

# Compact Microstrip Branch-line Coupler with Wideband Harmonic Suppression

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**Abstract** — one compact microstrip branch-line coupler with wideband harmonic suppression is presented in this letter. The new structure has two significant advantages, which not only effectively reduces the occupied area to 26.5% of the conventional branch-line coupler at 0.96 GHz, but also has high 6<sup>th</sup> harmonic suppression performance. The measured results indicate that a bandwidth of more than 120 MHz has been achieved while the phase difference between  $S_{21}$  and  $S_{31}$  is within  $90^\circ \pm 1^\circ$ . The measured bandwidth of  $|S_{21}|$  and  $|S_{31}|$  within  $3 \pm 0.5$  dB are 145 MHz and 150MHz, respectively. Furthermore, the measured insertion loss is comparable to that of a conventional branch-line coupler. The new coupler can be easily implemented by using the standard printed-circuit-board etching processes and is very useful for wireless communication systems.

**Index Terms** — Branch-line coupler, microstrip, harmonic suppression.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Branch-line couplers are extensively used at microwave frequencies in the design of microwave circuits such as balanced mixers, image-rejection mixers, balanced amplifiers,

power combiners, and power dividers, etc [1]. There are currently two drawbacks for the conventional microstrip branch-line design. Firstly, as the conventional branch-line coupler is composed of four quarter-wavelength transmission-line sections at the designed frequency, this will result in a large occupied area especially at low frequency. Secondly, the conventional design also has harmonics that occurred at the integral multiples of the fundamental operation frequency. These properties will degrade the performance of the coupler. Therefore, much work has been reported in recent years to achieve both compact design and harmonic suppression for the branch-line coupler [2-12].

Typically, there are two methods to design a compact planar microstrip branch-line coupler with harmonic suppression. The first method is to load the coupler with shunt open-stubs. By loading shunt open-stubs inside the free area of the branch-line coupler, Eccleston et al. designed a branch-line coupler with a size reduction of 37% to the conventional design at 1.8 GHz [5]. Based on the similar idea, Mondal et al. proposed a branch-line coupler, which has the properties of 42% size reduction at 2.4 GHz and 5<sup>th</sup> harmonics suppression [6]. However, further improvement should be carried out on size reduction and

harmonic suppression. The second design method is to introduce slow-wave resonators in the coupler structure. Using compensated spiral compact microstrip resonant cells (SCMRCs), Gu et al. introduced a branch-line coupler with its area reduced to 24% of the conventional one together with 2nd and 3rd harmonics suppression at 2.4 GHz. However, the isolation performance is not ideal [7]. By introducing high-low impedance resonators inside the free area of the coupler, Wang et al. proposed a slow-wave branch-line coupler with its area reduced to 28% of the conventional one at 2.0 GHz. Even so, it only has 2nd harmonic suppression performance [8]. On the other side, size reduction methods were also reported in [9–12]. These couplers achieve compact size, but the harmonic suppressions still need improvement.

The motivation of this paper is to design a new microstrip branch-line coupler with compact size and wideband harmonic suppression. For this purpose, one branch-line coupler with operation central frequency located at 0.96 GHz is designed, fabricated, and measured. Measured results indicate that the proposed branch coupler not only effectively reduces the occupied area to 26.5% of the conventional branch-line coupler at the same operation frequency, but also has high 6th harmonic suppression performance. Furthermore, the proposed new coupler has a bandwidth of more than 120 MHz, while the phase difference between  $S_{21}$  and  $S_{31}$  is within  $90^\circ \pm 1^\circ$ . The organizations of the paper are as following: the design theory of the proposed branch-line coupler is given in Section II; the simulated and measured results are given in Section III, and the conclusions are given in Section IV.

### II. CIRCUIT DESIGN

The schematic layout of the proposed branch-line coupler is shown in Fig. 1, which consists of eight microstrip open-ended resonators loaded inside the free area of a conventional branch-line coupler. Each microstrip resonator is composed of a short high-impedance line and a long low-impedance line with open-end. This type of loading will introduce eight microstrip open-ended resonators that are in parallel with the main transmission lines of the conventional coupler. As the length of

the high-impedance line is very short and less than  $\lambda/10$ , where  $\lambda$  is the guided wavelength at the operation frequency. Therefore, each

