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An Analytical Scalable Lumped-Element Model for GaN on Si Inductors

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ABSTRACT In this paper, a wide-band distributed model that can approximate the behaviour of square and octagonal inductors, both with and without tapering, is presented. This paper also presents a novel way of accurately modelling the lateral coupling in the substrate. The presented model can be applied to any foundry process, and its validity has been demonstrated using a novel technology, the D01GH GaN process developed by OMMIC, which has a high resistivity substrate. To do so, seventeen inductors have been designed and manufactured. The proposed model has been verified against EM simulations and measurements of the designed inductors. Comparisons show that the model can correctly estimate the behaviour of the inductor, improving the results of the EM simulations for most cases. The root mean square (RMS) error calculated across the samples when estimating the inductance is 0.0565. The RMS error for the quality factor results (2.2727) is also adequate, although there is more deviation when comparing the results with the measurements.

INDEX TERMS Inductor model, lateral coupling, octagonal inductor, square inductor, tapered inductor.

I. INTRODUCTION

Integrated inductors are a key component in RFIC and MMIC designs, since they have a significant impact on the size and performance of the overall system. Because of this, estimating the behaviour of these components has been a topic of interest for the integrated design community for the last two decades. Several works found in the literature provide different models and techniques to model the behaviour of manufactured inductors [1]–[4]. However, the growing interest in GaN processes in the last years has increased the need for a model that can correctly predict the behaviour of an inductor layed out on a high-resistivity substrate.

Additionally, an accurate model for tapered inductors would be welcome in the circuit designer community. Tapering is a well-known and widely discussed approach for increasing the quality factor (Q) of an inductor [5]–[7]. The quality factor of an inductor is the ratio of its reactance to its series resistance. The tapering technique consists on the

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gradual decrease of the width of each turn of the inductor so that the outer turns are wider, reducing the ohmic losses of the inductor, and the inner turns are narrower, maximising the magnetic field flowing through the inner hole of the inductor.

Numerous effects must be accounted for when modelling an inductor, especially a tapered one, such as DC inductance, skin effects, eddy currents and lateral coupling of the substrate. The first three effects have been widely analysed in the past [8]–[11]. [12] deems lateral coupling as not significant or negligible on high-resistivity substrates, like the ones on GaN or GaAs processes. Many papers have attempted to emulate the effect of lateral coupling using resistors and capacitors (R_M and C_M), but the calculation of their values has always been based on adjustment parameters or by applying extraction methods [13]–[16]. The model presented in this paper includes mathematical formulation for modelling lateral coupling and its impact on a high-resistivity substrate has been demonstrated.

This paper proposes a model that can be utilised to predict the behaviour of square and octagonal inductors, both

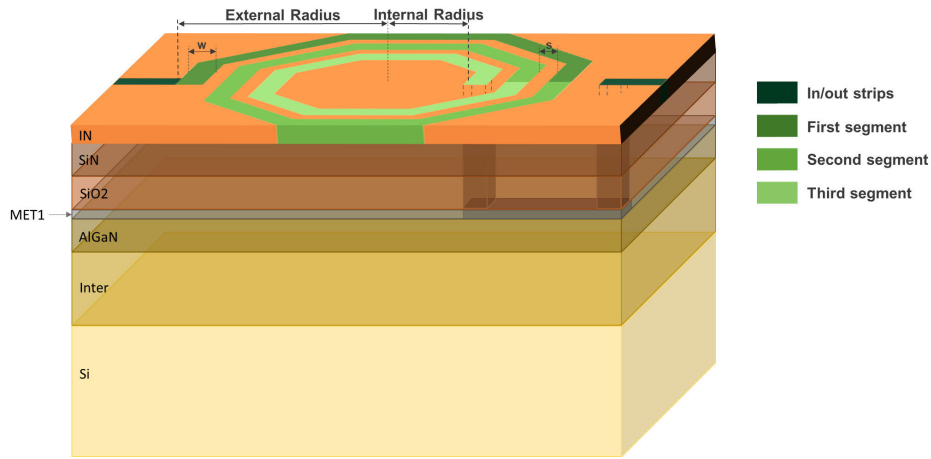


FIGURE 1. Generic inductor inset in the D01GH process.

