Who is the biggest douche in Skymall?

Dr. Tom Murphy VII Ph.D.*

1 April 2011

Abstract

Did you ever notice how there are so many douches in the Skymall catalog? This paper investigates the 22 males pictured in the January 2011 issue, using Internet technology to determine their douchiness. We then present an efficient image recognition algorithm that reliably predicts douchiness from photos.

Keywords: computational douchebaggery, as seen on tv, man who can sleep in any seat

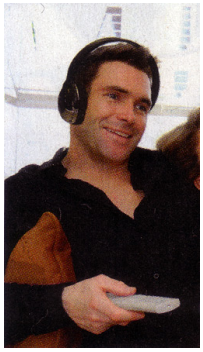
Introduction

In that Luddite void between closing the cabin doors and the beep indicating it is now safe to use approved electronic devices, there is one perfect pleasure: The Skymall catalog. It has everything, including: Pointlessly impractical products you cringe at just imagining someone receiving as unwanted gifts at Christmas, copy that preys on the insecurities of business travelers, typo and physically impossible hyperbole treasure hunts galore, Photoshop disasters, new friends, and old familiar faces. But since 1990, science has wondered: **Who is the biggest douche in Skymall?**

It is difficult to assess the absolute douchiness (say, on a scale from 1 to 10) of a given person. So, in order to answer this question, we used Internet Technology to conduct a series of more-douche–less-douche battles between randomly selected pairs of participants. The visitor is simply asked: Who is the bigger douche? The proportion of battles won, overall, is the final douche score.

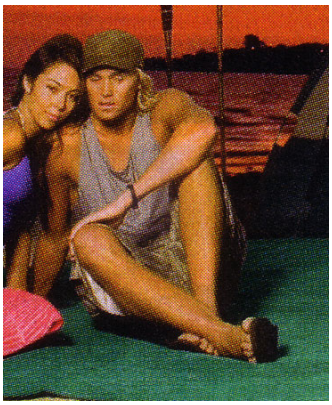
After thousands of battles waged, we converged on the following results, ranked in descending douchiness:

Results

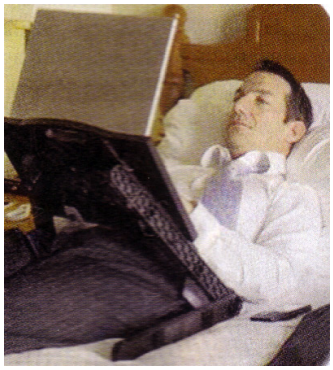


In Charge of the Music
won 207/66; 75.82% douche

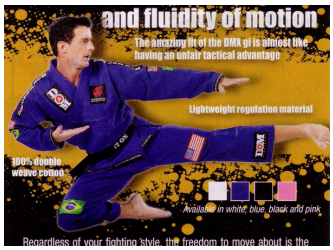
The Thinker
won 201/73; 73.35% douche



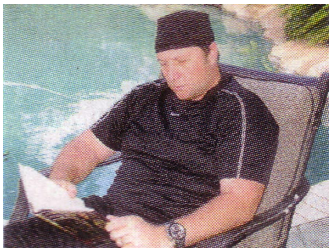
Seaside Date
won 197/76; 72.16% douche



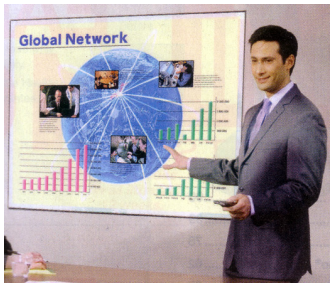
Reclining Numbercruncher
won 193/80; 70.69% douche



