CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The aluminum LM6 casting process is an essential step in manufacturing high-performance components, especially in industries like automotive, aerospace, and electronics, where material properties and reliability are paramount. LM6 alloy is favored in these industries for its outstanding mechanical properties, including high strength-to-weight ratio, resistance to corrosion, and ability to withstand high temperatures. These properties are crucial for parts that must operate under extreme mechanical and thermal stresses, such as engine blocks, pump housings, and structural components for vehicles and aircraft. Aluminum LM6 alloy, being lightweight yet durable, is an optimal choice for these applications, where the need to reduce weight while maintaining strength is critical. The alloy's excellent castability makes it suitable for mass production, which is why it is commonly used in manufacturing both small and large parts that require precision and performance under challenging conditions [1].

Composition and Properties of Aluminum LM6

Aluminum LM6 is an aluminum-silicon alloy that has been designed to achieve high-quality castings with favorable mechanical properties. The composition of LM6 consists primarily of aluminum, with key alloying elements such as silicon, magnesium, iron, copper, and small amounts of other elements like manganese, nickel, and titanium. Silicon plays an essential role in improving the fluidity of the molten metal, which helps reduce shrinkage and porosity during the casting process. The typical silicon content ranges from 6.5% to 7.5%, which is beneficial for producing intricate geometries with feourr defects. This silicon content also provides the casting with better dimensional stability, reducing the likelihood of warping or deformation after solidification [2].

Magnesium, which comprises approximately 0.30% of the LM6 composition, is another critical element that significantly enhances the strength, hardness, and corrosion resistance of the alloy. Magnesium increases the alloy's overall mechanical properties, especially its tensile strength and resistance to fatigue, which are essential for components that are subjected to cyclic loading. These improvements make LM6 suitable for high-performance applications like engine blocks and transmission housings, where material fatigue is a concern. Iron content is kept relatively low at about 0.25%, as excessive iron can degrade the casting quality, leading to reduced fluidity and the potential formation of unwanted phases that can weaken the material. Copper, typically 0.10%, is added to enhance the alloy's machinability, which is important when precision machining is required after casting. Manganese, nickel, and titanium, present in trace amounts, further refine the alloy's microstructure, improving its wear resistance and overall strength [3].

Casting Process and Methods

Casting is one of the oldest and most widely used methods for manufacturing metal parts. It involves pouring molten metal into a mold, which solidifies into a desired shape. The process is highly versatile and capable of producing parts with complex geometries, making it ideal for manufacturing components that would otherwise be difficult or prohibitively expensive to produce using alternative techniques such as machining, welding, or forging. Casting is especially useful when high material strength is required in parts with intricate designs, as it allows for the formation of shapes that are hard to achieve through other methods. Additionally, casting is often more cost-effective for large-scale production compared to other manufacturing techniques.

Among the different casting techniques, sand casting is one of the most commonly used methods in the production of aluminum LM6 castings. Sand casting involves creating a mold from a mixture of sand, binder, and water, which is then used to hold molten metal during the cooling and solidification process. Sand casting is particularly advantageous for producing large parts, as it is cost-effective and highly versatile. It can accommodate both simple and complex geometries and is commonly used for producing components like engine blocks, pump housings, and other critical structural parts. The flexibility of sand casting allows it to produce both small and large parts with excellent strength-to-weight ratios. Its relatively low tooling cost compared to methods like die casting makes it an attractive option for high-volume production of aluminum LM6 castings, especially in industries where large and small batches need to be produced with similar efficiency [4].

In sand casting, the mold material plays a significant role in determining the final quality of the casting. Factors like pouring temperature, mold material composition, and cooling rate must be carefully controlled to prevent the formation of defects such as porosity, shrinkage, and cracks. These defects often occur due to variations in the cooling process, the material's thermal conductivity, or the interaction between the molten metal and the mold material. As a result, process optimization is crucial to minimizing defects and improving the quality of the final casting.

Optimization ensures that the metal fills the mold effectively, cools uniformly, and solidifies without forming undesirable defects that can compromise the casting's integrity [5].

Process Optimization Using Taguchi's Orthogonal Array

To address the challenge of defects in the LM6 casting process, this study employs Taguchi's Orthogonal Array (OA) methodology to optimize key process parameters. Taguchi's method is widely recognized for its ability to identify optimal process settings while minimizing the number of experiments required. In traditional experimental designs, testing every possible combination of process parameters can be time-consuming and costly, especially when multiple factors influence the quality of the final product. However, Taguchi's method uses a systematic approach to experiment with multiple factors simultaneously by employing orthogonal arrays. This allows for a significant reduction in the number of trials needed while still providing meaningful insights into how each factor impacts the casting process.

Signal-to-Noise (S/N) Ratio Analysis

The Signal-to-Noise (S/N) ratio is a fundamental concept in Taguchi's methodology, and it is particularly useful in process optimization. In the context of casting, the S/N ratio helps assess how variations in process parameters affect the final product's quality. The primary goal is to maximize the S/N ratio, as a higher ratio indicates that the process is less sensitive to variations caused by uncontrollable factors. In other words, maximizing the S/N ratio ensures that the casting process is robust and produces high-quality parts, regardless of fluctuations in external conditions or raw material quality [10].

In this study, the S/N ratio is calculated for each experimental trial to determine the optimal levels of the casting parameters. By maximizing the S/N ratio, the process becomes more stable, and the occurrence of defects such as porosity and cold shuts is minimized. The results from the S/N ratio analysis provide the necessary insights for adjusting the process parameters to achieve the most reliable and consistent casting quality. Once the optimal parameter levels are identified through this analysis, confirmatory experiments are conducted to validate the improvements. These experiments demonstrate a significant reduction in defects, confirming that the optimal settings identified using the S/N ratio lead to better process stability and fewer defects in the final castings [8], [9].

Real-Time Defect Detection with CNN

Even with process optimization through Taguchi's method, defects may still occur during the casting process due to factors not considered in the experimental design, such as variations in raw material properties, human error, or environmental conditions. To address this, the project integrates a Convolutional Neural Network (CNN) model for real-time defect detection. CNNs are deep learning models specifically designed for image processing tasks, and they have proven to be highly effective in identifying complex patterns and anomalies in visual data. CNNs are well-suited for detecting subtle defects in the surface of aluminum LM6 castings, such as micro-cracks, porosity, and surface irregularities that may not be visible to the human eye or detectable by traditional inspection methods.

The CNN model is trained using a large dataset of images captured from the experimental castings. These images are taken from multiple angles to ensure that the model can detect defects from various perspectives. Once trained, the CNN model can automatically classify casting images as either defective or non-defective, providing real-time feedback during the production process. This automated defect detection system ensures that any defective castings are identified immediately, reducing the need for manual inspection and improving overall production efficiency. By integrating this CNN model with the optimized casting parameters from Taguchi's method, the system enhances quality control by continuously monitoring the casting process and ensuring that only high-quality castings are produced [10].

CNN Model Architecture and Performance

The CNN model developed for this study is designed to process 224x224 RGB images, with a total of 150,528 neurons in the input layer. The model includes four convolutional layers, each with increasing complexity in terms of the number of filters and kernel sizes. Conv1 has 64 filters with a 7x7 kernel, Conv2 has 128 filters with a 3x3 kernel, Conv3 has 256 filters with a 3x3 kernel, and Conv4 has 512 filters with a 3x3 kernel. These convolutional layers enable the model to extract complex features from the images, allowing it to detect defects such as micro-cracks or porosity that might not be easily visible.

After the convolutional layers, the model includes a fully connected layer with 512 input neurons, which helps process the extracted features and make final predictions. The output layer consists of nine neurons, each corresponding to one of the nine defect categories. The model is trained using a dataset of 3,600 images, with 70% used for training and 30% used for testing. The model achieved an impressive training accuracy of 99.66% and a test accuracy of 99.79%, demonstrating its ability to accurately classify defects. The model's training loss was 0.0088, and the test loss was 0.0056, confirming its ability to generalize to new data. These results validate the effectiveness of the CNN model for real-time defect detection, ensuring that the aluminum LM6 casting process produces high-quality components [12], [13].

This project focused on optimizing the aluminum LM6 casting process with a primary emphasis on surface defect detection. By using Taguchi's Orthogonal Array design, the study successfully optimized four key parameters—heating temperature, heating time, scum powder, and magnesium powder—leading to significant improvements in casting quality. The use of the Signal-to-Noise (S/N) ratio enabled the identification of optimal parameter levels, reducing defects such as porosity and cold shuts.

However, despite these optimizations, defects could still arise due to uncontrolled factors. To address this, a Convolutional Neural Network (CNN) was integrated for real-time defect detection in casting images. Trained on a dataset of 3,600 images, the CNN model demonstrated exceptional accuracy, achieving training and test accuracies of 99.66% and 99.79%, respectively. This combination of process optimization and advanced defect detection ensures a robust quality control system for aluminum LM6 castings, reducing manual inspection, improving production efficiency, and ensuring high-quality final products.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Casting is one of the oldest and most widely used manufacturing processes, allowing manufacturers to create complex metal components that would be difficult or expensive to fabricate through other means such as machining, welding, or forging. In casting, molten metal is poured into a mold and allowed to solidify into the desired shape. The process offers several advantages, including the ability to produce intricate geometries, handle large production volumes, and maintain relatively low material waste. As such, casting is integral to industries that require high-performance components, including automotive, aerospace, and electronics, where strength, reliability, and material performance are paramount. Among the various metals used in casting, aluminum alloys, particularly LM6, are widely preferred due to their combination of lightweight, high strength, corrosion resistance, and thermal stability [1][2]. However, despite the superior properties of LM6 alloy, its casting process remains prone to defects such as porosity, cracks, cold shuts, and shrinkage. These defects arise from several factors including uncontrolled process parameters, variations in raw material properties, and fluctuating environmental conditions. In industrial settings, defects can significantly compromise the mechanical properties and overall integrity of the casting, leading to production inefficiencies, increased costs, and unreliable components. Therefore, it is essential to optimize the casting process to minimize defects and ensure the production of high-quality components. This study proposes a dual approach that combines Taguchi’s Orthogonal Array (TOA) for process optimization and Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) for real-time defect detection. By utilizing these methodologies, this research aims to enhance both the quality and efficiency of the aluminum LM6 casting process [3][4].

