

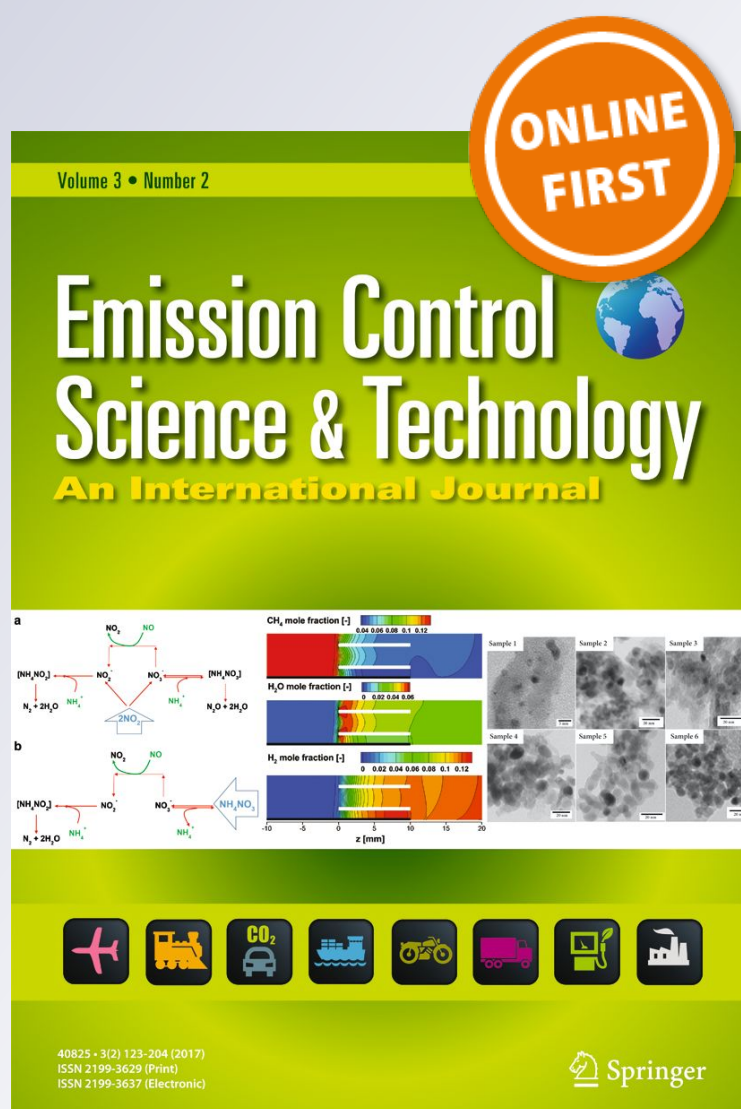
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Studies on the Solid Oxide Cell Perovskite Electrode Materials for Soot Oxidation Activity

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Abstract

Solid oxide cell (SOC) perovskite electrode materials (BSCF ($\text{Ba}_{0.5}\text{Sr}_{0.5}\text{Co}_{0.8}\text{Fe}_{0.2}\text{O}_{3-\delta}$), LSCF ($\text{La}_{0.6}\text{Sr}_{0.4}\text{Co}_{0.2}\text{Fe}_{0.8}\text{O}_{3-\delta}$) and LSCM ($\text{La}_{0.75}\text{Sr}_{0.25}\text{Cr}_{0.5}\text{Mn}_{0.5}\text{O}_{3-\delta}$)) were synthesised using microwave-assisted reverse-strike co-precipitation method and tested for soot oxidation activity. The calcined perovskite materials were characterized using FT-IR, XRD, SEM and BSE, BET and BJH and XPS analysis. The mean activation energy for soot oxidation was calculated from Ozawa plots at various heating rates (5, 10, 15 and 20 K/min) at different levels of soot conversions (T_{10} to T_{90}) for BSCF, LSCM and LSCF perovskite materials and was around 133 ± 11.5 , 138 ± 9.9 and 152 ± 7.2 kJ/mol, respectively. Irrespective of the heating rates, BSCF material showed the lowest T_{50} temperature than compared to other samples, and it is correlated to the presence of Fe_3O_4 as a secondary phase.

Keywords SOC perovskite materials · Soot oxidation activity · Secondary phase- Fe_3O_4 · Activation energy · Ozawa plots

1 Introduction

Solid oxide cells (SOCs) operate in electrolyser and fuel cell modes and provide effective conversion of electricity into renewable fuels and vice versa, respectively [1–3]. The most common perovskite material as oxygen electrode for SOCs is a composite of strontium doped lanthanum magnetite (LSM) [4, 5], lanthanum strontium ferrite (LSF) [6], lanthanum strontium cobaltite (LSCo) [5], lanthanum strontium copper ferrite (LSCuF) [7], lanthanum strontium cobalt ferrite (LSCF) [7, 8], lanthanum strontium cobalt magnetite (LSCM) [9] or barium strontium cobalt ferrite (BSCF) [10]. Oxygen

