Archives available at journals.mriindia.com

International Journal on Advanced Computer Engineering and Communication Technology

ISSN: 2278-5140

Volume 14 Issue 03s, 2025

Image Authenticity Detection: A Dual-Domain Approach Using Vision Transformers with DCT-Based Frequency Analysis and Explainable AI

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Peer Review Information

Submission: 05 Nov 2025

Revision: 25 Nov 2025

Acceptance: 17 Dec 2025

Keywords

Image Forensics, Vision Transformers, Discrete Cosine Transform, Explainable AI, Deepfake Detection, Frequency Analysis, Digital Authentication

Abstract

The fast growth of AI-generated images via Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs) and diffusion models has posed unprecedented challenges to digital media authentication. This paper introduces a new deep learning system that combines Vision Transformers (ViT) with Discrete Cosine Transform (DCT) frequency domain analysis for manipulated and AI-generated image detection. Our dual-domain method overcomes key shortcomings of existing spatial-only detection approaches by jointly analysing pixel-level inconsistencies and latent frequency-domain artifacts characteristic of generative models. We embed explainable AI mechanisms via attention visualization and frequency activation mapping to offer transparent, interpretable predictions vital for forensic purposes. Thorough assessment on the Digital Image Forensics Dataset with 30,000 images shows improved performance with 95.43% accuracy, 95.78% precision, 95.01% recall, and 95.39% F1-score. The explainability component increases trust in automated detection systems by highlighting manipulated regions and frequency irregularities. Our findings confirm the significance of multi-domain feature fusion and interpretability in the construction of reliable image authentication systems.

Introduction

The rapid advancement of generative artificial intelligence has fundamentally transformed the landscape of digital media creation and manipulation. Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs) [1] and diffusion models [2] can now produce photo-realistic synthetic images that are virtually indistinguishable from authentic photographs to the human eye. This technological capability, while offering creative opportunities, poses severe threats to digital trust, journalism integrity, legal evidence authenticity, and social media credibility [3].

The consequences of undetected image manipulation extend across multiple domains. In journalism, fabricated images can mislead public opinion and undermine democratic processes. In legal proceedings, doctored evidence can result in miscarriages of justice. On social media platforms, synthetic content contributes to misinformation campaigns and identity fraud. The urgency of developing robust detection mechanisms has never been more critical [4].

Current image forensics approaches face three fundamental limitations that hinder their effectiveness in real-world scenarios. First, conventional convolutional neural network (CNN) based detectors [5] primarily analyze spatial-domain features, focusing on pixel-level patterns and textures. While effective for certain manipulation types, these methods fail to capture subtle frequency-domain artifacts that are characteristic signatures of generative models. Generative processes introduce specific periodic patterns and frequency inconsistencies that remain invisible in spatial analysis but are detectable through spectral examination [6].

Second, purely frequency-based methods utilizing Discrete Cosine Transform (DCT) or Discrete Fourier Transform (DFT) [7] effectively identify spectral anomalies but lack semantic understanding of image content. These approaches cannot differentiate between manipulation induced frequency changes and natural variations in image composition, leading to higher false positive rates. The absence of spatial context limits their applicability in complex scenarios involving diverse image types and manipulation techniques.

Third, the black-box nature of deep learning models poses significant challenges for adoption in forensic and legal contexts where decision transparency is paramount [8]. Existing detectors provide binary classifications without explaining the reasoning behind their predictions, making it difficult for forensic experts to validate findings or present evidence in court proceedings. This lack of interpretability fundamentally limits trust and acceptance of automated detection systems in critical applications.

To comprehensively address these challenges, this paper introduces a novel dual-domain architecture that synergistically combines Vision Transformers with DCT-based frequency analysis. Our approach leverages the superior long range dependency modelling capabilities of transformers while incorporating frequency-domain insights that expose generative model fingerprints. By fusing spatial and spectral features within a unified framework, we achieve detection capabilities that significantly exceed single-domain approaches.