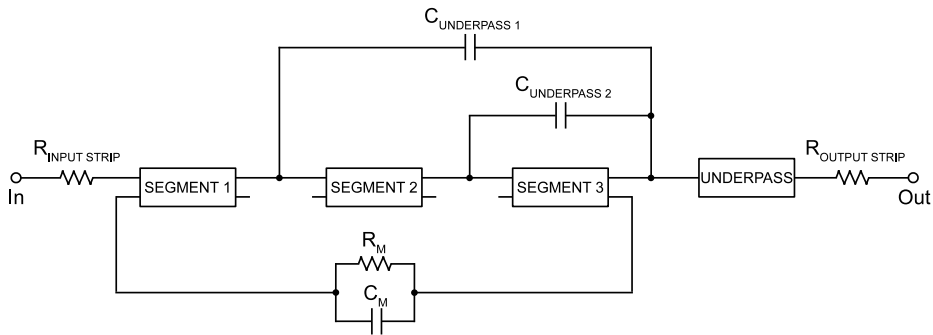


FIGURE 2. Proposed inductor model for the inductor shown in Fig.1.

tapered and non-tapered. The model and its equations are explained in Section II, whereas a comparison between the results of the model, electromagnetic (EM) simulations and measurements for different manufactured inductors is shown in Section III. Finally, some conclusions are drawn in Section IV.

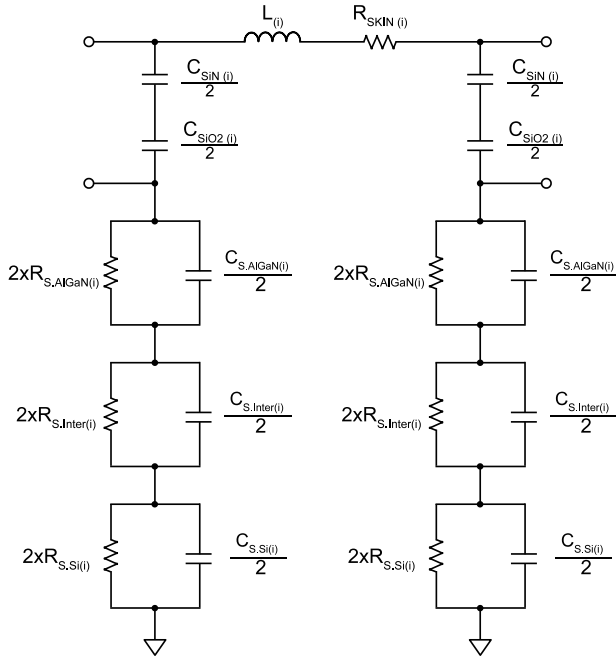
II. PROPOSED INDUCTOR MODEL

The first aspect to consider when developing the model of an inductor is the different materials involved in the definition of the technology and their distribution. The D01GH GaN process developed by OMMIC follows a similar composition to other GaN on Si technologies. A simplified version of the cross-section for this process including an octagonal inductor is shown in Fig.1. In this case, the inductor is constructed on the IN metal layer. The underpass of the inductor is defined in the Metal 1 (MET1) layer. Between these metal layers are two additional layers, SiN and SiO₂, which act as dielectric materials. Under the MET1 layer, two high resistivity layers (AlGaN and Interface) can be found. Finally, the Silicon (Si) substrate occupies the bottom layer.

In addition to the utilised technology, several parameters have to be taken into account when developing the inductor model. Among these parameters are the shape of the inductor (square, octagonal, circular), its number of turns or segments, the length and width of each segment (important for the case of tapered inductors), the length and width of the underpass and the materials of the different metal layers that make up the inductor. Once these parameters have been properly defined, the equivalent inductor model shown in Fig.2 can be applied. In this scalable model, the number of segments is mainly defined by the number of turns of the inductor. Therefore, for an inductor with two turns, there will be two segments, whereas for an inductor with two and a half turns like the one shown in Fig.1, the number of segments will be three.

