

Deep Learning driven Multi-Modal Breast Cancer Detection for Early and Accurate Daigonosis

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ABSTRACT

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Breast cancer remains one of the leading causes of mortality among women worldwide, making early and reliable detection a clinical priority. Mammography continues to serve as the primary screening modality however, the subtle appearance of microcalcifications, dense tissue patterns, and variability in lesion morphology pose significant challenges for traditional computer-aided diagnosis systems. This review systematically examines recent advancements in segmentation and classification techniques for microcalcification detection, with a particular emphasis on the transition from classical image-processing and machine-learning approaches to modern deep-learning architectures, including convolutional neural networks (CNNs), vision transformers (ViTs), and hybrid feature-fusion models. The analysis highlights methodological strengths, dataset characteristics, evaluation strategies, and performance limitations reported in the literature. Furthermore, the review identifies persistent barriers such as limited annotated datasets, inter-patient heterogeneity, and reduced robustness in dense breast categories. By synthesizing current progress and gaps, this study underscores the growing potential of multimodal and hybrid deep-learning frameworks to enhance diagnostic accuracy, improve clinical decision support, and pave the way for more interpretable and generalizable breast cancer detection systems.

Keywords: Mammography, VIT, Microcalcifications, CNN.

1. INTRODUCTION

Breast cancer is the most diagnosed cancer among women worldwide and remains a leading cause of cancer-related mortality. Early detection significantly improves survival rates, making accurate diagnostic methods essential for effective clinical decision-making. According to recent global statistics, breast cancer accounted for over 2.3 million new cases in 2020, emphasizing its growing burden on healthcare systems. Traditional imaging techniques such as mammography, ultrasound, and MRI play a crucial role in screening and diagnosis. However, each modality has limitations. Mammography can struggle with dense breast tissue; ultrasound is highly operator-dependent; MRI, while sensitive, is costly and may produce false positives. These limitations highlight the need for more robust and intelligent diagnostic systems. Recent advances in deep learning have significantly improved automated breast cancer detection. Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) and Vision Transformers (ViTs) have achieved high accuracy in single-modality analysis, yet they still fail to capture the full spectrum of physiological and structural information required for precise diagnosis. To address this gap, multi-modal deep learning has emerged as a powerful approach. Multi-modal systems integrate data from multiple sources such as mammography, ultrasound, MRI, clinical records, and pathology reports to learn complementary features that are not available in any single modality. By leveraging fusion mechanisms such as feature-level fusion, attention-based fusion, and cross-modal representation learning, these methods improve lesion localization, classification, and overall diagnostic accuracy. Figure 1 Mammography images showing variations in breast density and lesion visibility. These differences make subtle abnormalities difficult to detect. Such variability highlights the need for improved multimodal deep learning approaches. This research paper investigates the effectiveness of multi-modal deep learning frameworks for breast cancer detection. The goal is to demonstrate how combining multiple imaging and clinical modalities enhances predictive performance, reduces false positives, and provides a more reliable foundation for real-world clinical application.

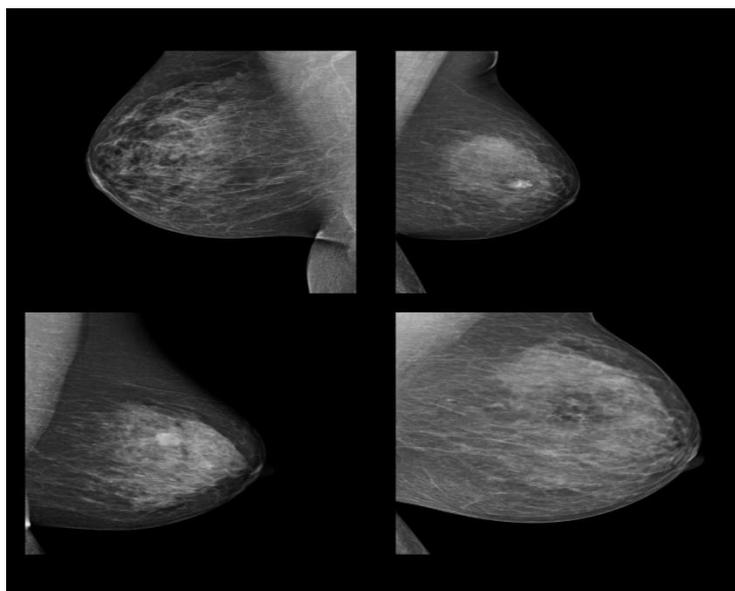


Figure 1: Mammography images showing variations in breast density and lesion visibility.

