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What Do Websites Say about Internet of Things Challenges? A Text Mining Approach

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ABSTRACT

Internet of Things (IoT) is a popular technological paradigm offering several promised advantages. IoT has been facing different challenges discussed by various researchers. The available literature on IoT challenges is mostly based on experimental studies or reviews. The analysis of webpages as a valuable database can be a good idea to provide an insight into IoT challenges. Thus, this paper was aimed at providing an overall view of webpages discussing IoT challenges. In this regard, the text mining approach was implemented to analyze the related webpages. The obtained results revealed that challenges relate to the security of IoT devices, connectivity, data processing, and storage have been the most prevalent topics in the selected webpages.

KEYWORDS

Internet of Things challenges; IoT adoption; smart devices; Internet of Things; latent Dirichlet Allocation

Introduction

Nowadays, IoT is one of the noteworthy technology paradigms. It has gained popularity in research communities and industries in different sectors (Atzori, Iera, and Morabito 2010; Huang et al. 2017). The early version of the internet contained HTML webpages linked together that were at the top of the internet architecture. After a while, such HTML webpages evolved in the form of web 2.0 that allowed for communication between the end users. Web 2.0 comprises of technologies such as wiki, social networks, blogs, etc. Researchers have put more effort into developing web 2.0 and providing a semantic web. This is where the web pages are understandable by machines. This version of the web is referred to as the semantic web or web 3.0. During the evolution of web technologies, RFID, near field communication, and sensor technologies have evolved as well. The evolutionary convergence of both technologies has led to a new vision facilitating machines communicating with each other via the internet. Such a vision provides a new paradigm entitled “Internet of Things”(Whitmore, Agarwal, and Li 2015). IoT can be defined as the global network of interconnected heterogeneous things (such as sensing and actuating devices) which are

connected to the internet and aims to enhance different applications in various sectors (such as logistics, healthcare, manufacturing, etc.) (Chang, Srirama, and Buyya 2019; Gubbi et al. 2013). IoT will have a significant impact on both the internet and the economy. It is anticipated that there would be about 100 billion connected IoT devices and a total economic impact of between \$3.9 trillion and \$11.1 trillion per year by 2025 (Manyika et al. 2015; Rose, Eldridge, and Chapin 2015). IoT will decrease costs and improve efficiency (Lee and Lee 2015). Furthermore, it is a key enabler for future industrial revolutions (Trappey et al. 2017). There are other papers discussing the advantages and impact of IoT that are outside of the scope of this research.

Although IoT provides some promising benefits, there are challenges limiting the IoT advantages that are addressed by researchers in order to be resolved. There are different studies in the literature investigating IoT challenges such as data management, privacy, security, interoperability, scalability, etc. (Breivold and Kristian 2015; Lee and Lee 2015; Peter and Richard Watson 2017; Tsai, Lai, and Vasilakos 2014). Some researchers have focused merely on a certain type of IoT challenges such as security (Sfar et al. 2018), privacy (Ziegeldorf, Morchon, and Wehrle 2014), ethical challenges (Popescu and Georgescu 2014), etc. Mohammadzadeh et al. (2018) used the Fuzzy Analytic Network Process (FANP) to prioritize the different challenges by considering Iran as the case study. They grouped the different IoT challenges into five categories, including technological, privacy and security, business, legal and regulatory and cultural challenges. Their research indicated that technological challenges and the challenges related to privacy and security have priority over others. In the literature, there are other researches into IoT challenges that reflect the authors' concerns.

Although there are valuable published papers addressing IoT challenges, websites available on the internet can be an appreciated source for analyzing IoT challenges as well. Websites are prized sources of knowledge, since there are web mining techniques to inspect web and extract valuable knowledge from them (Srivastava, Desikan, and Kumar 2005). This attaches significance to web content as a source of knowledge. Bloggers, freelancers, experts, journalists, and many other people share valuable information via websites. In other words, in websites, non-academic people also share information. Although there are some papers reviewing available studies on IoT challenges (Mohammadzadeh et al. 2018; Peter and Richard Watson 2017) and highlighting dominant challenges, no analysis has been performed of websites discussing such IoT challenges, which necessitates an analysis of related webpages to provide an insight into them. This paper aims to answer the below research questions:

Which categories of IoT challenges have been widely discussed in webpages? Which category(s) is more prevalent? Which emotion is behind webpages content in this regard?

