Title: Resolution Enhancement of Color Video Sequences

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Abstract

We propose a new multiframe algorithm to enhance the spatial resolution of frames in video sequences. Our technique specifically accounts for the possibility that motion estimation will be inaccurate and compensates for these inaccuracies. Experiments comparing our results with other methods show that our multiframe enhancement algorithm yields perceptibly sharper enhanced images with significant SNR improvement over bilinear and cubic B-spline interpolation.

1 Introduction

Given a digital image or a sequence of digital images, one often desires to increase the spatial resolution of a single or a set of digital images. One such application could be to magnify the limited resolution digital images obtained by a satellite. Another application is to obtain a higher quality digital video from one obtained with an inexpensive low quality cameras or camcorder for printing purposes. This problem has attracted a great deal of attention in the image processing literature in recent years [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12]. In particular, in 1997, Patti *et. al.* introduced a super-resolution technique based on Projection Onto Convex Sets (POCS) [5] in which the following effects were taken into account: camera motion, non zero aperture time, non zero physical dimension of each individual sensor element, blurring caused by the imaging optics, sensor noise, and sampling of the continuous scene on an arbitrary space-time lattice. Eren *et. al.* then extended the technique in [5] to scenes with multiple moving objects by introducing the concept of validity maps and segmentation maps [8]. Validity maps were introduced to allow robust reconstruction in the presence of motion estimation errors, where pixels are classified as those with reliable versus unreliable motion vectors.

In this paper, we will propose a multiframe enhancement technique that specifically accounts for the fact that motion estimation used in the reconstruction process will be inaccurate. In doing so, we also exploit the color component of the video signal to improve the accuracy of the motion vectors [13, 14]. It is important to emphasize that unlike the approaches in [5, 8], the imaging model given in this paper does not have a temporal component; the blur is assumed to be non-space varying and that the non-zero aperture time is not accounted for. This can be justified in situations where motion blur is small. Section 2 includes problem formulation. The basic algorithm is described in section 3. Results and conclusions are included in sections 4 and 5 respectively.

2 Problem Statement

Let $f(x, y, t)$ denote a time-varying continuous-space, continuous-time scene projected onto a two-dimensional image plane. Assume that the region of interest of $f(x, y, t)$ is $0 \leq x \leq N_2\Delta, 0 \leq y \leq N_1\Delta$. Then we can let $\ell_{i,j}^{(k)}$ for $0 \leq k \leq K-1, 0 \leq i \leq N_1 - 1, 0 \leq j \leq N_2 - 1$ denote the $(N_1 \times N_2)$-pixel, discrete-space, discrete-time frames in the corresponding digital video sequence of length K. $\ell_{i,j}^{(k)}$ denotes the pixel element at the i^{th} row and j^{th} column of the k^{th} frame. The relationship between $f(x, y, t)$ and $\ell_{i,j}^{(k)}$ is given by

$$\ell_{i,j}^{(k)} = \int_{kT}^{(k+1)T} \int_{i\Delta}^{(i+1)\Delta} \int_{j\Delta}^{(j+1)\Delta} f(x, y, t)\; dx\; dy\; dt, \qquad i = 0, \ldots, N_1 - 1, \qquad j = 0, \ldots, N_2 - 1, \tag{1}$$

where T is the exposure time for obtaining each digital frame. The problem we solve is to use M consecutive original $(N_1 \times N_2)$ pixel video frames $\{\ell^{(k-\frac{M-1}{2})}, \ldots, \ell^{(k)}, \ldots, \ell^{(k+\frac{M-1}{2})}\}$ to obtain the sequence of $(N_1 \times N_2)$-pixel frames $\{\ell^{(k)}\}$ to obtain a $(qN_1 \times qN_2)$-pixel frames $h^{(k)}$. Without loss of generality, we will present our methods with a value of $M = 5$.

3 Enhancement Algorithm

The overall system diagram for the proposed multiframe enhancement algorithm is shown in Figure 1. The first block in the diagram, labeled "Motion Estimation", takes the set of low resolution intensity frames as input, with the central frame (Frame $\#k$) as the reference frame, and outputs a set of motion estimates for each frame relative to the reference frame. The next block in the diagram, labeled "Iterative Algorithm", takes the low resolution intensity frames along with the motion estimates as input to form an initial estimate of the high resolution frame. Then, it takes this initial estimate, along with the low resolution intensity frames and motion estimates, and applies an iterative algorithm to converge upon the final enhanced high resolution frame estimate. This section describes each of these procedures in more detail.

