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Intra Coding Performance Comparison of HEVC, H.264/AVC, Motion-JPEG2000 and JPEGXR Encoders

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Abstract

In this document the intra coding performance comparison of HEVC, H.264/AVC, Motion-JPEG2000 and JPEG XR is investigated. The performance of these four codecs is evaluated for various videos coded at different bitrates in Intra coding configuration. The results prove the excellent coding efficiency of the HEVC. In addition, the performance of the JPEG2000 is improved at high resolution videos and is close to the ones of HEVC and H.264/AVC at low bit-rates.

1 Introduction

The Joint Collaborative Team on Video Coding (JCT-VC) developed the latest video coding standard, High Efficiency Video Coding (HEVC), and released the first version in January 2013 [1]. Similar to the previous video coding standard H.264/AVC [2], HEVC exploits both the temporal redundancy between frames and the spatial redundancy within a frame. While evaluations demonstrate that HEVC can achieve a bitrate reduction by approximately 50% on average compared with H.264/AVC for an equivalent subjective quality of the reproduced video [3]. The improved intra coding method, which employs more prediction modes for luminance and chrominance components than those used in H.264/AVC, contributes a lot to the superior coding efficiency of HEVC [4]. The intra coding focuses on the spatial redundancy within the frame and also can be applied to the still image coding which is dominated by the JPEG standard series. So it is meaningful to compare the spatial coding efficiency of different solutions from both image and video coding.

Marpe et al. compared the intra coding performance of H.264 with the one of Motion-JPEG2000 [5], which encodes each frame by the use of JPEG2000 still image coding standard [6]. The experiment calculates the average luminance (Y) PSNR over the average bitrate and concludes that H.264/AVC has a significantly advantage of the rate-distortion at low resolution source materials $(352 \times 288p \text{ and } 720 \times 576p \text{ in YUV } 4:2:0)$, while Motion-JPEG2000 clearly outperforms H.264/AVC at high resolutions $(1920 \times 1080p)$ and high bit-rates. In [7], Simone et al. transformed ten high definition images from RGB to YUV 4:4:4 and used them to measure JPEG2000, H.264/AVC High 4:4:4 Intra Profile and HD Photo which is standardized in JPEGXR [8]. The experiment shows that JPEG2000 outperforms HD Photo for all the images and H.264/AVC performs well compared to HD Photo, while JPEG2000 is better than H.264/AVC for most high definition images. In contrast, another literatures offer different conclusions based on their experiments. Shi et al. test sequences with resolutions from 512×256 to 4096×2048 . They concludes that H.264/AVC intra frame performs better than JPEG2000 at higher bitrates for different resolutions, while vice versa at lower bitrates [9]. In [10], Cai et al. compared HEVC with H.264/AVC and Motion-JPEG2000. According to their experiment results, Motion-JPEG2000 is more efficient than H.264/AVC and HEVC in low bitrate performance, while gradually surpassed by H.264/AVC and HEVC as the bit-rate increases. Nguyen et al. also presented the rate-distortion performances of HEVC Main Still Picture (MSP) profile, H.264/AVC and JPEG2000 [11]. They tested 36 still images and concluded the superior performance of HEVC for the average bit-rate reduction.

Although some comparison work has been presented as shown above, a divergence of the performances between the H.264/AVC and JPEG2000 is noticed. The experimental conditions, such as different image/video sequences, color spaces and PSNR calculation methods probably influence the comparison conclusion. In our experiment, the original video sequence is preferred rather than the individual images as done in [5] [10]. Each test sequence contains hundreds of frames (10 seconds duration) which provide sufficient examples. The format of sequence is YUV 4:2:0 and not converted to other color space. Each intra coding solution chooses the corresponding format mode during the test. The Evaluating criterion is the combination of weighted luma and chroma PSNR used in HM, which is the reference software of HEVC [12].

The following parts are organized as follows. a brief introduction of the related coding technologies is presented in Section 2. The test video sequences, reference softwares and related coding parameter configurations are provided in Section 3. The comparison results are shown and discussed in Section 4. The conclusion is provided in Section 5.

