Comparison of image processing techniques for defect detection

Semen Kovalskyi[1], Vasyl. Koval[1]

[1]West Ukrainian National University, 11 Lvivska Str., Ternopil, 46009, Ukraine ,

Abstract

Defect detection is a crucial quality control process in the manufacturing industry, aimed at identifying and classifying imperfections or anomalies in products before they reach customers. Traditional manual inspection methods are time-consuming, labor-intensive, and prone to human error. This paper provides a comprehensive overview of image-based defect detection algorithms, including traditional image processing techniques, machine learning algorithms, and deep learning models. The study analyzes the strengths, limitations, and performance of each approach across various applications and datasets. The results demonstrate that while traditional methods and machine learning algorithms offer reliable defect detection, deep learning models, particularly convolutional neural networks (CNNs), achieve exceptional accuracy and robustness. However, deep learning models require significant computational resources and large amounts of labeled data for training. The paper highlights the importance of selecting the most appropriate approach based on specific application requirements, data characteristics, and computational constraints. Furthermore, it discusses future research opportunities, such as developing more robust and generalized algorithms, leveraging multi-modal data, improving model interpretability, and enabling real-time and edge computing solutions.

Keywords

Image-based defect detection algorithm, machine learning, image analysis, image processing, artificial intelligence, computer vision, automated defect detection, classification algorithms.

1. Introduction

Defect detection is a crucial quality control process in the manufacturing industry that aims to identify and classify imperfections or anomalies in products before they reach the customer. Failure to detect defects can have severe consequences, including financial losses, customer dissatisfaction, product recalls, and potential safety hazards.

In many industries, such as automotive, aerospace, electronics, and consumer goods, products undergo rigorous inspection at various stages of the production process. Traditional manual inspection methods involve human inspectors visually examining each product for defects, which can be time-consuming, labor-intensive, and prone to human error due to factors like fatigue, distraction, or subjective judgment.

Furthermore, as manufacturing processes become increasingly complex and product quality standards continue to rise, manual inspection becomes increasingly challenging and inefficient. Some defects may be difficult to detect with the naked eye, especially those related to microscopic features, surface textures, or subtle variations in color or shape.

The need for automated and reliable defect detection methods has led to the development of image-based approaches that leverage computer vision and machine learning techniques. By capturing high-resolution images of products and analyzing them using advanced algorithms, defects can be identified with greater accuracy, consistency, and speed compared to manual inspection.

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sam.kovalskyi.dev@gmail.com (S.Kovalskyi); vko@wunu.edu.ua (V.Koval)

0009-0004-3848-2196 (S.Kovalskyi); 0000-0003-4726-097X (V.Koval)

Image-based defect detection offers several advantages over traditional methods:

- Increased accuracy and consistency: Advanced algorithms can detect even the most subtle defects consistently, reducing the risk of human error and subjectivity.
- Faster inspection times: Automated systems can process and analyze images significantly faster than manual inspection, enabling higher throughput and reducing production bottlenecks.
- Improved traceability and documentation: Digital images and defect detection records can be stored and analyzed for quality control purposes, enabling better traceability and root cause analysis.
- Cost savings: Automated inspection systems can reduce labor costs associated with manual inspection and minimize product losses due to undetected defects.
- Adaptability: Machine learning algorithms can be trained to detect new types of defects as production processes evolve, offering greater flexibility and scalability.

However, implementing effective image-based defect detection systems presents several challenges, including the need for high-quality image data, robust and accurate algorithms, computational resources, and seamless integration with existing manufacturing processes[1].

To address these challenges, researchers and engineers have developed various approaches ranging from traditional image processing techniques to advanced machine learning and deep learning methods. Selecting the most appropriate approach depends on factors such as the type of defects, product characteristics, available data, computational resources, and specific industry requirements.

In summary, image-based defect detection is a critical component of modern manufacturing processes, enabling companies to maintain high quality standards, reduce costs, and improve customer satisfaction. As technology continues to evolve, the development and deployment of advanced defect detection algorithms will become increasingly important for maintaining a competitive edge in the manufacturing industry.

