IJAREEIE

e-ISSN: 2278-8875
p-ISSN: 2320-3765

International Journal of Advanced Research in Electrical, Electronics and Instrumentation Engineering

Volume 13, Issue 2, February 2024

INTERNATIONAL STANDARD SERIAL NUMBER INDIA

Impact Factor: 8.317

| e-ISSN: 2278 – 8875, p-ISSN: 2320 – 3765| www.ijareeie.com | Impact Factor: 8.317|| A Monthly Peer Reviewed & Referred Journal |

||Volume 13, Issue 2, February 2024||

|DOI:10.15662/IJAREEIE.2024.1302007 |

Advancements and Future Technology of Energy Meters

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ABSTRACT-: This paper aims to provide a detailed study of the recent developments in energy meters, focusing on current static meters and more advanced smart meters. This study takes a closer look at how energy meters have evolved and the need for evolution. Energy meters serve as the cornerstone of the energy sector, facilitating fair billing and promoting energy efficiency; hence, the inefficiencies of traditional energy meters can have a cascading effect on utilities, leading to financial, operational, and customer satisfaction losses. Upgrading to more advanced and accurate metering technologies, such as smart meters, can help utilities mitigate these challenges and enhance overall performance.

KEYWORDS- Automatic Meter Reading System (AMR), Time of Use (TOU), Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI), Profile Capture Period (PCP) and Radio Frequency (RF).

I. INTRODUCTION

The energy meters are one of the most important units in the energy sector; efficient management and analysis of energy consumption are crucial for reducing costs for utilities and consumers and also contribute to environmental sustainability. As a result, more sophisticated and precise meters are required.

This paper aims to:

- A detailed overview of traditional energy meters and their limitations.
- A detailed study of static meters and how they mitigate the limitations of traditional energy meters.
- A brief discussion of pre-payment meters.
- Need for smart meters and future technology.

I. TRADITIONAL ENERGY METERS: LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES

Principle: This works on the principle of electromagnetic induction, the meter in reality a two-phase induction motor is made to work on a single-phase supply [1], and the rotation of the aluminum disk records the energy consumption.

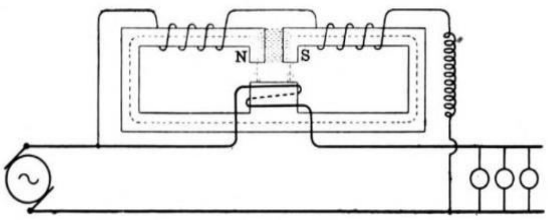

Figure-1 Circuit Diagram of Traditional Energy Meter [1]

Apart from the common errors like Phase error, Frictional error, and Creep error it also suffers from:

1) Mechanical wear and tear
2) Magnetic Field Variations
3) Inaccuracy in Power Factor Measurement
4) Voltage and Current Waveform Distortions
5) Limited measurement range

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6) Frequency Variations
7) Manual reading errors
8) Tampering
9) Lack of advanced features
10) Age-Related Drift
11) Accuracy Under Non-Linear Loads

The traditional energy meters have lots of limitations and Challenges which are following

1) It can only measure the active energy consumed.
2) Electromechanical meters respond to changes more slowly.
3) Because of regular operations and changes in the environment, they are more susceptible to errors.
4) Readings from electromechanical meters must be done physically by a meter reader. The need for manpower usually adds an extra expense to the bill on top of the energy utilized.
5) Vibrations and shocks have a long-term impact on the precision of the meter.
6) Connections and disconnections must be done manually.
7) Lack of real-time monitoring
8) Unidirectional Measurement
9) Difficulty in Identifying Energy Theft
10) Obsolete Technology
11) Limited connectivity and communication
12) Vulnerability to Cyber Security Threats
13) Inefficient load management
14) Limited Integration with Renewable Energy Sources
15) Dependency on Physical Inspection
16) Difficulty in Identifying Power Quality Issues
17) Environmental Impact
18) Resistance to Technological Upgrades
19) Data Privacy Concerns
20) Challenges in Load Balancing

II. STATIC ENERGY METERS, ITS LIMITATIONS & PREPAYMENT METERS

Static meters use digital technology and consist of a microcontroller, LCD Display, two communication ports (RS-232 and Optical) , and a real-time clock (RTC). In addition to measuring Active power, it also measures Phase voltages, phase currents, frequency, power factor, active power, reactive power, apparent power, maximum demand, and power quality measurements. Every static meter collects data in the following formats: instantaneous data, profile data (good for load surveys), cumulative data (helpful for invoicing), and events data (for vigilance) Automatic Meter Reading System (AMR) then collects these data and send them directly into the billing system for bill generation thus removing human intervention in the billing process, this results in faster billing process and lower chance of error, this also provide additional information and services like TOU and Temper detection.

