

A Monte Carlo Approach to Joke Optimization

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13-Jul-2008

ABSTRACT. In the following submission we propose an optimally humorous statistics joke, possessing maximum punch line coefficient of comedy.

1 Background

Professional satirists have long struggled in the search for effective statistics jokes. Many authorities have cited the inherent unfunny of statistics as the greatest obstacle. In 1937 the comedy team of Mark Lester and Harold Small developed the well known “A statistician and a donkey walk into a bar” joke, generally considered by comedy historians as being the first recorded statistics joke with a coefficient of comedy (COC) in excess of unity. Only four years later, after the dark, tumultuous split of Lester and Small, the newly formed comedy duo of Lester and Merriman performed their famous “Who’s performing the regression” skit, boasting a COC of between 1.60 and 1.64, depending on the timing. In the following year, both these groundbreaking comedians were immolated in the Great Toluska Coach House Fire (experts agree that this devastating conflagration was not funny). Since that time, attempts to achieve the coveted 2-COC statistics joke have failed.

2 Theory

Let L^h be the set of all hilariously integrable functions, and have θ be the maximum COC punch line estimator.

Thm

Statement S : $\theta \in L^h$.

Pf.

By contradiction. Suppose $\theta \notin L^h$, then θ wasn’t funny to begin with. Hence, S .

3 Results

We ran our algorithm on the “A doctor, city councilman, statistician are playing golf” joke:

A doctor, city councilman, and statistician are playing golf.

They play through the first couple holes, then come up to a group of two golfers ahead of them.

The group ahead of them is terrible. They hack wildly at the ball, then search for seeming eternities for their errant shots in the rough.

Our trio become increasingly impatient, when finally they flag down a greens manager cruising by in his golf cart.

“What in the world is the matter with these two?” they complain, “they’re holding up the course.”

“Oh,” the greens manager says, “these two brave young men are firefighters. Last year they saved our clubhouse when it caught fire. Sadly, they lost their eyesight in the blaze.”

Our three golfers are aback.

“Well,” the councilman stammers, “first thing tomorrow at our council meeting I’m going to inquire on these brave young men’s behalf, and make sure that they’re receiving their full benefits.”

“You know,” the doctor steps forward, “I have a colleague who’s a world class optical surgeon. They’re constantly making advances in the field, and I’m going to contact him first thing tomorrow and see if there’s something that can be done for these brave men.”

After a thoughtful pause, the statistician complains, “can’t these two play at night?”

This punch line represents the global maximum for the joke’s COC. Our optimization successfully exited a number of local maxima punch line variations, including the obvious omission of “After a thoughtful pause.”