# A Comprehensive Review of Web Mining Techniques

Gurpreet Singh<sup>a</sup>, Ajay Kumar<sup>b</sup>
<sup>a</sup>Research Scholar(gps.srm@gmail.com), <sup>b</sup>Assoc. Professor (ajay.s@srmuniversity.ac.in)
<sup>a,b</sup>Deptt. of Computer Science Engg, SRM University, Sonipat, Haryana India

Abstract: Web Mining approaches are aimed at assisting web users in a number of application domains such as Web-semantics, E-Commerce, information retrieval, user customizable information and entertainment. The web-based data through internet, provides the basic computing resource to the web miners that can be mined for generating useful information with the aid of a number of data mining tools. Due to the elevated volume and very large allotmentof the data on the web, it is exigentjob to provide reliable and timely information to all the users. To address this issue, a number of web mining schemes has been used in various existing proposals in literature. Web-mining is the method to automatically determine and dig out information from Web documents. A comprehensive analysis of all presentedproposal in literature is provided to their contribution for improving web Mining. This comprehensive review of various presented proposals allows diverse users working in its domain to choose the best amongst them.

#### 1. Introduction

The amount of information on the web is so large and in large number of formats that sometimes it becomes very difficult to find relevant and correct information. So, there is a requirement of some kind of methods and techniques to find exact and useful information [1-3]. The solution for this issue is provided through Web Mining. Web Mining is one of the applications of data mining, with the difference that instead of a database or warehouse we have to use the web as our data source [4-8]. Web Mining focuses on disparate types of content such as web-based documents, information related to how users access some resource, different types of links between web sites and other forms of Internet resources to achieve internal properties of data objects by incorporating different computer technologies such as statistical analysis, soft computing and machine learning to discover patterns that may be of use to users.

The four steps involved in web-mining which are classified: resource finding from web, data selection, pre-processing for removing outliers, generalization and web analysis [51]. Web Mining is classified into



three different categories, as follows: a) Web contentMining, b) Web Structure mining and c) Web usage mining [9-11]. These categories along with their important fields are illustrated in Figure 1.

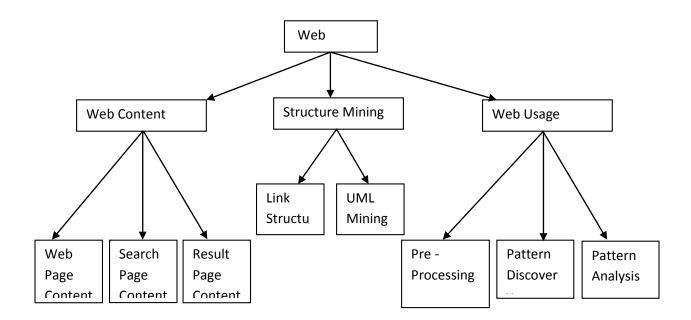


Figure 1: Categorization of Web Mining Techniques

## 2. Review of Web Mining Techniques

In this section we present a comprehensive review of existing web mining schemes. Most of these schemes have proposed generic solutions for overcoming some of the common research issues in the domain of Web Mining. The section also investigates the key contribution of these proposals in this area.

Yadav *et al.* [1] described web mining as a most important application of data mining. They discussed and applied various data mining techniques and tools for mining the huge data over the web. The main aim of web-mining is to discover and extract information over web; this knowledge can be very useful in the area of e-commerce and electronic industry. They have classified web mining into four categories as (i) web content mining, (ii) web structure mining, (iii) web usage mining and (iv) user profiles.

