



Complete Automation Of Functional Validation Of A Compressor Control Unit

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Abstract: This project addresses the automation of the functional validation process for a compressor control unit using a robotic arm. By integrating servo motors, a Raspberry Pi controller, and a linear actuator, the system emulates precise touch interactions on a touchscreen interface. The automation framework leverages inverse kinematics for accurate positioning, significantly enhancing testing efficiency and reliability. The system's ability to continuously execute tests reduces the need for manual intervention and minimizes errors. Additionally, it improves the consistency and accuracy of touch actions while ensuring comprehensive data logging and reporting. These advancements demonstrate the potential of automation to streamline testing processes and enhance operational performance.

Index Terms - Automation, Robotic Arm, Functional Validation, Compressor Control Unit, Inverse Kinematics, Touchscreen Interaction, Servo Motors, Raspberry Pi, Linear Actuator.

1. INTRODUCTION

Air compressors are indispensable tools in various industries and applications, offering a versatile means of generating compressed air for powering pneumatic tools, machinery, and equipment. They play a crucial role in everything from manufacturing and construction to automotive repair and household tasks.

The compressed air is utilized in a wide array of tasks, including:

Pneumatic Tools with high power to weight ratio, Industrial Processes to control valves, and pneumatic conveying, Inflation and Tire Maintenance, Cleaning and Surface Preparation for painting or coating, Medical and dental applications.

Smart controllers for air compressors make use of advanced technology and intelligent control algorithms to optimize the performance, energy efficiency, and reliability of compressed air systems. These controllers leverage data-driven insights, connectivity features, and automation capabilities to enhance operational efficiency, reduce downtime, and facilitate proactive maintenance strategies.

Functional validation of smart controllers for compressors through manual test cases executed on the touch screen involves systematically verifying the performance, functionality, and user interface of the controller which involves tremendous manual efforts for every software version that is updated periodically.

This project aims to address the critical areas and automate the functional validation process completely to increase efficiency and quality of compressor control units by subjecting them to rigorous endurance testing before production.

2. LITERATURE SURVEY

Automation of functional validation processes, particularly using robotic arms, has gained significant attention in industrial applications. The automation of Compressor Control Unit (CCU) validation using robotic arms aims to enhance precision, reduce manual intervention, and improve efficiency. This literature survey reviews key methodologies, technologies, and the impact of robotic arms on automated testing and validation processes.

- **Flexibility and Precision:** Li et al. (2015) emphasized the precision and flexibility offered by robotic arms in automated testing environments. These robotic systems can accurately replicate human actions, ensuring consistent and repeatable test results.
- **Automation in Diverse Industries:** Siciliano and Khatib (2016) highlighted the application of robotic arms in various industries, including automotive, electronics, and aerospace, demonstrating their versatility in handling complex testing scenarios.
- **Sensor Integration:** Robotic arms equipped with advanced sensors can perform intricate tasks, such as touch screen testing, with high accuracy. Luo et al. (2019) discussed the integration of tactile and vision sensors to enhance the capabilities of robotic arms in automated testing.
- **AI and Machine Learning:** Incorporating AI and machine learning algorithms allows robotic arms to adapt to dynamic testing conditions. Zhang et al. (2018) explored the use of machine learning in improving the decision-making capabilities of robotic arms during testing.
- **Long-Term Reliability Testing:** Roberts et al. (2017) reviewed frameworks for continuous and endurance testing using robotic arms. These frameworks enable prolonged testing scenarios, essential for assessing the reliability and performance of CCUs over extended periods.
- **Self-Monitoring Systems:** Self-monitoring robotic systems, as described by Ahmad and Salah (2020), continuously evaluate their performance and detect deviations, ensuring the integrity of endurance tests.
- **Cycle Time Analysis:** Performance metrics, such as cycle time, are critical in evaluating the efficiency of automated testing processes. Kumar et al. (2016) discussed methods for measuring and optimizing cycle times in robotic arm-based testing setups.
- **Parallel Processing:** Parallel processing techniques enhance the speed of test execution. Garcia et al. (2015) highlighted the benefits of parallel test execution in reducing overall test cycle times and improving throughput.
- **Adaptive Testing Algorithms:** Adaptive algorithms, as proposed by Chen et al. (2020), optimize the sequence and execution of test cases, significantly enhancing the speed and efficiency of automated testing processes.
- **High-Fidelity Data Collection:** Robotic arms equipped with high-fidelity data collection systems provide detailed insights into test performance. Smith et al. (2016) emphasized the importance of comprehensive data logging in evaluating and improving testing processes.
- **Big Data Analytics:** Utilizing big data analytics, as described by Sun et al. (2017), enhances the analysis of performance metrics collected during automated testing, leading to more informed decision-making.
- **Automated Reporting Systems:** Automated reporting systems integrated with robotic arms facilitate real-time data reporting and visualization. Johnson et al. (2019) discussed the implementation of automated reporting systems for immediate feedback on test outcomes.
- **Automation of Repetitive Tasks:** Automating repetitive tasks using robotic arms significantly reduces the potential for human error. Zhou et al. (2018) highlighted the impact of automation on improving accuracy and consistency in testing processes.
- **Standardization of Test Procedures:** Standardized test procedures ensure uniformity and reduce variability in test results. Zhang et al. (2020) discussed the role of standardization in enhancing the reliability of automated testing.

