

Fast Adaptive Frame Preprocessing for 3D Reconstruction

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Abstract: This paper presents a new online preprocessing strategy to detect and discard ongoing bad frames in video sequences. These include frames where an accurate localization between corresponding points is difficult, such as for blurred frames, or which do not provide relevant information with respect to the previous frames in terms of texture, image contrast and non-flat areas. Unlike keyframe selectors and deblurring methods, the proposed approach is a fast preprocessing working on a simple gradient statistic, that does not require to compute complex time-consuming image processing, such as the computation of image feature keypoints, previous poses and 3D structure, or to know a priori the input sequence. The presented method provides a fast and useful frame pre-analysis which can be used to improve further image analysis tasks, including also the keyframe selection or the blur detection, or to directly filter the video sequence as shown in the paper, improving the final 3D reconstruction by discarding noisy frames and decreasing the final computation time by removing some redundant frames. This scheme is adaptive, fast and works at runtime by exploiting the image gradient statistic of the last few frames of the video sequence. Experimental results show that the proposed frame selection strategy is robust and improves the final 3D reconstruction both in terms of number of obtained 3D points and reprojection error, also reducing the computational time.

1 INTRODUCTION

Multi-view 3D reconstruction (Szeliski, 2010) is a research field in computer vision, which has received much attention in the last few years due to its range of application, with impressive results (Gherardi et al., 2010; Snavely et al., 2008). The selection of “good” input sequences, both in terms of image quality and frame order, is a crucial step in 3D reconstruction algorithms. While close frames improve the tracking of the corresponding points between the frames, they also yield to non-efficient and almost redundant computations and jittering effects which can degrade the final 3D reconstruction.

According to the constraints imposed, multi-view 3D reconstruction algorithms can be divided in off-line Structure-from-Motion (SfM) approaches (Gherardi et al., 2010; Snavely et al., 2008) and real-time sequential Simultaneous Localization and Mapping (SLAM) approaches (Klein and Murray, 2007; Fanfani et al., 2013). In both approaches, different strategies to improve the efficiency and the quality of the reconstructed output have been investigated, by using keyframes (Klein and Murray, 2007; Seo et al., 2008) in the case of SLAM, or clustering (Gherardi et al., 2010) and graph-based approaches (Snavely

et al., 2008) for SfM.

In the presence of motion blur due to fast camera motion or shake, the uncertainty in the position of corresponding points amplifies the 3D point estimation error, which in some cases can lead to a camera tracking loss and the failure of the system. Different methods have been presented to improve the camera re-localization and recovery system and to allow a robust tracking of blurry features. These include the use of edgelets (Klein and Murray, 2008) and the estimation of the blur kernel to deblur the current frame (Lee et al., 2011), incorporating camera trajectory clues with blind deconvolution techniques (Joshi et al., 2008), or to blur the previous frame in order to obtain a consistent tracking (Mei and Reid, 2008).

Different metrics have been also investigated in order to estimate the amount of blur in images, based on the color saturation, local autocorrelation and gradient distribution (Liu et al., 2008), or spectral and wavelet analysis (Tong et al., 2004). In general, it turns out that robust measures can be derived from the gradient magnitude distribution (Liu et al., 2008), which also can give clues about the relevant structure of the image, in term of discriminant features, image contrast, border and non-flat and textured areas, thus providing robust correspondences.

This paper presents the *Double Window Adaptive Frame Selection* (DWAFS) algorithm for video sequences based on the gradient magnitude distribution. In particular, as shown in Sect. 2, the percentile statistic computed on each frame is used to develop an adaptive decision strategy based on a dangling sample window according to the time series of the ongoing percentile values and the last best ones.

Unlike keyframe selectors and deblurring methods, DWAFS is a fast preprocessing method that does not require to compute complex time-consuming image processing, such as the computation of image feature keypoints, previous poses and 3D structure, or to know a priori the input sequence. Nevertheless, it provides a useful and fast frame pre-analysis which can be used to improve further image analysis tasks, including also the keyframe selection or the blur detection, or to directly filter the video sequence as shown in Sect. 3, improving the final 3D reconstruction by discarding noisy frames and decreasing the final computation time by removing some redundant frames. DWAFS tries to select high-detailed and unblurred frames, but also to adapt to the current frame sequence after a transition time as in the case of a switch from highly structured and contrasted image to more flat ones, or in the case of long-lasting camera shakes.