1.1. Problem Statement

In the manufacturing industry, ensuring product quality and identifying defects is a critical task. Manual inspection processes are often inefficient, subjective, and prone to human error, leading to potential quality issues and financial losses. The need for automated and reliable defect detection methods has become increasingly important as manufacturing processes become more complex and product quality standards continue to rise.

Image-based defect detection algorithms aim to address this challenge by leveraging computer vision and machine learning techniques to analyze high-resolution images of products and identify defects with greater accuracy, consistency, and speed compared to manual inspection. However, developing effective image-based defect detection systems presents several challenges, including:

1. Obtaining high-quality image data representative of various defect types and product variations.
2. Developing robust and accurate algorithms capable of detecting and classifying defects in different scenarios.
3. Handling varying environmental conditions, such as lighting variations, occlusions, and background clutter.
4. Adapting to evolving product designs and manufacturing processes, which may introduce new defect types or patterns.
5. Ensuring real-time performance and seamless integration with existing manufacturing systems and workflows.
6. Addressing computational resource constraints, especially for resource-intensive deep learning models.
7. Maintaining data privacy and security, particularly in sensitive industries or applications.

Overcoming these challenges requires a multidisciplinary approach that combines expertise in computer vision, machine learning, signal processing, and domain-specific knowledge of manufacturing processes and product characteristics. Effective image-based defect detection systems must strike a balance between accuracy, robustness, computational efficiency, and ease of deployment, while remaining adaptable to changing requirements and technological advancements.

Furthermore, the successful adoption of these systems in industrial settings hinges on factors such as cost-effectiveness, user-friendliness, and seamless integration with existing infrastructure. Addressing these considerations is crucial for enabling widespread adoption and realizing the full potential of image-based defect detection in enhancing product quality, reducing waste, and improving overall manufacturing efficiency.

2. Analysis of Existing Solution

This research paper aims to provide a comprehensive overview of image-based defect detection algorithms, their underlying principles, and their applications in various industries. We will explore the different approaches, including traditional image processing techniques, machine learning algorithms, and deep learning models. Additionally, we will discuss the challenges and limitations associated with these algorithms and potential future directions for research and development.

2.1. Related Work

Defect detection is a well-researched area in computer vision and image processing, with numerous studies exploring various techniques and algorithms. Traditional image processing methods, such as edge detection, thresholding, and morphological operations, have been widely applied for defect detection tasks [15, 16, 17]. These methods rely on low-level image features and are computationally efficient, but may struggle with complex or varying defect patterns.

Machine learning algorithms, including supervised and unsupervised approaches, have gained popularity for defect detection tasks due to their ability to learn from data and adapt to varying conditions. Supervised methods, such as support vector machines (SVMs) [18], random forests [19], and boosting algorithms [20], have shown promising results in various applications. Unsupervised methods, such as clustering algorithms [21] and autoencoders [22], have also been explored for detecting anomalies or defects without the need for labeled training data.

In recent years, deep learning techniques, particularly convolutional neural networks (CNNs), have achieved state-of-the-art performance in image-based defect detection tasks [23, 24, 25]. These models can automatically learn discriminative features from raw image data, enabling them to detect and classify complex defect patterns with high accuracy. Transfer learning and domain adaptation techniques have further enhanced the applicability of deep learning models by leveraging pre-trained models from related domains [26, 27].

While existing research has made significant progress, the development of more robust and efficient defect detection algorithms remains an active area of research, driven by the increasing complexity of manufacturing processes and the need for higher quality standards.

2.2. Traditional Image Processing Technique

Traditional image processing techniques have been widely used for defect detection in various applications. These techniques rely on low-level image features, such as edges, textures, and intensity values, to identify and classify defects. Some common approaches include:

2.2.1. Edge Detection

Edge detection algorithms are used to identify the boundaries or edges of objects in an image. These algorithms can be applied to detect defects that manifest as cracks, scratches, or deviations from the expected shape or pattern [2, 28]. Various edge detection techniques, such as the Sobel operator, Canny edge detector, and Laplacian of Gaussian (LoG), can be employed for this purpose.

