled upon the title *First and Home*. This name connotes the application's intent to connect the user with a community that feels like home in a remote setting. It is also referential to the game of football itself--the phrase "first and home" is a play on the convention for marking downs and their distances.

Competition

As we researched this concept, we found that several other groups have attempted to implement this concept online. We found that the competitive offerings currently available on the market are inferior for a number of reasons, including the following:

- Competitor sites generally feature sparse, outdated, or poor quality content;
- Competitor sites are often loaded down with excess content and visual decoration that distracts from the central goal of the site;
- Competitor sites do not tap into popular external content databases for content such as bar ratings and reviews;
- Competitor sites do not offer elegant or useful social media integration; and
- Competitor sites are not optimized for mobile phones.

Though we are not the first to implement this concept, we are confident that our offering will be

of sufficient quality as to differentiate our offering from the others.

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Annex 1 - Timeline of Remaining Activities

We intend to work from an accelerated timeline so that we can capitalize on interest related to the NFL season currently underway.

Date	Activity/Milestone
November 1	Submit Mid-Term Report
November 4	Complete UI for all pages and theme for New England Patriots page
November 11	Test and launch Patriots team page
November 18	Complete marketing push for Patriots team Test and launch 3-5 more team pages
November 26	Complete marketing push for all team pages Gather feedback on site
December 2	Implement improvements and bug fixes as requested by users

Database Structure

bar

Column	Type	Null	Default	Comments
<u>bar_id</u>	int(11)	No		
bar_name	varchar(40)	No		
bar_address1	varchar(40)	Yes	NULL	
bar_address2	varchar(40)	Yes	NULL	
bar_address3	varchar(40)	Yes	NULL	
bar_city	varchar(40)	Yes	NULL	
bar_state	varchar(40)	Yes	NULL	
bar_state_code	varchar(2)	Yes	NULL	
bar_zip	varchar(5)	Yes	NULL	
bar_phone	varchar(10)	Yes	NULL	
bar_latitude	float	Yes	NULL	
bar_longitude	float	Yes	NULL	
bar_yelp_id	varchar(20)	Yes	NULL	
bar_yelp_mobile_url	varchar(100)	Yes	NULL	
bar_yelp_photo_url	varchar(100)	Yes	NULL	
bar_yelp_photo_url_small	varchar(100)	Yes	NULL	

bar_yelp_url	varchar(100)	Yes	NULL	
bar_approved	tinyint(1)	Yes	NULL	

team

Column	Type	Null	Default	Comments
<u>team_id</u>	int(11)	No		
team_loc_name	varchar(20)	No		
team_mascot_name	varchar(20)	No		
team_short_name	varchar(40)	Yes	NULL	
team_league	varchar(10)	No		
team_logo_url	varchar(40)	Yes	NULL	
team_tags	varchar(200)	Yes	NULL	

teamBar

Column	Type	Null	Default	Comments
teamBar_bar_id	int(11)	Yes	NULL	
teamBar_team_id	int(11)	Yes	NULL	