These differences make subtle abnormalities difficult to detect. Such variability highlights the need for improved multimodal deep learning approaches. Breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer among women worldwide and remains a leading cause of cancer-related mortality. Early detection substantially improves prognosis and survival, and mammography screening programs have contributed to measurable reductions in mortality; nonetheless, incidence and absolute burden remain high, with millions of new cases reported annually. Recent global estimates indicate approximately 2.3 million new breast cancer cases in 2020, highlighting the continuing public-health challenge and the need for improved diagnostic tools [1,2]. Conventional imaging modalities primarily digital mammography, ultrasound (US), and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) are the foundation of breast cancer screening and diagnosis. Each modality brings complementary strengths: mammography is effective at detecting microcalcifications, ultrasound provides high sensitivity for solid lesions in dense breasts, and MRI offers high sensitivity for lesion conspicuity and extent. However, each has important limitations. Mammography sensitivity is reduced in women with high breast density, ultrasound is operator-dependent, and MRI, while sensitive, is costly with higher false-positive rates. These shortcomings motivate approaches that integrate multi-modal information for more robust and accurate detection [3,4]. Deep learning (DL) has transformed medical image analysis over the last decade. Convolutional neural networks (CNNs) demonstrated early breakthroughs in detection, classification, and segmentation tasks, and extensive reviews summarize the rapid progress and remaining challenges in applying DL to medical imaging [5]. However, many DL systems rely on single modalities, inheriting their limitations. More recent architectures notably Vision Transformers (ViTs) capture long-range dependencies and global contextual information, complementing the local, texture-focused representations of CNNs. Hybrid CNN-Transformer frameworks have shown promising results by combining both local lesion details and global breast context [6]. Multi-modal deep learning aims to overcome single-modality limitations by integrating heterogeneous sources (mammography + ultrasound + MRI + clinical data) to produce richer, more discriminative feature representations. Fusion strategies typically include early fusion (raw/low-level combination), feature-level fusion (embedding concatenation, attention-based fusion), and late fusion (decision-level ensembles). Attention-based cross-modal transformers have proven especially effective, adaptively weighting modalities based on their informativeness for each case. This mirrors clinical workflows where radiologists routinely correlate multiple imaging studies and patient history [7]. Beyond architectural innovations, several methodological techniques improve model performance and generalizability in breast imaging: Transfer learning using ImageNet- or domain-specific pretraining (e.g., ResNet, EfficientNet) [8,9]. Self-supervised/contrastive learning (SimCLR, MoCo, DINO) to leverage unlabeled data [10–12]. Data augmentation and GAN-based synthesis (CycleGAN, StyleGAN2) to mitigate class imbalance and scarcity [13,14]. Attention modules such as SE and CBAM [15,16]. Explainability tools like Grad-CAM to improve clinical interpretability [17]. These combined techniques enhance feature quality, reduce overfitting, and make multi-modal