2 METHOD DESCRIPTION

The DWAFS method uses the p^m percentile of the gradient magnitude $\|\nabla I_t\|$ of each image frame I_t of the video sequence $V = \{I_t | t = 1, 2, \dots, n\}$ as statistic, $m \in [0, 100]$. The spatial gradient ∇I_t , whose directional derivatives are computed by convolution of the image I_t with the kernel masks $[-1 \ 1]$ and $[-1 \ 1]^T$ respectively, gives a fast robust estimation of the image blur (Liu et al., 2008), but also provides clues about the relevant structure of the image, such as borders and salient features (Szeliski, 2010). Figure 1 shows the Matlab code of DWAFS while an example of the DWAFS steps for two successive frames I_t, I_{t+1} is given in Fig. 2.

At each time step $t > w$, the DWAFS algorithms considers two different samples of size w in order to make a decision on the frame I_t . Note that for $t \leq w$ no output is given (line 12). The current sample C_t (line 15) contains the gradient percentile values of the last w frames

$$C_t = \{p_{t-w+i} | i = 1, 2, \dots, w\} \quad (1)$$

i.e. a running window of size w is considered, where $p_t = p^m(\|\nabla I_t\|)$. The best sample B_t (lines 13, 22)

```

1 function S=dwafs(p,w)
2 % input:
3 % - p (1xn double array) gradient percentiles
4 % - w (integer) window size
5 % output:
6 % - S (1xn boolean array) good frame set
7
8 S=zeros(size(p));
9 B=[];
10 d=w;
11 for t=1:length(p);
12     if t<=w
13         B=[B p(t)];
14     else
15         C=p(t-w+1:t);
16         A=sort([C B]);
17         F=A(ceil(d)+1:ceil(d)+w);
18         m=mean(F);
19         s=std(F);
20         if p(t)>=m-2*s
21             S(t)=1;
22             B=[B(2:end) p(t)];
23             d=min(w,d+1);
24         else
25             d=max(0,d-0.5);
26         end;
27     end;
28 end;

```

Figure 1: DWAFS Matlab code.

contains the gradient percentile values of the previously w selected frames

$$B_t = \{p_{k_z-w+i} | i = 1, 2, \dots, w\}, \quad (2)$$

where $S_t = \{I_{k_1}, I_{k_2}, \dots, I_{k_z}\}$ is the time-ordered set of the previous good selected frames, with $k_1 < k_2 < \dots < k_z \leq z < t$ and $k_i = i$ for $1 \leq i \leq w$.

The sorted list A_t (line 16), obtained by merging both the elements of B_t and C_t ordered according to

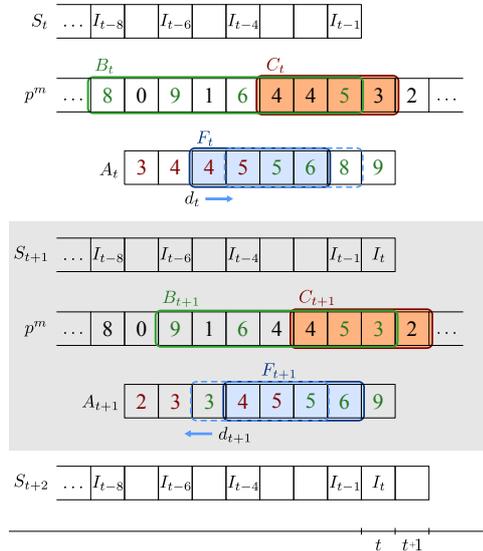


Figure 2: An example of the DWAFS frame processing for two successive frames I_t, I_{t+1} with a windows of size $w = 4$. The sample windows C_t, B_t and F_t (see text) are shown in red, green and blue respectively, the window shift of F_t is represented by the dashed blue window. In the case shown, frame I_t is selected while frame I_{t+1} is dropped (best viewed in color).

