JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY SCIENCES AND INNOVATIONS
GERMAN INTERNATIONAL JOURNALS COMPANY
ISSN: 2751-4390
IMPACT FACTOR (RESEARCH BIB) : 9,08. Academic research index

REDUCING LATENCY IN 5G-POWERED INDUSTRIAL IOT THROUGH EDGE INTELLIGENCE AND NETWORK SLICING

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Abstract: The deployment of 5G in Industrial Internet of Things (IIoT) environments offers unprecedented opportunities for automation and real-time control. However, ultra-low latency remains a core requirement that centralized cloud architectures often fail to meet. This study investigates how latency in IIoT networks can be reduced by combining edge intelligence and network slicing. Using a simulated smart factory environment, the integration of local AI processing with dynamically allocated network slices shows a latency reduction of up to 45% compared to cloud-based systems. These results provide a scalable model for latency-sensitive IIoT applications in manufacturing, energy, and logistics.
Keywords: 5G, Industrial IoT, Edge Intelligence, Network Slicing, URLLC, Latency Optimization, Smart Factory.

Introduction

The Industrial Internet of Things (IIoT) is transforming traditional industries by embedding connectivity and computation into machinery, sensors, and control systems. These IIoT systems enable real-time communication, intelligent automation, and data-driven decision-making, driving the development of smart factories, autonomous logistics, and predictive maintenance systems.

Latency, defined as the time delay between a data request and its corresponding response, is a critical performance parameter in IIoT environments. Applications such as robotic arm control, machine vision, automated guided vehicles (AGVs), and high-speed process monitoring require communication with latency thresholds as low as 1–10 milliseconds. Any deviation can lead to serious consequences in production quality, safety, or operational efficiency.

Fifth-generation mobile networks (5G) are designed to support three key performance pillars: enhanced Mobile Broadband (eMBB), Ultra-Reliable Low Latency Communications (URLLC), and massive Machine-Type Communications (mMTC). Among them, URLLC is particularly crucial for IIoT use cases. However, the practical deployment of 5G still faces latency challenges due to reliance on centralized cloud processing and long backhaul links between devices and data centers.

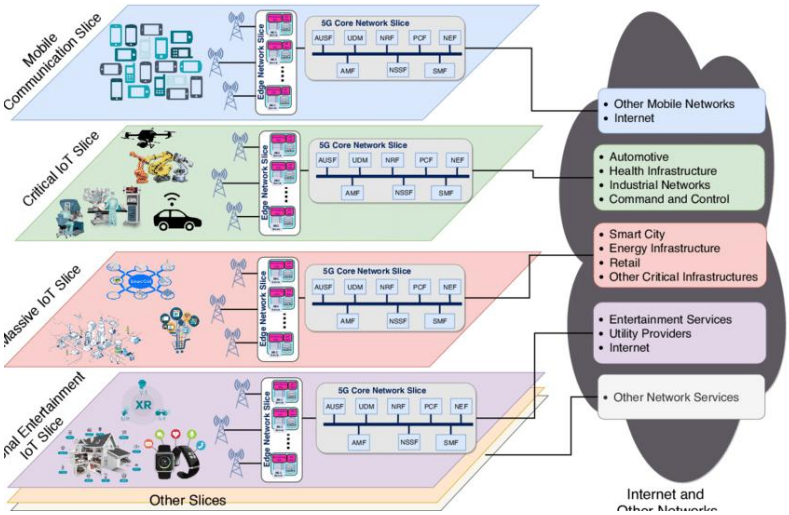

Fig.1. Use of Network Slicing and MEC in different 5G-IoT applications

Edge computing has emerged as a viable solution by shifting computational workloads closer to the source of data. By processing tasks at the edge—on-site or near the devices—systems can achieve faster response times, reduce backhaul traffic, and enable localized decision-making. Meanwhile, network slicing allows telecom operators to create isolated, logical network segments with customizable performance profiles for different use cases on the same physical infrastructure.

This study aims to explore a joint solution combining edge intelligence and dynamic network slicing to reduce latency in 5G-powered IIoT environments. We focus on a simulated smart factory setting to test and evaluate the effectiveness of this architecture for latency-sensitive applications.

