



## NoSQL Databases: Facebook Case study and Analysis

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**Abstract**— The current research explores and differentiate between various forms in which NoSQL databases exist. Now a days Facebook, Twitter using Nosql Databases. It examines the need of NoSQL and how they have become an important option to relational databases. NoSQL databases can be categorized into four major classifications which are: key value stores, graph databases, wide column stores, and document stores. These categories are compared on the basis of functional features and non-functional features. The non-functional features include performance, scalability, flexibility, structure and complexity. The functional features include denormalization, joins, atomicity, aggregation and keys. Then for further analysis, one database is selected from each of these categories that is, MongoDB (document stores), Cassandra (wide column stores), Redis (key value stores), and Neo4j (graph databases). Selected databases are compared on their data model, CAP theorem, distributive properties and other factors. By performing the comparison on non-functional features, it has been found that a document store can be used if high performance, flexibility and scalability are required and if we have represented the data in JSON format. Graph databases can be used when it comes to highly interconnected data and continuously evolving data models. The comparison between MongoDB, Cassandra, Redis and Neo4j concluded that all of them follow horizontal scaling and are schema free. Except Neo4j, others don't have complete ACID properties. Write and delete operations are fast for databases MongoDB, Redis and Cassandra, whereas read operation is comparatively slow in Cassandra. In case of Neo4j, REST performance is similar to MongoDB, whereas embedded is comparatively slow. We also discuss how these databases work in a distributed environment.

**Keywords**—database; NoSQL; comparison; database systems;

### I. INTRODUCTION

The recent advancements in distributed web applications and cloud computing have generated large volumes of data which cannot be managed by single nodes systems. Thus, distributed storage offers the solutions that provide high availability and scalability are needed. Examples of distributed (non-relational storage) are Dynamo by Amazon and Google's Big Table. Recently, Facebook has been causing a stir amongst those intresedt in online privacy.

#### A. Relational Database

Initially, every record was maintained manually, but the advent of technology has led to drastic changes over the years. To make maintaining data easier databases were created. A database varies from a simple text document to much more complex databases. These databases have to be refined periodically to remove any kind of redundant, inconsistent or

dirty data so as to perform effectively. The most common, well-known conception to store this data is through relational model. Structured Query Language (SQL) extracts relevant data from the pool of database.

#### B. Why NoSQL Databases are used?

The major challenge with the growing data is its non-uniformity. Due to this problem, in recent years, a non-relational database is needed to scale the growing need of industry and at the same time, must be highly efficient. This gave rise to NoSQL databases which are highly scalable, efficient and can store large amount of data.

Of course those of us who love social media believe the potential benefits far outweigh the hazards. Putting aside how much easier it makes keeping in touch with our friends and family, there's clearly a lot to be learned from studying the data generated during that communication. And gathering data from us is the foundation of Facebook's business model. Hence, to satisfy this non-uniformity of data a fresh thought was given to the storage of data, leading to the creation of NoSQL (Not only SQL) Databases.

#### C. Importance of NoSQL

NoSQL [16][39]databases are geared towards management of large, varied and continuously changing data sets. They are often used in distributed systems or cloud databases. In

NoSQL databases rigid schemes and many other limitations are avoided. They were initially introduced as databases to provide an alternative to the long existing relational databases. For these NoSQL databases scalability, fault tolerance and availability are the most important deciding factors. They do not follow the strict schema approach of RDBMSs [26].

There are four general types of NoSQL databases where every database has its own properties:

- **Graph database:** The basis of this type of databases is graph theory. Examples: Neo4j [27] and Titan [28].
- **Key-Value store:** In this database, we store the data in two parts, namely key and value. Examples: Redis [29], DyanmoDB [30], Riak [31].
- **Column store:** Here, data is stored in the form of sections of columns of data. Examples: HBase[32], BigTable[18][20] and Cassandra [33].
- **Document database:** This database is higher version of key-value stores. Here values are saved as documents which are data in the form of complex structures (like JSON). Examples: MongoDB [34] and CouchDB [35].

