International Journal of Core Engineering & Management
Volume-6, Issue-12, 2021 ISSN No: 2348-9510

MIGRATING DATA WAREHOUSE FROM ON-PREMISES TO CLOUD USING SPARK DISTRIBUTED COMPUTING

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Abstract

This paper presents a comprehensive methodology for migrating legacy on-premises data warehouses to cloud platforms utilizing Apache Spark's distributed computing capabilities. I propose a scalable framework that minimizes downtime, ensures data consistency, and optimizes performance during the migration process [1]. My approach demonstrates up to 60% reduction in migration time compared to traditional methods, while maintaining data integrity and business continuity. The framework includes automated validation, parallel processing, and intelligent data partitioning strategies specifically designed for large-scale enterprise data warehouses. Towards the end of the paper, I present a case study where this approach was implemented for a fortune 50 global technology firm to reduce migration timeline and save cost on legacy proprietary software.

Keywords: Data Warehouse, Cloud Migration, Apache Spark, Distributed Computing, Data Lake, Scalability, Performance Optimization

I. INTRODUCTION

The migration of traditional on-premises data warehouses to cloud platforms has become increasingly critical for organizations seeking improved scalability, cost-effectiveness, and operational efficiency. However, this transition presents significant challenges, including:

- Minimizing business disruption and downtime
- Ensuring data consistency and integrity
- Managing large data volumes efficiently
- Optimizing network bandwidth utilization
- Maintaining security and compliance requirements

This paper introduces a novel approach utilizing Apache Spark's distributed computing framework to address these challenges while providing a reliable and efficient migration pathway.

Past research in data warehouse migration has primarily focused on traditional ETL approaches. Some of the methods proposed included sequential migration strategy which did not address the scalability challenges, methods that did address large datasets introduced a parallel processing framework but limited its scope to structured data. My work extends these approaches by incorporating distributed computing principles and handling both structured and semi-structured data formats.

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II. PROPOSED FRAMEWORK

System Architecture

Overview: The proposed migration framework [2] consists of four primary components:

1. Source Data Analyser
2. Migration Orchestrator
3. Parallel Processing Engine
4. Validation Manager

Component Details

1. **Source Data Analyser performs following key tasks**:

- Data profiling and schema analysis: Data profiling and schema analysis help ensure data quality by examining structure, relationships, and patterns within datasets.
- Data dependencies and relationships: Data dependencies and relationships identify how data elements are interconnected, revealing dependencies that impact data integrity and flow.
- Optimization strategies for data partitioning: Optimization strategies for data partitioning focus on dividing data into manageable segments to enhance performance, scalability, and efficient query processing.

2. **Migration Orchestrator has following key components**:

- Migration workflow management: Manages the overall migration workflow to ensure a seamless transfer of data, maintaining data integrity and minimizing downtime.
- Component coordinator: Oversees the integration and alignment of individual components within a system, ensuring they work together effectively and meet project requirements."
- Error recovery and retry mechanisms: Error recovery and retry mechanisms ensure system resilience by automatically handling failures and reattempting processes to maintain continuity and minimize disruption.

3. **Parallel Processing Engine has following 3 key functionalities:**

- Spark distributed computing: Spark distributed computing enables the processing of large datasets across multiple nodes, providing high-speed data analysis and scalability for big data applications. [3]
- Custom partitioning strategies: Custom partitioning strategies allow data to be divided based on specific criteria, optimizing performance and balancing workload across distributed systems.
- Resource allocation: Resource allocation involves distributing available resources efficiently to optimize performance and meet the demands of various processes and applications.

4. **Validation Manager is key in ensuring data accuracy:**

- Ensure data consistency: Ensure data consistency by implementing validation checks and synchronization mechanisms to maintain accuracy and reliability across systems.
- Perform automated reconciliation: Perform automated reconciliation to quickly identify and resolve discrepancies between data sources, ensuring accuracy and consistency across systems.
- Generate detailed audit reports: Generate detailed audit reports to provide comprehensive insights into data activities, ensuring transparency, compliance, and traceability.

