BER and Outage Probability of DPSK Subcarrier Intensity Modulated Free Space Optics in Fully Developed Speckle

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***Abstract*--In this paper a differential phase shift keying (DPSK) subcarrier intensity modulated (SIM) free space optical (FSO) link is considered in negative exponential atmospheric turbulence environment. To mitigate the scintillation effect, the selection combining spatial diversity scheme (SelC) is employed at the receiver. Bit error rate (BER) and outage probability (P_{out}) analysis are presented with and without the SelC spatial diversity. It is shown that at a BER of 10^{-6}, a maximum diversity gain 25 dB is predicted. And about 60 dBm signal power is required to achieve an outage probability of 10^{-6}, based on a threshold BER of 10^{-4}.**

Index Terms—Free-space optics, DPSK, turbulence, spatial diversity, negative exponential distribution, outage probability.

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's access network, the FSO technology is playing an increasing complementary role to the radio frequency (RF) based techniques. This is attributable to its fundamental feature of huge bandwidth that is comparable to that obtainable from optical fibre but with an added advantage of lower deployment cost and time [1]. In recent years we have seen a steadily growing research interest in FSO systems accompanied by successful field trials that is now culminating into commercial deployments [1-4]. The earlier scepticism about FSO's efficacy, its dwindling acceptability by service providers and slow market penetration are now rapidly fading away, judging by the number of service providers, organisation, government and private establishments that now incorporate FSO links into their network infrastructure [5, 6].

Of course, terrestrial FSO links are not free of challenges; the atmospheric constituents (gases, aerosol, rain, fog, and smoke) extinguish and scatter photons traversing the atmosphere. The most deleterious being the thick fog, which could result in up to 270 dB/km attenuation coefficient [1]. This potentially limits the achievable link range to less than 500 m during such condition [7]. In clear atmospheric conditions, longer link ranges are feasible. However, due to atmospheric turbulence effects, small but random changes occur in the atmospheric temperature. This by extension, results in random changes in the atmospheric index of refraction along the path of the optical radiation. This metamorphoses into random phase and irradiance fluctuations (scintillation) of the optical radiation at the photodetector. Detailed study of the atmospheric turbulence can be found in [8-10]. The scintillation effect can be likened to the random fading effect on radio communication caused by the multipath propagation/channel frequency selectivity. Channel fading just like in RF communications, can cause severe degradation in the performance of an FSO link if unmitigated.

Selecting the most appropriate modulation scheme for a communication system is important factor which determines the overall system performance and cost. The requirement would be to have a low BER at low SNR and perform well in dispersive environment. In terrestrial FSO links; the simple and widely adopted on-off keying (OOK) [11] signalling format requires adaptive threshold to perform optimally in a fading environments. This poses a serious design difficulty that can be circumvented by employing the SIM scheme [12]. And for the full and seamless integration of FSO into existing networks the study of SIM becomes compelling because existing networks already contain subcarrier signals.

In weak turbulence modelled using the tractable log normal distribution, the spatial diversity has been studied to mitigate turbulence induced irradiance fading [11-13]. Likewise, FSO employing various forward error control techniques have been reported in literature [14-18] with varying degrees of gains and complexity. In this paper, a DPSK pre-modulated SIM terrestrial FSO link is presented with the selection combining spatial diversity adopted to ameliorate the scintillation effect. DPSK offers the advantage of adopting a no-coherent detection at the receiver end, thus avoiding the use of more

This paper was partly presented during the CSNDSP 2008 in Graz, Austria.
Manuscript received April 10, 2009; revised June 20, 2009; accepted June 29, 2009.

doi:10.4304/jcm.4.8.546-554

complex synchronization circuitry. In addition to mitigating scintillation without introducing additional latency into the system, spatial diversity also helps to prevent temporary outage/blocking due to birds or other small flying object cross the propagation path; it is also simpler to implement and very cost effective compared to the adaptive optics.