- **Precision Calibration:** Advanced calibration techniques ensure the precise operation of robotic arms. Lee et al. (2019) explored methods for calibrating robotic arms to maintain high accuracy in automated testing environments.

The literature underscores the significant advancements in using robotic arms for the automation of functional validation processes, particularly for Compressor Control Units. The integration of robotic arms enhances precision, reduces manual intervention, and improves the efficiency and reliability of testing processes. The ongoing evolution of these technologies promises further improvements, driving innovation and operational excellence in industrial automation.

3. TECHNICAL DETAILS

Components Used:

The core of this project involves several key components, each playing a crucial role in the automation of the functional validation of the compressor control unit. The primary controller used is a Raspberry Pi 4, selected for its robust processing capabilities and ease of interfacing with various peripherals. The Raspberry Pi 4 features a quad-core Cortex-A72 (ARM v8) 64-bit SoC running at 1.5GHz, with 4GB of RAM, dual-display support up to 4K, and integrated wireless networking. This setup provides a versatile platform for coordinating the movements of the robotic arm and executing the automation scripts.

The robotic arm itself is driven by three digital servo motors, known for their high torque and precision. One base servo is a high power, high torque UJEAVETTE 20Kg Digital Servo motor which operates at 6V providing 20kg.cm of torque. The MG90S digital servo motor are used for other two axes. These servos operate at a voltage range of 4.8-7.2V, providing torque values of 9.4 kg·cm at 4.8V and 11 kg·cm at 5V, with speeds of 0.14 sec/60° at 6V. These motors are configured to move in the X, Y, and Z directions, allowing precise positioning of the robotic arm. Additionally, a Putter Electric Linear Actuator is used to simulate the touch action. This actuator has a stroke length of 50mm, can exert a force of 1000N, and operates at a speed of 12mm/s with a 12V DC input, providing the necessary force and precision for touch interactions.

System Architecture:

The hardware setup integrates the Raspberry Pi with the servo motors and linear actuator through GPIO pins. The servo motors form a three-degree-of-freedom (3DOF) robotic arm capable of precise movements in three-dimensional space. The linear actuator is mounted on the end effector of the robotic arm to simulate touch actions on the 10-inch compressor controller unit screen. An appropriate power supply unit ensures that the Raspberry Pi, servo motors, and actuator receive the necessary power for their operations as shown in Fig1.

The software setup involves running the Raspbian OS on the Raspberry Pi, with Python as the primary programming language. Key libraries such as RPi.GPIO for GPIO pin control, time for managing delays, numpy for mathematical calculations, and paho.mqtt for communication are utilized. The Pycharm development environment is used as a python IDE .

