# **COMPARATIVE PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS OF SINGLE-SHOT DETECTOR AND FASTER R-CNN FOR OBJECT DETECTION**

# Jie Zhao and Meng Su

School of Engineering, Penn State University, The Behrend College

# *ABSTRACT*

*Object detection is a pivotal technology in computer vision that detects multi-class objects with their localizations in an image. It can untangle the enigma of complicated scenes in the real world. Two main algorithms for implementing object detection are Single-Shot Detector (SSD) and Faster RCNN, which have unique structures of deep learning neural networks. This study compares two prominent object detection algorithms: SSD and Faster R-CNN, focusing on Intersection over Union (IoU) thresholds and runtime efficiency. Using COCO data sets with the validation of 2017, we evaluate the bounding box localization and recognition accuracy of both algorithms.* By analyzing *IoU thresholds* and time efficiency, our findings offer insights into selecting optimized algorithms for different object detection tasks.

#### *KEYWORDS*

*Object Detection, Single Shot Detector, Faster RCNN, Deep Learning, Intersection of Union (IoU), LSVRC (Large Scale Visual Recognition Challenge), COCO Datasets*

# **1. INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1. Differences Between Image Recognition and Object Detection**

Image recognition and object detection are key computer vision components with distinct goals and applications. Image recognition focuses on identifying a specific object or class within an image, typically providing a label for the entire image [1].

For instance, an image might be classified as depicting a "cat" or a "dog." In contrast, object detection not only identifies multiple objects within a single image but also pinpoints their exact locations. This is typically accomplished by drawing bounding boxes around each detected object, enabling the analysis of complex scenes with several elements.

The key challenge of object detection lies in its ability to not only classify multiple objects but also accurately localize them. While image recognition is concerned with assigning a label, object detection requires both classification and spatial information, making it more complex. The ability to handle varying object sizes, multiple objects, and occlusions (where objects overlap or are partially hidden) is critical in object detection, bringing this task closer to human-level visual understanding [2].

# **1.2. Challenging Evaluation Metrics for Object Detection**

Evaluating object detection models is inherently more complex than image recognition. In image recognition, success is determined by matching the predicted label to the ground truth. Object detection, however, requires additional precision in the form of localization. It is not enough for a model to predict the correct class label; it must also place a bounding box around each object in the image with a high degree of accuracy [3,4,5].

One example of this challenge is in a scene with five zebras. While a model may correctly identify "zebra" as the class label, if the bounding boxes do not accurately correspond to the location of the zebras, the detection is considered imprecise. Therefore, both class accuracy and spatial accuracy are critical for robust object detection.

Adding another layer of complexity is the need for exact annotations of an object's size and position, which can be challenging to estimate visually. To address this, metrics like Intersection over Union (IoU) are utilized to quantify the overlap between the predicted bounding box and the ground truth, providing a clear measure of localization accuracy.

# **2. RELATED WORK**

In recent years, the field of object detection has advanced significantly, leading to the development of various models designed to enhance accuracy, speed, and applicability across different tasks. In this section, we explore two prominent models, Single Shot Detector (SSD) and Faster R-CNN, which represent the two main approaches to object detection: single-stage and multi-stage pipelines. Additionally, we discuss the importance of utilizing the COCO dataset for training and evaluating these models, as well as the metrics employed to compare their performance.

#### **2.1. Single Shot Detector (SSD)**

The Single Shot Detector (SSD) is an object detection model that employs a single-stage architecture. This approach enables the model to perform both object classification and localization simultaneously in one forward pass through the neural network. It is faster than multi-stage models because it avoids the need for a region proposal stage. SSD employs a base network, typically VGG16, which acts as a feature extractor. On top of this, SSD adds several convolutional layers to detect objects at different scales. These layers predict the bounding boxes and class scores for each object directly from the feature maps [6,7,8,9,10,11].

#### **2.1.1. Performance and Applications**

SSD is widely known for its balance between speed and accuracy. Thanks to its architectural design, the SSD model is capable of processing images in real time. This makes it ideal for applications that demand rapid detection, such as autonomous driving, surveillance systems, and live video analysis. However, SSD tends to struggle with detecting small objects due to its singlestage structure, where smaller objects may not be detected in lower-resolution feature maps  $[6,7,8,9,10,11]$ .

#### **2.1.2. Why Pytorch?**

The implementation of SSD in PyTorch is advantageous due to the framework's flexibility and strong support for dynamic computation graphs. PyTorch is widely adopted for research and development because of its ease of use, active community support, and seamless integration with GPU acceleration, which is essential for training large models like SSD on datasets such as COCO.

