

Which Saliency Detection Method is the Best to Estimate the Human Attention for Adjective Noun Concepts?

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Abstract: This paper asks the question: how salient is human gaze for Adjective Noun Concepts (a.k.a Adjective Noun Pairs - ANPs)? In an existing work the authors presented the behavior of human gaze attention with respect to ANPs using eye-tracking setup, because such knowledge can help in developing a better sentiment classification system. However, in this work, only very few ANPs, out of thousands, were covered because of time consuming eye-tracking based data gathering mechanism. What if we need to gather the similar knowledge for a large number of ANPs? For example this could be required for designing a better ANP based sentiment classification system. In order to handle that objective automatically and without using an eye-tracking based setup, this work investigated if there are saliency detection methods capable of recreating the human gaze behavior for ANPs. For this purpose, we have examined ten different state-of-the-art saliency detection methods with respect to the ground-truths, which are human gaze pattern themselves over ANPs. We found very interesting and useful results that the Graph-Based Visual Saliency (GBVS) method can better estimate the human-gaze heatmaps over ANPs that are very close to human gaze pattern.

1 INTRODUCTION

In this work (Al-Naser et al., 2015), the authors presented a study of ANPs and their attention pattern as analyzed from eye-tracking experiments. In particular they were interested in gaze behavior of subjects during ANP assessment to infer (1) the ANP's objectivity vs. subjectivity, which is derived from the correlation of fixations in context of positive or negative assessment, and (2) the implicit vs. explicit assessment of ANPs to study their holistic or localizable characteristics. This was realized by explicitly asking the subject to identify regions of interest (ROI) specific to the adjective during their eye-tracked ANP annotation. Once equipped with this knowledge, approaches can be developed to enhance the characteristic ROIs responsible for the adjectives to increase or decrease its sentiment for classification. However, in the previous work, they only targeted 8 out of 3000 ANPs (Borth et al., 2013) and they used only 11 human participants. What if we need to investigate the same for all ANPs? For example to design an improved ANP based sentiment classification system. Through our previous eye-tracking based setup, a manual creation of such a database is not feasible.

The goal of the previous work was to extract the information on how emotions and sentiment affect human fixation. Now, in this paper, we want to investigate if there are saliency detection methods capable of recreating the human gaze behaviour for ANPs and if specific methods are better suited to capture features of a specific ANP. That would be more efficient for applications, like sentiment classification, to predict this behavior automatically.

We used in total ten different state-of-the-art saliency detection methods from the research literature (as described in Section 2). We select four different ANPs: (a) stormy landscape, (b) damaged building, (c) beautiful landscape and (d) cute baby (as shown in Figure 1). In the previous work (Al-Naser et al., 2015), the authors already gathered human gaze information in the form of heatmaps for these ANPs with respect to the user's decision on agreement, disagreement and combination of both which are also shown in Figure 1. This work uses these results as ground-truth. The creation of the ground truth is described in Section 3. Finally, we compared the result of each saliency detection method for each ANP with the ground truth using different evaluation metrics, where different evaluation metrics are described in Section 4 and the com-

parison is described in Section 5, respectively. The comparison clearly demonstrates which saliency detection method is able to recreate an agreement with positive sentiment ANPs while another performs better in regard of negative sentiment ANPs, with respect to corresponding ground-truth information. Finally we discuss the results in Section 6.

2 STATE-OF-THE-ART SALIENCY DETECTION METHODS

A large number of saliency detection methods have been proposed in the literature. In this paper, we selected ten different state-of-the-art saliency detection methods from the literature. These methods are briefly described here as follows.

1. **Attention Simple Global Rarity (Mancas et al., 2006)(M1¹):** it is a global approach where no local information or spatial orientation are used. The authors describe, that it may be interesting for images with rare defects which have low contrast.
2. **Attention Simple Local Contrast (Mancas et al., 2007)(M2):** it is similar to the first one but uses a local approach instead of a global one. Therefore it is interesting for images where the local contrast is the most important.
3. **Context Aware Saliency (Goferman et al., 2010)(M3):** detects image regions that represent the scene instead of detecting dominant objects. This approach is based on four principles of psychology.
4. **Graph-Based Visual Saliency (Harel et al., 2006)(M4):** it starts with forming activation maps on certain feature channels. After that, they are normalized so that they highlight conspicuity and admits combination with other maps. The goal of this approach was to create a simple model which is naturally parallelized and therefore biological plausible.
5. **Itti and Koch (Itti and Koch, 2000)(M5):** they are describing a neuromorphic model to visualize attention. It is based on psychological tasks combined with a visual processing front-end.
6. **Random Center Surround Saliency (Vikram et al., 2011)(M6):** it calculates the saliency based on local saliencies. The local saliencies are calculated over random rectangular regions of interest.
7. **Rare 2007 (Mancas, 2009)(M7):** it is a bottom-up saliency method that only considers color information for the calculation.
8. **Rare 2012 (Riche et al., 2013)(M8):** it uses like Rare 2007 color information but unlike Rare 2007 it also takes orientation information into account.
9. **Saliency based Image Retargeting (Fang et al., 2011)(M9):** it is reading the features like intensity, color and texture features from DCT coefficients in a JPEG bitstream. Combining the Hausdorff distance calculation and feature map fusion the saliency value of a DCT block can be calculated.
10. **Saliency Detection Method by Combining Simple Priors (Zhang et al., 2013)(M10):** it includes three simple priors. First band-pass filtering models the way a human would detect salient objects. For the second prior, the center is focused due to humans paying attention at the center of an image. Lastly cold colors are less attractive than warm ones.