reduction reaction and oxygen evolution reaction, along with mixed ionic and electronic conductivities, play a major role in selecting promising oxygen electrode for the SOCs in fuel cell and electrolyser modes [11]. Similarly, the soot oxidation activity in a diesel particulate filter (DPF) works on the active oxygen mechanism in the absence of NO_2 indicating that, in the oxygen-rich gas stream, the DPF catalyst exchanges its oxygen with gas phase oxygen leading to the formation of highly reactive oxygen species which participates in soot oxidation at catalyst-soot interface [12]. Accumulation of soot in DPF results in backpressure and reduces the engine performance in the long run, therefore needs continuous regeneration [13]. Consequently, different measures have to be taken to eliminate soot from the engine exhaust. Only modifying the engine design will not accomplish this, efforts have to be taken to come up with novel catalysts that will help in oxidising soot at lower temperatures (423–673 K) than the temperature at which soot actually oxidises in the air (773–873 K) [14, 15]. Catalytic conversion of soot in a diesel particulate filter (DPF) is one of the promising ways to eliminate soot from a diesel engine exhaust.

The catalysts that are used for oxidation of soot include transition metal oxides [16], alkali and alkaline-earth containing catalysts [17], noble metals [18, 19], perovskites [20], spinel oxides [14] and pure and doped cerium oxides [21].

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Noble metals like platinum, palladium and rhodium are most widely used catalysts for the same, but they are costly, scarce and cannot withstand high temperatures as they get deactivated due to sintering [14, 22, 23].

In recent years, the perovskite family has garnered a lot of interest in the field of catalysis, due to their physical and chemical properties. These perovskites having ABO_3 structure, where A-site is usually occupied by lanthanides or alkaline-earth metals, B-site is occupied by transition metals and O is oxygen, find applications in several oxidation reactions like CO [24] and hydrocarbon oxidation [25], photocatalysis [26], materials for chemical sensors [27, 28], hydrogenation [29] and hydrogenolysis reactions [30], pollution abatement and electrocatalysis [31]. Partial substitution of cations in A-site and B-site leads to substituted compounds with the formula $A_{1-x}A_xB_{1-y}B_yO_{3-\delta}$. They are also stable at high temperatures (above 1273 K) and are cheaper as compared to noble metals [31–33]. Peron et al. [34] studied two lanthanum-based perovskites ($LaCrO_3$ and $LaMnO_3$) as possible substitutes for noble metal catalysts in the automotive exhaust, along with the substitution of La with K doping in order to increase the catalytic activity. It was found that doping with K led to improved catalytic activity due to the increase in surface oxygen vacancies created by the presence of adsorbed oxygen species. $La_{1-x}K_xCo_{1-y}Cu_yO_{3-\delta}$ perovskites were tested by Li et al. [35] for simultaneous oxidation of soot and NO_x , which showed that the redox properties improved on dual substitution of K and Cu in the $LaCoO_3$ lattice structure, mainly due to change in the oxidation states (by substituting La^{3+} by K^+ and Co^{3+} by Cu^{2+}), which leads to creation of oxygen vacancies, which further increases the surface adsorbed oxygen species (O_2^- and O^-), leading to increased catalytic activity.

The method of synthesis of perovskites is an important factor which defines their physical property, and various synthesis methods were used for preparation of perovskites which includes sol-gel method [18], freeze-drying method, spray-drying method [36], co-precipitation method [37], complexation method [38], hydrothermal method and microwave-assisted methods [39]. Microwave-assisted processes consume lesser energy, are fast and are shown to produce particles having smaller grain size [40]. In this context, an attempt is made to study and understand the suitability of SOC perovskite oxygen electrode materials (BSCF, LSCM and LSCF) for soot oxidation activity, synthesised by microwave-assisted reverse-strike co-precipitation method.

2 Experimental Details

2.1 Material Synthesis

The three perovskites, BSCF ($Ba_{0.5}Sr_{0.5}Co_{0.8}Fe_{0.2}O_{3-\delta}$), LSCF ($La_{0.6}Sr_{0.4}Co_{0.2}Fe_{0.8}O_{3-\delta}$) and LSCM

($La_{0.75}Sr_{0.25}Cr_{0.5}Mn_{0.5}O_{3-\delta}$), were synthesized by microwave-assisted reverse-strike co-precipitation method, using AR grade chemicals. The metal nitrates used for the same include lanthanum (III) nitrate hexahydrate [$La(NO_3)_3 \cdot 6H_2O$] (purity $\geq 99\%$) (Sigma–Aldrich), iron (III) nitrate nonahydrate [$Fe(NO_3)_3 \cdot 9H_2O$] (purity $\geq 98\%$) (Sigma–Aldrich), strontium nitrate anhydrous [$Sr(NO_3)_2$] (purity $\geq 99\%$) (Molychem), cobalt (II) nitrate hexahydrate [$Co(NO_3)_2 \cdot 6H_2O$] (purity $\geq 98\%$) (Sigma–Aldrich), barium nitrate [$Ba(NO_3)_2$] (purity $\geq 98.5\%$) (Loba Chemie), chromium (III) nitrate nonahydrate [$Cr(NO_3)_3 \cdot 9H_2O$] (purity $\geq 99\%$) (Sigma–Aldrich), manganese (II) nitrate tetrahydrate [$Mn(NO_3)_2 \cdot 4H_2O$] (purity $\geq 97\%$) (Sigma–Aldrich).