Mobasher*et al.* [3] have explained the main computer science aidended by web mining, they mentioned various applications, and highlighted future research directions. They provided taxonomy of web mining and summarize some of the key concepts related to the field. To start with the first concept is Page



Ranking metric, to find out the quality of pages and relevant pages to query, authors mentioned two ranking matrices, i) PageRank, the key plan is that a page will have high rank if it is pointed to by many highly ranked pages, ii) Hubs and authorities, uses a score computed by an iterative procedure called HITS. Robot Detection and filtering is used to identify between robot behavior and human behavior, as it is necessary to understand usage patterns of users for industry not the robotic patterns. Interestingness is the measure of the user interests computed from the knowledge extracted from usage data and structure data. Preprocessing is a step to make web data suitable for mining, in this step all the useless and redundant information is removed. And the last one is Maximum-Flow models which are used to identify Web communities. They have specified few prominent applications like Amazon's broadapproach to bespoke customers experience, Google's usage of link structure for returning relevant pages to a query rather than content, Double-click which serves advertisements according to the interests of the users, America Online (AOL) applied web mining to better understand web communities and their interests and provide them with good products accordingly etc. They outlined some future directions for researchers in the area of web metrics and process mining.

R. Cooley et al.[19, 20, 21] have done extensive work in web mining area. Their work can be considered as the base in this area. As in [19] they provided an early taxonomy of mining: web content mining and web usage mining. In this paper they described all the basic terminologies necessary to understand the web mining concept. They also surveyed various tools and techniques for web content mining, web usage mining and to analyze discovered patterns from web. They provided a general architecture of a web usage mining system. They highlighted the main issues and problems in this area for further research. In order to apply web mining algorithms over huge amount of web usage data some kind of preprocessing is required. In [20] they have presented several techniques for data preparation and algorithms for change raw web servers log into user sessions files that are suitable for performing Web usage mining on them. In [21] they proposed a transaction identification model, and compared it with already existing models. They discussed three modules in their paper, Reference Length Module, Maximal Forward Reference Module and Time Window Module. Finally, they used the tool Web Miner system to identify transactions.

Simranjeet*et al.* in [29] have reviewed web mining and compared web mining with data mining. In this paper they have discussed the three categories of web mining in every aspect like type of data required, suitable representation of data, methods in each category, scope application areas and challenges. Khosla et al. in [42] survey the research done in the era of web-mining. They tried to remove some confusion regarding the usage of the term web mining. They explored the connection between the three categories



of web mining i.e. web structure mining, web content mining and web usage mining and the related agent paradigm.

Table 1 provides a basic comparative analysis b/w the different types of web mining. Comparison is based parameters such as type of data, representation, various methods and different application categories.

Table 1: Web mining categories

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	Web Mining			
	Web Content Mining		Web Structure Mining	Web Usage Mining
	IR View	DB View	1	
View of Data	- Unstructured - Semi structured	- Semi structured - Web site as DB	- Links structure	- Interactivity
Main Data	- Text documents - Hypertext documents	- Hypertext documents	- Links structure	- Server logs - Browser logs
Representation	- Bag of words, n-grams - Terms, phrases - Concepts or ontology - Relational	- Edge-labeled graph (OEM) - Relational	- Graph	- Relational table - Graph
Method	- TFIDF and variants - Machine learning - Statistical (including NLP)	- Proprietary algorithms - ILP - (Modified) association rules	- Proprietary algorithms	- Machine Learning - Statistical - (Modified) association rules
Application Categories	- Categorization  - Clustering - Finding extraction rules - Finding patterns in text - User modeling	- Finding frequent sub- structures - Web site schema discovery	- Categorization - Clustering	- Site construction, adaptation, and management - Marketing - User modeling

In the following sections, the various categories and existing literature in the domain of Web Mining has been explored. These sections are divided based on different domains where web mining can be applied. In each section a detailed review of existing techniques on web mining are discussed based on their usability in each domain.

## 2.1 Web Content Mining

A content of web site consists of different data types and data structures used for representing web based information. This content may be further classified into visual content such as text images, multimedia content such as audio and video, and other structured records such as lists and tables. Web Content Mining is a process which is used for analyzing the data from web documents and then extracting some useful information from the content. In the past there have been quite a lot of significant techniques that have been proposed to perform the function of extracting information from traditional domains such as signals and images.



