International Journal on Recent and Innovation Trends in Computing and Communication
ISSN: 2321-8169 Volume: 11 Issue: 10s
DOI: https://doi.org/10.17762/ijritcc.v11i10s.7596
Article Received: 28 May 2023 Revised: 20 July 2023 Accepted: 07 August 2023

Empowering Recommendations with NLP: Exploiting Textual Reviews for Enhanced Rating-Based Systems

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Abstract- This research paper proposes a rating-based recommender system that leverages Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques to enhance the accuracy and effectiveness of recommendations. Traditional recommender systems primarily rely on numerical ratings provided by users to make predictions. However, these ratings often lack detailed information about user preferences and suffer from sparsity and inconsistency issues. By incorporating NLP, we aim to extract valuable insights from textual reviews and improve the recommendation process. Our system utilizes sentiment analysis, topic modelling, and text embeddings to capture the implicit information in reviews and generate more personalized and context-aware recommendations. The experimental results demonstrate the superior performance of the proposed rating-based recommender system compared to conventional approaches.

Keywords- Natural language processing, sentiment analysis, word embeddings, recommender system, rating prediction, collaborative filtering

I. INTRODUCTION

Recommender systems play a crucial role in assisting users in finding relevant and personalized recommendations in various domains such as e-commerce, movie streaming, and music platforms. Traditional rating-based recommender systems rely on numerical ratings provided by users to make predictions. However, these ratings often suffer from sparsity, as users tend to rate only a fraction of the available items, and inconsistency, as the interpretation of rating values can vary among users. To address these challenges and enhance the accuracy and effectiveness of recommendations, this research paper proposes a rating-based recommender system that leverages Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques. By incorporating NLP, we aim to extract valuable insights from textual reviews provided by users, which contain rich and nuanced information about their preferences.

The objective of this research is to develop a recommendation system that combines numerical ratings with textual information to generate more personalized and context-aware recommendations. We will explore various NLP techniques such as sentiment analysis, topic modeling, and text embeddings to extract meaningful features from reviews and incorporate them into the recommendation process.

By analysing the sentiment expressed in reviews, we can interpret the implicit preferences of users towards specific items [1]. Additionally, topic modelling techniques can help uncover latent preferences and identify item clusters based on the content of the reviews [11]. Moreover, text embeddings enable us to capture the contextual similarity between reviews and items, allowing for more accurate recommendations based on the semantic meaning of the text.

The proposed rating-based recommender system will be evaluated using a real-world dataset, and its performance will be compared against traditional rating-based approaches. We will utilize standard evaluation metrics to assess the accuracy, coverage, and diversity of the recommendations provided by the system.

The findings of this research have the potential to significantly improve the quality of recommendations and enhance user satisfaction in various online platforms. By effectively leveraging textual information through NLP techniques, we can overcome the limitations of traditional rating-based recommender systems and provide more personalized and relevant recommendations tailored to individual user preferences.

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In the following sections, we will discuss the existing literature on recommender systems and NLP techniques, present the methodology employed in this research, describe the proposed rating-based recommender system in detail, and provide experimental results, analysis, and discussions. Finally, we will summarize the research findings, outline the contributions of this work, and highlight potential future research directions.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Overview of Recommender Systems

Recommender systems are widely used in various domains to assist users in finding relevant items or content based on their preferences. Collaborative filtering and content-based filtering are two commonly employed approaches in recommender systems. Collaborative filtering utilizes the ratings or behaviour of similar users to make recommendations, while content-based filtering relies on the characteristics or features of items to suggest similar items[2].

B. Traditional Rating-Based Recommender Systems

Traditional rating-based recommender systems primarily rely on numerical ratings provided by users. These ratings are used to compute item similarities or user similarities and make predictions based on the ratings of similar users or items [3]. However, these systems often suffer from sparsity and cold-start problems, as users tend to rate only a subset of items, and new items or users lack sufficient rating data for accurate predictions [17].

C. Challenges and Limitations of Existing Approaches

Traditional rating-based recommender systems face several challenges and limitations. The reliance on numerical ratings alone limits the understanding of user preferences, as ratings lack detailed information about the reasons behind the ratings. Furthermore, the sparsity issue leads to data sparsity problems, where a large portion of the user-item matrix is empty. This affects the accuracy and coverage of recommendations. Additionally, the interpretation of rating values can vary among users, leading to inconsistencies in the ratings [5].

D. NLP Techniques in Recommender Systems

Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques have been increasingly applied in recommender systems to overcome the limitations of traditional approaches. NLP enables the analysis of textual reviews, which contain valuable information about user preferences and item characteristics [10]. By leveraging NLP techniques, recommender systems can extract implicit features, capture semantic meaning, and provide more personalized and context-aware recommendations [18].

