

SENSORS & TRANSDUCERS **12** vol. 147 /12

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Contents

Volume 147
Issue 12
December 2012

www.sensorsportal.com

ISSN 1726-5479

Research Articles

| | |
|--|----|
| Constantly Evolving Smartness, Intelligence and Innovation Ensure Seamless System Integration <i>Dr. Rajender Thusu</i> | 1 |
| An Intelligent Temperature Measurement Technique Using J Type Thermocouple with an Optimal Neural Network <i>Santhosh K. V., B. K. Roy</i> | 6 |
| Thermal Sensitivity of Solid Polymer Coated Surface Transverse/Love Wave Based Resonators on AT-cut Quartz for Sensor Applications <i>I. D. Avramov and K. D. Esmeryan</i> | 15 |
| Effect on Passive Localization from the Shape Distortion of Triplet Linear Array Based on Piezoelectric Transducers <i>Fei Xu, Xianlong Liu</i> | 27 |
| Detecting Water Content in Hydrocarbon Emulsion Using Acoustic and Ultrasonic Detectors <i>Rateb Issa, Ibrahim Al-Abbas and Hussein Sarhan</i> | 36 |
| Study of Vibration Characteristics of a Multi Cracked Rotating Shaft Using Piezoelectric Sensor <i>Rajeev Ranjan, N. K. Mandal</i> | 45 |
| An Insole Device Based on Piezoelectric Sensor to Assess Plantar Pressure during Daily Human Activity <i>Yemin Guo</i> | 53 |
| A Novel Tuning Method for Repeatability Problem Solving of RF MEMS Disk Resonators <i>Masoud Baghelani, Habib Badri Ghavifekr, Afshin Ebrahimi</i> | 61 |
| FEM Based Optimization of Thin Membrane for Thermoelectric Energy Harvesting Devices <i>Divya Jatain, Monoj Kumar Singha, Ajay Agarwal, Manoj Taleja</i> | 68 |
| Visual Odometry in Dynamical Scenes <i>Dong Zhang and Ping Li</i> | 78 |
| An Experimentation on Anti-Reset Windup Scheme for Level Process Station <i>I. Thirunavukkarasu, Mohammed Ibrahim Fareed Abuaiah, V. I. George, S. Shanmuga Priya</i> | 87 |
| Design and Development of an Instrument to Determine the Fluoride Ion Concentration in Certain Tooth Pastes <i>Saraswathi Parigi, Sreelekha Kande, Nagaraju Boya, Raghavendra Rao Kanchi</i> | 95 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Data Mining Approach to Polymer Selection for Making SAW Sensor Array Based Electronic Nose <i>Sunil K. Jha and R. D. S. Yadava</i> | 108 |
| Development of a Non-invasive Micron Sized Blood Glucose Sensor Based on Microsphere Stimulated Raman Spectroscopy <i>Alireza Bahrampour, Neda Jahangiri, Majid Taraz</i> | 129 |
| MOS Device Chemical Response to Acceptor Stimuli <i>Rina Lombardi, Ricardo Aragón and Héctor A. Medina</i> | 143 |

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Formats: printable pdf (Acrobat) and print (hardcover), 419 pages

ISBN: 978-84-616-0652-8,
e-ISBN: 978-84-615-6957-1

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Detecting Water Content in Hydrocarbon Emulsion Using Acoustic and Ultrasonic Detectors

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Received: 16 August 2012 /Accepted: 18 December 2012 /Published: 31 December 2012

Abstract: In this paper, the acoustic approach and the ultrasonic approach are designed and investigated to be used for detecting the water content in hydrocarbon emulsions. The acoustic approach based on creating a standing wave in chamber contains a sample under test. The frequency of acquired signal by a microphone is measured and entered to PC using a sound card. In the ultrasonic approach a combination of ultrasonic transmitter/receiver is utilized. The amplitude of reflected signal is measured. The signal processing is realized using LabView signal processing tool for both approaches. The acoustic and ultrasonic approaches were tested and verified and the experimental results show their acceptability for common industrial applications, with a maximum percentage nonlinearity of ± 0.95 %. *Copyright* © 2012 IFSA.

Keywords: Acoustic approach, Standing wave, Ultrasonic approach, LabView.

