

On effect of transmission type on mpg

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November 22, 2015

Overview

The goal of this short analysis is to determine whether the transmission type has the effect the car fuel efficiency. If so, we aim to quantify this effect by means of mpg difference.

Explaining the dataset

In this analysis we work with the `mtcars` dataset shipped with the R language. It contains 11 variables describing a total of 32 different cars. The following table summarizes the meaning of these variables:

Variable	Description	Variable	Description
<code>mpg</code>	fuel economy [miles per gallon]	<code>qsec</code>	1/4 mile time [sec]
<code>cyl</code>	number of cylinders	<code>vs</code>	engine type (0 = vee, 1 = straight)
<code>disp</code>	engine displacement [in ³]	<code>am</code>	transmission type (0 = automatic, 1 = manual)
<code>hp</code>	engine gross horsepower [hp]	<code>gear</code>	number of forward gears
<code>drat</code>	rear axle ratio	<code>carb</code>	number of carburetors
<code>wt</code>	car weight [lb/1000]		

Goal and applied method

Our goal is to quantify the effect of the transmission type on the fuel economy. We will try to find the most appropriate multivariable linear model describing the relationship between `mpg` variable and some of the other variables including `am`. The coefficient of the `am` variable in this model will then mean the effect of the transmission type on the fuel economy measured in mpg.

In order to make an analysis as precise as possible, we have to preprocess the dataset a little – we will convert variables that have only a few integer values into factors. This involves variables `cyl`, `gear`, `carb`, `am` and `vs`. For the last two is this transformation unnecessary in means of the linear regression (these variables have only two different values – 0 and 1, thus turning them into factors does not change the regression model at all).

Choosing the model

This is the most tricky part of the entire analysis. We want to have our model as simple as possible and at the same time it should estimate the `mpg` variable well enough. Especially we want to remove a majority effect of “skewness” of the data. In order to achieve this we at first analyze the covariances of all pairs of the variables. The following table presents those.

	<code>mpg</code>	<code>cyl</code>	<code>disp</code>	<code>hp</code>	<code>drat</code>	<code>wt</code>	<code>qsec</code>	<code>vs</code>	<code>am</code>	<code>gear</code>	<code>carb</code>
<code>mpg</code>	1.000	-0.852	-0.848	-0.776	0.681	-0.868	0.419	0.664	0.600	0.480	-0.551
<code>cyl</code>	-0.852	1.000	0.902	0.832	-0.700	0.782	-0.591	-0.811	-0.523	-0.493	0.527
<code>disp</code>	-0.848	0.902	1.000	0.791	-0.710	0.888	-0.434	-0.710	-0.591	-0.556	0.395
<code>hp</code>	-0.776	0.832	0.791	1.000	-0.449	0.659	-0.708	-0.723	-0.243	-0.126	0.750
<code>drat</code>	0.681	-0.700	-0.710	-0.449	1.000	-0.712	0.091	0.440	0.713	0.700	-0.091
<code>wt</code>	-0.868	0.782	0.888	0.659	-0.712	1.000	-0.175	-0.555	-0.692	-0.583	0.428
<code>qsec</code>	0.419	-0.591	-0.434	-0.708	0.091	-0.175	1.000	0.745	-0.230	-0.213	-0.656
<code>vs</code>	0.664	-0.811	-0.710	-0.723	0.440	-0.555	0.745	1.000	0.168	0.206	-0.570
<code>am</code>	0.600	-0.523	-0.591	-0.243	0.713	-0.692	-0.230	0.168	1.000	0.794	0.058
<code>gear</code>	0.480	-0.493	-0.556	-0.126	0.700	-0.583	-0.213	0.206	0.794	1.000	0.274
<code>carb</code>	-0.551	0.527	0.395	0.750	-0.091	0.428	-0.656	-0.570	0.058	0.274	1.000

We will build a sequence of nested linear models having `mpg` variable as outcome. The first model will be just the constant model, the second one the simple linear regression on `am`. Now we order the remaining variables in descending order with respect to the absolute value of covariance with the outcome variable `mpg` and add them successively to the model.

We end with 11 different models – the first one is the constant model, then in each step we add one variable to the predictors in the following order: `am`, `wt`, `cyl`, `disp`, `hp`, `drat`, `vs`, `carb`, `gear`, `qsec`.

Now we make an analysis of variance on these nested models in order to determine predictors that we want to keep in the model and those we want to exclude.

Added predictor	Res.Df	RSS	Df	Sum of Sq	F	Pr(>F)
NA	31	1126.047	NA	NA	NA	NA
am	30	720.897	1	405.151	50.474	0.000
wt	29	278.320	1	442.577	55.137	0.000
cyl	27	182.968	2	95.351	5.940	0.013
disp	26	182.869	1	0.099	0.012	0.913
hp	25	150.409	1	32.461	4.044	0.063
drat	24	150.101	1	0.308	0.038	0.847
vs	23	142.655	1	7.445	0.928	0.351
carb	18	125.618	5	17.038	0.425	0.825
gear	16	121.644	2	3.974	0.248	0.784
qsec	15	120.403	1	1.241	0.155	0.700

If we keep only predictors with F -statistic greater than one (there is a large gap) and exclude the others, we end with the model `mpg ~ am + wt + cyl + hp`:

	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr(> t)
(Intercept)	33.7083239	2.6048862	12.940421	0.0000000
ammanual	1.8092114	1.3963045	1.295714	0.2064597
wt	-2.4968294	0.8855878	-2.819404	0.0090814
cyl6	-3.0313445	1.4072835	-2.154040	0.0406827
cyl8	-2.1636753	2.2842517	-0.947214	0.3522509
hp	-0.0321094	0.0136926	-2.345025	0.0269346

