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# Deep Learning for Car Damage Detection: A Comprehensive Review

**Abhishek Narsayya Bathula, Khan Mohammed Suleman, Khan Faiyaz Ahmed, Gaikwad Vaishnavi, Prof. Rashmi Mahajan**
Dept. of Artificial Intelligence & Machine Learning,
Shivajirao S. Jondhale College of Engineering, Dombivli (E), India

**Abstract:** *The accurate and efficient assessment of vehicle damage is a critical requirement for industries such as automotive insurance, car rentals, and resale markets. Traditional manual inspection methods are slow, subjective, and prone to inconsistency. With the rapid evolution of Artificial Intelligence, particularly deep learning and computer vision, automated car damage detection has gained significant research attention. This review presents a comprehensive study of major advancements in deep learning-based vehicle damage detection, covering foundational CNN models, transfer learning approaches, object detection frameworks, and hybrid architectures. Key challenges—including limited datasets, difficulty detecting subtle damages, lack of severity estimation, and computational complexity—are highlighted. The review also discusses future research directions to achieve fully automated, robust, and interpretable real-world systems*

**Keywords***:* Car Damage Detection, Deep Learning, CNN, Transfer Learning, Object Detection, Computer Vision

## I. INTRODUCTION

Vehicle inspection plays an essential role in insurance claim processing, rental car management, and used-car evaluation. Manual inspection, although widely practiced, is time-consuming, costly, and inconsistent. With the rise of deep learning, automated visual inspection has become feasible due to advancements in Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) capable of recognizing complex damage patterns such as dents, cracks, and scratches.

Deep learning models have demonstrated superior performance compared to traditional image processing methods. Their ability to learn hierarchical features allows the detection of subtle and complex damages. This review consolidates key research contributions, performance trends, and existing limitations in automated car damage detection.

## II. REVIEW METHODOLOGY

A systematic review was conducted using keywords such as car damage detection, deep learning, CNN, object detection, and transfer learning. Relevant studies published between 2018 and 2024 were selected from major databases. Only peer-reviewed papers demonstrating practical applications or empirical performance on benchmark datasets were included.

## III. ANALYSIS OF EXISTING TECHNIQUES

### A. Foundational CNN-Based Approaches

Early studies utilized CNN models trained from scratch to classify damage versus non-damage images. Although these models achieved promising accuracy, they required large datasets and struggled with real-world variations such as lighting, angle, and background clutter.

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**B. Transfer Learning for Enhanced Accuracy**

Transfer learning models such as VGG16, VGG19, ResNet50, and EfficientNet significantly improved damage detection accuracy by leveraging pre-trained feature extractors. EfficientNet-B3 models achieved above 95% accuracy in several studies.

**C. Object Detection for Damage Localization**

Models such as YOLOv3, YOLOv5, and RetinaNet enabled localization of damage regions using bounding boxes. These approaches are better suited for applications requiring repair estimation or part-level analysis.

**D. Advanced and Hybrid Models**

Recent research introduced techniques such as Class Activation Maps (CAMs), multi-scale CNNs, and attention-based models to improve interpretability and the detection of small or subtle damages.

TABLE I

| Paper Name / Focus | SUMMARY OF KEY LITERATURE IN CAR DAMAGE DETECTION | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Authors & Year | Idea / Model | Performance |
| ”Vehicle Damage Detection...” | Kruthi V, et al. (2018) | CNN based approach | 92.2% Accuracy |
| DamageNet: Weakly Supervised...” | Song Y. et al. (2019) | Weakly supervised learning | 80.3% Accuracy |
| ”Transfer Learning Based Car...” | Zeng X. et al. (2020) | Transfer learning with VGG16 | 93% Accuracy |
| ”Vehicle Damage Detection | Sengupta S, et al. (2020Caps), paragraph | Deep learning with VGG19, ResNet50 | 91.4% Accuracy |
| ”Car Damage Detection with...” | Reddy N, et al. (2021) | Class activation maps (ResNet, VGG16) | 92.4% Accuracy |
| ”Car Damage Detection using...” | Cui Y. et al. (2021) | Transfer learning with EfficientNet-B3 | 95.5% Accuracy |

## IV. DISCUSSION AND IDENTIFIED RESEARCH GAPS

Despite notable progress, several challenges remain:

1. Dataset Limitations: Real-world annotated datasets are scarce. Many existing datasets are captured under controlled conditions, reducing model generalization.
2. Difficulty Detecting Fine Damage: Scratches and hairline cracks are often missed due to low contrast and ambiguity with background noise.
3. Absence of Severity Estimation: Most models classify damage type but fail to categorize severity levels such as minor, moderate, or severe.
4. Computational Constraints: Large architectures are unsuitable for mobile deployment, limiting real-world applications.
5. Lack of Interpretability: Many models operate as black boxes, reducing trust in high-risk industries such as insurance.

## V. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Deep learning has significantly advanced automated car damage detection, with CNN, transfer learning, and object detection models achieving high accuracy. However, the absence of robust datasets, real-world adaptability, and severity estimation continues to hinder deployment.

Future research should focus on:

1. Synthetic Data and GAN-Based Augmentation
2. Severity Level Classification
3. Repair Cost Estimation Models
4. Lightweight and Interpretable Architectures (MobileNet, Edge AI)
5. Unified End-to-End Damage Assessment Pipelines

Successfully addressing these challenges will enable complete automation—from image capture to cost estimation.

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