The rest of the paper is organised as follow: in Section II we describe the proposed DPSK-SIM, while the system performance analysis with and without the SelC spatial diversity is detailed in Section III. In Section IV, numerical simulation results are presented and discussed. The concluding remarks are then presented in Section V.

II. DPSK SUBCARRIER INTENSITY MODULATION

A. System description

In SIM, the data of symbol rate R_b is first pre-modulated on to a RF signal of frequency ω_c. The modulated subcarrier RF signal is then used to directly modulate the irradiance of an optical carrier which can either be a light-emitting-diode (LED) or a laser diode. The subcarrier modulated signal is DC-level shifted prior to modulating the optical source to ensure that the driving current of the laser diode is not less than its threshold current.

After traversing the atmospheric channel, the receive telescope coated with an optical band pass filter to limit the background radiation focuses the received irradiance onto the direct detection PIN photodetector, which is followed by a trans-impedance amplifier (TIA). The electrical band pass filter (BPF) with a centre frequency ω_c and bandwidth $2R_b$ allows the SIM signal through, and removes any DC component present. Finally, a standard DSPK demodulator is then used to recover the transmitted data as shown in Fig. 1.

Here we have assumed that the carrier and the local oscillators are both of the same frequency. The sampler output is delayed by one bit and is compared with the next signal received. The difference in the phase of the two sampled signals y_k and y_{k-1} determines the binary logic level of the received data.

The SIM leverages on the availability of stable RF oscillators and filters, hence any of the evolved digital modulation techniques such as PSK, frequency shift keying and quadrature amplitude modulation can in principle be used. In this work however, a binary differential DPSK is adopted in order to circumvent the absolute phase estimation (and its accompanying ambiguity) requirement of the coherent demodulated PSK [19]. The fact that the atmospheric turbulence channel can be rightly assumed to be ‘frozen’ for more than two consecutive data symbols makes the implementation of the DPSK decoder at the receiver feasible. The ‘frozen’ channel assumption is premised on the turbulence correlation time, which is known be on the order of a hundreds of millisecond [11, 20]. The instantaneous photocurrent $i_r(t)$ can now be modelled as [21]:

