Measurement based traffic classification in Differentiated Services

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ABSTRACT

Internet is moving towards the time of Quality of Service (QoS) networking. This move is taking place through the application of Differentiated Services (DiffServ) architecture. DiffServ offers low overhead tools to implement class based differentiation for the traffic. Decision of differentiation is, however, left as an open matter, to be settled between service provider and customer. Majority of customers are, based on our assumption, not ready to say what should be the quality or class for their traffic. This leaves space for provider intervention - service, to do this classification for the customer. Service provider is dealing with three problems which need to be solved concurrently: (1)Deciding the proper forwarding class for the application data stream (2)Separation of application flows from the packet stream (3)Constructing proper forwarding treatments. If successful with this operation, operator has direct control over the resource utilization within different classes and therefore service level provided to the customer. In order to cope with this service, tools for analyzing network traffic and forming suitable traffic groups are required. We present algorithms and methodologies which do differentiation of traffic based on the activity/traffic characteristics of applications. These values are determined from the flow analysis of packet lengths and inter-sending times.

Keywords: Differentiated Services, Integrated Services, Quality differentation, Traffic Classification

1. INTRODUCTION

Internet is facing a gigantic change when new QoS based services are being introduced to the wide audience. These QoS based services are applications of IETF Integrated and Differentiated services concepts. For a long time it seemed that Integrated Services (IntServ)[1] would be the way to implement the QoS for new interactive media types. As it has happened with many rigorous networking concepts, IntServ too, seems to have stumbled with the problem of complicated control mechanisms. Therefore, the tides have changed for a more flexible implementation of QoS, namely the Differentiated Services (DiffServ) architecture.[2] The difference between the IntServ and the DiffServ concepts is on the level of granularity where the traffic conditioning actions are taken.

IntServ, which has a strong connection to the ATM and circuit switched networks, offers a fine level of granularity - actions are taken on per flow basis. This fine granularity makes it possible to have high quality audio and video connections simultaneously with high speed data transfers. From the quality point of view, there exists two major classes: guaranteed service,[3] which offers high quality resource reserved connections and the controlled load service,[4] which aims to offer emulation of 'lightly loaded best effort service'. These two classes require, in order to operate, user to inform the network about resource requirements of the connection. This informing is done with the resource reservation protocol (RSVP)[5] which acts as an agent between the user and the network. This agent translates session characteristics to the traffic and the quality specifications which then are uniformly processed within the network. IntServ provides tools to offer real QoS in an end-to-end manner. However, there are many complications with this end-to-end approach. Network has to be able to maintain information about the resource requirements of each flow and user has to be able to pass resource information to the network. Differentiated Services aims to solve the first problem in the core network by aggregating the flow information. The second problem could be solved with reservation agent, which measures application traffic on the client and provides information for the RSVP.

DiffServ offers coarse granularity quality differentiation. Flows are aggregated to make processing as easy as possible in the core network (where the number of individual flows is enormous). All required preprocessing for the aggregation

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is done on the network edge. Quality, which the DiffServ offers, is dependable on the network provisioning and traffic distribution within the network. Main problem in the DiffServ is forming the aggregates in a way that individual flows still have quality which they need. In this process access points of the DiffServ domain are in major role. If the IntServ access network is feeding the DiffServ core, this problem is readily solved by information transmitted in the RSVP messages. However, if the case is about pure DiffServ domain there is no easy answer. Either the user states the quality requirements by selecting the aggregation class or the network does this as a value added service for the user. First option is problematic both from the user and network perspective. User may select wrong class and by doing so receive non-optimal quality. Also other users may be influenced by the selection of a single user (single high speed data transfer can deteriorate the quality in a class which is meant for the real-time low speed communication). Second option is beneficial both from the network and the user perspective. Classification made by the network has better opportunity to provide better quality throughout the network. Network based classification offers homogenous quality separation on network wide bases. This provides controlled mixture of traffic and has possibility to provide 'real QoS' in case of aggregate handling.

This paper is organized as following. Section 2 states and motivates the questions which come into picture with quality differentiation with technological solutions like Differentiated Services. Section 3 offers a solution for one of the questions stated in Section 2, namely service control and forwarding treatments. Section 4 is used to emphasize measurement based traffic classification. It presents three approaches which may be used alone or with the others to perform network based quality differentiation. Section 5 draws conclusions based on what has been presented.

This paper aims to start discussion on the problems which are very well known but hardly ever expressed, i.e. service/quality differentiation in Differentiated Services. How it really can be done without too many complications. Therefore, a broad overview is given without too narrow and deep technical assessment on any particular topic.

