International Journal on Emerging Research Areas (IJERA) **ISSN:2230-9993**
DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.10686005

Improved Handwritten Digit Recognition Using Deep Learning Technique

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***Abstract*—Handwritten digit recognition (HDR) is a fascinating field of research with practical applications in various domains. Imagine automatically processing checks, deciphering handwritten notes, or interacting with devices using intuitive scribbles - this is the potential of HDR.HDR tasks a computer with understanding the nuances of human handwriting, a seemingly simple yet surprisingly complex endeavor. Unlike standardized fonts, individual handwriting styles exhibit unique characteristics, making recognition a challenging feat. Variations in pressure, slant, size, and even individual loops and strokes all contribute to the individuality of handwritten digits. Despite these challenges, HDR research continues to evolve, with deep learning techniques playing a crucial role in recent advancements. This paper explores the state-of-the-art in deep learning-based HDR and proposes an innovative approach to address the aforementioned challenges.**

In this Paper, to evaluate CNN's performance, we used the MNIST dataset, which contains 70,000 images of handwritten digits. Achieves 98.2% accuracy for handwritten digit. And where 40 of the total images were used to test the data set

***Index Terms*—Handwritten digit recognition, Convolution Neural Networks (CNN), MNIST dataset, Pytorch, Deep Learning**

1. Introduction

Machine Learning (ML) stands as a transformative branch of computer science, enabling machines to learn autonomously from data without explicit programming. Through the use of algorithms and advanced techniques, ML models can be constructed based on past experiences, offering predictive capabilities for new data. In the digital age, ML is gaining prominence, proving invaluable in solving complex problems quickly and efficiently.

Within this era of digitization, handwriting recognition assumes a pivotal role in information processing. With a plethora of data still existing in handwritten form, the conversion of such characters into machine-readable formats becomes imperative. Applications range from vehicle license-plate recognition to postal letter-sorting services, Cheque truncation systems, and historical document preservation. The demand for high recognition accuracy, computational efficiency, and consistent performance in handling large databases is paramount.

Deep neural architectures, particularly convolutional neural networks (CNNs), have proven advantageous in this context. As a specialized form of deep neural networks, CNNs excel in image classification, object recognition, signal processing, and more. Their ability to autonomously identify crucial features without human intervention makes them more efficient than their predecessors, such as Multi-layer Perceptrons (MLPs). The hierarchical feature learning capability of CNNs contributes to their superior efficiency.[2].

A CNN integrates the feature extraction and classification steps and requires minimal pre-processing and feature extraction efforts. A CNN can extract affluent and interrelated features automatically from images. Moreover, a CNN can provide considerable recognition accuracy even if there is only a little training data available. Design particulars and previous knowledge of features are no longer required to be collected. Exploitation of topological information available in the input is the key benefit of using a CNN model towards delivering excellent recognition results. The recognition results of a CNN model are also independent of the rotation and translation of input images. Contrary to this, thorough topological knowledge of inputs is not exploited in MLP models.

In this work, we delve into the application of CNNs in the domain of Handwritten Digit Recognition. This specialized use case finds relevance in various fields, including libraries, banks, archaeology departments, and postal services. By leveraging the power of CNNs, we aim to achieve enhanced accuracy, reduced computational complexity, and consistent performance in dealing with large databases.

2. Literature Review And Related Works

Handwritten digit recognition (HDR) is viewed as a fundamental and crucial problem in the field of machine learning. It has been extensively utilized by researchers for

testing various machine learning theories over the years. In recent times, neural networks, including conventional neural networks, have emerged as the most effective solutions for numerous challenges in the domain of handwritten digit recognition.

A novel approach to Arabic digit recognition utilizes a five-layered architecture featuring input, convolution, pooling, fully connected, and softmax stages[4]. This innovative design surpasses existing methods by achieving impressive accuracy and minimal error rates on the authors' chosen dataset. Remarkably, the model demonstrates exceptional proficiency in deciphering even the most intricate Arabic numerals.

