Methodology

Introduction

Line Segment Detection (LSD) is the most common and essential step that has been studied thoroughly in many computer-vision research and projects. The major challenge in LSD is noise, selecting accurate segment out of several segments and variability present in an image.

In this research, Run-Length Encoded (RLE) and annotated images in JSON format were used as the initial data source for the implementation of the Line Segment Detection Algorithm. After RLE data has been decoded to an image, preprocessing and preparation steps were described in section 3.2. Then in section 3.3, Feature extraction step was described. Which is the most important step to detect all the line segments in the image. In the final step, (Section 3.4) line segments between two bounding boxes were successfully identified on the stem of each plant. Fig. shows the methodology in flow chart.

3.2 Preprocessing and Preparation

In this project, an image annotation tool called “Hasty” was used to create ground-truth dataset. During the annotation, the object classes of the image were defined as “First Section Cutting”, “Redundant Top End” and “Tip Cutting” etc. Finally, the annotated image was encoded to a run-length encoded (RLE) binary mask, which is a compressed representation of a binary image. In this encoding, the binary image is represented by a sequence of pairs (start, length), where each pair represents a consecutive run of 1's in the image.

In the 1st part of the algorithm, this mask was decoded and created a 2D numpy array. Also, image dimensions, bounding box details, selected object classes (First Section Cutting, Redundant Top End, Redundant Bottom End, Tip Cutting, Non-Viable Part, Second Section Cutting, Third Section Cutting, Fourth Section Cutting) which are useful for the line segment detection were gathered in this stage.

Usually sample images contain one or more plants, and in the second part of the algorithm, two Python lists were generated. Typically, in the Hasty Generated JSON file, plant sections are annotated with specific small bounding boxes and saved separately. The exact coordinates of these small bounding boxes were stored in the first Python list (Let’s call “small\_bbox\_list”). Also, large bounding boxes were defined for each plant (with all the section cuttings) in the JSON file and saved separately in the second Python list (Let’s call “large\_bbox\_list”). In addition, a dictionary was created to store the details of each plant section. In this case, the background of the image was saved as "0" and the foreground as "1".

Then the 3rd part of the algorithm is used to create the list of neighboring sections of the plants. As an example, 1st section, and 2nd section of the plant. This part of the algorithm is more challenging because efficiency of the algorithm mainly depends on this section. In here, OpenCV function: cv2.findContours()

was used to detect only the external contours (cv2.RETR\_EXTERNAL) of the sections of the plants and saved in a list(Let’s say “edge\_only\_list”) . Then in order to reduce the memory usage and speed up the process “cv2.CHAIN\_APPROX\_SIMPLE” method was used as the contour approximation method. Initially both internal (whole section of the plant) and external contour were used to find the neighboring sections of the plants. But during the stage of optimizing the algorithm’s efficiency, huge efficiency improvements were achieved while using this outside contour detection method. It was discussed more in the results section.

Also, another major improvement in efficiency was achieved by using parallel processing. By considering the factor of ease of use, two types of parallel processing methods based on multiple threads and based on multiple processors were tested. Using multiple processors for parallel processing means, distributing the workload across multiple physical or logical processors. Therefore, in this part of the algorithm (finding neighboring sections and finding complete sections of the plant) was written specifically for the ease of parallel processing. In here, standard Python library called “multiprocessing” was used for initial testing. But unfortunately, processing took excess time compared to normal processing. Therefore, other technique based on multiple threads was used with the help of “concurrent.futures” module in python.

A thread is a lightweight unit of execution that can run concurrently with other threads, sharing the same memory space. As shown in the **following algorithm(fig)**, multi-threading was done. Finally same combinations of the neighboring sections were eliminated. As an example (1st section cutting, 2nd section cutting) and (2nd section cutting, 1st section cutting) these two are similar combinations and these kinds of combinations were removed from the neighboring sections list.

Algorithm finding\_neighbors(small\_bbox\_list, edge\_only\_list):

Initialize an empty list bbox\_ones\_mask\_list

Initialize an empty list intersected\_comm\_ones\_list

Iterate over small\_bbox\_list with index mask\_index:

Iterate over edge\_only\_list with index mask\_index\_checked:

Iterate over edge\_only\_list[mask\_index\_checked] with index ones\_index:

If (small\_bbox\_list[mask\_index][0] <= edge\_only\_list[mask\_index\_checked][ones\_index][1] < small\_bbox\_list[mask\_index][1]) and (small\_bbox\_list[mask\_index][2] <= edge\_only\_list[mask\_index\_checked][ones\_index][0] < small\_bbox\_list[mask\_index][3]):

