

# Performance Analysis of Underlay Cognitive Radio Systems: Estimation-Throughput Tradeoff

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**Abstract**—In this letter, we study the performance of Underlay Systems (USs) that employ power control mechanism at Secondary Transmitter (ST). Existing baseline models considered for performance analysis either assume the knowledge of involved channels at the ST or retrieve this information by means of a feedback channel, such situations hardly exist in practice. Motivated by this fact, we propose a novel approach that incorporates channel estimation at the ST, consequently characterizes the performance of US under realistic scenarios. Moreover, we propose an outage constraint that captures the impact of imperfect channel estimation, particularly on the interference power received at the primary receiver. Besides that, we employ a transmit power constraint at the ST to determine an operation regime for the US. Finally, we analyze a tradeoff between the estimation time and the secondary throughput that delivers an optimum performance for the US.

**Index Terms**—Cognitive radio, Underlay system, Channel estimation, Estimation-throughput tradeoff, Operation regime

## I. INTRODUCTION

Cognitive Radio (CR) communication is considered as one of the viable solutions that addresses the problem of spectrum scarcity of future wireless networks. Secondary access to the licensed spectrum can be broadly categorized under different CR paradigms, namely, interweave, underlay and overlay systems [1]. Among these, underlay and interweave system operate at the physical layer, hence, considered feasible for hardware deployment. Particularly, interference tolerance capability exhibited by the USs sustain them from causing harmful interference to the primary system while performing shared access to the licensed spectrum. Power control is one such mechanism under which USs tend to operate below an Interference Threshold (IT) of Primary Receiver (PR) [2].

To employ power control, the knowledge of interference channel between the ST and the PR is of paramount importance. To this end, the performance analysis subject to imperfect channel estimation has received significant attention [3]–[5]. According to [3], [4], the ST attains the channel knowledge over a feedback channel. Since the feedback channel and ability to demodulate the ST's signal are non-existent in the current primary systems, thus, the hardware feasibility

of this approach becomes challenging. To overcome this issue, a [5] strategy was proposed in [5], whereby the ST listens to controlled-based transmission from the PR and employs a received power estimation to retrieve the knowledge of the interference channel. The variation due to imperfect channel estimation, particularly, in interference power received at the PR was captured by means of a constraint on the probability of confidence [5].

However, the system model described in [5] has certain limitations. Since, the USs are sensitive only to those variations that exceed the IT, hence, it is reasonable to implement a power control mechanism subject to an outage constraint. Besides that, considering a hardware implementation, the transmit power of the ST cannot exceed a specified value. Lastly, to analyze the performance of the secondary system in terms of achievable throughput requires the knowledge of access channel between the ST and Secondary Receiver (SR). [5] knowledge is not available at the ST. In this context, the performance analysis of the US that incorporates channel estimation at the ST subject to outage and transmit power constraints is an open research topic.

In this letter, we make the following contributions:

- We propose a novel model that employs power control mechanism and incorporates channel estimation of the interacting channels, namely interference channel and access channel at the ST.
- Based on the proposed model, we investigate the impact of imperfect channel estimation on the performance of the US. Particularly, we employ an outage constraint on the received power at the PR for sustaining the interference encountered by primary system. Subsequently, we investigate a tradeoff between the estimation time and the achievable secondary throughput.
- In reference to the transmit power constraint at the ST, we characterize an operation regime for the US.

## II. SYSTEM MODEL

Cognitive Small Cell (CSC), a CR application, characterizes a small cell deployment that fulfills the spectral requirements for Mobile Stations (MSs) operating indoor, cf. Fig. 1. For the disposition of the CSC in the network, the following key elements are essential: a CSC-Base Station (CSC-BS), a Macro Cell-Base Station (MC-BS) and MS [6]. Considering the fact that the power control is employed at the CSC-BS, the CSC-BS and the MS represents ST and SR, respectively.