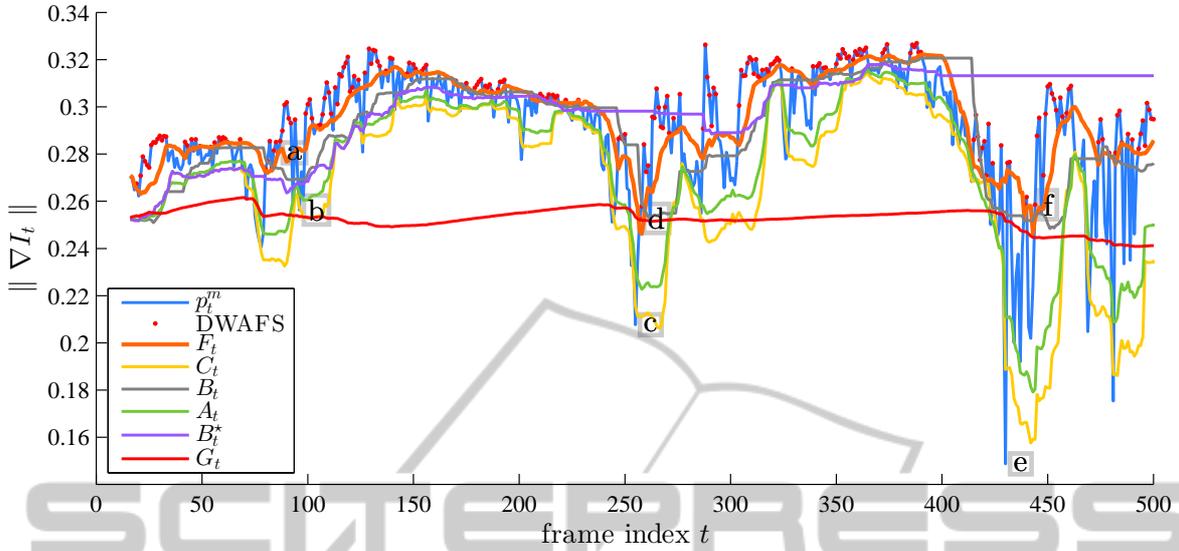


Figure 3: Plot of the gradient percentiles $\|\nabla I_t\|$ with respect to the frame index t for the *Monk* video sequence with $m = 0.95$ and $w = 15$ as the video frame rate (best viewed in color). DWAFS selected frames and thresholds of the kind $\mu(W_t) - 2\sigma(W_t)$ for different sample windows W_t are reported, too (best viewed in color).

the percentile value

$$A_t = B_t \oplus C_t = \{p_{a_i} | p_{a_i} \leq p_{a_{i+1}} \wedge i = 1, 2, \dots, 2w\} \quad (3)$$

is used to get the final list of samples F_t (line 17)

$$F_t = \{p_{a_{[d_t] + i}} | i = 1, 2, \dots, w\} \quad (4)$$

where d_t is a dangling factor used to adapt the final sample list F_t as the video sequence varies, recursively defined (lines 10, 23, 25) as

$$d_t = \begin{cases} w & \text{if } t = w + 1 \\ \min(w, d_{t-1} + 1) & \text{if } I_{t-1} \in S_t \\ \max(0, d_{t-1} - 1/2) & \text{if } I_{t-1} \notin S_t \end{cases} \quad (5)$$

i.e. the dangling window that defines F_t on A_t is shifted towards high sample values if the previous frame I_{t-1} was retained as good, or to lower values otherwise. Note that in order to support stationary and more conservative conditions, the extent of the shift is not symmetric.

Specifically, from the rightmost window position $2w$ frame drops are needed to move towards the leftmost window position, while only w successive good frame selections are needed for the opposite direction. Finally, the frame I_t is kept as good if (line 20)

$$p_t > \mu_t - 2\sigma_t \quad (6)$$

where μ_t, σ_t are respectively the mean and standard deviation of F_t (lines 18–19). The final sample list F_t

moves smoothly between the sampling sets C_t and B_t in order to adapt to changes in the video sequences. Furthermore, any frame which is both considered good (i.e. contained in B_t) and still contained in the current window C_t is weighted twice in F_t , since it appears duplicated in A_t .