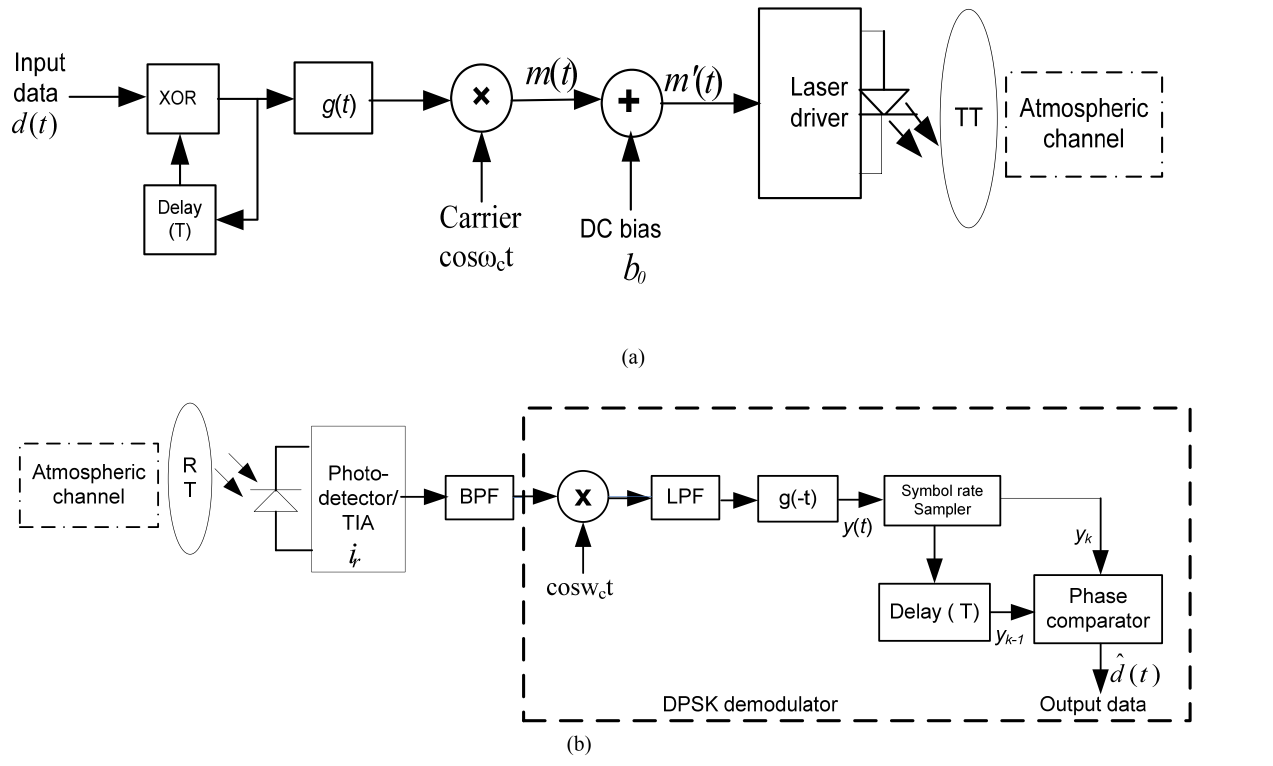

Fig. 1: A schematic system block diagram of an FSO link employing DPSK modulated SIM; (a) transmitter and (b) receiver. TIP-trans-impedance amplifier; TT-Transmit telescope; RT-Receive telescope; *T*-Symbol duration.

$$i_r(t) = RI(1+\beta m(t)) + n(t), \tag{1}$$

where $I = I_{peak}/2$, I_{peak} is the peak received irradiance, R is the photodetector responsivity, β is the modulation index and $m(t) = d(t)g(t)A_c\cos[\omega_c t+\theta]$ is the subcarrier signal of peak amplitude A_c; $d(t)$ is the input signal, $g(t)$ represents the rectangular pulse shape function and the additive noise $n(t)\sim N(0,\sigma^2)$ is assumed to be white Gaussian.

The condition $|\beta m(t)\le 1|$ must always be fulfilled for the continuous wave optical transmitter to operate within its dynamic range. This places an upper bound on the amplitude of the subcarrier for a given value of β. With the subcarrier pre-modulated using DPSK and normalising β to unity, the peak amplitude $A_c \le 1$.

B. Noise sources

Background noise: This is due to radiations from both the sky and the sun, with their irradiance (power per unit area) given, respectively as [22-24]:

$$I_{sky} = N(\lambda)\Delta\lambda\pi\,\Omega^2/4\,, \tag{2}$$

$$I_{sun} = W(\lambda)\Delta\lambda\,, \tag{3}$$

where $N(\lambda)$ and $W(\lambda)$ are the spectral radiance of the sky and spectral radiant emittance of the sun, respectively, Δλ is the bandwidth of the optical band pass filter at the receiver, and Ω is the receiver field of view angle (FOV) in radian. By carefully choosing a receiver with a very narrow FOV and Δλ, the impact of background noise can be greatly reduced. Optical BPF in the form of coatings on the receiver optics/telescope with Δλ < 1 nm are now readily available. Empirical values of $N(\lambda)$ and $W(\lambda)$ under different observation conditions are also available in literature [21-23]. The background noise is a shot noise with a variance given by [23]:

$$\sigma^2_{Bg} = 2qBR\,(I_{sky} + I_{sun})\,, \tag{4}$$

where B is the system electrical bandwidth. That is the bandwidth of the LPF shown in Fig. 1(b).