Methodology of the study

This research aims to provide an overall view of the webpages that discuss IoT challenges by identifying the categories of IoT challenges that have been discussed in the webpages, their prevalence, and the emotions behind the content. Text mining is appropriate in this regard because it provides the possibility of automatically analyzing large sets of texts and there are also algorithms that fit our research questions. The objective of text mining is to identify relevant patterns out of the data to help decision-making (Aggarwal and Zhai 2012). There are different text mining algorithms and, for the purpose of this research, the topic modeling algorithm seems practical to identify the different categories of IoT challenges. In this model, the key assumption is that any document may have the probability of belonging to multiple topics. In addition, each topic is associated with the probability of involving different words (Aggarwal and Zhai 2012; Bach et al. 2019). This research uses Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) to find topics in the webpages. The dominant categories of the IoT challenges will appear in these topics. LDA is a generative probabilistic model for discrete data such as textual data that aims to provide a short description drawn from the data to enable the processing of a large amount of data while holding up any essential statistical relationships (Blei, Ng, and Jordan 2003). LDA has been widely used in the literature for topic extraction from textual data (Garcia-Rudolph et al. 2019; Moro, Cortez, and Rita 2015; Tian, Revelle, and Poshyvanyk 2009; Tirunillai and Tellis 2014; Wang et al. 2016). The graphic representation of LDA is shown in the following Figure 1.

In this figure, matrix ϕ indicates the distribution of the T topics over W words from a Dirichlet parameterized by β . In addition, matrix θ shows the distribution of D documents over T topics from a Dirichlet parameterized by α . In fact, a topic z is drawn from the related document's topic distribution θ_d when word w is generated in document d . However, in such conditions, word w is drawn from the selected topic's word distribution ϕ_z . To extract a topic by taking advantage of LDA, we need to estimate ϕ and θ (Momtazi and Naumann 2013). Various

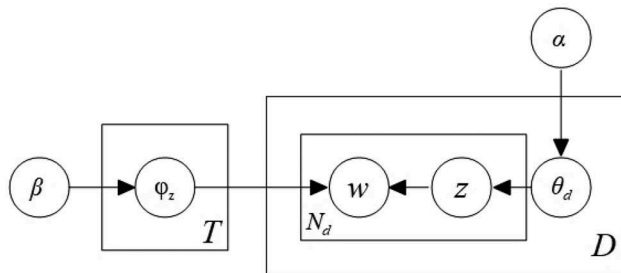


Figure 1. Graphical representation of LDA (from (Blei, Ng, and Jordan 2003; Momtazi and Naumann 2013) with edition).

algorithms have been presented in this regard including Gibbs, the sampling algorithm that is an efficient one for this purpose (Griffiths and Steyvers 2004; Momtazi and Naumann 2013). The input parameters that should be inserted by the user are the number of topics (T) and the values of hyperparameters (α and β). Where α and β are topic smoothing and word/term smoothing parameters, respectively. The larger the values of these parameters over one, the more even the distributions while the more smaller than one the results, the more concentrated the distributions over topics or words (Bastani, Namavari, and Shaffer 2019).

Regarding the text mining process, the related data should be firstly selected, cleaned, and represented, followed by the implementation of the LDA algorithm to it (Rajman and Vesely 2004). The term “Internet of Things challenges” was searched for in the Google search engine on 30th June 2019 and the first 220 results were assessed to select the relevant data. An overview on each webpage has been done to identify it is relevant or not. Academic papers, PDF files, and websites not focusing on IoT challenges were excluded. Finally, 86 webpages were identified to pertain to IoT challenges and they were stored as text files. However, these text files were not ready for data analysis since they contained irrelevant data such as links and words related to different parts of the sites, namely advertisements, menus, categories, etc. These text files were removed as much as possible to include only the text related to IoT challenges (all of the textual content of the related post).

