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SCHOOL OF COMPUTER SCIENCE
COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING AND PHYSICAL SCIENCES

MSc. PROJECT

Machine Learning & Deep Learning Approaches to Predict Credit Card Default

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for the degree of MSc. Artificial Intelligence & Computer Science
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Abstract

The material contained within this report has not previously been submitted for a degree at the University of Birmingham or any other university. The research reported within this report has been conducted by the author unless indicated otherwise.

Keywords Credit Card Default Prediction, Ensemble Learning

Declaration

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Signed Sarathkumar Padinjare Marath Sankaranarayanan

“You have to learn the rules of the game.
And then you have to play better than anyone else”

ALBERT EINSTEIN

MSc. Project

Machine Learning & Deep Learning Approaches to Predict Credit Card Default

Sarathkumar Padinjare Marath Sankaranarayanan

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Table of Abbreviations

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| SVM | Support Vector Machine |
| ANN | Artificial Neural Network |
| GBDT | Gradient Boosting Decision Tree |
| GRU | Gated Recurrent Unit |
| LGBM | Light Gradient Boosting Machine |
| XGBoost | Xtreme Gradient Boosting Machine |
| GRU | Gated Recurrent Unit |
| CV | Cross Validation |
| SMOTE | Synthetic Minority Oversampling Technique |
| RAM | Random Access Memory |
| MSE | Mean Squared Error |
| ReLU | Rectified Linear Unit |
| CFS | Correlation Based Feature Selection |
| AUC | Area Under the Curve |
| PCA | Principle Component Analsys |
| RNN | Recurrent Neural Network |
| RF | Random Forest Classifier |
| KNN | K-Nearest Neighbours |
| RBF | Radial Basis Function |
| DT | Decision Tree Classifiers |
| GOSS | Gradient based One-side Sampling |
| TP | True Positive |
| TN | True Negative |
| FP | False Positive |
| FN | False Negative |
| MSE | Mean Squared Error |

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1 Introduction

This section will introduce the user to definitions of terms relevant for understanding the problem, discuss the motivation behind the problem, the aim & approach taken to solve the problem, and the structure of this report.

1.1 Definitions

1.1.1 Credit Card Statement Date

The credit card statement date is the date on which the statement/bill is generated every month. Any transaction conducted on the card post billing date will reflect in the next month's credit card statement.

1.1.2 Delinquent Account

A credit card account is considered delinquent if the customer has failed to make the minimum monthly payment for 30 days from the original due date.

1.1.3 Delinquency Rate

The percentage of credit card accounts within a financial institution's portfolio whose payments are delinquent.

$$DelinquencyRate = \left(\frac{NumberOfDelinquentCreditCardAccounts}{TotalNumberOfCreditCardAccount} \right) * 100 \quad (1)$$

1.1.4 Credit Card Default

The customer is considered as defaulting customer in the event of nonpayment of the due amount in 120 days after the latest statement date.

1.2 Motivation

Delinquency rates & credit card default rates are directly proportional. According to the figure 1, the delinquency rates were at an all-time high just before the recession started in 2008; moreover, this was the same time when more & more customers began to default on credit card payments.

Predicting credit defaults is essential for managing risk in the consumer lending industry. Credit default prediction enables lenders to make the best possible lending decisions, improving customer satisfaction and fostering strong company economics.

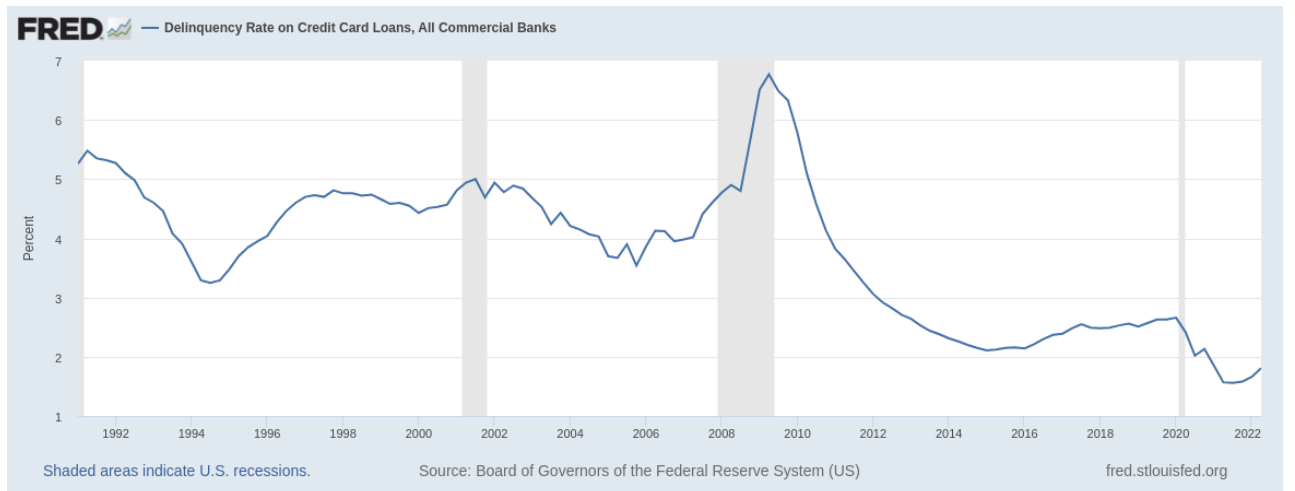


Figure 1: Delinquency rate on credit card loans for the period 1992-2022(Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System (US) 2022).

Existing models can be used to manage risk. However, developing models that perform better than those in use is feasible.

1.3 Aim & Approach

The objective of this project was to explore different machine learning algorithms & deep learning architectures on the American Express default prediction dataset(American Express 2022) to predict if a customer will default on the payment in the future. The project work started by developing a model using classic machine learning algorithm Support Vector Machine (SVM) followed by creating multiple models using Random Forest Classifier & Gradient Boosting Decision Tree (GBDT) algorithms. Artificial Neural Network (ANN), Gated Recurrent Unit (GRU) & Custom ensemble model created by model combining ANN, GRU and GBDT were created as part of exploring deep learning architectures. Finally created a lean model, using less features & optimized parameters using GBDT which provided comparable performances to the previously explored models.

1.4 Structure of Report

The remainder of the report is structured as follows: in Section 2 background information on different machine learning & deep learning algorithms along with metrics explanation is provided. Then in Section 3 a literature review related to the credit card default prediction research is given. Section 4 & 5 provides detailed explanations on the dataset, tools & software used in the project, and methodology followed for creating the models. Model evaluation results and the comparison is given in Section 6. Finally Section 7 discusses the conclusion of the project.

2 Background Knowledge

This section provides the reader with the required background information on the machine learning algorithms, deep learning architectures, data preprocessing techniques & model evaluation metrics. The explanations provided in this section are at intuitive level only without going deeper into the mathematical formulation.

2.1 Support Vector Machine (SVM)

SVM is a reliable classification and regression machine learning algorithm that maximizes the accuracy of a model without overfitting the training data. There are 4 main components to the SVM model, Hyperplane, Support Vectors, Margin, Kernel function. Hyperplane refers to the decision boundary of the model, this could be a line if the data is 2 dimensional, plane if the data is 3 dimensional, or hyperplane if the data is n dimensional. Support Vectors refers to the data points that are nearest to the hyperplane and these points are more difficult to classify. As shown in figure 2, the SVM algorithm tries to find a hyperplane which maximizes the distance between the support vectors and the hyperplane and hence reducing the overfitting on the training set. SVM machine learning

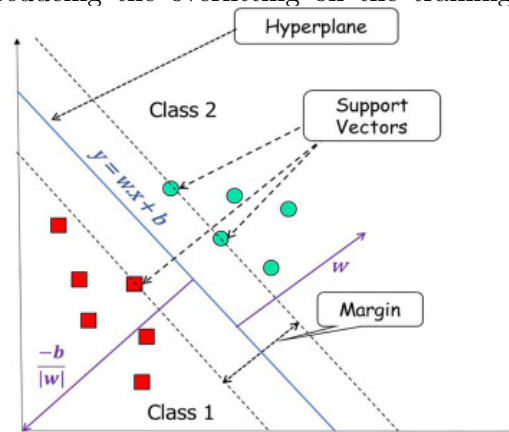


Figure 2: Components of SVM (Rani et al. 2022)

technique uses a concept of Soft Margin to remove the issues that may arise due to outliers in the dataset. Additionally, if the decision boundary is non-linearly separable, SVM transforms original data to map into new space using the Kernel function. Linear Kernel, Polynomial kernel & Radial Basis Function (RBF) are different kernel functions that can be used in SVM model. There are multiple implementations of the SVM technique is available; however, in this project libsvm(Chang & Lin

2011) & liblinear (Fan et al. 2008) is used as these implementations provide higher performance on large datasets.