Properties and Applications of LM6 Alloy

Aluminum LM6 is a high-performance casting alloy that is prized for its excellent castability and mechanical properties. The alloy is predominantly composed of aluminum, with approximately 6.5% to 7.5% silicon, 0.25% iron, 0.10% copper, and 0.30% magnesium, with trace amounts of manganese, nickel, and titanium. Silicon plays a critical role in enhancing the fluidity of the molten metal during the casting process, reducing defects like shrinkage and porosity by improving the material's ability to fill complex mold cavities. Magnesium, which is present at around 0.30%, significantly increases the alloy's strength, resistance to mechanical stress, and fatigue resistance, making LM6 suitable for applications that demand high performance and durability, such as automotive engine blocks and transmission housings [5].

The alloy's low iron content (0.25%) is important, as excessive iron can lead to poor castability and weakened mechanical properties due to the formation of undesirable iron-rich phases. Copper, although in small amounts (0.10%), contributes to the alloy's machinability, which is essential when precision post-casting processing is required. In addition to these primary elements, trace amounts of manganese, nickel, and titanium refine the microstructure of LM6, improving its overall strength, wear resistance, and toughness, particularly in environments exposed to extreme mechanical and thermal stresses [6][7]. These properties make LM6 an ideal choice for applications where both strength and lightweight are critical, such as in the production of high-performance structural components for automotive and aerospace industries. The alloy's high corrosion resistance and ability to withstand high temperatures further make it suitable for demanding environments. Despite its excellent material properties, the casting process of LM6 can still result in defects that compromise the integrity of the final product. Optimizing the process parameters is therefore crucial to enhancing the material's performance and minimizing the occurrence of such defects in production [8].

Taguchi's Orthogonal Array (TOA) in Casting Process Optimization

The optimization of the casting process is essential for ensuring the production of high-quality, defect-free components. In casting, several factors such as pouring temperature, mold material, and cooling rates affect the final quality of the product. Variations in these factors can result in defects like porosity, cracks, and cold shuts, which ultimately compromise the mechanical properties of the casting. Taguchi's Orthogonal Array (OA) method is a powerful statistical approach that simplifies the process of optimization by allowing for the simultaneous testing of multiple factors and their interactions, using a reduced number of experiments.

In this study, Taguchi's L9 Orthogonal Array design is applied to optimize four critical casting parameters: heating temperature, heating time, scum powder, and magnesium powder. Each of these parameters is tested at three levels, resulting in nine experimental combinations. This orthogonal array design helps to systematically explore the effect of each parameter while minimizing the number of experimental trials, thus saving time and resources. Additionally, Taguchi's method uses the Signal-to-Noise (S/N) ratio to assess the robustness of the process by evaluating the impact of uncontrolled variations. Maximizing the S/N ratio leads to a more stable and robust process, with reduced defects and increased consistency in the quality of LM6 castings [9][10].

Taguchi's method has been widely applied in industrial applications for process optimization, including the aluminum casting industry, where it has been shown to significantly reduce defects such as porosity and cold shuts. By optimizing key parameters like pouring temperature, cooling rate, and mold material, Taguchi's method ensures that the casting process is as efficient and reliable as possible, leading to higher-quality components [11].

Convolutional Neural Network (CNN) Model for Defect Detection

Despite process optimization techniques like Taguchi's Orthogonal Array improving casting parameters, defects can still arise due to various factors, including inconsistencies in raw materials, environmental fluctuations, and human error. To address this issue, the use of Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) offers a promising solution for automating defect detection. CNNs are deep learning models that excel in processing and analyzing visual data, particularly in tasks such as image recognition and classification. CNNs are well-suited for defect detection in aluminum castings because they can automatically identify and classify defects such as porosity, cracks, and cold shuts from images of castings. In this study, a CNN model is developed to process and classify casting images into defect and non-defect categories. The model is trained using a dataset of 3,600 images, with 70% of the images used for training and 30% reserved for testing. The CNN architecture consists of multiple convolutional layers that extract relevant features from the images, followed by fully connected layers that process these features to produce the final classification output [12].

CNNs have been shown to outperform traditional inspection methods in terms of accuracy and efficiency. These networks can detect subtle defects that may not be visible to the naked eye or detected by manual inspection. Furthermore, CNNs can process images at a much faster rate than human inspectors, making them ideal for real-time defect detection in production settings. By integrating CNN-based defect detection with optimized casting parameters, this study aims to create a comprehensive quality control system that ensures the production of high-quality aluminum LM6 castings [13].

Integration of Process Optimization and Defect Detection

Integrating Taguchi's Orthogonal Array for process optimization with CNN-based defect detection creates a robust system for improving the quality and consistency of aluminum LM6 castings. Taguchi's method is used to optimize critical casting parameters such as heating temperature and time, ensuring that the process operates under the most favorable conditions. Once these parameters are optimized, the CNN model is employed to continuously monitor the castings for defects in real-time. This integrated approach provides a dual benefit: it optimizes the casting process to reduce defects and automates the detection of any remaining defects, which might arise due to factors not fully addressed by process optimization. By combining these two methodologies, manufacturers can ensure that defects are detected early, reducing the likelihood of defective castings reaching the final production stages. This approach not only enhances product quality but also improves production efficiency, as it eliminates the need for manual inspection and reduces the likelihood of costly rework [14][15].

Integrating process optimization with defect detection represents a significant advancement in manufacturing processes, particularly in aluminum casting. This combination of statistical optimization and deep learning-based detection makes the production process more streamlined, data-driven, and automated. The proposed solution is especially valuable in industries that require high-performance components with minimal defects, such as automotive and aerospace, where the quality and reliability of castings are critical to the performance of the final product.

Gaps Identified from the Literature

While considerable advancements have been made in process optimization and defect detection in casting, several gaps remain in the existing literature. These gaps highlight areas where current methodologies fall short and provide the basis for this research to contribute to solving the problem:

- **Limited Focus on LM6-Specific Defects**: Many studies on casting defects are generalized for aluminum alloys or other metals. However, LM6 alloy is prone to specific defects such as porosity and cold shuts that have not been extensively studied in isolation. More research is needed to focus on these LM6-specific defects to develop more effective process optimization strategies.
- **Lack of Integration between Process Optimization and Real-Time Defect Detection**: Although Taguchi's method has been well-documented for process optimization, few studies

have integrated it with real-time defect detection methods such as CNNs. Combining process optimization with defect detection offers an innovative approach to improving the overall casting process.

- **Data Scarcity for CNN Training**: The availability of labeled datasets of casting images, especially for LM6, remains limited. This scarcity restricts the ability of CNN models to generalize effectively across different casting scenarios and limits their applicability in real-world production environments.
- **Challenges in Real-Time Monitoring in Production**: Many defect detection models, including CNNs, are not fully integrated into real-time production systems due to computational resource limitations and the need for high-speed image processing. There is a need for optimized CNN models that can process images quickly and accurately in a fast-paced production environment.
- **Inadequate Consideration of Variability in Casting Processes**: Most process optimization techniques, including Taguchi's method, fail to account for the high variability in casting processes, such as fluctuations in raw material quality or environmental conditions. This can impact defect formation, and more robust methods are needed to handle these variations effectively.

These gaps highlight the necessity of this research to combine Taguchi's optimization technique with CNN-based defect detection, ensuring a comprehensive solution for producing high-quality aluminum LM6 castings with reduced defects. The integration of these two approaches addresses the inherent limitations in current casting processes, where even optimized parameters may not fully eliminate defects due to uncontrollable variations in raw materials, environmental conditions, or human factors. Taguchi's method provides a structured, efficient way to determine the optimal process parameters for casting, reducing the likelihood of defects caused by process instabilities. However, despite process optimization, defects can still arise due to unaccounted variables. This is where the application of CNNs becomes critical. By implementing CNNs, this research introduces a real-time, automated defect detection system that can instantly identify any surface anomalies that might emerge during production, even if those defects were not fully prevented by the optimized process parameters. By combining process optimization with CNN-based real-time monitoring, the research ensures that the LM6 casting process remains robust and adaptable to variations. This combination provides a continuous feedback loop, allowing for immediate corrective actions to be taken when defects are detected, ensuring that only high-quality castings move forward in the production process. Furthermore, this integration contributes to reducing manual inspection efforts, increasing overall production efficiency, and minimizing waste and defects in the final product. Ultimately, the combined approach of process optimization and advanced machine learning detection ensures the consistent production of high-performance, defect-free aluminum LM6 castings, which is essential for industries that rely on the reliability and durability of these components, such as automotive and aerospace sectors.