The R tool and related packages were assigned to data analysis in this research (Benoit and Obeng 2019; Csardi and Nepusz 2006; Dowle and Srinivasan 2019; Feinerer and Hornik 2018; Feinerer, Hornik, and Meyer 2008; Fellows 2018b; Grün and Hornik 2011; Hornik, Meyer, and Buchta 2019; Jockers 2015; Neuwirth n.d.; Nikita 2017; R Core Team 2018; Sievert and Shirley 2014, 2015; Silge and Robinson 2016; Wickham 2016, 2017; Wickham et al. 2019; Wickham and Henry 2019). Some R tutorials and their codes along with some editions were used to conduct the related analysis (“An Overview of Text Mining Visualisations Possibilities with R on the CETA Trade Agreement” n.d.; “Read Text Files with Readtext()” n.d.; “Text Mining Example Codes (Tweets)” n.d.; Csardi n.d.; Feinerer 2018; Fellows 2018a; Fetzer 2017; Mair 2018; Neuwirth n.d.; Ognyanova 2015; Oliver 2018; Randy 2018; Sievert and Shirley 2014; Xiao and Miao Zhu 2019; Zhao 2012; n.d.). All 86 text files were imported into R and cleaned subsequently. The cleaning process includes converting all letters to lower case and removing punctuation, stop words, number, extra whitespace, and stemming words, preparing the data for future analysis. The analysis identified the most frequent words in the data and their co-occurrence network. Furthermore, it recognized relevant topics, their prevalence, and sentiment analysis. To detect the emotion behind texts in webpages, a sentiment analysis of the data was carried out as well. When human readers study a text, they can understand positive or negative concept behind the text and identify related emotions, which can also be

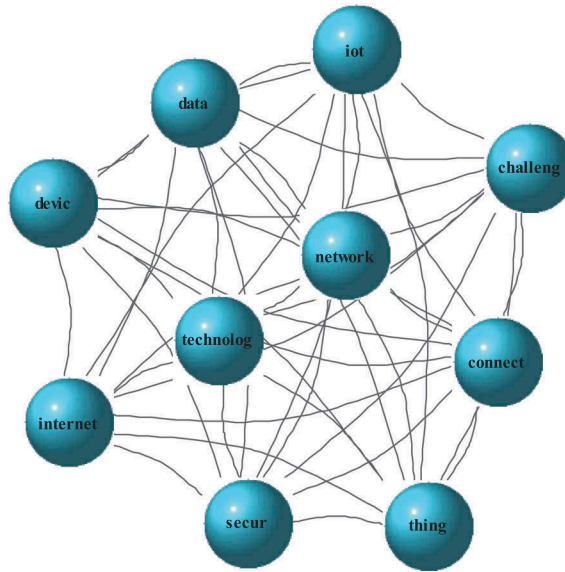


Figure 3. Co-occurrence network of top 11 words.

The LDA algorithm provided the terms associated with each topic and, in turn, the user could label them manually (Bastani, Namavari, and Shaffer 2019; Chang et al. 2009). To label each topic, pertinent terms and webpages were involved wherein a certain topic is more dominant (see Figure 4). Hence, the topic label may be inaccurate in Figure 4. However, the keyword identified would help to gain an overall view of the websites discussing IoT challenges. Topic 1 included IoT security challenges such as device security, data security, authentication, malware, etc. Webpages with this topic investigated IoT security challenges and possible solution (e.g., Katz 2019; Nwazor 2018). Topic 2 focused on the connectivity issues for IoT in large-scale deployment, namely network speed, the interconnection of heterogenous networks, firewalls, etc. (Hanson 2014; Roussey 2016). Processing and storing a large amount of data generated by IoT is another challenge engaged in topic 3 (D'mello 2019; Evans 2018). Topic 4 arose due to the discussion on the webpages of the effectiveness of IoT implementation and related benefits (Delaney and Levy 2017). A lack of a unique standard has led different companies to use various solutions. This entails IoT adoption with challenges. This is as different technologies may be incompatible, wherein developing end-to-end security solutions is burdensome (topic 5) (Bauer, Burkacky, and Knochenhauer 2017). Topic 6 discussed the concerns, challenges, and problems related to IoT adoption (Buntz 2016). Topic 7 encompassed the developmental and implementation challenges related to IoT devices (Rowe n.d.). Topics 8 and 9 appeared due to general terms in the IoT literature. They pertained to smart objects and other popular keywords in the IoT domain. One or two webpages were cited for each topic as an example in the above-mentioned discussion.