2.2 Ensemble Learning

Ensemble methods are highly effective compared to the traditional machine learning techniques and considered state-of-the-art approach for solving many challenges (Sagi & Rokach 2018). The idea behind ensemble learning technique is to train multiple base learners/models and combine the predictions from each learner to make the final prediction. As shown in figure 3, ensemble techniques can be mainly categorized into 2 types Homogeneous & Heterogeneous methods. In homogeneous methods all the base learners uses the same machine learning technique; on the other hand, heterogeneous methods may use different types machine learning techniques as the base learner.

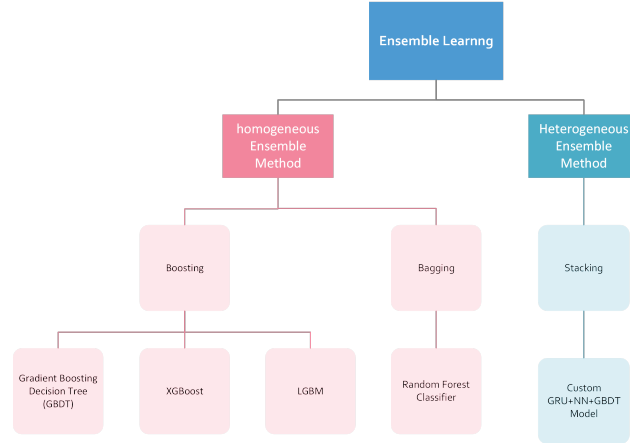


Figure 3: Ensemble Learning Techniques & Implementations

2.2.1 Bagging

Bagging is a Homogeneous Ensemble Method where the base learners are trained in parallel on the complete training set or a subset of training set based on the configuration. As depicted in figure 4, initially creates multiple dataset through random sampling with replacement, then train the mutiple learners in parallel. Finally combine output from all learners using either taking average or using majority vote strategy based on the problem is being solved.

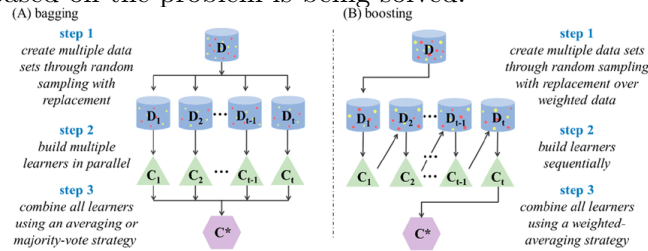


Figure 4: Illustrations of bagging and boosting ensemble algorithms(Yang et al. 2019).

2.2.2 Boosting

Boosting is a Homogeneous Ensemble Method where the base learners are trained sequentially and the predictions from individual learners are combined to make the final prediction. The model starts by creating a base learner which performs slightly better than the random prediction, then subsequent learners try to improve on the prediction made by the previous learner. The process ends when the improvement made by the new learner is less than the threshold. As depicted in figure 4, the boosting methods uses a weighted averaging strategy to combine the predictions from the individual learners.

2.2.3 Stacking

Stacking is a Heterogeneous Ensemble Method where the output from the base learners is passed through another learner to make the final prediction. In Bagging & Boosting methods the final prediction was made using taking average, majority voting, or weighted average; however the Stacking models uses a learner to make the final prediction. Figure 5 shows a sample Ensemble Stacking Model.

Model A, B, and C are base learners which are trained parallelly. The output from Model A, B & C is then passed through a Generalizer/Meta Learner which predicts the final output.

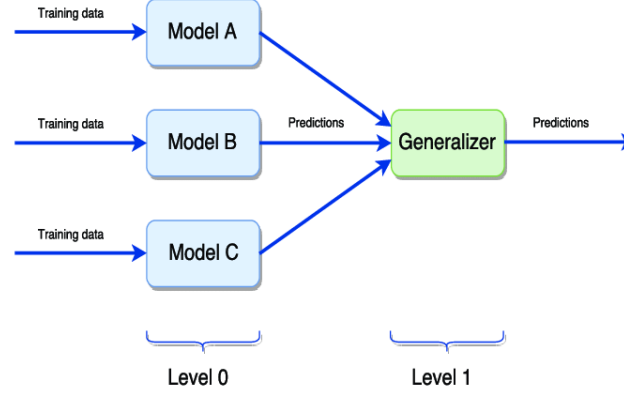


Figure 5: An example scheme of stacking ensemble learning Divina et al. (2018).

2.3 Random Forest Classifier (RF)

Random Forest Classifier (RF) (Breiman 2001) is an ensemble bagging method technique which uses Decision Tree Classifiers (DT) to create base learners. DT are a non-parametric supervised learning method used for classification and regression. The goal is to create a model that predicts the value of a target variable by learning simple decision rules inferred from the data features. RF creates multiple DT and trains each one of them with a random subsample of the dataset. The predictions from each DT is then combined by either taking average or by using majority voting strategy.

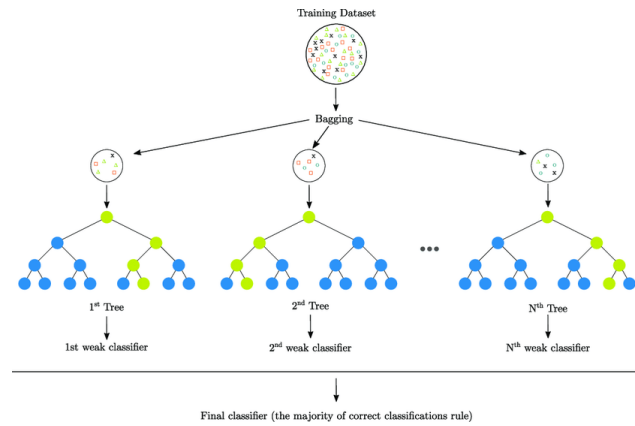


Figure 6: An example of Random Forest Classifier (RF) Sapountzoglou et al. (2020).

2.4 Gradient Boosting Decision Tree (GBDT)

Gradient-boosted decision trees are a machine learning technique for optimizing the predictive value of a model through successive steps in the learning process. Each iteration of the decision tree involves adjusting the values of the coefficients, weights, or biases applied to each of the input variables being used to predict the target value, with the goal of minimizing the loss function (the measure of difference between the predicted and actual target values). The gradient is the incremental adjustment made in each step of the process; boosting is a method of accelerating the improvement in predictive accuracy to a sufficiently optimum value.

2.4.1 Xtreme Gradient Boosting Machine (XGBoost) & Light Gradient Boosting Machine (LGBM)

Xtreme Gradient Boosting Machine (XGBoost)(Chen & Guestrin 2016) and Light Gradient Boosting Machine (LGBM)(Ke et al. 2017) are two mostly used Gradient Boosting Decision Tree (GBDT) framework/libraries which performs much better than the basic GBDT models (Machado et al. 2019). Xtreme Gradient Boosting Machine (XGBoost) & LGBM frameworks differ in how the individual weak learners are constructed. As shown in figure 8, the XGBoost uses Level Wise Tree Growth strategy while the LGBM uses Leaf Wise Growth Strategy. Gradient based One-side Sampling (GOSS) technique is used by the LGBM to split the nodes while generating the individual weak

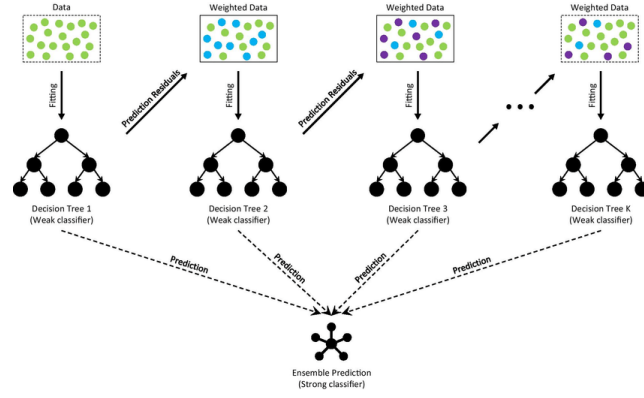


Figure 7: Architecture of Gradient Boosting Decision Tree (GBDT) Deng et al. (2021).

learners; on the other hand, the XGBoost uses Pre-Sorted and histogram based algorithms for splitting nodes.

