

# Ultra-Wideband Low Profile, U-Slot Microstrip Patch Antennas: L-Probe Feed Design Guidelines

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**Abstract** — The need for low-profile and ultra-wideband (UWB) antennas is rising in wireless communication and medical applications. The method of dimensional invariance, which is a class of U-slot patch design methods, is utilized to realize an initial, low-profile, wideband design. Building on this initial wideband design, this study establishes ideal L-probe feed dimensions through extensive parametric study on  $\epsilon_r = 2.2$  and 4.5 substrates to propose empirical guidelines for the design of L-probe feeds which yield *first-pass* optimum impedance bandwidth. The established ideal L-probe dimensions, after further extrapolation, are used successfully on other substrates,  $\epsilon_r = 3.27$ , 6.0 and 9.2, for the design of *first-pass* L-probe feeds which yield impedance bandwidth over 55%, 60%, and 53%, respectively. The results of three commercially available EM simulation solvers show good agreement.

**Index Terms** — FEM, L-probe, microstrip patch antenna, MoM, U-slot, UWB.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Low-profile and UWB microstrip patch antennas are finding their place in many wireless communication applications like WLAN and WiMAX [1, 2], and medical applications like breast cancer detection [3].

In recent years, the U-slot patch antenna proved to be a versatile antenna that can be fine-tuned for dual-band, triple-band, and wideband operations, in addition to supporting linear and circular polarization operations [4]. Dual-band operation is particularly important in some wireless communication applications, and wideband operation is useful in UWB medical imaging and detection applications.

Several feeding structure designs for the U-slot patch antenna are proposed in the literature [4-6]. The L-shaped probe feeding method [7], in particular, has led to improved impedance bandwidth of 38% for the U-slot patch antenna [5]. Moreover, its simple structure and low production cost [6] make it an attractive feeding method for the U-slot microstrip patch antenna.

In this paper, the U-slot patch antenna design method of dimensional invariance, developed and validated in earlier work [8-11], is utilized to realize an initial, low-profile, wideband design. Building on this initial wideband design and previous work [12], this study establishes ideal L-probe feed dimensions which propose empirical guidelines for the design of L-probe feeds to yield *first-pass* optimum impedance bandwidth.

In Section II of the paper, the U-slot patch design method and CAD model are discussed. In Section III, an extensive parametric study on two substrates,  $\epsilon_r = 2.2$  and 4.5, is presented to find the ideal L-probe dimensions which yield optimum impedance bandwidth. In Section IV, an empirical L-probe design technique is developed using the ideal L-probe dimension information established in Section III. The new L-probe design technique is then validated on substrates with different permittivities,  $\epsilon_r = 3.27$ , 6.0 and 9.2.

## II. DESIGN METHOD AND CAD MODEL

### A. Method of dimensional invariance

The method of dimensional invariance described in [8] is utilized in this paper to realize the U-slot antenna patch dimensions, shown in Fig. 1. This method relies on empirical formulas to first obtain the rectangular patch dimensions, then uses the dimensional invariance relationships in Table 1 to derive the U-slot dimensions. The method employs few criteria for substrate height,  $h$ , and patch width,  $W$ , that is  $\frac{h\sqrt{\epsilon_r}}{\lambda} \approx 0.15$ ;  $\frac{W}{L} \approx 1.385$  and  $(3.5 \leq \frac{W}{h} \leq 5.5)$ . Once  $\frac{W}{h}$  ratio is determined using the method's empirical equations, relationships in Table 1 can be used to derive the topology of the U-slot patch.

Comparative analysis between this method and another U-slot design method is presented in [9], which highlights the advantages of the method of dimensional invariance with respect to enhanced bandwidth and applicability to low and high permittivity substrates. Experimental validation of the design method of dimensional invariance in the design of U-slot microstrip patch antenna is reported from earlier work in [10], in

which HFSS simulation results agree with experimental results as shown in Fig. 2. In the absence of recent experimental results to validate our simulation results in this paper, further validation of the results presented in the published work [10] using FEKO MoM shows good agreement with the experimental data presented in Fig. 2. The discrepancy between measured and simulated MoM results is mainly due to the infinite ground plane assumption in MoM method.

