IJARSCT
International Journal of Advanced Research in Science, Communication and Technology
International Open-Access, Double-Blind, Peer-Reviewed, Refereed, Multidisciplinary Online Journal
ISSN: 2581-9429
Volume 6, Issue 2, October 2026
Impact Factor: 8.2

Smart Waste Detection and Management System

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Abstract: *Mixed waste reduces recycling efficiency and increases the time and effort required for manual segregation. This paper presents a literature survey and proposed design for a smart waste detection and automatic segregation system using sensors and a conveyor belt. Existing approaches use image-based deep learning, material sensors, or mechanical sorting mechanisms. Their comparison indicates that identifying waste is only one part of an effective solution: the system must also coordinate item detection, conveyor movement and accurate placement into a collection bin. The proposed design uses a presence sensor to start the conveyor, a detection zone using suitable sensors and/or a camera, a microcontroller for control, and a rotating platform carrying separate bins. The system is intended to classify selected categories such as plastic, paper and organic waste and display the detected category on a laptop. Since prototype testing is required, no unmeasured accuracy or performance results are claimed.*

Keywords: Smart Waste Management; Waste Segregation; Sensors; Conveyor Belt; Deep Learning; Automatic Sorting; Microcontroller.

I. INTRODUCTION

Solid waste includes materials such as plastic, paper, organic matter, glass and metal. When these materials are mixed, recycling becomes more difficult and some reusable materials may be lost. Manual segregation requires repeated human handling and may be slow when waste arrives in large quantities.

Automated waste segregation combines sensing, decision-making and a physical sorting mechanism. A sensor can detect the presence of an item or measure a material property, while a camera and machine-learning model can classify items from visual features. A conveyor transports the item through the detection point, and an actuator directs it into a suitable bin.

The proposed project focuses on an end-to-end student-scale prototype. It is designed to detect incoming waste, start the conveyor only when required, classify the item in a detection zone, rotate the collection platform to the selected bin and then wait for the next item.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW METHODOLOGY

The survey is organized thematically rather than as a separate summary of each paper. The reviewed work is compared according to sensing approach, classification method, physical sorting mechanism, main contribution and limitations. Three relevant research directions are considered: CNN-based image classification, deep-learning-based automated segregation, and systems combining sensor technology with machine learning.

The comparison is used to derive a project-specific research gap and a proposed workflow. Published results are attributed to their respective studies; they are not treated as results of the proposed prototype.

III. BACKGROUND AND NEED

A practical waste segregation system must detect an incoming item, transport it to a detection point, determine its category, communicate the decision to the controller, align a suitable bin and release the item without interrupting the next cycle.

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Sensor-only systems can be economical, but a single sensor may not distinguish materials with similar measured properties.

Vision-based systems can support several categories, but their output may be affected by lighting, object orientation,

IV. COMPARATIVE SYNTHESIS

4.1 Existing Waste-Segregation Approaches

CNN-based classification uses image features to identify waste categories. Sensor-based approaches rely on measurable physical properties, while integrated systems connect recognition to a conveyor or actuator. The main distinction is whether a study addresses only recognition or also demonstrates physical discharge into a selected bin.

Study / System	Approach	Main Finding / Limitation	Relevance to Proposed Project
Mao et al. (2021) [1]	Optimized CNN for waste-image classification	Shows potential for image recognition; performance depends on data and test conditions.	Supports considering a camera/AI model for selected categories.
Automated segregation study (2024) [2]	Deep-learning classification and automated sorting	Shows the importance of connecting recognition to a physical sorting action.	Highlights coordination betweenclassification, conveyor and bin control.
Pučnik et al. (2024) [3]	Sensors combined with deep learning for plastic packaging	Illustrates a hybrid sensing approach; performance depends on materials and conditions.	Supports choosing sensors and vision according to budget and target categories.

4.2 Thematic Synthesis

The first theme is visual classification. CNN-based approaches can learn differences in shape, texture and colour from labelled images, but the training dataset must represent real operating conditions. The second theme is sensor-based detection. Sensors can support presence detection and selected material properties, but a single reading may not be enough for every waste type. The third theme is physical segregation. A correct classification must be converted into a timely motor or actuator command so that the item reaches the intended bin.

Together, these themes indicate that a prototype should evaluate not only classification but also conveyor reliability, rotatingplatform alignment and actual correct-bin placement.

V. RESEARCH GAPS IDENTIFIED

The comparison identifies three practical gaps. First, classification-focused studies do not by themselves establish whether an item can be sorted correctly by a physical mechanism. Second, conveyor movement and destination-bin alignment must be synchronized with the detection result. Third, low-cost prototypes require a simple control sequence that can be tested repeatedly with selected waste categories.

The proposed project addresses these gaps by integrating a presence sensor, conveyor belt, detection zone, controller and rotating three-bin platform. The intended contribution is the complete detection-to-segregation workflow; its reliability must be confirmed through prototype testing.

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VI. PROPOSED SMART WASTE SEGREGATION FRAMEWORK

The proposed framework has six stages: (1) Detect: a presence sensor detects waste on the input platform. (2) Transport: the controller starts the conveyor. (3) Classify: selected sensors and/or a camera determine the category. (4) Decide: the controller maps the category to a bin. (5) Position and discharge: a motor rotates the platform until the selected bin is aligned with the outlet. (6) Reset: the mechanism stops and waits for the next item.

6.1 Proposed Block Diagram



Fig. 1. Proposed block diagram of the smart waste segregation system.

6.2 Expected Outcomes and Evaluation

The expected outcome is a prototype that detects incoming waste, moves it through the detection zone, displays its category and directs it into the selected bin. Testing should record classification accuracy, correct-bin placement rate, and response time and repeated-cycle reliability. If camera classification is used, precision, recall, F1-score and a confusion matrix can be reported. No numerical performance is claimed before testing.

VII. ADVANTAGES AND LIMITATIONS

The design can reduce manual handling, demonstrate automatic conveyor control and connect classification with physical bin selection. Its modular structure allows additional sensors or improved classification to be added later.

Possible limitations include sensor ambiguity, camera sensitivity to lighting and object orientation, conveyor jams and inaccurate alignment of the rotating platform. The system may initially support only a small number of waste categories.

VIII. FUTURE SCOPE

Future improvements may include adding metal, glass and e-waste categories; improving camera-based classification with a larger dataset; adding bin-fill sensors; and sending operating status to an IoT dashboard. Mechanical improvements could include more accurate platform positioning, jam detection and safer conveyor operation.

IX. CONCLUSION

This literature survey compared image-based waste classification, sensor-assisted separation and automated sorting approaches. The reviewed work shows that waste recognition is only one part of a successful system; reliable segregation also depends on conveyor control, timing and destination-bin positioning. The proposed design combines a

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presence sensor, conveyor, detection zone, microcontroller and rotating collection platform. Its effectiveness remains to be established through physical testing.

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