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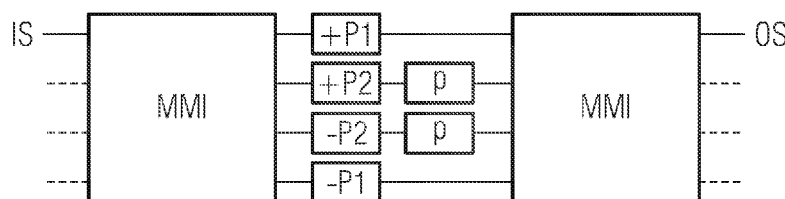
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(54) Title: OPTICAL I-Q-MODULATOR

FIG 1



(57) Abstract: The invention describes a modulator for the quadrature modulation of an optical carrier signal with an I- and a Q-portion, where a first optical multimode interferometer (MMI) splits the optical carrier signal into four branches and that in pairs of branches the I-portion and the Q-portion respectively is modulated with a Mach-Zehnder-Structure and a second optical multimode interferometer (MMI) combines the modulated I-portion and Q-portion again to one quadrature modulated optical output signal (OS).

Description

Optical I-Q-modulator

5 The invention relates to a modulator for the quadrature modulation of an optical carrier signal with an I- and a Q-portion.

10 An optical I-Q-modulator is used in optical networks to transmit the data on the optical carrier signal in multilevel formats to achieve a high transmission data rate. The Q-portion of the carrier signal is shifted in relation to the I-portion by a fourth of the wavelength.

15 The current method to implement an I-Q-modulator is to use separate Mach-Zehnder-interferometers for the I-portion and the Q-portion of the carrier signal. To split the signal, the Mach-Zehnder-interferometers are arranged in a Mach-Zehnder-Super-Structure. This involves a considerable number of components which are quite large in size and difficult to integrate.

20 In the patent US 7,063,601 an optical modulator is proposed in which a complex driver circuitry is used to build the driving signals for one Mach-Zehnder-modulator. This also leads to a complex structure.

25 It is the object of the invention to propose an I-Q-modulator, which is easy to integrate and in this way to build one compact optical component.

30 This objective is achieved with the features of claim 1.

Favourable embodiments of the invention are disclosed in the dependent claims.

A basic building element for such a modulator is a 4-port multimode interferometer, acting as a 1:4 power splitter,

which splits the optical carrier signal into four branches. It is an optical integrated circuit with a low loss and good power balance at each branch, compactness and ease of fabrication.

5

So the optical carrier signal is split into four branches, which carry intermediate signals of equal power.

The four branches are grouped into two pairs and some
10 branches contain fixed phase shifts in order to obtain pairwise Mach-Zehnder-structures with a mutual phase shift of a quarter wavelength. In each pair of the intermediate signals the according portion of the carrier signal is modulated with a driving signal. To avoid frequency chirp, the modulation in
15 each branch of the pair is in opposite polarity, in the so-called push-pull configuration. So the I-portion and the Q-portion of the carrier signal are modulated separately.

The modulated signals are combined again in a second multimode interferometer into one quadrature-modulated optical
20 output signal.

This combination of multimode-interferometers, phase modulators and phase shifters can be integrated to a compact integrated optical circuit.
25

In one embodiment the modulation is done with phase shifters using the electro-optical effect, where an applied driving voltage shifts the phase of the optical signal.

30

In a further embodiment the modulation is done with amplitude modulators using the electro-absorption effect, where an applied driving voltage attenuates the amplitude of the optical signal. In this case, the integrated fixed phase shifts are

such that each branch corresponds to one axis (+I, -I, +Q, -Q) of the I-Q constellation diagram.

It is also possible to use waveguides as phase shifters which
5 can be modulated.

When building the optical circuit, the branches of the multimode interferometer can be formed as waveguides and the connecting branches of the first and the second multimode interferometer are used as straight waveguides, which can be modulated.
10

In the figures some aspects of the modulator are shown.

