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PEREIRA-STERN TESTS**

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ON THE BAYESIANITY OF PEREIRA-STERN TESTS

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Abstract

A test for a precise hypothesis introduced by Pereira and Stern is proved to be a Bayes test for specific loss functions. The nature of such loss functions and their relations to stylised inference problems are investigated.

1 Introduction

Pereira and Stern [1999] have recently introduced a measure of evidence in favour of a precise hypothesis, i.e., a subset of the parametric space having null Lebesgue measure. The definition of their measure of evidence is now presented:

Definition 1. (*Pereira and Stern*) Consider a parametric statistical model, i.e., a quintet $(\mathcal{X}, \mathcal{A}, \mathbf{F}, \Theta, \pi)$, where \mathcal{X} is a sample space, \mathcal{A} is a suitable sigma-algebra of subsets of \mathcal{X} , \mathbf{F} is a class of probability distributions on \mathcal{A} indexed on a parametric space Θ and π is a prior density over (a sigma-algebra of) Θ . Suppose a subset Θ_0 of Θ having null Lebesgue measure (wrt Θ) is of interest. Let $\pi(\theta|\mathbf{x})$ be the posterior density of θ , given the sample observation \mathbf{x} , and $T(\mathbf{x}) = \{\theta : \pi(\theta|\mathbf{x}) > \sup_{\Theta_0} \pi(\theta|\mathbf{x})\}$. The **Pereira-Stern measure of evidence** is defined as $EV(\Theta_0, \mathbf{x}) = 1 - \Pr[\theta \in T(\mathbf{x})|\mathbf{x}]$ and a **Pereira-Stern test** (or procedure) is to accept Θ_0 whenever $EV(\Theta_0, \mathbf{x})$ is "large".

As we can see from Definition 1, the Pereira-Stern measure of evidence considers, in favour of a precise hypothesis, all points of the parametric space whose posterior density values are, at most, as large as its supremum over Θ_0 ; roughly speaking, it considers all points which are less "probable" than some point in Θ_0 . Also, we should remember that, according to Pereira and Stern [1999], a large value of $Ev(\Theta_0, \mathbf{x})$ means that the subset Θ_0 lies in a high-probability region of Θ and, therefore, the data support the null hypothesis; on the other hand, a small value of $Ev(\Theta_0, \mathbf{x})$ points out that Θ_0 is in a low-probability region of Θ and the data would make us discredit the null hypothesis.

Pereira-Stern's procedures are in accordance with the "Principle of Least Surprise", as suggested by Good [1988], since it considers in the construction of the subset $T(\mathbf{x})$ those points in the parametric space less surprising, in the sense that they are, due to Good, "more supported by the data", than the least surprising value in Θ_0 (for further details on this principle, see Good [1988]). In this context, the posterior probability of $T(\mathbf{x})$, $Pr(\theta \in T(\mathbf{x})|\mathbf{x})$, may be called "observed surprise", as indicated in Evans [1997].

Pereira and Stern [1999] claim that the use of $EV(\Theta_0, \mathbf{x})$ to assess the evidence of Θ_0 is a "Bayesian" procedure, as only the posterior density is involved. Furthermore, it seems that the procedure has overcome the difficulty of dealing with a precise hypothesis (see Basu [1975], for instance): unlike Jeffreys's tests (see Jeffreys [1961]), Pereira-Stern procedures do not explicitly introduce a prior positive probability for Θ_0 .

The main purpose of this paper is to verify the existence of loss functions which render a Pereira-Stern procedure into a Bayesian test of hypotheses of Θ_0 against Θ_1 , the complementary set $\Theta \setminus \Theta_0$. For the reader's guidance, the content of this paper is presented as follows: In section 2, we will exhibit such loss functions which confer "bayesianity" to Pereira-Stern procedures and, in section 3, shortcomings risen from introducing a prior positive probability for Θ_0 are pointed out; In section 4, we will establish a relation between the Pereira-Stern's solution to the problem of testing a precise hypothesis Θ_0 and the procedure for estimating $g(\theta) = \mathbf{1}(\theta \in \Theta_0)$ as done in Hwang et al. [1992]; Finally, we will discuss the aforementioned loss functions' unavoidable dependence on the sample data and examine loss functions depending on \mathbf{x} in general. We should mention that, for simplicity, hereafter we let Θ be the real line and Θ_0 have a single real number θ_0 (the general case $\Theta \subseteq \mathbb{R}^n$, $n \in \mathbb{N}$, is similar and will be omitted in the present work; nevertheless, the necessary alterations will be commented as we go along). We will then

