Parameterless Outlier Detection in Data Streams

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ABSTRACT

Outlyingness is a subjective concept relying on the isolation level of a (set of) record(s). Clustering-based outlier detection is a field that aims to cluster data and to detect outliers depending on their characteristics (small, tight and/or dense clusters might be considered as outliers). Existing methods require a parameter standing for the "level of outlyingness", such as the maximum size or a percentage of small clusters, in order to build the set of outliers. Unfortunately, manually setting this parameter in a streaming environment should not be possible, given the fast time response usually needed. In this paper we propose WOD, a method that separates outliers from clusters thanks to a natural and effective principle. The main advantages of WOD are its ability to automatically adjust to any clustering result and to be parameterless.

Categories and Subject Descriptors

H.4 [Information Systems Applications]: Miscellaneous

Keywords

Data Streams, Outliers, Parameterless

1. INTRODUCTION

Clustering is a major topic of data mining that aims to separate objects into groups (or clusters) according to their similarity. The first goal of clustering was to provide patterns representing the majority of data. In contrast, outlier detection aims to discover highly unlikely data. This is an important topic of data mining since it has many applications, such as fraud detection for credit card [1], cyber security [4] or safety of critical systems [6]. Actually, outliers might be indicative of suspicious data such as skewed or erroneous values, entry mistakes or malicious behaviours. A malicious behaviour can be detected as an outlier in datasets such as transactions in a credit card database or records of usage on a web site.

To the best of our knowledge, outlier detection always relies on a parameter, given by the end-user and standing for a "degree of outlyingness" above which records are considered as atypical. For instance, in [11], a *distance-based* outlier is an object such that

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a user-defined fraction of dataset objects have a distance of more than a user-defined minimum distance from that object. In [5], the authors propose a nonparametric clustering process and the detection of outliers requires a user defined value k corresponding to the top-k desired outliers.

In this paper we propose WOD (Wavelet-based Outlier Detection), a parameterless method intending to automatically extract outliers from the results of a clustering step. In contrast to previous work, our goal is to find the best division of a distribution and to automatically separate values into two sets corresponding to clusters on the one hand and outliers on the other hand. The tail of the distribution is found thanks to a wavelet technique and does not depend on any user threshold. Our method fits any distribution depending on any characteristic such as distances between objects [11], objects' density [2, 14] or clusters' size [8].

Our framework involves clustering-based outlier detection in data streams. Clustering-based detection of outliers aims to find objects that do not follow the same model as the rest of the data depending on the clusters' size or tightness [8, 17, 5]. This framework will allow us to illustrate our proposal with one of the possible characteristics observed for building a distribution of objects (i.e. clusters' size). The choice of data streams is motivated by the specific constraints of this domain. In a data stream environment, data are generated at a very high rate and it is not possible to perform blocking operations. In this context, requesting a parameter such as k, for top-k outliers, or x, a percentage of small clusters, should be prohibited. First, because the user doesn't have enough time to try different values of these parameters for each period of analysis on the stream. Secondly, because a permanent value may be adapted to one period of the stream but it is highly likely to be wrong on the next periods (the data distribution will change, as well as the number or percentage of outliers). For these reasons, detecting outliers should not depend on any parameter and should be adaptive in order to keep the best accuracy all along the stream.

This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 gives an overview of existing works in outlier detection and Section 3 gives a formal definition of our problem. Our method relies on a clustering step described in Section 4. Section 5 gives the details of WOD and its principle for separating outliers from clusters. Section 6 shows the advantages of WOD through a set of experiments on real Web usage data and Section 7 gives our conclusion.

2. RELATED WORKS

In this paper, we focus on clustering-based outlier detection algorithms [11, 16, 9, 7, 14]. Such techniques rely on the assumption that normal points belong to large clusters while outliers either do not belong to any cluster [11, 16] or form very small and tight clusters [8, 17, 5]. In other words, outlier detection consists in identi-

fying among data those that are far from being significant clusters. Depending on the approach, the number of parameters required to run the algorithm can be high and will lead to different outliers. To avoid this, some works return a ranked list of potential outliers and limit the number of parameters to be specified [16, 9, 5]. Let us note that [5] proposes to reduce or to avoid given parameter to the clustering algorithm, while maintaining a parameter regarding the outliers: n the number of required outliers. In this paper, we aim to detect outliers on the basis of clusters characteristics only. Among these characteristics, we have selected the clusters' size. A distribution of the clusters' size combined with our wavelet approach allows cutting the clusters set into two sub-sets, basically corresponding to "big" and "small" clusters. This method would also cut down this set with regard to other characteristics, such as clusters tightness or their number of neighbors (density) for instance.

