

CLICKTHECITY.COM CASE STUDY: EXAMINING E-YELLOW PAGES

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ABSTRACT

As everything becomes self-service nowadays, individuals and business entities have still found significant use of the yellow pages whether in the printed form or in the virtual form. The yellow pages allow an individual to freely select among many choices what best suits his unique needs or requirements.

This essay looks into the e-yellow pages as another face of a web portal. While web portals are originally conceived to be used in an enterprise, its major components are also used in the e-yellow pages. This paper will try to dissect the e-yellow pages in terms of web portal components, use the Tridion Solutions content management elements of a web portal in examining what may be considered as the best and longest running online entertainment and business directory in the Philippines, the Clickthecity.com. As Clickthecity is made a material in review, both strengths and weaknesses of this e-yellow pages will also be determined. Hopefully, this case study will also serve as a reference material for those who intend to develop an e-yellow pages or those who intend to improve their own yellow pages.

Index Terms— clickthecity, web portals, e-yellow pages, content management in portals, best practices in B2C portals

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Thomas Friedman, "The world is flat". [1] The advent of technology in the 21st century and the progress of globalization have paved way to the "leveling of the playing field" [2] and all players, big and small can compete and participate in the market space.

The idea has some validity with the maturity of technology and the leverage the web has offered to all business players and the consumers alike. Interacting, communicating, negotiating, engaging, meeting and purchasing are but a few of the activities that can be done in the web regardless whether the player is a huge conglomerate or just a window-shopper.

E-commerce, e-business, e-services and all nouns where the big E can be applied has also become the hype. And this

hype is not just creating a vision of an e-world but a realization of enabling E in our lives make a big difference.

This essay intends to share a viewpoint of how e-yellow pages can succeed in the playing field and what are the minimum components necessary in developing e-yellow pages. This essay will cite and use the Clickthecity.com, a long established B2C web portal in the Philippines and how this web portal has continuously served its customers.

2. THE YELLOW PAGES AND THE WEB PORTAL

Yellow pages are typically pictured as thick, bind listing of business and residential telephone numbers of individual and other private entities in a particular location.

Following the definition of Muamat Business Directory [3] yellow pages have the following characteristics:

- Yellow pages are fully searchable.
- Whether you are a small business holder, or a big company owner, you can publish your complete business or company profile, your buying leads or selling leads.
- A trader can easily trade with other business partners or business persons by using and searching yellow pages.
- A Buyer and seller can easily do business by looking into yellow pages. [4]

As mentioned earlier, there is a move to make all the possible nouns into a big E, meaning making this things electronic and possibly moving or extending this to the web. And the yellow pages are no exemption. The concept of the e-yellow pages has been toyed by researchers and developers as well.

A web portal is defined by the UITS of Indiana University as a hub that "provides a single point of access to a variety of content and core services and ideally offers a single sign-on point. It also gives a managed online experience, and can be particularly helpful as a start and return point for those new to the web." [5]

Another relevant definition is by Liferay—"A portal is a web-based gateway for users to locate relevant content and use the applications they commonly need to be productive. It offers compelling benefits to today's enterprises: reduced

operational costs, improved customer satisfaction, and streamlined business processes.”[6]

In the Philippines, a pioneer in the B2C portal is the clickthecity.com. Clickthecity is an e-yellow pages that provide a rich list of various business listings including hotels and resorts, bars and restaurants, shops and services. [7] It also provides an almost real-time information on local entertainment such as movies, travels, theatre shows, nightly music live shows, concerts, exhibits and others.

The contents of clickthecity are accessible in multiple platforms, i.e. using PC browsers, mobile computing protocols—like the wireless application protocol (WAP), short messaging services (thru SMSs) and other handheld devices. [8] It also provides city guide information, lifestyle trivia and contents and linkages with other major portals, mobile telecoms companies and internet service providers (ISPs) across the archipelago.