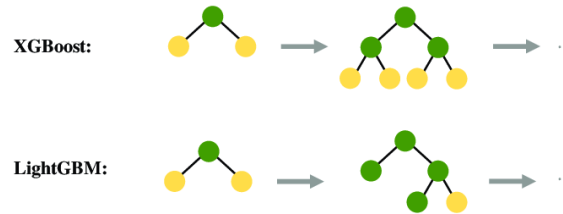


Figure 8: XGBoost Level wise tree growth and LGBM Leaf wise tree growth.Rezazadeh (2020).

Both frameworks require the features to be numerical and does not support text features; thus; categorical encoding must be done before training LGBM & XGBoost models. In addition, both these libraries are well optimized for parallel processing and hence can be used for large datasets.

2.5 Artificial Neural Network (ANN)

ANN are a subset of Machine Learning algorithms. The architecture and name of ANN is inspired by how the human brains works, specifically, how biological neurons signal to one another(IBM 2022). Figure 9 represents the architecture of a ANN in general. The network consists of an input layer, multiple hidden layers and an output layer. There are multiple nodes, also known as neurons, in each layer. The neurons are the building blocks of the ANN network. Each neuron connects to all the neurons in the next layer; moreover, neurons in the input layer are basically the input features.

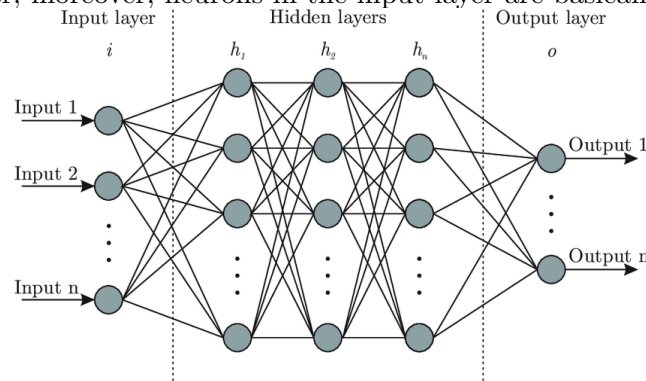


Figure 9: Architecture of Artificial Neural Network (ANN)Bre et al. (2018).

Neurons are the basic building block of an ANN. As shown in figure ??, each neuron at least consists of a learning function and an activation function. Learning function can be thought of as a simple logistic/linear regression model and the activation function can be though of as a gate-keeper which decides how much influence this neuron should have in the next layer. Commonly used activation functions are Sigmoid, ReLU and tanh.

While training ANN models, a cost function is assigned to evaluate the performance of the model, Mean Squared Error (MSE), Binary Cross Entropy are some of the cost functions which are generally

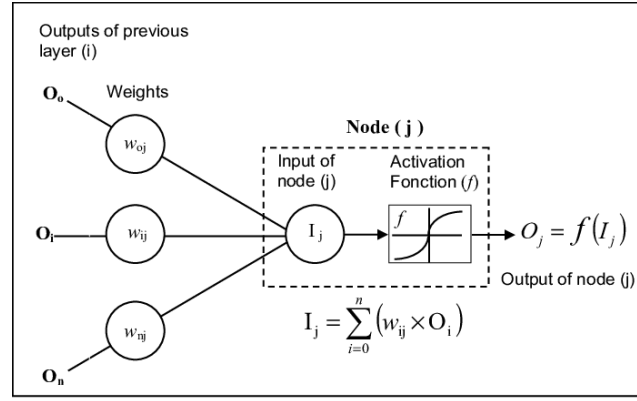


Figure 10: Representation of a Neuron in Artificial Neural Network (ANN).Ghedira & Bernier (2004)

used. Finally the weights learning function of each neuron is adjusted through an algorithm called Backpropagation based on the result of the cost function. The algorithm ends when the cost function converges (figure 11) and the improvement made to the performance is less than the threshold.

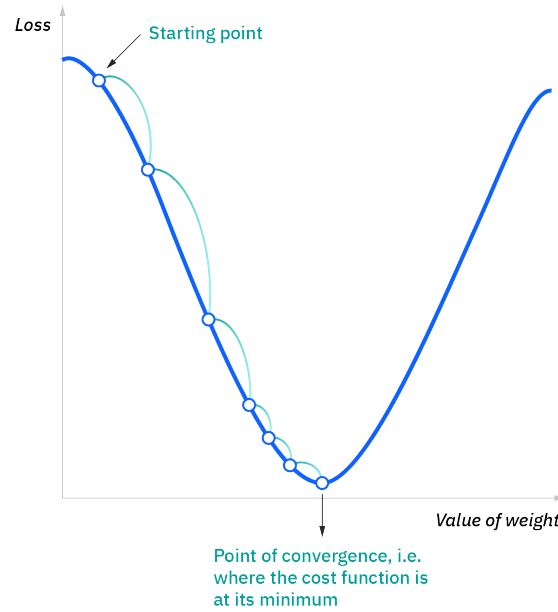


Figure 11: Representation of Convergence of Cost Functions(IBM 2022)

2.6 Gated Recurrent Unit (GRU)

GRU(Cho et al. 2014)

2.7 Feature Selection

While building a Machine Learning model, all of the features might not contribute equivalently to the model's prediction performance, some of the features might impact the model's prediction performance adversely. This problem becomes more prominent on high dimensional data. The process of identifying the important features which improve the performance of the model is called Feature Selection. Two feature selection methods which were used in this project are Select From Model & Sequential Feature Selection.

2.7.1 Select From Model

In this method, the training dataset is first trained on a machine learning model which is computationally less expensive and provides acceptable level of performance, this model can be considered as a filter. Then remove the features whose feature weights are less than the threshold value in the filter model. Finally, use the filtered dataset for training the main model. In this project, the SVM is used as the filter model for training the main LGBM model.

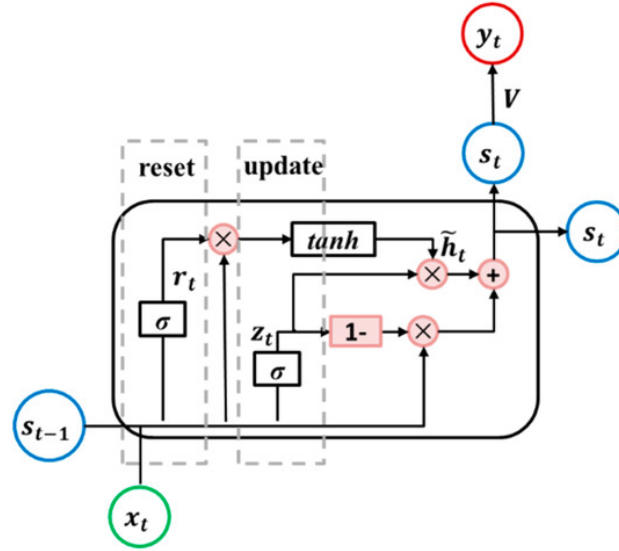


Figure 12: Representation of Gated Recurrent Unit (GRU) Network(Zhao et al. 2019).

2.7.2 Sequential Feature Selection

As shown in figure 13, sequential feature selection starts with a subset of dataset and then an estimator chooses the best feature to add or remove to the dataset based on the Cross Validation (CV) score obtained by adding/removing each feature. The process ends once the algorithm reaches the exit criteria. Exit criteria could be either the count of features or until improvement in performance gained by adding/removing features is not greater than a threshold. There are two types Sequential

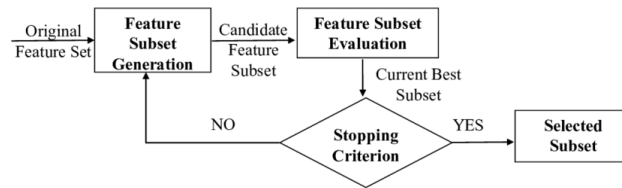


Figure 13: Sequential Feature Selection Process(Beyan 2015)

Feature Selection techniques, Forward Selection & Backward Selection. In Forward Selection, the initial feature subset contains only one feature, then additional features are added based on CV score until the exit criteria is met. On the other hand, in Backward Selection technique, the initial feature subset contains all the features, then the algorithm removes the features based on CV score until the exit criteria is met.

