Authors: Kevin La (acvt726), Martin Doung (aczg157), Saffan Ahmed (acwf535)

IN3062 – INTRODUCTION TO ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Coursework

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

[1. INTRODUCTION 2](#_Toc59011547)

[1.1 PROBLEM DOMAIN 2](#_Toc59011548)

[1.2 DATASET 2](#_Toc59011549)

[2. REGRESSION 2](#_Toc59011550)

[3. MISSING DATA 3](#_Toc59011551)

[4. MODELS USED 3](#_Toc59011552)

[4.1 LINEAR REGRESSION 3](#_Toc59011553)

[4.2 SUPPORT VECTOR MACHINES 3](#_Toc59011554)

[4.3 RANDOM FOREST REGRESSION 4](#_Toc59011555)

[5. INPUT VARIABLES ENCODED 4](#_Toc59011556)

[6. ACCURACY EVALUATION CRITERIA 4](#_Toc59011557)

[7. RESULTS 4](#_Toc59011558)

[7.1 LINEAR REGRESSION 4](#_Toc59011559)

[7.2 SUPPORT VECTOR MACHINES 4](#_Toc59011560)

[7.3 RANDOM FOREST REGRESSION 4](#_Toc59011561)

[8. ENCOUNTERED DATASET PROBLEMS 4](#_Toc59011562)

[9. REFERENCES 4](#_Toc59011563)

# **INTRODUCTION**

Video game culture has exponentially grown to become a popular source of entertainment and consumed by modern pop culture, evolving from humble beginnings to a multibillion-dollar industry today**1**. Current predictions estimate the net global revenue of video games in 2020 to be over $160 billion dollars**2**, an increase of over 7.6% from 2019.  Throughout its history, the market for video games has only strengthened due to continuous advancements in computer technology, through an increase in processing power, graphical performance, and game design. With each successive year, more advanced consoles have spawned a plethora of video game titles and genres, with thousands of titles available to feed increased sale demands. This impact also meant that digital sales has exponentially risen resulting in UK gaming outlets to struggle selling physical units. Severity of the impact can be assessed from one of UK’s leading commercial video game retailers – ‘GAME’ store**3**.

## 1.1 PROBLEM DOMAIN

The distribution of video game sales in the UK reflects that 80% is sold digitally via   
micro-transactions, DLC and subscription services. Thus, digital revenue is up by 12.5% year-on-year whilst physical revenue goes down by 2.8%**4**. As a result, commercial retailers are threatened by losing profit from excess supply of physical video game units. This is reflected by the UK’s prominent video games retailer ‘GAME’ store, case study below:

**Case Study:** UK retailer GAME runs out of money, enters administration**5**

With supply of physical units increasing overtime, has meant that not enough revenue is generated from in-store transactions. To alleviate excess supply, unit pricing of popular games was reduced, resulting in profit-loss.  
Popularity of E-commerce overtime had led to excess overhead costs of maintaining store operations thus forcing 40 ‘GAME’ stores to go into administration.



Fig 1: ‘GAME’ store administration.

Digital formatted video games sold via E-commerce will continually rise, as consumers benefit with improved convenience, accessibility, and privacy. Developers of next-gen consoles will eventually want to move over to operating only on digital formatted video games in their bid to reduce carbon footprint**6** and maintain corporate social responsibility.

Our aim to help commercial video game retailers like ‘GAME’ to adapt to these changes, also make effective predictions on which game titles and platforms will be popular to maintain stock control i.e., best-selling. Goal is to prevent stock-overload and efficiently manage stock inventory with the purpose of maximising revenue and reducing overhead.

## 1.2 DATASET

The original dataset titled ‘Video Game Sales with Rating’ can be found on Kaggle, here is the [link](https://www.kaggle.com/rush4ratio/video-game-sales-with-ratings). The dataset itself contained more than 12,000 games including outdated gaming platforms and game titles thus opted to narrow down our dataset to the top 100 selling video games across 5 platforms that are released within the years 2010 and 2016 – PC, Xbox One, PS4, Nintendo Wii U and 3DS. To ensure accurate predictions are generated about future sales, we are focusing on video games released between 2010 & 2016, because within this date range the regional sales are consistent thus enabling better predictive analysis from which patterns can be identified. Moreover, the dataset highlights 5 individual classes: genre, publisher, platform amongst many other factors. From which correlations can be identified and could contribute to determine a video game’s success rate.

# **REGRESSION**

Our models will mainly be computed using supervised learning methods like Linear Regression, SVM and Random Forest Regression. The main goal is to allow us to predict new continuous data based on the trends and results of the datasets that have already been tested using the different regression algorithms and see which variables are most correlated to Video Games having high sales numbers. We will use Pearson’s correlation coefficient to see which 2 variables have the best correlation. R value of 1 meaning perfect correlation, 0 meaning no correlation and -1 meaning perfect inverse correlation.

# **MISSING DATA**

Having filtered the top 100 sales for each platform within time period 2010-2016, we found discrepancies within columns critic score and critic count missing. This would hinder our results as no correlation can be identified between user reviews and video games sold over time. We thought about using the mean or median of the critic score/count values to fill in the blanks, but this wouldn’t be adequate. We concluded that since critic score and count is an opinion-based system, we decided to manually enter the missing data for each game which has been taken from a credible source such as ‘[Meta Critic’](https://www.metacritic.com/) link.

