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Green Computing: Current Trends, Challenges, and Future Directions

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ABSTRACT: Green computing, also known as green IT, refers manufacturing, using, and disposing of computing resources. As the demand for computing power increases, so does the environmental impact associated with energy consumption, e-waste, and resource depletion. This means reduction in use of hazardous materials, maximizing output from the product during its lifetime while minimizing energy consumption and also reusability or recyclability and biodegradability of used products and wastes. Many corporate organizations are taking initiatives to reduce the harmful impact of their operations on the environment. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is an international environment treaty whose objective is to stabilize the emission of green house gases in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the eco system This paper reviews current research trends in green computing, highlights the importance of sustainable practices, and discusses the challenges faced in implementing green computing initiatives. According to the findings, even though there has been a lot of development, more study and cooperation amongst stakeholders are necessary to ensure the IT industry has a sustainable future.

I. INTRODUCTION

Environmental issues have become increasingly worse over the past decades as a result of industrialization, deforestation, the consumption of fossil fuels, and greenhouse gas emissions. The climate of the earth has been altered drastically due to these activities, which have resulted in more frequent occurrences of extreme weather, sea levels rising, and global warming. The rapid dissemination of information technology (IT) has turned into a double-edged sword in the midst of this ecological crisis.

IT has changed day-to-day life, commerce, and global communication, but due to its high energy usage and creation of electronic waste, it has also worsened environmental conditions. Sustainable computing, or green IT as it is also known, is now an imperative and forward-thinking approach to lowering the environmental impact of technology. It is the energy-efficient and environmentally sustainable design, development, use, and disposal of computing systems, hardware, and software. The philosophy supports the sustainable life cycle of IT products from design to disposal to reduce carbon footprint, minimize toxic waste, and improve energy efficiency. Since the ICT industry as a whole generates approximately 2% of the world's carbon emissions, now more than ever, there is a need for sustainable IT practice. Green computing can broadly be categorized into two main areas.

Green IT 1.0 is focused on using the IT system in a greener way by redesigning the IT products and processes to decrease energy usage and carbon footprint. On the other hand, Green IT 2.0 aims at leveraging the use of IT to make other parts of the organizational ecosystem sustainable, including better supply chains, workflows, and manufacturing processes. This holistic vision ensures that sustainability goes beyond individual IT systems and extends to the usage of them in various sectors.

1. Green Use: Minimizing energy consumption in computers and other information systems, as well as operating them in an eco-friendly way.
2. Green Disposal: Refurbishing and repurposing old computers and recycling unwanted electronics and related equipment.
3. Green Design: Creating energy-efficient and environmentally responsible components, computers, servers, and cooling systems.
4. Green Manufacturing: Producing electronic components, computers, and related subsystems with little to no environmental impact.



As a result of increased global awareness and regulatory pressures, organizations, government agencies, and educational institutions are adopting green computing practices in various operations. Organizations realized that applying environmentally friendly approaches to IT is not only an ethical responsibility but also a driver of making their operations more efficient, reducing expenses, and strengthening their public image... Bill Gates's once-bold vision of "a PC in every home" has not only materialized but has also extended to nearly every commercial and industrial domain. The widespread presence of information technology offers both challenges and opportunities; although its environmental effects are considerable, it also holds great promise for promoting sustainable solutions. Most notably, data centers—the fundamental component of the digital economy—have become an area of concern. The increased use of technological services has resulted in an increase in the population and geographical dispersion of data centers, which are significant consumers of electrical energy and important sources of CO₂ emissions. The increased interest in environmental harms as well as sustainable development renders green data center management important with the use of data center monitoring systems. Good Managing Data Centers through Green Computing, such as server virtualization, energy- efficient cooling systems, renewable power, sophisticated monitoring systems, and the reduction of carbon emissions by data centers reduces the promotion of global warming. Several methods are being developed to encourage environmentally friendly data center operations, minimize non-biodegradable waste, and maximize recyclable material utilization.

Educational institutions, similarly, are examining the advantages and limitations of embracing green computing technologies, especially through cloud computing technology that has the potential to bring benefits both to the environment and the economy. In embedding green IT practices in their infrastructure, schools and universities can demonstrate environmental stewardship while promoting consciousness among the next generation.

