

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION OF CONFORMAL AND STRAIGHT
COOLING CHANNELS ON INJECTION MOULDED PART

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy (Mechanical Engineering)

Faculty of Mechanical Engineering
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia

DECEMBER 2015

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

To my beloved wife Azzurawaty Binti Yusuf, who is praying for me and who provided me with support, help and encouragement that greatly contributed to the successful completion of my studies.

To my daughter Nur Allya Syaffiyah, and to my sons Muhammad Amirun Azzwar and Muhammad Amirun Amzar who have brought wonderful fun, great motivation and bright inspiration into my life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Alhamdulillah, all praise is due to Allah S.W.T, the Most Beneficent and the Most Merciful, who has taught me what I knew not.

First and foremost, I wish to express special thanks, appreciation and deep gratitude to my main supervisor, Prof. Dr. Safian Sharif, who has provided continuous guidance, advice, encouragement, support and generous amount of time in helping me to complete this research. His remarkable unique ways and professionalism of handling my weaknesses has turned my simplistic mind to see and think in more rational and critical view. Special thanks also to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Azlan Mohd. Zain, my honourable co-supervisor, for his continuous guidance, committed support and invaluable advice throughout my study.

Sincere appreciation of course goes to my friends who gave me unselfish support and my family, especially my wife Azzurawaty Yusuf for her support and encouragement throughout the completion of this research. Without their endless sacrifices, constant love and steadfast support, I would never have reached this level. To my daughter Nur Allya Syaffiyah and my sons Muhammad Amirun Azzwar and Muhammad Amirun Amzar, it is to all of you I dedicate this effort.

Above all, I would like to offer my deepest appreciation and thanksgiving to Allah SWT. There is no way to measure what You've bestowed. You are The One who has made things possible. You deserve all glory and honour.

ABSTRACT

In injection moulding process, warpage is one of the main quality aspects measured for moulded parts while cycle time to produce a part indicates the efficiency of the process. Efficient cooling is a huge challenge to many mould designers for achieving a uniform thermal distribution in an injection mould where it affects both quality and productivity. The use of conformal cooling design has been reported as very effective to distribute thermal uniformly, thus able to improve part quality as well as reducing moulding cycle time. However, most of previous researchers only focused on simulation studies and they hardly performed experimental works to verify the simulation results. In this study, a Milled Groove Square Shape (MGSS) conformal cooling channel has been designed, simulated, fabricated and tested using a front panel housing as the case study. Performance evaluations on the MGSS conformal cooling channel and straight cooling channel were conducted using simulation and experimental works in terms of quality (warpage) and productivity (cycle time) of the moulded part. Mould and coolant input temperatures were varied in both evaluations, i.e. mould temperature (40 °C to 80 °C) and coolant temperature (25 °C to 65 °C). Results showed that the MGSS conformal cooling was superior with improved cycle time from 37.57% to 48.66% (simulation) and confirmed by experimental trials (27.89% to 36.15%). Simulated results showed that there is no warpage on the front panel housing in x direction for both types of cooling channels. However, experimental results indicated that warpage occurs in x direction in both cooling channel designs, but MGSS conformal cooling type demonstrates more reduction from 36.36% to 76%. Similarly, warpage in y direction recorded a remarkable improvement within the range of 34.3% to 41.5% and 16.7% to 35.48% respectively from the simulated and experimental results when employing the MGSS conformal cooling channel. The fabrication cost of the MGSS conformal cooling channel is approximately 3 % to 5 % higher which depends on the complexity of part shape as compared to the straight cooling channel. The finding shows that the MGSS conformal cooling channel design offers very encouraging results which is able to improve part quality as well as productivity at an acceptable manufacturing cost.

