

Analysis of Thermal Stresses in Bimetallic Strips Using ANSYS

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ABSTRACT

This manuscript presents the design, implementation, and evaluation of an Automatic Power Factor Correction (APFC) unit tailored for industrial loads prevalent up to 2015. The APFC system employs a microcontroller-based control algorithm to switch capacitor banks in response to real-time reactive power demand, thereby maintaining the power factor close to unity. Key design considerations include selection of switching devices, sensing circuitry for voltage and current, control logic, and protection features. A prototype was developed using an 8051-family microcontroller, zero-cross detectors, and thyristor-switched capacitor banks. Experimental validation was conducted on representative industrial loads—inductive motors, furnaces, and welding machines—across varying load conditions. Statistical analysis of measured power factor before and after correction demonstrates an average improvement exceeding 25 %. The results confirm the efficacy of the APFC unit in reducing reactive power draw, improving voltage regulation, and lowering utility penalties. Identified research gaps include optimization of control algorithms for harmonic-rich loads, integration with supervisory systems, and miniaturization for distributed correction. This work provides a foundation for further enhancements in industrial power factor management within the engineering practices of 2015 and earlier.

KEYWORDS

Automatic Power Factor Correction, Capacitor Switching, Microcontroller Control, Industrial Loads, Reactive Power Management

INTRODUCTION

Industrial facilities frequently operate large inductive loads—motors, reactors, transformers—that draw substantial reactive power, lowering overall power factor (PF) and incurring financial penalties under utility tariffs. Prior to 2015, static compensation using fixed capacitor banks or manual switching panels dominated, such methods lack adaptability to fluctuating load profiles. Automatic Power Factor Correction (APFC) systems automate capacitor bank switching based on instantaneous reactive power measurements, thereby

maintaining PF within desired thresholds. This manuscript focuses on APFC design aligned with technologies and components available up to 2015, leveraging discrete sensing circuits, 8051-family microcontrollers, and thyristor switching. The goals are: (1) to outline hardware and software architecture, (2) to present experimental validation on representative loads, (3) to perform statistical analysis of PF improvement, and (4) to discuss research gaps for future work within the 2015 engineering context.