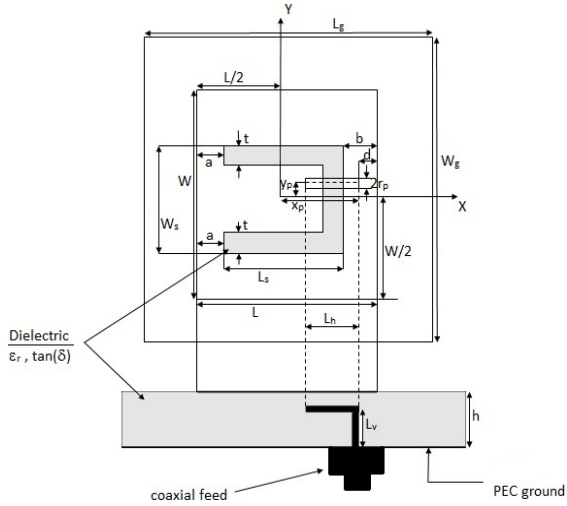


Fig. 1. Geometry of L-shaped, probe-fed, rectangular patch U-slot microstrip antenna.

Table 1: Dimensional invariance in U-slot designs for various substrates [8]

$\epsilon_r$	$\frac{L}{L_s}$	$\frac{W_s}{L_s}$	$\frac{L_s}{b}$	$\frac{t}{W_s}$	$\frac{W}{W_s}$
2.33	1.445	0.777	4.5	0.144	2.573
4.0	1.443	0.776	4.51	0.144	2.573
9.8	1.442	0.777	4.48	0.144	2.574

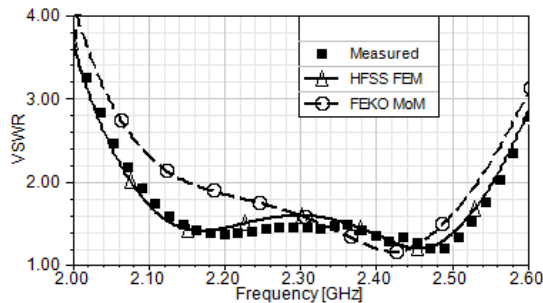


Fig. 2. Experimental [10] and simulated VSWR of a probe-fed U-slot patch antenna.

**B. CAD model**

The parametric studies in Section III are simulated and analyzed using the commercially available EM full-wave solvers, FEKO and HFSS, which are popular tools

for analyzing microstrip patch antennas. Simulation results using the Method of Moments (MoM) and Finite Element Method (FEM) solvers within FEKO are validated with simulation results using the HFSS FEM solver. The FEKO and HFSS FEM solvers have the same underlying computational electromagnetic method and hence, are expected to produce comparable results. Table 2 shows the dimensions of the U-slot microstrip patch antenna used in the parametric study, which are derived from the aforementioned method of dimensional invariance for a 2.4 GHz design frequency. Two substrate materials are studied: the *Rogers RT/Duroid 5880* substrate material with  $\epsilon_r = 2.2$  and  $\tan(\delta) = 0.0009$  and the *Rogers TMM 4* substrate material with  $\epsilon_r = 4.5$  and  $\tan(\delta) = 0.002$ . Further simulation optimization runs were performed to arrive at the substrate height and probe position which yield best bandwidth.

Table 2: U-slot microstrip patch antenna dimensions for various substrates

	$\epsilon_r = 2.2$	$\epsilon_r = 4.5$
a	5.17	3.61
b	5.17	3.61
W	46.53	32.54
L	33.6	23.49
Ls	23.26	16.27
t	2.6	1.82
Ws	18.09	12.65
rp	1	1
xp	13.8	8.745
yp	1	-3
d	3	3
h	14	12

\*All values are in mm.

In FEKO MoM solver, infinite substrate and ground is assumed. In FEKO FEM and HFSS FEM solvers, the substrate and ground ( $W_g$  and  $L_g$ ) dimensions are extended by  $\lambda/2$ , where  $\lambda$  corresponds to the lower bandwidth frequency, from the edge of the patch to simulate an infinite substrate and ground for a more suited comparison between the FEM and MoM solvers. A radiation air box boundary which is  $\lambda/4$ , where  $\lambda$  corresponds to the lower bandwidth frequency, above the patch is used. The microstrip patch mesh size is  $\lambda/20$ , where  $\lambda$  corresponds to the upper bandwidth frequency. A 50-ohm coaxial feed line is used to feed the L-probe.

**III. PARAMETRIC STUDY OF L-PROBE DIMENSIONS**

In this section, parametric studies are performed on two substrates,  $\epsilon_r = 2.2$  and 4.5, in which the horizontal length,  $L_h$ , and vertical length,  $L_v$ , of the L-probe are varied to find the L-probe dimensions with the highest impedance bandwidth. VSWR results for selected  $L_h$  and

$L_v$  variations are presented to show the results of three EM solvers on one figure for the sake of comparison and validation.