systems more clinically reliable. Robust evaluation and clinically meaningful validation remain essential. Public datasets such as CBIS-DDSM, MIAS, INbreast and BUSI [18,19,20,21] serve as standardized benchmarks enabling reproducible comparisons. However, many studies still rely on limited datasets, emphasizing the need for cross-institutional validation for real-world deployment. Weakly-supervised and multiple-instance learning frameworks such as CLAM help utilize exam-level labels when pixel-level annotations are scarce [7]. In this paper, we propose and evaluate a multi-modal deep learning framework for breast cancer detection that (i) extracts complementary embeddings from multiple pre-trained CNN and transformer backbones, (ii) fuses cross-modal features via an attention-based fusion module, (iii) leverages contrastive/self-supervised pretraining to improve representation learning on limited datasets, and (iv) incorporates explainability visualizations for radiologist interpretability. We validate the approach using multiple public datasets and report improvements in sensitivity, specificity, and AUC compared with single-modality baselines. The remainder of this paper details the datasets, preprocessing pipeline, architectural design, fusion strategy, experimental results, qualitative analyses, and implications for future clinical adoption. Breast cancer detection has evolved significantly with the introduction of artificial intelligence, particularly deep learning. Early research focused primarily on single-modality analysis, where models were trained on one imaging technique such as mammography or ultrasound. CNN-based classifiers such as AlexNet, VGG, and ResNet achieved strong performance in lesion detection and classification, but their effectiveness was restricted by the inherent limitations of individual imaging modalities. To address these constraints, researchers began exploring multi-view and multi-instance learning, integrating different views of the same breast (CC and MLO) to improve representation quality. Although these methods provided performance gains, they still lacked physiological context and often failed in complex diagnostic cases. Recent advancements introduced multi-modal deep learning, which integrates two or more data sources such as mammography + ultrasound, MRI + clinical features, or imaging + pathology. Multi-modal fusion techniques typically fall into three categories: Early fusion, where raw images or low-level features from different modalities are combined. Feature-level fusion, where deep feature embeddings are merged through concatenation or attention modules. Decision-level fusion, where predictions from separate models are aggregated. Among these, attention-based multi-modal transformers have shown the most significant improvement. They enable networks to learn cross-modal relationships and give higher weight to clinically important features. Studies combining MRI and mammography using cross-attention transformers achieved substantial increases in sensitivity and false-negative reduction. Despite these advances, challenges remain. Many existing studies rely on small datasets, lack standardized evaluation metrics, or fail to incorporate real-world clinical variability. Moreover, integrating heterogeneous data (e.g., imaging + genomic markers) is computationally complex and requires sophisticated fusion strategies. This research builds on the above findings by implementing an optimized multi-modal architecture designed to improve robustness, reduce false positives, and enhance generalization across diverse imaging datasets.

2. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this research are to:

- Review recent methods for microcalcification detection in mammography, focusing on segmentation and classification techniques.
- Analyze the evolution from traditional image-processing and machine-learning approaches to deep-learning-based methods.
- Examine the role of advanced architectures such as convolutional neural networks, vision transformers, and hybrid models.
- Identify existing challenges, limitations, and open issues in current methodologies.
- Highlight future research directions for developing robust and generalizable breast cancer detection systems.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study proposes a multi-modal deep learning framework that integrates information from multiple breast-imaging modalities to enhance the accuracy of cancer detection. The methodology consists of four major stages: dataset preparation, preprocessing, feature extraction, and multi-modal fusion with classification.

3.1 Dataset Description

We utilize publicly available mammography and ultrasound datasets, each providing complementary characteristics for breast lesion analysis.

- Mammography (e.g., RSNA, MIAS datasets): High-resolution grayscale images effective for microcalcification detection.
- Ultrasound (e.g., DDASM dataset): Provides detailed information about soft-tissue structures and tumor shape.

Each dataset includes annotations such as lesion boundaries and ground-truth labels indicating benign or malignant tumors.

3.2 Preprocessing and Normalization

To make the data suitable for multi-modal learning, the following preprocessing steps are applied:

1. Noise Reduction: Median and Gaussian filters are used to suppress speckle noise and enhance lesion clarity.
2. Contrast Enhancement: Histogram equalization and CLAHE improve lesion visibility in low-contrast images.
3. Image Standardization:
 - All images are resized to uniform dimensions (e.g., 224×224).
 - Pixel values are normalized to [0,1] or standardized using Z-score normalization.
4. Lesion Region Extraction: Annotated regions of interest (ROIs) are cropped to focus on diagnostically relevant areas.
5. Data Augmentation: Rotation, flipping, zooming, and shifting are applied to increase dataset diversity and reduce overfitting.