Figure 3 shows a DWAFS run over a video sequence. Thresholds of the kind $\mu(W_t) - 2\sigma(W_t)$ for different sample windows W_t are also shown, corresponding to different possible frame selection strategies. Beside the sample windows C_t , B_t , A_t and F_t , the thresholds in the case of the best window B_t^* , i.e. B_t is used in the place of F_t in DWAFS, and of the ongoing window $G_t = \{p_i | i = 0, 1, \dots, i\}$ are presented. Image details for labeled frames of the sequences are also shown in Fig. 4. Note that while the discarded frame (b) looks similar to the accepted frames (d) and (f), also in terms of gradient percentiles, the running video sequence context is different. Indeed, frame (b) comes slightly after a better frame subsequence whose frame (a) is a representative, while frame (d) and frame (f) come after very blurry subsequences represented respectively by frames (c) and (e).

The B_t^* window sample in Fig. 3 (purple dashed line) cannot take into account rapid scene change towards low gradient, while a strictly local sample such as for C_t (yellow dashed line), is too permissive, as well as the full-length sample of G_t (red dashed line), which cannot be so responsive to adapt to the scene. The B_t sample window (gray dashed line) is slightly more selective than C_t but it cannot handle a rapid



Figure 4: Image details for some frames of video sequence of Fig. 3, selected by DWAFS ((a),(d),(f)) and dropped ((b),(c),(e)) (best viewed in color).

decrease of gradient (see values around $t = 425$) and an the A_t sample (green dashed line) is an average between C_t and B_t . DWAFS final sample F_t (orange dashed line) responds better than others, also due to the double weighting of the samples both contained in C_t and B_t .

It is worth nothing that using the average values of the window samples instead of a combination of the mean and the standard deviation (not shown in the plot) would not be a good idea. Indeed, since the average value of a line slope is in the middle, it would be a value too low and permissive when the curve increases and a value too high and restrictive when the curve decreases.

3 EVALUATION

3.1 Experimental Setup

Four video sequences lasting about 1 minute each, with a resolution of 640×480 pixels exploring two different indoor scene were used (see Fig. 5) to demonstrate the effective benefits of DWAFS. The first three sequences, named *Desktop0*, *Desktop1* and *Desktop2* (see Fig. 5(a)), explore the same desktop environment as the camera undergoes to different motion speeds, so that motion blur effects and shakes decrease from *Desktop0* to *Desktop2*, and are recorded at 30 *fps*. The last *Monk* sequence (see Fig. 5(b)), taken at 15 *fps*, shows an object continuously observed from different viewpoints.

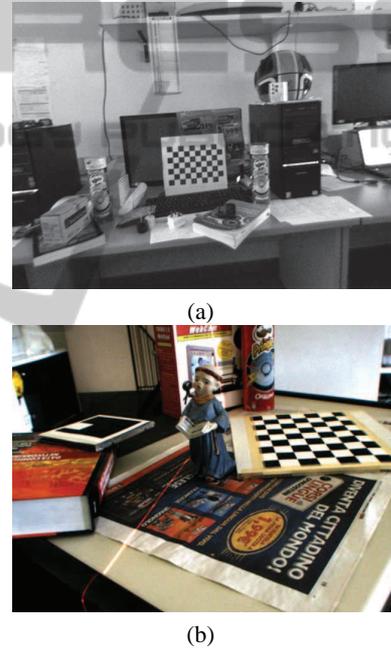


Figure 5: Snapshots of the environment of *Desktop0*, *Desktop1* and *Desktop2* example1 and of the *Monk* sequence example2.

Two different kinds of reconstruction tests were done. In one case, the 3D reconstruction results obtained using the whole sequence $V = \{I_t | t = 1, 2, \dots, n\}$, the set of frames selected by DWAFS $S = S_{n+1}$ (see Sect. 2) and its complement $C = V \setminus S$ were compared. In the other case, the uniform decimated video sequence V^r

$$V^r = \{I_t | t = 1 + ir \wedge i = 0, 1, \dots, \lfloor n/(r-1) \rfloor\} \quad (7)$$

generated from V by a stride of r frames, is compared with the corresponding DWAFS decimated frame subset $S^r \subseteq S$ of DWAFS frames temporally close to

V^r , so that a frame I_t belong to S^r only if the distance $|t - k|$ for a frame $I_k \in V^r$ is the minimal among all the frames in S .

In both tests w was heuristically set to the video frame rate, since it implies a reasonable camera shake of about 1s, while in the decimated test $r = \lceil w/2 \rceil$. For this setup it was experimentally verified that $|S| \simeq |V|/2$ while the maximum distance equals roughly the video frame rate. This also implies a four times faster computation, as 3D reconstruction algorithms have a time complexity of at least $O(n^2)$.

