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An FSS Based Multiband MIMO System Incorporating 3D Antennas for WLAN/WiMAX/5G Cellular and 5G Wi-Fi Applications

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ABSTRACT A compact 3-dimensional dual-element, multiband antenna for Multi-Input-Multi-Output (MIMO) applications is proposed in this paper. Folding technique along with various impedance matching structures are employed for miniaturization and multiband operation while maintaining the desired S-parameter performance. A grid of Frequency Selective Surface (FSS) patch based decoupling structure is introduced to achieve measured isolation of more than 30 dB between antenna ports. In addition to this decoupling structure, a meandered line based defected ground plane configuration helps to retain the multiband response while maintaining the optimum isolation performance. This 3D-MIMO antenna is fabricated and measured for its performance in different bands of WLAN, WiMAX, 5G cellular and 5G Wi-Fi along with different MIMO performance parameters. The reported design is a suitable option for multiband MIMO applications for future wireless technologies.

INDEX TERMS Antenna arrays, frequency selective surfaces, multifrequency antennas, MIMO, 5G mobile communication, WiMAX.

I. INTRODUCTION

Exponential growth in adoption of portable devices has raised the miniaturization standards and demand for value added features. High data rate services complement this evolution and a number of wireless standards have been proposed to cater for these demands in short range and long-range applications. Realization of compact RF front-end systems supporting multiple frequencies and various communication standards are necessary for next generation mobile devices [1]. A single antenna supporting multiple frequency bands for different standards e.g. Wireless Local Area Network (WLAN), Bluetooth, Global System for Mobiles (GSM), 5th generation (5G) mobile services and Worldwide Interoperability for Microwave Access (WiMAX) is an optimum solution to integration and space constraints since it is

impractical to employ separate antennas for all these applications [2]–[4].

In addition to multiband operation, high data rates with low power requirements are best achievable through MIMO technology. Additionally, MIMO configuration is suitable to overcome the multipath fading effect [5], [6]. Although MIMO antenna system has a potential application in wireless communications to transmit data efficiently; however, when several antenna elements are placed in a close proximity, the data transmitted through different channels develop correlation, owing to undesired coupling between antennas, which in turn degrades the diversity performance of the MIMO system [7]. In particular, the mutual coupling causes blind scanning angles in phased arrays systems and also reduces diversity gain of MIMO arrays [13]. To overcome this limitation, antenna elements are separated by a distance equal to one half wavelength or more. However, this solution increases the overall size of the system and compromises the

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compactness [8]. Therefore, an efficient decoupling structure is required to reduce mutual coupling between antenna elements without increasing the separation [9], [10].

FSSs are generally employed in antennas to serve the purpose of miniaturization, gain enhancement, multiband operation and various others [11]. A distinct feature of reconfigurability and tunability can be introduced as well in miniature antennas when FSSs are employed along with switches or varactors. FSSs are also extremely beneficial in order to suppress mutual coupling among array elements [12]. The mutual coupling between antenna array ports is caused by undesired surface wave phenomenon and FSS is capable of suppressing these surface waves by acting as resonators at the desired decoupling frequency.

A large number of multi-band MIMO antenna systems are reported in recent literature. In [14], a dual-band microstrip patch antenna (MSA) is reported for MIMO applications. This system employs Substrate Integrated Waveguide (SIW) and miniaturized Spoof Surface Plasmon Polariton (SSPP) to achieve 20 dB isolation while keeping large footprint of $60 \text{ mm} \times 120 \text{ mm}$. A dual-band decoupling split EBG structure is reported in [15] in order to isolate a couple of meander-line antennas. This $44 \text{ mm} \times 58 \text{ mm}$ configuration achieves isolation of 26 and 44 dB at 3.48 and 4.88 GHz respectively. Another study presents a 2×1 multi-band MIMO array comprising 3D antenna elements [16]. This configuration achieves isolation of 23 dB while having large dimensions of $300 \text{ mm} \times 200 \text{ mm}$. Likewise a two-port dual-band pattern diversity patch antenna is reported in [17]. The folding microstrip line and coplanar waveguide (CPW) structure are printed on the two sides of single feeding network with overall system size of $120 \text{ mm} \times 47 \text{ mm}$ including ground plane. This configuration offers an isolation of 20 dB at the cost of larger dimensions while maintaining impedance matching. An Inverted-F Antenna (IFA) for 5G mobile MIMO application is reported in [18]. This proposed system offers isolation of 20 – 40 dB with large dimension of $100 \text{ mm} \times 50 \text{ mm}$. In [19], a $60 \text{ mm} \times 100 \text{ mm}$ dual element multiband MIMO antenna system is reported for indoor wireless applications. This proposed structure maintains less than 30 dB isolation over a limited frequency spectrum. A couple of semi-printed fractal antennas having $121.8 \text{ mm} \times 61.45 \text{ mm}$ dimensions are presented in [20]. This reported system achieves less than 20 dB isolation in 2.4 – 2.489 GHz band. In [21] a $120 \text{ mm} \times 80 \text{ mm}$ dual-antenna system with a folded fork-shaped ground branch for electromagnetic decoupling is proposed. This multiband MIMO achieves isolation of maximum 15 dB in the operating band. A decoupled dual-antenna system with crossed neutralization lines is studied in [22]. This reported system offers less than 15 dB isolation with relatively high footprint of $120 \text{ mm} \times 80 \text{ mm}$. In [23], a reconfigurable MIMO antenna is reported with dimensions of $65 \text{ mm} \times 120 \text{ mm}$. An overall isolation of 20 dB is attained by this system. From the literature reported here it can be inferred that compactness and isolation are challenging to achieve

