ISSN (Print): 2957-9325, ISSN (Online): 2957-9333

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF APPLIED ENGINEERING RESEARCH TRANSACTION

(Open Access-Referred-Peer-Reviewed Journal)

Journal homepage:https://ijaer-transaction.com/

Research Article

AUTOMATED CONSTRUCTION QUALITY CONTROL SYSTEM USING IMAGE PROCESSING

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Article History	Received: 15.05.2025	Accepted: 21.05.2025	Published: 28.05.2025

Abstract

The construction industry is increasingly embracing digital technologies to improve quality control and reduce human dependency in inspections. Traditional quality assurance methods, though widely used, are often time-consuming, error-prone, and inefficient in large-scale projects. This review explores the integration of image processing techniques into automated construction quality control systems. It covers the fundamental principles of computer vision, the types of imaging sensors utilized, and the role of machine learning and deep learning in defect detection. Applications such as crack identification, concrete monitoring, dimensional verification, and quality assurance in prefabricated components are examined. Furthermore, the review identifies key challenges including environmental variability, dataset limitations, real-time processing demands, and scalability issues. Future directions emphasize AI-driven inspections, integration with digital twins, and the need for standardized protocols. The findings highlight the transformative potential of image-based automation in enhancing construction quality, safety, and efficiency.

Keywords: Automated quality control; , Image processing; , Computer vision;, Construction inspection;, Crack detection

1. Introduction

The construction industry plays a critical role in infrastructure development and economic growth; however, ensuring quality control (QC) during construction processes remains a persistent challenge. Traditional methods of quality inspection, which rely heavily on manual labor and human judgment, are often time-consuming, prone to errors, and inefficient in detecting early-stage defects (Zhao et al., 2020). These limitations can lead to safety risks, increased costs, and delays in project delivery.

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With the increasing complexity and scale of construction projects, there is a growing demand for **automation and real-time monitoring** systems that can improve the accuracy and efficiency of quality control procedures (Khallaf & Mourshed, 2021). The integration of technology into quality assessment workflows not only reduces human dependency but also enhances consistency and reliability in inspections. As a result, the construction industry is witnessing a paradigm shift toward digital and data-driven quality management frameworks.

One of the most promising technological advancements in this regard is the application of **image processing and computer vision** techniques. These methods allow for the automated detection of surface defects, structural inconsistencies, and dimensional inaccuracies by analyzing visual data captured through cameras, drones, or other optical sensors (Yang et al., 2019). By converting raw images into quantifiable metrics, image processing empowers project managers and engineers with actionable insights in near real-time, facilitating proactive decision-making.

Furthermore, image-based quality control systems can be integrated with machine learning algorithms to continuously improve their accuracy over time. When combined with tools such as Building Information Modeling (BIM) and Internet of Things (IoT) platforms, these systems support comprehensive, end-to-end monitoring of construction activities (Kim et al., 2022).

2. Fundamentals of Image Processing in Construction

2.1 Basics of Computer Vision and Image Processing Techniques

Computer vision is a field of artificial intelligence (AI) that enables computers to interpret and process visual information, while image processing refers to techniques used to enhance or analyze images for extracting meaningful features. In the context of construction, these techniques enable automated monitoring of surface conditions, material placement, and structural integrity (Chen & Luo, 2020). The core image processing pipeline typically involves steps such as image acquisition, preprocessing (e.g., noise reduction, contrast enhancement), segmentation, and classification (Ghosh et

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al., 2019). These procedures form the foundation for identifying patterns, anomalies, and defects in construction elements.

2.2 Types of Images and Sensors Used in Construction

Different types of imaging technologies are employed in construction quality control based on specific inspection needs. **RGB cameras** are the most common and are used for capturing visual information in the visible light spectrum. **Thermal infrared cameras** are effective in detecting heat leaks, moisture ingress, and insulation defects, especially in building envelope inspections (Yin et al., 2021). **LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging)** sensors, which provide 3D point clouds, are used for volumetric analysis, dimension verification, and surface roughness measurements (Teizer et al., 2013). Additionally, multispectral and hyperspectral imaging systems are being explored for more advanced material characterization and deterioration assessment.

2.3 Feature Extraction and Defect Detection

Feature extraction is a crucial step in which relevant attributes, such as edges, textures, corners, and contours, are identified from images to facilitate defect recognition. Techniques like edge detection (e.g., Canny, Sobel), morphological filtering, and texture analysis help in identifying cracks, voids, or surface unevenness on concrete or brick structures (Patil & Rane, 2019). Machine vision systems can be trained to detect cracks as small as 0.1 mm, which is beyond the precision of human inspectors in many cases. Automation of such inspection tasks significantly improves consistency and reduces inspection time.