**A. For  $\epsilon_r = 2.2$  substrate**

*Parametric study of horizontal length of L-probe*

The horizontal length,  $L_h$ , is varied at 11 different points between 5 and 13 mm.  $L_v$  is fixed at 10 mm. As shown in the Fig. 3, a wideband behavior is observed for the  $L_h$  values equal to 11 mm and 12 mm. Figure 4 summarizes the relationship between  $L_h/\lambda_0$  (where  $\lambda_0$  is the free-space wavelength corresponding to the 2.4 GHz center frequency) and bandwidth and shows good agreement between the HFSS and FEKO results for  $L_h = 5-13$  mm ( $0.04-0.11\lambda_0$ ). As shown in Fig. 4, optimum bandwidth of approximately 50% is achieved when  $L_h$  is equal to  $0.08-0.11\lambda_0$ .

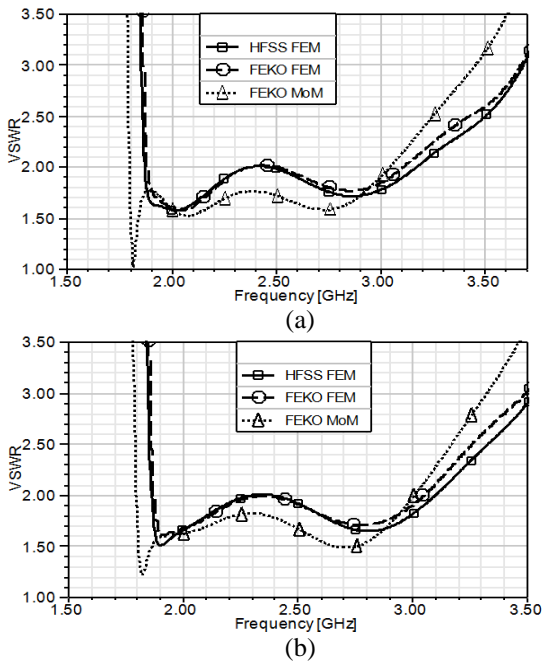


Fig. 3. VSWR for different  $L_h$  and  $\epsilon_r = 2.2$  substrate with fixed  $L_v = 10$  mm. (a)  $L_h = 11$  mm and (b)  $L_h = 12$  mm.

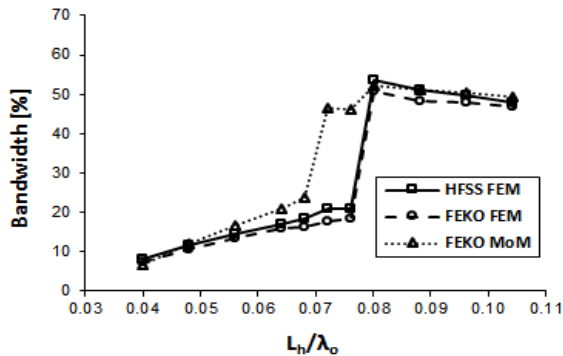


Fig. 4. Bandwidth versus  $L_h/\lambda_0$  for  $\epsilon_r = 2.2$  substrate.

*Parametric study of vertical length of L-probe*

The vertical length,  $L_v$ , is varied at 9 different points between 7 and 12 mm.  $L_h$  is fixed at 12 mm. As shown in the Fig. 5, a dual-band behavior is observed for the  $L_v$  values equal to 11 mm and 12 mm. Figure 6 summarizes the relationship between  $L_v/\lambda_0$  and bandwidth and shows good agreement between the HFSS and FEKO results for  $L_v = 7-12$  mm ( $0.05-0.10\lambda_0$ ). As shown in Fig. 6, optimum bandwidth of approximately 50% is achieved when  $L_v$  is equal to 10 mm ( $0.08\lambda_0$ ). Also, wideband behavior is shown in Fig. 2 when  $L_v = 10$  mm.

