
Bayesian Kernelized Tensor Factorization as Surrogate for Bayesian Optimization

Anonymous Author(s)

Affiliation

Address

email

Abstract

1 Bayesian optimization (BO) primarily uses Gaussian processes (GP) as the key sur-
2 surrogate model, mostly with a simple stationary and separable kernel function such as
3 the squared-exponential kernel with automatic relevance determination (SE-ARD).
4 However, such simple kernel specifications are deficient in learning functions with
5 complex features, such as being nonstationary, nonseparable, and multimodal.
6 Approximating such functions using a local GP, even in a low-dimensional space,
7 requires a large number of samples, not to mention in a high-dimensional set-
8 ting. In this paper, we propose to use Bayesian Kernelized Tensor Factorization
9 (BKTF)—as a new surrogate model—for BO in a D -dimensional Cartesian product
10 space. Our key idea is to approximate the underlying D -dimensional solid with a
11 fully Bayesian low-rank tensor CP decomposition, in which we place GP priors
12 on the latent basis functions for each dimension to encode local consistency and
13 smoothness. With this formulation, information from each sample can be shared
14 not only with neighbors but also across dimensions. Although BKTF no longer
15 has an analytical posterior, we can still efficiently approximate the posterior dis-
16 tribution through Markov chain Monte Carlo (MCMC) and obtain prediction and
17 full uncertainty quantification (UQ). We conduct numerical experiments on both
18 standard BO test functions and machine learning hyperparameter tuning problems,
19 and our results show that BKTF offers a flexible and highly effective approach for
20 characterizing complex functions with UQ, especially in cases where the initial
21 sample size and budget are severely limited.

22 1 Introduction

23 For many applications in sciences and engineering, such as emulation-based studies, design of
24 experiments, and automated machine learning, the goal is to optimize a complex black-box function
25 $f(\boldsymbol{x})$ in a D -dimensional space, for which we have limited prior knowledge. The main challenge in
26 such optimization problems is that we aim to efficiently find global optima rather than local optima,
27 while the objective function f is often gradient-free, multimodal, and computationally expensive
28 to evaluate. Bayesian optimization (BO) offers a powerful statistical approach to these problems,
29 particularly when the observation budgets are limited [1, 2, 3]. A typical BO framework consists of
30 two components to balance exploitation and exploration: the surrogate and the acquisition function
31 (AF). The surrogate is a probabilistic model that allows us to estimate $f(\boldsymbol{x})$ with uncertainty at a new
32 location \boldsymbol{x} , and the AF is used to determine which location to query next.

33 Gaussian process (GP) regression is the most widely used surrogate for BO [3, 4], thanks to its
34 appealing properties in providing analytical derivations and uncertainty quantification (UQ). The
35 choice of kernel/covariance function is a critical decision in GP models; for multidimensional
36 BO problems, perhaps the most popular kernel is the ARD (automatic relevance determination)—

37 Squared-Exponential (SE) or Matérn kernel [4]. Although this specification has certain numerical
 38 advantages and can help automatically learn the importance of input variables, a key limitation is that
 39 it implies/assumes that the underlying stochastic process is both stationary and separable, and the
 40 value of the covariance function between two random points quickly goes to zero with the increase of
 41 input dimensionality. These assumptions can be problematic for complex real-world processes that
 42 are nonstationary and nonseparable, as estimating the underlying function with a simple ARD kernel
 43 would require a large number of observations. A potential solution to address this issue is to use more
 44 flexible kernel structures. The additive kernel, for example, is designed to characterize a more “global”
 45 and nonstationary structure by restricting variable interactions [5], and it has demonstrated great
 46 success in solving high-dimensional BO problems (see, e.g., [6, 7, 8]). However, in practice using
 47 additive kernels requires strong prior knowledge to determine the proper interactions and involves
 48 many kernel hyperparameters to learn [9]. Another emerging solution is to use deep GP [10], such as
 49 in [11]; however, for complex multidimensional functions, learning a deep GP model will require a
 50 large number of samples.

51 In this paper, we propose to use *Bayesian Kernelized Tensor Factorization* (BKTF) [12, 13, 14] as a
 52 flexible and adaptive surrogate model for BO in a D -dimensional Cartesian product space. BKTF is
 53 initially developed for modeling multidimensional spatiotemporal data with UQ, for tasks such as
 54 spatiotemporal kriging/cokriging. This paper adapts BKTF to the BO setting, and our key idea is to
 55 characterize the multivariate objective function $f(\mathbf{x}) = f(x_1, \dots, x_D)$ for a specific BO problem
 56 using low-rank tensor CANDECOMP/PARAFAC (CP) factorization with random basis functions.
 57 Unlike other basis-function models that rely on known/deterministic basis functions [15], BKTF uses
 58 a hierarchical Bayesian framework to achieve high-quality UQ in a more flexible way—GP priors
 59 are used to model the basis functions, and hyperpriors are used to model kernel hyperparameters in
 60 particular for the lengthscale that characterizes the scale of variation.

61 Figure 1 shows the comparison between BKTF and GP surrogates when optimizing a 2D function that
 62 is nonstationary, nonseparable, and multimodal. The details of this function and the BO experiments
 63 are provided in Appendix 7.3, and related code is given in Supplementary material. For this case,
 64 GP becomes ineffective in finding the global solution, while BKTF offers superior flexibility and
 65 adaptability to characterize the multidimensional process from limited data. Different from GP-based
 66 surrogate models, BKTF no longer has an analytical posterior; however, efficient inference and
 67 acquisition can be achieved through Markov chain Monte Carlo (MCMC) in an element-wise learning
 68 way, in which we update basis functions and kernel hyperparameters using Gibbs sampling and slice
 69 sampling respectively [14]. For the optimization, we first use MCMC samples to approximate the
 70 posterior distribution of the whole tensor and then naturally define the upper confidence bound (UCB)
 71 as AF. This process is feasible for many real-world applications that can be studied in a discretized
 72 tensor product space, such as experimental design and automatic machine learning (ML). We conduct
 73 extensive experiments on both standard optimization and ML hyperparameter tuning tasks. Our
 74 results show that BKTF achieves a fast global search for optimizing complex objective functions
 75 under limited initial data and observation budgets.