ABSTRAK

Dalam proses pengacuan suntikan, ledingan adalah salah satu aspek utama kualiti yang diukur pada bahagian yang dibentuk manakala kitaran masa untuk menghasilkannya menunjukkan kecekapan proses. Penyejukan yang cekap adalah satu cabaran yang besar kepada kebanyakan pereka bentuk acuan untuk mencapai agihan haba yang seragam dalam acuan suntikan di mana ia memberi kesan kepada kualiti dan produktiviti. Penggunaan reka bentuk penyejukan konformal telah dilaporkan sangat berkesan untuk mengagihkan haba secara seragam, dengan itu dapat meningkatkan kualiti bahagian dan juga mengurangkan masa kitaran pembentukan. Walau bagaimanapun, kebanyakan penyelidik terdahulu hanya memberi tumpuan kepada kajian simulasi dan mereka jarang melakukan kerja-kerja eksperimen untuk mengesahkan keputusan simulasi. Dalam kajian ini, saluran penyejukan konformal berbentuk segiempat alur terkisar (MGSS) telah direkabentuk, disimulasi, difabrikasi dan diuji menggunakan panel perumah hadapan sebagai kajian kes. Penilaian prestasi saluran penyejukan konformal MGSS dan saluran penyejukan lurus telah dibuat menggunakan simulasi dan kerja-kerja eksperimen dari segi kualiti (ledingan) dan produktiviti (masa kitaran) bahagian yang dibentuk. Suhu masukan acuan dan penyejuk telah diubah dalam kedua-dua penilaian, iaitu suhu acuan (40 °C hingga 80 °C) dan suhu penyejuk (25 °C hingga 65 °C). Keputusan menunjukkan bahawa penyejukan konformal MGSS adalah lebih baik dengan penurunan masa kitaran daripada 37.57% hingga 48.66% (simulasi) dan disahkan oleh ujian percubaan (27.89% hingga 36.15%). Keputusan simulasi menunjukkan tidak ada ledingan pada panel perumah hadapan dalam arah x untuk kedua-dua jenis saluran penyejukan. Walau bagaimanapun, keputusan dari eksperimen menunjukkan ledingan berlaku dalam arah x bagi kedua-dua reka bentuk saluran penyejukan, tetapi penyejukan jenis konformal MGSS menunjukkan lebih pengurangan daripada 36.36% sehingga 76%. Begitu juga, ledingan dalam arah y telah merekodkan penambahbaikan yang memberangsangkan dalam julat 34.3% hingga 41.5% dan 16.7% hingga 35.48% masing-masing daripada keputusan simulasi dan eksperimen apabila menggunakan saluran penyejukan konformal MGSS. Kos anggaran fabrikasi saluran penyejukan konformal MGSS adalah diantara 3% sehingga 5% lebih tinggi, bergantung kepada kerumitan bentuk bahagian berbanding dengan saluran penyejukan lurus. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa reka bentuk saluran penyejukan konformal MGSS menawarkan hasil yang sangat memberangsangkan yang mampu untuk meningkatkan kualiti bahagian dan juga produktiviti dengan kos pembuatan yang boleh diterima.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABS	-	Acrylonitrile Butadiene Styrene
AMI	-	Autodesk Moldflow Insight
ANSYS	-	Analysis System
CAD	-	Computer Aided Design
CAE	-	Computer Aided Engineering
CMM	-	Coordinate Measuring Machine
CNC	-	Computer Numerical Control
CSCC	-	Conventional Straight Cooling Channels
DMD	-	Direct Metal Deposition
DMLS	-	Direct Metal Laser Sintering
DMT	-	Direct Metal Tooling
EBM	-	Electron Beam Melting
FEA	-	Finite Element Analysis
LCD TV	-	Liquid - crystal display television
MGSS	-	Milled Grooved Square Shape
PA	-	Polyamide
PC	-	Polycarbonate
PMMA	-	Poly(methyl methacrylate)
POM	-	Polyoxymethylene
PP	-	Polypropylene
RHCM	-	Rapid Heat Cycle Moulding
RP	-	Rapid Prototyping
RT	-	Rapid Tooling
R&D	-	Research and Development
SLS	-	Selective Laser Sintering
SM	-	Shot Material
SSCCC	-	Square Section Conformal Cooling Channel

3DP - Three Dimensional Printing

LIST OF SYMBOLS

D	-	Gate diameter
α	-	Thermal diffusivity
T_{melt}	-	Melt temperature
$T_{coolant}$	-	Coolant temperature
T_{no_flow}	-	No flow melt temperature
\dot{Q}_m	-	Heat flux from the molten plastic
\dot{Q}_c	-	Heat flux exchange with coolant
\dot{Q}_e	-	Heat flux exchange with environment
T_M	-	Melt temperature
T_E	-	Ejection temperature
c_p	-	Specific heat
ρ_m	-	Melt density
s	-	Part thickness
x	-	Pitch of the cooling channels
α	-	Heat transfer coefficient of coolant
k_{st}	-	Thermal conductivity of the mould steel
T_w	-	Mould temperature
T_C	-	Coolant temperature
S_e	-	Shape factor
y	-	Distance from centre of the cooling channels to the mould surface
Re	-	Reynolds number
u	-	Velocity of the coolant
ν	-	Kinematic viscosity of the coolant
t_{cp}	-	Cooling time of the moulded part in the form of plate
a	-	Thermal diffusivity

