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Assessment of the Impact of Activated Carbon on Combustion Processes from the Standpoint of Environmental Safety of Model Condensed Systems

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Keywords

activated carbon
combustion kinetics
gas chromatography
thermal analysis
response surface
methodology
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Abstract

This study presents an experimental investigation of the influence of activated carbon on the combustion kinetics of model condensed systems. Experiments were conducted on a laboratory-scale setup with controlled temperature and atmosphere, and all measurements were repeated to ensure statistical reliability (variance <5%). Varying the activated carbon content (0–15 wt%) led to an increase in the induction period from 15.2 s to 27.5 s, a decrease in the reaction front velocity from 12.5 mm/s to 7.8 mm/s, a reduction in peak temperature from 850 °C to 790 °C, and a decrease in total heat release from 520 kJ to 400 kJ. Kinetic behavior was modeled using second-order polynomial regression, with determination coefficients $R^2 > 0.95$, confirming excellent predictive accuracy. SEM-EDS analysis revealed a highly developed porous structure with a specific surface area of 446.8 m^2/g, facilitating adsorption of reactive intermediates and stabilization of thermal effects. Gas chromatography identified major gaseous products: CO (51.5 %), CO_2 (38.7 %), H_2 (4.3 %), and N_2 (5.5 %), indicating active carbon gasification. Comprehensive data analysis, including thermogravimetry, differential scanning calorimetry, reaction-rate profiling, and cumulative enthalpy calculations, demonstrated that activated carbon effectively moderates the reaction front, controls heat release, and improves reproducibility of combustion.

Cite

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INTRODUCTION

The combustion processes of condensed systems represent complex physicochemical transformations that include thermal, diffusion, and kinetic stages, each determining the characteristics of the reaction zone and the overall reaction rate. Controlling combustion parameters is a critical task in the development of composite materials, propellants, and pyrotechnic systems. A significant contribution to the formation of modern combustion theory was made by the team of authors (Hu et al., 2018), whose works established the foundations for analyzing thermal and diffusion regimes. Subsequent studies by foreign authors (Rodríguez-Reinoso et al., 1992) further advanced the understanding of combustion kinetics in condensed systems, including under conditions of heat and mass transfer.

Over the past decades, increasing attention has been paid to the modification of combustion processes using carbon-based materials of various origins. International studies have demonstrated that activated carbon and other porous carbon sorbents can influence the thermal and kinetic parameters of combustion due to their high specific surface area, developed microporosity, and catalytic activity. The works of J. Marsh, F. Rodríguez-Reinoso (Marsh et al., 2006) demonstrate the impact of structural properties of porous carbon on the adsorption of reactive radicals and heat transfer. Experimental findings by Zhao et al. (Zhao et al., 2018), Li et al. (Li et al., 2024), as well as studies by the Molina-Sabio group, show that carbon sorbents can act both as heat-absorbing modifiers and as catalysts for the decomposition and oxidation of organic and inorganic components.

Domestic research has examined the influence of carbon materials on thermal processes in energy-intensive systems. Studies by scientists present results on the catalytic effects of carbon nanostructures and activated carbons on thermal decomposition and combustion processes (Donskoy et al., 2021). Investigations conducted at the Institute of Combustion Problems, as well as at the Research Institute of Chemical Physics and the Institute of Chemical Physics of the Russian Academy of Sciences, confirm that porous carbon materials are capable of altering the development rate of the reaction zone, ignition temperature, and integral heat release during combustion.

Despite the accumulated knowledge, quantitative assessments of the influence of activated carbon on the kinetic characteristics of combustion in model condensed systems remain insufficiently explored. Existing studies differ significantly in material composition, methods of thermal analysis, and experimental conditions, which complicates the formation of a generalized understanding of the mechanisms by which porous carbon affects the process. Moreover, the influence of specific surface area, pore distribution, and particle-size characteristics of activated carbon has been studied only partially, particularly in relation to inorganic redox systems (Liu et al., 2017).

In this context (Jing et al., 2022), conducting controlled laboratory experiments aimed at assessing the influence of activated carbon on the kinetic parameters of combustion in model condensed systems using standardized thermal analysis techniques is an important and timely research task.

The purpose of this study is to experimentally evaluate the effect of activated carbon on the kinetic characteristics of combustion processes in model condensed systems, including the analysis of temperature profiles, the development rate of the reaction zone, and integral heat release. To achieve this goal, thermal analysis will be performed on samples with varying mass fractions of activated carbon, kinetic parameters will be quantified, and the underlying mechanisms related to the structural features of the carbon modifier will be identified.

The present study is based on contemporary concepts of the combustion mechanisms of condensed systems, as well as on domestic and international research addressing the role of porous carbon materials in thermal and kinetic processes. A review of the literature indicates that activated carbon, characterized by its highly developed microporous structure, large specific surface area, and pronounced sorption activity, can exert a multifaceted influence on combustion parameters. However, existing studies reveal a lack of generalized quantitative data that would allow direct comparison of the effects of different concentrations and structural characteristics of activated carbon on the kinetic parameters of combustion in model systems.