Figure 2- Static Energy Meter

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Figure 3- Static Prepayment Meter

Principle: The static meter senses current (I) and Voltage (V) and samples them at regular intervals, the instantaneous power (P) at each sampling point is calculated as the product of the measured voltage and current $P(t)=V(t)\cdot I(t)$, The static meter uses digital signal processing (DSP) techniques to process the sampled data. The instantaneous power is computed using DSP algorithms, which also account for phase angles, power factor, and other variables. The instantaneous power readings are accumulated by the meter over time. The summation is performed digitally, integrating the power values at each time interval: $\text{Energy}=\sum P(t)\cdot\Delta t$ The total energy consumption is then displayed on the meter's digital screen.

Features of static meters

1. It's more accurate than traditional meters since it has no moving parts.
2. Easy detection of tempering and energy theft.
3. Independent on physical inspection for billing process (the bill is downloaded through an optical port and RS-232).
4. Support for TOU pricing, RTC, block load, and daily load.
5. Memory for storing billing data and other information.
6. Ease of access.
7. Low-level and high-level security features.
8. Availability of pre-payment facility in static pre-payment meter, the consumer can recharge the meter according to his or her needs.

Limitations of static meters

1. Accuracy under Non-Ideal Conditions
2. Temperature Sensitivity
3. Influence of Voltage and Current Waveform Distortions
4. Power Factor Dependency
5. Susceptibility to EMI and RFI
6. Calibration Drift over Time
7. Voltage and Current Sensor Limitations
8. Initial Cost
9. Communication Vulnerabilities
10. Limited Measurement Range
11. Reliance on External Power

Prepayment Meters-

Electricity meter with additional functionality that can be operated and controlled to allow the flow of energy and interrupt it automatically when available credit is exhausted. [3]

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Benefits to consumers [2]

- Make payments as you go.
- There's no need to wait in line.
- No unexpected bills; no disagreements about bills.
- Permit clients to set spending limits.
- Encourage clients to make energy-saving contributions.

Benefits to Utilities [2]

- Full payment for power up front
- Decreased overhead.
- Simple invoicing.
- Avoid disconnecting and reconnecting.
- Detecting fraud and tampering.
- The load connection and disconnection depending on money and time.
- Control of Load and Demand.

III. SMART METERS AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

Smart meters, just like static meters, are electronic devices that are capable of recording information such as current and voltage levels, power factors, energy consumed, etc., but apart from the Automatic Meter Reading System (AMR) like static meters, they also support two-way communication at a higher frequency (RF) and GPS between the consumer and the supply, thereby completely removing the need for a third person in the billing process and making it convenient for both the consumer and the utilities to generate faster and more accurate bills. Such an advanced technology is called Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI). Smart meters capture the data at an interval of 30 or 15 minutes; this is known as the Profile Capture Period (PCP). This information is then sent by the smart meters to the utilities for improved load management.

Features/Services of Smart meter:

1. Smart Meter Association Requirements
2. Push Services
3. Advanced Security Profile
4. Communication Profile
5. Firmware Upgrade
6. Connect/Disconnect Services
7. Parameter List for Smart Meter

Figure 4 - Smart Energy Meter

The Future Prospects of Smart Meter:

Smart meters have already brought a wave of innovation to the way we understand and consume energy, but their journey is far from over. Smart meter prospects are really bright as we look to the future.

1. Advanced Energy Management:

In the future smart meters will become even more advanced and will help the consumer in making complex decisions and energy savings.

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2. Integration with Smart Homes:
Smart meters in the future will become an integral part of the home while being connected to other devices of the consumer it will help the consumer in easy access and control their meters from remote locations with just a touch.

3. Artificial Intelligence Integration:
AI integration will further enhance the capabilities of the smart meter, helping even a normal consumer to understand their complex power consumption behavior and will make the best decision for them by analyzing all the data that would not only help the consumer but also the utilities as well.

