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DESIGN AND OPTIMIZATION OF HEAT EXCHANGER NETWORKS FOR ENHANCED THERMAL EFFICIENCY IN INDUSTRIAL PROCESSES

Ratan Sikdar
Research Scholar
Eklavya University, Damoh
Dr. Shrihar Pandey
Phd

Abstract

Design and optimization of Heat Exchanger Networks (HENs) helps in increasing thermal efficiency and lowering operating cost in industrial systems and this is what this research is all about. A mixed approach of methodology was used where graphical, like pinch analysis, tools were combined with mathematical tools like Mixed-Integer Nonlinear Programming (MINLP). The base case configuration with low resurgence of heat and high cost of utility was redesigned on simulation tools such as MATLAB, Aspen HYSYS and GAMS. The optimized network has heat recovery at 89 percent thus, savings of the Total Annual Cost (TAC) showed a 30 percent decrease and utility bills were minimized by 38 percent although there was a small rise in the number of exchangers. To support this further sensitivity analysis of minimum temperature difference (0 T 0) clearly showed that 10 o C approach is the best trade-off between the capital cost of investment and the cost saved on utilities. The study offers an affordable and scalable solution to the integration of energy in the real world in a manner that is sustainable to the functioning of industries.

Keywords: Heat Exchanger Network (HEN), Thermal Efficiency, Pinch Analysis, Optimization, Total Annual Cost (TAC).

1. INTRODUCTION

As the competitive pressure to improve energy efficiency and decrease green house gas emissions increases in the industries due to increasing energy demands and environmental concerns, industries are struggling to meet them. Since thermal energy is a major utility used in most industrial processes, it presents high potential in the circumstances of conservation and reuse. One particular technology, that is, the design and optimization of heat exchanger networks (HENs) has become an imminent solution to the idea of enhancing thermal integration in an industrial plant among other strategies. Through proper recycling of heat captured in hot streams and sending that to the cold streams, industries can reduce its external energy input, economise on the operations costs and reduce its carbon footprint. The study has navigated the research gap of the existence of structured methods to plan and optimize HENs, which are not only process-based, but also meet the objectives of sustainability.

1.1 Background and Significance

Energy efficiency has not only become an important tool in relation to cutting down on operational costs in the modern industrial environment, but also an important component in the achievement of environmental sustainability. Through heating and cooling of systems in industries, a large portion of energy is spent and therefore, thermal energy management becomes an area of focus as far as optimisation is concerned. HENs are also the key elements towards achieving recovery and reuse of thermal energy to decrease the dependence on external utilities. These networks make it possible to transfer heat between hot process streams and cold streams thus contributing very less wastage of energy and overall process efficiency.

The geometry of effective HENs is an interaction of thermodynamics, fluid mechanics and economics. The poor design can result in the loss of energy, high operating costs, and even wearing out. As such, structured and streamlined HEN design is necessary in that both the technical and economic feasibility are met. The optimization algorithms and computational tools have enhanced significantly the possibility of designing HENs that maximize their thermal recovery within the limits of realistic feasibility (and within reasonable capital costs).

1.2 Research Objectives and Scope

The goal of the study is to formulate and assess successful approaches to come up with the designs and optimization of heat exchanger networks that could play a major role in bringing an improvement in terms of thermal performance within the industrial environments. The core objectives include:

- Establishing a systematic method of HEN synthesis based on graphical and mathematic ways.
- Application of optimization algorithms with aim of optimizing total annual cost (TAC) such as energy cost, capital cost and so on.
- The investigation of industrial processes to check the proposed methods and models by using case studies.

It includes subjects such as theoretical foundations, design techniques as well as modeling and simulation, and focuses on their real-life applicability. The aim of the work is to be a guideline to engineers and other decision-makers to put in place efficient HENs in any sector of industry.

2. REVIEW OF LITREATURE

Ahmed et al. (2018) carried out an extensive scrutiny on the optimization of thermodynamics design in heat sinks, providing many methods to be used to optimize the performance of heat expulsion. In their work, they present important details about how geometry, choice of material and fluid dynamics can be exploited to enhance thermal management systems, which forms the basis of designing of efficient heat exchangers systems.

Arsenyeva et al. (2021) devoted to retrofit synthesis of industrial HENs with varying types of heat exchangers. Their work brought systematic ways to refurbish current systems with the help of alternative exchanger technologies such that the flexibility and functionality of the industrial network would increase without making drastic structural changes. The study stresses that practical and algorithmic interpretation of the design must go hand-in-hand towards reaching the best results in retrofitting a building.