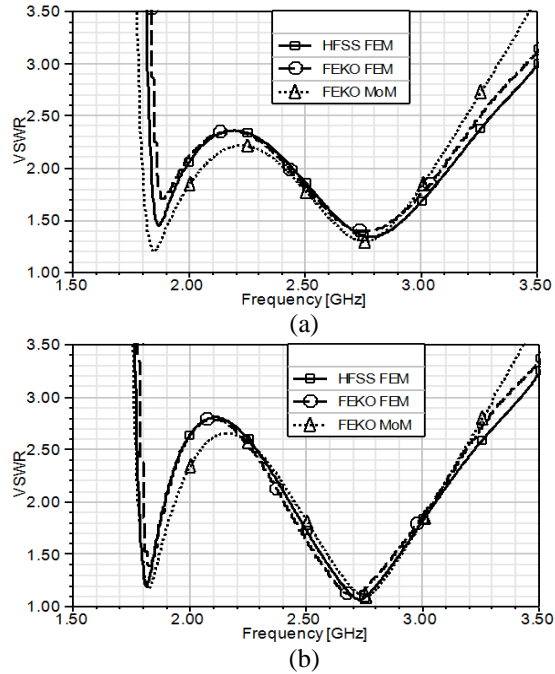


Fig. 5. VSWR for different  $L_v$  and  $\epsilon_r = 2.2$  substrate with fixed  $L_h = 12$  mm. (a)  $L_v = 11$  mm and (b)  $L_v = 12$  mm.

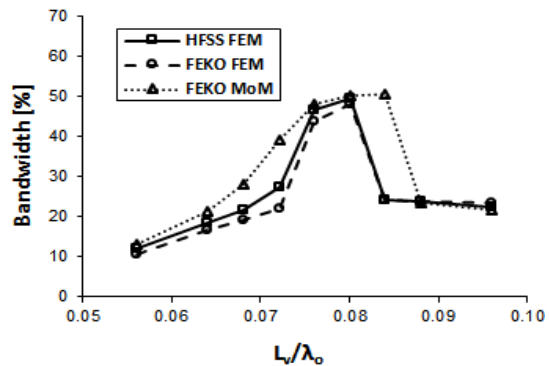


Fig. 6. Bandwidth versus  $L_v/\lambda_0$  for  $\epsilon_r = 2.2$  substrate.

The antenna gain for the wideband case of L-probe dimensions  $L_v = 10$  mm and  $L_h = 12$  mm is illustrated in Fig. 7. As shown in the figure, there is good agreement in the gain between the HFSS and FEKO simulation results.

Also, the antenna gain is around 5 dB for the 1.9-3.2 GHz (~50%) bandwidth achieved by these L-probe dimensions.

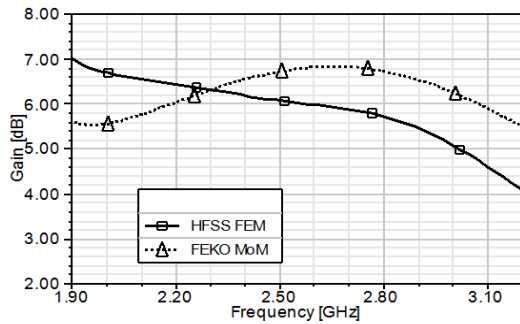


Fig. 7. Gain for  $L_v = 10$  mm,  $L_h = 12$  mm and  $\epsilon_r = 2.2$  substrate.

**B. For  $\epsilon_r = 4.5$  substrate**

*Parametric study of horizontal length of L-probe*

The horizontal length,  $L_h$ , is varied at 8 different points between 3 and 13 mm.  $L_v$  is fixed at 10 mm. As shown in the Fig. 8, a wideband behavior is observed for the  $L_h$  values equal to 5 mm and 9 mm. Figure 9 summarizes the relationship between  $L_h/\lambda_0$  (where  $\lambda_0$  is the free-space wavelength corresponding to the 2.4 GHz design frequency) and bandwidth and shows good agreement between the HFSS and FEKO results for  $L_h = 3-13$  mm (0.02-0.11 $\lambda_0$ ). As shown in Fig. 9, optimum bandwidth over 50% is achieved when  $L_h$  is equal to 0.02-0.04 $\lambda_0$ .

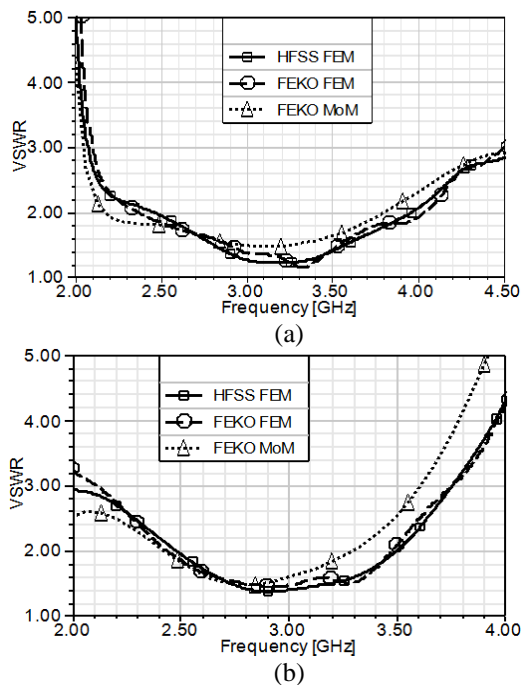


Fig. 8. VSWR for different  $L_h$  and  $\epsilon_r = 4.5$  substrate with fixed  $L_v = 10$  mm. (a)  $L_h = 5$  mm and (b)  $L_h = 9$  mm.

