Fixed-confidence guarantees for Bayesian best-arm identification

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AISTATS 2020

August 2020

Joint work with...


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What? — BAI for finitely-armed bandits

- Goal: given a set of *unknown* measurement distributions, find the best one ($\mu^\star = \arg\max_i \mu_i$);
- Motivation: hyperparameter tuning, A/B/C testing, clinic trial design;
- A BAI algorithm is composed of:
  - sampling rule;
    - selects an arm I at each round

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- Motivation: hyperparameter tuning, A/B/C testing, clinic trial design;
- A BAI algorithm is composed of:
  - sampling rule;
  - stopping rule τ;
    - Fixed-budget: stops when reach the budget $\tau = n$
    - Fixed-confidence: stops when the probability of recommending a wrong arm is less than δ, minimize $\mathbb{E}[\tau_\delta]$

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  - stopping rule τ;
  - recommendation rule.
    - outputs a guess of the best arm J when the algorithm stops

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  - sampling rule;
  - stopping rule τ;
  - recommendation rule.

We are interested in `TTTS` (Top-Two Thompson Sampling, Russo 2016)

Why?

- Beyond fixed-budget and fixed-confidence: anytime BAI framework [Jun and Nowak 2016];
- A Bayesian competitor for BAI as Thompson sampling to `UCB` for regret minimizing?

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- Beyond fixed-budget and fixed-confidence: anytime BAI framework [Jun and Nowak 2016];
- A Bayesian competitor for BAI as Thompson sampling to `UCB` for regret minimizing?
  - It's often easier to sample from the fitted model than compute complicated optimistic estimates;
  - Strong practical performance?

How? - Contributions

- New theoretical insights on `TTTS`;
- Computational improvement.

Outline

Top-Two Thompson Sampling

New Theoretical Insights on `TTTS`

Alleviate the Computational Burden: `T3C`

Experimental Illustrations

What we know about TTTS...

Input: β
for $n = 1, 2, \ldots$ **do**
    $\forall i \in \mathcal{A},\ \theta_i \sim \Pi_n$
    $I^{(1)} = \arg\max_{i=0,\ldots,m} \theta_i$
    if $U(\sim \mathcal{U}([0,1])) > \beta$ **then**
        while $I^{(2)} \neq I^{(1)}$ **do**
            $\forall i \in \mathcal{A},\ \theta'_i \sim \Pi_n$
            $I^{(2)} \leftarrow \arg\max_{i=0,\ldots,m} \theta'_i$
        end while
        $I^{(1)} \leftarrow I^{(2)}$
    end if
    `evaluate arm` $I^{(1)}$
    `update` Π_n
end for

What we know about TTTS... (Posterior convergence)

Assumptions

- Measurement distributions are in the canonical one dimensional exponential family;
- The parameter space is a bounded open hyper-rectangle;
- The prior density is uniformly bounded;
- The log-partition function has bounded first derivative.

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Theorem (Russo 2016)

Under TTTS and under the previous boundedness assumptions, it holds almost surely that

$$\lim_{n\to\infty} -\frac{1}{n}\log(1-\alpha_{n,I^\star}) = \Gamma_\beta^\star,$$

where

$$\alpha_{n,i} \triangleq \Pi_n(\theta_i > \max_{j\neq i}\theta_j).$$

What we know about TTTS... (Complexity)

Definition

Let $\Sigma_K = \{\boldsymbol{\omega} : \sum_{k=1}^{K} \omega_k = 1, \omega_k \geq 0\}$ and define for all $i \neq I^\star$

$$C_i(\omega, \omega') \triangleq \min_{x \in \mathcal{I}} \; \omega d(\mu_{I^\star}; x) + \omega' d(\mu_i; x),$$

where $d(\mu, \mu')$ is the KL-divergence. We define

$$\Gamma_\beta^\star \quad \triangleq \quad \max_{\substack{\boldsymbol{\omega} \in \Sigma_K \\ \omega_{I^\star} = \beta}} \min_{i \neq I^\star} C_i(\omega_{I^\star}, \omega_i).$$

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In particular, for Gaussian bandits...

$$\Gamma_\beta^\star = \max_{\boldsymbol{\omega} : \omega_{I^\star} = \beta} \min_{i \neq I^\star} \frac{(\mu_{I^\star} - \mu_i)^2}{2\sigma^2(1/\omega_i + 1/\beta)}.$$

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Lower bound

Under any δ-correct strategy satisfying $T_{n,I^\star}/n \to \beta$,

$$\liminf_{\delta \to 0} \frac{\mathbb{E}\left[\tau_\delta\right]}{\ln(1/\delta)} \geq \frac{1}{\Gamma_\beta^\star}.$$

What we want to know about TTTS

- Can we 'relax' the aforementioned assumptions?
- What can we say about the sample complexity in the fixed-confidence setting?
- Can we have finite-time guarantees?