Each of these saliency detection methods produces an intensity map, same like a heatmap, where high to low range of saliency is represented by the dark red to dark blue color range respectively. The heatmap of each saliency detection method was compared with the ground-truth heatmaps, that were generated using human gaze attention (Al-Naser et al., 2015). The next section will briefly summarize the previous work to show how the ground truth for ANPs was created.

3 GROUND TRUTH CREATION OF HUMAN GAZE ANP

First the ground truth images were created for four ANPs ("Beautiful Landscape", "Cute Baby", "Damaged Building" and "Stormy Landscape") from the eye gaze data that had been gathered in this publication (Al-Naser et al., 2015). Each ANP contained ten different sample images and gaze data of 11 participants with their responses; for example if a participant was shown a "beautiful landscape" sample image, we recorded his gaze data plus his response whether he agreed that it is a beautiful landscape or disagreed and stated that it is not a beautiful landscape. Therefore for each ANP, each sample image had three different forms of ground-truths: (i) one for the gaze data where the people agreed with the ANP, (ii) one for disagreement and (iii) one for both agreement and disagreement combined, as shown in Figure 1.

¹Methods will be annotated with these shorter identifier

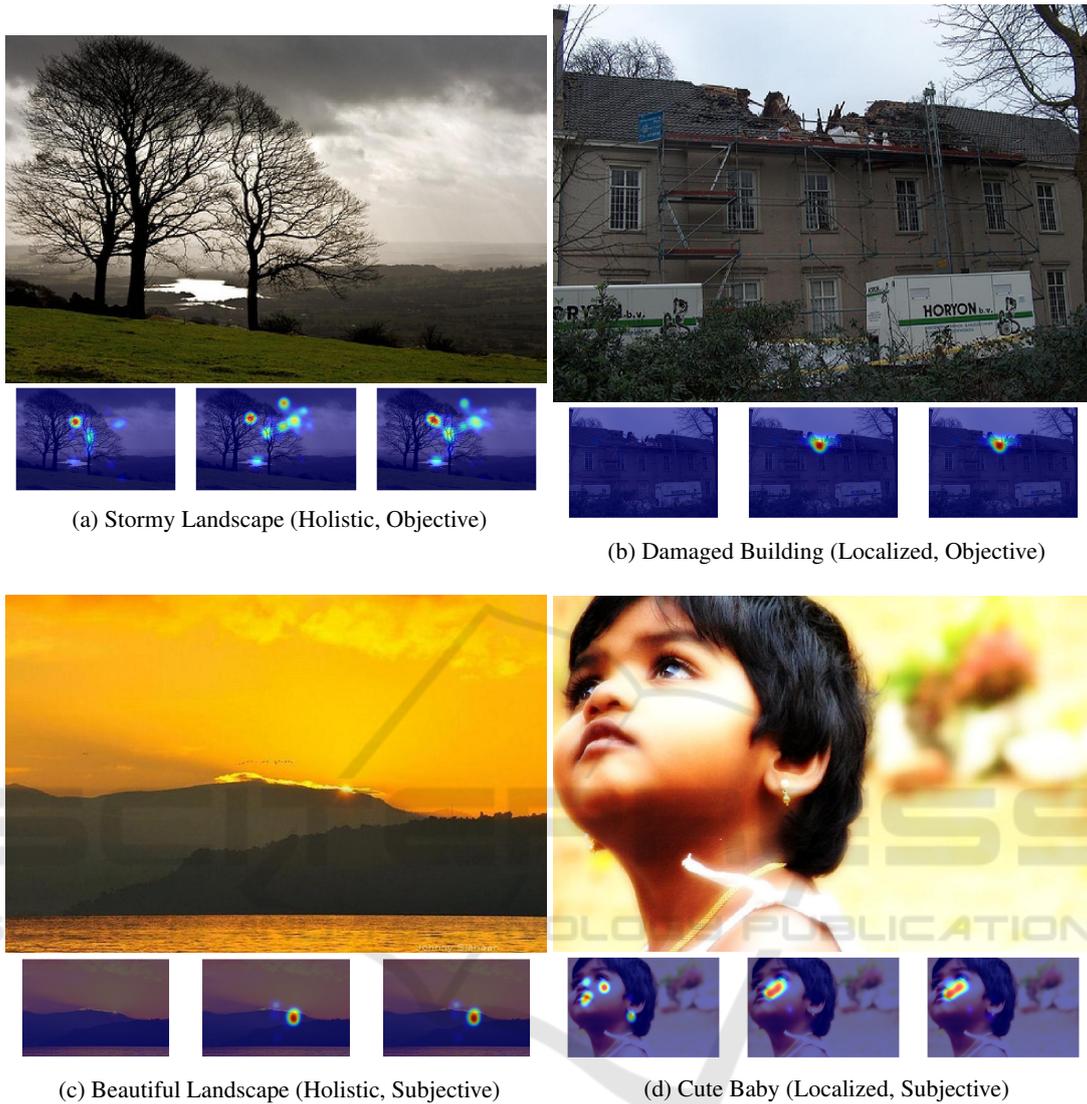


Figure 1: Four Adjective Noun Pair samples illustrating the spectrum of objective vs. subjective ANPs and holistic vs. localizable ANPs. Under each ANP are their ground truths in the following order from left to right: disagreement, agreement and combination of user-agreement and user-disagreement. The reason why not all ground truths are indicating any eye-gaze data is because in this case no participant agreed with this ANP. For example the disagreement image for beautiful landscape doesn't show any eye-gazes because no participant disagreed with this landscape being beautiful.