The 3D reconstruction was achieved by using the state-of-the-art freely available SfM pipeline *VisualSFM* (Wu, 2013) where matches between keypoints are computed on a window of h successive frames, where $h = 7$ for the *Monk* sequence and $h = 13$ for the other video sequences. Note that the windows size is intended in terms of successive frames given as input to *VisualSFM*. In the case of the full sequence V , the window size is doubled in order to preserve the spatial consistency between the frame matches.

No further methods are included in the evaluation, since no other similar methods exist to the best of our knowledge, and a comparison with keyframe selection strategies (Seo et al., 2008) or deblurring methods (Lee et al., 2011) would be unfair as they differ in purposes and use additional information. In particular, DWAFS aims at providing a fast data pre-processing to be used for other tasks, working on a simple gradient statistic, that does not require complex time-consuming image processing, as the computation of image feature keypoints, previous poses and 3D structure as most of keyframe selectors and deblurring methods, which represent possible final tasks which can benefit of DWAFS.

3.2 Results

Results in the case of the full and decimated sequences are reported respectively in Figs. 6 and 7. In particular, the histograms of the total number of 3D point of the reconstructed model are reported, as well as the corresponding mean reprojection error and the track length associated, together with the average number of feature points found on each frame. Note that for the full sequence V , the average track length bar is halved to get the same frame spatial track length, since V frames are about twice those of S and C .

Reasonably, it can be stated that the product of the average track length times the number of 3D points must be roughly equals to product of the mean number of features per images times the total number of image frames. So, in order to provide a more accu-

rate, defined and dense 3D reconstruction, not only a higher number of 3D points must be found, but also more features on the images or longer tracks. Both cases improve the reconstruction accuracy and decrease the estimation errors, by providing a denser 3D point cloud in the former case or a more robust and stable reconstruction in the latter case.

Referring to Fig. 6, the DWAFS strategy notably improves the reconstruction in the case of the *Monk* and *Desktop2* sequences. The relatively small decrease of the average track length can be attributed to a major number of features found on images. More robust and stable point are retained first so that improvements can be only done by adding points lasting less on the sequence with clearly shorter tracks, decreasing the average track length. Nevertheless, reprojection error still remains lower.

In the case of the *Desktop0* and *Desktop1*, although with respect to the full sequence V less 3D points are found, an higher number of features with longer track lengths are found in the image, which together with a lower reprojection error means that the V models contain fragmented and unstable tracks. This implies that multiple tracks are associated to the same 3D point which appears duplicated, that implies a misleading untrue denser model.

Concerning the comparison between the DWAFS sequence S and its complement C , there is noticeable difference between them for fast camera movements and shakes with noticeable blur (*Monk*, *Desktop0* and *Desktop1* videos). Also for slow camera movements (*Desktop2* sequence), although reduced, better results are obtained for S . Note that the reprojection error for C is lower than that of the full sequences V as this got a higher number of points per image. Nevertheless, the reprojection error of C is higher than that of S even if there is an higher number of points per image for the DWAFS sequence S .

Finally, from Fig. 7 it can be observed that better 3D reconstructions are obtained in the case of decimated sequences. The difference lowers as the video contains slow camera movements, in that case results are quite similar. Note that in the decimated case denser 3D models are found with respect to the full image sequence, since less dense sequences are used with the same frame windows h (see Sect. 3.1) to get the feature matches, that implies higher effective spatial window.

Moreover, by inspecting all histograms, the percentile parameter m seems to be quite stable, providing a peak for $m = 95$.

