



Feasibility study of the implementation of A.I. automation techniques in modern power distribution networks

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 24 June 2008

Received in revised form 5 May 2009

Accepted 24 October 2009

Available online 27 November 2009

Keywords:

Power restoration

Reliability improvement

Loss reduction

ABSTRACT

Contemporary power distribution networks are no longer regarded as passive power system elements. On the contrary, novel control systems are being constantly developed over the last decade, aiming to achieve reliability improvement and operational optimization by means of power loss reduction, prompt fault detection and power restoration etc. A crucial aspect of the systems developed to achieve these goals will inevitably be their ability to integrate new functions without the need for further investment. In this paper, a multi agent system (MAS) initially developed for fault detection and power restoration is studied with respect to these issues. More specifically, a feasibility analysis is conducted regarding the implementation of the MAS on a segment of the underground 20 kV power distribution network of the city of Thessaloniki, Greece. The analysis focuses on the initial investment cost and the payback of the application, as well as on the additional benefits for the power distribution system operator due to the system reliability improvement. The ability of the MAS to incorporate loss reduction algorithms without further investment is also studied, and the respective benefits of the power distribution system operator are analyzed. Moreover, the feasibility analysis is generalized so as to be able to be applied to any power distribution automation implementation with similar attributes.

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1. Introduction

One of the most critical issues concerning contemporary power distribution networks is their classic treatment by the power companies as passive elements within the power systems. This classic treatment can be clearly observed in the traditional configuration of these systems, as in most cases the power companies have no feedback concerning the real time status of their networks at medium voltage (MV) and low voltage (LV) level. More specifically, the power companies usually have at their disposal information concerning real time operation at the level of the high voltage (HV) to MV power substations separating the power transmission from the power distribution networks. Moreover, in many countries including Greece, most switching operations at these voltage levels (except of the ones at the aforementioned HV/MV power substations) are performed manually. Consequently, any power restoration procedure after a fault takes a considerable amount of time, as it basically consists of the dispatch of a technical crew, which conducts a series of manual operations at the MV/LV substations aiming to locate and isolate the fault.

For several decades, this traditional power distribution system configuration worked without presenting significant problems. Over the last decades however, the power consumption has increased dramatically, especially in urban areas. It is estimated that the largest proportion of losses in power networks corresponds to distribution networks; for a typical system in a developing country, distribution losses account for approximately 8% of the total electrical energy produced [1]. Moreover, an additional issue is imposed by the nature of urban power consumption, which is characterized by significant reactive power flow due to the massive deployment of residential air-conditioning units. These issues have demonstrated the importance of concepts such as power distribution automation and power loss reduction.

Automation has been applied to power distribution networks in order to achieve significant service reliability improvement for electricity customers [2–4]. Other approaches investigate reliability improvement and interruption cost minimization based on appropriate switch location or relocation across a distribution feeder [5,6]. Finally, significant research has been conducted on loss reduction in distribution systems via network reconfiguration. These applications are based on the development of algorithms for switching operations utilizing heuristic, fuzzy logic and other approaches [7–9].

An important aspect concerning any investment towards the aforementioned goals is the ability of the deployed system to be

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