A User Study on Clarifying Comparative Questions

Motivation:
- Correct information need interpretation is difficult for ambiguous queries.
- Clarification is one of the solutions in conversational search interfaces.

Contribution:
- A user study on clarifying comparative questions.
- Questions with unclear comparison aspects:
  - “Which is better, Bali or Phuket?”
- Questions without explicit comparison objects and aspects:
  - “What is the best antibiotic?”

User Study Interface Design

Clarifying Comparison Aspects
- 15 predefined comparative questions, 7 participants.
- 76% of the participants stated they were able to find satisfactory answers.
- 23% found only partial answers: they would want more information.
- 90% of the initial vague questions were refined with suggested comparison aspects.
- Majority found clarification helpful to obtain good results.
- All enjoyed the system, however, only 15% were entirely satisfied.

Clarifying Comparison Objects and Aspects
- 10 predefined comparative questions, 7 participants.
- 71% decided to use suggested object clarification options.
- 60% used both, an object and an aspect clarification.
- 86% of the participants enjoyed the system.
- 84% stated they had found a satisfactory answer.

Conclusions
- A user study on clarifications in the scenario of vague comparative searches.
- In at least 70% of the cases, the participants decided to use clarifications to refine the initial search results.
- The majority enjoyed the experience with the system’s clarification component and found clarifications helpful for finding satisfactory answers.

Future Work:
- Develop the actual approaches that generate clarifying suggestions for comparison aspects and objects.
- Larger user study.

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