E-ISSN: 2583-9667
Indexed Journal
Peer Reviewed Journal
https://multiresearchjournal.theviews.in

Received: 18-01-2025
Accepted: 29-03-2025

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCE RESEARCH IN MULTIDISCIPLINARY

Volume 3; Issue 2; 2025; Page No. 186-193

Plastic Waste Road Utilization Alert System Using Surveillance

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15575892

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Abstract

The swift rise in plastic waste buildup along roadways has turned into a major issue because of its ecological risks and detrimental effects on urban tidiness. Traditional techniques for identifying and monitoring plastic waste are primarily manual, leading to inefficiencies, high labor demands, and susceptibility to errors. This research introduces a smart image-based detection system employing Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN) for the automated recognition of plastic waste along roadways. The system records live images using cameras placed on roadside poles, vehicles, or drones. These images undergo a series of preprocessing steps including conversion to grayscale, removal of noise, resizing, and enhancement of edges utilizing OpenCV to get them ready for precise feature learning. A tailored CNN model is subsequently utilized to derive spatial features and accurately classify the occurrence of plastic waste. The CNN is trained on a labeled dataset that includes images featuring both plastic debris and clean backgrounds across different lighting, background noise, and environmental settings. The system is designed for efficient performance, allowing it to be deployed on low-resource edge devices for practical application in the field. Performance assessment shows that the model attains significant accuracy and recall, showcasing its strength in identifying plastic even in situations that are partially obstructed or in low-light conditions. Through the automation of plastic waste detection along roadways, this system offers a scalable and budget-friendly answer for supporting municipal authorities in preserving environmental cleanliness and starting prompt waste management efforts. It additionally creates opportunities for real-time notification systems and smart city connectivity.

Keywords: Plastic waste detection, roadside monitoring, CNN, image processing, deep learning, object classification, environmental cleanup, smart city

Introduction

In recent decades, plastic pollution has become a significant environmental concern, particularly impacting roadways and urban streets. Thrown-away plastic products like bottles, bags, wrappers, and containers pile up by roadsides, resulting in visual pollution, blocking drainage systems, and threatening wildlife and human health. In spite of the introduction of awareness initiatives and waste management strategies, detecting and collecting plastic waste continues to be difficult because of insufficient real-time monitoring and identification systems.

Manual inspection techniques for identifying plastic waste are labor-intensive, susceptible to human mistakes, and frequently struggle to keep pace with the rising amount of waste produced each day. To fill this void, smart image-focused solutions provide encouraging options for automating the detection procedure. In this setting, Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN)-a type of deep learning model-have demonstrated outstanding effectiveness in tasks involving image classification and object detection.

This study presents a CNN-driven approach for the automatic identification of plastic waste along roadsides through image processing methods. The system takes pictures with conventional cameras (mobile, CCTV, or drone-mounted) and processes them via a series of preprocessing steps to improve detection precision. The CNN model is developed to identify different types of plastic waste in various settings and under different environmental circumstances. In contrast to conventional methods, this solution functions effectively on edge devices and offers quick responses for waste management teams.

The aim of this project is to assist in creating smarter, more sustainable urban areas by facilitating the automated, scalable, and precise identification of roadside plastic waste.

Traditional Approach

Conventional approaches for identifying and handling plastic waste along roads have mainly depended on manual examination and removal. City workers or eco-volunteers actively patrol roads and streets to spot and gather visible plastic waste. Though this approach is simple, it is very labor-intensive, takes a lot of time, and is frequently ineffective, particularly in expansive urban or rural regions with scarce personnel and resources.

Alongside manual inspection, static surveillance systems like closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras have sometimes been used for monitoring. Nevertheless, these systems usually need human operators to monitor video feeds, rendering them vulnerable to lapses and fatigue. Additionally, they do not possess the capability to automatically distinguish plastic waste from other substances, resulting in limited assistance for decision-making or immediate response.