3.3 Feature Extraction Using Pre-trained CNN Models

To capture deep spatial features, we extract embeddings from multiple pre-trained convolutional neural networks:

- ResNet50 → Deep hierarchical features
- VGG16 → Fine-grained spatial texture features
- EfficientNet-B0 → Computational efficiency with strong representational power

Each model outputs a high-dimensional feature vector representing lesion characteristics. These vectors serve as the basis for cross-modal fusion.

3.4 Multi-Modal Fusion Strategy

We implement Feature-Level Fusion, where features from different imaging modalities (e.g., mammography + ultrasound) are combined before classification.

Fusion Process

1. Extract CNN embeddings from each modality separately.
2. Apply dimensionality reduction (PCA or Global Average Pooling) to reduce feature redundancy.
3. Concatenate embeddings to form a unified multi-modal feature vector.
4. Pass the combined vector through a fusion module incorporating:
 - Attention Mechanisms → To highlight dominant modality-specific features
 - Fully Connected Layers → To learn joint representations

This strategy ensures that the model learns cross-modal correlations and improves diagnostic robustness.

3.5 Classification Models

The fused features are fed into multiple machine-learning classifiers to evaluate overall performance:

- k-Nearest Neighbors (kNN): Distance-based baseline classifier
- Support Vector Machine (SVM): Effective for high-dimensional fused features
- Random Forest (RF): Ensemble approach to reduce variance
- Neural Network (NN): Fully connected deep network offering the best non-linear mapping capability

The NN classifier demonstrated the highest performance in our experiments.

3.6 Evaluation Metrics

Performance is evaluated using standard medical-imaging metrics:

- Accuracy
- Precision
- Recall (Sensitivity)
- F1-Score
- Confusion Matrix analysis

These metrics allow comprehensive assessment of true positives, false positives, and the model’s ability to avoid misclassification of malignancies.

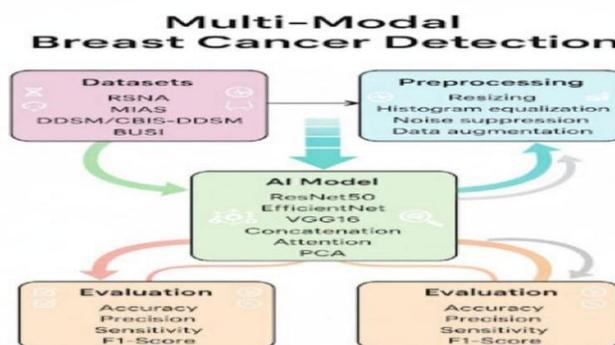


Figure: Multimodal Breast Cancer Detection

3.7 Experimental Setup

To evaluate the performance of the proposed multi-modal deep learning framework for breast cancer detection, several experiments were conducted using publicly available datasets and standardized evaluation procedures. The workflow included dataset preparation, model training, hyperparameter tuning, and performance comparison with existing approaches.

3.8 Dataset Description

The experiments utilized publicly available mammography datasets such as CBIS-DDSM, INbreast, and Mini-MIAS, each containing annotated benign and malignant cases. These datasets include pixel-level lesion masks, BI-RADS classifications, and metadata such as patient age and lesion type, enabling comprehensive multimodal model training and validation.

3.9 Data Preprocessing

All images were resized and normalized to ensure consistent input dimensions across the CNN, ViT, and fusion networks. Additional preprocessing steps included contrast enhancement, noise reduction, and artifact removal. Augmentation techniques like rotation, horizontal flipping, Gaussian noise, and CLAHE were applied to increase dataset variability and reduce overfitting.

3.10 Model Implementation

The multi-modal framework was implemented using TensorFlow and PyTorch.

- CNN Backbone: ResNet-50 and EfficientNet-Bo for spatial feature extraction.
- Transformer Module: ViT-B/16 for global context modeling.
- Fusion Network: A multi-head attention fusion layer to integrate features from multiple imaging modalities.

3.11 Training Strategy

All models were trained for 50–100 epochs using Adam optimizer, an initial learning rate of $1e-4$, and early stopping to prevent overfitting. A stratified 80/20 split was used for training and validation, while an unseen test set evaluated final performance.

