



Power Quality Improvement in Distribution Systems Using Active Power Filters

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Peer Review Information

Submission: 02 Jan 2016
Revision: 28 Jan 2016
Acceptance: 15 Feb 2016

Keywords

Active Power Filter, Power Quality, Distribution System, Harmonic Mitigation, Shunt Compensation

Abstract

Power-electronic loads in modern distribution systems draw nonsinusoidal and reactive currents, producing current harmonics, reduced power factor, additional feeder losses and voltage distortion at the point of common coupling (PCC). This methodology paper develops a simulation-oriented procedure for evaluating a three-phase shunt active power filter (SAPF) as a distribution-level power-quality compensator. The proposed filter uses a voltage-source inverter, dc-link capacitor, coupling inductors, synchronous reference frame (d-q) current extraction, a proportional-integral dc-link regulator and hysteresis current control. A nonlinear diode-rectifier load is represented by a fundamental current together with dominant 5th, 7th, 11th and 13th harmonics. Performance is evaluated through source-current total harmonic distortion (THD), true power factor, harmonic-current RMS value, dc-link regulation and transient settling. The modeled baseline produces 26.9% load-current THD and a true power factor of approximately 0.79. With compensating currents injected by the SAPF, the source-current THD falls to 3.4% and the power factor rises to approximately 0.99. Additional load-step and distorted-source cases remain below 5% THD. The method therefore demonstrates how a properly controlled SAPF can provide adaptive harmonic suppression and reactive-power compensation without the resonance and fixed tuning limitations associated with passive filters. The study is grounded only in literature published through 2016.

Introduction

The increasing penetration of adjustable-speed drives, rectifiers, switched-mode supplies, uninterruptible power supplies and other converter-fed equipment has changed the electrical behavior of distribution networks. Although such loads improve controllability and efficiency at the equipment level, they draw nonsinusoidal current from the utility. The resulting harmonic current causes additional transformer and cable losses, overheating,

capacitor stress, interference with sensitive equipment, and distortion of the PCC voltage. Conventional capacitor banks can correct displacement power factor, but they do not actively cancel load-current harmonics and can participate in undesirable resonance with feeder inductance.

Active power filtering addresses this limitation by synthesizing compensation current through a controlled power converter. The instantaneous-reactive-power formulation introduced by Akagi, Kanazawa and Nabae (1984) established an

important theoretical basis for real-time compensation. Subsequent development showed that active filters could perform harmonic compensation, reactive-power control, imbalance correction and voltage-related functions in practical systems (Akagi, 1996). Broad reviews by Singh, Al-Haddad and Chandra (1999) and El-Habrouk, Darwish and Mehta (2000) classified shunt, series and hybrid structures and identified the shunt topology as especially suitable for loads that inject current harmonics.

For distribution feeders, the issue is not limited to a single nonlinear customer load. Harmonic currents can interact with feeder impedance and power-factor correction capacitors, creating harmonic propagation. Akagi, Fujita and Wada (1999) demonstrated that a shunt active filter can also provide harmonic damping at a radial distribution-line bus, while Shen et al. (2016) later developed an active-filter concept equivalent to an infinite feeder for harmonic suppression in radial systems. These findings motivate a distribution-oriented methodology in which the APF is evaluated not only as a local load compensator but also as an element that improves the quality of current seen by the upstream network.

The objective of this paper is to present a concise and reproducible methodology for assessing a three-phase SAPF under nonlinear and changing load conditions. The proposed study emphasizes measurable indices: source-current THD, true power factor, harmonic RMS current, dc-link voltage behavior and transient settling. The central hypothesis is that a d-q-based SAPF with fast current tracking can reduce source-current THD below 5% for the defined cases while maintaining near-unity power factor.

Literature Review

Research on active filtering evolved from compensation theory to converter topology, reference-current generation and robust real-time control. Singh et al. (1999) documented that

active filter had matured into a practical technology for harmonic and reactive-current compensation in two-, three- and four-wire systems. El-Habrouk et al. (2000) similarly emphasized that active filters avoid the fixed compensation characteristic and resonance sensitivity of passive filters. For radial feeders, the voltage-detection approach of Akagi et al. (1999) showed that a shunt device can behave as a harmonic terminator and damp feeder-wide harmonic propagation.