2. CONTROL OVER QUALITY

As expressed in the Introduction, QoS in the Internet is related to three problems which need to be solved concurrently:

1. Deciding the proper forwarding class for the application data stream
2. Separation of application flows from the packet stream
3. Constructing the proper forwarding treatments

The first item is directly connected to the required quality and mechanisms to be used in the decision process and in relaying classification information. We can argue if there are general rules to apply for this decision process, but the bottom line is that there has to be some mechanism which does this. The RSVP and other signaling based methods are developed under the assumption that the user population has ability to choose the right class with the help of communication device. Furthermore, if end-to-end services are offered resource requirements need to be stated at the same time. Resource requirements are in some cases easily derived from the application, like in case of VoIP codecs, which generate similar packet stream irrespective of actual usage. However, this is not the case with TCP based data applications which, in general, produce traffic based on the direct feedback from the network. With the DiffServ the selection of forwarding class is even more problematic. At this point there is no clear picture what is the derived quality in each class nor is the difference between the classes known. This means that the network is in better position to make decisions as it knows more about the load levels within links and also provisional goals of the service provider. However, network does not know requirements of different applications. With this in our mind we can make the first question: *Is there any way network could become aware of application requirements ?*

Second item, separating the traffic flows, is more straight forward to solve. Separation of application flows requires only knowledge of different applications transport protocol and transport protocol port information. Based on this information filters can be made to separate flows belonging to different applications. However, there is still question: *How network constructs filters which reflect separation of application flows ?* With the IntServ this is clearly again the task of the RSVP, but in case of the DiffServ we need again something else.

Third item, construction of forwarding treatments, is matter of selection from the side of service provider. One way to differentiate among service providers is to offer some particular service model to the customers. Service models, however, connect to some particular forwarding treatment. Internet communication is typically reaching over multiple service providers which, if having different forwarding treatments, may have problems in the QoS interoperability. This calls for *a small set of forwarding treatments which are used in a way that guarantees meaningful interoperability.*

To solve these questions we present a measurement based traffic management paradigm with a service model. This is designed for the pure DiffServ networks or to the networks which have IntServ feeding the DiffServ core without bandwidth broker capabilities. This solution does not guarantee end-to-end services, but it offers rational, homogenous class aggregation based on the traffic characteristics of *application identifiers.* Application identifier is combination of transport protocol and source port information. Source port information can be bound to application with some level of accuracy. This process is dynamic and therefore measurement process used to identify application has to be coarse to take only general nature of application into account.

3. FORWARDING TREATMENT

In our view, the decision of forwarding treatment is bound to the services which are meant to be offered for the customers. Because service structure has to be flexible in evolvement there has to be general rules which set constrains for the selection of forwarding treatment. We call this as a service creation environment. There can be multiple service creation environments but they all provide information about *importance of packets in particular service class compared to other service classes and timely requirements of packet delivery in that class.* This makes possible to construct DiffServ coding which clearly represents importance and urgency of packets within the network, like in [6].

3.1. Service Creation Environment

Protocol Application Forwarding (PAF) is our service creation environment. It allows service provider to build services based on the idea of proportional sharing. We argue that proportional sharing, like in Simple Integrated Media Access,[7] is the most flexible and promising way to implement services to the Internet. This is due to frequent changes in application space and user habits.

In general the service ideology in PAF is following:

1. User is allowed to send traffic up to the level of the contracted rate with high priority. Excess traffic is delivered with lower priority.

2. Traffic is not treated as a black box. Applications are resolved based on application identifiers and forwarding treatment is bound to this identifier.

We assume that when application information is resolved and forwarding treatment is bound to this information, delivered performance will be better compared to the situation when mixing of applications in forwarding classes is random. This is justified by notion which has been made from the current Internet where UDP-based real-time applications and TCP-based data applications interfere one and the other. If real-time applications are separated from the data applications they both should receive better performance. To verify this we made a set of simulations where three groups of applications (VoIP, HTTP and FTP) were used in the network presented in Figure 1.

First we used best effort technology to have baseline to which we could compare results when traffic is separated. Best effort simulation, Table 1, shows that there is strong interference between different application groups. VoIP, which has traffic generation rate of 75200 bps, does not achieve this rate i.e. its packets are discarded in the network due to congestion. HTTP, which is modeled based on measurements of Mah,[8] has lower aggressivity than FTP and therefore does not suffer as high packet loss percentage as FTP, which is modeled as 'infinite' file size greedy source.

Next we differentiated applications on the level where UDP based VoIP was separated to own class and TCP based still share a common class. Simulation results, Table 2, show at this point that VoIP clients receive approximately resources which they require (mean call duration was 3 minutes and new call was attempted every 30s, this causes empty moments lowering the average rate). Interference between two different types of TCP applications, HTTP and FTP, is still causing overall performance to be less than what could be achieved. This is well known problem that HTTP connections which are very short (operate mainly on slow-start) can cause long living FTP connections problems (long idle times while waiting window to recover after a packet loss) even in cases where average utilization is low.

