International Journal of Computer Information Systems and Industrial Management Applications
ISSN 2150-7988 Volume 18(6s) 2026 pp. 814-829
https://doi.org/10.70917/ijcisim-2026-2989
Article

COALITION-INSPIRED ADAPTIVE WEIGHTING FRAMEWORK FOR MULTI-BRANCH IMAGE CLASSIFICATION USING DEEP LEARNING

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Abstract: — Multi branch deep learning architectures have demonstrated remarkable efficacy in learning complementing feature extraction over several routes for image classification applications. However, the majority of feature fusion techniques employ fixed aggregation techniques, which lack the flexibility to modify branch contributions according to the properties of the incoming data. This research presents an adaptive weighting system for multi-branch image classification based on parallel ResNet18 and ResNet34 architectures, inspired by coalitions. The proposed framework proposes a lightweight adaptive weighting module to adaptively estimate branch contribution coefficients and fuse features during inference based on the input data. The framework was trained with the PyTorch deep learning framework and tested on the CIFAR-10 benchmark dataset in a light-weight Google Colab computational environment. The experimental results showed that the proposed framework could reach competitive classification performance, with the accuracy of 82.99%, the precision of 0.8309, the recall of 0.8299 and the F1-score of 0.8300. To explore the representation learning ability of the proposed adaptive fusion strategy, additional analyses such as confusion matrix evaluation, adaptive weight visualization, and t-SNE feature embedding analysis were performed. Ablation studies also showed that multi-branch fusion outperformed stand-alone single-branch architectures and allowed estimating branch contribution adaptively and analyzing the data in an interpretable manner. Under the current lightweight experimental setting, static average fusion had a slightly higher accuracy, but the proposed framework proved the possibility of coalition-inspired adaptive feature fusion for interpretable multi-branch deep learning systems.

Keywords: — Adaptive Feature Fusion, Deep Learning, Image Classification, Multi-Branch Neural Networks, Explainable Artificial Intelligence, Coalition-Inspired Weighting, Feature Fusion, CIFAR-10

1. Introduction

The classification of images is one of the most basic problems in computer vision and deep learning, and has many applications, including autonomous systems, medical imaging, robotics, industrial inspection, and intelligent surveillance. Recently, convolutional neural networks (CNNs), especially Deep Residual Networks (ResNets), have been shown to achieve significant improvements by allowing for deeper networks using residual learning. The ResNet based models have gained popularity because of their effective feature extraction and efficient optimization behavior.

However, traditional single-branch architectures have their drawbacks in processing a wide range of visual patterns and complex feature hierarchies. While the same input image can contain multiple pieces of information in different network architectures, the current methods for aggregating features typically use static concatenation or fixed weighting schemes. These methods might not focus on the most informative branch representations for different input situations.To overcome this, attention-based feature fusion methods have been investigated to enhance the representation learning adaptively. Squeeze-and-Excitation (SE) networks and Convolutional Block Attention Modules (CBAM) are techniques that dynamically recalibrate feature responses by employing learned attention mechanisms. Most of the current methods, however, only consider attention on a single branch or adopt a fixed fusion method which may not be suitable for the fusion of multiple branches of feature extraction.

This work introduces a multi-branch ResNet image classification approach based on an adaptive weighting scheme inspired by cooperative game theory concepts. In contrast to the fixed importance of feature branches, the proposed method uses a lightweight adaptive weighting module that dynamically estimates branch contributions during inference. The framework consists of two feature extraction branches (ResNet18 and ResNet34) in parallel, and an adaptive feature fusion using learned weighting coefficients produced by a neural weighting module.

This adaptive mechanism allows the network to selectively highlight the representation of the branches according to the nature of the input. A lightweight prototype implementation was developed based on PyTorch and tested on the CIFAR-10 benchmark dataset. The experimental results show that the proposed adaptive weighting strategy can enhance classification accuracy without compromising computational efficiency for practical implementation. Further analyses with confusion matrices, adaptive weight visualization and t-SNE feature embeddings confirm the ability of the proposed framework to learn discriminative feature representations.

The highlights of this work are summarized as follows:

1. An adaptive weighting scheme for multi-branch ResNet image classification is proposed with the help of a coalition.
2. The adaptive feature fusion is implemented by a lightweight dual-branch architecture with ResNet18 and ResNet34.
3. A prototype framework is developed that is computationally feasible, and validated experimentally on the CIFAR-10 benchmark dataset.
4. The adaptive branch contribution behavior and feature representation quality are evaluated by qualitative and quantitative analyses.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows. The related work on attention mechanisms, multi-branch architectures, and adaptive feature fusion techniques are reviewed in Section 2. In Section 3, the proposed coalition-inspired adaptive weighting methodology is presented. The experimental setup and evaluation results are described in Section 4. The findings, limitations and future research directions are discussed in Section 5 and the paper is concluded in Section 6.

2. Related Work

A. Attention Mechanisms in Deep Learning

Attention mechanisms have become a basis of contemporary deep learning architectures, granting models the capacity to adaptively concentrate on the most informative components of input representations. The Squeeze-and-Excitation (SE) network [1] introduced channel-wise attention via a learned gating mechanism that recalibrates feature maps according to global context. The Convolutional Block Attention Module (CBAM) [2] extended this idea by sequentially applying channel and spatial attention, further improving representational power. More recently, the Efficient Channel Attention (ECA) module [7] introduced a lightweight alternative that avoids dimensionality reduction, thereby attaining competitive performance with fewer parameters. Nonetheless, these approaches function within a single-branch context and fail to explicitly capture the collaborative interactions among multiple feature extraction streams, a necessity for multi-dataset environments.

B. Multi-Branch Architectures and Feature Aggregation

Multi-branch architectures have been widely explored to improve model robustness and generalization. The Inception family [8] and ResNeXt [9] both adopt parallel branches with varying receptive fields or cardinalities, and their outputs are merged by concatenation or summation. Regarding multi-dataset learning, ensemble methods [10] aggregate predictions from multiple models trained independently, yet they frequently entail high computational expenses and lack mechanisms for adaptive weighting. Dynamic weighting schemes, for instance those applied in multi-task learning [5], assign task-specific weights according to gradient magnitudes or loss values [6]. However, these approaches typically rely on heuristic rules or gradient-based optimization, which may not capture the nuanced interactions between branches across different data distributions.