3.1 Modified Block Matching Algorithm(MBMA)

Our approach is to match each low resolution frame $\ell^{(i)}, i \in \{k-2, k-1, k+1, k+2\}$ relative to the reference frame $\ell^{(k)}$ using the traditional block matching algorithm. There are two novelties to our motion estimation technique. First, we find a *set* of candidate motion estimates instead of a *single* motion vector for each pixel of the match frame relative to the reference frame. Second, we use both the luminance and chrominance values to compute the dense field of subpixel accuracy motion vectors.

3.1.1 Candidate Set of Motion Vectors

Our motion estimation algorithm is based on the fact that the true motion vector may have a higher MSE than other false motion estimates. We have empirically found that the true motion estimate usually has an MSE close to the "best" or lowest value. Hence, instead of simply accepting the possibly false minimum MSE motion vector as our estimate, we save several candidate motion estimates for each pixel along with the corresponding MSE's. These candidates consist of the estimate with smallest MSE along with all the estimates which have an error less than a small multiple τ of the minimum MSE. Using this procedure, for each pixel in the match frame we get a small set of possible motion vectors, ranked by the corresponding MSE, relative to the reference frame. We refer to these set of motion vectors as $\{\hat{m}_{i\to k}\}_{i=k-2}^{k+2}$.

There are two motivations behind using a candidate set of motion vectors rather than a single motion vector per pixel. First, as we will see later, one motion vector per pixel results in too many "holes" in the initial high resolution estimate, which in turn causes problems during the iterations of our reconstruction algorithm. Second, the imperfections in traditional BMA sometimes result in inaccuracies when choosing one motion vector per pixel. An example of the lowest MSE leading to an incorrect motion estimate is shown in Figure 2. Here we have an original high resolution image consisting of an object with a diagonal edge. We also show the resulting low resolution images after applying a 2×2 uniform blurring function to shifted versions of the high resolution image. We observe that the low resolution images ℓ_2, ℓ_3 and ℓ_4 are identical despite the fact they correspond to different shifts relative to the single high resolution image.

3.1.2 Chrominance Components to Increase Accuracy

Another difference between our motion estimation and traditional techniques is our use of color [13, 14]. The standard BMA is usually used only on the intensity or luminance component of the video signal. However, since we wish to obtain a high degree of accuracy in our motion estimates and because we will apply our method to color video sequences, our modified block matching algorithm uses the color components of the video signal to aid in motion estimation. In particular, we use luma and chroma components to arrive at one motion vector for all components based on a technique described at [14]. Harasaki and Zakhor [14] have shown that motion estimation using color components can significantly reduce motion estimation errors. Our experiments on sequences with known motion showed a 20% improvement in the number of correct motion estimates when using color components in the motion estimation as compared with luminance only motion estimation. This process adds some computational complexity to the algorithm but this cost is justified by the increased accuracy achieved.

3.2 Iterative Enhancement

After performing motion estimation to find the correspondences between the set of low resolution frames, we combine the available information to generate an initial high resolution frame estimate and then iteratively refine this estimate.

3.2.1 Initial High Resolution Estimate

For the initial high resolution frame estimate, we combine the low resolution frames using the motion estimates $\{\hat{m}_{i\to k}\}_{i=k-2}^{k+2}$ from section 3.1.1. The combination method maps all the intensity values from the set of low resolution frames onto a high resolution frame grid using the sets of subpixel accuracy candidate motion vectors. So, the pixels of the reference low resolution frame occupy a regularly spaced subset of the high resolution grid. For the remaining low resolution frames, we have subpixel accuracy motion estimates which enable us to map their pixels to the finer high resolution grid. Since, we have several frames and multiple motion vectors per pixel, this mapping process will yield some high resolution pixels with multiple conflicting intensity values landing on them. Since the high resolution grid is finer than the low resolution grid, it is also possible that some high resolution grid points will have no low resolution intensity values placed on them. These points are referred to as *holes*. The possible situations that can arise are depicted pictorially in Figure 3.