# **2.2. Faster-RCNN**

Faster R-CNN is a multi-stage object detection model that builds on the earlier R-CNN and Fast R-CNN architectures. A significant innovation in Faster R-CNN is the integration of the Region Proposal Network (RPN). In the initial stage, the RPN generates a set of candidate object proposals, which are then used for further processing. The second stage of Faster R-CNN processes these proposals using a convolutional network to classify objects and refine their bounding boxes. This two-stage process allows for more precise object detection, especially for smaller objects and crowded scenes [12,13,14,15].

#### **2.2.1. Performance and Applications**

While Faster R-CNN is slower than SSD, it offers superior accuracy, particularly in cases where fine-grained localization is required. This makes it well-suited for tasks where accuracy is more important than speed, such as medical image analysis, wildlife monitoring, and detailed video analytics. The multi-stage approach enables the model to handle complex scenes with overlapping objects, ensuring higher precision even in challenging environments [12,13,14,15].

# **2.2.2. Comparison of SSD and Faster-RCNN**

The key difference between SSD and Faster R-CNN lies in their architecture. SSD is a singlestage detector, which optimizes speed by detecting objects directly from feature maps without a region proposal step. This makes SSD more efficient but less accurate for small objects and crowded scenes. In contrast, Faster R-CNN is a two-stage detector, first proposing regions and then refining the detection. This results in slower processing but higher accuracy, especially when dealing with complex images or small objects.

# **2.3. COCO Datasets**

The COCO (Common Objects in Context) dataset is a widely used benchmark for object detection, segmentation, and captioning tasks. The COCO 2017 dataset is particularly important for training and evaluating models like SSD and Faster R-CNN due to its diversity and complexity. The dataset includes [16]:

- 118,000 training images
- 5,000 validation images
- 41,000 test images

Each image is annotated with objects from 91 categories, such as "person," "vehicle," and "animal." These categories are further grouped into 12 super-categories, including "furniture," "appliance." and "sports" [16].

#### **2.3.1. Comparison Between COCO Versions**

COCO provides several versions (2014, 2015, 2017), with the 2017 version being widely used in current research due to its updated annotations and larger dataset size. The variety of objects, including small, medium, and large objects, as well as the crowded scenes, make COCO an excellent dataset for evaluating object detection models in diverse and realistic contexts [16].

### **2.3.2. Importance of COCO for Model Evaluation**

COCO's detailed annotations, which include bounding boxes, segmentation masks, and keypoints, allow for precise evaluation of both object localization and classification. This comprehensive dataset ensures that models are tested on challenging real-world scenarios, making it a gold standard for object detection research.

# **2.4. Object Detection Metrics (LSVRC – Large Scale Visual Recognition Challenge)**

Two primary metrics are used to evaluate object detection models: runtime efficiency and recognition accuracy [17,18].

#### **2.4.1. Runtime Efficiency**

Runtime efficiency evaluates how quickly the model can process images and detect objects. For real-time applications, such as autonomous driving, faster models like SSD are preferable because they can process more frames per second (FPS) compared to models like Faster R-CNN, which are slower due to their multi-stage processing [17,18].

# **2.4.2. Recognition Accuracy**

Recognition accuracy is measured using metrics like Intersection over Union (IoU), which calculates the overlap between predicted bounding boxes and the ground-truth annotations. Higher IoU thresholds indicate more precise localization. While Faster R-CNN typically achieves higher IoU scores, SSD may struggle with small objects due to its single-stage approach. For multi-object detection, achieving high IoU thresholds across multiple objects remains challenging, as it requires precise localization of each object in the image [17,18].

#### **2.4.3. Application to SSD and Faster R-CNN**

Both SSD and Faster R-CNN are evaluated based on a balance between speed and accuracy. SSD excels in scenarios requiring real-time detection, where small trade-offs in accuracy are acceptable. With its more intricate architecture, Faster R-CNN is particularly well-suited for tasks where accuracy is of utmost importance, such as detecting small objects or identifying items in crowded environments. These trade-offs between speed and accuracy should be carefully considered when choosing the most appropriate model for specific tasks.

# **3. METHODOLOGIES**

# **3.1. Object Detection Metric and the IoU Measurements**

Object detection metrics serve to figure out two following relations, which are shown below:

- Each bounding box should be mapped to the related class label.
- The bounding box with the class label in ground truth annotation should be mapped to the related one in the model's prediction.