Delpech et al. (2018) researched the use of the waste heat recovery with heat pipe technology in the ceramic sector. Their case analysis of the cases showed that there is a significant scope of enhancement in energy use and process efficiency by using the advanced thermal integration methods. The research indicated the possibility of using new technologies such as heat pipes to supplement regular HEN, especially in industries where the high heating processes put off waste in hot form

El-Said et al. (2021) demonstrated the use of the machine learning algorithms in estimating the thermohydraulic performance of shell and tube heat exchangers, specifically in presence of air injection. In their study, they have successfully enhanced the accuracy of the prediction and that indicates the increased importance of data-based modeling in the optimization process of the heat transfer phenomena. The study reaffirms the importance of artificial intelligence in real-time performances improvement, as well as in choosing different operations.

Han et al. (2019) proposed a new type of a polymer based heat exchanger with a new design and implemented a multi-goal genetic algorithm (MOGA) to optimize the design. They were systematically taking into account several performance considerations, including thermal efficiency and pressure drop, to deliver a reasonable, cost balanced result at one and the same time. With the help of the polymer materials and advanced evolutionary algorithms, new possibilities in the form of light and corrosion-resistant heat exchangers enter the industrial scene.

3. METHODOLOGY

In this section the systematic methodology that will be followed in the design and optimization of Heat Exchanger Networks (HENs) is outlined. It describes the process of the formulation of the problem, the techniques of hybrid design based on combining the graphical and mathematical approach and the application of more advanced pieces of software such as MATLAB, Aspen HYSYS and GAMS. The aim is to obtain the cost effective and energy efficient configuration of HEN by exacting modeling and simulation techniques.

3.1 Problem Formulation

The essence of this research is to design a cost efficient and thermo dynamically viable Heat Exchanger Network (HEN) that will result in maximization of internal heat recovery with minimum utilization of external resources. The formulation of the optimization problem consists in defining the objective function which minimizes the Total Annual Cost (TAC) which is a composite measure made up of:

- Capital investment cost: Includes the cost of heat exchangers, piping, and structural supports.
- Operating cost: Covers utility consumption such as heating and cooling media (e.g., steam, cooling water).
- Maintenance and energy loss costs: Factors in degradation, fouling, and heat losses.

Constraints would be the energy balances, possible temperature difference (Delta T), available exchanger area, connected network of exchangers and equipment restrictions. The heat recovery targets are estimated using pinch based calculations and on that basis a minimum utility network is synthesized and further detailed optimization performed.

3.2 Design Techniques

To work systematically on the HEN design approach, a hybrid approach that has the combination of graphical approach and mathematical modeling is embraced.

3.2.1 Graphical Techniques

- Composite Curves (Hot and Cold): Assist in determining the minimum energy requirements and the pinch point which is the narrowest difference between the two composite curves.
- Grand Composite Curve (GCC): Gives a further insight on opportunities of heat integration by combining thermal loads at the plants into one curve allowing the opportunity to be identified where there are opportunities in heat recovery and siting of utility.

These techniques supply graphical heuristics to identify pinch points and determine possible heat recovery objectives without an effort to mathematically optimize anything.

3.2.2 Mathematical Modeling

Mathematical programming techniques are used to design and refine HEN structures:

- Linear Programming (LP): Applied to elementary targeting of minimum usage of utility, to rapid tests of feasibility of linear constraints.
- Nonlinear Programming (NLP): Used to model more accurately energy and heat transfer, given consideration to non-linear exchanger performance and temperature dependent properties.
- Mixed-Integer Linear/Nonlinear Programming (MILP/MINLP): Such models make discrete choices like selecting number of units, match selection, splitting streams and bypass configurations. In particular MINLP is able to model the structural elements of the network as well as the operational features and allow cost and thermal optimality trade-ups to be done.

3.3 Optimization Tools

In order to apply rigorous and verified results of optimization, a set of software platforms was used:

- MATLAB: The program is used widely in developing algorithms, writing programs to implement tailored optimization procedures and the application of general methods including heuristic/metaheuristic algorithms like Genetic Algorithms (GAs) and Particle Swarm Optimization (PSO) in providing a global search power.
- Aspen HYSYS: Used in the simulation of processes and model thermal systems. The tool is useful in validating the proposed HEN design; mass and energy balances are validated under actual operating conditions. It can also give exchanger duty, size estimate and analysis of pressure drop.

- GAMS (General Algebraic Modeling System): Applied in the solutions of complicated problem of MINLP. HEN synthesis GAMS allows organised modelling of problems with powerful solvers such as CPLEX, DICOPT, BARON, to optimise cost and configuration problems.

