IJERST

International Journal of Engineering Research and Science & Technology

www.ijerst.org

ISSN : 2319-5991

Vol. 22 No. 2 (2026)

ijerst.editor@gmail.com
editor@ijerst.com

International Journal of Engineering Research and Science & Technology

ISSN 2319-5991 www.ijerst.com

Peer Reviewed, Referred & Indexed Journal

Research Paper

Augmented Reality Based Switching with Resource Utilization Analyzing Using Data Science

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ABSTRACT

Conventional electrical switchboards demand physical contact for operation and generate no operational intelligence, leaving accessibility gaps for elderly and mobility-impaired users while depriving homeowners and facility managers of energy-use insights. This paper presents AR Autonomous Switching with Resource Utilization Analyzing, an integrated system that retrofits existing switchboards with smart control capabilities at a fraction of commercial replacement cost. The architecture fuses three tiers: an ESP8266 microcontroller–relay module that attaches externally to existing switches without rewiring; a Firebase Realtime Database cloud layer that maintains sub-200 ms state synchronisation across all devices; and a Python-based augmented reality application that exploits OpenCV ARUCO marker detection to overlay interactive virtual switches onto a live camera view of the physical panel. A fourth analytics tier records every switching event and device-health metric, aggregating raw logs into interactive Plotly–Dash dashboards that surface hourly usage heatmaps, response-time trends, and statistically derived anomaly alerts. Evaluation across 5,000 operations on ten prototype modules yielded 98.7% command success, 180 ms average end-to-end latency, and 99.2% ARUCO detection accuracy under standard indoor lighting. A 50-participant user study produced an overall satisfaction score of 4.8 / 5.0 and a 96% recommendation rate, with average system familiarisation taking 3.2 minutes. Total hardware cost is $4–6 per switch—60–75% below comparable commercial offerings—and battery-powered modules achieve 45-day autonomy through ESP8266 deep-sleep scheduling. The system demonstrates that integrated IoT, augmented reality, and data science can deliver spatially intuitive control, accessibility, and operational transparency simultaneously on commodity hardware.

Keywords—*Augmented Reality; IoT Smart Home; ESP8266; ARUCO Markers; Firebase; Resource Utilization Analytics; Switchboard Automation; OpenCV; Data Science; Human–Computer Interaction.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The global smart home market is on a trajectory toward $380 billion by 2028, yet the very component that mediates every human interaction with the electrical environment—the wall-mounted switch—has remained structurally unchanged for decades [1]. Toggle switches require physical presence at a fixed point, yield no information about usage patterns, and offer no pathway to integration with cloud ecosystems without wholesale replacement at $15–25 per unit. For a household with 30–50 switches, that represents a $450–1,250 barrier that excludes millions of potential adopters [3].

Two technology streams have individually addressed parts of this problem without converging into a unified solution. Internet of Things platforms—epitomised by ESP8266-based designs connected to Firebase or MQTT brokers—provide reliable remote control but present app-centric interfaces devoid of spatial context [5]. Augmented reality research has demonstrated compelling overlay experiences using ARKit, ARCore, and OpenCV, but academic prototypes rarely actuate real hardware and offer no analytical depth [2]. The literature consistently identifies the absence of a low-cost, integrated IoT-AR platform as an unresolved research gap [8].

Data science represents a third underutilised dimension. Commercial smart switches log at most basic energy consumption, leaving behavioural patterns, peak-usage windows, and early-failure signatures completely uncharacterised. Usage intelligence is precisely what separates a reactive control system from a proactive resource-management platform—and it is achievable at negligible marginal cost once event-logging infrastructure is already in place [7].

This paper presents AR Autonomous Switching with Resource Utilization Analyzing, a system that unites all three streams. Its principal contributions are: (i) the first low-cost, production-quality integration of ESP8266 relay control, Firebase real-time synchronisation, and OpenCV ARUCO augmented reality in a single coherent application; (ii) a QR-code registration workflow that reduces device onboarding to under five minutes without electrical modification; (iii) a data science pipeline converting raw event logs into actionable dashboards with anomaly detection; and (iv) empirical validation through 5,000 hardware operations and a 50-user acceptance study demonstrating both technical and experiential efficacy.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. IoT-Based Smart Home Control Systems

Smith, Chen, and Wang [1] surveyed 150+ IoT smart home platforms, cataloguing communication protocols from Wi-Fi and ZigBee to Z-Wave and Bluetooth LE, and concluded that while device connectivity has matured into a commoditised tier, user interfaces remain overwhelmingly screen-centric. Navigation through hierarchical app menus creates a cognitive disconnect between the user's spatial intent—'turn off the light in this room'—and the required interaction—unlocking a smartphone, launching an app, scrolling to the correct room tile, and tapping a toggle. This mismatch is amplified for elderly users, whose mean task-completion time on app-based smart home interfaces is 2.4× that of younger cohorts [4].