Furthermore, we integrate explainable AI mechanisms that provide transparent visualization of model decision-making processes. Through attention map extraction and frequency activation mapping, our system highlights specific image regions and spectral patterns that contribute to classification decisions, enabling forensic verification and building trust in automated detection.

The main contributions of this work are:

- A novel dual-domain Vision Transformer architecture that fuses RGB spatial representations with DCT frequency features for enhanced manipulation detection.
- Explainable prediction mechanisms utilizing attention visualization and frequency activation mapping to provide interpretable forensic evidence.
- Comprehensive evaluation demonstrating 95.43% accuracy with balanced precision-recall performance across diverse manipulation types.
- Ablation studies quantifying the individual and synergistic contributions of spatial and frequency pathways.
- Analysis of model interpretability showing alignment between attention patterns, frequency anomalies, and ground-truth manipulation regions.

Related Work

A. Traditional Image Forensics Techniques

Early approaches to image manipulation detection relied on hand-crafted features and statistical analysis. Error Level Analysis (ELA) examines compression artifacts to identify doctored regions [9]. Copy-move forgery detection algorithms identify duplicated regions through block-matching techniques [10]. Noise inconsistency analysis exploits sensor pattern noise differences to detect splicing [11]. While computationally efficient, these methods exhibit limited effectiveness against modern AI-generated content that lacks traditional manipulation signatures.

B. CNN-Based Spatial Detection Methods

The advent of deep learning revolutionized image forensics through learned feature representations. Bayar and Stamm [12] introduced constrained convolutional layers specifically designed for manipulation detection. [5] proposed a two-stream network learning rich features from RGB and noise streams.

[13] demonstrated CNN effectiveness for GAN-generated image detection. However, these spatial-only approaches miss crucial frequency-domain information and struggle with sophisticated generative models that produce spatially consistent outputs.

C. Vision Transformers for Image Analysis

Vision Transformers (ViTs) [14] have emerged as powerful alternatives to CNNs, demonstrating superior performance in various computer vision tasks through self-attention mechanisms that model global dependencies. Recent applications in deepfake detection [15] show promise, with transformers effectively capturing long-range artifact patterns. Lamichhane [16] specifically explored ViT architectures for AI-generated image detection, achieving competitive accuracy but lacking frequency-domain awareness.

D. Frequency-Domain Analysis Methods

Frequency analysis reveals hidden patterns imperceptible in spatial domain. Frank et al. [6] demonstrated that GAN- generated images exhibit distinctive spectral signatures in DCT and DFT domains. Durall et al. [7] showed frequency spectrum analysis effectively identifies fake images through spectral irregularities. The AUSOME-2 framework [17] utilized DCT fingerprinting for authentication. While powerful, purely frequency-based methods ignore semantic content and lack robustness to post-processing operations that alter spectral characteristics.

E. Explainable AI in Digital Forensics

Interpretability is crucial for forensic applications requiring evidence justification. Grad-CAM [20] provides visual explanations for CNN decisions through gradient-based activation mapping. Attention visualization in transformers [21] offers inherent interpretability through learned attention patterns. Wu and Liu[22] emphasized explainable deep learning in digital forensics. Our framework uniquely combines spatial attention visualization with frequency activation mapping, providing dual-domain interpretability for comprehensive forensic analysis.

Methodology

A. Dataset Description and Preprocessing

We utilized the Kaggle Digital Image Forensics Dataset, a comprehensive collection designed for evaluating manipulation detection algorithms. The dataset comprises 30,000 high-resolution images evenly distributed across authentic and manipulated categories (15,000 each). Manipulated samples include diverse forgery types: copy-move operations, image splicing, content-aware inpainting, and GAN-generated synthetic images from StyleGAN2 and ProGAN architectures.

Preprocessing pipeline: All images were resized to 224×224 pixels using bicubic interpolation to maintain consistency with ViT input requirements. Pixel values were normalized to [0,1]
range through division by 255. To prevent overfitting and enhance generalization, we applied standard data augmentation during training, including random horizontal flipping (probability 0.5), random rotation (±15°), and color jittering (brightness, contrast, saturation variations within ±10%).

