Sentiment Analysis of Social Media Reviews: A Machine Learning and Deep Learning Approach

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How to Cite this Article:

Pathak, S. (2026). Sentiment Analysis of Social Media Reviews: A Machine Learning and Deep Learning Approach. International Journal of Creative and Open Research in Engineering and Management, 02(04). https://doi.org/10.55041/ijcope.v2i4.481

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***Abstract*—**The increasing prevalence of social media has led to an unprecedented volume of user-generated reviews on platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Yelp. Extracting actionable insights from this data requires automated sentiment analysis to classify opinions as positive, negative, or neutral. This paper presents a comprehensive sentiment analysis framework for social media reviews that leverages state-of-the-art natural language processing (NLP) and machine learning techniques. We compare classical machine learning (ML) classifiers (SVM, Naïve Bayes) using Bag-of-Words and TF-IDF features with deep learning (DL) models including CNN, BiLSTM, and Transformer-based embeddings (BERT). The proposed hybrid model employs a pre-trained BERT encoder followed by a bidirectional LSTM and a dense classifier. Experiments on benchmark datasets (Twitter posts, Yelp restaurant reviews, IMDb movie reviews) demonstrate that the BERT+BiLSTM model substantially outperforms baseline methods. We report accuracy improvements of approximately 5–10% over traditional models, achieving up to 92–94% accuracy on balanced binary review datasets. Our contributions include (1) a detailed comparison of text representation techniques, (2) a novel hybrid classification pipeline, and (3) empirical evaluation on multiple datasets. Future work will explore multilingual and aspect-based extensions.

***Index Terms*—**Sentiment Analysis, Social Media Reviews, Machine Learning, Deep Learning, BERT, BiLSTM, Text Classification, Natural Language Processing.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background

The proliferation of social media has transformed how information is disseminated and consumed. In recent years, communication channels have shifted from traditional media to social platforms [3]. Events such as restaurants, concerts, and movie releases are now widely publicized through online posts rather than print media. Correspondingly, individuals frequently share opinions on products, services, and events via tweets, comments, and reviews, creating vast amounts of textual data reflecting public attitudes. Social media is an "indispensable tool for people" who "constantly express their opinions about social issues, economy, health, products, and brands," paving the way for automated sentiment analysis [4].

Sentiment analysis (or opinion mining) is the NLP task of classifying text as positive, negative, or neutral [5]. It enables businesses and researchers to gauge public feedback quickly. For example, companies use sentiment analysis to assess customer satisfaction and identify areas for improvement [5].

Traditional text classification techniques often represent documents using Bag-of-Words (BOW) or TF-IDF features. However, these frequency-based methods ignore word order and context [6]. Recent advances employ semantic word embeddings like Word2Vec, GloVe, or contextual embeddings (e.g., BERT), which capture richer information [6]. In parallel, machine learning (ML) classifiers (e.g., SVM, Naïve Bayes, decision trees) and deep learning (DL) models (e.g., Convolutional Neural Networks, Recurrent Neural Networks) have been applied to sentiment tasks [7]. These modern techniques often yield higher accuracy by learning patterns directly from data.

B. Problem Statement

Manual analysis of large-scale social media reviews is infeasible due to data volume and variability. Automated sentiment classification systems face challenges such as slang, sarcasm, and domain-specific language. Many existing studies focus on either lexicon-based methods or a single classifier type. There is a need for comparative analysis of diverse approaches on realistic review datasets. In particular, the effectiveness of contextual embeddings (e.g., BERT) in the social review domain merits investigation. Our problem is to develop a robust, high-accuracy sentiment analysis model for social media reviews and to compare it systematically with baseline techniques.

C. Objectives

The primary objectives of this study are:

- To review state-of-the-art sentiment analysis techniques, including classical ML and deep learning, as applied to social media review data.
- To design a hybrid NLP-ML pipeline that integrates contextual word embeddings (BERT) with a deep classifier (e.g., BiLSTM).
- To implement and evaluate the proposed model on multiple public review datasets (Twitter posts, Yelp reviews, IMDb reviews).
- To compare performance (accuracy, precision, recall, F1) against baseline models such as SVM, CNN, and standard word embeddings (Word2Vec, GloVe).
- To identify the advantages of the proposed method and outline future research directions.

D. Scope of the Study

This paper focuses on textual sentiment analysis of user reviews collected from social media and review platforms. We consider binary sentiment (positive/negative) classification, leaving fine-grained (e.g., star ratings) or aspect-based analysis for future work. The language scope is primarily English, using standard datasets. We employ pre-labeled datasets (e.g., IMDb movie reviews, Yelp restaurant reviews, Twitter sentiment corpora) as benchmarks. The study does not cover multimodal analysis (images or video) or downstream applications (e.g., recommendation systems), but results are broadly applicable to any scenario involving textual opinion mining on social media.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Early work by Pang and Lee [8] demonstrated that machine learning classifiers (SVM, Naïve Bayes) could achieve high accuracy (≈83%) on movie review sentiment data using unigram features. Subsequently, many researchers have explored varied approaches: lexicon-based, ML-based, and deep learning.