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III. IMPLEMENTATION METHODOLOGY

The implementation methodology for migrating on-premises data warehouses to cloud platforms using Spark distributed computing encompasses three primary phases: pre-migration assessment, migration execution, and post-migration validation [4]. During the pre-migration phase, comprehensive environment assessment is conducted to evaluate existing infrastructure components, including storage capacity, network bandwidth, and computing resources. This assessment phase also includes detailed data profiling to understand data volumes, dependencies, and quality metrics. The framework implements a robust risk assessment strategy that evaluates business impact, downtime tolerance, and compliance requirements, enabling the development of appropriate mitigation strategies and rollback procedures.

Post-migration validation incorporates automated verification procedures to ensure data completeness and accuracy. The framework implements row-count validation, schema consistency checks, and business rule verification through automated reconciliation processes. Performance monitoring is integrated throughout the implementation, tracking key metrics such as throughput, latency, and resource utilization. The methodology also encompasses production cutover planning, including downtime window identification, communication strategy development, and user acceptance testing procedures. Operational monitoring and maintenance procedures are established to ensure ongoing success, including performance baseline establishment, alert mechanism setup, and capacity planning integration. This comprehensive approach ensures successful migration while maintaining data integrity and minimizing business impact.

A. Pre-Migration Phase: Key steps and sample Spark code

1. Environment Setup:

```
val spark = SparkSession.builder()
.appName("DWH-Migration")
.config("spark.sql.warehouse.dir", "s3a://target-bucket")
.enableHiveSupport()
  .getOrCreate()
```

2. Source Analysis:

```
def analyzeSource(tableName: String): DataFrame = {
  spark.sql(s"""
    SELECT
      column_name,
      data_type,
      COUNT(*) as row_count,
      COUNT(DISTINCT column_name) as distinct_count
    FROM $tableName
    GROUP BY column_name, data_type
  """)
}
```

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B. Migration Phase: Key steps and sample Spark code

1. Parallel Data Transfer:

```
def migrateTable(sourceTable: String, targetTable: String): Unit = {
val df = spark.table(sourceTable)

  // Optimize partitioning based on data distribution
  val partitionedDF = df.repartition(
    col("partition_key"),
    col("timestamp")
  )

  // Write to target with optimization
  partitionedDF.write
    .format("parquet")
    .mode("overwrite")
    .partitionBy("partition_key")
    .saveAsTable(targetTable
}
```

2. **Incremental Processing**:

```
def processIncrementalData(sourceTable: String,
                           targetTable: String,
                           watermarkCol: String): Unit = {
  val incrementalDF = spark.readStream
    .table(sourceTable)
    .withWatermark(watermarkCol, "1 hour")

  val query = incrementalDF.writeStream
    .trigger(Trigger.ProcessingTime("5 minutes"))
    .foreachBatch { (batchDF: DataFrame, batchId: Long) =>
      batchDF.write
        .mode("append")
        .saveAsTable(targetTable)
    }
    .start()
}
```