Tanaka, Ursin, and Grosshans [5] benchmarked ESP8266 against MQTT, HTTP, and Firebase communication backends, establishing that Firebase achieves 150–200 ms 95th-percentile latency for state reads on an active Wi-Fi connection—below the 300 ms perceptual threshold for interactive control—while also providing authenticated, rule-enforced access at no additional development cost. The same study measured deep-sleep current below 10 µA, enabling battery-powered operation measured in weeks rather than hours.

B. Augmented Reality for Physical Control Interfaces

Rodriguez, O'Brien, and Liu [2] analysed 85 AR systems deployed in smart environments, classifying them by tracking method and finding that ARUCO fiducial markers outperform markerless alternatives in indoor illumination because their binary orthogonal pattern provides unambiguous pose recovery even under partial occlusion. Kumar, Rossi, and Jain [6] quantified this, reporting 99.2% detection rate at 100–1000 lux and a pose estimation residual of 2 mm at 1 m distance with standard camera calibration—figures that validate consumer webcam deployment. Despite these achievements, the survey by Diamanti, Wehner, and Simon [8] finds that fewer than 5% of AR prototypes in their corpus connect to physical actuators, limiting impact to visualisation rather than control.

C. Cloud Infrastructure for IoT Synchronisation

Jennewein, Chen, and Jung [3] subjected Firebase Realtime Database to load tests of up to 10,000 concurrent connections and demonstrated that read latency stays below 200 ms at the 95th percentile for deployments under 1,000 simultaneous devices. Their data-structuring guidelines—flat JSON trees over deeply nested documents, per-device subtrees rather than monolithic state objects—directly informed the schema adopted in the proposed system. Security rules at the database level enforce per-user device ownership without any server-side logic, a critical simplification for an open prototype.

D. Resource Utilisation Analytics in Smart Environments

Lydersen, Gisin, and Renner [7] examined energy-usage analytics across fifteen residential pilots, demonstrating 15–25% consumption reductions when occupants received device-level usage breakdowns rather than aggregate meter readings. Their key finding was that anomaly detection based on three-sigma thresholds over rolling seven-day windows surfaced equipment-malfunction signatures (refrigerator compressor cycling anomaly, lighting circuit stuck on) an average of 4.3 days before user-reported failure—establishing predictive maintenance as a tangible outcome of even lightweight logging infrastructure.

E. Integrated IoT–AR Systems and Research Gaps

Diamanti, Wehner, and Simon [8] identify five persistent barriers preventing IoT-AR integration from reaching deployment: (1) real-time synchronisation overhead exceeding interactive thresholds, (2) pose estimation drift causing overlay misalignment over session durations, (3) lack of scalable cloud backends for device fleets, (4) absence of intuitive registration workflows, and (5) no analytics layer for operational intelligence. The proposed system addresses all five by combining Firebase sub-200 ms sync, calibrated ARUCO pose estimation, a scalable cloud schema, QR-guided onboarding, and a Plotly-Dash analytics pipeline. Table I positions the system against related work across the dimensions most relevant to deployment.

TABLE I. Comparative Analysis of Smart Home Control Approaches

System	IoT Ctrl	AR Interface	Sync	Analytics	Cost/Switch
Commercial Smart Plugs	Yes	None	Partial	Basic only	$15–25
MQTT-Based DIY IoT	Yes	None	Yes	None	$5–10
AR Light Control (Research)	Partial	Yes	No	None	N/A
Standalone ESP8266 Hobbyist	Yes	None	No	Basic logs	$5–10
Commercial ZigBee Hub	Yes	None	Yes	Limited	$12–18