2 Overview of the Compression Schemes

This section gives an overview of the evaluated coding algorithms, HEVC, H.264/AVC, JPEG 2000 and JPEGXR. The two video coding standards (HEVC, H.264/AVC) constrained to intracoding mode which only considers the spatial redundancy, while JPEG2000 and JPEGXR are still image coding standards. In the next sections, we give a brief introduction of these four standards.

2.1 H.264/AVC

H.264/AVC is based on the block coding. It divides each frame into non-overlapping square or rectangular blocks. Each block is put into intra or inter prediction. The prediction residuals are then transformed by the block-based approach and quantized.

In the intra-coding mode, 9 prediction modes are used for the 4×4 block, while 4 modes for the 16×16 block. For the prediction residual signal, an adaptive selection between the 4×4 and 8×8 transform block sizes for the integer transform operation is applied to improve the coding efficiency. For the entropy coding part, H.264/AVC has two kinds of methods, CABAC and Context-adaptive variable-length coding (CAVLC). CABAC compresses the quantized transform coefficient values more efficiently than CAVLC, but also requires more processing operations. In our experiments, CABAC is adopted for H.264/AVC to test the coding efficiency.

2.2 HEVC

In HEVC, each frame is partitioned into coding tree blocks (CTB). The blocks of CTB can be further partitioned into coding blocks (CB). The size of the CB varies from the same size of CTB to the minimum size 8×8 . The size is specified by a syntax which should be coded. The CB and the associated syntax form a coding unit (CU).

To each CU, an intra or inter mode is applied. For the intra mode, it considers the associate pixels adjacent to the current position and chooses one of 35 intra prediction mode [4]. Specifically, there are 33 angular prediction modes, one DC mode, and one planar mode.

The angular prediction is designed to model different directional structures in the video or image and performs well in the presence of edges. For the smooth content in the image, DC prediction generates a prediction block by averaging values in the neighboring reconstructed blocks. It provides an alternative but a coarse approximation. In addition, the planar prediction mode is used to describe the continuities along block boundaries. In the planer mode, the border samples are linearly interpolated and the center samples are linearly interpolated from the border ones. After the prediction, kinds of filters are applied to remedy the discontinuities along block boundaries. The complete description of the filtering process is referred to [13]. The prediction residuals are transformed by the Discrete cosine transform (DCT) in each transform block (TB) which is partitioned individually from the CU. For the inter coding mode, CB corresponds to one to four prediction blocks (PB). PB and the associate syntax form a prediction unit (PU) which has one or two motion vectors. The inter prediction is done by the use of the advanced motion vector prediction (AMVP): A candidate list is built for each motion vector to record the motion vectors of neighboring blocks with the same index as the predicted motion vector. Finally, all syntax data are entropy coded by CABAC, which is similar to the entropy coding scheme used in H.264/AVC [14]. A sample adaptive offset (SAO) operation is also adopted in HEVC [15]. SAO classifies reconstructed pixels into different categories and then reduce the distortion by adding an offset for each category of pixels. According to a report on HEVC compression performance verification testing in 2014, the average bit-rate reduction for HEVC are estimated at approximately 52% for 480p, 56% for 720p, 62% for 1080p and 64% for 4K UHD, compared with H.264/AVC [16].

2.3 JPEG2000

JPEG2000 is designed for the still image coding. It partitions the image into rectangular regions called tiles. The *tile* can be any size, but once the size is chosen, all the *tiles* have the same size during the coding. Each *tile* is compressed individually in four main steps.

The first step is to apply the one-dimensional wavelet transform to the *tile* in the horizontal and vertical directions to get subbands of wavelet coefficients. The achieved coefficients are located in four blocks and describe the horizontal and vertical characteristics of the original *tile* component: one is the low resolution representation (LL), one responds strongly to vertical edges and line segments (HL), one responds to horizontal edges and line segments (LH), and one responds primarity to diagonally oriented features (HH). The low resolution one LL can be transformed further to get the more low resolution image blocks. This process is then repeated several times until a certain low resolution is achieved. This procedure can be seen as a decomposition of the image block. There are two kinds of transforms, integer and floating point. The integer one is reversible and designed for lossless coding.