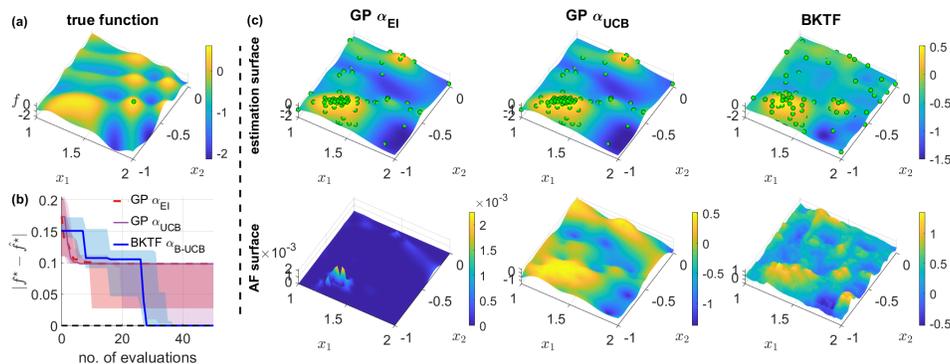


Figure 1: BO for a 2D nonstationary nonseparable function: (a) True function surface, where the global maximum is marked; (b) Comparison between BO models using GP surrogates (with two AFs) and BKTF with 30 random initial observations, averaged over 20 replications; (c) Specific results of one run, including the final mean surface for f , in which green dots denote the locations of selected candidates, and the corresponding AF surface.

76 **2 Preliminaries**

77 Throughout this paper, we use lowercase letters to denote scalars, e.g., x , boldface lowercase letters
 78 to denote vectors, e.g., $\mathbf{x} = (x_1, \dots, x_D)^\top \in \mathbb{R}^D$, and boldface uppercase letters to denote matrices,
 79 e.g., $\mathbf{X} \in \mathbb{R}^{M \times N}$. For a matrix \mathbf{X} , we denote its determinant by $\det(\mathbf{X})$. We use \mathbf{I}_N to represent
 80 an identity matrix of size N . Given two matrices $\mathbf{A} \in \mathbb{R}^{M \times N}$ and $\mathbf{B} \in \mathbb{R}^{P \times Q}$, the Kronecker

81 product is defined as $\mathbf{A} \otimes \mathbf{B} = \begin{bmatrix} a_{1,1}\mathbf{B} & \cdots & a_{1,N}\mathbf{B} \\ \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ a_{M,1}\mathbf{B} & \cdots & a_{M,N}\mathbf{B} \end{bmatrix} \in \mathbb{R}^{MP \times NQ}$. The outer product of two

82 vectors \mathbf{a} and \mathbf{b} is denoted by $\mathbf{a} \circ \mathbf{b}$. The vectorization operation $\text{vec}(\mathbf{X})$ stacks all column vectors
 83 in \mathbf{X} as a single vector. Following the tensor notation in [16], we denote a third-order tensor by
 84 $\mathcal{X} \in \mathbb{R}^{M \times N \times P}$ and its mode- k ($k = 1, 2, 3$) unfolding by $\mathbf{X}_{(k)}$, which maps a tensor into a matrix.
 85 Higher-order tensors can be defined in a similar way.

86 Let $f : \mathcal{X} = \mathcal{X}_1 \times \dots \times \mathcal{X}_D \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ be a black-box function that could be nonconvex, derivative-free,
 87 and expensive to evaluate. BO aims to address the global optimization problem:

$$\mathbf{x}^* = \arg \max_{\mathbf{x} \in \mathcal{X}} f(\mathbf{x}), \quad f^* = \max_{\mathbf{x} \in \mathcal{X}} f(\mathbf{x}) = f(\mathbf{x}^*). \quad (1)$$

88 BO solves this problem by first building a probabilistic model for $f(\mathbf{x})$ (i.e., surrogate model) based
 89 on initial observations and then using the model to decide where in \mathcal{X} to evaluate/query next. The
 90 overall goal of BO is to find the global optimum of the objective function through as few evaluations
 91 as possible. Most BO models rely on a GP prior for $f(\mathbf{x})$ to achieve prediction and UQ:

$$f(\mathbf{x}) = f(x_1, x_2, \dots, x_D) \sim \mathcal{GP}(m(\mathbf{x}), k(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{x}')), \quad x_d \in \mathcal{X}_d, \quad d = 1, \dots, D, \quad (2)$$

92 where k is a valid kernel/covariance function and m is a mean function that can be generally assumed
 93 to be 0. Given a finite set of observation points $\{\mathbf{x}_i\}_{i=1}^n$ with $\mathbf{x}_i = (x_1^i, \dots, x_D^i)^\top$, the vector of
 94 function values $\mathbf{f} = (f(\mathbf{x}_1), \dots, f(\mathbf{x}_n))^\top$ has a multivariate Gaussian distribution $\mathbf{f} \sim \mathcal{N}(\mathbf{0}, \mathbf{K})$,
 95 where \mathbf{K} denotes the $n \times n$ covariance matrix. For a set of observed data $\mathcal{D} = \{\mathbf{x}_i, y_i\}_{i=1}^n$ with
 96 i.i.d. Gaussian noise, i.e., $y_i = f(\mathbf{x}_i) + \epsilon_i$ where $\epsilon_i \sim \mathcal{N}(0, \tau^{-1})$, GP gives an analytical posterior
 97 distribution of $f(\mathbf{x})$ at an unobserved point \mathbf{x}^* :

$$f(\mathbf{x}^*) \mid \mathcal{D}_n \sim \mathcal{N}\left(\mathbf{k}_{\mathbf{x}^* \mathbf{X}} (\mathbf{K} + \tau^{-1} \mathbf{I}_n)^{-1} \mathbf{y}, \mathbf{k}_{\mathbf{x}^* \mathbf{x}^*} - \mathbf{k}_{\mathbf{x}^* \mathbf{X}} (\mathbf{K} + \tau^{-1} \mathbf{I}_n)^{-1} \mathbf{k}_{\mathbf{x}^* \mathbf{X}}^\top\right), \quad (3)$$

98 where $\mathbf{k}_{\mathbf{x}^* \mathbf{x}^*}, \mathbf{k}_{\mathbf{x}^* \mathbf{X}} \in \mathbb{R}^{1 \times n}$ are variance of \mathbf{x}^* , covariances between \mathbf{x}^* and $\{\mathbf{x}_i\}_{i=1}^n$, respectively,
 99 and $\mathbf{y} = (y_1, \dots, y_n)^\top$.