2.8 Encoding Categorical Features

As discussed in section 2.4.1, some of the machine learning techniques does not support categorical text variables. Two most common methods used to encode categorical features are Ordinal Encoder & One-hot encoder. Ordinal encoder is better than the One-hot encoder in memory efficiency.

2.8.1 Ordinal Encoder

In this method, the feature is transformed into a numerical value by assigning numbers to each distinct category. For eg: in Scikit Learn library the categorical variables low, medium, high will be transformed to 0, 1, 2; moreover, a default number can be assigned to categories which are not seen in the training dataset.

2.8.2 One-hot Encoder

In this method, the categorical feature column is transformed into n different features each representing one distinct category. For eg: a feature X with low, medium, high as distinctive categorical

values, will be transformed into 3 features X_{low} , X_{medium} , X_{high} . X_{low} will have a value of 1 if the $X='low'$ for the record, likewise for the other features.

2.9 Data Oversampling

A classification data set with skewed class proportions is called imbalanced. Classes that make up a large proportion of the data set are called majority classes. Those that make up a smaller proportion are minority classes. Data sampling is a method used to overcome / reduce the effect of Class Imbalance on the performance of the model. There two types of Data Sampling, Over Sampling & Under Sampling. Over Sampling techniques boost the minority class entries by introducing new records in minority class; on the other hand, the Under Sampling methods eliminates entries from majority class and makes the majority & minority class entries to similar proportion.

In this project, Data Oversampling techniques are used as the dataset is large. Synthetic Minority Oversampling Technique (SMOTE) (Chawla et al. 2002) & KMeans SMOTE (Last et al. 2017) are two different Oversampling methods which were explored in this project.

2.9.1 Synthetic Minority Oversampling Technique (SMOTE)

SMOTE method introduces new data points in the minority class by finding nearest neighbors and adding new data point along the line of nearest neighbor. Figure 14 shows the SMOTE process, in this picture green points are minority class & blue points are majority class. The algorithm first selects a data point from the minority class, then finds the K nearest neighbors among the minority class. Finally one of the K nearest neighbor is chosen randomly and a new synthetic minority class data point (red) is added along the straight line connecting the selected data point and the chosen nearest neighbor.

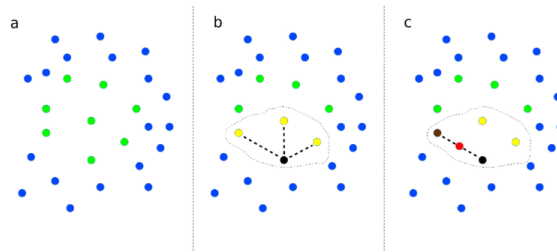


Figure 14: SMOTE algorithm (Schubach et al. 2017)

2.9.2 KMeans SMOTE

In KMeans SMOTE method, the minority class is first passed through a KMeans clustering model before applying the SMOTE algorithm. Clustering before applying SMOTE helps to eliminate the problem of oversampling the outliers in the minority classes; moreover, clustering also helps to apply the SMOTE algorithm for non-linearly separable data. As shown in figure 15, the SMOTE algorithm is applied separately on each cluster.

2.10 Metrics

Figure 16 represents the Confusion Matrix associated with classification problem. There are 4 important terms related to confusion matrix, True Positive (TP), True Negative (TN), False Positive (FP), and False Negative (FN). TP represents the predictions where the truth label and the predicted labels are both positive; on the other hand, FP represents the predictions where the predicted label is positive but the truth label is negative. TN represents the predictions where both the predicted label and the truth label are Negative. Predictions where the predicted label is negative and the truth label is positive is called FN. There are multiple metrics based on the confusion matrix, metrics which are relevant to this project is discussed in below sections.

2.10.1 Accuracy

Accuracy is defined as the ratio of total number of correct predictions and total number of samples. However, the Accuracy metric might be misleading on imbalanced dataset; for example, in a dataset

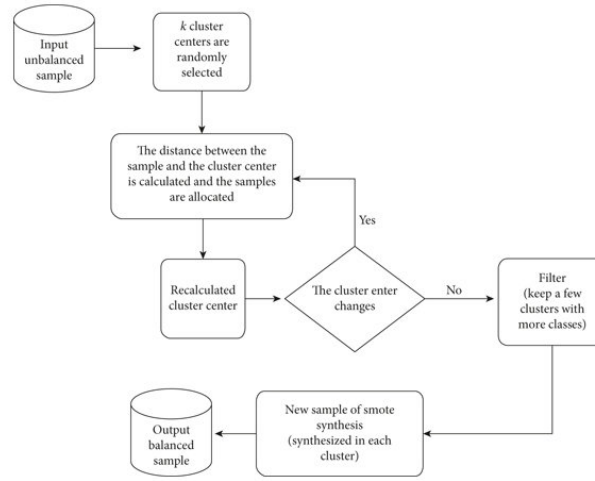


Figure 15: KMeans SMOTE Flowchart (Chen & Zhang 2021)

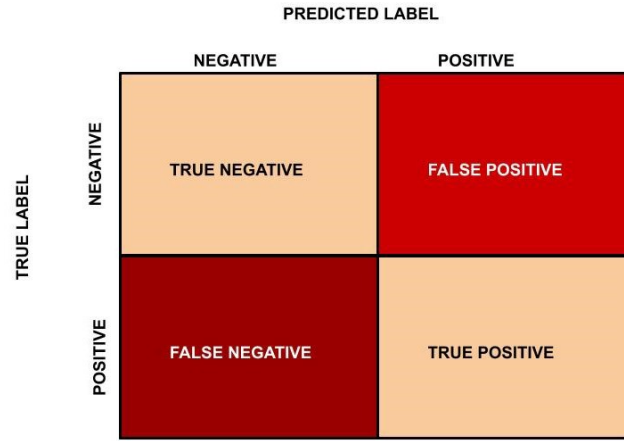


Figure 16: Confusion Matrix (Harikrishnan N B 2019)

where the minority class is only one percent of the overall dataset, 99% can be achieved by predicting every data point as majority class. Equation 2 shows the formula for calculating Accuracy.

$$Accuracy = \frac{TP + TN}{TP + TN + FP + FN} \quad (2)$$

2.10.2 Recall

Recall represents the ratio of total number of positive predictions and the total number of positive samples. Intuitively, Recall provides an idea of how many positive samples were correctly identified by the model; for example, in a credit card default prediction dataset, recall is how many of the defaulted customers were identified by the model. Equation 3 shows the formula for calculating Recall.

$$Recall = \frac{TP}{TP + FN} \quad (3)$$

2.10.3 Precision

Precision is defined as the ratio of correct positive predictions and the total number of positive predictions. Precision provides insight into how many of the predicted positive samples were actually correct. Equation shows the formula for calculating Precision.

$$Precision = \frac{TP}{TP + FP} \quad (4)$$

2.10.4 F1-Score

F1-Score combines both Precision & Recall into a single metric; in other words, F1-Score is the harmonic mean of Precision and Recall metrics. F1-Score has shown to be a good metric on the imbalanced datasets classification problems. F1-Score better represents the performance of the model on the dataset compared to the other metrics. Equation 5 shows the formula for calculating the F1-Score.

$$Precision = 2 * \frac{Precision * Recall}{Precision + Recall} \quad (5)$$

2.11 Cross Validation (CV)

2.11.1 K-Fold CV

2.12 Hyper Parameter Tuning

2.12.1 Grid Search CV

2.13 Stochastic Gradient Descent

2.14 File Format

2.14.1 Parquet

2.15 Binary Cross Entropy

2.16 Summary

3 Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

This section discusses the current techniques used to predict the credit card default. Since the dataset used for these studies differ, a direct comparison of results is not possible. However, an overall comparison of different techniques and its efficiency in predicting the credit card default will be discussed wherever possible.

3.2 Previous Work

(Sayjadah et al. 2018) developed logistic regression, rpart decision tree & Random Forest Classifier models on dataset generated from credit card operations. The dataset contains 30000 records and 24 features. A Correlation Based Feature Selection (CFS) technique was used to reduce the dimensionality of the dataset. 30% of the dataset was used as the test set for evaluating the performance. (Sayjadah et al. 2018) found that the Random Forest Classifier provided highest Area Under the Curve (AUC) among the models.