k_m	-	Thermal conductivity of the plastic material
P_i	-	Pressure drop for feeding segment
L_i	-	Length of the segment
L_{Total}	-	Total length of the feeding system
ΔP_{max}	-	Maximum pressure drop
R	-	Radius of runner
K	-	Reference viscosity of the polymer melts at the melt temperature
L	-	Length of runner
n	-	Reference viscosity of the polymer melts at the melt temperature
\dot{V}_{melt}	-	Volumetric flow rate
P	-	Pressure
t_c	-	Cooling time
D	-	Diameter of the runner
T_{eject}	-	Ejection temperature
h	-	Thickness of the part
$\dot{\gamma}$	-	Shear rate
W	-	Width of the gate
h	-	Thickness of the gate
R	-	Radius of the gate
t_s	-	Gate freezing time
D	-	Diameter of the gate
$Q_{molding}$	-	Total amount of heat needs to be removed by the cooling system
$m_{molding}$	-	Weight of the moulded part to be moulded
$\dot{Q}_{cooling}$	-	Amount of energy that must be removed per second of cooling time
\dot{Q}_{line}	-	Heat transfer rate per cooling line
n_{lines}	-	Numbers of cooling lines
$\dot{V}_{coolant}$	-	Coolant flow rate
$\Delta T_{coolant}$	-	The differences of the temperatures between the inlet and outlet of the coolant

$\rho_{coolant}$	-	Density of the coolant
$C_{p,coolant}$	-	Specific heat of the coolant
D	-	Diameter of the cooling channels
$\mu_{coolant}$	-	Viscosity of the coolant
ΔP	-	Half of the maximum pressure supplied from the coolant controller
L_{line}	-	Length of the cooling channels
$h_{conduction}$	-	Effective heat conduction coefficient
K_{mold}	-	Thermal conductivity of the mould material
H_{line}	-	Maximum depth of cooling channels

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Injection moulding process has been widely used in the manufacturing of plastic products with various types of shapes due to its high productivity and low cost for high volume production (Cho *et al.*, 2009; Lin, 2002; Spina, 2004). The important stages in injection moulding process are injection (filling), packing, cooling and ejection (Lin, 2002; Saifullah *et al.*, 2009; Tang *et al.*, 2006). During the injection stage, molten plastics are injected into the cavities. In the packing stage the molten plastics are continuously injected into the cavities until the gate freezes to fill in the leaving space due to plastic shrinkage during solidification. After the molten plastics solidify and are rigid enough at the cooling stage, the mould opens allowing the moulded parts to be ejected out of the mould. The mould then closes and the process continues for the next cycle (Bozdana and Eyercioglu, 2002). Among all the stages, cooling is the most significant phase that affects the productivity and the quality of the moulded parts (Hassan *et al.*, 2010b; Tang *et al.*, 2006). It contributes approximately 70% to 80% of the cycle time in injection moulding process (Saifullah and Masood, 2007b; Subramanian *et al.*, 2005).

As such, in order to improve the cycle time in the injection moulding process, it is essential that the cooling time is reduced (Hassan *et al.*, 2010b).

1.2 Background of Study

The cost-effectiveness of the injection moulding process mainly depends on the moulding cycle time whereby the cooling stage is the primary stage influencing the cycle time and the production rate of the moulded parts (Hassan *et al.*, 2010b; Saifullah *et al.*, 2009). In addition, the design of cooling channels in the injection moulds affects the quality of moulded plastic part (Dimla *et al.*, 2005; Hassan *et al.*, 2010b; Li, 2007). The undesirable defects that commonly affect the quality of the moulded parts include hot spots, sink marks, differential shrinkage, thermal residual stress and warpage. All these defects can be minimized with an efficient cooling channel system which results in a uniform temperature distribution in the inserts of the injection mould (Chen *et al.*, 2000; Wang and Young, 2005).

