# An Rssi-Based Wi-Fi Download Management Approach for Energy Saving on Smartphones

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*Abstract*—Smartphones are emerging as a particularly appealing platform for network applications, espacially through the Wi-Fi interface. However, Wi-Fi entails considerable energy consumption and smartphones are bottlenecked by their battery capacity. Finding ways to reduce energy consumption of Wi-Fi is more than critical. In this paper, we address the problem of energy saving of Wi-Fi with regarding to Rssi. Through extensive experiments, we investigate how Rssi influences energy consumption. Based on our experimental findings, we propos a novel Rssi-based Wi-Fi download management approach for energy saving on smartphones which is simple but highly elaborate. Simulations prove that our approach is effective and can achieve more than 100% energy saving, both in a constantly moving scenario and in a stationary-moving scenario.

*Index Terms*—Rssi, Energy saving, algorithm.

## I. INTRODUCTION

SMARTPHONES are becoming increasingly popular because of their capabilities and functionalities and have emerged as a particularly appealing platform for network applications, espacially through the Wi-Fi interface. However, these light-weighted and easy-to-carry devices are constrained by their limited battery capacity. Considering that people use their smartphones to download large files such as movies, documents and apk tar files, in a stationary scenario or in a moving scenario, we address in this paper the energy consumption of downloading files via Wi-Fi and how to achieve better energy efficiency, with regarding to Rssi.

We first investigate the relationship between the energy consumption and Rssi and conclude that Rssi has a major impact on the energy consumption, and a Rssi-based Wi-Fi download management scheme is needed to achieve good energy efficiency. However, one of the key challenges is that constantly varying nature of Rssi. For example, as presented in [1], at a distance of 24 m, Rssi values between -40 and -84 dBm are encountered. Our experiments show that the weaker Rssi is, the greater its variation will be. This observation in line with the work done in [2]. Accurate Rssi measurement [3] may be helpful, but this involves detecting trends in Rssi values, detecting changes in transmission power, or detecting motions, which causes extra energy overhead. As the relationship between Rssi and energy consumption is threshold-based, we are able to conceive a simpler solution.

Prediction-based algorithm such as [4] may achieve good performance in a constantly moving scenario. In our algorithm,

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we take the opposite way, i.e. the making-sure strategy. Instead of predicting Rssi of the next moment, we make sure that the smartphone is truly in a strong signal area when starting downloading files, and make sure that the signal is truly degraded when stopping downloading files. In this way, we not only leverage the varying nature of Rssi, making each decision of starting or stopping downloads wiser and more reasonnable, but also avoid constantly stopping and restarting downloads, causing significant energy overhead of interrupting and reestablishing TCP connections as well as tail energy.

We also take into the geometric characteristics of Wi-Fi signal and moving smartphones when conceiving our algorithm. We conduct Monte-Carlo simulations and show the effectiveness of our algorithm.

The main contributions of this paper are as follows:

(1) We conduct extensive experiments to evaluate the relationship of rssi and the energy consumption.

(2) We propose a novel Rssi-based wifi access management algorithm, leveraging the inaccuracy of one measurement of Rssi and the additional energy consumption of pausing and restarting a download, taking into the geometric characteristics of Wi-Fi signal.

(3) We conduct effectiveness evaluation using simulations and show the effectiveness of our algorithm.

The rest of this article is organized as follows. We review some substantial works that focus on energy saving of Wi-Fi in Section II. In Section III, we describe our experimental settings for measuring the energy consumption of downloading a file at different Rssi and present our results. Our algorithm for energy saving is described in Section IV, and simulation results of our algorithm are given in Section V. We conclude our work in Section VI.

## II. RELATED WORKS

Energy optimization for smartphones has attracted considerable attention in recent years, and lots of researches have been done on the energy consumption of Wi-Fi.

Tan et al. [5] proposed power save mode (PSM) throttling, an application-independent protocol, which reshapes TCP traffic into periodic bursts with the same average throughput as the server transmission rate. Clients accurately predict the arriving time of packets, and turn on/off the wireless interfaces accordingly. PSM-throttling can minimize power consumption on TCP-based bulk traffic by effectively utilizing available Internet bandwidth without degrading the performance of application perceived by the user.

Fahad R. Dogar et al. [6] proposed Catnap, a system that exploits high bandwidth wireless interfaces by combining

small gaps between packets into meaningful sleep intervals, thereby allowing the NIC as well as the device to doze off. Catnap targets data oriented applications, such as web and file transfers, which can afford delay of individual packets as long as the overall transfer times do not increase. Catnap is implemented as an application independent proxy to decouple wired and wireless segments, and schedules ADU transmissions on the wireless side using hints regarding the application workload.