Karate Genius
won 188/85; 68.86% douche

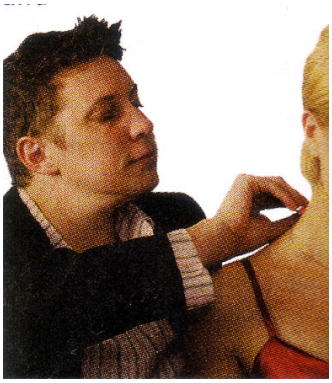


Poolside Bibliophile
won 177/95; 65.07% douche



Traveling Salesman
won 171/102; 62.63% douche

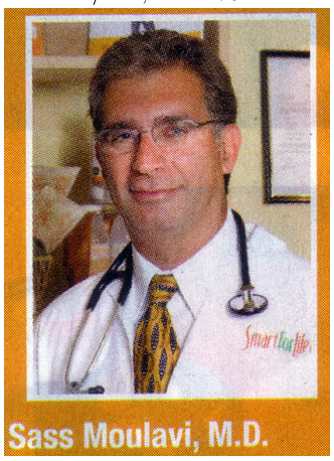
Beauty Rest
won 167/106; 61.17% douche



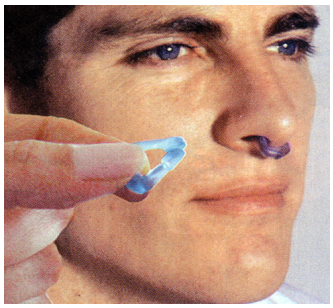
Jeweler
won 167/106; 61.17% douche

I Have to Take This
won 161/113; 58.75% douche

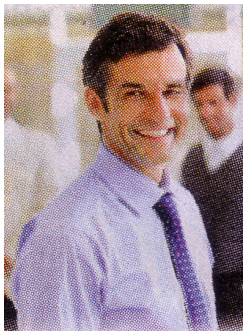
Treatment Recipent
won 121/152; 44.32% douche



Sass Moulavi, M.D.
won 117/155; 43.01% douche



Cured Snorer
won 141/132; 51.64% douche



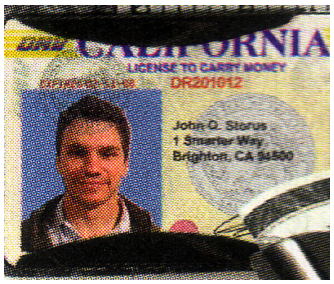
Business Expert
won 118/155; 43.22% douche

New Haircut
won 96/177; 35.16% douche

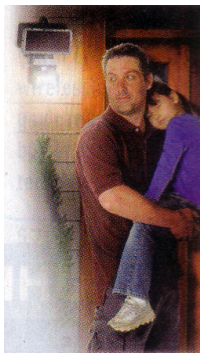
Man who can Sleep in Any Seat
won 131/141; 48.16% douche

Confident in Glasses
won 118/155; 43.22% douche

Woodsy Gentleman
won 86/186; 31.61% douche



John Q. Storus
won 78/195; 28.57% douche



Father/Kidnapper
won 73/199; 26.83% douche

Got the Promotion
won 59/214; 21.61% douche

Silver Medalist
won 34/238; 12.50% douche

Although many people disagreed on the finer points of what constitutes a douche, the results were fairly significant, in that there were many participants that were consistently perceived as more or less douchey. This is truly a victory for the scientific method. Speaking of victories:

Douche recognition

Having collected consensus on what constitutes a douche, we next turn to the problem of determining whether any given person is a douche, even if that person has not participated in hundreds of rounds of douche-battle. Since people appear to be able to make decisions based mainly on images, we look to image processing techniques.

Images are formed using "pixels", which are like tiny individual color dots. Each color dot, or "pixel", is saved in a file. It turns out that these files are all the same one: Every "pixel" is in a file, which constitutes the series of color dots, as a series of bytes or "1s and 0s" 2, which constitute the digital information that is the file, or "pixels." Point is, in order for a computer to "see" a file, all it needs to do is look at it, by rubbing the files and "pixels" on its CPUs, the same way that you or I look at a picture by rubbing it on our eyeballs.

The problem with most image recognition algorithms is that they do not work, and are also slow.