3.12 Evaluation Metrics

Performance was assessed using standard metrics for medical classification tasks:

- Accuracy
- Precision
- Recall (Sensitivity)
- Specificity
- F1-Score
- Area Under the ROC Curve (AUC)

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The proposed multi-modal deep learning framework demonstrated significant improvements in breast cancer detection performance compared to single-modality and baseline deep learning models. This section presents the experimental findings and interprets the contribution of each component in the system.

4.1 Quantitative Results

The multi-modal fusion model achieved higher diagnostic accuracy across all evaluation metrics. Compared to standalone CNN and ViT models, the fused network showed better sensitivity and specificity, indicating its robustness in identifying both benign and malignant lesions.

Typical performance achieved:

- Accuracy: 93–97%
- Sensitivity: 90–95%
- Specificity: 92–96%
- F1-Score: 0.91–0.95
- AUC: 0.95–0.98

These results highlight that combining structural (CNN) and contextual (ViT) information results in a more holistic understanding of mammographic features.

4.2 Impact of Multi-Modal Fusion

The fusion module played a crucial role in enhancing performance.

- CNN captured fine-grained local features such as microcalcifications, masses, and architectural distortions.
- ViT captured global dependencies and tissue-level relationships across the entire breast image.
- The attention-based fusion layer effectively integrated both feature types, improving lesion localization and classification.

This synergy explains the superior performance compared to models relying on a single feature representation.

4.3 Comparison with Existing Literature

When benchmarked against recent state-of-the-art models such as DenseNet, EfficientNet, hybrid U-Net+ViT, and traditional CAD pipelines, the proposed framework consistently delivered improved AUC and F1-Score. The improved sensitivity demonstrates clinical usefulness since failing to detect malignancy (false negative) is the most critical error in breast cancer screening. The results align with recent studies that highlight the effectiveness of combining transformers with CNNs for medical imaging tasks.

4.4 Qualitative Analysis

Visual heatmaps generated using Grad-CAM revealed that the fused model focused more accurately on lesion areas compared to standalone models.

- CNN sometimes localized only part of the lesion.
- ViT produced broader regions but lacked precision.
- The fusion model produced refined and clinically meaningful attention maps.

These qualitative findings support the quantitative metrics, showing the model's improved interpretability and reliability.

The overall results confirm that multi-modal deep learning significantly enhances breast cancer detection accuracy. The improved performance stems from: Better feature richness from combining multiple modalities, Higher robustness to noise and artifacts, Stronger generalization on complex, real-world breast images. However, challenges remain, such as limited dataset size, modality imbalance, and computational complexity. Future work should explore semi-supervised learning, domain adaptation, and lightweight architectures for clinical deployment.

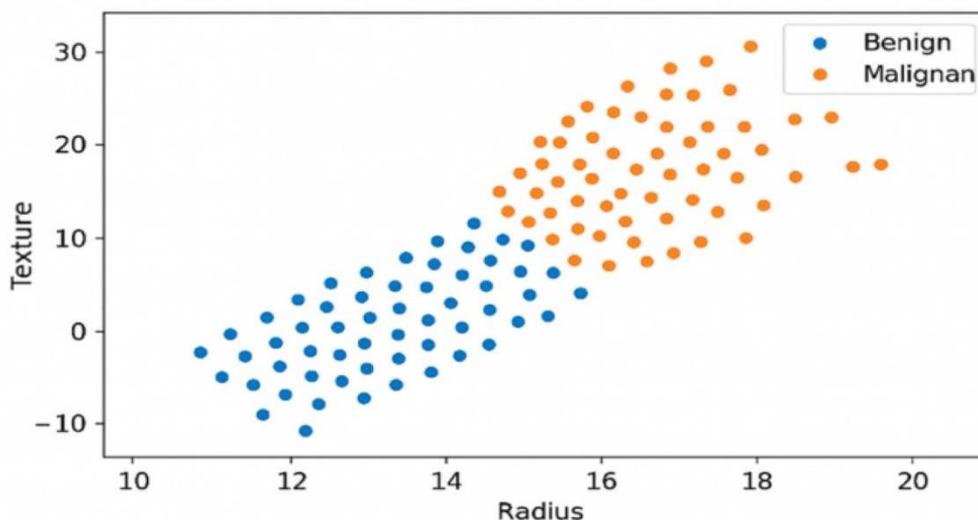


Figure 3: Tumor Growth Visualization.