100 Based on the posterior distributions of f , one can
 101 compute an AF, denoted by $\alpha : \mathcal{X} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$, for a
 102 new candidate \mathbf{x}^* and evaluate how promising \mathbf{x}^*
 103 is. In BO, the next query point is often determined
 104 by maximizing a selected/predefined AF, i.e., $\mathbf{x}_{n+1} =$
 105 $\arg \max_{\mathbf{x} \in \mathcal{X}} \alpha(\mathbf{x} \mid \mathcal{D}_n)$. Most AFs are built on the
 106 predictive mean and variance; for example, a com-
 107 monly used AF is the **expected improvement** (EI)
 108 [1]:

$$\alpha_{\text{EI}}(\mathbf{x} \mid \mathcal{D}_n) = \sigma(\mathbf{x}) \varphi\left(\frac{\Delta(\mathbf{x})}{\sigma(\mathbf{x})}\right) + |\Delta(\mathbf{x})| \Phi\left(\frac{\Delta(\mathbf{x})}{\sigma(\mathbf{x})}\right), \quad (4)$$

109 where $\Delta(\mathbf{x}) = \mu(\mathbf{x}) - f_n^*$ is the expected difference between the proposed point \mathbf{x} and the current
 110 best solution, $f_n^* = \max_{\mathbf{x} \in \{\mathbf{x}_i\}_{i=1}^n} f(\mathbf{x})$ denotes the best function value obtained so far; $\mu(\mathbf{x})$ and
 111 $\sigma(\mathbf{x})$ are the predictive mean and predictive standard deviation at \mathbf{x} , respectively; and $\varphi(\cdot)$ and $\Phi(\cdot)$
 112 denote the probability density function (PDF) and the cumulative distribution function (CDF) of
 113 standard normal, respectively. Another widely applied AF for maximization problems is the **upper**
 114 **confidence bound** (UCB) [17]:

$$\alpha_{\text{UCB}}(\mathbf{x} \mid \mathcal{D}_n, \beta) = \mu(\mathbf{x}) + \beta \sigma(\mathbf{x}), \quad (5)$$

115 where β is a tunable parameter that balances exploration and exploitation. The general BO procedure
 116 can be summarized as Algorithm 1.

Algorithm 1: Basic BO process

Input: Initial dataset \mathcal{D}_0 and a trained surrogate model; total budget N .
for $n = 1, \dots, N$ **do**
 Compute the posterior distribution of f using all available data;
 Find next evaluation point $\mathbf{x}_n \in \mathbb{R}^D$ by optimizing the AF;
 Augment data $\mathcal{D}_n = \mathcal{D}_{n-1} \cup \{\mathbf{x}_n, y_n\}$, update surrogate model.

117 3 Bayesian Kernelized Tensor Factorization for BO

118 3.1 Bayesian Hierarchical Model Specification

119 Before introducing BKTF, we first construct a D -dimensional Cartesian product space corresponding
 120 to the search space \mathcal{X} . We define it over D sets $\{S_1, \dots, S_D\}$ and denote as $\prod_{d=1}^D S_d$: $S_1 \times \dots \times$
 121 $S_D = \{(s_1, \dots, s_D) \mid \forall d \in \{1, \dots, D\}, s_d \in S_d\}$. For $\forall d \in [1, D]$, the coordinates set S_d is formed
 122 by m_d interpolation points that are distributed over a bounded interval $\mathcal{X}_d = [a_d, b_d]$, represented by
 123 $\mathbf{c}_d = \{c_1^d, \dots, c_{m_d}^d\}$, i.e., $S_d = \{c_i^d\}_{i=1}^{m_d}$. The size of S_d becomes $|S_d| = m_d$, and the entire space
 124 owns $\prod_{d=1}^D |S_d|$ samples. Note that S_d could be either uniformly or irregularly distributed.

125 We randomly sample an initial dataset including n_0 input-output data pairs from the pre-defined
 126 space, $\mathcal{D}_0 = \{\mathbf{x}_i, y_i\}_{i=1}^{n_0}$ where $\{\mathbf{x}_i\}_{i=1}^{n_0}$ are located in $\prod_{d=1}^D S_d$, and this yields an incomplete
 127 D -dimensional tensor $\mathcal{Y} \in \mathbb{R}^{|S_1| \times \dots \times |S_D|}$ with n_0 observed points. BKTF approximates the entire
 128 data tensor \mathcal{Y} by a kernelized CANDECOMP/PARAFAC (CP) tensor decomposition:

$$\mathcal{Y} = \sum_{r=1}^R \lambda_r \cdot \mathbf{g}_1^r \circ \mathbf{g}_2^r \circ \dots \circ \mathbf{g}_D^r + \mathcal{E}, \quad (6)$$

129 where R is a pre-specified tensor CP rank, $\boldsymbol{\lambda} = (\lambda_1, \dots, \lambda_R)^\top$ denote weight coefficients that
 130 capture the magnitude/importance of each rank in the factorization, $\mathbf{g}_d^r = [g_d^r(s_d) : s_d \in S_d] \in \mathbb{R}^{|S_d|}$
 131 denotes the r th latent factor for the d th dimension, entries in \mathcal{E} are i.i.d. white noises from $\mathcal{N}(0, \tau^{-1})$.
 132 It should be particularly noted that both the coefficients $\{\lambda_r\}_{r=1}^R$ and the latent basis functions
 133 $\{\mathbf{g}_1^r, \dots, \mathbf{g}_D^r\}_{r=1}^R$ are random variables. The function approximation for $\mathbf{x} = (x_1, \dots, x_D)^\top$ can be
 134 written as:

$$f(\mathbf{x}) = \sum_{r=1}^R \lambda_r g_1^r(x_1) g_2^r(x_2) \dots g_D^r(x_D) = \sum_{r=1}^R \lambda_r \prod_{d=1}^D g_d^r(x_d). \quad (7)$$