together while achieving multiband operation and the desired diversity performance.

In this paper, a compact 3D dual Folded Monopole Antenna (FMA) system exhibiting multiple resonances is proposed. A combination of resonant structures including T-shaped and rectangular slots, meander-line structure and folded armatures are employed to achieve resonances at the desired frequencies. The operating frequency bands of the proposed FMA are 2.4 GHz – 2.48 GHz [24], 2.91 GHz – 3.49 GHz and 3.27 GHz – 3.97 GHz [25], [26], 3.4 GHz – 3.8 GHz [27] and 5.15 GHz – 5.85 GHz [28] for WLAN, WiMAX, 5G cellular and 5G Wi-Fi services respectively. Moreover, a planar array of square patch FSS is introduced to suppress the overall undesired mutual coupling between antenna pairs.

The rest of this paper is arranged as follows: Section II presents FMA antenna element configuration. Design of the decoupling structure is presented in Section III. In section IV, simulated and measured results are discussed. MIMO performance parameters are reported in section V, Section VI presents detailed comparison of proposed system with existing literature and finally section VII concludes the paper.

II. DESIGN CONFIGURATION

The proposed dual element FMA-MIMO is realized on a low cost 1 mm thick FR-4 laminate having compact dimensions of $70 \text{ mm} \times 50 \text{ mm}$. The employed laminate has relative permittivity $\epsilon_r = 4.4$, and a dielectric loss tangent $\tan\delta = 0.02$. The proposed FMA pairs are fabricated with a copper sheet having a thickness of 0.2 mm.

This geometry has evolved from a conventional 3D IFA system to achieve a wideband response initially. MIMO configuration is achieved by separately designing a pair of FMAs on two feeding strips for multiband response. FMAs are then connected to feeding strips through 1-mm thick shorting pins on the upper metallic layer. A staircase profile is added near the feeding edge to achieve the impedance match over lower frequencies. The separation between FMAs and substrate surface is kept at 1 mm to maintain the impedance performance [29]. However, improved resonance performance is observed when another set of FMAs are mirrored on the same feeding lines (Fig. 1 step. 3). Square aperture is machined at the base of each FMA pair which helps to improve overall impedance response. A T-shaped slot and two sets of stubs, S_1 and S_2 (three on each sides), tunes and strengthens the resonances of antenna at each band while maintaining impedance bandwidth. Moreover, rectangular strips are introduced on either side of the FMA pairs to offer a resonance at 3.2 GHz (WiMAX band) and it also aids to reduce the effect of induced currents on the ground plane [30].

Polystyrene blocks having dimensions $11 \times 10 \times 11 \text{ mm}^3$ are placed inside the square aperture in order to further support these FMA pairs. All evolution steps and their respective reflection coefficient response are shown in Fig 1. The overall geometrical configuration of the finalized 3D antenna system