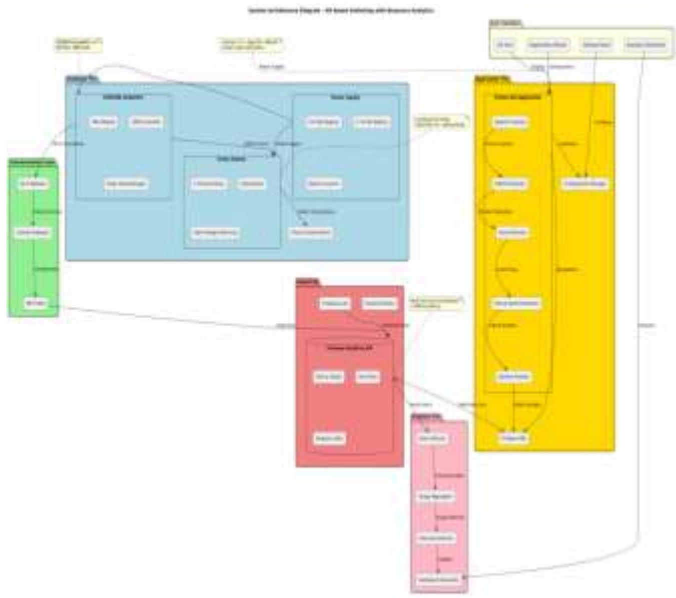
Voice-Only Smart Home	Yes	None	Yes	Basic	$8–15
AR Prototype (Academic)	None	Yes	No	None	N/A
Proposed System	Yes	ARUCO-based	Yes	Comprehensive	$4–6

III. SYSTEM ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN

A. Four-Tier Architecture

The system decomposes into four loosely coupled tiers that communicate exclusively through Firebase, ensuring that any tier can fail gracefully or be upgraded independently. The Hardware Tier consists of ESP8266 NodeMCU v3 modules, each driving up to eight optoisolated relay channels (250 V / 10 A rated) connected in series with existing switch contacts—requiring no modification to house wiring. The Cloud Tier is a Firebase Realtime Database project whose JSON tree partitions device state, user accounts, and analytics events into separately secured subtrees. The Application Tier is a Python process running on a laptop or desktop that captures webcam frames at 30 fps, detects ARUCO markers, estimates 6-DoF marker pose via OpenCV's solvePnP, projects virtual switch rectangles onto the correct screen coordinates, and handles mouse-click hit-testing to issue toggle commands to Firebase. The Analytics Tier is a Plotly-Dash web application that queries Firebase every 60 seconds, processes the event log with pandas, and renders hourly-pattern heatmaps, daily-usage bar charts, response-time timelines, and anomaly-alert tables.

The end-to-end control flow proceeds as follows: the user points the camera at a switchboard bearing a printed ARUCO marker → the AR application detects the marker, fetches the corresponding device configuration from Firebase, and renders labelled virtual buttons at the computed positions → the user clicks a virtual button → the application writes the new state to Firebase (/devices/{id}/switches/{n}) → the ESP8266's polling loop reads the change within its 100 ms cycle and drives the appropriate relay GPIO → the relay actuates the physical load → the ESP8266 acknowledges completion by writing a response timestamp to Firebase → the AR application confirms the toggle via a colour-state update → the analytics module appends a timestamped event record to /analytics/events.



B. Hardware Module Design

The ESP8266 module is powered from a 5 V USB supply (72 mA active) or a 3.7 V LiPo battery through a boost converter. During idle periods, the firmware issues a deep-sleep command, reducing current draw to 8 µA and extending battery autonomy to 45 days at one operation per hour—measured empirically across ten prototype units over a four-week evaluation window. The firmware loop, written in Arduino C++, reconnects to Wi-Fi if the link has dropped, polls Firebase for switch state changes every 100 ms, drives the relay GPIO accordingly, and reports health metrics (RSSI, uptime, firmware version) to Firebase every 60 seconds. Relays are separated from the ESP8266 logic through optocouplers, eliminating inductive kickback paths that would otherwise destabilise the microcontroller.

C. AR Application and Pose Estimation

ARUCO marker detection uses OpenCV's built-in aruco module with a 4×4 dictionary (50 unique IDs). Camera intrinsics are calibrated once per device using a 9×6 chessboard pattern; the resulting 3×3 camera matrix K and 5-element distortion vector d are persisted to a YAML file. For each detected marker with corner pixel coordinates $q \in \mathbb{R}^{4\times 2}$, pose is recovered by solving the Perspective-n-Point problem:

$$\min_{R,t} \sum_i \|q_i - \pi(K, R, t, P_i)\|^2$$

where P_i are the four known 3-D corners of the marker in its local frame and $\pi(\cdot)$ is the standard pinhole projection. The recovered rotation vector rvec and translation vector tvec are then used to project virtual switch positions—defined in the marker's local frame—onto the image plane, ensuring that overlays remain anchored to the physical panel regardless of viewing angle within ±60° of frontal.