A. SEGMENT BLOCK MODELLING

The schematic for the Segment block of the model is shown in Fig.3. In this model, $R_{SKIN(i)}$ and $L_{(i)}$ represent the skin and proximity effects of the inductor [1], [8] [12] for the segment. The total DC inductance of the inductor is split evenly across the segments, while the resistance of each segment is calculated using (1) [1], where $l_{(i)}$ and $w_{(i)}$ are the length and


FIGURE 3. Schematic of the SEGMENT block.

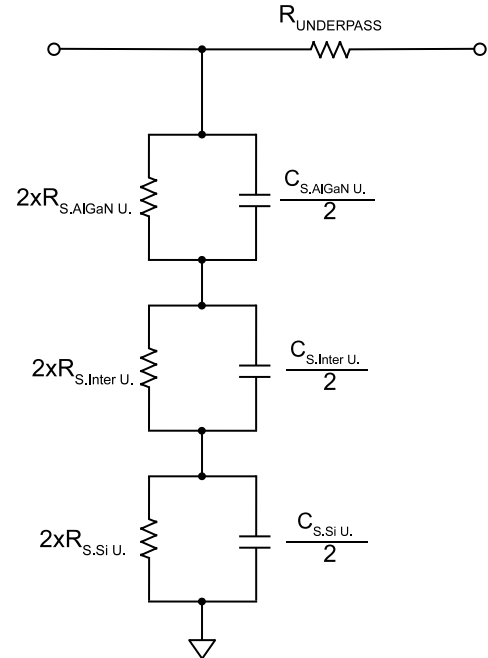
width of the segment, σ is the conductivity of the metal of the inductor (IN), t_{IN} is the thickness of said metal and δ_{EFF} is the effective skin depth, calculated using (2).

$$R_{SKIN(i)} = \left(\frac{l(i)}{2 \cdot \sigma \cdot w(i) \cdot \delta} \right) \cdot \left[\frac{\sinh\left(\frac{t_{IN}}{\delta_{EFF}}\right) + \sin\left(\frac{t_{IN}}{\delta_{EFF}}\right)}{\cosh\left(\frac{t_{IN}}{\delta_{EFF}}\right) + \cos\left(\frac{t_{IN}}{\delta_{EFF}}\right)} \right] \quad (1)$$

$$\delta_{EFF} = \sqrt[3]{\frac{t_{IN}}{w}} \cdot \delta = \sqrt[3]{\frac{t_{IN}}{w}} \cdot \sqrt{\frac{2}{\mu\sigma\omega_0}} \quad (2)$$

In (2), w is the maximum width of the inductor, μ is the magnetic permeability of the material and ω_0 is the angular frequency. In this model, it is assumed that the magnetic field is spread evenly across the substrate and that no elements are placed under the inductors. This is a common practice in MMIC design.

To properly model the substrate of the inductor, all the process layers should be considered in order to have the most accurate model possible. Thus, the capacitance of the SiN and SiO₂ layers under the IN metal area occupied by each segment ($A(i)$) of the inductor had to be modelled. To do so, (3) and (4) are utilised, where t is the thickness of the material. The AlGa_N, Inter and Si layers found below the MET1 layer are also considered. Since this process has a high resistivity substrate, where ρ_{Si} is 5k $\Omega \cdot$ cm and ρ_{AlGaN} and ρ_{Inter} are 100k $\Omega \cdot$ cm, the resistance of each of these layers must also be considered. The capacitances and resistances of each layer can be obtained by applying (5) and (6) [1], [17]. In these equations, $v = A(i)/\pi$. The equations for the Inter and Si layers are the same as for AlGa_N, but keeping in mind


FIGURE 4. Schematic of the UNDERPASS block.

that the characteristics and properties (thickness, permittivity and resistivity) of each layer are different. Since this is a distributed model, the capacitors that account for the capacitance of each layer are divided by two, as it can be observed in the model shown in Fig.3. The resistors are multiplied by two for the same reason [18].