15 Fig. 1 shows an embodiment with two pairs of branches, where one pair is phase shifted.

Fig. 2 shows another arrangement with three phase shifters.
20

Fig. 3 shows an implementation of an MMI.

Fig. 1 shows a modulator, in which two multimode interferometers MMI are linked together. The input signal IS is splitted
25 in the first MMI into four branches, which have a defined phase shift to the input signal. The branches are grouped into pairs, which are modulated with opposite driving signals. The inphase portion I is modulated with the phase modulators +P1 and -P1, while the quadrature portion Q is modulated with the phase modulators +P2 and -P2. The fixed phase
30 shifters $P = \pi$ compensate for the fixed phase shift of the branches.

The dashed lines on the input and output of the MMIs indicate, that also 4X4 MMIs can be used. In this case on the first MMI only one input is used and on the second MMI only one output. Another option is to use 1:4 power splitters, in which the input/output waveguide is located in the center of the structure. This can be incorporated by adjusting the fixed phase shifts P accordingly.

In Fig. 2 another arrangement of the phase modulators between the two MMIs is shown. In the two pairs for the I-Portion $P1$ and the Q-portion $P2$ always a phase shift of $P/2 = \pi/2$ is achieved.

Fig 3 depicts the structure of a MMI that splits the input signal into four outputs. This structure is according to the article titled "Design and Fabrication of 1-by-4 MMI Power Splitter for Optical Communication" of Huilian et.al. published in: Communications, 1999. APCC/OECC '99, pages 1638 - 1641 vol.2.

It is an all optical component, where the input signal is fed into the input structure with the width a , then the structure is widened to the width W and fed into the four branches, which bend to a center-to-center distance D between neighboring branches. In these branches modulating waveguides can be implemented.

The component, described in said article, is designed for the wavelength of the optical signal $\lambda = 1,31 \mu\text{m}$. The width a is then $2 \mu\text{m}$ and the width W $40 \mu\text{m}$. The distance D is $250 \mu\text{m}$. The whole MMI measures $1 \times 2 \text{ mm}$.

This shows that a very compact I-Q-modulator for optical signals can be built, which is all in optical technology.

Claims

1. Modulator for the quadrature modulation of an optical carrier signal with an I- and a Q-portion,
5 characterized in that
a first optical multimode interferometer (MMI) splits the optical carrier signal into four branches and that in pairs of branches the I-portion and the Q-portion respectively is modulated with a Mach-Zehnder-Structure and
10 a second optical multimode interferometer (MMI) combines the modulated I-portion and Q-portion again to one quadrature modulated optical output signal (OS).

2. A modulator according to claim 1, characterized in
15 that the Mach-Zehnder-Structure is built by optical phase shifters (p , $p/2$) which are inserted into two or more branches.

3. A modulator according to claim 1, characterized in
20 that the modulation is executed with a bias, which compensates for phase differences or nonlinearities.

4. A modulator according to claim 1, characterized in
that the modulation is an amplitude modulation.
25

5. A modulator according to claim 1, characterized in
that the modulation is a phase modulation.

6. A modulator according to claim 5, characterized in
30 that the phase modulation is achieved by the electro-absorption effect.

7. A modulator according to claim 4, characterized in
that the amplitude modulation is achieved by the electro-optic effect.
35

8. A modulator according to claim 1, characterized in
that the branches of the first and the second multimode in-

terferometer (MMI), which connect the two, are built as as waveguides which can be modulated.