3. THE BASIC PORTAL COMPONENTS AND RELEVANT ELEMENTS

Microsoft’s Sharepoint portal components for an enterprise portal sites will commonly constitute functions such as *search, business processes, content management and business intelligence*. The portal will constitute *portal site templates, site definitions, social networking, privacy controls, site and document roll-ups, colleagues and memberships and single sign-ons*. [9] The portal design allows the users with the appropriate skills to work and collaborate.

Another example of an enterprise portal architecture will include the following—*business directory, search engine, web server, publishing facility, import/export interfaces, meta data crawlers, and subscription facility*. It may include *databases for decision processing, collaboration and other external systems*. [10]

Any enterprise portal depends on the strong integration of the front-end systems and the back office systems particularly if the enterprise is running e-commerce applications. [11] A usual know-how on understanding development of IT systems will tell us that this is not a new idea but reinforcement of this idea is necessary.

3.1. Summary of Portal Components and Features

Components	Features
Portal server	Search/search engine
Web server	Business directory
Application server	Content management
Business intelligence	Publishing facility

Databases	Privacy controls
	Social networking
	Single sign-ons
	Site and document roll-ups
	Personalisation

All the above mentioned features are characterized by Clickthecity.com. As of the components, the paper is currently assuming that Clickthecity possesses all these components being an established e-business in the country. Both components and features are considered the minimum requirements of an e-yellow pages.

A critical and important element of a portal is content management. Content management is a critical task. This paper shares the belief that there is a need to systematically contribute, manage and deliver content in a secure and personalized way. [12]

The following are some of the recommended content management features adopted from Tridion Solutions [13], a leading enterprise portal solution developer.

1. Users should also find it easy to contribute content with no re-training or re-education. Updating of content should also be made convenient. One guarantee of success is when there is *fresh, up-to-date web content*.
2. Three important smart web functions will be *intelligent search, related content navigation and personalization of content and layout*.
3. There are three typical CMS users—*the casual contributor, the authors and editors, and the power user*. The user interface should one way or the other an adaptation for each type of user. Although it’s more convenient to most users to adapt to an interface they have been accustomed to like the Internet Explorer or Mozilla browser, it is not guaranteed that any new interface will be difficult to use.
4. The portal should also have the ability to accommodate different forms of content and the different metadata that goes with it.
5. The lifecycle of the CMS should be managed by the portal such as:
 - a. Role-based security/collaboration
 - b. Content versioning and roll back (similar in the case of MS Sharepoint)
 - c. Library services
 - d. Workflow
 - e. Globalization and localization
 - f. Web site and publication management[14]

6. "It has been touted that personalization is the killer application in online business." [15]
7. following components~visitor profile management, meta data management, and matching visitor profiles with the right content (personalisation rule).

4. CLICKTHECITY IN REVIEW

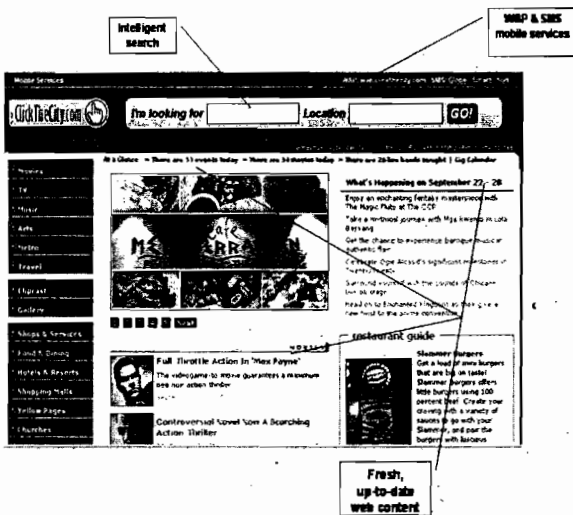


Figure 1 – The main page of clickthecity.com

1. Clickthecity may be characterized as having dynamic content~fresh, up-to-date and almost real-time information are found in the main page. Examples are the Sep 22-29 events and the updated movie listings that allow navigation to the related movie websites. (Refer to Figure 1)
2. On top of the header bar lists all the mobile services available~Globe, Smart and Sun and the enablement of WAP services. (Refer to Figure 1)