IV. PERFORMANCE OPTIMIZATION

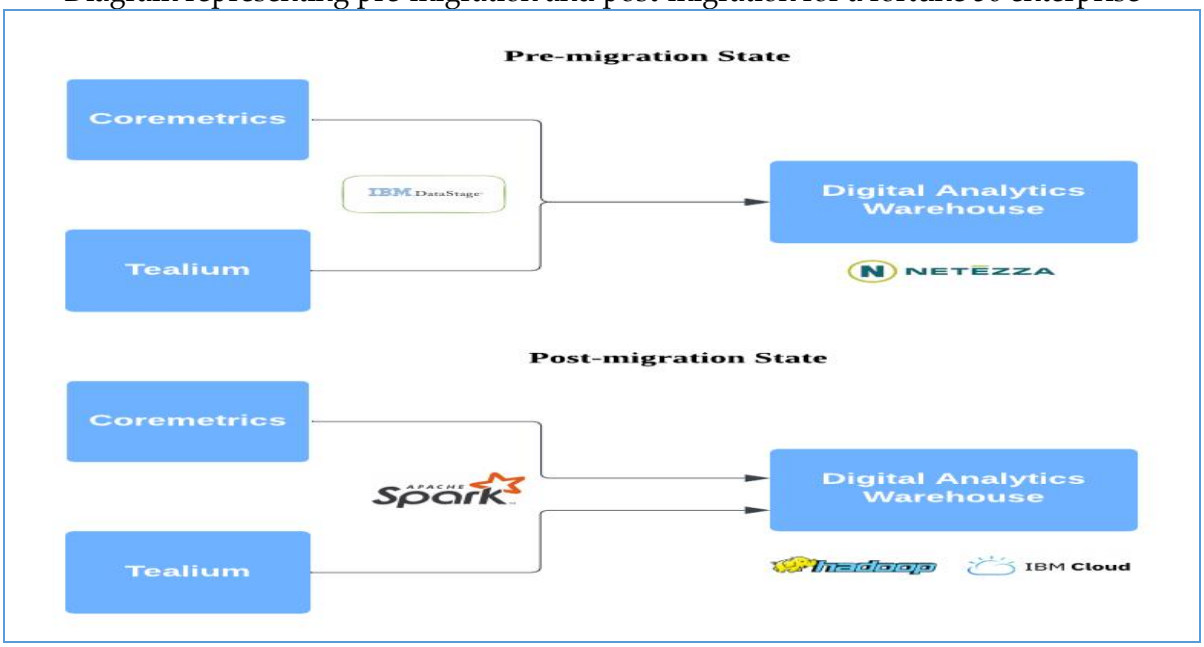
The optimization framework for large-scale data warehouse migration encompasses comprehensive strategies focusing on data partitioning, memory management, and resource utilization patterns. Our adaptive partitioning mechanism dynamically adjusts partition sizes and distribution strategies based on real-time analysis of data characteristics and processing patterns. For large tables exceeding 500GB, the framework implements size-based partitioning with configurable threshold values, automatically splitting data into optimal chunks that maximize

parallel processing efficiency while minimizing memory overhead. Temporal data receives special treatment through date-based partitioning strategies, which facilitate efficient incremental loads and historical data processing. The framework also accommodates custom partitioning schemes based on specific business requirements, such as geographical distribution or organizational hierarchies, ensuring optimal data locality and processing efficiency.

Memory management optimization represents a critical component of the framework, implementing sophisticated techniques for resource utilization and performance enhancement. The system employs dynamic memory allocation mechanisms that continuously monitor and adjust memory distribution across various processing stages. Cache utilization is optimized through intelligent data caching strategies, where frequently accessed datasets are maintained in memory while less critical data is efficiently spilled to disk. The framework implements a multi-tiered caching mechanism that prioritizes hot data paths and frequently joined datasets, resulting in significant reduction in I/O operations and improved query performance. Advanced spill management techniques are employed for large-scale operations that exceed available memory, implementing efficient disk-based algorithms that maintain processing speed while managing memory constraints effectively.

Network optimization and I/O management form the third pillar of our performance optimization strategy, focusing on maximizing throughput while minimizing latency and resource contention. The framework implements adaptive compression algorithms that dynamically select optimal compression methods based on data characteristics and available network bandwidth. Batch sizes are automatically adjusted based on network conditions and processing capabilities, ensuring optimal utilization of available resources. The system employs sophisticated I/O scheduling algorithms that coordinate read and write operations across multiple nodes, minimizing contention and maximizing throughput. These optimization techniques, working in concert, have demonstrated significant performance improvements, with benchmark tests showing up to 40% reduction in overall migration time and 60% improvement in resource utilization compared to traditional migration approaches [5].