CAP [19] theorem explains the limitation posed on all databases. It states that anyone can pick only any two out of the three features abbreviated as CAP in which C stands for Consistency, A for Availability, and P stands for Partition tolerance. The main statement of Brewer's theorem says that for any shared-data system, a maximum of two properties can be exist from these properties [36].

## II. LITERATURE SURVEY

The detailed summary of related papers has been presented in appendix (Table 5).

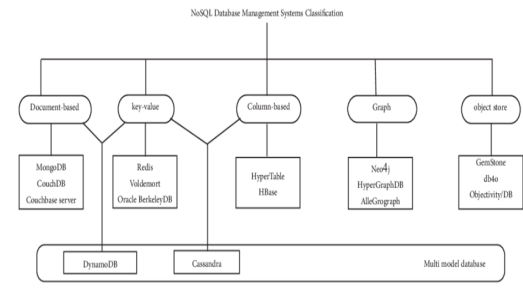
Figure 1 depicts that we surveyed papers from different sources such as, VLDB, IEEE, ACM and SIGMOD etc. These papers have been categorized into six groups (NoSQL, SQL/RDBMS, Redis, MongoDB, Cassandra and Neo4j) and critical analysis of each group has been performed.

- **NoSQL:**

NoSQL, Not Only SQL, is distributive data model that does not follow relational database guidelines. It supports huge data storage, horizontal scaling and massive- parallel data

processing [9]. NoSQL also supports data which cannot be easily expressed in terms of SQL [17].

Figure 1: Classification of relevant papers



Hence NoSQL databases have been adopted as a widespread substitute to conventional SQL databases, especially in the scenario where we are managing extremely large scale of data [13]. NoSQL was developed to overcome the disadvantages of relational databases. Therefore, many companies invested into researching the field of these databases [9]. Nowadays ACID properties can be achieved by NoSQL databases also with the help of middleware [3]. NoSQL databases rely on the services and capabilities of the underlying storage systems [8].

- **RDBMS/SQL**

Relational databases are the most common type of database because of its simplicity. In an RDBMS [26] data is divided into multiple tables which are usually in their normalized form for more efficiency. While accessing data it can be reassembled as per the requirements of the user. Structured Query Language (SQL) consists of four types of queries that are data definition language (DDL), data control language (DCL) and data manipulation language (DML). Each one has its own set of queries which are executed to define data i.e. create table, alter table etc. , to manipulate existing data as per the requirements using update, insert etc. and define the control of transaction using queries like roll back, commit etc. respectively. A detailed comparison of NoSQL versus RDBMS on features such as data validity, query language, data type, data storage, schema, flexibility, scalability and ACID compliancy is presented [40] Generally in NOSQL, only single record transactions and an eventual consistency replica system are supported, where it is assumed that transactions are commutative. Thus, ACID transactions are compromised for performance [41].

- **Document store (MongoDB):**

MongoDB resides on the CP side of CAP theorem. MongoDB supports format BSON [37] which is JSON [38] like document with dynamic schemas which make data integration easier and faster. Some of the common features of MongoDB are that it has a document-oriented storage layer and

for replication of data between servers it uses asynchronous replication [15]. In MongoDB and other NoSQL databases additional implementation decisions are made which were not required in SQL databases. These decisions have an effect on the performance of databases[12]. Other advantages of using MongoDB include easy replication, MapReduce, and clustering [11].

- Column store (Cassandra):

Cassandra resides on the AP side of CAP theorem. It provides its users scalability as it's linearly scalable and availability without compromising with its performance. Cassandra is easily capable of managing heaps of data across number of commodity servers while maintaining high availability without any single point of failure. [6][10]

- Key value store (Redis):

Redis resides on the CP side of CAP theorem. Redis key-value data store with a choice for data durability. It is an in-memory NoSQL database, Redis supports various data structure servers like strings, lists, sets, hashes and sorted sets. It can be replicated using relax master slave architecture.

