Video-based Machine Learning System for Commodity Classification

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Abstract: The cost of video cameras is decreasing rapidly while their resolution is improving. This makes them useful for a number of transportation applications. In this paper, we present an approach to commodity classification from surveillance videos by utilizing text information of logos on trucks. A new real-world benchmark dataset is collected and annotated accordingly that covers over 4,000 truck images. Our approach is evaluated on video data collected in collaboration with the state transportation entity. Results on this dataset indicate that our proposed approach achieved promising performance. This, along with prior work on trailer classification, can be effectively used for automatically deriving the commodity classification for trucks moving on highways using video collection and processing.

1 INTRODUCTION

Freight transport is considered as one of the most important variables in understanding economic and regional development, and there has been an increasing interest in collecting accurate data for this purpose. On-road freight analysis can serve multiple objectives: reducing freight transit times, improving the reliability of freight movement, and reducing the cost of freight transportation. Additional uses include improving transportation efficiency and safety, congestion mitigation, land use planning, and enhancing economic competitiveness.

The most widely-used freight data collection method is survey-based, which requires carriers, shippers, and receivers to fill in questionnaires about the commodity type, vehicle configuration, origin and destination, etc. Survey-based methods severely suffer from the problems of low response rate, lack of geographic localization, unknown data reliability, and high cost in time and money. It is not uncommon for trucking companies to keep records of their detailed truck activities and commodity information, yet most of them are reluctant to make statistics publicly available to others, considering potential competitions. Because of the above limitations, the data reliability, completeness, and timeliness are limited, thereby limiting their applicability.

One of the most important applications for onroad freight analysis is highway truck freight classification using computer vision techniques (Huang et al., 2020). On one hand, vision-based methods provide intelligent sensing and processing technologies for a wide variety of transportation applications and services. On the other hand, providers of transportation infrastructure and services are expanding their reliance on computer vision to improve safety and efficiency in transportation.

The cost-effectiveness and accuracy of videobased sensing systems have made large strides over the last decade. This has led to the increasing use of computer vision-based video processing techniques in the discipline of transportation, for improving both safety and efficiency. Current systems of using vision-based techniques for freight classification are still in their infancy. There remain many challenges for vision-based methods, including data overload, the variety of environmental and illumination conditions, and requirements of object recognition or tracking at high speed. Vison-based highway truck freight classification is still an unsolved problem that has not been sufficiently studied.

Among various transportation modes, trucks carry the largest proportion of commodities in the U.S. in terms of both tonnage and value, accounting for 62.7 percent and 61.9 percent, respectively, according to surveys conducted in 2016 (Bronzini et al., 2018). In the latest edition of the American Trucking Associations (ATA) freight forecast, freight transportation by trucks will continue growing over the next decade. Most previous research work has focused

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Figure 1: Typical relations between trailer types and commodity types. The trailer type is an important piece of information in determining the type of commodity carried in trucks. Consequently, for detected trucks, only after a trailer is detected could we continue the process of commodity identification. For many trailers, the corresponding commodities could be directly determined by their types (He et al., 2019a). In case of enclosed trailers, we can further utilize the text information of the logo data on the truck body to determine commodity type.

on developing truck and trailer classification models that use various traffic sensor data such as inductive loop detectors (ILD), weigh-in-motion (WIM), and cameras (Hernandez et al., 2016; He et al., 2019a). This extracted vehicle information can provide traffic agencies with limited cues for understanding truck classes, but only rarely revealing the carried cargo.

Detailed and real-time road-based freight data are urgently required to challenge problems of the current road transportation network, such as congestion, bottlenecks, and resource wasting. We aim at addressing the lack of freight data analysis in dynamic, real-world environments using novel video processing approaches. In this paper, we propose a fundamentally different approach for freight analysis based on other fine-grained visual information contained in truck bodies such as logo data. Logos, also known as trademarks, serve a key role in intelligent trafficcontrol systems. Preliminary approaches for detecting and recognizing vehicle logos (Psyllos et al., 2010; Llorca et al., 2013) are shown to be effective for a fixed set of logo classes, such as license plate detection and determining the type of a car.