(Widyadhana & Prastyo 2021) developed Logistic Regression, SVM, ANN & Random Forest Classifier models to predict credit card default on dataset containing 1000 records and 11 features. The dataset contains credit card data from cardholders from the territory of Indonesia; moreover, the authors used Principle Component Analysis (PCA) to do feature selection also. The dataset is split into 70:30 Train/Test set and the AUC was used to compare the results. The authors found that the Random Forest Classifier outperformed all other models by far and provided a 80% AUC score.

(Hsu et al. 2019) approached the credit card default prediction from a different perspective and proposed a model where dynamic features (time dependent features) were first passed through a Recurrent Neural Network (RNN) network to extract the time dependent features. Then the extracted dynamic features were concatenated with the static features and trained on a Random Forest Classifier. The dataset contained 30,000 samples credit card payment history with 23 features (5 static feature, 18 dynamic features). The authors compared the results of the proposed model with the SVM, Logistic Regression and KNN models and found that proposed method outperformed the others and provided a AUC score of 78%.

(Alam et al. 2020) investigated different approaches to solve the credit card default prediction problem with a specific focus on Class Imbalance. The credit card default prediction dataset are inherently imbalanced as only a small fraction of customers default on credit card. The authors employed different data under/over sampling techniques and evaluated performance on multiple credit card default dataset. They found that GBDT classifier when used with KMeans SMOTE provided

the best results and the models performed significantly better on balanced datasets compared to imbalanced datasets.

(Faraj et al. 2021) research shows that ensemble methods consistently outperform Neural Networks and other machine learning algorithms in terms of F1 score. (Faraj et al. 2021) uses the same dataset as the (Sayjadah et al. 2018) which has 30,000 records and 24 features. The authors found that XGBoost provided maximum F1 score compared to Neural Networks, Random Forest Classifier and custom ensemble stacking model. Authors also concludes that the performance of XGBoost model did not improve on balanced datasets. This observation was in contrary to the observations made by (Emil Richard Singh & Sivasankar 2019), the authors of earlier had found that the best performance is achieved on GBDT with KMeans SMOTE method.

3.3 Summary

In conclusion, the ensemble boosting models generally provided better performance than the classic machine learning and deep learning techniques. The data under/over sampling had mixed performances depending on the dataset, some performed better with under/over sampling and some did not. Out of data under/over sampling techniques, KMeans SMOTE performed better. Some studies used feature selection techniques in the data preprocessing techniques which improved the model efficiency. The studies discussed in the section used dataset which were imbalanced and contained atmost 30,000 records; however, (American Express 2022) contains 5 Million records and exploring the different techniques on such large scale dataset will help us to consolidate the understanding gained from these papers.

4 Materials

4.1 Primary Dataset

The primary dataset contains 190 aggregated profile features of 458913 American Express customers at each statement date for 13 months. Features are anonymized and normalized, and fall into the following general categories:

- D_* = Delinquency variables
- S_* = Spend variables
- P_* = Payment variables
- B_* = Balance variables
- R_* = Risk variables

This dataset(American Express 2022) was released as part of the "American Express - Default Prediction" hosted in Kaggle by the American Express team.

4.2 Secondary Dataset

The secondary dataset was derived from primary dataset by applying the below mathematical aggregate operations to the numerical features.

- Minimum
- Maximum
- Mean
- Last Value
- Standard Deviation

Aggregate for the categorical features were taken by the applying below operations.

- Last Value

- Count
- Unique Value Count

The secondary dataset contains 920 features and 458913 records.

4.3 Tools & Software

The primary programming language used for the implementation of this project is Python version 3.7. Data analysis and manipulation is done using Pandas(1.3.5), seaborn(0.11.2) & Dask(2.12.0) packages. Scikit Learn(1.0.2) package is used for create, train & evaluate machine learning models. ANN & GRU models were created using Tensorflow (2.8.2).Google colab was used to train the model in cloud and Github was used as the version control & project management software.

5 Methodology

5.1 Introduction

This section will first provide a brief overview of the overall strategy of the experiments performed as part of this project followed by providing detailed explanation on the data preprocessing techniques used. Then in subsequent sections each experiment/model will be presented along with the model specific explanations & details.

5.2 Overview of Methodology Followed

Figure 17 represents a overview of methodology in general followed for conducting experiments. The dataset was first split into chunks and stored in different files in parquet format to optimize the memory usage. Then, dataset was preprocessed to remove invalid values and encode categorical text variables to numerical values. Followed by data pre-processing, the dataset was split into Training & Test set, this ensures that none of the entries in test set will have an influence in model training and model selection process. Then the dataset was enhanced using oversampling techniques to resolve the class imbalance issue; in addition, feature selection techniques were used to eliminate the features from the dataset which were less important and hence contribute very little to model.

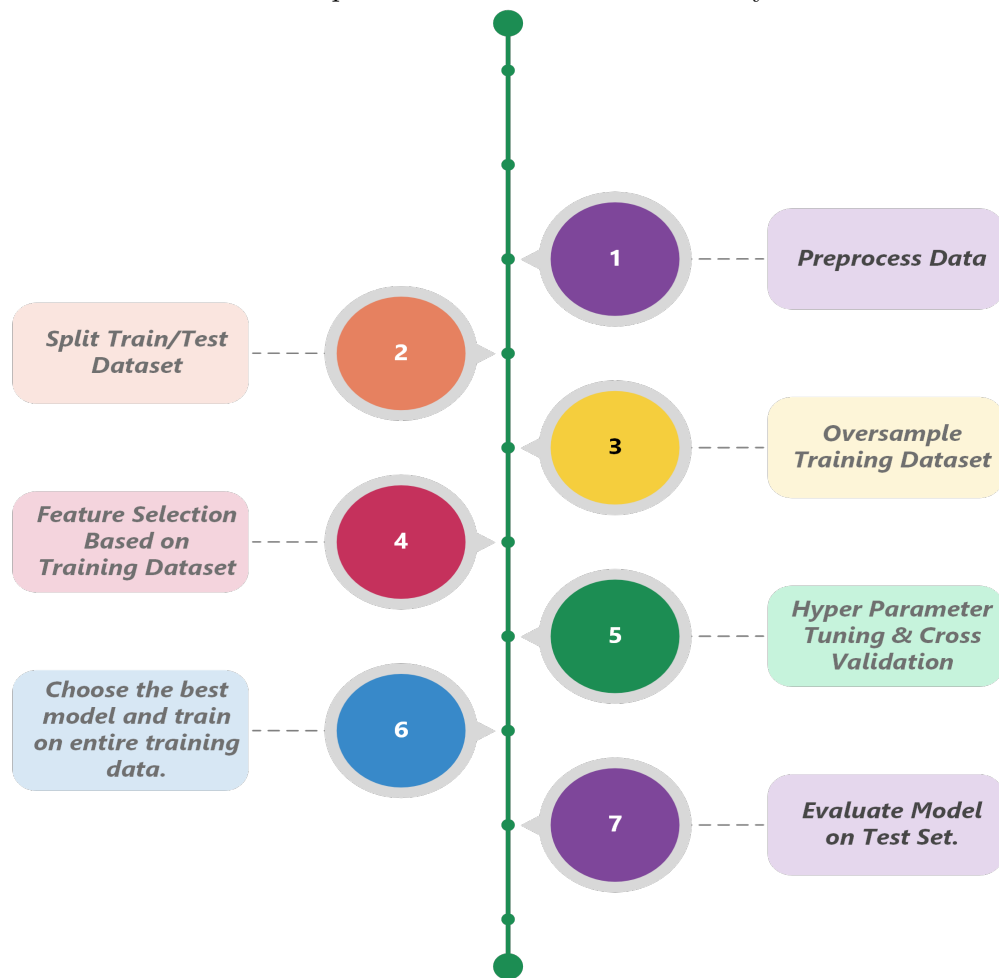


Figure 17: Methodology followed for the experiments

After the feature selection, the model was created and then passed through a Hyperparameter tuning pipeline which helps to find the best parameters for the model which would give highest cross validation score. Finally the entire training dataset was trained on the best model found using hyperparameter tuning and the model was evaluated using the test set set aside at the beginning of the experiment.

5.3 Data Preprocessing

This section discusses the common preprocessing techniques used in all experiments conducted as part of the project. The model specific data preporcessing techniques used will be discussed in respective

sections describing the model.

5.3.1 Default Values

NaN & NULL values in the dataset was replaced by Zero and if a column contains all values same, it was removed from the dataset. -1 was used as the default value for the categorical variables. The categorical variables were encoded using Ordinal Encoder before passing to the model training pipeline.

