

Les Liaisons Miracles

A Look at Miracle Mile's Future Through the Interests of Its Audience

Challenges

As human mobility rises, cities tend to compete for people. To become more attractive, urban areas need to understand their community and adopt a user-centered mindset. This challenge arises especially for the developers of retail zones. They need to create new value for their visitors. Access to proper information is a problem though. Despite numerous marketing analyses, retail areas keep lacking information about their users' consumer profile - who they are, what could attract them to the area and where else they like to go.

This study focuses on the Miracle Mile shopping district in Coral Gables, Florida, a retail community, its current rivals and emerging disruptors. We explore people's interests and attitudes by analysing their social media activity.

Context

Coral Gables has long been a thriving place rich in history. Developed in 1920s, this area was one of the first planned communities in the United States with strict zoning regulations. Famous for its architectural heritage, Coral Gables was built in the Mediterranean style with inspiration from the City Beautiful Movement. The city is pedestrian friendly as its founder George Merrick wanted every business to be less than a two-block walk.

Coral Gables' population is a great ethnic and cultural mix with a Hispanic flavor - about 60% of its citizens are Latinos. The city is home to several universities, which attract young students from across the country. Over the past few years, Coral Gables has faced a real estate boom. Now the area is surrounded by upper-class neighborhoods inhabited by affluent, well-educated people.

Miracle Mile mostly consists of classy restaurants, financial and art institutions. It positions itself as a trendy and luxurious place. However Miracle Mile faces strong competition from other retail and entertainment destinations nearby. This business district also can't reach a wider audience and needs a miracle to restore itself to its former glory.

Methodology

With a mountain of data generated, social media is a free and powerful source of information. Twitter is one of the most popular social platforms in the United States. Twitter users are not equally distributed among the population, but represent a younger and more desirable audience. Most of this audience are between 18 and 34 years old.

Twitter data contains texts, images and sometimes locations which makes it an attractive source for studying a wide range of human phenomena. This work is based on 7 mln

geo-tagged tweets shared in the Greater Miami area over 12 months (March 2014 – February 2015).

A Closer Look at Miracle Mile

As people share their thoughts, we can analyse the most popular topic of a given location. The map below shows people's perception of Miracle Mile. Each color represents the most discussed issue within a proximity of a road intersection. The hatching lines indicate several themes that are equally popular. Food is the prevailing topic and completely dominates Ponce De Leon Boulevard and a dozen other locations. The area also stores routine discussions like work or the internet. Miracle Mile is not just a shopping destination. It is the place to be.