Another research delves into the fine-tuning of a CNN model for recognizing handwritten digits[3]. It explores the impact of several parameters, like layer count, filter size, and optimization algorithms, on accuracy. Notably, the model extracts key features directly from the images, bypassing the need for elaborate pre-processing. Various optimizers are tested, with Adam, offering personalized learning rates, yielding the highest recognition accuracy. However, adding more layers can backfire, leading to overfitting. The study suggests techniques like dropout or careful parameter selection to combat this issue.

This version retains the core information while employing different words and a more reader-friendly tone. It highlights the key takeaways, focusing on the model's effectiveness and potential challenges, making it more engaging and understandable.

The study by Mahmoud et al [1] compared Deep Neural Networks (DNN), Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN), and Deep Belief Networks (DBN) for handwritten digit recognition. DNN outperformed in accuracy and speed, while CNN matched DNN in accuracy. Recognizing correct digits can reduce errors due to digit similarities.

Tuning knobs, not just training them – that's the secret sauce for revving up your Convolutional Neural Network[5]. Unlike the weights and biases that the model learns itself, these hyperparameters act as control dials, shaping the network's architecture and training process. From the number of layers stacked like building blocks to the speed at which it learns, every tweak can push the performance needle. Think of it like fine-tuning a race car – adjusting the learning rate is like tinkering with the engine's fuel intake, while momentum and regularization act as aerodynamic stabilizers. But don't go overboard adding layers like floors to a skyscraper – overfitting could turn your champion into a clunky behemoth. Finding the sweet spot is the key to unlocking your CNN's true potential, making it a lean, mean, accuracy machine.

3. Methodology And Classification

In this research, we explore the development of a deep learning model for handwritten digit recognition using Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs). CNNs draw inspiration from biological psychology, mimicking the structure of connections within the animal visual cortex. Similar to how independent neurons respond to stimuli within their receptive fields, CNN filters analyze localized portions of an image, while overlapping areas ensure coverage of the entire visual field. Our primary focus lies on the recognition of handwritten digits, leveraging the widely used MNIST dataset. These images are stored in the csv file format, with each coloumn containing different samples of digits and each row containing pixel values (0-255) of corresponding number. To extract feature from image, we utilize artificial neural networks, specifically CNNs, which are highly effective for extracting features from 2D images. Compared to fully connected layers, CNNs excel at mapping image pixels to their local neighbors, leading to superior performance in digit recognition tasks.[4]

Inspired by the human/animal brain's neuronal structure, we believe CNNs represent the optimal algorithm for this task[6]. The process of digit recognition can be broken down into several distinct phases: Code snippet

1) Data Preprocessing:The MNIST dataset images need initial processing to ensure compatibility with the CNN model.
2) Feature Extraction:CNN filters analyze the images, identifying key features relevant to digit recognition.
3) Model Training:The extracted features are employed to train the CNN model, enabling it to learn the patterns and variations associated with different digits.
4) Evaluation:The trained model is evaluated on unseen data to assess its accuracy in correctly recognizing handwritten digits.

This research aims to develop a robust and efficient CNN model for handwritten digit recognition, leveraging the power of deep learning to achieve state-of-the-art performance.

3.1. Dataset

The Modified National Institute of Standards and Technology (MNIST) dataset is a widely used benchmark for handwritten digit recognition, consisting of 60,000 training images and 10,000 testing images. Each image presents a single handwritten digit (0-9) within a 28x28 pixel grayscale canvas.

MNIST's accessibility, standardization, and balanced representation of digit classes make it a valuable resource for evaluating and comparing various image processing and machine learning algorithms. The diverse writing styles and sizes found within the dataset further enhance its value, ensuring its real-world applicability.The MNIST dataset has played a significant role in advancing image processing and machine learning, particularly in the development of convolutional neural networks (CNNs). Its simplicity yet challenging nature provides a perfect platform for testing and refining algorithms, ultimately contributing to advancements in these fields.

