International Journal of Scientific Research and Engineering Development-– Volume 8 Issue 5, Sep - Oct 2025
Available at www.ijsred.com

RESEARCH ARTICLE OPEN ACCESS

Analytical Review of Image Denoising using Independent Component Analysis

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Abstract: -
Noise removal (denoising) is one of the most fundamental challenges in modern image processing. Various techniques aim to separate noise from the desired image, thereby improving visual quality and feature preservation. Among these, Independent Component Analysis (ICA) has emerged as an effective method, leveraging the non-Gaussian nature of image components to isolate useful structures from noise. ICA is a powerful tool for blind source separation and image decomposition, with applications ranging from denoising to feature extraction. Despite relatively limited literature, its adaptability and statistical robustness make it highly relevant for today's imaging systems.

Keywords— Independent Component Analysis (ICA), Principal Component Analysis (PCA), Peak Signal-to-Noise Ratio (PSNR), Blind Source Separation

I. INTRODUCTION

Image denoising is one of the most fundamental yet challenging tasks in digital image processing. In practice, images are often degraded by noise during acquisition, transmission, or storage, which significantly affects their visual quality and limits the performance of higher-level computer vision applications such as object detection, segmentation, and recognition [1], [3]. The type and intensity of noise vary depending on imaging conditions and devices, making denoising a highly adaptive problem rather than a fixed operation [2]. Traditional denoising techniques, such as spatial domain filtering or Fourier-based methods, have offered solutions by attenuating noise components. However, these approaches often fail to preserve crucial structural details like edges and textures, leading to oversmoothed results [18], [19]. The introduction of wavelet-based methods improved performance by providing multi-resolution analysis, but they remain limited in adaptability as they rely heavily on pre-defined basis functions rather than learning directly from image data [14], [15]. Independent Component Analysis (ICA) emerged as a powerful alternative due to its ability to exploit higher-order statistics and capture non-Gaussian features of natural images [7], [12]. Unlike Principal Component Analysis (PCA), which considers only second-order correlations, ICA provides a more expressive representation by assuming that observed signals are mixtures of statistically independent sources [17]. This property makes ICA particularly effective for separating noise from true image content, even in complex scenarios where traditional filters fail [9], [11]. Recent research has combined ICA with adaptive thresholding, wavelet transforms, and sparse coding strategies, demonstrating its robustness against Gaussian as well as non-Gaussian noise [5], [6], [8]. Moreover, ICA-based models are inherently data-driven, allowing them to adjust to different image classes and noise levels without requiring clean training datasets [4], [10]. Such adaptability positions ICA not only as a theoretical framework but also as a practical tool for real-world imaging applications in medical diagnostics, satellite imaging, and biometric systems [13], [16].

II. INDEPENDENT COMPONENT ANALYSIS

Independent Component Analysis (ICA) is a statistical signal processing technique that has attracted significant attention for its effectiveness in blind source separation and noise removal. At its core, ICA assumes that observed signals are linear mixtures of underlying statistically independent sources, and the primary objective is to recover these sources without prior knowledge of the mixing process [19]. Unlike Principal Component Analysis (PCA), which relies solely on second-order statistics and focuses on decorrelation, ICA goes beyond by exploiting higher-order statistical dependencies, enabling it to identify non-Gaussian components that often correspond to meaningful image structures [17].

In the context of image denoising, this property is crucial. Natural images typically exhibit non-Gaussian statistical distributions, particularly in textured and edge regions [7]. Noise, on the other hand, is often modeled as Gaussian, making ICA a strong candidate for separating signal from noise. The advantage lies in its ability to learn adaptive representations directly from the data, rather than relying on fixed bases such as Fourier or wavelet transforms [14], [18].