In this method, the metal nitrate solution was prepared by dissolving stoichiometric amounts of nitrates in water (used as a solvent). This metal nitrate solution and the ammonium hydroxide assay was added simultaneously and dropwise to water at pH 11 (adjusted by the addition of ammonium hydroxide), and overall pH is maintained at 9 under continuous stirring [41]. The obtained precipitate is allowed to settle overnight, followed by heating the solution in a microwave at 423 K for 30 min (540 W). This allows the particles to heat quickly and leads to lesser clustering of particles [40]. This solution is dried in a hot air oven at 453 K for 24 h. The solid powder is crushed and calcined at 873 K for 5 h (to ensure removal of impurities) in a muffle furnace, and the powder is further re-calcined at 1373 K for 5 h (to ensure proper phase formation) to obtain the desired material.

2.2 Material Characterization

The perovskite materials were analysed using Fourier-transform infra-red spectroscopy (FT-IR) (Bruker Alpha), X-ray diffraction (XRD) (Rigaku Miniflex 6000), scanning electron microscopy (SEM) and back-scattered electron (BSE) (JSM 6380LA), BET surface area and BJH analysis (Quanta Chrome Novae-2200) and X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS) (Omicron ESCA+). CasaXPS software is used for curve fitting from raw data, using C 1 s peak as a reference, having binding energy 284.6 eV. The peak analysis is obtained using a Shirley background and Gaussian-Lorentzian peak fitting.

2.3 Soot Oxidation Activity

Soot oxidation activity studies were carried out using thermogravimetric analysis (TGA, TG-DTA 6300). Before the soot oxidation experiments, the TGA setup is optimized to eliminate the possible heat and mass transfer effects [42]. Soot (Printex-U, Orion Engineered Chemicals) is used, and the soot to catalyst weight ratio is 1: 10 under tight contact mode. TGA instrument is operated in the temperature range of 473 to

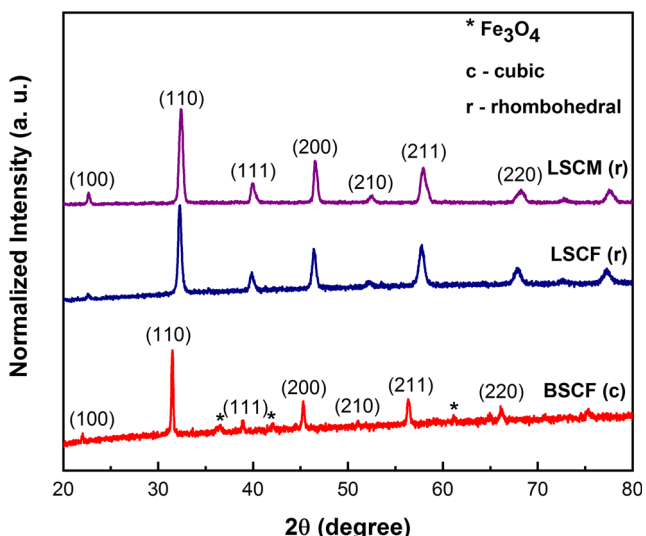


Fig. 1 XRD patterns of the BSCF, LSCM and LSCF perovskite materials synthesised by microwave-assisted reverse-strike co-precipitation method, calcined at 1373 K/5 h

873 K at various heating rates (5, 10, 15 and 20 K/min) in an air atmosphere at a flow rate of 100 ml/min.

The apparent activation energy for soot oxidation is obtained using the following expression determined by Ozawa method, given as [13, 43–45]:

$$[d(\log(\phi))]/[d(1/T_\alpha)] = -0.4567E_a/R \quad (1.1)$$

where ϕ is the heating rate (K/min) ($\phi = 5, 10, 15$ and 20 K/min), T_α is the temperature corresponding to $\alpha\%$ ($\alpha\% = 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80$ and 90%) carbon conversion, E_a is the apparent activation energy (kJ/mol) and R is the ideal gas constant ($= 8.314$ J/(mol K)). Using the least squares straight-line fit, E_a can be estimated from the slope of $\log(\phi)$ versus $(1/T_\alpha)$ plot.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Material Characterization

Figure S1 (Supplementary Information) depicts the FT-IR spectra of the perovskite materials calcined at 1373 K/5 h in air and shows the formation of the metal oxygen bonds in all

the materials. Figure 1 shows the XRD patterns of BSCF, LSCM and LSCF materials. For BSCF, LSCF and LSCM materials, major diffraction peaks (100), (110), (111), (200), (210), (211) and (220) correspond to the cubic perovskite phase of BSCF [46, 47], the rhombohedral phase of LSCF [48, 49] and the rhombohedral phase of LSCM [50–52], respectively. For BSCF material, in addition to the major peaks, low-intensity peaks were observed at $2\theta = 36.52^\circ$, 42.09° and 61.08° , which were identified as Fe_3O_4 [53, 54]. It indicates that a secondary phase (Fe_3O_4) is formed, along with the BSCF phase. No visible secondary phase formation or peak shift can be identified in the LSCF and LSCM perovskites materials, indicating pure phase formation [55, 56].