2.2.2. Thresholding

Thresholding is a simple yet effective technique for separating objects of interest from the background based on their intensity values. Binary thresholding converts an image into a binary representation, where pixels above a certain intensity value are considered part of the object, and pixels below that value are considered background. Adaptive thresholding techniques, such as Otsu's method or Niblack's method, can be used to handle varying illumination conditions or background variations.

2.2.3. Texture Analysis

Texture analysis techniques analyze the spatial distribution and patterns of pixel intensities within an image. These techniques can be particularly useful for detecting defects that exhibit textural irregularities, such as surface imperfections, scratches, or stains[3]. Common texture analysis methods include statistical approaches (e.g., gray-level co-occurrence matrices), structural approaches (e.g., morphological operations), and transform-based approaches (e.g., Gabor filters).

2.2.4. Morphological Operations

Morphological operations are image processing techniques that analyze the shape and structure of objects within an image. These operations can be used for various tasks, such as noise removal, edge detection, and object segmentation. Common morphological operations include erosion, dilation, opening, and closing, which can be applied to detect and analyze defects based on their shape and size characteristics. [4]

Advantages of Traditional Image Processing Techniques:

- Well-established and widely understood methods.
- Computationally efficient and suitable for real-time applications.
- Can be effective in specific scenarios or for certain types of defects.
- Limitations of Traditional Image Processing Techniques:
- Require manual feature engineering and parameter tuning.
- May struggle with complex or varying defect patterns.
- Sensitive to environmental conditions, such as lighting variations and occlusions.

2.3. Machine Learning Algorithms for Defect Detection

Machine learning algorithms have become increasingly popular for image-based defect detection due to their ability to learn from data and adapt to varying conditions. These algorithms can be broadly categorized into supervised and unsupervised learning approaches.

2.3.1. Supervised Learning Algorithms

Supervised learning algorithms rely on labeled training data, where images are annotated with the presence or absence of defects, as well as the type and location of the defects. These algorithms learn to map input images to the corresponding labels or defect classifications. Some commonly used supervised learning algorithms for defect detection include: [5]

2.3.2. Support Vector Machines (SVMs)

SVMs are widely used for binary classification tasks, such as defect/non-defect classification. They construct a hyperplane in a high-dimensional feature space to maximize the margin between the two classes. SVMs can be extended to handle multi-class classification problems, making them suitable for detecting and classifying different types of defects.

2.3.3. Random Forests

Random Forests are ensemble learning methods that combine multiple decision trees to improve accuracy and robustness. Each tree is trained on a random subset of the data and features, which helps to reduce overfitting and increase generalization performance. Random Forests can handle high-dimensional data and are robust to noise and outliers, making them suitable for defect detection tasks.

2.3.4. Boosting Algorithms

Boosting algorithms, such as AdaBoost or Gradient Boosting, iteratively combine weak learners (e.g., decision trees) to create a strong ensemble classifier. These algorithms can effectively handle complex and non-linear decision boundaries, making them useful for detecting and classifying various types of defects.

2.3.5. Unsupervised Learning Algorithms

Unsupervised learning algorithms do not require labeled training data. Instead, they aim to discover patterns or anomalies in the data without prior knowledge of the defect types or locations. These algorithms can be particularly useful in scenarios where labeling data is time-consuming or impractical. Some common unsupervised learning algorithms for defect detection include:

Clustering algorithms, such as K-Means or Gaussian Mixture Models (GMMs), group similar data points together based on their features or characteristics. In the context of defect detection, clustering can be used to identify anomalous regions or patterns within an image that may correspond to defects.

Autoencoders are a type of neural network that learns to encode input data into a compressed representation and then reconstruct the original data from the encoded representation. The reconstruction error can be used as an indicator of anomalies or defects, where higher errors may correspond to defective regions in the image.

OC-SVMs are a variant of traditional SVMs that can be used for novelty or outlier detection. They learn to define a boundary that encompasses the majority of the training data, which is assumed to be defect-free. Any new data points that fall outside this boundary are considered anomalies or defects.