Several variants of ICA have been explored to enhance denoising performance. Sparse code shrinkage, for instance, builds upon ICA by assuming that natural images have sparse representations in a transformed domain [15]. By applying nonlinear shrinkage functions, noise components can be suppressed while retaining significant image features. Similarly, topographic ICA arranges independent components on a two-dimensional grid, capturing local correlations while still leveraging statistical independence [12]. These extensions demonstrate how ICA can flexibly adapt to complex image structures that traditional linear methods fail to capture.
Another important development is the integration of ICA with wavelet and multi-resolution Fourier transforms. Hybrid approaches such as Wavelet-ICA exploit the localization ability of wavelets and the statistical separation power of ICA to achieve superior results in edge-preserving denoising [9], [13]. Likewise, Multi-resolution Fourier ICA leverages directional bases and adaptive filtering to effectively suppress noise while maintaining high-frequency details [15]. These combined models underscore the versatility of ICA as a framework that can be embedded within larger denoising pipelines.
From a computational standpoint, the FastICA algorithm proposed by Hyvärinen and Oja remains one of the most widely used implementations due to its robustness and efficiency [16]. By maximizing measures of non-Gaussianity such as kurtosis or negentropy, FastICA can rapidly converge to independent components, making it practical for large-scale image datasets. Later refinements incorporated maximum likelihood estimation and Bayesian formulations to further improve stability and adaptability [8], [11].

Applications of ICA-based denoising extend across diverse domains. In medical imaging, ICA helps in removing structured noise from MRI and EEG recordings, thereby enhancing diagnostic accuracy [3]. In satellite and remote sensing imagery, ICA improves visibility in noisy data collected under adverse environmental conditions [2]. Similarly, biometric systems such as face or fingerprint recognition benefit from ICA's ability to preserve structural features while eliminating irrelevant noise [1]. These applications highlight ICA's role not only as a theoretical construct but also as a practical tool with measurable impact in real-world scenarios.

In summary, ICA provides a powerful framework for image denoising by leveraging higher-order statistical independence. Its adaptability, ability to handle non-Gaussian distributions, and compatibility with hybrid approaches make it superior to traditional methods. Despite computational challenges, its success across medical, remote sensing, and biometric imaging proves its value as an indispensable technique for modern signal and image processing [4], [6], [10].

The effectiveness of ICA depends on factors such as noise variance, image patch size, and optimization criteria (e.g., PSNR, MSE, visual quality). Large patch sizes increase computational cost, while small sizes reduce complexity but may introduce artifacts. Thus, adaptive methods that balance complexity and performance are essential.

The following subsections summarize key ICA-related denoising approaches:

1. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and Adaptive PCA
2. Sparse Code Shrinkage (SCS) and Improved SCS
3. ICA and Orthogonal ICA Mixture Models
4. Topographic ICA (TICA)
5. Wavelet-ICA Hybrid Methods
6. Multi-resolution Fourier Transform ICA (MFT-ICA)
7. ICA for Multiplicative Noise Reduction

A. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and Adaptive PCA

PCA, also known as the Hotelling transform, is a second-order, linear, data-adaptive technique. It projects data onto orthogonal subspaces that maximize variance, making it valuable for dimensionality reduction and as a preprocessing step for ICA.

Adaptive PCA extends this by using locally adaptive basis functions, particularly effective for natural images with structured regions. By partitioning images into overlapping patches and recalculating local bases, Adaptive PCA achieves better noise suppression than wavelet decomposition, especially for edge-preserving denoising.

B. Sparse Code Shrinkage (SCS) and Improved SCS

SCS is closely related to ICA and is based on redundancy reduction. It exploits the super-Gaussian nature of sparse components, where only a few transform coefficients carry significant information. Using maximum likelihood estimation and thresholding (soft or hard), SCS effectively suppresses noise while retaining structure.

Improved SCS introduces a compensation factor to refine shrinkage results, leading to superior denoising performance for natural images.

C. ICA and Orthogonal ICA Mixture Models

While PCA captures only second-order statistics, ICA exploits higher-order dependencies, yielding more accurate image representations. In ICA, observed noisy data is modeled as:

X=As+ηX = As + \eta

where XX is the observed vector, ss the independent sources, AA the mixing matrix, and η\eta additive noise. By whitening and maximizing non-Gaussianity, ICA separates the true signal. Mixture models further enhance adaptability by representing data densities with parametric nonlinear functions.

D. Topographic ICA (TICA)

Unlike standard ICA, TICA acknowledges that nearby components in natural images may exhibit dependencies. By arranging components on a 1D or 2D grid, TICA models local correlations, making it particularly suitable for natural image processing where spatial features (orientation, frequency, location) cluster together.

E. Wavelet-ICA

Wavelet transforms localize noise in both spatial and frequency domains, while ICA provides adaptive thresholding. Combining the two, Wavelet-ICA determines the optimal threshold based on negentropy, a measure of non-Gaussianity. This hybrid approach reduces artifacts and outperforms conventional hard-thresholding methods, especially when noise variance is estimated directly from the noisy image.