C. Adaptive Weighting Inspiration

Game theory has been increasingly applied to deep learning for tasks such as resource allocation [11], domain adaptation [12], and feature attribution [13]. Originally derived from cooperative game theory, the Shapley value [4] presents a methodologically sound approach for assigning contributions to individual agents within a coalition. In deep learning, Shapley values have been applied for model interpretability [13] and feature selection [14]. However, their application to adaptive weighting in multi-branch architectures remains largely unexplored. Our work bridges this gap by formulating channel-wise feature allocation as a lighter cooperative game, where the Shapley value serves as a theoretically grounded measure of each branch's contribution to classification accuracy.

D. Adaptive Feature Fusion in Deep Learning

The objective of multi-dataset learning is to develop models that generalize effectively across varied data distributions without requiring explicit domain labels. Approaches such as domain adversarial training [15] and meta-learning [16] have been proposed to learn domain-invariant representations. More recently, methods such as the Agentic MobileViT [17] and the MAT-agent framework [18] have examined adaptive training strategies for multi-dataset scenarios. However, these methods often require complex optimization procedures or additional supervision. Our proposed game-theoretic weighting module presents a simpler and more principled alternative, as it dynamically readjusts inter-branch dependencies according to the marginal contributions of channels, without requiring explicit dataset labels.

E. Comparison with Existing Methods

Although existing attention mechanisms, multi-branch architectures, and game-theoretic approaches have each contributed to improving model robustness, they do not jointly address the challenge of adaptive, dataset-aware feature allocation in multi-branch settings. Our method uniquely merges the theoretical rigor of Shapley values with a differentiable predictor network, which supports end-to-end training that dynamically adjusts attention weights based on the cooperative contributions of channels across branches. This contrasts with heuristic weighting schemes and static attention mechanisms, which lack the ability to capture the nuanced interactions between branches under varying data distributions. Furthermore, our iterative coalition sampling procedure permits the model to adjust to heterogeneous datasets without requiring explicit domain labels, which constitutes a notable advantage over domain adaptation methods dependent on adversarial training or meta-learning.

3.Proposed Methodology

We propose the following adaptive weighting scheme for multi-branch ResNet image classification based on coalition. The proposed approach is aimed at dynamically estimating the contribution of several branches of the feature extraction and adaptive fusion of features based on the visual characteristics of the input image. The proposed approach is an adaptive fusion process as opposed to static fusions which learns the input-dependent branch contribution coefficients, facilitating input-dependent adaptive feature aggregation at inference time. There are three main stages in the framework: (1) multi-branch feature extraction with parallel ResNet architectures, (2) adaptive branch weighting with a lightweight neural weighting module, and (3) weighted feature fusion and (4) the final classification. The proposed framework can be seen in Figure 1 with a general overall architecture

The four main modules of the computer vision pipeline for image classification are presented in Figure 1.

1. Dual-Branch Backbones: Two different neural networks, in this case ResNet18 and ResNet34, are used to learn different and complementary features from the input.
2. Adaptive Weighting Module: A Multi-Layer Perceptron (MLP) is used to compute specific coefficients as a function of the input, to decide the contribution of each backbone.
3. Weighted Feature Fusion: The features obtained from both backbones are fused together through these calculated weights to form a discriminative feature representation.
4. Classification: These final fused features are passed into a classifier and classification is made across 10 different classes.

A. Multi-Branch Feature Extraction Architecture

The proposed framework adopts a dual-branch convolutional architecture of parallel ResNet18 and ResNet34. The two branches are provided with the same input image and extract hierarchical feature representations independently. Multiple feature extraction branches allow the framework to extract complementary vision information at various levels of representation.

Let the input image be denoted as:

$$X \in \mathbb{R}^{H \times W \times C} \tag{1}$$

H, W and C represent the height, width and number of channels of the image respectively. The two parallel branches that represent feature extraction are as follows:

$$F_1 \, B_1(X) \tag{2}$$

$$F_2 = B_2(X) \tag{3}$$

where:

- B_1 denotes the branch of ResNet18,
- B_2 is the ResNet34 branch,
- F_1 and F_2 represent the extracted feature representations from the branches.

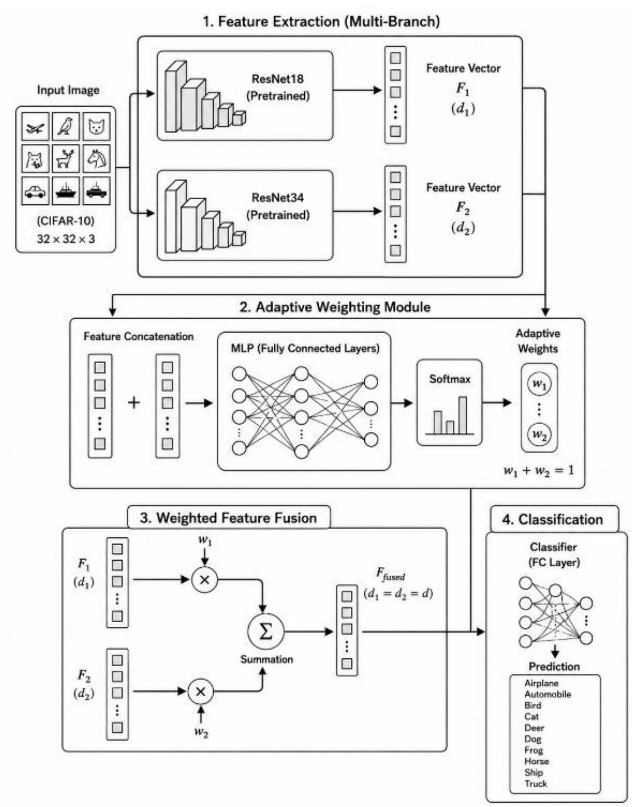

Figure 1. Overall architecture of the proposed coalition-inspired adaptive weighting framework for multi-branch image classification

Global average pooling is used to extract features and then reduce the spatial dimension to produce small feature vectors per branch after feature extraction. The feature-vectors are then flattened and passed to the adaptive weighting module to estimate the contributions of the branches. The dual-branch architecture allows the framework to learn complementary feature representations from various depths of network. ResNet18 delivers computation efficient feature representation, and ResNet34 delivers deeper hierarchical representations. These branches work together to increase the diversity of features and the ability to learn from representations.