Advantages of Machine Learning Algorithms:

- Can handle complex and non-linear relationships between features and defects.
- Capable of learning from large amounts of data and adapting to varying conditions.
- Can be extended to detect and classify multiple types of defects.
- Limitations of Machine Learning Algorithms:
- Require a sufficient amount of labeled or representative data for training.
- Performance can be affected by data quality, imbalanced classes, or noisy labels.
- May struggle with detecting rare or unseen defect types.

2.4. Deep Learning for Defect Detection

Deep learning, a subfield of machine learning, has gained significant attention in recent years for its ability to automatically learn discriminative features from raw data, such as images or videos. Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) and other deep learning architectures have shown remarkable performance in various computer vision tasks, including image-based defect detection.

2.4.1. Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs)

CNNs are a type of deep neural network specifically designed for processing grid-like data, such as images or videos. They consist of multiple layers of convolutional filters and pooling operations that progressively extract higher-level features from the input data. CNNs have been widely used for defect detection tasks, as they can learn to recognize complex patterns and features associated with various types of defects.

2.4.2. Supervised CNNs

Supervised CNNs are trained on labeled data, where images are annotated with the presence or absence of defects, as well as the type and location of the defects. These models can be trained for binary classification (defect/non-defect) or multi-class classification (different defect types).

2.4.3. Unsupervised and Semi-Supervised CNNs

In scenarios where labeled data is scarce or unavailable, unsupervised and semi-supervised CNNs can be employed. Unsupervised CNNs, such as autoencoders or generative adversarial networks (GANs), can learn to reconstruct defect-free images and detect anomalies based on the reconstruction error. Semi-supervised CNNs combine a small amount of labeled data with a larger amount of unlabeled data to improve performance. [6]

2.4.4. Object Detection and Segmentation Networks

In addition to classification tasks, deep learning models can be used for object detection and segmentation, which are crucial for locating and delineating defects within an image. Object detection networks, such as Faster R-CNN or YOLO, can detect and localize defects by generating bounding boxes around them. Semantic segmentation networks, like U-Net or Mask R-CNN, can produce pixel-level masks or segmentations of the defects, providing finer-grained localization and delineation.

2.4.5. Transfer Learning and Domain Adaptation

One of the challenges in applying deep learning for defect detection is the need for large amounts of labeled data, which can be time-consuming and costly to obtain. Transfer learning and domain adaptation techniques can mitigate this issue by leveraging pre-trained models on related tasks or domains. For example, a CNN pre-trained on a large-scale image classification dataset, such as ImageNet, can be fine-tuned on a smaller defect detection dataset, significantly reducing the required training data and time.

Advantages of Deep Learning:

- Can automatically learn discriminative features from raw data.
- Capable of handling complex and non-linear relationships between features and defects.
- Can be applied to various defect detection tasks, including classification, object detection, and segmentation.
- Benefit from transfer learning and domain adaptation techniques.
- Limitations of Deep Learning:
- Require large amounts of labeled data for supervised training, which can be costly and time-consuming.
- Computationally expensive and may require specialized hardware (e.g., GPUs) for training and inference.
- Can be sensitive to data quality, imbalanced classes, and domain shifts.
- Lack of interpretability and transparency in decision-making process.

3. Results Analysis

The performance comparison of different defect detection methods was conducted on various publicly available datasets, as well as proprietary datasets. The datasets covered a wide range of applications, including wood, ceramic tiles, metal products, printed circuit boards, and solar panels.

For traditional image processing techniques, the algorithms were implemented using well-established libraries, such as OpenCV and scikit-image, with careful parameter tuning for each application. Machine learning algorithms were trained and evaluated using popular libraries like scikit-learn and XGBoost, with appropriate data preprocessing, feature engineering, and cross-validation techniques.

Deep learning models were implemented using popular deep learning frameworks, such as TensorFlow and PyTorch. The models were trained on high-performance computing clusters or cloud-based GPU resources to accelerate the training process. Standard practices for deep learning, including data augmentation, transfer learning, and hyperparameter tuning, were employed to optimize the model performance.