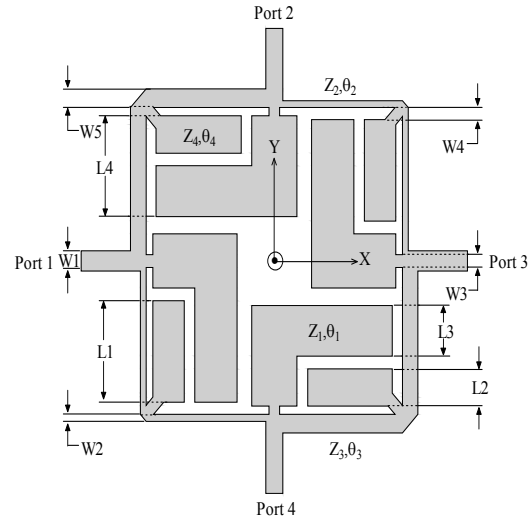


Fig. 1. Topology of the proposed branch-line coupler.

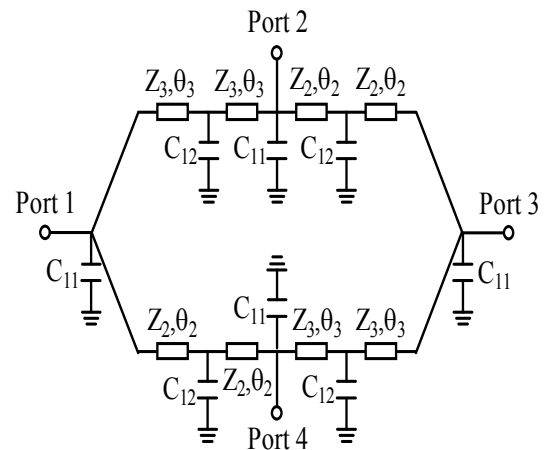


Fig. 2. Equivalent circuit of the proposed branch-line coupler.

high-impedance line can be deemed as a lumped element with negligibly small value and its inductance effect to the per unit length of the main transmission lines between two adjacent ports can be ignored since it is trivial. The capacitances caused by the low-impedance lines are loaded parallel with the main transmission lines in a distributed form. This will increase the per unit length capacitance of the main transmission lines between two adjacent ports. Figure 2 shows the equivalent circuit of the proposed branch-line

coupler. We can clearly see from this figure that the loaded high-low impedance resonators will introduce extra parallel capacitances denoted as  $C_{11}$  and  $C_{12}$  in the coupler, where  $C_{11}$  and  $C_{12}$  are the capacitances caused by the couplings between the loaded resonators and the ground. Thus, this type of loading can increase the shunt capacitance in the coupler. As the propagation constant  $\beta$  is given by

$$\beta = \omega \sqrt{L_0(C_0 + C_1)}, \quad (1)$$

Where  $L_0$  and  $C_0$  are the distributed inductance and capacitance for the main line of the branch-line coupler per unit length, respectively, and  $C_1$  is the effective distributed capacitance per unit length caused by the shunt capacitance  $C_{11}$  and  $C_{12}$ . Clearly, the propagation constant is increased by the periodic capacitive loading. An increased propagation constant means a shorter physical structure can be used to yield a required electrical length compared with a conventional transmission line. This new type of slow-wave loading dose not occupy extra area of the circuit as the periodic slow-wave loading are placed at the free area inside the branch-line coupler. We can get a desired slow-wave factor by adjusting the structure parameters of the proposed new branch-line coupler properly. On the other side, when the electrical length of the loaded high-low impedance resonator is odd number times of  $\lambda/4$ , where  $\lambda$  is the guided wavelength at the spurious resonance frequency, harmonic signals that occurred at the integral multiples of the fundamental operation frequency can be suppressed. The proposed branch-line coupler is designed based on the slow-wave loading mentioned above. The values of  $L_0$ ,  $C_0$ , and  $C_1$  can be achieved by the curve fitting method through Advanced Design System simulator (ADS) based on the proposed lumped element equivalent circuit. Then, the coarse value of the structure parameters can be achieved by the experimental equations given in [13]. With further optimal design by the full-wave electronic magnetic (EM) simulation software (ANSOFT HFSS version 11.0), the final structure parameters of the proposed branch-line coupler are as follows:  $W_1 = 1.7$  mm,  $W_2 = 0.6$  mm,  $W_3 = 1.1$  mm,  $W_4 = 0.7$  mm,  $W_5 = 1.6$  mm,  $L_1 = 9$  mm,  $L_2 = 3.2$  mm,  $L_3$

$= 4.6$  mm,  $L_4 = 8.5$  mm. They can be easily implemented by the standard printed-circuit-board etching processes. The substrate used here has a relative dielectric constant of 2.94 and a thickness of 0.76 mm and the total area of the proposed branch-line coupler is 820.25 mm<sup>2</sup>.