CHAPTER 3

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND OBJECTIVES

Problem statement:

The aluminium LM6 casting process is critical in producing high-performance components used in automotive and aerospace industries. Despite its advantageous properties such as strength, corrosion resistance, and lightweight, the process often results in defects like porosity, cracks, and cold shuts due to variations in casting parameters and external factors.

Manual inspection of castings is prone to errors. Automating the defect detection process with Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) offers an effective solution. CNNs can identify and classify surface defects in real-time, improving accuracy, speed, and efficiency while reducing the reliance on manual inspection.

Objectives:

The objectives of this project are:

1. **To Optimize LM6 Alloy Casting Parameters**

   Optimize key casting parameters such as heating temperature, heating time, scum powder, and magnesium powder using Taguchi's Orthogonal Array method. This aims to minimize defects like porosity and cracks, ensuring high-quality castings with fewer experimental trials.

2. **To develop CNN model for automated Surface Defect Detection**

   Develop a CNN model to automate the detection of surface defects in LM6 castings. The model will identify defects in real-time during production, reducing reliance on manual inspection and improving quality control efficiency.

3. **To Identify Defect Types in the LM6 castings Using CNN model**

   Train the CNN model to classify detected defects, enabling the identification of defect types (e.g., porosity, cracks) in LM6 castings. This will allow for targeted corrective actions, improving the overall quality of the final castings.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this project is presented in figure 1.

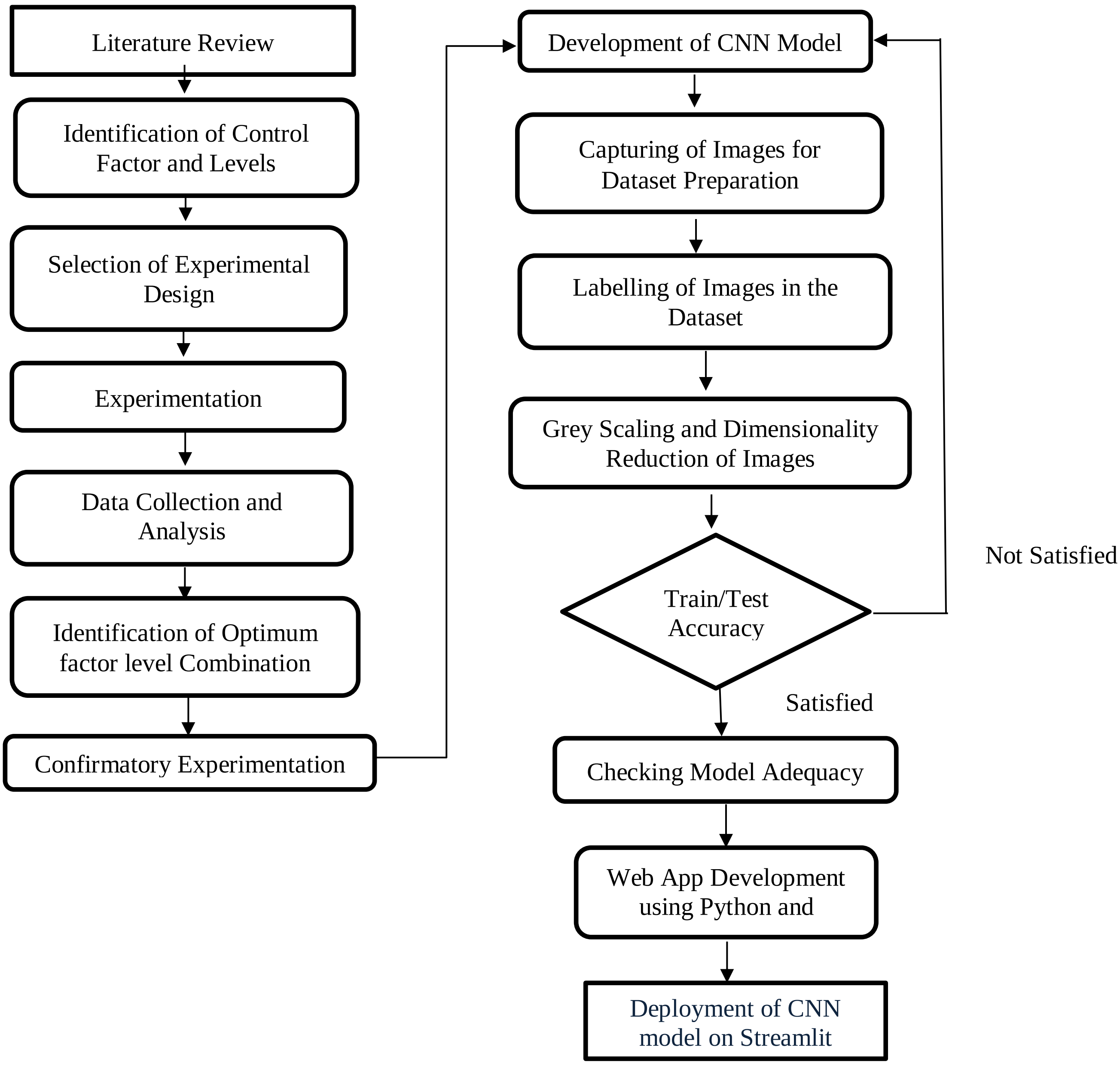

Fig 1: Flowchart Of Methodology

The methodology for this project integrates experimental optimization and machine learning to minimize surface defects in LM6 aluminum alloy castings and to develop an automated inspection system using Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN). The research commenced with an extensive literature review to understand the influence of various casting parameters on defect formation, and to evaluate state-of-the-art practices in defect detection through deep learning. Following this, four primary control factors—heating temperature, heating time, scum powder, and magnesium powder—were selected based on their critical impact on casting quality. Each factor was assigned three levels to allow for a comprehensive evaluation.

To systematically investigate these parameters while minimizing experimental effort, Taguchi's L9 Orthogonal Array design was employed. This design enabled the researchers to assess the interaction and individual effects of the four parameters across nine controlled experimental trials, each repeated to ensure statistical validity. LM6 alloy was cast in sand molds under varying conditions as per the experimental matrix, and the resulting specimens were visually inspected for surface defects such as porosity, cold shuts, and cracks. The collected data was analyzed using the Signal-to-Noise (S/N) ratio, a statistical metric that quantifies process stability and robustness. The analysis revealed the optimal parameter combination for minimizing defects: a heating temperature of 800°C, a heating time of 2.5 hours, 4 grams of scum powder, and 2 grams of magnesium powder. This combination was validated through confirmatory experimentation, which yielded almost defect-free results, thus affirming the reliability of the chosen settings.

With the process parameters optimized, the next phase of the methodology involved the development of a CNN model for defect classification. Images of the cast specimens were captured under controlled lighting from multiple angles to ensure a diverse dataset. These images were then labeled according to their defect type, forming a foundational dataset for training. Prior to model development, the images underwent preprocessing, including greyscale conversion and dimensionality reduction, to standardize input and enhance computational efficiency. The CNN model, built using a ResNet-inspired architecture, was trained on 3,600 images—divided into 70% training and 30% testing datasets. It achieved outstanding performance, with training and testing accuracies of 99.66% and 99.79%, respectively.

Once the model demonstrated reliable accuracy, it was evaluated for adequacy using standard classification metrics and subsequently deployed through a web-based interface. This interface was developed using Python and Streamlit, enabling real-time classification of new casting images uploaded by users. The final deployed application delivers instant predictions and confidence scores, allowing for efficient quality control in industrial settings. By integrating optimized casting parameters with a CNN-based defect detection system, this methodology ensures a dual approach to defect minimization—combining statistical process optimization with modern artificial intelligence for real-time inspection.

CHAPTER 5

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

From the literature review, four control factors Heating time, Heating Temperature, Quantitiy of Scum Powder, Quantitiy of Magnesium Powder are selected that significantly affect the occurrence of surface defects on the LM6 alloy are identified. The quality and reliability of aluminum LM6 casting are largely influenced by a range of process parameters. In this study, four key parameters were identified for their direct impact on casting integrity and the likelihood of defect formation: heating temperature, heating time, quantity of scum powder, and quantity of magnesium powder. Each parameter was chosen based on both empirical evidence and metallurgical literature that emphasize their relevance in influencing flowability, solidification, inclusion control, and alloy modification. Heating temperature plays a pivotal role in determining the fluidity of molten LM6. If the temperature is too low, the metal may not fully flow into all mold cavities, leading to cold shuts and misruns. Excessively high temperatures, on the other hand, may promote oxidation, increased gas absorption, and larger grain structures upon cooling. To balance these extremes, three temperature levels were selected: 800°C, 1000°C, and 1200°C. These values span a wide but controlled range to allow exploration of temperature-induced effects on casting quality. Heating time is another critical variable. Insufficient heating may result in poor alloy homogeneity and inadequate reaction time for alloying elements like magnesium to integrate uniformly. Overheating can cause degradation of beneficial elements and increase the potential for gas entrapment. Hence, heating time was studied at 2.0, 2.5, and 3.0 hours to reflect typical industrial durations with enough variance to detect both linear and nonlinear effects. Scum powder, used for impurity removal, directly affects the cleanliness of the melt. Too little scum powder may leave inclusions in the cast, while excessive use can interfere with the chemistry of the melt. The chosen levels—2g, 4g, and 6g—allow assessment of its effectiveness in degassing and dross removal without overwhelming the system. Magnesium powder, used for improving fluidity and enhancing the mechanical properties, was added in quantities of 1g, 2g, and 3g. These values were selected based on standard practices for small-scale aluminum casting and scaled to 100g of LM6 used per experiment. The aim was to observe how varying magnesium influences porosity formation and intermetallic phase development. Three levels were chosen for each parameter to enable the detection of curvature or nonlinear behavior in the response surface. A two-level design, while simpler, would only detect linear relationships and might overlook critical interaction effects. The use of three levels ensures that both increasing and decreasing trends, as well as turning points, can be effectively captured.