135 For priors, we assume $\lambda_r \sim \mathcal{N}(0, 1)$ for $r = 1, \dots, R$ and use a GP prior on the latent factors:

$$g_d^r(x_d) \mid l_d^r \sim \mathcal{GP}(0, k_d^r(x_d, x'_d; l_d^r)), \quad r = 1, \dots, R, \quad d = 1, \dots, D, \quad (8)$$

136 where k_d^r is a valid kernel function. We fix the variances of k_d^r as $\sigma^2 = 1$, and only learn the
 137 length-scale hyperparameters l_d^r , since the variances of the model can be captured by $\boldsymbol{\lambda}$. One can
 138 also exclude $\boldsymbol{\lambda}$ but introduce variance σ^2 as a kernel hyperparameter on one of the basis functions;
 139 however, learning kernel hyperparameter is computationally more expensive than learning $\boldsymbol{\lambda}$. For
 140 simplicity, we can also assume the lengthscales parameters to be identical, i.e., $l_d^1 = l_d^2 = \dots =$
 141 $l_d^R = l_d$, for each dimension d . The prior for the corresponding latent factor \mathbf{g}_d^r is then a Gaussian
 142 distribution: $\mathbf{g}_d^r \sim \mathcal{N}(\mathbf{0}, \mathbf{K}_d^r)$, where \mathbf{K}_d^r is the $|S_d| \times |S_d|$ correlation matrix computed from k_d^r .
 143 We place Gaussian hyperpriors on the log-transformed kernel hyperparameters to ensure positive
 144 values, i.e., $\log(l_d^r) \sim \mathcal{N}(\mu_l, \tau_l^{-1})$. For noise precision τ , we assume a conjugate Gamma prior
 145 $\tau \sim \text{Gamma}(a_0, b_0)$.

146 For observations, based on Eq. (7) we assume each y_i in the initial dataset \mathcal{D}_0 to be:

$$y_i \mid \{g_d^r(x_d^i)\}, \{\lambda_r\}, \tau \sim \mathcal{N}(f(\mathbf{x}_i), \tau^{-1}). \quad (9)$$

147 3.2 BKTF as a Two-layer Deep GP

148 Here we show the representation of BKTF as a two-layer deep GP. The first layer characterizes the
 149 generation of latent functions $\{g_d^r\}_{r=1}^R$ for coordinate/dimension d and also the generation of random
 150 weights $\{\lambda_r\}_{r=1}^R$. For the second layer, if we consider $\{\lambda_r, g_1^r, \dots, g_D^r\}_{r=1}^R$ as parameters and rewrite
 151 the functional decomposition in Eq. (7) as a linear function $f(\mathbf{x}; \{\xi_r\}) = \sum_{r=1}^R \xi_r \lambda_r \prod_{d=1}^D g_d^r(x_d)$
 152 with $\xi_r \stackrel{\text{iid}}{\sim} \mathcal{N}(0, 1)$, we can marginalize $\{\xi_r\}$ and obtain a fully symmetric multilinear ker-
 153 nel/covariance function for any two data points $\mathbf{x} = (x_1, \dots, x_D)^\top$ and $\mathbf{x}' = (x'_1, \dots, x'_D)^\top$:

$$k(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{x}'; \{\lambda_r, g_1^r, \dots, g_D^r\}_{r=1}^R) = \sum_{r=1}^R \lambda_r^2 \left[\prod_{d=1}^D g_d^r(x_d) g_d^r(x'_d) \right]. \quad (10)$$

154 As can be seen, the second layer has a multilinear product kernel function parameterized by
 155 $\{\lambda_r, g_1^r, \dots, g_D^r\}_{r=1}^R$. There are some properties to highlight: (i) the kernel is **nonstationary** since
 156 the value of $g_d^r(\cdot)$ is location-specific, and (ii) the kernel is **nonseparable** when $R > 1$. Therefore,
 157 this specification is very different from traditional GP surrogates:

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{GP with SE-ARD: } k(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{x}') = \sigma^2 \prod_{d=1}^D k_d(x_d, x'_d), \\ \quad \text{kernel is stationary and separable} \\ \text{additive GP: } k(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{x}') = \sum_{d=1}^D k_d^{1\text{st}}(x_d, x'_d) + \sum_{d=1}^{D-1} \sum_{e=d+1}^D k_d^{2\text{nd}}(x_d, x'_d) k_e^{2\text{nd}}(x_e, x'_e), \\ \text{(1st/2nd order)} \quad \text{kernel is stationary and nonseparable} \end{array} \right.$$

158 where σ^2 represents the kernel variance, and kernel functions $\{k_d(\cdot), k_d^{1\text{st}}(\cdot), k_d^{2\text{nd}}(\cdot), k_e^{2\text{nd}}(\cdot)\}$ are
 159 stationary with different hyperparameters (e.g., length scale and variance). Compared with GP-based
 160 kernel specification, the multilinear kernel in Eq. (10) has a much larger set of hyperparameters and
 161 becomes more flexible and adaptive to the data. From a GP perspective, learning the hyperparameter
 162 in the kernel function in Eq. (10) will be computationally expensive; however, we can achieve efficient
 163 inference of $\{\lambda_r, g_1^r, \dots, g_D^r\}_{r=1}^R$ under a tensor factorization framework. Based on the derivation in
 164 Eq. (10), we can consider BKTF as a ‘‘Bayesian’’ version of the multidimensional Karhunen-Loève
 165 (KL) expansion [18], in which the basis functions $\{g_d^r\}$ are random processes (i.e., GPs) and $\{\lambda_r\}$ are
 166 random variables. On the other hand, we can interpret BKTF as a new class of stochastic process that
 167 is mainly parameterized by rank R and hyperparameters for those basis functions; however, BKTF
 168 does not impose any orthogonal constraints on the latent functions.