If mask\_index != mask\_index\_checked:

Append [mask\_index, mask\_index\_checked] to bbox\_ones\_mask\_list

Append [(edge\_only\_list[mask\_index\_checked][ones\_index][0], edge\_only\_list[mask\_index\_checked][ones\_index][1]), mask\_index, mask\_index\_checked] to intersected\_comm\_ones\_list

Return (bbox\_ones\_mask\_list, intersected\_comm\_ones\_list)

Algorithm finding\_sections(large\_bbox\_list, edge\_only\_list):

Initialize an empty list mask\_inside\_large\_bbox\_list

Iterate over large\_bbox\_list with index lg\_bb\_ind and element lg\_bb\_ele:

Iterate over edge\_only\_list with index mask\_index\_2 and element mask\_ele\_2:

Initialize ones\_count as 0

Iterate over mask\_ele\_2:

If (lg\_bb\_ele[0] <= co\_with\_ones\_ele2[1] < lg\_bb\_ele[1]) and (lg\_bb\_ele[2] <= co\_with\_ones\_ele2[0] < lg\_bb\_ele[3]):

Increment ones\_count by 1

If ones\_count is equal to the length of mask\_ele\_2:

Append [lg\_bb\_ind, mask\_index\_2] to mask\_inside\_large\_bbox\_list

Return mask\_inside\_large\_bbox\_list

Algorithm results\_function(small\_bbox\_list, large\_bbox\_list, edge\_only\_list):

Create an executor using ThreadPoolExecutor

# Submit the first for loop as a task

task1 = executor.submit(finding\_neighbors, small\_bbox\_list, edge\_only\_list)

# Submit the second for loop as a task

task2 = executor.submit(finding\_sections, large\_bbox\_list, edge\_only\_list)

# Wait for both tasks to complete

results = [task1.result(), task2.result()]

# Combine the results from both tasks and return them

return results

Then in the final part of the algorithm, based on the new neighboring sections list, every time two neighboring sections were considered for the analysis. Therefore, in this part of the algorithm, those two sections were considered for further analysis.

3.3 Feature Extraction

Feature Extraction step is the most important step in this project because the cutting line segment of two neighboring sections is situated in the edge of these sections. Therefore, several edge detection methods are tested to get optimum results.

The Canny Edge Detection method has several steps: Initially, the image is smoothed using a Gaussian filter to reduce the noise. Then, the gradients of the image intensity are calculated using the Sobel operator. Non-maximum suppression is applied to thinning the edges and keep only the maximum values. Double thresholding is used to classify pixels as strong, weak, or non-edges. Finally, weak edges that are connected to strong edges are retained as actual edges using a process called edge tracking by hysteresis. Opencv based algorithm (cv2.Canny) was used for this.

Then during the analysis of the results, some line segments were not identified. Therefore, two other methods were tested to identify those missing line segments. Sobel Operator calculates the gradient magnitude and direction of an image, which helps to identify regions with significant changes in intensity. In here Sobel operator (cv2.Sobel) was used in both x and y directions and results were combined.

Moreover, Laplacian of Gaussian (LoG) was also used to identify edges. The combination of Laplacian operator (cv2.Laplacian) with Gaussian smoothing(cv2.GaussianBlur) with the kernel size of 3x3 was applied to highlight the regions of rapid intensity changes. After that, the results of two neighboring plant sections were taken and passed through an AND operator. Then output was taken into further consideration. Finally, several types of line segments were revealed. The majority of the line segments appeared on the stem of the plants but some of the irrelevant lines were noticed on the area of the intersection of leaves and also leaves & stems etc. as shown in the Fig.

3.4 Detection of Exact Cutting Line Segment (Classification)

This is the most challenging area of the algorithm because not all the line segments lay on the stem of the plant. Therefore, based on the results of the feature extraction stage, detection of the exact line segment was done in three steps. Initially combination of nearest sections with single line segments were considered. Then some combination of nearest sections was noticed with multiple line segments. Those were separated into two main categories. (Main reason for those line segments is due to intersection of two leaves and intersection of part of the leaves and stems). 1st separation (2nd Step) was done based on the size of the line segments. By analyzing the data, it was noticed that the majority of the samples had a noticeable difference in size. But still some samples were noticed with nearly similar line segments in size. 2nd separation (3rd step) was used for this kind of samples using the distance of the line segments to the stem.