$$C_{SiN(i)} = \epsilon_0 \cdot \epsilon_{SiN} \cdot \frac{A(i)}{t_{SiN}} \quad (3)$$

$$C_{SiO2(i)} = \epsilon_0 \cdot \epsilon_{SiO2} \cdot \frac{A(i)}{t_{SiO2}} \quad (4)$$

$$C_{S,AlGaN} = \frac{2 \cdot \epsilon_0 \cdot \epsilon_{AlGaN} \cdot A(i)}{2 \cdot t_{AlGaN} + \sqrt{v} - \sqrt{4 \cdot t_{AlGaN}^2 + v}} \quad (5)$$

$$R_{S,AlGaN(i)} = \frac{\rho_{AlGaN} \cdot \epsilon_0 \cdot \epsilon_{AlGaN}}{C_{S,AlGaN(i)}} \quad (6)$$

B. INPUT/OUTPUT STRIPS AND UNDERPASS BLOCK MODELLING

This model also takes into account the resistance of the input and output strips of metal (R_{IS} and R_{OS}) used to connect the inductor, as well as the resistance of the underpass of the inductor (R_U), which is implemented in the MET1 layer, as stated above. These values can be calculated using (7)–(9), where ρ is the resistivity of the material, l is the length of the strip or underpass and w is the width of said strip/underpass [17]. The effects of the underpass on the substrate are also considered, as shown in Fig.4, where the resistances and capacitances are obtained using (5) and (6).

$$R_{IS} = \frac{\rho_{IN} \cdot l_{IS}}{t_{IN} \cdot w_{IS}} \quad (7)$$

$$R_{OS} = \frac{\rho_{IN} \cdot l_{OS}}{t_{IN} \cdot w_{OS}} \quad (8)$$

$$R_U = \frac{\rho_{MET} \cdot l_U}{t_{MET} \cdot w_U} \quad (9)$$

Another important aspect of this inductor model is that it also considers the parasitic capacitances generated by the coupling between the metal strips of the inductor and the underpass. This effect can be modelled as a simple plane parallel capacitor [19], [20], which is the typical widespread solution. In the case of OMMIC's D01GH process, the SiN and SiO₂ layers found between the IN and MET1 layers (which is used for the underpass) produce capacitive effects due to their dielectric characteristics. Therefore, two series capacitors (C_{PSiN} and C_{PSiO2}) are included to model the overlaps between the IN and MET1 layer for each segment of the inductor. The combination of these two capacitors is calculated for each segment and represented as $C_{UNDERPASS(i)}$ in the model shown in Fig.2. The equations for both capacitors are shown in (10) and (11) [1].

$$C_{PSiN} = \epsilon_0 \cdot \epsilon_{SiN} \cdot t_{SiN} \cdot w_{(i)} \cdot w_{UNDERPASS} \quad (10)$$

$$C_{PSiO2} = \epsilon_0 \cdot \epsilon_{SiO2} \cdot t_{SiO2} \cdot w_{(i)} \cdot w_{UNDERPASS} \quad (11)$$

C. LATERAL COUPLING MODEL

Finally, the formulation of the C_M and R_M elements that model the lateral coupling in the substrate will also be explained. Although these elements have already been presented in previous publications [12]–[16], in those cases C_M and R_M were obtained via extraction or by using formulae with empirical adjustment factors, whereas in this model they are obtained purely from the dimensions of the inductor and physical properties of the materials that conform the substrate. In order to explain the formulation for C_M and R_M , the area of the lines that conform the inductor (A_{LINES}), the area of the internal hole of the inductor (A_{INT}) and the area occupied by the separation of the turns of the inductor (A_{SEP}) must be calculated. Based on these areas, the total area occupied by the inductor can be defined as shown in (12). The equations for the different areas for an octagonal inductor are shown in (13)–(15). For other types of inductors, such as square ones, the equations for the internal square calculation and separation area must be modified accordingly. In (15), s is the separation between the turns of the inductor and n represents the number of turns of said inductor.