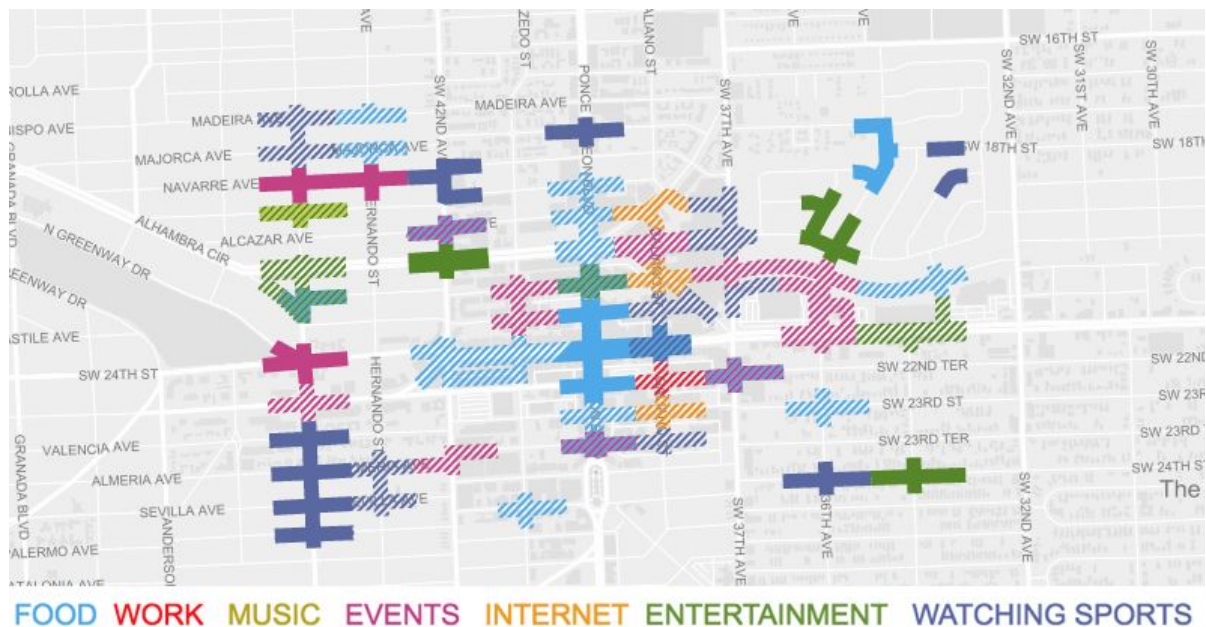


Figure 1. Discussion topics in in Coral Gables, Florida

Discussions might be different. Some people enjoy while others complain about the same thing. Dividing social media activity into positive and negative opinions is crucial for understanding the audience. We counted positive and negative emotions people experience in different venues across Miracle Mile and across Miami in general. It turned out that people feel happy about food and entertainment, while negative emotions are caused by retail and traffic.

The geography of Twitter activity reflects Miracle Mile's strong position among other retail and entertainment areas. Miracle Mile is the second most discussed place following the larger-sized Wynwood. However activity density is higher in Miracle Mile. At the same time other retail zones with a strong identity are situated nearby which puts Miracle Mile in danger.

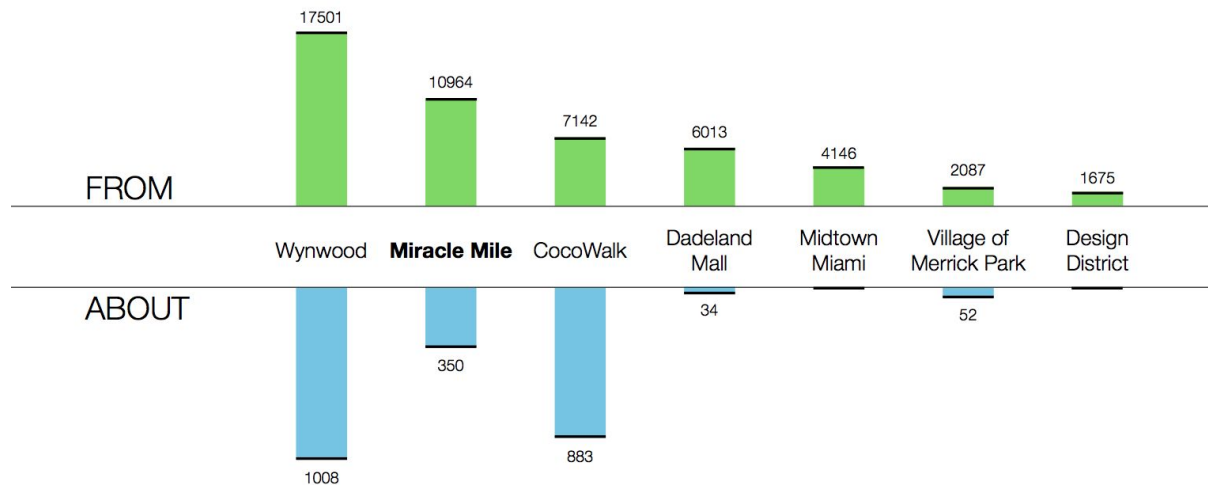


Figure 2. Twitter activity from and about main retail and entertainment areas in Coral Gables

Semantic Connections

Social media can explain how Miracle Mile fits into the city, and can identify loyal community and key competitors. Semantic analysis helps us to connect places of activity with toponyms. We discover semantic liaisons by connecting people's digital and physical presence.