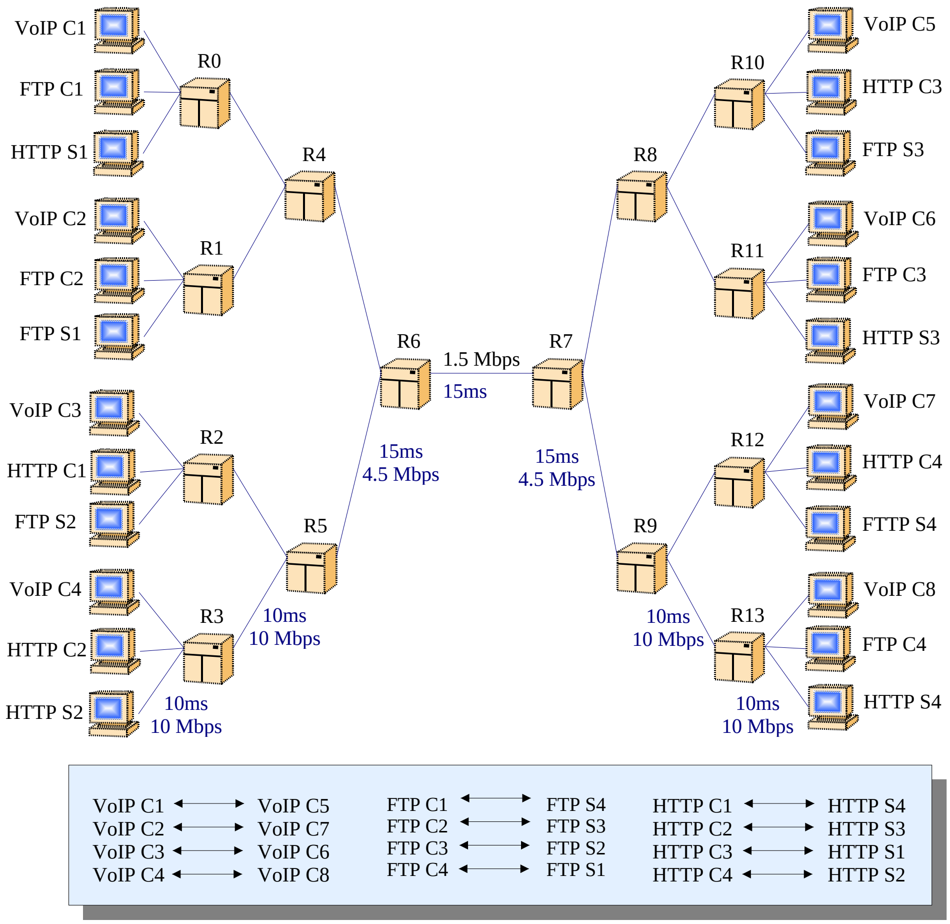


Figure 1. Network model used in the simulation study

Table 1. Throughput results from the best effort simulation

	VoIP[C5]		VoIP[C6]		VoIP[C7]		VoIP[C8]	
	Mean	C95%	Mean	C95%	Mean	C95%	Mean	C95%
1	74712 bps	208 bps	74720 bps	206 bps	74734 bps	209 bps	74900 bps	175 bps
2	74856 bps	190 bps	74848 bps	191 bps	74901 bps	175 bps	74979 bps	157 bps
3	74754 bps	212 bps	74908 bps	167 bps	74865 bps	180 bps	74566 bps	244 bps
4	74710 bps	209 bps	74641 bps	227 bps	74688 bps	213 bps	74691 bps	210 bps
5	74687 bps	216 bps	74903 bps	166 bps	74851 bps	183 bps	74820 bps	190 bps
6	74765 bps	207 bps	74695 bps	212 bps	74716 bps	213 bps	74785 bps	195 bps

	HTTP[C3]		HTTP[C4]		FTP[C3]		FTP[C4]	
	Mean	C95%	Mean	C95%	Mean	C95%	Mean	C95%
1	101674 bps	3674 bps	99626 bps	3654 bps	0 bps	0 bps	30860 bps	7477 bps
2	91623 bps	3437 bps	105764 bps	3851 bps	188157 bps	8962 bps	45603 bps	7776 bps
3	91950 bps	3616 bps	101265 bps	3666 bps	0 bps	1 bps	306370 bps	6449 bps
4	98852 bps	3624 bps	97374 bps	3738 bps	0 bps	1 bps	87382 bps	14669 bps
5	98353 bps	3791 bps	109142 bps	3826 bps	81676 bps	8197 bps	0 bps	3 bps
6	97397 bps	3810 bps	95240 bps	3690 bps	365953 bps	6454 bps	167884 bps	7160 bps