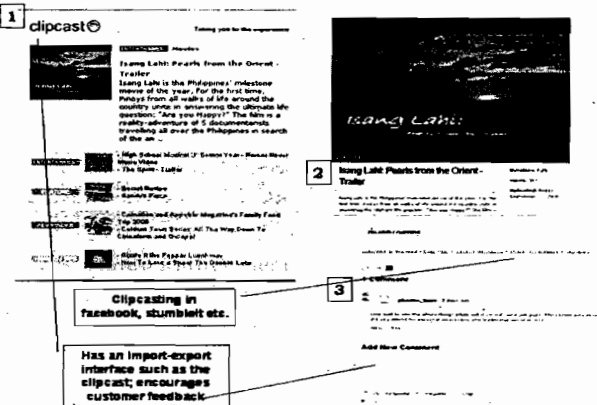


Figure 2 – The clipcast(1) page is found at the bottom of the main page of Clickthecity.

Personalisation of content delivery have the

3. Featured restaurant in slow moving splash screens are attuned with the concept of the yellow pages where there are featured businesses highlighted in page ad boxes. Only on this occasion, the restaurants are animated and exhibit delectable images.
4. Videos can be clipcasted in anybody's personal social networking account like Facebook, delicious, diggit and others. Clipcast is a tool that allows any web surfer to clip the information and have it in her own clipcast. Clipcast is a web concept activity derived from clipmarks.com [16] (Refer to Figure 2)

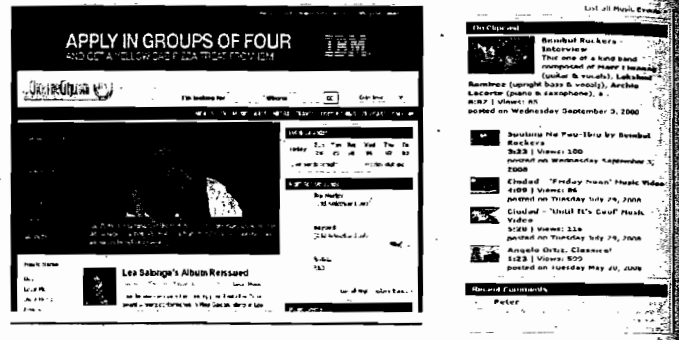


Figure 2.2 – The Music section with clipcast options

On top, the Music section allows some music clipcast for the site customers. The page also provides access to various types of music and the current music events in the metropolitan area.

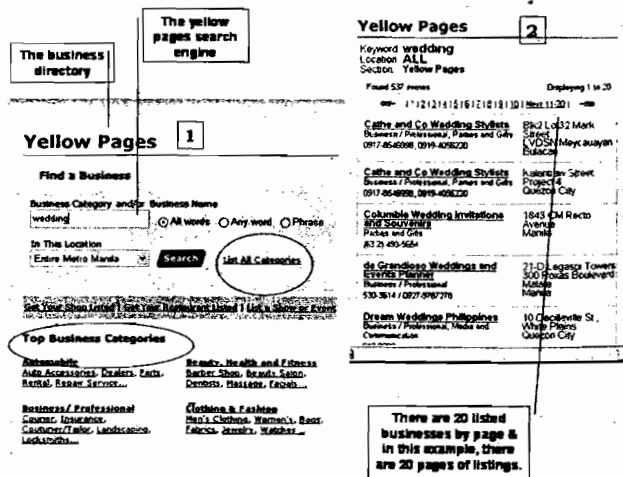


Figure 3 – The Yellow Pages or the Business Directory of Clickthecity.