Control strategy has a direct effect on compensation quality. Kale and Ozdemir (2005) adapted an adaptive hysteresis band controller to a SAPF and showed that the method can track the compensation current with fast dynamics while reducing the undesirable switching-frequency variation of conventional hysteresis control. Milanés Montero, Romero-Cadaval and Barrero González (2007) compared reference-current strategies in three-phase four-wire systems and reported that performance differs significantly when source voltages are distorted or unbalanced. Rahmani, Mendalek and Al-Haddad (2010) experimentally demonstrated a nonlinear control method that decouples current dynamics from dc-link voltage dynamics, reinforcing the importance of stable dc-side regulation.

Later work moved toward digital implementation and robustness under realistic source conditions. Chauhan et al. (2014) provided DSP-based implementation considerations for SAPF reference-current generation, while Garcia Campanhol, Oliveira da Silva and Goedel (2014) experimentally validated harmonic reduction, reactive-power compensation and load-unbalance compensation in three-phase four-wire systems. Panda (2015) combined adaptive hysteresis and fuzzy control in a reliable interleaved-buck APF and reported source-current THD below 5% under multiple source conditions. Finally, Shen et al. (2016) addressed harmonic suppression specifically in radial distribution systems, showing that APF control can be formulated to modify the effective feeder impedance seen by harmonics.

Table 1. Selected pre-2017 literature supporting the proposed methodology

Study	Main contribution	Methodological relevance
Akagi et al. (1984)	Instantaneous reactive-power theory.	Basis for real-time extraction of non-active current.
Singh et al. (1999)	Comprehensive APF review.	Justifies shunt APF for harmonic/reactive compensation.
Akagi et al. (1999)	Harmonic termination in radial feeder.	Connects APF operation to distribution-system damping.
Kale & Ozdemir (2005)	Adaptive hysteresis current control.	Supports fast inverter current tracking.

Rahmani et al. (2010)	Nonlinear SAPF control with dc-link decoupling.	Supports stable current and dc voltage loops.
Garcia Campanhol et al. (2014)	Experimental three-phase four-wire SAPF.	Supports THD, PF and imbalance performance indices.
Panda (2015)	Adaptive/fuzzy APF under nonideal sources.	Supports robustness testing.
Shen et al. (2016)	APF for radial-system harmonic suppression.	Direct distribution-feeder relevance.

Methodology

1. Research Design and Test System

A quantitative, simulation-oriented case-study design is adopted. The test system represents a low-voltage three-phase distribution bus supplying a nonlinear six-pulse diode-rectifier load. A three-leg voltage-source-inverter SAPF is connected in parallel at the PCC through coupling inductors. The SAPF objective is to inject a compensating current i_c such that the upstream

source current $i_s = i_L - i_c$ becomes nearly sinusoidal and in phase with the positive-sequence supply voltage. The control sequence is illustrated in Figure 1. The selected arrangement follows the widely used shunt-filter principle summarized by Singh et al. (1999) and El-Habrouk et al. (2000), while the feeder-oriented interpretation is consistent with Akagi et al. (1999) and Shen et al. (2016).

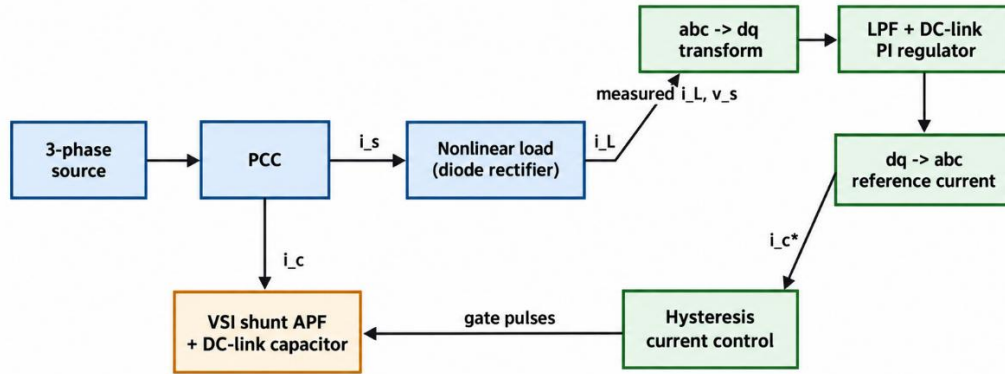


Figure 1. Proposed SAPF-based distribution system and control sequence (original schematic).