After transformation, the next step is to quantize the transformed coefficients. Each coefficient is divided by a quantization step size Q and rounded down. This operation is lossy. The larger Q is, the coarser the coefficients are quantized, and the lower bitrate can be achieved. For the lossless coding, Q is essentially set to 1.0 and the coefficients are integers produced by the reversible transform.

The third step is using an arithmetic coding which is called MQ coder to encode the quantized wavelet coefficients. The coder encodes the bits of coefficients, starting with the most significant bits and progressing to less significant ones by a process called EBCOT (Embedded Block Coding with optimal Truncation) [17].

The last step is the construction of the bitstream. The bitstream is composed of packets and many "markers". The marker is a sign of certain code parts. By the use of markers, the deocoder can skip some parts of the bitstream to decode a certain code part, and display certain regions of the image before others. The bitstream is also organized by layers. Each layer contains a certain resolution information and the decoder can achieve the image progressively by releasing the layers one by one.

Motion-JPEG2000 is defined as Part 3 of the ISO Standard for JPEG2000. It does not involve inter-frame coding, but each frame is coded independently using JPEG2000 [18].

2.4 JPEGXR

JPEGXR is based on the technology developed by Microsoft under the name HD Photo [19]. It uses an integer transform adopting a lifting scheme [20]. This transform is close to a 4×4 DCT but is lossless. JPEGXR allows an optional overlap step. This step operates on 4×4 blocks which are offset by 2 samples in each direction from the 4×4 core transform blocks. Its purpose is to improve compression capability and reduce block-boundary artifacts at low bitrates. At high bitrates, when the block-boundary artifacts are not obvious, this operlap step is skiped for reducing the encoding and decoding time. At the final stage, JPEGXR employs the adaptive Huffman codes for entropy coding.

Compared to JPEG2000, JPEGXR offers a low computational complexity coding solution. It is popularized mainly by Microsoft and supported in Adobe Flash Player 11, Windows Imaging Component and Windows operating systems.

Sequence Name	Resolution	Frame rate (fps)	Frame Amount
BlowingBubbles	416 - 940	50	500
BasketballPass	410×240	50	500
BQMall		60	600
PartyScene	832×480	50	500
BasketballDrill		50	500
ChinaSpeed	1024×768	30	500
FourPeople		60	600
Johnny		60	600
KristenAndSara	1280×720	60	600
SlideEditing		30	300
SlideShow		20	500
Kimono1		24	240
ParkScene		24	240
Cactus	1920×1080	50	500
BQTerrace		60	600
BasketballDrive		50	500
Traffic	2560×1600	30	150
PeopleOnStreet	2300×1000	30	150
Beauty		30	120
Bosphorus	3840×2160	30	120
HoneyBee		30	120

Table 1: Overview of the Test Sequences

3 Evaluation Methodology

The test sequences are mainly from those used in the standardization process of HEVC and shown in Table 1. The test sequences in 4K are available in [21]. All the sequences are in the format YUV 4:2:0 and have the 8-bit depth. These sequences cover a wide range of characteristics of the image contents and have hundreds of frames to describe the movements of the traffic, the people and the screen context. Besides, the sequences provide examples in different resolutions with sizes from 416×240 to 3840×2160 in order to test the spatial compression efficiencies of coding solutions for low and high resolution images. It is expected to provide convincing test results.

3.1 Encoder configuration

In general, the default configurations of the reference softwares of the test compression schemes are used in this comparison experiment.

For HEVC, the released version of HM 14 [12] is tested as the reference solution. The intra coding mode is controlled by the configuration file "encoder_intra_main.cfg". The details of options are shown in Table 2. The quantization parameter QP is changed during the test to get the qualities of coded sequences at different bit-rates.

H.264/AVC is tested by the use of the reference solution JM 18.6 which is available in [22]. JM is configured to closely emulate HEVC coding based on the HM-like configurations as used in [23]. The configuration file is "encoder_JM_Intra_HE.cfg" which is included in the JM folder. The main parameters are listed in Table 3.