Table 1 shows the physicochemical properties obtained from XRD, BET and BJH analysis. The crystallite size and lattice strain for the BSCF, LSCF and LSCM perovskite materials from XRD data are around 41, 19 and 19 nm and 0.0023, 0.0052 and 0.0054, respectively. The BET surface area and pore volume of BSCF, LSCF and LSCM perovskite materials obtained from BET and BJH analysis are around 20, 39 and 4 m^2/g and 0.036, 0.059 and 0.004 cc/g , respectively. Fig. S2 (Supplementary Information) shows the N_2 adsorption-desorption isotherms and pore size distribution of the perovskite materials. Type IV adsorption isotherm with H3 type hysteresis loop is obtained indicating the dependency of isotherm on the quality/surface of the porous solid perovskite materials having slit-shaped pores of non-uniform size and shape. From the BJH pore size distribution, all the perovskite materials displayed a mesoporous structure having a pore size ranging from 2 to 50 nm.

Figure 2 depicts the SEM and BSE images of the perovskite materials. The SEM images show that the obtained materials are agglomerated. The agglomerate size of the BSCF and LSCF perovskite materials is around 20 to 25 μm , and for the LSCM material, it is less than 5 μm . Compared with the crystallite size obtained from the XRD data, BSCF and LSCF materials displayed a higher degree of agglomeration than LSCM material. BSE analysis is carried out to find out the presence of any secondary phase in the perovskite materials. From a close observation, BSCF material showed a variation in colour, but this variation cannot be attributed to the secondary phase since such variation is also possible due to topography changes. LSCM and LSCF have not shown major colour variations.

Figure 3 represents the XPS spectra of BSCF (Fig. 3a), LSCF (Fig. 3b) and LSCM (Fig. 3c) perovskites. The

Table 1 Crystallite size, lattice strain, BET surface area and pore volume of BSCF, LSCF and LSCM perovskite materials, calcined at 1373 K/5 h, obtained from XRD, BET and BJH analysis

Perovskites	Crystallite size ^a (nm)	Lattice strain ^b	BET surface area (m^2/g)	Pore volume (cc/g)
BSCF	41	0.0023	20	0.036
LSCF	19	0.0052	39	0.059
LSCM	19	0.0054	04	0.004

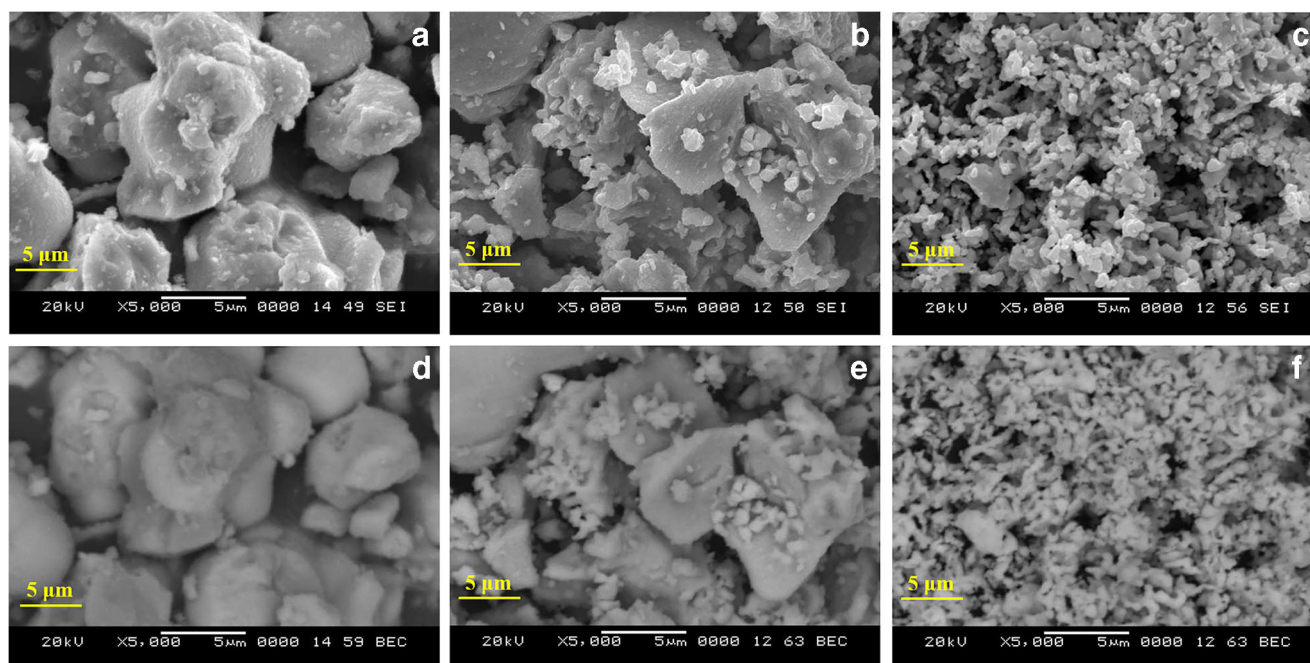


Fig. 2 SEM and BSE images of the BSCF (a, d), LSCM (b, e) and LSCF (c, f) perovskite materials