1. Introduction

Quality control is one of the main problems in economics and industry. Leading hand to solve the problem of quality improvement in oil production and processing is based on analytical monitoring. Analytical monitoring is achieved by the help of different types of physical-chemical analyzers and quality index raw material and end product. Taking into account the demand of oil products in industry which affects on the performances of plant, machines and their efficiency; the problem of quality control plays a great role in vital activity. This determined exacting requirements to monitor the quality of oil production and processing.

One of the valuable indexes in oil monitoring is detecting the content of water in oil and oil products. In this case water in oil appears as hydrocarbon emulsion. Monitoring of such parameter is realized with laboratory instrumentation techniques which include method of analysis and laboratory analyzer. The aim of this work is to develop an acoustic/ultrasonic analyzer which can be used to determine the content of water in oil (kerosene is taken as a sample under test). Two different studies are presented. The first study aims to investigate the possibility of detecting the content of water in hydrocarbon emulsion using ultrasonic waves. It was found that the reflected ultrasonic wave is a function of water content in kerosene. The second study aims to build a low-cost computer based analyzer in which standing wave is created in a medium. It was found that the measured frequency of created standing wave is a function of water content in kerosene.

2. Literature Review

Analytical monitoring of oil product as raw material or in final stages is an important issue in several fields of industry.

Small contents of water in oil which appears as hydrocarbon emulsion [1] may affect on performance of operated system which can be a vehicle or a turbine system [2]. Besides, it also can be very dangerous, generating pollution causes financial losses to the industry. For those reasons, it is essential to have a fast and efficient detection system which can be used to detect the content of water in oil or oil products.

Various techniques are available to detect water content in hydrocarbons. Technologies that are restricted to laboratory use may provide the most valuable data, but these are not commonly used in fieldwork, where fast reading times are critical for the management of an effective processing. Water content can be detected using special pastes which change their color on contact with water [3].

Several analytical methods have been developed to determine the water content in organic materials. The classic method for the determination of water is the Karl Fischer method [4]. The method is based on variation of color of the sample under test when it contains water.

A substance which is chemically inert to oil product but reacts to water is also used to detect the water contaminate in oil product [5]. Contacting the substance to oil contains water causes a gas to be produced, and then the amount of gas is measured. The main disadvantages of these works are destructivity, complexity and large time delay amounting to 3 minutes.

Gas chromatography and mass spectrometers are good analytical techniques which can be used to make qualitative and quantitative measurement including detecting the presence of water in oil. These techniques are usually used in laboratory to provide off line measurements of samples.

Acoustic methods of detection are also utilized to measure and detect many physical phenomena. Gas chromatography detectors based on measuring the velocity of sound in resonance tube [6] are good examples where acoustic measurement is applied.

Acoustic field was also combined with thermo effect to build a simple analyzer [7] which was used to measure the concentration of water content in kerosene. The signal obtained by this analyzer was presented as a "chromatogram".

The literature review of existing measurement detectors or analyzers which are used to make qualitative and quantitative test of oil product shows that this issue is still developing. This explains why research and development in this field is a viable continuous process. Determining water

contamination in oil can be realized using different types of analyzers and detectors. The work described in this paper presents the possibility of using an acoustic/ ultrasonic measurement in order to measure and detect the presence of water in oil product (kerosene is taken as a sample under test).

3. Experiment Design

3.1. Approaches Used in Experiment

The present work solves the problem of detection of water contaminate in hydrocarbon emulsions. Kerosene is taken as a sample under test. Two approaches are applied to solve the mentioned above problem:

- Acoustic approach based on generation of a standing wave within a tested medium;
- Ultrasonic approach, where the reflected ultrasonic wave is measured.

3.1.1. Acoustic Approach

In this approach the free mode of standing wave generation is applied. The standing wave is created in the chamber filled by a sample under test. The standing wave may be created using the principle of acoustic resonance, which is usually realized by using a speaker- microphone combination [8]. The sound card of PC is utilized in order to create an acoustic standing wave between the (AT) and (AR) which is transmitted through the sample under test. As a result, the speed of transmitted acoustic signal varies depending on the type of the medium filled in the chamber. This variation of speed is usually characterized by the frequency of created acoustic standing wave. The frequency of acoustic wave is measured by sound card of PC and LabVIEW software.