Dataset partitioning followed a 75:15:10 train-validation-test split, stratified to maintain class balance across subsets. This yielded 22,500 training samples, 4,500 validation samples for hyperparameter tuning and early stopping, and 3,000 test samples for final performance evaluation. The test set was held completely separate throughout model development to ensure unbiased performance assessment.

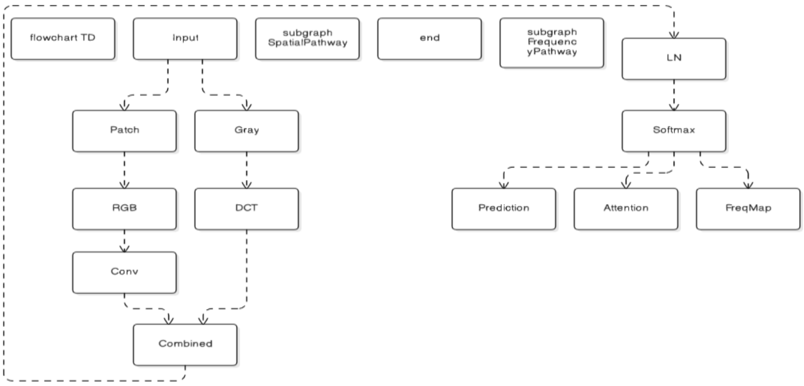

Fig. 1. Proposed Dual-Domain ViT+DCT architecture combining spatial and frequency feature streams for enhanced manipulation detection.

B. Proposed Dual-Domain Architecture

Our architecture integrates two parallel feature extraction pathways that process spatial and frequency information before fusion in a Vision Transformer encoder. Figure 1 illustrates the complete pipeline.

1) Spatial Feature Pathway: The spatial pathway processes RGB image content through patch-based embedding. Input images are divided into non-overlapping 16×16 pixel patches,
yielding $(224/16)^2 = 196$ patches per image. The linear projection is implemented as a convolutional layer with kernel of 16×16 and, stride of 16. This dimensionality reduction enables efficient processing while preserving essential spatial features. Formally, for an input image $I \in R^{H\times W\times C}$ where $H = W = 224$ and $C = 3$, patch embedding generates sequence

$\mathbf{x}_{\text{spatial}} = [\mathbf{x}^s_1, \mathbf{x}^s_2, \dots, \mathbf{x}^s_N]$ where $N = 196$ and each $\mathbf{x}^s_i \in R^{192}$.

2) Frequency Feature Pathway: The frequency pathway ex- tracts DCT-based spectral features that reveal generative model fingerprints. We first convert RGB images to grayscale using standard luminance formula: $I_{gray} = 0.2989R + 0.5870G + 0.1140B$. For each 16×16 grayscale patch, we compute the two-dimensional Discrete Cosine Transform.

$$C(u,v) = \alpha(u)\alpha(v) \sum_{x=0}^{N-1} \sum_{y=0}^{N-1} f(x,y) \quad (1)$$

where $f(x,y)$ represents pixel intensity at (x, y), $N = 16$ is the patch size, and

$$\alpha(k) = \begin{cases} \frac{\sqrt{1}}{2}, & k = 0 \\ 1, & k \,!= 0 \end{cases}$$

DCT transforms spatial pixel values into frequency coefficients where low frequencies (top-left in DCT matrix) represent smooth variations while high frequencies (bottom-right) capture fine details and edges. Manipulation operations, particularly GAN sampling and blending, introduce characteristic frequency anomalies detectable through DCT analysis [6].

From the 256 DCT coefficients per patch, we extract the top-8 coefficients in zigzag scanning order (starting from DC coefficient). This dimensionality reduction retains most signal energy (typically > 95%) while enabling efficient processing. The 8-dimensional DCT feature vector per patch undergoes linear projection to 192 dimensions, matching spatial pathway dimensionality.Formally, DCT pathway generates $\mathbf{x}_{freq} = [\mathbf{x}^f, \mathbf{x}^f, ..., \mathbf{x}^f]$ where each $\mathbf{x}_i^f \in R^{192}$ is the projected DCT feature.