169 3.3 Model Inference

170 Unlike GP, BKTF no longer enjoys an analytical posterior distribution. Based on the aforementioned
 171 prior and hyperprior settings, we adapt the MCMC updating procedure in [12, 14] to an efficient
 172 element-wise Gibbs sampling algorithm for model inference. This allows us to accommodate
 173 observations that are not located on the grid space $\prod_{d=1}^D S_d$. The detailed derivation of the sampling
 174 algorithm is given in Appendix 7.1.

175 3.4 Prediction and AF Computation

176 In each step of function evaluation, we run the MCMC sampling process K iterations for model
 177 inference, where the first K_0 samples are taken as burn-in and the last $K - K_0$ samples are
 178 used for posterior approximation. The predictive distribution for any entry f^* in the defined grid
 179 space conditioned on the observed dataset \mathcal{D}_0 can be obtained by the Monte Carlo approximation
 180 $p(f^* | \mathcal{D}_0, \boldsymbol{\theta}_0) \approx \frac{1}{K - K_0} \times \sum_{k=K_0+1}^K p(f^* | (g_d^r)^{(k)}, \boldsymbol{\lambda}^{(k)}, \tau^{(k)})$, where $\boldsymbol{\theta}_0 = \{\mu_l, \tau_l, a_0, b_0\}$ is
 181 the set of all parameters used in hyperpriors. Although direct analytical predictive distribution does
 182 not exist in BKTF, the posterior mean and variance estimated from MCMC samples at each location
 183 naturally offer us a Bayesian approach to define the AFs.

184 BKTF provides a fully Bayesian surrogate model. We define a Bayesian variant of UCB as the AF
 185 by adapting the predictive mean and variance (or uncertainty) in ordinary GP-based UCB with the
 186 values calculated from MCMC sampling. For every MCMC sample after burn-in, i.e., $k > K_0$, we
 187 can estimate a output tensor $\tilde{\mathcal{F}}^{(k)}$ over the entire grid space using the latent factors $(g_d^r)^{(k)}$ and the
 188 weight vector $\boldsymbol{\lambda}^{(k)}$: $\tilde{\mathcal{F}}^{(k)} = \sum_{r=1}^R \lambda_r^{(k)} (g_1^r)^{(k)} \circ (g_2^r)^{(k)} \circ \dots \circ (g_D^r)^{(k)}$. We can then compute the
 189 corresponding mean and variance tensors of the $(K - K_0)$ samples $\{\tilde{\mathcal{F}}^{(k)}\}_{k=K_0+1}^K$, and denote the
 190 two tensors by \mathcal{U} and \mathcal{V} , respectively. The approximated predictive distribution at each point \mathbf{x} in
 191 the space becomes $\tilde{f}(\mathbf{x}) \sim \mathcal{N}(u(\mathbf{x}), v(\mathbf{x}))$. Following the definition of UCB in Eq. (5), we define
 192 Bayesian UCB (B-UCB) at location \mathbf{x} as $\alpha_{\text{B-UCB}}(\mathbf{x} | \mathcal{D}, \beta, \mathbf{g}_d^r, \boldsymbol{\lambda}) = u(\mathbf{x}) + \beta \sqrt{v(\mathbf{x})}$. The next
 193 search/query point can be determined via $\mathbf{x}_{\text{next}} = \arg \max_{\mathbf{x} \in \{\prod_{d=1}^D S_d - \mathcal{D}_{n-1}\}} \alpha_{\text{B-UCB}}(\mathbf{x})$.

194 We summarize the implementation procedure of BKTF for BO in Appendix 7.2 (see Algorithm 2).
 195 Given the sequential nature of BO, when a new data point arrives at step n , we can start the MCMC
 196 with the last iteration of the Markov chains at step $n - 1$ to accelerate model convergence. The main
 197 computational and storage cost of BKTF is to interpolate and save the tensors $\tilde{\mathcal{F}} \in \mathbb{R}^{|S_1| \times \dots \times |S_D|}$
 198 over $(K - K_0)$ iterations for Bayesian AF estimation. This could be prohibitive when the MCMC

199 sample size or the dimensionality of input space is large. To avoid saving the tensors, in practice,
200 we can simply use the maximum values of each entry over the $(K - K_0)$ iterations through iterative
201 pairwise comparison. The number of samples after burn-in then implies the value of β in $\alpha_{\text{B-UCB}}$. We
202 adopt this simple AF in our numerical experiments.

203 4 Related Work

204 The key of BO is to effectively characterize the posterior distribution of the objective function
205 from a limited number of observations. The most relevant work to our study is the *Bayesian*
206 *Kernelized Factorization* (BKF) framework, which has been mainly used for modeling large-scale and
207 multidimensional spatiotemporal data with UQ. The key idea is to parameterize the multidimensional
208 stochastic processes using a factorization model, in which specific priors are used to encode spatial
209 and temporal dependencies. Signature examples of BKF include spatial dynamic factor model
210 (SDFM) [19], variational Gaussian process factor analysis (VGFA) [20], and Bayesian kernelized
211 matrix/tensor factorization (BKMF/BKTF) [12, 14, 13]. A common solution in these models is to
212 use GP prior to modeling the factor matrices, thus encoding spatial and temporal dependencies. In
213 addition, for multivariate data with more than one attribute, BKTF also introduces a Wishart prior
214 to modeling the factors that encode the dependency among features. A key difference among these
215 methods is how inference is performed. SDFM and BKMF/BKTF are fully Bayesian hierarchical
216 models and they rely on MCMC for model inference, where the factors can be updated via Gibbs
217 sampling with conjugate priors; for learning the posterior distributions of kernel hyperparameters,
218 SDFM uses the Metropolis-Hastings sampling, while BKMF/BKTF uses the more efficient slice
219 sampling. On the other hand, VGFA uses variational inference to learn factor matrices, while kernel
220 hyperparameters are learned through maximum a posteriori (MAP) estimation without UQ. Overall,
221 BKTF has shown superior performance in modeling multidimensional spatiotemporal processes with
222 high-quality UQ for 2D and 3D spaces [14] and conducting tensor regression [13].