5.3.2 Normalization

The primary dataset from American Express is already normalized and all the values lies between zero to ten, hence none of the data normalization techniques were used to preprocess the data.

5.3.3 Handling Memory Issue

Google Colab provides 24 GB of Random Access Memory (RAM) in the virtual environment, though the Primary Dataset is 16 GB, the pandas library was unable to load the complete data into memory due to memory leakage issue in the framework. Dask library, which uses multiple Pandas dataframe under the hood, was used to overcome the memory. Dataframe API in Dask library splits the dataset into multiple chunks and loads each chunk on a need basis only (Lazy Loading), this ensured that the complete 16 GB dataset could be loaded even at a low memory of 4GB.

Additionally, the primary dataset was loaded using Dask framework and split the dataset month wise, ie one file for each month. The month wise files were saved in parquet format which helped to reduce the total size of the dataset from 16GB to 7GB. Similarly the primary dataset was also split customer wise, ie 1-50000 customers data in one file, 50001-100000 customers data in second file etc. These files were later used to build the Secondary Dataset.

5.4 Model 1 - Support Vector Machine (SVM)

The SVM model was created with parameters Regularization Term = L2 Norm(Squared Error Loss), Alpha = 0.0001, Loss='hinge'(soft-margin), tolerance=0.001. The primary dataset was used to train the model and the model converged after 28 iterations. Early stopping was used to prevent overfitting of the model and 10% of the data from training set used as the validation set. Stochastic gradient descent was used to optimize the objective function, this ensured that even though the dataset contains millions of records, the training is able to proceed and finish in reasonable time. 20% of the Secondary Dataset was used as test set to evaluate the performance of the model.

5.5 Model 2 - Random Forest Classifier

The Random Forest Classifier model uses 100 Decision Trees trained in parallel on the primary dataset. Each decision tree uses a different subset of Primary Dataset with maximum number of records in a database set to 600,000. Gini impurity metric is used to measure the quality of the split while building decision tree. Finally the model predicts the target variable by taking mean of all the predictions from the 100 individual decision trees. 20% of the Secondary Dataset was used as test set to evaluate the performance of the model.

5.6 Model 3 - Gradient Boosting Decision Tree (GBDT)

GBDT model was created using 100 Decision Trees trained sequentially on the primary dataset. Friedman Mean Squared Error (MSE) is used to measure the quality of a split; additionally, model was set to use only 60% of the data for constructing each decision trees to avoid memory leakage issue. 10% of the training set was set for validation purpose; furthermore, the parameters were set to stop the training if the validation score does not improve to avoid overfitting. Loss function for the training was set to Deviance. 20% of the Secondary Dataset was used as test set to evaluate the performance of the model.

5.7 Model 4 - Xtreme Gradient Boosting Machine (XGBoost)

XGBoost model was created using training 100 base learners on the Secondary Dataset and each base learner is constructed using 80% of the training dataset. Instead of using complete features to construct the base learner, parameters were set to use only 60% of features, this helped to eliminate the memory leakage/overflow issues while training. Moreover, L2 regularization parameter was set

to 0.9 to reduce the overfitting of the model. 20% of the Secondary Dataset was used as test set to evaluate the performance of the model.

5.8 Model 5 - Light Gradient Boosting Machine (LGBM)

LGBM model was trained on Secondary dataset and the 100 base learners were constructed using the entire features & training set. Tradition Gradient Boosting Decision Trees were used as the boosting type and learning rate was set to 0.1. 20% of the dataset were set aside as the test set for evaluating the model. Maximum depth is not set as to allow trees of any depth.

5.9 Model 6 - Artificial Neural Network (ANN)

Figure 18 depicts the architecture of the custom ANN model developed. The primary dataset was first split into training & test dataset, followed by oversampling the training dataset using KMeans SMOTE to make the percentage of defaulting & non defaulting customers equal. Then the training dataset was trained using the custom ANN model. The first & second layer uses Rectified Linear Unit (ReLU) as the activation function, however the final layer uses Sigmoid as the activation function. Adam optimizer was used to optimize the objective binary cross entropy loss function. The trained model was tested and evaluated on the test set.

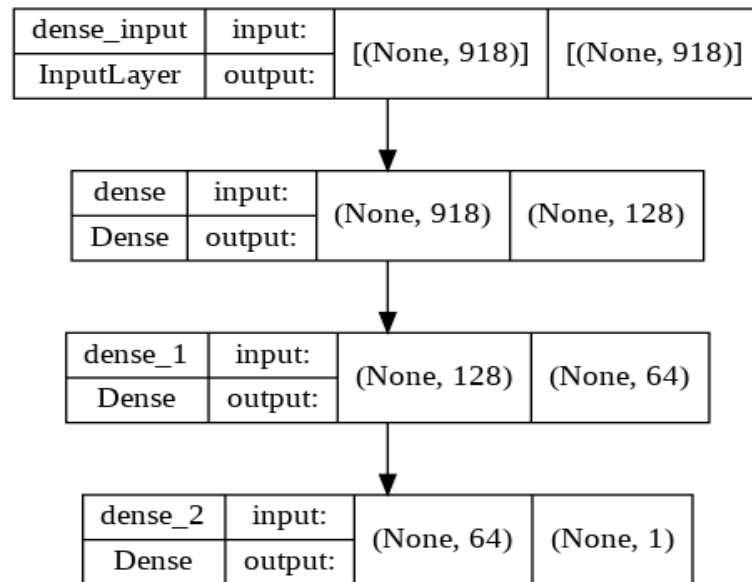


Figure 18: Custom Neural Network Architecture

5.10 Model 7 - Gated Recurrent Unit (GRU)

Figure 19 represents the architecture of the GRU based model for predicting credit card default. The primary dataset is used for training this model; furthermore, the tanh function is used as the activation function and sigmoid is used as the recurrent activation function for the GRU layer. Dropout of 10%, recurrent dropout of 50% added to reduce the overfitting problem. The output of the GRU layer is then fed to dense layer followed by another dense layer with activation sigmoid for making final prediction. Optimizer used is Adam & the loss function is Binary Cross Entropy. A dataset generator was created to provide input to the model in chunks, this helped to eliminate the memory issues while training. The final model contains 49165 trainable parameters.

5.11 Model 8 - Ensemble Stacking Model using ANN + GRU + GBDT

Figure 20 partially depicts the architecture of the custom ensemble stacking model. The primary dataset is first trained using GRU layer followed by a dense layer. In parallel, the secondary dataset is trained using a 2 dense layers. Then the output of these two parallel legs were combined to form the concatenation layer. The output of concatenation layer is then trained using a GBDT model to get the final prediction. Adam optimizer was used to optimize the objective binary cross entropy loss function. Instead of loading complete dataset into memory and train the entire dataset in one go,

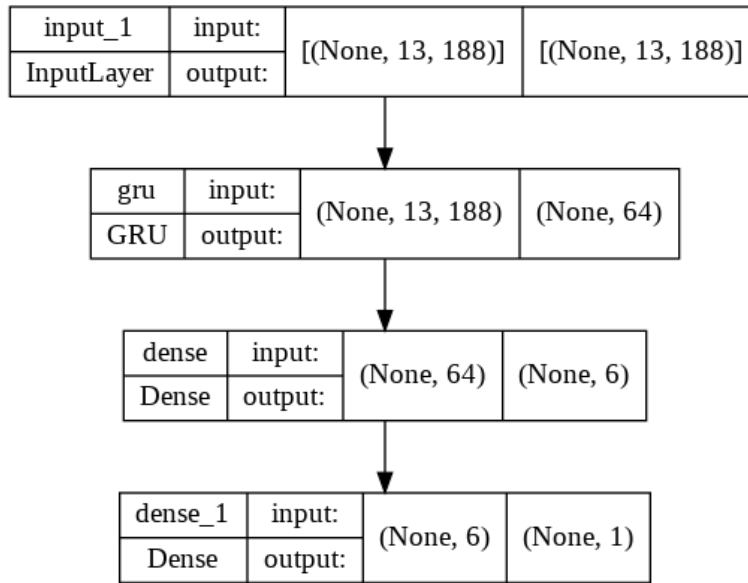


Figure 19: GRU Model Architecture

a dataset generator was written to return chunks of data for training, this helped to eliminate the memory overflow issues.