For JPEG2000, the Motion-JPEG2000 is used to encode video sequences. The implementation is based on the OpenJPEG v2.1 [24]. The options also adopt default values and the reversible discrete wavelet transform (DWT) is used. However, the reversible DWT is the choice to implement the lossless coding by the JPEG2000. For the lossy coding, the irreversible DWT can achieve a better objective quality than the one the reversible mode as reported in [25] [26] [27]. In this test, the irreversible DWT is adopted to show the lossy coding performance of JPEG2000, while the results of the reversible DWT are also added for comparison. The main options of Motion-JPEG2000 are shown in Table 4. The implementation of JPEGXR is available in [28]. The options are also mainly configured in default and some parameters are listed in Table 5.

Coding Options	Parameters		
Profile	main		
MaxCUWidth	64		
MaxCUHeight	64		
MaxPartitionDepth	4		
QuadtreeTULog2MaxSize	5		
QuadtreeTULog2MinSize	2		
${\it Quadtree TUMaxDepthInter}$	3		
${\it Quadtree TUMaxDepthIntra}$	3		
IntraPeriod	1		
FastSearch	1 (TZ search)		
SearchRange	64		
HadamardME	1 (Enabled)		
QP	Quantization parameter $(0 \sim 51)$		
RDOQ	1		
RDOQTS	1		
LoopFilterDisable	0 (0=Filter)		
InternalBitDepth	8		
SAO	1 (Enabled)		
AMP	1 (Enabled)		
TransformSkip	1 (Enabled)		
TransformSkipFast	1 (Enabled)		

Table 2: Options of HM

Table 3: Options of JM

Coding OptionsParametersProfileIDC100 (FREXT Profiles)
ProfileIDC 100 (FREXT Profiles)
IntraPeriod 1
IDRPeriod 1
QPISlice Quant. param for I Slices $(0 \sim 51)$
FastCrIntraDecision 0 (off)
CbQPOffset 0
Transform8x8Mode 1
SymbolMode 1 (CABAC)
RDOptimization 1 (Enabled)
DFDisableRefISlice 0 (0=Filter)

3.2 Measurement Criteria

The Bjøntegaard-Delta bit-rate (BD-BR) measurement for the calculation of average bit-rate differences between rate-distortion curves for the same objective quality. The negative BD-BR values indicate actual bit-rate savings [29]. The objective quality used here is the $PSNR_{YUV}$ which is calculated from the PSNR values of components Y, U and V as did in [10].

$$PSNR_{YUV} = (6*PSNR_Y + PSNR_U + PSNR_V)/8 \tag{1}$$

The PSNR of each component is the average of the PSNR sequence of the frames.

Coding Options	Parameters		
Size of code-block	64×64		
Progression order	LRCP		
DWT mode	Reversible DWT 5-3		
DW1 mode	Irreversible DWT 9-7		
Frame size and sub-sampling	Width, height, 2,2 (YUV420)		
Compression ratios	$1 \sim 300$		

Table 4: Options of MotionJPEG2000

Table 5: Options of JPEGXR

Coding Options	Parameters
-l (the overlapped block filtering)	HP only
-d (quanti. for U/V derived from Y)	enabled
-q (quanti. values)	$0 \sim 255$
-r (encoding with RAW image)	enabled
-M (raw image format)	19 (YCC420)

4 Experiment Results and Discussion

Fig. 1 to Fig. 3 show the rate-distortion performances of each coding standards on different test video sequences. The point in the curve represents the objective quality of the decoded frame sequence at a specific bit-rate. $MJPEG2K_{re}$ represents the results of the Motion JPEG2000 with reversible DWT, while $MJPEG2K_{irre}$ with the irreversible DWT.

According to the figures, the intra mode performance of HEVC outperforms AVC, Motion-JPEG2000 and JPEGXR in most cases. The quality of AVC is closed to the one of HEVC, but does not exceed nether at low or high bi-rate. This result has been tested and concluded in many researches [3] [4].