Commodity type can be directly inferred on some trucks using their trailer types (e.g., enclosed, flatbed, tank, and bobtail) (He et al., 2019a; He et al., 2019b). Trailer type is an important piece of information in determining the type of commodity in the trailer (Figure 1). Consequently, for detected trucks, only after a trailer is also detected could we continue the process of commodity recognition. For many trailers, the corresponding commodity could be directly determined by their type. However, the majority of trucks have enclosed trailers, and the only commodity information we can obtain from camera sensors is potentially from company logos on truck bodies. In case of enclosed trailers, logo text detection, recognition, and database lookup was the primary way of determining commodity type.

We propose one freight analysis pipeline that is summarized as follows: (i) truck detection from

video, (ii) trailer identification, (iii) potential logo text detection, (iv) potential logo text recognition, and (v) North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) database lookup for commodity identification. It is non-trivial to detect and recognize these logos on the trucks, due to the presence of varying challenging factors such as occlusions, uncontrolled illumination, and background clutter. We have made the following contributions:

- A novel end-to-end road video processing system to provide real-time dynamic commodity information by deploying sensors and edge devices in locations of interest. The system integrates both state-of-the-art trailer classification approaches and text recognition solutions for commodity classification.
- A logo classification method that matches detected logos with a built company database with high accuracy. It utilizes text information from logo data, by leveraging state-of-the-art scene-text solutions. The resulting model allows the traffic agency to effectively extend to new logo classes and companies of interests.
- We develop a new commodity classification benchmark based on logo data. To our best knowledge, it is the first dataset collected to evaluate commodity classification based on logo data. It can be useful in providing traffic engineers and researchers a dataset to systematically evaluate their developed commodity classification models.

Results obtained from our datasets show that our scheme for commodity classification has reasonably good recall and precision for detecting logos appearing on trucks. By further utilizing the NAICS code, we can search and infer the corresponding commodity type, based on the name of the company obtained from the logo classification model. A system is developed to illustrate the concept of our commodity classification.

2 METHODOLOGY

In this section, we describe the computer vision and machine learning approaches that were developed for the problems at hand. We used an array of techniques for obtaining a set of features that are suitable to truck trailer classification and commodity classification. Because the camera was positioned to mainly obtain information from the side of the trucks passing on the freeway (as opposed to information from the rear), the process of identifying commodities was fundamentally restricted by the types of vendor image, logo, or text information that could be gleaned from the trucks themselves. As mentioned, our freight analysis pipeline involves three key steps: truck detection and classification, logo text detection and recognition, and commodity classification or identification.

2.1 Truck Detection and Classification

The initial stage processes the raw videos so as to determine the presence of truck objects within images, by adopting the state-of-the-art detection method (Redmon et al., 2016). It is followed by estimating the bounding box of each truck object. Specifically, transfer learning techniques are adopted to accurately find candidate vehicle regions by estimating the bounding box of each vehicle object. A 2-class (truck vs. non-truck) deep learning classifier is developed to decide whether the vehicle candidate was a truck or not, as we were interested in trucks.

Following (He et al., 2019a; He et al., 2019b), geometric features are extracted from the cropped truck images, by incorporating expertise knowledge of traffic engineering on determining truck or trailer types (e.g., the number of wheels (a proxy for the number of axles), number of trailers, size and aspect ratio, i.e., ratio of length to height from aside view). The decision tree classifier is trained on top of these geometric features to group trucks into several trailer types such as tank, specialty, enclosed trailer, etc. As illustrated in Figure 1, the predicted trailer types can be further linked to commodity types. This trailer model serves as our initial strategy for commodity classification. In case of enclosed trailers, we can further determine the commodity type (if available), as introduced in the subsequent section.

2.2 Text-based Truck Logo Detection and Recognition

A logo can be conceptualized of as a brand image expression, comprising a (stylized) letter or text, a

graphical figure, or a combination (Fehérvári and Appalaraju, 2019). Many logo images vary significantly in color and contain specialized, unknown fonts. It is difficult to guarantee their context or placement because logos can be placed anywhere on the truck. Previous work on logo detection assumed that large training datasets for each logo class are available with finegrained bounding box annotations. Such assumptions are often invalid in realistic scenarios where it is impractical to exhaustively label fine-grained training data for every new class.

