Abstract

The practice of public shaming for violating social norms goes into antiquity. This gradually lost its significance in modern industrialized societies. However, the advent of online social networks has facilitated quick and anonymous opinion sharing by the masses on virtually every issue. An unintended consequence of this has been the reappearance of public shaming in online social networks. In its new avatar, an online public shaming event can quickly become a global phenomenon having disastrous social and financial consequences for the victim. Most of the victims of such events happen to be ordinary people as opposed to public figures. The popular online social network platforms, however, offer little remedy to the victim in the unfortunate event of a public shaming. In this backdrop, this thesis proposes methods to detect, analyze and mitigate online public shaming events on behalf of the victims.

In the three contributory chapters of the thesis, mitigation of shaming events is explored from three different perspectives. In the first one, the focus is on automatic detection of shaming utterances using machine learning. A platform named BlockShame is also proposed to shield victims from direct shaming attacks on Twitter. In the next chapter, opinion change of shamers and non-shamers is explored. The objective is to change the opinions of the shamers to non-shaming. In the third contributory chapter, the effect of the victim's response on event progress is studied. A response from the victim, which quickens the conclusion of the event, is preferred over the ones delaying it. Many disparate online shaming events examined in this thesis have been observed to share interesting patterns, e.g., the characteristics of the participants involved. It is hoped that this thesis would propel further research into managing public shaming events for ordinary victims.

Keywords: online public shaming, shaming events, crisis management, online social networks