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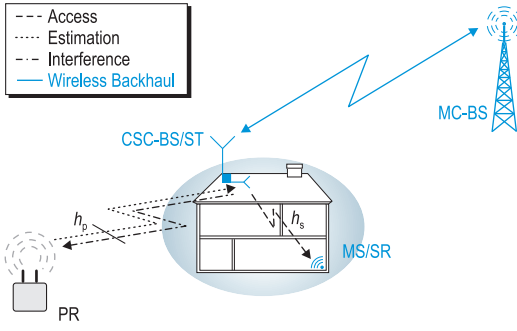


Fig. 1. A cognitive small cell scenario demonstrating: (i) the underlay paradigm, (ii) the associated network elements, which constitute Cognitive Small Cell-Base Station/Secondary Transmitter (CSC-BS/ST), Mobile Station/Secondary Receiver (MS/SR), Macro Cell-Base Station (MC-BS) and Primary Transmitter (PT), (iii) the interacting channels: interference and access channels.

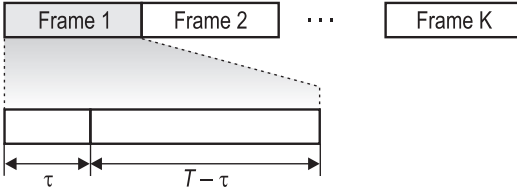


Fig. 2. Frame structure of underlay system with received power estimation for the interference channel.

The medium access for the US is slotted, where the time axis is segmented into frames of length  $T$ . The duration  $T$  ( $\ll$  expected ON/OFF period of the primary user) is chosen in such a way that the frames are aligned to the controlled-based transmissions<sup>1</sup> of the primary system. The frame structure is analog to periodic sensing in [5], according to which, US uses  $\tau$  to estimate the received power, where  $\tau (< T)$  corresponds to a time interval, cf. Fig. 2. To incorporate fading in the model, we assume that the channel remains constant over a frame duration [5]. Hence characterized by the fading process, each frame witnesses a different received power. In order to sustain a desired outage probability, it is reasonable to exercise estimation followed by data transmission with power control in the remaining time  $T - \tau$  for each frame. Since the access channel estimation is performed by listening to the pilot symbols from the SR, no time resources are allocated for access channel estimation in the frame structure, hence  $\tau$  is utilized for interference channel estimation only. In this current scope of the letter, we consider this frame structure to perform short-term analysis that is the performance is analyzed for a certain channel gain, thereby neglecting the effect of channel fading.

Since the PR does not perform any transmissions during the reception of signal from the PR and subsequently, when the ST is transmitting, hence, no interference is depicted at the SR from the PR. Moreover, to simplify the analysis, we assume the interference at the SR, from the PT, to be below the noise level. However, by replacing the noise power with interference power from the PT in the throughput expressions, derived

<sup>1</sup>This includes the beacons transmitted by the PR in the same band. With the knowledge of power transmitted by the PR and using channel reciprocity, ST is able to determine interference power received at the PR thereby controlling the transmit power while sustaining IT, cf. [5] and the references therein.

in Section III, the performance of the US under interference limited regime can be depicted.

The discrete controlled-based signal received from the PR at the ST is given by [5]

$$y_{\text{rcvd}}[n] = h_p \cdot x_{\text{tran}}[n] + w_s[n], \quad (1)$$

where  $x_{\text{tran}}[n]$  corresponds to a discrete and complex sample transmitted by the PR with transmit power  $P_{\text{tran}}$  known at the ST,  $|h_p|^2$  represents the power gain for the interference channel and  $w_s[n]$  is circularly symmetric complex Additive White Gaussian Noise (AWGN) at the ST  $\mathcal{CN}(0, \sigma^2)$ .