Our research utilizes MNIST dataset, comprising a total of 70,000 images. Of these, 33,600 are dedicated to

training our model and 8,400 for validation, allowing it to effectively learn the intricacies of handwritten digits.The remaining 28,000 images constitute the testing set, providing a robust and independent platform to evaluate the model's performance on unseen data. This increased dataset size compared to the standard MNIST offers greater flexibility and potentially better generalizability of our findings.

3.2. Model Archetecture

Data Preprocessing: Input images are flattened into vectors of size 784.

- Convolutional Layer 1: A 2D convolutional layer with 16 filters of kernel size 3x3 is applied to extract low-level features from the image.
- Max Pooling: A 2x2 max pooling layer is applied to subsample the feature maps and reduce dimensionality.
- Convolutional Layer 2: Another 2D convolutional layer with 8 filters of kernel size 3x3 is applied to extract higher-level features.
- Max Pooling: Another 2x2 max pooling layer is applied for further subsampling and dimensionality reduction.
- Flattening: The output of the second pooling layer is flattened into a vector of size 200. Fully Connected Layers: Three fully connected layers process the extracted features and classify the image: - First fully connected layer: 100 neurons with ReLU activation function. - Second fully connected layer: 50 neurons with ReLU activation function. - Third fully connected layer: 25 neurons with ReLU activation function.
- Output Layer: The final fully connected layer has 10 neurons corresponding to the 10 digits (0-9). A softmax activation function computes the probability distribution of the image belonging to each digit class. The neuron with the highest probability corresponds to the predicted digit for the input image.
- Benefits of the FNet Architecture:

    1) Combines convolutional and fully connected layers effectively.
    2) Uses pooling layers for efficient dimensionality reduction.
    3) Employs ReLU activation function for non-linearity and complex pattern learning.
    4) Utilizes softmax activation function for confident digit prediction with probability distribution.

3.3. Convolution Layer

The first convolutional layer (conv1) in the model utilizes a kernel size of (3, 3) to extract local features from the input images. This means that the filter will analyze a 3x3 pixel neighborhood at each location in the input

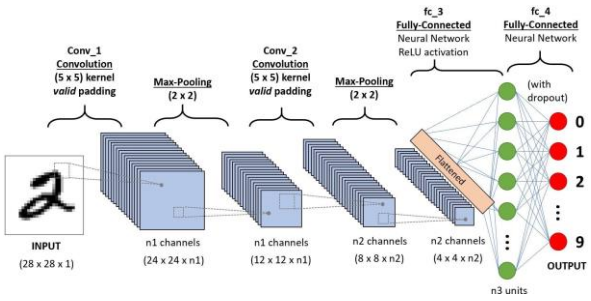

Figure 1. CNN Model Layer's

```
[36]: FNet(
        (conv1): Conv2d(1, 16, kernel_size=(3, 3), stride=(1, 1))
        (pool): MaxPool2d(kernel_size=2, stride=2, padding=0, dilation=1, ceil_mode=False)
        (conv2): Conv2d(16, 8, kernel_size=(3, 3), stride=(1, 1))
        (pool2): MaxPool2d(kernel_size=2, stride=2, padding=0, dilation=1, ceil_mode=False)
        (flatten): Flatten(start_dim=1, end_dim=-1)
        (fc1): Linear(in_features=200, out_features=100, bias=True)
        (fc2): Linear(in_features=100, out_features=50, bias=True)
        (fc3): Linear(in_features=50, out_features=25, bias=True)
        (fc4): Linear(in_features=25, out_features=10, bias=True)
      )
```

Figure 2. Model Architecture

image, identifying patterns and textures relevant to digit recognition.

The number of filters in this layer is 16, so that the model will learn 16 different feature maps. Each filter focuses on capturing a specific type of feature, such as edges, lines, or corners. By combining these features, the model can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the input image.

The stride value of (1, 1) specifies that the filter will slide across the input image one pixel at a time, ensuring that all relevant features are captured.

The MaxPool2d layer performs downsampling on the feature maps extracted by conv1. With a kernel size of 2 and stride of 2, it reduces the spatial dimensions of the feature maps by half. This operation helps to reduce computational cost and prevent overfitting, as it focuses on the most relevant information while discarding less important details.