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Experimental Illustrations

Main result — Posterior convergence

Theorem

Under TTTS, for Gaussian bandits with improper Gaussian priors, it holds almost surely that

$$\lim_{n\to\infty} -\frac{1}{n}\log(1-\alpha_{n,I^\star}) = \Gamma_\beta^\star.$$

Theorem

Under TTTS, for Bernoulli bandits and uniform priors, it holds almost surely that

$$\lim_{n\to\infty} -\frac{1}{n}\log(1-\alpha_{n,I^\star}) = \Gamma_\beta^\star.$$

Main result — Sample complexity

Theorem

The TTTS sampling rule coupled with the Chernoff stopping rule form a δ-correct BAI strategy. Moreover, if all the arms means are distinct, it satisfies

$$\limsup_{\delta \to 0} \frac{\mathbb{E}\left[\tau_\delta\right]}{\log(1/\delta)} \leq \frac{1}{\Gamma^\star_\beta}.$$

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Recall (Lower bound)

Under any δ-correct strategy satisfying $T_{n,I^\star}/n \to \beta$,

$$\liminf_{\delta \to 0} \frac{\mathbb{E}\left[\tau_\delta\right]}{\ln(1/\delta)} \geq \frac{1}{\Gamma_\beta^\star}.$$

Sample complexity sketch — δ-correctness

Stopping rule

$$\tau_\delta^{\text{Ch.}} \triangleq \inf \left\{ n \in \mathbb{N} : \max_{i \in \mathcal{A}} \min_{j \in \mathcal{A} \setminus \{i\}} W_n(i,j) > d_{n,\delta} \right\}. \qquad (1)$$

Sample complexity sketch — δ-correctness

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Transportation cost

Let $\mu_{n,i,j} \triangleq (T_{n,i}\mu_{n,i} + T_{n,j}\mu_{n,j})/(T_{n,i} + T_{n,j})$, then we define

$$W_n(i,j) \triangleq \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if } \mu_{n,j} \geq \mu_{n,i}, \\ W_{n,i,j} + W_{n,j,i} & \text{otherwise,} \end{cases} \tag{2}$$

where $W_{n,i,j} \triangleq T_{n,i} d\left(\mu_{n,i}, \mu_{n,i,j}\right)$ for any i, j.

Sample complexity sketch — δ-correctness

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In particular, for Gaussian bandits...

$$W_n(i,j) = \frac{(\mu_{n,i} - \mu_{n,j})^2}{2\sigma^2 (1/T_{n,i} + 1/T_{n,j})} \mathbb{1}\{\mu_{n,j} < \mu_{n,i}\}.$$

Sample complexity sketch — δ-correctness

Stopping rule

$$\tau_\delta^{\text{Ch.}} \triangleq \inf\left\{ n \in \mathbb{N} : \max_{i \in \mathcal{A}} \min_{j \in \mathcal{A} \setminus \{i\}} W_n(i,j) > d_{n,\delta} \right\}. \qquad (1)$$

Theorem

The TTTS sampling rule coupled with the Chernoff stopping rule (1) with a threshold $d_{n,\delta} \simeq \log(1/\delta) + c\log(\log(n))$ and the recommendation rule $J_t = \arg\max_i \mu_{n,i}$, form a δ-correct BAI strategy.

Sample complexity sketch — Sufficient condition for β-optimality

Lemma

Let $\delta, \beta \in (0,1)$. For any sampling rule which satisfies $\mathbb{E}\left[T_{\beta}^{\varepsilon}\right] < \infty$ for all $\varepsilon > 0$, we have

$$\limsup_{\delta \to 0} \frac{\mathbb{E}\left[\tau_{\delta}\right]}{\log(1/\delta)} \leq \frac{1}{\Gamma_{\beta}^{\star}},$$

if the sampling rule is coupled with stopping rule (1).