The alternative levels for these factors are identified from the available range of specifications. Table 1 shows the control factors and their alternative levels

Table 1: Control Factors And Their Levels

Factor	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Heating Temperature (°C)	800	1000	1200
Heating Time (hours)	2.0	2.5	3.0
Scum Powder (g)	2	4	6
Magnesium Powder (g)	1	2	3

For four factors at three levels each, the total number of experiments required is 9 and hence L9 orthogonal array is selected for experimentation. Table 2 presents the L9 OA layout. The physical layout of the experimentation is prepared and presented in table 3.

For 4 factors, total degrees of freedom (dof) to estimate main effects:

DoF main effects =4×2=8

Overall mean = 1

Minimum number of experiments = 9

Table 2: L9 Orthogonal Array Layout

Experiment No.	1	2	3	4
1	1	1	1	1
2	1	2	2	2
3	1	3	3	3
4	2	1	2	3
5	2	2	3	1
6	2	3	1	2
7	3	1	3	2
8	3	2	1	3
9	3	3	2	1

Table 3: Physical Layout For The Experimentation

Experiment No.	Heating Temp (°C)	Heating Time (hrs)	Scum Powder (g)	Magnesium Powder (g)
1	800	2.0	2	1
2	800	2.5	4	2
3	800	3.0	6	3
4	1000	2.0	4	3
5	1000	2.5	6	1
6	1000	3.0	2	2
7	1200	2.0	6	2
8	1200	2.5	2	3
9	1200	3.0	4	1

For each experimental trial, two replications are performed to ensure repeatability and to assess variability, resulting in 18 total casting samples.

The experimentation is performed using aluminium LM6 alloy, which begins with melting ingots in a crucible furnace, where the molten metal is heated to the predetermined temperatures and times specified by the experimental design. During melting, precise quantities of scum powder and magnesium powder are added to the molten metal and thoroughly stirred to ensure uniform distribution of these additives, which play critical roles in influencing the casting quality by affecting impurity removal and grain refinement, respectively. The molten alloy is then poured into standardized sand molds designed to produce consistent specimen dimensions. The molds cool naturally at ambient room temperature to simulate real-world industrial conditions, allowing the solidification process to complete under typical production environments. After solidification, the castings are carefully removed from molds and subjected to detailed visual inspection under controlled lighting. Surface defects such as porosity, cracks, shrinkage cavities, cold shuts, blowholes, and flashes are manually identified and quantified for each specimen, providing essential data for quality assessment. After obtaining the casting, cooling and ejection from the molds, the specimens were visually inspected. Each specimen was photographed under controlled lighting to capture surface features. Defects such as porosity, shrinkage, cold shut, and blowholes were manually recorded. The defect count for each specimen was documented and is summarized in table 4.

Table 4: Experimental Results For Number Of Defects

Expt. No.	Heating Temp (°C)	Heating Time (hrs)	Scum Powder (g)	Magnesium Powder (g)	R1 (Defects)	R2 (Defects)
1	800	2.0	2	1	2	1
2	800	2.5	4	2	1	1
3	800	3.0	6	3	3	4
4	1000	2.0	4	3	1	3
5	1000	2.5	6	1	3	5
6	1000	3.0	2	2	4	2
7	1200	2.0	6	2	3	4
8	1200	2.5	2	3	1	4
9	1200	3.0	4	1	5	4

Analysis of Signal-to-Noise (S/N) Ratio

In the context of quality control and process optimization, the Signal-to-Noise (S/N) ratio plays a crucial role in determining the robustness of a system under varying conditions. The Taguchi Method, which utilizes the S/N ratio, is particularly effective in evaluating and improving manufacturing processes by focusing on minimizing the variability (noise) while maximizing the desired performance (signal). In this study, the S/N ratio is employed to evaluate the impact of different casting parameters on the defect formation in aluminum LM6 castings. A higher S/N ratio indicates more stable and consistent performance, whereas a lower S/N ratio points to higher variation and susceptibility to defects.

Calculation of S/N Ratio

The S/N ratio for each experiment was calculated using the "Smaller-the-Better" approach, as the goal is to minimize defects in the castings. This method is particularly suited for quality characteristics where lower values (defects) are desirable. The S/N ratio is calculated using the formula:

$$S/N = -10 \cdot \log_{10}\left(\frac{1}{n}\sum_{i=1}^{n} y_i^2\right)$$

Where:

- yi is the response (defect count) for the i-th trial

- n is the number of replications (in this case, two replications for each experiment)

The table 5 summarizes the S/N ratio obtained for each experimental trial.

Table 5: S/N Ratio For Experimental Trials

Experiment No.	S/N Ratio (dB)
1	-3.98
2	0.00
3	-10.97
4	-6.99
5	-12.30
6	-10.00
7	-10.97
8	-9.30
9	-13.12

These values reflect the **defect levels** observed in each experiment, with higher negative values representing a higher number of defects.

Interpretation of S/N Ratio Results

From the S/N ratio values, we can infer the following insights:

1. **Defect Minimization**: The experiments with **lower S/N ratios**, such as Experiment 9 (-13.12 dB) and Experiment 5 (-12.30 dB), indicate the highest number of defects. These are the trials that did not achieve optimal conditions and are considered less robust.
2. **Optimal Parameters**: On the other hand, **Experiment 2 (0.00 dB)** shows a moderate S/N ratio, indicating a balanced approach to defect minimization. This experiment likely represents one of the optimal settings for the casting process, where defects are minimized without introducing significant noise or variability.
3. **Variation in Results**: The range of S/N ratios from -3.98 dB to -13.12 dB suggests that the aluminum casting process is sensitive to the variation in the parameters used (heating temperature, heating time, scum powder, magnesium powder). Certain combinations of parameters result in significantly lower-quality castings, while others yield better outcomes with fewer defects

To analyze how each parameter affects the defect formation, we calculate the average S/N ratio for each factor level and is shown in table 6.

Table 6: S/N Ratio For Factor Level Combination

Factor	Level 1 (S/N)	Level 2 (S/N)	Level 3 (S/N)
Heating Temp	-4.98 dB	-9.76 dB	-11.13 dB
Heating Time	-7.98 dB	-7.20 dB	-11.70 dB
Scum Powder	-7.76 dB	-6.70 dB	-12.08 dB
Magnesium Powder	-9.80 dB	-6.42 dB	-8.75 dB

Interpretation:

- Heating Temperature: The S/N ratio improves as the heating temperature decreases, with Level 1 (800°C) yielding the best results. High temperatures may cause defects such as oxidation and material degradation, which is evident in the lower S/N ratios at higher levels.
- Heating Time: The S/N ratio is highest at Level 2 (2.5 hours), indicating that moderate heating time helps achieve better casting quality by ensuring proper alloy homogeneity.
- Scum Powder: Level 2 (4g) yields the best results, suggesting that this amount is optimal for impurity removal without affecting the overall casting quality.
- Magnesium Powder: Level 2 (2g) offers the best S/N ratio, indicating that excessive magnesium could lead to defects such as porosity, and insufficient magnesium affects the fluidity and strength of the casting.

