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A Novel Supercell-Based Dielectric Grating Dual-Beam Leaky-Wave Antenna for 60-GHz Applications

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Abstract—This communication proposes a novel dual-beam dielectric grating antenna based on the supercell (SC) concept. Through the theoretical analysis of the effective phase constants of the SC, it is found that two space harmonic modes ($m = -1$ and $m = -2$) can be simultaneously excited (above the air line) within a certain frequency range. This phenomenon leads to the generation of two radiation beams in the far-field region. At the frequency where the phase constants satisfy $\beta_{-1} = -\beta_{-2}$, the two beams are in symmetric directions with respect to the axis that is perpendicular to the azimuth plane. Different from the conventional periodic structures that the $m = -2$ mode lacks well control, the proposed antenna can manipulate both modes and obtain equal performance for the two radiation beams. In this communication, the symmetric beam case is investigated. The detailed design principle is presented. In addition, the frequency-based beam steering characteristic that the two beams scan in the same clockwise or anticlockwise direction is discussed as well. The proposed antenna operates in 60-GHz band and it can be a good candidate for the WiGig application.

Index Terms—60-GHz, dielectric grating antenna, dispersion analysis, dual-beam, leaky-wave, supercell (SC).

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the 60-GHz band has attracted much interest, because of its high transmission rate at the level of Gb/s and the fast-growing demand of unlicensed short-range data links [1]–[3]. Antenna, as a key component of the entire communication system, its design in this frequency band always faces challenges. The fabrication cost, antenna performance and integration ability with other components are often the important design considerations [4]. In the past decades, the difficulties inherent in constructing antennas at millimeter-wave frequencies have spurred interest in dielectric antennas [5]. Thanks to their advantages of low-cost, easy integration and good compatibility, many studies have been conducted and reported. In terms of the antenna configuration, the dielectric antennas can be generally categorized into two types, dielectric rod and periodic grating antennas [5]–[11]. The former type often features end-fire radiation. In [5], the characteristics of linearly and curvilinearly tapered cylindrical dielectric rod antennas are analyzed. For the latter type, the periodic gratings-based dielectric antennas employ leaky-wave principle as the main radiation mechanism. They have more flexible radiation directions and offer the advantage of frequency-based beam steering. The detailed theories of these antennas are presented in [6] and [7]. In [8] and [9], the dielectric grating antennas with omnidirectional patterns are presented. Reference [10] discusses the effects of the grating profile and various

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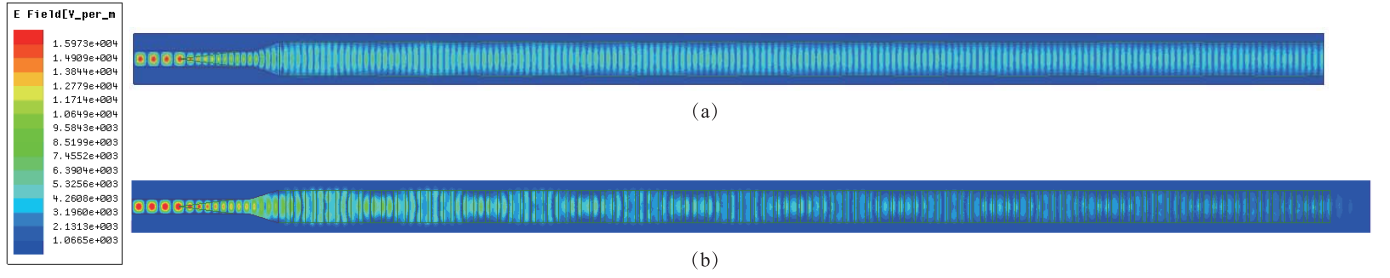


Fig. 4. Full-wave simulated E-field distributions of (a) grounded dielectric waveguide without corrugations and (b) proposed SC-based dielectric grating dual-beam leaky-wave antenna.

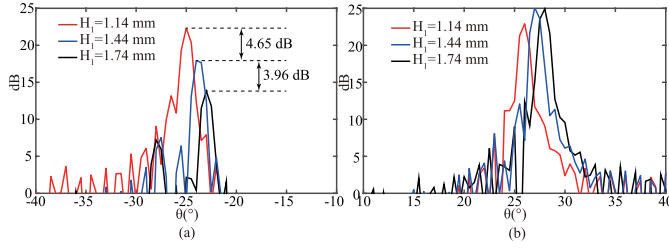


Fig. 5. Simulated copolarized radiation patterns (yz plane) with various H_1 at 60 GHz. (a) Backward beam. (b) Forward beam.