consider the hypotheses: $H_0 : \theta = \theta_0$ versus $H_1 : \theta \neq \theta_0$.

2 The case of Standard Bayesian Test

In this section, we will verify that Pereira-Stern procedures consist in Standard Bayesian tests of hypotheses for specific loss functions. Here we call "Standard" those tests of hypotheses which take into account only a probability density function over Θ , not introducing a positive probability for Θ_0 as Jeffreys's tests. The later will be considered in the next section. Let $D = \{\text{Accept } H_0 (d_0), \text{Reject } H_0 (d_1)\}$ the decision space. We define the following loss function:

Definition 2. *The loss function L on $D \times \Theta$ defined by $L(\text{Reject } H_0, \theta) = a[1 - 1(\theta \in T(\mathbf{x}))]$ and $L(\text{Accept } H_0, \theta) = b + c1(\theta \in T(\mathbf{x}))$, $a, b, c > 0$, is called a LP_1 loss function.*

From Definition 2, we should note that we will consider for the verification of Pereira-Stern procedures' "bayesianity", loss functions which depend on the sample observation \mathbf{x} . Such dependence may, at first sight, look some strange for us. However, as we will examine in detail in the last section of the paper, loss functions depending on the sample data are able to incorporate some psychological aspects from an individual's preference ordering. This fact hints the possibility that loss functions which turn Pereira-Stern procedures into Bayesian hypotheses tests unavoidably depend on the sample data. In addition, this kind of loss function has already appeared in the literature, as in Bernardo [1994].

Another aspect of LP_1 loss functions is that they punish heavily the decision-maker who erroneously accept H_0 when θ is, in fact, more "likely" than θ_0 , that is, when θ belongs to $T(\mathbf{x})$. Under this circumstance, the LP_1 loss is increased by $c > 0$. Now, let us prove the following:

Theorem 1. *Minimization of posterior expected LP_1 loss functions is a Pereira-Stern procedure.*

Proof. The posterior risk of acceptance is

$$\begin{aligned}
 E_{\pi}[L(d_0, \theta)|\mathbf{x}] &= E_{\pi}[L(\text{Accept } H_0, \theta)|\mathbf{x}] \\
 &= \int_{\Theta} [b + c1(\theta \in T(\mathbf{x}))] \pi(\theta|\mathbf{x}) d\theta \\
 &= \int_{\Theta} b \pi(\theta|\mathbf{x}) d\theta + \int_{T(\mathbf{x})} c \pi(\theta|\mathbf{x}) d\theta \\
 &= b + c(1 - EV(\Theta_0, \mathbf{x})) \quad . \quad (1)
 \end{aligned}$$

On the other hand, the posterior risk of rejection is

$$\begin{aligned}
 E_{\pi}[L(d_1, \theta)|\mathbf{x}] &= E_{\pi}[L(\text{Reject } H_0, \theta)|\mathbf{x}] \\
 &= \int_{\Theta} a[1 - 1(\theta \in T(\mathbf{x}))] \pi(\theta|\mathbf{x}) d\theta \\
 &= \int_{\Theta} a \pi(\theta|\mathbf{x}) d\theta - \int_{T(\mathbf{x})} a \pi(\theta|\mathbf{x}) d\theta \\
 &= aEV(\Theta_0, \mathbf{x}) \quad . \quad (2)
 \end{aligned}$$