The increasing volume of research on green computing highlights its importance as a scholarly and applied discipline. This study aims to contribute to that discourse by investigating how IT-based industries can implement green computing strategies within their data centers to achieve environmental sustainability, cost efficiency, and ethical waste management. Drawing upon both secondary data and primary data collected from over 133 industry professionals, the research identifies key lifecycle strategies and best practices that can guide organizations in aligning their operational goals with global sustainability objectives.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: Section II presents a comprehensive literature review of recent studies in green computing. Section III outlines the research methodology, followed by a detailed analysis of the survey results in Section IV. Section V discusses the implications of the findings, and Section VI concludes with a summary of the research, its limitations, and directions for future work.

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II. WHAT IS GREEN COMPUTING?

Green computing (also known as green IT or sustainable IT) is the design, manufacture, use and disposal of computers, chips, other technology components and peripherals in a way that limits the harmful impact on the environment, which include reducing carbon emissions and energy consumption by manufacturers, [data centers](#) and end-users. Green computing also encompasses choosing sustainably sourced raw materials, reducing electronic waste and promoting sustainability through the use of renewable resources.

The potential for green computing to have a positive impact on the environment is considerable. The information and communication technology (ICT) sector is responsible for between 1.8% and 3.9% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Moreover, data centers account for 3% of annual total energy consumption—an increase of 100% in the last decade.

“The energy demands and carbon output of computing and the entire ICT sector must be dramatically moderated if climate change is to be slowed in time to avoid catastrophic environmental damage,” according to a [report published by the Association for Computing Machinery](#) (link resides outside ibm.com).

Each and every part of contemporary information technology from the tiniest chip to the biggest data center has a carbon price label and green computing aims to curtail just that Technology producers are involved in green computing, as are the companies, institutions, governments and individuals utilizing technology. From huge data centers implementing policies to reduce energy use to people opting not to use screen savers, green IT is complex and encompasses thousands of decisions at all levels.

III. THE HISTROY OF GREEN COMPUTING

In 1992, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) initiated the Energy Star Program (link is outside ibmcom) in the United States, which was designed to encourage and acknowledge energy efficiency. That program prompted the use of the sleep mode feature throughout the IT sector and initiated many other programs to raise the level of activity towards green computing.

Energy Star-certified products will have to satisfy some operation requirements and power management features that non-certified products might not possess. The program was extended by an EPA grant to the Global Electronics Council, which led to the Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool (link outside ibmcom) (EPEAT.). EPEAT is a product registry for products that are held to certain performance standards, including materials utilized, transportation greenhouse gas emissions, product lifespan, energy consumption and lifecycle end-management. Prior to green computing, the IT sector had a tendency to concentrate on making smaller and faster machines, but not on sustainability or emissions reduction.

On-premises hardware and physical servers are linked to traditional computing, while cloud computing is a step towards becoming more environmentally friendly, with increased emphasis on efficiency.

Several initiatives aimed at enhancing the green computing standards by developing industry metrics aligned with sustainability are present, along with several different certifications.

Multiple initiatives to improve green computing standards through the creation of industry metrics related to sustainability exist, as do various certifications. The Green500 (link is outside ibmcom) is a sublist of the Top500, which ranks supercomputers and the uses for which those computing systems are employed.

The Green500 rankings the supercomputers based on energy efficiency. The Transaction Processing Performance Council (TCP) is a not-for-profit company that creates performance benchmarks for the transaction processing business. SPECpower also creates benchmarks, but for the power and performance characteristics of single- and multi-node servers with the goal of improving efficiency.

IV. NEEDS OF GREEN COMPUTING

Today, computers have become a fundamental necessity in everyone's life. They simplify tasks and save both time and human effort. However, their usage also results in increased energy consumption and significant heat production. This leads to higher emissions of greenhouse gases, especially carbon dioxide (CO₂), which negatively affect our

environment and deplete natural resources. The main reason behind this issue is the lack of awareness about the environmental effects of extensive computer usage. Personal computers and data centers consume vast amounts of power and often rely on outdated technology and inefficient cooling systems, contributing to environmental pollution. Various computer-related sources such as data centers, PCs and their accessories, and networking equipment are major contributors to CO₂ emissions. However, a large portion of these emissions is produced by personal computers alone.