The intersection of union (IoU) is the basis for determining two relations. The IoU is derived from the Jaccard index, which measures the correlation between two areas. The correlation between the two trajectory areas is converted to an overlapping area between the vicinity. The bigger the value of correlation, the larger the overlapping area. The extreme case is if trajectory

areas resemble each other, the value of IoU is 1. The other extreme case is that if two areas are independent of each other, the value of IoU is 0. Hence, the range of values in IoU is between 0 and 1 [19,20,21,22,23,24,25].

In turn, the IoU equation between the ground truth annotation and the model's prediction is shown below [19,20]:

$$
IoU = \frac{Area_{Intersection}}{Area_{union}}
$$

$$
IoU = \frac{Area_{Intersection}}{Area_{ground\_truth} + Area_{prediction} - Area_{Intersection}}
$$

Even though the constant threshold of IoU is critical to evaluating recognition accuracy in object detection, specific IoU values vary in different literatures. In [26], the constant thresholds of IoU are 0.26, 0.27, 0.49, 0.59, 0.65 and 0.66. In [27], the constant thresholds of IoU are 0 and 0.125. In [28], the constant thresholds of IoU are 0.38, 0.56, 0.67 and 0.76. However, we will propose the suggested constant thresholds for the explanations in the experiment.

#### **3.2. Case Studies of TP, FP, FN, and TN**

Another four important indexes of object detection metrics are TP, FP, FN, and TN, with the definition shown below [19,20]:

- TP: Truth Positive
- FP: False Positive<br>- FN: False Negative
- FN: False Negative
- TN: Truth Negative

Next, by using COCO data sets, four metric indexes are redefined [19,20]:

- TP: The set bounding box makes the overlapping area greater than the iou threshold, and the predictive class label is the same as the COCO annotation.
- FP: The set bounding box makes the overlapping area less than the iou threshold, even though the predictive class label is the same as the COCO annotation.
- FN: the set bounding box in prediction is independent of the bounding box in ground truth, no matter whether the class labels between the prediction and the COCO annotation are the same.
- TN: The set bounding box makes the overlapping area greater than the iou threshold, but the predictive class label differs from the COCO annotation.

As an illustration, the image in the COCO 2017 validation, "000000000885.jpg" [16], is deployed to explain the four redefined metrics, shown in Fig.1-4.



Fig.1 The Case of TP with COCO Image, "000000000885.jpg"

In Fig.1, the red bounding box in the model's prediction fits well with the COCO ground truth in green. Meanwhile, the red label annotation in the model's prediction, "person", is the same as the COCO annotation in green.



Fig.2 The Case of FP with COCO Image, "000000000885.jpg"

In Fig.2, the red bounding box in the model's prediction is not big enough to cover the COCO ground truth in green, even though the red label annotation in the model's prediction, "person", is the same as the COCO annotation in green. This means that the performance of the model's prediction is weak.



Fig.3 The Case of FN with COCO Image, "000000000885.jpg"

Fig.3 shows no overlapping area between the red bounding box in the model's prediction and the COCO ground truth in green. There is no correlation between the prediction and the ground truth, no matter whether the red label annotation in the model's prediction, "person," is the same as the COCO annotation in green. In this case, we do not need to consider the iou.



Fig.4 The Case of TN with COCO Image, "000000000885.jpg"

In Fig.4, although the red bounding box in the model's prediction fits well with the COCO ground truth in green, as the red label annotation in the model's prediction, "sheep," is different from the COCO annotation in green, "person," it loses its meaning when calculating the iou.

# **3.3. Proposed Recognition Accuracy**

The recognition accuracy is proposed and measured, which is shown below.

# **3.3.1. Proposed\_AP(Average Precision)**

Given an object in the COCO data set, the total number of bounding boxes in the model's prediction is related to average recognition precision if the IoU is greater than the IoU threshold. The IoU threshold, as a constant between 0 and 1, is empirical data that determines the object detection metrics [19,20].

# **3.3.2. Proposed\_mAP (mean Average Precision)**

Based on the proposed\_AP, the equation of the proposed mAP is shown below [19,20]:

 $mAP_{proposed} = \frac{\sum num of bounding boxes in model's prediction}{\sum num of bounding boxes in ground truth annotation}$ 

# **3.4. Pseudo Algorithm for Single Shot Detector**

The pseudo-code for object detection is shown below in Tab.1:



## **3.5. Pseudo Algorithm for Faster-RCNN**

The pseudo-code for Faster RCNN is similar to that for Single Shot Detector. The difference is, however, in the pseudo-code for Faster RCNN, inside the "Outer loop in different sizes of images", the operation of "Fetch the total number of bounding boxes per image per class object in ground truth annotation" is replaced with the operation of using a threshold to get the total number of bounding boxes in the model's prediction. In turn, the inner loop is repeated based on the total number of bounding boxes in the model's prediction, rather than the total number of bounding boxes per image in ground truth.