$$A_{TOTAL} = A_{LINES} + A_{INT} + A_{SEP} \quad (12)$$

$$A_{LINES} = \sum_{i=1}^N l_{(i)} \cdot w_{(i)} \quad (13)$$

$$A_{SEP} = 2\pi \cdot \left[(n \cdot r_{EXT} \cdot s) - (w_{(1)} \cdot (2n - s - 1)) + 1.5s^2 \right] \quad (14)$$

$$A_{INT} = \pi \cdot r_{INT}^2 \quad (15)$$

When modelling the lateral coupling through the substrate, the main aspects to consider are the capacitance and

resistance generated between the edges of the internal hole of the inductor and between the edges of the different turns. This way, it could be theorised that R_M is the series connection of the resistance between the edges of each turn and the resistance between the edges of the internal hole. Therefore, if the equation for the resistance of a three-dimensional conductor (16) is utilised as a reference and modified accordingly, R_M could be calculated as shown in (17), where l_{IND} is the total length of the inductor.

$$R = \rho \cdot \frac{l}{A} = \rho \cdot \frac{l}{w \cdot t} \quad (16)$$

$$R_M = \rho_{Si} \cdot \frac{l_{IND}}{A_{SEP} + A_{INT}} \quad (17)$$

For the calculation of C_M , the equation of a parallel-plate capacitor, shown in (18) was considered [21]. In this case and in a similar fashion to the calculation of R_M , the lateral capacitance can be considered as the series combination of the capacitances that result of the parasitic coupling between the edges of the turns of the inductor in the substrate and between the sides of the inner hole. Since the resulting capacitance in the series connection of capacitors is always determined by the smallest capacitor, in this case C_M is equivalent to the capacitance between the sides of the internal hole of the inductor. The resulting equation for this case is (19), where d_i is the diameter of the internal hole of the inductor.

$$C = \frac{\epsilon \cdot A}{d} \quad (18)$$

$$C_M = \frac{\epsilon_0 \cdot \epsilon_{Si} \cdot A_{INT}}{d_i} \quad (19)$$

III. MODEL VERIFICATION

In order to demonstrate that the developed model can correctly estimate the behaviour inductors of the OMMIC D01GH GaN-on-Si process, seventeen inductors of different shapes (tapered and non-tapered square and octagonal inductors) and sizes were simulated using Keysight Momentum 3D EM Simulator and manufactured. The main characteristics of these inductors are shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Physical characteristics of the inductors.

Ind	Inductor type	Tapering [$\mu\text{m}/\text{turn}$]	Ext radius [μm]	No. of turns	Width [μm]	Gap [μm]	Int radius [μm]
L1	Octagonal	2	142	3.5	12	13	50
L2	Octagonal	2	85	2.5	12	14	15
L3	Octagonal	2	114	3.5	17	9	19
L4	Square	No	232	4.5	14	10	18
L5	Square	No	232	4.5	14	10	18
L6	Octagonal	No	70	2.25	14	10	11
L7	Octagonal	No	107	3.5	14	10	16
L8	Square	No	184	3.5	14	10	18
L9	Square	No	112	2	14	10	18
L10	Square	No	232	4.5	14	10	11
L11	Square	No	136	2.25	14	10	5
L12	Square	No	136	2.25	14	10	5
L13	Octagonal	No	142	3.5	14	10	50
L14	Octagonal	No	80	2.5	14	10	16
L15	Octagonal	2	80	2.5	12	14,25	12
L16	Square	2	240	4.5	14	11	18
L17	Octagonal	2*	138.5	3.5	12.5	12.5	50

*First turn of the inductor without tapering.