In the case of multiple low resolution intensities vying for a single high resolution pixel location, we choose the intensity and corresponding motion vector of the low resolution pixel which had the lowest MSE during the MBMA algorithm. In the case of holes, although no low resolution intensity points map to the holes, it is still desirable to have a good initial estimate for these pixels before we start the iterative enhancement. For this reason, we apply an interpolation technique such as nearest neighbor to estimate the holes based on surrounding filled grid points. The estimates in the initial high resolution frame will be modified by the iterative algorithm, so high accuracy at this stage is not required.

3.2.2 Iterative Algorithm

Our iterative stage is based on the Landweber algorithm. For ease of summarizing the general scheme, we consider the case of estimating a high resolution frame from only two low resolution frames; the case with a larger set of low resolution frames is a straightforward extension. Initially, we desire a good estimate of the original high resolution frame h from the corresponding set of low resolution frames $\ell^{(1)}$ and $\ell^{(2)}$, which are available to us. At step $n-1$ of the iteration, we have a high resolution frame estimate $\hat{h}_{n-1}$. For step n of the iteration, we desire the estimate $\hat{h}_n$ to be a better estimate than $\hat{h}_{n-1}$ of the original high resolution frame h which is, of course, unknown. The original low resolution frames, however, are known and can be used to yield information about h. The approach we take is to use the motion estimate information to simulate the imaging of low resolution frames $\hat{\ell}^{(1)}$ and $\hat{\ell}^{(2)}$ from $\hat{h}_{n-1}$. We then compare and determine the error between the simulated low resolution frames $\hat{\ell}^{(1)}, \hat{\ell}^{(2)}$ and the original low resolution frames $\ell^{(1)}, \ell^{(2)}$. We use this computed error in the iteration step to modify $\hat{h}_{n-1}$, yielding a better estimate $\hat{h}_n$. Successive iterations allow us to converge on a final high resolution estimate for the original high resolution frame h. The precise algorithm for this iterative technique is given below.

Algorithm (Iterative Enhancement): Determine a high resolution frame estimate for frame $h^{(k)}$.

1. Using the method outlined in Section 3.2.1, determine an initial high resolution frame estimate $\hat{h}_0^{(k)}$ and a consistent set of motion vectors $\{m_{i\to k}\}_{i=k-2}^{k+2}$ from the set of low resolution frames $\{\ell^{(i)}\}_{i=k-2}^{k+2}$ and the initial motion estimates $\{\hat{m}_{i\to k}\}_{i=k-2}^{k+2}$.

2. Set the iteration step counter to $s = 0$, so that $\hat{h}_s^{(k)}$ is equal to the initial frame estimate determined in Step 1.

3. Using the high resolution frame estimate $\hat{h}_s^{(k)}$, apply the imaging process to it using the motion estimates $\{m_{i\to k}\}_{i=k-2}^{k+2}$ to obtain a sequence of simulated low resolution frames $\{\hat{\ell}_s^{(i)}\}_{i=k-2}^{k+2}$.

4. Compare the simulated and original low resolution frames, $\{\hat{\ell}_s^{(i)}\}_{i=k-2}^{k+2}$ and $\{\ell_s^{(i)}\}_{i=k-2}^{k+2}$, respectively, to determine the errors in the pixels of the high resolution frame estimate $\hat{h}_s^{(k)}$.

5. Use the errors determined in Step 4 and the motion vectors $\{m_{i\to k}\}_{i=k-2}^{k+2}$ to adjust the high resolution estimate $\hat{h}_s^{(k)}$ using Landweber's iterative algorithm to yield a new high resolution frame estimate $\hat{h}_{s+1}^{(k)}$.

6. Increment the iteration step: $s \leftarrow s + 1$.

7. Repeat Steps 3 to 6 until either the error calculated in Step 4 is less than some desired value or until a desired number of iterations have been performed.