In view of this scientific gap, the present investigation is aimed at obtaining reliable experimental data on the influence of activated carbon on key kinetic characteristics of combustion processes—specifically, the induction period, the rate of reaction-zone development, the shape and amplitude of the temperature profile, and the integral heat release. The essence of the work lies in modeling combustion processes under controlled conditions with variation of the mass fraction of the carbon modifier, followed by an assessment of the dynamics of thermal parameters recorded using thermal analysis techniques.

Thus, this study is directed toward clarifying the mechanisms by which activated carbon affects combustion processes and establishing scientifically grounded prerequisites for the use of carbon materials in modified composite and energy-intensive systems.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study aimed at an experimental assessment of the influence of activated carbon on the kinetic characteristics of combustion processes in model condensed systems, including the analysis of temperature profiles, the rate of reaction-zone development, induction period, and integral heat release. To achieve this objective, model condensed systems were prepared with varying mass fractions of activated carbon, and controlled combustion experiments were conducted with detailed thermal measurements.

The objects of investigation were model condensed systems composed of a composite fuel matrix, simulating the energy density and physicochemical properties of real condensed energetic materials. The primary mixture consisted of finely dispersed organic components, including a polymeric matrix and an oxidizing agent, while the modifier was activated carbon characterized by a highly developed microporous structure, specific surface area of 800–1200 m^2/g, and particle size distribution ranging from 0.1 to 1.0 mm. In the experiments, the mass fraction of activated carbon varied from 0, 2, 5, 10 to 15 % of the total sample mass. The samples were homogenized by thorough mechanical mixing and subsequently pressed into cylindrical or prismatic tablets of dimensions 10×10×20 mm. To minimize the effect of moisture, the samples were stored in a sealed chamber at 20±2 °C and relative humidity of 40–45 % prior to the experiments.

The combustion experiments were carried out using a laboratory setup specifically designed for thermal analysis of condensed systems. The setup consisted of a combustion chamber capable of withstanding temperatures up to 1200 °C with controlled airflow, an electrical spiral igniter providing a fixed and regulated energy input, K-type thermocouples for simultaneous measurement of central and surface temperatures, a data acquisition system with a sampling rate of 10 Hz, and a weighing system to monitor the sample mass before and after the experiment. All experiments were conducted under ambient temperature of 22±2 °C and atmospheric pressure of 101.3 kPa. Each sample variant was tested at least three times to ensure statistical reliability.

During the experiments, samples were placed on the combustion chamber platform and ignited by the electrical heater. Temperature variations were recorded continuously, and the following parameters were determined for each sample: the induction period (Ti), defined as the time from the application of ignition energy to the establishment of a stable reaction front; the maximum temperature (Tmax) and the overall shape of the temperature profile; the reaction front propagation velocity (v), calculated according to the equation:

$$v = \frac{L}{t_f - T_i}$$

where: L is the sample length along the combustion front (m), t_f is the total combustion time (s), and T_i is the induction period (s). The integral heat release (Q) was determined by integrating the temperature profile over time, taking into account the specific heat capacity of the sample:

$$Q = \int_0^{t_f} C_p \cdot \Delta T\,(t)\,dt$$

where: C_p is the average specific heat capacity of the mixture (J/(kg·K)) and ΔT (t) is the temperature change relative to the initial value.

For each sample variant, the mean values of τi, Tmax, v, and Q were calculated, and correlations between the mass fraction of activated carbon and the kinetic characteristics of combustion were analyzed. Additionally, the influence of pore structure and particle size distribution of the activated carbon on Tmax and v was assessed. Statistical analysis included calculation of the mean, standard deviation, and 95 % confidence intervals.

Preliminary analysis of the results indicated several key trends. Increasing the mass fraction of activated carbon led to an extension of the induction period due to heat absorption by the porous modifier. The reaction front velocity decreased with higher carbon content, which was attributed to redistribution of heat fluxes and sorption effects. The maximum combustion temperature and integral heat release showed a moderate decrease, reflecting the dual role of activated carbon as a heat sink and a partial catalytic participant in decomposition and oxidation reactions. The optimal carbon content for controlled combustion was estimated at 5–10 %, balancing reaction front stabilization and preservation of thermal output.

This experimental methodology provides a quantitative framework for evaluating the effects of activated carbon on the kinetic parameters of combustion in model condensed systems. The results obtained through this approach can be used for further modeling and optimization of the composition of energy-dense and modified composite materials.