3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

We instantiate WOD on streaming usage data of a Web site. We need to define a navigation sequence as the series of URLs requested by a user.

DEFINITION 1. Let $\mathcal{I}=i_1,i_2,...,i_n$ be a set of items. Let $X=i_1,i_2,...,i_k/k \leq n$ and $\forall j \in [1..k]$ $i_j \in \mathcal{I}$. X is called an **itemset** (or a k-**itemset**). Let $\mathcal{T}=t_1,t_2,...,t_m$ be a set of times, over which a linear order $<_T$ is defined, where $t_i <_T t_j$ means t_i occurs before t_j . A **transaction** T is a couple T=(tid,X) where tid is the transaction's identifier and X is the associated itemset. Associated to each item i in X we have a time-stamp t_i which represents the valid time of occurrence of i in T.

DEFINITION 2. A navigation sequence is an ordered list of itemsets denoted by $\langle s_1, s_2, \ldots, s_n \rangle$, where s_j is an itemset and each item of s_j stands for a URL.

A data stream is made of n series of navigation sequences. Each series is potentially infinite. Each navigation sequence n in the data stream is associated to a client c and n corresponds to the series of requests by c on the Web site. In section 4 we propose a method for clustering the navigation sequences of a data stream. Our proposal for detecting outliers without any parameter is given in section 5.

4. CLUSTERING STREAMING USAGE DATA

Our method will process the data stream as batches of fixed size. Let $B_1, B_2, ...B_n$ be the batches, where B_n is the most recent batch of transactions. The principle of WOD will be to cluster the sequences of each batch b in $[B_1..B_n]$ and to detect the outliers according to the clusters' size. The general principle of our method can be described as follows: for each batch of transactions, WOD discovers the clusters of users (grouped by behavior) and then analyzes their navigations by means of a sequence alignment process. This allows us to obtain clusters of behaviors that represent the current usage of the Web site. In [13] the authors have proposed a method for mining sequential patterns in data streams which is based on sequence alignment. The clustering function of WOD catches and extends this principle. For each cluster c, the aligned sequence corresponding to the content of c gives a summary of c. After processing each batch, we are provided with patterns (the summaries or alignments obtained for the clusters) and their supports (the size of the clusters).

For each batch, the clustering algorithm is initialized with only one cluster which contains the first navigation (the first sequence of the batch). To each cluster s is associated a centroid ς_c (the aligned

sequence of the cluster) that summarizes the cluster. WOD will process the batch of sequences in only one scan. During this scan, the following operations are performed:

- 1. For each navigation n in the batch, n is compared to each existing centroid. Let c be the cluster such that its centroid ς_c is the most similar to n, then n is inserted into c. If no such cluster has been found, then a new cluster is created and n is inserted in this new cluster.
- 2. For each cluster c, WOD computes the centroid ς_c of c incrementally.

The centroid ζ_c of cluster c is computed thanks to an alignment technique applied to c. When the first sequence is inserted into c, ζ_c is equal to this unique sequence.

The alignment of sequences is based on the definition of [12] and leads to a weighted sequence represented as follows: SA = < $I_1: n_1, I_2: n_2, ..., I_r: n_r >: m$. In this representation, m stands for the total number of sequences involved in the alignment. I_p $(1 \le p \le r)$ is an itemset represented as $(x_{i_1}: m_{i_1}, ... x_{i_t}:$ m_{i_t}), where m_{i_t} is the number of sequences containing the item x_i at the p^{th} position in the aligned sequences. Finally, n_p is the number of occurrences of itemset I_p in the alignment. In WOD, the aligned sequence is incrementally updated, each time a sequence is added to its cluster. For that purpose, we maintain a matrix which contains the number of items for each sequence and a table representing the distances between sequences. This is illustrated in Figure 1. Our matrix (left) stores for each sequence the number of occurrences of each item in this sequence. For instance, s_1 is a sequence containing twice the item a. The table of distances stores the sum of similarities (similMatrix) between sequences. Let s_{1} , be the number of occurrences of item i in sequence s_1 and let mbe the total number of items. similMatrix is computed thanks to the matrix in the following way:

 $similMatrix(s_1, s_2) = \sum_{i=1}^{m} min(s_{1_i}, s_{2_i}).$

For instance, with two sequences s_1 and s_2 in the matrix of Figure 1, this sum is: $s_{1a}+s_{2b}+s_{2c}=1+0+1=2$.