Techniques based on sensors, like infrared or ultrasonic detection, have been tested in regulated settings to recognize particular materials. Nonetheless, these systems tend to be costly, restricted in range, and inappropriate for changing outdoor environments where lighting, angles, and weather conditions fluctuate.

In general, conventional methods do not possess the automation, scalability, or precision needed to manage real-world situations efficiently. They also struggle to identify smaller or partially hidden plastic items, especially in messy or natural settings. These constraints have inspired the creation of machine learning and deep learning-driven systems, such as the CNN-based model suggested in this study, which is capable of processing visual information and executing intelligent plastic waste detection promptly

Related Works

Banerjee *et al*. (2023) [1] introduced a waste material detection framework using a combination of SVM classifiers and color-based segmentation. While effective in differentiating between general waste types in well-lit, clean environments, the system failed in detecting plastic waste in complex backgrounds, particularly under low-light or occluded conditions. The model lacked adaptability and required frequent recalibration, which limits its real-time, large-scale deployment potential-an issue resolved by the proposed CNN-based system optimized for diverse conditions and edge devices.

Kumar and colleagues (2019) [2] created a deep learning-based system for classifying waste through images to differentiate between recyclable and non-recyclable materials. The system employed a simple CNN that was trained on a limited dataset with little preprocessing. Even though the model attained satisfactory accuracy in regular settings, its dependability greatly decreased in outdoor conditions characterized by fluctuating lighting and messy backgrounds. This restricts its application in dynamic roadway environments in contrast to the suggested system.

Zhao and Lee (2021) [3] suggested a waste identification system that employs drone-acquired images and YOLOv3 for immediate detection. Although the system showed encouraging outcomes, it faced difficulties in identifying smaller plastic objects and exhibited reduced accuracy in messy or low-contrast situations. Moreover, its implementation necessitated advanced hardware, rendering it less appropriate for low-resource edge devices as addressed in the suggested system.

Singh *et al*. (2020) [4] developed a CNN-based model for classifying litter that identified waste categories such as paper, plastic, and metal from images taken by smartphones. While successful in controlled settings, the model demonstrated weak generalization in real-world situations involving shadows, obstructions, or varying camera angles. The absence of sophisticated preprocessing restricted its reliability, in contrast to the suggested system that employs OpenCV for image improvement.

Nair and Abraham (2018) [5] introduced a trash detection system that employs a static camera and is trained with conventional machine learning classifiers and HOG features. Their system did not function effectively in dynamic background situations or when plastic waste was somewhat mixed with the environment. The reliance on manually created features and lack of deep feature extraction rendered it less flexible compared to CNN-based architectures such as the one suggested.

Wang and colleagues (2022) [6] employed a U-Net framework for segmenting waste in environmental photographs. Although the segmentation performed well for distinctly separated waste items, the model faced difficulties with overlapping or partially visible objects. The system additionally needed GPU support for real-time performance, rendering it unsuitable for edge-based deployment, a deficiency tackled by the suggested lightweight CNN model.

Reddy and colleagues (2019) [7] created a system for monitoring road cleanliness using AI that categorized images as "clean" or "unclean." Nonetheless, the binary aspect of classification was not precise enough to identify plastic waste exclusively, leading to incorrect positive identifications when various debris types were present. The suggested system provides more detailed detection centered on plastic, improving its significance for specialized waste management.

Chen and Gupta (2021) [8] introduced a multi-class waste identification system utilizing pre-trained CNN architectures such as VGG16 and ResNet50. Although they attained great precision on benchmark datasets, the models were resource-heavy and necessitated cloud-based inference. Their dependence on high-resource platforms constrained immediate, on-site usability, in contrast to the edge-friendly design of the suggested system.

Hassan and colleagues (2020) [9] applied image segmentation and contour detection methods to identify waste along roadways. Their method was effective for large, recognizable waste items but struggled to identify smaller plastic fragments or those blended into intricate backgrounds. The lack of deep learning restricted its flexibility to different environmental conditions, which the suggested CNN-based model addresses.