4 COMPARISON METRICS

In the literature, there are a large number of performance evaluation metrics proposed for comparing structures like heatmaps. These comparison metrics are briefly described here as follows:

- **Simple Difference based Comparison (SD):** As the first comparison method we used a simple difference method. In detail, we first applied the different saliency techniques to the images and binarized the result as well as the ground truth, where

intensity value '1' means high saliency/attention and '0' means no saliency/attention. The binarization was done in a global approach with a threshold determined by Otsu's method(Otsu, 1975). After that we subtracted the ground truth from the resulting map. From this result we summed up all the absolute values and divided it by a value D , where D was calculated with counting the pixels of the binarization where at least the ground truth or the result were 1. If at a position both images were 1, this pixel was nevertheless counted once.

It calculates the difference between saliency map as compared to ground-truth heatmap. In order to calculate the similarity between them, the result was negated, which makes it easier to analyze with other comparison metrics.

- **Area under Curve based Comparison (AUC Judd & AUC Borji):** We also used two Area under Curve methods to compare saliency maps with the ground truths. The first one is AUC Judd (Judd et al., 2012) and the second one is AUC Borji (Borji et al., 2013). As in the first procedure this was done for a binarization where the threshold is determined by Otsu's method.

5 COMPARISON BETWEEN SALIENCY AND HUMAN GAZE

For each saliency method, we calculated the saliency maps for each image within each ANP and compared it with the corresponding three different forms of ground-truth using the different comparison metrics which were described in Section 4. Finally all the results for each ANP and for each different form of ground-truth were averaged. The results can be seen in Table 1 for an agreement form of ground-truth, Table 2 for a disagreement form of ground-truth, and Table 3 for an agreement and disagreement combined form of ground-truth. Highlighted are the best values corresponding to the winners of each ANP case.

Additionally, figures 2, 3, 4 and 5 are showing the best and worst saliency detection method for each of the four ANPs depending on agreement (annotated with yes), disagreement (annotated with no) and combination. In the middle the ground truth is shown. In these Figures, the results of the saliencies were overlaid with a heatmap. On the right side are the best images and on the left side the worst ones. The order from top to bottom is: agreement, disagreement and combination, also the saliency method responsible for this image is noted.

Furthermore to investigate the impact of binarization we repeated the above mentioned procedure after binarizing each of the saliency maps and ground truths. The results can be seen in Table 4 for agreement form of ground-truth, Table 5 for disagreement form of ground-truth, and Table 6 for agreement and disagreement combined form of ground-truth.

Lastly we investigated if a combination of two saliency detection techniques can further improve the current results. We experimented by combining a pair of saliency methods corresponding to two different saliency detection methods. All possible combina-

tions of ten different saliency detection methods were tried out.

The combination of two ground truth images was achieved in two different ways resulting in two different results. First we used the union to combine them, meaning that if a single pixel in one of the two maps was marked, the same pixel was marked in the resulting map. For the other combination we used the intersection, meaning that a pixel in the result will only be marked if the same pixel is marked in both saliency maps. The results for the union combination can be seen in Table 7. Table 8 represents the intersection combination. These results were only calculated by the AUC Judd method. Results are shown for the combination of the methods GBVS(M4), Itti(M5) and Saliency detection method by combining simple Priors(M10). We decided to show only the results of these three methods because showing all possible combinations and their results would be simply too many entries for the scope of this paper. The decision of which combinations are shown is based on the results of Table 1 to 6 where these methods belong to the best. Furthermore the combinations of these three methods also belong to the best overall compared to the other possible combinations.

6 DISCUSSION

In this paper we investigated ten different saliency detection methods as compared to human gaze behavior as ground-truths to find out if there are saliency detection methods capable of recreating the human gaze behavior for different ANPs.

We determined that overall of the ten different saliency detection methods, a clear best method could not emerge. There are some trends like the saliency detection method by combining simple priors(M10) being quite good in the agreement case or Itti(M5) being good for the ANP damaged building.

Another interesting observation, is that Attention Simple Global Rarity(M1) scores consistently best according to the simple difference method, but belongs to the worst according to both AUC methods. We conclude that some evaluation metrics may favor certain circumstances. Therefore we need to expand our experiment for future research and include more evaluation metrics to provide a fair result for all saliency detection methods.

Contrary to the earlier results, the binarized environment favors GBVS(M4) which now emerges as the best method to recreate the human gaze for all ANPs including three different forms of ground-truths, i.e. agreement, disagreement and both agreement and dis-

agreement combined. We think that GBVS scores that good, because of its graph based approach which may correlate to human eye movements. Therefore the question how binarization can positively affect saliency detection methods poses to be interesting and needs to be investigated.

Unfortunately a combination of two saliency methods didn't yield much improvements. Nevertheless the combinations containing GBVS(M4) often resulted in the best scores.

These results are very interesting and can be used for many different applications, such as developing a better sentiment classifier for ANPs using salient regions for feature extractions.