All connections are classified into two main categories and each has sub-categories.

First-order connections include

- 1) **communities** talking about Miracle Mile.
- 2) places that Miracle Mile talks about. These are current **competitors**.

Second-order connections include

- 3) communities talking about competitors. This is Miracle Mile's **target (potential) audience**.
- 4) places also discussed by communities besides Miracle Mile. These are **potential competitors**.

Competitors

While being in Miracle Mile people compare, dream or share memories about other places. These are the key competitors of the district. Visitors usually discuss typical popular places, fashion, sports and parties. There is strong competition from Miami Beach venues and Downtown Miami neighborhoods like Brickell.



Figure 3. Places that Miracle Mile talks about

Community

Miracle Mile is widely discussed in the city. There is latent demand from universities as students often mention the area, but do not visit it. Also it is noteworthy that people visiting Dadeland Mall and Merrick Park like Miracle Mile more, but for some reason do not go there often.

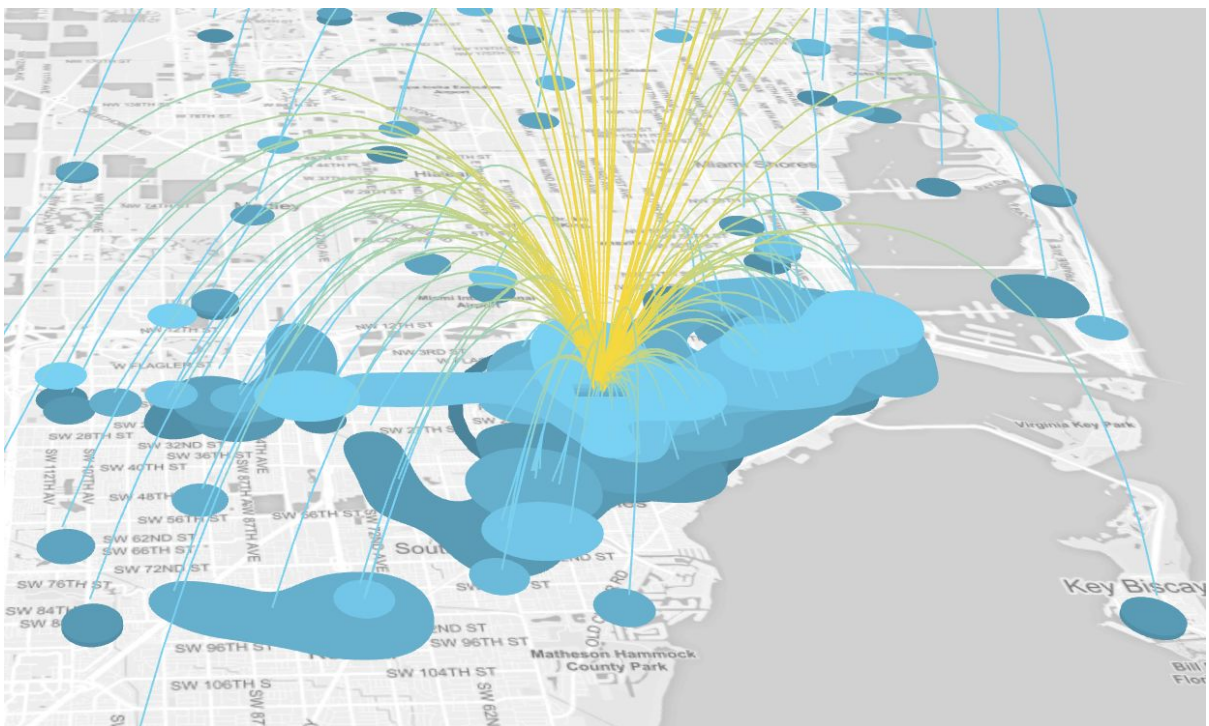


Figure 4. Communities talking about Miracle Mile

The Future of Miracle Mile

To be successful in the future, Miracle Mile needs to be one step ahead right now. Our analysis discovers potential audience, demand and competition that can emerge .