3.1.2. Ultrasonic Approach

In this approach a classical ultrasonic ranger consisting of transmitter and receiver in the same side is used. The transmitter sends an ultrasonic signal to the medium, which may be absorbed, propagated, scattered or reflected. The reflected signal is received by ultrasonic receiver estimated by measuring the amplitude of reflected signal using PICOSCOPE and Lab View software.

3.2. Experimental Setup

3.2.1. The Acoustic Approach Experimental Setup

The acoustic approach experimental setup and LabVIEW block diagram are shown in Fig. 1.

The combination of speaker – microphone allows to generate an acoustic standing wave with a frequency value dependent on distance between the speaker and microphone and the medium. The signal from the microphone is fed to the sound card input and processed by LabView program shown in Fig. 2.

In this block diagram the MIC VI is used to acquire signal the microphone input. Then the Tone Measurements VI is utilized to measure the frequency of the signal. The measured frequency is introduced to band pass filter in order to remove higher order harmonics of the signal and keeping only the first harmonic, smoothing filter VI is used to smooth and reduce disturbance in the measured frequency and displayed on indicator.

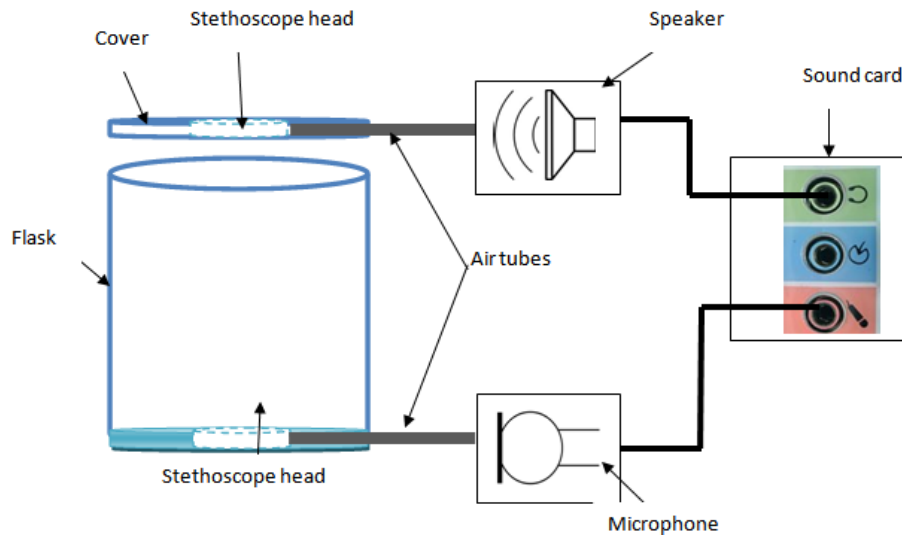


Fig. 1. Acoustic approach experimental setup.

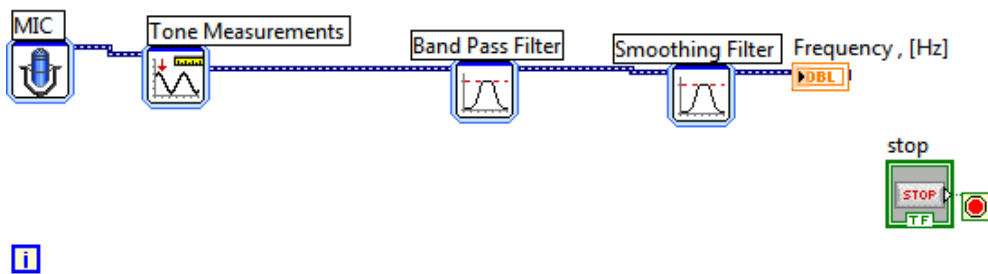


Fig. 2. The acoustic analyzer LabView program.

3.2.2. The Ultrasonic Approach Experimental Setup

The ultrasonic approach experimental setup is shown in Fig. 3.