With the implementation of power control  $P_{\text{cont}}$  at the ST, the interference signal received at the PR is given by

$$y_p[n] = h_p \cdot x_{\text{cont}}[n] + w_p[n], \quad (2)$$

and on the other side, the received signal at the SR is given by

$$y_s[n] = h_s \cdot x_{\text{cont}}[n] + w_s[n], \quad (3)$$

where  $x_{\text{cont}}[n]$  corresponds to discrete and complex sample with controlled power  $P_{\text{cont}}$ . Further,  $|h_s|^2$  represents the power gain for the access channel and  $w_p[n]$  is AWGN at the PR with  $\mathcal{CN}(0, \sigma^2)$ .

### III. THORETICAL ANALYSIS

#### A. Ideal model

According to the ideal model, ST as US is required to control its transmit power such that the interference power received  $P_p$  at the PR is below IT ( $\theta_1$ ) [2]

$$P_p = |h_p|^2 P_{\text{cont}} \leq \theta_1. \quad (4)$$

With controlled power at the ST determined using (4), the throughput at the SR is defined as

$$R_s = \log_2 \left( 1 + |h_s|^2 \frac{P_{\text{cont}}}{\sigma^2} \right). \quad (5)$$

#### B. Proposed Model

To employ power control based on (4) and evaluate  $R_s$  according to (5), the ideal model considers the knowledge of the involved channels  $h_p$  and  $h_s$  at the ST, which is not available in practice. In this regard, we incorporate channel estimation in the system model. The imperfect channel estimation however translates to the variations in the performance parameters,  $P_p$  and  $R_s$ . Particularly, the variation in the  $P_p$  that exceeds the  $\theta_1$  causes interference at the PR. Unless characterized, these variations may seriously degrade the performance of the US. In this view, we capture the variations in  $P_p$  and  $R_s$  by characterizing the distribution functions of the estimated channels.

1) *Estimation of interference channel:* Given  $P_{\text{rcvd}} = |h_p|^2 P_{\text{tran}} + \sigma^2$  and the knowledge of PR's transmit power  $P_{\text{tran}}$ , the ST listens to the control-based transmission from the PR and acquires the knowledge of  $|h_p|^2$  indirectly by estimating the received power

$$\hat{P}_{\text{rcvd}} = \frac{1}{\tau f_s} \sum_n^{\tau f_s} |y_{\text{rcvd}}[n]|^2. \quad (6)$$

$\hat{P}_{\text{rcvd}}$  estimated using  $\tau f_s$  samples follows a non-central distribution function  $F_{\hat{P}_{\text{rcvd}}} \sim \mathcal{X}_1^2(\lambda_p, \tau f_s)$  with non-centrality parameter  $\lambda_p = \tau f_s |h_p|^2 P_{\text{tran}} / \sigma^2 = \tau f_s \gamma$ , where  $\gamma$  is defined as the received controlled-based signal from the PR to noise ratio at the ST and  $\tau f_s$  corresponds to the degrees of freedom.

*Approximation 1:* For all degrees of freedom,  $\mathcal{X}_1^2$  distribution can be approximated as Gamma distribution [7]. The parameters of the Gamma distribution are obtained by matching the first two central moments to those of  $\mathcal{X}_1^2$ .

*Lemma 1:* The cumulative distribution function of  $\hat{P}_{\text{rcvd}}$  is characterized as

$$F_{\hat{P}_{\text{rcvd}}}(x) \approx 1 - \Gamma(a_1, b_1 x) \quad (7)$$

where,  $a_1 = \frac{\tau f_s (1 + \gamma)}{2 + 4\gamma}$  and  $b_1 = \frac{\sigma^2 (2 + 4\gamma)}{\tau f_s (1 + \gamma)}$ ,

and  $\Gamma(\cdot, \cdot)$  represents the regularized lower-incomplete Gamma function [7].