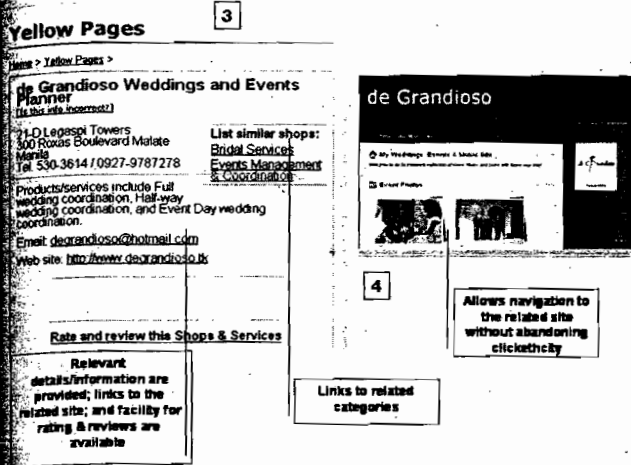


Figure 4 – detailed page of a selected business contact from the yellow pages and the link to the business contact site.

A major capability of the Clickthecity is its rich, populated business directory annotated with useful metadata such as ratings, customer feedback and finely selected categories and subcategories. Each page contains 20 listings of business establishments and a category will have 10 to 20 or over 20 pages. (Refer to Figure 3)

Searching through the smart search facility and enhanced with the use of ~all words, any word and phrase for enhanced information filtering has been very helpful. The web user or customer can indulge himself with the listing of all the categories or the top business categories. (Refer to Figure 3)

There is great ease of use in the navigation of related content. From the page that allows inputting of a business category to the listing of the business names and information, getting the details of a desired business establishment to its own website, navigation flows quickly and smoothly. (Refer to Figure 4)

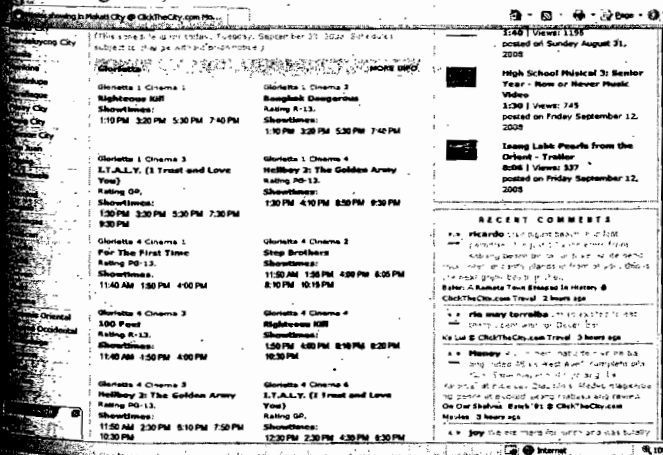


Figure 5 – The Movie page listing

Aside from the business directory, the Entertainment facility of Clickthecity has updated, reliable information on available movies, schedules and the theatres showing

these movies. (Refer to Figure 5) The WAP facility allows even phone subscribers on the move to check the movie flick they want to see.

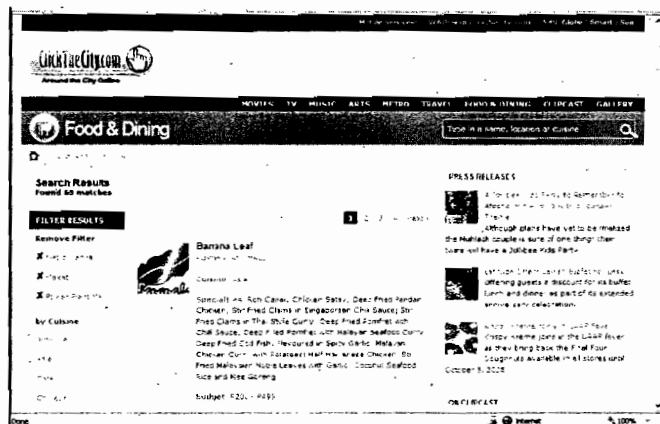


Figure 6 – Restaurant Listings With Customer Reviews

9. Solicitation of customer feedback, reviews or opinions are highly encouraged in almost all the pages of Clickthecity. It is like Clickthecity really takes time to engage and communicate with its site customers.

The restaurant listings, similar to the yellow pages have customer insights on their dining experiences. Positive or negative, this page (refer to Figure 6) is able to support dining preferences and requirements of anybody who would browse this e-yellow pages.