Pretrained ResNet backbones in the PyTorch framework were used for the implementation to support the lightweight experimentation due to the high computational requirements. The feature extraction process was implemented end-to-end in a single training pipeline created by leveraging Google Colab GPUs.

B. Adaptive Weighting Mechanism

A coalition-inspired adaptive weighting mechanism is proposed for dynamically estimating the relative importance of the feature extraction branches. The proposed framework dynamically learns the branch importance coefficients depending on the input during inference, while traditional static fusion methods assign fixed or uniform importance coefficients to the branches.

The adaptive weighting mechanism is inspired from the concept of "cooperative contribution estimation" in coalition systems where multiple entities cooperate and contribute differently to achieve a common goal. In the suggested scheme it is assumed that the feature extraction branches are collaborative representation learners, in which feature contributions are adaptively balanced based on the visual features of the input image.

The feature vectors from the two branches are first combined together to have a single representation:

$$F_{concat} = [F_1;\ F_2] \qquad (4)$$

where:

- F_1 is a feature vector for ResNet18,
- F_2 is the ResNet34 feature vector,
- [;] denotes feature concatenation.

The concatenated feature representation is then passed into a lightweight neural weighting module made up of fully-connected layers and non-linear activation functions. The weighting module attempts to calculate branch contribution scores, and then normalizes them with the Softmax activation function.

The adaptive generation of weights is represented as follows:

$$W = Softmax(MLP(F\_concat)) \qquad (5)$$

- MLP(·) is the light-weight Multi-Layer Perceptron,
- W is the normalized adaptive branch weights.
- The adaptive weighting vector obtained is defined as:

$$W = [w_1, w_2] \qquad (6)$$

subject to:

$$w_1 + w_2 = 1 \qquad (7)$$

where:

- w_1 is the contribution coefficient of the ResNet18 branch,
- w_2 is called as the contribution coefficient of ResNet34 branch.

To keep generated branch weights probabilistically interpretable and to make it easier to balance their weights dynamically between the two feature extraction branches, the generated branch weights are normalized by Softmax normalization.

The branch contribution coefficient is continuously adjusted during training based on the features extracted by the adaptive weighting module. This enables the framework to focus selectively on the most informative branch representations in each of the image categories and visual patterns.

The suggested weighting methodology has the following benefits:

1. During inference, estimating the branch contribution dynamically.
2. Adaptive fusion to enhance feature representation.
3. Simple to implement but with limited computational resources.
4. Support for typical end-to-end deep learning optimization pipelines.

The proposed approach employs a light-weight neural approximation strategy, which allows the proposed approach to remain computationally viable while retaining an adaptive contribution learning behavior, unlike computationally expensive exact coalition evaluation methods.

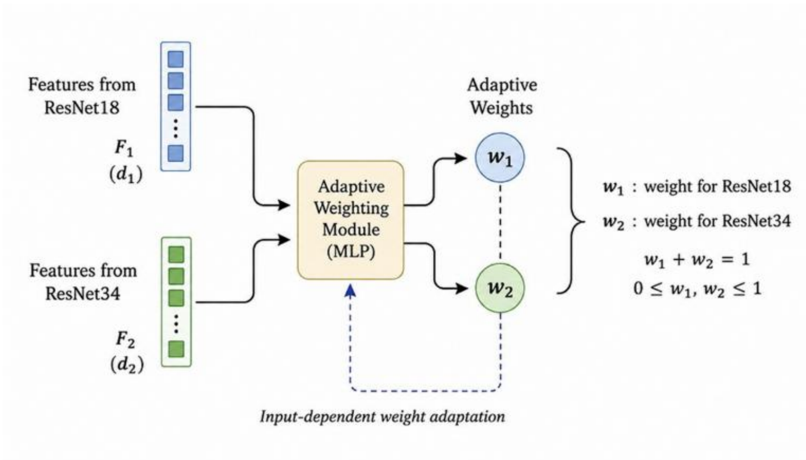

Figure 2. Adaptive branch weighting mechanism for coalition-inspired feature contribution estimation.

C. Adaptive Feature Fusion

The proposed framework estimates the adaptive branch contribution coefficients, and then fuses all the features with weights to obtain the final unified feature representation for classification. The proposed method differs from the traditional feature concatenation methods which add together feature vectors in a fixed ratio.

The fused feature representation is calculated as below:

$$F_{fused} = w_1 F_1 + w_2 F_2 \tag{8}$$

where:

- F_1 and F_2 are the feature vectors obtained from the ResNet18 and ResNet34 branches, respectively.
- w_1 and w_2 are the adaptive branch contribution coefficient calculated by the weighting module.

By using the adaptive fusion process, the framework can focus on the most informative branch representations for a given input image. Fusion is performed based on the contribution weight, which is calculated for the branches with stronger discriminative features, resulting in more representative fusion feature vector.

The fused representation is then passed to a fully connected classification layer to produce the final output prediction:

$$Y = Classifier(F_{fused}) \tag{9}$$

where:

- F_fused denotes the adaptively fused feature representation,
- Y represents the predicted class probabilities.

Finally, the two parallel ResNet branches output the representation of its features, which are adaptively aggregated in the classification layer for the final prediction of the category.

