IARJSET ISSN (O) 2393-8021, ISSN (P) 2394-1588
International Advanced Research Journal in Science, Engineering and Technology
International Conference on Interdisciplinary Global Research in Adaptation, Transformation & Engineering
INTEGRATE 2025
Geetanjali Institute of Technical Studies (GITS)
Vol. 12, SPECIAL ISSUE 2, NOVEMBER 2025 DOI: 10.17148/IARJSET/INTEGRATE.2025.12250

The Driving Force of the Future: A Comprehensive Review of Robotics and Automation in the Modern Automobile Industry

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Abstract: The automobile industry is undergoing a massive transformation, largely driven by advancements in robotics and automation. From the manufacturing floor to the vehicle itself, robots and intelligent systems are making cars safer, smarter, and more efficient to produce. This review paper explores the key areas where robotics is revolutionizing the automotive sector. We begin by examining the role of industrial robots in manufacturing, including welding, painting, and assembly. The paper then delves into the exciting field of autonomous vehicles, explaining the technology that allows cars to perceive their environment and drive themselves. Furthermore, we discuss Advanced Driver-Assistance Systems (ADAS) like automatic emergency braking and lane-keeping assist, which are the building blocks of full autonomy. Finally, the review addresses the challenges, such as job displacement and cybersecurity, and looks at future trends like connected vehicles and human-robot collaboration. This paper aims to provide a clear and complete overview for students and newcomers to this rapidly evolving field.

Keywords*:* Robotics, Automation, Autonomous Vehicles, ADAS, Industry 4.0, Self-Driving Cars, Automotive Manufacturing.

I. INTRODUCTION

The global automotive sector, valued at over $3 trillion in 2024, is in a state of rapid evolution, largely propelled by advancements in robotics and automation [1]. These technologies are critical in addressing contemporary demands for enhanced sustainability, improved safety, and greater operational efficiency, particularly amidst the global shift toward electrification and complex supply chains. The first half of 2025 saw significant investment in this area, with North American companies procuring 17,635 industrial robots at a cost of $1.094 billion, a surge led by automotive original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) [2]. This trend signifies a strategic move toward smart factories, a hallmark of Industry 4.0, where interconnected cyber-physical systems optimize production and enable sophisticated autonomous capabilities in vehicles themselves [3].

The journey of automotive robotics began with basic spot-welding units in the 1960s. In contrast, modern systems are characterized by machine vision, collaborative robots (cobots), and artificial intelligence (AI) for complex decision-making [4]. For consumers, the most visible impact is in autonomous vehicles (AVs), which have the potential to reduce traffic fatalities by up to 90% through advanced perception and control systems [5]. Concurrently, ADAS features like automatic emergency braking have become standard in over 70% of new models [6]. Despite these benefits, the adoption of such technologies raises significant ethical and practical concerns, including workforce transition and data security vulnerabilities [7].

This paper provides a systematic review of these developments. Section II details the role of robotics in modern automotive manufacturing. Section III covers the core technologies enabling autonomous vehicles. Section IV discusses the implementation and trends in ADAS. Section V addresses the socio-technical challenges of deployment. Section VI explores future trends, and Section VII concludes with implications for the industry.

II. ROBOTICS IN AUTOMOTIVE MANUFACTURING

Robotics has become indispensable in automotive production, delivering unparalleled precision, scalability, and adaptability in high-volume environments. The global market for automotive robotics, valued at $9.7 billion in 2024, is projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 15.4% through 2034, driven largely by the specialized assembly requirements of electric vehicles (EVs) and lightweight materials [8]. By 2025, next-generation systems increasingly incorporate AI for predictive maintenance and flexible production lines [9].

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A. Welding Applications

Robotic systems dominate the body-in-white stage, performing spot and arc welding with sub-millimeter accuracy. Modern welding robots are equipped with force-torque sensors and AI algorithms that allow them to adapt to variations in materials, such as the aluminum alloys common in EV construction, thereby reducing defects by 25-40% [10]. The integration of cobots in hybrid workcells has enhanced safety and flexibility, allowing human operators to collaborate directly with robotic systems [11].

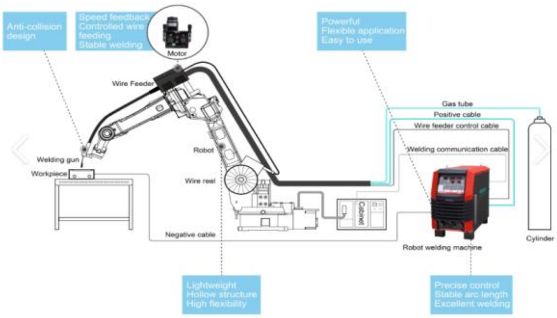

Fig. 1. A multi-arm robotic welding station operating on a vehicle chassis in an automated assembly line

B. Painting and Coating
Painting robots utilize electrostatic applicators and 3D vision systems to achieve uniform finishes while reducing volatile organic compound (VOC) emissions by approximately 30% [12]. By 2025, the integration of hyperspectral imaging for real-time defect detection has merged the painting process with inline quality assurance, supporting just-in-time manufacturing principles [13].
C. Assembly Processes
Final assembly leverages pick-and-place robots for installing components ranging from heavy battery packs to delicate infotainment systems. These robots are often guided by convolutional neural networks for precise part recognition [14]. Furthermore, mobile manipulators and automated guided vehicles (AGVs) create modular assembly lines, which have been shown to increase throughput by 30-50% [15].