4. Enhanced Cyber Security Measures:
With technology comes security, with more enhanced smart meters cyber security measures will be taken in the future to strengthen the security and protect the privacy of the consumer.

5. Demand Response Evolution:
With features like TOU the smart meters will help the consumer to manage their load effectively helping the consumer to turn their load on and off accordingly.

6. Integration with Electric Vehicles (EVs):
EVs are the future of Automobiles and with the help of smart meters, it is possible for the consumer to charge their vehicle effectively on low demand periods, helping them to reduce the cost which would encourage them to buy EVs.

7. Grid Modernization and Smart Cities:
Smart meters will play a key role in managing load demand and supply in the interconnected grids by analyzing real-time data. People will also participate in this by providing energy to the grid with the help of bidirectional smart meters.

8. Enhanced Communication Technologies:
In the future Smart meters will use more advanced communication technologies like 5G for faster and reliable data transfer to the utilities.

Table 1:- Comparison of Errors in three types of meters.

Error Sources	Traditional Meters	Static (Electronic) meters	Smart Meters
Mechanical wear and tear	Yes	No	No
Magnetic Field Variations	Yes	No	No
Inaccuracy in Power Factor Measurement	Yes	Yes	No
Voltage and Current Waveform Distortions	Yes	Yes	No
Limited measurement range	Yes	Yes	No
Frequency Variations	Yes	No	No
Manual reading errors	Yes	No	No
Tampering	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lack of advanced features	Yes	No	No

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Age-related drift	Yes	Yes	No
Accuracy Under Non-Linear Loads	Yes	Yes	No
Temperature Sensitivity	No	Yes	No
Susceptibility to EMI and RFI	No	Yes	No
Calibration drifts over time.	No	Yes	No
Voltage and Current Sensor Limitations	No	Yes	No
Initial Cost	No	Higher initial cost compared to traditional	Higher initial cost compared to static
Communication Vulnerabilities	No	No	Smart meters are susceptible to cyber security threats.
Limited measurement range	No	Some meters may have a restricted range.	No
Reliance on external power	No	No	Smart meters require external power; potential issues during outages

Table 2:- Comparison of all three traditional, static ,and smart meters.

Aspect	Traditional Meters (Electromechanical/Analog)	Static Meters (Electronic)	Smart Meters
Measurement Technology	Electromechanical components	Electronic components	Advanced electronics and communication tech
Current and Voltage Handling	Current and voltage coils	Electronic sensors	Electronic sensors
Signal Processing	Mechanical rotation and gears	Analog-to-digital conversion	Digital signal processing
Data Display	Analog dials	Digital	Digital

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	or digital displays	displays	displays with advanced interfaces
Communication Capabilities	None	Limited or none	Bidirectional communication with utilities
Real-Time Monitoring	No	No	Yes, provides real-time energy consumption
Data Granularity	Limited	Moderate	High, detailed consumption patterns
Maintenance Needs	May require more frequent maintenance	Generally low	Low
Lifespan	Moderate	Long	Long
Upgradability	Limited	Limited	High, remote firmware updates and upgrades
Integration with Renewables	Limited bidirectional handling	Facilitates bidirectional flow	Effectively handles bidirectional flow
Advanced Features	Basic functionality	Limited features	Advanced features like time-of-use pricing
Remote Communication with Utilities	Manual reading by personnel	Limited or none	Bidirectional communication for grid management

IV. CONCLUSION

This paper aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the advancement of energy meters. The paper started with the basic introduction of mechanical meters, including their principle of operation and the problems and limitations associated with them. It further discusses other energy meters and how they mitigate those problems and limitations. Finally, it gives the introduction of pre-payment and smart meters, with discussion of both current advancements and future potential in the energy sector with the use of these meters.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Authors extend their gratitude to the management of Central Power Research Institute, India for their support that contributed to the successful completion.

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BIOGRAPHY

First Author – Mr. Rishiraj Meena completed his graduation in Electrical Engineering from REC College, Dausa (RTU) Kota, Rajasthan and currently working as an Engineering Officer in the Energy Meter Testing Laboratory at CPRI, RTL, NOIDA, and have four years of experience in the field of testing and certification of energy meters.