The 1st step was easily achieved by using the clustering of the adjacent foreground pixels. Then defined a threshold value (distance in-between one adjacent pixel cluster to other) to categorize the cluster of adjacent pixels with non-adjacent pixel cluster. Then those values were stored in a list called “clustering\_list”. In the 1st step, only one cluster of adjacent pixels is detected all the time. It means clustering list length is zero. Thereafter, all the pixel coordinates are saved in another list (“cluster\_coor\_list”) that list was used as the final output (detected line segment) of the algorithm.

The second step is followed by the algorithm unless length of the clustering list is detected nonzero. In here, once again “cv2.findContours” method was used to detect all the available common line segments in two neighboring plant sections. Then the size of all the line segments were measured (using cv2.arcLength()) and discovered the range of the size of the line segment which is usually noticed on the stem as the cutting line. So based on that range, correct line segment was detected. As usual, pixel coordinates are saved in “cluster\_coor\_list”.

The third step is followed only if the size of the line segment is out of the range or if it has line segments with similar lengths. In this case, several methods were tried to identify the stem of the plant because the main concept in this part of the algorithm is to measure the distance from the point in stem to the nearest line segment.

Initially a Python library called “PlantCV” which is designed based on the OpenCV for image analysis in the field of plant was used to detect the stem. “plantcv.morphology.skeletonize() “ function is applied to obtain the skeletonized image. It was used to extract the skeleton while preserving the connectivity of the plant structure. But unfortunately, the main problem in applying skeletonization on the binary masks (plant sections) is separation of leaves and stems because of the unidentifiable boundary in between leaves and stems. Therefore, sometimes algorithms picked leaves as stems and skeletonized the leaves as well. Finally, the expected classification of stem and leaves separately was not achieved.

For the same purpose, the next approach was to segment the edge of the stem into several line segments as shown in the Fig. For this “cv2.createLineSegmentDetector” function was used and saved the result as “LSD\_img”. Based on the results, parallel or closer to parallel line segments were noticed on either side of the stem. If two or more parallel line segments are thickened, then there is a chance of creating a single line or solid object. This is the technique which was used to detect stems separately. Therefore, those line segments were dilated using “cv2.dilate” function with a 7x7 kernel (numpy.ones((7, 7), dtype=np.uint8)) and two iterations. In order to erode unwanted parts, erosion was done with OpenCV erosion function with same configurations as in dilation function. Then the difference of the result(“dilated\_eroded\_img”) and “LSD\_img” was saved as “substracted\_img” and passed through a median blur operation using a kernel size of 7, to reduce noise and outliers.

The resulted image(substracted\_img) consisted of parts of the stem not connected with each other. This issue was due to the improper boundaries of stem where the leaves joint. So once again morphological dilation operation was performed in order to connect those areas as much as possible. After that, the closed and biggest contour was assumed as the stem and other small, closed contours were neglected. Then Euclidean distance from that contour to the line segments were calculated and line segment with shortest distance was considered as the correct cutting line segment. Finally, pixel coordinates of that line segment were saved in “cluster\_coor\_list”.

Results and Analysis

In this section, the results of the algorithm for detecting accurate cutting line segments are presented under several subtopics. A JSON file was utilized, containing a total of 316 images along with varying numbers of plants captured in each image. As an example, in some images, 21 section cuttings were available, while in others, only one or two were available.

In subtopic 4.1, a sample image was considered, and it served as an illustrative example, displaying all the algorithm steps employed. In subtopic 4.2, the accuracy and precision of the algorithm had been evaluated. Extensive analysis had been carried out to assess the algorithm's ability to precisely identify the intended line segments with minimal errors.

Furthermore, the efficiency of the algorithm had been considered a critical factor to measure the quality of the algorithm. This aspect has been thoroughly described in subtopic 4.3, emphasizing its impact on real-world implementation and practical considerations.

These aforementioned subtopics have contributed to a comprehensive understanding of the algorithm's performance in detecting correct cutting line segments.

4.2 Evaluation of Algorithm’s Performance

As mentioned in the introduction, evaluation of this algorithm's performance was done by using 316 samples. Through the analysis of various evaluation metrics and the visualization of results, insights can be gained into how well positive and negative instances are accurately identified by the algorithm. In this project a fundamental tool for summarizing classification results called confusion matrix was used. Moreover, the calculation and interpretation of key evaluation metrics such as accuracy, precision and the F1 score was examined. Furthermore, the Receiver Operating Characteristic (ROC) curve and its significance in assessing the algorithm's performance in terms of Recall and false positive rates was investigated.

The confusion matrix is a tabular representation of the performance of the algorithm by the counts of true positive (TP), true negative (TN), false positive (FP), and false negative (FN) instances. Then it was used as the basis or the foundation of finding other evaluation metrics.