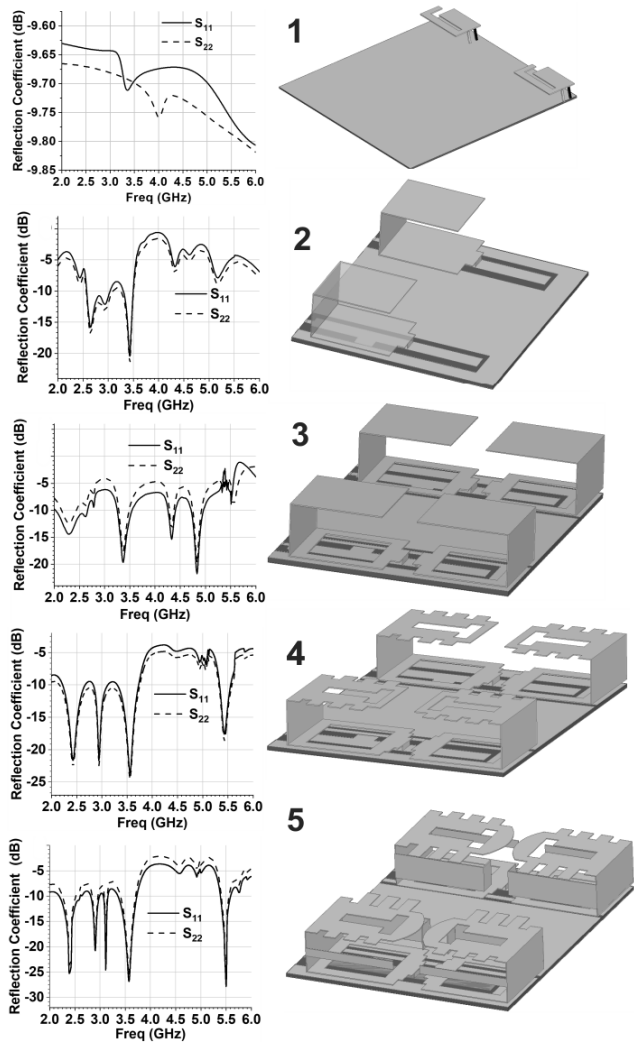


FIGURE 1. FMA-MIMO design evolution with flat metallic ground and without decoupling.

is illustrated in Fig. 2 and 3 and the optimized dimensions are listed in Table 1.

III. DECOUPLING CONFIGURATION

Owing to good reflectivity and overall mutual coupling suppression characteristics, a grid of metallic square patch FSSs are introduced to decouple FMA pairs on upper layer as shown in Fig. 3a. Initially, four longer slits T_1 to T_4 are introduced among FMA pairs followed by an optimized FSS array of 4×17 cells that is enclosed in these four slits to achieve the desired isolation. Moreover, a defected ground plane configuration is devised by employing meandered structure in the ground plane as shown in Fig. 3b. This meandered structure act as an interdigital capacitor to trap the surfaces currents and improves multi-band performance after inserting lossy FSS based decoupling mechanism. The number of turns in the meandered structure is optimally selected to achieve stronger resonances in the desired bands.

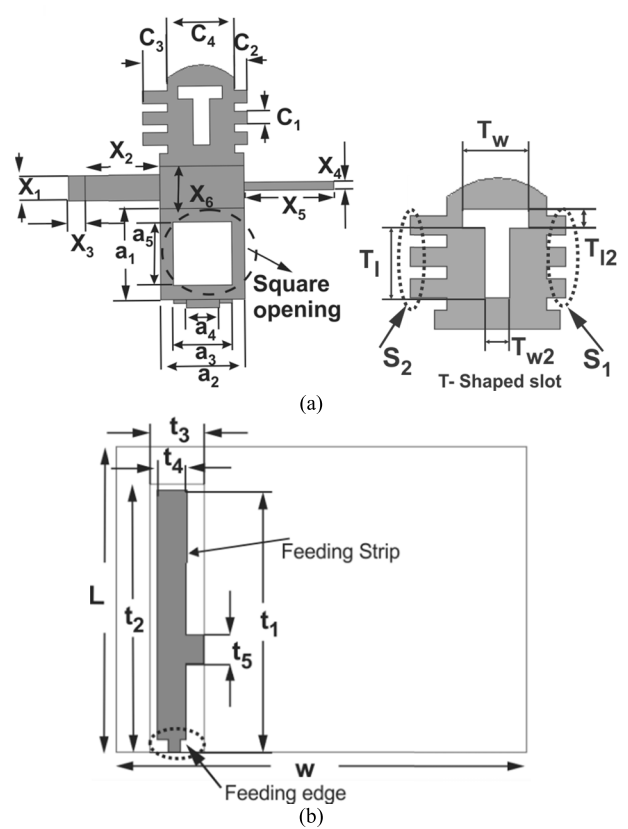


FIGURE 2. FMA-MIMO design configurations, (a) unfolded view of FMA with T-shaped configuration and (b) feeding strip.