*Proof:* Applying Approximation 1 yields (7). ■

2) *Estimation of access channel:* The pilot signal received from the SR undergoes matched filtering and demodulation at the ST, hence, we employ a pilot-based estimation at the ST to acquire the knowledge of the access channel. According to [8] the maximum-likelihood estimate representing a average of  $N_s$  is given by

$$h_s = \hat{h}_s + \underbrace{\frac{\sum_{n=1}^{N_s} p[n]}{2N_s}}_{\epsilon}, \quad (8)$$

where  $p[n]$  denotes the discrete pilot symbol and  $\epsilon$  represents the estimation error. As a result, the estimate  $\hat{h}_s$  is unbiased, efficient and achieves a Cramer-Rao bound with equality, with variance  $\mathbb{E}[|h_s - \hat{h}_s|^2] = \sigma^2 / (2N_s)$  [8]. As a result,  $\hat{h}_s$  conditioned on  $h_s$  follows a Gaussian distribution.

$$\hat{h}_s | h_s \sim \mathcal{N}\left(h_s, \frac{\sigma^2}{N_s}\right). \quad (9)$$

Consequently, the estimated power gain  $|\hat{h}_s|^2$  follows a non-central chi-squared  $\mathcal{X}_1^2(\lambda_s, 1)$  distribution with 1 degree of freedom and non-centrality parameter  $\lambda_s = \frac{2N_s |h_s|^2}{\sigma^2}$ .

*Lemma 2:* The cumulative distribution function of  $|\hat{h}_s|^2$  is characterized as

$$F_{|\hat{h}_s|^2}(x) \approx 1 - \Gamma(a_2, b_2 x) \quad (10)$$

where,  $a_2 = \frac{(1 + \lambda_s)^2}{2 + 4\lambda_s}$  and  $b_2 = \frac{\sigma^2 (2 + 4\lambda_s)}{(1 + \lambda_s)}$ .

*Proof:* Applying Approximation 1 yields (10). ■

Next, we employ an outage probability constraint at the ST to capture the variation in the  $P_p$  incurred due to channel estimation, defined as

$$\mathbb{P}\left(\left(\frac{\hat{P}_{\text{rcvd}} - \sigma^2}{P_{\text{tran}}}\right) P_{\text{cont}} \geq \theta_1\right) \leq \rho_{\text{out}}, \quad (11)$$

$|\hat{h}_p|^2$

where  $\rho_{\text{out}}$  corresponds to an outage constraint. Besides the outage constraint,  $P_{\text{cont}}$  is limited by a predefined transmit

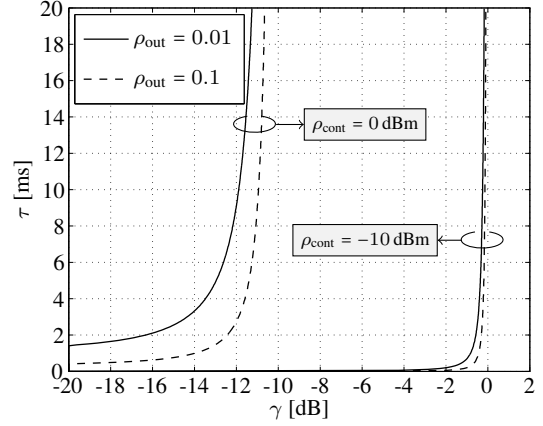


Fig. 3. An illustration of operation regime for the US depicted in terms of estimation time and controlled-based signal from the PR to noise ratio at the ST.

power  $\rho_{\text{cont}}$ . To capture this aspect, the transmit power constraint at the ST is defined as

$$P_{\text{cont}} \leq \rho_{\text{cont}}. \quad (12)$$

Based on the aforementioned constraints, we determine the expression of controlled power for the proposed model.

*Lemma 3:* Subject to the outage constraint and transmit power, the controlled power at the ST is given by

$$P_{\text{cont}} = \begin{cases} \frac{\theta_1 P_{\text{tran}}}{(b_1 \Gamma^{-1}(1 - \rho_{\text{out}}, a_1) - \sigma^2)} & \text{if } P_{\text{cont}} < \rho_{\text{cont}} \\ \rho_{\text{cont}} & \text{if } P_{\text{cont}} \geq \rho_{\text{cont}} \end{cases}, \quad (13)$$

where  $a_1$  and  $b_1$  are defined in (7) and  $\Gamma^{-1}(\cdot, \cdot)$  is the inverse function of regularized lower-incomplete Gamma function [9].