Thermal noise: This is caused by the thermal fluctuations of electrons in the receiver circuit of equivalent resistance R_L and temperature T_e. Its variance is given by:

$$\sigma^2_{Th} = 4kT_e BR_L^{-1} \tag{5}$$

Noise due to the quantum nature of light, the dark current and the relative intensity noise are assumed too small to be reckoned with. Hence, the total noise variance is given as:

$$\sigma^2 = \sigma^2_{Bg} + \sigma^2_{Th}\,. \tag{6}$$

From (1) and (6), the electrical signal-to-noise ratio (SNR_e) can thus be derived as:

$$SNR_e = A_c^2R^2I^2/2\sigma^2\,. \tag{7}$$

The work presented in this paper is for a single subcarrier, however more than one subcarrier could be adopted to modulate the optical carrier irradiance.

C. Atmospheric turbulence

For FSO links spanning over 1 km, turbulence induced multiple scatterings do take place and the log normal turbulence model [9] characterised by single scattering event clearly becomes invalid. The strength of irradiance fading encountered in atmospheric turbulence is often referred to as the scintillation index defined as: $S.I = E[I^2]-E[I]^2/E[I]^2$; which is the normalised log irradiance variance. For links covering over 3 km, the turbulence effect can easily tend towards saturation; in which the *S.I.* begins to decrease due to multiple scattering and it then settles at a value of unity [8, 9]. This describes the fully developed speckle regime. In this regime, the optical radiation field fluctuation obeys the Rayleigh distribution [9] and that means that the irradiance fluctuation will follow negative exponential statistics as given by (8). The validity of the negative exponential irradiance fluctuation is widely acknowledged in literature and has also been experimentally verified [8]. Other turbulence models notably the log-normal-Rician [25], the *I-K* [26] and the gamma-gamma [10] all reduce to the negative exponential distribution in the limit of strong turbulence as given below:

$$p(I) = I_o^{-1}\exp(-I/I_o), \qquad I_o > 0 \tag{8}$$

where $E[I] = I_o$ is the mean received irradiance. For analogue SIM systems such as cable television signal transmission over optical fibre links, the average SNR suffices as a performance indicator but not for the digital SIM systems. Hence, in the next section the BER and the outage performance metrics suitable for digital communications in fading channel are presented.

D. Selection combining (SelC) spatial diversity

For fading channels such as the atmospheric turbulence channel, higher transmitted optical power is required to maintain the link performance level. However, increased power level is an undesirable constraint for a number of reasons including, safety and cost. Hence, there is a need to mitigate this deleterious atmospheric turbulence induced fading (scintillation) effect. Suitable candidates for doing this include: forward error control, adaptive optics, and spatial/time diversity schemes. Here, the spatial diversity technique employing an array of *N*-PIN photodetectors is considered.

Since at the subcarrier level the data is encoded using DPSK - a technique that requires no absolute phase extraction for its demodulation - then the spatial diversity adopted must not require absolute phase extraction as well. Hence, the choice of SelC spatial diversity in this work. In this diversity scheme, the photodetector with the highest SNR is selected out of all the N identical photodetectors. The selected branch is also the pupil with the highest received irradiance since all the paths will experience similar noise levels.

For fair comparison with a single photodetector case, each receiver aperture is made equal to A_p/N, where A_p is the receiver aperture for a single receiver system. Without any loss of generality, A_p is normalised to unity. In order for the signal received by the photodetectors to be uncorrelated, the spacing s between any two photodetectors must not be less than the atmospheric turbulence correlation distance ρ_o; a value which only measures a few centimetres [13].

III. PERFORMANCE METRIC ANALYSIS

A. Bit-error-rate (BER)

The generic performance metric of a digital communication system is the BER and for a DPSK based SIM-FSO link; this metric, conditioned on the received irradiance is given by [27]:

$$P_{ec} = 0.5\exp(-0.5 SNR_e) \quad . \tag{9}$$

However, in the face of scintillation the unconditional BER given by (9) is averaged over the irradiance fluctuation statistics (8) to obtain the following unconditional BER.

$$\begin{aligned} BER &= \int_0^\infty P_{ec}\, p(I)\, dI \\ &= \frac{1}{2I_o}\int_0^\infty \exp\left[-\frac{I}{I_o} - \frac{1}{4}\left(\frac{A_c R I}{\sigma}\right)^2\right] dI \end{aligned} \tag{10}$$

The above expression can be conveniently simplified by invoking equation (3.322.2) in [28] to obtain:

$$\begin{aligned} BER = &\sqrt{\pi / SNR}\, \exp(SNR^{-1}) \times \\ &Q\left(\sqrt{\pi / SNR}\right) \end{aligned} , \tag{11}$$

where the subcarrier amplitude A_c has been normalised to unity and $SNR = R^2 E[I]^2 / \sigma^2$.