In [7], Young-Seol Lee and Sung-Bae Cho proposed a context-aware battery management system that uses probabilistic models to infer a user's situation with low power sensors such as acceleration and orientation and controls components that consume a large amount of energy such as screen and Wi-Fi interface. For example, when the system infers that the user goes out, it turns off Wi-Fi automatically. However, the authors didn't take into consideration the energy overhead of closing and reopening the Wi-Fi interface, which is more than 30 minutes of the energy consumption of keeping it open.

In [8], Jian Li et al. investigate the key factors influencing Wi-Fi energy consumption, and propose three energy management schemes: 1) dynamic control of Wi-Fi on/off interface; 2) improve communication efficiency via application packing; and 3) elongation of Wi-Fi Power Save Mode (PSM) via application alignment under mixed application workload. They design and test their solution as a device-side application utilizing general system process scheduling and network firewall techniques. However, their work regarding to Rssi didn't take into consideration the energy consumption characteristics, geometric characteristics and variation characteristics of Wi-Fi.

Previous work that is the most similar to ours is [4], which proposed a non-parametric Rssi prediction based energy-saving scheme for moving smartphones. By periodically monitoring Rssi in diverse network environments, their proposed scheme applies weighted scatter plot smoothing and kernel moving average algorithms to adaptively adjust file downloading and video streaming rates. However, the KMA prediction model that they adopted consumes much energy, causing a significant energy overhead. Besides, in the interval of [-90dBm, -70dBm], the variation of Rssi is more than 6dBm, and the accuracy of prediction models such as KMA can be greatly degraded. As they showed, in a fixed location scenario, their scheme may consume almost 100% more energy than if no prediction or adaption adopted for downloading files.

## III. EVALUATION OF RSSI AND ENERGY CONSUMPTION

### A. Experimental Setup for Power Measurement

This section describes the experimental setup for power measurement.

**Experimental Setup and Measurement Technology**: The DUT (Device Under Test) is a Huawei 8950D running Android 4.0 with superuser access, supporting IEEE 802.11 n/b/g. It's equiped with a double-core 1.2GHz Snapdragon MSM8225 CPU and 768MB RAM. We use a Monsoon Power Monitor [9] for power measurement. The Monsoon Power Monitor
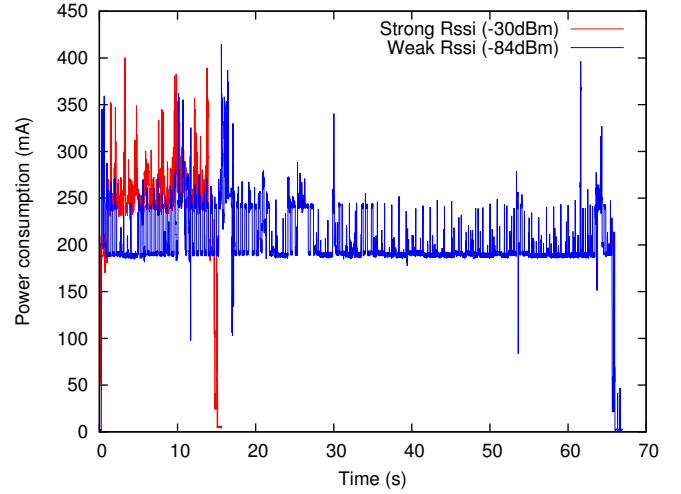


Fig. 1. Power consumption for downloading a file of 11.4Mb in different Rssi

supplies a stable voltage of 3.7V to the DUT and samples the power consumption at a rate of 5KHz.

**Measurement Methodology**: To perform the download, an application (WiDownload) that downloads files using the DownloadManager API provided by Android is developped and installed in the DUT. We also cross compile Iptables and Tcpdump and install them into the DUT as local libararies.

We adjust the distance between the DUT and the AP to get different Rssi. When we perform measurements, we keep all instruments at fixed location. We use Iptables to block the Internet access of all applications except that of WiDownload so that no interference traffic is introduced. During the download, the screen is off and the WifiLock is aquired.

We measure the power consumed for completing downloading a file of 11.4 Mb. After this, we perform the same download at the same fixed location, but with Tcpdump running to dump traffic information. Each measurement is repeated 3 times. After that, we move the instruments to another location where Rssi is different and reconduct the experiment.

### B. Measurement Results

Figure 1 shows the power consumption for download a file at strong (-30 dBm) and weak (-84 dBm) Rssi. Figure 2 and 3 are the corresponding traffic throughputs. Comparing the two, we can infer that the energy consumption for downloading files can be assumed to be proportional to the time it takes to finish the download. Rssi influences the the energy consumption for downloading files mainly due to its impact on the throughput. The whole dataset of the relationship between Rssi (averaged over time) and the energy consumption is plotted in Figure 4.

