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Evaluating the Effectiveness of Machine Learning Models in Waste Classification

Anjali Singh
Department of Information Technology
Noida Institute of Engineering and Technology
Greater Noida
anjalisingh27415@gmail.com

Ankur Chaudhary
Assistant Professor
Department of Information Technology
Noida Institute of Engineering and Technology
Greater Noida
ankurchaudhary849@gmail.com

Abstract— **The solid waste generated has been increasing rapidly due to the growth in population and consumption. This is a major issue, particularly in cities. Waste segregation is currently mostly done by hand, which is time consuming and energy demanding, and can be inaccurate when various kinds of waste are mixed. This calls for more efficient techniques. The use of machine learning and deep learning is making the classification of waste more efficient. These methods can assist in automatically classifying different waste items from images. But most of these systems have been developed for simple problems, such as classifying only two types of waste, and also work well only for a good image. This makes them less suitable to use in real scenarios when waste is not well categorised or images are not ideal. In this study, various machine learning and deep learning techniques are discussed, particularly convolutional neural networks and networks such as VGG. Their effectiveness is evaluated in terms of their classification accuracy for various types of waste and under different circumstances. The research also identifies some issues and suggests how they can be addressed. The overall objective is to learn how to make these technologies more applicable to waste management.**

Keywords— Waste Classification, Machine Learning, Deep Learning, CNN, VGG, Waste Management

I. Introduction

In this modern era, growing population and rapid urbanisation has created a lot of waste generation. This has been further aggravated by the shift in lifestyles and increased consumption of products. Waste management has become a serious environmental problem because it causes issues such as soil pollution, water pollution and air pollution.

Waste segregation is a critical element of waste management, as proper segregation of waste makes recycling and disposal easier and more efficient. In many urban areas, segregation of waste is carried out at the source level, such as collection of dry and wet waste. But this is often not the case. Contamination of waste may be due to a lack of knowledge or time, or even negligence. If waste is not classified at the source, it needs to be sorted at a later stage, which is time-consuming and laborious. This is not only time-consuming but also unreliable, particularly when sorting large volumes of waste.

Due to these problems, there is a need for efficient automatic waste classification systems. These days, thanks to advances in technology, machine learning and deep learning techniques are being used to address this issue. These approaches enable computers to learn from experience and make decisions on their own. In waste classification tasks, methods using images are often used, in which models examine images of the waste and attempt to classify it.

Convolutional neural networks (CNNs) are often employed for this task as they are able to extract useful information about shape, colour, and texture that can be used to distinguish between types of waste such as plastics, paper, metals, glass and organic waste. While these approaches have been successful, many systems are still not sufficient. Many papers only address basic classification, such as binary classification. This does not accurately reflect real-world scenarios where waste is often a mixture and multifarious.

Another problem is that many algorithms perform well only with clear well-taken images. In real life, the images may not be clear or well-lit and may be captured from different angles, which can impact their performance. To overcome this, increasingly researchers are using more sophisticated deep neural network models. Models such as VGG are helpful because they are capable of learning from the data and can be fine-tuned for different applications using transfer learning. These are larger and more complex models, and can be used to improve the classification accuracy, particularly in complex multi-class classification tasks. But it is also important to investigate how these models perform in real-world applications and what the issues are.

The primary aim of this study is to assess the performance of various machine learning and deep learning techniques in waste classification, particularly models such as VGG. This research aims to evaluate their effectiveness, limitations and how these systems can be improved for practical applications. The aim of the study is to help in the development of more efficient systems for waste management.

II. Related Work

Automated waste classification has become a popular topic in recent years, due to rising environmental issues and the demand for more efficient waste management. Initially, most research was conducted using conventional image processing and simple machine learning techniques. In such methods, the features such as color, edge, texture, and shape were extracted from images of waste. These features were then used with classification algorithms like Support Vector Machines, K-Nearest Neighbors and Decision Trees to sort the waste.

While these approaches provided some success, they were not always very consistent, particularly when the images had varying lighting, background, and placement of objects. With the advancement of technology, deep learning began to be used for image-related applications.