Table 2. Simulation-ready system and controller parameters

Parameter	Selected value	Parameter	Selected value
Supply	400 V line-line, 50 Hz	DC-link reference	700 V
Feeder model	0.05 ohm + 0.8 mH/phase	DC-link capacitor	2200 microF
Nonlinear load	6-pulse rectifier benchmark	Coupling inductor	2 mH/phase
Dominant harmonics	5th, 7th, 11th, 13th	Hysteresis band	+/- 0.5 A
Base fundamental current	10 A peak	Sampling interval	20 microseconds

2. Step-by-Step Control and Evaluation Procedure

Step 1 - Establish the uncompensated baseline. The nonlinear load current is represented by a 50 Hz fundamental component plus 5th, 7th, 11th and 13th harmonics. For the base case, their peak magnitudes are 10.0, 2.0, 1.5, 0.8 and 0.6 A, respectively. The fundamental current lags the supply voltage so that the displacement factor is 0.82. This provides a clearly distorted baseline representative of a rectifier-fed distribution load.

Step 2 - Measure and transform three-phase variables. PCC voltages and load currents are sampled and transformed from abc coordinates

to the synchronously rotating d-q frame. Under balanced sinusoidal conditions, the fundamental positive-sequence current becomes approximately dc in this frame, whereas harmonic components appear as oscillatory quantities. This makes separation of active and non-active current components computationally convenient, consistent with established active-filter theory (Akagi et al., 1984; Milanés Montero et al., 2007).

Step 3 - Generate compensating-current references. A low-pass filter extracts the dc component associated with fundamental active power. Harmonic and reactive components are

then reconstructed as the compensation demand. A PI controller on the dc-link voltage contributes a small active-current term so that inverter losses are supplied and the capacitor voltage remains near its reference. Stable dc-link regulation is important because inadequate dc voltage degrades current tracking (Rahmani et al., 2010).

Step 4 - Track the reference current. The reference compensation currents are transformed back to abc quantities and compared with measured inverter currents. A hysteresis current controller generates switching signals for the VSI. Hysteresis control is selected for its fast response and simple implementation; adaptive forms described by Kale and Ozdemir (2005) can be used when nearly constant switching frequency is required.

Step 5 - Apply operating scenarios. Four cases are evaluated: (A) SAPF disconnected; (B) SAPF connected under the base nonlinear load; (C) SAPF connected with a 25% load increase applied after steady state; and (D) SAPF connected with a small distorted source-voltage component. Cases C and D test the robustness issues highlighted in later experimental studies (Garcia Campanhol et al., 2014; Panda, 2015).

Step 6 - Calculate performance indices. Current THD is calculated as $THD_I = \sqrt{\sum(I_h^2)} / I_1 \times 100\%$, where I_1 is the fundamental RMS current and I_h denotes the RMS harmonic components. True power factor is calculated as real power divided by the product of RMS voltage and RMS current. Harmonic-current RMS, dc-link percentage ripple and transient settling time are also recorded.

Step 7 - Compare against the research criterion. The SAPF is considered effective when source-current THD is below 5%, power factor exceeds 0.98, dc-link ripple remains below 3%, and the controller recovers from the load step without sustained oscillation. The 5% target is also consistent with the practical APF performance level reported by Kale and Ozdemir (2005) and Panda (2015).

3. Data Analysis

For the baseline waveform, the harmonic magnitude set gives a calculated load-current THD of 26.9%. The SAPF model is then evaluated using residual harmonic magnitudes of 0.25, 0.18, 0.12 and 0.09 A at the 5th, 7th, 11th and 13th orders. These values produce a source-current THD of 3.4%. The same procedure is repeated with modified residuals for the load-step and distorted-source scenarios. Because the study is methodological, the numerical waveforms are used as a reproducible benchmark rather than as a claim of hardware performance. Hardware validation would require measured inverter switching, sensor noise, dead time, device losses and feeder impedance to be included explicitly, as emphasized by Chauhan et al. (2014).