TABLE 1. Dimensions of FMA-MIMO.

Variables	Optimized dimension (mm)	Variables	Optimized dimension (mm)
L	50	T_1	11
W	70	T_{w2}	4
a_1	11	T_{l2}	3
a_1	21.5	t_1	45.5
a_2	20	t_2	45.8
a_3	14	t_3	10
a_4	10	t_4	7
a_5	15	t_5	5
$C1$	3	e_1	10
$C2$	3	e_2	1
$C3$	5	e_3	2
$C4$	16	e_4	17
X_1	5.5	e_5	25
X_2	22	e_6	34
X_3	4	e_7	48
X_4	3	f	45.5
X_5	21.5	m_1	6
X_6	9.5	m_2	2
T_w	10.5	m_3	15

A. FSS ANALYSIS

The employed square patch FSS unit cell has compact dimension of $e_3 \times e_8$. The unit cell analysis and optimization is

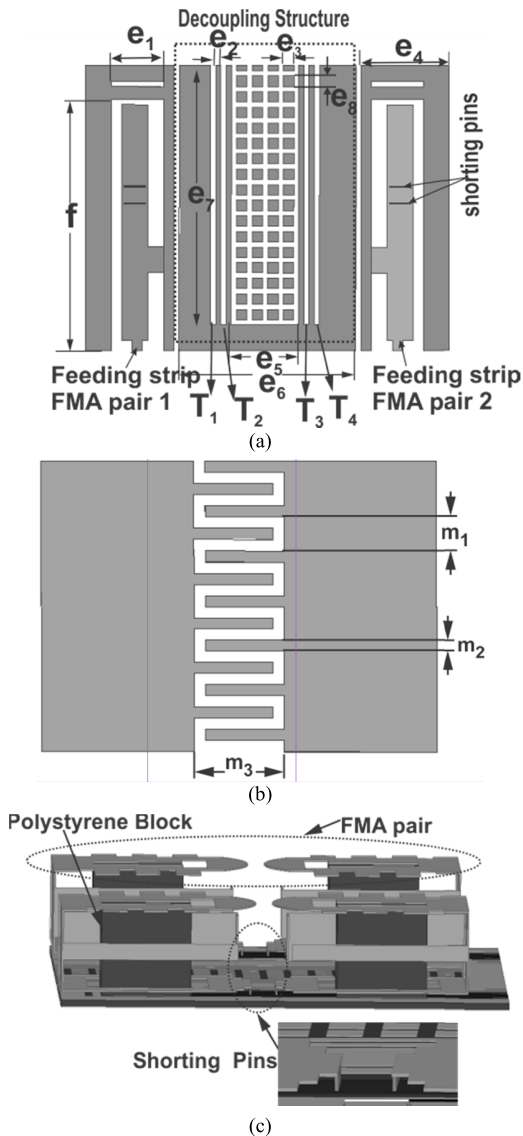


FIGURE 3. Decoupling configurations (a) square patch FSS based decoupling structure on upper layer (b) menderline configuration at ground plane and (c) finalized 3D view.

performed by using a full-wave finite-element method based electromagnetic solver (Ansys HFSS[®]). In addition to the Floquet analysis of the FSS grid, the Finite Element Boundary Integral (FE-BI) analysis is also carried out to validate the actual performance of the finite elements of FSS grid as illustrated in Fig. 4a. This FSS achieves at least 17 dB reflectivity over the desired band as shown in Fig. 4b.

IV. SIMULATIONS AND MEASUREMENTS

The prototype of the proposed FMA-MIMO is fabricated (Fig. 5) to test and verify the simulations. The simulated and measured results of FMA-MIMO are presented in the following subsections.

A. REFLECTION COEFFICIENT PERFORMANCE

This system is simulated and measured with and without decoupling structure to demonstrate the effect of decoupling

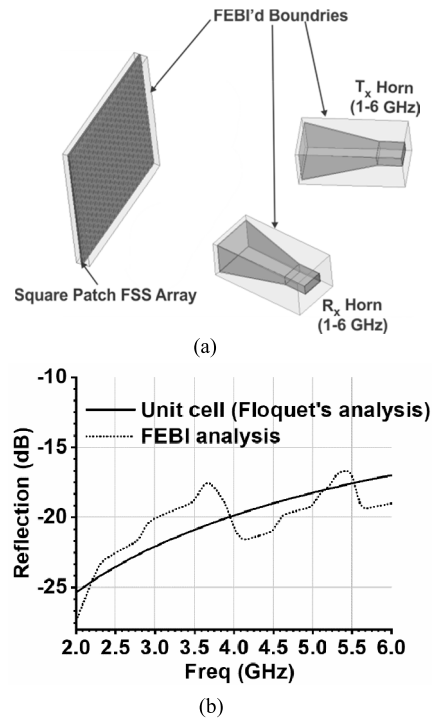


FIGURE 4. Square patch FSS analysis (a) FE-BI analysis setup and (b) reflection response.

