

# Content-based Title Extraction from Web Page

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**Abstract:** Web pages are usually designed in a presentation oriented fashion, having therefore a large amount of non-informative data such as navigation banners, advertisement and functional text. For a particular user, only informative data such as title, main content, and representative images are considered useful. Existing methods for title extraction rely on the structural and visual features of the web page. In this paper, we propose a simpler, but more effective method by analysing the content of the title and meta tags in respect to the main body of the page. We segment the title and meta tags using a set of predefined delimiters and score the segments using three criteria: placement in tag, popularity within all header tags in the page, and the position in the link of the web page. The method is fully automated, template independent, and not limited to any certain type of web pages. Experimental results show that the method significantly improves the accuracy (average similarity to the ground truth title) from 62 % to 84 %.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the Internet is the main source of information for users. Web-based applications use search engines to collect information from websites for their users. However, the content of the web pages is not well-structured for easy content extraction. Irrelevant data such as advertisements and information related to the site that hosts the services are often retrieved. Search engines rely on several methods to extract data using manual, semi-automatic, and full automatic approaches. Most of these methods require user interaction, training data and experimental adjustment. To improve the performance of the search engines, and reduce the time and efforts required by users to identify the content of the data, fully automated techniques for extracting the relevant content from web pages are required.

In this paper, we aim at solving the problem of automatic extraction of the web page title. We define title as the most obvious description of the web page. For example, we define *Speech and Image Processing Unit* as the title for the web page (<http://www2.uef.fi/sipu/>). The title is important because it gives a user a quick insight into the content of the page and how it might be relevant to his query. It is often the primary piece of information for users to decide which search results to click on. It is also

useful in several applications such as social networks, browsers and location based applications such as MOPSI (<http://cs.uef.fi/mopsi/>) where title and a thumbnail image are extracted as the minimum information for the user's needs.

Extracting the title from the web page is not always trivial. Title tag would be the obvious source, but in several cases it also includes generic keywords such as *Homepage* or *Contact*, long descriptions that contain slogans and advertisements such as *Joensuu Keskusta | Intersport - Sport to the people*. Therefore, a more robust solution is needed to extract an informative title.

Several methods have been proposed to perform the task. (Xue et al., 2007) proposed two methods that utilize the body of the hypertext markup language (HTML) pages. The first method is based on formatting features that are extracted from the document object model (DOM) tree such as font, tag, linguistic, and format change information. The second method is based on vision features such as page layout, block, and unit position information. In either method, each text node is classified as a title or non-title using support vector machine (SVM) and conditional random field (CRF) learning models. Results show that combining formatting and vision features provides best accuracy, and that CRF outperforms SVM, and SVM with nonlinear kernels outperforms SVM with a linear kernel for this task.

Wang et al., (2009) proposed a method to extract titles from news web pages. It segments the web page into blocks using vision-based page segmentation algorithm (Cai et al., 2003). Each block is classified either as a candidate that contains the title or not, using SVM and a set of features such as first screen, largest font size, number of words, and similarity with the content of title tag. The text with the largest font inside the candidate block is considered the title.

Changuel et al., (2009) extracted the first twenty text nodes from the DOM tree and for each node a feature vector is created. Thirty-six features that are based on the styling of the text such as font size, font weight, color, letter capitalization, alignment, tag information and similarity with title tag are used to train two classifiers: decision tree (C4.5) and random forest algorithm (Breiman, 2001). This work also investigated the task of extracting titles using image information such as *alt* attribute, but they concluded that people rarely specify values for *alt*.

Mohammadzadeh et al., (2012) studied the title extraction in case of online web news articles. All text nodes are first extracted from the DOM tree, tokenized into words and transformed into classical vector representation. The words of each node are then weighted using term frequency (TF) and term frequency-inverse document frequency (TF-IDF). The similarity between each text node and the text content of title tag is computed using different similarity metrics such as cosine similarity and Overlap Scoring Measure (OSM) similarity (Manning et al., 2009). The text node that has the highest similarity with the content of title tag is considered the title of the article.

A recent method (Jeong et al., 2014) uses the text of the anchor element '`<a> text </a>`' of the inlink page (a web page that contains anchor text) to extract the title of the landing page (a web page that does not contain anchor text). For each landing page, the text nodes are extracted from the DOM tree as candidate titles. The similarity between each candidate and the anchor texts of the inlink pages pointing to the landing page is computed. A candidate that has higher similarity with the anchor text is selected as the title.