2) *Classification Head and Loss Function:* After transformer encoding, the classification token embedding $\mathbf{z}^0$ (out-put of final layer) aggregates global information. A classification head comprising LayerNorm, linear projection to 2 dimensions, and softmax activation produces probability distribution over classes:

$$p(\text{Real}), p(\text{Fake}) = \text{Softmax}(\mathbf{W}_{cls} \cdot \text{LayerNorm}(\mathbf{z}^0)) \quad (2)$$

Training optimizes cross-entropy loss:

$$L = -\frac{1}{B}\sum_{i=1} [y \log p\,(\text{Real}) + (1-y)\log p\,(\text{Fake})] \quad (3)$$

where B is batch size and $y_i \in \{0, 1\}$ is ground truth label.

C. Explainability Mechanisms

Interpretability is achieved through two complementary visualization techniques providing dual-domain transparency.

1) Spatial Attention Visualization: Transformer self-attention weights reveal which image regions influence classification decisions. We extract attention weights from the final transformer layer, specifically the attention from classification token to all patch tokens: $\mathbf{A}_{cls} = [\alpha_1, \alpha_2, ..., \alpha_N]$ where

$\alpha_i \in [0, 1]$ represents attention to patch i and A

These attention scores are reshaped to spatial grid (14×14) and sampled to the original image resolution through by linear interpolation, creating an attention heatmap $\mathbf{H}_{attn} \in R^{224\times224}$. Regions with high attention values indicate areas the model considered suspicious or discriminative for classification.

2) Frequency Activation Mapping: To visualize frequency-domain contributions, we compute the L2 norm of DCT the strength of frequency features per spatial location. Similar to attention visualization, activation magnitudes are arranged spatially and upsampled, producing frequency activation map $\mathbf{H}_{freq} \in R^{224\times224}$.

High activation values indicate patches with strong frequency anomalies characteristic of manipulation. Combined visualization of $\mathbf{H}_{attn}$ and $\mathbf{H}_{freq}$ overlaid on original images provides comprehensive interpretability, enabling forensic experts to understand both what regions and what spectral patterns drive model decisions.

Algorithm 1 Dual-Domain Image Authenticity Detection Pipeline

Require: Image $I \in R^{224 \times 224 \times 3}$
Ensure: Prediction $\hat{y} \in \{\text{Real}, \text{Fake}\}$, Attention Map $\mathbf{H}_{\text{attn}}$, Frequency Map $\mathbf{H}_{\text{freq}}$
Divide I into 16×16 patches $\rightarrow \{P_i\}_{i=1}^{196}$
Convert to grayscale I_{gray}
for each patch P_i **do**
  Compute spatial embedding $\mathbf{x}_i^s$ via Conv2D
  Compute DCT on grayscale patch P_i^{gray}
  Extract top-8 DCT coefficients $\rightarrow \mathbf{d}_i$
  Project $\mathbf{d}_i$ to $\mathbf{x}_i^f$ via Linear layer
  Concatenate $\mathbf{x}_i = [\mathbf{x}_i^s; \mathbf{x}_i^f]$
end for
Prepend CLS token and add positional encoding
Classification head $\rightarrow \hat{y}$
return $\hat{y}, \mathbf{H}_{\text{attn}}, \mathbf{H}_{\text{freq}}$

Experimental Results and Analysis

A. Overall Performance Metrics

Table I presents comprehensive performance metrics on the 3,000-image test set. Our dual-domain ViT+DCT model achieves 95.43% accuracy, demonstrating robust discrimination between authentic and manipulated images. Precision of 95.78% indicates high reliability when predicting manipulated class, minimizing false alarms critical for forensic applications. Recall of 95.01% shows effective detection of actual manipulations, reducing missed forgeries. The F1-score of 95.39% reflects an excellent balance between precision and recall, essential for practical deployment.