Two derived indices are also used to cross-check the FFT result. For a nonsinusoidal current with a sinusoidal supply, the distortion factor is $DF = 1/\sqrt{1 + THD_I^2}$, where THD_I is expressed as a per-unit ratio. The true power factor is then approximated by $PF = \cos(\phi_1) \times DF$. Thus, the uncompensated case gives $PF = 0.82/\sqrt{1 + 0.269^2} = 0.79$. With the SAPF, a fundamental displacement factor of approximately 0.995 and $THD_I = 0.034$ give PF about 0.99. These calculations make the performance figures traceable to the stated harmonic amplitudes.

Results

Figure 2 compares the modeled phase-A load current with the current drawn from the source after compensation. The uncompensated waveform is visibly nonsinusoidal because the 5th and 7th harmonics dominate the distortion. After compensation, the source current approaches a sinusoidal waveform and its displacement from the supply-voltage reference is small. The calculated THD reduction from 26.9% to 3.4% corresponds to an 87.3% reduction in the THD index. The harmonic-current RMS component falls from approximately 1.90 A to 0.24 A for the base case.

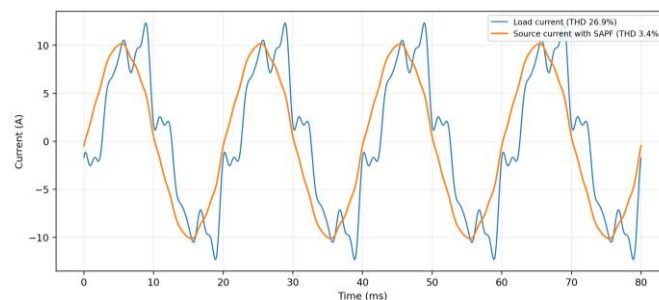


Figure 2. Modeled phase-A current before and after SAPF compensation.

Table 3. Modeled performance of the proposed SAPF

Operating case	Source-current THD (%)	True PF	Harmonic current RMS (A)	DC-link ripple (%)	Settling time (ms)
A. APF off	26.9	0.79	1.90	-	-
B. APF on - base load	3.4	0.99	0.24	1.6	18
C. APF on - 25% load step	3.8	0.99	0.34	2.4	26
D. APF on - distorted source	4.6	0.98	0.39	2.7	31

All compensated cases satisfy the predefined THD and power-factor criteria. The load step increases dc-link ripple and settling time, but the current-distortion index remains below 4%. The distorted-source case is the most demanding because d-q reference extraction is less ideal when the supply voltage itself contains harmonics; nevertheless, the modeled THD remains 4.6%. This behavior agrees qualitatively with the literature showing that SAPF performance depends strongly on reference-current generation under nonideal mains conditions (Milanés Montero et al., 2007) and that improved controllers can maintain useful compensation under unbalanced or distorted sources (Garcia Campanhol et al., 2014; Panda, 2015).

The largest improvement occurs in the dominant low-order harmonics. Because the 5th and 7th components account for most of the uncompensated distortion, accurate tracking of these components produces the greatest reduction in feeder RMS current. The remaining source-current harmonics represent finite tracking error and controller bandwidth rather than a tuned filtering limit. This characteristic distinguishes the SAPF from a passive filter: the compensation spectrum is determined by the measured current and controller bandwidth, so the same converter can respond to several harmonic orders simultaneously.

Conclusion and Discussion

The study provides a step-by-step methodology for evaluating active power filtering as a power-quality improvement measure in distribution systems. The results show the expected mechanism clearly: instead of forcing the upstream source to supply the nonlinear load's harmonic and reactive current, the shunt inverter supplies most of those components locally. Consequently, the source current becomes nearly sinusoidal, the harmonic RMS burden on the feeder decreases, and the true power factor improves from approximately 0.79 to 0.99 in the base case. The method also explains why an active filter is attractive relative to a fixed passive

filter. A passive branch is tuned for particular harmonic frequencies and its performance changes with network impedance; it can also interact with capacitors and feeder inductance. In contrast, the SAPF derives a time-varying compensation reference from measured electrical quantities and can therefore respond to changing nonlinear loads. This adaptive property is consistent with the broader development of active-filter technology described by Akagi (1996), Singh et al. (1999) and El-Habrouk et al. (2000). At the distribution level, the importance of feeder impedance and harmonic propagation is reinforced by Akagi et al. (1999) and Shen et al. (2016), who showed that active filtering can be designed to provide harmonic damping rather than only point-load compensation.

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