223 The proposed BKTF surrogate models the objective function—as a single realization of a random
224 process—using low-rank tensor factorization with random basis functions. This basis function-
225 based specification is closely related to multidimensional Karhunen-Loève (KL) expansion [18] for
226 stochastic (spatial, temporal, and spatiotemporal) processes. The empirical analysis of KL expansion
227 is also known as proper orthogonal decomposition (POD). With a known kernel/covariance function,
228 truncated KL expansion allows us to approximate the underlying random process using a set of
229 eigenvalues and eigenfunctions derived from the kernel function. Numerical KL expansion is often
230 referred to as the Garlekin method, and in practice the basis functions are often chosen as prespecified
231 and deterministic functions [15, 21], such as Fourier basis, wavelet basis, orthogonal polynomials,
232 B-splines, empirical orthogonal functions, radial basis functions (RBF), and Wendland functions
233 (i.e., compactly supported RBF) (see, e.g., [22], [23], [24], [25]). However, the quality of UQ will be
234 undermined as the randomness is fully attributed to the coefficients $\{\lambda_r\}$; in addition, these methods
235 also require a large number of basis functions to fit complex stochastic processes. Different from
236 methods with fixed/known basis functions, BKTF uses a Bayesian hierarchical modeling framework
237 to better capture the randomness and uncertainty in the data, in which GP priors are used to model the
238 latent factors (i.e., basis functions are also random processes) on different dimensions, and hyperpriors
239 are introduced on the kernel hyperparameters. Therefore, BKTF becomes a fully Bayesian version of
240 multidimensional KL expansion for stochastic processes with unknown covariance from partially
241 observed data, however, without imposing any orthogonal constraint on the basis functions. Following
242 the analysis in section 3.2, BKTF is also a special case of a two-layer deep Gaussian process [26, 10],
243 where the first layer produces latent factors for each dimension, and the second layer holds a
244 multilinear kernel parameterized by all latent factors.

245 5 Experiments

246 5.1 Optimization for Benchmark Test Functions

247 We test the proposed BKTF model for BO on six benchmark functions that are used for global
248 optimization problems [27], which are summarized in Table 1. Figure 2(a) shows those functions with
249 2-dimensional inputs together with the 2D Griewank function. All the selected standard functions
250 are multimodal, more detailed descriptions can be found in Appendix 7.4. In fact, we can visually
251 see that the standard Damavandi/Schaffer/Griewank functions in Figure 2(a) indeed have a low-rank

Table 1: Summary of the studied benchmark functions.

| Function | D | Search space | m_d | Characteristics |
|-----------|-----|---------------------------|-------|--|
| Branin | 2 | $[-5, 10] \times [0, 15]$ | 14 | 3 global minima, flat |
| Damavandi | 2 | $[0, 14]^2$ | 71 | multimodal, global minimum located in small area |
| Schaffer | 2 | $[-10, 10]^2$ | 11 | multimodal, global optimum located close to local minima |
| Griewank | 3 | $[-10, 10]^3$ | 11 | multimodal, many widespread and regularly distributed local optima |
| | 4 | $[-10, 10]^4$ | 11 | |
| Hartmann | 6 | $[0, 1]^6$ | 12 | multimodal, multi-input |

252 structure. For each function, we assume the initial dataset \mathcal{D}_0 contains $n_0 = D$ observed data pairs,
 253 and we set the total number of query points to $N = 80$ for 4D Griewank and 6D Hartmann function
 254 and $N = 50$ for others. We rescale the input search range to $[0, 1]$ for all dimensions and normalize
 255 the output data using z-score normalization.

256 **Model configuration.** When applying BKTF on the continuous test functions, we introduce m_d
 257 interpolation points c_d in the d th dimension of the input space. The values of m_d used for each
 258 benchmark function are predefined and given in Table 1. Setting the resolution grid will require
 259 certain prior knowledge (e.g., smoothness of the function); and it also depends on the available
 260 computational resources and the number of entries in the tensor which grows exponentially with m_d .
 261 In practice, we find that setting $m_d = 10 \sim 100$ is sufficient for most problems. We set the CP rank
 262 $R = 2$, and for each BO function evaluation run 400 MCMC iterations for model inference where
 263 the first 200 iterations are taken as burn-in. We use Matérn 3/2 kernel as the covariance function for
 264 all the test functions. Since we build a fully Bayesian model, the hyperparameters of the covariance
 265 functions can be updated automatically from the data likelihood and hyperprior.

266 **Effects of hyperpriors.** Note that in optimization scenarios where the observation data is scarce, the
 267 model performance of BKTF highly depends on the hyperprior settings on the kernel length-scales
 268 of the latent factors and the model noise precision τ when proceeding estimation for the unknown
 269 points, i.e., $\theta_0 = \{\mu_l, \tau_l, a_0, b_0\}$. A proper hyper-prior becomes rather important. We discuss the
 270 effects of $\{\mu_l, \tau_l\}$ in Appendix 7.5.1. We see that for the re-scaled input space, a reasonable setting
 271 is to suppose the mean prior of the kernel length-scales is around half of the input domain, i.e.,
 272 $\mu_l = \log(0.5)$. The hyperprior on τ impacts the uncertainty of the latent factors, for example, a large
 273 model noise assumption allows more variances in the factors. Generally, we select the priors that
 274 make the noise variances not quite large, such as the results shown in Figure 4(a) and Figure 5(b) in
 275 Appendix. An example of the uncertainty provided by BKTF is explained in Appendix 7.3.

276 **Baselines.** We compare BKTF with the following BO methods that use GP as the surrogate model.
 277 (1) GP α_{EI} : GP as the surrogate model and EI as the AF in continuous space $\prod_{d=1}^D \mathcal{X}_d$; (2) GP α_{UCB} :
 278 GP as the surrogate model with UCB as the AF with $\beta = 2$, in $\prod_{d=1}^D \mathcal{X}_d$; (3) GPgrid α_{EI} : GP as the
 279 surrogate model with EI as the AF, in Cartesian grid space $\prod_{d=1}^D S_d$; (4) GPgrid α_{UCB} : GP as the
 280 surrogate model with UCB as the AF with $\beta = 2$, in $\prod_{d=1}^D S_d$. We use the Matérn 3/2 kernel for all
 281 GP surrogates. For AF optimization in GP α_{EI} and GP α_{UCB} , we firstly use the DIRECT algorithm
 282 [28] and then apply the Nelder-Mead algorithm [29] to further search if there exist better solutions.