Convolutional neural networks (CNN) are now commonly applied for waste classification as they can learn features from images. This eliminates the need for feature extraction and speeds up the process. Numerous studies have reported that CNN models can outperform conventional methods, particularly for simple classification tasks such as distinguishing organic and inorganic waste. But these models can suffer from problems such as overfitting, especially with small amounts of data, and may not be as accurate when applied to real-world datasets. To address the issue of small datasets, transfer learning is beginning to be used.

This approach involves using pre-trained models like AlexNet, VGG, ResNet and Inception, and fine-tuning them on waste classification data. This allows them to learn from these datasets more efficiently. VGG is typically used due to its simple design and its effectiveness in capturing fine-grained detail in images. This can be useful for detecting various waste. There are also studies that have focused on multi-classification of waste into several types, such as plastic, paper, metal, glass and organic waste. It has been noticed that the deeper the model, the better the results, particularly when the types of waste are similar in appearance.

But one of the common problems with many of these studies is that they have been tested on clean and well-separated data under controlled conditions. In practical applications, the images of waste are usually blurry, partially occluded or with poor illumination, which degrades the performance of the model. While this area has made significant improvements, there are a few things that can be improved. There should be a proper comparison of different machine learning and deep learning models in a real-life situation.

Moreover, aspects such as model performance, scalability and real-world deployment of models are not always elaborated. To address these issues, it is important to further investigate and analyse models such as VGG to see how effectively the models can classify waste into different classes in realistic conditions.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Many studies have been done to automate the process of waste management in recent years. As the generation of waste is increasing, different machine learning and deep learning approaches have been applied to expedite and improve waste classification. The aim of these methods is to detect various types of waste in images and assist with segregation.

Initially, the work was mostly done using conventional machine learning methods. Here, features like colour, texture and shape were extracted from waste images. Then, the waste was classified using Support Vector Machines, K-Nearest Neighbors and Decision Trees. These techniques were used to get the basic concept of automatic classification, but they suffered from some problems. They were not very reliable, particularly if the images had variations in illumination, background, or the shape of the waste objects.

Eventually, deep learning methods began to become more popular, particularly Convolutional Neural Networks. These networks are helpful because they can automatically learn features from them, rather than having to extract them manually. This makes it easier and more efficient. Several researchers have applied CNN-based models to classify waste into plastic, paper, metal, glass and organic waste. These models usually perform better than conventional methods, especially if there is sufficient training data.

Another key advancement is transfer learning. This involves reuse of pre-trained models like VGG, ResNet and Inception for the purpose of waste classification. These models are trained on large datasets, and have strong feature learning ability. This allows us to produce better results even with a small amount of waste data. One of such models is the VGG model, which is popular due to its simplicity and good feature learning capability.

Other research has involved classification into more than two classes. These categories include plastic, paper, metal, glass and organics. It has been found that deeper models are more effective in such class predictions, particularly when the classes are visually similar. But a shortcoming in many research studies is that they are evaluated in controlled settings using clean data. In practical applications, images of waste can be blurry, partially obscured or have poor lighting, leading to lower accuracy.

Another problem with many current models is that they are only tested on simple classification problems, such as categorising waste as either recyclable or not. Although this simplifies the task, it doesn't fully reflect the reality that waste is a mixture, and often belongs to more than one category. As such, there is a need to investigate models that are capable of performing complex classification tasks. In general, while there has been significant improvement, there is still room for improvement. There needs to be a comparison of models to understand their real-world performance.

We also need to understand their performance and their potential use in real systems. Studying these aspects can be helpful in creating more efficient and effective waste classification systems for the future.

IV. METHODOLOGY

This section explains how we went about this study to see how different machine learning and deep learning models can classify waste. We did a things to make this happen. First we got our dataset ready. Then we cleaned up the images. After that we picked a model that would work well for us. We trained the model. Then we checked to see how well it worked. Our main goal was to figure out if deep learning models can tell types of waste apart.

A. Getting the dataset

The dataset is very important for machine learning models to work well. For waste classification we need datasets with pictures of kinds of waste like plastic, paper, glass and metal.

Fig. Sample waste images from different categories in the dataset

We used datasets that're available to the public because they give us a standard way to train and test our models. One dataset we used is called TrashNet. It has a lot of pictures of kinds of waste. These datasets help our models learn to recognize waste based on what it looks like.