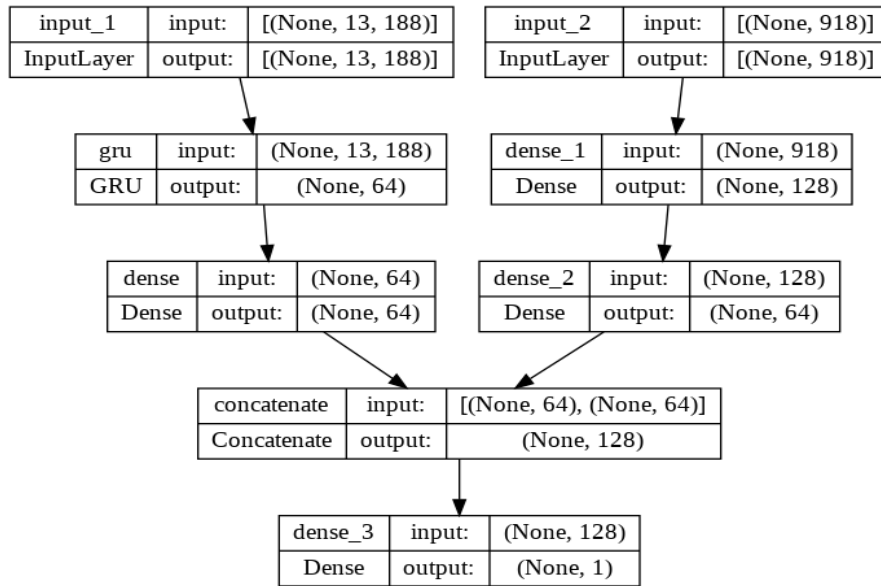


Figure 20: Custom Ensemble Stacking Model Architecture

5.12 Model 9 - Lean LGBM Model

Finally, a lean model was created using LGBM model which performed on par with the other models but with less resources & data. Firstly the 20% of the dataset was set aside as test set and remaining 80% for training purpose. Training dataset was then oversampled using KMeans SMOTE method which resulted in the number of defaulting customers & non defaulting customers to become equal. Secondly the training dataset was trained using a simple SVM model to extract the feature importances; in addition, the features with feature importance weight less than the mean of importance of weights were discarded. This helped to reduce the feature count from 920 in the secondary dataset to 279. This modified dataset was then passed through a Grid Search CV pipeline to choose the best parameters for maximum depth & maximum number of leafs for base learner trees, and boosting type. Cross Validation (CV) Recall score was used as the metric to choose the best model. Finally, a LGBM model was created using the best model parameters found using GridSearchCV and trained the same on the complete training dataset. The final model was tested and evaluated on the test set.

5.13 Summary

Firstly, this section presented overall methodology followed for the experiments followed by the data preprocessing techniques used. Handling of invalid feature values, normalization & handling memory leakage and memory overflow issue were discussed in the Data Preprocessing section. Secondly, the 9 different models created to solve the problem were discussed. Initially SVM model & Random Forest Classifier model were discussed followed by more advanced machine learning techniques such as GBDT, XGBoost & LGBM. Then 3 models using deep learning techniques such as Neural Network, GRU and Ensemble Stacking model were presented. Finally a lean model was developed and presented which used less features for training, was computationally less expensive and was explainable model. Before training the final model, the model was passed through a data oversampling pipeline, feature selection pipeline. The model was also tuned using GridSearchCV method to find the optimal hyper parameters. In all the experiments 20% of data was set aside before training for testing & evaluation purposes.

6 Results & Discussions

6.1 Introduction

Firstly this section presents the test result of the experiments conducted based on the methodology described in section 5. Secondly the main highlights or achievements of the project is discussed. Finally, limitations of this project as well as the future works are discussed.

6.2 Test Results

Table 1 depicts the result of running the models discussed in section 5 on the test set. 4 metrics, F1 Score, Recall, Accuracy & Precision is used to compare the performance of the models. Though 4 metrics are tracked, Recall & F1 Score are the metric which is used for Hyper Parameter Tuning, Early Stopping, Cross Validation across all experiments. This decision was taken based on observation that Accuracy will not be a good metric as the dataset is imbalanced; furthermore, the F1 score & Recall provides a better indication on how well the model is able to predict the defaulting clients correctly.

| Model | F1 Score | Recall | Accuracy | Precision |
|--------------|----------|--------|----------|-----------|
| SVM | 74.66 | 75.57 | 87.24 | 73.78 |
| RF | 73.81 | 72.78 | 87.13 | 74.86 |
| GBDT | 74.33 | 74.13 | 87.25 | 74.52 |
| XGBoost | 80.22 | 80.11 | 89.79 | 80.34 |
| LGBM | 81.01 | 81.11 | 90.13 | 80.91 |
| ANN | 81.03 | 81.81 | 90.09 | 80.27 |
| GRU | 79.81 | 79.96 | 90.67 | 79.65 |
| GRU+ANN+GBDT | 80.09 | 79.71 | 90.87 | 80.49 |
| Lean LGBM | 80.95 | 80.68 | 90.15 | 81.23 |

Table 1: Comparison of metrics on various models.

The SVM provided an accuracy of 87.24% & F1 score of 74.66 which was impressive considering the model took very less time to train compared to other models; thus, SVM model was used in Lean LGBM model as part of feature selection pipeline. RF model performed worst on F1 Score, Recall & Accuracy among all the models experimented as part of this project. This reduced performance of RF could be due to the large dataset & dimensionality and the algorithm is not able to generalize well with 100 decision trees. GBDT model provided similar results to SVM model, however, GBDT provided better Precision while SVM provided better Recall scores. Ensemble boosting techniques XGBoost & LGBM performed really well the test set such that F1 score & Recall increased almost by 6% compared to SVM model. LGBM model performed slightly better than XGBoost model in all the metrics and LGBM model took less time to train compared to XGBoost.

ANN model provided the highest F1 Score & Recall among all the models, however, the difference in F1 Score of LGBM and ANN model is only 0.02. ANN model provided better Recall score while

LGBM provided better Precision score. GRU+ANN+GBDT model provided best accuracy score of 90.87 among all the models. GRU provided the second best accuracy score; moreover, considering that GRU model has 49,165 trainable parameters while the GRU+ANN+GBDT has 178,945, the GRU model is able to extract the features better than GRU+ANN+GBDT with less parameters. The table 2 shows the trainable parameter count for the deep learning models explored.

| Model | Trainable Parameters |
|--------------|----------------------|
| ANN | 125,953 |
| GRU | 49,165 |
| GRU+ANN+GBDT | 178,945 |

Table 2: Trainable parameters comparison of Deep Learning Models

The Lean LGBM model provides a F1 Score of 80.95 which is only 0.08 less than the best performing ANN model; furthermore, the Lean LGBM provided the best Precision score among all the models. Lean LGBM model uses only 1/3rd of the features used by the ANN model and still provides comparable performance. The figure 21 represents the confusion matrix of all the Machine Learning models explored during this project.

6.2.1 Feature Importance

The table 3 represents the top 5 features based on the importance from model Lean LGBM. This is another advantage of Lean LGBM model over the ANN model, the Lean LGBM model is explainable. However, the features in the Primary Dataset & Secondary Dataset is anonymized, hence it is not possible to know the exact real life meaning of these features.

| Feature | Importance Score |
|-----------|------------------|
| D_39_last | 226 |
| P_2_last | 214 |
| B_4_last | 191 |
| B_3_last | 162 |
| B_1_last | 144 |

Table 3: Important Features Extracted Based on Lean LGBM model (Secondary Dataset)

6.3 Achievements

As mentioned in 3, most of the previous work on credit card default prediction was based on dataset containing records less than 100,000. However the Primary Dataset used in this work has around 5 Million records of 400,000 unique customers. Most of the previous works concluded that the Ensemble Boosting classifier such as XGBoost & GBDT performed better than the traditional machine learning algorithms, this is reconfirmed on large dataset with the work of this project. On the other hand, this work helped to identify that the difference in performances between the Deep Learning Network & Ensemble Boosting Algorithms reduced on large dataset, however it the differences were significant in the smaller datasets. Finally, it was reconfirmed that the models performed better on balanced data and KMeans SMOTE is a suitable candidate for fixing the class imbalance.