*Proof:* Substituting the distribution function for  $\hat{P}_{\text{rcvd}}$ , defined in (7), in (11) and combining with (12) yields (13). ■

Clearly,  $P_{\text{cont}}$  increases with increase in  $|h_s|^2$ , which depicts low  $\gamma$ , consequently a better performance in terms of secondary throughput is achieved by the US for low  $\gamma$ , however with the presence of  $\rho_{\text{cont}}$  an upper limit is imposed on the achievable performance. We define this limit in terms of  $\gamma$  as operation regime for the US.

*Corollary 1:* Subject to a transmit power constraint, an operation regime in terms of  $\gamma$  at the ST is defined as<sup>2</sup>

$$\rho_{\text{out}} \leq 1 - \Gamma\left(a_1, \frac{1}{b_1} \left(\frac{\theta_1 P_{\text{tran}}}{\rho_{\text{cont}}} + \sigma^2\right)\right). \quad (14)$$

*Proof:* Substituting  $P_{\text{cont}}$ , cf. (13), in (12) yields (14). ■ In other words, beyond a certain  $\gamma$  characterized by the operation regime, no performance gain is witnessed by the CR system, cf. Fig. 3.

Besides that, for the estimation model, the expected throughput for the access link at the SR is defined as

$$R_s(\tau) = \mathbb{E}_{|\hat{h}_s|^2} \left[ \frac{T - \tau}{T} \log_2 \left( 1 + \frac{|\hat{h}_s|^2 P_{\text{cont}}}{\sigma^2} \right) \right], \quad (15)$$

where  $\mathbb{E}_{|\hat{h}_s|^2}[\cdot]$  corresponds to an expectation over  $|\hat{h}_s|^2$ , whose distribution function is characterized in Lemma 2.

At this stage, it is worthy to note that  $P_{\text{cont}}$  and  $R_s$  depends on  $\tau$ , cf. (13) and (15), respectively. Hence, the proposed

<sup>2</sup>Please note that  $\tau f_s$  and  $\gamma$  are included in the parameters  $a_1$  and  $b_1$ , cf. (7).

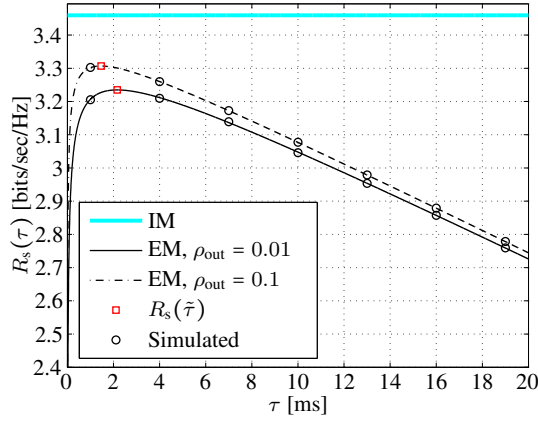


Fig. 4. Estimation-throughput tradeoff with  $\gamma = 0$  dB,  $\rho_{\text{out}} \in \{0.0, 0.1\}$  and  $\rho_{\text{cont}} = 0$  dBm.

model exhibits a fundamental tradeoff between the estimation time and the achievable secondary throughput.

*Theorem 1:* The expected achievable secondary throughput subject to the outage constraint on the received power at the PR and transmit power constraint at the ST is defined as

$$R_s(\tilde{\tau}) = \max_{\tau} R_s(\tau), \quad (16)$$

$$\text{s.t. } \mathbb{P}\left(\left(\frac{\hat{P}_{\text{rcvd}} - \sigma^2}{P_{\text{tran}}}\right) P_{\text{cont}} \geq \theta_1\right) \leq \rho_{\text{out}},$$

$$\text{s.t. } P_{\text{cont}} \leq \rho_{\text{cont}},$$

where  $R_s(\tilde{\tau})$  corresponds to optimum throughput at  $\tilde{\tau}$ .