- Graph database (Neo4j):

Neo4j utilizes labeled property graph model. In Neo4j nodes and edges can have properties associated with them. Nodes can be further associated with labels which categorize different them according to their roles. Neo4j is a full ACID transaction compliant graph database. It can be used as both standalone server (REST interface) or in embedded form [22].

### III. COMPARITIVE ANALYSIS OF NOSQL DATABASES

#### A. Comparison of NoSQL databases on the basis of functional and non functional requirements.

Table1: Different NoSQL databases on basis of Non-functional features

Data model	Performance of queries	Scalability of data	Flexibility of schema	Structure of database	Complexity of values
Key-value store	High	High	High	Primary key with some value	None
Column Store	High	High	Moderate	row consisting multiple columns	Low
Document Store	High	Variable (High)	High	JSON in form of tree	Low
Graph Database	Variable	Variable	High	Graph – entities and relation	High

Table 1 compares key-value store, column store, document store and graph database based on their non-functional features such as, Performance of queries, Scalability of data, Flexibility of schema, Structure of database and Complexity of values. Table1 depicts that for a simple data that can be represented as a key-value pair form easily; key value store may be chosen as it will provide high performance, scalability and flexibility. If the value can be represented in column from

and is semi structured, then column store is the appropriate database as it will provide high performance and scalability. If data can be represented in JSON format, then document store should be preferred as it has high performance, flexibility and usually high scalability. If we need to store data which can be represented using graph theory or if the data is strongly inter-related, then we use graph store model which provides high stability, but performance and scalability is variable.

Table 2 compares the four categories of NoSQL databases on the basis of functional features, such as, De-normalization, Single aggregate (adding multiple composite keys to a single key), Atomicity, Unordered Keys, Derived Table (a table can be created on the basis of master class this helps in sorting according to multi-dimensional indices), Composite Key, Composite Aggregation, Aggregation, Aggregation and Group by, Adjacency Lists (each node is designed as an individualistic record that accommodates arrays of immediate ancestors or descendants), Nested Sets and Joins.

Key value store should be avoided if we want to use composite key, joins or derived table operations on the database.

Document Store should be avoided if we want to use de-normalization, unordered key, composite key, composite aggregation, joins or derived table operations on the database.

Wide Column store should be avoided if we want to use unordered keys, aggregation and group by, adjacency lists, nested sets or joins operations on the database.

Graph Store should be used if we want to perform just de-normalization.

Table 2: Different NoSQL databases on basis of functional features

S. No	Features	Key Value Store	Document Store	Wide Column store	Graph Store
1.	Denormalization	Applicable	Not Applicable	Applicable	Applicable
2.	Single Aggregate	Applicable	Applicable	Applicable	Not Applicable
3.	Atomicity	Applicable	Applicable	Applicable	Not Applicable
4.	Unordered Keys	Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
5.	Derived Table	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Applicable	Not Applicable
6.	Composite Key	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Applicable	Not Applicable
7.	Composite Aggregation	Applicable (ordered)	Not Applicable	Applicable	Not Applicable
8.	Aggregation	Applicable	Applicable	Applicable	Not Applicable
9.	Aggregation and Group by	Applicable	Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
10.	Adjacency Lists	Applicable	Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
11.	Nested Sets	Applicable	Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
12.	Joins	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable

Table 3: Differentiation of Cassandra, MongoDB, Redis, Neo4J and MySQL.