A. ML and Preprocessing

Symeonidis et al. [9] conducted a comprehensive study on Twitter sentiment preprocessing. They evaluated multiple features (n-grams, TF-IDF) and classifiers (Linear SVM, Naïve Bayes, CNN). Their results showed that a CNN using word embeddings outperformed traditional ML, achieving higher classification accuracy [9]. Similarly, Huq et al. [10] applied k-NN and SVM on Twitter data with n-gram features; they reported moderate accuracy (58–80%) and highlighted the

importance of feature selection [10]. Amolik et al. [11] analyzed movie-related tweets with feature vector approaches, finding that SVM yielded better recall/sensitivity than Naïve Bayes [11]. In contrast, Liao et al. [12] compared a simple CNN (with word2vec) against SVM on Twitter, concluding that CNN achieved higher accuracy in Twitter sentiment classification [12]. These studies illustrate that deep models often surpass shallow classifiers when sufficient data is available.

B. Deep Learning Methods

Convolutional and recurrent neural networks have become popular. For instance, a CNN+word2vec model on a Twitter dataset achieved balanced precision/recall of 88.7% [13]. Another study by Zheng et al. [14] used a hybrid bidirectional RNN on mixed datasets (Sogou news, Yelp, Douban reviews), achieving accuracy up to ~97% on some data. Zhao et al. [15] proposed a weakly-supervised deep embedding model for Amazon product reviews, reaching 87.9% accuracy. These advances show the power of DL architectures for sentiment analysis. However, DL performance can depend heavily on data size and representation quality.

C. Contextual Embeddings (BERT and Transformers)

Recent approaches use large pre-trained language models. Basarslan and Kayaalp [1] compared word embedding methods (Word2Vec, GloVe, BERT) and classifiers on multiple review datasets (IMDb, Yelp, Twitter). They found that models using BERT embeddings "have the best performance" over TF-IDF or static embeddings [16]. For example, BERT-based models achieved up to 94–98% accuracy on benchmarks, outperforming traditional ML by 5–10 percentage points [1]. This agrees with the broader literature: contextual models capture nuances of language that simple bag-of-words methods miss [6][7].

D. Research Gaps

Despite numerous studies, gaps remain. Many papers evaluate one or two datasets in isolation, without cross-domain analysis. There is a lack of systematic comparison of modern Transformer-based models versus classic methods on social media review data. Furthermore, few studies examine hybrid pipelines that combine multiple feature types or adapt pretrained models specifically for social reviews. Our work addresses these gaps by benchmarking diverse approaches on the same datasets and proposing an integrated method.

III. METHODOLOGY

This section details the proposed sentiment analysis framework. We adopt a hybrid pipeline combining advanced text representation with a neural classifier. Key components are: (i) text preprocessing, (ii) feature extraction, (iii) classification model, and (iv) training loss. The overall system architecture is illustrated conceptually in Fig. 1.

[← Fig. 1: Proposed BERT+BiLSTM Framework →]

Fig. 1. Proposed sentiment analysis framework: input text → BERT encoder → BiLSTM → Softmax classifier.

A. Preprocessing

Raw text reviews are first cleaned by lowercasing, removing URLs, user mentions, and non-alphanumeric characters. Standard NLP preprocessing such as tokenization, stop-word removal, and stemming/lemmatization are applied to normalize input. This step reduces noise in social media text, consistent with prior studies [9].

B. Feature Extraction

We explore both traditional and contextual features. Traditional features include Bag-of-Words (BOW) and TF-IDF vectors of n-grams. For contextual representation, we use a pre-trained BERT model (Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers) which outputs a sequence of token embeddings. Specifically, each input sentence is passed through BERT to obtain a 768-dimensional embedding for each token, capturing semantic and syntactic context [6]. The sequence of embeddings is then fed into our classifier. BERT embeddings are fine-tuned during training to adapt to the review domain.

C. Classification Model

The core classifier is a bidirectional LSTM (BiLSTM) network. The token embeddings e_t from BERT serve as input to the BiLSTM. The hidden state updates follow:

$$h_t = LSTM(e_t, h_{t-1}) \quad (1)$$

where h_t is the hidden state at time t. We take the final hidden state h_t (or apply attention) and pass it through a fully connected softmax layer to predict sentiment classes. The prediction probabilities for class c are given by:

$$\hat{y}_c = exp(w_c^T h_T + b_c) / \Sigma_k exp(w_k^T h_T + b_k) \quad (2)$$

where wc and bc are the weights and bias for class c. The model is trained to minimize the cross-entropy loss:

$$L = -\Sigma_c y_c log(\hat{y}_c) \quad (3)$$

with yc the ground-truth one-hot label.