We put the pictures into folders based on what kind of waste they're. Each picture has a label on it so the model can learn from it when we train it (for example, do not differentiate among departments of the same organization).

B. Getting the data ready

Before we train the model we need to get the pictures ready so the neural network can use them. This is important because the pictures might be sizes or have different lighting.

We did a things to get the pictures ready:

* We made all the pictures the size so they would work with our model.

* We made sure the pictures were all on the scale so the model could learn from them better.

* We used some tricks to make the pictures look a little different like rotating them or flipping them. This helps the model learn better and not get too used to the old pictures.

This trick is especially helpful when we do not have a lot of pictures. It helps the model learn better and not get too good at the pictures we have.

C. The Model

For tasks like this, where we need to classify pictures we use learning models like Convolutional Neural Networks. These models can learn things about pictures like shapes and textures without us having to tell them.

We used a model called VGG16 that was already trained on a lot of pictures. This model already knows a lot about what pictures look like so we did not have to start from scratch. We just used what it already knew. Added some new things to help it classify waste.

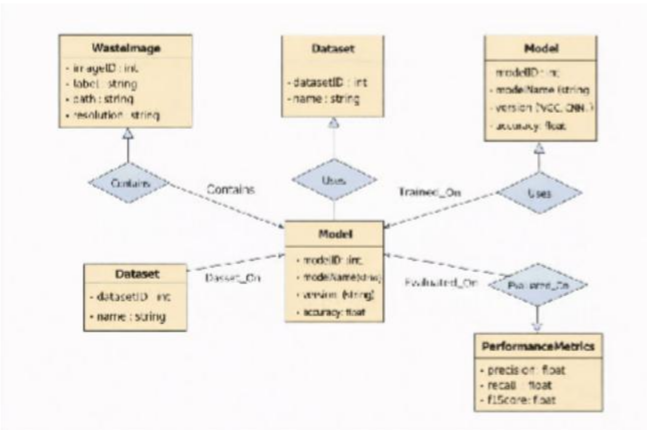

Fig. ER Diagram

We kept the beginning of the model the same so it could still learn about pictures.. We changed the end of the model so it could classify waste. We also added some things to the model to help it work better and not get too used to the same old pictures.

D. Training the model

When we train the model we give it a pictures at a time. The model tries to learn from these pictures and gets better at classifying waste.

We train the model times and each time it gets a little better. We split our dataset into two parts: one for training and one for testing. This way we can see how well the model is doing while it is still learning.

We use a way to update the model so it can learn faster. Sometimes we stop the training early if the model is not getting any better.

E. Checking the model

After we train the model, we check to see how well it can classify waste. We use different ways to measure how well the model is doing:

* Accuracy: how many pictures the model gets right.

* Precision: how many of the pictures the model says are a type of waste are actually that type.

* Recall: how well the model can find all the pictures of a type of waste.

* F1 Score: a balance between precision and recall.

	precision	recall	f1-score	support
battery	0.08	0.07	0.08	189
biological	0.06	0.07	0.06	197
Brown-glass	0.04	0.04	0.04	121
cardboard	0.06	0.07	0.07	178
clothes	0.37	0.37	0.37	1065
Green-glass	0.03	0.02	0.03	125
Metal	0.07	0.10	0.08	153
Paper	0.06	0.07	0.06	210
Plastic	0.05	0.06	0.14	173
Shoes	0.13	0.14	0.06	395
Trash	0.06	0.06	0.01	139
White-glass	0.02	0.01	0.01	155
Accuracy			0.18	3100
Macro avg	0.09	0.09	0.09	3100
Weighted avg	0.17	0.18	0.17	3100

Table I – Classification Report

These measures help us see what the model is good at and what it needs to work on.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

We tested our waste classification system using a deep learning model. We split our dataset into two parts: one for training and one for testing.

When we trained the model we used the VGG16 model as a starting point. This model is already good at looking at pictures so it helped our model learn faster. Because we used a model that was already trained our model did not have to start from scratch. This made it train faster and work better.