We conclude that when Rssi is higher than -70dBm, the energy consumption for the download is limited and independent of Rssi. When Rssi is between -70dBm and -80dBm, the energy consumption for the download increases as Rssi becomes weaker, but not so significantly. When Rssi is below -80dBm, the energy consumption for downloading
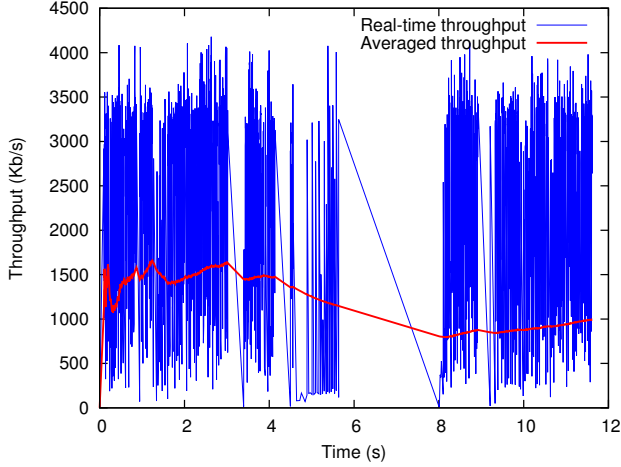
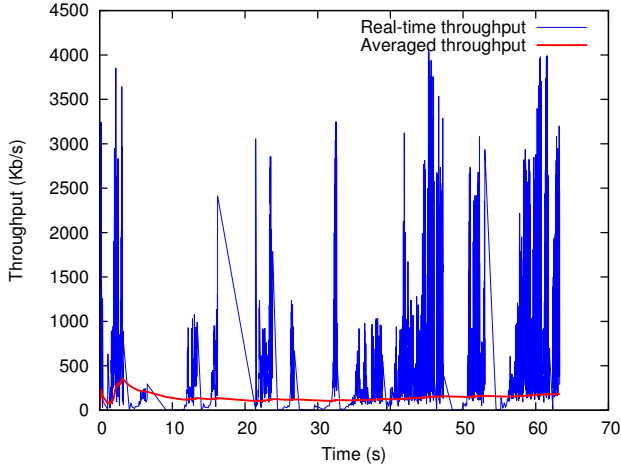Fig. 2. Throughput in strong Rssi (-30dBm)



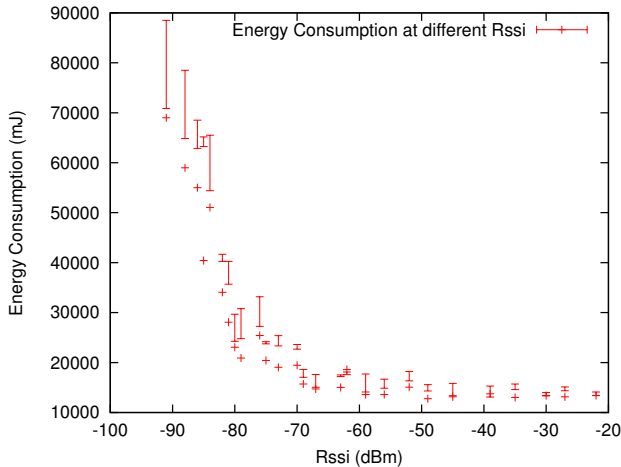Fig. 3. Throughput in weak Rssi (-84dBm)



Fig. 4. Energy Consumption in different Rssi

files increases dramatically.

Comparing the duration of throughput and energy consumption, we can see that the energy consumption duration is always 3-5 seconds longer than that of throughput. To further investigate this phenomenon, we use WiDownload to download a 22KB file, which is downloaded in less in 1 second, but the duration of energy consumption is more than 6 seconds. We conclude that Wi-Fi, as with 3G, introduces significant tail energy [10]. We can see that tail energy represents a great overhead if the download session is short.

## IV. Rssi-based Wi-Fi Download Management Algorithm

### A. Requirements for a good Rssi-based Download Management Algorithm

As Rssi has an significant impact on the energy consumption of the Wi-Fi downloading, one may consider closing the Wi-Fi interface when the Wi-Fi signal is weak and reopening it when the Wi-Fi signal is strong. However, our experiments show that closing and openning the Wi-Fi interface consumes much energy, 3700 mJ and 4300 mJ respectively, shown in Figure 5. Keeping the Wi-Fi interface open, on the other hand, consumes only 3.95 mW overhead. The energy consumption of closing and openning the Wi-Fi interface is equal to that of keeping the Wi-Fi open for 2025 seconds. Besides, keeping the Wi-Fi open allows to monitor Wi-Fi condition and adjust the smartphone's networking behaviors accordingly. In designing our Rssi-based download management algorithm, we keep the Wi-Fi interface open.

A good Rssi-based download management algorithm should take into consideration the 2 following major characteristics of Rssi of Wi-Fi.

First, we should also take into consideration the geometric characteristics of the Wi-Fi signal. Our measurements show that the distance of Rssi range of -70dBm to -80dBm is 4-10 meters, depending on the obstacles present in the Wi-Fi environment. As a person walks typically around 1.5m/s, not necessarily against the rayon direction of the Wi-Fi signal of AP, the phone has always sufficient time to adjust its download behavior to the Wi-Fi signal change within one sampling period, 2 seconds in our algorithm.