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APPENDIX

Table 1: Comparison between **Agreement-Yes** form of ground-truth and each saliency method and using different comparison metrics. (Note: Close to 1 is the best match).

	Beautiful Landscape			Cute Baby			Damaged Building			Stormy Landscape		
	SD	AUC Judd	AUC Borji	SD	AUC Judd	AUC Borji	SD	AUC Judd	AUC Borji	SD	AUC Judd	AUC Borji
M1	0.052	0.503	0.504	0.017	0.5	0.499	0.024	0.501	0.5	0.017	0.512	0.512
M2	0.03	0.513	0.514	0.009	0.51	0.509	0.007	0.519	0.519	0.013	0.528	0.528
M3	0.008	0.612	0.613	0.003	0.571	0.57	0.003	0.61	0.608	0.004	0.606	0.605
M4	0.008	0.665	0.664	0.005	0.593	0.592	0.003	0.725	0.723	0.003	0.668	0.666
M5	0.007	0.648	0.649	0.004	0.597	0.595	0.002	0.757	0.755	0.002	0.63	0.629
M6	0.015	0.648	0.648	0.007	0.554	0.554	0.007	0.598	0.597	0.004	0.637	0.636
M7	0.033	0.517	0.516	0.007	0.512	0.511	0.01	0.506	0.507	0.008	0.532	0.532
M8	0.017	0.537	0.538	0.004	0.642	0.64	0.005	0.612	0.612	0.004	0.582	0.582
M9	0.013	0.613	0.609	0.004	0.586	0.584	0.002	0.569	0.57	0.003	0.644	0.642
M10	0.011	0.678	0.676	0.003	0.708	0.706	0.003	0.594	0.592	0.003	0.687	0.686

Table 2: Comparison between **Disagreement-No** form of ground-truth and each saliency method and using different comparison metrics. (Note: Close to 1 is the best match).

	Beautiful Landscape			Cute Baby			Damaged Building			Stormy Landscape		
	SD	AUC Judd	AUC Borji	SD	AUC Judd	AUC Borji	SD	AUC Judd	AUC Borji	SD	AUC Judd	AUC Borji
M1	0.045	0.503	0.502	0.022	0.504	0.504	0.019	0.509	0.507	0.017	0.504	0.501
M2	0.03	0.552	0.549	0.009	0.533	0.532	0.006	0.502	0.502	0.011	0.509	0.509
M3	0.007	0.775	0.774	0.003	0.578	0.577	0.004	0.554	0.554	0.003	0.556	0.556
M4	0.006	0.728	0.727	0.009	0.62	0.62	0.004	0.573	0.571	0.003	0.657	0.657
M5	0.007	0.735	0.732	0.005	0.635	0.634	0.001	0.723	0.721	0.002	0.506	0.507
M6	0.019	0.602	0.599	0.009	0.553	0.552	0.007	0.5	0.499	0.004	0.644	0.643
M7	0.028	0.514	0.512	0.009	0.531	0.533	0.007	0.518	0.517	0.008	0.507	0.507
M8	0.018	0.564	0.56	0.003	0.647	0.646	0.003	0.603	0.599	0.003	0.542	0.542
M9	0.014	0.536	0.539	0.006	0.532	0.53	0.001	0.503	0.503	0.003	0.532	0.531
M10	0.012	0.586	0.587	0.003	0.604	0.604	0.003	0.506	0.508	0.002	0.707	0.705

Table 3: Comparison between **Combined (Agreement-Yes and Disagreement-No)** form of ground-truth and each saliency method and using different comparison metrics. (Note: Close to 1 is the best match).

	Beautiful Landscape			Cute Baby			Damaged Building			Stormy Landscape		
	SD	AUC Judd	AUC Borji	SD	AUC Judd	AUC Borji	SD	AUC Judd	AUC Borji	SD	AUC Judd	AUC Borji
M1	0.048	0.502	0.504	0.018	0.499	0.5	0.022	0.501	0.501	0.017	0.512	0.512
M2	0.029	0.525	0.524	0.009	0.515	0.515	0.007	0.521	0.52	0.013	0.534	0.534
M3	0.008	0.647	0.648	0.003	0.571	0.57	0.003	0.616	0.615	0.004	0.627	0.626
M4	0.008	0.667	0.665	0.006	0.604	0.603	0.003	0.746	0.743	0.003	0.71	0.707
M5	0.007	0.673	0.673	0.004	0.61	0.61	0.002	0.79	0.786	0.002	0.636	0.634
M6	0.016	0.639	0.637	0.007	0.561	0.559	0.006	0.59	0.589	0.005	0.651	0.649
M7	0.033	0.515	0.516	0.007	0.516	0.515	0.01	0.512	0.511	0.008	0.531	0.531
M8	0.017	0.535	0.536	0.004	0.647	0.645	0.005	0.615	0.616	0.004	0.601	0.6
M9	0.013	0.583	0.584	0.004	0.581	0.579	0.002	0.569	0.57	0.003	0.643	0.642
M10	0.011	0.64	0.638	0.003	0.706	0.704	0.003	0.588	0.588	0.003	0.709	0.707

Table 4: Comparison between **Agreement-Yes** form of ground-truth and each saliency method and using different comparison metrics in a **binarized** environment. (Note: Close to 1 is the best match).

