



Sabre launches pilot of A.I.-powered chatbot

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Pilot explores how artificial intelligence can help travel agencies serve travelers better by fulfilling their most common service and support requests with smart technology

SOUTHLAKE, Texas, Feb. 1, 2018 /PRNewswire/ -- Sabre Corporation (NASDAQ: SABR), the leading technology provider to the global travel industry, today launched a pilot program of an A.I.-powered chatbot that leverages Microsoft's Bot Framework and Microsoft Cognitive Services, a set of tools that organizations can use to add intelligent and conversational features to their applications. Sabre is initially piloting the chatbot with the travel agency Travel Services International USA (TSI) and the travelers they serve.

"We are excited to start pilot testing for the bot," said Chad Callaghan, head of the Sabre Studios incubation team. "We believe the self-service convenience the bot offers will improve travelers' ability to resolve routine support requests. At the same time, we are happy to help our travel agency customers ensure agents can focus on supporting more complex traveler requests. We will be interested to track how travelers learn about and interact with the bot."

TSI will test a white-label version of the chatbot with their corporate travelers, who will access the chatbot via Facebook Messenger to address common service and support requests related to existing flight reservations. Using the bot, travelers will be able to ask trip-related questions, make voluntary changes to existing flight reservations, request a special meal, select and pay for a seat, and request an emailed copy of an itinerary. The chatbot will divert to a live travel agent if it is unable to fulfill a request.

"We've named the TSI bot, Ella," noted Claire LeBuhn, vice president, support services at TSI USA. "Ella represents TSI's heritage of innovation and commitment to exploring new technologies and tools that can help our corporate customers and their busy employees. Travelers can access Ella via the TSI app or directly from TSI's Facebook page. Ella supports reservations originated by TSI. We are eager to understand how corporate travelers engage with Ella and the kinds of emerging conversational interfaces that she represents."

Throughout the test, Sabre and TSI will evaluate travelers' preferences for how often and when they engage the chatbot and when they are likely to divert to a live agent. The companies expect to gain a better understanding of the best way to engage travelers with chatbots and solve for some of the most common friction points associated with chatbots, such as how travelers will initially find the bot.

In developing the chatbot, Sabre is leveraging Microsoft Bot Framework and a selection of Microsoft Cognitive Services, including Language Understanding Intelligent Service (LUIS). One of the key challenges in human-computer interactions is the ability of computers to understand what people want and find relevant information that connects to their intent. Travel applications must recognize a plethora of unique terms and phrases, which adds complexity for industry applications. LUIS provides simple tools to build language models that allow any application or bot to understand commands and act accordingly.

About Sabre

Sabre Corporation is the leading technology provider to the global travel industry. Sabre's software, data, mobile and distribution solutions are used by hundreds of airlines and thousands of hotel properties to manage critical operations, including passenger and guest reservations, revenue management, flight, network and crew management. Sabre also operates a leading global travel marketplace, which processes more than US\$120 billion of global travel spend annually by connecting travel buyers and suppliers. Headquartered in Southlake, Texas, USA, Sabre serves customers in more than 160 countries around the world.

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