As shown in the Table 4.1, the actual classes of “correct line segment available and correct line segment not available” are represented by the rows, while it’s detected(predicted) or not detected are represented by the columns. The number of instances falling into each category is correspondingly indicated by the values in the cells. But unfortunately, it’s not possible to present the results of all the samples after inserting into confusion matrix. Therefore, some significant results are shown in the table 4.2

The evaluation metrics were computed using the values derived from the confusion matrix. These metrics provide a comprehensive assessment of the algorithm's performance.

The following formula(4.1) was used to calculate the accuracy, which measures the overall correctness of the algorithm's predictions.

Accuracy = (TP + TN) / (TP + TN + FP + FN)

Initially, accuracy of the algorithm was calculated with only the 1st step and 3rd detection steps of the algorithm (see subtopic 3.4). Then accuracy was detected as 0.8912(89.12%). As shown in the fig. after implementing all three detection steps (see subtopic 3.4) to the algorithm, accuracy of all the samples was plotted and average accuracy was taken as 0.9616 (96.16%). Therefore, improvement of 0.0704(7.04%) was achieved by expanding the detection step.

This level of accuracy metric indicates a high level of overall correctness in the predictions made by the classification algorithm. Also, the algorithm demonstrates its effectiveness in distinguishing between positive and negative instances (detection and non-detection).

However, a comprehensive analysis of other evaluation metrics is necessary to gain a proper understanding of the algorithm's performance, as well as its strengths and limitations. Therefore, precision and the F1 score were further calculated.

The precision metric evaluates the algorithm's ability to avoid false positive predictions by measuring the proportion of correct positive predictions out of all instances predicted as positive. Equation 4.2 represented the precision in terms of confusion matrix.

Precision = TP / (TP + FP)

As shown in the Fig. after implementing all three detection steps (see subtopic 3.4) to the algorithm, precision of all the samples was plotted and average precision was taken as 0.9608 (96.08%). As a result,

occurrence of false positives was minimized and making it reliable in distinguishing positive instances from negative ones.

The F1 score, which is determined using the equation provided, represents a balanced measure of the algorithm's performance as it combines both precision and recall in a harmonic mean. These two metrics offer an overall assessment of the algorithm's ability to correctly identify positive instances while minimizing false positives and false negatives.

F1 Score = 2 \* (Precision \* Recall) / (Precision + Recall)

Average F1 score was achieved as (0.9785) 97.85%, it indicates that the algorithm achieves a high balance between precision and recall. In here, recall (TP / (TP + FN)) for all the samples was calculated as one because there were zero instances in which the correct line segment was not detected, unless it was not passed from the feature extraction section to the classification section of the algorithm.

It is suggested by a higher F1 score that the algorithm is performing well in terms of correctly identifying positive instances (exhibiting high precision) and minimizing false negatives (demonstrating high recall). Results of all the samples were shown in the Fig.

The Receiver Operating Characteristic (ROC) curve was constructed by plotting the true positive rate (Recall) against the false positive rate (FPR) at various classification thresholds. Ideally, the top-left corner of the graph would be touched by an ROC curve, indicating Recall and low FPR, by an algorithm with excellent performance. Fortunately, this was achieved by the line segment detection algorithm as shown in the Fig.

As a summary, the algorithm's reliability and effectiveness in classification tasks are signified by the high F1 score, accuracy, and precision values. Furthermore, the perfect sensitivity suggested by the straight line in the ROC curve and the absence of false negatives further affirm the strong performance of the algorithm.

4.3 Efficiency Analysis of the Algorithm

Efficiency analysis of the algorithm is based on the processing time of the algorithm. As mentioned in the methodology, there are main three sections in this algorithm. But for the efficiency analysis, time spent on preprocessing and the feature extraction were combined into one single section and called “initial preparation time”. Then time spent for the classification step was divided into three sections “single line detection”, “detection based on the size” and “detection based on the distance”. To measure the processing time, python library “timeit” was used.