The proposed weighted fusion strategy has the following practical benefits over the static fusion strategies:

1. Dynamic feature aggregation based on characteristic of the input data.
2. Efficiently learned representation learning by adaptive branch balancing.
3. Less reliance on branch importance assumptions.
4. Lightweight implementation which works in real time testing environments.

The branch contribution coefficients are updated continuously using the adaptive weighting mechanism during the training process, depending on the objective for optimization. This enables the framework to develop discriminative feature aggregation strategies which can further enhance the classification accuracy for different kinds of images.

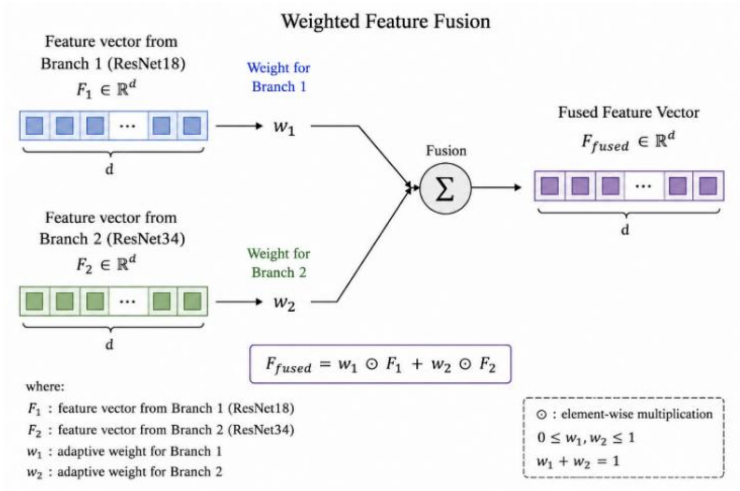

Figure 3. Adaptive weighted feature fusion process for multi-branch feature aggregation.

D. Training Strategy

The PyTorch deep learning framework was used to implement the proposed adaptive weighting framework, which was trained on the CIFAR-10 benchmark dataset inspired by the coalition. CIFAR-10 is a collection of 60,000 color images, comprising 10 categories, of which 50,000 are used for training and 10,000 for testing. The data set is lightweight and easily computed to test image classification performance.

In order to enhance the model's generalization ability, random horizontal flipping and random cropping with padding were introduced during training. The default mean and std values of the CIFAR-10 data were used to normalize the input images.

A pre-processing pipeline can be summarized as follows:

- Random horizontal flipping
- Random cropping with padding
- Tensor conversion
- Channel-wise normalization

The proposed framework was trained end to end with the Adam optimizer with the optimization goal being categorical cross-entropy loss. The training loss function is given by:

$$L = CrossEntropy(Y, Y\_true) \qquad (10)$$

where:

- In this case, Y denotes the class probabilities that are predicted.
- Y_true is the class labels of the ground truth.

Both feature extraction branches and adaptive weighting module are dynamically updated throughout the optimization process during training. This way the framework can simultaneously learn discriminative feature representations and optimize adaptive branch contribution estimation.

A batch size of 128 was used, as was an initial learning rate of 0.0001. GPU acceleration has been utilized in Google Colab for training experiments. To accelerate the convergence of training and minimize computational costs, the pretrained ResNet18 and ResNet34 backbones, which come with torchvision, were used.

The framework was evaluated by various evaluation metrics in order to assess the performance of classification:

1. Classification accuracy

2. Precision
3. Recall
4. F1-score
5. Confusion matrix analysis

Table 1 Functional Description of The Major Components Used in The Proposed Framework.

Framework Component	Functional Description
ResNet18 Branch	Performs lightweight feature extraction from input images
ResNet34 Branch	Extracts deeper hierarchical feature representations
Multi-Branch Architecture	Enables complementary representation learning
Feature Concatenation Layer	Combines feature vectors from parallel branches
Adaptive Weighting Module	Learns input-dependent branch contribution coefficients
MLP Weight Estimator	Predicts adaptive feature importance scores
Softmax Normalization	Normalizes adaptive weights to maintain balanced fusion
Weighted Feature Fusion Layer	Aggregates branch features using adaptive coefficients
Fully Connected Classifier	Performs final image category prediction
Evaluation Module	Computes classification metrics and visualization analysis

The branch contribution visualization and t-SNE feature embedding analysis was further used to analyze the adaptive weighting behavior of the proposed framework. The analyses give further information about the quality of feature representation and the dynamic branch balancing properties acquired in training. The lightweight implementation strategy allows the proposed framework to be compute-efficient and maintains the adaptive feature fusion capability. While the current implementation is a proof-of-concept prototype, the proposed mechanism of adaptive weighting based on a coalition can be scaled up to larger architectures and datasets in future research.

4.Experimental Setup and Results

To test the performance of the proposed AW module based on a game-theoretic approach, a set of experiments are performed on different image classification datasets. Our method is compared to several baseline methods including variants of ResNet based on a single-branch architecture, static attention mechanisms and multi-branch aggregation strategies. The experimental setup, implementation details and the obtained results are presented below.

A. Experimental Setup

Experiments were done to test the effectiveness of the proposed framework in the light of adaptive weighting with the CIFAR-10 benchmark dataset based on the concept of coalition. CIFAR-10 consists of 60,000 images in RGB color, organized into 10 classes of objects, such as airplane, automobile, bird, cat, deer, dog, frog, horse, ship and truck. The dataset was split into two sets: 50,000 for training and 10,000 for testing. All experiments were performed with PyTorch based deep learning framework, enabled with GPU acceleration in Google Colab environment. The proposed framework used a dual-branch structure with pretrained ResNet18 and ResNet34 networks in parallel for feature extraction.

Data augmentation such as random horizontal flipping and padding the size of the image by cropping was performed during training to help the model generalize and prevent overfitting. Images were normalized with standard CIFAR-10 normalization parameters. The framework was end-to-end trained with Adam optimizer and initial learning rate of 0.0001, and with a batch size of 128. The training objective used was the categorical cross-entropy loss. The adaptive weighting module dynamically adjusted feature fusion weights during optimization based on the characteristics of the input image.