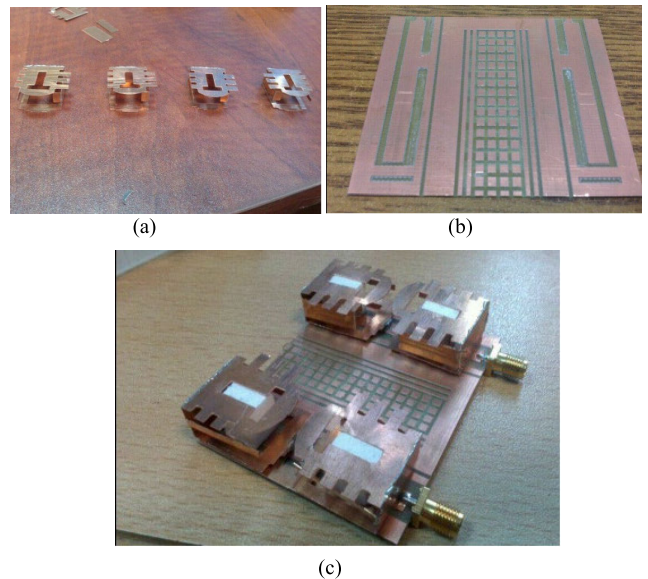


FIGURE 5. Fabricated dual-element FMA MIMO. (a) Folded radiators/armatures. (b) Ground plane with decoupling and feed line structures and (c) Dual-channel FMA-MIMO system.

structure. The resonant frequencies of the proposed FMA are 2.4 GHz (WLAN), 2.95 GHz and 3.2 GHz (WiMAX), 3.6 GHz (5G cellular) and 5.5 GHz (5G Wi-Fi) as shown in Fig. 6. It can be observed from the results that the reflection coefficient performance is slightly degraded with the introduction of the decoupling structure. This is however compensated with the help of mender line structure and reverted

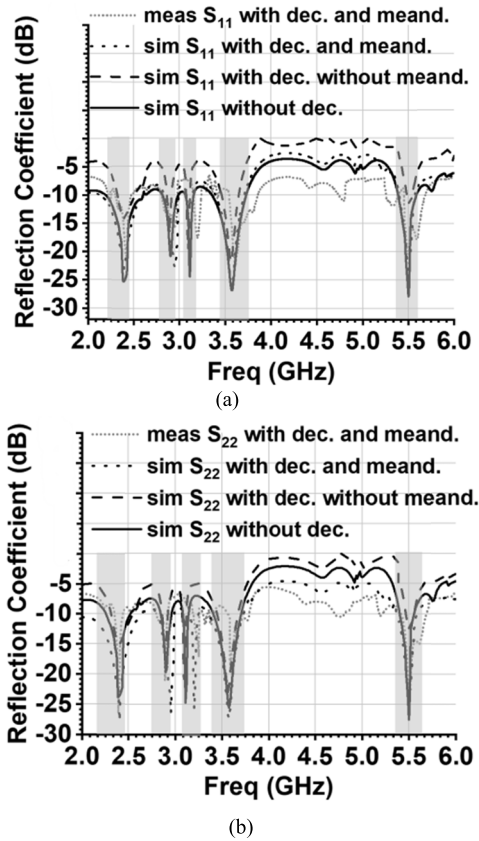


FIGURE 6. Reflection coefficient performance (a) FMA pair 1 and (b) FMA pair 2 reflection response.

back to optimum limits. Overall, simulated and measured reflection coefficient are in agreement within the allowable limits.

B. DECOUPLING PERFORMANCE

The simulated and measured mutual coupling results of dual-element FMA-MIMO system are shown in Fig. 7. The proposed FSS based decoupling structure suppresses the undesired mutual coupling and improves isolation between FMA pairs considerably to 30 dB in the desired bands.