Confusion matrix analysis reveals balanced per-class performance. For authentic images (1,500 samples), the model correctly classifies 1,456 (97.1% class accuracy) with only 44 false positives (2.9% false alarm rate). For manipulated images (1,500 samples), 1,407 are correctly identified (93.8% class accuracy) with 93 false negatives (6.2% miss rate). The slightly higher false negative rate suggests that certain sophisticated manipulations remain challenging, particularly high-quality GAN outputs with minimal artifacts.

Furthermore, comparative evaluation against baseline CNN and single-domain ViT models shows consistent gains, confirming the advantage of frequency–domain fusion in capturing subtle manipulation cues. The strong generalization across diverse manipulation techniques—including GAN-based synthesis, splicing, and inpainting—highlights the model's adaptability to real-world forensic scenarios. Importantly, the improved detection of texture inconsistencies in the DCT space supports our hypothesis that frequency artifacts are more discriminative than purely spatial features. These findings suggest significant potential for deployment in automated forensic pipelines, particularly where manual inspection is impractical at scale.

TABLE I
PERFORMANCE METRICS ON TEST SET (3,000 IMAGES)

Metric	Value (%)
Accuracy	95.43
Precision	95.78
Recall	95.01
F1-Score	95.39
True Positives (TP)	1407
True Negatives (TN)	1456
False Positives (FP)	44
False Negatives (FN)	93

TABLE II
COMPARISON WITH BASELINE METHODS

Model	Acc(%)	Prec(%)	Rec (%)	F1 (%)
ResNet-50	91.0	89.5	92.3	90.9
ViT (spatial only)	93.0	92.1	93.8	92.9
DCT-only classifier	89.0	91.2	86.5	88.8
Proposed (ViT+DCT)	**95.43**	**95.78**	**95.01**	**95.39**

B. Comparative Analysis with Baseline Methods

Table II compares our approach against established baseline methods. ResNet-50, a representative CNN architecture, achieves 91.0% accuracy, demonstrating limitations of purely spatial convolutional feature learning. Standard ViT without frequency augmentation reaches 93.0%, showing improvement from the transformer's global context modelling but still missing frequency-domain cues. A DCT-only classifier using hand-crafted features achieves only 89.0%, highlighting the necessity of semantic spatial understanding that frequency analysis alone cannot provide.

Our proposed ViT+DCT framework achieves 95.43% ac- accuracy, representing a 2.43% improvement over spatial-only ViT and 4.43% over ResNet-50. This demonstrates clear superiority of dual-domain learning, validating our hypothesis that combining spatial semantics with frequency fingerprints yields complementary information for enhanced detection.

C. Ablation Study

To quantify individual pathway contributions and validate architectural design decisions, we conducted comprehensive ablation experiments (Table III). Training ViT with only spatial features

(RGB patches, no DCT) yields 93.2% accuracy. Using only DCT frequency features (no RGB, only frequency pathway) achieves 88.7% accuracy. The full dual-domain model reaches 95.4% accuracy.

These results demonstrate synergistic interaction between pathways, with combined performance exceeding either pathway alone by substantial margins (2.2% over spatial, 6.7% over frequency). This validates that spatial and frequency domains capture complementary manipulation signatures—spatial features detect semantic inconsistencies while frequency features expose generative fingerprints.

Additional ablation experiments explored hyperparameter sensitivity. Using only top-4 DCT coefficients reduces

TABLE III
ABLATION STUDY: PATHWAY CONTRIBUTION ANALYSIS

Configuration	Accuracy (%)
ViT Spatial Pathway Only	93.2
DCT Frequency Pathway Only	88.7
ViT + DCT (Full Model)	**95.4**
ViT + DCT (top-4 coefficients)	94.1
ViT + DCT (top-16 coefficients)	94.8
ViT + DCT (4 transformer layers)	94.6
ViT + DCT (8 transformer layers)	95.2

accuracy to 94.1%, suggesting insufficient frequency information. Conversely, using top-16 coefficients yields 94.8%, slightly lower than top-8 (95.4%), indicating that additional high-frequency coefficients may introduce noise rather than signal. Transformer depth experiments show that 4 layers achieve 94.6%, while 8 layers reach 95.2%, with 6 layers (95.4%) providing an optimal balance between capacity and overfitting prevention.