deconvoluted peaks from obtained XPS data of Ba_{3d} , Sr_{3d} , Co_{2p} , Fe_{2p} , La_{3d} , Cr_{2p} and Mn_{2p} level of the perovskites were analysed, and the oxidation states were assigned accordingly which also matched well with the literature [51, 57–65]. From the Fig. 3a, it is difficult to identify the oxidation state of cobalt due to overlapping of Ba 3d and Co 2p. Figure 4 displays the O1s spectra of all the three perovskites. The spectrum was well fitted into two peaks, and the peak obtained at lower binding energy (528–530 eV) is ascribed to surface lattice oxygen species (O^{2-}), and that of higher binding energy (530.5–532.5 eV) belongs to surface adsorbed oxygen species (O_2^- , O_2^- & O^-) which is due to the presence of carbonate/hydroxyl groups or adsorbed water molecule [66, 67].

The amount of lattice and adsorbed oxygen species are obtained by calculating the ratio of individual oxygen species to the total oxygen species and are tabulated in Table 2. The surface adsorbed oxygen species were found to be high for LSCF and LSCM perovskites than compared to BSCF. From Table 2, it can also be seen that the amount of lattice oxygen ($O_{lattice}/O_{total}$) is high for BSCF perovskites. From the work carried out by Urasaki et al. [68], Ming et al. [69], Chen et al. [70] and Grimaudet al. [71], it was reported that the surface lattice oxygen also favours the catalytic activity. However, the catalytic stability and activity are associated closely with the transfer of bulk lattice oxygen to fill the surface lattice oxygen also [70]. Apart from that, the involvement of lattice oxygen species in the oxidation reactions is more versatile than gaseous oxygen as it decreases the vacancy formation energy and eases diffusion in the material [72].

3.2 Soot Oxidation Activity Studies

Figure 5 shows the soot oxidation conversion obtained for BSCF, LSCF and LSCM perovskite materials with an increase in the temperature at a heating rate of 10 K/min. Sigmoidal-shaped curves were obtained and BSCF material showed a better T_{50} temperature (734 K) than compared to LSCM (747 K) and LSCF (773 K) materials. When compared to ceria-based catalysts [73–75], the soot oxidation activity of the SOC perovskites is less and it can be due to high calcination temperature of perovskites. Nevertheless, efforts have to be made to decrease the heat treatment temperature at which these SOC perovskite structures are formed. When compared to single redox oxides (CeO_2 , SnO_2 , Pr_6O_{11} and Mn_3O_4) and non-redox oxides (Gd_2O_3 , La_2O_3 , ZrO_2 , and HfO_2), the BSCF perovskite showed better T_{50} (734 K) [76]. Figure 6 demonstrates the soot oxidation conversion obtained for BSCF (Fig. 6a), LSCF (Fig. 6b) and LSCM (Fig. 6c) materials with the increase in the temperature at various heating rates (5, 10, 15 and 20 K/min) and sigmoidal-shaped curves were obtained. Irrespective of the tested perovskite, material dependence of the soot conversion on the heating rate is noticed and soot conversion is shifted to higher temperatures with the increase of heating rates from 5 to 20 K/min. To further understand the phenomena and to obtain the activation energy for the perovskite materials, Ozawa plots at various soot conversions ($\alpha = 10$ to 90%) were obtained from Fig. 6 and depicted in Fig. 7. From Fig. 7, a family of straight and parallel lines is obtained for all the materials at the same degree of soot