Traditionally, simple cooling channels are designed with straight holes in the core and cavity inserts of the mould. It is simple to design and easy to fabricate using a conventional machining process such as drilling. Nowadays, many researchers and mould designers are trying to improve the efficiency of cooling channels by focusing on how to optimize the layout of the cooling channels system in terms of shape, size and location (Dang and Park, 2011; Hassan *et al.*, 2010a; Lam *et al.*, 2004; Shoemaker, 2006; Zhou *et al.*, 2009). On the other hand, some researchers studied on how to design and fabricate conformal cooling channels in order to ensure uniform thermal distribution and to increase the cooling efficiency (Ahn *et al.*, 2010; Altaf *et al.*, 2011; Dimla *et al.*, 2005; Park and Pham, 2009; Park and Dang, 2010; Saifullah *et al.*, 2009). Over the years, conformal cooling channels have proven more efficient as compared to conventional cooling channels in terms of production rate and parts quality (Saifullah and Masood, 2007b; Xu *et al.*, 2001). Several investigations on conformal cooling channels have been conducted which involved fabricating the channels as close as possible to the surface of the mould cavities in order to increase the efficiency of heat absorption from molten plastic thus ensuring the moulded parts to be cooled uniformly (Saifullah and Masood, 2007a; Saifullah *et al.*, 2009). The application of conformal cooling channels began when rapid tooling was first introduced because of its simple fabrication process with various technologies as

compared to the conventional drilling and milling on hard tooling materials of the injection moulds.

In recent years, the high efficiency of conformal cooling channels in rapid tooling over conventional cooling channels has triggered many researchers to investigate its effectiveness on hard tooling for injection moulding process. Designing such cooling channels is always a big challenge because of its limitation in the fabrication process which involves free-form machining of the cooling channels that follows exactly the profile of the injected plastic parts.

1.3 Problems Statement

Warping defect is a common issue in an injection moulding process due to non-uniform temperature variation causing differential shrinkage on the moulded parts (Fischer, 2003; Kazmer, 2007; Malloy, 2010). In designing plastic injection moulds, it is difficult to achieve efficient cooling with uniform thermal distribution by using traditional design of simple cooling channels with straight holes. To overcome these issues, the use of conformal cooling channels with uniform distance between the centre of the cooling channels and the mould surfaces was introduced which offers a better thermal distribution and reduction in cooling time.

Many researchers have studied the designing of conformal cooling channels on hard tooling for injection moulding process (Dang and Park, 2011; Park and Pham, 2009; Park and Dang, 2010; Saifullah and Masood, 2007a; Saifullah and Masood, 2007b; Saifullah *et al.*, 2009; Sun *et al.*, 2004). Similar to the findings on conformal cooling channels in rapid tooling, its efficiency and performance are proven superior in terms of the uniformity of thermal distribution, improvement on parts deflection, cooling time reduction and unquestionably the reduction in an injection moulding cycle time. However, most of the researches were focused on the simulation works or computer modelling which lack supports and verifications of real experimental data (Dang and Park, 2011; Park and Pham, 2009; Park and Dang,

2010; Saifullah and Masood, 2007a; Saifullah and Masood, 2007b; Sun *et al.*, 2004). Simulation results could not provide a full and accurate solutions to the actual problems in real production. Only Saifullah *et al.* (2009) had performed experimental works and compared to the simulation results. However, the experimental work only consider a circular part which is too simple. Besides that, most researchers only proposed the cooling channels in simulation without any consideration on mould fabrication. In addition, most of them used coolant temperature of 25°C and 35°C in their study which did not fulfilled the recommended temperature suggested by the material manufacturer. Therefore the results are questionable and less beneficial to the injection moulding society.

Hence, in this study extensive investigation involving experimental works were conducted in order to assist the moulding industries, particularly in small and medium enterprise, in improving the quality of plastic parts produced. A Milled Grooved Square Shape (MGSS) conformal cooling channels which are easy to design, fabricate and assemble is developed taking into the consideration on the fabrication of the conformal cooling channels, especially in hard tooling. The performance of the MGSS conformal cooling channels in term of productivity (cycle time) and quality (warpage) was compared to the conventional straight cooling channels with a same layout and cross sectional area through simulation and experimental works. Thus, the efficiency of the MGSS conformal cooling channels as compared to the conventional straight cooling channels was validated clearly. This study is able to address the following questions:

1. Can the MGSS conformal cooling channels be fabricated and used in real injection moulding processes?
2. How much a MGSS conformal cooling channels can improve the productivity of the injection moulding process as compared to the conventional straight cooling channels?
3. How much improvement on the quality of the moulded parts of a MGSS conformal cooling channels as compared to the conventional straight cooling channels?
4. What are the variation of the experimental results against the simulation results in terms of productivity and quality of the moulded parts?