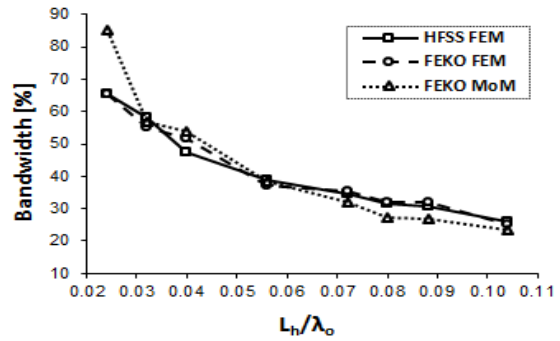


Fig. 9. Bandwidth versus  $L_h/\lambda_0$  for  $\epsilon_r = 4.5$  substrate.

*Parametric study of vertical length of L-probe*

The vertical length,  $L_v$ , is varied at 5 different points between 6 and 10 mm.  $L_h$  is fixed at 3 mm. As shown in Fig. 10, the wideband behavior is observed for the  $L_v$  values equal to 9 mm and 10 mm. Figure 11 summarizes the relationship between  $L_v/\lambda_0$  and bandwidth and shows good agreement between the HFSS and FEKO results for  $L_v = 6-10$  mm (0.05-0.08 $\lambda_0$ ). As shown in Fig. 11, optimum bandwidth over 50% is achieved when  $L_v$  is equal to 0.05-0.08 $\lambda_0$ .

The antenna gain for the wideband case of L-probe dimensions  $L_v = 10$  mm and  $L_h = 3$  mm in HFSS and FEKO simulations is illustrated in Fig. 12. As shown in the figure, there is good agreement in the gain between the HFSS and FEKO results. Also, the antenna gain is around 2 dB for the 2.2-2.9 GHz (~28%) bandwidth achieved by these L-probe dimensions.

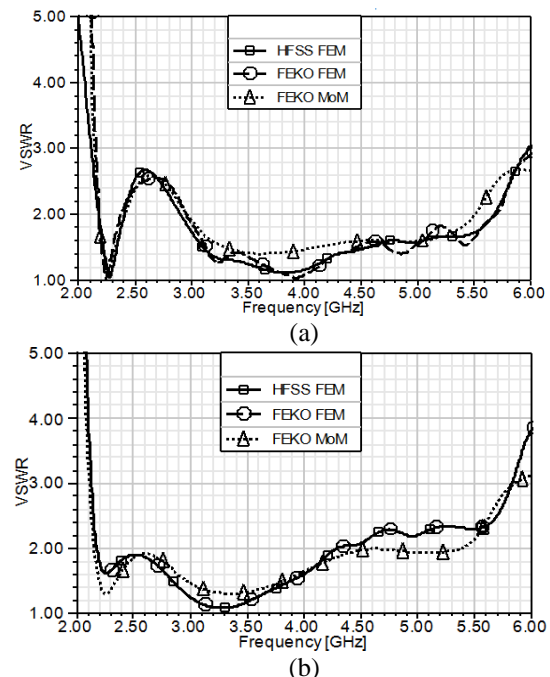


Fig. 10. VSWR for different  $L_v$  and  $\epsilon_r = 4.5$  substrate with fixed  $L_h = 3$  mm. (a)  $L_v = 9$  mm and (b)  $L_v = 10$  mm.

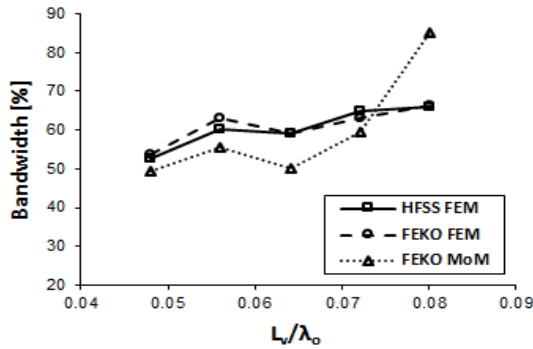


Fig. 11. Bandwidth versus  $L_v/\lambda_0$  for  $\epsilon_r = 4.5$  substrate.