Target Audience

There are numerous social groups who avoid Miracle Mile, but are interested in competitive places. Besides universities, there is a potential demand from Miami International Airport and high-end sport facilities users. Miracle Mile has a central location close to main touristic attractions, however tourists stay away. Also the area can be promoted at horse races and golf courses as people discuss Coral Gables Country Club, Granada Gulf Course, Venetian Pool and rich residential neighborhoods.

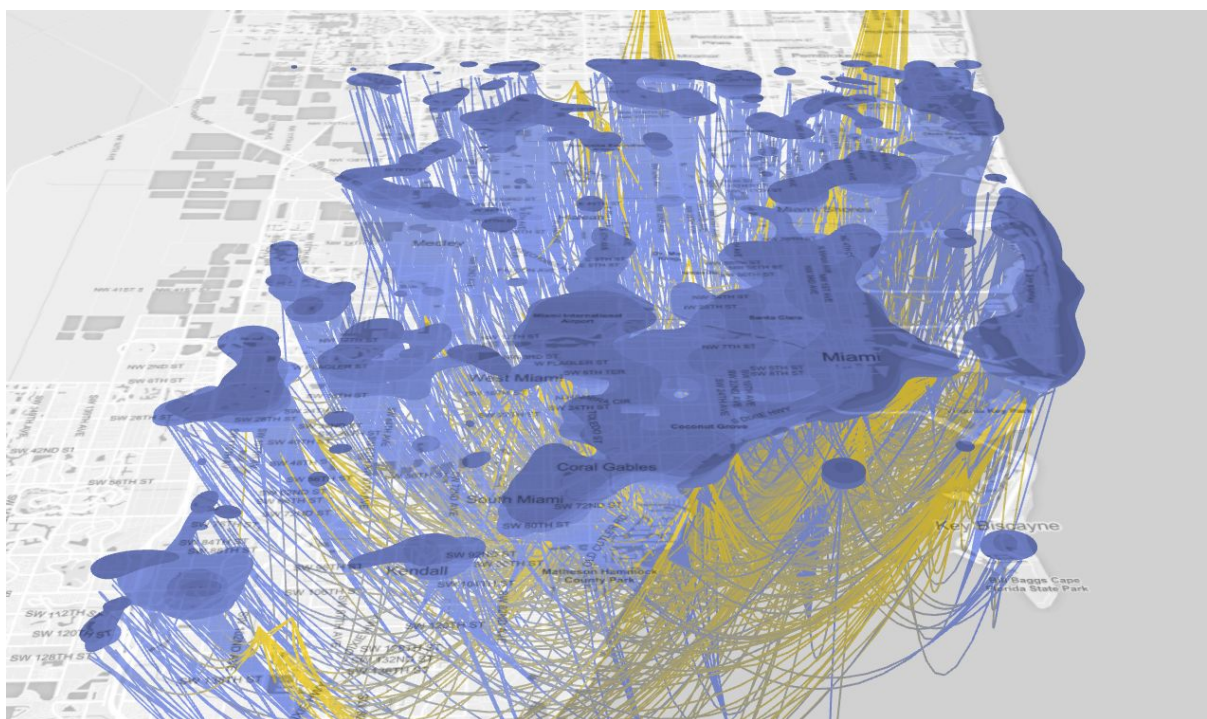


Figure 5. Communities talking about Miracle Mile's competitors

Potential Competitors

To identify potential competitors, we discover other places the Miracle Mile community is interested in. People prefer recreational zones like the Miami Seaquarium, the Port of Miami, and Hibiscus Island. They discuss numerous events hosted by other retail and entertainment areas. Even university campuses can become competitors if retail zones fail to attract students.