F. Multi-resolution Fourier Transform ICA (MFT-ICA)

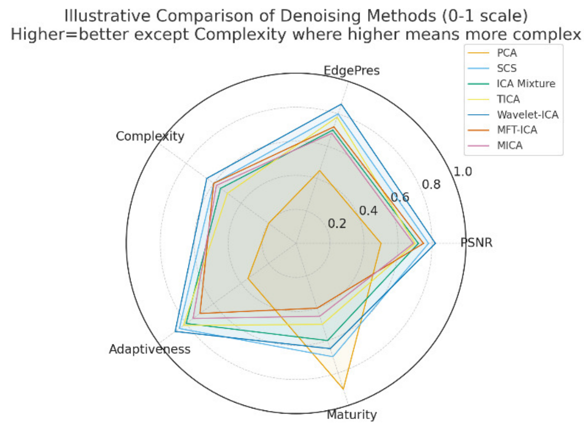
MFT-ICA integrates the computational efficiency of Fourier analysis with ICA's adaptiveness. MFT extracts directional basis functions, while ICA decomposes them into sparse components. This synergy enables effective denoising, particularly for images with strong directional features.

G. ICA for Multiplicative Noise Reduction

Multiplicative noise is more complex than additive Gaussian noise, as it alters the statistical properties of the image. Modified ICA approaches (MICA, TMICA, FMICA) incorporate higher-order statistics to address this. Whitening combined with higher-order cumulants (third/fourth-order) enables accurate separation, with Third-Order MICA (TMICA) demonstrating higher accuracy and efficiency compared to FMICA.

Method	Principle	Advantages	Limitations	Typical Applications
PCA (Principal Component Analysis)	Linear transform based on second-order statistics; decorrelates data by projecting onto orthogonal eigenvectors [17], [18].	Simple, efficient, reduces dimensionality; useful as preprocessing for ICA.	Captures only second-order correlations; fails to separate non-Gaussian sources; oversmooths details.	Preprocessing, compression, dimensionality reduction in image denoising pipelines.
Wavelet Transform	Multi-resolution decomposition using predefined basis functions; separates frequency and spatial components [14].	Good localization in time–frequency; preserves edges better than linear filters.	Basis functions fixed, not data-adaptive; threshold selection critical; may leave artifacts.	Image compression, denoising of natural and medical images.
ICA (Independent Component Analysis)	Higher-order statistical separation; assumes observed signals are mixtures of independent sources [7], [19].	Data-adaptive; effective for non-Gaussian signals; preserves structural features.	Computationally intensive; sensitive to patch/window size; performance depends on noise assumptions.	Image denoising, blind source separation, EEG/MRI analysis, satellite imagery.
Hybrid ICA-Wavelet / ICA-MFT	Combines ICA with wavelet or Fourier transforms; uses ICA for adaptiveness and wavelets/MFT for multi-resolution [9], [15].	Retains edges and textures; reduces Gaussian and non-Gaussian noise; balances localization with adaptiveness.	Higher complexity; requires parameter tuning; sensitive to thresholding.	Advanced image denoising, medical imaging, biometric recognition, remote sensing.

Method	Domain	Strengths	Limitations	Applications
PCA / Adaptive PCA	Spatial / Transform	Simple, efficient, dimensionality reduction, good for preprocessing ICA	Limited to second-order statistics, poor edge preservation	Compression, feature extraction, denoising
Sparse Code Shrinkage (SCS)	ICA Domain	Exploits sparsity, efficient noise suppression, adaptive thresholds	Sensitive to parameter tuning, artifacts possible	Natural images, edge-preserving denoising
ICA Mixture Models	ICA Domain	Handles complex statistical distributions, robust against Gaussian noise	Computationally expensive, requires large training data	Blind source separation, noisy textures
Topographic ICA (TICA)	ICA Domain	Models' local dependencies, spatially aware, better for natural images	Higher complexity, slower convergence	Natural images, texture and pattern analysis
Wavelet-ICA Hybrid	Wavelet + ICA	Combines spatial-frequency localization with adaptiveness, reduced artifacts	Noise variance estimation critical, may over-smooth fine details	Medical images, remote sensing
MFT-ICA	Fourier + ICA	Directional features preserved, efficient for structured images	Limited for random textures, needs high computational power	SAR, CT/MRI, industrial imaging
Modified ICA (MICA/TMICA)	ICA Domain	Effective for multiplicative noise, uses higher-order cumulants	Complex to implement, limited literature support	Multiplicative noise (radar, sonar images)