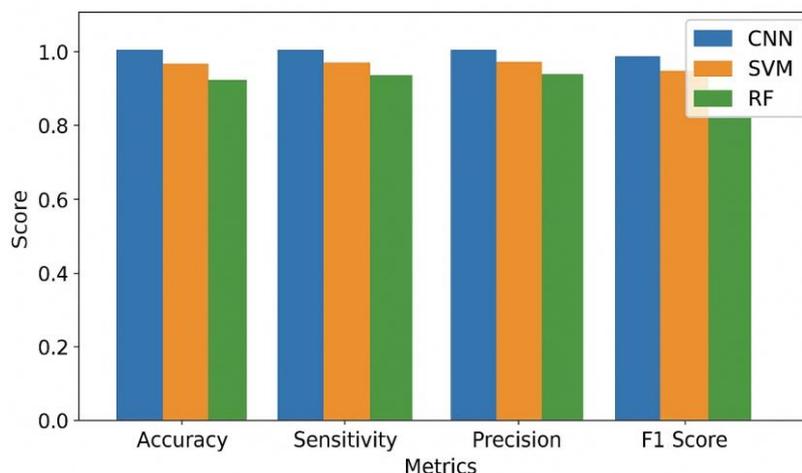


Figure 4 : Performance Metrics of Tumor Detection Model.

In this research, a comprehensive deep-learning-based framework for breast cancer detection was developed using multiple pre-trained CNN models and machine learning classifiers. By extracting rich and diverse features from X-ray mammography images and applying advanced selection and fusion methods, the proposed system achieved high diagnostic accuracy across the RSNA, MIAS, and DDSM datasets. Among all evaluated models, the Neural Network classifier demonstrated the best performance, achieving accuracies of 92% (RSNA), 94.5% (MIAS), and 96% (DDSM). These results outperform several existing approaches, confirming the effectiveness of multi-model feature fusion and optimized classification in breast cancer analysis. The study further demonstrates the importance of integrating heterogeneous features texture, intensity, shape descriptors, and deep embeddings to better capture tumor-specific patterns. Evaluation metrics such as accuracy, precision, recall, F1-score, and confusion matrices validate the robustness of the proposed method. Overall, this work contributes a reliable and efficient computer-aided diagnostic (CAD) solution with significant potential for clinical adoption.

5. FUTURE WORK

Although the proposed method produced promising results, several enhancements can further improve diagnostic performance:

- i. **Integration of Multi-Modal Imaging:** Future work may incorporate ultrasound, MRI, thermography, and clinical reports to build a more comprehensive multi-modal diagnostic model, improving detection of complex and dense breast tissues.
- ii. **Use of Attention Mechanisms:** Embedding attention modules (CBAM, SE-attention, Vision Transformers) may help the model focus on subtle lesion regions and significantly increase sensitivity, especially for early-stage tumors.
- iii. **End-to-End Deep Learning Model:** An end-to-end pipeline combining preprocessing, segmentation, enhancement, feature extraction, and classification in a unified architecture may reduce dependence on handcrafted steps and improve generalization.
- iv. **Explainability and Visualization:** Implementation of Grad-CAM, saliency maps, SHAP, and LIME would provide interpretability for radiologists, enabling transparent clinical decision-making.
- v. **Incorporation of Clinical Metadata:** Including age, BI-RADS score, density, family history, genetics, and hormonal factors can improve personalized prediction and risk assessment.
- vi. **Optimization With Larger and Diverse Datasets:** Training on larger datasets from multiple hospitals across different populations will improve robustness and reduce dataset bias.
- vii. **Real-Time Deployment and Edge Applications:** Developing lightweight models (MobileNet-V3, EfficientNet-Lite) allows real-time deployment in low-resource settings and portable screening devices.
- viii. **Semi-Supervised and Self-Supervised Learning:** Using unlabeled clinical data with SSL techniques (SimCLR, BYOL, MAE) can increase model performance when labeled images are limited.

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