Second, when the Wi-Fi signal is weak or relatively weak, the variation of Rssi measured is significant. Each measurement of Rssi can thus be inaccurate. Adapting the download behavior to Rssi change should leave space for the verification of Rssi.

A good Rssi-based download management algorithm should also take into consideration the 2 following major characteristics of energy consumption of smartphones at different Rssi of Wi-Fi:

First, when Rssi is higher than -70dBm, the energy consumption for downloading files varies little and can be considered as constant. When Rssi is between -70dBm and -80dBm, the energy consumption for downloading files increases but not so significantly. So we can tolerate some time of download spent in the range of -70dBm and -80dBm if this could lead to better overall energy-saving strategy.
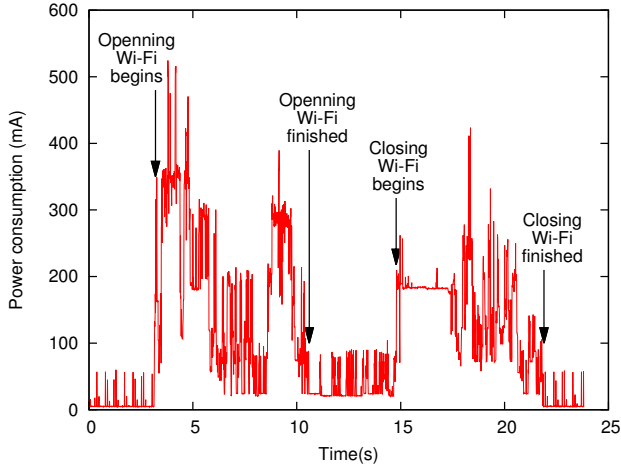
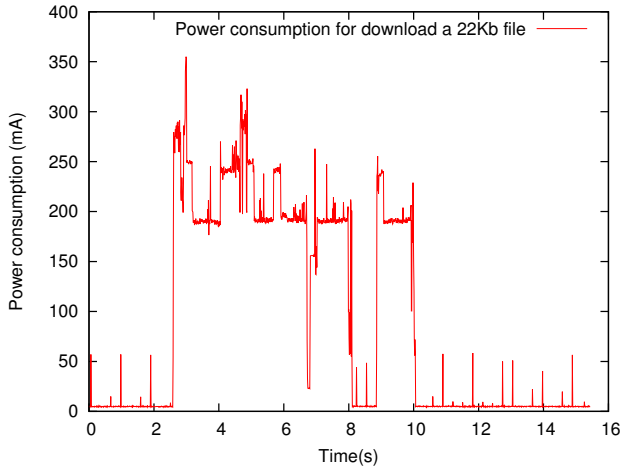Fig. 5. Energy Consumption of openning and closing Wi-Fi interface



Fig. 6. Energy Consumption of downloading a 22KB file

Second, we should avoid frequent transition between download and not download. In the one hand, interrupting and reestablishing a TCP connection can waste much energy and influence the download efficiency. In the other hand, each time a download is stopped, the Wi-Fi interface will continue to consume tail energy for 3-5 seconds, as we have presented in Sction II.

### B. Our Decision-Tree-Based Algorithm

Based on our finding in experiments, we are able to conceive the Rssi-based Wi-Fi Download Management Algorithm. We divide Wi-Fi signal strength measured by the smartphone into 3 categories: strong, relatively weak and weak, according to its impact on energy consumption:

(A) Strong: Rssi $>=$ -70dBm

(B) Relatively weak: Rssi $\in$ [-80dBm, -70dBm)

(C) Weak: Rssi $<$ -80dBm

We define 3 different perceptions of Wi-Fi: *good*, *acceptable*, *bad*. However, what's subtle is that the perception of Wi-Fi is not a simple mapping of the signal strength of Wi-Fi, but obtained dynamically according to previous perception

and the Rssi measured, as shown in Figure 5.

According to the current perception of Wi-Fi, we adjust the download strategy adaptively. The basic idea is to start downloading files when the perception of Wi-Fi is *good*, and to stop the download when the perception is *bad*. If the perception is *acceptable*, we continue the download if the download is running, and stay in the paused stated if the download is paused.