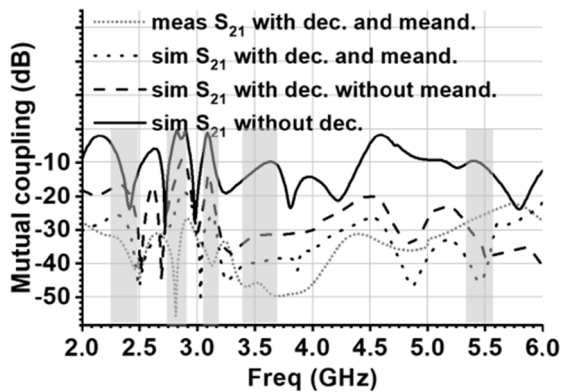


FIGURE 7. Decoupling performance of the proposed FMA-MIMO.

C. SURFACE CURRENT DISTRIBUTION

The surface current distribution with decoupling mechanism at 2.4 GHz and 5.5 GHz is presented in Fig. 8. By introducing the decoupling structure, currents induced on the non-excited element are suppressed effectively as observed from the surface current distribution. However, a slight coupling is inevitable between the FMA elements.

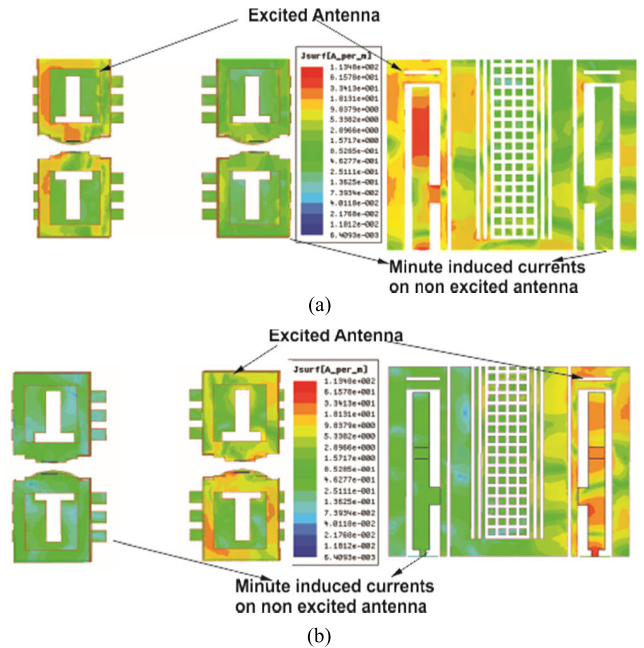


FIGURE 8. Surface current density with decoupling structure (a) 2.4 GHz and (b) 5.5 GHz.

D. RADIATION CHARACTERISTICS

The simulated and measured E-field and H-field patterns of the proposed FMA-MIMO system design are shown in Fig. 9. The patterns are obtained at frequencies 2.4 GHz, 2.95 GHz, 3.6 GHz and 5.5 GHz. The simulated and measured results reveal that proposed FMA-MIMO antenna system provides quasi omnidirectional patterns in both the planes. The patterns exhibit slight distortion in the measurements process owing to the non-planar configuration and fabrication imperfections. Moreover, for higher frequencies, in this case 5.5 GHz, patterns tend to distort because of smaller wavelengths and less tolerance to the geometry imperfection.

V. MIMO PERFORMANCE

The MIMO performance of the proposed system is evaluated through certain parameters including Envelope Correlation Coefficient (ECC), Channel Capacity Loss (CCL), Diversity Gain (DG) and Total Active Reflection Coefficient (TARC). For an acceptable MIMO performance ECC and CCL should be less than 0.5 whereas TARC should be below 0 dB [30]. ECC, DG and TARC are calculated using the relations given in [31]. ECC can be evaluated through scattering parameters