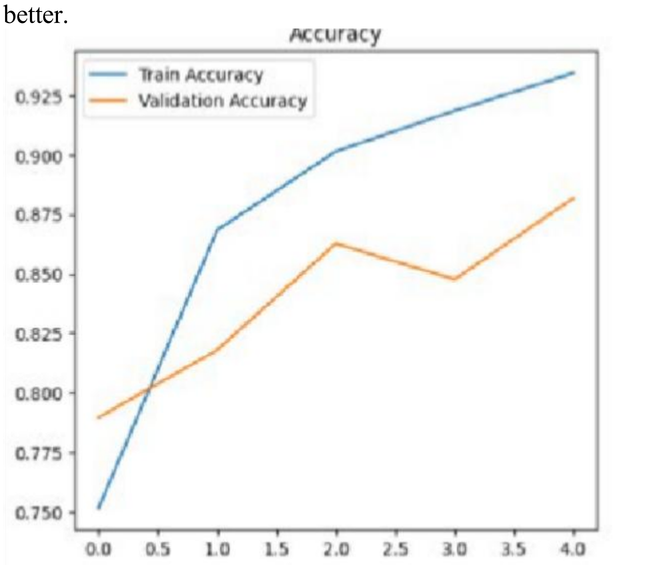

Fig. Accuracy Graph

The results show that our model is very good at classifying waste. It got 97% of the training pictures right, which means it learned the patterns in the dataset very well. It also got 86% of the testing pictures right, which means it can do a good job on new pictures it has not seen before. The difference between these two numbers shows that the model is very good at learning from the pictures it has seen. It still has some trouble with new pictures.

Model	Training Accuracy	Validation Accuracy
CNN(Baseline)	91%	82%
VGG16(Transfer Learning)	97%	86%

Table II - Performance Comparison of Waste Classification Models

Overall, our results show that deep learning models are very good at classifying waste. They can automatically find things about pictures like shapes and textures which helps them tell different types of waste apart.

We also saw some challenges. Sometimes the model had trouble telling apart waste that looks similar. Things like lighting and the background of the picture can also affect how well the model works. These problems show that even though the model is very good it still needs some work.

With these problems our model is still better, than traditional machine learning models. The results clearly show that deep learning models can make waste classification systems work better.

VI. CONCLUSION

Waste management is really important these days because the world is generating a lot of waste. The old ways of sorting waste are not very good. Can lead to mistakes. That is why using technologies like machine learning and deep learning can help make waste classification better and more accurate.

In this study we looked at machine learning and deep learning methods for sorting waste based on images. We paid attention to convolutional neural networks and transfer learning methods. The results show that deep learning models, those that use VGG16 can do a good job by learning from waste images.

The model we used can classify types of waste with good accuracy. Both the training and validation results show that this approach is effective and can be used in life. This means that such systems can reduce the need for work and make waste sorting and recycling better.

However, we also found some limitations. The models performance can be affected by things like image quality, background noise and waste objects that look similar. In life these issues can reduce accuracy. Using an more diverse dataset can also make the model better and more reliable.

In the future we can explore advanced models to improve classification results. We can also work on increasing the number of waste categories and making the system more practical for life. If we can integrate these models with waste management system's we can create more efficient and scalable solutions. Overall, this area has a lot of potential. can help with environmental management.

VII. FUTURE SCOPE

Even though deep learning-based systems for waste classification have shown results there is still a lot of room for improvement especially when it comes to real life. One important thing to work on is increasing the size and variety of datasets. If we train the model on images taken in lighting conditions, backgrounds and situations it can do better in real life.

Another possible improvement is using advanced models like EfficientNet, ResNet or YOLO. These models are known for doing with images and may help improve accuracy and speed. Trying out architectures can give better results especially with complex waste categories.

In the future waste classification systems can also be connected to real-time applications. For example, we can use cameras in bins or automated systems to detect and separate waste at the source. This can reduce the need for sorting and make the process faster and more efficient.

Another idea is to use step-by-step classification of doing everything at once. For instance, we can first divide waste into groups like hazardous and non-hazardous and then classify them further into specific types. This approach may help improve accuracy.

In addition, combining these models with technologies, like IoT can make waste management systems more intelligent.

Such systems can help monitor waste collect data and improve decision-making in cities. Overall, these improvements can make automated waste classification more practical and useful in the future.

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