Thomas and Mehta (2022) [10] developed a system for detecting plastic bottles through conventional background subtraction and blob analysis techniques. The system functioned effectively with static video feeds; however, it was very responsive to motion noise and variations in lighting, resulting in numerous false detections. The absence of stability in changing environments highlights the proposed system's capability to function dependably in diverse real-world conditions

Limitations of the system

Table 1: Limitations In Existing Survey Papers

Ref. No.	Authors	Year	Focus	Limitations Compared to Proposed System
[1]	Banerjee *et al.*	2023	Hybrid detection (edge + shallow NN)	Poor in low-light; requires manual tuning
[2]	Kumar *et al.*	2019	Garbage classification (recyclable vs. not)	Poor outdoor performance; minimal preprocessing
[3]	Zhao and Lee	2021	Waste detection using YOLOv3 and drones	Struggles with small items; high resource dependency
[4]	Singh *et al.*	2020	Litter classification via smartphones	Poor generalization; lacks robust preprocessing
[5]	Nair and Abraham	2018	Static camera trash detection with HOG	Ineffective in dynamic backgrounds; no deep features
[6]	Wang *et al.*	2022	Waste segmentation using U-Net	Overlaps cause misclassification; not suitable for edge devices
[7]	Reddy *et al.*	2019	Road cleanliness monitoring (clean/unclean)	Binary classification only; not plastic-specific
[8]	Chen and Gupta	2021	Waste classification with VGG/ResNet	High computational load; unsuitable for real-time edge use
[9]	Hassan *et al.*	2020	Roadside waste detection via contour analysis	Misses small/camouflaged plastic; lacks adaptability
[10]	Thomas and Mehta	2022	Plastic bottle detection with blob analysis	Sensitive to motion and lighting changes

Proposed System

The suggested system presents an intelligent framework for detecting plastic waste through images, utilizing Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN) specifically designed for practical use along roadways. In contrast to conventional models, this system obtains real-time images from cameras attached to poles, vehicles, or drones and utilizes sophisticated OpenCV-based preprocessing methods, which include converting to grayscale, eliminating noise, resizing, and enhancing edges. These measures greatly enhance feature clarity, allowing the CNN to precisely capture spatial features and recognize plastic waste even in difficult situations like partial blockage, dim lighting, and diverse environmental settings. The CNN is trained on an extensive, labeled dataset comprising images of plastic waste and tidy environments in various conditions. Created for real-time efficiency, the model is compact and fine-tuned for low-resource edge devices, making it scalable and economical for extensive deployment. This system surpasses current solutions by overcoming typical shortcomings like inadequate visibility, absence of preprocessing, and high hardware demands, thus providing a viable option for local authorities to implement prompt waste management and support smart city projects.