Table 2. Throughput results from the semi-differentiated applications simulation

	VoIP[C5]		VoIP[C6]		VoIP[C7]		VoIP[C8]	
	Mean	C95%	Mean	C95%	Mean	C95%	Mean	C95%
1	75120 bps	214 bps	75117 bps	213 bps	75028 bps	257 bps	75112 bps	194 bps
2	75158 bps	130 bps	75159 bps	124 bps	75113 bps	136 bps	75117 bps	125 bps
3	74963 bps	497 bps	74949 bps	515 bps	74978 bps	527 bps	74954 bps	506 bps
4	75090 bps	260 bps	75093 bps	253 bps	75094 bps	260 bps	75086 bps	266 bps

	HTTP[C3]		HTTP[C4]		FTP[C3]		FTP[C4]	
	Mean	C95%	Mean	C95%	Mean	C95%	Mean	C95%
1	79433 bps	9095 bps	35957 bps	7377 bps	324113 bps	23695 bps	113824 bps	21905 bps
2	89026 bps	6763 bps	21227 bps	5147 bps	323069 bps	19013 bps	0 bps	5 bps
3	59950 bps	13771 bps	93856 bps	14924 bps	142428 bps	37667 bps	7205 bps	7513 bps
4	78699 bps	10500 bps	89300 bps	9632 bps	109924 bps	25827 bps	380574 bps	22062 bps

Table 3. Throughput results from the differentiated applications simulation

	VoIP[C5]		VoIP[C6]		VoIP[C7]		VoIP[C8]	
	Mean	C95%	Mean	C95%	Mean	C95%	Mean	C95%
1	75120 bps	214 bps	75117 bps	213 bps	75028 bps	257 bps	75112 bps	194 bps
2	75158 bps	130 bps	75159 bps	124 bps	75113 bps	136 bps	75117 bps	125 bps
3	74963 bps	497 bps	74949 bps	515 bps	74978 bps	527 bps	74954 bps	506 bps
4	75090 bps	260 bps	75093 bps	253 bps	75094 bps	260 bps	75086 bps	266 bps

	HTTP[C3]		HTTP[C4]		FTP[C3]		FTP[C4]	
	Mean	C95%	Mean	C95%	Mean	C95%	Mean	C95%
1	99618 bps	5289 bps	86610 bps	5058 bps	248117 bps	11883 bps	94195 bps	13694 bps
2	82412 bps	4479 bps	95975 bps	4656 bps	217278 bps	11467 bps	295656 bps	10585 bps
3	74705 bps	9212 bps	79023 bps	8606 bps	334765 bps	24958 bps	113917 bps	19710 bps
4	86549 bps	4419 bps	93534 bps	4807 bps	200608 bps	10705 bps	88971 bps	13711 bps

Last phase was to add differentiation between HTTP and FTP. Simulation results, Table 3, show that applying a small level of differentiation, Assured Forwarding (AF)[9] target rates, between HTTP and FTP helps both applications to receive better throughput what they would have received if this had not been done.

We can even do more fine grained differentiation, like in Figure 2. We can divide applications first by their transport protocol and then by their nature. This provides total isolation between closed loop controlled (TCP) and open loop controlled (UDP) traffic. However, nature of the applications is not well known for the service provider and therefore mechanisms to detect 'class' for each application is required, this is investigated in Section 4.

Typical ISP is differentiating customers based on their committed information rate or equivalent. This means that customer is allowed to send traffic to the network with a certain intensity. However, customer is allowed to send traffic with rate higher than committed but only for a certain period of time. With this in mind proportionality in sharing is based on the differentiation of allowed sending rates to different classes. Classes by themselves do not form differentiation rather they act as a tool for the service provider to maximize goodput of the network and revenue.

DiffServ forwarding treatment, e.q. per hop behavior (PHB), which provides best possibility to offer services which aim this goal, is assured forwarding (AF) PHB.[9] AF PHB provides delivery of IP packets in four independently forwarded AF classes. Within each AF class, an IP packet can be assigned one of three different levels of drop precedence. There are no quantifiable timing requirements associated with the forwarding of packets within the AF PHB. When comparing offerings of AF and requirements of typical ISP they are well hand in hand. Number of classes makes it possible to have:

1. Network control class for both TCP and UDP. This contains: DNS, DHCP, SNMP, BGP and other network control functions which have impact to the user performance.