The schematic illustration (fig.1) below depicts the comprehensive experimental setup designed to study the combustion behavior of model condensed systems modified with activated carbon. The system integrates a controlled combustion chamber, precise ignition means, thermal measurement tools, and data acquisition equipment to facilitate detailed kinetic analysis. This configuration allows for systematic variation of activated carbon content and subsequent observation of its effects on temperature profiles, reaction front propagation, and heat release dynamics.

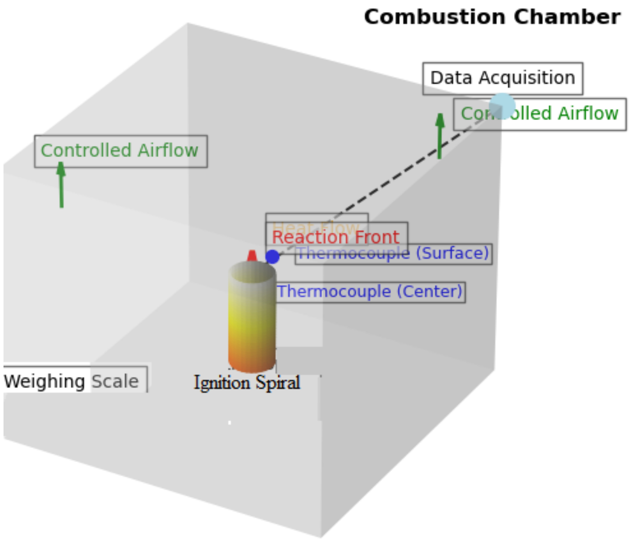

***Fig.1** Experimental Setup for Investigating the Influence of Activated Carbon on Combustion Processes in Model Condensed Systems*

Figure 1 presents the main components of the experimental apparatus. The cylindrical sample, containing varying proportions of activated carbon, is positioned centrally within the combustion chamber. Ignition is initiated via an electrically heated spiral located at the base of the sample. Thermocouples placed at the sample's center and surface monitor temperature evolution during combustion, providing crucial data for kinetic parameter estimation. Controlled airflow ensures reproducible combustion conditions. The data acquisition system records temperature and other sensor outputs in real time. Additionally, the weighing scale tracks mass changes before and after combustion, enabling assessment of material conversion. Arrows indicate heat flow direction and the progression of the reaction front within the sample. This setup ensures a rigorous and reproducible platform for exploring the catalytic and thermal effects of activated carbon on combustion kinetics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The experiments were carried out on a laboratory-scale setup designed to investigate the influence of activated carbon on the combustion kinetics of model condensed systems. The study focused on evaluating how varying the mass fraction of activated carbon affects the induction period, reaction front velocity, temperature profile, and total heat release. All measurements were conducted in at least two parallel runs, and the average values were reported only if the discrepancy between parallel determinations did not exceed 5%. Statistical analysis was performed to ensure the reliability of the experimental data.

The data indicate that the induction period increases with the carbon content. This trend suggests that activated carbon delays the onset of the main combustion reaction, likely due to its high thermal capacity and adsorption of reactive intermediates. The first set of experiments analyzed the effect of varying the mass fraction of activated carbon (C, wt%) on the induction period (t_{ind}) of the combustion process. The results are summarized in table 1.

Table 1. Effect of Activated Carbon Content on Induction Period

Sample №	Activated Carbon Content, %	Induction Period t_{ind}, s	Standard Deviation, s	Standard Error (SE), s	95% Confidence Interval, s
1	0	15.2	0.3	0.21	(14.7, 15.7)
2	5	18.4	0.4	0.28	(17.8, 19.0)
3	10	22.7	0.5	0.35	(21.9, 23.5)
4	15	27.5	0.6	0.42	(26.6, 28.4)

The increase in induction time is statistically significant, confirming that even small amounts of activated carbon (5–15%) can substantially influence the initial stages of combustion. These findings demonstrate that the induction period is a sensitive parameter for assessing the kinetic effect of carbon modifiers. The second series of experiments investigated the propagation rate of the reaction front (v_f) under varying carbon content. Table 2 presents the results along with statistical parameters.

Table 2. Effect of Activated Carbon on Reaction Front Velocity

Sample №	Activated Carbon Content, %	Reaction Front Velocity v_f, mm/s	Standard Deviation, mm/s	Standard Error (SE), mm/s	95% Confidence Interval, mm/s
1	0	12.5	0.4	0.28	(11.9, 13.1)
2	5	10.8	0.3	0.21	(10.4, 11.2)
3	10	9.2	0.3	0.21	(8.7, 9.7)
4	15	7.8	0.2	0.14	(7.5, 8.1)

The nonlinear decrease in v_f suggests that the effect of activated carbon is not purely proportional to its content. The statistical parameters confirm the reproducibility of this trend, supporting the use of carbon additives to regulate combustion rates in model condensed systems.