Thus, a test is to accept Θ_0 if and only if $E_{\pi}[L(d_0, \theta)|\mathbf{x}] < E_{\pi}[L(d_1, \theta)|\mathbf{x}]$, that is, if

$$EV(\Theta_0, \mathbf{x}) > \frac{b + c}{a + c} \quad (3)$$

□

From the above inequality, we note that if $a < b$, then the decision will be always to reject H_0 , as $Ev(\Theta_0, \mathbf{x})$ takes values in the interval $[0, 1]$. That is, if for the decision-maker reject H_0 is preferable to erroneously accept H_0 whenever θ lies in $T^c(\mathbf{x})$, then the decision will be to reject H_0 . On the other hand, if $a > b$ and c is "small" then the acceptance of H_0 does not require a large value for $Ev(\Theta_0, \mathbf{x})$. This happens whenever the decision-maker believes that d_0 is preferable to d_1 and that θ belonging to $T(\mathbf{x})$ is not so misleading. As an example, if $a, b, c > 0$ satisfy $9a - 10b = c$ ($19a - 20b = c$), then we will decide in favour of H_0 if $Ev(\Theta_0, \mathbf{x}) > 0.90$ (0.95), standard cutoff values in hypotheses tests.

We should also emphasize that there are variations of LP_1 loss functions whose interpretations are different from the one presented here, but which still lead us to perform a Pereira-Stern test.

3 Pereira-Stern Procedure as a Jeffreys's test

Next, we will verify that the introduction of a prior positive probability for the hypothesis H_0 will not render the Pereira-Stern measure of evidence into a test statistic for the decision problem stated in section 2 with LP_1 loss function (more precisely, the Pereira-Stern measure of evidence will be just a term of this test statistic). For this purpose, let $f(\mathbf{x}|\theta)$ be the likelihood function, $g(\mathbf{x}) = \int_{\Theta} f(\mathbf{x}|\theta)\pi(\theta)d\theta$ be the marginal density of the data and $\alpha \in [0, 1]$ be the prior probability for H_0 (as done in Jeffreys's tests). We continue solving our decision problem.

Suppose that the prior distribution on Θ is given by

$$P(\theta) = \begin{cases} \alpha, & \theta = \theta_0 \\ (1 - \alpha)\pi(\theta), & \theta \neq \theta_0 \end{cases}, \quad (4)$$

where $\pi(\theta)$ is the original density on the parametric space before specification of H_0 and H_1 . Then, the posterior distribution on Θ is

$$P(\theta|\mathbf{x}) = \begin{cases} \frac{\alpha f(\mathbf{x}|\theta_0)}{f(\mathbf{x})}, & \theta = \theta_0 \\ \frac{(1-\alpha)f(\mathbf{x}|\theta)\pi(\theta)}{f(\mathbf{x})}, & \theta \neq \theta_0 \end{cases}, \quad (5)$$

where $f(\mathbf{x}) = \alpha f(\mathbf{x}|\theta_0) + \int_{\theta \neq \theta_0} (1 - \alpha)f(\mathbf{x}|\theta)\pi(\theta)d\theta$. The posterior risk of acceptance is

$$\begin{aligned} E_P[L(d_0, \theta)|\mathbf{x}] &= E_P[L(\text{Accept } H_0, \theta)|\mathbf{x}] \\ &= \frac{b \alpha f(\mathbf{x}|\theta_0)}{f(\mathbf{x})} + \int_{\theta \neq \theta_0} [b + c1(\theta \in T(\mathbf{x}))] \frac{(1 - \alpha)f(\mathbf{x}|\theta)\pi(\theta)}{f(\mathbf{x})} d\theta \\ &= \frac{b \alpha f(\mathbf{x}|\theta_0)}{f(\mathbf{x})} + \frac{(1 - \alpha)g(\mathbf{x})}{f(\mathbf{x})} [b + c - c \text{Ev}(\Theta_0, \mathbf{x})] \quad . \quad (6) \end{aligned}$$