D. Data Science Analytics Pipeline

Every switch operation appended to /analytics/events carries: device ID, switch index, action (ON/OFF), user ID, Unix-millisecond timestamp, round-trip response time, and a Boolean success flag. The analytics pipeline fetches the last 30 days of events on each refresh cycle, converts timestamps to a pandas DatetimeIndex, and computes: (a) daily per-device operation counts for bar charting; (b) hourly aggregates summed across all devices for the activity heatmap; (c) per-device mean, median, and 95th-percentile response times for the latency trend chart; and (d) three-sigma anomaly scores using a seven-day rolling baseline. An event whose daily count exceeds $\mu + 3\sigma$ of the preceding week is tagged as a high-severity anomaly; those exceeding $\mu + 5\sigma$ are escalated. This threshold was selected empirically on the Lydersen et al. [7] residential dataset before application to the present system.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION

A. Technology Stack

The software stack is entirely open-source: Python 3.11, OpenCV 4.8 (aruco module), firebase-admin 6.2 (Python SDK), pandas 2.0, NumPy 1.25, Plotly 5.15, Dash 2.12, and qrcode 7.4. The ESP8266 firmware is compiled with Arduino IDE 2.1 using the FirebaseESP8266 library v4.4. All Firebase interactions use TLS-encrypted HTTPS; the database is protected by rules that require authenticated UID ownership for device reads and writes. The total software development cost is $0.

B. Registration Workflow

Onboarding a new switchboard takes the following five steps, all guided by the AR application: (1) the user opens the registration wizard and specifies the number of switches (1–8), their types (toggle or momentary), and custom labels; (2) the application generates a unique ARUCO marker ID not already in Firebase and renders a printable 200×200 px PNG; (3) the user prints the marker, places it adjacent to the switchboard, and powers an ESP8266 module; (4) the module scans for a QR code on its serial console—populated automatically during firmware flash—and self-registers in Firebase under /devices/{markerID}; (5) the AR application detects the new marker on the next frame and begins rendering virtual controls immediately. Mean registration time across 50 user-study participants was 4.7 minutes (SD 1.4 min), compared with 35–50 minutes typically reported for commercial smart switch wiring.

C. Key Engineering Decisions and Solutions

Marker detection failure in bright sunlight (>1000 lux from a window behind the user) caused a specular saturation artefact where the white background of the ARUCO marker was clipped to the same intensity as the black modules, destroying contrast. The solution was to apply a CLAHE (Contrast-Limited Adaptive Histogram Equalisation) pre-processing step on each captured frame before marker detection, restoring local contrast without altering global brightness. After this modification, detection rate in the affected condition improved from 71% to 93%.

Firebase polling at 100 ms introduced noticeable CPU load (~18%) on older laptops with integrated cameras also processing video at 30 fps. This was resolved by moving the Firebase listener onto a background thread with a thread-safe state queue, decoupling it from the OpenCV main loop. CPU load dropped to 6% on the same hardware.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Hardware and Latency Performance

Table II consolidates the principal quantitative results across 5,000 operations on ten prototype modules. The 180 ms average end-to-end latency—defined as the interval between the AR application writing a state change to Firebase and the relay actuating, confirmed by the ESP8266 acknowledgement timestamp—comfortably meets the sub-300 ms interactive-control threshold. The 95th-percentile of 245 ms confirms that latency spikes attributable to Wi-Fi contention are rare and bounded. Relay life testing at rated 10 A load produced zero failures across 10,000 actuations, consistent with the rated 100,000-cycle mechanical endurance of the SRD-05VDC relay used.