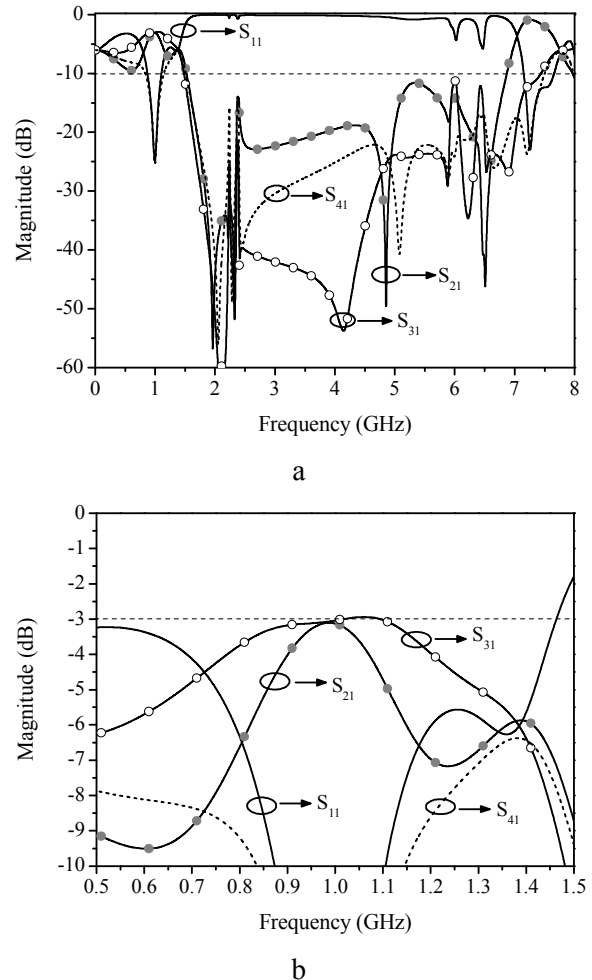


Fig. 3. Simulated S-parameters of the proposed branch-line coupler.

a Frequency range of 0 to 8 GHz.

b Frequency range of 0.5 to 1.5 GHz.

### III. SIMULATION AND MEASUREMENT RESULTS

Simulation was accomplished with ANSOFT HFSS. Measurement was carried out on an Agilent 8510C network analyzer. Figure 3 shows the simulated results of S-parameters. Figure 4 shows the measured S-parameters of the proposed

branch-line coupler. We can find that they are in good agreement. Referring to the measured results in Fig. 4, the central frequency located at 0.96 GHz can be clearly observed. At this central frequency, the measured  $S_{21}$  is 3.12 dB and  $S_{31}$  is 3.10 dB, while the measured bandwidth of  $|S_{21}|$  and  $|S_{31}|$  within  $3 \pm 0.5$  dB are 145 MHz and 150MHz, respectively.

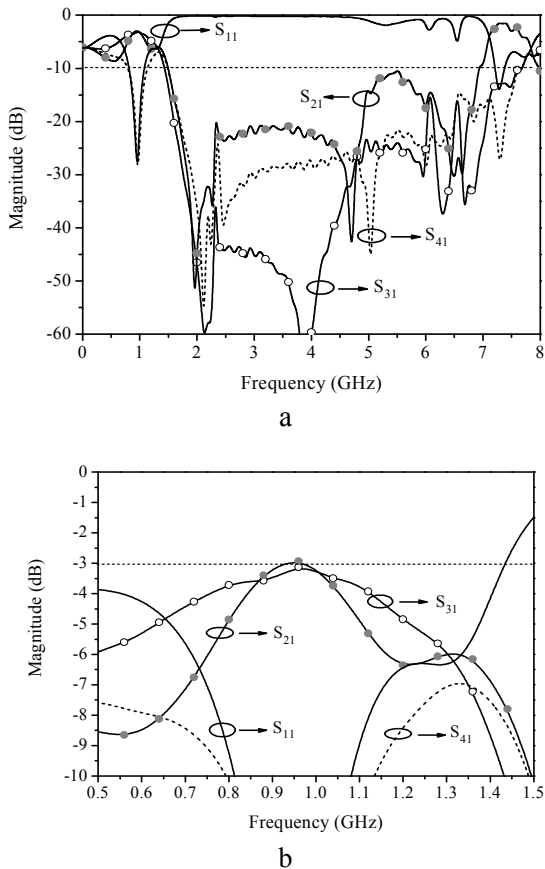


Fig. 4. Measured S-parameters of the proposed branch-line coupler.  
 a Frequency range of 0 to 8 GHz.  
 b Frequency range of 0.5 to 1.5 GHz.