Sometimes, the alignment has to be refreshed and cannot be updated incrementally. Let us consider a sequence s_n . First, s_n is inserted in the matrix and its distance to the other sequences is computed $(\sum_{i=1}^n similMatrix(s_n,s_i))$. s_n is then inserted in the distance table, with respect to the decreasing order of distances values. For instance, in Figure 1, s_n is inserted after s_2 . Let r be the rank where s_n is inserted (in our current example, r=2) in c. After inserting s_n , there are two possibilities:

- 1. $r>0.5\times |c|.$ In this case, the alignment is updated incrementally and
 - $\varsigma_c = alignment(\varsigma_c, s_n).$
- 2. $r \leq 0.5 \times |c|$. In this case, the centroid has to be refreshed and the alignment is computed again for all sequences of this cluster.

Let s be the current sequence and C the set of all clusters. Wod scans C and, for each cluster $c \in C$, performs a comparison between s and ς_c (the centroid of c, which is an aligned sequence). This comparison is based on the longest common sub-sequence (LCS) between s and ς_c . The length of the sequence is also taken into account since it has to be no more than 120% and no less than 80% of the original sequence (i.e. the first sequence inserted into c).

5. PARAMETERLESS OUTLIER DETECTION

Seq	a	b	c
s_1	2	0	1
s_2	1	0	1
:			

Seq	$\sum_{i=1}^{n} similMatrix(s, s_i)$
s_1	16
s_2	14
s_n	13
s_3	11
:	
s_{n-1}	1

Figure 1: Distances between sequences

Most previous work in outlier detection requires a parameter [9, 18, 15, 10], such as a percent of small clusters that should be considered as outliers or the top-n outliers. Generally, their key idea is to sort the clusters by size and/or tightness. We consider that our clusters will be as tight as possible, according to our clustering algorithm, and we aim to extract outliers by sorting the clusters by size. The problem is to separate "big" and "small" clusters without any apriori knowledge about what is big or small. Our solution is based on an analysis of cluster distribution, once they are sorted by size. The key idea of WOD is to use a wavelet transform to cut down such a distribution. With a prior knowledge on the number of plateaux (we want two plateaux, the first one standing for small groups, or outliers, and the second one standing for big groups, or clusters) we can cut the distribution in a very effective manner. Actually, each cluster having size lower than (or equal to) the first plateau will be considered as an outlier.

The wavelet transform is a tool that cuts up data or functions or operators into different frequency components, and then studies each component with a resolution matched to its scale [3]. In other words, wavelet theory represents series of values by breaking them down into many interrelated component pieces; when the pieces are scaled and translated wavelets, this breaking down process is termed wavelet decomposition or wavelet transform. Wavelet reconstructions or inverse wavelet transforms involve putting the wavelet pieces back together to retrieve the original object [3]. Mathematically, the continuous wavelet transform is defined by:

$$T^{wav}f(a,b) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{a}} \int_{-\infty}^{+\infty} f(x)\psi^*(\frac{x-b}{a})dx$$

where z^* denotes the complex conjugate of $z, \psi^*(x)$ is the analyzing wavelet, a > 0 is the scale parameter and b is the translation parameter. This transform is a linear transformation and it is co-variant under translations and dilations. This expression can be equally interpreted as a signal projection on a function family analyzing $\psi_{a,b}$ constructed from a mother function in accordance with the following equation: $\psi_{a,b}(t) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{a}}\psi(\frac{t-b}{a})$. Wavelets are a family of basis functions that are localized in time and frequency and are obtained by translations and dilations from a single function $\psi(t)$, called the mother wavelet. For some very special choices of a, b, and $\psi, \psi_{a,b}$ is an orthonormal basis for $L^2(\mathbb{R})$. Any signal can be decomposed by projecting it on the corresponding wavelet basis function. To understand the mechanism of wavelet transform, we must understand the multiresolution analysis (MRA). A multiresolution analysis of the space $L^2(\mathbb{R})$ consists of a sequence of nested subspaces such as:

$$\dots \subset V_2 \subset V_1 \subset V_0 \subset V_{-1} \dots \subset V_{j+1} \subset V_j \dots$$

$$\overline{\bigcup_{j \in Z} V_j} = L^2(\mathbb{R})$$

$$\bigcap_{j \in Z} V_j = \{0\}$$

$$\forall j \in \mathbb{Z} \text{ if } f(x) \in V_j \iff f(2^{-1}x) \in V_{j+1}$$