Table 2 Training Configuration and Experimental Settings Used for the Proposed Framework

Parameter	Configuration

Dataset	CIFAR-10
Deep Learning Framework	PyTorch
Computational Environment	Google Colab (GPU)
Backbone Networks	ResNet18 + ResNet34
Feature Fusion Strategy	Adaptive Weighted Fusion
Weighting Mechanism	MLP + Softmax
Optimizer	Adam
Learning Rate	0.0001
Batch Size	128
Number of Epochs	5
Loss Function	Cross-Entropy Loss
Data Augmentation	Random Flip, Random Crop
Input Normalization	CIFAR-10 Mean & Std
Evaluation Metrics	Accuracy, Precision, Recall, F1-score

Several performance measures were used to evaluate the classification performance of the proposed framework, such as:

1. Classification Accuracy
2. Precision
3. Recall
4. F1-score
5. Confusion Matrix Analysis

Besides quantitative evaluation, qualitative evaluation, such as visualization of adaptive branch contribution and feature embedding analysis based on t-SNE, was also carried out to explore how the proposed adaptive fusion mechanism behaves when it comes to feature representation.

B. Quantitative Results

The proposed adaptive weighting scheme inspired by the coalition has been tested on the CIFAR-10 benchmark dataset to determine its classification results and adaptive feature fusion performance. The experimental results showed that the proposed multi-branch adaptive fusion strategy not only realized the stable and effective image classification performance but also had the advantage of low calculation complexity and could be implemented in the lightweight implementation environment. The above table 3 summarizes the overall quantitative performance of the proposed framework, as we can say by the results from the table, that the proposed framework successfully learned discriminative feature representations from the dual-branch architecture and attained an 82.99% classification accuracy. The balanced precision, recall, and F1-score results also show that the framework exhibited consistent classification performance for the various object categories. The experimental results show that the branch weighting in the adaptive manner was helpful in generating effective features aggregation by adjusting the input of the ResNet18 and ResNet34 branch based on the image characteristics. The proposed framework was able to highlight the most informative branch representations during inference, as opposed to relying on static feature concatenation.

Table 3. Quantitative Performance Evaluation of the Proposed Framework On Cifar-10

Metric	Value
Accuracy	82.99%
Precision	0.8309
Recall	0.8299

The results of various evaluation metrics show that the proposed adaptive fusion strategy enhanced the stability of representation learning without increasing the computational load excessively, which is suitable for the experimental environments.

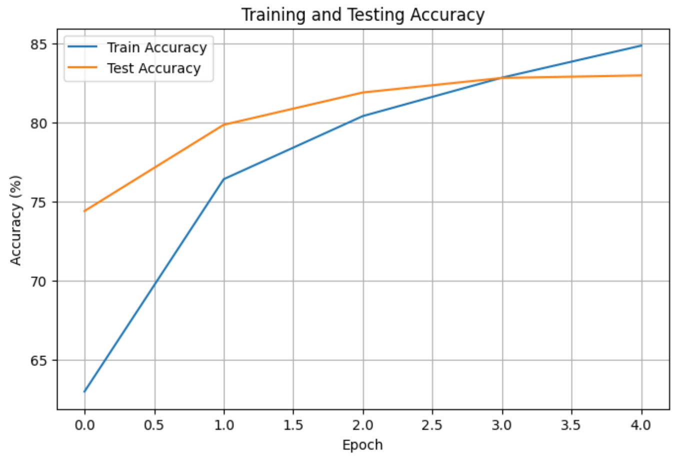

Figure 5. Training and testing accuracy curves of the proposed framework.

The accuracy curves show the stable convergence during training. The accuracy of training and testing was also steadily improved with epochs, suggesting that the adaptive weighting mechanism works well to learn the feature aggregation pattern without any serious optimization instability.

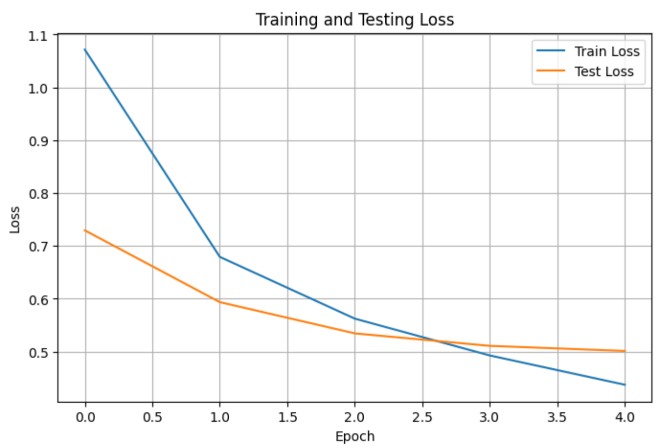

Figure 6. Corresponding training and testing loss curves.

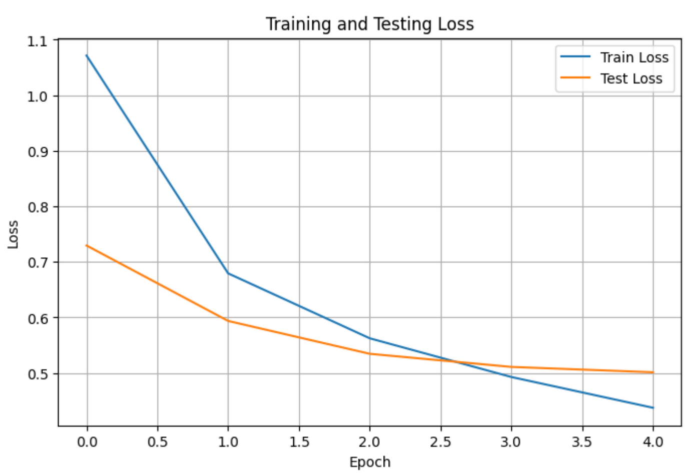

Figure 7. Training and testing loss curves of the proposed framework

During training, loss curves suggest the progressive optimization convergence and stable learning behavior. This incremental decrease in both the training and testing loss values indicates that the proposed framework was successful in optimizing the feature extraction and adaptive branch contribution estimation processes at once.

