SQUARE PRODUCT OF THREE INTEGERS IN SHORT INTERVALS

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Abstract. In this paper we list all the integer triplets taken from an interval of length \( \leq 12 \), whose products are perfect squares.

1. Introduction

Let \( f \) and \( k \) be positive integers with \( f \leq k \). The sets of distinct integers \( n_1, \ldots, n_f \in [n + 1, \ldots, n + k] \) with the property that there is a nontrivial way to multiply them to obtain a perfect power was investigated by Erdős and Turk [ET]. This question is related to the Erdős-Selfridge theorem (see [ES]), which states that the product of two or more consecutive integers is never a perfect power—that is, if \( f = k \geq 2 \), then the equation

\[
\prod_{i=1}^{f} n_i = x^m \quad (x \in \mathbb{N}, \ m \geq 2)
\]

has no solutions. Moreover, Erdős and Turk conjectured (cf. [ET]) that (1) has no solutions with \((k, f, m) = (4, 3, 2)\). This conjecture was verified by Tzanakis [T].

In this paper we list all the integer triplets \((f = 3)\) taken from a short interval \((k \leq 12)\) whose products are perfect squares.

2. Result

Now we formulate our result.

Theorem. Let \((a, b, c) \in \mathbb{Z}^3\) with \(a < b < c\) such that \(c - a = k - 1 < 12\). If \(abc \neq 0\) is a perfect square, then the triplet \((a, b, c)\) is one of the following:

- \( k = 5 \): \((-2, -1, 2), (2, 3, 6)\);
- \( k = 6 \): \((-4, -1, 1), (3, 6, 8), (5, 8, 10), (240, 243, 245)\);
- \( k = 7 \): \((-4, -2, 2), (-3, -1, 3), (2, 4, 8), (6, 8, 12), (48, 50, 54)\);
- \( k = 8 \): \((-4, -3, 3), (1, 2, 8), (2, 8, 9), (7, 8, 14), (21, 27, 28)\);
- \( k = 9 \): \((-6, -3, 2), (-4, -1, 4), (1, 4, 9), (2, 5, 10), (12, 15, 20), (24, 27, 32), (242, 245, 250)\).

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\[ k = 10 : (-8, -2, 1), (-6, -2, 3), (-3, -2, 6), (3, 4, 12), (3, 9, 12), (6, 10, 15), (18, 24, 27); \]
\[ k = 11 : (-9, -4, 1), (-9, -1, 1), (-8, -4, 2), (-8, -1, 2), (-5, -4, 5), (-5, -1, 5), (-2, -1, 8), (2, 6, 12), (5, 12, 15), (8, 9, 18), (8, 16, 18), (10, 18, 20), (14, 21, 24), (20, 24, 30), (40, 45, 50), (2880, 2888, 2890), (10082, 10086, 10092); \]
\[ k = 12 : (-9, -8, 2), (-9, -2, 2), (-8, -6, 3), (1, 3, 12), (7, 14, 18), (11, 18, 22), (22, 24, 33), (44, 45, 55), (88, 98, 99), (693, 700, 704). \]

As a consequence of the theorem we obtain that the interval \([44, 45, \ldots, 55]\) is the smallest one which contains two disjoint triplets of positive integers with the relevant property: \([44, 45, 55]\) and \([48, 50, 54]\).

3. Proof

To prove our theorem, we will reduce equation (1) to several elliptic equations. Recently, Gebel, Pethő and Zimmer [GPZ], and independently Stroeker and Tzanakis [ST], have developed an algorithm for solving elliptic equations. Their method is based on the approach of Zagier [Z], and on the recent estimates of linear forms in elliptic logarithms due to David [D]. The algorithm outlined in [GPZ] has been implemented by Gebel in the program package SIMATH (cf. [SIM]), and we use this program package to solve our elliptic equations.

**Proof of the Theorem.** Let \((a, b, c) \in \mathbb{Z}^3\) be a triplet with the desired property, and put \(x = a, u = b - a\) and \(v = c - a\). To prove the theorem we have to solve the system of elliptic equations

\[ x(x - u)(x - v) = y^2 \]

with \(0 < u < v < 12\) in integers \(x, y\). Using the results of Erdős and Selfridge [ES], and Tzanakis [T], we may suppose that \(v \geq 4\), and we obtain 52 equations. By a simple substitution we transform these elliptic equations into Weierstrass normal form, and we can solve them by SIMATH. We obtained just the solutions listed in our theorem.

\(\square\)

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