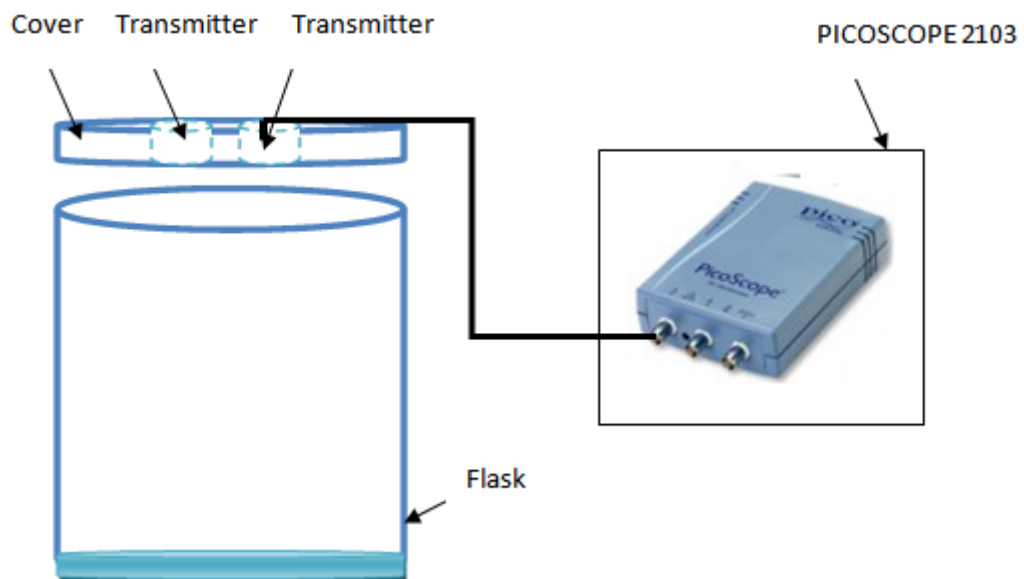


Fig. 3. Ultrasonic approach experimental setup.

It consists of plastic flask which is filled by the sample and classical ultrasonic ranger which is placed on the inner part of the cover. The ranger consists of ultrasonic transmitter, receiver and corresponding conditioning circuit. The ultrasonic system is powered by +5 V from USB of PC and the output of receiver is connected to oscilloscope type PICOSCOPE 2003. The signal processing and analyses are realized by the help of LabVIEW 2010 software which is shown in Fig. 4.

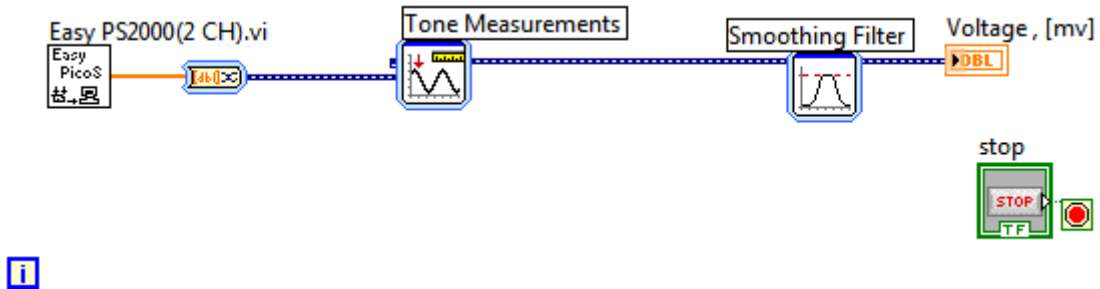


Fig.4.The LabVIEW program for Ultrasonic analyzer.

3.3. Principle of Operation and Mathematical Model

3.3.1. Principle of Operation of Experimental Setup Based on Acoustic Approach

When the flask is filled by pure kerosene, the velocity of sound in the medium has an exact value equal to the speed of sound in kerosene and then the frequency of generated standing wave is given by:

$$f_K = \frac{C_K}{L_K}, \quad (1)$$

where C_K is the speed of sound in kerosene and L_K is the distance between the two heads of oscilloscope when the whole flask is filled by kerosene.

$$C_K = \sqrt{\frac{E_K}{\rho_K}}, \quad (2)$$

where E_K is the bulk modulus of kerosene and ρ_K is the density of kerosene.

If the kerosene contains small amount of water the average speed of sound is:

$$\bar{C} = C_w + C_K, \quad (3)$$

where C_w is the speed of sound in water and given by:

$$C_w = \sqrt{\frac{E_w}{\rho_w}}, \quad (4)$$

where E_w is the bulk modulus of water and ρ_w is the density of water.