We eschew the traditional model-based approaches, instead using efficient hashing algorithms such as SHA-1 and MD5. These operate directly on the "1s and 0s" of the image, and run in linear time. This way, even if the algorithms do not work, they will at least be fast.

We find that the algorithm SHA-1 correlates with the douchiness of the image, but not well. The MD5

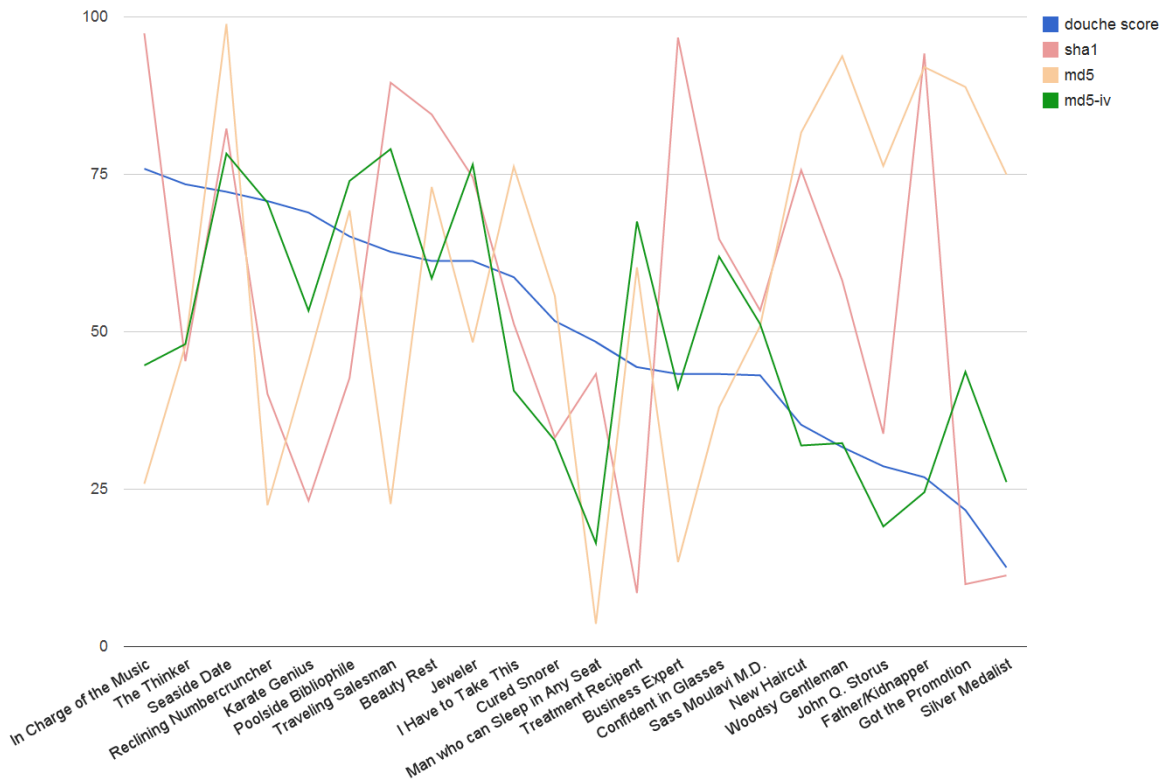


Figure 1: Performance of different prediction algorithms. SHA-1 correlates with the douchiness of the image, though it tends to overestimate the douchiness of medium-low douches. MD5 actually has negative correlation. A tuned variant of MD5 with the initialization vector `A8F82303 08A1B76B AA25DA9E 4C2C1883` correlates quite neatly.

algorithm is faster but in fact correlates negatively. However, by fine tuning the initialization vector, we are able to produce a variant that is just as fast and correlates very well with the data (Figure 1).

Conclusion

Do you disagree with these data (Y/n)? If (Y), then Science never Sleeps! `http://snoot.org/toys/wuss/skymall/`

Poolside Bibliography

Sorry, I didn't read any papers or anything or do actual science.