	Beautiful Landscape			Cute Baby			Damaged Building			Stormy Landscape		
	SD	AUC Judd	AUC Borji	SD	AUC Judd	AUC Borji	SD	AUC Judd	AUC Borji	SD	AUC Judd	AUC Borji
M1	0.039	0.574	0.572	0.028	0.536	0.536	0.039	0.571	0.569	0.052	0.606	0.602
M2	0.045	0.603	0.599	0.023	0.523	0.521	0.05	0.618	0.614	0.05	0.565	0.563
M3	0.069	0.705	0.7	0.042	0.607	0.605	0.065	0.689	0.683	0.07	0.615	0.611
M4	0.07	0.783	0.775	0.053	0.785	0.778	0.091	0.756	0.749	0.081	0.709	0.702
M5	0.068	0.752	0.746	0.04	0.619	0.616	0.063	0.752	0.745	0.062	0.635	0.632
M6	0.067	0.748	0.742	0.046	0.677	0.673	0.066	0.717	0.711	0.091	0.681	0.674
M7	0.036	0.587	0.585	0.032	0.604	0.602	0.035	0.56	0.559	0.051	0.641	0.636
M8	0.066	0.669	0.664	0.076	0.725	0.72	0.063	0.667	0.663	0.072	0.651	0.646
M9	0.067	0.726	0.72	0.05	0.732	0.728	0.048	0.617	0.614	0.071	0.673	0.667
M10	0.059	0.711	0.704	0.058	0.756	0.751	0.051	0.631	0.628	0.92	0.694	0.687

Table 5: Comparison between **Disagreement-No** form of ground-truth and each saliency method and using different comparison metrics in a **binarized** environment. (Note: Close to 1 is the best match).

	Beautiful Landscape			Cute Baby			Damaged Building			Stormy Landscape		
	SD	AUC Judd	AUC Borji	SD	AUC Judd	AUC Borji	SD	AUC Judd	AUC Borji	SD	AUC Judd	AUC Borji
M1	0.046	0.613	0.609	0.033	0.568	0.567	0.028	0.519	0.518	0.057	0.602	0.599
M2	0.053	0.624	0.622	0.028	0.529	0.528	0.024	0.517	0.516	0.062	0.604	0.601
M3	0.071	0.753	0.747	0.03	0.533	0.532	0.04	0.593	0.591	0.045	0.554	0.553
M4	0.068	0.735	0.728	0.049	0.708	0.703	0.104	0.744	0.737	0.078	0.739	0.732
M5	0.073	0.751	0.745	0.05	0.601	0.598	0.054	0.742	0.735	0.057	0.597	0.595
M6	0.068	0.685	0.678	0.045	0.667	0.664	0.041	0.587	0.584	0.092	0.736	0.728
M7	0.044	0.65	0.646	0.035	0.628	0.626	0.026	0.495	0.495	0.056	0.632	0.628
M8	0.083	0.735	0.729	0.052	0.663	0.661	0.074	0.727	0.721	0.07	0.668	0.663
M9	0.056	0.645	0.641	0.045	0.668	0.663	0.031	0.535	0.534	0.069	0.677	0.67
M10	0.052	0.599	0.595	0.05	0.691	0.688	0.043	0.584	0.58	0.084	0.717	0.709

Table 6: Comparison between **Combined (Agreement-Yes and Disagreement-No)** form of ground-truth and each saliency method and using different comparison metrics in a **binarized** environment. (Note: Close to 1 is the best match).

	Beautiful Landscape			Cute Baby			Damaged Building			Stormy Landscape		
	SD	AUC Judd	AUC Borji	SD	AUC Judd	AUC Borji	SD	AUC Judd	AUC Borji	SD	AUC Judd	AUC Borji
M1	0.047	0.57	0.566	0.028	0.536	0.536	0.04	0.567	0.566	0.06	0.616	0.612
M2	0.052	0.6	0.597	0.024	0.52	0.52	0.051	0.612	0.609	0.058	0.578	0.575
M3	0.08	0.702	0.696	0.042	0.606	0.603	0.066	0.688	0.682	0.075	0.616	0.612
M4	0.084	0.789	0.78	0.053	0.786	0.779	0.1	0.778	0.769	0.087	0.723	0.715
M5	0.078	0.739	0.732	0.041	0.619	0.616	0.07	0.764	0.755	0.069	0.632	0.628
M6	0.08	0.733	0.726	0.046	0.68	0.676	0.072	0.721	0.714	0.102	0.704	0.697
M7	0.044	0.586	0.583	0.032	0.606	0.604	0.038	0.56	0.558	0.06	0.66	0.655
M8	0.078	0.666	0.661	0.075	0.725	0.72	0.066	0.673	0.669	0.081	0.674	0.669
M9	0.076	0.713	0.705	0.049	0.732	0.727	0.05	0.623	0.62	0.079	0.681	0.675
M10	0.067	0.693	0.688	0.056	0.753	0.749	0.057	0.642	0.638	0.097	0.707	0.7

Table 7: Comparison between **Agreement-Yes, Disagreement-No, Combined (Agreement-Yes and Disagreement-No)** form of ground-truth and three **union** combination of saliency methods which generally belong to the best. Lastly AUC Judd was used. (Note: Close to 1 is the best match).