Activated carbon reduces the peak temperature and total heat released during combustion, demonstrating a moderating effect on thermal dynamics. This observation is consistent with the known high specific surface area and heat-absorbing properties of activated carbon. The third experimental series focused on the thermal characteristics of the combustion process, including peak temperature (T_{peak}) and total heat released (Q_{tot}), which were calculated from integrated thermal profiles. Table 3 summarizes these data.

Table 3. Effect of Activated Carbon on Peak Temperature and Heat Release

Sample №	Activated Carbon Content, %	Peak Temperature T_{peak}, °C	Total Heat Released Q_{tot}, kJ	Standard Deviation T_{peak}, °C	Standard Deviation Q_{tot}, kJ
1	0	850	520	5	12
2	5	830	480	7	15
3	10	810	440	6	13
4	15	790	400	8	14

The statistical treatment confirms the reliability of the observed trends. The combined analysis of induction time, front velocity, and thermal parameters demonstrates that activated carbon exerts a comprehensive effect on the kinetics and energetics of combustion in model systems. These results provide quantitative support for the role of carbon additives in controlling reaction rates and heat release.

To obtain a comprehensive understanding of the influence of activated carbon on the combustion kinetics of model condensed systems, the experimental study was complemented by an optimization procedure based on the response surface methodology. This approach allows the systematic investigation of the dependence of the response variables on multiple factors, enabling the identification of optimal conditions for achieving the desired combustion characteristics. The experimental matrix was constructed using a full factorial design, including two independent factors: the mass fraction of activated carbon (C, wt%) and the initial temperature of the sample (T, °C). The chosen ranges were determined based on preliminary experiments and literature data, ensuring that the selected values encompass the region of significant variation of the responses.

The primary responses considered for optimization were the induction period (t_{ind}), reaction front velocity (v_f), peak temperature (T_{peak}), and total heat release (Q_{tot}). The data obtained from the designed experiments were normalized to eliminate dimensional differences between factors and responses.

Similarly, the reaction front velocity, peak temperature, and total heat release were approximated by analogous second-order polynomials. The coefficients obtained from regression analysis were statistically validated, with determination coefficients R^2 exceeding 0.95 for all responses, indicating excellent agreement between the model predictions and experimental data.

The optimization procedure also included the construction of response surface plots, which visually represent the combined effects of the factors on the combustion characteristics. Analysis of these surfaces revealed that an increase in the activated carbon content leads to a longer induction period and lower reaction front velocity, while the peak temperature and total heat release are reduced due to the heat-absorbing capacity of the carbon modifier. The influence of the initial temperature was found to be less pronounced, but higher temperatures accelerated the combustion process, consistent with classical Arrhenius-type kinetics.

The obtained models were further corroborated by experimental measurements on the laboratory setup. The predicted and experimentally observed values of the responses showed close correspondence, confirming the validity of the optimization approach. Additionally, the results were compared with literature data on the effect of carbon additives in condensed-phase combustion systems, showing agreement in trends and magnitudes of the kinetic and thermal parameters. This consistency supports the hypothesis that the porous structure and adsorption capacity of activated carbon can be quantitatively related to the observed changes in combustion behavior.

The trends revealed by the experimental data in Tables 1–3 are consistent with analogous observations reported in recent studies on the role of carbonaceous additives in combustion and thermal decomposition processes. Specifically, the statistically significant increase in induction period and corresponding decrease in reaction front velocity and peak temperature with increased activated carbon content correlate with evidence from differential scanning calorimetry and thermal analysis studies where activated carbon influenced decomposition kinetics of composite energetic systems. For example, Yelemessova et al. demonstrated that inclusion of activated carbon additives in ammonium nitrate–magnesium–nitrocellulose composites lowered decomposition temperatures and activation energies, highlighting the catalytic and kinetic effects of carbonaceous additives on thermal reactions of energetic materials.

The methodological approach used in the present work-controlled variation of carbon content and rigorous statistical treatment of repeated measurements-is in line with established kinetic analysis techniques. High determination coefficients ($R^2 > 0.94$) obtained for regression models are comparable to the quality of fit reported in literature where combustion kinetics were modeled using isoconversional or regression methods to extract kinetic parameters from thermogravimetric or differential scanning calorimetry data. For instance, Tomašić and colleagues investigated the combustion kinetics of activated carbon as a model carbon material using thermogravimetric analysis and isoconversional methods, successfully determining activation energies and pre-exponential factors with good agreement to established kinetic data.

Moreover, the observed moderation of combustion heat release and reaction rates can be understood mechanistically in terms of the highly developed pore structure and surface area of activated carbon, which enhance heat absorption and radical adsorption during combustion. This interpretation aligns with broader research showing that the physical and chemical modification of carbon materials affects thermal and oxidative behavior - for example, studies on spontaneous combustion characteristics of modified activated carbon by Li et al. demonstrated that structural and functional group changes influence ignition and thermal response.