The corresponding average frequency of generated standing wave is given by:

$$\bar{f} = \frac{\bar{C}}{\bar{L}}, \quad (5)$$

where: $\bar{L} = L_w + L_k$ and L_w is the path which is traveled by standing wave.

3.3.2. Principle of Operation of Experimental Setup Based on Ultrasonic Approach

In this approach the generated ultrasonic wave passes the medium. Part of this wave is absorbed or scattered or reflected. The signals from the ultrasonic generator and the ultrasonic receiver are recorded on the digital oscilloscope.

In fact the measurement can be considered as measuring the level of liquid in container. So to obtain the mathematical model, in this approach we use the level measurement relationship presented in [8] for measuring the level using ultrasonic approach when the container is filled by pure kerosene.

The kerosene level h_k is given by:

$$h_k = \frac{C_k}{2} t_k, \quad (6)$$

where t_k is the round trip time of transmitted wave in kerosene.

If the kerosene contains a small amount of water, the level h can be presented by:

$$h = h_k + h_w, \quad (7)$$

where h_w is the level of water and given by:

$$h_w = \frac{C_w}{2} t_w, \quad (8)$$

where t_w is the round trip time of transmitted wave in water.

Considering equations (6) and (8) equation (7) can be rewritten as:

$$h = \frac{C_k}{2} t_k + \frac{C_w}{2} t_w \quad (9)$$

4. Experimental Results

In order to evaluate the proposed techniques and to investigate the relationship between composition and the output signal for both approaches, multiple water-in-emulsion percentages (A chamber with a volume of 1000 mL is filled by a sample under test) are tested to estimate the generated frequencies in acoustic approach and produced voltages in ultrasonic approach. To represent the data, the method of

data regression is used by utilizing Matlab curve Fitting Toolbox. A linear equation is used to fit the regression model for both techniques.

4.1. Acoustic Based Approach Experimental Result

The acoustic based approach experimental results are shown in Table 1 and Fig. 5.

Table 1. Acoustic based approach experimental results.

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|------|------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Water content, [mL] | 10 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 | 60 | 70 | 80 | 90 | 100 |
| F, [Hz] | 1500 | 1275 | 1200 | 993 | 905 | 750 | 485 | 445 | 320 | 140 |

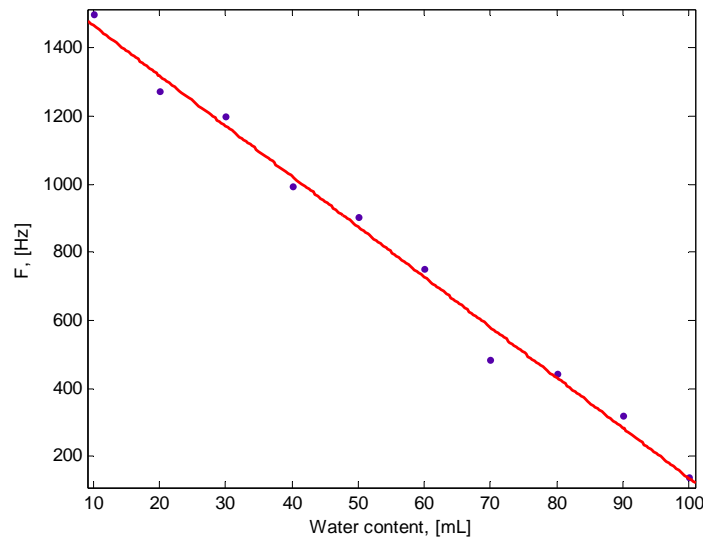


Fig. 5. The relationship between the water content and frequency.

In this approach, a microphone- speaker combination is utilized to create standing wave in a chamber made of glass (1000 mL) and filled by a sample under test. The output signal of microphone is connected to the sound card of PC and the signal processing was realized by LabView software. In order to measure frequency of the signal acquired by microphone by LabView the Tone Measurements VI block used. The measured signal is then filtered and displayed by indicator.

4.2. Ultrasonic Based Approach Experimental Result

The ultrasonic based approach experimental results are shown in Table 2 and Fig. 6.

Table 2. Ultrasonic based approach experimental results.