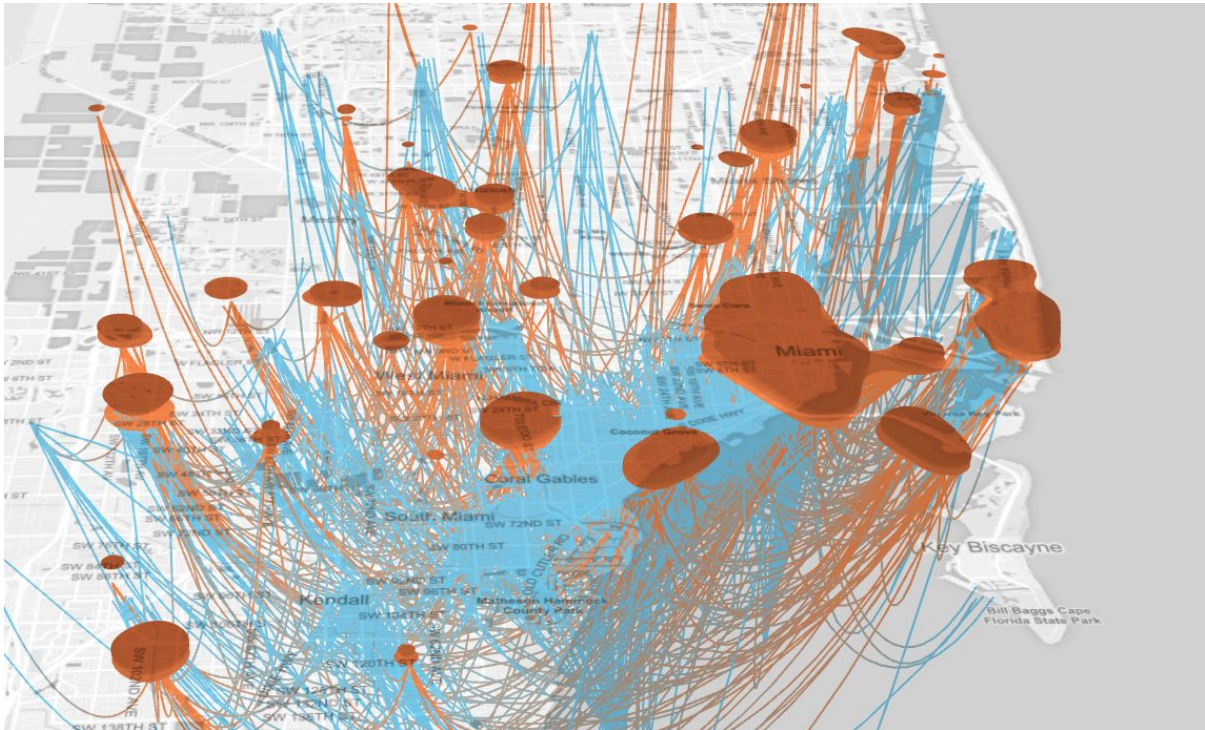


Figure 6. Places also discussed by communities besides Miracle Mile

Summary

Now Miracle Mile is more of a local phenomenon, though it has potential to become one of the top destinations in the Greater Miami area. Our analysis suggests several options to attract new visitors. One is to target new social groups like students and tourists. Another is to focus on the current affluent audience as there are people in high-end locations still ignoring Miracle Mile. Each decision will determine Miracle Mile's identity and future.

Semantic connections analysis is an effective market discovery tool. This analysis determines not only the current market area, but also the strategic direction for a business. In addition, this type of analysis is a powerful competitive tool which unveils competitors' weaknesses and strengths. Keeping this in mind, area developers can attract new visitors and make a territory a better place.

A semantic connections analysis is part of Habidatum's pre-masterplanning analytics. Our solutions also include communities and lifestyles classification, place-related sentiments, mobility analysis and space use in time. For more information visit habidatum.com