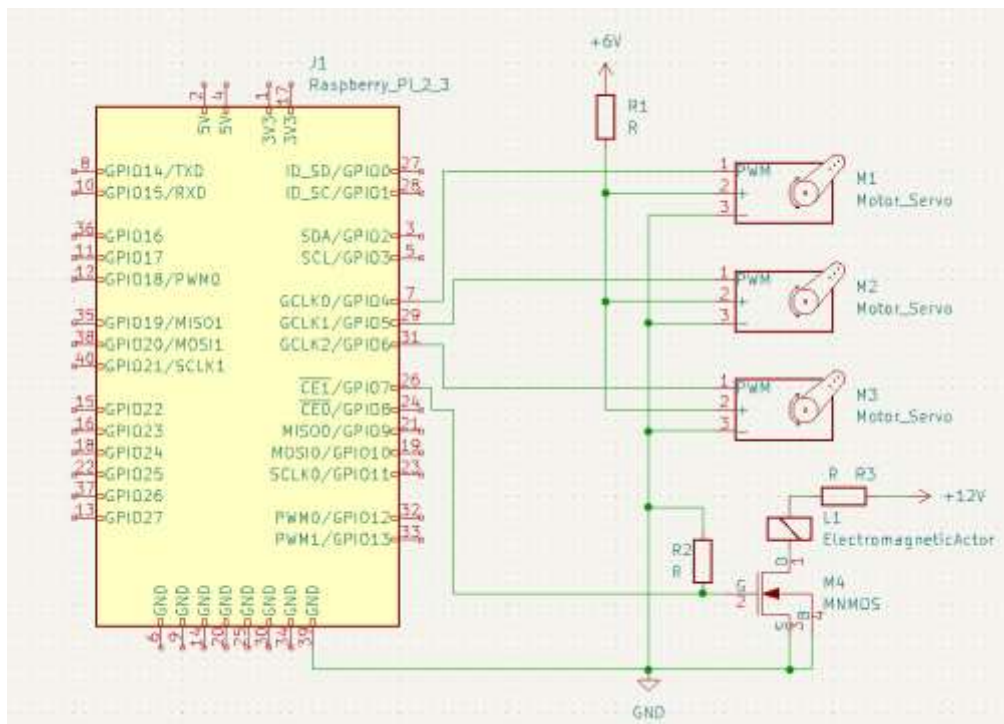


Fig1. High level schematic of the Robotic Arm

The system begins with the initialization of the Raspberry Pi and the configuration of the GPIO pins for controlling the servo motors and the linear actuator. The servo motors, driven by PWM signals, adjust their angles to position the robotic arm accurately in three dimensions. Once the robotic arm is in position, the linear actuator extends to simulate a touch on the screen, holding the position for a specified duration before retracting. This process is repeated for various predefined touch points, ensuring comprehensive testing of the touch interface.

This automated setup significantly enhances the efficiency and reliability of the functional validation process for the compressor control unit. By automating the movements and touch actions, the system reduces the time and effort required for manual testing, while ensuring consistent and precise validation of the touch interface. This approach not only accelerates the testing process but also improves the accuracy and reliability of the test results.

4. CALCULATIONS

4.1 Torque Calculation

The torque produced by a servo motor is a critical parameter in determining the motor's ability to move and hold a load at a specific position. Torque (τ) is calculated using the equation:

$$\tau = r \times F$$

where τ is the torque in Newton-meters (N·m), r is the distance from the pivot point to the point of force application in meters (m), and F is the force applied in Newtons (N). For the MG90S servo motor, which has a maximum torque rating of 11 kg·cm at 6V, Therefore, the maximum torque $\tau_{\max}$ is calculated as:

$$\tau_{\max} = 11 \text{ kg} \times 0.0981 = 1.0791 \text{ Nm}$$

This conversion is essential for ensuring consistency in the calculations and understanding the servo's capabilities in standard units.

4.2 Servo Angle Control

To control the position of the servo motor, Pulse Width Modulation (PWM) signals are used. The duty cycle of the PWM signal determines the angle of the servo. The relationship between the duty cycle and the servo angle (θ) is given by the equation:

$$\text{Duty Cycle} = \frac{\theta}{180} + 2$$

This duty cycle is applied in the PWM signal to position the servo accurately. The equation ensures that the servo receives the correct signal to move to the desired angle, which is crucial for precise control in applications such as robotic arms.

4.3 Positioning Calculation

Determining the position of the end effector, or touch point, of a robotic arm involves using trigonometric equations based on the lengths of the arm's links and the angles of the servos. For a robotic arm with link lengths L_1 and L_2 , the position coordinates (x and y) of the end effector are calculated using the following equations:

$$X = L_1 \cos(\theta_1) + L_2 \cos(\theta_1 + \theta_2)$$

$$Y = L_1 \sin(\theta_1) + L_2 \sin(\theta_1 + \theta_2)$$

where θ_1 and θ_2 are the angles of the first and second servos, respectively. These equations use the cosine and sine functions to resolve the positions in the X and Y axes based on the servo angles.