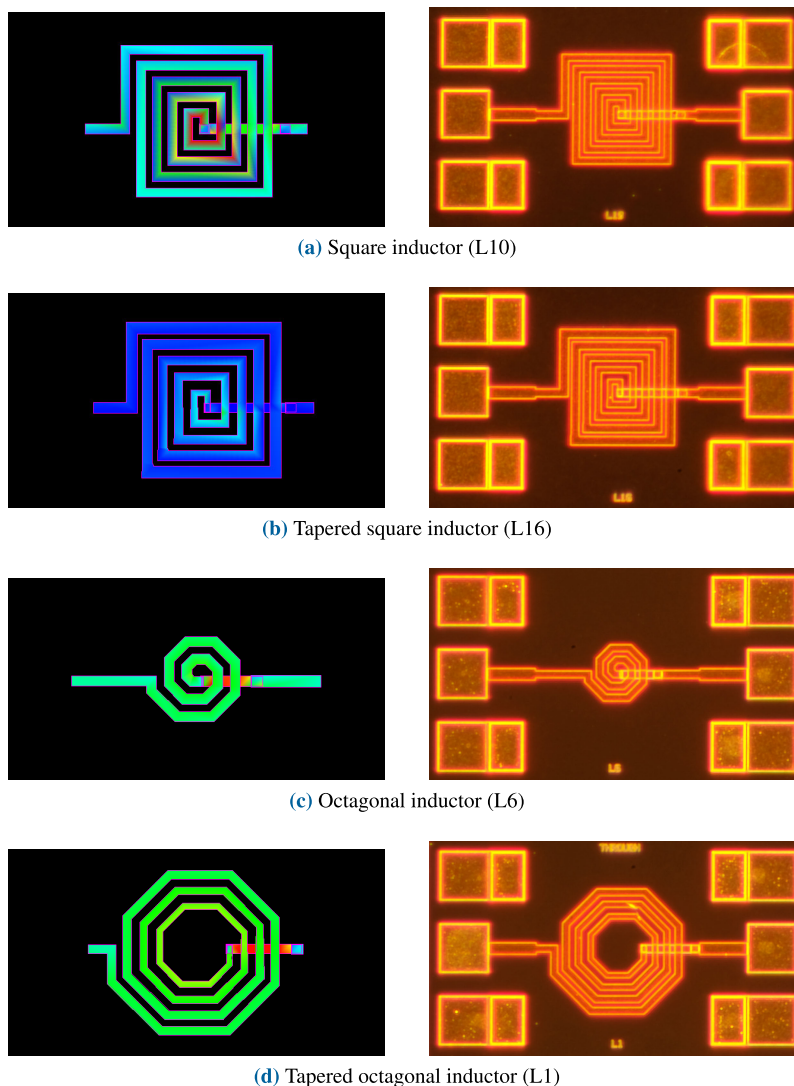


FIGURE 5. EM simulation and microphotograph of the manufactured inductors.

The inductors were simulated up to 50GHz with a high meshing resolution in order to guarantee that a correct analysis was performed. Fig. 5 shows four of the manufactured inductors (one of each type), as well as current density simulation results for each one at the frequency where the maximum quality factor is reached.

As it can be observed, all the manufactured inductors have input and output GSG pads, so they can be measured directly on-wafer and not be affected by the parasitic effects caused by bonding. The measurements were performed using the Agilent 8720ES S-Parameter Network Analyzer, which permits the measurement of circuits up to 20GHz. All measurement results were obtained by de-embedding the effects of the probes, the GSG pad parasitics and the inductive effects of the metal lines reaching to and from the inductors by using open, short and thru structures that were on the same die as the inductors. Fig. 6 shows the comparison between the

EM simulations, the measurements and the developed model for the four inductors shown in Fig. 5. Additionally, Table 2 shows the model parameters for the four inductors shown in Fig. 5.

From the results shown in Fig. 6, it can be observed that the developed model provides excellent results for the estimation of the inductance, most of the times delivering a more accurate result than the EM simulation, both in magnitude and frequency response. The quality factor results, however, show more variability. In some cases, the model is not as precise as the EM simulation result at low frequencies for the octagonal inductors. However, for the other types of inductors, the model matches or improves the results of the EM simulations.