The combination of the tools enabled an effective and recursive design procedure covering the design spectrum, including conceptual targeting down to design verification, as well as technical and economic viability of suggested heat exchanger networks.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this segment, the comparison and assessment of Heat Exchanger Network (HEN) configuration prior and after optimization have been done. It consists of the three sections exact case analysis of noting the inefficiencies, the generation of optimized network based on the pinch analysis and MINLP and the extensive sensitivity study of the effect of minimum temperature difference (ATm). It is indicated in the results that the energy recovery, cost saving, and network efficiency are substantially improved due to the results that there is an overall view of the advantages of using thermal integration in industrial processes.

4.1 Base Case Analysis

To have a basis of optimization a base case Heat Exchanger Network (HEN) was modeled and simulated in Aspen HYSYS. This is a design of this network using traditional practices, without any form of advanced integration and optimization. The main aim of the current simulation was to analyze the current energy consumption scheme and find out the extent of losses regarding the recovery of heat.

A total of four process streams were incorporated in the simulation, with two hot (H 1 and H 2) and two cold (C 1 and C 2) streams requiring some type of heating or cooling. Table 1 summarizes the thermodynamic characteristics of these streams as well as their flow characteristics.

Table 1: Stream Data Summary

Stream	Type	Supply Temp (°C)	Target Temp (°C)	Heat Capacity Flowrate (kW/°C)
H1	Hot	180	60	2.5
H2	Hot	150	70	3.0
C1	Cold	40	130	2.8
C2	Cold	60	160	2.0

Streams H1 and H2 are indicated on the table of having very much thermal energy since their supply temperatures are very high and the rate of heat capacity flow is reasonable. Conversely, the cold streams C1 and C2 require a significant amount of heating in a broad range of temperatures. In the base case, however, external utilities (e.g. steam to heat and cooling water to cool) were mainly used to satisfy these heating and cooling requirements, with little internal recovery of heat between streams.

The performance evaluation of this configuration revealed the following key issues:

- Thermal coupling of the hot and the cold streams was limited thereby underutilizing the accessible waste heat on the hot streams.
- High utilities were made, either where too much cooling water and process steam were utilised.
- The systematic lack of targeting (e.g.- pinch temperature identification) lead to inefficient exchanger placements.
- TAC was also determined to be greater because of the poor performance of network coupled with high operations costs.

This was a baseline on which further work could be compared against and showed that it was necessary to optimize. It emphasized the potential to save much more by recouping more heat internally and tapping less on outside energy sources. The following sections are concerned with the redesign and optimization of this network through pinch analysis and mathematical programming in order to enhance total thermal performance and economic feasibility.

4.2 Optimized Network Design

The above approaches (development of limitation in the base case scenario, use of pinch and optimization by mixed integer non linear programing MINLP) were used to come up with an optimized Heat Exchanger Network (HEN). The one goal of the optimization process was to improve the internal heat recovery, the external utility usage was to be minimized, the Total Annual Cost (TAC) connected with heat exchange processes to be reduced.

- **Pinch Analysis Application**

The pinch point of the plant was calculated with the help of the pinch analysis, which involved the plotting of the composite curve of the hot and cold streams. This analysis determined a minimum temperature strategy (Delta-T-sign omega-ish exactly minutes squared) of 10 o C which allowed maximum viable recovery of energy, without the application of indecent capital costs. This understanding led to the rearrangement of the heat exchanger layout with the heat not transferred across pinch point in keeping with the principles of the pinch design rules.

- **MINLP-Based Optimization**

The modified network was also optimized by means of MINLP algorithms, which were performed by GAMS and MATLAB. The optimization structure tackled structuring decisions (i.e. stream matches and heat exchanger placements) and operational parameters (i.e. individual heat duties and area allocation) in parallel. Cost function was the TAC, and this involved the annualized capital cost, and utility cost. The algorithm progressively optimized parameters of the designs to converge on the more economy-wise effective one.

The performance comparison between the base case and the optimized network is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Performance Comparison of Base and Optimized Networks

Parameter	Base Case	Optimized Case
Heat Recovery (%)	65	89
Utility Cost (INR/year)	₹5,00,000	₹3,10,000
Total Annual Cost (INR/year)	₹8,00,000	₹5,60,000
Number of Heat Exchangers	6	8

The optimized HEN design significantly outperforms the base case across all key performance indicators:

- Heat recovery improved by 24 percentage points, demonstrating better energy integration and less reliance on external utilities.
- Utility costs dropped by 38%, as a larger portion of the thermal load was satisfied through internal stream-to-stream heat exchange.
- The Total Annual Cost (TAC) decreased by approximately ₹2.4 lakhs per year, showcasing the economic benefits of network optimization.
- Although the number of heat exchangers increased from 6 to 8, the additional capital investment was justified by the long-term operational savings and efficiency gains.

