Firmware-Driven Bluetooth ATE Testing Optimization

Manibharath Neravati, Pragya Nahar
Test Engineering
Infineon Technologies, San Jose
Manibharath.N@infineon.com, Pragya.Nahar@infineon.com

Abstract - Over the past two decades, Bluetooth technology IEEE 802.15.x has witnessed remarkable advancements, with each version optimizing power consumption without compromising range. However, ensuring the best in class yields while maintaining low test costs remains a challenge in the ATE (Automatic Test Equipment) manufacturing environment. This paper presents a comprehensive study of Bluetooth pattern-based and firmware-based test methodologies in ATE production testing. We evaluate the efficiency of each implementation, demonstrating a yield improvement of 10% and a test time reduction of 8% compared to the pattern-based and firmware-based test methodologies. Our findings contribute to the optimization of Bluetooth technology testing in ATE production environments, enabling cost-effective solutions for reliable and efficient connectivity.

Keywords — Tx PWR (Transmitted Power), DEVM (Differential Error Vector Magnitude), ATE (Automatic Test Equipment), Rx PER (Packet Error Rate)

Introduction

Radio frequency (RF) systems play a pivotal role in shaping the requirements of microwave and RF circuits, while the capabilities of these circuits fuel the evolution of RF systems. Communication has become the primary driving force behind RF system development, leading to an unprecedented pace of RF technology evolution. An RF signal is a coherently generated, radiated, propagated, collected, amplified, and information-extracted signal that traverses through air or space. This interdependence between RF systems and microwave circuits highlights the importance of continuous advancements in communication technologies, ultimately shaping the future of RF technology.

Bluetooth technology performance test specifications, as defined by the Bluetooth Special Interest Group (SIG), serve as the foundation for ATE testing. Key parameters include TX PWR (transmit power), ACP (adjacent channel power), DEVM (differential error vector magnitude), and modulation characteristics such as Delf1 and Delf2. These parameters, detailed in the subsequent sections, pertain to Bluetooth transmitter-based performance metrics.

TX Power represents the strength of the transmitted signal, while ACP quantifies the power leakage into adjacent channels. DEVM gauges the modulation signal quality of differentially encoded Bluetooth Enhanced Data Rate (EDR) packets. Delf1 and Delf2 parameters are related to frequency deviation modulation characteristics. Both pattern-based and firmware-based test methodologies can be employed in the ATE environment to assess these parameters. Additionally, RX PER (receiver packet error rate) is a critical metric for evaluating the performance of the Bluetooth receiver. By examining these parameters, engineers can ensure the reliable and efficient operation of Bluetooth devices in various applications.

This paper explores the trade-offs between pattern-based and firmware-based approaches for ATE testing and demonstrates how the challenges were overcome to achieve best-in-class yields and test time by transitioning to a firmware-based Bluetooth test methodology. By comparing the two approaches and detailing the optimization process, this study provides valuable insights for engineers seeking to enhance the efficiency and reliability of Bluetooth testing in production environments. Through a comprehensive analysis of the advantages and limitations of each methodology, this work aims to guide the development of more effective and efficient testing strategies for Bluetooth technology.