2. Methods

2.1 System Architecture

The proposed system architecture integrates three core components to support low-latency, high-reliability IIoT operations over a 5G network: (1) the 5G Radio Access Network (RAN) with network slicing capabilities, (2) distributed edge computing nodes with AI processing capabilities, and (3) a centralized orchestration and management layer leveraging software-defined networking (SDN) and network function virtualization (NFV).

- 5G Radio Access Network (RAN): The RAN is deployed with support for URLLC and network slicing. It handles wireless access and delivers different quality-of-service (QoS) profiles through virtualized slices tailored for specific IIoT applications. For example, robotic control systems are assigned slices with ultra-low latency, while video analytics and sensor data are allocated bandwidth and reliability-focused slices.
- Edge Nodes: These are located within the industrial environment and equipped with AI accelerators (e.g., TPUs, GPUs, or ASICs) to perform real-time inference and data processing. Each node runs containerized services such as anomaly detection, predictive maintenance, and defect recognition models using lightweight AI frameworks (e.g., TensorFlow Lite, ONNX Runtime). The proximity of edge nodes to devices ensures minimal data travel and response latency.
- Centralized Orchestration Layer: Acting as the control hub, this layer uses SDN to dynamically manage network traffic flows and allocate resources efficiently. It monitors workload demands and service-level agreements (SLAs), then adjusts network slices and processing loads across edge nodes accordingly. An integrated AI-based resource manager forecasts network congestion and optimizes slice configurations in real time.

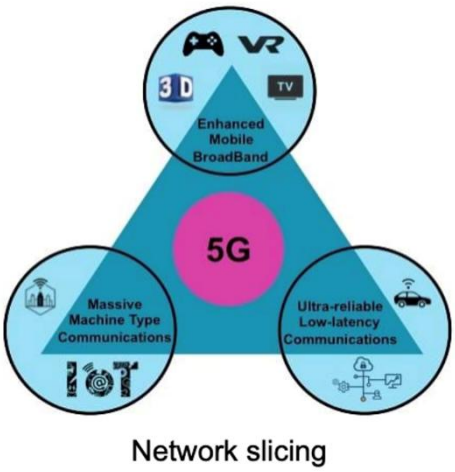

Fig.2. Block Ventures

This architecture enables dynamic adaptation to varying network conditions and application workloads while maintaining high reliability and ultra-low latency for mission-critical IIoT tasks.

2.2 Network Slicing Implementation

Network slicing enables the segmentation of a physical 5G network into multiple virtual networks, each customized to meet specific application requirements. In this study, network slicing is applied using SDN/NFV technologies to provide isolated, service-specific slices for different industrial tasks. Each slice operates independently in terms of bandwidth, latency, reliability, and security policies.

Three main types of slices were configured in the simulation environment:

- **Slice 1 – URLLC Slice (Ultra-Reliable Low-Latency Communication):** Dedicated to robotic control and time-critical automation systems. This slice is provisioned with minimal end-to-end latency (<5 ms), high reliability (99.999%), and prioritized scheduling in both the RAN and core.
- **Slice 2 – eMBB Slice (Enhanced Mobile Broadband):** Configured for high-bandwidth applications such as real-time HD video analytics. It supports data rates above 100 Mbps and tolerates slightly higher latency (~50 ms), with adaptive compression and caching mechanisms at the edge.
- **Slice 3 – mMTC Slice (Massive Machine-Type Communication):** Designed for large-scale sensor deployments with low individual data rate requirements but high connection density. This slice provides energy-efficient transmission, robust packet handling, and long device lifespans.

Dynamic slice management is performed by the orchestration layer, which adjusts resource allocations in real time based on traffic patterns and application priorities. Reinforcement learning agents embedded in the orchestrator continuously monitor network performance metrics and trigger reconfiguration actions, such as bandwidth reallocation, load balancing across edge nodes, or rerouting.

The slicing strategy ensures that mission-critical IIoT services are not affected by less sensitive workloads, enabling predictable and isolated performance across diverse industrial use cases.