Pipeline. Following state-of-the-art scene-text solutions EAST (Zhou et al., 2017) for text detection and CRNN (Shi et al., 2016) for text recognition, we propose a processing pipeline for logo texts as shown in Figure 2. It consists of the following steps:

- 1. Given an image frame from roadside videos, we use a multichannel FCN (fully convolutional network) model to obtain a text line/word score map to filter our regions of interest.
- A post-processing step followed to filter out overlapped detection results by applying the standard NMS (non-maximum suppression) technique. After this step, we obtained results of text line/word locations represented by oriented bounding boxes.
- Cropped images containing pure texts are processed by the CRNN model to obtain recognition results.
- 4. Word correction and string matching techniques are applied to match the result to predefined logo class list.

Network Learning. Similar to (Zhou et al., 2017), we adopt the geometry shape called quadrangle (QUAD) for representing text regions, where each QUAD has 8 numbers that denote the coordinate shift from four corner vertices of the quadrangle to the current pixel location. Two branches are introduced after the feature extraction from the multichannel FCN in step 1. The first branch is designed for predicting the pixel-level text score map while the second branch aims at estimating the geometry for each text region. The loss is therefore formulated as:

$$L = L_s + \lambda_g L_g, \tag{1}$$

where L_s and L_g represent the losses for the score map and the geometry, respectively. The balanced crossentropy loss is adopted for computing L_s . To learn the geometry, a modified smoothed-L1 loss is adopted where an extra normalization term is added. Denote by an ordered set $Q = \{p_i | i \in \{1, 2, 3, 4\}\}$ the quadrangle, where $p_i = \{x_i, y_i\}$ are vertices on the quadrangle in clockwise order. Let

$$C_Q = \{x1, y1, x2, y2, x3, y3, x4, y4\},$$
 (2)



Figure 2: The detection and recognition pipeline of the text-based solution. It consists of: 1) Given an image frame from roadside videos, we use a multichannel FCN (fully convolutional network) model to obtain a text line/word score map to filter our regions of interest; 2) A post-processing step followed to filter out overlapped detection results by applying the standard NMS (non-maximum suppression) technique. After this step, we obtained results of text line/word locations represented by oriented bounding boxes; 3) Cropped images containing pure texts are processed by the CRNN model to obtain recognition results; 4) Word correction and string matching techniques are applied to match the result to predefined logo class list.

then L_g can be written as:

$$L_{g} = L_{QUAD}(\hat{\mathbf{Q}}, \mathbf{Q}^{*})$$
(3)
=
$$\min_{\hat{\mathbf{Q}} \in P_{\mathbf{Q}^{*}}} \sum_{\substack{c_{i} \in C_{\mathbf{Q}}, \\ \hat{c}_{i} \in C_{\mathbf{Q}}}} \frac{Smoothed_{L1}(c_{i}, \hat{c}_{i})}{8 \times N_{\mathbf{Q}^{*}}},$$
(4)

where $\hat{\mathbf{Q}}$ and \mathbf{Q}^* represent the predicted quadrangles and the ground truth quadrangles, respectively. $P_{\mathbf{Q}^*}$ denotes all equivalent quadrangles of \mathbf{Q}^* with different vertices ordering. $N_{\mathbf{Q}^*}$ denotes the shorted edge length of the quadrangle, given by

$$N_{\mathbf{Q}^*} = \min_{i=1}^4 D(p_i, p_{i \mod 4} + 1)$$
 (5)

The final recognition stage follows the classic connectionist temporal classification (CTC) that labels the sequence data extracted from each text image region, by utilizing the recurrent neural networks. We refer to (Graves et al., 2006) for detailed information.

The implemented algorithms achieved a high recall with a competitive recognition accuracy, compared to the original research work (Zhou et al., 2017; Shi et al., 2016). Although in many cases, the recognition results either missed or wrongly predicted a small number of characters, this can be suitably corrected by using many publicly available spelling correction methods.