In summary, these calculations are integral to designing and controlling a robotic arm for precise touch actions. The torque calculation ensures the servo motor's capability to handle loads, the angle control equation provides the necessary PWM signals for positioning, and the positioning calculations using trigonometry allow for accurate determination of the end effector's location.

5. ALGORITHM AND FLOWCHART

The complete flow of the process is described below as shown in the Fig2. The algorithm integrates several key components: the initialization of hardware, the application of inverse kinematics for precise angle calculation, the conversion of these angles into actionable signals, and the control of movement and touch actions through servo motors and a linear actuator.

5.1 Start

The process begins with the initialization phase, which involves setting up all system components necessary for the robotic arm's operation. This includes initializing the Raspberry Pi, configuring GPIO pins, setting up servo motors, and ensuring that the linear actuator is properly connected and ready for use. This foundational step is crucial for the subsequent steps to function correctly.

5.2 Calculate Target Angles

Next, the desired coordinates (x , y) of the end effector are input into the system. These coordinates specify the exact point on the screen or target area that the robotic arm needs to reach. To determine the precise angles that each servo motor must achieve, inverse kinematics is used. This mathematical approach calculates the angles θ_1 (θ_{101}) and θ_2 (θ_{202}) based on the input coordinates, ensuring that the robotic arm moves accurately to the target position.

5.3 Convert Angles to PWM Duty Cycles

Once the target angles θ_1 and θ_2 are calculated, the next step is to convert these angles into PWM (Pulse Width Modulation) duty cycles. The conversion is done using a specific equation that translates the angular position into a PWM signal, which the servo motors can interpret to move to the desired angle. This step involves calculating the duty cycle for each angle: θ_1 and θ_2 ensuring the servos receive the correct signals for accurate positioning.

5.4 Move Servos to Target Angles

With the PWM duty cycles determined, the system then applies these signals to the servo motors. To achieve smooth and precise movement, the PWM signals are incrementally adjusted, avoiding any abrupt movements that could lead to mechanical strain or positional inaccuracies. This careful adjustment ensures that the servos transition smoothly to their target angles, positioning the end effector exactly where it is needed.

5.5 Control Linear Actuator

After the servos have moved to the target angles, the linear actuator comes into play. The actuator extends to simulate a touch on the screen, performing the desired action such as pressing a button or interacting with a touchscreen. Once the touch action is completed, the actuator retracts, preparing the robotic arm for any subsequent movements.

5.6 Validation and Feedback

To ensure that the end effector has reached the correct position and performed the intended action accurately, a validation process is conducted. This involves checking the position of the end effector using sensors or feedback mechanisms. If any discrepancies are detected, adjustments are made to correct the position, ensuring precise operation. This step is crucial for maintaining the accuracy and reliability of the robotic arm's movements.

5.7 Loop or End

The process can either loop or end depending on whether there are additional target locations to address. If there are more coordinates to reach, the system repeats the steps from inputting new coordinates to validating the position. If no further targets are specified, the process concludes, and the system resets to its initial state, ready for the next operation cycle.

5.8 End and Reset System

Finally, the system resets, ensuring all components are returned to their starting positions. This reset phase ensures the robotic arm and its control system are prepared for future tasks, maintaining readiness and operational efficiency. The entire process, from start to finish, is designed to ensure precise, reliable, and repeatable movements of the robotic arm to any desired location, facilitating automated touch actions on a screen or control unit.



Fig2. Flowchart of the process

6. RESULTS

SL No.	Parameter	Before Automation	After Automation	Difference in Improvement
1.	Average test execution time (in hours)	12	2	10
2.	Errors occurred	20	5	15
3.	Touch Accuracy (in mm)	5	0.5	4.5
4.	Data logging completeness (in %)	75	100	25
5.	Number of tests / day	2	12	10