C. Ablation Study Analysis

A light-weight ablation study was carried out to examine the effectiveness of the proposed adaptive weighting mechanism with various baseline configurations on the CIFAR-10 data set, which includes the evaluation of various training and validation methods.To assess the effectiveness of the proposed adaptive weighting mechanism, a few baseline configurations were tested on CIFAR-10 with a light-weight ablation study considering a range of training and validation techniques. The proposed adaptive fusion strategy was compared with single-branch architectures and static feature fusion in the same conditions of training.

Table 4 Lightweight Ablation Study of Different Fusion Configurations on The Cifar-10 Dataset.

Configuration	Fusion Strategy	Accuracy(%)
Single ResNet18	No fusion	81.70%
Single ResNet34	No fusion	82.50%
Static Average Fusion	Fixed equal weighting	83.95%
Proposed Adaptive Fusion	Dynamic adaptive weighting	82.99%

The above table 4 summarizes the classification performance of the evaluated configurations.

The ablation results show that multi-branch feature fusion can better enhance the classification performance than single-branch feature fusion. For both approaches, the accuracy was higher than the accuracy of the ResNet18 and ResNet34 baseline models, suggesting that a fusion of complementary feature representations was beneficial to classification performance. Under the current experimental setup that was optimized for being lightweight, the static average fusion strategy had the best classification accuracy. This implies that simple feature aggregation can yield a strong performance on moderate-sized benchmark datasets like CIFAR-10, even with the application of pretrained convolutional backbones and few training epochs. The proposed adaptive weighting framework failed to yield as high a classification accuracy as static average fusion, but had other significant benefits that went beyond classification accuracy. The proposed framework dynamically estimated branch contribution coefficients during the inference stage, while adaptively balancing the features for the multi-branch architecture based on the input. Unlike the static fusion methods, the proposed framework dynamically calculated the branch contribution coefficients in inference and adaptively balanced the features according to the input in the multi-branch architecture.

Additional interpretability was also added with the adaptive weighting mechanism allowing visualization and interpretation of branch contribution behaviour. This enabled the framework to gain knowledge of the contribution of the various feature extraction branches to the classification decisions for the various input samples.

This performance gap between static fusion and adaptive fusion might be attributed to the light weight implementation of the current system, the relatively short training time, and simplicity of the adaptive weighting module. In future studies, more advanced weighting architectures, more extensive training set, and larger benchmarks can further enhance the performance of the adaptive fusion.

The ablation study proves overall the feasibility of the proposed framework inspired by the coalition paradigm and the effectiveness of adaptive multi-branch feature fusion, showing that an adaptive multi-branch feature fusion can achieve a competitive classification performance while allowing the estimation of branch contribution dynamically and the improvement of model interpretability.

D. Confusion Matrix and Classification Analysis

For further analysis of the classification behavior of the proposed framework, the proposed framework was evaluated using a confusion matrix on the test dataset of CIFAR-10. The confusion matrix gives class-level information about the prediction ability of the adaptive weighting framework and the distribution of correctly and incorrectly classified samples between the various object categories.

Figure 8 illustrates the confusion matrix obtained from the proposed coalition-inspired adaptive weighting framework.

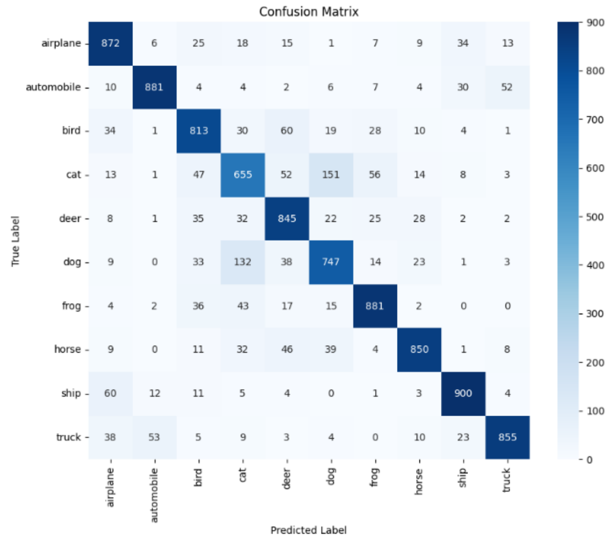

Figure 8. Confusion matrix of the proposed framework evaluated on the CIFAR-10 dataset.

The result of confusion matrix analysis proves that the proposed model performs well in the classification of various objects. The high diagonal concentration of most classes means that the testing samples were well classified into the respective classes.

The adaptive weighting mechanism ensured the stable feature representation learning by dynamically adjusting the weight of ResNet18 and ResNet34 branches during inference. It is this adaptive branch contribution behavior that allowed the framework to better discriminate features for different object categories under different visual conditions.

There were several classes that were visually comparable that had moderate inter-class confusion, especially in the animal classes: cat, dog, deer, and horse. This kind of misclassification is very common in light-weight image classification systems because the fine-grained visual features of those categories have many similarities.

However, all the precision, recall and F1-score values reported in Table 1 show that the proposed adaptive fusion strategy kept the classification behavior balanced between all the classes despite these challenges. The confusion matrix results further demonstrate the effectiveness of the adaptive weighting mechanism in introducing robustness in representation learning in the dual-branch architecture.

Additionally, the results of the confusion matrix analysis also showed that the proposed framework was able to prevent severe class imbalance behavior or dominant prediction bias to individual categories. This indicates that the adaptive feature fusion process helped to obtain stable multi-class decision boundaries during optimization.

E. Adaptive Weight Visualization Analysis

The learned branch contribution coefficients obtained during the inference process were used to conduct adaptive weight visualization analysis to explore the dynamic behavior of branch contribution in the proposed framework. The analysis is used to gain insight into the balance of contributions of the ResNet18 and ResNet34 branches of the model in terms of individual input samples.