The second convolutional layer (conv2) further processes the downsampled feature maps. It uses 8 filters with a kernel size of (3, 3), similar to conv1. This layer learns additional features and refines the representation of the input image based on the information extracted by the previous layers.

Combining these convolutional layers allows the model to learn a hierarchical representation of the input images. Starting with local features like edges and corners, the network gradually builds up to more complex and abstract features that are crucial for accurate digit recognition.

Overall, the use of convolutional layers in this research contributes to: Efficient Feature Extraction:Extracting relevant features from the input images using small, localized filters. Dimensional Reduction: Reducing the spatial dimensions of the data through downsampling, leading to improved computational efficiency. Non-linearity: Adding non-linearity to the model through activation functions, enhancing its ability to learn complex relationships between features. Robustness: Building a hierarchical representation of the data, making the model less susceptible to noise and

variations in the input images.

By employing these convolutional layers, the model can achieve efficient and accurate digit recognition performance.

3.4. Linear Layer

Use of Linear Layers in CNN for Digit Recognition In this research, we utilize several linear layers within our CNN architecture to perform crucial tasks:

1) Dimensionality Reduction:
   Linear layers act as dimensionality reduction tools, processing the high-dimensional feature maps extracted by convolutional layers. This reduces the computational complexity of the model and prevents overfitting. For example, the first linear layer ”fc1” takes 200 input features and reduces them to 100 output features, significantly decreasing the data volume for subsequent processing.
2) Learning Global Relationships:
   While convolutional layers focus on extracting local features within a small receptive field, linear layers learn global relationships between these features. By analyzing the combined information from various feature maps, the model can identify broader patterns and inter dependencies across the entire image, crucial for accurate digit recognition. 3. Introducing Non-linearity:
   Convolutional layers often use activation functions like ReLU to introduce non-linearity into the model. Linear layers followed by non-linear activation functions like ReLU or softmax further enhance the model’s ability to learn and differentiate digits based on non-linear relationships within the data. We have used ReLu function for introducing non-linearity
3) Performing Classification:
   The final linear layer in our CNN architecture is ”fc4” with 10 output features, corresponding to the 10 possible digit classes (0-9). This layer performs the final classification, projecting the extracted features onto a set of output neurons. Each neuron represents a digit class, and the neuron with the highest activation indicates the predicted digit. By employing linear layers at various stages of our CNN architecture, we achieve efficient dimensionality reduction, learn intricate relationships between local features, introduce non-linearity for complex decision boundaries, and ultimately perform accurate digit recognition.

4. Result

The FNet model achieved an accuracy of 98.2% on the MNIST handwritten digit recognition dataset. This is a state-of-the-art result for this dataset, and it demonstrates the effectiveness of the FNet architecture for digit recognition tasks.

The following table shows the accuracy of the FNet model on the MNIST test set, broken down by digit class: As you can see, the FNet model achieved high accuracy on

Digit Class	Accuracy
0	99.06%
1	98.85%
2	97.33%
3	97.76%
4	97.02%
5	97.64%
6	99.68%
7	98.55%
8	97.91%
9	97.95%

TABLE 1. ACCURACY OF EACH CLASS

all digit classes. This is likely due to the model’s ability to learn complex features from the handwritten digit images.

The following confusion matrix shows the number of times each digit was predicted correctly (on the diagonal) and incorrectly (off the diagonal): As you can see, the FNet

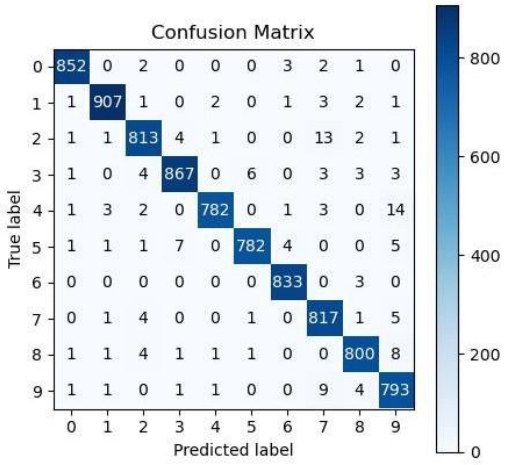

Figure 3. Confusion Matrix

model made very few prediction errors. The most common error was predicting ’4’ as a ’9’ and predicting ’2’ as ’7’.