Our Rssi-based Wi-Fi download management algorithm works iteratively in three steps: update current perception of Wi-Fi, ajust download according to the current perception of Wi-Fi and sleep for 1 second. The pseudo-code in given in Algorithm 1. We incorporate these ideas in our algorithm

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**Algorithm 1** Rssi-based Download Management Algorithm

1:  **while** true **do**
2:    /**Update current perception of Wi-Fi,
3:    *as shown in Figure 7 */
4:    update_perception()
5:    **if** curr_perception is *good* **then**
6:      start_download()
7:    **else if** curr_perception is *bad* **then**
8:      stop_download()
9:    **end if**
10:   prev_perception ← curr_perception
11:   sleep() //sleep for 1 second
12: **end while**

---

mainly in the decision tree for updating current perception of Wi-Fi. The path 1, 3, 6 and 9 is easy to understand. Here are further analysis of the five other paths:

(a) Path 2: The previous perception is *good*, according to Algorithm 2, the phone is downloading files. As each Rssi measurement could be inaccurate, the Rssi measured is not sure indicator that the Wi-Fi signal is degraded. We set Path 2 to be *acceptable*, so that the decision-making is to be performed at the next iteration (to make sure). If the relatively weak Rssi is due to measurement variation, the next moment Path 4 will be taken and the perception will be updated to be *good*. In this way, the download is not interrupted and the energy overhead of reestablishing TCP connection is spared. If the relatively weak Rssi is due to the user moving to where the signal is degraded, the path 5 or 6 will be taken the next moment and the download will be stopped.

(b) Path 4: As the previous perception is *acceptable*, the perception prior to the previous moment could be *good* or *bad*. If the perception prior to the previous moment is *good*, the Path 2 is taken at the previous moment. So the sequence of the 3 most recent Rssi measured is: strong → relatively strong → strong. The download is not interrupted. If the perception prior to the previous moment is *bad*, then the sequence of the 3 most recent Rssi measured is: relatively weak or weak → strong → strong. It's a good indicator the phone comes into the strong Wi-Fi zone from a relatively distant location where the Wi-Fi is weak or relatively weak. And the *good* set here will trigger the download to start.

(c) Path 5: As the previous perception is *acceptable*, the perception prior to the previous moment could be *good* or

*bad*. If the perception prior to the previous moment is *good*, the sequence of the 3 most recent Rssi measured is: strong → relatively weak → relatively Weak, which is a good indicator that we get far away from the AP. As Path 5 is set to be *bad*, the download will be stopped and waste of energy in a degraded Wi-Fi is avoided. If the perception prior to the previous moment is *bad*, then the download is not started and the paused state of download will be continued.

(d) Path 7: The jump of the Rssi measured from weak to strong is rare, so this could be caused by the accidental measurement error. Not sure about the real state of the Wi-Fi, we leave the decision-making to the next moment, and either Path 4, Path 5 or Path 6 will be taken (to make sure).

(e) Path 8: As the previous perception is *bad*, the download is not running. The download will not be started until two consequent strong Rssi is measured (Path 8 → Path 7 → Path 4), which is good indicator that we get into the strong Wi-Fi signal area and two consequent measurements reduce the uncertainty of each one measurement.

### C. Analysis of Energy Overhead

Our algorithm is light-weighted. We simply need to store the perception of Wi-Fi of the previous iteration. The decision-making takes only 2 comparisons.

Our algorithm causes negligible energy overhead. Because the Rssi calculation is done by the Android OS and WifiService. In fact, once the Wi-Fi is connected, WifiService will be started in SystemServer and Rssi will be calculated periodically, as shown in the source code of Android:

```
WifiService(Context context){
    mContext = context;
    mInterfaceName =
        SystemProperties.get("wifi.interface",
        "wlan0");
    mWifiStateMachine = new
        WifiStateMachine(mContext,
        mInterfaceName);
    mWifiStateMachine.enableRssiPolling(true);
    ...
    ...
    }
```

We implemente our algorithm as an application. We measure the power consumption of running the application and not running the application, and the difference cannot be measured because it's too insignificant, far less than 0.001mA. Therefore, we can consider the energy overhead of our algorithm as zero.

## V. SIMULATION RESULTS

In this section, we present our Monte Carlo simulation of the Rssi-based Wi-Fi download management algorithm and its detailed analysis.

### A. Simulation Methodology

**Halton Sequence**: Halton sequences are sequences used to generate points in space for numerical methods such as Monte Carlo simulations. Although these sequences are deterministic
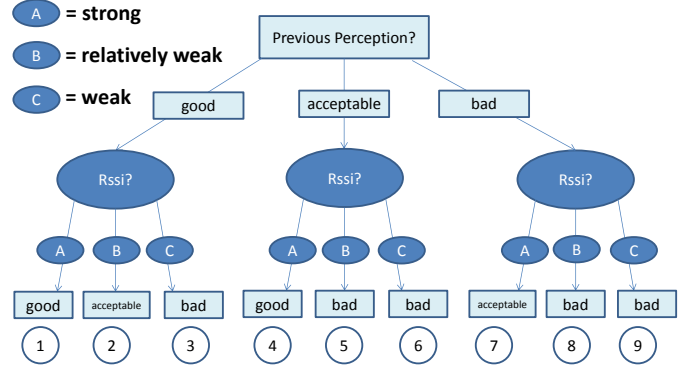


Fig. 7. Decision tree for updating current perception of Wi-Fi

they are of low discrepancy and appear to be random [11]. In our simulation, to simulate all possible starting point that a smartphone user could take, a 2-dimensional Halton sequence with base {2, 3} is generated. When the user get out of the signal range of the Wi-Fi AP, we consider one walk is terminated and take the next value of the Halton sequence as his new starting point. This process is characterized as:

$$\vec{P}_{k_{t=0}} = R\mathrm{H}_k(2,3) \tag{1}$$

where $R$ refers to the rayon of the signal range of the Wi-Fi AP. A starting point out of the range of the Wi-Fi is discarded and the user takes the $k+1^{th}$ walk.