S. No.	Feature	Wide Column Store (Cassandra)	Document Store (MongoDB)	Key Value Store (Redis)	SQL (MySQL)	Graph Database (Neo4j)
1	<b>Database Model</b>	Wide column store	Document Store	Key-Value Store	Relational DBMS	Graph database
2	<b>Description</b>	It is one of the most popular wide column store database. It is based on the concept of BigTable	It is one of the well-known document store database	It is an in-memory data structure store and an important key value store	Widely used open source RDBMS	Open source graph database
3	<b>DB</b>	Key space	Database	Database	Database	Graphs
4	<b>Table</b>	Column Family	Collection	Hash set, List, Set, Sorted set and String	Relation	Label
5	<b>Value</b>	Rows	Documents	Key value pair	Rows	Node and edges
6	<b>Read Operations</b>	Slow[4]	Fast[4]	Fast[5]	Slow (Join dependent)	Data dependent
7	<b>Write Operations</b>	Fast[4]	Fast[4]	Fast[5]	Slow	Data dependent
8	<b>Delete Operations</b>	Fast [4]	Fast[4]	Fast[5]	Slow	Data dependent
9	<b>Language</b>	Java	C++	C[14]	C and C++	Java, Scala
10	<b>License</b>	Open Source	Open Source	Open Source	Open Source	Open Source
11	<b>Data scheme</b>	Schema-free	No particular schema is followed but usually contents of same documents as a convention have similar structures though it is not mandatory	Schema-free	Yes	Schema-free
12	<b>Predefined types</b>	Yes; ASCII, int, blob, counter, decimal, double, list, map, set, text, timestamp, varchar	Yes; Boolean, date, object_id, String, Integer, double.	Partial; data types supported for value are strings, Bit arrays, hyper logs, hashes, lists, sets, sorted sets, and geospatial indexes	Yes; int, float, double, date, time, bit, char, enum, binary, blob, Boolean	Yes; Boolean, byte, short, int long, float, double, char, string
13	<b>Server side scripts</b>	No	JavaScript	Lua	Yes	Yes
14	<b>Triggers</b>	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
15	<b>Partitioning methods</b>	Sharding (In this very large databases are divided or partitioned into much smaller and manageable units called shards)	Sharding with no individual point of failure	Sharding	Horizontal partitioning, sharding with MySQL Cluster or MySQL Fabric	Partitioning should be avoided in Neo4j
16	<b>Foreign Keys</b>	No	Usually, not used, however equivalent operation with DBRef can be done	No	Yes	Yes
17	<b>Transaction Concepts</b>	Atomicity and Isolation are supported for single operations	Atomic operations can be performed within single document	Optimistic locking, atomic execution of command blocks and scripts	ACID	ACID
18	<b>User Concepts</b>	Access rights for users can be defined per object	Access rights for users and roles	Simple password – based access control.	Users with fine grained authorization concepts; no user groups or roles	Users, roles and permissions

### B. Comparison on the basis of categories of NoSQL databases.

In Table 3, comparison is made using features such as, Database Model, Description, Database, Table, Value, Read Operations, Write Operations, Delete Operations, Language License, Data scheme, Predefined types, Server side scripts, Triggers, Partitioning methods, Replication Methods, Scaling, Foreign Keys, Transaction Concepts, User Concepts, Website, Developer, Initial Release and Current Release.

The current research has taken databases from each category of NoSQL databases that is Cassandra, MongoDB, Redis) and Neo4j. Table 3 presents the differentiation of various NOSQL databases with an example from each category. SQL is a Relational DBMS; Cassandra falls under the category of Wide Column stores which are based on the ideas of BigTable and DynamoDB. MongoDB is a Document Store, whereas Redis follows the concepts of a Key-Value Store.

Cassandra has a keyspace analogous to a database in SQL and a column family instead of a table. MongoDB makes a collection, while Redis has options of hashes, lists, sets and sorted sets instead of a table.

Read operations are slower in Cassandra and SQL compared to the other two. For both write and delete operations, SQL falls short in comparison to all NoSQL databases. In case of Neo4j, even though the embedded version is slow REST's performance is roughly similar to MongoDB[21]. For partitioning methods, SQL is the only one to use Horizontal Partitioning, while the rest use sharding. Also SQL is the only one which uses the concept of foreign keys. Coming to the transaction concepts, SQL and Neo4j follow the ACID properties. For single operations, atomicity and isolation are supported in Cassandra. Atomic operations are possible inside a long document in MongoDB, while Redis supports optimistic locking and atomic execution of command blocks and scripts.