Web pages are designed in a presentation oriented fashion, having therefore much variety in their structure, layout and content depending on their domain, topic and purpose (Win and Thwin, 2014). Using structural and visual features, which has been the main focus of the previous studies, is not always useful because the title can appear at different places on the web page with no visual differences from other parts of the text, especially when the logo image contains the title (see Figure 1). Furthermore, most of

these methods require training and focus on one specific domain such as *news* or *education*.

To avoid these limitations, we do not rely on visual or structural features as the criteria to select the title. Instead, we parse the DOM tree of the web page and compare the content to that of the title and meta tags. We segment the content of these tags using a set of predefined delimiters. We then apply three criteria to score the candidate segments: placement in the tags, popularity among the header tags and the position in the link of the web page. The segment that achieves the highest score is selected as the title for the web page.

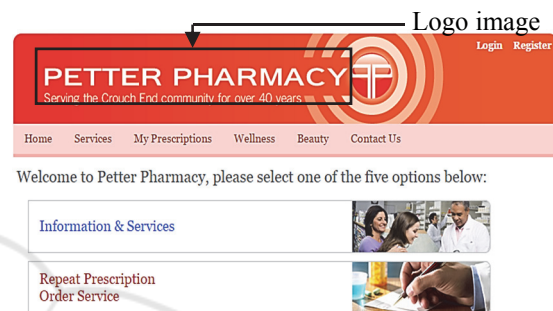


Figure 1: The web page title (in red box) has no visual differences from the surrounded text.

Our contribution is to show that the title and meta tags can still be used for extracting the title. However, they should not be used as such, but better approach is to divide them into segments, which are further analyzed using the content of the rest of the page. We use three criteria. Web link turns out to be the most significant, but placement in title and meta tags, and popularity in header tags are also used. The proposed method, Title Tag Analyzer (TTA) outperforms the comparative methods. It is domain independent and does not rely on certain templates or category of web pages. It is targeted to work with all types of pages, and not limited to certain writing style or layout of the web page.

The proposed method is implemented in MOPSI (Fränti et al., 2011) to show the search and recommendation results to the mobile user.

## 2 TITLE EXTRACTION

The steps of the method are shown in Figure 2. We download the HTML source of the web page and parse it as DOM tree. DOM is an interface allowing scripts and programs to dynamically access and handles all the elements such as content, structure and style of web pages. We navigate through the DOM

tree to identify title and meta tags with *name=title*, *og:title* and *keywords*, and extract their content. The reason to consider title and meta tags in this method is that they are a good source of text features. They contain words and phrases relevant to the content of the web page they describe, but in some cases, they also contain bogus, repeated and long sequence of words and phrases such as *here!*, *layout*, *helpdesk*, and *map and list of sports facilities on offer*, which require further processing to conclude the best representative words or phrases. For this reason, we use a set of criteria to identify the title in the web page.

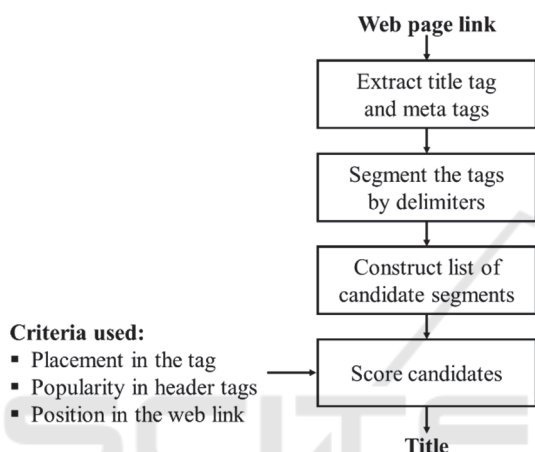


Figure 2: The workflow for title extraction.

After title and meta tags content have been extracted, we use regular expression to segment the content into words and phrases using predefined patterns (see Table 1).

Table 1: Pre-defined delimiter patterns.

space – space	space / space	space . space
space : space	, space	space -
: space	space :	space
space >	space «	space »
?,	-,	space ::
Space /	-	space <

Let  $X = \{x_i(i) \mid i \in [1, n]\}$  be the content extracted from title tag where  $n$  is the number of segments in the title tag, and  $Y = \{y_j(j) \mid j \in [1, m]\}$  be the content extracted from meta tag where  $m$  is the number of segments in the meta tag. A set of  $p$  candidate segments  $Z = \{z_k(k) \mid k \in [1, p]\} = X \cup Y$  is then constructed. Special characters such as *!*, *?*, *@* are removed and duplicate segments are deleted leaving only unique candidates.