However, with the SelC spatial diversity, the SNR_e can be easily derived as:

$$SNR_{e-SelC} = \frac{R^2 A_c^{\,2} I^2}{2N(N\sigma_{Th}^2 + \sigma_{Bg}^2)} \, . \tag{12}$$

It should be noted that, the background noise is proportional to the receiver aperture area while the thermal noise is not. Hence, the unconditional BER with SelC is obtainable from:

$$BER_{SelC} = \int_0^\infty P_{ec}\, p(I_{\max}) dI \, , \tag{13}$$

where $P_{ec} = 0.5\exp(-0.5 SNR_{e-Sel})$ and $I_{\max} = \max\{I_i\}_{i=1}^N$ is the strongest of all received irradiance from all the N-PIN photodetectors. The probability density function (pdf) of I_{max}, given by $p(I_{\max}) = p(\max\{I_i\}_{i=1}^N)$ is obtained first by finding the cumulative distribution function of I_{max} at an arbitrary point and then differentiating. The resulting pdf is given by (14) and the detailed proof is presented in Appendix A.

$$p(I_{max}) = \tfrac{N}{I_o}\exp(-I/I_o)(1-\exp(-I/I_o))^{N-1}. \tag{14}$$

The plot of the pdf of I_{max} is shown in Fig. 2 for different values of N and $E[I] = I_o = 1$.

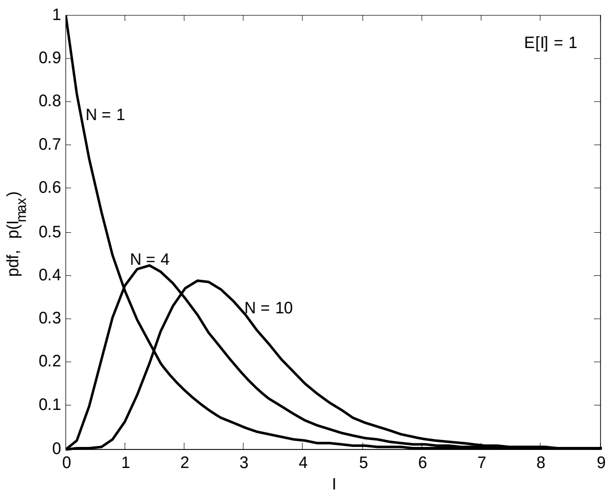

Fig. 2: The pdf $p(I_{max}) = p(max\{I_i\}_{i=1}^N)$ for N = 1, 4 and 10, and $E[I] = I_o = 1$

With the SelC spatial diversity the BER is given by:

$$BER_{SelC} = \int_0^\infty \frac{N}{2I_o}\left(1-\exp(-I/I_o)\right)^{N-1} \exp\left(\frac{-I}{I_o} - \frac{R^2 A^2 I^2}{2N(\sigma_{Bg}^2 + N\sigma_{Th}^2)}\right) dI \, . \tag{15}$$

This expression (15), to the best our knowledge has no closed form. As such, it can only be evaluated via numerical methods.