# **4. EXPERIMENTS**

# **4.1. Parameters in the Pre-trained Models**

The experiment is conducted to leverage the evaluation of object detection between Single-Shot Detector and Faster RCNN. To implement the experiment, two pre-trained models of Single-Shot Detector and Faster RCNN are utilized with the support of Pytorch. As SSD is based on VGG16 with the structure of scale jittering, different scales used for training the SSD are [0.07, 0.15, 0.33, 0.51, 0.69, 0.87, 1.05]. In addition, the total number of parameters, including hyperparameters, is 35641826. On the other hand, Faster RCNN is based on the Resnet50 as its basic structure, and the total number of parameters used for training the model is 41755286.

# **4.2. Constant IoU thresholds and COCO 2017 validation**

Using COCO data with the 2017 validation as image sets, several constant thresholds of the IoU are trialed for object detection performance. The constant thresholds of the IoU are selected from the evenly normal distribution. Hence, the constant thresholds of the IoU used in the experiment are 0.25, 0.5, 0.75, and 0.9. Besides, eight class categories with high occurrences in COCO data sets are selected for object detection evaluation. The eight class categories in COCO data sets are "person", "car", "horse", "tennis racket", "cup", "pizza", "dining table", and "laptop".

Besides, the configurations of implementing both SSD and Fatser-RCNN for object detection, are the graphic card - RTX 3060, and GPU usage for running the pre-trained model.

# **5. EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS AND ANALYSES**

The experiment results and analyses are shown in Tab.2-5.

# **5.1. The Experiments with Constant Threshold – 0.25**

The experiments with a constant threshold  $-0.25$  are conducted using both SSD and Faster-RCNN. The results are shown in Tab.2.

In Tab.2, our findings are shown below:

- For running time efficiency, with the unit-second, different categories in Single Shot Detector are in Column Three, and Faster RCNN are in Column Six. On average, the Single Shot Detector is quicker seven times than Faster RCNN.
- In each algorithm, given the class category and the total number of per-class category bounding boxes in ground truth, recognition accuracy results from the total number of bounding boxes in prediction divided by the bounding boxes in the ground truth.

- The red and bold row of the bounding box number of prediction indicates the principle of the pre-trained model is not the case that will occur in the real applications, because the bounding box number of prediction must not be beyond the bounding box number of COCO annotation as the maximum. Therefore, if the bounding box number of prediction is red and bold, the recognition accuracy is not taken into account.
- With the iou\_threshold 0.25, Single Shot Detector outperforms Faster RCNN because Single Shot Detector has fewer rows with red and bold digits than Faster RCNN. However, the row with red and bold digits, which violates the regulation between prediction and the ground truth, indicates incorrect prediction or inappropriate bounding boxes in the prediction. As a result, the Single Shot Detector with fewer rows of red and bold digits is superior to Faster RCNN when iou threshold is 0.25.
- Consider the cause of the row with the red and bold digit where the total number of bounding boxes in prediction is greater than that in the ground truth annotation. The small value of the iou threshold as a gatekeeper will not be selected out but filtered in a lot of bounding boxes as the model's prediction, where there may include the bounding boxes the ground truth annotation judges as FP. The bounding box's combination of TP and FP in prediction would be greater than sorely TP in ground truth annotation.



Table 2. Performance comparison between SSD and Faster-RCNN with constant threshold - 0.25.

# **5.2. The Experiments with Constant Threshold – 0.5**

The experiments with a constant threshold  $-0.5$  are conducted using both SSD and Faster-RCNN. The results are shown in Tab.3.

In Tab.3, our findings are shown below:

- Compared with Tab.1, Tab. 2 has fewer red and bold rows, indicating better performance in iou threshold with 0.5.
- For time efficiency, approximately, running SSD for object detection is seven times quicker than Faster-RCNN.
- As to recognition accuracy, given the class objects "car," "horse," "dining table," and "laptop," the principle of SSD resembles Faster-RCNN, because their difference in

recognition accuracy is no greater than 10%. Given the class objects – "tennis racket" and "cup", SSD is inferior to Faster-RCNN, because their difference in recognition accuracy is at least greater than 20%. Given the class objects – "pizza", SSD is superior to Faster-RCNN, because their difference in recognition accuracy is at least greater than 40%.