This optimal design is a trade-off between capital cost and the operating cost, which is within the industrial objectives of sustainability and cost-effectiveness. The enhanced plan permits little loss of energy and the ventilation of hot and cold stream outlines which provides a more environmental friendly and cost-efficient industrial heat exchange system.

4.3 Sensitivity Analysis

In order to have a better insight into how the minimum temperature difference (Delta T point sub script Mi n g g o i 2 i g e g filter d l e 97 percent 24 percent) impacts performance and economics of the Heat Exchanger Network (HEN), sensitivity analysis was carried out. This analysis is important in that the selection of 9T 8(is a significant factor to determine the suitability of heat recovery, heat exchanger size and the proportion between capital outlay and utility cost of operations.

In the present research, a 5oC, 10oC, and 15oC values of the difference between the mean temperature levels were studied. The findings, tabulated in Table 3, show the difference in the percentage of heat recovery, capital cost and the annual utility cost of every temperature strategy.

Table 3: Sensitivity Analysis of Minimum Temperature Difference (ΔT_{min})

(ΔT_{min}) (°C)	Heat Recovery (%)	Capital Cost (INR)	Utility Cost (INR/year)
5	93	12,00,000	2,80,000
10	89	10,00,000	3,10,000
15	82	8,50,000	3,60,000

- The lowest utility cost is reached when ΔT_{min} = 5°C, which is when the most heat is recovered (93%). This setup, on the other hand, needs bigger heat exchanger surface areas, which raises the capital cost by a lot (₹12,00,000). Because the temperature difference is so small, the system needs a bigger heat transfer surface to handle the thermal load, which makes it more expensive.
- When ΔT_{min} = 15°C, the system is more capital-efficient (₹8,50,000), but it loses heat recovery (82%) and uses more utilities (₹3,60,000/year), which makes it less appealing for long-term use.

- The best balance occurs at ΔT_{min} = 10°C, when the trade-off between the cost of capital and the cost of running the business is best. This setup has a modest capital cost of ₹10,00,000 and a competitive utility cost of ₹3,10,000 per year. It also recovers 89% of the heat. So, this value was chosen for the final design and optimization of the HEN.

This sensitivity analysis shows how HEN design has to make trade-offs between technological and economic factors. Choosing a ΔT_{min} that is too tiny will make the system as energy efficient as possible, but it could also make it too expensive to run. On the other hand, a bigger ΔT_{min} decreases capital costs but makes the system more dependent on utilities, which affects sustainability and operational costs.

The results of this analysis show that industrial process design needs to include all parts of the decision-making process, balancing performance with real-world investment limits.

5. CONCLUSION

The main goal of this research was to improve the thermal efficiency and lower the operational expenses of industrial processes by thoroughly looking into the design and optimization of Heat Exchanger Networks (HENs). A cost-effective and energy-efficient heat recovery system was made by combining graphical methods like Pinch Analysis with advanced mathematical modeling using Mixed-Integer Nonlinear Programming (MINLP). The base case research showed that traditional HEN setups are quite inefficient, with heat potential that isn't being used and excessive utility expenditures. This first assessment set a standard, showing that the heat recovery rate was only 65% and the Total Annual Cost (TAC) was ₹8,00,000, mostly because the building relied heavily on outside heating and cooling services.

The study used a minimum temperature approach (ΔT_{min}) of 10°C to optimize network design. This led to a 24% increase in heat recovery, a 38% decrease in utility expenses, and a 30% decrease in TAC overall, even though the number of heat exchangers went up slightly. The improved setup shows how useful process integration and algorithm-driven decision-making can be in industrial energy systems. The sensitivity analysis gave us more information that showed how important ΔT_{min} was in figuring out the balance between utility savings and capital investment. Smaller temperature differences made heat recovery better, but they also made capital expenses go up. The investigation showed that 10°C is the best design position since it balances both thermal and economic performance. In conclusion, the study shows that using both thermal targeting and optimization algorithms together can greatly improve the thermal and economic performance of industrial HENs. These results have a lot of meaning for industries that use a lot of energy and want to cut down on emissions, use less energy, and follow rules on sustainability. The study not only shows that theory can be improved, but it also gives a strong framework that can be used in real-world industrial systems to increase long-term operational efficiency.

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Ratan Sikdar
Dr. Shrihar Pandey

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