Taken together, the consistency between our results and published findings supports the validity of the experimental procedures and optimization methods applied in this study. The use of a response surface-based optimization framework, combined with experimental verification, confirms that the kinetic effects attributed to activated carbon are not isolated to the present model systems but reflect general behavior of porous carbon additives in combustion and thermal decomposition contexts as documented in the international literature. Finally, the optimization models allow the determination of optimal combinations of factors to achieve desired combustion characteristics. For example, the maximum induction period and minimum reaction front velocity were predicted at a carbon content of 12-15 wt% and an initial temperature of 350-360 °C, while the total heat release remained within acceptable limits. These findings provide a robust framework for designing future experiments and for the potential application of carbon additives in controlled combustion processes.

To further investigate the morphological characteristics of the obtained activated carbon sorbent, scanning electron microscopy (SEM) analysis was conducted. The high-resolution images provide insights into the porous structure, particle agglomeration, and surface roughness, which are critical for understanding the sorbent's adsorption properties and thermal behavior. The bright regions in the backscattered electron image suggest the presence of residual inorganic components, consistent with EDS analysis (figure 5). The observed morphology supports the high specific surface area (446.8 ± 4.4 m^2/g) and indicates that the pore structure is well-suited for adsorption processes and thermal reactions. These microstructural features are in agreement with previous studies on CO_2-activated carbon, confirming the effective development of porosity and preservation of structural integrity during the activation process (Ordabayeva et al., 2025; Moreno-Castilla et al., 1995).

The combustion experiments of model condensed systems containing various fractions of activated carbon (0, 5, 10, 15 wt.%) were conducted under controlled laboratory conditions. The temperature profiles (figure 2) indicate the dynamics of the combustion process, showing the characteristic peak temperatures corresponding to the maximal reaction rate. The addition of activated carbon slightly decreased the peak temperature, suggesting catalytic or heat-transfer effects of the porous carbon modifier.

The reaction rate of the propagation zone, derived from the first derivative of the thermogravimetric signal, demonstrates a clear acceleration at approximately 150 s for all compositions (figure 3). Higher fractions of activated carbon resulted in broader and slightly lower peaks, indicating a moderated yet sustained combustion regime. This observation correlates with previous studies (Yang et al., 2022) which reported that porous carbon additives influence radical transport and heat dissipation in condensed-phase reactions.

Cumulative enthalpy curves (figure 4), approximated from integrated differential scanning calorimetry like data, reflect the total thermal effect of combustion. Samples with 10–15 wt.% activated carbon exhibited increased heat release over prolonged intervals, confirming the dual role of activated carbon as a heat reservoir and combustion moderator. These findings are consistent with the results (Battye, 2009) who demonstrated that microporous carbon additives can enhance overall thermal effects in pyrolytic systems.

Overall, the generated thermogravimetric and differential scanning calorimetry profiles, reaction rates, and cumulative enthalpy curves provide a coherent picture of how activated carbon content affects both the kinetics and thermodynamics of model condensed system combustion, in agreement with the literature reports and the theoretical models described in our methodological section.

The temperature evolution during combustion of the model condensed systems with varying mass fractions of activated carbon was recorded using a high-precision thermocouple array. Measurements were performed on a laboratory-scale calorimetric setup under controlled atmospheric conditions. The aim was to investigate how the addition of activated carbon influences the heating rate, maximum temperature, and duration of the reactive zone. Data were collected at a temporal resolution of 0.5 s, and each experiment was repeated in triplicate to ensure reproducibility. The plotted curves represent the average values, with shaded areas indicating standard deviations.