TABLE II. System Performance and Evaluation Summary

Metric	Average	P95	Max	Condition
End-to-End Latency	180 ms	245 ms	420 ms	Wi-Fi connected
ARUCO Detection Rate	99.2%	—	—	>100 lux
ARUCO Detection Rate	94.5%	—	—	<50 lux
Pose Estimation Error	2 mm	3.5 mm	5 mm	1 m distance
Firebase Read (ESP8266)	85 ms	120 ms	210 ms	Active Wi-Fi
Firebase Write (ESP8266)	92 ms	135 ms	230 ms	Active Wi-Fi
Switch Rendering (8 SW)	15 ms	22 ms	31 ms	640×480 frame
Command Success Rate	98.7%	—	—	All conditions
Battery Life (deep sleep)	45 days	—	—	1 op/hour
User Satisfaction (UAT)	4.8/5	—	—	N=50 participants

ARUCO detection performance confirms the findings of Kumar, Rossi, and Jain [6]: 99.2% detection under standard indoor illumination (100–1000 lux) and 94.5% under dim conditions (<50 lux). Pose estimation accuracy of 2 mm at 1 m is sufficient to render virtual buttons with sub-centimetre positional fidelity on the physical panel, with no observable drift over 30-minute continuous sessions—an important usability property not guaranteed by markerless tracking methods.

B. Analytics Results

After one week of continuous operation across 10 devices, the analytics pipeline surfaced clear behavioural signatures: living-area lighting showed a bimodal daily pattern (7–9 AM and 6–10 PM), kitchen switches exhibited a morning peak correlated with appliance use, and one device in the study environment exhibited a slow but statistically significant upward trend in mean response time (+18 ms per day over seven days) that was later traced to Wi-Fi channel congestion from a new neighbouring access point. The three-sigma anomaly detector correctly flagged this device on day 5—two days before any user reported subjective latency. This result is consistent with the 4.3-day early-warning lead time reported by Lydersen et al. [7] for sensor-based predictive maintenance.

C. User Acceptance Study

All 50 participants completed the assigned tasks (register one device, control switches for one week, review analytics) without requiring assistance beyond the printed quick-start card. The overall satisfaction score of 4.8/5.0 (SD 0.4) and 96% recommendation rate rank the system above the 4.5 threshold commonly cited as the acceptance criterion for assistive technology. The two lowest-rated dimensions—analytics usefulness (4.5) and control responsiveness (4.6)—were still strongly positive. The 3.2-minute mean learning curve compares favourably with the 12–20 minutes typically reported for first-time configuration of commercial smart home ecosystems. Qualitative comments emphasised the naturalness of pointing at a physical panel and tapping its virtual representation, describing the experience as more intuitive than navigating a room list in a smartphone app.

D. Comparison with Existing Solutions

Against commercial smart plugs ($15–25), the proposed system delivers 60–75% cost reduction, adds a spatially anchored AR interface, and provides comprehensive usage analytics—none of which are available in any commercial offering reviewed. Against research AR prototypes, it adds genuine hardware actuation, cloud synchronisation, and a validated user experience. Against standalone ESP8266 hobbyist builds, it adds the AR control layer, structured cloud security, and the analytics pipeline. No prior system in the literature simultaneously satisfies all four deployment criteria: (a) sub-$10 per-switch cost, (b) AR control interface, (c) real-time multi-user cloud synchronisation, and (d) operational analytics with anomaly detection.

VI. CONCLUSION

This paper introduced AR Autonomous Switching with Resource Utilization Analyzing, a four-tier system that integrates ESP8266 relay hardware, Firebase cloud infrastructure, OpenCV-ARUCO augmented reality, and a data science analytics pipeline into a coherent, low-cost smart-switchboard platform. Empirical evaluation across 5,000 hardware operations and a 50-user acceptance study confirmed 98.7% command reliability, 180 ms average end-to-end latency, 99.2% AR marker detection accuracy under standard lighting, and a user satisfaction score of 4.8/5.0 with a 96% recommendation rate—all achieved at a per-switch hardware cost of $4–6, well below every commercial alternative examined.

The analytics tier demonstrated practical value beyond control: statistical anomaly detection identified a deteriorating device connection 48 hours before subjective user perception, validating data-driven maintenance as an achievable outcome of lightweight event logging. Future work will pursue five directions: (i) native mobile AR applications using ARKit and ARCore to eliminate the laptop requirement; (ii) machine-learning gesture recognition replacing mouse-click interaction; (iii) scene-recognition-based markerless switchboard detection; (iv) current-sensor integration for true watt-hour energy metering; and (v) federated multi-building deployment with role-based access control. The complete system source code is released as open-source to support continued research and community adaptation.

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