From Fig. 4a we can also observe that the 6th harmonic signals have been effectively suppressed with  $S_{21}$  and  $S_{31}$  lower than a criterion of -10 dB. This means the proposed new coupler can protect specialized communication system from the interference of the unwanted signals from 1.5 GHz to 5.8 GHz, such as the signals in the IEEE 802.11 a/b/g standard specifications. This property is very useful for modern communication system

to operation in high performance. In order to study the size reduction performance, we investigated the circuit area of conventional one at the same frequency and found that the cost area is 3089.88 mm<sup>2</sup>. This means that the proposed branch-line coupler can effectively reduce the occupied area to 26.5% of the conventional coupler.

Figure 5 shows the phase difference between  $S_{21}$  and  $S_{31}$ . According to a criterion of  $\pm 1^\circ$  around the optimum  $90^\circ$  phase difference, the frequency range is from 0.90 GHz to 1.02 GHz corresponding to a bandwidth is 12.5%. To demonstrate the superior performance of the proposed coupler, Table 1 shows the performance comparison of the proposed design with several previous designs. Hence, the advantages of the proposed coupler can be clearly observed. Photograph of the fabricated branch-line coupler is shown in Fig. 6.

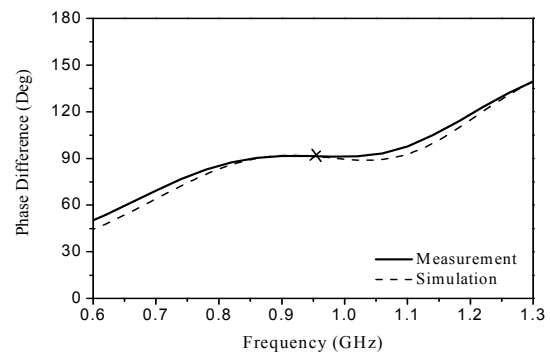


Fig. 5. Phase difference between  $S_{21}$  and  $S_{31}$ .

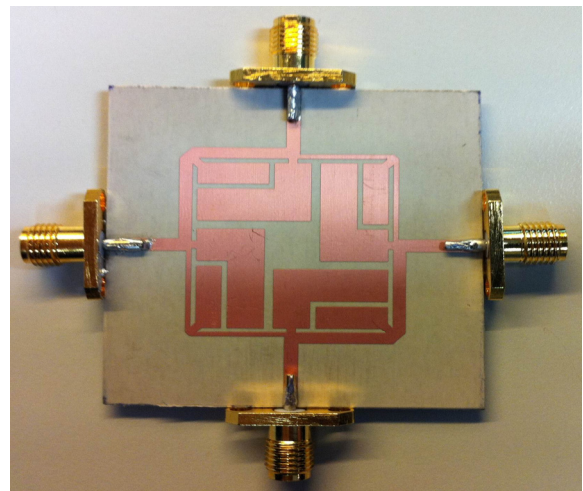


Fig. 6. Proposed branch-line coupler.

Table 1: Performance comparison of couplers

	<b>Relative Area</b>	<b>Harmonic Suppression</b>
Conventional	100%	No
[5]	63%	Not Reported
[6]	58%	5 <sup>th</sup>
[7]	24%	3 <sup>rd</sup>
[8]	28%	2 <sup>nd</sup>
[9]	29.33%	4 <sup>th</sup>
[10]	26.8%	2 <sup>nd</sup>
[11]	25%	4 <sup>th</sup>
This Work	26.5%	6 <sup>th</sup>

#### IV. CONCLUSION

A novel compact microstrip branch-line coupler has been presented in this letter. Due to eight microstrip open-ended resonators placed inside the free area of a conventional branch-line coupler, the new structure has effectively reduced the occupied area to 26.5% of the conventional design at 0.96 GHz and has high 6th harmonic suppression performance. One sample microstrip branch-line coupler has been fabricated, measured, and compared with the previous designs. Results indicate that the proposed coupler has the properties of compact size, low insertion loss, and wideband harmonic suppression performance. With this good performance, the proposed branch-line coupler has potential applications in modern wireless communication systems.

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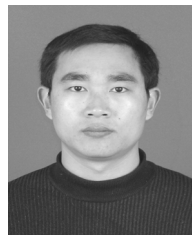
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