(or $f(2^jx) \in V_0$)
$$\forall k \in \mathbb{Z} \text{ if } f(x) \in V_0 \iff f(x-k) \in V_0$$

There is a function $\varphi(x) \in L^2(\mathbb{R})$, called scaling function, which by dilation and translation generates an orthonormal basis of V_j . Basis functions are constructed according to the following relation:

 $\varphi_{j,n}(x)=2^{-\frac{j}{2}}\varphi(2^{-j}x-n), n\in\mathbb{Z}$, and the basis is orthonormated if $\int_{-\infty}^{+\infty}\varphi(x)\varphi^*(x+n)dx=\delta(n), n\in\mathbb{Z}$. For each V_j , its orthogonal complement W_j in V_{j-1} can be defined as follows: $V_{j-1}=V_j\oplus W_j$ and $L^2(\mathbb{R})=\bigoplus_{j\in\mathbb{Z}}W_j$. As W_j is orthogonal to V_{j-1} , then W_{j-1} is orthogonal to W_j , so $\forall j,k\neq j$ then $W_j\perp W_k$.

There is a function $\psi(x) \in \mathbb{R}$, called wavelet, which by dilations and translations generates an orthonormal basis of W_j , and so of $L^2(\mathbb{R})$. The basis functions are constructed as follows:

$$\psi_{i,n}(x) = 2^{-\frac{j}{2}} \psi(2^{-j}x - n), n \in \mathbb{Z}$$

Therefore, $L^2(\mathbb{R})$ is decomposed into an infinite sequence of wavelet spaces, i.e. $L^2(\mathbb{R}) = \bigoplus_{j \in Z} W_j$. To summarize the wavelet decomposition: given a f_n function in V_n , f_n is decomposed into two parts, one part in V_{n-1} and the other in W_{n-1} . At next step, the part in V_{n-1} continues to be decomposed into two parts, one part in V_{n-2} and the other in W_{n-2} and so on. Figure 2 gives an illustration of the multiresolution analysis.

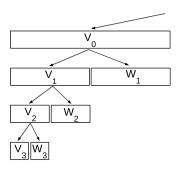


Figure 2: Multiresolution Analysis Principle

A direct application of multiresolution analysis is the fast discrete wavelet transform algorithm. The idea is to iteratively smooth data and keep the details all along the way. More formal proofs about wavelets can be found in [3]. The wavelet transform provides a tool for time-frequency localization and are generally used to summarize data and to capture the trend in numerical functions. In practice, the majority of wavelets coefficients are small or insignificant, so to capture the trend only a few significant coefficients are needed. We use the Haar wavelets to illustrate our outlier detection method. Let us consider the following series of values: [1,1,2,5,9,10,13,15]. Its Haar wavelet transform is illustrated by the following table:

Level	Approximations	Coefficients
8	1, 1, 2, 5, 9, 10, 13, 15	
4	1, 3.5, 9.5, 14	0, -1.5, -0.5, -1
2	2.25, 11.75	-1.25, -2.25
1	7	-4.75

Then, we keep only the most two significant coefficients and we make the others zero. In our series of coefficients ([7, -4, 75, -1.25, -2.25, 0, -1.5, -0.5, -1]) the most two significant ones are 7 and -4, 75, meaning that the series becomes [7, -4, 75, 0, -1.25, -1.25, 0, -1.25, 0, -1.25, 0]

 $0,\,0,\,0,\,0$. In the following step, the inverse operation is calculated and we obtain an approximation of the original data [2.25, 2.25, 2.25, 2.25, 11.75, 11.75, 11.75, 11.75]. This gives us two plateaux corresponding to values $\{1,1,2,5\}$ and $\{9,10,13,15\}$. The set of outliers contains all the clusters having size smaller than the first plateau(e.g. 2.25). In our example, $o=\{1,1,2\}$ is the set of outliers.