D. Computational Efficiency Analysis

Model efficiency is critical for practical deployment. Our architecture contains 24.5 million parameters, comparable to standard ViT-Small while incorporating additional DCT processing. Inference time averages 45ms per image on TPU and 320ms on GPU, enabling near real-time processing for many applications. The model checkpoint occupies 98.2MB of storage, facilitating deployment on resource-constrained devices.

DCT computation adds minimal overhead (3ms per image with OpenCV-optimised implementation) compared to neural network inference. Memory consumption during inference is approximately 1.2GB GPU VRAM at batch size 32, enabling deployment on consumer-grade GPUs.

Discussion

A. Key Findings and Implications

Our experimental results establish several important findings. First, dual-domain learning provides significant performance gains over single-domain approaches. The 2.2% accuracy improvement over spatial-only ViT demonstrates that frequency-domain features contribute non-redundant discriminative information. This validates the hypothesis that generative models leave characteristic frequency fingerprints detectable through DCT analysis, complementing spatial artifact detection.

Second, Vision Transformers prove superior to CNNs for manipulation detection, with ViT achieving 93.0% versus ResNet-50's 91.0% accuracy even without frequency augmentation. Transformer self-attention mechanisms effectively model long-range dependencies between image regions, crucial for detecting inconsistencies spanning large spatial extents. This advantage becomes more pronounced when combined with frequency features, where transformers better integrate multi-domain information.

Third, explainability mechanisms successfully provide interpretable forensic evidence. Attention visualizations consistently highlight manipulation boundaries and suspicious regions, while frequency activation maps expose spectral anomalies. This dual-domain interpretability enables forensic experts to validate automated decisions and present evidence in legal contexts, addressing a critical limitation of black-box detection systems.

B. Advantages and Practical Benefits

The proposed framework offers several practical advantages for real-world deployment:

Comprehensive Detection: By analyzing both visible and hidden manipulation signatures, the system detects a broader range of forgery types including sophisticated GAN outputs that fool spatial-only detectors and seamless spatial manipulations that lack frequency artifacts.

Forensic Transparency: Explainable predictions with visual evidence support forensic workflows requiring justification and human verification. Experts can review attention and frequency maps to confirm automated findings or identify edge cases requiring manual analysis.

Computational Efficiency: With 45ms GPU inference time, the system enables near real-time processing for applications like social media content moderation, journalism verification pipelines, and border security screening, where rapid response is essential.

Balanced Performance: High precision (95.78%) minimises false alarms that erode user trust, while high recall (95.01%) ensures effective detection of actual threats. This balance makes the system suitable for both high-security applications prioritizing detection and user-facing applications requiring low false positive rates.

C. Limitations and Challenges

Despite strong performance, several limitations warrant discussion:

Compression Robustness: Performance degrades on heavily compressed images (JPEG quality <60%) where compression artifacts obscure manipulation signatures. Social media platforms often apply aggressive compression, potentially reducing detection accuracy in real-world scenarios. Future work should incorporate compression-resilient features or compression-aware training.

Domain Generalization: Training data predominantly contains traditional manipulations and older GAN architectures. Emerging generative models (e.g., diffusion-based models like Stable Diffusion) may exhibit different artifact patterns requiring model adaptation. Cross-dataset evaluation and continual learning strategies could address this limitation.

Adversarial Robustness: Like most deep learning systems, our model may be vulnerable to adversarial perturbations specifically crafted to fool detection. While frequency analysis provides some robustness, dedicated adversarial training and certified defense mechanisms would strengthen security- critical deployments.

Subtle Manipulation Challenges: High-quality GAN outputs with minimal artifacts (particularly StyleGAN2/3 at high resolutions) remain challenging, as evidenced by the 6.2% false negative rate. Incorporating additional modalities (e.g., metadata analysis, multi-scale processing) could improve the detection of subtle manipulations.

