Best Tree Density Approximators

1 Why

Which is the best tree to use for tree density approximation?

2 Definition

We want to choose the tree whose corresponding approximator for the given density achieves minimum relative entropy with the given density among all tree density approximators. We call such a density an *optimal tree approximator* of the given density. We call a tree according to which an optimal tree approximator factors and optimal approximator tree.

3 Result

Proposition 1. *Let $g : \mathbf{R}^n \to [0, 1]$ be a density. A tree T on $\{1, \dots, n\}$ is an optimal approximator tree if and only if it is a maximal spanning tree of the differential mutual information graph of g.*

Proof. First, denote the optimal approximator of g for tree T by f^*_T. Recall

$$f^*_T = f_1 \prod_{i \neq 1} f_{i|\mathrm{pa}_i}$$

Second, recall $d(g, f) = H(g, f) - H(g)$. Since $H(g)$ does not depend on f, f is a minimizer of $d(g, f)$ if and only if it is a minimizer of $H(g, f)$.

Third, express the cross entropy of f_T^* relative to g as

$$
\begin{aligned}
H(q, p_T^*) &= h(q_1) - \sum_{j \neq i} \left(\int_{\mathbf{R}^d} g(x) \log g_{i|pai}(x_i, x_{\mathrm{pa}_i}) dx \right) \\
&= H(q_1) - \sum_{i \neq 1} \sum_{a \in A} q(a)(\log q_{i,\mathrm{pa}_i}(a_i, a_{\mathrm{pa}_i}) - \log q_{\mathrm{pa}_i}(a_{\mathrm{pa}_i})) \\
&= H(q_1) - \sum_{i \neq 1} \sum_{a \in A} q(a)(\log q_{i,\mathrm{pa}_i}(a_i, a_{\mathrm{pa}_i}) - \log q_{\mathrm{pa}_i}(a_{\mathrm{pa}_i}) - \log q_i(a_i) + \log q_i(a_i)) \\
&= \sum_{i=1}^{n} H(q_i) - \sum_{i \neq 1} I(q_i, q_{\mathrm{pa}_i}) \\
&= \sum_{i=1}^{n} H(q_i) - \sum_{\{i,j\} \in T} I(q_i, q_j)
\end{aligned}
$$

where pa_i denotes the parent of vertex i in T $(i = 2, \ldots, n)$. $H(g_i)$ does not depend on the choice of tree. Choosing a tree to minimize the second term in the final expression above is equivalent to choosing a maximal spanning tree from the weighted graph with differential mutual information edge weights; namely, the mutual information graph of g.

$\square$