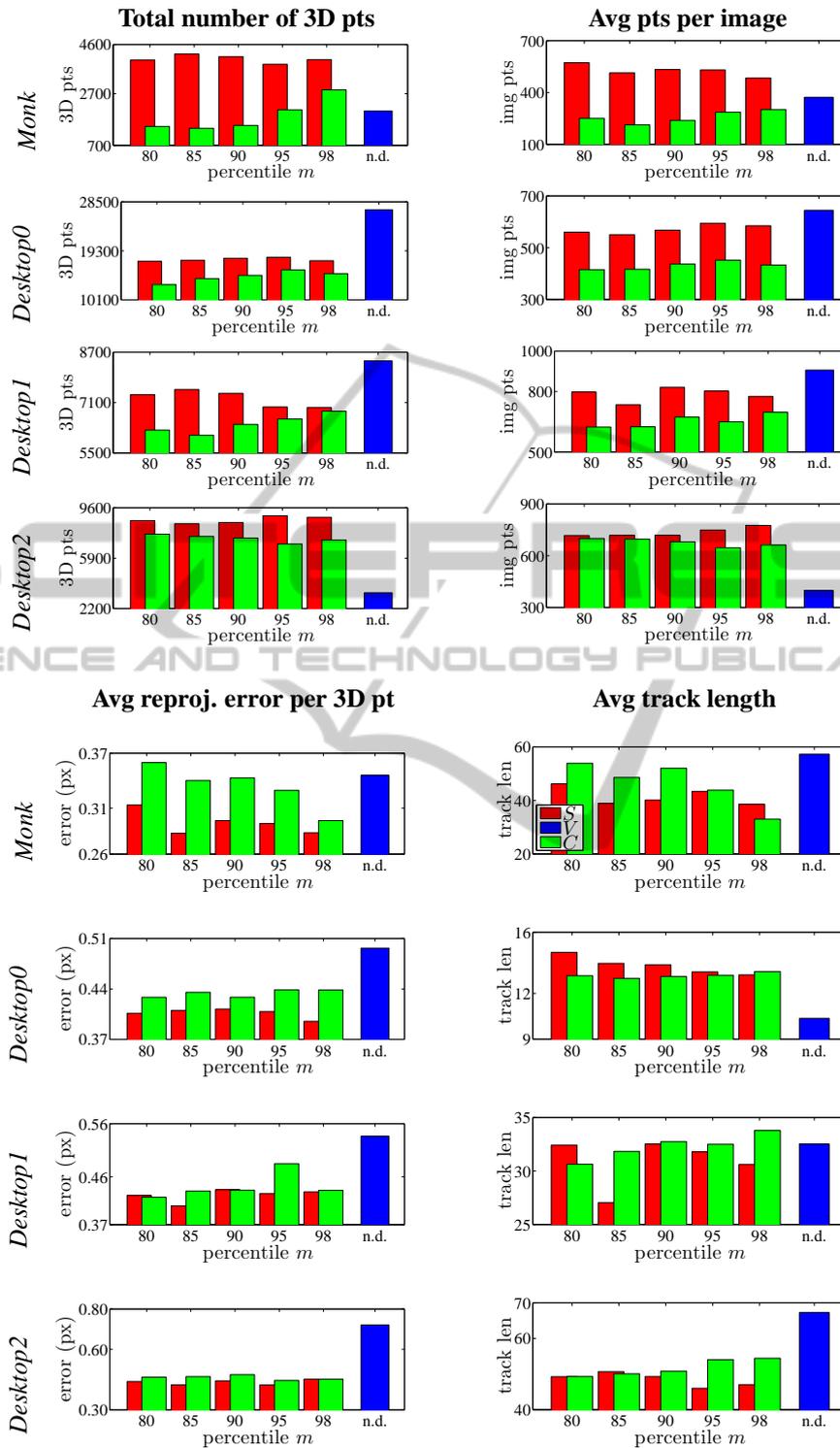


Figure 6: Evaluation of the 3D reconstruction results on the full test video sequences. The histograms of the total number of 3D points found, the average number of points for each image frame, the mean reprojection error for each 3D point and the average track length are reported for the full sequences V , DWAFS frames S and the complementary sets C (best viewed in color).