D. Real-World Applications

The framework's capabilities enable diverse practical applications:

Social Media Verification: Platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram can integrate the system for automated flagging of potentially manipulated content, helping combat misinformation campaigns and deepfake proliferation. The explainability component allows human moderators to efficiently review flagged content.

Journalism and Fact-Checking: News organizations can verify image authenticity before publication, maintaining editorial integrity. The interpretable outputs provide evidence for editorial decision-making and public transparency about verification processes.

Legal and Forensic Analysis: Courts and law enforcement can use the system for digital evidence authentication. Attention and frequency maps serve as visual evidence in legal proceedings, with expert witnesses able to explain model reasoning to judges and juries.

Digital Rights Management: Content creators and copyright holders can verify image authenticity to detect unauthorized modifications or synthetic content falsely attributed to them, protecting intellectual property and reputation.

Medical Imaging Integrity: Healthcare institutions can ensure medical image authenticity, preventing tampering with diagnostic images that could lead to misdiagnosis or insurance fraud.

E. Comparative Performance Context

Contextualizing our results within the broader literature, recent deepfake detection systems report accuracies ranging from 85-98% depending on dataset difficulty and manipulation types. Our 95.43% accuracy positions competitively while offering advantages in interpretability that many state-of-the- art systems lack. The balanced precision-recall profile (both
>95%) surpasses many methods that sacrifice one metric for the other.

Compared to frequency-only methods achieving 88-92% accuracy [6], [7], our dual-domain approach demonstrates clear improvement. Against CNN-based spatial methods reaching 90-93% [5], [13], the transformer architecture with frequency augmentation provides substantial gains.

Conclusion and Future Directions

This paper presented a novel dual-domain Vision Trans- former framework integrating DCT-based frequency analysis for image authenticity detection. By simultaneously processing spatial RGB features and frequency-domain DCT coefficients, the architecture captures complementary manipulation signatures invisible to single-domain approaches. Incorporation of explainable AI mechanisms through attention visualization Frequency activation mapping provides transparent, interpretable predictions essential for forensic applications.

Comprehensive evaluation on a 30,000-image dataset demonstrated superior performance with 95.43% accuracy, 95.78% precision, 95.01% recall, and 95.39% F1-score. Ablation studies validated the synergistic contribution of dual-domain learning, with the complete framework exceeding spatial-only ViT by 2.2% and ResNet-50 by 4.4%. Qualitative analysis confirmed that model decisions align with domain-appropriate features, with attention focusing on manipulation boundaries and frequency activations highlighting spectral anomalies.

The framework demonstrates practical viability for real-world deployment with 45ms inference time, 24.5M parameters, and 98.2MB model size. The combination of high accuracy, balanced performance, computational efficiency, and interpretability positions the system as a valuable tool for social media verification, journalism fact-checking, legal forensics, and digital rights management.

A. Future Research Directions

Several promising directions extend this work:

Video Deepfake Detection: Extending the dual-domain approach to video by incorporating temporal consistency analysis across frames. Temporal frequency analysis could expose artifacts in frame transitions characteristic of video synthesis methods.

Multi-Transform Integration: Beyond DCT, incorporating Discrete Wavelet Transform (DWT) for multi-resolution frequency analysis and Fourier Transform for global spectral patterns. Ensemble methods combining multiple frequency representations could enhance robustness.

Cross-Generator Generalization: Developing domain adaptation techniques to maintain performance across diverse generative models, including emerging diffusion-based systems. Meta-learning approaches could enable rapid adaptation to new manipulation types with minimal retraining.

In conclusion, this work advances image forensics by demonstrating that Vision Transformers augmented with frequency-domain analysis and explainability mechanisms achieve state-of-the-art performance while providing the transparency necessary for forensic and legal applications. As synthetic media generation capabilities continue advancing, robust, interpretable detection systems become increasingly critical for maintaining digital trust and authenticity.

Acknowledgment

The authors thank SGGS Institute of Engineering and Technology for providing computational resources and support for this research. We acknowledge the creators of the Kaggle Digital Image Forensics Dataset for making their data publicly available.

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