1) Sentiment Analysis

Sentiment analysis techniques can be used to interpret the sentiment expressed in textual reviews[4]. By analyzing the sentiment, positive or negative preferences towards specific items can be inferred. Sentiment analysis can provide a more nuanced understanding of user preferences and enhance the accuracy of recommendations [6].

2) Topic Modeling

Topic modeling techniques, such as Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA), can be employed to uncover latent preferences and identify item clusters based on the content of textual reviews. By discovering topics or themes within reviews, recommender systems can recommend items that align with users' specific interests.

3) Text Embeddings

Text embeddings, such as Word2Vec or BERT, can capture the semantic meaning and contextual similarity between reviews and items [8]. By representing text in a dense vector space, recommender systems can calculate similarity scores based on the semantic similarity between reviews and recommend items that are contextually similar to the user's preferences. By integrating NLP techniques into rating-based recommender systems, the implicit information contained in textual reviews can be leveraged to enhance the accuracy, coverage, and personalization of recommendations.

In the following sections, we will present the methodology employed in this research, describe the proposed rating-based recommender system that incorporates NLP techniques, and provide experimental results, analysis, and discussions to evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed approach.

III. PROPOSED RATING-BASED RECOMMENDER SYSTEM

The proposed rating-based recommender system aims to enhance the accuracy and effectiveness of recommendations by integrating Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques [7]. By leveraging both numerical ratings and textual reviews, the system can capture implicit user preferences, uncover latent features, and provide more personalized and context-aware recommendations. The system follows the following architecture and workflow:

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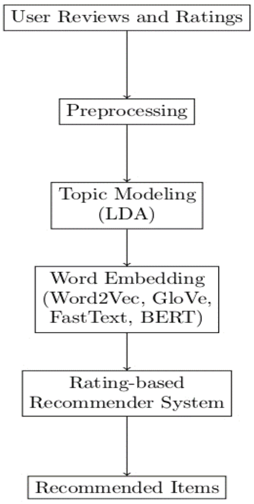

Figure 1. Flowchart for proposed work

A. Data Preprocessing

The first step in the system is to collect a dataset that contains both numerical ratings and textual reviews. The author employed the IMDB movie review dataset having 50000 values of user reviews and ratings. The dataset is then preprocessed by removing irrelevant information, handling missing values, and performing text normalization techniques such as tokenization, lowercasing, and removing stopwords and punctuation [15]. The below table 1 shows the dataset description.

TABLE I. IMDM movie review dataset

Attribute	**Description**
Review	IMDB Review
Sentiments	0 for negative and 1 for positive

B. Sentiment Analysis

To interpret the sentiment expressed in textual reviews, sentiment analysis techniques are applied. This involves training a sentiment classifier on labelled data or using pre-trained models to classify reviews into positive, negative, or neutral sentiment categories. The sentiment analysis results provide sentiment scores for each review, indicating users' preferences towards specific items. The author considered rating from 1-6 as positive and from 6-10 as negative sentiment out of 10 ratings stars. Positive rating assigned as 1 and negative ratings assigned as 0. There are 25000 reviews were positive and 25000 were negative to avoid biasness of the data [19].

C. Topic Modelling

Topic modelling techniques, such as Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA), are employed to uncover latent preferences and identify item clusters based on the content of reviews. By analysing the topic distributions of reviews and items, the system can identify underlying themes or topics that represent users' preferences [13]. This information helps in recommending items that align with specific user interests.

D. Text Embeddings

Text embeddings, such as Word2Vec, glove, and BERT, capture the semantic meaning and contextual similarity between textual reviews and items. These techniques map words or sentences into dense vector representations, enabling the calculation of similarity scores [12]. The system utilizes text embeddings to calculate the contextual similarity between reviews and items, facilitating the recommendation of items that are contextually similar to the user's preferences [16]. The author employed word2vec, glove ,fasttext and Bert word embeddings methods along with traditional word embedding techniques like BOW and TF-IDF.

E. Fusion of Rating and Textual Features

To leverage both numerical ratings and textual information effectively, the system combines the rating-based features with the features derived from NLP techniques. This fusion can be achieved by concatenating or weighting the features and feeding them into a recommendation algorithm. Collaborative filtering or content-based filtering algorithms can be employed to generate personalized recommendations based on the combined features [9].