Text-based logo detection and recognition demonstrated a competitive accuracy on text logos. However, the pure text-based solution is not sufficient to solve the commodity classification problem for the following reason: some of the logos do not contain text (or the text is complex with stylized fonts) and have to be recognized as entire images. Deriving the company names from such logos is a challenging object recognition and classification problem. Even the state-of-the-art scene-text solutions fail to detect and recognize these types of logo data. We leave this part for future studies.

2.3 Commodity Classification with Logo Data

The North American Industry Classification System is an industry classification system that groups establishments based on the similarity of their production processes. It is a comprehensive system covering all economic activities. Inspired by this, we developed our commodity classification based on commodity identification. It was based on results obtained from our logo detection and recognition results. Once we extracted the text and company name, we forwarded it to our collected company list to search for the NAICS code and commodity description as shown in Table 1. This process naturally links the logo detection and recognition to the commodity classification. To our best knowledge, our proposed pipeline is the first attempt in this direction.

3 EXPERIMENTS

We evaluated our developed approaches on collected datasets, along with carefully conducted ablation studies. In the end, we illustrate a system integrating all the developed approaches. It takes the raw roadside video as input and outputs truck attributes and associated commodities automatically.

3.1 Dataset Collection and Processing

Benchmark Datasets. We evaluated our logo detection and recognition approaches on video frames captured by roadside cameras provided by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT). From these videos, we chose 26 frequently appearing logo classes for our experiments. We collected a dataset, referred



Figure 3: Illustration of logo classes.

Table 1: Samples of the NAICS code searching.

NAICS Code	Description
311919	Other Snack Food Manufactur-
	ing
337127	Institutional Furniture Manu-
	facturing
424490	Other Grocery and Related
	Products Merchant Whole-
	salers
445110	Supermarkets and Other Gro-
	cery (except Convenience)
	Stores
484121	General Freight Trucking
	Long-Distance Truckload
485119	Other Urban Transit Systems
532120	Truck Utility Trailer and RV
	Rental and Leasing
551112	Offices of Other Holding Com-
	panies

to as the Annotated Logo Dataset (ALD), for evaluating logo detection and classification. This ALD dataset was carefully annotated with bounding boxes attached to logo regions. In addition to the annotations of logo locations, we labeled each logo according to its corresponding trademark name.

The dataset consists of 4,486 images and 5,020 logos. Detailed distributions of logo classes are shown in Table 2. These images were used for evaluating the end-to-end logo detection and recognition and commodity classification.

The logo classes were chosen based on the frequency of occurrence in our testing videos, which contains several top carrier companies in the US¹. We diverse the classes by including styled text logos, shape-based logos, and logos shown on different types of trailers. The chosen 26 classes are not full coverage of all logo classes of interest but are illustrative to evaluate our proposed approach.

Logo Grouping. To better describe the challenges of logo recognition, we further divided all logo classes into three individual groups ('easy', 'medium', and 'difficult') based on the difficulties. The detailed division can be found in Table 5, Table 6, and Table 7. For 'easy' class, most of the logo images are high contrast with relatively clean backgrounds, such as the 'Dollar General', where the background is a smooth single color. The text (dark color) and background (yellow color) are distinct from each other due to high contrast. In addition, the font of the logo texts is readable, in contrast to fancy-style fonts that will be categorized into the other two classes. These characteristics made it easier for models to extract discriminative feature and obtain good performance. For 'medium' class, we considered logos consisting of multiple text lines such as 'Heartland Express' and 'US Foods'. We also include logos with figures underneath the text, such as 'Heartland Express', and logos with unusual font, such as 'Heyl'. These characteristics require capturing the overall logo structure with different colors, textures, text arrangements and the ability to tolerant misrecognized letters. For 'difficult' class, we mainly choose the ones with fewer characters in artistic fonts, (i.e., 'OD' and 'E'). Besides, the size of logos in this class is usually much smaller than the others, which makes the recognizer suffer from low resolution. The 'Opies' serves as a special one since it usually showed up on a silver surface which reflects sunlight so that the only part of the logo is visible.

Evaluation Protocols. For evaluating the performance of our developed approaches, we adopted the standard evaluation protocol for object detection.