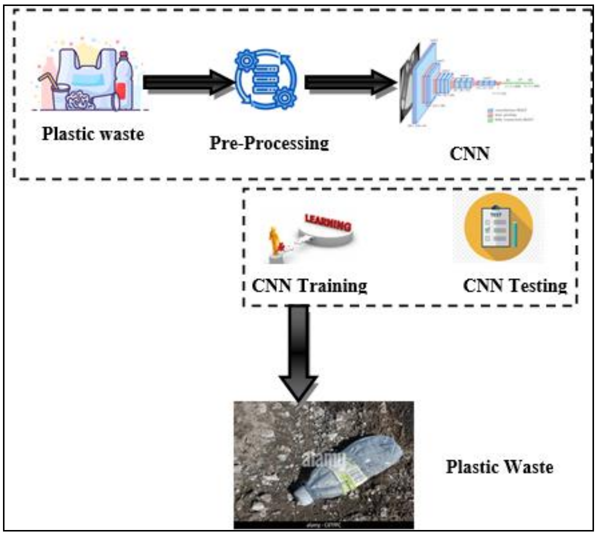

Fig 1: Proposed system architecture

The system architecture depicts a process for detecting plastic waste with the help of a Convolutional Neural Network (CNN). The process starts by gathering images of plastic waste, which subsequently undergo a pre-processing phase. This phase includes getting the images ready by resizing, normalizing, and potentially augmenting them to enhance their quality and appropriateness for analysis. The processed images are input into a CNN, a deep learning architecture created to automatically identify features and patterns within images. The CNN experiences a training stage during which it learns to identify plastic waste by examining labeled training data. Following training, the model is assessed on fresh images to gauge its effectiveness and confirm correct classification. Ultimately, the trained CNN recognizes and categorizes new input images as plastic waste, illustrated in the example at the bottom of the diagram. This automated method aids in efficiently identifying and handling plastic waste by utilizing image-based deep learning approaches.

Implementation: The implementation can be done using step by step functional system.

- Image acquisition
- Pre-Processing
- Feature Extraction
- CNN Training
- CNN Testing
- Plastic Waste Detection

Image Acquisition

The dataset collection process is the foundation of any deep learning-based image recognition system. In the context of plastic waste detection along roadways, the dataset must be diverse, realistic, and well-labeled to ensure the CNN model can generalize effectively to real-world scenarios.

Images are collected using multiple hardware setups to simulate various deployment conditions:

Fixed Cameras on Roadside Poles: Continuously monitor specific urban areas or high-traffic zones.

Vehicle-Mounted Cameras: Collect dynamic roadway images during vehicle movement.

Drone-Mounted Cameras: Provide aerial perspectives, useful for detecting scattered waste over larger areas.

This multi-perspective acquisition ensures a wide range of

- Backgrounds (urban, rural, vegetation, concrete, etc.)
- Lighting Conditions (day, night, shadow, fog, etc.)
- Plastic Types (bottles, bags, wrappers, etc.)
- Environmental Variations (wet roads, cluttered areas, overlapping objects)

Pre-Processing

Pre-processing is an essential stage in getting unprocessed images ready for feature extraction and model training. It improves the consistency and quality of input images, enabling the CNN to concentrate on important features and boost classification precision.

Gray Scale Conversion

Objective: Converts the image from RGB (3 channels) to grayscale (1 channel), decreasing computational burden.

Advantage: Streamlines the image while preserving vital texture and shape details, essential for identifying plastic waste.

Noise Elimination

Objective: Eliminates undesired noise (like pixel grain, dust, or distortions) through the use of filters.

Gaussian Blur: Soften the image, diminishes high-frequency noise.

Feature Extraction

Feature extraction involves pinpointing and isolating key patterns or features in images that assist in differentiating plastic waste from its background. In your system, the Convolutional Neural Network (CNN) takes care of this process automatically following pre-processing.

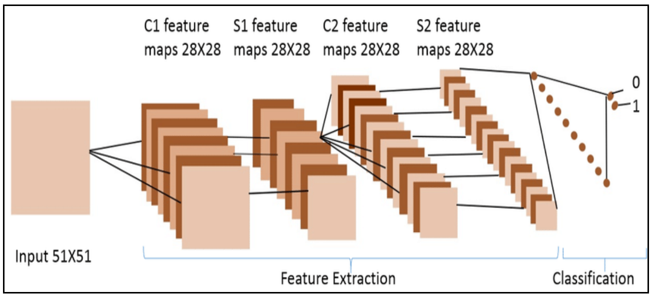

Fig 2: CNN Feature Extraction

Input Image: The processed image (grayscale, resized, with noise eliminated) is input into the CNN.

Convolutional Layer: Utilizes filters to identify fundamental features such as edges, lines, and curves.

Activation (ReLU): Introduces non-linearity by transforming negative values into zero, enabling the network to understand intricate patterns.