6.4 Limitations & Future Work

6.4.1 Limitations

Training using some of the traditional machine learning algorithms, such as Non Linear SVM, K-Nearest Neighbours (KNN) etc, were not possible due to the large dataset size and the related time complexity. Feature selection using Sequential Feature Selection technique was tried to select 50 features from the Secondary Dataset; however, due to the large number of features and the large dataset size, Sequential Feature Selection did not complete even after 20 hours. Thus, due to the time constraint on the project as well as the cost related to training on Google Colab, Sequential Feature Selection was dropped from experiments and instead Select From Model technique were used.

Additionally, though multiple data over/under sampling techniques, such as SVMSMOTE, BorderlineSMOTE, Cluster Centroids etc, were tried, none of them worked as some throw memory

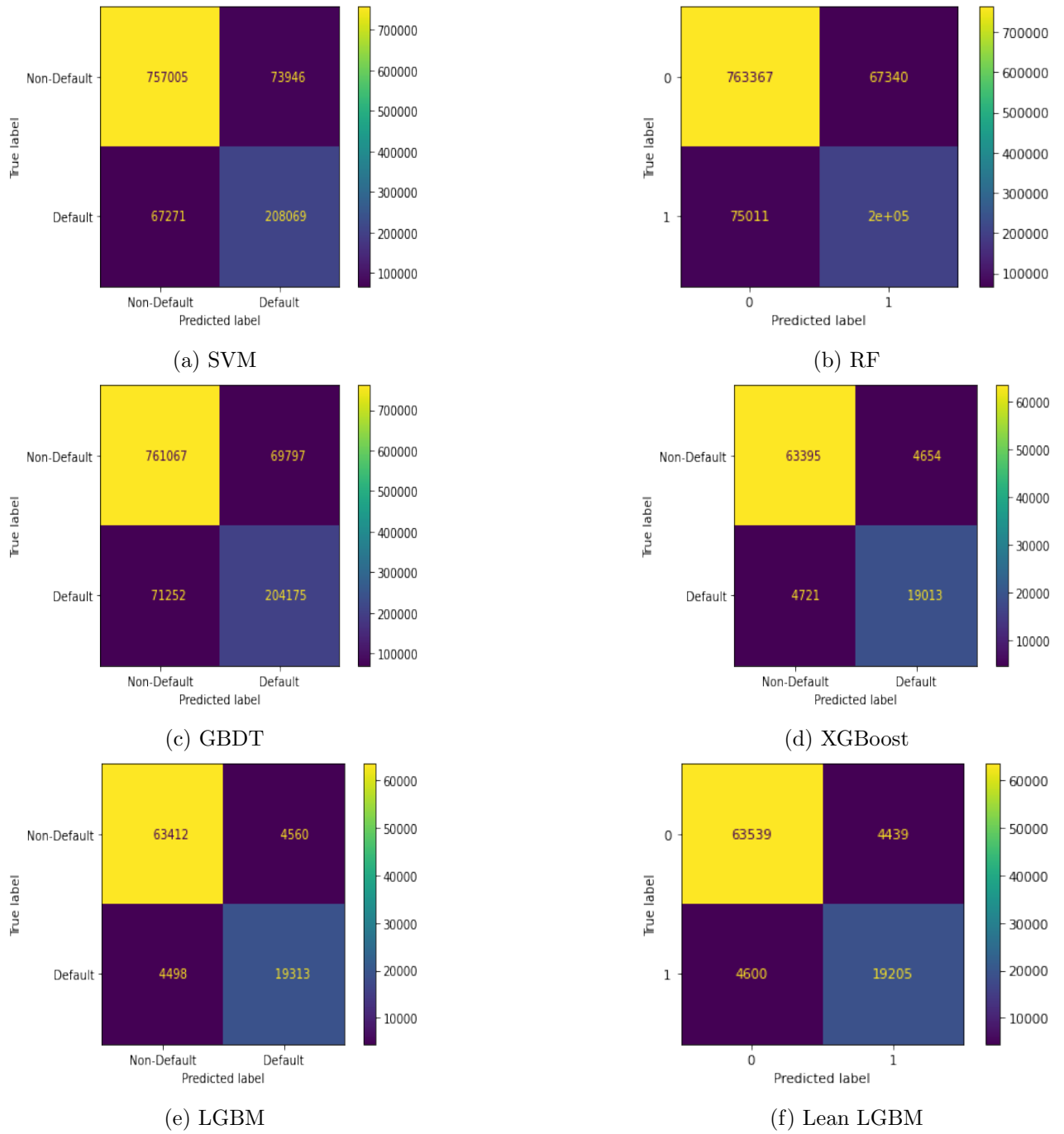


Figure 21: Confusion Matrix of Machine Learning Models

overflow issue and others did not complete due to higher time complexity. Since the features of the dataset is anonymized, applying domain knowledge to feature selection process was not possible; moreover, features identified as important in section 6.2.1 can not be made sense in real life as the features are anonymized. Finally, the data types auto-detected by the Pandas framework while loading dataset is not optimal because even though some of the features contains values between 0 - 1 with precision up to 10 decimal points, still Pandas chooses float64 as the datatype by default. This causes the in memory size of the dataset to quickly exceed the available memory and making impossible to try some of the machine learning algorithms.

6.4.2 Future Work

Scikit Learn (Pedregosa et al. 2011) provides limited support for parallel computing, yet this can be explored to make certain computations faster and it might help to overcome some of the computation related limitations mentioned in previous section. Since the data types auto-detected by the Pandas framework while loading dataset is not optimal, one can explore individual features and manually

find an optimal datatype of the feature and save this new dataset in parquet format. This will help to reduce the overall size of the dataset and will make loading the dataset to memory much easier.

Attention based Transformer networks recently shown to perform well for time series based classification tasks (Wen et al. 2022), (Lim et al. 2021), (Cholakov & Kolev 2021), this could be explored on the Primary Dataset to extract dynamic features or could be used as part of the Ensemble Stacking model as one of the learners. TabNet (Attentive Interpretable Tabular Learning)(Arik & Pfister 2021) architecture on classification problems with tabular dataset provides promising performance;thus, this architecture could be explored on the Primary/Secondary dataset to check if provides better performance than the models explored in this project.

In order to overcome some of the challenges related to feature selection mentioned in the previous section, one can explore the idea of stacking the different feature selection techniques in sequential manner, so that less expensive feature selection technique is applied first and then more expensive techniques applied later in the feature selection pipeline.

6.5 Summary

In summary, this section initially discussed the evaluation results of different model on the test set. It was identified that the ANN network scored the highest on F1 Score & Recall metrics while GRU+ANN+GBDT scored the highest score on accuracy metric. The Lean LGBM model performed on par with the best scoring models while using less features;also, the Lean LGBM scored highest on Precision metrics. Top 5 important features were identified from the Lean LGBM model result and the same was presented. Then the achievements of the experiments, such as reconfirming understanding from prior studies on huge industry scale dataset and identifying that the performance of Ensemble Boosting models is on par with the deep learning architecture performance on large datasets. Finally, the limitations related to the data sampling, feature selection, huge dataset size were discussed along with proposing future works that could be conducted on the dataset & models.

7 Conclusion

The objective of this project was to explore different machine learning algorithms & deep learning architectures on the American Express default prediction dataset(American Express 2022) to predict if a customer will default on the payment in the future. 8 different models (5 Machine Learning & 3 Deep Learning models) were explored in this project;subsequently, it was identified that Artificial Neural Network (ANN) networks performed best in terms of F1 Score metrics. However, ANN model only performed slightly better then the best performing machine learning model, LGBM;more importantly, the increase in performance was almost negligible considering the complexity of deep learning networks to traditional machine learning models and the non-explainability of ANN models.Thus, we can conclude that the LGBM is a better choice for credit card default prediction in a industry environment, this is because the explainability of Machine Learning model could become useful for the organizations which require to provide explanations regarding the model to Regulatory Authorities.

Based on the above conclusion, an improved & efficient model, Lean LGBM, was proposed which uses 1/3rd of the features (hence less dataset size) of the Secondary Dataset to provide performance on par with the LGBM & ANN models. This Lean LGBM model uses Feature Selection Techniques, Data Oversampling Technique(KMeans-SMOTE) and Hyper Parameter tuning to obtain high performance with minimal computations.

In conclusion, as reported in various studies (Alam et al. 2020), (Faraj et al. 2021), (Emil Richard Singh & Sivasankar 2019), the Ensemble Boosting techniques such as XGBoost & LGBM provides best performance in terms of F1 Score & computation for credit card default prediction problems.

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8 Appendix One: Code

8.1 Directory Structure

8.2 Running the Provided Code