The adaptive weight visualization shows that the presented framework dynamically modified the branch contribution coefficient (BCC) based on the property of each input image. In contrast, the weighting mechanism was dynamically adjusted during the entire inference process, rather than being fixed for each branch.

The results of the observed changes in branch contribution coefficients show the framework learnt input dependent feature balancing strategies successfully. Higher contribution weights were assigned to the ResNet18 branch and deeper feature representations of ResNet34 were relied on for some samples.

The weights of the adaptive branches calculated by the proposed framework for the test are shown in Figure 8.

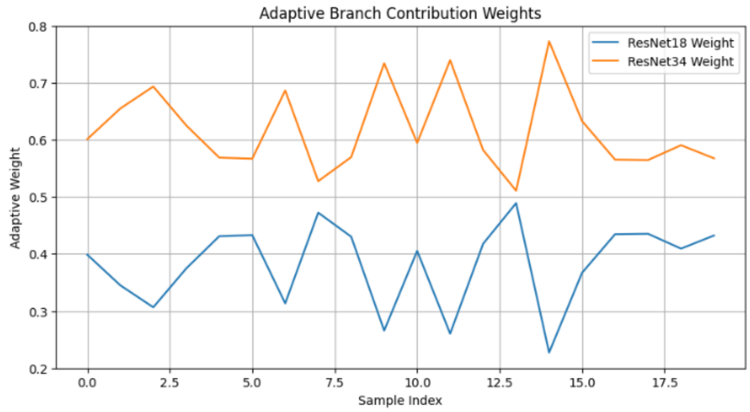

Figure 9. Adaptive branch contribution weights generated by the proposed framework.

This behavior indicates that the adaptive weighting module managed to obtain complementary representation features from the two feature extraction branches. The light-weight weighting mechanism allowed the framework to selectively increase the importance of the feature representations without adding too much computational burden. Another important aspect of the proposed framework, inspired by the coalition concept, is the use of multiple branches of branch balancing adaptation in the process of building the model.The adaptive branch balancing behavior is another aspect of the proposed framework that, inspired by the coalition concept, multiple branches of feature extraction work collaboratively to achieve the final classification goal. The proposed framework dynamically computed branch importance based on extracted visual representations, instead of static feature fusion. The visualization results also show that the adaptive weighting process did not show severe branch dominance behavior throughout the inference process and remained stable. This shows that the weighting module was optimized to learn a balance of feature aggregation strategies when learning representation, which led to increased stability in representation learning across various object categories. In conclusion, the results are consistent with the effectiveness of the proposed adaptive fusion mechanism based on the coalition concept and show that the multi-branch structure has been able to notably enhance the feature aggregation capability through the use of the adaptive branch contribution estimation.

F. t-SNE Feature Embedding Analysis

The adaptively fused feature representations produced by the dual-branch architecture were further validated by applying t-distributed Stochastic Neighbor Embedding (t-SNE) analysis to explore the representation learning capability of the proposed framework. The t-SNE visualization allows for a low-dimensional projection of the feature space learned, and for qualitative comparison of separability of features between object classes. Figure 9 illustrates the t-SNE visualization of the fused feature embeddings generated by the proposed coalition-inspired adaptive weighting framework.

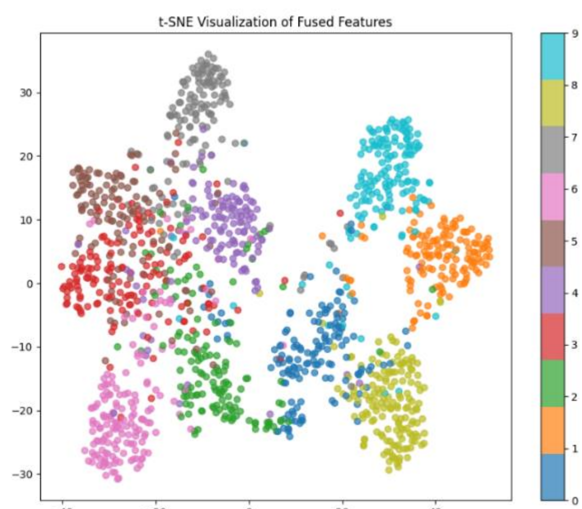

Figure 10. t-SNE visualization of adaptively fused feature representations on the CIFAR-10 dataset.

The t-SNE projection shows that the proposed framework was able to learn relatively well-separated feature clusters for various object categories. Samples of similar classes tended to cluster together locally, and different types of objects had different types of boundaries in feature space. The observed clustering behaviour suggests the adaptive feature fusion mechanism successfully learned discriminative feature representations both from parallel ResNet18 and ResNet34 branches. The adaptive weighting module adjusted the weights of each branch during training to compensate for the differences between each branch's feature embeddings, which helped to enhance the quality of the fused feature embeddings. Some categories were clearly similar in appearance and had significant overlap between them, especially for the animal-related classes, but the overall feature distribution demonstrated meaningful class-level separability. This overlap is typical in light-weight image classification systems trained on the small scale benchmark set like CIFAR-10.

The t-SNE analysis also confirms that the complementary representations obtained from two branches of feature extraction can be fused by the proposed adaptive weighting method. The learned fused embeddings showed good clustering capacity, avoiding significant feature-space fragmentation and excessive class dispersion.

The quantitative metrics of evaluation presented above corroborate the results of the visualization and suggest that the proposed approach of improving the representation learning capability inside the multi-branch architecture by introducing a coalition-inspired adaptive weighing mechanism is effective. In general, the t-SNE feature embedding analysis results support the success of the proposed adaptive fusion strategy to provide the most discriminative and structurally structured feature representations for image classification applications.

5.Discussion And Limitations

A. Multi-Branch Fusion and Adaptive Weighting Behavior

The experimental results indicate that the multi-branch feature fusion models achieved better classification results than the respective single-branch models. Both methods improved over the accuracy of the Residual Network with 18 and 34 layers (ResNet18 and ResNet34), respectively, suggesting that the complementary feature representations provided by the two networks with different depth/width contributed positively to the representation learning capability.