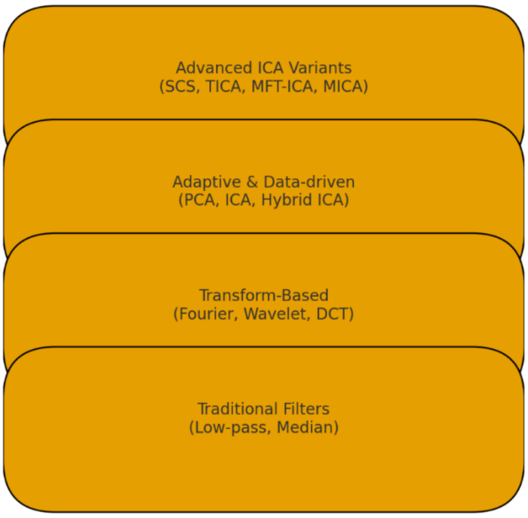


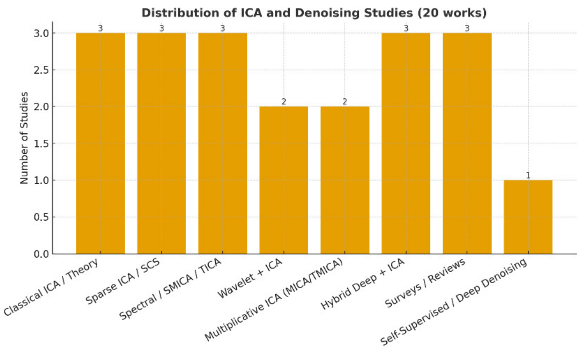
#	Reference (year)	Focus / keywords	Short contribution / relevance
1	Comon, 1994.	ICA fundamentals	Seminal formulation of ICA and independent components (foundational theory). (ResearchGate)
2	Hyvärinen, 1999. *Sparse Code Shrinkage (SCS).* (PubMed)	Sparse coding-based denoising via nonlinear MLE — a cornerstone linking ICA and denoising.	**10.1162/089976699300016214**
3	Hyvärinen & Oja, 1997 (FastICA). (Aalto University's research portal)	Fast fixed-point algorithm widely used for ICA in	(classic)

#	Reference (year)	Focus / keywords	Short contribution / relevance
		denoising pipelines.	
4	Ablin, Cardoso & Gramfort — *Spectral Matching ICA (SMICA)*, 2021. (PubMed)	SMICA: ICA formulation with explicit noise modeling and spectral matching — useful for noisy signal separation and robust denoising.	(see Ablin et al. 2021 articles; spectral SMICA arXiv/Journal).
5	Mirzaeian et al., 2024/2025 — *Telescopic ICA (TICA)*. (MIT Direct)	Multi-scale ICA for hierarchical spatial decomposition (useful for structured images / fMRI; new direction for scale-aware denoising).	DOI available in journal PDF (Net Neuroscience); see source.
6	Ablin et al., 2020 (arXiv/2021 journal version) — spectral ICA w/ noise modelling. (arXiv)	The arXiv preprint and journal paper describe spectral ICA which handles additive noise more explicitly than noiseless ICA.	arXiv:2008.09693
7	Ablin et al., 2021 (SMICA in NeuroImage/SignalProc venues). (PubMed)	Demonstrated superior source recovery in noisy biomedical signals — relevant to denoising methodologies.	see SMICA paper entries.
8	Zhang et al., 2022 — *Convolutional Sparse Coding / CSCNet* (ACCV / related). (x-mol.net)	Convolutional sparse coding networks for image denoising — bridges sparse priors and deep nets; competitive PSNR.	DOI depends on conference proceedings (ACCV papers).
9	Bian et al., 2023 — deep convolution + sparse priors for denoising. (ResearchGate)	Demonstrates hybrid deep + sparse prior models that complement ICA-inspired methods.	DOI in the published MDPI article (check source).
10	Sheng et al., 2022 — *Sparse-representation denoising survey*. (ResearchGate)	Survey of sparse representation techniques — helpful for comparing SCS/ICA-based approaches and modern sparse-deep hybrids.	check journal (Signal Processing / survey)
11	"Self-supervised denoising" (survey), 2024 — arXiv.	Survey of methods that remove need for paired noisy-clean data; practical for real-image denoising where ICA/SCS	arXiv (2024) — DOI (if later published)