2. Real-time class for the UDP-based applications. These are ones with the most stringent quality requirements.

3. Interactive class for TCP-based applications. This class contains HTTP and terminal applications (Telnet, SSH).

4. Bulk transfer class. This contains email, FTP, news and other low priority traffic.

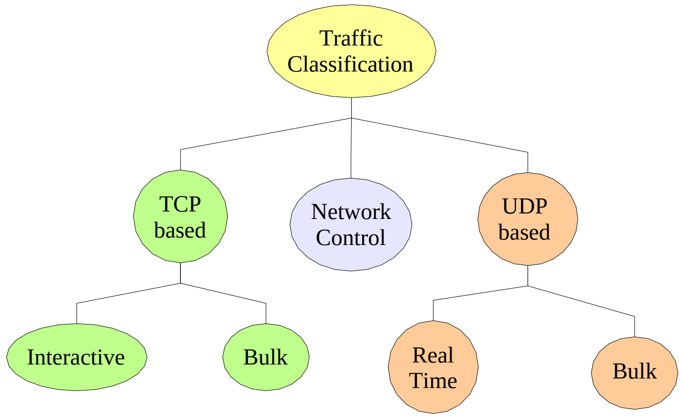


Figure 2. Functional division of applications in PAF

4. FORWARDING CLASS SELECTION

We use continuous measurement process for the selection of proper forwarding class for each application. This measurement process produces list of application identifiers* for each class which are then used in the classification process of the DiffServ access routers. Measurement cycle should be long enough to provide stability in service usage but on the other hand short enough to notice new applications and their features. We have used 30 minutes in this work.

4.1. Measuring information

Measurement process which we use runs on access routers of the network. Measurements are used for gathering information about arrivals of packets and classifiable information they carry in headers of IP and transport layer. Necessary elements of header and time-of-arrival is collected for post-processing with statistical and artificial intelligent analysis methods.

Measurement information, if collected incorrectly, leads to misclassifications and unwanted resource distribution in the network. Correct collection means that information should be collected as near to the source as possible. In practice this means the access router or the first concentration stage in the network. Reason for this requirement is the possible distortion in the traffic profile, as the traffic gets buffered, fragmented and multiplexed on the way to the measurement point. This is an important aspect on all analysis mechanisms which rely on the time information of arriving packet, see packet arrival distributions of single session in near and far end at the Figure 3. To minimize misclassifications we suggest mechanisms which utilize measurement at the uplink of the access router. This requires additional measurement unit in each router to collect data, to process it and for sending information to the network operation center (NOC). Requirements for such a device should easily be well within implementation constrains of todays low cost technologies.

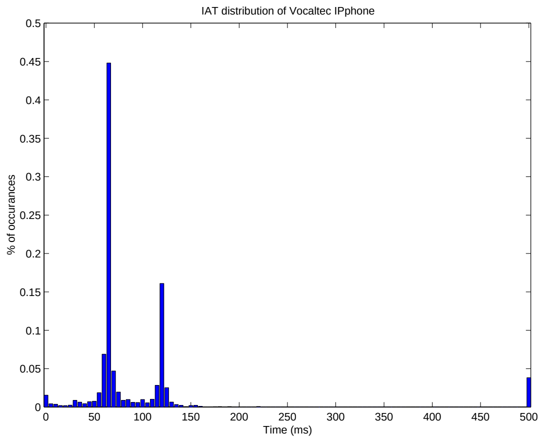
4.2. Data analysis

Traffic analysis is usually based on the aggregated flow analysis with the flow granularity of the fivetuple†. Traffic and flows are analyzed in several dimensions, such as the relative number of flows, the relative number of packets, packet length distribution and/or inter-arrival distribution within a certain classification category.

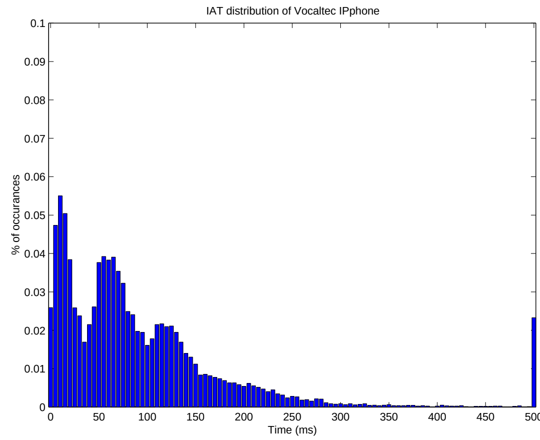
4.2.1. Packets per flow analysis

Packets per flow analysis produces single data point in two-dimensional array representing relative amount of packet and relative amount flows detected for single application identifier over the whole of the measurement data.

Due to the (usually) large amount of data points and relatively high uncertainty of behavior of some applications, artificial intelligence mechanism, like k-nearest neighbor method, are needed to resolve which class area individual



(a) Near end - Finland



(b) Far end - China

Figure 3. Packet inter arrival time distributions for a Vocaltec VoIP connection from Finland to China.