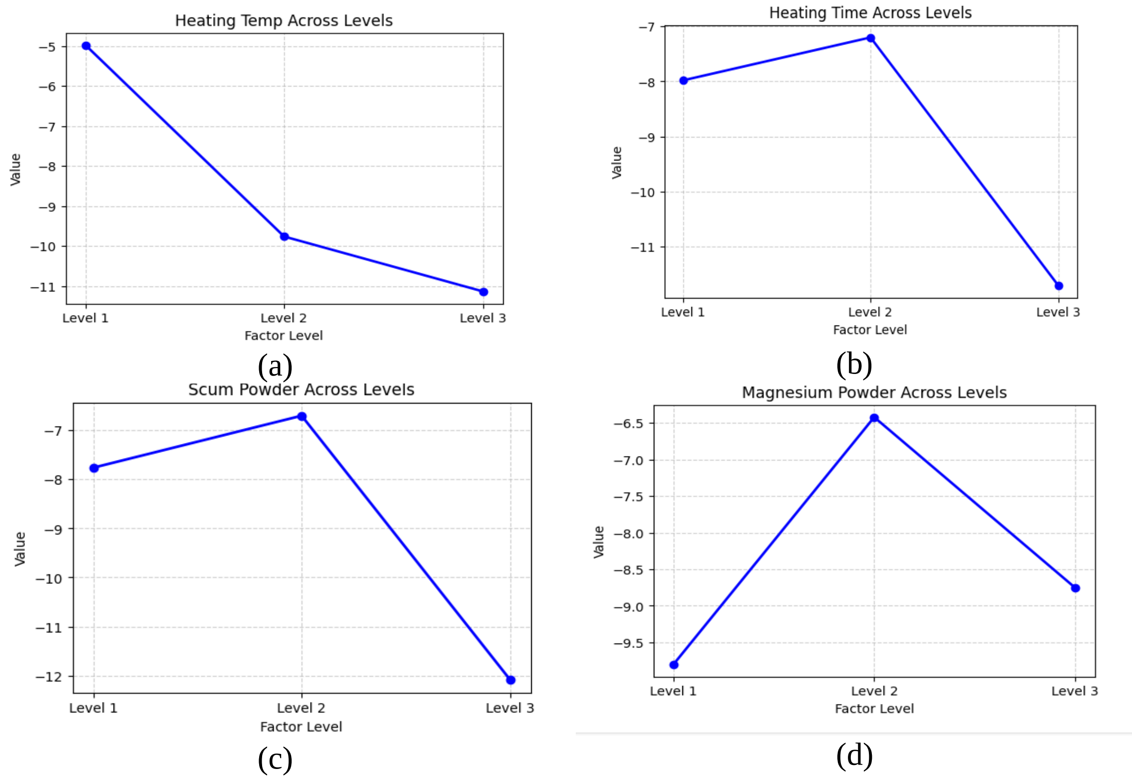

Fig 2: S/N Ratio Graph For Factor Level Combination

Fig 2(a) presents a graph that showcases the effect of heating temperature on the defect levels in aluminum casting. The x-axis represents the different levels of heating temperature, ranging from Level 1 (800°C) to Level 3 (1200°C), while the y-axis indicates the defect levels. From the graph, it can be observed that as the heating temperature increases, the defect level decreases. At Level 1, where the temperature is 800°C, the defect level is significantly higher, suggesting that insufficient heating leads to issues like improper flow of the molten aluminum, resulting in higher defect rates. In contrast, as the temperature increases to Level 3 (1200°C), the defect level drops, indicating that a higher temperature improves the casting process by ensuring better flow and reducing the likelihood of defects such as cold shuts and porosity. The trend suggests that a moderate to high heating temperature is crucial for achieving high-quality aluminum castings with minimal defects.

Fig 2 (b) demonstrates how heating time affects the number of defects in the casting process. Here, the x-axis represents the different heating time levels, ranging from 2.0 hours to 3.0 hours, while the y-axis shows the defect level. The graph reveals that the defect level is lowest at Level 2 (2.5 hours), with moderate defects observed at both shorter and longer heating times. At Level 1, with only 2.0 hours of heating, the defect level is notably higher, indicating that insufficient heating time leads to poor alloy homogeneity and incomplete reactions during the casting process, which in turn causes more defects. On the other hand, at Level 3, where the heating time extends to 3.0 hours, the defect level rises again, likely due to over-heating, which can cause excessive oxidation and other issues. This graph highlights that a balanced heating time, specifically 2.5 hours, results in the fewest defects, allowing for proper alloy integration and improved casting quality.

In the fig 2(c) the relationship between the amount of scum powder added during the casting process and the resulting defects is examined. The x-axis represents the levels of scum powder, ranging from 2g to 6g, while the y-axis indicates the defect level. From the graph, it is clear that the defect level is lowest at Level 2, where 4g of scum powder is used. At this level, the scum powder effectively removes impurities and gas from the molten aluminum, which helps in achieving a cleaner, higher-quality casting. At Level 1 (2g), the defect level is higher, suggesting that insufficient scum powder may fail to adequately remove impurities, leading to more defects such as porosity. At Level 3 (6g), the defect level increases again, indicating that an excess of scum powder may interfere with the chemistry of the melt, potentially causing unwanted reactions that negatively impact casting quality. Therefore, the optimal amount of scum powder appears to be 4g, as it balances impurity removal without introducing adverse effects.

Fig 2(d) focuses on the impact of magnesium powder on the defect levels in aluminum casting. The x-axis represents the levels of magnesium powder, ranging from 1g to 3g, while the y-axis shows the defect level. The graph indicates that the defect level is lowest at Level 2, where 2g of magnesium powder is used. Magnesium is crucial for enhancing fluidity and refining the microstructure of the aluminum, but too little or too much can lead to problems. At Level 1 (1g), the defect level is higher, possibly due to insufficient magnesium to achieve the desired improvements in fluidity and mechanical properties, resulting in defects like porosity. Conversely, at Level 3 (3g), the defect level increases again, which may be due to an excess of magnesium, leading to increased porosity and other casting defects. The optimal amount of magnesium powder seems to be 2g, as it provides the best balance, improving the quality of the aluminum casting without causing excessive defects.

The Signal-to-Noise (S/N) Ratio was used to identify the optimum parameter levels that reduce the defect formation in aluminum LM6 castings.

The optimum levels are Heating Temperature: 800°C, Heating Time: 2.5 hours, Scum Powder: 4g, and Magnesium Powder: 2g.

Confirmatory experiments

Confirmatory experiments were performed on 4 specimens by keeping the parameters at their optimum levels and the results are summarized in table 7. From this table, it is observed that with the optimum levels for the parameters, the number of defects obtained is almost zero.

Table 7: Results Of Confirmatory Experiments

Specimen No.	Defects
1	0
2	0
3	0
4	1

CHAPTER 6

CNN MODEL ARCHITECTURE AND DEVELOPMENT

With the optimized parameter values in place, there remains a possibility of a few defects occurring during production. However, these defects can be automatically inspected and classified based on their types. To address this, an automated online quality control system is developed using a Convolutional Neural Network (CNN). A dataset of approximately 3,600 labeled casting images, including both defective and non-defective samples, is prepared. These images are preprocessed by resizing, normalization, and data augmentation techniques such as rotation and flipping to improve the model's robustness and generalization. The CNN architecture includes multiple convolutional layers to extract features, activation functions to introduce non-linearity, pooling layers for dimensionality reduction, dropout for regularization, and fully connected layers to perform binary classification between defective and non-defective castings. The model is trained with a suitable loss function and optimizer, with performance evaluated on unseen test images using metrics such as accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score. This trained model is deployed through a user-friendly web interface that allows operators to upload casting images and receive immediate feedback on defect presence and confidence scores. Integrating this real-time defect detection system with the offline experimental results creates a closed-loop quality control framework. Here, feedback from the CNN informs dynamic adjustments to casting parameters, further improving process control and reducing defects.

CNN architecture

The architecture of the Convolutional Neural Network (CNN) included several key layers designed to efficiently process and classify casting defects from input images. Initially, convolutional layers were used to extract spatial features from the images using 3x3 filters, which helped capture essential patterns such as edges, textures, and defect shapes. After each convolution operation, a Rectified Linear Unit (ReLU) activation function was applied to introduce non-linearity, enabling the model to learn complex patterns. To reduce the spatial dimensions and computational load, max-pooling layers were employed, retaining the most dominant features while reducing the resolution of the feature maps. Additionally, dropout layers were included to prevent overfitting by randomly deactivating neurons during the training process, ensuring that the model generalized well to unseen data. The extracted features were then interpreted by fully connected dense layers, which connected the learned representations to the output layer. Finally, the output layer used a sigmoid activation function to produce a binary classification, yielding a value between 0 and 1, which indicated the presence or absence of a defect in the casting.

Model Building

We will use convolutional neural networks to approach the problem of classifying whether a casting is Defective or OK based on the given image. Almost universally used in computer vision applications, convolutional neural networks (CNN, convnets) is a type of deep-learning model that can look at groups of adjacent pixels in an area of an image and learn to find spatial patterns.

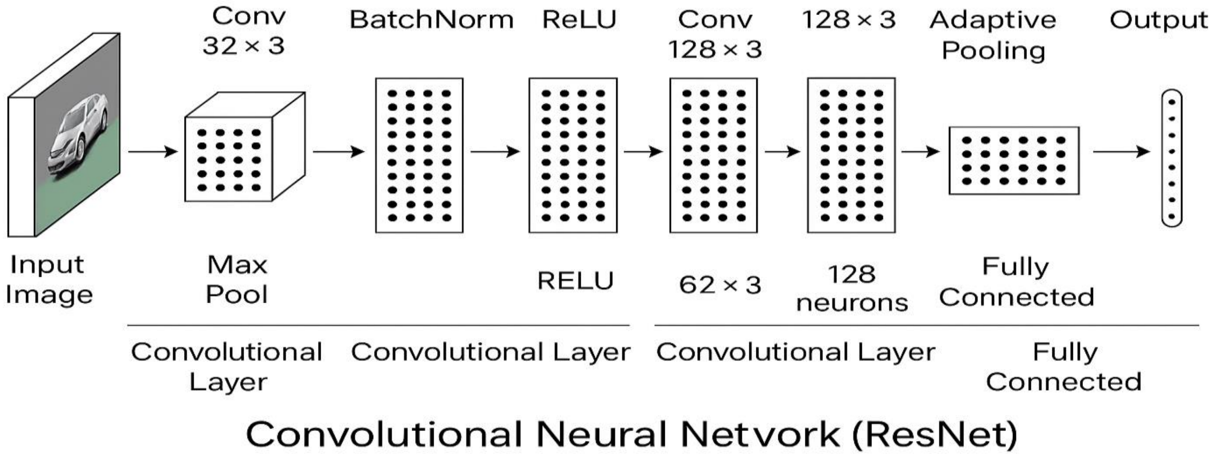

Fig 3: Image Classification With A Typical CNN Architecture

The Figure 3 depicts the CNN Resnet diagram, CNN is made up of a number of layers: a series of convolutional layers (with activation), pooling layers, and at least one final fully-connected layer that produces a set of class scores for a given image. The convolutional layers of a CNN act as feature extractors; they extract shape and color patterns from the pixel values of training images.