We only consider the meta tag with name *title* and *og:title* in  $Z$ , if the title tag is found and has a value,

otherwise, we consider meta tag with name *keywords*. Next, we score the candidate segments  $z_k$  by different criteria:

### 2.1 Placement in Title and Meta Tags

According to a recent survey on search engine ranking factors made in 2013 by MOZ (<https://moz.com/search-ranking-factors>), the position of the key segments in title tag would help search engine optimization (SEO). It aims at showing the most relevant web pages on the top of the results list. The closer to the beginning of the tag the segment is, the more useful it will be for ranking. It is also recommended to have the brand name in the end of the tag. Therefore, we consider a candidate  $z_k$  that is placed first or last in the title or meta tags is more important than candidates that are placed in the middle. We therefore give it higher score:

$$S_1(z_k) = \begin{cases} 0.1 & \text{if } z_k = x_1 \text{ or } x_n \\ 0.1 & \text{if } z_k = y_1 \text{ or } y_m \\ 0 & \text{Otherwise} \end{cases} \quad (1)$$

### 2.2 Popularity in Header Tags

Headlines and important segments are usually more emphasized in the body of the web page. Therefore, we consider candidate  $z_k$  that appears in header tags ( $H_1, H_2, H_3 \dots H_6$ ) is more important than other candidates. We first navigate through the entire page and extract the content of all header tags. We then compare the strings to find whether the candidate  $z_k$  appears within header tags, and apply the following heuristics:

- A candidate  $z_k$  that appears in a bigger header like  $H1$  is more important than candidates in smaller headers like  $H6$ .
- A candidate  $z_k$  that appears more than once is more important than a candidate that appears only once.

The following formulas represent the heuristics above:

$$F(z_k) = \sum_{i=1}^6 w_i f_i \quad (2)$$

where  $f_i$  is the frequency of appearance of  $z_k$  in header  $i$  and  $w_i$  is the weight of header  $i$ . Similarly to [Fan et al. 2011], the weights are fixed to values (6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1) respectively. The score  $F$  is then normalized to the scale of [0, 1] by the following formula:

$$S_2(z_k) = \frac{F(z_k) - F_{\min}}{F_{\max} - F_{\min}} \quad (3)$$

where  $F_{\min} = \min (F(z_1), F(z_2) \dots F(z_p))$  and  $F_{\max} = \max (F(z_1), F(z_2) \dots F(z_p))$  for all candidate segments.

### 2.3 Position in the Web Page Link

The keywords in the link of the web page are usually precise and relevant to the content of the page. Therefore, a candidate  $z_k$  that appears in the web page link is more important than other candidates. We score the candidate  $z_k$  according to its position in the link (i.e, whether it appears in the host, path or document name) and its similarity with the content of the link in that position. A candidate that appears at the end of the link (document name) is more important than candidates that appear at the beginning of the link (host) because the segment in the latter path of the link are more specific to the page content than the segment appears in the host and as we go in depth with the web page link, we get more specific segments as was also concluded in (Kan and Thi, 2005). For example, consider the word *Microsoft* appears in the host of one link and in the document name of another link. In the first case, we understand that the web page is located on Microsoft's web server, but could relate to any topic. In the second case, the document is named *Microsoft* and is likely to discuss the company itself. Another example, suppose that we have a web page link (<https://www.s-kanava.fi/toimipaikka/s-market-kausala/511787202>) and two candidates which are: *S-market Kausala*, and *S-kanava*. Then, we consider that *S-market Kausala* is more relevant and therefore we give it higher weight.

Let  $pos(z_k)$  be the position of  $z_k$  in the link,  $sim$  be

the similarity between  $z_k$  and the content of the link in  $pos$  computed using Dice coefficient (Brew and McKelvie, 1996), and  $w$  is the weight of the position, then we can represent the relation as follows:

$$W(z_k) = w_i \times sim, \quad (4)$$

$i = pos(z_k)$  and  $w_i > w_{i-1}$

The weights are empirically obtained and fixed to values 1 for the host, 1.5 for the path and 3 for the document name. We normalize  $W$  to the scale [0, 1] by the following formula:

$$S_3(z_k) = \frac{W(z_k) - W_{\min}}{W_{\max} - W_{\min}} \quad (5)$$

Where,  $W_{\min} = \min (W(z_1), W(z_2) \dots W(z_r))$  and  $W_{\max} = \max (W(z_1), W(z_2) \dots W(z_r))$  for all candidate segments.