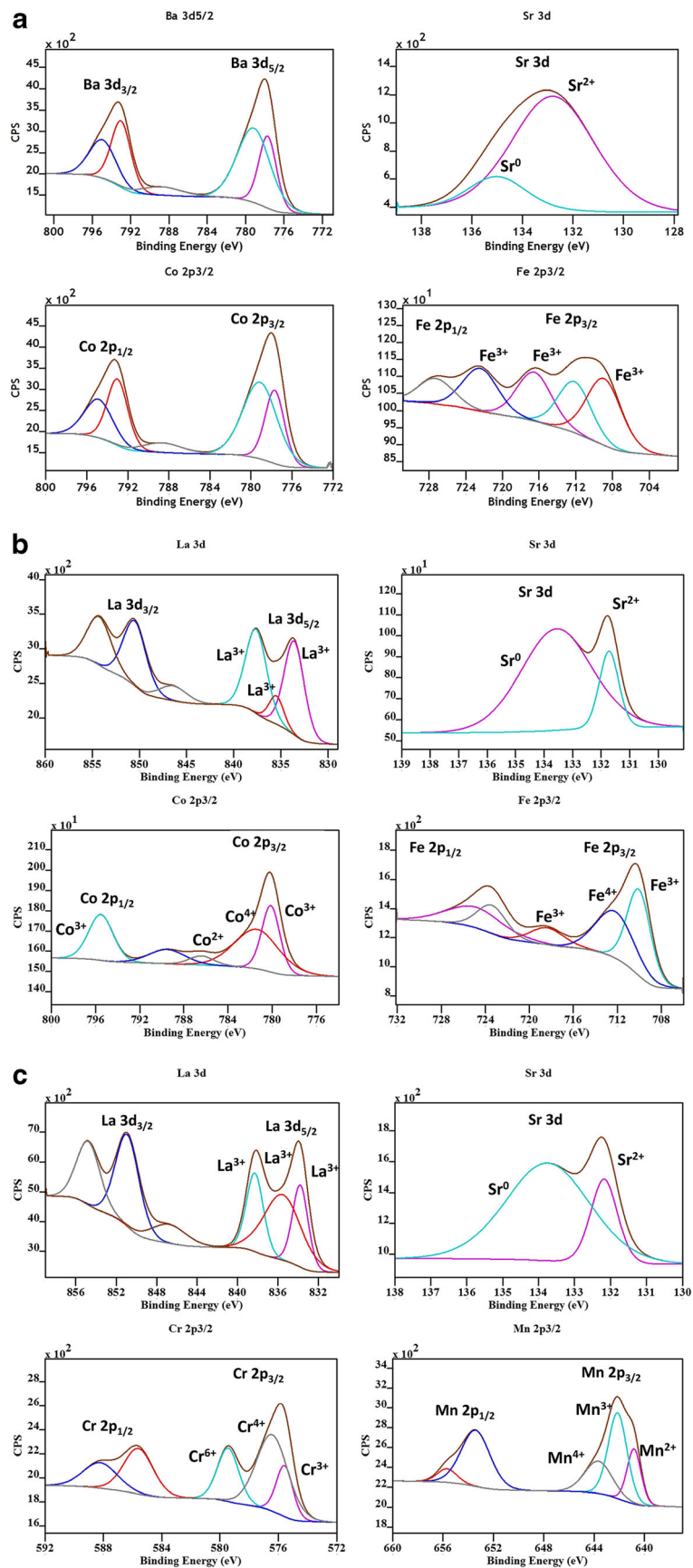
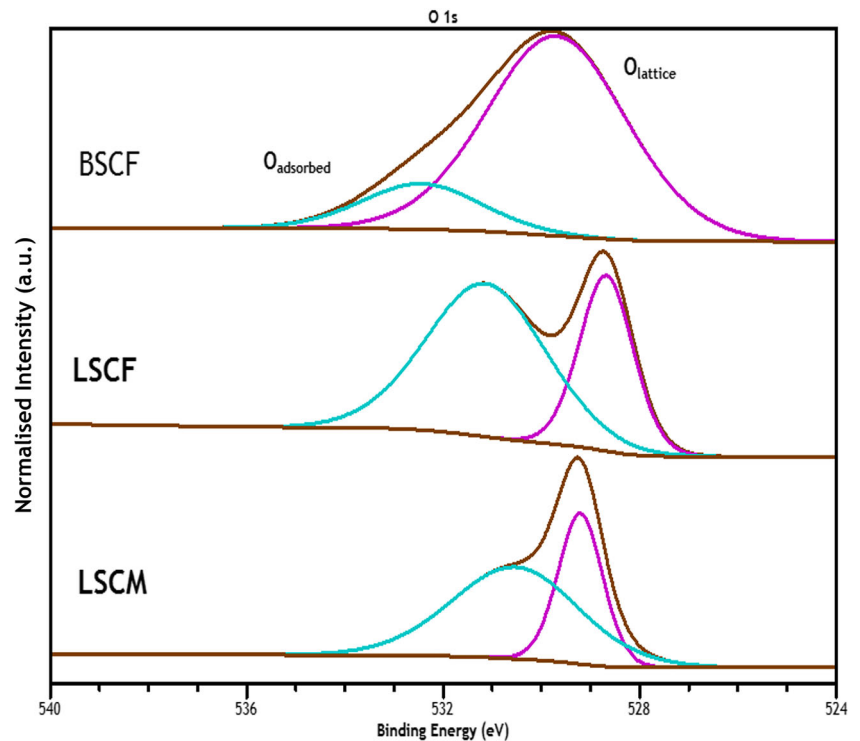


Fig. 3 XPS analysis of the BSCF (a), LSCF (b) and LSCM (c) perovskites with the corresponding metal oxidation states

Fig. 4 O 1s spectra of the BSCF, LSCF and LSCM perovskites



conversion and the activation energy for each conversion line can be obtained from its slope. Activation energy hardly varied with the extent of conversion for the perovskite materials indicating a single-step reaction. A mean value of 133 ± 11.5 kJ/mol, 138 ± 9.9 kJ/mol and 152 ± 7.2 kJ/mol is calculated and reported as apparent activation energy of the soot oxidation process for the BSCF, LSCM and LSCF perovskite materials respectively and is lower than the activation energy (168 kJ/mol) of uncatalyzed soot oxidation [77]. The presence of secondary phase (Fe_3O_4) in BSCF material could be one of the reasons for the better soot oxidation performance than compared to other perovskite materials. From XRD data (Fig. 1), it is evidenced that the BSCF material has Fe_3O_4 as a secondary phase. From the literature [78, 79], the temperature programmed reduction (TPR) profiles of bulk Fe_2O_3 , the reduction of Fe_3O_4 to Fe is noticed in the range of ~ 903 to 943 K. This indicates that the secondary phase (Fe_3O_4)

benefits the soot oxidation owing to presence of iron in mixed oxidation states ($\text{Fe}^{2+}/\text{Fe}^{3+}$) and promotes soot oxidation at lower temperatures in BSCF material than compared to other perovskite materials. The present study indicates the possibility of the application of SOC perovskite oxygen electrode materials as catalysts for soot oxidation in diesel particulate filters.