1.4 Objectives

The main objectives of this study are:

1. To design and fabricate of conformal cooling channels for moulds used in the injection moulding process of a plastic part.
2. To evaluate the performance of MGSS conformal cooling channels in injection moulding process on the productivity and quality of the moulded parts by simulation.
3. To experimentally compare the quality and productivity of the moulded parts produced using a MGSS conformal cooling channels mould against the simulation results in term of shrinkage, warpage, cooling time and cycle time.

1.5 Scopes of Study

The scope of this study involves designing, fabrication and testing of the plastic injection moulds with a MGSS conformal cooling channels in the injection moulding of a front panel housing made from Acrylonitrile Butadiene Styrene (ABS) material. Comparative study was conducted between the MGSS conformal cooling channels and the straight cooling channels for the coolant temperature of 25 °C to 65 °C in order to obtain the mould temperature of 40 °C to 80 °C as per recommended by the plastic material manufacturer. Performance evaluations were conducted by simulation and validated experimentally with regards to productivity (cycle time) and quality (warpage) of the moulded parts. In this study, the values of the melt temperature, injection rate, packing pressure and part thickness were kept constant. The parameters that were varied are mould temperature, filling time and packing time. The mould temperature depends on the coolant temperature while the filling and packing time depend on the mould temperature from the Fill + Pack analysis form simulation. Therefore, in order to control the mould temperature, filling and packing time, the coolant temperature needs to be controlled. A commercial Computer Aided Engineering (CAE) software, Autodesk Moldflow Insight 2013 was used for the analysis and simulation works in this study. Meanwhile a 80 Tonne

Nissei NEX1000 injection moulding machine at the production laboratory, School of Manufacturing Engineering, Universiti Malaysia Perlis was used to perform the experimental works.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study provides useful scientific knowledge and solution to plastic manufacturing industries pertaining to plastic injection moulding in improving the quality (warpage) and productivity (cycle time) of the moulded parts through the MGSS conformal cooling channels of an injection mould. MGSS conformal cooling channels has been developed and proven to be used in the real injection moulding process. Slight difference exists between the results from simulation and experimental because of the few assumptions used in Autodesk Moldflow Insight 2013. However, the experimental results are in line with the simulation results whereby the MGSS conformal cooling channels is able to improve the quality and productivity of the moulded parts produced. The fabrication cost of MGSS conformal cooling channels for the front panel housing is approximately to be within 3 % to 5 % higher as compared to the straight cooling channels. However, the fabrication cost of MGSS conformal cooling channels depends mainly on the shape complexity of the moulded parts.

1.7 Organisation of the Thesis

This thesis begins with an introductory chapter that describes the general information of conventional injection moulding, problems statement, objectives, scopes and significance of this study. In Chapter 2, a thorough discussion of the literature on the performance of conformal cooling channels in rapid and hard tooling for injection moulding with different approaches to improve the quality and productivity of moulded parts are highlighted. In Chapter 3, detailed methodologies from part design, design of gating system, analysis using Autodesk Moldflow 2013

and experimental are presented. The simulation and experimental results are discussed in Chapter 4 whereas Chapter 5 concludes all of the findings of the study.

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APPENDIX A

1. **Z. Shayfull, S. Sharif, Azlan Mohd Zain, R. Mohd Saad and S.M. Nasir,** Improving the Quality and Productivity of Molded Parts with a New Design of Conformal Cooling Channels for the Injection Molding Process, *Advances in Polymer Technology*, DOI: 10.1002/adv.21524, **2015. Impact Factor: 1.045.**
2. **Z. Shayfull, S. Sharif, Azlan Mohd Zain, M.F. Ghazali and R. Mohd Saad** Potential of Conformal Cooling Channels in Rapid Heat Cycle Molding: A Review, *Advances in Polymer Technology*, 33(1): 1-24, **2014. Impact Factor: 1.045.**
3. **Z. Shayfull, S. Sharif, Azlan Mohd Zain, R. Mohd Saad and M.A. Fairuz,** Warpage analysis with straight drilled and conformal cooling channels on front panel housing by using taguchi method, *Key Engineering Materials* 594, 593-603, **2014. (Scopus).**
4. **Z. Shayfull, S. Sharif, Azlan Mohd Zain, R. Mohd Saad, and M. A. Fairuz,** Milled Groove Square Shape Conformal Cooling Channels in Injection Molding Process, *Materials and Manufacturing Processes*, 28: 884–891, **2013. Impact Factor: 1.486.**
5. **Z. Shayfull, M. Fathullah, S. Sharif, S.M. Nasir, N.A. Shuaib,** Warpage analysis on ultra-thin shell by using taguchi method and analysis of variance (ANOVA) for three-plate mold. **International Review of Mechanical Engineering**, Vol. 5, No. 6, 1116-1124, September **2011. (Scopus).**
6. M. Fathullah, **Z. Shayfull, S. Sharif, N.A. Shuaib, S.M. Nasir,** A study on two plate and three plate mold of ultra thin plates in minimizing warpage issue. **International Review of Mechanical Engineering**, Vol. 5, No. 7, 1189-1195, November **2011. (Scopus).**