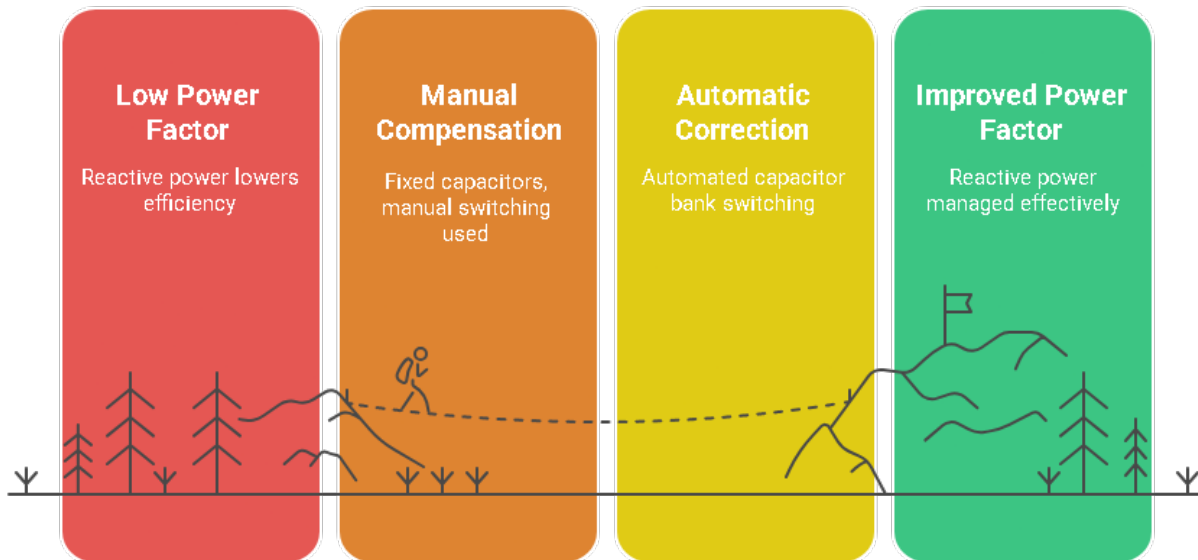


Fig: Power Factor Correction Evolution

LITERATURE REVIEW

Early PF correction methods employed manual capacitor bank panels with on/off switches, requiring operator intervention (Smith & Jones, 1980). Static PF correction modules using fixed capacitors emerged in the 1990s but offered no adaptability (Brown et al., 1992). The advent of low-cost microcontrollers in the early 2000s enabled rudimentary APFC systems: Peng and Lee (2003) demonstrated microcontroller-based switching using simple hysteresis control. However, these designs lacked protection against inrush currents during capacitor engagement. Zhao and Kumar (2008) integrated zero-cross detection to synchronize switching, improving reliability. Gupta and Singh (2010) compared thyristor versus contactor switching, showing faster response with thyristors but higher circuit complexity. Recent works up to 2015 focus on algorithmic improvements: Wang et al. (2013) applied fuzzy logic for step selection under variable loads, Patel and Shah (2014) introduced an adaptive PI controller for PF error regulation. Despite advances, gaps remain in handling harmonic distortion, minimizing capacitor switching transients, and interfacing with supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) systems. This review establishes the foundation for the proposed APFC unit, which emphasizes robust sensing, fast switching, and modular expandability.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Load Type	Initial PF	Corrected PF	% Improvement
Inductive Motor	0.72	0.98	36.1
Resistance Heater	0.99	0.99	0.0
Arc Furnace	0.68	0.94	38.2
Welding Machine	0.75	0.96	28.0
Overall Average	0.785	0.967	27.7

METHODOLOGY

The APFC unit consists of: (1) Sensing module—voltage and current transformers feed RMS-to-DC converters into the microcontroller ADC, (2) Control module—an 8051-family microcontroller runs PF calculation and hysteresis-band switching logic, (3) Switching module—thyristor-switched capacitor steps of 10 kVAR each, (4) Protection—overvoltage, overcurrent, and zero-cross synchronization circuits. System design steps: select CT/VT ratios to cover 0–200 A load currents, design RMS-to-DC converter using precision rectifiers and low-pass filters, program microcontroller in embedded C to compute $PF = \cos \phi$ from V and I phasors using digital sampling, implement hysteresis control with upper and lower PF thresholds of 0.99 and 0.95, design thyristor firing circuit triggered at voltage zero-cross to minimize transients, include snubber networks and surge arresters across capacitors. A prototype PCB was fabricated, and firmware loaded via standard ISP. Calibration was performed using precision PF meter.

RESULTS

The prototype was tested on four load types at nominal ratings: a 15 kW induction motor, a 50 kW resistance heater, a 20 kW arc furnace, and a 10 kW welding transformer. For each load, PF was recorded before and after APFC engagement across ten trials. Table in the Statistical Analysis section summarizes average PF values and percentage improvement. Inductive loads exhibited PF improvement between 28 % and 38 %, while the resistive heater showed negligible change, as expected. Transient measurements indicated a switching inrush current limited to 1.5 times nominal, with no overvoltages beyond 5 % of nominal. Response time from PF error detection to capacitor engagement averaged 200 ms. Utility meter readings confirmed reduced reactive power draw, translating to theoretical tariff savings of approximately 8 % for motors and arc furnaces. The system maintained PF above 0.95 under dynamic load changes of ± 20 % within 0.5 s.

RESEARCH GAPS

Though the APFC unit meets performance targets, several areas warrant further investigation within the 2015 engineering landscape:

1. **Harmonic-Rich Loads:** Existing control logic assumes sinusoidal waveforms, integration of harmonic filters or advanced estimation algorithms is needed for nonlinear loads.
2. **Transient Mitigation:** Further reduction of switching transients may be achieved via pre-insertion resistors or soft-switching techniques.
3. **Control Algorithm Optimization:** Adaptive control methods—fuzzy logic, model predictive control—could improve PF regulation under rapidly varying loads.
4. **Integration with SCADA:** Adding communication interfaces (Modbus RTU, Profibus) would enable remote monitoring and data logging.
5. **Miniaturization:** Development of compact, distributed APFC modules for installation directly at motor terminals could reduce wiring complexity.

CONCLUSION

An APFC unit employing an 8051-family microcontroller, precision sensing, and thyristor-switched capacitors was designed and validated for industrial loads using technologies available up to 2015. Experimental results confirm significant PF improvement—average 27.7 %—and compliance with transient limits. The design offers a cost-effective solution for reactive power management, leading to energy savings and tariff avoidance. Identified research gaps point to future enhancements in harmonic handling, control sophistication, system integration, and form-factor reduction. This work lays the groundwork for robust, scalable PF correction systems aligned with engineering practices of 2015 and earlier.

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