	Beautiful Landscape			Cute Baby			Damaged Building			Stormy Landscape		
	Yes	No	Yes/No	Yes	No	Yes/No	Yes	No	Yes/No	Yes	No	Yes/No
M4 M5	0.773	0.767	0.76	0.76	0.76	0.715	0.732	0.723	0.718	0.68	0.662	0.7
M4 M10	0.78	0.776	0.757	0.785	0.785	0.76	0.746	0.736	0.7	0.744	0.721	0.769
M5 M10	0.76	0.754	0.75	0.764	0.758	0.74	0.718	0.71	0.689	0.682	0.661	0.707

Table 8: Comparison between **Agreement-Yes, Disagreement-No, Combined (Agreement-Yes and Disagreement-No)** form of ground-truth and three **intersection** combination of saliency methods which generally belong to the best. Lastly AUC Judd was used. (Note: Close to 1 is the best match).

	Beautiful Landscape			Cute Baby			Damaged Building			Stormy Landscape		
	Yes	No	Yes/No	Yes	No	Yes/No	Yes	No	Yes/No	Yes	No	Yes/No
M4 M5	0.765	0.756	0.737	0.655	0.652	0.624	0.772	0.763	0.691	0.626	0.624	0.634
M4 M10	0.775	0.773	0.744	0.8	0.8	0.713	0.705	0.692	0.617	0.691	0.672	0.727
M5 M10	0.757	0.749	0.726	0.66	0.655	0.613	0.739	0.726	0.689	0.6	0.596	0.615

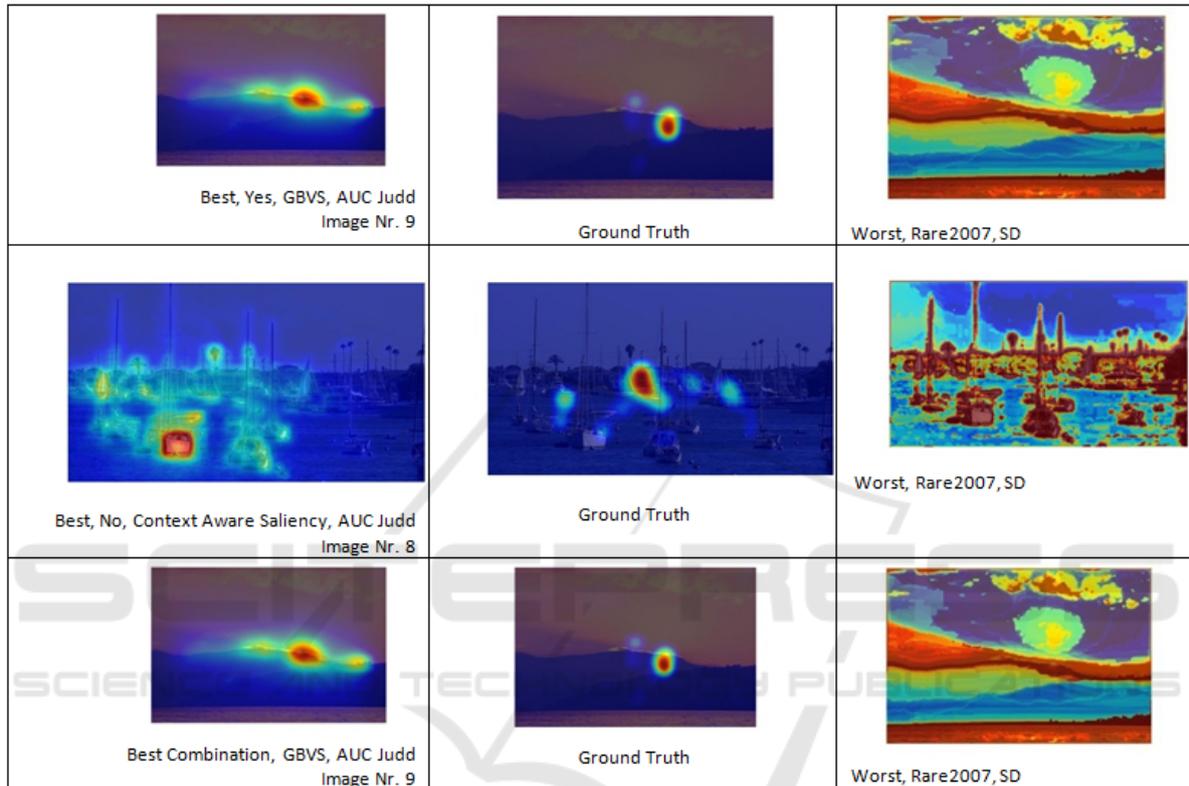


Figure 2: **Beautiful Landscape**: Examples showing the best (left) and the worst (right) saliency detection methods as compared to the ground-truth (middle) human attention map for different sample images with different user responses (Aggrement-Yes, Disagreement-No, and Combination of both Aggrement-Yes and Disagreement-No).