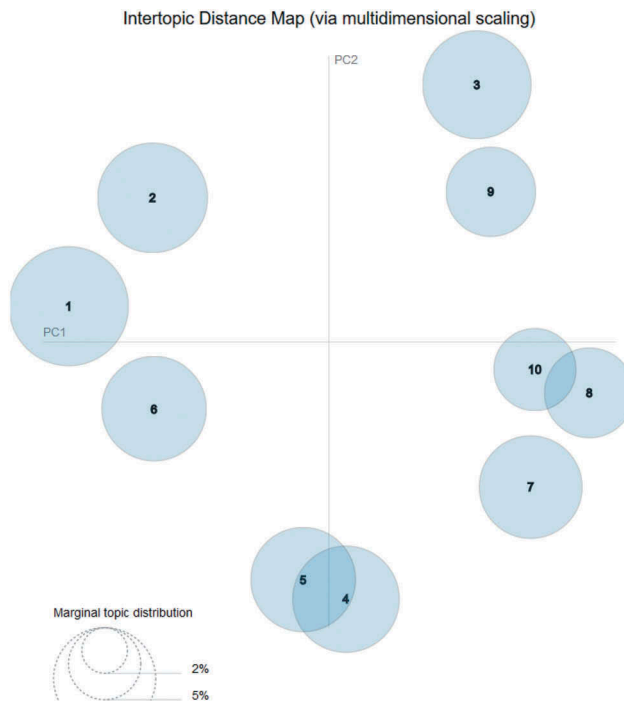


Figure 5. Topics visualized using LDAvis.

the area of each circle. The inter-distance of topics (similarity between topics) was represented by two axes. As can be observed in [Figure 4](#), there were discussions about IoT challenges, including security, connectivity, data storage and processing, standardization, adoption, and implementation/development challenges, in the selected webpages. Topic 1, i.e., the security challenge of IoT devices, was the most common topic in the webpages. After this topic, topic 2 (connectivity challenge of IoT) and topic 3 (the challenge of Data processing and storage) ranked the most prevalent. The reason for the popularity of these topics might be attributed to their significance as barriers to IoT. The proposed search process for identifying the related webpages was performed in the English language medium without any limitation as to the context. However, the obtained result agrees with that obtained by Mohammadzadeh et al. (Mohammadzadeh et al. 2018). Their study showed that technology, privacy, and security challenges have a high priority over others. Their category for technological challenges consisted of architecture and design, device heterogeneity, addressing, ubiquitous data management, hardware construction, and fault tolerance. Accordingly, our findings reveal that security and technological challenges were the most commonplace topics in the webpages, which might be due to the higher significance of these challenges. There have been other research studies referring to security challenges as one of the major IoT issues (Aldowah,

Rehman, and Umar 2018; Sicari et al. 2015). Zubiaga et al. analyzed tweets which discuss IoT, they concluded that security of IoT is a main concern (Zubiaga et al. 2018).

Moreover, the categories of IoT challenges specified by analyzing webpages have been examined in literature. For example, security (Aldowah, Rehman, and Umar 2018; Sicari et al. 2015), connectivity (Mumtaz et al. 2017; Samuel 2016), data processing, and storage (Lee and Lee 2015; Ma, Wang, and Chu 2013), standardization (Rose, Eldridge, and Chapin 2015), etc., have been broadly investigated in the literature. Accordingly, webpages do not typically face new kinds of challenges and they share some similar and already-available categories of challenges that have been presented in literature. It is worth noting that this study aimed at generally discussing IoT challenges, and not doing so in detail.