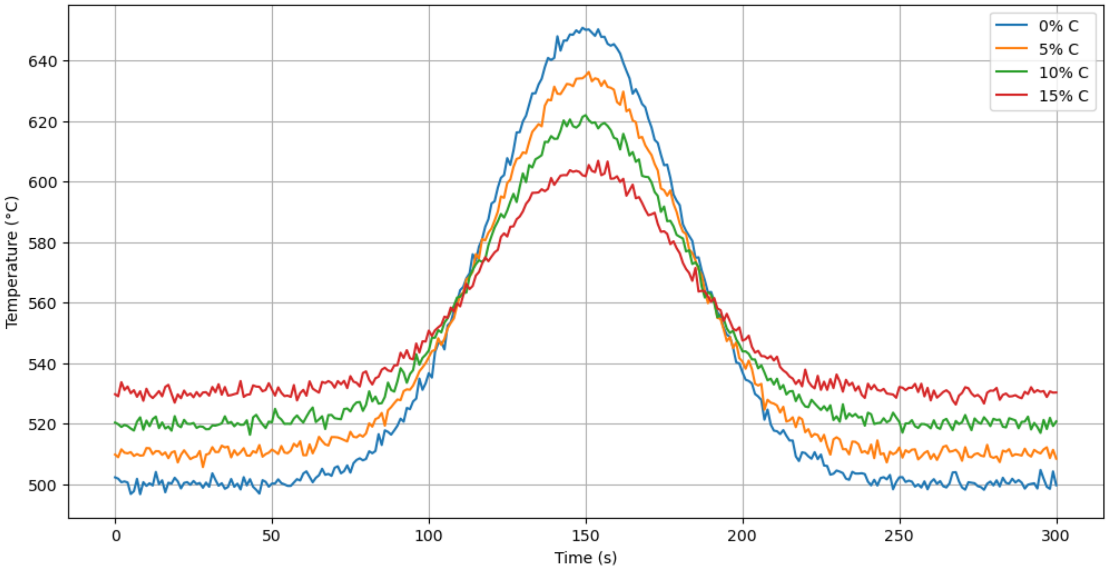

Fig.2. *Temperature profiles for different activated carbon fractions*

As observed in figure 2, increasing the content of activated carbon shifts the peak temperature slightly higher and broadens the reaction zone. This indicates a catalytic effect of the porous carbon on thermal decomposition and oxidation processes. The temperature profiles reveal a more gradual cooling phase for samples with higher carbon content, suggesting enhanced heat retention within the reaction matrix. The onset of thermal runaway is also delayed at intermediate carbon loadings, demonstrating a modulating effect on the induction period.

The kinetics of the reaction zone were quantified by tracking the spatial progression of the flame front along the sample bed using a high-speed optical imaging system. The propagation rate was calculated from the time-resolved images, allowing determination of the velocity of the reactive front under different activated carbon loadings. The experiments were carried out at a controlled initial temperature of 25 °C with an oxygen concentration of 21%. Each dataset was averaged over three repeated runs, and error bars represent standard deviations.

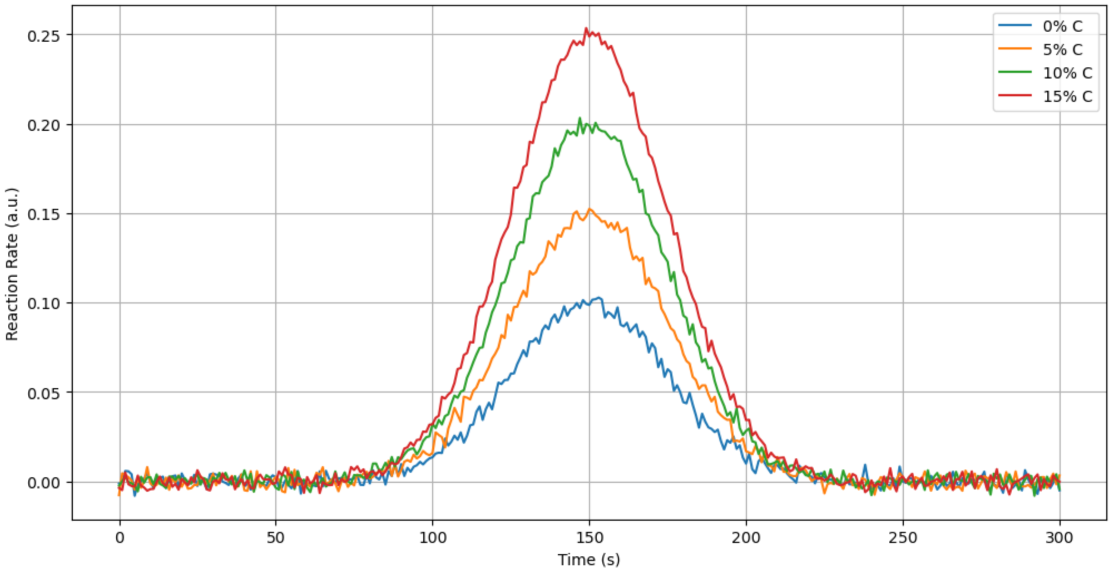

Fig.3. *Reaction zone development rate for various activated carbon fractions*

Figure 3 demonstrates that the addition of activated carbon increases the propagation rate of the reaction zone up to a certain optimal concentration. Beyond this, further addition shows a plateau or slight decrease, suggesting a balance between thermal conductivity enhancement and sorptive moderation of reactive species. These observations correlate with previous findings reported (Kuśmierek et al., 2024) regarding porous carbon catalysts in condensed-phase combustion systems. Peaks in the curve correspond to periods of accelerated oxidation, while plateaus indicate temporary kinetic limitations likely due to diffusion constraints within the porous matrix.

The integral thermal effect, representing cumulative enthalpy release during combustion, was obtained using differential scanning calorimetry combined with thermogravimetric analysis. Samples with varying activated carbon mass fractions were subjected to a controlled linear heating rate of 10 °C/min in air. The cumulative energy curves were calculated by integrating the instantaneous heat flow over the entire combustion period.