Because the web page link is formulated using English alphabet, we need to convert the candidates that are written using foreign letters such as *Silmäasema* before counting their appearance in the link. For this conversion, we use Table 2.

Finally, we compute a total score for each candidate segment as follows:

$$S_K = S_1 + S_2 + S_3 \quad (6)$$

## 3 EXPERIMENTS

### 3.1 Date Set

The weight of the position in title and meta tags and the weights of the position in the link of the web page were empirically obtained based on collection of 100 websites.

The score for each criterion is normalized to the

Table 2: Foreign to English letter conversion (<https://www.drupal.org/files/issues/i18n-ascii-full.txt>).

Foreign	English	Foreign	English	Foreign	English	Foreign	English	Foreign	English
À à	A a	È è	E e	Ö ö	O o	Ž ž	Z z	Đ đ	D d
Â â	A a	Ê ê	E e	Ø ø	O o	Ž ž	Z z	ð	D
Ä ä	A a	É é	E e	Ó ó	O o	Ž ž	Z z	Ď	D
Á á	A a	Ë ë	E e	Ò ò	O o	Û û	U u	đ	d
Ã ã	A a	Ë ë	E e	Ô ô	O o	Ù ù	U u	þ Þ	TH th
Å å	A a	Ě ě	E e	Õ õ	O o	Ú ú	U u	Ŧ ŧ	T t
Ą ą	A a	Ĕ ĕ	E e	Ő ő	O o	Û ü	U u	Ŧ ŧ	T t
Æ æ	AE ae	Ë ë	E e	Œ œ	OE oe	Ŭ ŭ	U u	Ŧ ŧ	T t
Ç ç	C c	Ì ì	I i	Š š	S s	Ů ů	u	Đ đ	NG ng
Č č	C c	Í í	I i	Š š	S s	Ł ł	L l	Ŧ ŧ	K k
Ć ć	C c	Ī ī	I i	Ş ş	S s	Ĺ ĺ	L l	Ř ř	R r
Ĝ ĝ	G g	Ĭ ĭ	I i	ß	SS	Ń ń	N n	Ň ň	N n
Ġ ġ	G g	Ĵ ĵ	J j	Ý ý	Y y	Ņ ņ	N n		
		Ķ ķ	K k	Ŷ ŷ	Y y	Ŋ ŋ	N n		

scale [0, 1] except the position in title and meta tags criterion, which we fix to 0.1. We experimented with different weights (0.0, 0.1, 0.2, 0.4, 0.8, 0.9, and 1.0) and observed that 0.1 provides better results. This criterion has small contribution to the result, but much smaller than the other criteria.

The same set was also used to decide the use of the so-called Dice coefficient (Brew and McKelvie 1996) to measure the similarity of the extracted title to the ground truth. This evaluation set is completely different from the test data set used later.

The actual data set was collected during 18 - 31 July 2014 and 19 - 23 April 2015, by choosing different type of websites from different regions of the world, in order to have a reasonable geographical diversity. This set contains 1,245 websites in eight categories: *Food & Drinks*, *Home & Garden*, *Hotels and Accommodation*, *Shopping*, *Arts & Entertainment*, *Hobbies & Leisure*, *Sport*, and *Health & Social care*, collected from Google and Google maps (<http://maps.google.co.uk>) search results using queries such as *bar*, *restaurant*, *café*, *Pizza*, *Radisson blue hotel*, *H&M shop*, *Play bar*, *Cavalier pub*, *Rosso restaurant*, *Intersport shop*, *sauna*, *swimming pool* and *bowling alley*.

We manually extracted the titles from each web page according to the specification defined in (Hu et al., 2005). In the following experiments, this data is used as a ground truth to measure the accuracy of our web page title extraction method.

### 3.2 Evaluation Measure

To decide whether the detected title is correct, we used the Dice coefficient to compare the similarity of the extracted title to the ground truth, on average. Dice uses 2-gram for the comparison.