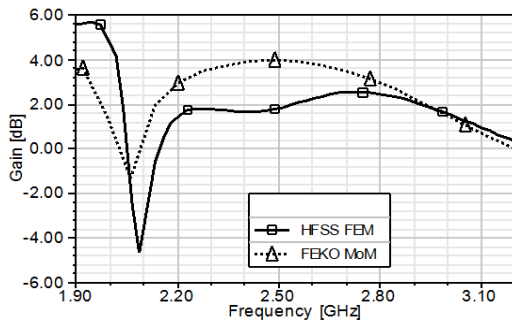


Fig. 12. Gain for  $L_v = 10$  mm,  $L_h = 3$  mm and  $\epsilon_r = 4.5$  substrate.

Comparing the results of the  $\epsilon_r = 2.2$  and 4.5 substrates, we note that the bandwidth is increased for the  $\epsilon_r = 4.5$ , however, the gain is decreased. This is expected since the loss tangent of the  $\epsilon_r = 4.5$  substrate is higher than the loss tangent of the  $\epsilon_r = 2.2$  substrate. This results in more losses in the dielectric substrate, which in turn decreases the input impedance leading to increased bandwidth and decreased efficiency.

#### IV. EMPIRICAL DESIGN TECHNIQUE OF L-PROBE FEED

##### A. Development of empirical design technique for L-probe feed

In this section, the ideal L-probe dimension information presented in Figs. 4, 6, 9, and 11 is utilized to extrapolate the ideal L-probe dimensions on substrates with different dielectric constants to generate optimum impedance bandwidth. Figure 1 shows the U-slot patch antenna geometry and Table 3 shows the antenna dimensions for three substrate materials realized using the aforementioned method of dimensional invariance for a 2.4 GHz design frequency. The three substrate materials are: the *Rogers TMM 3* substrate material with  $\epsilon_r = 3.27$  and  $\tan(\delta) = 0.002$ , the *Rogers TMM 6* substrate material with  $\epsilon_r = 6.0$  and  $\tan(\delta) = 0.0023$ , and the *Rogers TMM 10* substrate material with  $\epsilon_r = 9.2$  and  $\tan(\delta) = 0.0022$ . The optimized L-probe position values,

$x_p$  and  $y_p$ , are shown in parenthesis in Table 3, and the optimized vertical probe  $x_p$  and  $y_p$  values are outside the parenthesis.

Using FEKO MoM, FEKO FEM, and HFSS FEM solvers, the three antennas are simulated with a conventional vertical probe and an L-probe feed. The horizontal length of the L-probe feed for the  $\epsilon_r = 3.27$  substrate is realized by taking the average of the  $L_h/\lambda_0$  value with maximum bandwidth for  $\epsilon_r = 2.2$  substrate in Fig. 4 and the  $L_h/\lambda_0$  value with maximum bandwidth for  $\epsilon_r = 4.5$  substrate in Fig. 9; which equals to approximately  $0.05\lambda_0$  or 6 mm. Simulation results using the  $L_h/\lambda_0$  value with maximum bandwidth for  $\epsilon_r = 2.2$  and 4.5, instead of using the average between the two showed bandwidths of 10% and 48%, respectively, compared to over 55% when using the average value. Similarly, the vertical length of the L-probe feed for the  $\epsilon_r = 3.27$  substrate is realized by taking the average of the  $L_v/\lambda_0$  value with maximum bandwidth for  $\epsilon_r = 2.2$  substrate in Fig. 6 and the  $L_v/\lambda_0$  value with maximum bandwidth for  $\epsilon_r = 4.5$  substrate in Fig. 11; which equals to  $0.08\lambda_0$  or 10 mm. For the  $\epsilon_r = 6.0$  and 9.2 substrates, the horizontal and vertical lengths of the L-probe feed are realized by taking the  $L_h/\lambda_0$  value with maximum bandwidth for  $\epsilon_r = 4.5$  substrate in Fig. 9; which equals to  $0.02\lambda_0$  or 2.5 mm, and the  $L_v/\lambda_0$  value with maximum bandwidth for  $\epsilon_r = 4.5$  substrate in Fig. 11; which equals to  $0.08\lambda_0$  or 10 mm.

VSWR results in Fig. 13 (a) show that, for  $\epsilon_r = 3.27$  substrate, using the *first-pass* L-probe design over the vertical probe, the bandwidth improved from 9% to over 55%. Similarly, VSWR results in Fig. 13 (b) show that, for  $\epsilon_r = 6.0$  substrate, using the designed L-probe over the vertical probe, the bandwidth improved from 13% to over 60%. VSWR results in Fig. 13 (c) show that, for  $\epsilon_r = 9.2$  substrate, using the designed L-probe over the vertical probe, the bandwidth improved from 33% to over 53%. FEKO FEM and HFSS FEM results for the L-probe are in agreement in the three plots.