**Directional Random Walk**: To simulate the process of walk of a smartphone user, we introduce the directional random walk defined as:

$$s_{k_t} \sim \mathrm{U}(s_{min}, s_{max}) \tag{2}$$

$$\theta_{k_t} \sim \mathrm{N}(\theta_{k_{t-1}}, \sigma^2) \tag{3}$$

where $s_{k_t}$ and $\theta_{k_t}$ are respectively the speed and the heading of the smartphone user at instant $t$, drawn respectively from an uniform distribution and a Gaussian distribution. $\theta_{k_{t=0}}$ is set to be 0 as the signal range of the AP is a circle and therefore symmetric. (...) Thus the position of phone at the next instant can be given as:

$$\vec{P}_{k_{t+1}} = \vec{P}_{k_t} + s_{k_t}\begin{pmatrix}\cos\theta_{k_t}\\\sin\theta_{k_t}\end{pmatrix} \tag{4}$$

**Stationary-Moving State Transition**: Considering that a smartphone user may use his phone not only in the move, but also when he is stationary, we introduce a Markov chain to characterize this stationary-moving transition, with two state spaces *moving* and *stationary* and the transition matrix:

$$A = \begin{pmatrix} p_m & 1-p_m \\ 1-p_s & p_s \end{pmatrix} \tag{5}$$

where $p_m$ refers to the probability of the user continuing moving the next instant if he is on the move the current instant, and $p_s$ refers to the probability of the user staying stationary the next instant if he is stationary the current instant.

Representing the *moving* state as 1 and the *stationary* state as 0, noted by $\delta \in \{0, 1\}$, equation (4) can then be changed to:

$$\vec{P}_{k_{t+1}} = \vec{P}_{k_t} + \delta_{k_{t+1}} s_{k_t} \begin{pmatrix} \cos \theta_{k_t} \\ \sin \theta_{k_t} \end{pmatrix} \qquad (6)$$

**Rssi Variation Model**: We adopt the logarithmic wireless path model to calculate the real Rssi of Wi-Fi from the distance between the AP and the smartphone:

$$Rssi(d) = Rssi(d0) + 10\eta \log(d/d0) + \xi \qquad (7)$$

where d0 is the reference distance, typically 1 meter, $\eta$ is the path attenuation factor and $\xi$ the shadowing factor. However, as each measurement of Rssi could introduce inaccuracy, we define Equation (8)-(10) to describe the variations of Rssi in measurements.

$$d_{k_t} \sim \mathrm{N}(0, \phi^2) \qquad (8)$$

$$\Delta_{k_t} \equiv \lfloor \|d_{k_t}\| \rfloor \pmod{M} \qquad (9)$$

$$Rssi_{measured\_k_t}(d) = Rssi_{k_t}(d) + \mathrm{sign}(d_{k_t})\Delta_{k_t} \qquad (10)$$

where $M$ refers to the maximum variation of measured Rssi from the real Rssi. For example, if the real Rssi is -20dBm and measured Rssi is {-19dBm, -20dBm, -21dBm}, then the $M$ is 1. Our experiments show that $M$ is 5 if $Rssi(d) \in$ (-70dBm, -60dBm], 6 if $Rssi(d) \in$ (-80dBm, -70dBm], 7 if $Rssi(d)$ is lower than -80dBm. So $M$ is given as:

$$M = \lfloor \| \frac{Rssi_{k_t}(d)}{10} \| \rfloor - 1 \qquad (11)$$

**Monte-Carlo Simulation**: We simulate a person carrying 4 phones with him and performs 1,000,000 directional random walks in a plan with an AP in the center. Phone1 runs our algorithm for the download management. Phone2 starts the download if Rssi is measured to be strong and stops the download if Rssi is measured to be weak or relatively weak. Phone3 starts the download if Rssi is measured to be strong or relatively weak and stops the download if Rssi is measured to be weak. Phone4 has no download strategy and keeps downloading regardless of Rssi. The 4 phones are all powered with a infinite-capacity battery, but their power consumptions are recorded. They are all the four charged with the task of downloading a file of infinite size.

We incorporate our measurement results in our simulations, including the relationship between energy consumption and Rssi, the relationship between throughput and Rssi, the tail energy and the variation of Rssi.

Two simulations are carried out. In the first simulation, the person walks always and thus $p_m = 1$, $p_s = 0$. In the second simulation, the person walks and stops, with $p_m = 0.8$, $p_s = 0.9$.