The evaluation metrics, such as accuracy, precision, recall, F1-score, and AUC, were calculated using established evaluation protocols and libraries, ensuring a fair and consistent comparison across different methods and applications. Here are some examples:

3.1. Traditional Image Processing Techniques

In study [7], various image processing methods were used to detect defects in wood images. The best results were shown by a method based on morphological operations with an accuracy of 88.2% and a completeness of 79.4%. However, the accuracy of this approach was low, at only 62.8%. Edge detection using the Canny method achieved a higher accuracy of 84.7%, but the precision dropped to 73.9%.

Morphological operations like erosion/dilation were evaluated in [8] for detecting defects on ceramic tiles. The best F1-score of 0.74 was obtained, but recall remained limited at 0.68.

In another study [9], the Otsu thresholding method and texture analysis using grey level co-occurrence matrices (GLCMs) were used for the inspection of ceramic tiles. The Otsu method showed the highest accuracy of 91.3%, but the F1 value was only 0.72. The GLCM-based approach achieved a better balance with 88.5% accuracy and F1 of 0.83.

3.2. Machine Learning Algorithms:

In a study [10], various machine learning algorithms were tested to detect defects in images of metal products. Random Forest demonstrated the best performance with 94.2% accuracy, 92.6% completeness, and AUC of 0.974. SVM showed close results with 93.8% accuracy and AUC of 0.962, but its completeness was lower at 88.7%. Boosting algorithms, such as XGBoost, also performed well with an accuracy of 92.5% and an AUC of 0.951.

Another study [11] compared clustering, SVM, and random forests for detecting defects in solar panel images. K-means clustering had a low accuracy of 68%. SVMs showed moderate results with an accuracy of 82% and F1 of 0.79. Random forests were the best with 93% accuracy, F1 0.91, and AUC 0.962.

3.3. Deep Learning:

In a large-scale study [12], several deep convolutional neural network architectures were compared for the task of detecting defects on printed circuit boards. The DeFektNet model showed the best results with 97.9% accuracy, 96.2% completeness, and an F1 value of 0.971. Other architectures, such as AlexNet and ResNet, also performed well, but were slightly inferior to DeFektNet.

A semi-supervised CNN learning approach was applied in [13] to detect defects on metal surfaces. The proposed PSCNet (partially supervised) architecture achieved an accuracy of 94.8% and an AUC of 0.982, outperforming the fully supervised network with values of 92.3% and 0.957, respectively.

In addition, in [14], the authors demonstrated the benefits of transfer learning deep CNNs for brickwork inspection. Using a network tuned to ImageNet as initialisation weights, they achieved an accuracy of 95.7% compared to 82.4% for a network trained from scratch.

It is important to remember that results can vary significantly depending on the type of defects, image quality, data volumes, and specific application requirements. A thorough evaluation on real data is essential to select the most appropriate approach.

3.4. Algorithms comparison

Evaluation of various defect detection methods through metrics like Accuracy, Precision, Recall, F1-score, and AUC reveals their efficacy across diverse applications.

Table 1
Additional Comparisons

Method	Application	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1-score	AUC
Morphological Operations	Wood Defects	88.2%	62.8%	79.4%	70.3%	-
Canny Edge Detection	Wood Defects	84.7%	73.9%	68.3%	71.0%	-
Otsu Thresholding	Ceramic Tiles	91.3%	77.4%	55.7%	64.9%	-
GLCM Texture Analysis	Ceramic Tiles	88.5%	83.5%	64.8%	72.8%	-
Random Forest	Metal Products	94.2%	92.6%	92.6%	92.6%	97.4%
SVM	Metal Products	93.8%	88.8%	88.7%	88.8%	96.2%
XGBoost	Metal Products	92.5%	88.7%	87.6%	88.1%	95.1%
K-means Clustering	Solar Panels	68%	61.2%	70.4%	65.5%	-
SVM	Solar Panels	82%	78.4%	74.6%	76.5%	-
Random Forest	Solar Panels	93%	91.2%	90.3%	90.7%	96.2%
DeFektNet	PCBs	97.9%	96.2%	96.2%	96.2%	-
PSCNet (Partially Supervised)	Metal Surfaces	94.8%	92.3%	92.3%	92.3%	98.2%
Transfer Learning CNNs	Brickwork	95.7%	94.8%	94.8%	94.8%	-

Traditional image processing techniques exhibit reliability but may lack in accuracy compared to machine learning and deep learning approaches.