B. Outage probability P_{out}

The FSO system performance with respect to the generic average BER metric is the most reported metric; however, a system with an adequate average BER can temporarily suffer from an increase in error rate due to deep fades and this 'short outage' is not adequately modelled by the average BER [29]. An alternative performance metric commonly used in fading channels is the outage probability. It is defined as the probability that the BER is greater than a threshold level BER^*. This is akin to finding the probability that the SNR that results in BER is lower than a threshold level SNR^* that corresponds to the BER^*. That is:

$$P_{out} = P(BER > BER^*) \equiv P(SNR < SNR^*), \quad (16)$$

where $SNR^* = (RAI^*)^2/2\sigma^2$, and I^* which can be obtained from the solution of (10) is the receiver sensitivity required to attain BER^*.
Combining (7) and (8), it is obtained that the received irradiance I_o needed to attain an outage probability P_{out} is:

$$I_o = \frac{I^*}{\ln(1-P_{out})^{-1}}. \quad (17)$$

With SelC, the outage probability is the cumulative density function of I_{max} whose pdf is plotted in Fig. 2. Thus, combining (7), (12), (14) and (A3) of Appendix A, the received irradiance $I_{o\text{-}Selc}$ needed to attain a given P_{out} is derived as:

$$I_{oSelC} = \frac{I^*}{\ln\left(1-\sqrt[N]{P_{out}}\right)^{-1}}\left(\frac{N(N\sigma_{Th}^2+\sigma_{Bg}^2)}{\sigma_{Th}^2+\sigma_{Bg}^2}\right)^{0.5}. \quad (18)$$

From the foregoing, the diversity gain I_o/I_{oSelC} can thus be obtained.

IV. NUMERICAL RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The numerical simulations presented in this section are based on the parameters of Table I. In Fig. 3, we show the BER obtained from (11) and (15) against the receiver sensitivity with and without SelC. This plot brings to bare the potential gain of SelC in reducing the required sensitivity for a given BER. For example, to achieve a BER of 10^{-6} with no diversity, about 23 dBm of received irradiance is required while with two photodetectors (N = 2), about -1.7 dBm is needed to achieve the same level of performance. Moverover, as the number of photodetectors increases, the attained diversity gain per additional detector reduces. For instance, for N = 2, the gain per detector at a BER of 10^{-6} is ~12 dB and this reduces to about 5 and 4 dB for N = 8 and 10, respectively. This result is summarised in Table II for up to 10 photodetectors.

To consider the outage probability, equations 17 and 18 are used. In Fig. 4, we plotted the P_{out} against I_{oSelC} with I^* = 0 dBm, being the sensitivity value required to attain a BER of 10^{-4} according to Fig. 3(a). This graph shows that for a threshold BER of 10^{-4}, achieving a DSPK-SIM with an outage probability of 10^{-6} or better, will require a minimum of 60 dBm received irradiance without SelC. This requirement reduces to ~35 dBm and ~23 dBm, respectively with 2 and 4 photodetectors. The inference from Fig. 4 is therefore similar to that of Fig. 3(b). To further illustrate the gain of using SelC in the saturation regime, we show in Figs. 5 and 6 the predicted diversity gain at different values of P_{out} and N. With 2 photodetectors and an outage probability of 10^{-6}, the

Table I: Numerical simulation parameters

Parameter	Value
Symbol rate R_b	155 Mbps
Spectral radiance of the sky $N(\lambda)$	10^{-3} W/cm^{2}μmSr
Spectral radiant emittance of the sun $W(\lambda)$	0.055 W/cm^{2}μm
Optical band-pass filter bandwidth $\Delta\lambda$ @ λ = 850 nm	1 nm
PIN photodetector field of view FOV	0.6 rad
Radiation wavelength λ	850 nm
Number of Photodetectors N	$1 \le N \le 10$
Load resistance R_L	50 Ω
PIN photodetector responsivity R	1
Operating temperature T_e	300 K
Electrical low-pass filter bandwidth	155 MHz