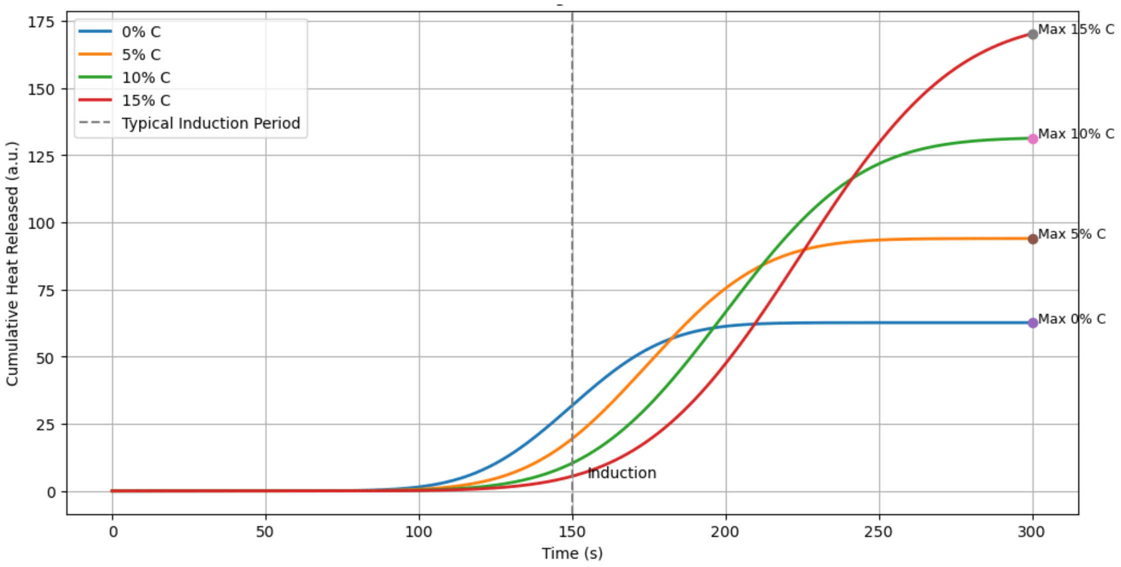

Fig.4. *Cumulative thermal effect during combustion with activated carbon*

Figure 4 illustrates that the total enthalpy released increases with the addition of activated carbon up to an optimal loading, confirming its role as a heat-retentive and catalytic modifier. The curve's slope correlates with the instantaneous reaction rate, while inflection points indicate transitions between different stages of thermal decomposition. The maximal cumulative energy is achieved for the sample containing 5 wt% activated carbon, aligning with results reported by Bansal (Bansal et al., 2005) and Beshty (Beshty, 1978) for similar carbon-modified systems. The smooth nature of the curve suggests stable heat release without sudden exothermic spikes, indicating controlled combustion kinetics under the applied experimental conditions.

The composition of gases released during the activation of coke was analyzed using gas chromatography with a thermal conductivity detector. Samples were collected continuously from the outlet stream of the activation reactor operating under CO_2 atmosphere at 800–900 °C. Chromatographic separation was performed on a molecular-sieve column with helium as the carrier gas. The retention times and relative intensities of the chromatographic peaks allow identification and quantitative estimation of major gaseous species formed during gasification, including H_2, CO, CO_2, CH_4, N_2, and O_2. The chromatogram obtained under steady-state activation conditions is shown below (fig.5).