The web content mining model proposed by the authors of [58] [59] for performing information retrieval involves the domain of graph analysis, where nodes represent web pages and edges represent hyperlinks. This information retrieval model is based on object oriented paradigm. They have addressed an important issue of finding frequent item sets and improving the quality of ranking in a query. The proposed information retrieval model pertains to characteristics like modularity, flexibility, broadness and applicability. There are few steps in web content mining process as listed in the figure below:

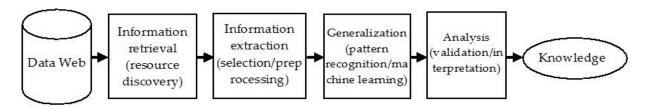


Figure 2: The Step wise procedure of web content mining

In web content mining there are two approaches: 1) Agent Based Approach, 2) Database Approach. The diagram below shows the classification for these approaches.

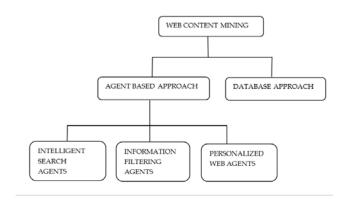


Figure 3: The various approaches of Web Content Mining.

## 2.1.1 Agent Based Approach

Its main focus is on searching the relevant information from web. It is further divided into three parts:



a. Intelligent search agents – It basically performs automatic search with a particular query.

b. Information filtering: / categorizing agents – It is used for filters data.

c. Personalized web agents: It discoverdocuments which are linked to the user Profiles.

2.1.2 Database Approach

It contains databases, which consist tables, attributes, and schemes. Its main focus is on technique for organizing the semi-structured data on web in-to collection of resources. The benefit of this is that we can

use data mining techniques to analyze it, Example areweb querying system and multilevel database.

Zheng et al. in [37] have discussed the structural semantic entropy. This technique used tolocate data on

web page. It is an automated extraction algorithm that can extract useful pair of attributes from different

web sites. The structural semantic entropy method is based on the extent of density occurrence of the

interested information. The authors have experimented and the results were encouraging.

Rohillaet al. in [36] have implemented the web content mining in their project called INFUSION. This

concept has been applied on managing the social websites. As HTML web pages consist of various

elements, some are nested and some are not. So HTML document have a tree like structure. Any kind of

changes in the web page is reflected in the structure. In their implementation they have used an algorithm

called Tree Edit Distance algorithm to make sure that changes get reflected in the tree structure of the

document. The purpose of their work is based on the fact that web content mining is useful in extracting

useful information, new changes and updates in their social network etc from users' various social

accounts and showing it at a common place. They have used technique called Web Scraping which is a

process of extracting information from web in structured way. So data is fetched from various social web

sites and showed to user in a well-structured way.

2.2 Web Usage Mining

The term web usage mining is the application of one or more computing techniques to perform the

functionality of web mining so as to obtain some information from the web based data that depicts some

interesting usage patterns [60]. This information may be utilized so as to understand the user behavior

and improve the usability of any web-based applications [61]. The extraction process may reveal different types of data that includes some web logs, database transactions and the streams of click that are done at some web site or at some group of similar web links. Another issue that is related to web usage mining, the implementation of privacy concern of the website users this topic is also being extensively researched in this domain.

Web usage mining itself can be further classified based upon the kind of usage data considered:

- a. Web Server Data: its user log, like IP address, page reference and access time etc.
- b. Application level Data: This information can be used for personalization of the web sites.
- c. Application server Data: these are commercial application servers used for e-commerce based applications.

In the process of web usage mining the figure below shows the steps involved, initially the raw data is processed, just to remove useless and redundant data, then to find the usage patterns some useful data mining techniques are applied. These steps in the form of steps are shown in the diagram below.

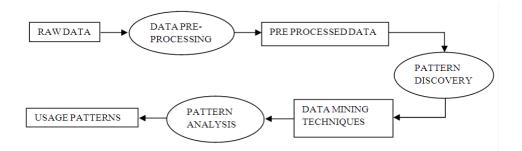


Figure 5. The process of web usage mining

Raju *et al.* [4] highlighted the significance of Web personalization. The term web personalization means that it enables the dynamic insertion, customization or suggestions that can be useful for users based on user's implicit behaviour such as item purchased and page viewed, and explicit behavior like rating and preferences etc. As Web is an "ocean" of information, user faces the problem of finding relevant, needed and useful information.



