Variations on Impulse Noise Model in Digital Image Processing Field: A Survey on Current Research Inclination

Sin Hoong Teoh and Haidi Ibrahim

Abstract—As the information from digital images are easier to be evaluated as compared with one dimensional signals, digital images are now commonly used in many research fields. Unfortunately, similar to other digital signals, digital images are also sometimes unintentionally corrupted by unwanted signals, called noise. One of the noises commonly corrupting digital image is the impulse noise. Therefore, impulse noise reduction has become one of the active researches in these recent years. Many impulse noise models have been proposed by researchers for this research purpose. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to investigate the popularity of these noise models. The research is done by a survey on available online materials. However, because there are more than thousands of related articles available online, the survey was carried out based on the keywords related to those articles. The research was restricted only to IEEEExplore® database. The result from this survey shown that the research related to impulse noise model in digital image processing is still showing an increasing trend. Among the impulse noise models, the salt-and-pepper noise is the most used impulse noise model in current literature.

Index Terms—Impulse noise, salt-and-pepper noise, fixed-valued impulse noise, random-valued impulse noise, uniform noise, universal impulse noise.

I. INTRODUCTION

With the advancement in computers and digital imaging technologies, the costs of digital cameras and computers are lowering each years, and thus these equipments are becoming affordable these days. The usage of digital images in our daily life is turning common. As more information can be extracted from digital images, as compared to one dimensional signal, many research areas, including material researches, are now utilizing digital images, such as microscopic images and X-ray images, as one of their evaluation tools. For example, Brook et al. [1] used radar images in order to inspect aeronautics composite materials and structures. Works by Kumar, Taheri, and Islam [2] used ultrasonic images in order to evaluate and detects several defects in a material. On the other hand, Thai et al. [3] utilizes video sequences to monitor special nuclear material.

Unfortunately, similar to other digital signals, digital images may suffer from unwanted signals known as noise [4]. There are a lot of noise types normally corrupt digital image [5]. One of these noise types is the impulse noise [6]. Impulse noise can be assumed as an additive noise [7], and randomly damages the pixel, at random positions [8]. Normally, impulse noise appears as black and white speckles on the image [9]. Pixels corrupted by impulse noise are normally having either extremely high, or extremely low intensity values [10]. Usually, they have very high contrast towards their clean, uncorrupted smooth surrounding areas [11]. Therefore, impulse noise, even at a low level of degradation, will damage the appearance of digital image dramatically [12]. Many important information will be altered by this noise. As a consequence, the impulse noise also might make a fully automatic vision based system to give inaccurate result.

Based on this problem, many researchers around the globe have put their serious efforts in searching suitable methods that are able to reduce the degree of degradation by the impulse noise. Such type of digital image restoration method requires the researchers to artificially add the impulse noise to set of test images in order to evaluate the performance of their proposed methods. The evaluations normally compare the filtered image with the artificially corrupted image. However, researchers have described impulse noise by many ways. There are many mathematical equations suggested by researcher in literatures to present impulse noise [13]. Several terms have been used to describe impulse noise models in reading materials, such as fixed valued impulse noise, salt-and-pepper noise, uniform impulse noise, random valued impulse noise, and universal impulse noise.

The main aim of this paper is to investigate the current research trend related to impulse noise models. First, we are interested to see whether the research regarding impulse noise in digital image processing is showing a growing trend, or a shrinking trend. Then, we are also interested to investigate which impulse noise model is the mostly used model in current literature.

The organization of this paper is as follows. After this introduction section, we will present our research approach in Section II. Then, we will present the findings from our survey in Section III. Finally, the findings will be concluded in Section IV.

II. METHODOLOGY

As time flies, research areas regarding impulse noise are becoming very large. Currently, when we search for online reading materials from the internet regarding impulse noise, we will be suggested thousands of related literatures. With this situation, it is very impossible to check every single literature to determine which impulse model it used in its
experiment. Fortunately, there are keywords attached to these materials. Therefore, we assume that these keywords reflect exactly the noise model used by that literature. Therefore, we will classify the research papers accordingly, based on their keywords.

It is worth noting that currently there are many scientific databases available in internet. Therefore, we need to restrict our search for online materials. To be more specific, we limit our search only to http://ieeexplore.ieee.org/Xplore/guesthome.jsp, which is the IEEExplore® database. This database is one of currently reliable databases, and it is up-to-date. The user interface provided by IEEExplore® is shown in Fig. 1. There are many features provided in this online database, which can help our research significantly.