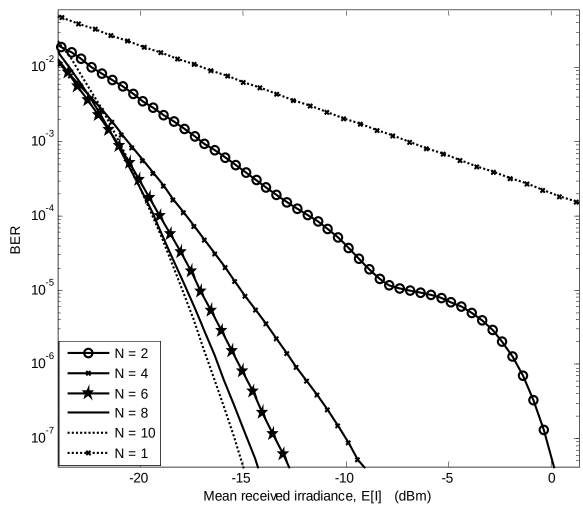

Fig. 3: The graph of BER against the receiver sensitivity in saturation turbulence regime for N = [2, 4, 6, 10]

Table II: Gain per photodetector at a BER of 10^{-6}

N	1	2	4	6	8	10
Sensitivity (dBm)	23.1	-1.7	-12.5	-15.2	-16.2	-16.7
Gain (dB) per N	0	12.4	8.9	6.4	4.9	4.0

maximum predicted gain per detector is about 14 dB as depicted in Fig. 5. This predicted gain is observed to be even higher at lower values of P_{out}. This makes sense as the use of diversity in a fading channel increases the received signal strength and by extension a lower P_{out}. And in Fig. 6, it is clearly shown that the gain (dB) per detector peaks at $N = 2$ and then decreases thereafter.

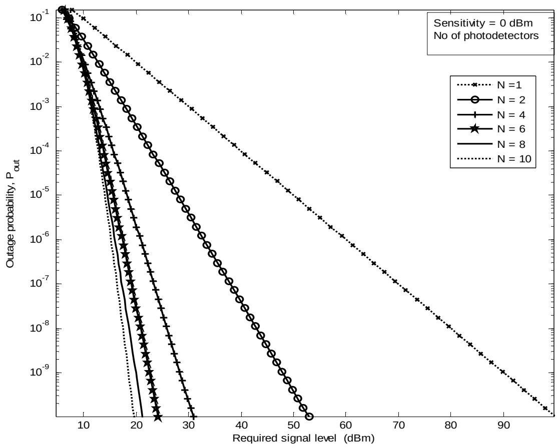

Fig. 4: Outage probability against the received irradiance with $I^* = 0$ dBm for $N = [1, 2, 4, 6, 10]$.

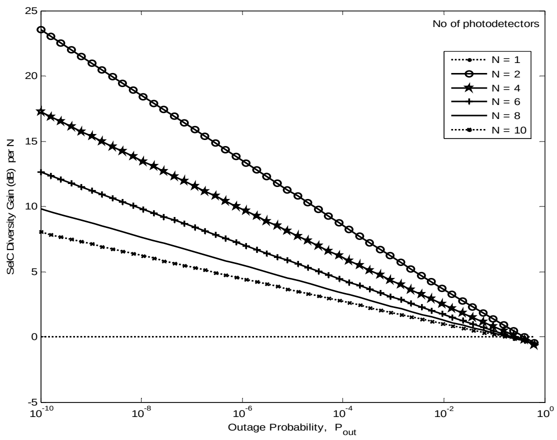

Fig. 5: Predicted SelC diversity gain (dB) per photodetector against P_{out} for $N = [1, 2, 4, 6, 10]$.

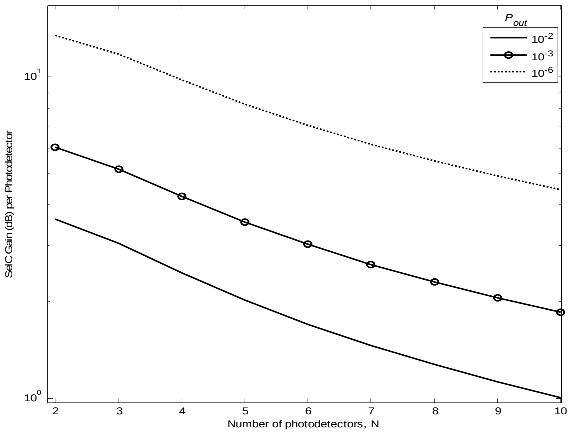

Fig. 6: Predicted SelC diversity gain (dB) per photodetector against N for $P_{out} = [10^{-6}, 10^{-3}, 10^{-2}]$.