Some challenges have been highlighted in the analysis, such as security, connectivity, and data processing, storage challenges, etc., more than others. Such challenges are dominant concerns in the realm of IoT challenges on webpages. Future research should pay special attention to these challenges to provide solutions for them. In practice, an individual intending to use IoT needs to have an awareness of these challenges. These are the key barriers to viable IoT implementation. Even though this paper has offered an overview of the webpages discussing IoT challenges, it presents some new questions; ‘What are the most prevalent challenges in the literature?’ ‘Are the results similar to the findings of this paper?’ and ‘Can the importance of IoT challenges be varied between different contexts and regions?’ Future research can answer these questions.

To perform sentiment analysis, available tutorials (Shen 2017; Silge and Robinson 2017) and the NRC lexicon (S. M. Mohammad and Turney 2010, 2012) were used. The NRC lexicon provides two sentiments, positive or negative, and eight emotions, including anger, fear, anticipation, trust, surprise, sadness, joy, and disgust (Mohammad and Turney 2010, 2012). Figure 6(a,c) show the results of the sentiment analysis of the 86 selected webpages about IoT challenges.

Based on the literature (Mohammad 2011a; Garcia-Rudolph et al. 2019; Mohammad and Yang 2011) and after consulting with experts, it was concluded that we could gain an insight into the results of the sentiment analysis when comparing two datasets. Therefore, it was preferred to perform sentiment analysis on the IoT-related data disregarding the IoT challenges, followed by making a comparison between the results. The reason for this is that the number of positive or negative words is not sufficient enough criterion to assess people’s opinion. By comparing two different datasets in the same domain, more insight can be provided. In this regard, it was decided to create a dataset from the websites addressing the IoT benefits and advantages. The below query was searched in the Google search engine (search date 29th July 2019):

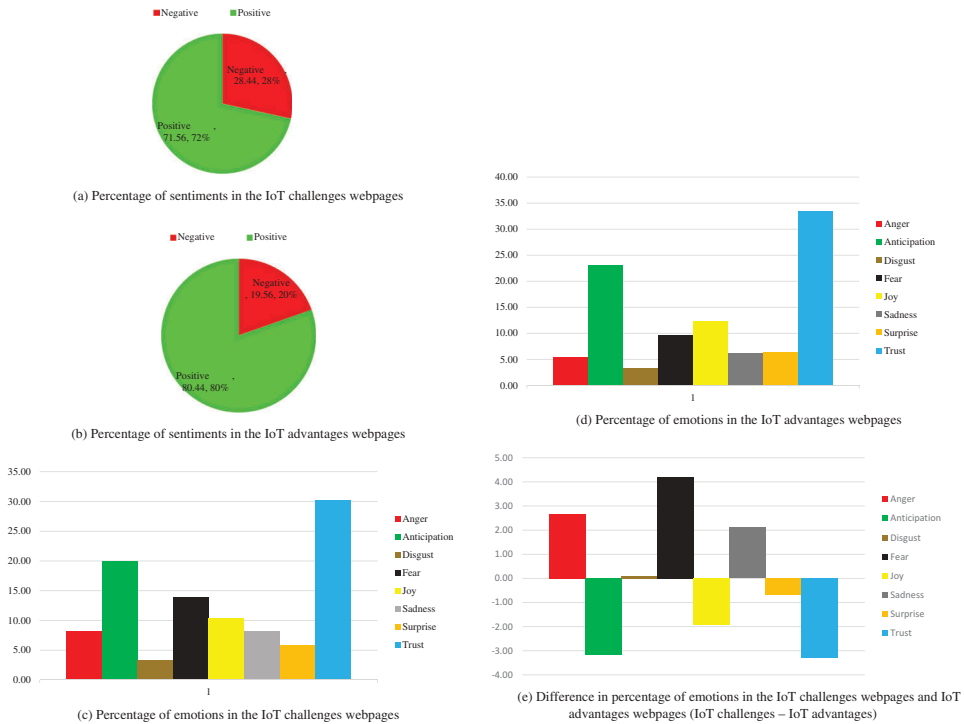


Figure 6. Sentiment analysis of webpages about IoT challenges and benefits (Percentage of an emotion has been calculated by considering total occurrence of an emotion in a dataset divided by total occurrence of all emotions on that dataset).