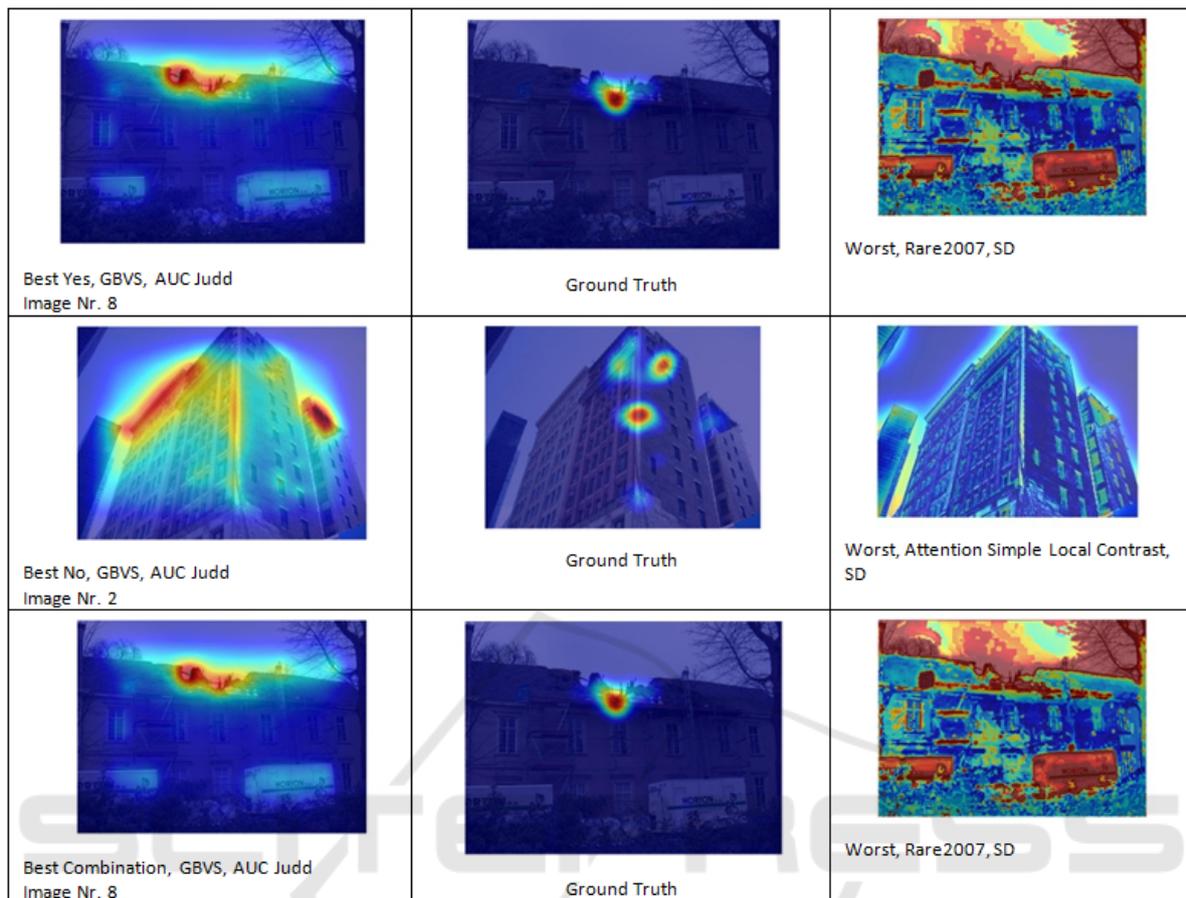


Figure 3: **Damaged Building:** Examples showing best (left) and worst (right) saliency detection methods as compared to ground-truth (middle) human attention map for different sample images with different user responses (Aggrement-Yes, Disagreement-No, and Combination of both Aggrement-Yes and Disagreement-No).

