

Towards an ideal model of sentiment

Abstract: Sentiment analysis deals with the emotional content of transmitted messages. Traditionally, that meant text. However, messaging has become multimedia. Broadening to deal with that is not just about extracting from different sources (pictorial, sound, etc). It requires descriptions that capture the different kinds of emotional content that are prominent in different sources. Verbal categories are a default. Different sets of categories are available, some oriented to intense emotion, some to pervasive everyday experiences. Dimensional descriptions have computational advantages, and carry partly comparable information. Both can be understood as partial descriptions of the systems that generate emotion, and deriving fuller descriptions of those is an obvious goal. Several more specialised kinds of description are potentially relevant. Social stances are important: politeness is the best researched example. Landscapes often feature in pictorial media: they evoke reactions that are distinctive, but little discussed. Music is also prominent. Specialised dimensional descriptions are well developed: interactions with the use of the music are beginning to be studied, as are the text-music interactions that make song. Humour and irony potentially transform any apparent content. Integrating those is a deeply challenging ideal.

Bio: Roddy Cowie graduated (from Stirling) in Philosophy and Psychology, and his PhD (from Sussex) compared human and machine vision. He has worked at Queen's, Belfast since 1975, on topics from individual differences in vision, to social variation in speech, to the experience of becoming deaf. Those highlighted issues involving emotion, and that has been his main focus since the 1990s. He was central to a series of projects on emotion and computing from the 1990s, and retains an active interest in the area. He has also tried to highlight the role of emotion in areas where it tends to be underestimated, including music, therapies for chronic illnesses, and the dynamics of peace and conflict.