Wagloehner et al. [80, 81] have studied the transport of oxygen from iron oxide catalysts to the soot surface during soot oxidation. The contact points between soot and catalyst lead to generation of surface oxygen vacancies due to transfer of oxygen from the bulk of the catalyst to its surface, which was understood using isotopic TPO studies. This transfer of oxygen to soot leads to reduction of iron oxide to active iron species. The surface oxygen vacancies were replenished by either diffusion of bulk oxygen (movement through lattice vacancies) or gas phase oxygen and the bulk oxygen

Table 2 O 1s data of BSCF, LSCF and LSCM perovskite materials, calcined at 1373 K/5 h, obtained from XPS analysis

Sample	Secondary phase ^a (XRD)	B.E eV ($\text{O}_{\text{lattice}}$)	B.E eV ($\text{O}_{\text{adsorbed}}$)	$\text{O}_{\text{lattice}}/\text{O}_{\text{total}}$	$\text{O}_{\text{adsorbed}}/\text{O}_{\text{total}}$	T_{10} (K) ^b	T_{50} (K) ^b	T_{90} (K) ^b
BSCF	Fe_3O_4	529.7	532.4	0.83	0.16	652	734	780
LSCF	–	528.6	531.1	0.28	0.71	692	773	815
LSCM	–	529.2	530.5	0.36	0.63	682	747	774

^a From XRD data

^b From Fig. 5 data

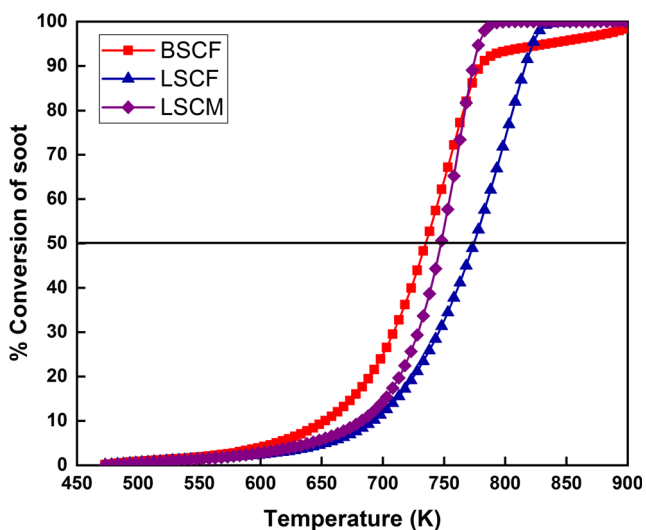


Fig. 5 Soot oxidation conversion of the BSCF, LSCF and LSCM perovskite materials with an increase of temperature at a heating rate of 10 K/min

replenished vacancies by relocation of surface oxygen to bulk. This might be a possible reaction mechanism, which clarifies the reason for lower soot oxidation temperature of BSCF, mainly due to the presence of Fe_3O_4 , which has higher amount of bulk/lattice oxygen as compared to LSCF and LSCM.

4 Conclusion

Microwave-assisted reverse-strike co-precipitation method is used for the synthesis of SOC perovskite oxygen electrode (BSCF, LSCF and LSCM) materials, and the calcined samples were characterized by XRD, SEM and XPS analysis and tested for soot oxidation activity. From XRD analysis, BSCF perovskite materials displayed a cubic structure along with a secondary phase formation of Fe_3O_4 , LSCM and LSCF perovskite materials showed a rhombohedral structure. The soot oxidation activity studies showed that BSCF sample showed better activity as compared to LSCM and LSCF samples. The mean activation energies for the soot oxidation process, calculated using Ozawa plots, are 133 ± 11.5 kJ/mol, 138 ± 9.9 kJ/mol and 152 ± 7.2 kJ/mol for BSCF, LSCM and LSCF samples respectively. Formation of secondary phase (Fe_3O_4) in BSCF sample promoted a positive effect on soot oxidation activity, due to lattice/bulk oxygen vacancy.