Pooling (Max Pooling): Minimizes the dimensions of feature maps while retaining crucial information. This aids in lowering computation and avoiding overfitting.

Enhanced Convolution + Pooling Layers: Executes convolution and pooling multiple times to identify advanced features including textures, shapes, and patterns of objects such as plastic bottles or bags.

Leveling: Transforms the concluding feature maps into one extended vector of features.

Layers with Full Connectivity (Dense Layers): Employs the identified features to determine the final classification indicating if plastic waste is present or absent.

CNN Training: Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) are a specific type of deep learning models created to interpret and categorize image information by autonomously learning spatial hierarchies of characteristics. Regarding plastic waste detection, CNN training consists of instructing the network to identify patterns, textures, and shapes typically associated with plastic rubbish by providing it with extensive amounts of labeled image data. The model steadily enhances its predictive ability by fine-tuning internal parameters throughout training, allowing it to correctly detect plastic waste across different environmental situations.

Division of Dataset: The annotated dataset (images of plastic and non-plastic) is split into training, validation, and testing subsets.

Input Nourishment: Training images are input into the CNN model in groups for effective learning.

Propagation Forward System: Images move through the CNN layers (convolution, activation, pooling) to gather features. The last layer produces a prediction (e.g., “Plastic” or “No Plastic”).

Calculation of Loss: The forecast is contrasted with the real label to calculate the error through a loss function (e.g., binary cross-entropy).

Backward propagation: The network modifies internal weights by computing gradients derived from the error.

Enhancement: An optimizer (such as Adam or SGD) modifies the weights to reduce the loss and enhance prediction accuracy.

Era Cycle: The aforementioned steps are repeated for multiple epochs (full traverses of the dataset) to gradually improve the model.

Validation Verification: Following each epoch, the model is assessed with a distinct dataset to evaluate its generalization and prevent overfitting.

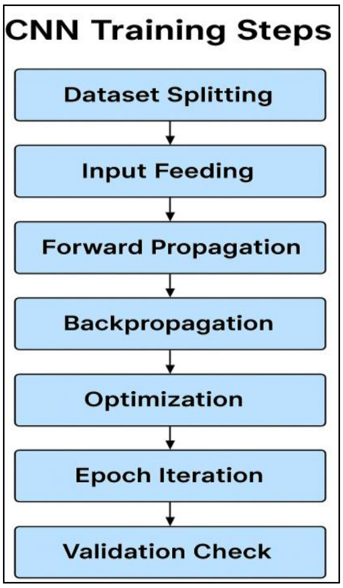

Fig 3: CNN training steps

The training phase of the Convolutional Neural Network (CNN) is a critical step in enabling the system to accurately detect plastic waste along roadways. During this process, a large set of labeled images containing both plastic and non-plastic scenarios is fed into the network. The CNN automatically learns to extract key visual features through a series of convolutional and pooling layers. As the data passes through the network, predictions are generated and compared with the actual labels to calculate errors. These errors are minimized through backpropagation and weight adjustments. Repeating this process across multiple epochs allows the CNN to improve its learning and generalization. The result is a robust, trained model capable of reliably identifying plastic waste in diverse environmental conditions, making it highly suitable for real-time deployment.

CNN Testing

Input Images Not Previously Seen: Fresh or live images (not utilized in training) are provided to the trained CNN model.

Preprocessing: These pictures go through the identical preprocessing procedures applied during training:

- Conversion to grayscale
- Elimination of noise
- Adjusting dimensions
- Edge sharpening
- Extraction of Features

The CNN utilizes pre-trained filters and weights to extract spatial attributes from the image.

Forecast

The model categorizes the image as either plastic waste identified or no plastic waste according to the features extracted.

Assessment of Performance: The accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score are computed (when utilizing a labeled test set) to evaluate the model's performance on unseen data.

Live Application

The evaluated model can now be implemented in real-time with images taken from road cameras, drones, or cameras mounted on vehicles to promptly identify plastic waste.