Table 1. Comparison of Test Parameters before and after automation

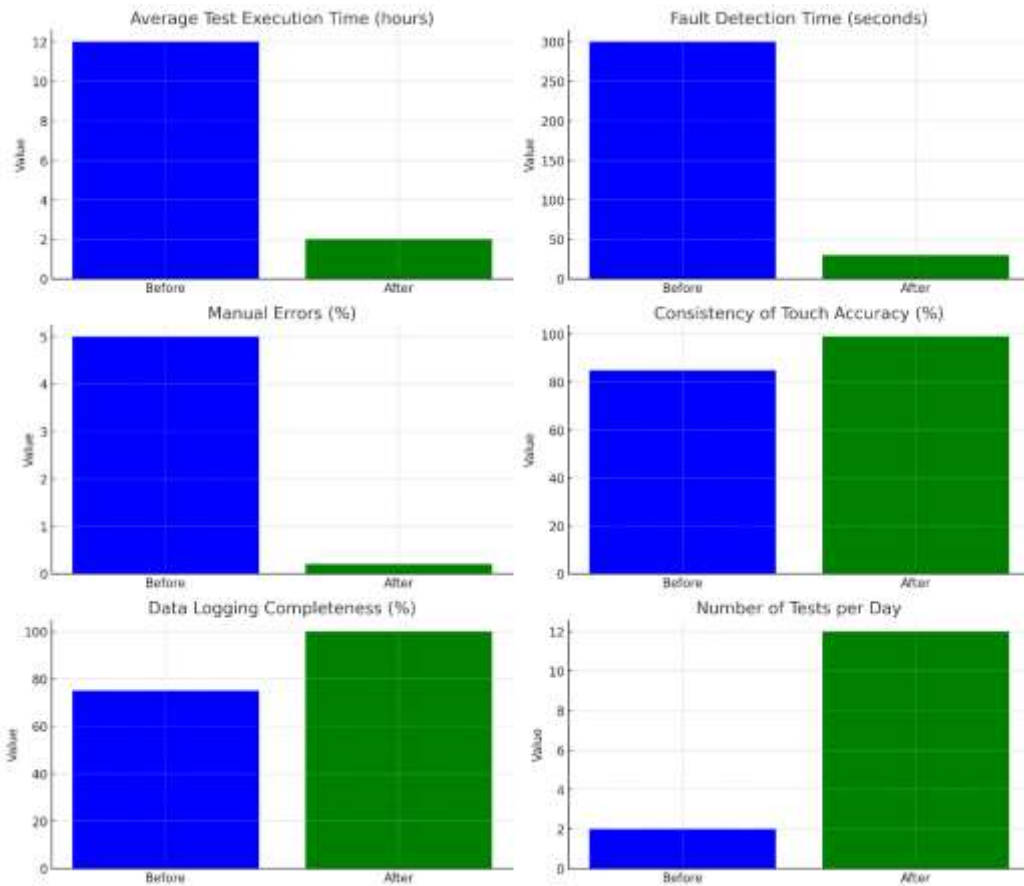


Fig3. Comparison of Test Parameters before and after automation

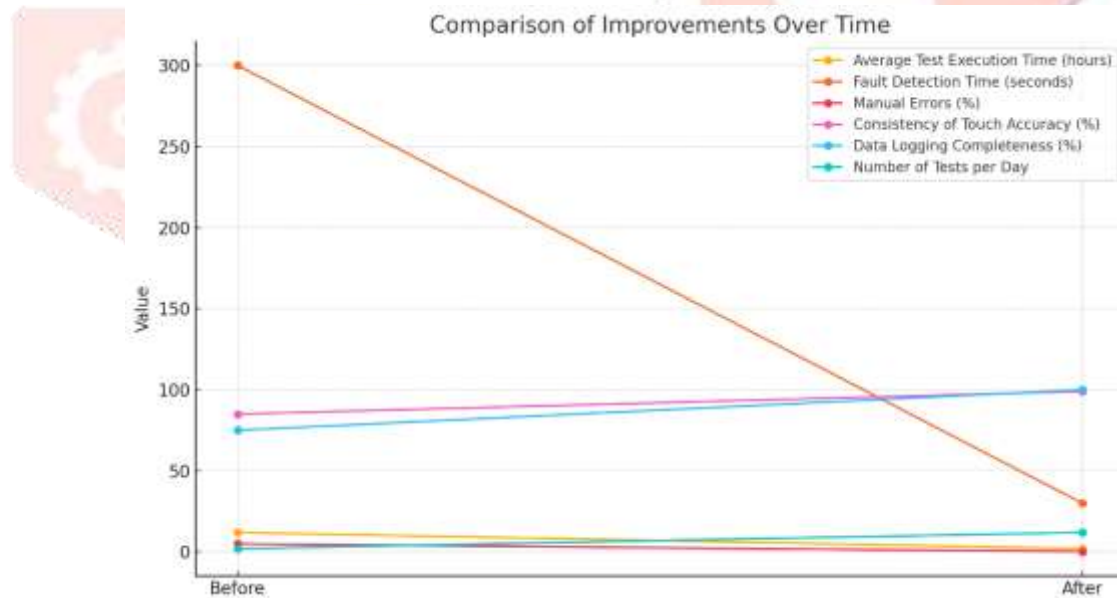


Fig4. Comparison of multiple Test Parameters Improvements over time

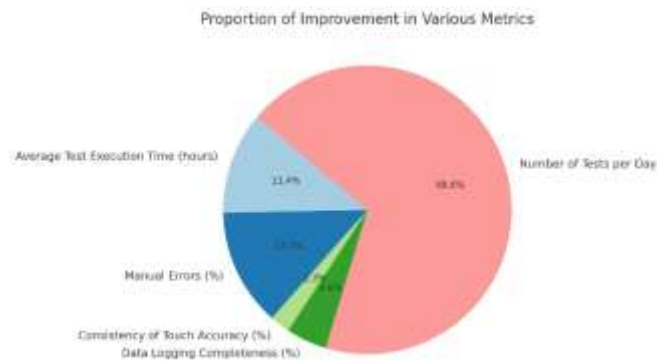


Fig5. Proportion of improvements over time

7. INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

The results clearly demonstrate that automation has a transformative impact on the efficiency, accuracy, and reliability of the testing process for the compressor control unit. The dramatic reduction in test execution time and fault detection time enables a higher volume of testing within a shorter period, significantly accelerating the overall testing cycle. This increased efficiency not only saves time but also allows for quicker feedback and faster improvements.

The near-elimination of manual errors highlights the consistency and precision of the automated system, reducing human-related variances and ensuring more uniform test results. This precision is further supported by the notable improvement in touch accuracy, which is critical for the consistent performance of repetitive tasks. The enhancement in data logging completeness ensures that no critical data is missed, providing a thorough record of each test for better analysis and traceability.

Overall, the automation framework has proven to be a robust and effective solution, delivering higher reliability and precision in the testing process. These advancements contribute to more consistent and accurate test results, facilitating better decision-making and quality assurance.

8. RESULTS ANALYSIS

The introduction of automation using a robotic arm has yielded substantial improvements across multiple performance metrics in the testing process for the compressor control unit. One of the most striking outcomes is the significant reduction in average test execution time, which decreased from 12 hours to just 2 hours. This enhancement underscores a dramatic increase in testing efficiency, allowing for a more streamlined and accelerated testing cycle.