### B. Simulation Results

**First Simulation**: Our first simulation shows that in the constantly moving scenario, Phone1 will have 89.1% of its download time spent in areas where the Wi-Fi signal is strong, 10.1% in areas where the Wi-Fi signal is relatively weak, and
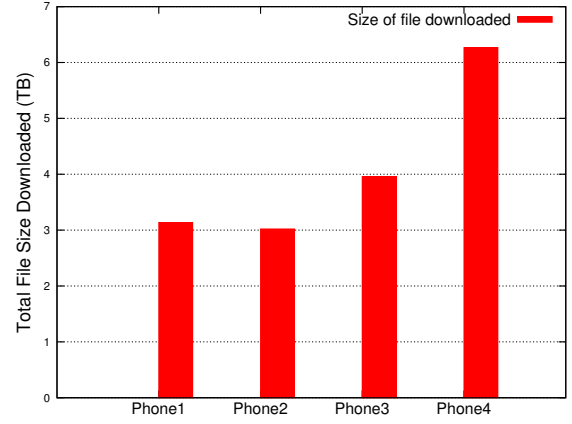


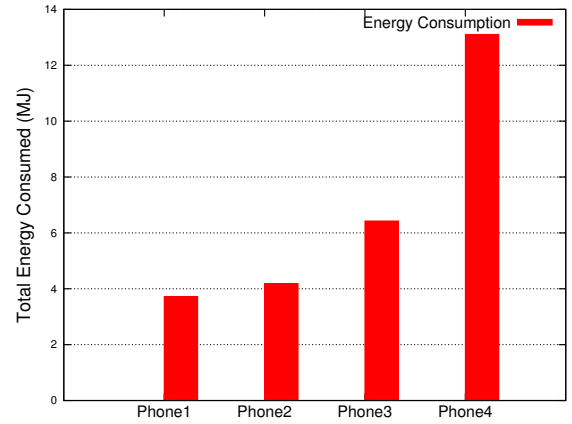Fig. 8. Size of file downloaded in Simulation1



Fig. 9. Energy consumed for download in Simulation1

0% in areas where the Wi-Fi signal is weak. The rate of being in strong Wi-Fi area and not downloading is 0.13%.

The size of file downloaded and the energy consumed by the 4 phones are shown in Figure 9 and Figure 10. We define the energy efficiency as the fraction of the size of file downloaded and the energy consumed, given in Equation (12). The energy efficiency of the 4 phones in the constantly moving scenario is illustrated in Figure 11.

$$EnergyEfficiency = \frac{SizeOfFileDownloaded}{EnergyConsumed} \qquad (12)$$

**Second Simulation**: Our second simulation shows that in the stationary-moving Markov chain scenario, Phone1 will have 96.7% of its download time spent in areas where the Wi-Fi signal is strong, 3.3% in areas where the Wi-Fi signal is relatively weak, and 0% in areas where the Wi-Fi signal is weak. The rate of being in strong Wi-Fi area and not downloading is 0.06%. The size of file downloaded, the energy consumed, and the energy efficiency of the 4 phones are respectively shown in Figure 12, Figure 13 and Figure 14.

### C. Analysis of Simulation Results

The performances of Phone2, Phone3 and Phone4 decrease, showing that even simple download controls accord-
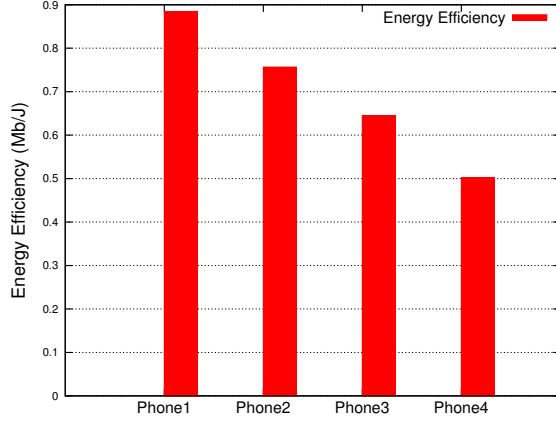
Fig. 10.  Energy efficiency of the 4 phones in Simulation1
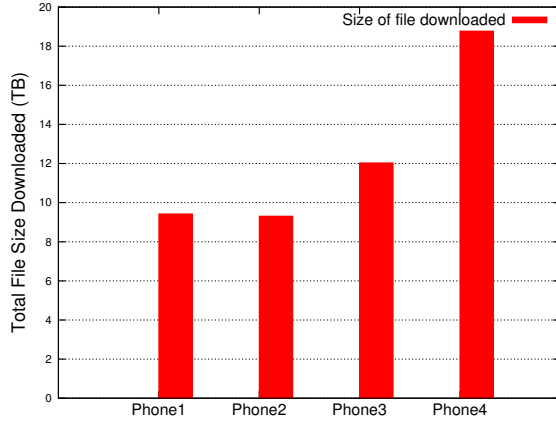