FIG 1

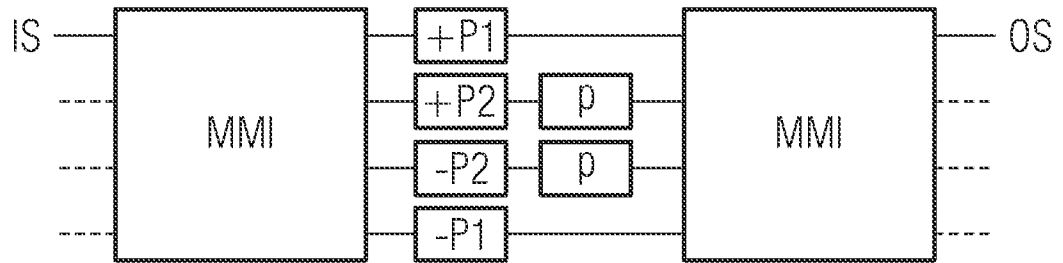


FIG 2

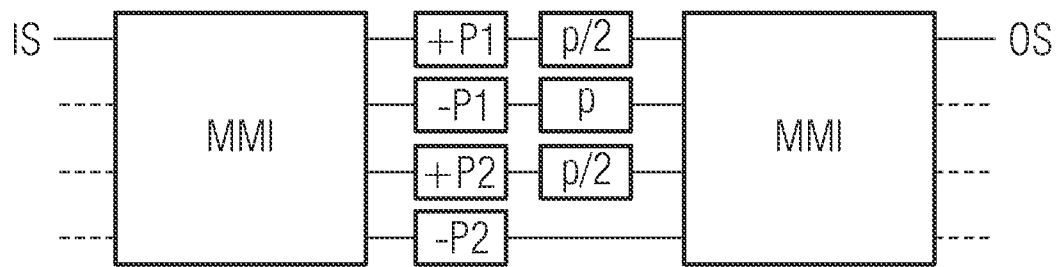
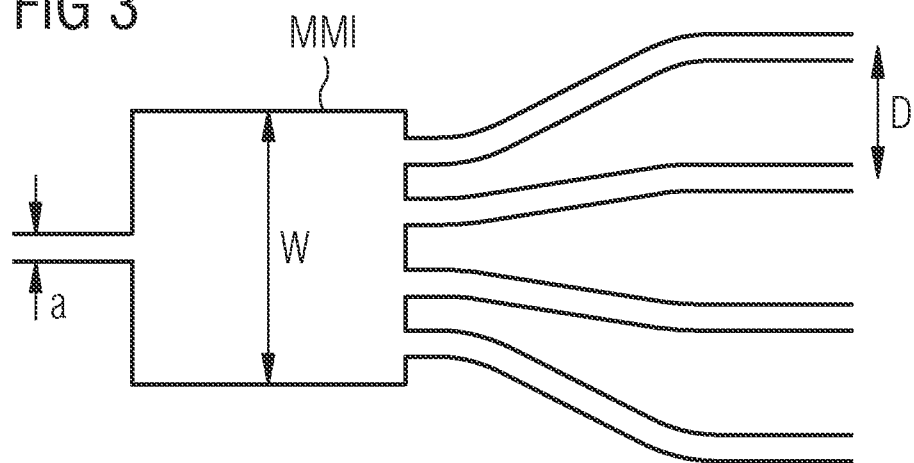


FIG 3



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No

PCT/EP2009/058472

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

INV. H04B10/155

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

H04B

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

EPO-Internal, INSPEC

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	HITOSHI MURAI ET AL: "EA-Modulator-Based Optical Time Division Multiplexing/Demultiplexing Techniques for 160-Gb/s Optical Signal Transmission" IEEE JOURNAL OF SELECTED TOPICS IN QUANTUM ELECTRONICS, IEEE SERVICE CENTER, PISCATAWAY, NJ, US, vol. 13, no. 1, 1 January 2007 (2007-01-01), pages 70-78, XP011163499 ISSN: 1077-260X abstract; figure 1	1-8
A	US 5 109 441 A (GLAAB JOSEPH B [US]) 28 April 1992 (1992-04-28) abstract; figure 2 ----- -/--	1-8

☒ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.

☒ See patent family annex.

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Date of the actual completion of the international search

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No

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C(Continuation). DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
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A	US 2006/210283 A1 (SHIRASAKI MASATAKA [US]) 21 September 2006 (2006-09-21) abstract; figure 4 -----	1-8
A	US 2006/034616 A1 (TIPPER ALAN [GB]) 16 February 2006 (2006-02-16) abstract; figure 3 -----	1-8

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International application No

PCT/EP2009/058472

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