Table 3: U-slot microstrip patch antenna dimensions for various substrates

	$\epsilon_r = 3.27$	$\epsilon_r = 6.0$	$\epsilon_r = 9.2$
a	4.24	3.14	2.44
b	4.24	3.14	2.44
W	38.17	28.18	21.88
L	27.56	20.34	15.8
$L_s$	19.08	14.06	10.94
t	2.14	1.58	1.22
$W_s$	14.83	10.95	8.5
$r_p$	1	1	1
$x_p$	0 (10.78)	6 (7.17)	4(5.9)
$y_p$	0 (-2)	-3 (-3)	-5(-5)
d	3	3	3
h	13	12	12

\*All values are in mm.

The antenna gain for the  $\epsilon_r = 3.27, 6.0,$  and  $9.2$  substrate design examples is illustrated in Fig. 14. As expected, the antenna gain for the low permittivity 3.27 substrate is the highest with around 2-3 dB in most of the  $VSWR \leq 2$  bandwidth.

The co- and cross-polar radiation patterns in the  $\phi = 0^\circ$  and  $\phi = 90^\circ$  planes for the  $\epsilon_r = 3.27$  substrate design example are shown in Fig. 15. It is observed that cross-polar levels are lower in the  $\phi = 0^\circ$  plane in comparison with the  $\phi = 90^\circ$  plane. This is expected and is due to the asymmetric current distribution in the  $\phi = 90^\circ$  plane.

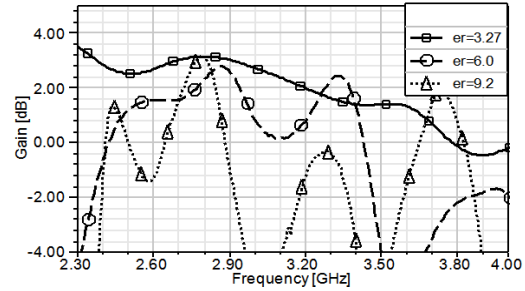


Fig. 14. FEKO FEM gain for  $\epsilon_r = 3.27, 6.0,$  and  $9.2$  substrates.

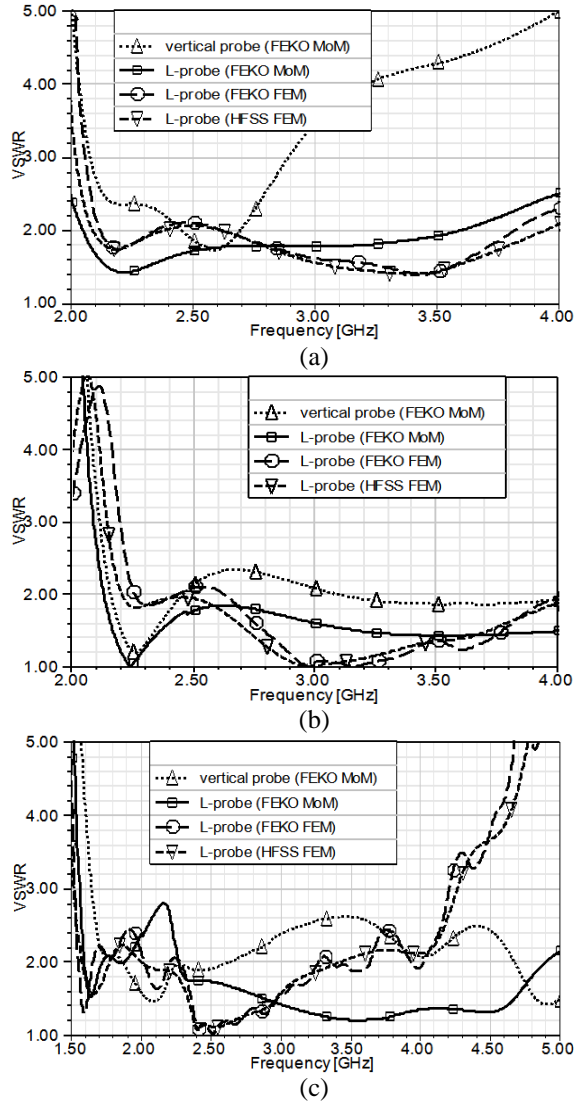


Fig. 13. VSWR with vertical probe and L-probe for substrates (a)  $\epsilon_r = 3.27,$  (b)  $\epsilon_r = 6.0,$  and (c)  $\epsilon_r = 9.2.$