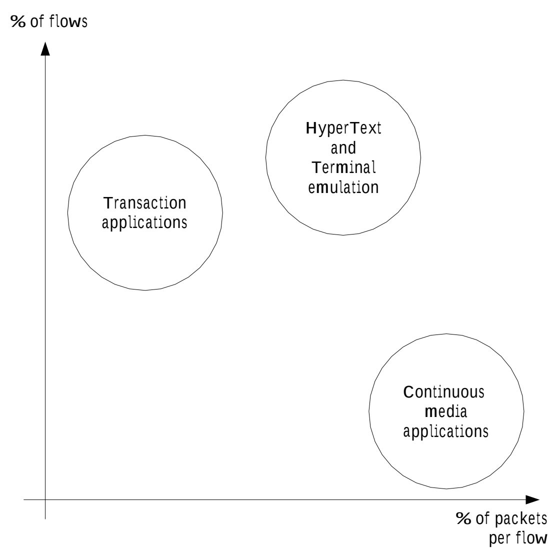


Figure 4. Conceptual idea of flows packets per flow analysis

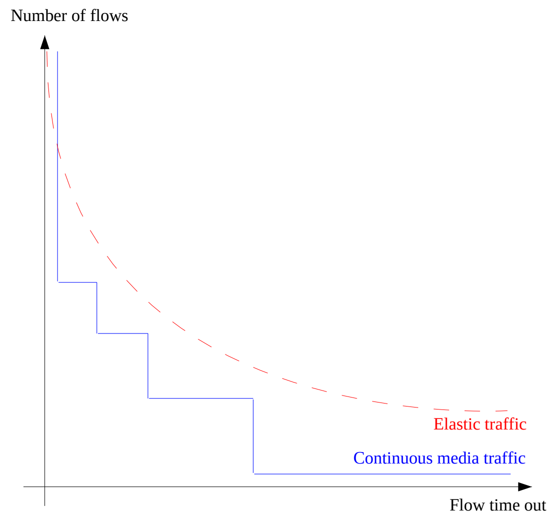


Figure 5. Conceptual idea of flows packets per flow analysis in multi class operation

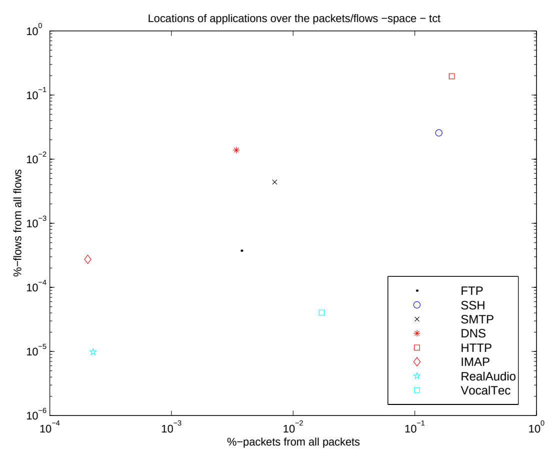


Figure 6. Packets per flow data points for applications and protocols used as reference observations

data point belongs to. With Internet traffic this usually tends to form three regions with some overlap when looking the borderline applications. Theses three regions are marked roughly to the Figure 4.

In [10] the use of Learning Vector Quantization (LVQ) is introduced to make class area decisions in a flow-based connection-oriented IP router environment. This approach is extended to have multiple application classes in [11]. Multiple application classes are resolved based on the observations that real-time communication typically produces constant packet rate whereas data communication packet rate varies. This causes different forms of flow/timeout figures, presented in Figure 5. To extract this type of information from the packet streams, different time-out values are used in the flow analysis. Short time-out values tend to find interactive flows whereas longer time-outs tend to find also less interactive communication.

From the trace gathered from the link between Networking laboratory and HUT backbone, we performed packets per flow analysis, Figure 6. This analysis reveals interesting points of the nature of these applications. VoIP phones are used to communicate between persons so the communication process is very much like that found in the circuit switched telephone networks. This process has mean connection time of 180s and on the average 50% active time. Packet per flow analysis shows that a VoIP client typically produces a small number of flows with high packet count, during a flow. Similar thing, with a slightly lower ratio, is observable with all applications and protocols where a

*We call these lists in name of network service profile (NSP).

†Fivetuple is vector of Source address, Destination address, Protocol, Source port and Destination port

Table 4. Application identifiers which contain more than 90% packets shorter than 128 or 256 bytes. Trace is from TCT backbone July 1999.