Based on the results, the most time-consuming area in the algorithm was identified as the preprocessing and the feature extraction area. Initially, processing time was compared by changing the hardware configurations. For this, two completely different computers were used to run the program and capture the processing time as shown in the table.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Hardware Configurations | Minimum Processing Time per combination of neighboring sections (ms) | Maximum Processing Time per combination of neighboring sections (ms) |
| Intel Core i5 - 9300H CPU @ 2.40GHz Processor (9th Gen), 16.0 GB RAM, 512 GB SSD | 66.42 | 716.73 |
| Intel Core i5 - 4210U CPU @ 1.70GHz Processor (4th Gen), 8 GB RAM, 750 GB SATA | 103.24 | 2078.21 |

According to the table, a huge contrast in the processing time was noticed. The CPU is responsible for executing instructions and performing calculations. The i5-9300H CPU (9th Gen) in the 1st computer has a higher clock speed (2.40GHz) compared to the 2nd computer. A higher clock speed generally means faster processing, Therefore, one reason for the less processing time in the 1st computer is CPU performance. Other factors such as the number of cores and the microarchitecture also play a role.

In the computer architecture, RAM is used to store data that the CPU needs to access quickly. Having more RAM allows this kind of complex algorithm to be processed efficiently. The first laptop has 16GB of RAM, which is twice the capacity of the second laptop's 8GB. This means that the first laptop can handle larger amounts of data in memory, potentially leading to faster algorithm execution.

The storage drive, whether it's an SSD or an HDD, affects the algorithm's speed primarily during data read/write operations like loading JSON file etc. SSDs are generally faster than traditional HDDs, offering quicker data access times. The first laptop's 512GB SSD is likely to provide faster read/write speeds compared to the second computer's 750GB SATA drive. Therefore, the 1st computer was taken into further processing.

When further analyzing the preprocessing and feature extraction stages, a hypothesis was formulated to examine the impact of the number of neighboring plant section combinations in a sample image on the efficiency of the algorithm. The relationship between these two parameters was investigated using Big O notation, a mathematical notation commonly used in computer science. Big O notation, denoted as O(f(n)), where "O" represents the order of growth and "f(n)" denotes the algorithm's growth rate as a function of the input size "n," was employed to analyze and compare algorithm performance as the input size increased. Typically, the function "f(n)" represents the worst-case time complexity of the algorithm, providing a clear indication of its efficiency and scalability with increasing input size.

Based on the algorithm's performance behavior in relation to the input size, various types of Big O notations have been defined. For instance, O(1) represents constant performance, O(log n) denotes logarithmic performance, and O(n) signifies linear performance. Considering the processing structure of this algorithm, it was theoretically assumed that the algorithm's Big O notation complexity should be linear (O(n)). To validate this assumption, a graph was plotted, as depicted in Figure 4.3, representing the algorithm's processing time against the number of neighboring plant section combinations. The graph was examined to identify patterns in the growth of the processing time.

Observing Figure 4.3, significant differences in the growth rate of the processing time (gradient) were noticed as the number of combinations increased. The relevant Big O notation or the relationship between the number of combinations and the processing time was summarized in the Table. This observation can be attributed to the fact that as the number of combinations increases in an image, the size of the plant decreases, including both the plant's section size and the size of the outside contour. Consequently, less time is required for processing the contours. This is further explained in the following graph. (See Fig. 4.4). Also, a logarithmic relationship (see equation 1) was found in the average time per combination vs No. of combinations.

Average time per combination (T) = -167.2ln(N) + 504.12

Where:

T represents the average time per combination.

N represents the number of combinations.

Note: This equation is valid only for values of N > 0

Additionally, to compare the algorithm's performance, a processing time reduction technique utilizing the external contour detection method (refer to subtopic 3.2) instead of the internal contour detection method (utilizing the whole solid section of the plant) was employed as shown in the Fig. 4.3. Based on that, roughly 3 times of the processing time reduction was achieved due to less amount pixels available on the external contour compared to whole solid section of the plant.

The histogram presented the duration allocated to the classification step. A visual representation of single line detection is provided in Figure 4.4, where the histogram illustrates a left-skewed distribution. This signifies that the range of time dedicated to detecting a single line span from 39ms to 239ms.

With respect to detection based on size, as depicted in Figure 4.5, the time distribution follows a similar left-skewed pattern. Comparable to the previous instance, the duration for this type of detection also lies in a similar range, that is, between 41ms to 241ms.

However, a deviation can be observed when we examine the time spent for detection based on distance, as represented in Figure 4.6. In this particular scenario, the duration is slightly increased, ranging from 286ms to 486ms, which is higher than the time required for the other two forms of detection.

Therefore, it can be interpreted from the histograms that while the time distributions for single line detection and size-based detection are quite similar and relatively lower, the time required for distance-based detection is marginally greater.

It may be worth considering whether the increased time for distance-based detection is due to inherent complexity in this type of detection, or whether it could be optimized further. Finally understanding these factors could potentially inform decisions about which detection method needs to be more optimized in future development.