Depending on the distribution, wavelets will give different indexes (where to cut). For instance, with few clusters having the maximum size, wavelets will cut the distribution in the middle. On the other hand, with a large number of such large clusters, wavelets will accordingly increase the number of clusters in the little plateau (taking into account the large number of big clusters).

Applying the wavelet transform on the series allows us to obtain a good data compression and, meanwhile, according to different trends, a good separation. Knowing that outliers are infrequent objects, they will always be grouped into small clusters. WoD's principle of separating outliers from clusters is based on theorem

THEOREM 1. Let P1 and P2 be the two plateaux obtained after applying the wavelet transform and selecting the most two significant coefficients. The optimal separation into two groups according to clusters' size and regarding the minimisation of the sum squared error, is given by P1 and P2.

Proof In an orthonormal base, it has been shown that keeping the largest k wavelet coefficients gives the best k-term Haar approximation to the original signal, in terms of minimizing the sum squared error for a given k [3]. For this propose, let us consider the original signal f(x) and the basis functions u1(x), ...um(x). The signal can thus be represented depending on the basis functions as:

$$f(x) = \sum_{i=1}^{m} c_i u_i(x)$$

The goal is to find an approximating function with fewer coefficients. Let σ be a permutation of 1, ..., m and f' the approximating function using only the first m' elements of σ , with m' < m.

$$f'(x) = \sum_{i=1}^{m'} c_{\sigma(i)} u_{\sigma(i)}(x)$$

The square of L^2 error of this approximation is:

$$\begin{aligned} \left| |f(x) - f'(x)| \right|_{2}^{2} &= \langle f(x) - f'(x)|f(x) - f'(x) \rangle \\ &= \left\langle \sum_{i=m'+1}^{m} c_{\sigma(i)} u_{\sigma(i)} \right| \sum_{j=m'+1}^{m} c_{\sigma(j)} u_{\sigma(j)} \right\rangle \\ &= \sum_{i=m'+1}^{m} \sum_{j=m'+1}^{m} c_{\sigma(i)} c_{\sigma(j)} \langle u_{\sigma(i)} | u_{\sigma(j)} \rangle \\ &= \sum_{i=m'+1}^{m} (c_{\sigma(i)})^{2} \end{aligned}$$

Due to the basis orthonormality, $\langle u_i, u_j \rangle = \delta$, so, for any m' < m, to minimize this error the best choice for σ is the increasing permutation (or the permutation that contains the elements ordered in increasing order).

Therefore, for m'=2 we obtain the best 2-term Haar approximation to the original signal. \square

Based on theorem 1, we select the clusters having size smaller than the first plateau. These clusters can be considered as outliers without any parameter given by the end-user.

6. EXPERIMENTS

The goal of our experiments is to show the advantages of our parameterless outlier detection in a streaming environment. In such an environment, choosing a good level of outlyingness is highly difficult given the short time available to take a decision. In this context, an outlier detection method which does not depend on a parameter such as k, for the top-k outliers, or a percentage p of small clusters, should be much appreciated. On the other hand, such a parameterless outlier detection method also has to guarantee good results. This method should be able to provide the end-user with an accurate separation into small and big clusters. It should also be able to fit any kind of distribution shape (exponential, logarithmic, linear, etc.). Finally, it should also be able to automatically adjust to the number of clusters and to their size from one batch to the other. Our claim is that WOD matches all these requirements and we illustrate these features in this section .

For these experiments we used real data, coming from the Web Log usage of our institute from January 2006 to April 2007. The original files have a total size of 18 Gb and they correspond to a total of 11 millions navigations that have been split into batches of 8500 requests each (in average). In these experiments, we report some results on the first 15 batches, since they are very representative of the global results.

Figures ?? and ?? show the behaviour of two filters on the first 15 batches. Foreach batch, the number of objects (navigation sequences) and clusters is given in Table 1. The first filter (figure ??) shows the size of clusters selected by a top-k filter. The principle of this filter is to select only the first k clusters after sorting them by size. An obvious disadvantage of this filter is to select either too much or not enough clusters. Let us consider, for instance, batch 13 in Figure ??. With k = 50 the maximum outliers size is 12, whereas with k = 90 this size is 265 (which is the maximum size of a cluster in this batch since it contains only 87 clusters).