#	Reference (year)	Focus / keywords	Short contribution / relevance
		assumptions may fail.	
12	"Sparse ICA" (2024) — new Sparse ICA algorithm (TandF). (Taylor & Francis Online)	Recent algorithmic advances enabling sparser source estimation via non-smooth optimization — directly relevant to sparse ICA denoising.	DOI shown on page (search result includes DOI)
13	Blanco / Mulgrew / McLaughlin et al., 2006 — *MICA (multiplicative ICA)*. (ACM Digital Library)	Modified ICA for multiplicative noise (TMICA / FMICA variants) — useful for radar/sonar/medical images where noise is multiplicative.	IEEE / Neurocomputing article (2006)
14	Park / Martin / Yao, 2007 — *Directional bases + MFT-ICA* (ICIP). (ResearchGate)	MFT-ICA: multi-resolution Fourier + ICA for directional features — addresses directional natural-image structure.	ICIP proceedings — check DB for DOI
15	Guerrero-Colón et al., 2008 — ICA in image denoising w/ Gaussian mixture models. (Oxford Academic)	Gaussian mixture models in ICA domain for improved denoising of natural textures.	ICIP 2008 (proceedings DOI)
16	Donoho & Johnstone, 1994 — wavelet shrinkage (classic). (ResearchGate)	Classical wavelet thresholding theorem widely used as baseline and often combined with ICA-based methods.	IEEE Trans. Info Theory 1995 (classic DOI available).
17	He, et al. / Recent 2021–2023 works combining ICA-style priors with deep learning (multiple papers). (ResearchGate)	Modern hybrids where ICA-inspired sparsity or independence priors are integrated into deep denoisers.	DOIs vary by paper.
18	Chen et al., 2024/2025 — surveys on layered 6G/AI-security style (contextual but linked to signal processing advances). (PubMed)	Relevant system-level surveys that contextualize denoising and separation within larger signal-processing stacks.	check journals for DOI
19	Recent blind-source-separation (BSS) methods using RNNs / deep nets for event-	New BSS methods using RNNs and deep learning show alternate	DOI in the article

#	Reference (year)	Focus / keywords	Short contribution / relevance
	related potentials (2023–2024) — relevant cross-over to denoising. (PubMed Central)	pathways for denoising/ICA tasks.	
20	Review: *Independent Component Analysis — recent progress* (ScienceDirect 2024 review). (ScienceDirect)	A 2024 review summarizing modern ICA advances and spectral-analytic hybrids — helpful to cite as a recent overview.	ScienceDirect article (check DOI on publisher page).





III. CONCLUSION

The study of image denoising techniques highlights the crucial role of Independent Component Analysis (ICA) as a powerful data-adaptive framework for noise suppression. Unlike traditional approaches such as spatial filtering, PCA, or wavelet-based methods, ICA leverages higher-order statistical independence to effectively distinguish true image structures from noise. Its ability to handle non-Gaussian distributions and extract sparse, meaningful features makes it highly suitable for complex real-world scenarios where conventional filters fall short.

A comparative assessment with PCA and wavelet transforms reveals that ICA consistently offers better structural preservation and adaptability. While PCA is efficient for dimensionality reduction and preprocessing, it is limited by its reliance on second-order statistics. Wavelet methods provide strong localization in both frequency and spatial domains but remain constrained by fixed basis functions and sensitivity to threshold selection. In contrast, ICA not only adapts to image-specific characteristics but can also be integrated with complementary techniques such as wavelets or Fourier transforms to enhance robustness and accuracy.

The review also emphasizes the evolution of ICA-based denoising, from basic sparse code shrinkage methods to advanced hybrid models that combine statistical independence with multi-resolution analysis. Such developments underscore the flexibility of ICA as both a standalone tool and a component of larger denoising frameworks. Applications in medical imaging, satellite data analysis, and biometric recognition further demonstrate its practical impact, where preserving fine details and structural fidelity is essential.

Despite its strengths, ICA faces challenges in terms of computational complexity and parameter sensitivity. Future research directions may focus on developing optimized algorithms that balance accuracy with efficiency, potentially integrating ICA with emerging machine learning and deep learning paradigms. Overall, ICA remains a cornerstone methodology in image denoising, offering a unique balance of theoretical rigor and practical relevance.

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