Finally we exclude the `cyl` predictor since its effect is not monotonous and the p -value for the 8 cylinder is too high. The final model thus has the formula `mpg ~ am + wt + hp` and its summary is as follows:

	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr(> t)
(Intercept)	34.0028751	2.6426593	12.866916	0.0000000
ammanual	2.0837101	1.3764202	1.513862	0.1412682
wt	-2.8785754	0.9049705	-3.180850	0.0035740
hp	-0.0374787	0.0096054	-3.901830	0.0005464

Conclusion

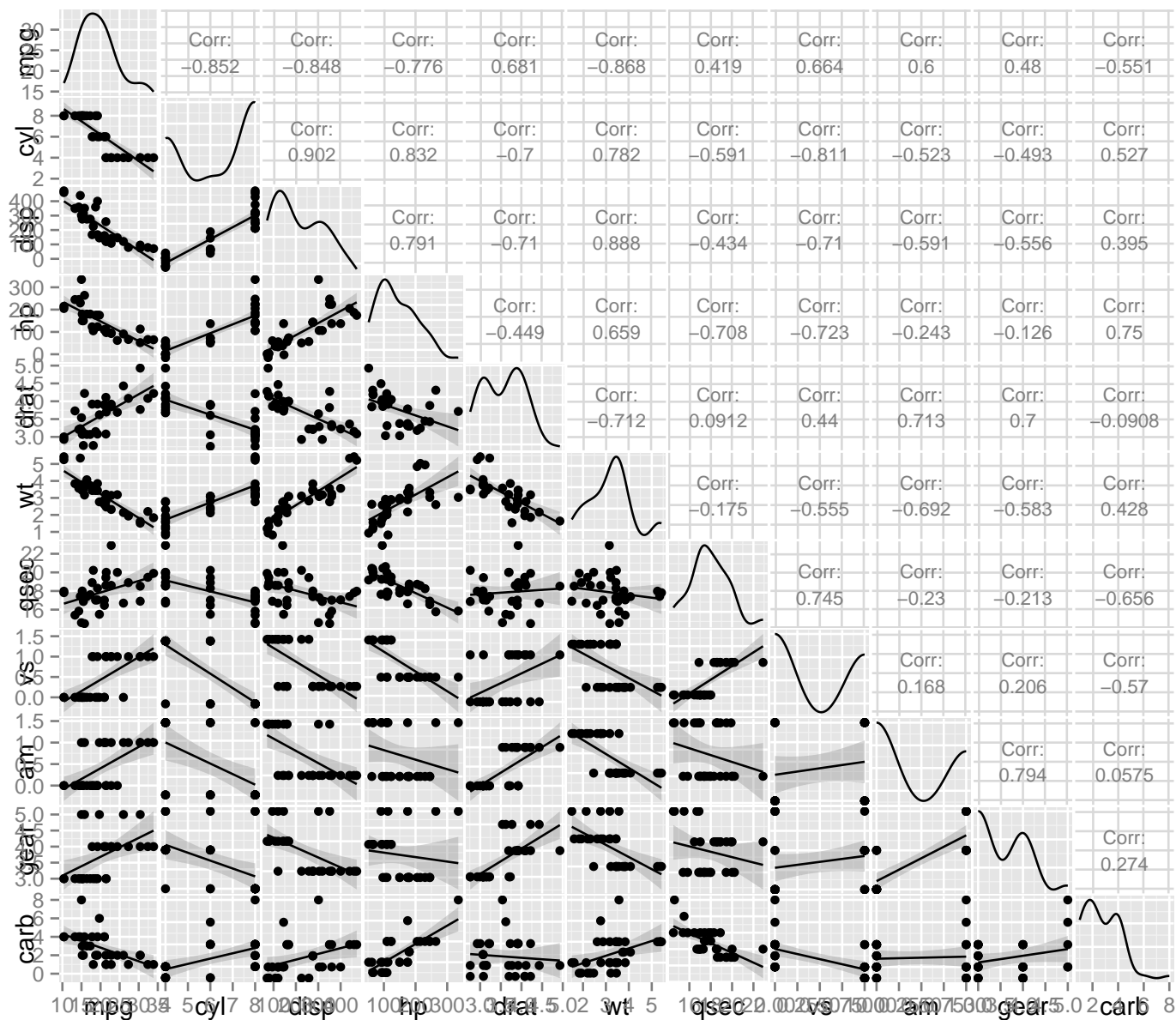
From the table above we see that the p -value associated with the `am` regressor is greater than 0.05, and so we failed to reject the hypotheses that the type of trasmission has the impact on car fuel efficiency at 95% confidence level. However the data suggests that the hypothesis might be valid, so we higly recommend to collect more data to confirm it definitely.

The second proposed question about the quantification of the effect of the transmission type is thus meaningless. We hope that the following analysis on larger data will prove our hypotheses that manual transmissions are better for fuel efficiency by approximately 2 mpg.

Appendix

We present only one figure – the matrix of one variable linear regressions together with covariances of each pair of variables. In the main part it was replaced by covariance table as it covers less space.

```
library(GGally)
ggpairs(mtcars,
  upper = list(params = list(size = 3)),
  lower = list(continuous = "smooth"))
```



Notice

The knitr source code of this analysis including dirty tricks to fit the main part on 2 pages is available at [github](#).