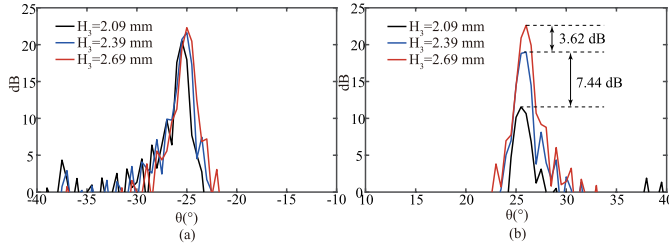


Fig. 6. Simulated copolarized radiation patterns (yz plane) with various H_3 at 60 GHz. (a) Backward beam. (b) Forward beam.

centerline and consists of two height-varying corrugations on each side along the longitudinal direction. Each corrugation can be treated as one unit cell (UC) and all the UCs have the same physical length. The heights from the lowest to the highest are denoted as H_1 , H_2 , and H_3 , respectively. The identical SCs are periodically arranged along one dimension. A prototype of the proposed antenna that contains 45 SCs is demonstrated in this communication. On the backside of the antenna, a ground plane can be found. In this design, the Teflon material is used as the dielectric. Its parameters are $\epsilon_r = 2.1$ and loss tangent = 0.001.

III. THEORY AND DESIGN PRINCIPLE

In [20], we propose a novel multiple periodic configuration, in which several different series connected UCs form an SC and a number of identical SCs are periodically arranged to compose the antenna. Through the analysis on the effective phase constants of the SC, we have demonstrated that with the same antenna length, the SC-based periodic structures can excite higher order space harmonic modes to radiate at relatively lower frequencies more easily than the conventional counterparts. The more the number of UCs in the SC, the shorter the separation distance (in the phase constant diagram) of the space harmonic modes. Based on this phenomenon, the SC concept is applied to this dual-beam antenna design. In the previous study, it is found that as long as the number of UCs in

one SC is larger than one, the $m = -1$ and $m = -2$ modes can be simultaneously excited in a certain frequency range. However, with the increase of the quantity of UCs, the design complexity is increased correspondingly. In view of this consideration, the SC configuration with triple UCs is chosen in this design. The configuration of the initial asymmetric SC is shown in Fig. 2(a). Since the proposed antenna is expected to have symmetric performance, a symmetric SC configuration should be more suitable for this design. Therefore, the SC is finally designed as Fig. 2(b) shows. Comparing the two structures, the symmetric design should be easier to fabricate. The operation principle of the symmetric SC is identical to the previous discussion.

By using the full wave simulation software ANSYS high frequency structural simulator, the effective phase constants of the proposed symmetric SC can be extracted, as shown in Fig. 3. In Fig. 3, the black dashed lines stand for the air lines and the gray region refers to the leaky-wave radiation region. The red curves are the phase constants for various space harmonic modes. They can be expressed by

$$\beta_m(\omega) = \pm \left[\beta_e(\omega) + \frac{2m\pi}{L_{sc}} \right] \quad m = 0, \pm 1, \pm 2, \pm 3 \dots \quad (1)$$

where m is the mode index, β_e and L_{sc} ($L_{sc} = 6p$) are the effective phase constant and the physical length of the SC. We can observe that, as we expected, from 57 to 63 GHz, two space harmonic modes are above the air lines and with different phase constants. They correspond to $m = -1$ and $m = -2$ modes, respectively. According to the theory of leaky-wave antenna, this phenomenon implies that the structure based on the proposed SC can generate two radiation beams in the far-field region. In addition, at almost 60 GHz, the curves of the two modes are intersected and the phase constants satisfy $\beta_{-1} = -\beta_{-2}$. The well-known relation between the radiation angle (from broadside direction) and the phase constant is defined by

$$\theta \approx \sin^{-1} \left(\frac{\beta_m}{k_0} \right). \quad (2)$$

Therefore, the two resultant beams are symmetric with respect to the xz plane. Furthermore, it is not difficult to find that with the frequency variation, the two beams show in-directional steering. This is different from most existing studies on beam steering dual-beam antenna.