TABLE I ROBOTIC APPLICATIONS IN AUTOMOTIVE MANUFACTURING

Application	Key Benefits	Efficiency Gain (%)	Adoption Rate (2025)
Welding	Precision, defect reduction	25-40	85%
Painting	Uniformity, emission cuts	20-35	75%
Assembly	Speed, adaptability	30-50	90%

III. AUTONOMOUS VEHICLES

Autonomous Vehicles represent the ultimate convergence of robotics, AI, and sensor technology, aiming for human-free operation as defined by the SAE J3016 levels 0-5. By 2025, commercial deployments of Level 4 automation in geofenced areas, such as urban robotaxi services, are scaling significantly. The AV market is anticipated to reach $62 billion, fueled by advancements in sensor fusion and edge computing capabilities [16].
A. Perception and Sensing
The perception system of an AV relies on a suite of multi-modal sensors. LiDAR provides high-resolution 3D mapping, radar accurately detects object velocity, and cameras enable semantic understanding of the driving scene. Data from these sensors are fused using sophisticated algorithms, such as Kalman filters, to create a robust environmental model resilient to adverse conditions like fog or low light [17].

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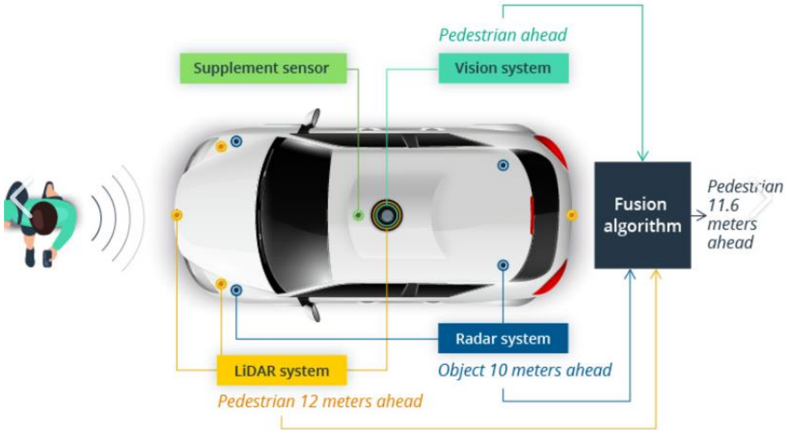

Fig. 2. Data flow architecture for sensor fusion in an autonomous vehicle, from LiDAR, radar, and camera inputs to the central AI processing unit.

B. Localization and Control

Accurate localization is achieved through Global Navigation Satellite Systems (GNSS) augmented with inertial measurement units (IMUs), enabling centimeter-level precision [18]. For navigation, path-planning algorithms increasingly employ reinforcement learning to handle dynamic environments, while model predictive control (MPC) manages the physical actuation of steering, throttle, and braking. Extensive simulation of edge cases is critical for validating these systems safely [19].

IV. ADVANCED DRIVER-ASSISTANCE SYSTEMS (ADAS)

ADAS serves as a critical bridge between manual and fully autonomous driving. As of 2025, Level 2+ features are standard in 76% of new vehicles, encompassing technologies from rearview cameras to forward collision warning [6]. The market for ADAS software is forecasted to grow at a 21.2% CAGR, reaching $66.4 billion by 2034 [20].

A. Core Features

Key ADAS features include Automatic Emergency Braking (AEB), which uses radar and camera data to prevent collisions and has been shown to reduce rear-end impacts by 50% [1]. Lane-Keeping Assist (LKA) utilizes optical sensors for edge detection to provide corrective steering input, and Adaptive Cruise Control (ACC) maintains a set headway to preceding vehicles using millimeter-wave radar [21].

B. Integration Trends

Prominent trends in 2025 include Vehicle-to-Everything (V2X) connectivity, which enables cooperative maneuvers between vehicles and infrastructure, and over-the-air (OTA) software updates for continuous improvement of sensor calibration and system performance [22].

V. CHALLENGES IN DEPLOYMENT

Despite the promising advancements, the integration of robotics and automation presents significant challenges. An estimated 10-20% of traditional manufacturing roles are susceptible to displacement, creating an urgent need for large-scale reskilling initiatives focused on AI oversight and robotics maintenance [7]. Furthermore, the increased connectivity of vehicles and manufacturing systems introduces cybersecurity vulnerabilities, including the risk of remote hijacking, necessitating the adoption of zero-trust security architectures [23].

Regulatory and ethical frameworks have struggled to keep pace with technological change. Issues such as algorithmic bias in AV decision-making and liability in the event of a system failure require standardized, global frameworks [24]. Physical infrastructure, such as comprehensive 5G networks, also lags in many regions, impeding the full realization of connected and autonomous mobility [25].

VI. FUTURE TRENDS

Looking toward 2030, several key trends are emerging. Connected vehicles will leverage V2X communication for platooning, which can reduce fuel consumption by up to 15% [26]. Human-robot collaboration will expand beyond the factory floor, with 39% of

OEMs deploying cobots in R&D and logistics operations [27]. The pilot deployment of humanoid robots for versatile assembly tasks, as seen in initiatives by BMW and Tesla, is also gaining traction [28]. Finally, AI-driven autonomy, including concepts like swarm robotics for logistics, is identified by the International Federation of Robotics as a dominant trend for the coming decade [29].

VII. CONCLUSION

Robotics and automation are unequivocally propelling the automotive industry toward a safer, more efficient, and sustainable future. This review has documented the tangible benefits these technologies bring to manufacturing precision and vehicle intelligence. The systematic adoption of robotic systems in production and the gradual progression toward fully autonomous driving are poised to unlock an estimated $300-400 billion in value by 2035. However, realizing this potential fully requires proactive mitigation of associated challenges, particularly concerning the workforce and cybersecurity. This analysis underscores the critical need for interdisciplinary education and collaboration to foster the next wave of innovation in automotive engineering.

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