It should be noted that up to 10 photodetectors has been considered in the results presented, this is mainly for illustration purpose. The use of such a large number of detectors will pose serious implementation difficulties. An interesting point to note from these results however, is that unlike in weak turbulence regime/short range links where previous studies [13] [27] revealed that SelC should not be used; SelC is highly recommended here as it results in a significant reduction in the required receiver sensitivity especially when the photodetector is kept to a maximum of four. An explanation for this is as follow. The irradiance fading in a fully developed speckle regime is dominant over the reduction in the received irradiance due to the reduction in the receiver aperture area. Any scheme that thus mitigates this dominant irradiance fading will clearly result in an improved performance.

The predicted sensitivities and diversity gains presented in this paper are valid for as long as the photodetectors receive independent irradiances. That is, $\rho_o < s \leq \vartheta_D L$ where ϑ_D is the divergence angle of the optical source in milliradian and L is the link length in kilometre. For $s < \rho_o$, the received irradiances are correlated, thus a reduced diversity gain.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The performance of a DPSK-SIM optical wireless communication link has been presented in fully developed speckle environment. Expressions for the BER and P_{out} performance metrics have been presented with and without the SelC spatial diversity. In the saturation regime under consideration, the fading is so strong that huge receiver sensitivity is usually required to achieve an acceptable level of performance. At say a BER of 10^{-6}, about 23 dBm of irradiance is required at the receiver while achieving a corresponding outage probability of 10^{-6} will require about 60 dBm sensitivity. These values are prohibitive and any technique such as the spatial diversity that mitigates the channel fading will hence result in huge gains. Results show that with two PIN photodetectors, a maximum gain of about 25 dB is predicted at a BER of 10^{-6}.

This implies therefore that the SelC spatial diversity is a potent technique for mitigating scintillation in the fully developed speckle regime as it results in a significant improvement in link performance especially when the photodetector is kept to a maximum of four.

APPENDIX A

Assumption 1: Let the number of independent photodetectors be N.

$$\therefore I_{max} = max\{I_i\}_{i=1}^{N}. \tag{A1}$$

And $p(I_{max}) = p(max\{I_i\}_{i=1}^{N})$. Considering an arbitrary received irradiance I, it then follows that

$p(I_{max} < I) = p(I_1 < I, I_2 < I, ... I_N < I)$ since none of the $\{I_i\}_{i=1}^{N}$ is greater than I_{max}.

The following therefore gives the cumulative distribution function (CDF) of I_{max} for N-independent received irradiances:

$$p(I_{max} < I) = \int_0^I ... \int_0^I \int_0^I p(I_1, I_2 ... I_N) dI_1 dI_2 ... dI_N. \quad \text{(A2)}$$

Assumption 2: The received irradiances are identically distributed as negative exponential distribution.

$$\begin{aligned} p(I_{max} < I) &= \prod_{i=1}^{N} \int_0^I p(I_i) dI_i = \left[\int_0^I \frac{1}{I_o} \exp\left(-\frac{I}{I_o}\right) dI \right]^N \\ &= \left(1 - \exp\left(-\frac{I}{I_o}\right)\right)^N \end{aligned} \quad \text{(A3)}$$

The required pdf $p(I_{max})$ is now obtained by differentiating (12) once with respect to the irradiance *I*.

$$\begin{aligned} p(I_{max}) &= \frac{d}{dI} \left(1 - \exp\left(-\frac{I}{I_o}\right)\right)^N \\ &= \frac{N}{I_o} \exp\left(-\frac{I}{I_o}\right) \left(1 - \exp\left(-\frac{I}{I_o}\right)\right)^{N-1}. \end{aligned} \quad \text{(A4)}$$

With N = 1, (A4) gives the negative exponential distribution as will be expected.

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