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if the sampling rule is coupled with stopping rule (1).

$$T_{\beta}^{\varepsilon} \triangleq \inf\left\{N \in \mathbb{N} : \max_{i \in \mathcal{A}} |T_{n,i}/n - \omega_i^{\beta}| \leq \varepsilon, \forall n \geq N\right\}$$

Sample complexity sketch — Core theorem

Theorem
Under TTTS, $\mathbb{E}\left[T_\beta^\varepsilon\right] < +\infty$.

The proof is inspired by Qin et al. (2017), but some technical novelties are introduced. In particular, our proof is much more intricate due to the randomized nature of the two candidate arms...

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Alleviate the Computational Burden: T3C

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Alleviate the computational burden?

Input: β
for $n = 1, 2, \ldots$ **do**
    $\forall i \in \mathcal{A}$, $\theta_i \sim \Pi_n$
    $I^{(1)} = \arg\max_{i=0,\ldots,m} \theta_i$
    if $U(\sim \mathcal{U}([0,1])) > \beta$ **then**
        while $I^{(2)} \neq I^{(1)}$ **do**
            $\forall i \in \mathcal{A}$, $\theta'_i \sim \Pi_n$
            $I^{(2)} \leftarrow \arg\max_{i=0,\ldots,m} \theta'_i$ {Re-sampling phase}
        end while
        $I^{(1)} \leftarrow I^{(2)}$
    end if
    `evaluate arm` $I^{(1)}$
    `update` Π_n
end for

Alleviate the computational burden?

Input: β
for $n = 1, 2, \ldots$ **do**
  $\forall i \in \mathcal{A},\ \theta_i \sim \Pi_n$
  $I^{(1)} = \arg\max_{i=0,\ldots,m} \theta_i$
  if $U(\sim \mathcal{U}([0,1])) > \beta$ **then**
    $I^{(2)} \leftarrow \arg\min_{i \neq I^{(1)}} W_n(I^{(1)}, i)$ {`T3C`}
    $I^{(1)} \leftarrow I^{(2)}$
  end if
  `evaluate arm` $I^{(1)}$
  `update` Π_n
end for

Main result — Sample complexity T3C

Theorem

The T3C sampling rule coupled with the Chernoff stopping rule form a δ-correct BAI strategy. Moreover, if all the arms means are distinct, it satisfies

$$\limsup_{\delta \to 0} \frac{\mathbb{E}\left[\tau_\delta\right]}{\log(1/\delta)} \leq \frac{1}{\Gamma_\beta^\star}.$$

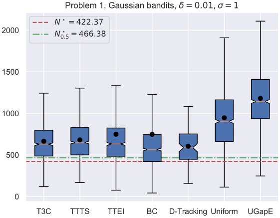
Outline

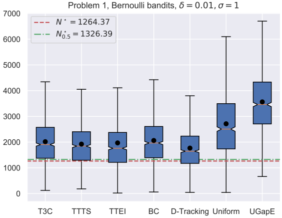
Some illustrations — Time consumption

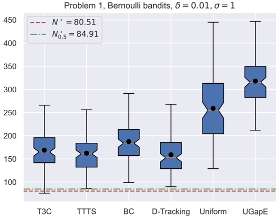
Sampling rule	T3C	TTTS	Uniform
Execution time (s)	1.6×10^{-5}	2.3×10^{-4}	6×10^{-6}

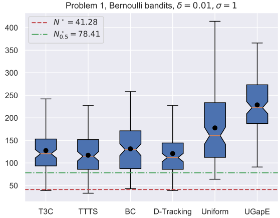
Table: average execution time in seconds for different sampling rules.

Some illustrations — Average stopping time









Still far from the Holy Grail...

- Finite-time analysis (fixed-budget setting?)

Conclusion

More details on `TTTS` and `T3C`

Check out [Shang et al. 2020].

References

Thank you for your attention!
Please join our poster session @...

Daniel Russo. "Simple Bayesian algorithms for best arm identification". In: *29th CoLT*. 2016.

Xuedong Shang, Rianne de Heide, Pierre Ménard, Emilie Kaufmann, and Michal Valko. "Fixed-confidence guarantees for Bayesian best-arm identification". In: *23rd AIStats*. 2020.