As reported in [25] and [27], MJPEG2K_{irre} has higher PSNR performances than MJPEG2K_{re} ones to most sequences except the 'SlideEditing' and 'SlideShow' which have lots of artificial graphics and much content in the same color. The reversible DWT shows more contributions for this characteristic. With the irreversible DWT, Motion-JPEG2000 has a better rate-distortion quality compared with JPEGXR as concluded in [7] where the test still images are high definition 4:4:4 color ones. While for some sequences in 1080p, such as 'ParkScene', 'Cactus' and 'BQTerrace', JPEGXR provides comparable results to MJPEG2K_{irre} at high bit-rates. Compare the rate-distortion curves for different resolution sequences, MJPEG2K_{irre} shows a better performance for the high resolution frames than the low ones. For the sequences lower than 1080p, the points of MJPEG2K_{irre} presents close results to the ones of AVC. With the increasing of the resolution, MJPEG2K_{irre} presents close results to the ones of AVC for 1600p sequences and higher results for 2160p, especially at low bit-rates. The reason is probably related to the wavelet transform. The inter correlation between pixels are quite strong in the high resolution frame and the wavelet transform shows an excellent decorrelation property.

As a low computational solution, JPEGXR is not developed with a very high PSNR in lossy coding. Its performance are lower than AVC and HEVC at all bit-rate parts.

Table 6 provides the bit-rate saving of HEVC compared with AVC, Motion-JPEG2000 and JPEGXR. The BD-BR values indicate the required overhead in bit-rate to achieve a closed $PSNR_{YUV}$ value. For each test sequence, the bit-rate data of the different encoders are selected out according to the same PSNR range area. These data are used to calculate the bit-rate saving compared with HEVC. As shown in the average data, HEVC achieves the gain of 22.3859% compared with AVC, 45.3480% with Motion-JPEG2000 and 58.8925% with JPEGXR.

The rest of the r					
Sequence Name	PSNR Range (dB)	HEVC vs. AVC	HEVC vs. $M2K_{ir}$	HEVC vs. JXR	
BlowingBubbles	$30 \sim 48$	12.7740	33.6876	37.8617	
PartyScene	$30 \sim 48$	11.6621	32.4413	39.1666	
BasketballDrill	$33 \sim 45$	44.0732	62.8349	103.0553	
ChinaSpeed	$30 \sim 50$	34.6287	66.2816	99.3773	
FourPeople	$35 \sim 50$	27.1632	41.7835	64.6286	
Johnny	$35 \sim 50$	44.6954	60.0140	105.0201	
KristenandSara	$35 \sim 50$	36.2561	55.6464	87.4065	
SlideEditing	$25 \sim 50$	34.4160	83.2319	124.1203	
SlideShow	$40 \sim 60$	39.9924	78.4710	118.7211	
Kimono1	$37 \sim 48$	31.5492	24.3941	72.6893	
ParkScene	$35 \sim 48$	16.0876	26.5534	37.0676	
Cactus	$35 \sim 48$	20.0561	33.8119	46.9229	
BQTerrace	$34 \sim 44$	23.5953	44.3458	42.3828	
BasketballDrive	$35 \sim 50$	22.9524	48.1836	85.9476	
Traffic	$35 \sim 50$	23.8857	32.4333	42.8683	
PeopleOnStreet	$35 \sim 50$	24.4652	36.6050	50.6165	
Beauty	$36 \sim 48$	20.0446	10.1971	95.5694	
Average		22.3859	45.3480	58.8925	

Table 6: HEVC Bit-Rate Saving (BD-BR in %) compared with AVC, Motion-JPEG2000 with irreversible DWT (M2K_{ir}) and JPEGXR(JXR) for a specific range of $PSNR_{YUV}$

5 Conclusion

An intra coding performance comparison of HEVC, H.264/AVC, Motion-JPEG2000 and JPEG XR is presented in this study. The results prove the excellent coding efficiency of HEVC. In addition, the performance of the JPEG2000 can be improved with the increasing of the resolution and close to the ones of HEVC and H.264/AVC at low bit-rates.

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Figure 3: Performance curves