

What can a database browser based on MDS-Interactive look like?

The principle

MDS-Interactive is an interface technique that lets a user search in a collection of objects through a visualisation of a small set of samples from that collection.

MDS-I uses the multidimensional structure of the attributes stored for each object in presenting the samples, but the user interaction is based on experienced similarities and dissimilarities as expressed through the 2D layout. This is particularly appropriate if the judgements are subjective, based on taste, or otherwise hard to verbalize.

An in-shop chooser

The user interactions in MDS-Interactive are spatially sophisticated, but simple to operate. This makes it suitable for chooser consoles in commercial settings, using only a touch-display. Typical product collections can be wines, rental videos, holiday destinations, fabrics for furniture or wallpaper.

The interface's simplicity makes that it can be used by two people make a decision together, and that its operation can be learned quickly (possibly by peeking over someone's shoulder). In a simple consumer version, the attributes and their weights should be pre-determined by marketing research, so the similarities on the display correspond to the user's experience.

A retailer's marketing tool

On the more professional user side, MDS-Interactive can serve as a marketing research instrument for optimizing stock composition. The retail shop manager sets the attribute weights according to his customer profile. The system shows as samples the products in stock of a certain product category, e.g. shampoos. The MDS layout reveals 'holes' in his market coverage that he hasn't covered ('H') and 'hills' which are redundantly covered ('R'). By clicking on the holes, the system shows the best-fit products that his wholesaler can supply.



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