In order to have a more analytical view of the results and perform a more detailed analysis, Table 3 has been filled out. In this table, the measured results for the inductance and

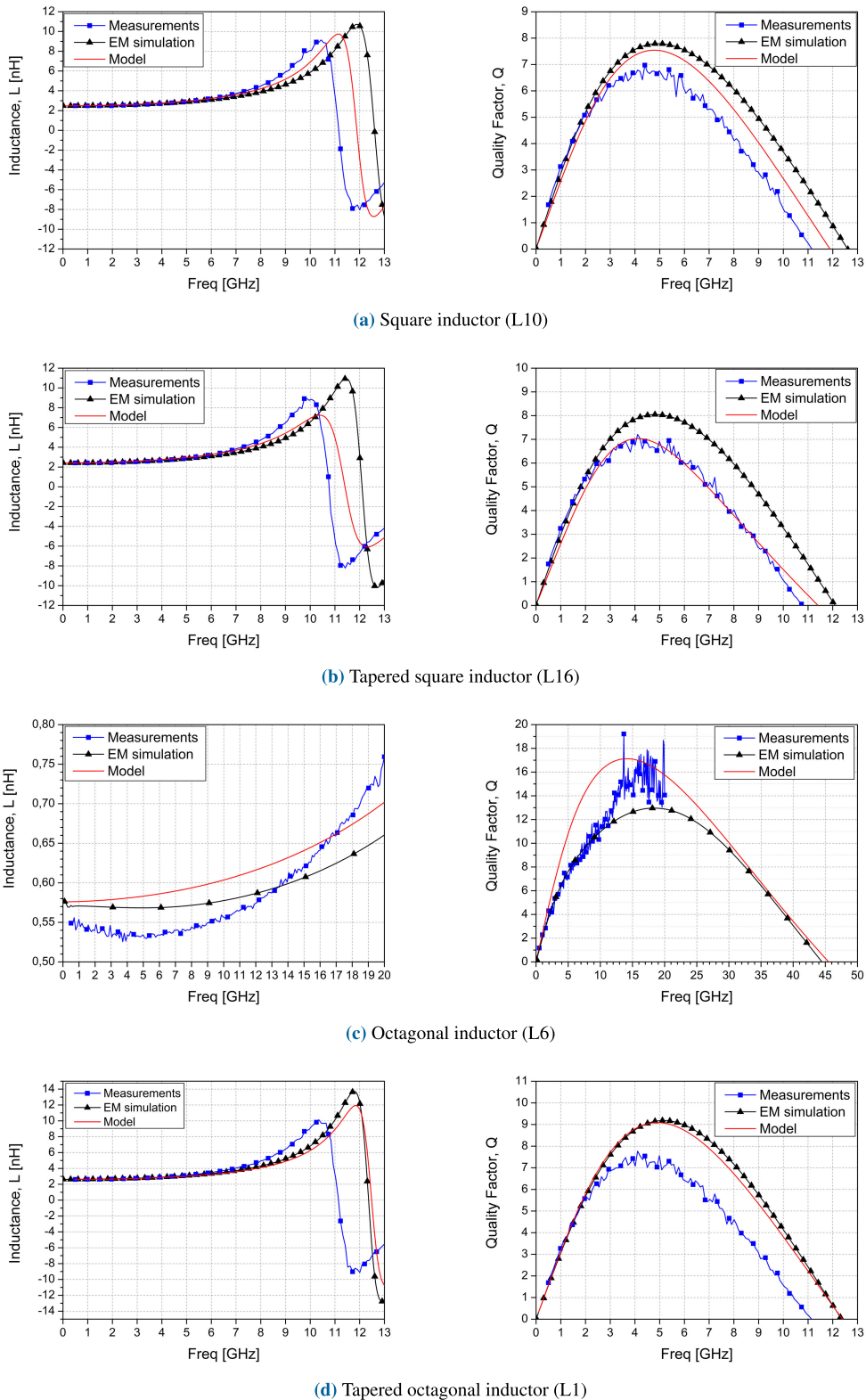
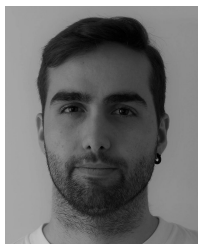


FIGURE 6. Comparison between the model, EM and simulation results for each inductor shown in Fig. 5.

quality factor have been compared with the results obtained in the EM simulations and with the model presented in this paper. To perform this comparison, the results have

been compared at the frequency at which the maximum measured (MM) quality factor (f_{QMM}) is obtained. This way, it can be verified whether the model is valid at a critical point



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