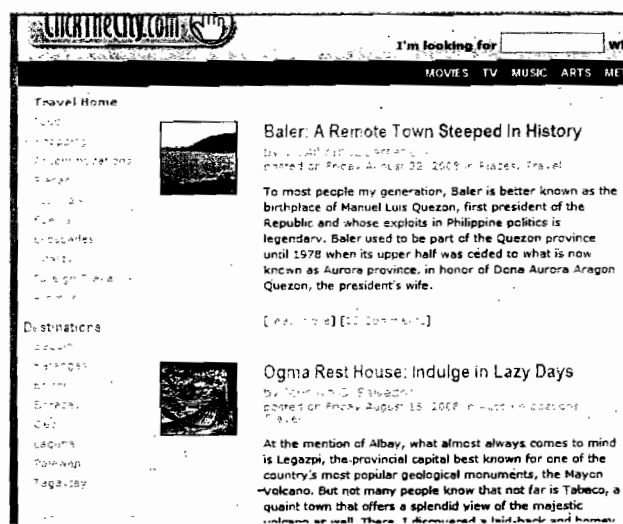


Figure 7- The Travel Blog

10. The travel blog is a very useful, practical way of interacting with the site customers. (Refer to Figure 7) While earlier the social network is a recommended feature in a portal, the travel blog is able to do justice in the Clickthecity. Site customers who travel near or far, share various interesting experiences and opinions of different

places such as Pattaya, Hanoi or the local tourist destinations such as Boracay, Palawan, Baguio or other undiscovered places. Topics vary from food, dining, places to see, things to do, souvenir items and so many more. Interaction through the comments section are very moving. *Clickthecity enhanced the service by allowing index searching within the content.*

11. Personalisation can be observed in the themed pages of Clickthecity. The color and the selected images set the ambience in the different pages (refer to Figures 6 and 7). Such personalization allows catering to the various types of site customers whether *the casual contributor, the authors and editors, and the power user.* The authors and editors may give their reviews in the fine dining section, casual contributors may give their endorsements in the business directory reviews and finally, the power user can just post a comment in any of the multimedia available, comment on the travel blog.



Figure 9 – The Categories/The Defined Major User Demographics

12. Site usage policies, disclaimers and protection of the rights of the site owners, site contributors as well as site customers are in place.

13. On the left (Refer to Figure 9) is listed the different categories of the business directories. The last section may have not direct impact to the site customers and this list is not a regular part of the yellow pages—horoscope; today in history; celebrity birthdays; quote of the day and the joke of the day, but these items have been constantly offered by Clickthecity even in 1999 when it first started to operate and site customers eventually became accustomed to these.