It calculates the number of adjacent character pairs contained in both strings:

$$\text{Similarity}(t_1, t_2) = \frac{2 \times |\text{pairs}(t_1) \cap \text{pairs}(t_2)|}{|\text{pairs}(t_1)| + |\text{pairs}(t_2)|} \quad (7)$$

Where  $\text{pairs}(t_1)$  and  $\text{pairs}(t_2)$  are the number of character pairs (2-gram) in the ground truth title ( $t_1$ ) and the extracted title ( $t_2$ ) respectively. The similarity score between title ( $t_1$ ) and title ( $t_2$ ) are used directly in the evaluation results, where 100% means that perfect match is found every time.

The reason for choosing this algorithm is that it is language independent, robust to the change of the order of the words and treats strings with small differences as being similar. These kinds of variations are expected in title extraction, and therefore exact match is not useful in this case. A measure like

levenshtein distance is also not enough because it considers the reverse order of two strings as a mismatch. For example, the edit distance based similarity between the two strings *nba mcgrady* and *mcgrady nba* is 0.3 which is very low although the strings are very similar (Wang et al., 2014).

### 3.3 Methods Evaluated

We compare the following methods:

- Title tag (baseline)
- TitleFinder (Mohammadzadeh et al. 2012)
- Title tag analyzer (TTA) - Our method

### 3.4 Selection of the Criteria

The method is based on three criteria:

- Placement in title and meta tags;
- Popularity in header tags;
- Position in the link of the web page.

The number of segments contained in the title tag varies from 0 to 25 as shown in Figure 3, which means that selecting one candidate for title representation is not trivial. From these websites, 4% have  $\langle \text{meta name=title} \rangle$  or  $\langle \text{meta property=og:title} \rangle$ , and 52% have  $\langle \text{meta name=keywords} \rangle$ .

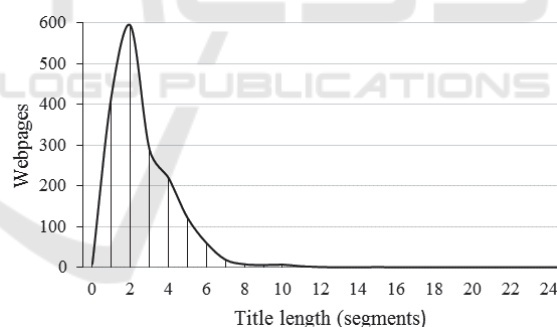


Figure 3: Number of segments in title tags, on average.

We conducted the experiments using different combinations of criteria. From Table 3 we observe that criterion 3 has the highest impact (0.84) because the title or part of it usually appears in the web link.

Criteria 1 has the lowest impact (0.65). We observed that more generic words such as *home* and *welcome* are often placed at the beginning and then followed by the title, and either the slogan, address or general information about the web page is placed at the end of the title.

Criteria 2 has slightly higher impact (0.68), but still far less than criteria 3. This is because header tags are not always used, and even when existing, the

correct title is not always there.

Combination of criteria 1 and 3 improves the score to (0.85), but the improvement is not statistically significant according to Mann Whitney U-test. The results show that the score provided by criterion 3 is statistically significant in comparison with criteria 1 and 2 individually, and criteria 1 and 2 jointly (in the sense  $p$  value  $< 0.05$ ).

Table 4 summarizes typical cases on how the criteria work jointly, both in case of success and failure. In total, (19 %) of the cases provide lower similarity with the ground truth titles. This is either because the extracted title is shorter than the ground truth (case 2), a part of a long segment (case 3), the correct title is not contained in the title and meta tags (case 4), or because the applied rules select a wrong segment especially when title and meta tags contain general words such as *order*, *food*, or city names such as *Philadelphia*, *NYC* and *Swansea* (case 5). These kinds of words appear frequently in the content of the page and therefore they are given a higher score by criterion 2.

Table 3: Impact of criteria (average similarity) according to Mann Whitney U-test, ( $p$ -value  $< 0.05$ ).

Criteria	Average similarity
1	0.65
2	0.68
3	<b>0.84</b>
1 + 2	0.70
1 + 3	<b>0.85</b>
2 + 3	<b>0.82</b>
1 + 2 + 3	<b>0.84</b>

Table 4: Examples for the Extracted Titles.