CNN model development

The training pipeline included image preprocessing steps where each input image was resized to 512x512 pixels, converted to RGB, normalized (scaled between 0 and 1), and reshaped into a 4D tensor. The model was compiled with a binary cross-entropy loss function, optimized using the Adam optimizer, and evaluated with accuracy as the primary metric.

The deployment was done using Streamlit, a Python-based framework for building interactive web apps. The interface allowed users to upload multiple images simultaneously. Each image was displayed back to the user, passed through the CNN model, and classified in real-time. If the model's prediction score was greater than 0.5, the image was labeled as "No Defect"; otherwise, it was flagged as "Defect". The model's output also included a confidence score, which helped indicate the certainty of the prediction.

The model developed for casting defect detection utilizes a convolutional neural network (CNN) built on the ResNet architecture, which is highly regarded for its effectiveness in image classification tasks. By leveraging residual connections, the ResNet architecture ensures that the model can learn complex features without encountering the vanishing gradient problem, making it ideal for deep learning tasks. The model's ability to detect defects in casting images is facilitated through a series of convolutional layers that capture important spatial features like edges, textures, and defect-specific patterns. These features are further refined using batch normalization, ReLU activations, and max-pooling layers

Model Architecture

The architecture of the CNN model is shown in figure 4, and is implemented using PyTorch, with a ResNet backbone. This architecture includes essential components such as convolutional layers, batch normalization, residual blocks, and a fully connected layer at the output. The model is designed to process 224x224 RGB images, where each pixel has three channels (Red, Green, Blue), and it aims to classify defects in casting images into one of nine categories.

The model contains a total of 12,014,336 neurons. The breakdown of the layers is as follows:

Input Layer:

The input layer processes 224x224 RGB images. The input size is 224x224 pixels, with three color channels, resulting in a total of 150,528 neurons in the input layer. These neurons correspond to the pixel values of the images.

Hidden Layers

The model contains 4 convolutional layers, each designed to extract hierarchical features from the input images. The first convolutional layer applies 64 filters with a 7x7 kernel size, followed by three subsequent layers: one with 128 filters and a 3x3 kernel, another with 256 filters, and the last with 512 filters, all using 3x3 kernels. These layers are followed by batch normalization and ReLU activations, which help improve model convergence and prevent overfitting.

Additionally, the network includes residual blocks that allow for deeper learning without encountering vanishing gradient problems, which is crucial for image classification tasks. After the convolutional layers and residual blocks, the output is passed through an adaptive pooling layer, followed by a fully connected layer containing 512 neurons.

Output Layer

The model ends with an output layer that consists of 9 neurons, corresponding to the nine defect categories: *blowholes_defect_front, cold_shut_defect_front, cracks_defect_front, def_front, flash_defect_front, misrun_defect_front, ok_front, porosity_defect_front, and shrinkage_defect_front*. This final layer provides the probabilities for each defect type.

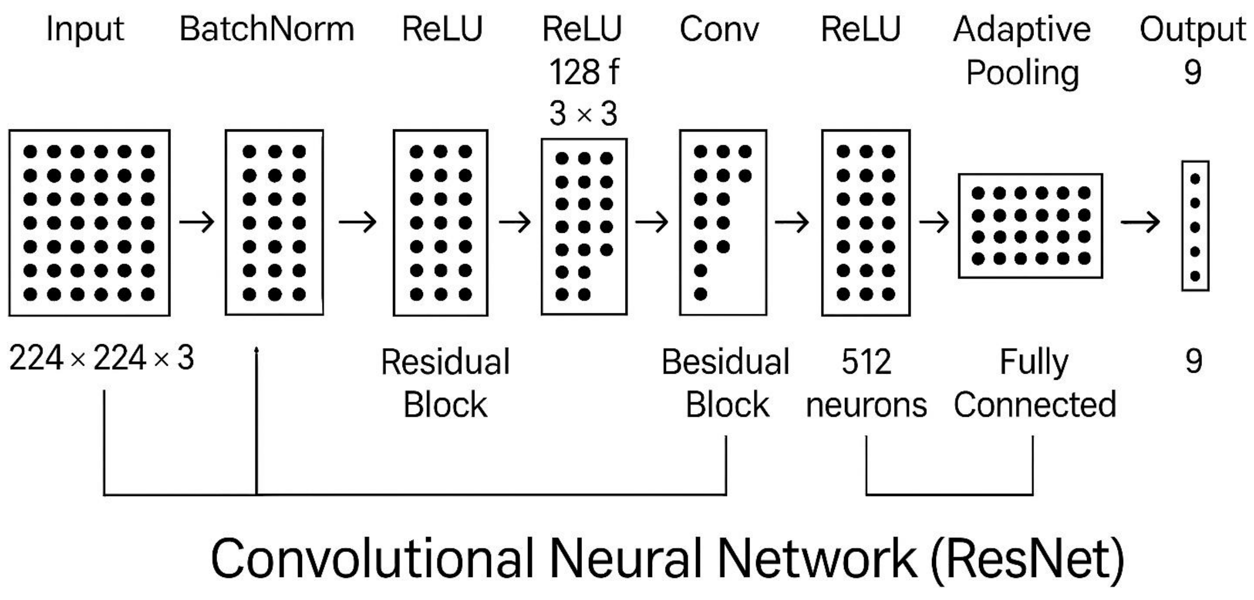

Fig 4: Resnet Architecture Diagram Of The Deveopled Model

Performance Metrics

The model was trained for 25 epochs, achieving high accuracy across both training and validation sets. The final training accuracy was 99.66%, while the final validation accuracy reached 99.79%, indicating excellent generalization. The model’s loss function exhibited consistent improvement, with a final training loss of 0.0088 and a final validation loss of 0.0056, demonstrating the model's ability to effectively minimize errors during training.

Layer Breakdown

The layer structure of the CNN model is summarized in the table 8:

Table 8: Summary Of The Layer Structure Of The CNN Model

Layer Type	Details	Number of Neurons
Input Layer	224×224 RGB images	1,50,528
Convolutional Layer 1	64 filters, 7×7 kernel	8,02,816
Convolutional Layer 2	128 filters, 3×3 kernel	4,01,408
Convolutional Layer 3	256 filters, 3×3 kernel	2,00,704
Convolutional Layer 4	512 filters, 3×3 kernel	1,00,352
Fully Connected Layer	512 input neurons after adaptive pooling	512
Output Layer	9 output neurons for defect classification	9

Performance Summary

The performance summary of training and testing is shown in table 9.

Table 9 : Model Performance Summary: Training And Validation Metrics

Metric	Training	Validation
Accuracy	99.66%	99.79%
Loss	0.0088	0.0056

The CNN model, utilizing a ResNet architecture, shows exceptional performance in classifying casting defects with very high accuracy. It handles both binary and multi-class classification tasks efficiently, using deep convolutional layers and residual blocks to extract spatial features. The model's performance is robust, with minimal overfitting and excellent generalization. The architecture and training setup ensure that it can be deployed effectively in real-world applications, such as automated defect detection in casting processes.

Training and Performance Metrics

The model underwent 25 epochs of training, with the training and validation losses consistently decreasing over time. Notably, there were some fluctuations in the validation loss, particularly during epochs 5, 7, 9, 16, and 21, which could be attributed to learning rate adjustments or certain patterns in the dataset. Despite these fluctuations, the model achieved excellent performance, with a final training accuracy of 99.66% and a final validation accuracy of 99.79%. The loss figures were similarly low, with the final validation loss at 0.0056.

The high validation accuracy suggests that the model generalizes well to unseen data, which is crucial for practical deployment in a real-world quality control scenario. The model's performance across all 9 defect classes is solid, as demonstrated by the low number of misclassifications in the confusion matrix, particularly for the "ok_front" class, which was correctly identified in 6044 instances.

GPU Utilization and Efficiency

The model was trained on an NVIDIA GeForce GTX 1650 GPU, with 0.185 GB of memory allocated for the training process. While the model's GPU memory usage was relatively low, the memory caching was higher, indicating efficient use of available resources. This allows the model to handle large datasets without overwhelming the hardware.

Evaluation of Training Behavior

Over the course of the 25 epochs, the training accuracy remained consistently high, which is indicative of the model's ability to effectively learn from the data. The validation accuracy also remained stable, with only minor fluctuations, which further emphasizes the model's robustness. However, the spikes in validation loss during specific epochs suggest that the learning rate and other hyperparameters may need further tuning to achieve smoother convergence in future iterations.

The model's excellent performance on both training and validation sets suggests it is well-suited for practical applications, such as automated defect detection in casting processes. The strong performance in identifying defects across multiple classes implies that the model can be a reliable supplement to manual inspection processes, providing consistent and objective results in a real-time quality assurance system.

The CNN-based defect detection model shows exceptional promise for use in industrial settings, particularly in casting quality control. The ResNet architecture, coupled with TensorFlow/Keras, enables the model to perform complex image classification tasks efficiently, achieving high accuracy and low loss values. The deployment of the model through Streamlit further enhances its accessibility, allowing users to upload multiple casting images and receive real-time predictions. This system provides a dual role in the inspection process: enhancing manual inspections with consistent and objective results and offering a scalable AI-driven classification mechanism. It aligns with modern manufacturing objectives, such as predictive maintenance and real-time quality assurance. The system's integration with the user interface, enabling easy batch documentation and result management, further contributes to its practical applicability in industrial environments.