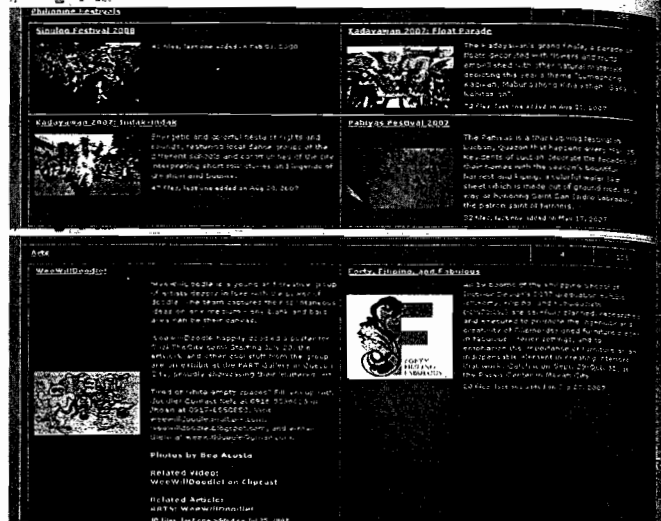


Figure 10 – The Gallery section

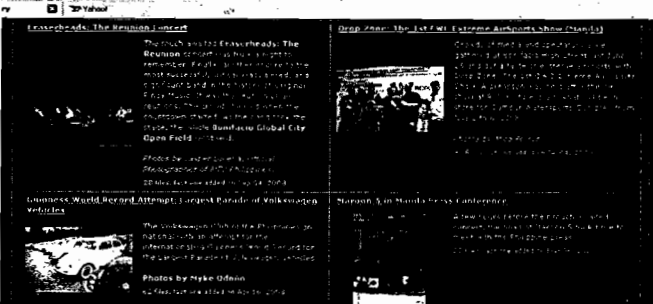
12. The latest and popular events ranging from music events shopping, fashion, dining and even the arts always find place in the Gallery section. This section facilitates wide array of multimedia from the past to the latest events. Clickthecity also allows event information contributions from the site patrons.

5. PROFILE OF THE YELLOW PAGES USERS

Davis in his work identified the major users of the printed yellow pages and the internet yellow pages. [17]

“The printed directory users are more likely to be both men and women who are younger (51% are younger than age 50); are college educated (63% have some level of college education); and have an annual household income of \$60,000 (44% earn more than \$60,000/year). The demographics of Internet yellow pages users are very similar to the demographics of print directory users. Internet yellow pages users are more likely than the population as a whole to be aged 25 to 49; college educated; and in households with an annual income of \$60,000 or more. [18]

While these are the US figures, local demographics are not available to say that the pattern in the Philippines will be the same. But the mere availability of a dynamic online media such as the Clickthecity presupposes that this new media actually provides more choices and options for the consuming public. Site users can have active participation in the selection or just pick the minimum information she needs from the site or totally immerse herself to empower the yellow pages. Such proposition actually follows uses and gratification theory [19] that suggests that even how powerful the media is, in the case of a very dynamic content-rich e-yellow pages, particularly Clickthecity, site users still have that free will to decide on what content, what media or what form of interaction will suit their needs or will have suitable effect on them.



6. ROOMS FOR IMPROVEMENT

While the site encourages feedback and insights coming from its site users, the site is unable to exhibit the real demographics of the visitors and respondents of the site. A good profiling management system will further support the site not only in improving the services but even identifying interaction opportunities among its site users.

The CMS lifecycle of the site in review was not done. This will require inputs and coordination from the management of Clickthecity.

Presently, English is the main language used in the site. The use of other local dialects such as Bicolano, Hiligaynon, Ilocano or Maranao and other foreign languages like Nihonggo, Korean, Mandarin or Spanish will allow more dynamism of the site.

7. CONCLUSION

While the Tridion content management model gives high regard for intelligent search, personalization and related content navigation, this paper considers these things as secondary.

Clickthecity's regularly fresh, up-to-date information about its business listings—from basic information and details to the related events and experiences makes it as fundamentally a true e-yellow pages. It goes beyond being just fully searchable. Such characteristic which is not present in the printed yellow pages allows it to become highly reliable. Thus, any e-yellow pages should prioritize and warrant freshness, reliable and updated information.

Tridion has also recommended that the portal should be able to accommodate different forms of media content. Clickthecity's clipcast facility enables site consumers to have a share of music, video and other events. But the real deal will be more on the empowered insights, feedback and ratings from the site users. These true testimonies in the form of comments, ratings, experiences and interactions in blogs, make the site more useful. Such empowerment also allows businesses or merchants to become transparent and true to the kind of product or service they promise.

The e-yellow pages as a vigorous web portal providing all business listings, rich multimedia content and experiences is a very proactive form of e-business and new media. As an e-business, the e-yellow pages is able to address real-time business information requirement of individuals as well as other entities. As a new media, the services it offers to site users—from basic information to testimonies and up-to-date media content about the business

in focus or the event that took place as shared by the site consumers themselves, makes this new media the next generation metamorphosis of e-yellow pages. This also means that even the printed yellow pages may adapt having features as testimonies, feedback from clients, personalization and most importantly—freshness and up-to-date information.

Review of design and architecture of Clickthecity as an e-yellow pages may be studied in depth in the next paper. And the sign-on feature as commonly recommended in an enterprise portal may be optional for the yellow pages. The online tools used to get customer feedback will suffice.

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