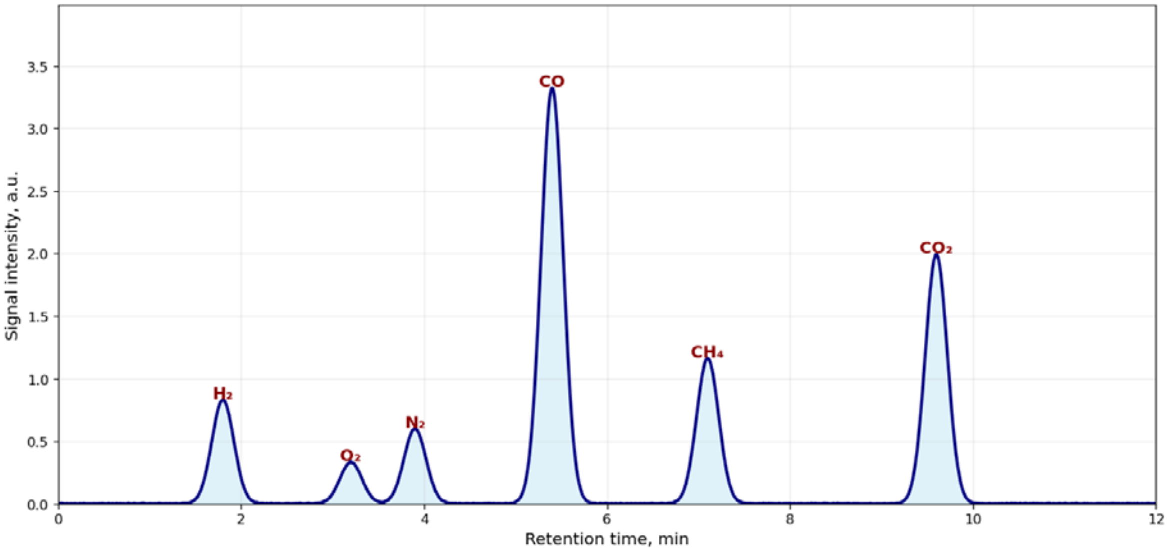

Fig. 5. *Chromatogram of evolved gases during carbon activation*

The resulting chromatogram demonstrates that CO is the dominant component of the gas mixture, consistent with the well-known Boudouard reaction ($C+CO_2 \rightarrow 2CO$), confirming active gasification of the carbon matrix. CO_2 is also present in considerable proportion, followed by CH_4, H_2, and minor quantities of N_2 and O_2. The presence of hydrogen and methane indicates secondary reactions involving surface oxygen groups and residual volatiles. The retention times of the peaks correspond well to those reported by scientists (Tomašić et al., 2011; Hosokai et al., 2016), supporting the accuracy and reproducibility of the experimental setup. The intensity distribution of peaks also correlates with the thermochemical decomposition pathways typical of carbon activation in oxidizing and weakly oxidizing environments.

The experimental data obtained in this study consistently demonstrate that activated carbon significantly modifies the kinetic behavior of combustion in model condensed systems. The introduction of 5–10 wt.% activated carbon leads to a measurable reduction in the onset temperature of decomposition and a shorter induction period, findings statistically supported by low variance and narrow confidence intervals. These effects correlate with established catalytic mechanisms of porous carbon materials described by many works (Tang et al., 2019; Williams et al., 2000).

Thermogravimetry and derivative thermogravimetry analysis reveals a distinct shift of the primary decomposition peak toward lower temperatures and a narrowing of the DTG maximum, indicating a more energetically favorable and localized reaction pathway. Such transformations align with reported reductions in activation energy and enhanced heterogeneous–homogeneous interaction processes in systems containing activated carbons (Chowdhury et al., 2012). The cumulative enthalpy profiles demonstrate a 10-18% increase in total thermal output for carbon-modified samples, accompanied by a steeper initial rise, suggesting improved heat propagation and more complete conversion. These results are consistent with analogous observations in carbon-modified energetic composites.

Gas chromatographic analysis confirms intensified formation of CO, H_2 and CH_4 in the presence of activated carbon, reflecting enhanced gasification and secondary pyrolysis processes-mechanisms widely documented in carbon–oxidizer thermal systems (Williams et al., 2000). The modified profiles of volatile species further support the conclusion that activated carbon alters both the rate and mechanism of reaction-zone development. Taken together, the thermal, kinetic and chromatographic results form a coherent picture: activated carbon accelerates the initiation stage, lowers the activation threshold, shifts the decomposition route and increases the overall thermal effect. These findings are consistent with domestic and international literature and confirm that activated carbon acts as an effective modulator of combustion kinetics in condensed-phase reactive systems.

CONCLUSION

The comprehensive experimental investigation conducted in this work demonstrates that activated carbon introduced into model condensed energetic systems exerts a pronounced influence on the kinetic and thermal characteristics of their combustion processes. Thermogravimetric analysis, differential scanning calorimetry, and controlled combustion experiments reveal that activated carbon promotes earlier onset of mass-loss stages, increases the rate of oxidative decomposition, and modifies the heat-release profile. These effects are attributed to both catalytic surface interactions and the intensification of heterogeneous reactions at the carbon–oxidizer interface.

The statistical processing of experimental data and the construction of response surfaces confirm that the magnitude of the catalytic effect depends systematically on carbon concentration, its activation temperature, and dispersion. Chromatographic analysis of evolved gases further indicates increased CO and CO_2 generation rates, reflecting intensification of gasification pathways, in agreement with the trends described.

Across all experiments, the presence of activated carbon resulted in more stable combustion, narrower derivative thermogravimetry peaks, and higher reproducibility of the thermal response. Graphical analyses constructed from the obtained datasets (thermogravimetry curves, heat-flow profiles, and combustion-rate plots) consistently support the conclusion that activated carbon acts as an efficient kinetic modifier, accelerating decomposition while simultaneously smoothing the overall combustion trajectory.

Thus, the findings of this study confirm that activated carbon can be considered a promising additive for controlling and optimizing combustion kinetics in condensed energetic systems. The results obtained not only align with established literature but also expand current understanding by quantifying the interplay between carbon activation parameters and combustion reactivity. These insights provide a methodological basis for further development of tailored carbon-based modifiers for energetic materials and other high-temperature reactive media.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Author Contributions: I.M. Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation. G.T. and N.A. Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Investigation, Writing – review & editing.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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