*Proof:* The constrained optimization problem is solved by substituting  $P_{\text{cont}}$  from Lemma 3, determined by applying outage and transmit power constraints defined in (11) and (12), in (15), and subsequently using (9) results in an expression of expected throughput as a function of  $\tau$ . Solving numerically this expression yield  $\tilde{\tau}$  and  $R_s(\tilde{\tau})$ . ■

#### IV. NUMERICAL ANALYSIS

Here, we investigate the performance of the US based on the proposed model. To accomplish this: (i) we perform simulations to validate the expressions obtained, (ii) we analyze the performance loss incurred due to the estimation. In this regard, we consider the ideal model for benchmarking and evaluating the performance loss. Unless stated explicitly, the following choice of the parameters is considered for the analysis,  $f_s = 1$  MHz,  $h_p = -100$  dB,  $h_s = -80$  dB,  $\theta_1 = -110$  dB,  $T = 100$  ms,  $\rho_{\text{out}} \in \{0.01, 0.10\}$ ,  $\rho_{\text{cont}} \in \{-10, 0\}$  dBm,  $\sigma^2 = -100$  dBm,  $\gamma = 0$  dB,  $P_{\text{tran}} = 0$  dBm,  $N_s = 10$ .

Fig. 4 analyzes performance of US in terms of estimation-throughput tradeoff, cf. Theorem 1, corresponding to the Ideal Model (IM) and the Estimation Model (EM). It is indicated that the estimation-throughput tradeoff yields a suitable estimation time  $\tilde{\tau}$  that results in an optimum throughput  $R_s(\tilde{\tau})$ . Hereafter, for the analysis, we consider the theoretical expressions and choose to operate at suitable estimation time. To procure further insights, the variation of  $R_s(\tilde{\tau})$  with  $\gamma$  for different choice of  $\rho_{\text{cont}}$  and  $\rho_{\text{out}}$  is considered in Fig. 5. It is observed that  $R_s(\tilde{\tau})$  gets saturated below a certain  $\gamma$ , thereby limiting the performance of the US. As indicated by the margin between the IM and the EM, a severe performance loss at low  $\gamma$  is witnessed by the US.

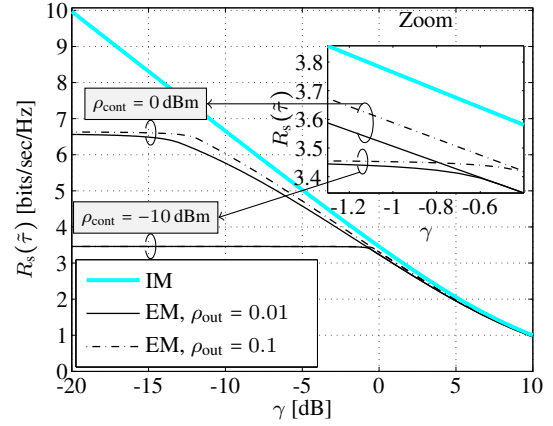


Fig. 5. Optimum throughput vs controlled-based signal from the PR to noise ratio at the ST with  $\rho_{\text{out}} \in \{0.01, 0.1\}$  and  $\rho_{\text{cont}} \in \{-10, 0\}$  dBm.

#### V. CONCLUSION

In this letter, we studied the performance of the underlay system from a deployment perspective. In this view, a novel model that incorporates channel estimation has been proposed. To capture the impact of imperfect channel estimation, an outage constraint has been employed, which forbids performance degradation in terms of interference power received at the primary receiver. With the inclusion of transmit power constraint, an operation regime that determines performance limit for the US has been established. A power control mechanism subject to the outage and transmit power constraints has been proposed. Finally, the estimation-throughput tradeoff is investigated to determine the achievable secondary throughput for the US. In the future work, we plan to extend the proposed analysis to include the effect of channel fading, thereby characterizing the long-term performance for the underlay systems.

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