The design of the proposed dual-beam leaky-wave antenna can start from a grounded dielectric waveguide without corrugations. By properly designing the parameters t_1 , t_2 , t_3 , and W_{ant} , the grounded dielectric waveguide can be fed from the left side. The E-field distribution inside the dielectric waveguide is presented in Fig. 4(a). It can be seen that after the transition part, the waves are converted from the waveguide mode to the fundamental propagation mode in the dielectric. The E-field shows an almost uniform distribution along the dielectric waveguide. From the left side to the end of the structure, there is no obvious magnitude reduction. It implies that the designed dielectric waveguide can successfully guide the waves.

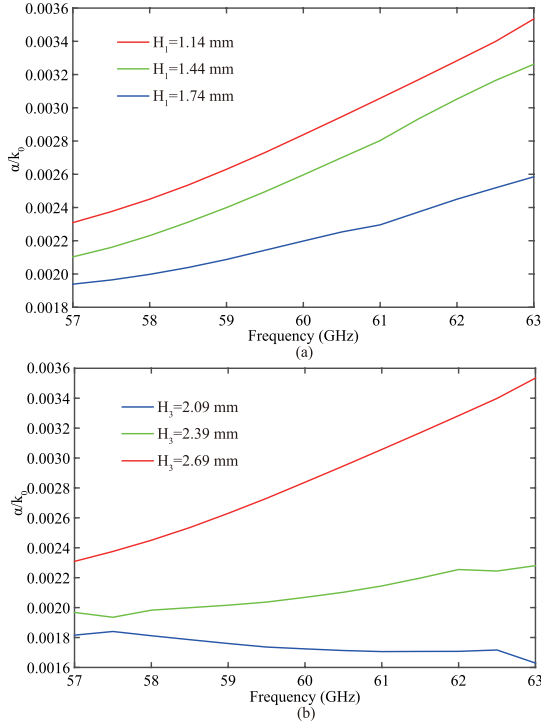


Fig. 7. Normalized attenuation constants for various (a) H_1 and (b) H_3 .

After this procedure, the corrugations can be added on the dielectric waveguide. The E-field distribution of the proposed SC-based antenna with optimized parameters is presented in Fig. 4(b). It is seen that the magnitude of the E-field is gradually reduced along the structure due to the leaky-wave radiation.

After adding the corrugations, the radiation performance of the proposed antenna can be investigated. In order to reduce the design complexity, we can keep the parameter H_2 unchanged and gradually adjust H_1 and H_3 to obtain the required gain. Figs. 5 and 6 present the effects of the parameter H_1 and H_3 on the radiation patterns, respectively. In Fig. 5, the patterns stand for the copolarizations in yz plane at 60 GHz. It can be seen that with the increase of H_1 , the gain of the backward beam is gradually reduced. In contrast, the gain of the forward beam is less sensitive to this parameter variation. Similarly, in Fig. 6, the gain of the forward beam is increased as H_3 increases while that of the backward beam is almost kept. Therefore, it can be found that the backward and forward beams are almost independently controlled by H_1 and H_3 , respectively. According to the aforementioned theory, the two beams correspond to the two space harmonic modes. Therefore, we can conclude that the $m = -2$ and $m = -1$ modes are dominated by H_1 and H_3 , respectively. By proper designing these two parameters, the beam pairs with flexible gain can be obtained.

In Fig. 7(a) and (b), the normalized attenuation constants for various H_1 and H_3 are presented, respectively. With the decrease of H_1 and the increase of H_3 , the proposed antenna shows a gradually increased attenuation. It implies that more power is radiated by the antenna. All the attenuation constants indicate the total power loss in the structure, namely, the wave attenuation comes from both $m = -1$ and $m = -2$ modes. Since H_1 and H_3 have dominant effects on the $m = -2$ and $m = -1$ modes, approximately, we can think that Fig. 7(a) and (b) stands for the variations of attenuation of the two modes, respectively.