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Water content, [mL] | 10 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 | 60 | 70 | 80 | 90 | 100 |
| Voltage, [mV] | 380 | 330 | 310 | 280 | 240 | 215 | 195 | 175 | 120 | 90 |

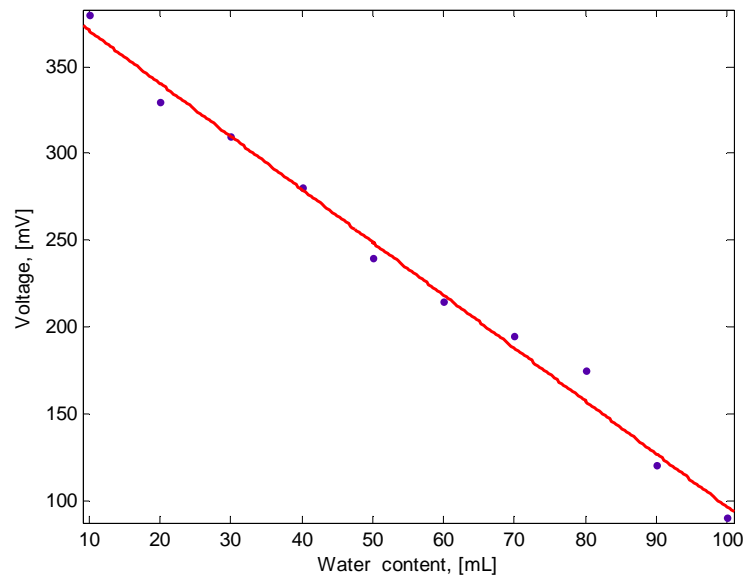


Fig. 6. The relationship between the water content and voltage.

In this approach, the transmitted ultrasonic wave in glass chamber (1000 mL) is reflected and introduced into ultrasonic receiver. The output signal of ultrasonic receiver is entered into DAQ device, which allows processing the acquired signal by PC under LabVIEW environment. In order to measure the amplitude of reflected ultrasonic signal acquired by receiver, the Tone Measurements VI block is used. The measured signal is then filtered and displayed by indicator.

5. Conclusions

Detection of water content in hydrocarbon emulsion is proposed using two different approaches based on measurement of the sound propagation in a media. The two demonstrated approaches allow measuring the water content in hydrocarbon emulsion. The experimental results revealed that the generated acoustic signal (frequency in acoustic approach and voltage in ultrasonic one) is related to the properties of the tested hydrocarbon emulsion. Concerning the transducer nonlinearity error by using the experimental results and regression model, it was found that the maximum nonlinearity (to F.S.D) is equal to $\pm 0.95\%$.

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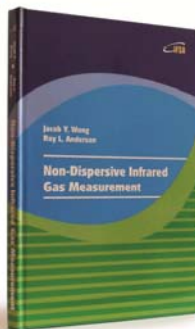
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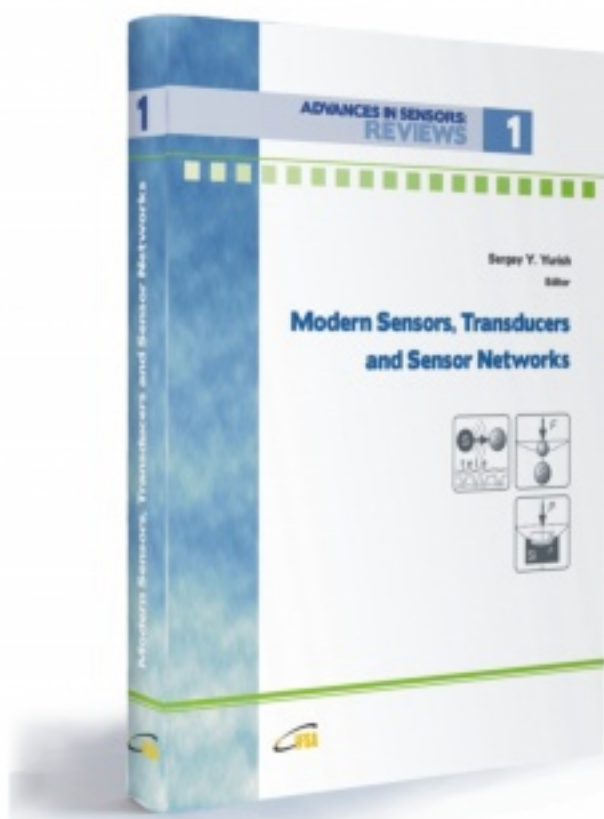
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