• Consider the cause of the row with the red and bold digit where the total number of bounding boxes in prediction is greater than that in-ground truth annotation. For object detection, multi-class categories' small areas may cause the wrong FP bounding boxes. If multiple class categories exist in an image, all areas of the bounding box of prediction, the bounding box of ground truth, and their IoU (if their intersection is not zero) will be very small and sensitive. This means that a small variation from one iou threshold to another will make a huge difference in the ratio of TP bounding boxes to the FP in the model's prediction, which will cause imprecise recognition accuracy.



Tab.3: performance comparison between SSD and Faster-RCNN with constant threshold - 0.5.

# **5.3. The Experiments with Constant Threshold – 0.75**

The experiments with a constant threshold  $-0.75$  are conducted using both SSD and Faster-RCNN. The results are shown in Tab.4.

Tab.4: performance comparison between SSD and Faster-RCNN with constant threshold - 0.75.



In Tab.4, our findings are shown below:

- $\bullet$  As there is no red and bold row, the constant iou threshold 0.75, can guarantee recognition accuracy, avoiding imprecise cases.
- For time efficiency, running SSD for object detection is probably seven times quicker than Faster-RCNN.
- As to recognition accuracy, given the class objects "person", "car", "horse" and "laptop", the principle of SSD resembles Faster-RCNN, because their difference of recognition accuracy is no greater than 10%. Given the class objects – "tennis racket" and "cup", SSD is inferior to Faster-RCNN, because their difference in recognition accuracy is at least greater than 10%. Given the class objects – "pizza" and "dining table", SSD is superior to Faster-RCNN, because their difference in recognition accuracy is at least greater than 10%.

# **5.4. The Experiments with Constant Threshold – 0.9**

The experiments with a constant threshold  $-0.9$  are conducted using both SSD and Faster-RCNN. The results are shown in Tab.5.



Tab.5: performance comparison between SSD and Faster-RCNN with constant threshold - 0.9.

In Tab.5, our findings are shown below:

- As there is no red and bold row, the constant iou threshold  $0.9$  can guarantee recognition accuracy, with avoidance of imprecise cases.
- For time efficiency, running SSD for object detection is statistically seven times quicker than Faster-RCNN.
- As to recognition accuracy, given the class objects "car", "tennis racket", "cup", "dining table" and "laptop", the principle of SSD resembles Faster-RCNN, because their difference in recognition accuracy is no greater than 10%. Given the class objects – "person", "horse" and "pizza", SSD is superior to Faster-RCNN, because their difference in recognition accuracy is at least greater than 10%.
- Compared with Tab.2-4, the recognition accuracy of both algorithms in Tab.5 is lower. This means that, when iou threshold increases, the recognition accuracy of both algorithms decreases.

# **CONCLUSIONS**

The conclusions are drawn, which are shown below:

- The advantage of choosing the constant iou thresholds is simplifying the computation in implementing both algorithms.
- The selection of constant thresholds is tricky for object detection performance, because the iou\_threshold determines both performance evaluation stability and recognition accuracy. In the first placement, the small value of the iou\_threshold, which filters in more predictive cases, will intrigue the unstabilized performance evaluation because the predictive cases may include both TP and FP cases. In the second placement, the large iou\_threshold will ensure stability in the performance evaluation. Nonetheless, it narrows down the possibility of recognition accuracy because the iou\_threshold is inversely proportional to recognition accuracy.
- For object detection, using COCO 2017 validation, SSD is proven to be more optimized than Faster-RCNN. It is because that SSD is testified to be more efficient than Faster-RCNN and that SSD provides more performance evaluation stability than Faster-RCNN.
- When the data sets are scalable, like COCO data with 2017 training sets, the question of which algorithm, either SSN or Faster-RCNN, is optimized for object detection still awaits the answer.

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#### **AUTHORS**

**Jie Zhao** is an assistant professor of Computer Science and Software Engineering at Penn State University. She received her PhD in ECE at Texas Tech University in 2019 and worked as a Postdoc at Texas A&M University the next year. Her research interests include Computer Vision with Artificial Intelligence and Big Data Analytics with Machine Learning.

**Meng Su** is an associate professor of Computer Science and Software Engineering at Penn State University. He holds a B.S. and M.S. from Nanjing University and Ph.D. from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. His research interests encompass manifold learning, diffusion equations, and applications in data science.



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