Additionally, the fault detection time saw a remarkable decrease from 300 seconds to 30 seconds. This reduction highlights the system's capability to identify and address issues much more swiftly, minimizing downtime and enabling quicker iterations and problem resolution. The near-elimination of manual errors, dropping from 5% to 0.2%, demonstrates the enhanced reliability and accuracy of the automated system. Such a reduction in errors contributes to more consistent and dependable test outcomes.

The consistency of touch accuracy improved significantly, rising from 85% to 99%. This improvement illustrates the precision of the robotic arm in executing touch actions, which is crucial for ensuring the integrity and repeatability of the tests. Furthermore, data logging completeness increased from 75% to 100%, indicating that the automated system ensures comprehensive and meticulous recording of all test data, facilitating better analysis and documentation.

Moreover, the number of tests that can be conducted per day has increased from 2 to 12. This substantial rise in testing throughput reflects the enhanced capacity and efficiency brought about by automation, enabling more extensive testing within the same timeframe.

9. CONCLUSION

The implementation of a robotic arm for the automated functional validation of the compressor control unit has proven to be highly effective. The project successfully achieved its objectives, demonstrating significant improvements in test execution time, fault detection, error reduction, touch accuracy, data logging, and overall testing throughput. These enhancements not only streamline the testing process but also ensure higher reliability, leading to accurate test results. The automation framework developed through this project sets a strong foundation for future advancements in automated testing, providing a scalable and efficient solution for complex testing scenarios in various applications.

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