MongoDB supports access rights for different types of users. For Cassandra, access rights can be established per object. Redis supports uncomplicated password based access control [44]. In MongoDB, authorization and authentication are disabled by default. Here, the authorization is provided by following a role-based approach on a per-database level. Provision for authentication on a per-database level has been made available in basic MongoDB where the users subsist particularly for a single logical database [42]. Authorization and authentication is enabled by default in Neo4j [45].

### C. Comparison on the basis of distributive properties

Table 4 explains how the four databases work when database is spread on multiple computers which may or may not be in same physical location. In case of MongoDB auto sharding is used to partition data amongst multiple nodes in order preserving manner. MongoDB supports horizontal scaling which enables it to scale data across multiple nodes. The load is distributed equally across nodes and if balance is disrupted it automatically redistributes the load equally.

Table 4: Analysis of NOSQL databases based on distributive properties.

Feature	Wide Column Store (Cassandra)	Document Store (MongoDB)	Key Value pair Store (Redis)	Graph Database (Neo4j)
Sharding and Partitioning	Auto sharding and order preserving	Built in and order preserving	Auto sharding and no order	Supports sharding but should be avoided
Scaling	Horizontal	Horizontal	Horizontal	Horizontal
Replication	Selectable Replication Factor	Master slave	Relaxed Master slave	Causal Clustering using Raft protocol (master slave)

In Cassandra vast quantity of data is divided across many nodes which imparts user with very high availability and without failure. It also supports horizontal scaling, selectable replication factor and cross data center replication.

Redis is designed for in-memory data using master-slave architecture. Categorically, Redis supports less strict practice of master-slave replication, wherein information from any master is easily replicated to whatever number of slaves, whereas a slave itself can act as a master to other slaves. This database doesn't partition data across nodes in an order preserving manner.

Subject to Neo4J scalability package is noted as high availability. It does not support partitioning and complete dataset is replicated across whole cluster.

## IV. CONCLUSIONS

SQL databases are scale vertically (hardware) while the NoSQL databases are horizontally scalable (server). This paper has the aim of giving a thorough overview and introduction of NoSQLs, which have recently emerged in the market as an alternative to predominant relational database management systems. The first half discusses the motives and rationales behind the development and usage of non-relational management systems, while the next half categorizes NoSQLs into types, namely, Document stores, Key-value stores and Column based stores, and then elucidate on their models and workings. Each database performs and behaves in a different manner and all of them are constantly evolving. The current research has taken databases from each category that is Cassandra (wide column store), Neo4j (Graph database) Redis (Key value pair store) and MongoDB (Document store) and compared them on the basis of data models, distributive properties and other features. The research compares them on their non-functional features. It has been found that for a simple data that can be represented in the form of key value easily, a key value store should be chosen as it will provide high performance, scalability and flexibility. If the value can be represented in column form, and is semi structured, then column store is the appropriate database as it will provide high performance and scalability. If data can be represented in JSON format, document store should be preferred as it has high performance, flexibility and usually high scalability. If the graph theory represents the data then we use graph store model which provides us high stability, but performance and scalability is variable. Following this, the comparison is made

on the basis of functional features. It has been concluded that Key value store ought to be avoided if one needs to use composite key, joins or derived table operations on the database. Document Store ought to be avoided if one needs to use de-normalization, unordered key, composite key, composite aggregation, joins or derived table operations on the database. Wide column store should be avoided if we want to use unordered keys, aggregation and group by, adjacency lists, nested sets or joins operations on the database. Graph Store should be used if we want to perform just de-normalization. Redis is not optimized for maximum security [43] but for maximum performance and simplicity. Stonebraker [41] considered various performance arguments in support of NOSQL databases and observed them insufficient. Thus, these systems have various limitations also.

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