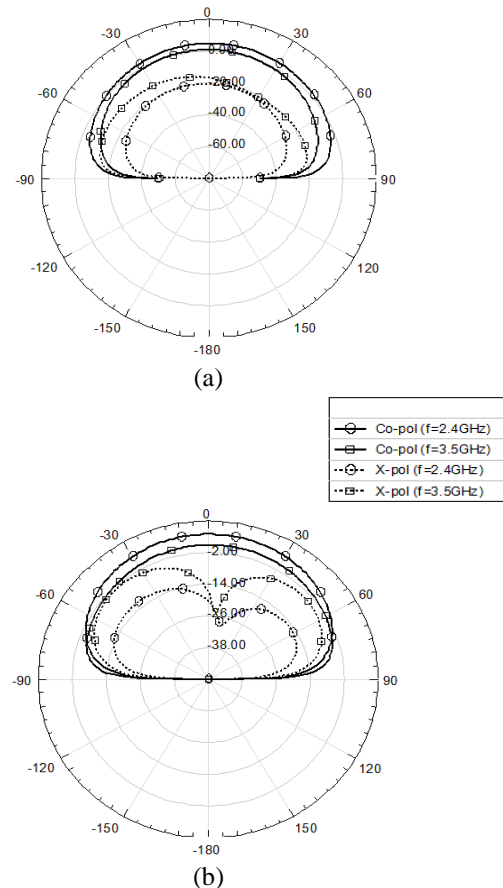


Fig. 15. FEKO MoM co-polar and cross-polar patterns for the L-probe fed U-slot patch design for  $\epsilon_r = 3.27$  substrate at 2.4 GHz and 3.5 GHz: (a)  $\phi = 0^\circ$  and (b)  $\phi = 90^\circ.$

**B. Summary of empirical design technique for L-probe feed**

The empirical design technique for the L-probe feed developed above can be summarized as follows:

- (a) For  $\epsilon_r = 2.2$  substrates, use initial *first-pass* values of  $L_h = 0.08\lambda_0$  and  $L_v = 0.08\lambda_0$ . For further optimization, use values of  $0.08\lambda_0 \leq L_h \leq 0.11\lambda_0$ .
- (b) For  $2.2 < \epsilon_r < 4.5$  substrates, use initial *first-pass* values of  $L_h = 0.05\lambda_0$  and  $L_v = 0.08\lambda_0$ . For further optimization, use values of  $0.05\lambda_0 \leq L_h \leq 0.08\lambda_0$ .
- (c) For  $4.5 \leq \epsilon_r \leq 9.2$  substrates, use initial *first-pass* values of  $L_h = 0.02\lambda_0$  and  $L_v = 0.08\lambda_0$ . For further optimization, use values of  $0.02\lambda_0 \leq L_h \leq 0.04\lambda_0$  and  $0.05\lambda_0 \leq L_v \leq 0.08\lambda_0$ .

The design procedure assumes the substrate height,  $h$ , is greater than the vertical length of the L-probe,  $L_v$ , namely  $0.10\lambda_0 \leq h \leq 0.12\lambda_0$ . Also, the design procedure assumes the probe diameter,  $2r_p$ , is less than the horizontal length of the L-probe,  $L_h$ , otherwise further optimization to either probe diameter or  $L_h$  is needed. The design procedure is applicable for  $\epsilon_r = 2.2$ - $9.2$  substrates only.

## V. CONCLUSION

In this paper, an initial, low-profile, wideband U-slot patch design is realized using the method of dimensional invariance. Ideal L-probe feed dimensions are established through extensive parametric study on  $\epsilon_r = 2.2$  and  $4.5$  substrates to propose empirical guidelines for the design of L-probe feeds which yield *first-pass* optimum impedance bandwidth. The established ideal L-probe dimensions, after further extrapolation, are used successfully on other substrates,  $\epsilon_r = 3.27$ ,  $6.0$  and  $9.2$ , for the design of *first-pass* L-probe feeds which yield impedance bandwidth over 55%, 60%, and 53%, respectively.

Results show good agreement between the three EM solvers. FEKO FEM and HFSS FEM results, in particular, show closer agreement. This is to be expected since the same geometry and underlying computational electromagnetic method are used in the two solvers.

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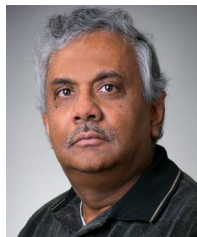
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