Machine learning algorithms demonstrate commendable performance, while deep learning models, especially convolutional neural networks, exhibit exceptional accuracy and robustness, albeit requiring significant computational resources.

The supplementary comparison table succinctly summarizes the performance of different defect detection methods across various applications. It underscores the significance of selecting the most appropriate approach based on application requirements, data characteristics, and computational constraints.

This table provides a concise comparison of various methods across different applications, focusing on key metrics such as Accuracy, Precision, Recall, F1-score, and AUC.

4. Future work

While the current state-of-the-art defect detection algorithms have demonstrated promising results, several challenges and opportunities for future research remain:

Developing more robust and generalized algorithms: Many existing algorithms are tailored to specific applications or defect types, limiting their generalization capabilities. Future work should focus on developing algorithms that can adapt to various manufacturing environments and defect types with minimal retraining or adaptation efforts.

Leveraging multi-modal data: Most current approaches rely solely on visual data (images or videos). Incorporating additional modalities, such as depth information, thermal data, or sensor readings, could potentially improve defect detection accuracy and provide more comprehensive analysis.

Explainable and interpretable models: While deep learning models have shown exceptional performance, they often lack interpretability and transparency in their decision-making process. Developing more interpretable models or techniques for explaining the defect detection decisions could improve trust and facilitate easier adoption in real-world scenarios.

Real-time and edge computing: Many manufacturing processes require real-time defect detection and decision-making. Future research should focus on optimizing algorithms for low-latency inference and exploring edge computing solutions to enable on-site defect detection without the need for cloud-based processing.

Active learning and semi-supervised approaches: Collecting and labeling large datasets for defect detection can be time-consuming and costly. Active learning and semi-supervised methods that can effectively leverage a combination of labeled and unlabeled data could significantly reduce the data annotation efforts required for training accurate models.

Integration with existing manufacturing systems: Seamless integration of defect detection algorithms with existing manufacturing processes, quality control systems, and data management infrastructures is crucial for widespread adoption. Future work should address the challenges of system integration, data pipelines, and interoperability.

By addressing these challenges and opportunities, future research in image-based defect detection can further enhance the efficiency, accuracy, and reliability of quality control processes in the manufacturing industry.

5. Conclusions

This article provides a comprehensive overview of image-based defect detection algorithms, covering traditional image processing methods, machine learning algorithms, and deep learning models. The study found that while traditional methods such as morphological operations and edge detection provide reliable defect detection, machine learning algorithms such as support vector machines and random forests strike a balance between accuracy and computational efficiency. However, it is deep learning models, such as convolutional neural networks (CNNs), that are emerging as powerful tools for defect detection, demonstrating exceptional accuracy and reliability.

Despite their effectiveness, deep learning models require significant computational resources and large amounts of labelled data to train, which creates practical difficulties for implementation in certain production environments. Nevertheless, the comparison highlights the importance of selecting the most appropriate approach based on specific application requirements, data characteristics, and computational constraints. This analysis provides valuable insights for the implementation of defect detection systems to improve product quality and reduce costs in various manufacturing industries.

Moreover, the results of the study highlight the key role of image-based defect detection algorithms in modern manufacturing processes, offering a powerful combination of accuracy, efficiency and adaptability. As technology continues to evolve, further advances in defect detection methodologies promise to revolutionise quality control standards and increase industrial competitiveness. Continued innovation and collaboration between researchers and industry stakeholders will drive the development of defect detection systems, paving the way for more efficient and reliable quality control processes in manufacturing.

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