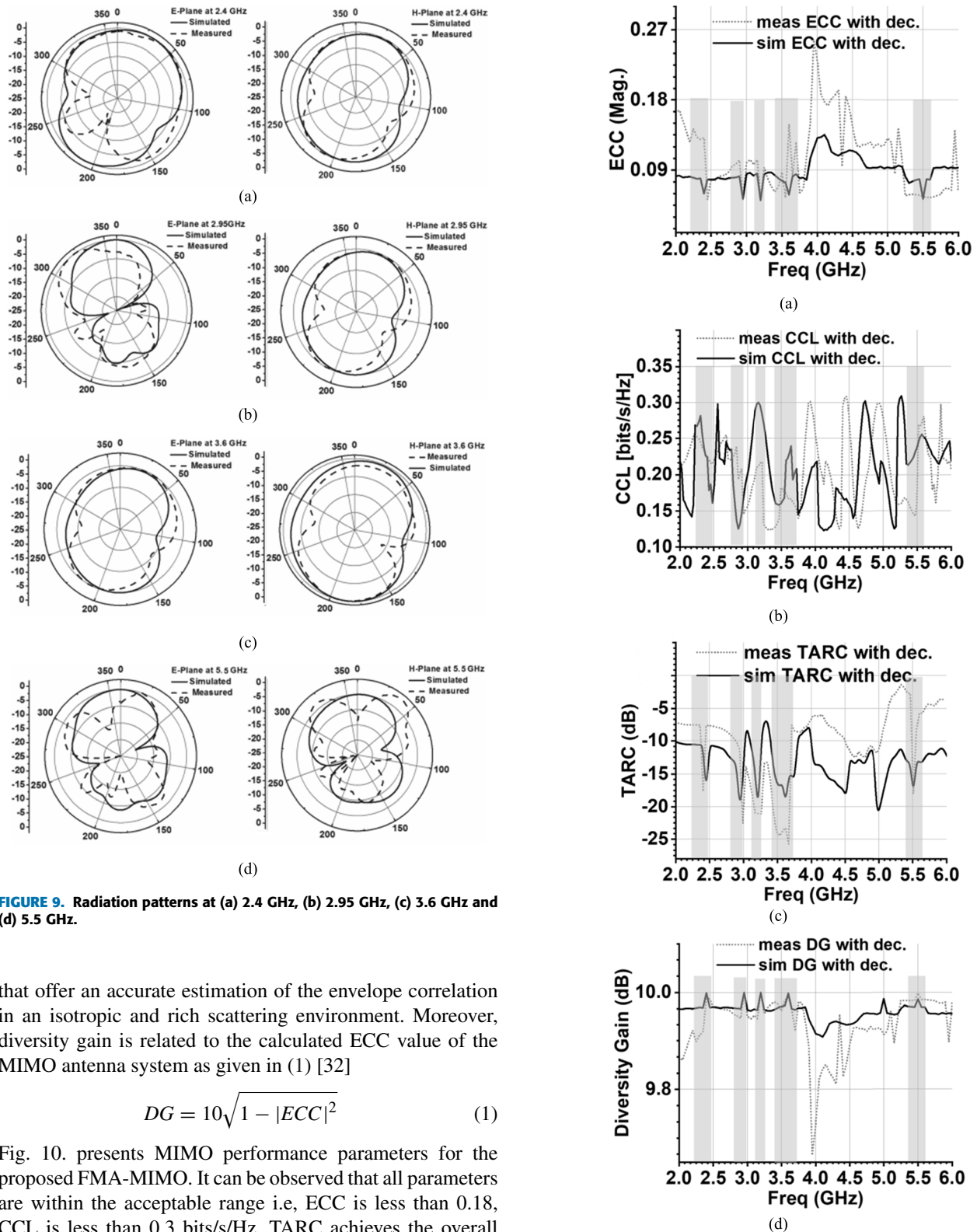


FIGURE 9. Radiation patterns at (a) 2.4 GHz, (b) 2.95 GHz, (c) 3.6 GHz and (d) 5.5 GHz.

that offer an accurate estimation of the envelope correlation in an isotropic and rich scattering environment. Moreover, diversity gain is related to the calculated ECC value of the MIMO antenna system as given in (1) [32]

$$DG = 10\sqrt{1 - |ECC|^2} \quad (1)$$

Fig. 10. presents MIMO performance parameters for the proposed FMA-MIMO. It can be observed that all parameters are within the acceptable range i.e., ECC is less than 0.18, CCL is less than 0.3 bits/s/Hz, TARC achieves the overall value of less than -15 dB with some variations at resonant band. Furthermore, the radiation efficiency and peak gain of the proposed MIMO antenna is shown in Fig 11a and Fig 11b respectively.

The simulated radiation efficiency varies between 65% and 75% without decoupling structure. The decoupling struc-

FIGURE 10. MIMO performance (a) ECC, (b) CCL, (c) TARC and (d) DG.

ture slightly reduces the radiation efficiency at resonant frequencies to vary between 55% and 65%. However, considerable improvement (over 45%) in MIMO performance parameters and better isolation is achieved. The radiation

TABLE 2. Comparison with existing literature.