In Fig. 8, effects of various antenna parameters on the phase constants are presented. The effects of the UC length p , overall

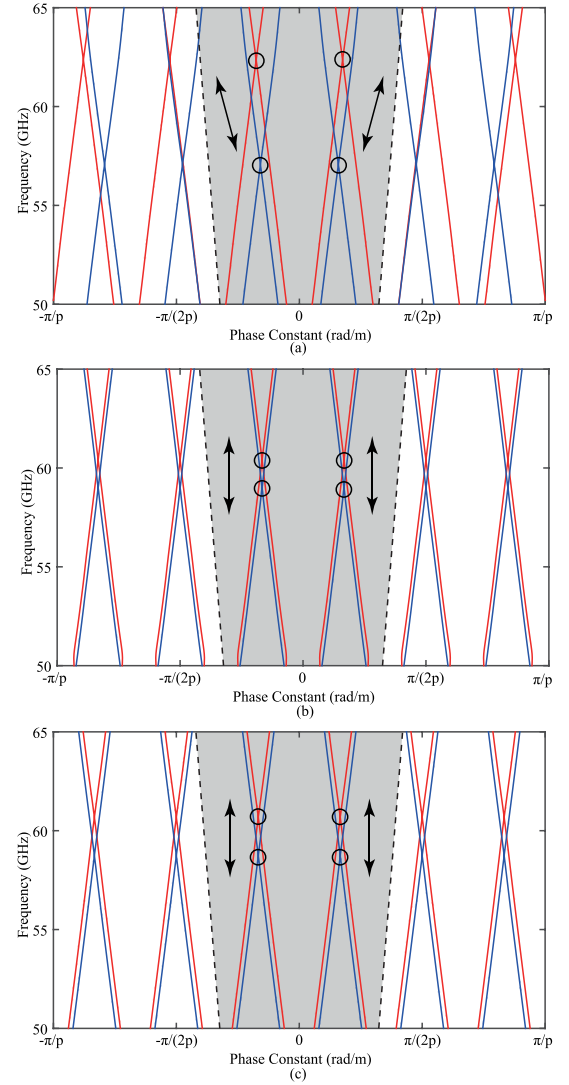


Fig. 8. Effects of various antenna parameters on the phase constants. (a) Various UC length p . The red and blue curves stand for $p = \{0.92, 1.02\}$ mm, respectively. (b) Various overall SC height $\{(H_1, H_2, H_3) + \delta\}$. The red and blue curves stand for $\delta = \{-0.3, 0.3\}$ mm, respectively. (c) Various SC width W_{wg} . The red and blue curves stand for $W_{wg} = \{4, 20\}$ mm, respectively. The circles indicate the symmetric dual-beam locations.

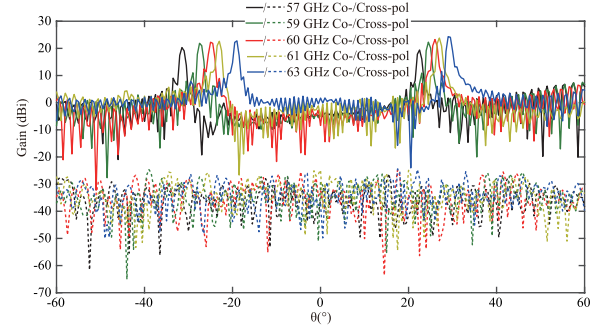


Fig. 9. Simulated radiation patterns in yz plane for the proposed antenna.

SC height $\{(H_1, H_2, H_3) + \delta\}$, and SC width W_{wg} are shown in Fig. 8 (a)–(c), respectively. We can see that for symmetric dual-beam, p provides simultaneous controls in both vertical and horizontal axes, while, δ and W_{wg} adjust the dual-beam points in the vertical axis. These variations imply that the antenna parameters can offer enough

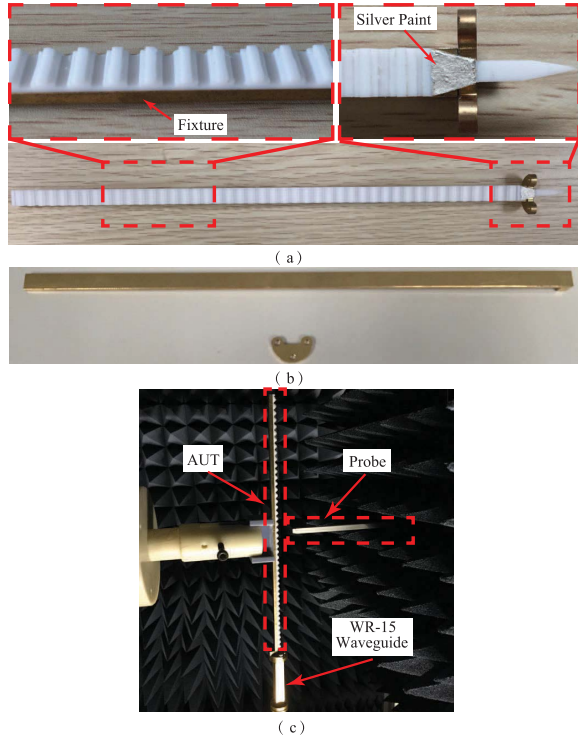


Fig. 10. Photographs of (a) fabricated antenna, (b) fixture, and (c) measurement setup.