APPENDIX B

1. Special Award from Chinese Innovation & Invention Society - Taiwan (CIIS), New Design of Milled Groove Square Shape Conformal Cooling Channels in Injection Molding Process, International Warsaw Invention Show (IWIS) 2013, Warsaw, Poland.
2. Special Award from Korea Invention News, New Design of Milled Groove Square Shape Conformal Cooling Channels in Injection Molding Process, International Warsaw Invention Show (IWIS) 2013, Warsaw, Poland.
3. Award in Invention Academics & Education Order of Merit Category, World Inventor Award Festival (WIAF) 2013, New Design of Milled Groove Square Shape Conformal Cooling Channels in Injection Molding Process, Seoul, Korea.
4. Award in Manufacturing Order of Merit Category, World Inventor Award Festival (WIAF) 2013, New Design of Milled Groove Square Shape Conformal Cooling Channels in Injection Molding Process, Seoul, Korea.
5. Special Award, Honor of Invention from World Invention Intellectual Property Associations, A New Design of Milled Groove Square Shape Conformal Cooling Channels (Milled Grooved Square Shape Conformal Cooling Channels) in Injection Molding Process, Invention, Innovation & Technology Exhibition (ITEX) 2014, Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre (KLCC), Malaysia
6. Leading Innovation Award from International Intellectual Property Network Forum, Improving Productivity and Quality In Conventional and Rapid Heat Cycle Molding With A New Design of Conformal Cooling Channels, International Exhibition on Invention Kunshan (IEIK) 2014, Kunshan, China.

7. Special Award from Korea University Invention Association, Improving Productivity and Quality In Conventional and Rapid Heat Cycle Molding With A New Design of Conformal Cooling Channels, International Exhibition on Invention Kunshan (IEIK) 2014, Kunshan, China.
8. Special Award from Croatian Inventors Association, Improving Productivity and Quality In Conventional and Rapid Heat Cycle Molding With A New Design of Conformal Cooling Channels, International Exhibition on Invention Kunshan (IEIK) 2014, Kunshan, China.

APPENDIX C

1. Gold Medal, New Design of Milled Groove Square Shape Conformal Cooling Channels in Injection Molding Process, International Warsaw Invention Show (IWIS) 2013, Warsaw, Poland.
2. Silver Medal, Improving Quality and Productivity in Rapid Heat Cycle Moulding with A New Design of Conformal Cooling Channels, European Exhibition of Creativity and Innovation (EUROINVENT) 2014, Iasi, Romania.
3. Gold Medal, A New Design of Milled Groove Square Shape Conformal Cooling Channels (Milled Grooved Square Shape Conformal Cooling Channels) in Injection Molding Process, Innovation & Technology Exhibition (ITEX) 2014, Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre (KLCC), Malaysia.
4. Gold Medal, Design of Milled Groove Square Shape (MGSS) Conformal Cooling Channels in Injection Molding Process, Ekspo Rekacipta dan Penyelidikan UniMAP 2014, University Malaysia Perlis, Malaysia.
5. Bronze Medal, Improving Productivity and Quality In Conventional and Rapid Heat Cycle Molding With A New Design of Conformal Cooling Channels, International Exhibition on Invention Kunshan (IEIK) 2014, Kunshan, China.
6. Silver Medal, Improving Productivity and Quality In Injection Molding Process with a New Design of Conformal Cooling Channels, Malaysia Technology Expo (MTE) 2014, Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre (KLCC), Malaysia.