¹https://www.ttnews.com/top100/for-hire/2019

Logo Class	Images	Logo Class	Images	Logo Class	Images	Logo Class	Images
Ashley	83	E	248	Lays	64	UPS	236
Atlas	52	FedEx	1128	OD	392	US Foods	163
Budget	47	HamburgSUD	63	Opies	51	Werner	142
CarrollFulmer	30	HeartlandExpress	245	Prime	48	XTRA	489
Celadon	107	Heyl	50	RBI	281	YRC	53
Davis	95	JNJ	168	SouthernAG	174	Total	5,020
Dollar General	199	Landstar	362	Sunstate	50		

Table 2: Logo distributions of the Annotated Logo Dataset.



Figure 4: The developed algorithms achieved a high recall with a competitive recognition accuracy. Notice that some of the recognition results missed or wrongly predicted one or a few characters, which in reality should not cause many problems because the recognition results are further processed by matching the most similar results.

Two commonly used metrics, recall (Rec) and precision (Prec), are used. Besides, we use the average precision (AP) that measures the detection accuracy of the developed universal logo detector. It computes the average precision for recall values ranging from 0 to 1. The general definition has the formula:

$$\boldsymbol{AP} = \int_0^1 \boldsymbol{p}(r) dr \tag{6}$$

where p(r) is the precision value at the recall value r. In practice, the equation is replaced with a finite sum over several recall values, such as the 11-point interpolated AP used in the Pascal VOC challenge (Everingham et al., 2010) that is defined as the mean precision at a set of 11 equally spaced recall values ([0, 0.1, 0.2, ..., 1]). We follow the new evaluation protocol of the Pascal VOC challenge where they use all data points, rather than interpolating only 11 equally spaced points (Everingham et al., 2010). The mean Average Precision (mAP) is used for evaluating the logo detection and recognition for all logo classes. We considered a detection correct if the IoU (Intersection over Union) between predicted logos and ground truth logos exceeded a certain threshold (such as 0.5).

3.2 Experimental Results

In this section, we evaluated the proposed approaches for the following: evaluation on logo detection, evaluations on end-to-end logo recognition. We conducted ablation studies for each step with different threshold settings. These studies illustrated and detailed advantages and disadvantages of each model component, which sheds light on exploring commodity classification.

3.2.1 Qualitative Results

The results are illustrated in Figure 4. The logo texts appear on different truck bodies where some of texts are extremely tiny (e.g., the 'FedEx' in the right). It can detect words in a high recall with competitive recognition accuracy. With these predictions, we further merge words that are horizontally close to each other into a single prediction. By doing so, we can partly handle the cases where the logo class contains multiple words such as 'Dollar General'.

3.2.2 Quantitative Results

Logo Text Detection. We evaluate the performance of the developed text detector on our proposed dataset. As illustrated in Table 3, it achieves a high recall (Rec) of 94.04% and a good precision of 89.20% with the threshold value 0.3. Both the recall and precision drop rapidly when we further increase the IoU threhold. The reason is ascribed to the fact that the developed text detection method tends to predict tighter bounding boxes around text regions. The logo region is usually larger than text regions as it usually consists of both text and figure regions. The gap is seen in the annotation process of our ALD dataset where we annotate bounding boxes by covering the whole logo regions. Predictions from our text solution are expected to be smaller than the ground truth annotations, which can worsen the recall. Therefore, we argue that setting

IoU = 0.1 IoU = 0.3		0.3 IoU = 0.5).5				
Prec	Rec	AP	Prec	Rec	AP	Prec	Rec	AP
91.59	96.56	93.12	89.20	94.04	87.25	56.60	59.67	36.75

Table 3: Results of logo text detection.

Table 4: Evaluations on three logo groups with different thresholds.

	IoU = 0.1			IoU = 0.3			IoU = 0.5		
	Prec	Rec	AP	Pre	Rec	AP	Prec	Rec	AP
Easy	93.07	98.55	96.31	90.65	95.55	91.72	66.06	68.98	63.51
Medium	93.43	90.64	88.92	93.43	90.64	88.92	66.75	63.11	56.83
Difficult	39.88	24.53	23.43	39.88	24.53	23.43	37.21	23.32	21.67

Table 5: Detailed results on easy logo classes.