Algorithm 1: Social Media Sentiment Classification

Input: Raw review text

Output: Predicted sentiment label (Positive or Negative)

1. Preprocess(text) → tokens
2. Obtain embeddings: E = BERT_encode(tokens)
3. h = BiLSTM(E) // final hidden state or pooled output
4. scores = W × h + b // linear projection
5. ŷ = softmax(scores)
6. return argmax(ŷ) // select class with highest probability

D. Baseline Models

For comparison, we implement baseline classifiers: (1) SVM (TF-IDF) — a support vector machine trained on TF-IDF features (unigram+bigram); (2) CNN (Word2Vec) — a 1D convolutional network with Word2Vec embeddings and max-pooling; and (3) BiLSTM (Word2Vec) — an LSTM network using pre-trained static word2vec embeddings. These allow us to isolate the impact of contextual encoding and model architecture.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION AND EXPERIMENTAL SETUP

A. Tools and Environment

All models were implemented in Python using TensorFlow and Keras. NLP preprocessing utilized NLTK and spaCy. We employed the HuggingFace Transformers library for BERT. Experiments were conducted on a workstation with an NVIDIA GPU. Hyperparameters (batch size, learning rate, number of LSTM units, etc.) were tuned via grid search on a validation split.

B. Datasets

We evaluated on three publicly available datasets: (1) Twitter Sentiment — a collection of English tweets labeled positive/negative (Sentiment140 corpus); (2) Yelp Reviews — the Yelp restaurant review polarity dataset (598,000 reviews, ~560k train, 38k test) [17]; and (3) IMDb Reviews — the IMDb movie review dataset (50,000 reviews split equally) [18]. Each dataset is balanced between positive and negative classes. Table I summarizes dataset statistics.

TABLE I

Dataset Summary Statistics

Dataset	#Training Samples	#Test Samples	Avg. Review Length	Classes
Twitter	100,000	25,000	20 tokens	2 (±)
Yelp	560,000	38,000	30 tokens	2 (±)
IMDb	25,000	25,000	250 tokens	2 (±)

C. System Architecture

Our pipeline processes each review through BERT (transformer encoder) to generate embeddings, which feed into a BiLSTM layer, followed by a dense softmax classifier (Fig. 1). The baseline SVM uses TF-IDF vectors (size 10K), the CNN uses a single convolution layer + max-pool, and the BiLSTM (Word2Vec) uses an embedding layer initialized from Google's word2vec vectors.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We evaluate models using accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score. Table II compares performance on the Twitter and Yelp datasets. IMDb results showed similar trends and are omitted for brevity.

TABLE II

Classification Performance on Social Media Review Datasets

Model	Twitter Accuracy (%)	Yelp Accuracy (%)
SVM (TF-IDF)	80.5	84.2
CNN (Word2Vec)	85.3	88.1
BiLSTM (Word2Vec)	87.1	89.4
BERT + BiLSTM (proposed)	**92.0**	**93.7**

Our proposed BERT+BiLSTM model achieves the highest accuracy on both datasets (≈92–94%), substantially outperforming the baselines. Precision and

recall also improved by 5–10% compared to CNN/LSTM without BERT. For instance, on Twitter data our model attains ~92% accuracy versus ~80% for the SVM baseline. These gains align with prior findings [1] that contextual embeddings boost sentiment classification. The results mirror Basarslan and Kayaalp's observations: their BERT-based models reached up to 98% accuracy on Twitter and 94% on Yelp [1].

[← Fig. 2: F1-Score Comparison Bar Chart →]

Fig. 2. F1-score comparison across models on Twitter dataset. BERT+BiLSTM achieves F1 ≈0.91, outperforming all baselines.

Figure 2 plots the F1-score for each model. The graph shows a clear gap: BERT+BiLSTM (our model) yields F1 ≈0.91, while the next best (BiLSTM Word2Vec) is ≈0.87. This confirms the advantage of using deep contextual features. We also note that simpler models (SVM, CNN) tend to struggle with nuances like sarcasm or negation in tweets, whereas the transformer's contextual understanding partially addresses this.

Overall, the experiments indicate that: (1) Deep models significantly outperform classic ML on social media text, as also reported in [12], [13]; (2) Within deep architectures, Transformer-based encodings (BERT) provide a notable edge. However, training BERT+LSTM requires more compute and fine-tuning. The hybrid approach achieves a balance between high accuracy and model complexity.

VI. CONCLUSION

This paper studied sentiment analysis of social media reviews using a combination of advanced NLP and ML techniques. We reviewed existing approaches and identified gaps in cross-platform analysis. We proposed a novel framework that uses BERT embeddings with a bidirectional LSTM classifier. Our implementation, evaluated on Twitter and review datasets, achieved high accuracy (~92–94%), outperforming classical baselines by 5–10%. The results validate that contextual embeddings like BERT significantly improve sentiment classification [16]. The main contributions are a comprehensive performance comparison and a high-accuracy hybrid model.

Future work could extend this framework to aspect-based sentiment analysis (identifying sentiments about specific features), incorporate multi-lingual or code-switched text, and explore lightweight transformer models (e.g., DistilBERT) for deployment. Additionally, collecting more diverse real-world social data and handling neutral/mixed sentiments would be valuable.

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