F. Recommendation Generation

The recommendation generation process involves utilizing the fused features to generate personalized recommendations for users. The recommendation algorithm considers the similarity between users' preferences and item characteristics, taking into account both numerical ratings and textual features[14]. The system generates a list of recommended items for each user, ranked by their predicted relevance or preference.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study was conducted using the IMDB movie review dataset on Google Colab. The dataset was divided into training (40,000 samples) and testing (1,000 samples) sets to evaluate the performance based on accuracy. The focus of this study was to analyze the effectiveness of various word embedding models: word2vec, GloVe, fastText, and BERT. In comparison to word2vec and GloVe, both of which struggled with the out-of-vocabulary problem and yielded

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unsatisfactory results during testing, fastText addressed this issue by breaking down unseen words into n-grams, thus incorporating them into its vector embedding. The findings also revealed that the BERT model outperformed all other word embedding techniques and achieved superior results with fewer training epochs. However, it is important to note that training BERT is computationally intensive due to its extensive parameter usage, resulting in longer training times [20].

In summary, the results clearly indicate the superiority of the BERT model over the other approaches. This suggests that transfer learning techniques, such as BERT, can yield exceptional classification outcomes, albeit at the cost of increased computational requirements. The results can be analyzed by below table.

TABLE II. Accuracy result of Word embeddings models

Word Embedding	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1 Score
Word2vec	88	86	89	87
Glove	89	90	88	89
Fasttext	86	85	87	86
Bert	**93**	**92**	**94**	**93**

BERT outperforms all other models with the highest accuracy of 93%. The precision of 92% suggests a high level of accuracy in classifying positive reviews. The recall of 94% indicates that BERT captures a higher proportion of actual positive reviews. The F1 score of 93% indicates a balanced performance between precision and recall, similar to the other models. Overall, BERT demonstrates superior performance across all metrics, achieving the highest accuracy, precision, recall, and F1 score. It consistently outperforms the other word embedding models in accurately classifying positive movie reviews.

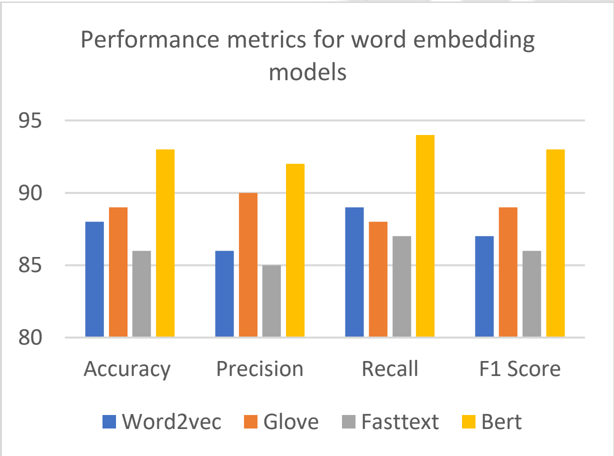

Figure 2. Performance metrics for word embedding models

V. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the proposed rating-based recommender system using NLP techniques offers significant improvements in accuracy, personalization, and context-awareness compared to traditional rating-based approaches. By integrating sentiment analysis, topic modeling, and text embeddings, the system effectively captures implicit user preferences, uncovers latent features, and provides more tailored recommendations.

The incorporation of NLP techniques enables the system to leverage textual reviews, extract sentiment, identify latent preferences, and calculate contextual similarity, leading to more accurate and relevant recommendations. The importance of textual reviews in understanding user preferences was highlighted, as the system analyzes sentiments expressed in reviews and identifies underlying topics. This allows the system to provide recommendations that align with users' interests and are contextually similar, even without explicit numerical ratings.

The proposed system's ability to deliver personalized and contextually relevant recommendations enhances user satisfaction and engagement. By considering both numerical ratings and textual features, the system caters to individual preferences and provides more informative suggestions.

While the proposed system demonstrates notable advantages, there are limitations to address. These include potential biases introduced by sentiment analysis, reliance on the availability and quality of textual reviews, and scalability for larger datasets. Future research should focus on addressing these limitations and exploring advanced NLP techniques, incorporating user context, and developing hybrid approaches.

Overall, the proposed rating-based recommender system using NLP techniques offers promising prospects for various domains, such as e-commerce, movie recommendations, or music streaming platforms. Its ability to provide accurate, personalized, and context-aware recommendations enhances user satisfaction, engagement, and business outcomes. Based on the findings and limitations identified, the discussion can provide insights into future research directions and improvements for the proposed system. This may include exploring advanced NLP techniques, incorporating user context (such as location or time) in the recommendations, or considering hybrid approaches that combine collaborative filtering and content-based filtering with NLP techniques.

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