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A GLOBAL PINCHING THEOREM
FOR COMPACT MINIMAL SURFACES IN $S^3$

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(Communicated by Jonathan M. Rosenberg)

ABSTRACT. Let $M$ be a compact minimally immersed surface in the unit sphere $S^3$, and let $S$ denote the square of the length of the second fundamental form of $M$. We prove that if $\|S\|_2 < 2\sqrt{2\pi}$, then $M$ is either the equatorial sphere or the Clifford torus.

Let $M$ be a compact minimally immersed hypersurface in the unit sphere $S^{n+1}$. Denote by $S$ the square of the length of the second fundamental form of $M$. It is well known that if $0 < S < n$, then $M$ is either the equatorial sphere or a Clifford torus [1]. Recently, C. L. Shen [4, Theorem 2] proved that if $M$ is a compact embedded minimal surface of nonnegative Gauss curvature in the unit sphere $S^3$ with $\|S\|_2 < 1/(6912\sqrt{2\pi(g+1)})$, then $M$ is the equatorial sphere, where $g$ denotes the genus of $M$. The purpose of this note is to improve this theorem and obtain the best constant. The following is our main result:

Theorem. Let $M$ be a compact minimally immersed surface in the unit sphere $S^3$. Then $\|S\|_2 \geq 2\sqrt{2g\pi}$. The equality sign holds if and only if $M$ is either the equatorial sphere or the Clifford torus. In particular, if $\|S\|_2 \leq 2\sqrt{2\pi}$, then $M$ is either the equatorial sphere or the Clifford torus.

1. NOTATIONS AND AUXILIARY RESULTS

Let $M$ be a compact connected minimally immersed surface in the unit sphere $S^3$. Following the notations of [1], denote by $h = (h_{ij})$ the second fundamental form of $M$, and by $S$ the square of the length of $h$, $S = \sum h_{ij}^2$. We need the following auxiliary results.

Lemma 1 [1]. $\frac{1}{2} \Delta S = S(2 - S) + \sum h_{ijk}^2$, where $h_{ijk}$ denote the covariant derivatives of $h_{ij}$.
Lemma 2 [3]. The set of all zeros of $S$ is either the whole space $M$ or at most a finite set of points.

Lemma 3. $|\nabla S|^2 = 2S \sum h_{ijk}^2$.

From Lemmas 1 and 3, we see that if $S$ is constant, then either $S \equiv 0$ or $S \equiv 2$.

Lemma 4. If $g \geq 1$, then

$$\lim_{\epsilon \to 0} \sum_{i=1}^k \int_{\partial B\epsilon(p_i)} \frac{S_r}{S} = 16\pi(g - 1)$$

where $p_1, p_2, \ldots, p_k$ constitute all the zeros of $S$ and $S_r$ denotes the derivative of $S$ on $\partial B\epsilon(p_i)$ in the radial direction from $p_i$.

Proof. At the points where $S$ is positive, by Lemma 3, we get

$$(1) \quad \Delta \log S = 2(2 - S).$$

Integrating (1) over $M = M \setminus \bigcup_{i=1}^k B\epsilon(p_i)$, we get from the Gauss equation

$$(2) \quad 2K = 2 - S,$$

where $K$ is the Gauss curvature of $M$, the assertion by Stokes's theorem and the theorem of Gauss-Bonnet.

Lemma 5.

$$\int_M \sqrt{S/2} + \left(\frac{\pi}{4} - \sin^{-1}\sqrt{S/(2+S)}\right) \frac{2-S}{2} \geq (g+1)\pi^2.$$  

Proof. Regard $M$ as an immersed surface of $\mathbb{R}^4$. Then the total absolute curvature of $M$, in the sense of [2], is given by

$$\int_M \int_0^{2\pi} |(\sin \theta)^2 - \frac{S}{2}(\cos \theta)^2| \, d\theta \, dV$$

$$= \int_M 2\sqrt{2S} + \left(\pi - 4\sin^{-1}\sqrt{S/(2+S)}\right) \frac{2-S}{2}.$$

By a well-known inequality of Chern-Lashof [2], we have

$$\int_M \sqrt{S/2} + \left(\frac{\pi}{4} - \sin^{-1}\sqrt{S/(2+S)}\right) \frac{2-S}{2} \geq \frac{\pi^2}{2}(b_0 + b_1 + b_2),$$

where $b_i$ denotes the $i$th Betti number relative to the real field, for $i = 0, 1, 2$. Since $M$ is of two-dimensional, $b_0 = 1, b_1 = 2g$, and $b_2 = 1$. □
2. Proof of Theorem

We may assume that $S$ is positive except possibly at a finite set of points (Lemma 2). By using (1) and Lemmas 3 and 4, we get

$$\int_M 1 + \frac{1}{4} h_{ijk}^2 - \sqrt{\frac{S}{2}} - \left( \frac{\pi}{4} - \sin^{-1} \sqrt{\frac{S}{2 + S}} \right) \frac{2 - S}{2}$$

$$= \int_M \left[ \frac{1}{\sqrt{2(\sqrt{2} + \sqrt{S})}} - \frac{1}{2} \left( \frac{\pi}{4} - \sin^{-1} \sqrt{\frac{S}{2 + S}} \right) \right] (2 - S) + \frac{1}{4} h_{ijk}^2$$

$$= \lim_{\epsilon \to 0} \int_{M_0} \frac{1}{2} \left[ \frac{1}{\sqrt{2(\sqrt{2} + \sqrt{S})}} - \frac{1}{2} \left( \frac{\pi}{4} - \sin^{-1} \sqrt{\frac{S}{2 + S}} \right) \right] \|\nabla S\|^2 + \frac{|\nabla S|^2}{8S}$$

$$= \lim_{\epsilon \to 0} \int_{\partial M_0} \frac{1}{2} \left[ \frac{1}{\sqrt{2(\sqrt{2} + \sqrt{S})}} - \frac{1}{2} \left( \frac{\pi}{4} - \sin^{-1} \sqrt{\frac{S}{2 + S}} \right) \right] \frac{|\nabla S|^2}{2S}$$

$$= -(4 - \pi)\pi(g - 1) + \int_M \left( \frac{1}{4} - \frac{1}{(2 + S)(\sqrt{2} + \sqrt{S})} \right) h_{ijk}^2$$

$$\geq -(4 - \pi)\pi(g - 1),$$

where the equality sign holds if and only if $S$ is constant. According to Lemma 5, we get

$$A + \frac{1}{4} \int_M h_{ijk}^2 \geq -(4 - \pi)\pi(g - 1) + \int_M \sqrt{\frac{S}{2}} + \left( \frac{\pi}{4} - \sin^{-1} \sqrt{\frac{S}{2 + S}} \right) \frac{2 - S}{2}$$

$$\geq 2g\pi^2 - 4\pi(g - 1),$$

where $A$ denotes the area of $M$. By combining (2) with the inequality (3), it follows that

$$\int_M 2S + h_{ijk}^2 = 4A + 16\pi(g - 1) + \int_M h_{ijk}^2 \geq 8g\pi^2.$$

The desired inequality now follows from Lemma 1.

References


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