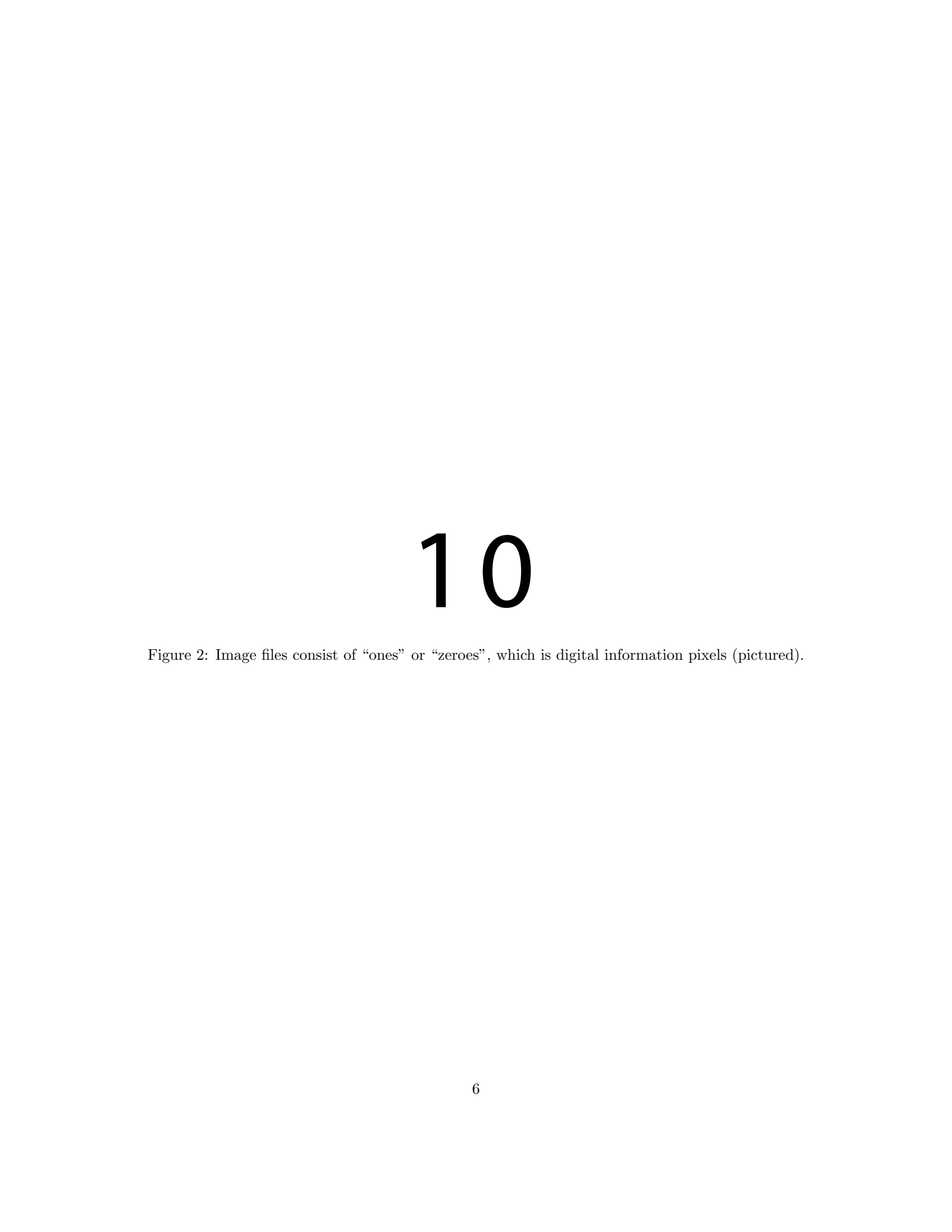


Figure 2: Image files consist of “ones” or “zeroes”, which is digital information pixels (pictured).