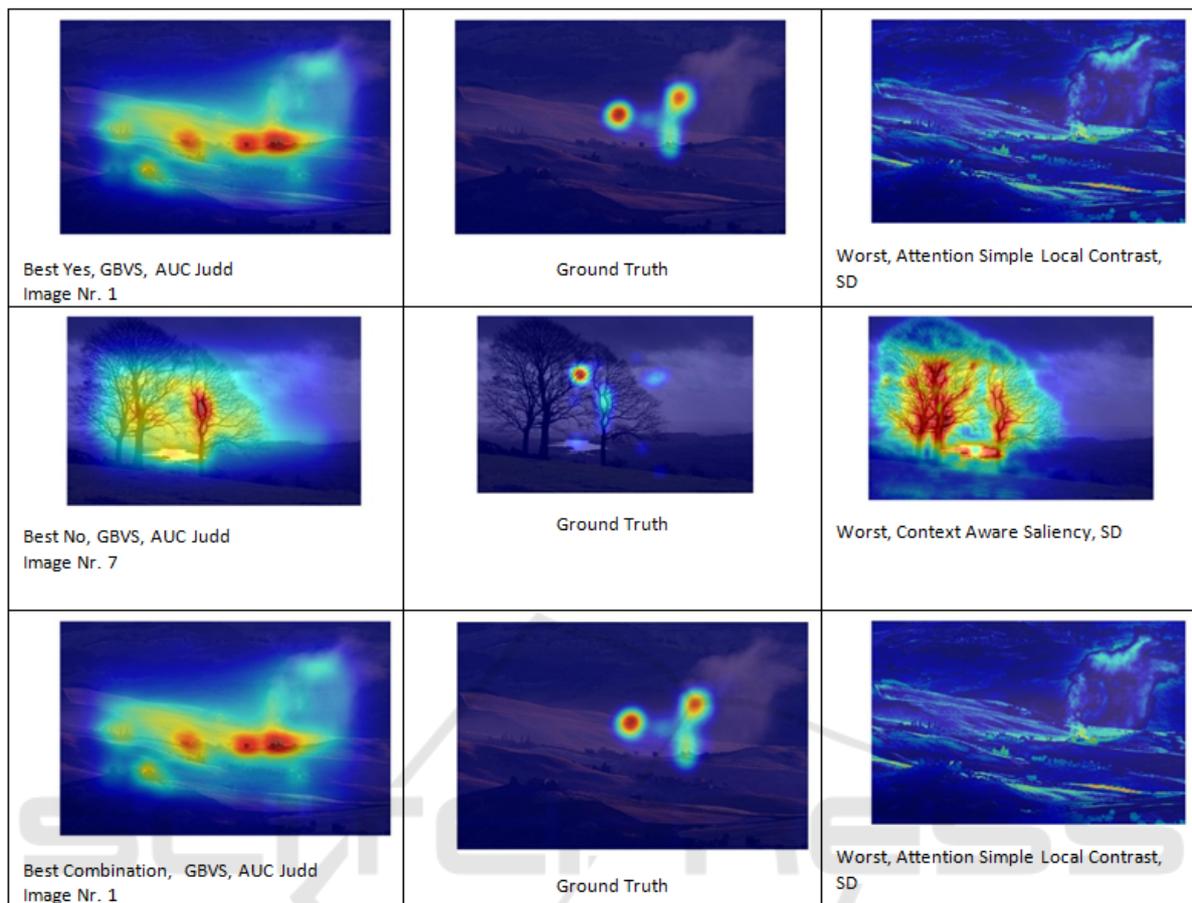


Figure 4: **Stormy Landscape:** Examples showing best (left) and worst (right) saliency detection methods as compared to ground-truth (middle) human attention map for different sample images from Stormy Landscape with different user responses (Aggrement-Yes, Disagreement-No, and Combination of both Aggrement-Yes and Disagreement-No).

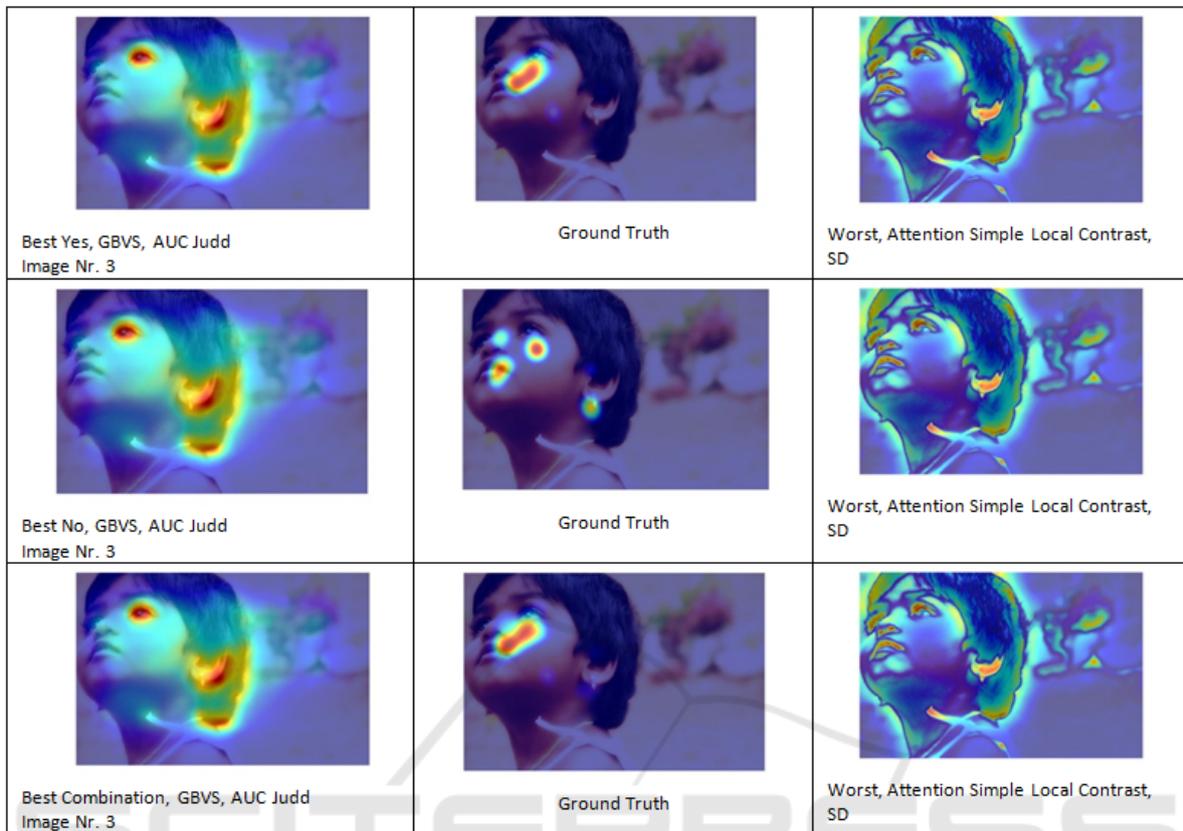


Figure 5: **Cute Baby**: Examples showing best (left) and worst (right) saliency detection methods as compared to ground-truth (middle) human attention map for different sample images with different user responses (Aggrement-Yes, Disagreement-No, and Combination of both Aggrement-Yes and Disagreement-No).