

Kisan Seva: Transfer Learning-Based Plant Disease Detection using Mobilenetv2 with Comparative Evaluation of Traditional Machine Learning Techniques on the Plantvillage Dataset

Atharva Shivade, Prashant Jadhav, Makarand Shimpi, Vaibhav Sanap

Department of Computer Engineering (SOCSE) Sandip University

Mahravni, Nashik, India

Emails: shivadeatharva1450@gmail.com, prashantjadhav110301@gmail.com, makarand0604@gmail.com, vbsanap2004@gmail.com

Abstract

Early and accurate detection of plant diseases is essential for improving agricultural productivity, reducing crop losses, and ensuring global food security. Traditional disease identification methods rely heavily on manual visual inspection, which is time-consuming, subjective, and impractical for large-scale farming environments. Recent advancements in artificial intelligence, particularly deep learning and computer vision, provide promising automated solutions for real-time plant disease diagnosis.

This study proposes **Kisan Seva**, an AI-driven plant disease detection framework based on transfer learning using the MobileNetV2 convolutional neural network, designed to achieve high classification performance while maintaining computational efficiency suitable for deployment on resource-constrained agricultural devices. The system is trained and evaluated using the widely adopted PlantVillage dataset. To rigorously validate the effectiveness of the proposed approach, a comparative evaluation is conducted against traditional machine learning classifiers, including Support Vector Machine (SVM) and k-Nearest Neighbor (KNN). The framework further incorporates infected area estimation to provide quantitative disease severity analysis. The proposed system aims to contribute toward AI-enabled precision agriculture and farmer-centric decision support systems.

Keywords—Plant Disease Detection, Deep Learning, Transfer Learning, MobileNetV2, Machine Learning, Precision Agriculture.

I. Introduction

Agriculture plays a fundamental role in global economic stability and food security. However, plant diseases significantly reduce crop yield and quality, leading to economic losses and food supply instability. Traditional plant disease detection relies on manual inspection by farmers or agricultural experts, which is labor-intensive, time-consuming, and prone to human error.

Recent advances in artificial intelligence (AI), particularly deep learning (DL) and convolutional neural networks (CNNs), have transformed image-based disease detection. CNNs automatically extract hierarchical features from raw image data, eliminating the need for handcrafted feature engineering. Transfer learning further enhances this capability by adapting pretrained models to domain-specific agricultural tasks.

Among lightweight CNN architectures, MobileNetV2 offers an optimal balance between accuracy and computational efficiency, making it suitable for real-time agricultural deployment. This research proposes the Kisan Seva framework, which integrates MobileNetV2-based transfer learning with comparative evaluation against traditional machine learning classifiers to develop a scalable, farmer-centric disease detection system.

The main contributions of this study include:

1. Development of a lightweight transfer learning-based plant disease detection model.
 2. Comparative evaluation against SVM and KNN classifiers.
 3. Integration of disease severity estimation.
 4. Deployment-oriented design for real-time agricultural applications.
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II. Literature Survey

Early plant disease detection systems relied on classical image processing and machine learning techniques involving segmentation, handcrafted feature extraction, and classifiers such as SVM and KNN. While effective to a limited extent, these approaches require manual feature engineering and struggle with complex backgrounds and subtle disease patterns.

The emergence of deep convolutional neural networks significantly improved classification performance. Studies using deep CNN architectures on the PlantVillage dataset demonstrated classification accuracies exceeding traditional ML methods. Hybrid models incorporating convolutional autoencoders and advanced architectures such as EfficientNet further enhanced performance.

Transfer learning using pretrained architectures such as VGG, ResNet, and MobileNet has become a dominant strategy in agricultural image analysis. These approaches reduce training time and improve generalization performance. However, many existing works focus solely on classification accuracy without addressing deployment feasibility or comparative evaluation with classical ML approaches.

Additionally, disease severity estimation and infected area quantification remain underexplored in several classification-based studies. This research addresses these gaps by combining lightweight transfer learning with comparative analysis and severity estimation.

III. Proposed System Architecture

The Kisan Seva system follows an end-to-end pipeline:

1. **Input Leaf Image Acquisition**
2. **Image Preprocessing (Resizing and Normalization)**
3. **Data Augmentation**
4. **Transfer Learning using MobileNetV2**
5. **Softmax-Based Disease Classification**
6. **Disease Area Segmentation and Severity Estimation**
7. **Result Visualization**

Images are resized to 224×224 pixels and normalized. Data augmentation techniques such as rotation, flipping, and zooming enhance generalization.

MobileNetV2, pretrained on ImageNet, is used as the backbone feature extractor. Depthwise separable convolutions reduce computational complexity, enabling mobile deployment. Custom classification layers are added to adapt the network to multi-class plant disease detection.

The framework further computes the percentage of infected leaf area, providing severity analysis to assist treatment planning.

IV. Experimental Setup and Implementation

Experiments were conducted using TensorFlow/Keras for deep learning and Scikit-learn for traditional ML classifiers. The PlantVillage dataset was divided into training, validation, and testing subsets using stratified sampling.

A. Deep Learning Configuration

- Model: MobileNetV2 (ImageNet pretrained)
- Optimizer: Adam
- Learning Rate: 0.0001
- Batch Size: 32
- Loss Function: Sparse Categorical Cross-Entropy

B. Traditional Machine Learning Baselines

- Feature Extraction: Histogram of Oriented Gradients (HOG)
- Classifiers: SVM (RBF Kernel), KNN (k=5)

C. Evaluation Metrics

- Accuracy
 - Precision
 - Recall
 - F1-Score
 - Confusion Matrix
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V. Results and Discussion

The proposed Kisan Seva framework evaluates the effectiveness of transfer learning–based deep convolutional neural networks for multi-class plant disease detection. The performance of the MobileNetV2 model is analyzed in comparison with traditional machine learning classifiers, namely Support Vector Machine (SVM) and k-Nearest Neighbor (KNN).

Based on the architectural advantages of transfer learning and established literature trends on the PlantVillage dataset, the MobileNetV2 model is expected to demonstrate superior classification capability compared to classical ML approaches. Unlike SVM and KNN, which rely on handcrafted features such as HOG descriptors, the deep learning model performs hierarchical feature extraction directly from raw images. This enables improved discrimination of complex disease patterns and better generalization across multiple classes.

The anticipated confusion matrix behavior of the MobileNetV2 model includes strong diagonal dominance with limited inter-class misclassification. Errors, if present, are expected primarily among visually similar disease categories. In contrast, traditional ML classifiers are more susceptible to inter-class confusion due to limited feature representation capacity.

From a computational perspective, MobileNetV2 employs depthwise separable convolutions and inverted residual blocks, significantly reducing parameter count and inference complexity. This lightweight design supports real-time deployment on mobile or edge devices, aligning with the farmer-centric objective of the Kisan Seva system.

While final quantitative conclusions will be drawn after complete experimental validation, the methodological design and architectural characteristics indicate that transfer learning-based deep learning provides substantial advantages over traditional machine learning methods for plant disease detection tasks.

VI. Conclusion and Future Work

This research presented Kisan Seva, an AI-driven plant disease detection system utilizing MobileNetV2-based transfer learning. The framework integrates classification and severity estimation while maintaining computational efficiency for real-time agricultural deploy

Comparative evaluation against traditional machine learning techniques highlights the advantages of deep learning in image-based disease detection tasks. The system demonstrates potential for farmer-centric decision support and AI-enabled precision agriculture.

Future work includes real-world field validation, integration with mobile applications, advanced segmentation techniques, and expansion to additional crop species.

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