Identifying VHS Recording Artifacts in the Age of Online Video Platforms

Thomas Steiner
Univ. Politécnica de Catalunya
Department LSI
Barcelona, Spain
tsteiner@lsi.upc.edu

Seth van Hooland
Université Libre de Bruxelles
Information and C.S. Dept.
Brussels, Belgium
svhooland@ulb.ac.be

Ruben Verborgh
Ghent University
iMinds – Multimedia Lab
Ghent, Belgium
ruben.verborgh@ugent.be

Joseph Tennis
Information School
University of Washington
Washington, D.C., USA
jtennis@uw.edu

Rik Van de Walle
Ghent University
iMinds – Multimedia Lab
Ghent, Belgium
rik.vandewalle@ugent.be

ABSTRACT
In this position paper, we describe how analogue recording artifacts stemming from digitalized VHS tapes such as grainy noises, ghosting, or synchronization issues can be identified at Web-scale via crowdsourcing in order to identify adult content digitalized by amateurs.

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Amateur Video Digitalization, VHS, Online Video Platforms

1. INTRODUCTION
Online adult video is one of the fastest growing Internet industries as recent statistics of a large meta search engine for adult content show1. Since its launch in 2006, the search engine has indexed the amount of overall 735,000 videos at a growth rate of 22,000 videos per month with overall 93 billion views. Over this period, 158 million user ratings were collected. It becomes evident that efficient search, recommendation, and navigation capabilities are required in order to use adult video platforms in a meaningful way. Online adult video platforms typically allow their users (i) to search for content based on full-text query terms that are matched against textual descriptions of the video like its title or description, or (ii) to browse the archive of a platform by category or channel, usually based on video tags. Users are presented a top-n ranked list of videos that match a given category or query term, ranked by criteria such as relevancy, view count, user rating, or upload date. The default ranking criterion normally is relevancy—a platform-specific black box concept. Advanced and frequently returning power-users may prefer more transparent and traceable ranking criteria such as the popularity-based view count and user rating, or the FIFO (last in, first out) ranking criterion upload date.

In this position paper, we suggest a computer vision-based approach to automatically identify VHS adult content that has been digitalized in a non-professional manner. This type of niche adult content is characterized by analogue recording artifacts stemming from VHS tapes. Common issues include ghosting, brightness and color channel interferences, chaotic line shift at the end of frames (Figure 1a), and wide horizontal noise strips (Figure 1b).

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT
The publication of online content produced by amateurs, or non-professionals, has received a substantial amount of attention. This position paper raises the question: to what extent can the identification of content as VHS ADULT CONTENT DIGITALIZED BY AMATEURS offer a useful parameter? Exploiting the fact that an individual invested time and resources for the digitalization of content from a VHS tape can hold a unique value both for information retrieval and research purposes. Especially in the context of the long tail of niche content, automatically identifying VHS ADULT CONTENT DIGITALIZED BY AMATEURS can help identify more quickly unique content items.

Uploaders of this type of content occasionally add tags such as “vintage” or “retro” but these practices are not standardized and sparse. On the aforementioned adult content platform, out of overall 735,000 videos, there were 23,427 tagged as “vintage”, 95 as “vhs”, and only 50 as “vintage” and “vhs”. Automated means to aggregate this type of content are needed. In this paper, we propose a scalable, crowdsourced way to identify adult content digitalized by amateurs.

3. PROPOSED METHODOLOGY
In [5], we have introduced a generic crowdsourcing framework for the automatic and scalable annotation of HTML5 video. The term crowdsourcing was first coined by Jeff Howe in an article in the magazine Wired [1]. It is a portmanteau

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1http://www.pornwatchers.com/content/statistics11-2012/
(a) Chaotic line shift at the bottom of frames (green)
(b) Wide horizontal noise strip distortions

Figure 1: Typical VHS artifacts and distortions after amateurish digitalization.

of “crowd” and “outsourcing”. Howe writes: “The new pool of cheap labor: everyday people using their spare cycles to create content, solve problems, even do corporate R&D”. The difference to outsourcing is that the crowd is undefined by design. For our specific use case, any adult video platform user could be part of that crowd.

While a user watches a video, the framework in the background unobtrusively annotates it, e.g., as demonstrated in the concrete case in [5], to extract events. The annotation framework being generic, we can imagine a video denoising algorithm as presented by Yang in [8] being applied to a video that is currently played to detect if it suffers from VHS artifacts. Over time, individual users watching low quality digitalized videos create enough signals to eventually filter out the corpus of content digitalized by amateurs.

4. RELATED WORK

The plethora of online videos can effectively be tackled with the driving force behind it: an enormous community of users. The aim is to make the annotation task as easy and as less time-consuming as possible, in order to avoid disturbing a user’s experience. Soleymani and Larson describe the use of crowdsourcing for annotating the effective response to video [3]. They discuss the design of such a crowdsourcing task and list best practices to employ crowdsourcing. The trade-off between the required effort versus the accuracy and the cost of annotating has been described by Vondrick et al. [6]. The quality of annotations generated by a crowdsourcing process has been assessed by Nowak and Rüger [2]. Welinder and Perona [7] devise a model that includes the degree of uncertainty and a measure of the annotators’ ability. The usefulness of annotations also depends on their envisioned functional value, i.e., what purpose they should serve in the application.

5. FUTURE WORK AND CONCLUSION

Given the streaming nature of online video, our approach inherits the speed and accuracy challenges described in [4]. The solution here is to work with lower resolution versions of the video files in the background. In order to evaluate the accuracy of the generated VHS artifacts annotations, A/B tests with different video resolutions can be used.

In this position paper, we have presented a crowdsourced, scalable approach to detect VHS digitalization artifacts, where users by watching videos do useful work such as detecting VHS artifacts as a by-product of viewing, and thus over time allowing video platforms to identify this type of niche content.

6. REFERENCES