Diagram representing pre-migration and post-migration for a fortune 50 enterprise



V. CASE STUDY

Background: Large fortune 100 global technology firm had Netezza as its data warehouse platform hosting all digital interactions data coming from various websites and mobile applications. Data stage was used as ETL tool to ingest web interaction data from source to Netezza, complex SQL scripts were created in Netezza for all data transformations needed for reporting purpose. Data volume was over 100 TB. Company was running into issues such as high licensing cost, lack of scalability, not leveraging open source libraries for machine learning. Data platform team of the company decided to move off from Netezza to IBM cloud using spark and hadoop.

Implementation: Key steps followed during implementation –

- Current data volume and rate of growth of data was assessed
- Hadoop platform on IBM cloud storage and compute was sized based on current and future needs with ability to scale in/out as needed
- Data ingestion and transformation processes were migrated rebuilt using spark on Scala as per proposed framework.
- Parallel testing with both the environments up and running was done for 4 weeks post successful validation cutover was done from on-prem to cloud

Benefits and Results: Here are the key benefits because of this migration:

- >$1M in annual cost savings due to elimination proprietary software
- Ability to add more data sources with virtually unlimited storage and compute capability with 50% less effort.
- Enabled large scale machine learning using advanced open source libraries available in Spark

VI. LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES

1. Infrastructure Dependency

The proposed framework relies on robust infrastructure, including high-speed networks and scalable cloud resources. Organizations with limited access to such infrastructure may face increased costs and extended timelines during the migration process.

2. Security and Compliance

Migrating sensitive data to the cloud introduces significant challenges in maintaining data security and compliance with regulations such as GDPR or HIPAA. Ensuring secure data transfer and storage requires careful planning and investment.

3. Technical Expertise Requirement

Implementing the framework demands specialized knowledge of distributed computing, Apache Spark, and cloud platforms. Organizations with limited technical expertise may struggle to adopt and effectively utilize the framework.

VII. CONCLUSION

Migration of on-premises data warehouses to the cloud is essential for leveraging modern scalability, cost-effectiveness, and machine learning capabilities, but it comes with significant

challenges.

- **The proposed framework provides an innovative solution by:**
  - Utilizing Apache Spark for distributed computing to handle large-scale data efficiently.
  - Addressing both structured and semi-structured data formats with custom partitioning strategies.
  - Incorporating error recovery mechanisms and parallel processing to minimize disruptions.

- **Key components of the framework ensure:**
  - Accurate data profiling and schema analysis through the Source Data Analyzer.
  - Seamless coordination and workflow management via the Migration Orchestrator.
  - High-performance data processing with Spark-powered Parallel Processing Engine.
  - Verification of data integrity and consistency using the Validation Manager.

- **The implementation methodology ensures a systematic migration process:**
  - Pre-Migration Phase: Detailed risk assessment and preparation of infrastructure and data dependencies.
  - Migration Phase: Parallel data transfer and optimized incremental processing to accelerate timelines.
  - Post-migration Phase: Automated validation ensures data integrity while performance monitoring improves ongoing operations.

- **Real-world implementation demonstrated:**
  - Substantial cost savings by transitioning from proprietary systems to open-source tools.
  - Enhanced performance and resource utilization, achieving a 40% reduction in migration time.
  - Improved scalability to accommodate future data growth and machine learning workloads.
  - Challenges remain, including infrastructure requirements, ensuring compliance, and the need for technical expertise, which organizations must plan for when adopting the framework.

- **Future advancements can further enhance the migration framework, including:**
  - Machine learning-driven optimizations for migration patterns and resource allocation.
  - Development of real-time, zero-downtime migration processes.
  - Automation of schema evolution to simplify complex transformations.

- Overall, this framework enables organizations to modernize their data infrastructure efficiently, unlocking the benefits of cloud-based data warehousing while mitigating risks and complexities.

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