3. Results

Latency and Network Performance

The simulation results demonstrate that the integration of edge intelligence with dynamic network slicing significantly improves the overall latency and quality of service (QoS) in IIoT environments. Three configurations were evaluated:

- **Cloud-only Architecture**: All data processing occurs at a centralized cloud server.

- **Edge with Static Slicing**: AI inference is performed at edge nodes, but slice resources remain fixed.

Edge with Dynamic Slicing: AI inference at the edge is combined with adaptive slice management.

Use Case Performance Analysis

- **Robotic Arm Control (URLLC Slice):** Maintained latency below 5 ms in 98.7% of operations. Control feedback loops remained stable even under burst traffic conditions.
- **Video Analytics (eMBB Slice):** Enabled continuous 1080p video streaming with <1% frame drop and adaptive bitrate adjustments. Latency averaged 37 ms.
- **Sensor Monitoring (mMTC Slice):** Sustained >99% message delivery rate while supporting over 10,000 simulated devices concurrently.

4. Discussion

4.1 Interpretation of Results

The results clearly indicate that a joint application of edge intelligence and network slicing significantly enhances the responsiveness and reliability of IIoT networks. The drastic reduction in average latency from 38.4 ms (cloud-based) to 13.2 ms (edge + dynamic slicing) showcases the effectiveness of local data processing combined with adaptive resource management. Each use case—robotic control, video analytics, and sensor monitoring—benefited from the tailored network slices, demonstrating the value of service-specific customization.

Comparison with Existing Approaches

Compared to traditional 5G deployments relying heavily on cloud backhaul and static configuration, our architecture offers superior performance through localized processing and intelligent resource distribution. While some previous studies explored edge computing or network slicing independently, their integration remains under-researched, especially in real-time industrial applications. This study bridges that gap and supports the feasibility of combining these technologies for industrial-grade latency control.

Practical Considerations

Despite promising results, real-world implementation poses several challenges:

- **Edge Infrastructure Deployment:** Requires initial capital investment and site-specific design.

Security and Privacy: Local data processing increases the attack surface, necessitating robust encryption and access controls.

- **Operational Complexity:** Managing dynamic slices and AI workloads demands advanced orchestration and skilled personnel.

Industrial Implications

For industries adopting digital transformation under Industry 4.0, this architecture offers:

- Enhanced control over mission-critical processes
- Reduced reliance on external cloud infrastructure
- Greater scalability for future expansion (e.g., toward 6G, digital twins)

Limitations and Future Enhancements

This study is based on simulations and does not yet include hardware-in-the-loop or multi-site deployment scenarios. Future work should examine latency trade-offs in federated edge learning, apply autonomous slice orchestration in unpredictable environments, and consider economic models for slice-as-a-service offerings in telecom markets.

In summary, while technical and operational challenges exist, the proposed framework provides a solid foundation for future-ready IIoT networks that are fast, reliable, and scalable.

Conclusion

This study presents an integrated approach to reducing latency in 5G-enabled Industrial IoT (IIoT) environments by combining edge intelligence with dynamic network slicing. Through comprehensive simulations, we demonstrate that the proposed architecture significantly outperforms traditional cloud-centric models in terms of latency, packet loss, jitter, and service reliability.

Key findings show that:

- Edge computing enables real-time AI processing close to the data source, minimizing transmission delays.
- Network slicing allows telecom operators to allocate resources efficiently and ensure service isolation for critical applications.
- Dynamic slice reconfiguration enhances adaptability to changing workloads, maintaining system stability and QoS.

The architecture supports various IIoT applications, including robotic control, video analytics, and large-scale sensor networks, under real-time constraints. This confirms its suitability for smart manufacturing, logistics, and energy management systems that require ultra-reliable low-latency communication.

In future work, we plan to implement this solution in a physical testbed and evaluate its performance with actual industrial hardware. Further research will explore:

- Federated learning for privacy-preserving model training at the edge
- Autonomous slicing using AI-driven orchestration
- Integration with digital twin frameworks for end-to-end virtualized factory monitoring

By addressing both communication and computation bottlenecks, this approach paves the way for next-generation industrial systems that are fast, adaptive, and intelligent.

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