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Fig. 6 Soot oxidation conversion of BSCF (a), LSCF (b) and LSCM (c) perovskite materials with an increase of temperature at a heating rate of 5, 10, 15 and 20 K/min

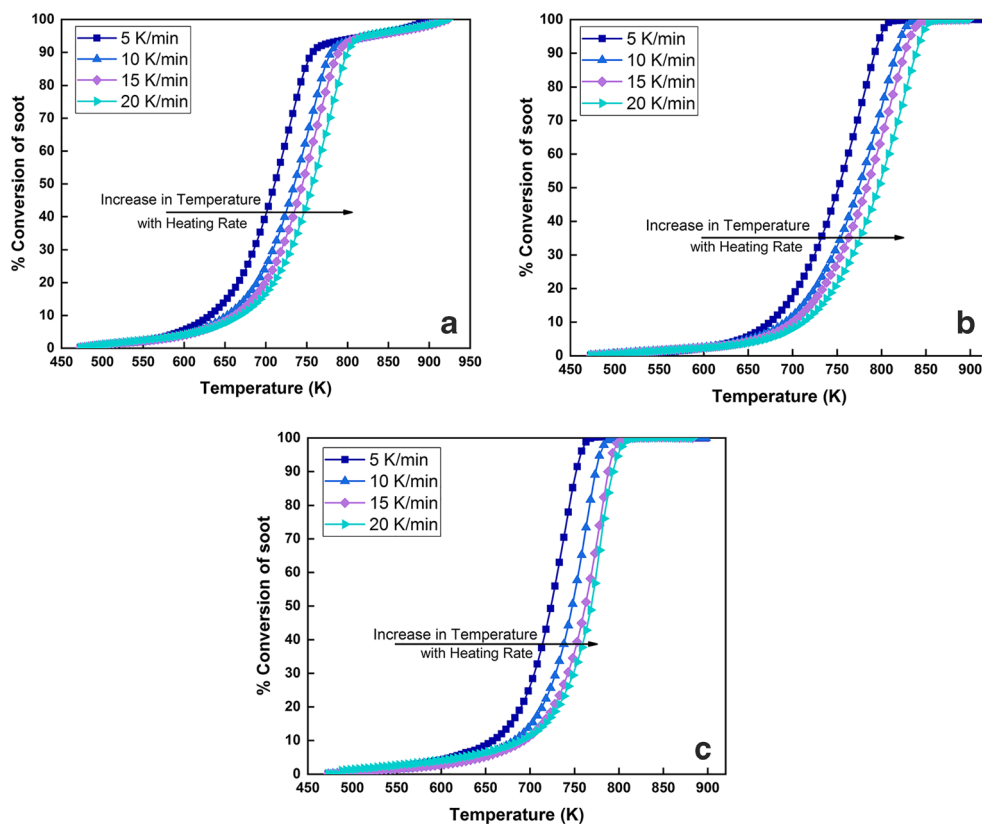
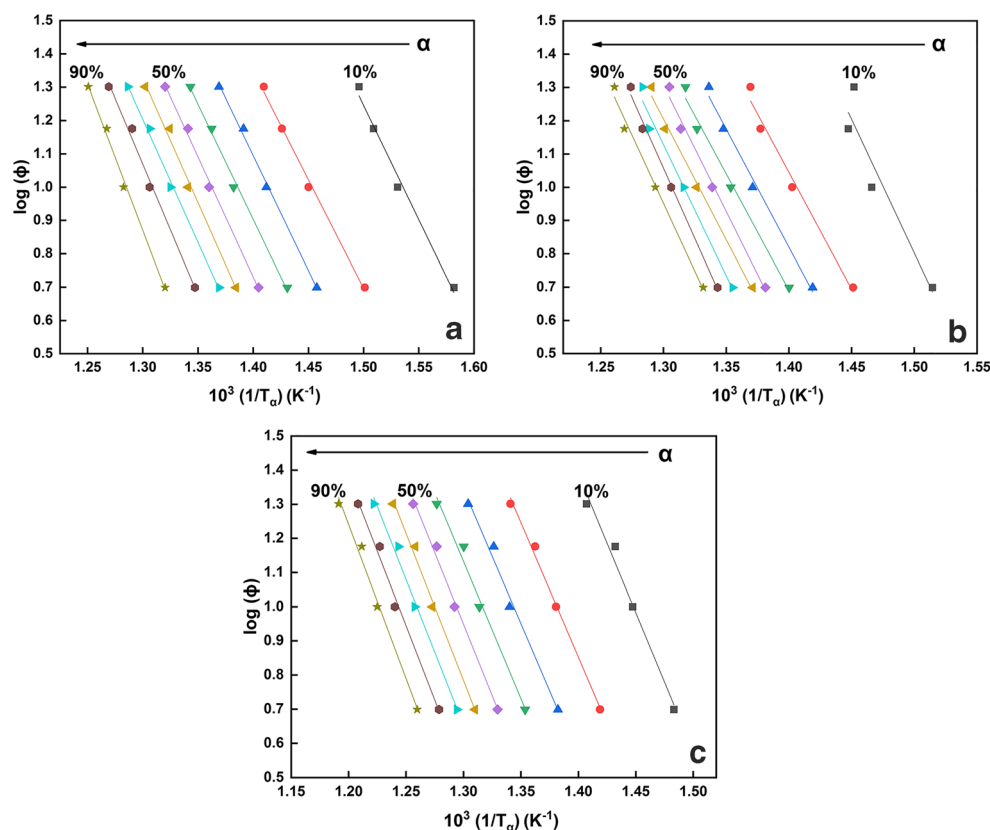


Fig. 7 Ozawa plots of BSCF (a), LSCF (b) and LSCM (c) perovskite materials obtained from Fig. 6 data



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Compliance with Ethical Standards

Competing Interests The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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