Comparison of Model Performance: The Developed CNN vs. Existing Literature Models

The developed CNN model stands out with an exceptional performance, surpassing the other models in both training and validation accuracy, as shown in table 10. The near-perfect performance indicates that our model has strong generalization capabilities, making it highly reliable for real-world defect detection scenarios in aluminum casting.

When compared to Model 1 [6], the developed model performs notably better. While [6] model shows strong training accuracy, the significant drop in validation accuracy suggests overfitting or that it doesn't generalize well to new data. This could limit its practical use in production environments where the model needs to adapt to varied casting conditions.

Model 2 [1] demonstrates solid performance but still falls short when compared to the developed model's validation accuracy. This indicates that while the model is robust, it could benefit from improvements in generalization to handle the diverse defects typically seen in aluminum castings.

Model 3 [16] shows poor performance in both training and validation. This highlights potential issues with the model's architecture or training dataset, leading to difficulties in accurately detecting defects. Such a model might not be suitable for industrial applications where high accuracy is crucial.

Finally, Model 4 [17] shows a moderate performance but still lacks behind the developed model in validation accuracy, suggesting that it may need further refinement, such as tuning or training with more diverse datasets, to improve its ability to generalize across different defect types and casting conditions.

Table 10 : CNN Model Performance Comparison For Casting Defect Detection

Model	Train Accuracy	Validation Accuracy	Inference
Developed CNN Model	99.66%	99.79%	The developed model performs exceptionally well, with near-perfect accuracy on both training and validation datasets, indicating excellent generalization.
Model 1 (Zhang L et al., 2019) [6]	90.10%	89.50%	The model performs reasonably well but has a noticeable drop in validation accuracy, suggesting overfitting or limited generalization to unseen data.
Model 2 (Chen Z et al., 2018) [1]	92.30%	91.00%	This model is robust, but still lags behind the developd model in validation performance, indicating room for improvement in real-world defect detection scenarios.
Model 3 (Gupta & Rao, 2017) [16]	88.70%	87.20%	Lower performance in both training and validation, indicating that this model may struggle to generalize well on diverse casting defect datasets.
Model 4 (Tan et al., 2019) [17]	91.50%	90.10%	Moderate performance, with a slight difference between training and validation accuracy, indicating some potential for improvement in generalization.

In conclusion, the developed CNN model demonstrates superior performance and is well-equipped for automated defect detection in aluminum casting processes, outperforming the existing models in both accuracy and generalization, making it a more reliable and efficient solution for industrial applications.

CHAPTER 7

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Taguchi method, a robust design technique, was employed to systematically study the effect of multiple process parameters on casting defects. By using an L9 orthogonal array, the experimental design allowed efficient evaluation of the influence of three factors—heating temperature, heating time, and additive quantities (scum powder and magnesium powder)—at three different levels, while minimizing the number of experimental runs needed.

The experiments were conducted on a laboratory-scale setup where LM6 ingots were melted in a crucible furnace. Additives were carefully weighed and introduced during the molten stage with thorough stirring to ensure uniform distribution. The molten metal was then poured into standardized sand molds and cooled under ambient conditions. Two replications per experimental setting were performed, producing a total of 18 specimens. Visual inspection was used to identify and count surface defects such as porosity, shrinkage, cold shut, and blowholes. Table 11 shows the optimum levels for the selected four factors.

Table 11: Factors And Their Optimum Levels

Factor	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Heating Temperature (°C)	800	1000	1200
Heating Time (hours)	2.0	2.5	3.0
Scum Powder (g)	2	4	6
Magnesium Powder (g)	1	2	3

The confirmatory experiments were carried out on 4 specimens by setting the factors at their optimum levels and it was observed that the number of defects in the specimens were almost zero. Table 12 shows the Defect Count per Specimen.

Table 12: Defect Count Per Specimen

Specimen No.	Defects
1	0
2	0
3	0
4	1

CNN model was developed to identify the defects on the surface of the casting specimen and also to identify the type of defect. The CNN model was integrated with a Streamlit-based web interface, allowing for easy interaction and real-time defect detection. For each of the 18 specimens generated from the experiments, the images were passed through the CNN, which classified them as either defective or non-defective. The results were consistent with the manual inspection, further validating the effectiveness of the CNN model. The CNN model demonstrated a high level of accuracy in identifying defects, with several images correctly classified as Porosity or Cold Shut. The confidence scores for each image indicated that the model could reliably detect even subtle defects, proving the potential for automated quality control in metal casting processes. The comparison of manual defect counts with CNN results showed that both methods aligned well, reinforcing the feasibility of integrating AI in industrial settings.

Results of Training Data:

The CNN model developed for defect classification in aluminum LM6 castings is based on a variant of the ResNet architecture, most likely ResNet-18 or ResNet-34, as inferred from the structure of its layers. The architecture comprises several convolutional layers followed by batch normalization, ReLU activation functions, and max-pooling operations to progressively extract and refine image features. The network includes four primary residual blocks, labeled as layer1 through layer4, which leverage skip connections to facilitate the training of deep networks and mitigate issues like vanishing gradients. At the conclusion of the network, a fully connected linear layer maps the learned features to nine output nodes, each corresponding to one of the nine predefined classes. These classes include eight specific defect types—blowholes, cold shuts, cracks, general defects, flash, misruns, porosity, and shrinkage—and a ninth class labeled "ok_front," which represents non-defective castings.

Training of the model was conducted over a total of 25 epochs. During each epoch, the model's performance was evaluated using four key metrics: training loss, validation loss, training accuracy, and validation accuracy. The training loss, which measures the model’s error on the training data, showed a consistent downward trend from an initial value of approximately 0.1151 in the first epoch to values between 0.0069 and 0.0088 by epochs 24 and 25. This steady decrease indicates that the model was effectively learning and fitting the training data over time. In contrast, the validation loss exhibited more fluctuation, generally remaining low—below 0.05 for most epochs—but with noticeable spikes at epochs 5 (0.2850), 7 (1.7687), 9 (0.8943), 18 (0.3129), and 22 (0.4208). These spikes suggest intermittent overfitting, possible noise in the validation dataset, or unstable phases during the training process, which temporarily affected the model’s generalization capability.

The training accuracy remained impressively high throughout the process, consistently exceeding 96% and frequently nearing 99% to 100%, demonstrating that the model was highly effective at classifying the training samples. Validation accuracy similarly stayed strong, generally above 85%, and mostly maintained levels above 97%. However, the validation accuracy dipped in correspondence with the loss spikes during epochs 7 (69.27%), 9 (72.86%), and 22 (84.74%), indicating reduced performance on unseen data at those stages. Despite these temporary declines, by the final epoch, the validation accuracy recovered to an excellent 99.79%, with validation loss settling to a low value of 0.0056. This recovery suggests that the model ultimately achieved stable convergence with reliable predictive power on new data.

The model training was performed using an NVIDIA GeForce GTX 1650 GPU, which provided sufficient computational resources for efficient processing while maintaining modest memory usage. Overall, the training dynamics demonstrate a robust model capable of accurately classifying multiple defect types as well as distinguishing non-defective castings, with stable and reliable performance upon completion of the training cycles. Table 13 shows the results of the training data.

The epoch graphs in figure 5 provide valuable insights into the model’s training and validation performance over time. The left plot illustrates the loss trends across epochs, with the blue line representing training loss and the orange line representing validation loss. Both losses start at relatively higher values and generally decrease as training progresses, indicating effective learning. However, the validation loss exhibits several notable spikes at specific epochs—such as epochs 7, 9, 18, and 22—which correspond with fluctuations observed in the training report. In contrast, the training loss curve is much smoother and shows a steady downward trend, reflecting consistent progress in fitting the training data. The right plot depicts accuracy trends over epochs, where the training accuracy (blue line) steadily increases and remains close to perfect accuracy, near 100%. Validation accuracy (orange line), on the other hand, fluctuates more noticeably, displaying dips that coincide with the spikes in validation loss but generally maintains high values and recovers quickly after each dip. Overall, these patterns suggest that the model is effectively learning from the training data, as evidenced by low loss and high accuracy. The temporary dips in validation performance likely indicate short periods of overfitting or variability caused by noise and batch effects during validation.