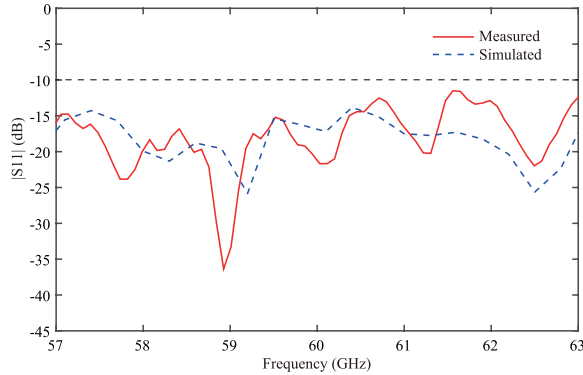


Fig. 11. Measured and simulated magnitudes of S11 for the proposed antenna.

TABLE I
ANTENNA PARAMETERS (mm)

L_{ant}	W_{ant}	W_{wg}	p	H_1	H_2	H_3	t_1	t_2	t_3
290.78	8	3.759	0.97	1.14	1.88	2.69	15	3	7

degree of freedom to manipulate symmetric dual-beam points in the phase constant diagram. Consequently, the operation frequency and beam directions can be adjusted. The optimized antenna parameters are listed in Table I. Fig. 9 shows the full-wave simulated copolarization and cross-polarization patterns in yz plane with optimized geometrical parameters. The frequency range covers the band of the WiGig application. The cross-polarizations within this band are very small.

IV. EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS

In order to verify the proposed idea, the SC-based dielectric grating dual-beam leaky-wave antenna is fabricated and experimentally

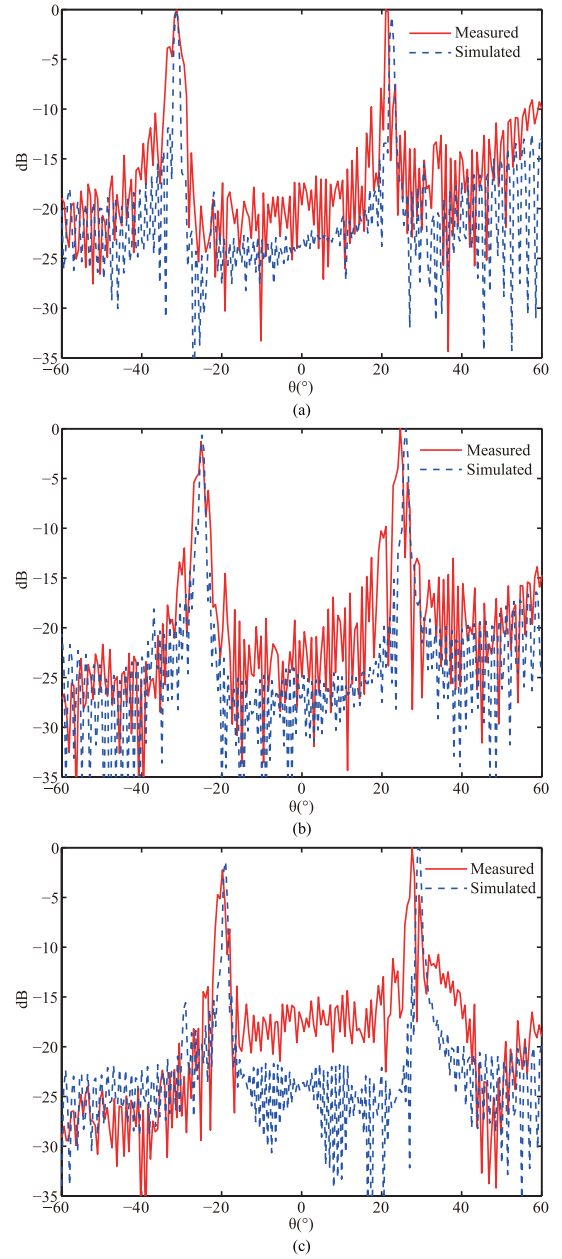


Fig. 12. Normalized measured and simulated radiation patterns (yz plane) at (a) 57, (b) 60, and (c) 63 GHz.