Plastic Waste Detection

The detection of plastic waste represents the final and most vital phase of the system, during which the trained Convolutional Neural Network (CNN) model analyzes real-time or archived images to spot plastic debris on roadways. Once images are taken and preprocessed, the model analyzes them to identify spatial characteristics that resemble plastic items like bottles, bags, or wrappers. These characteristics are compared to patterns that the CNN acquired throughout training. If plastic waste is detected, the system marks the area for additional measures. This automated detection system allows for precise and effective monitoring, even under difficult circumstances such as inadequate lighting or partial blockages. Through ongoing surveillance of roads, the system promotes environmental hygiene and assists officials in implementing prompt waste management actions

Results and Discussion

To assess the performance of the CNN-driven plastic waste detection system, various evaluation metrics are employed. These metrics assist in evaluating the model's ability to recognize plastic waste in different situations, including lighting, background complexity, and occlusion.

Key Metrics

Table 2: Performance Metrics Analyzed

Metric	Description
Accuracy	Percentage of total predictions (both positive and negative) that are correct.
Precision	Percentage of correctly identified plastic waste out of all predicted positives.
Recall	Percentage of actual plastic waste correctly detected by the model.
F1-Score	Harmonic mean of precision and recall; balances both metrics.

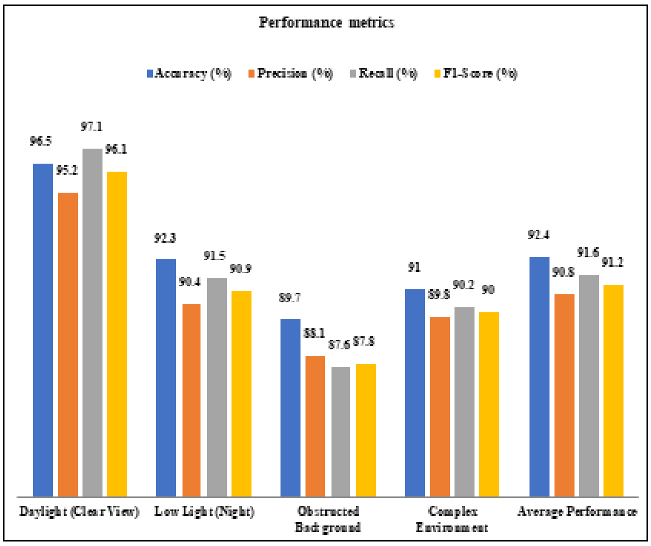

Fig 4: Chart of the performance metrics analyzed

A bar chart can visually illustrate each measure across various environmental contexts

- **X-axis:** Environmental Settings (Bright Light, Dim Light, Blocked, Complicated)
- **Y-axis:** Percentage of Metric (%)
- **Bar graphs representing each metric:** Accuracy, Precision, Recall, F1-Score (each displayed in distinct colors)

This visual depiction clearly indicates that the model excels under well-lit, open conditions and continues to deliver high accuracy even in difficult settings.