283 **Results.** To compare optimization performances of different models on the benchmark functions,
 284 we consider the absolute error between the global optimum f^* and the current estimated global
 285 optimum \hat{f}^* , i.e., $|f^* - \hat{f}^*|$, w.r.t. the number of function evaluations. We run the optimization 10
 286 times for every test function with a different set of initial observations. The results are summarized in
 287 Figure 2(b). We see that for the 2D functions Branin and Schaffer, BKTF clearly finds the global
 288 optima much faster than GP surrogate-based baselines. For Damavandi function, where the global
 289 minimum ($f(x^*) = 0$) is located at a small sharp area while the local optimum ($f(x) = 2$) is
 290 located at a large smooth area (see Figure 2(a)), GP-based models are trapped around the local
 291 optima in most cases, i.e., $|f^* - \hat{f}^*| = 2$, and cannot jump out. On the contrary, BKTF explores the
 292 global characteristics of the objective function over the entire search space and reaches the global
 293 optimum within 10 iterations of function evaluations. For higher dimensional Griewank and Hartmann
 294 functions, BKTF successfully arrives at the global optima under the given observation budgets, while
 295 GP-based comparison methods are prone to be stuck around local optima. We illustrate the latent

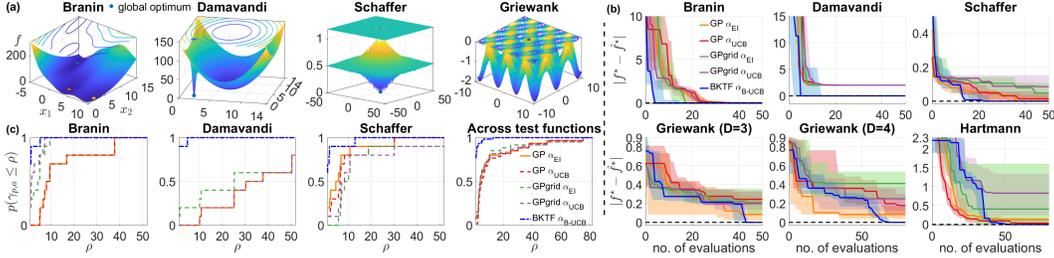


Figure 2: (a) Tested benchmark functions; (b) Optimization results on the six test functions, where medians with 25% and 75% quartiles of 10 runs are compared; (c) Illustration of performance profiles.

Table 2: Results of $|f^* - \hat{f}^*|$ when $n = N$ (mean \pm std.) / AUC of PPs on benchmark functions.

| Function (D) | GP α_{EI} | GP α_{UCB} | GPgrid α_{EI} | GPgrid α_{UCB} | BKTF α_{B-UCB} |
|------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Branin (2) | 0.01 \pm 0.01/37.7 | 0.01 \pm 0.01/37.7 | 0.31 \pm 0.62/47.8 | 0.24 \pm 0.64/49.2 | 0.00\pm0.00/50.5 |
| Damavandi (2) | 2.00 \pm 0.00/17.6 | 2.00 \pm 0.00/17.6 | 1.60 \pm 0.80/24.2 | 2.00 \pm 0.00/17.6 | 0.00\pm0.00/50.6 |
| Schaffer (2) | 0.02 \pm 0.02/44.9 | 0.02 \pm 0.02/43.1 | 0.10 \pm 0.15/38.3 | 0.09 \pm 0.07/38.0 | 0.00\pm0.00/49.6 |
| Griewank (3) | 0.14 \pm 0.14/48.9 | 0.25 \pm 0.10/47.7 | 0.23 \pm 0.13/47.7 | 0.22 \pm 0.12/47.7 | 0.00\pm0.00/50.8 |
| Griewank (4) | 0.10 \pm 0.07/79.5 | 0.19 \pm 0.12/77.8 | 0.38 \pm 0.19/77.8 | 0.27 \pm 0.17/77.8 | 0.00\pm0.00/80.5 |
| Hartmann (6) | 0.12 \pm 0.07/78.0 | 0.07 \pm 0.07/78.0 | 0.70 \pm 0.70/79.1 | 0.79 \pm 0.61/78.9 | 0.00\pm0.00/80.7 |
| Overall | -/70.3 | -/69.53 | -/71.3 | -/70.4 | -/80.5 |

Best results are highlighted in bold fonts.

296 factors of BKTF for 3D Griewank function in Appendix 7.5.3, which shows the periodic (global)
 297 patterns automatically learned from the observations. We compare the absolute error between f^* and
 298 the final estimated \hat{f}^* in Table 2. The enumeration-based GP surrogates, i.e., GPgrid α_{EI} and GPgrid
 299 α_{UCB} , perform a little better than direct GP-based search, i.e., GP α_{EI} and GP α_{UCB} on Damavandi
 300 function, but worse on others. This means that the discretization, to some extent, offers possibilities
 301 for searching all the alternative points in the space, since in each function evaluation, every sample in
 302 the space is equally compared solely based on the predictive distribution. Overall, BKTF reaches
 303 the global optimum for every test function and shows superior performance for complex objective
 304 functions with a faster convergence rate. To intuitively compare the overall performances of different
 305 models across multiple experiments/functions, we further estimate performance profiles (PPs) [30]
 306 (see Appendix 7.5.2), and compute the area under the curve (AUC) for quantitative analyses (see
 307 Figure 2(c) and Table 2). Clearly, BKTF obtains the best performance across all functions.