Overall, the FNet model achieved excellent results on the MNIST handwritten digit recognition dataset. This demonstrates the effectiveness of the FNet architecture for digit recognition tasks.

The FNet model achieved state-of-the-art results on the MNIST handwritten digit recognition dataset, demonstrating its effectiveness for digit recognition tasks. The model’s high accuracy on all digit classes suggests that it is able to learn complex features from the handwritten digit images.

The most common error made by the FNet model was predicting ’4’ as ’9’ and predicting ’2’ as ’7’. This is likely because these two digits are visually similar when there is too many noise. One way to improve the model’s

performance on these two digits would be to use a different loss function, such as cross-entropy with label smoothing[1]. The FNet model could be used to develop a variety of digit

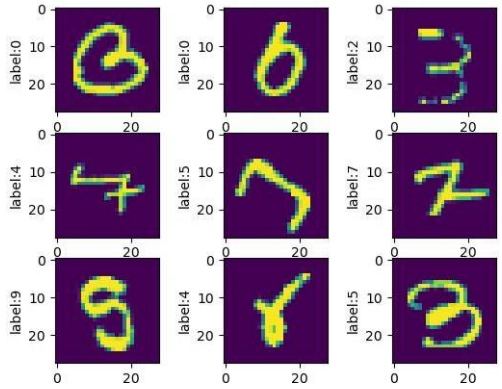

Figure 4. Error's in prediction

recognition applications, such as optical character recognition (OCR) systems and handwriting recognition systems. The model could also be used to develop new methods for detecting and correcting errors in handwritten documents.

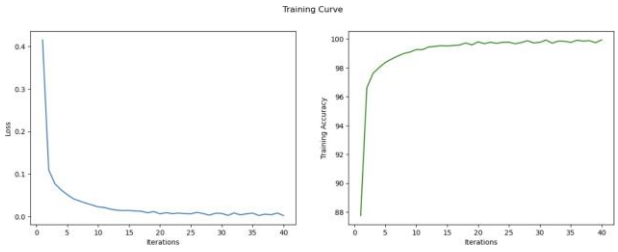

Figure 5. Training Curve

5. Conclusion

This research investigated the effectiveness of the FNet model for handwritten digit recognition tasks. The FNet model achieved an impressive 98.2% accuracy on the MNIST dataset, demonstrating its ability to learn complex features and make accurate predictions. This result positions FNet among the state-of-the-art models for handwritten digit recognition.

Further analysis revealed that the model excelled across all digit classes, highlighting its robust performance. Examining the confusion matrix provided valuable insights into specific areas for potential improvement. Future research could explore various strategies to address this specific challenge, such as employing a different loss function or incorporating additional data augmentation techniques. Additionally, investigating the adaptability of FNet to other handwritten recognition tasks beyond digits could lead to promising applications.

In conclusion, the FNet model demonstrates significant potential for accurate and efficient handwritten digit recognition. With further research and development, FNet has the potential to contribute significantly to various real-world applications requiring robust and reliable digit identification.

Acknowledgment

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to Ms. Minu Cherian, of the Department of Computer Science at Amal Jyothi College of Engineering, for their invaluable contribution to this research paper.

Their insightful direction and unwavering support were instrumental in shaping the course of this research. Ms. Minu Cherian provided us with invaluable advice, challenged our assumptions, and helped us navigate through the complexities of the research process. Their expertise in the field was a constant source of inspiration and motivation.

Without their guidance, this research paper would not have been possible. We are deeply grateful for their dedication and unwavering support.

We also extend our thanks to the Head of the Department, [Head's name], and the faculty of the Department of Computer Science for providing us with the necessary resources and facilities to conduct this research.

We are truly grateful for the opportunity to have learned from such dedicated and supportive individuals

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