Fig. 11.  Size of file downloaded in Simulation2
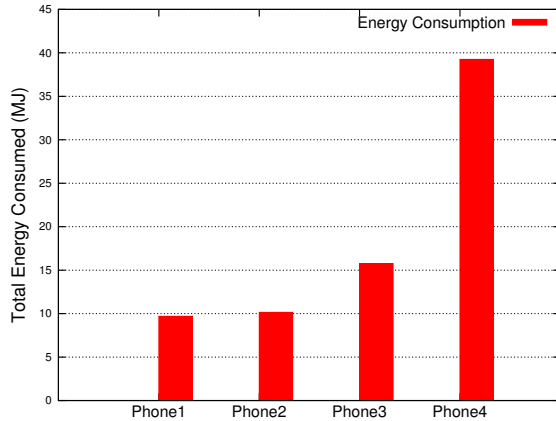


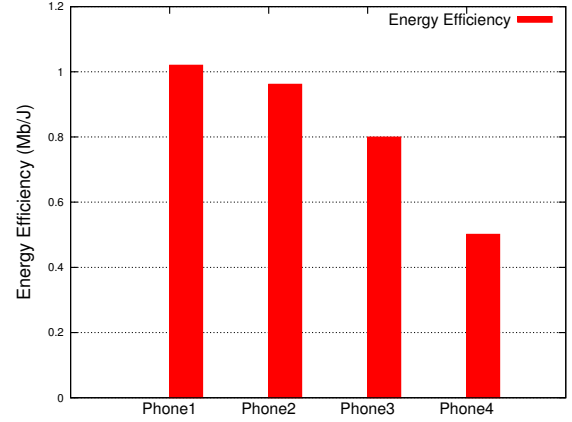Fig. 12.  Energy consumed for download in Simulation2



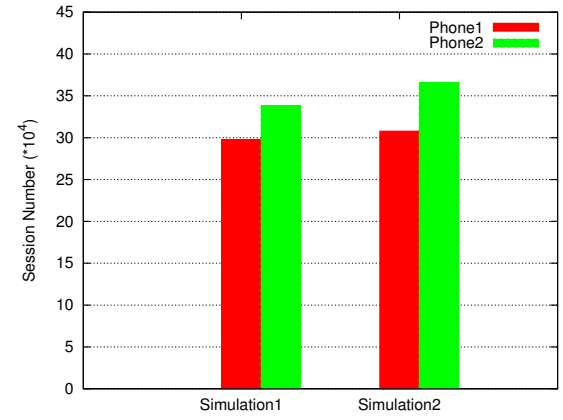Fig. 13.  Energy efficiency of the 4 phones in Simulation2



Fig. 14.  Comparison of Phone1 and Phone2 in terms of download session number

ing to Rssi can be effective. We further analysis why Phone1 outperforms Phone2.

Figure 14 and Figure 15 illustrate the number of download sessions and the average download session lengths of Phone1 and Phone2. We see that in Simulation1, Phone2 has 13.5% more sessions than Phone1. This rate increases to 18.8% in Simulation2. More session number means more frequent transition between starting and stopping downloads, and wasting energy consumption in interrupting and reestablishing TCP connections as well as tail energy. At the same time, Phone1 also has 14.7% longer average download session length than Phone2 in Simulation1 and 21.4% in Simulation2. All these contribute to the better performance of Phone1 in preference to Phone2. We conclude that our algorithm is effective in energy saving and succeed in fulfilling requirements of a good Rssi-based algorithm.

## VI. CONCLUSION

In this paper, we first investigate the relationship between Rssi and energy consumption of smartphones and then propose a novel Rssi-based Wi-Fi download management algorithm for energy savings. Our algorithm, as simple as it is, incorporates some major characteristics of Wi-Fi signal. Through Monte-Carlo simulations, we prove the effectiveness of our algorithm
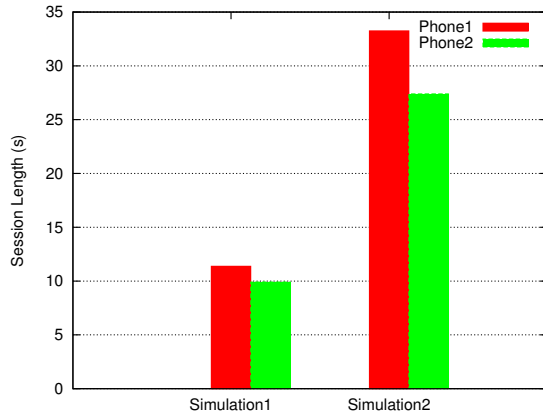
Fig. 15. Comparison of Phone1 and Phone2 in terms of average download session length

and conclude that it leverages some main challenges such as varying nature of Rssi and tail energy when stopping downloading.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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