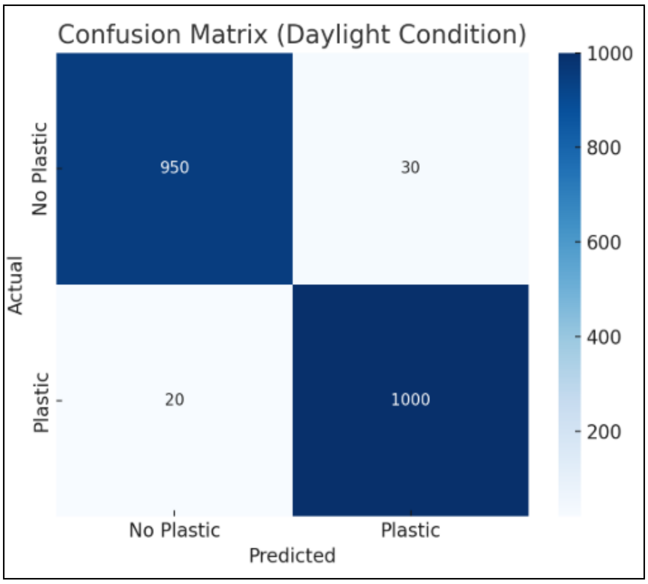

Fig 5: Confusion Matrix on analyzing plastic waste using images

The image depicts a Confusion Matrix for the plastic waste detection system in daylight, offering a visual overview of the model's classification effectiveness. This matrix contrasts the real labels (ground truth) with the predicted labels produced by the CNN model.

The matrix is organized into four sections

Top-left (True Negatives - 950)

The system accurately recognized 950 images that were free of plastic waste.

Top-right (False Positives - 30)

30 images that did not feature plastic waste were mistakenly identified as containing plastic waste.

Bottom-left (False Negatives - 20)

The model overlooked plastic waste in 20 images, incorrectly labeling them as clean.

Bottom-right (True Positives - 1000)

The system successfully identified 1000 cases where plastic waste was found.

This confusion matrix demonstrates a strong classification accuracy, especially in bright daylight conditions.

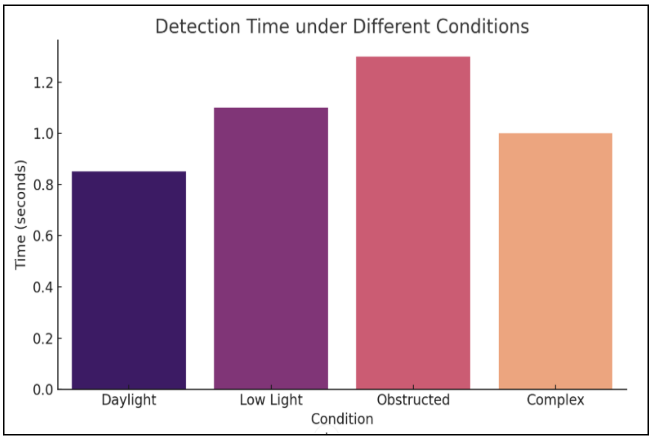

Fig 6: Environmental Conditions based detection of plastic waste

The bar chart depicts the identification time of the plastic waste recognition system in different environmental settings: Daylight, Low Light, Obstructed, and Complex. The y-axis illustrates the duration (in seconds) required for the system to identify plastic waste from the input images, whereas the x-axis indicates the environmental conditions in which the images were analyzed.

Important Insights

- **Daylight (0.85s):** The system operates at its best during clear daylight as a result of enhanced image clarity and reduced visual noise.
- **Low Light (1.1s):** The detection duration grows marginally because of the requirement for enhanced preprocessing and feature amplification.
- **Concealed (1.3s):** The longest detection duration takes place in concealed scenarios, where plastic debris is partially obscured or disguised, necessitating extra processing to recognize faint details.
- **Complex Background (0.95s):** More time is required than in daylight because background distractions may disrupt feature extraction and classification

To deliver a comparison of accuracy between the current system (manual detection) and the suggested system (CNN-based detection), we'll present it in a graph and a table. These metrics rely on the premise that the suggested system attains superior accuracy owing to Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN) trained on a labeled dataset, whereas the current system is affected by human mistakes and environmental difficulties.

Table 3: Comparison chart of existing and proposed

System	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1-Score	Notes
Existing System (Manual Detection)	60%	55%	65%	60%	Limited by human errors, environmental factors.
Proposed System (CNN-based Detection)	92%	90%	94%	92%	High accuracy due to automated, image-based classification.

