



Ain Shams University
Faculty of Engineering
Electronics and Communications Department

Design of a Digital-Output Capacitive Sensor Interface

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of a Master of Science
degree in Electrical Engineering

Submitted by:

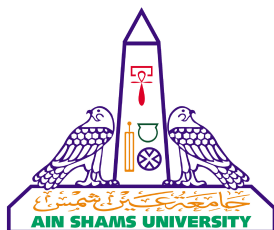
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Cairo, 2015



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Faculty of Engineering
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Thesis: Design of a Digital-Output Capacitive Sensor Interface

Degree: Masters of Science in Electrical Engineering

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Curriculum Vitae

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Name of University: Ain Shams University

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Statement

This dissertation is submitted to Ain Shams University for the degree of Master of Science in Electrical Engineering (Electronics and Communications Engineering).

The work included in this thesis was carried out by the author at the Electronics and Communications Engineering Department, Faculty of Engineering, Ain Shams University, Cairo, Egypt.

No part of this thesis was submitted for a degree or a qualification at any other university or institution.

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Abstract

Faculty of Engineering – Ain Shams University

Electronics and Communication Engineering Department

Thesis title: **“Design of a Digital-Output Capacitive Sensor Interface”**

Researcher Name: **Muhammad Abdel-Rasoul Metwally Abdel-Hay**

El-Nafarawi

Degree: **Masters of Science in Electrical Engineering**

Abstract

This work presents a novel energy-efficient capacitance-to-digital converter (CDC) interface for capacitive pressure sensors. A new direct-capacitance-comparison technique (DCCT) is proposed and employed together with a successive approximation register (SAR) algorithm to resolve the sensor capacitance by, directly, comparing it to an on-chip binary-weighted capacitive DAC array (CAPDAC). This conversion technique, significantly, simplifies the process of capacitance-to-digital conversion and enables using less analog blocks.

The proposed interface circuit topology requires neither a high purity reference clock for digital conversion, nor a bandgap reference voltage. Furthermore, the interface does not have a capacitance-to-voltage converter (CTV),

which all add up to maximize the proposed solution energy-efficiency compared to other pressure sensors capacitive interface architectures.

It is, also, shown that the proposed new CDC employs an offset DAC array (OFFDAC that compensates for the sensor rest and co-integration parasitic capacitances. Therefore, the proposed CDC provides a dynamically zoomed digital-output code that corresponds to the range of the capacitance change only rather than sensor rest or parasitic capacitances. Also, the proposed CDC provides a very high capacitance readout linearity that, considerably, outperforms some techniques proposed in literature.

The sensor rest, co-integration, and full-scale (FS) range capacitance can be easily adjusted using the proposed CDC. A complete system analysis shows how the power consumption and the comparator sensitivity are traded for sensor rest capacitance, the FS capacitance, and the ability to tolerate large parasitic capacitance.

The proposed 8-bit SAR-based CDC is designed and simulated using $0.18\mu\text{m}$ standard CMOS technology. For the reported power consumption, it can handle parasitic capacitance combined with rest capacitance up to four times larger than the sensor FS capacitance range. The CDC exhibits a capacitance sensing range from 4pF to 6pF, achieves a resolution and linearity of 7.26-bit and 8.2-bit, respectively, and a capacitance noise floor of $5.32aF/\sqrt{Hz}$, at $7.7\mu\text{W}$ power consumption and $36\mu\text{s}$ conversion time. The interface circuit occupies an active area of 0.2mm^2 , and achieves a figure-of-merit (FoM) of 1.8pJ/step at 1.4V supply. Compared to the state-of-the-art implementations with similar performance, this solution provides a consid-

erable enhancement.

key words: Capacitance-to-digital converter (CDC), capacitive pressure sensors, direct-capacitance comparison technique, successive approximation register (SAR), energy-efficient interfaces, low-power interfaces.

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Summary

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Electronics and Communication Engineering Department

Thesis title: **“Design of a Digital-Output Capacitive Sensor Interface”**

Researcher Name: **Muhammad Abdel-Rasoul Metwally Abdel-Hay**
El-Nafarawi

Degree: **Masters of Science in Electrical Engineering**

Summary

The thesis is divided into six chapters as listed below:

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 provides the background, motivation, and objective of this work. The chapter, also, gives a brief summary for the thesis organization.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 gives an overview on MEMS-based capacitive pressure sensing systems, where the principle of operation of pressure sensor devices is presented. Also, different systems' architectures are discussed and compared, listing examples from existing state-of-the-art system implementations.