UDP		TCP			
ntp	123	smtp	25	?	1141
dns query	1025	?	1017	?	1142
?	1076	?	1019	?	1143
icq	4000	?	1020	?	1148
realaudio	6970	?	1021	?	1154
		?	1024	?	1173
		?	1082	?	1199
		ansoft−lm−2	1084	?	1203
		?	1089	?	1225
		sunclustermgr	1097	?	1229
		?	1105	?	1233
		?	1107	?	1251
		?	1115	?	1317
		?	1119	hiq	1410
		?	1121	innosys	1412
		?	1125	firefox	1689
		?	1140	?	5280

(a) 128B

UDP		TCP			
ntp	123	smtp	25	?	1141
dns query	1025	?	1017	?	1142
?	1076	?	1018	?	1143
icq	4000	?	1019	?	1148
realaudio	6970	?	1020	?	1154
vocaltec−phone	22555	?	1021	?	1173
		?	1024	?	1199
		?	1082	?	1203
		ansoft−lm−2	1084	?	1225
		?	1089	?	1229
		sunclustermgr	1097	?	1233
		?	1105	?	1251
		?	1107	?	1317
		?	1115	hiq	1410
		?	1119	innosys	1412
		?	1121	firefox	1689
		?	1125	?	5280
		?	1140	?	6000

(b) 256B

human is in direct contact with the communication process (HTTP, SSH, FTP). Extrapolating on this finding we argue that the LVQ algorithm, which we have used in [10,11] to do similar class-based grouping with older data, is able to extract large number of communication classes. The most basic example of this is differentiating user driven real-time, interactive and bulk traffic, like in our service scenarion.

4.3. Packet length analysis

Analysis based on the packet length distribution of an application group offers a tool to distinguish sets of applications which have similar characteristics or restrictive operation type.

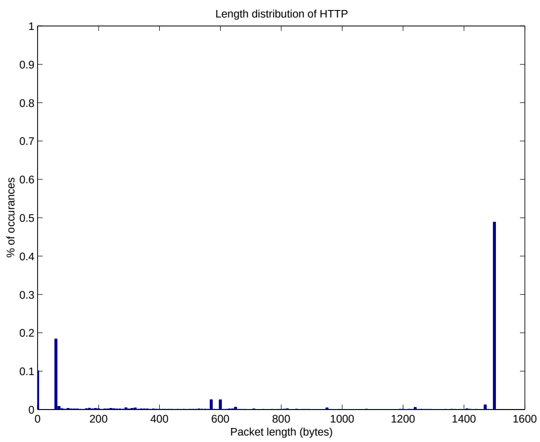
Most straight-forward result from this analysis is the division between real-time and non-real-time nature of an application. Typical real-time application uses a small packet size due to tradeoff between packet size and delay budget in the real time applications. For example; voice communication cannot tolerate more than 150ms of one-way delay. When using packetized voice codec, the delay is a combination of the actual coding and framing. Framing is the time-window which the codec waits for the samples. This time varies with different codecs from 10ms to 30ms. In this time these codecs produce typically maximum of 250 bytes of information. Video communication, where the amount of information is greater, these rules are no longer valid. Video communication utilizes varying set of compression methods which distort packet length distribution heavily. In general, packet length for the video tends to be smaller than 512 bytes. Requirements for voice and video transmission over the packet networks are studied in [12].

We present here results from the analysis of measurements done on the link between Networking laboratory and HUT backbone. These results, in Figure 7, show strong correlation, as expected, between application type and packet length distribution. This would suggest that proposed method of Cheng and Kung in [13,14] works well if classes in general behave as these example applications.

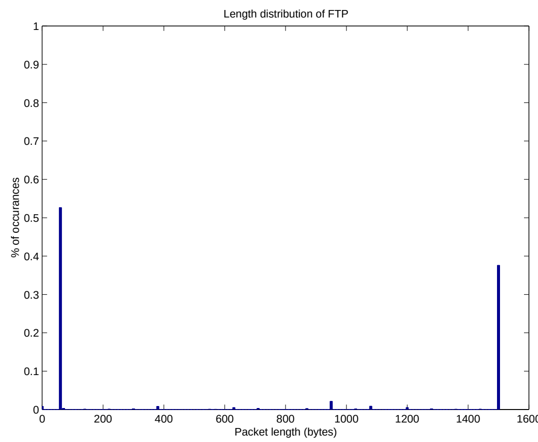
We examine these conditions based on the raw statistical analysis of traffic. If more than 90% of the packets in an application identifier are shorter than threshold value, 128 and 256 bytes, application is classified as interactive. Based on this analysis and observations from the Table 4 we claim that packet length is not alone adequate for classifying general behavior of a class. Large amounts of TCP ACKs cause some irrelevant applications to be classified as interactive. Nevertheless, packet length approach shows its usefulness as a first-hand, easily implementable, NSP generator.