Another disadvantage is to arbitrary select or ignore clusters with equal size. For instance, with $s = \{1, 1, 2, 2, 3, 5, 10\}$ a series of sizes and k = 3, the top-k filter will select the 3 first clusters having sizes: 1, 1 and 2, but will ignore the 4^{th} cluster having size 2. We have also implemented a filter based on p, a percentage of clusters, to select outliers. The number of outliers selected by this filter with different values of p (i.e. from 0.01 to 0.09) are given in figure ??. The principle is to consider $p \in [0..1]$, a percentage given by the end-user, d = maxVal - minVal the range of cluster sizes and $y = (p \times d) + minVal$. Then, the filter aims to select only clusters having size s, such that $s \leq y$. For instance, with $s = \{1, 3, 10, 11, 15, 20, 55, 100\}$ a series of sizes and x = 0.1we have d = 100 - 1 = 99, $y = 1 + (0.1 \times 99) = 10$ and the set of outliers will be $o = \{1, 3, 10\}$. In our experiments, this filter is generally better than a top-k filter. Actually, we can notice homogeneous results from Figure ??. For instance, with batch 13 we can see a number of outliers ranging from 24 (1 %) to 70 (9 %).

Figures 3 and 4 give a comparison of WoD (applied to the same data) with top-k and percentage filtering. In figure 3, we compare WOD with a top-10 and a top-80 filter. Filter top-80 gives good results for approximately 50% of the batches, whereas filter-10 always gives very low values (size 1 or 2). Unfortunately, a value of 80 for this filter cannot be considered as a reference. For instance, in batch number 11, we notice a cluster having size 127 is considered an outlier. The maximum size of a cluster in batch 11 is 172 and there are 82 clusters. This result is thus not acceptable and

Batch	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Number of Objects	1391	2076	2234	1635	2174	1672	1955	2009	2455	2182	2857	2498	2294	2698	2090
Number of Clusters	154	92	118	98	128	116	119	111	119	108	82	94	87	106	122

Table 1: Batches, objects and clusters

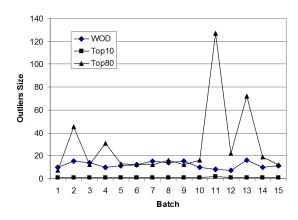


Figure 3: Comparison between top-k and Wod

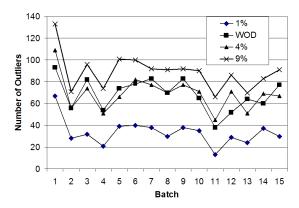


Figure 4: Comparison between % filters and Wod

shows that top-k is unable to adjust to changes in the distribution of cluster sizes. On the other hand, thanks to its wavelet feature, WOD is able to automatically adjust and will select 8 as a maximum size of an outlier.

In figure 4, we focus on three percentage filters with 1%, 4%, 9% and we compare them to Wod. Our observation is that Wod and 4% would give similar results. For instance, with batch 11, we know that Wod labels clusters having size less than or equal to 8 as outliers. That filtering gives a total of 38 clusters (where filter 4% gives 45 outliers). These clusters represent a total of 184 objects in a batch which contains 2294 objects. Therefore, the advantage of Wod over the percentage filter is double:

WOD does not require any parameter tuning. It adjusts automatically, whatever the distribution shape and the number of clusters. In contrast, the end-user will have to try several percentage values before finding the good range (i.e. between

3% and 9% the percentage filter gives good outliers for the first batches). Furthermore, the outlier detection provided by WOD will not degrade with a variation of distribution shape over time. In our case, the distribution is usually exponential. Let us consider a change of usage, or a change of clustering method, resulting in a variation of the distribution shape. That new shape could be logarithmic, for instance. Then, the percentage filter would have to be manually modified to fit that new distribution, whereas WOD would keep giving the good set of outliers without manual settings.

2. WOD gives a natural separation between small and big values (according to theorem 1). Let us consider our previous illustration of a distribution $s = \{1, 3, 10, 11, 15, 20, 55, 100\}$. We know that on this distribution a 10% filter would give the following set of outliers $:o = \{1, 3, 10\}$. However, why not including 11 into o? Actually, 10 and 11 are very close values. On the other hand, with WOD we have $o = \{1, 3\}$, which is obviously a natural and realistic result.

7. CONCLUSION

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