Easy Class	Prec	Rec	AP
Ashley	100.0	98.8	98.8
Celadon	86.99	100.0	98.26
Dollar General	100.0	98.99	98.99
Fedex	86.79	91.09	89.41
Landstar	61.02	75.69	53.92
Prime	90.57	100.0	94.55
Sunstate	100.0	100.0	100.0
XTRA	99.8	99.8	99.8
Mean	90.65	95.55	91.72

Table 6: Detail	ed results on	medium	logo classes.
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Medium Class	Prec	Rec	AP
Atlas	96.3	100.0	98.11
Budget	74.6	100.0	88.68
CarrollFulmer	100.0	73.33	73.33
HamburgSUD	100.0	87.3	87.3
HeartlanEexpress	100.0	62.04	62.04
Heyl	100.0	100.0	100.0
JNJ	100.0	75.0	75.0
Lays	98.46	100.0	98.63
SouthernAG	98.86	100.0	99.12
US Foods	100.0	99.39	99.39
YRC	59.55	100.0	96.57
Mean	93.43	90.64	88.92

Table 7: Detailed results on difficult logo classes.

Difficult Class	Prec	Rec	AP
Davis	100.0	91.58	91.58
Е	0.0	0.0	0.0
OD	0.0	0.0	0.0
Opies	0.0	0.0	0.0
RBI	0.0	0.0	0.0
UPS	84.62	43.48	36.79
Werner	94.55	36.62	35.62
Mean	39.88	24.53	23.43

a slightly lower threshold value (e.g., 0.3) is fair to evaluate the logo detection. In addition, the multiple texts and multi-line texts presented in the logo regions cause another fundamental challenge where it introduces the semantic gap of scene text understanding between machine and human beings. It is straightforward for human beings to localize, recognize, and organize the texts (e.g., multi-line texts, oriented texts, artistic texts) into meaningful text regions or blocks, while it is much more difficult for a machine system to handle these cases.

Logo Recognition and Commodity Classification. As can be found in Table 4, the text-based approach performs well in the easy and medium categories. It achieves high AP of 91.72% and 88.92% on easy and medium categories, respectively. However, it fails to detect logo classes in difficult category such as 'OD', 'Opies', and 'E', where 'E' and 'OD' logos are designed with artistic fonts and figures. The 'Opies' logo usually appears on the body of the tank truck, where the compartment is made of reflective materials. The lighting reflection causes the failure of the text-based approach to detecting 'Opies'. A more detailed evaluation is illustrated in Table 5, Table 6, and Table 7 where the results of each logo class are presented.

4 VISUALIZATION SYSTEM

To demonstrate the pipeline of our proposed approach, we integrate all the developed approaches, resulting in an end-to-end visualization system. It takes the raw roadside video as input and outputs the truck locations, truck classes, trailer classes, detected logo texts, and final commodity predictions automatically. The visualization system plays an important role in evaluating the effectiveness and exposing the deficiencies of each component used in our approach.

In summary, our developed pipeline took advan-

tage of recent advances in deep neural networks for object detection, semantic segmentation, and edge detection. We developed deep learning algorithms that used transfer learning to determine whether an image frame had a truck and, if the answer is affirmative, localize the area from the image frame where the truck is most likely to be present. We utilized a hybrid truck classification approach that integrated deep learning models and geometric truck features for recognizing and classifying various truck attributes, such as tractor type, trailer type, and refrigeration units, that are useful in commodity prediction. Using logo text detection and recognition, we developed state-of-the-art techniques for extracting vendor information corresponding to a truck. All these information are used for the final commodity classification.

5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

We have presented the novel end-to-end road video processing system to provide real-time dynamic commodity information (indispensable downstream for tracking commodity movements) by deploying sensors and edge devices in locations of interest. Besides, we have developed a new commodity classification benchmark based on logo data. To our best knowledge, it is the first dataset collected to evaluate commodity classification based on logo data. It can be useful in providing traffic engineers and researchers a dataset to systematically evaluate their developed freight classification models. Our results for 26 predominant logos derived from highway videos is very promising. A visual system was developed to illustrate the concept of commodity classification. We believe that this accuracy can be further improved by both adding more annotated images to the dataset as well as by proposing an integrated technique to take into account a image-based matching.

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