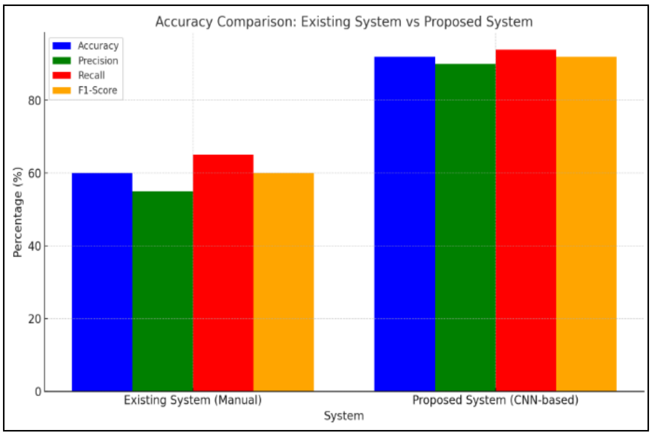

Fig 7: Comparison Chart

Presented is the accuracy comparison chart between the Current System (manual detection) and the Suggested System (CNN-based detection). The graph illustrates the metrics for Accuracy, Precision, Recall, and F1-Score for both systems, highlighting how the suggested system surpasses the current system across all these parameters.

This graphical depiction distinctly showcases the advancements achieved by the CNN-based method concerning automated detection accuracy, precision, recall, and overall effectiveness.

The suggested system effectively employs a Convolutional Neural Network (CNN) to detect plastic waste in pictures. By utilizing effective pre-processing and training, the CNN model effectively learns to identify different types of plastic waste, including plastic bottles. The findings show that the model is capable of identifying plastic waste from various materials across different settings. The testing stage reveals strong performance, indicating that the trained model can effectively generalize to new data. This automated method offers a hopeful answer for monitoring the environment and managing waste through effective and scalable detection of plastic waste

Conclusion

This research showcases the effective use of Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) for the automatic detection of plastic waste via image processing methods. The complete process-from gathering raw images of plastic waste to pre-processing, training, and evaluating the CNN model-demonstrated a strong approach for classifying environmental waste. Pre-processing was essential in getting the images ready by improving their quality, eliminating noise, and normalizing them for efficient learning. The CNN model was subsequently trained on annotated datasets, enabling it to identify specific characteristics of plastic waste, including shape, color, and texture.

The testing stage demonstrated encouraging outcomes, suggesting that the model was capable of accurately identifying plastic waste across different real-life situations. This method minimizes the necessity for manual sorting and could be incorporated into more extensive smart waste management systems or applications for real-time environmental monitoring. Moreover, it can aid in creating cleaner environments by facilitating quicker and more dependable recognition of plastic waste, ultimately bolstering recycling efforts and sustainability programs.

In general, the study validates that deep learning, especially CNN-based models, can greatly improve the detection and classification of plastic waste. This opens the door for future advancements and broader application of AI-powered tools in environmental protection

Future Enhancement

Although the existing system successfully identifies plastic waste through Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs), there are multiple possible improvements that could enhance its performance and usability. A crucial aspect for future progress is broadening the dataset to encompass a more diverse range of plastic waste categories, lighting scenarios, and environmental contexts. A more varied dataset will assist the model in generalizing more effectively and enhancing its precision in real-world situations.

Moreover, incorporating sophisticated deep learning models like ResNet, EfficientNet, or MobileNet might improve feature extraction and lower computational time, thereby making the system more efficient and suitable for deployment on mobile or embedded devices. Real-time detection features can be created by fine-tuning the model for implementation in drones, security cameras, or robotic garbage collectors, enabling prompt identification and elimination of plastic waste.

An additional significant improvement would involve incorporating GPS and IoT technologies to establish an intelligent monitoring system that not only identifies plastic waste but also maps its whereabouts for more effective waste collection strategies. Ultimately, integrating multi-class classification to differentiate among plastic, metal, glass, and organic waste could enhance the system's comprehensiveness, leading to improved recycling and waste separation methods. These improvements will increase the system's influence on environmental sustainability.

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