“IoT advantages” OR “IoT potentials” OR “IoT Benefits” OR “IoT profit” OR “IoT promise” OR “Internet of things advantage” OR “Internet of things benefit”

Then, 86 webpages discussing IoT advantages and benefits were selected. Websites which discussed IoT advantages in addition to its challenges were excluded when possible. The sentiment analysis of this dataset was also performed (Figure 6(b,d)), and the obtained results were then compared with the results of the sentiment analysis on IoT challenges dataset. Accordingly, it was possible to compare the results of the sentiment analysis of IoT challenge data with the result of the sentiment analysis of dataset about IoT advantages. The results revealed that positive words in both data were the most dominant, which could be attributed to the discussions about IoT-promised advantages, drivers, IoT success, etc. Negative words ranked second in sentiments, while data pertaining to IoT challenges included more negative words, which could be due to challenges embedded in webpages. In addition, as can be observed in Figure 6, negative emotions such as “fear” were of higher ranks compared to the results of sentiment analysis of IoT advantages dataset. Individuals might fear that such challenges could lead to their IoT project failure. Other emotions could

be compared by considering [Figure 6\(e\)](#). The pattern of colors in the figure is based on the study conducted by Mohammad (2011b).

The sentiment analysis revealed the emotions behind texts in webpages and positive or negative sentiment in this regard. This can help to develop new research in this area, especially for researchers studying technology acceptance. For example, IoT challenges may lead to fear in individuals to use IoT due to the possibility of project failure, health risks, immaturity of IoT devices, etc. Identifying such factors can be vital to IoT technology acceptance. For future information about IoT acceptance, one can refer to cited references (Balaji et al. 2018; Canhoto and Arp 2017; Coughlan et al. 2012). There is a potential for research to understand emotions of people regard to their interaction with IoT or related devices. For example, it is possible to conduct an interview with people to understand reasons which they accept to use or not use IoT devices. Then by doing sentiment analysis, it is possible to understand emotions behind of presented reasons. There is valuable research in the literature which discuss reasons of using or not using IoT devices (Canhoto and Arp 2017; Garg and Kim 2018), but they did not applied sentiment analysis on the interviews. When we are aware with emotions which usually lead to not using of IoT devices, it is possible to plan for addressing reasons of not using with more insights.

Conclusion

This research provided an overall view of the webpages discussing IoT challenges and it has identified the most prevalent challenges present. Based on the results, the challenges related to the security of IoT devices, connectivity and data processing, and storage were the most prevalent. The reason for this may lie in their significance as a barrier to the progression of IoT technology since different webpages mentioned the aforementioned as challenges of IoT. A key contribution of this research was the inspection of websites as the supplementary source of knowledge instead of solely analyzing journal papers. Websites are a valuable knowledge source and they can provide insights for the researchers. Most of the available literature prior to this research focused on academic papers or they briefly referred to the web content concerning IoT challenges. This research has shed a light on the status of the discussion of IoT challenges through websites.

The results of the current research were based on a semi- or fully computer-based analysis of the textual data (natural language) and there might be some errors in comparison to if there had been a human-based analysis of text. In addition, almost all of the most prevalent categories of IoT challenges were identified in research (not all of them and not in detail), which can be assumed to be a limitation of this study.

There are some studies which provide an overview on IoT literature by using statistical methods. (MacDonald and Dressler 2018; Mishra et al. 2016). Using these methods to study IoT challenges can be topic for future research.

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