The related keywords will be typed on the search box, as shown in Fig. 2. The database will then return its search results. Because we want to see the research trend over years, we will utilize the field of “publication year” which is located on the left side of the database, once the search results are been displayed, as shown in Fig. 3. From this field, we can choose to limit our search toward a specific year. The number of publications, based on its types (e.g. conference paper, journal & magazine, etc.) can be obtained from “content type” field, which is located above the “publication year” field.

One type of impulse noise is the salt-and-pepper noise. It can be described by either following equations [5]:

\[
p(N) = \begin{cases} 
0.5P & \text{salt; } N = L-1 \\
1-P & \text{noise free pixels; } 0 \leq N \leq L-1 \\
0.5P & \text{pepper; } N = 0 
\end{cases} \tag{1}
\]
where \( p \) is the noise distribution, \( P \) is the noise density (i.e. \( 0 \leq P \leq 1 \)), and \( P_1 + P_2 = P \). Therefore, in order to observe the trend related to this impulse noise model, we used “salt and pepper noise image” as the keyword for the search in IEEEExplore® database. The plot of the graph obtained from this keyword is shown in Fig. 6.

Salt-and-pepper noise is also known as the fixed valued impulse noise. Therefore, we also want to investigate the trend related to these terms. We use “fixed valued impulse noise image” as our keyword, and Fig. 7 shows the corresponding result. By comparing Fig. 6 with Fig. 7, we can see that the term salt-and-pepper is more popular than the term fixed valued impulse noise. This is observed from the number of publications. Furthermore, the term salt-and-pepper noise has been used since 1979, whereas the term fixed valued impulse noise started only in 1990. From these bar graphs also, we can observe that the usage of term salt-and-pepper is showing an increasing trend, while the term fixed valued impulse noise showing an almost constant trend over time.

Another type of impulse noise model is known as the uniform impulse noise. This noise can be described by the following equation:

\[
p(N) = \begin{cases} 
  P_1 &: \text{pepper; } N = 0 \\
  1 - P &: \text{noise free pixels; } 0 \leq N \leq L - 1 \\
  P_2 &: \text{salt; } N = L - 1 
\end{cases}
\]  

(2)

where \( L \) is the quantization level of the image. In this noise model, the distribution of the impulse noise is equally distributed. We used “uniform impulse noise image” as the keyword to IEEEExplore® database, and obtained the result as shown in Fig. 8. As the uniform impulse noise is also known as the random-valued impulse noise, we also investigate the use of this term. We use the term “random valued impulse noise” for this purpose. The graph obtained from this keyword is shown in Fig. 9.

From Fig. 8 and Fig. 9, although both the uniform impulse noise and the random-valued impulse noise are presenting the same type of impulse noise, the term random-valued impulse noise is more popular in the literature. The term random-valued impulse noise is showing an increasing trend.
Another type of impulse noise is the universal impulse noise. It can be considered as a weighted combination between the fixed valued impulse noises with the random valued impulse noise. In order to inspect the trend related to this impulse noise model, we use the keyword “universal impulse noise image” for our search. The bar graph obtained from this keyword is shown in Fig. 10. From this figure, we can observe that this type of noise model is seldom been used in research publications. However, this noise model is showing an increasing trend for the last three years.

By inspecting bar graphs shown in Fig. 5 to Fig. 10, we can see that the term salt-and-pepper noise is the most popular terms used by research literatures in this field. This is judged based on the quantity of the publications. Furthermore, this type of impulse noise is still showing an increasing trend. We also can assume that the researches related to salt-and-pepper noise, or fixed-valued impulse noise is more popular than the researches related to uniform impulse noise, or random-valued impulse noise.

**IV. SUMMARY**

This research investigates the current trend regarding to impulse noise models. It is found that the research related to impulse noise in image processing is still an interesting research field, and attracts more and more researchers in recent years. The research also shown that the salt-and-pepper noise is the most popular impulse noise model used in literature.

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**REFERENCES**


Sing Hoong Teoh received his B. Eng degree in electronic engineering from Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia, in year 2006. He is currently an engineer at Altera Malaysia, and furthering his MSc degree as a part time student at the School of Electrical and Electronic Engineering, Engineering Campus, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Nibong Tebal, Penang, Malaysia. His research interest is impulse noise reduction from digital images.

Huld Ibrahimm received his B. Eng degree in electronic engineering from Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia, in year 2000. He then received his Ph.D degree in digital image processing from the Centre for Vision, Speech, and Signal Processing (CVSSP), University of Surrey, Guildford, Surrey, United Kingdom in year 2005. He is now a senior lecturer at the School of Electrical and Electronic Engineering, Engineering Campus, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Nibong Tebal, Penang, Malaysia. His research interest includes digital image contrast enhancement, noise reduction, image segmentation, 3D visualization, and virtual reality.