# **TECHNIQUES USED**

****For our dataset, we decided to use **Pearson's Coefficient** in order to find out which 2 variables depict the strongest correlation that will help us predict video game sales in the future.

To better understand the Pearson Co-efficient correlation, we decided to use a coloured heatmap to represent the correlation. Greater coefficient value will correspond with a darker hue of Red and show a strong correlation and vice versa. We can see that ‘sale figures’ for different regions have a strong relation to Global Sales which is what we expected. For all our regression models we made Global Sales our dependent variable and as it counts for all regions, so we decided to drop the other sales features. So, the relationship between Global Sales and Region we can see that Critic Score and Critic Count have the next highest positive relationship with a value of **‘0.28’** and **‘0.36’**. Despite Critic Count having the higher value we decided to disregard this feature as yes it may have a relation with Global Sales however users buy games depending on the Critic Score and not Critic Count. Therefore, our main focus is Critic Score to Global Sales.

Fig 2: Heatmap for Pearson Co-efficient

* Highlights the correlation strengths between each Regions and consumers: Critic Score & Count.

# **MODELS USED**

## 5.1 LINEAR REGRESSION (LR)

LR is a statistical approach for modelling the relationship between a dependent variable with a given set of independent variables. It tries to fit data with the best hyper-plane which goes through the points. This model works well with our dataset as we look for the variation of critic scores that are dependent on global sales. The LR for our model depicts a positive correlation whereby a high critic score would equal a higher level of global sales. However, despite LR being simple to implement and interpret. This model is prone to underfitting; fails to capture data properly and often the line does not fit well due to the relationship between critic score and global sales being not entirely linear. Some data-points for global sales reflected irregular behaviour, whereby once thresholds of critic score reached (70-85%) global sales reflected 28.5% (14 million sales) greater sales than those critic scores that reached (90%) but global sales dropped (10 million sales) when it should reflect greater marginal sales. Further analysis within the [‘Results’](#_7.1_LINEAR_REGRESSION) section is highlighted with RMSE.

## 5.2 SUPPORT VECTOR REGRESSION (SVR)

SVR uses the same basic idea as Support Vector Machine (SVM), a classification algorithm, but applies it to predict real values rather than a class. Our goal will be to try to fit the error in a certain threshold (unlike minimizing the error rate we were doing in the previous cases). The SVR model can easily be converted into a linear regression which we predicted will work well with our dataset given we had 8 classes that had to be separated from which we relied on 2 classes: ‘Critic Score’ and ‘Global Sales’. This model works well in a low dimension space than other models thus should reflect a higher accuracy of results via RMSE. However, in comparison to the LR model the accuracy of results were lower. This poses a problem as it highlights a weak correlation between global sales and critic score. On the other hand, with the data being kernel comparisons can be made to identify similarity between data points. Thus, the majority of video game titles with a low critic score will reflect low volume of global sales but are set to gradually increase as critic score increases. Further analysis within the [‘Results’](#_7.2_SUPPORT_VECTOR) section is highlighted with RMSE. Our aim is to help the commercial video games retailers be able to make effective predictions on certain aspects, by using SVR it will find an appropriate line of best fit and margin of error to help with this prediction.

## 5.3 RANDOM FOREST REGRESSION (RF)

A special form of decision tree algorithm which utilises multiple decision trees which are known as forest and glue them together to urge a more accurate and stable prediction.

The RF model for our dataset was used to compare the volume of global sales with the baseline predicted value of sales. Further analysis of correlation is highlighted within the ‘Results’ section also compared with RMSE. Consequently, for a larger dataset it will reach a point whereby no matter how much this model is trained, the accuracy won’t change thus resulting in a model becoming unreliable. In our case increasing the video games range would highlight some change for the predictive baseline of the model, however this change would not significantly reflect the specific output value. Thus, the only way around would be to model the dataset based on the top selling video games rather than the entire video games catalogue. In comparison. Our aim was to investigate how these models reflect the volume of global sales of video games differ based upon the critic score. We expected both SVR and RF to perform much better than LR models however this was not the case as you can see from the [‘Results’](#_RESULTS) section. The RMSE coefficient that is used highlights the LR model reflects a stronger correlation between ‘Global Sales’ and ‘Critic Score’.

# **INPUT VARIABLES ENCODED**

The fields required for each AI algorithm model had been split up from the original dataset and placed into their individual CSV files i.e. for Random Forest Model will would encode Critic Score and Global Sales from ‘RandomForestGlobalSales&CriticScore.csv’ file. This was the case for all other models for our project. Using a simple function, we then extracted each column and placed into corresponding variables “x” and “y” in their respected numerical format. Utilising ***‘sklearn. model\_selection import train\_test\_split’*** the raw data from each class ‘Critic Score’ and ‘Global Sales’ had been split in terms of 2-dimensional array from which the components for ‘x’ and ‘y’ had been derived.   
Utilising these classes formed the significant basis of comparison for our models, simply because they highlighted the most marginal difference and correlation compared to the other classes. For instance, our dataset featured regional sales of EU (Europe), JP (Japan) and NA (North America) however it was difficult to identify a linear correlation with critic score as a result had led to the cluster of data points to be irregular which in itself leads to inaccurate data reading for RMSE.

# **ACCURACY EVALUATION CRITERIA**

# **RESULTS**

## 7.1 LINEAR REGRESSION

## 7.2 SUPPORT VECTOR MACHINES

## 7.3 RANDOM FOREST REGRESSION

# **ENCOUNTERED DATASET PROBLEMS**

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