References	Ports	Dimensions (mm ³)	Isolation (dB)	ECC	TARC	CCL	Gain (dBi)	Band coverage
[14]	2	60 × 120 × 0.8/1	30	-	-	-	-	Two
[15]	2	44 × 58 × 1.2	35	0.007	-	-	-	Two
[16]	2	300 × 200 × 1	25	0.001	-	-	<5	Three
[17]	2	120 × 47 × 1	20	<0.04	-	-	2.6-4.5	Two
[18]	2	100 × 50 × 1.6	20-40	0.0007	-	-	2.7	One
[19]	2	60 × 100 × 0.8	<30	-	-	-	3-4	Four
[20]	2	121.8 × 61.45 × 0.812	<20	<0.1	-	-	-	Two
[21]	2	120 × 80 × 0.8	>15	<0.5	-	-	-	Four
[22]	2	120 × 80 × 0.8	<15	<0.5	-	-	-1.79 – 3.75	Four
[23]	2	65 × 120 × 0.8	<20	<0.028	-	-	0.5-5.2	Four
This work	2	50 × 70 × 1.6	<30	<0.25	<-8	<0.3	3-4	Five

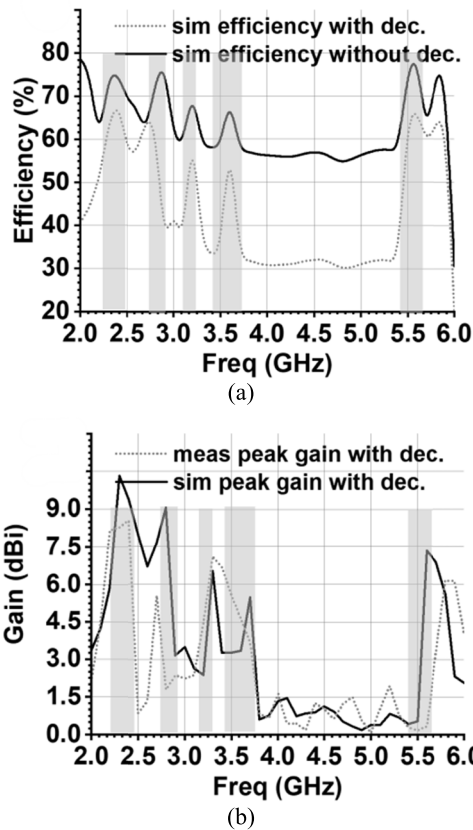


FIGURE 11. FMA-MIMO performance (a) radiation efficiency (b) peak gain.

efficiency is low primarily because of the lossy nature of FR-4, and it can be increased by using low-loss substrates. The antenna has reasonable gain values in the desired frequency bands in particular 9 dBi (WLAN), 7.5 dBi & 6.5 dBi (WiMAX), 4 dBi (5G cellular), and 7 dBi (5G Wi-Fi).

VI. COMPARISON WITH OTHER DESIGNS

The proposed MIMO system is designed for various wireless applications altogether. The existing literature reports several

MIMO antennas. However, the proposed design is highly competitive to the reported designs in terms of isolation, size/profile and overall bands coverage. This 3D MIMO antenna system not only has a compact size but also exhibits efficient performance. A comprehensive comparison with the recent literature is shown in Table 2. The proposed work is compared with two-port 2D and 3D reported designs. Moreover, proposed design has desirable values of ECC, CCL and TARC and the optimum values of gain in comparison, whereas most of the reported designs in table are not evaluated in terms of CCL and TARC

VII. CONCLUSION

A dual-element, multiband FMA-MIMO antenna system is proposed in this work. This design finds its applications where multiband and MIMO functionalities are required simultaneously. FMA pairing on sophisticated feeding strips, optimum shorting pins, slotting technique and menderline configuration are the few highlighting features of the proposed design. These features help to achieve multiband communication for WLAN, WiMAX, 5G cellular and 5G Wi-Fi services while maintaining optimum impedance match. The mutual coupling between FMA pairs is effectively suppressed by employing an array of square patch FSS structures. To verify the simulated results, a prototype FMA-MIMO system is fabricated and tested. An overall measured isolation of 30 dB is achieved between FMA pairs. Alongside, the mutual coupling suppression and other performance characteristics like radiation pattern, ECC, CCL, TARC, DG and radiation efficiency signify that the proposed antenna system is a promising candidate for multiservice software defined radio (SDR) devices and various other wireless communication systems like airport communications, automotive communications, subway communication systems and railway communication systems.

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