	Annotated title	Content of title tag	Content of meta tag	Selected string
Case 1 (correct title)	3 Weeds Hotel	3 Weeds Hotel   Unique Pub   Bars   Restaurant   Party Venue   Inner West Sydney	Hotel , Pub, Bar, Restaurant, Dining, Party Venue, Function, Center, Centre, Rozelle, Balmain, Drumoyne, Glebe, Lilyfield, Annandale Sydney, Inner West Hotel	3 Weeds Hotel
Case 2 (short title)	Irish Channel Restaurant & Pub	Irish Channel - Restaurant & Pub   500 H St NW DC (202) 216-0046		Irish Channel
Case 3 (long title)	Secret Garden Bed & Breakfast	Secret Garden Bed & Breakfast (formerly Whitegates Guest House), near Keynsham, Bristol: Rooms, Prices and Guest Information	Bed and breakfast, B and B, bed, breakfast, guesthouse, accommodation, hotel, stay, visit, Bristol, Bath, Keynsham, Stockwood, South West, England, garden, Whitegates Guest House, Whitegates, Whitegate, Whitegate Nurseries, White Gate Nursery, Christmas, open, Secret Garden Centre, swimming pool, Cotswolds	Secret Garden Bed & Breakfast (formerly Whitegates Guest House)
Case 4 (no title)	Rio Pool	Hot Tubs, hot tub hire, swimming pools, Bristol, Gloucester	Hot tubs, Swimming pools, home swimming pools, pool maintenance, wooden swimming pools, hot tub hire, pool and spa equipment, Gloucester, Bristol, Cheltenham, South West, UK	swimming pools
Case 5 (incorrect)	Slice and Dice	Home   Prepared Food   Swansea   Slice and Dice UK	Prepared food, Prepared fruit and veg, Fresh chips supplier, Swansea	Swansea

Figure 4 shows a qualitative evaluation for all titles extracted by TTA. As we can observe, despite of these negative cases, the overall result is still much better than that of the baseline and TitleFinder as shown in Table 5.

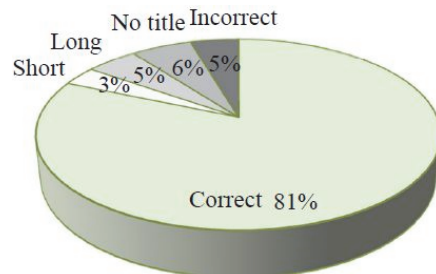


Figure 4: Qualitative analysis of the title extraction method.

### 3.5 Comparative Results

The results of the baseline, Titlefinder and TTA are summarized in Table 5. TTA provides highest similarity scores of (0.84) which outperform the baseline (0.62) and TitleFinder (0.52). We conducted significance test and the results indicate that the improvements of TTA over the baseline and TitleFinder are statistically significant (in the sense  $p$ -value  $< 0.05$ ).

Figure 5 shows the distribution of the web pages with respect to the similarity of the extracted titles with the ground truth titles. TTA finds perfect match with the ground truth in 1,014 of the cases, which is significantly more than the result of baseline 276 and TitleFinder 447.

Table 5: Comparative results for title extraction methods.

Method	Average similarity
Baseline	0.62
TitleFinder	0.52
TTA	0.84

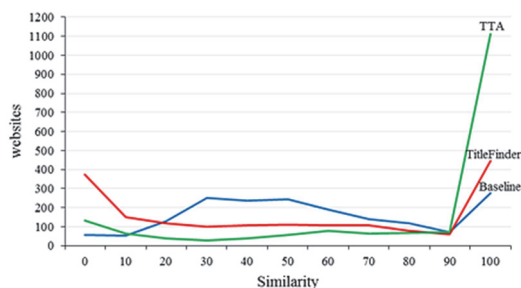


Figure 5: Similarities of the detected titles with the ground truth titles.

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, we propose a fully automated method to extract titles from web pages without extensive needs of training data or user interaction. The proposed method analyses the content of the title and meta tags, and it extracts suitable sub string to represent the content of the web page. It should be short, but informative to be used in both web and mobile devices. The method, Title Tag Analyzer (TTA), is integrated with Mopsi search to summarize the retrieved web pages.

We conducted various experiments to evaluate the performance of TTA and our findings are as follows:

- The proposed method significantly outperforms the baseline from 0.62 to 0.84 in the average similarity.
- Title and meta tags usually contain the correct title, but they also contain irrelevant text which needs to be processed and filtered.
- The words in the web page link have the highest impact on selecting the correct title for the page.

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