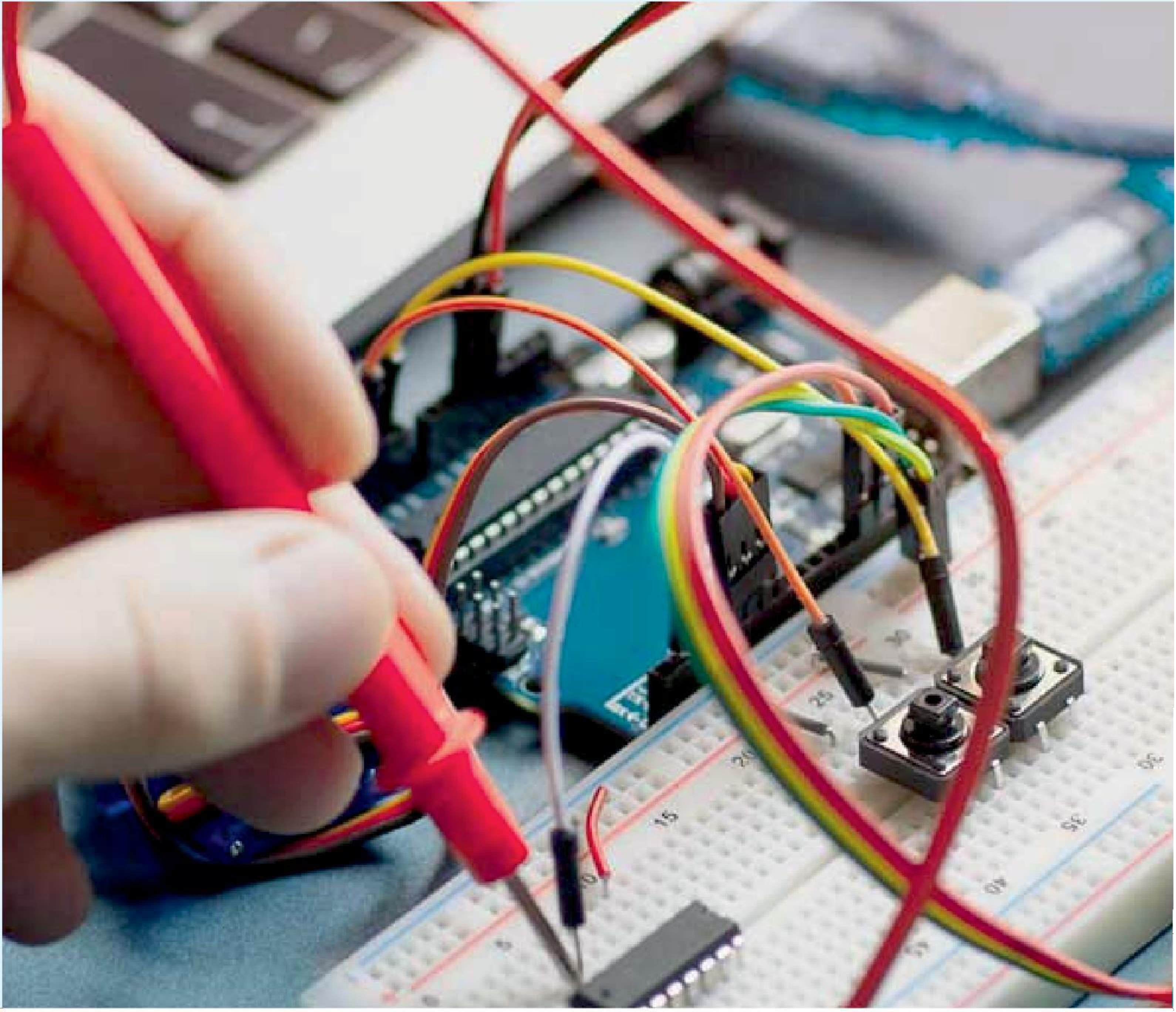
Second Author - Mridula Jain obtained her Bachelor degree in Electrical Engg from IGEC Sagar in 2001 and M.E. degree in Power Electronics from SGSITS Indore in 2006. She worked in SGSITS Indore as a lecturer for 2 years. Also worked for NaMPET project at IISc Banglaore.

Since 2007 she has been working with Central Power Research Institute in the areas of Power system automation, SCADA consultancy,Smart Grid Consultacy, Substation Automation Protocol testing and Metering Protocol testing.

Currently she is posted at Central Power Research Institute Noida and In charge of Energy Meter Testing Laboratory.

She is looking after Energy meter testing for smart meters and static meters as per national and international standards.

She is active member of standardization committee for Metering under the aegis of Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS).



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