4.4. Inter-arrival time analysis

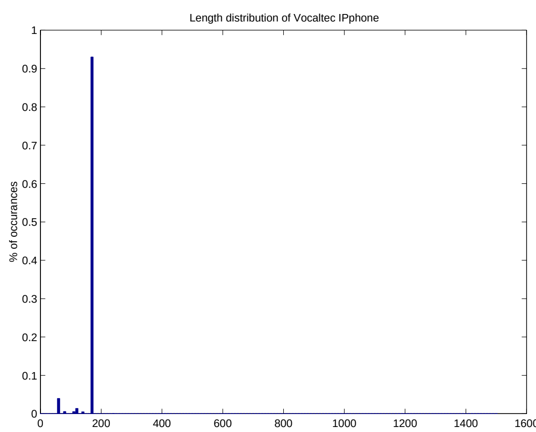
With inter-arrival time (IAT) analysis applications can be classified into two classes: real-time and non-real-time. Suggestions for this kind of mechanisms have been proposed in [14].



(a) HTTP

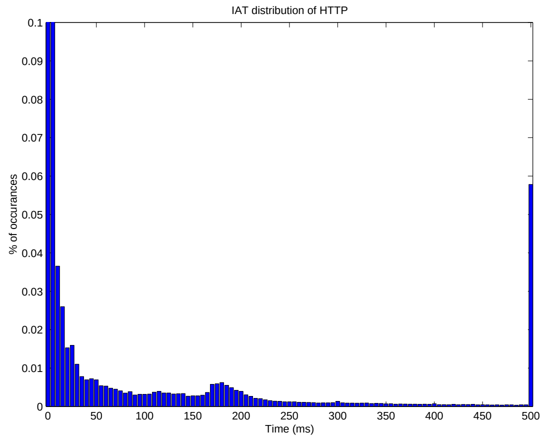


(b) FTP

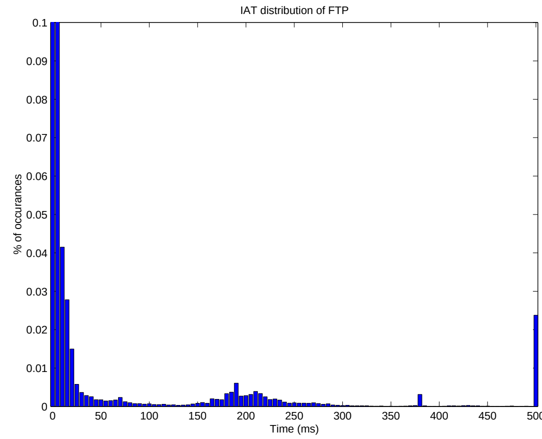


(c) Vocaltec

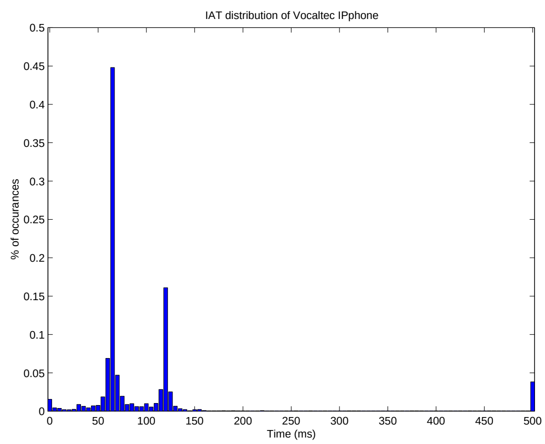
Figure 7. Packet length distribution of various applications or protocols



(a) HTTP



(b) FTP



(c) Vocaltec

Figure 8. Inter arrival time distributions of various applications and protocols

The foundation behind the IAT based classification is the characteristics of applications. Real-time applications typically lack feedback control or at least they tend to keep constant inter sending times of packets during the active period, for instance talk spurts. This produces 'uni-modal' distribution. Non-real-time applications on the other hand typically use TCP as transport protocol. TCP which uses window based flow/congestion control where a certain amount of data is sent to the network and thereafter an acknowledgment for the transmitted data is required. This kind of two phase operation produces a distorted 'exponential' inter-arrival time distribution with long tails. This is again examined based on measured traffic trace, see Figure 8. Example applications HTTP and FTP show long tail in their IAT while Vocaltec VoIP has largely two IAT values 60 and 125 ms.

5. CONCLUSIONS

We have presented a motivation and a solution for the measurement based traffic management in the QoS aware IP environment. It contains a service creation environment, data analysis mechanisms for the application detection and class decision. We have showed that these mechanisms work in general. To have experimental results from the network which uses this technology, we are now in process of implementing all of these functions. So far we have devised the measurement tool, the data analysis tool and are in process of integrating them to a network management platform. We argue that network based quality mechanisms will be the solution for the QoS Internet and their role will be even more important than what we have expressed. However, we want to note that in the light of our experience, we see that it is doubtful if any single algorithm is, in the long run, able to do traffic differentiation. This calls for extensive research on this area.

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