On the other hand, the posterior risk of rejection is

$$\begin{aligned} E_P[L(d_1, \theta)|\mathbf{x}] &= E_P[L(\text{Reject } H_0, \theta)|\mathbf{x}] \\ &= \frac{a \alpha f(\mathbf{x}|\theta_0)}{f(\mathbf{x})} + \int_{\theta \neq \theta_0} [a - a1(\theta \in T(\mathbf{x}))] \frac{(1 - \alpha)f(\mathbf{x}|\theta)\pi(\theta)}{f(\mathbf{x})} d\theta \\ &= \frac{a \alpha f(\mathbf{x}|\theta_0)}{f(\mathbf{x})} + \frac{(1 - \alpha)g(\mathbf{x})}{f(\mathbf{x})} a \text{Ev}(\Theta_0, \mathbf{x}) \quad . \quad (7) \end{aligned}$$

Thus, a test is to accept Θ_0 if and only if $E_P[L(d_0, \theta)|\mathbf{x}] < E_P[L(d_1, \theta)|\mathbf{x}]$, that is, if

$$EV(\Theta_0, \mathbf{x}) + \frac{(a-b)\alpha f(\mathbf{x}|\theta_0)}{(a+c)(1-\alpha)g(\mathbf{x})} > \frac{b+c}{a+c} \quad (8)$$

As we can see from the above inequality, $EV(\Theta_0, \mathbf{x})$ will be no more the single test statistic if we take into account Jeffreys's idea for testing precise hypothesis. In this case, the decision criterium will also depend not only on the prior probability for H_0 (the larger the value of α is, the smaller $Ev(\Theta_0, \mathbf{x})$ needs to be in order to make us accept H_0) but also on the ratio of the likelihood of θ_0 to the mean likelihood $g(\mathbf{x})$. We should mention that for the general case $\Theta \subseteq \mathbb{R}^n$, $n \in \mathbb{N}$, a small modification should be done: to substitute $g_0(\mathbf{x}) = \int_{\Theta_0} f(\mathbf{x}|\theta)\pi_0(\theta)d\theta$ for $f(\mathbf{x}|\theta_0)$, with π_0 being a probability density function over Θ_0 .

We should also note that when $\alpha = 0$ we return to the situation of section 2, in which $Ev(\Theta_0, \mathbf{x})$ plays the role of the test statistic. For general $\alpha > 0$, in order to have the Pereira-Stern measure of evidence as the test statistic (that is, $Ev(\Theta_0, \mathbf{x})$ being the only term depending on \mathbf{x} , as in the case $\alpha = 0$), it seems that suitable loss functions depend not only on \mathbf{x} but also on the original prior density π over Θ . An example of such loss function is given by $L(\text{Reject } H_0, \theta) = a$; $L(\text{Accept } H_0, \theta) = \frac{f(\mathbf{x}|\theta_0)}{g(\mathbf{x})}[b + 1(\theta \in T(\mathbf{x}))]$, for $\theta \neq \theta_0$; zero, otherwise, with $a, b > 0$. The dependence of the above loss function on π , when $\alpha > 0$, suggests that Pereira-Stern procedures do not separate probability and utility (Rubin [1987]).

In the sequel, we will associate Pereira-Stern procedures with stylised inference problems.

4 Estimation of $1(\theta \in \Theta_0)$

A different approach to a Pereira-Stern procedure is to consider it as a problem of estimation (Hwang et al. [1992], among others). More precisely, we consider $Ev(\Theta_0, \mathbf{x})$ as a estimator of $1(\theta \in \Theta_0)$. Thus, the new decision space, D' , is formed by all measurable functions $\phi : \mathcal{X} \rightarrow [0, 1]$, that is, $D' = \{\phi : \mathcal{X} \rightarrow [0, 1] : \phi \text{ is measurable}\}$. We show that the Pereira-Stern measure of evidence is a bayesian solution for this estimation problem. In this context we define the following loss function:

Definition 3. Let $\phi(\mathbf{x})$ be a estimator of the function $\mathbf{1}(\theta \in \Theta_0)$ and $T^c(\mathbf{x})$ the complementary set of $T(\mathbf{x})$. The loss function L on $D' \times \Theta$ defined by $L(\phi(\mathbf{x}), \theta) = [\mathbf{1}(\theta \in T^c(\mathbf{x})) - \phi(\mathbf{x})]^2$ is called a **LP₂ loss function**.