2.4 Machine Learning and Deep Learning Integration

The integration of machine learning (ML) and deep learning (DL) with image processing has revolutionized construction defect detection. Traditional image processing relies heavily on hand-crafted features, but ML algorithms like Support Vector Machines (SVM) and k-Nearest Neighbors (k-NN) enable classification based on learned patterns from data (Ghanem et al., 2021). More recently, deep learning models such as Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) have achieved state-of-the-art performance in detecting complex construction defects from raw image data (Cha et al., 2017). These models learn hierarchical feature representations automatically and are particularly effective for tasks like crack classification, material segmentation, and anomaly detection on site.

3. Applications in Quality Control

3.1 Crack Detection and Surface Defect Analysis

One of the most prominent applications of image processing in construction is the **automated detection of cracks and surface defects**. Techniques such as edge detection, thresholding, and convolutional neural networks (CNNs) are used to identify micro-cracks, spalling, and corrosion on concrete surfaces (Cha et al., 2017). These systems outperform manual inspection in terms of speed, consistency, and ability to detect fine structural issues early.

3.2 Concrete Structure Monitoring

Image-based monitoring also enables assessment of **concrete curing, spalling, and void detection**. Infrared thermography and time-lapse photography are employed to track curing progress and detect anomalies beneath the surface (Yin et al., 2021). This helps ensure that concrete structures develop adequate strength and durability over time, reducing the risk of future failure.

3.3 Alignment and Dimension Verification

Image processing tools combined with 3D vision systems allow for **verification of component alignment, placement accuracy, and dimensional conformance**. By comparing as-built images with Building Information Modeling (BIM) data, discrepancies can be automatically flagged for correction (Kim et al., 2022). This reduces rework and helps maintain design precision in structural assembly.

3.4 Prefabricated and Modular Construction Quality Checks

In **prefabrication and modular construction**, where components are manufactured off-site, image processing ensures consistent quality before shipment. Automated inspection systems evaluate surface finish, joint integrity, and dimensional accuracy using high-resolution imagery and pattern recognition algorithms (Li et al., 2020). This

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accelerates quality checks without interrupting production workflows.

4. Challenges and Limitations

4.1 Variability in Lighting, Texture, and Environmental Conditions

A major challenge in applying image processing on construction sites is the **variation in lighting, texture, weather, and dust**, which affects image clarity and consistency. These uncontrolled factors lead to reduced detection accuracy, especially in outdoor or poorly lit environments (Zhao et al., 2020).

4.2 Dataset Availability and Annotation Issues

The development of reliable models requires **large annotated datasets**, which are scarce in the construction domain. The time and expertise needed for manual annotation further hinder the adoption of supervised learning approaches (Ghanem et al., 2021). There is a pressing need for standardized datasets representing diverse construction scenarios.

4.3 Real-Time Processing and Integration with BIM/IoT

While real-time quality control is desirable, it is **computationally intensive**. Integrating image processing systems with BIM and IoT platforms requires robust architectures that can process data on-site or on the cloud with minimal latency (Khallaf & Mourshed, 2021). This complexity slows deployment in large-scale projects.

4.4 Cost, Scalability, and Worker Adaptation

Despite the long-term benefits, **initial investment in hardware, software, and training** remains a barrier. Many small- to medium-sized contractors struggle to adopt these technologies due to budget constraints and a lack of technical expertise among their workforce (Teizer et al., 2013).

5. Future Directions and Conclusion

5.1 Advancements in AI-Driven Visual Inspection

Recent advancements in AI, particularly in **deep learning and computer vision**, have shown promise for improving accuracy in defect classification and prediction. Transfer learning and self-supervised learning are being explored to overcome dataset limitations

(Chen & Luo, 2020).

5.2 Integration with Drones, Robotics, and Digital Twins

Future quality control systems are expected to be more autonomous, leveraging **drones for aerial inspection**, **robotic arms for scanning**, and **digital twins for real-time comparison** of actual and expected construction states (Ghosh et al., 2019). These integrated systems will enable proactive maintenance and quality assurance.

5.3 Standardization and Regulatory Considerations

For widespread adoption, **standardized inspection protocols and regulatory frameworks** are necessary. Industry-wide benchmarks will ensure that automated systems meet acceptable accuracy and safety standards (Yin et al., 2021).

5.4 Summary of Findings and Future Research Gaps

This review demonstrates that image processing offers transformative potential for construction quality control, improving speed, accuracy, and objectivity. However, **further research is needed** in developing adaptable algorithms for variable site conditions, constructing comprehensive datasets, and integrating these systems within existing project workflows. Future innovations should aim for cost-effective, scalable solutions tailored to the unique demands of the construction industry.

6. Author(S) Contribution

The writers affirm that they have no connections to, or engagement with, any group or body that provides financial or non-financial assistance for the topics or resources covered in this manuscript.

7. Conflicts of Interest

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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9. Sources of Funding

The authors received no financial aid to support for the research.

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