tested. The photographs of the fabricated antenna and measurement setup are presented in Fig. 10. An extra fixture is designed to not only provide strong support to the soft dielectric but also serve as a ground plane. In the measurement, it is fixed on the flange of the WR-15 waveguide by screws. The antenna is measured in the Nearfield Systems Inc. (NSI) near-field measurement system. The measured and simulated magnitudes of S11 are presented in Fig. 11. It is obvious that the fabricated prototype has very good impedance matching. From 57 to 63 GHz, the measured $|S_{11}|$ is below -10 dB and shows good agreement with the simulation.

In Fig. 12, the normalized measured and simulated radiation patterns E_θ in yz plane are presented. It can be seen that the measured and simulated patterns show reasonable agreements. Two radiation beams can be clearly observed. At 60 GHz, the proposed antenna is designed to have two symmetric radiation beams. The simulated

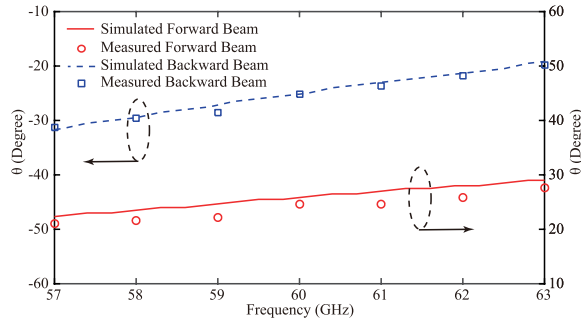


Fig. 13. Measured and simulated angles (from the broadside direction) of the backward and forward beams.

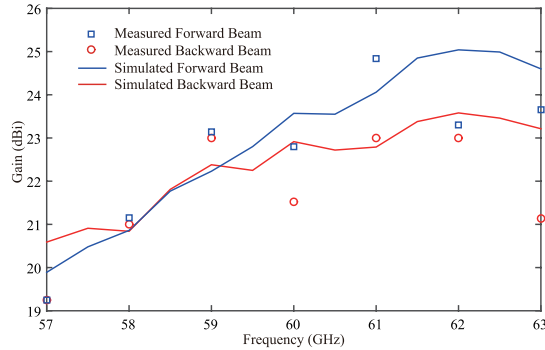


Fig. 14. Measured and simulated gain of the backward and forward beams.

results show that the backward and forward beams are at $\pm 26^\circ$, respectively. In the measurement, they appear at -25.2° and 24.6° . The discrepancy is very small. In order to examine the beam steering performance, the normalized measured and simulated patterns at 57 and 63 GHz are presented in Fig. 12(a) and (c), respectively. With the frequency variation, the two beams scan in the same clockwise or anticlockwise direction. Some discrepancies can be found between the measured and simulated results. They may be caused by the unavoidable fabrication tolerance and the difference between the practical implementation and the ideal simulation. In addition, the proposed antenna has narrow beamwidth. In the measurement process, the vibration of the measuring probe (Fig. 10) during movement may also affect the results. The probe is an open-ended waveguide probe which is based on the standard WR-15 waveguide and is provided by NSI. However, from these results, the proposed design idea is validated successfully. Fig. 13 summarizes the measured and simulated angles of the forward and backward beams over the frequency range from 57 to 63 GHz. It can be seen that the measured backward beam directions are almost the same as simulations. The maximum variation is smaller than 1.5° . The measured forward beam angles follow the same trend with the simulation. The variation is about 2° . In Fig. 14, the measured and simulated gain of the backward and forward beams are presented, respectively. The agreements are reasonable. At 60 GHz, the proposed antenna has high gain of 21.5 and 22.8 dBi for the backward and forward beams, respectively.

V. CONCLUSION

In this communication, an SC-based dielectric grating dual-beam leaky-wave antenna has been proposed, designed, fabricated and tested. The mechanism is analyzed through the dispersion analysis. Two space harmonic modes $m = -1$ and $m = -2$ are

excited to generate the dual-beam. At 60 GHz, the proposed antenna has symmetric beams and the two beams have similar properties. The proposed antenna is validated by both full-wave simulation and practical experiment. The results show reasonable agreements. The proposed antenna can be a good candidate for the WiGig application.

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