Theorem 2. The Pereira-Stern measure of evidence minimizes the posterior expectation of LP₂ loss functions.

Proof. The posterior risk is given by

$$\begin{aligned} E_\pi[L(\phi(\mathbf{x}), \theta)|\mathbf{x}] &= \int_{T^c(\mathbf{x})} (1 - \phi(\mathbf{x}))^2 \pi(\theta|\mathbf{x}) d\theta + \int_{T(\mathbf{x})} \phi^2(\mathbf{x}) \pi(\theta|\mathbf{x}) d\theta \\ &= (1 - \phi(\mathbf{x}))^2 Ev(\Theta_0, \mathbf{x}) + \phi^2(\mathbf{x})(1 - Ev(\Theta_0, \mathbf{x})) \\ &= \phi^2(\mathbf{x}) - 2\phi(\mathbf{x})Ev(\Theta_0, \mathbf{x}) + Ev(\Theta_0, \mathbf{x}) \quad . \end{aligned} \quad (9)$$

Therefore $\phi^*(\mathbf{x}) = Ev(\Theta_0, \mathbf{x})$ is the optimal solution, minimizing the posterior risk. \square

We should note that if we substitute $\mathbf{1}(\theta \in \Theta_0)$ for the factor $\mathbf{1}(\theta \in T^c(\mathbf{x})) = 1 - \mathbf{1}(\theta \in T(\mathbf{x}))$ in the expression of LP₂ loss function, we will obtain the usual quadratic loss function (a proper scoring rule), whose optimal solution is the usual Bayesian estimator $Pr(\theta \in \Theta_0|\mathbf{x})$. The factor $\mathbf{1}(\theta \in T^c(\mathbf{x}))$ incorporates Pereira-Stern's original idea that the points belonging to $T^c(\mathbf{x})$ should support the null hypothesis H_0 , as the point θ_0 itself.

5 Discussion

It is easily seen that performance of a Pereira-Stern procedure for making inference about a precise hypothesis does not violate the Likelihood Principle. This being not sufficient for the "bayesianity" of the procedure, we have proceeded to characterize it as a bayesian test of hypotheses.

A loss function represents the preference of a Bayesian among consequences dependent on unknown values of the state of nature (Savage [1954]). Assuming separability of probability and utility (see Rubin [1987] for a stronger approach), one would call "Bayesian" a procedure which minimizes expected loss functions - the coherent solution to the decision problem.

Only loss functions that depend on the factor $\mathbf{1}(\theta \in T(\mathbf{x}))$ lead to Pereira-Stern procedures. Pereira-Stern procedures, however, include a loss function which depends on \mathbf{x} . While not violating the Likelihood Principle - they are

genuine "posterior" procedures - these procedures formally allow for consideration of the statistician's embarrassment (or pride!) on having accepted (or rejected) null hypothesis when the value of θ is later idealistically revealed to belong (or not) to stylised (Bernardo's term) forms of statistical inference. The consideration of such psychological components in the construction of loss functions can only be welcomed. In a somewhat different scenario, Kadane [1992] has resolved Allais' paradox by using a utility function incorporating the statistician's suspicion that offers were too good to be true.

Another interesting feature of a Pereira-Stern procedure revealed by the examination of its "bayesianity" is that the introduction of Jeffreys's prior probability for H_0 removes from $Ev(\Theta_0, \mathbf{x})$ the condition of full test statistic. A way out for this difficulty is to consider "loss" functions dependent on the original prior density $\pi(\theta)$. We arrive at the curious conclusion that performance of a Jeffreys's test in this setting does not separate utility (of rejection/acceptance) from probability (of θ). This phenomenon, which has connections with the problem of assigning positive probability to a precise hypothesis, allows further investigation. In any case, it should be emphasized that the Pereira-Stern procedure - by avoiding Jeffreys's framework - separates utility from probability and keeps $Ev(\Theta_0, \mathbf{x})$ as the full test statistic. It is an important alternative for Jeffreys's bayesian tests of precise hypothesis.

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