308 5.2 Hyperparameter Tuning for Machine Learning

309 In this section, we evaluate the performance of BKTF for automatic machine-learning tasks. Specifi-
 310 cally, we compare different models to optimize the hyperparameters of two machine learning (ML)
 311 algorithms—random forest (RF) and neural network (NN)—on classification for the MNIST database
 312 of handwritten digits¹ and housing price regression for the Boston housing dataset². The details of
 313 the hyperparameters that need to learn are given in Appendix 7.6. We assume the number of data
 314 points in the initial dataset \mathcal{D}_0 equals the dimension of hyperparameters need to tune, i.e., $n_0 = 4$ and
 315 $n_0 = 3$ for RF and NN, respectively. The total budget is $N = 50$. We implement the RF algorithms
 316 using scikit-learn package and construct NN models through Keras with 2 hidden layers. All other
 317 model hyperparameters are set as the default values.

318 **Model configuration.** We treat all the discrete hyperparameters as samples from a continuous
 319 space and then generate the corresponding Cartesian product space $\prod_{d=1}^D S_d$. One can interpret
 320 the candidate values for each hyperparameter as the interpolation points in the corresponding input
 321 dimension. According to Appendix 7.6, the size of the spanned space $\prod S_d$ is $91 \times 46 \times 64 \times 10$ and
 322 $91 \times 46 \times 13 \times 10$ for RF classifier and RF regressor, respectively; for the two NN algorithms, the
 323 size of parameter space is $91 \times 49 \times 31$. Similar to the settings on standard test functions, we set the
 324 tensor rank $R = 2$, set $K = 400$ and $K_0 = 200$ for MCMC inference, and use the Matérn 3/2 kernel.

¹<http://yann.lecun.com/exdb/mnist/>

²<https://www.cs.toronto.edu/~dave/data/boston/bostonDetail.html>

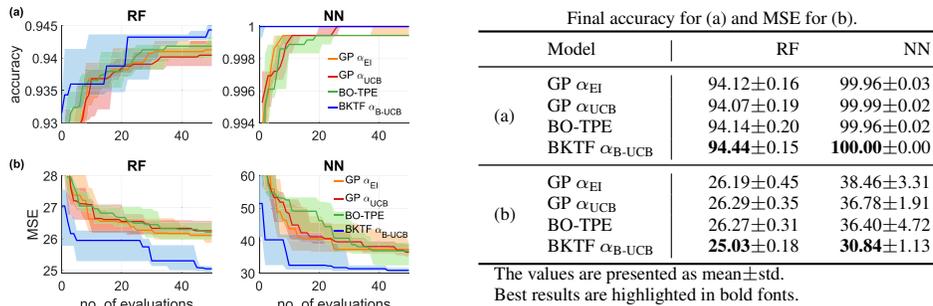


Figure 3 & Table 3: Results of hyperparameter tuning for automated ML: (a) MNIST classification; (b) Boston housing regression. The figure compares medians with 25% and 75% quartiles of 10 runs.

325 **Baselines.** Other than the GP surrogate-based GP α_{EI} and GP α_{UCB} , we also compare with Tree-
 326 structured Parzen Estimator (BO-TPE) [31], which is a widely applied BO approach for hyperparam-
 327 eter tuning. We exclude grid-based GP models as sampling the entire grid becomes infeasible.

328 **Results.** We compare the accuracy for MNIST classification and MSE (mean squared error) for
 329 Boston housing regression both in terms of the number of function evaluations and still run the
 330 optimization processes ten times with different initial datasets \mathcal{D}_0 . The results obtained by different
 331 BO models are given in Figure 3, and the final classification accuracy and regression MSE are
 332 compared in Table 3. For BKTF, we see from Figure 3 that the width between the two quartiles of the
 333 accuracy and error decreases as more iterations are evaluated, and the median curves present superior
 334 convergence rates compared to baselines. For example, BKTF finds the hyperparameters of NN that
 335 achieve 100% classification accuracy on MNIST using less than four function evaluations in all ten
 336 runs. Table 3 also shows that the proposed BKTF surrogate achieves the best final mean accuracy and
 337 regression error with small standard deviations. All these demonstrate the advantage of BKTF as a
 338 surrogate for black-box function optimization.

339 6 Conclusion and Discussions

340 In this paper, we propose to use Bayesian Kernelized Tensor Factorization (BKTF) as a new surrogate
 341 model for Bayesian optimization. Compared with traditional GP surrogates, the BKTF surrogate is
 342 more flexible and adaptive to data thanks to the Bayesian hierarchical specification, which provides
 343 high-quality UQ for BO tasks. The tensor factorization model behind BKTF offers an effective
 344 solution to capture global/long-range correlations and cross-dimension correlations. Therefore, it
 345 shows superior performance in characterizing complex multidimensional stochastic processes that are
 346 nonstationary, nonseparable, and multimodal. The inference of BKTF is achieved through MCMC,
 347 which provides a natural solution for acquisition. Experiments on both test function optimization and
 348 ML hyperparameter tuning confirm the superiority of BKTF as a surrogate for BO. A limitation of
 349 BKTF is that we restrict BO to Cartesian grid space to leverage tensor factorization; however, we
 350 believe designing a compatible grid space based on prior knowledge is not a challenging task.

351 There are several directions to be explored for future research. A key computational issue of BKTF
 352 is that we need to reconstruct the posterior distribution for the whole tensor to obtain the AF. This
 353 could be problematic for high-dimensional problems due to the curse of dimensionality. It would be
 354 interesting to see whether we can achieve efficient acquisition directly using the basis functions and
 355 corresponding weights without constructing the tensors explicitly. In terms of rank determination, we
 356 can introduce the multiplicative gamma process prior to learn the rank; this will create a Bayesian
 357 nonparametric model that can automatically adapt to the data. In terms of surrogate modeling, we can
 358 further integrate a local (short-scale) GP component to construct a more precise surrogate model, as
 359 presented in [14]. The combined framework would be more expensive in computation, but we expect
 360 the combination to provide better UQ performance. In terms of parameterization, we also expect that
 361 introducing orthogonality prior to the latent factors (basis functions) will improve the inference. This
 362 can be potentially achieved through more advanced prior specifications such as the Matrix angular
 363 central Gaussian [32]. In addition, for the tensor factorization framework, it is straightforward to
 364 adapt the model to handle categorical variables as input and multivariate output by placing a Wishart
 365 prior to the latent factors for the categorical/output dimension.

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