The impact of different strategies on charging behavior of electric vehicles

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(1)Overview

To reduce the dependency on fossil fuels and to slow down climate change, the replacement of combustion engine based vehicles by plug-in hybrid vehicles (PHEVs) and electric vehicles (EVs) will be required [1]. With multiple electric vehicles, restrictions of the power grid have to be considered carefully. This requires adequate charging strategies which control the electric current flow.

This paper focuses on intelligent charging strategies for electric vehicles in a corporate vehicle fleet. The electric vehicles will impact the electricity demand of the enterprises and may consequently affect the contractual load. This has to be taken into account together with vehicle usage profiles and individual preferences in deriving optimal charging strategies.

Existing studies on optimal charging mostly focus on technical restrictions like [1], [2] or on cost minimization in a system context or with respect to wholesale prices [3], [4]. By contrast, the present contribution focuses on charging strategies from a perspective of electricity customers.

(2) Methods

From the perspective of a retail customer, avoiding an increase in the peak load is a key requirement. This is at least true in Germany where retail tariffs for medium and large customers include an important capacity charge based on actual peak demand. Therefore it is important to control the electric current flow. In order to reach this, different charging strategies are investigated with respect to the resulting cost efficiency. The reference charging strategy (basic model) is immediate charging. The electric vehicles will be charged when they arrive at the charging station only considering technical restrictions of the vehicle. A first improved strategy regards technical and contractual peak load restrictions and therefore results in a shifting of the charging time. The third charging strategy is a charging cost minimization strategy including technical and contractual constraints. The developed strategies are implemented as linear optimization programs. Starting with the basic model, constrained charging maximization and various loading strategies like cost minimization, priority based charging and hybrid approaches are compared.

For the model we assume that the electricity costs, the conventional load of the company and the time interval of charging are known. For all strategies, we implement restrictions on the company peak load and the vehicle battery capacities as well as the maximal charging load. Furthermore various priorities are externally assigned to the different vehicles within a fleet.

As objective function either the maximization of the state of charge or cost minimization under charging constraints are considered. Moreover penalties based on priorities and on state of charge are investigated. Additionally, weighted combinations of several strategies are analyzed.

(3)Results

When many electric vehicles within the vehicle fleet will be charged at the same time during day peak, the contractual load of the company will be frequently exceeded. The developed charging strategies with regard to company's peak load are capable to avoid that. When only the technical restrictions and the contractual peak-load are considered, the charging time of the electric vehicles is only slightly shifted. But still the vehicles will be fully charged as fast as possible and the costs will be reduced by 55%. The cost minimization strategy shifts the charging time a lot. The vehicles will be charged at the lowest possible prices and the charging costs will be reduced by at least 45%. But this strategy doesn't avoid the contractual peak load, yet requires additional information on the planned usage: The time of departure and the required minimum range have to be known. The best optimization strategy is the cost minimal charging strategy under capacity constraints, which will reduce the cost by 70% in comparison to the dumb charging strategy.

(4) Conclusion

As the results show, it is absolutely necessary to insert charging strategies to reduce company's costs. The investigated charging strategies are a small part of relevant charging strategies for the future. Considering an individual enterprise, it is important to limit its peak load and to minimize its energy costs. But for the entire system an as even as possible load distribution is preferable to minimize overall costs. Moreover, vehicle to grid (V2G) may contribute in the future to match load with available intermittent generation. Besides these advanced approaches, also the handling of limited and uncertain information (e.g. on future usage) is a key requirement for charging strategies in companies and households.

References

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