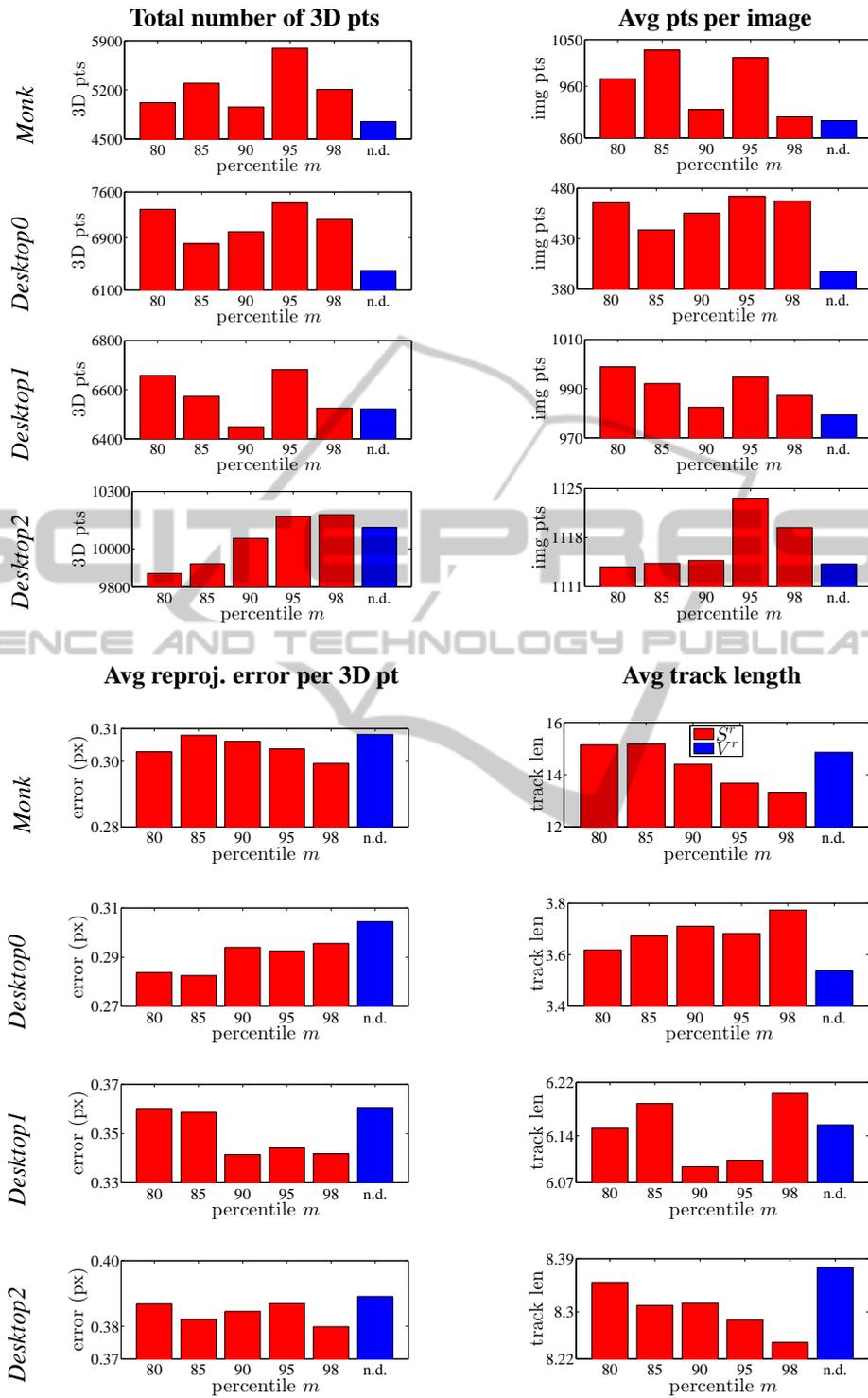


Figure 7: Evaluation of the 3D reconstruction results on the decimated test video sequences. The histograms of the total number of 3D points found, the average number of points for each image frame, the mean reprojection error for 3D point and the average track length are reported for the uniform decimated video sequences V^r and DWAFS decimated frames S^r (best viewed in color).

4 CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

This paper presented the DWAFS frame selection strategy, based on the gradient, to improve the 3D reconstruction of SfM and SLAM approaches both in terms of accuracy, point density and computational time from video sequences. This is done by dropping blurred frames or those which do not provide further information with respect to the current video sequence history. DWAFS provides a useful and fast frame pre-analysis which can be used to improve further image analysis tasks and, unlike keyframe selectors and deblurring methods, it does not require to compute complex time-consuming image processing, such as the computation of image feature keypoints, previous poses and 3D structure, or to know a priori the input sequence. Experimental evaluation show that it is robust, stable and effective. Future work will include more experimental evaluation to assess the validity of the DWAFS approach when embedded in keyframe selection methods, so that bad frames discarded by DWAFS cannot be given as input to the keyframe selector.

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