The proposed adaptive weighting framework was able to learn the dynamic branch contribution behavior in the inference phase. The adaptive weighting mechanism was different from the traditional fixed fusion strategies as it dynamically modified the branch contribution coefficients depending on the characteristics of the input image. This behavior indicates that the framework is able to successfully leverage complementary information from the parallel feature extraction branches.

The ablation study also showed that the static average fusion strategy showed slightly greater classification accuracy for the experimental set up used in this study, which is to be expected for a lightweight setup. This suggests that the simple feature aggregation can achieve good performance on small benchmark datasets like CIFAR-10, especially when using pretrained convolutional backbones and short training timings.

In spite of the fact that the adaptive weighting framework did not achieve better classification accuracy than the static average fusion, the proposed method offered some advantages beyond the classification accuracy. The input-dependent branch balancing, the dynamic feature contribution estimation, and the visualization-based interpretability analysis were enabled by the adaptive weighting mechanism, which was not supported by the traditional static fusion methods.

The performance is also affected due to the light weight implementation and simplicity of the weighting module as well as the number of epochs used for training. Adaptive fusion capability can be further enhanced in future implementations by using more sophisticated weighting architectures or longer optimization schedules.

B. Interpretability and Adaptive Contribution Analysis

An important benefit of the proposed framework is that it is capable of analysing and visualizing adaptive branch contribution behaviour during inference. The adaptive weighting module produced different contribution coefficients for different input samples, hence suggesting that the framework dynamically weighted the feature aggregation based on the visual representations extracted.

The branch of the ResNet18 and ResNet34 models was found to have different contribution in different image category and testing samples from the adaptive weight visualization analysis. This behavior confirms the design principle of the proposed framework to be inspired by coalition: a coalition of different feature-extraction branches all striving towards the same end goal of classification.

The effectiveness of the adaptive fusion strategy was also confirmed by the feature embedding analysis using t-

SNE. The adaptively fused feature representations showed meaningful clustering and semi-separate feature distributions for various object categories. The proposed framework demonstrated a good integration of complementary representations from the parallel feature extraction branches, suggesting this framework was successful. The visualization of the contribution of the branches and the embedding organization of features offer further interpretability advantages over standard static methods of fusion. This interpretability may turn out to be useful for future research on explainable AI, adaptive multi-branch networks and representation learning analysis. The proposed framework also showcases the possibility of embedding lightweight adaptive contribution estimation methods into common deep learning pipelines. Even with such a simple implementation, the framework managed to keep the training behavior stable throughout training and the adaptive features balanced in some way.

C. Extensions to Dynamic Architectures and Heterogeneous Modalities

There are some limitations in the present study. To begin with, the experimental evaluation was carried out in a lightweight proof-of-concept implementation with the CIFAR-10 dataset. While CIFAR-10 is commonly used for testing out image classification models, larger and more complex datasets can give a better overall assessment of the ability of adaptive weighting. Second, the existing adaptive weighting module used a relatively simple multi-layer perceptron structure in the estimation of branch contribution. More sophisticated weighting schemes, such as attention-based fusion modules, transformer architectures or adaptive multi-scale weighting approaches, can be used to further enhance the dynamic feature aggregation ability.

Thirdly, limited computational resources were used in the Google Colab environment with a relatively small number of training epochs. Larger configurations of batches and longer optimization schedules and large-scale computational infrastructure can possibly enhance the convergence stability and adaptive weighting performance. This is because the current implementation was based largely on the dual-branch convolutional architectures. Systematization of adaptive weighting strategies in larger multi-branch systems, in heterogeneous backbone architecture, and in multimodal representation learning framework are possible avenues for future research.

Further future research could also consider Transformer-based adaptive fusion architectures, Multi-scale feature aggregation strategies, Advanced coalition approximation mechanisms, Large-scale dataset evaluation and Explainable adaptive weighting analysis and Real-time deployment optimization. In spite of these constraints, this proposed framework successfully showed the feasibility of coalition inspired adaptive feature fusion in a lightweight and low computational environment. The results show that adaptive branch contribution estimation can successfully deliver informative behavior of representation learning while also being compatible with typical deep learning optimization pipelines.

6.Conclusion

In this paper, a parallel ResNet18 and ResNet34 architecture-based adaptive weighting method was introduced for multi-branch image classification based on the coalition. contribution coefficients and fused features during inference depending on the input. Experimental results on the CIFAR-10 benchmark dataset showed that the proposed framework could adaptively aggregate the features from multiple branches with stable classification performance in a light computational environment. The framework successfully achieved competitive quantitative performance, and also allowed for visualization-based analysis of adaptive branch contribution behavior and fused feature representations. The ablation study demonstrated that multi-branch feature combination can enhance the classification performance over the single-branch architectures. The proposed adaptive weighting framework offered increased flexibility by branch balancing, contribution estimation and feature fusion analysis using interpretability, whereas under the current experimental setup, a static average fusion strategy yielded slightly better classification accuracy. The embedding analyses by adaptive weight visualization and t-SNE also showed that the proposed framework was able to capture meaningful representation aggregation behavior for different image categories. These analyses further informed the adaptive feature fusion process and confirmed the capability of using the coalition approach to estimating branch contributions in a lightweight deep learning pipeline. There were also some shortcomings in the current study such as the fact that the experimental setup was light, the training time was short, and the module for the adaptive weighting was simple. The framework is planned to be expanded to larger benchmark databases, deeper multi-branch architectures, adaptive fusion strategies based on the transformer network, and more sophisticated contribution estimation mechanisms in future works. In conclusion, the proposed framework shows the potential of implementing adaptive branch contribution estimation in multi-branch image classification systems while maintaining the compatibility with the standard deep learning optimization pipeline. The results have shown that the coalition-inspired adaptive feature fusion can offer meaningful representation learning behavior and also help to achieve better interpretability for future adaptive deep learning studies.

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