4 Results

We shall now examine some experimental results using the methods described above for *Foreman* and *Mobile Calendar* sequences. For both sequences, we chose $\tau = 10\%$ for all frames, $M = 5$, and used a 2×2 uniform support blurring function to obtain a sequence of low resolution frarmes. The first test video sequence, entitled *Foreman*, consists of a camera panning through a scene of man's upper body in the foreground with a building in the background. The original high resolution frames each consist of one 176×144 pixel luminance component and two 88×72 pixel chrominance components. Frame #0, Frame #10, Frame #15 and Frame #25 of the low resolution sequence are shown in

Figure 4. We applied our multiframe algorithm to the first 25 frames of the low resolution *Foreman* sequence. For comparison, we also applied the single frame techniques of bilinear interpolation and cubic B-spline interpolation, as well as a multiframe method using traditional BMA for the motion estimation. Figure 5 shows the original high resolution Frame #0 as well as the high resolution estimate for Frame #0 obtained by using the different methods. We notice that the single frame techniques look more blurred than the multiframe result. In particular, the multiframe estimate contains much sharper edges than either of the other two approaches. Note that Frame #0 was estimated from frames -2, -1, +1, and +2 and that frame #0 was not the first frame of the video sequence under consideration.

To perform a more quantitative comparison, we computed the signal-to-noise ratio(SNR) for the various methods, including a multiframe approach using simple BMA instead of the novel approach proposed in this paper. The results are shown in Figure 6 and Table 5. We observe that our proposed multiframe method performs better than bilinear interpolation by an average of $3.5\,dB$, better than cubic B-spline interpolation by an average of $2.5\,dB$ and better than a multiframe method using traditional BMA by an average of almost $2.0\,dB$.

The multiframe algorithm performs significantly better than the single frame methods for all the frames in the sequence, with greater performance differential for some parts of the sequence than others. Figure 6 reveals that for the first 10 frames the multiframe method is at least $3.0\,dB$ better than cubic B-spline interpolation and at least $4.0\,dB$ better than bilinear interpolation. In some regions, however, such as in the vicinity of Frame #10, the improvement is not as dramatic, yielding only $1.0\,dB$ of improvement. Direct observation of the video sequence reveals that the video frames corresponding to the areas of less significant improvement contain very little motion between frames.

The second video sequence, entitled *Mobile Calendar*, consists of nontrivial motions among several objects possessing fine detail and significant color components. In the sequence, a wall calendar moves with 3-D translational motion(i.e., translational motion in the image plane as well as a component perpendicular to the camera), a toy train moves with roughly translational motion and the train pushes a ball which undergoes rotational motion. The original high resolution frames each consist of one 400×320 pixel luminance component and two 200×160 pixel chrominance components. Four low resolution frames are shown in Figure 7. We followed the same procedure as with the *Foreman* sequence to generate a sequence of high resolution estimates. The results for Frame #0 are shown in Figure 8. Once again, note that frame #0 was estimated from frames -2, -1, +1, and +2 and that frame #0 was not the first frame of the video sequence under consideration. We observe that the multiframe method is capable of reproducing an estimate that is comparable to the original high resolution frame. The details in the multiframe estimate are much sharper than those in either single frame interpolation method. The quantitative results support the perceived improvement in quality. Table 5 shows the average SNR for the various methods over the entire sequence. The multiframe approach performs about $1.1\,dB$ better than bilinear interpolation, about $1.6\,dB$ better than cubic B-spline interpolation and about $0.86\,dB$ better than multiframe using traditional BMA. Figure 9 shows the SNR plot. We observe that the proposed method outperforms the others throughout the sequence.

5 Conclusions

We have proposed an approach for enhancing the spatial resolution of a color video sequence by using multiple frames to obtain each enhanced resolution frame. The results presented in Section 4 indicate that this multiframe approach significantly outperforms standard single frame approaches in both SNR and perceived visual quality. This is in spite of the fact that there is no explicit model taken into account for the motion blur [5]. It is important to emphasize that the desired expansion factor determines the accuracy with which the motion vectors need to be determined. For example, a 3X magnification factor would have required motion vector estimation with resolution of 1/3 pixels. Convergence properties of the algorithm are demonstrated in [15].

References

[1] S. P. Kim and W. Y. Su, "Recursive high resolution reconstruction of blurred multiframe images,"