Sahuet al. [5] have discussed Data cleaning used in Data Preprocessing and Web Usage Mining. They also provided a summary of Log Cleaner that filters out plenty of some irrelevant, inconsistent data based on the common of their URL. Data cleaning is very important process because noisy data can cause difficulty during page ranking. They mentioned various web usage mining techniques like Two-Level clustering method, Noise Detector, Community Detection, Effective and scalable technique and EPLog Cleaner filtering method.

Naga *et.al.* [4] have discussed web server log files that are plain text files which store click stream data of users. The various log files comes in the following file formats:a) Common Log Format (CLF), b) Microsoft Internet Information Services (IIS) Log file Format, c) World Wide Web (World Wide Web Consortium) Extended Log file Format and d) NCSA Common Log file Format.

Srivastava *et al.* in [11] have provided an advanced survey of speedily growing region of web usage mining. Web usage mining allow administrators to better understand web traffic behavior, and this information is in turn is very useful for developing policies, providing better content to user, e-commerce, resolving security issues and so on. Web usage mining have three phases, namely pattern analysis, pattern discovery and preprocessing. Due to increasing interest in this area a lot of effort has been put in research work and application development. Authors have provided taxonomy of major application areas of web usage mining and various commercial products available. They categorized web usage mining into five major application areas: Personalization, System improvement, Site Modification, Business Intelligence and Usage Characterization, and explained each one in detail. They also provided the commercial product according to the above categories, like Web SIFT, WUM [12], Speed Tracer [13], Weblog Miner [14] as web usage mining products, Site Helper [15], Letizia [16], Web Watcher [17], Mobasher [18], Analog and Krishnapuram as Personalization Products and so on. They also gave a brief overview of the Web SIFT system as an example.

Jaideep *et.al.* [9] have explained the process of web usage mining. They mentioned that after the data passes through the Preprocessing stage, algorithms from Data Mining viz. Classification, Clustering, Association Rules, Statistical Analysis etc. are to be applied. The Pattern Mining phase to be applied depends upon the area in which it is to be applied. Often, Visualization techniques are utilized to show these trends in data. Web Log Data has been utilized across all domains.

#### 2.3 Web Structure Mining



The term web structure mining can be defined as the process of discovering information related to the structure of a web page from the world wide web. To perform web structure mining the web can also be considered as a collection of semi structured documents. The graphical structural representation of any generic web site may typically consist of the nodes being the web pages and edges connecting two related pages may be represented by hyperlinks.

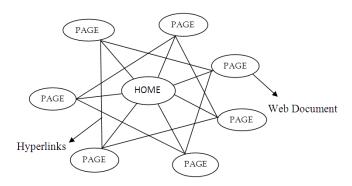


Figure 6: The structure of World Wide Web

Costa Da *et al.* in [23] have surveyed the research area of web mining and they mainly focused on the category web structure mining. They have discussed the concept of Link mining and how it can be applicable to web mining. They also discussed block-level link mining issues. As they mainly focused on web structure mining, they reviewed two well-liked algorithms applied in web str. mining: Page Rank, HITS.

Krishna Murthy *et al.* in [26] proposed an algorithm for the classification of XML URLs based on their semantic. As a huge amount of information is there on web, it is very important to know what information is to be considered and what information is to be avoided, so some kind of method should be there to classify the information. HTML based web pages are not well structured so XML based web pages are a better option for web mining. Authors categorized web page into four categories.

### 3. Conclusion

The use of web mining techniques can help to reduce the amount of information dissemination thereby providing correct and up to date information for the users. This work has provided a detailed review about existing web mining techniques along with their application areas. The reviewed proposals have been classified into different sub categories and a comprehensive classification of existing literature into these categories has also been done. The work also provides an overview about important issues that need



attention of research community. Finally, a brief description about some important tools being used in the web mining also presented. The presented work can be considered as a useful reference point for all researchers in the region of web mining.

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