Table 13: Training summary Data

Epoch	Train Loss	Val Loss	Train Accuracy	Val Accuracy
1	0.1151	0.0312	0.9641	0.9954
2	0.0349	0.0277	0.9906	0.9916
3	0.0388	0.0392	0.9887	0.9889
4	0.0193	0.0079	0.9954	0.9976
5	0.0139	0.2850	0.9948	0.9175
6	0.0591	0.0107	0.9797	0.9971
7	0.0176	1.7687	0.9959	0.6927
8	0.0562	0.0102	0.9829	0.9967
9	0.0177	0.8943	0.9949	0.7286
10	0.0508	0.0086	0.9831	0.9978
11	0.0140	0.0063	0.9970	0.9979
12	0.0123	0.0090	0.9957	0.9976
13	0.0115	0.0103	0.9966	0.9967
14	0.0100	0.0353	0.9965	0.9895
15	0.0351	0.0081	0.9896	0.9983
16	0.0200	0.0216	0.9948	0.9934
17	0.0093	0.0075	0.9971	0.9977
18	0.0194	0.3129	0.9951	0.9168
19	0.0483	0.0068	0.9846	0.9979
20	0.0110	0.0071	0.9964	0.9978
21	0.0307	0.0371	0.9902	0.9866
22	0.0125	0.4208	0.9960	0.8474
23	0.0106	0.0076	0.9966	0.9977
24	0.0069	0.0090	0.9979	0.9976
25	0.0088	0.0056	0.9966	0.9979

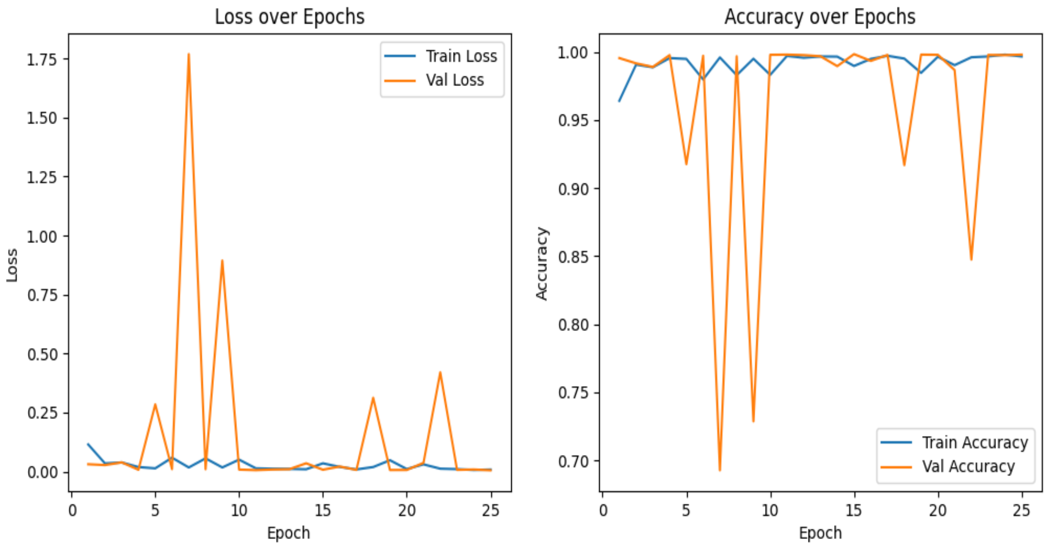

Fig 5 : CNN Training Performance: 25-Epoch Loss and Accuracy Curves

Despite these fluctuations, the model demonstrates strong generalization capability by the conclusion of training, achieving stable and reliable accuracy on unseen data. The confusion matrix shown in figure 6, presents a detailed comparison between the true class labels (represented by the rows) and the predicted class labels (represented by the columns). The diagonal entries indicate the number of correct predictions made by the model for each class. The classes considered include blowholes defect, cold shut defect, cracks defect, a general defect category (def_front), flash defect, misrun defect, the non-defective class (ok_front), porosity defect, and shrinkage defect. A key observation from the confusion matrix is that most classes have very high true positive counts along the diagonal, demonstrating that the model correctly identifies the vast majority of samples for each defect type. For instance, the blowholes defect class has 160 correct predictions, cold shut defect has 276, the general defect category has an impressive 3,927 correct classifications, and the non-defective ok_front class has 3,046 correct predictions. Misclassifications, represented by off-diagonal entries, are minimal or virtually absent across most categories, underscoring the model's strong precision. One notable detail is that within the def_front class, although the majority of samples are correctly identified (3,927), there are 17 instances where the model incorrectly predicted the sample as belonging to the ok_front (non-defective) class. The ok_front class itself shows an excellent number of correct classifications, with very few misclassifications. Similarly, other classes such as porosity defect and shrinkage defect exhibit negligible confusion with other classes, often showing zero or minimal misclassification rates.

Overall, the confusion matrix serves as compelling evidence of the model’s robust classification capabilities. It confirms that the CNN performs with very high accuracy and precision, making very few errors in differentiating among the multiple types of casting defects as well as distinguishing defective from non-defective castings. This high level of classification performance is critical for reliable automated quality control in aluminum casting applications.

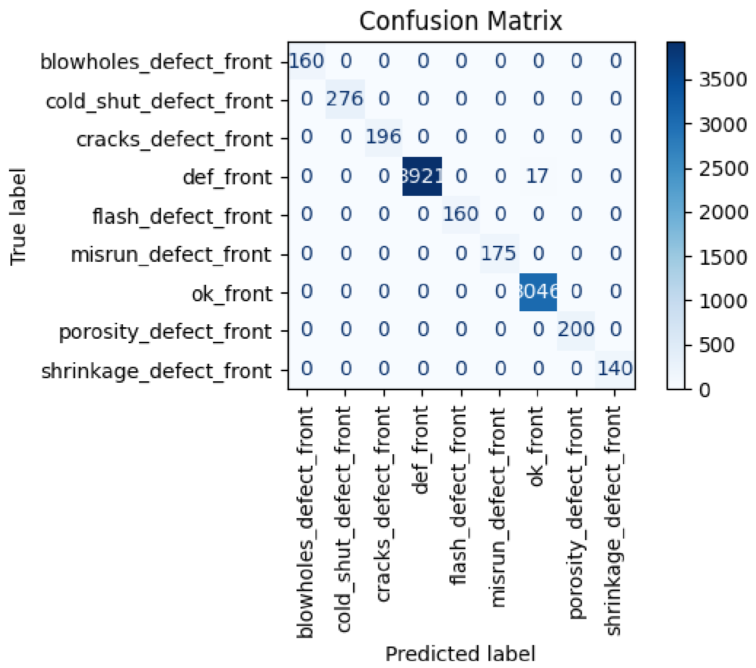

Fig 6 : CNN Model Confusion Matrix for Multi-Class Defect Classification

Conclusions

This study successfully bridges the gap between traditional experimental optimization techniques and modern artificial intelligence methodologies to advance the quality control framework in aluminum LM6 casting processes. The application of Taguchi's orthogonal array design proved instrumental in systematically evaluating the effects of critical casting parameters—including heating temperature, heating time, scum powder, and magnesium powder—while drastically reducing the number of experimental trials required. This efficient design of experiments facilitated the identification of optimal process settings that minimize prevalent defects such as porosity, shrinkage, cold shuts, and blowholes, thereby providing valuable insights into the metallurgical and operational factors influencing casting quality.

In parallel, the development and deployment of a Convolutional Neural Network (CNN) model for automated defect detection marked a significant leap forward in casting inspection technology. The CNN exhibited outstanding performance across multiple defect classes and the non-defective category, as evidenced by its consistently high training and validation accuracies. The training dynamics revealed through loss and accuracy metrics demonstrated stable convergence and effective learning, while the detailed confusion matrix analysis underscored the model's precision and recall in correctly classifying various subtle and complex defect patterns. This high level of accuracy is crucial for replacing or supplementing manual inspection methods that are often labor-intensive, subjective, and prone to inconsistency.

The integration of these complementary approaches—offline experimental optimization and online automated defect classification—forms a robust and holistic quality control framework. This dual strategy enables manufacturers to not only fine-tune process parameters based on empirical evidence but also implement scalable, real-time inspection systems that ensure consistent product quality throughout production cycles. By facilitating rapid and accurate defect detection, the AI-powered system supports timely corrective actions, thereby reducing scrap rates, minimizing waste, and improving overall manufacturing efficiency.

Moreover, the study's findings highlight the potential for future enhancements such as multi-label defect classification, defect localization within casting images, and closed-loop process control where real-time inspection results dynamically inform process adjustments. These advancements would further strengthen the ability to maintain stringent quality standards and adapt to variability in production environments.

In conclusion, this project work demonstrates a successful synergy between statistical process control and deep learning technologies, charting a progressive pathway toward intelligent, data-driven manufacturing in the aluminum casting industry. The methodologies and results presented here offer a valuable foundation for further academic inquiry and industrial application, ultimately contributing to enhanced product reliability, operational cost savings, and competitive advantage in the evolving landscape of smart manufacturing.

Future Directions and Next Steps

The next phase of this study will focus on advancing both the analytical and predictive capabilities of the aluminum LM6 casting quality control system. In addition to enhancing statistical analysis, future research will emphasize the refinement of defect detection models. While the current CNN model effectively distinguishes between defective and non-defective castings, the goal is to develop more sophisticated CNN architectures capable of multi-label classification. Such models will be able to identify and classify multiple defect types occurring simultaneously within a single specimen, reflecting more realistic production scenarios. Alongside this, defect localization techniques will be integrated, enabling the model to precisely pinpoint the spatial locations of defects within casting images. This advancement will provide more actionable information for quality engineers, facilitating targeted inspections and process adjustments.

Further experimental work will be carried out to validate and confirm the findings of the Taguchi orthogonal array design. Confirmatory experiments will ensure the reliability of optimal parameter settings and their reproducibility in industrial environments. Additionally, more comprehensive S/N ratio analyses and related statistical evaluations will be performed to deepen understanding of parameter effects and process interactions.

A promising direction for future development is the incorporation of a mini Large Language Model (LLM) into the system. This AI component would analyze historical defect data, process parameters, and quality trends to generate insightful recommendations and predictive analytics. By integrating LLM-driven decision support, the system could assist operators and engineers in making real-time, data-informed adjustments to casting processes, thereby enhancing defect prevention and production efficiency.

Collectively, these future endeavors aim to elevate the system from a reactive quality control tool to a proactive, intelligent manufacturing assistant. By combining advanced multi-defect classification, defect localization, rigorous experimental validation, and AI-powered process optimization, the framework will offer enhanced accuracy, reliability, and adaptability. This progression will position the system as a highly effective solution for modern manufacturing environments demanding real-time, data-driven quality assurance and continuous process improvement.

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