These machines are environmentally harmful since their parts are non-biodegradable and hardly recycled. Pollution is also created by defects in manufacturing, packaging, and disposal. Computer manufacturing uses toxic materials that, when disposed of illegally, severely damage the environment. Thus, raising awareness is crucial to minimize these adverse impacts. This is where the idea of green computing arises.

The following are important reasons to implement green computing

A. Electronic gadgets, such as computers, use lots of electricity, which causes air, land, and water pollution. Power generation using fossil fuels emits air pollutants and uses lots of water resources, causing climate change, acid rain (pH<5), ozone layer depletion, and air toxins.

B Most electronic devices produce excessive heat, which causes the release of CO₂. CO₂ is a greenhouse gas that traps heat close to the Earth's surface, raising global temperatures by preventing heat from escaping. The rising carbon dioxide levels have accelerated global warming and human-driven climate change.

C. The disposal of computers and their components generates hazardous waste, which severely harms the environment. Toxic substances like lead (Pb), mercury (Hg), and cadmium (Cd) are released into the atmosphere during disposal.

D. The manufacturing process of computer hardware involves toxic chemicals used in insulation, soldering, and fireproofing. Long-term exposure to these substances can cause cancer, reproductive issues like miscarriages, and other health hazards. According to Fig 2, CO₂ is emitted by data centers, PCs and peripherals and networks and devices. But the large amount of CO₂ is released by PCs and peripheral. Because, PCs contain many toxic elements and it releases a large amount of CO₂. PCs are non bio-degradable and also it can be rarely recycled. So we have to be aware of using any computing devices. To reduce these impacts 'Green Computing' has been implemented on various computing devices.



V. IMPLEMENTATION OF GREEN COMPUTING

To curtail these effects 'Green Computing' has been adopted on different computing systems.

In order to effectively deal with the environmental effect of technology and ensure sustainability, it is crucial to embrace four main complementary strategies. They are as described below

A. Green Usage

This includes reducing the amount of energy that computers and associated information systems consume through practicing responsible usage practices.

Examples are switching off appliances when they are not being used and using them in a manner that promotes environmental sustainability.

B. Green Disposal

Older computer hardware tends to experience physical damage, e.g., cracks, and can be hazardous to the environment. Safe recycling procedures should be used to dispose of such hardware and avoid harming the environment. There are several resources available to make it easier to recycle electronic waste safely.

C. Green Design

It involves developing energy-saving and green components. It involves designing computers, servers, data centers, and coolers that consume less energy and cause less negative impact on the environment.

D. Green Manufacturing

It is the manufacture of electronic products, as well as their components and subsystems, with minimal environmental impact. It involves decreasing the consumption of hazardous materials and implementing sustainable production processes. Organizations can foster green computing awareness within their workplaces by taking the following simple yet effective steps:

- Communicating green initiatives and goals to all employees
- Forming a dedicated committee to develop and implement a green IT strategy.
- Centralizing computing resources to improve energy efficiency.
- Utilizing software and applications that are optimized for energy conservation.
- Implementing effective power management techniques.
- Enhancing business performance through environmentally responsible practices

Computing uses large amounts of energy. The amount of energy used worldwide by servers (alone), amounts to 1% of the world's total electricity usage. From 2000 to 2005 – a five year period - the energy used by servers doubled. It is predicted that by 2010 the amount of energy used by these servers would have increased by up to 70%. This is only for servers, the figure for personal computers is likely to be higher as we had over 870,000,000 PCs in 2005 and the predicted number last year was over 1.1 billion. Such use of energy is unsustainable and contributes enormously to green house gas emissions. Think also of the amount of computing hardware we have all around the globe. This equipment is made of some of the most toxic and dangerous chemicals.

The worst part is that most of the equipment has very short life spans – sometimes less than three years. The hardware is not being properly disposed of, ending in landfills, third world countries, etc. So ultimately the toxic chemicals which are in this hardware end up polluting the environment. Now, a lot of new arriving industries as well as the old and trusted ones have entered into the mission of green computing.

Though a lot of ideas and issues have been put forward during this decade, efforts are being taken by Governmental as well as Non-Organizations to make the dream of green computing come true. Electronic components and associated systems are manufactured in such a way that they create low or minimal impact on the environment. You might be familiar with the eco-labeling in several products. These efforts aim a realistic approach towards an economically sustainable and energy efficient computing in the near future. Non governmental organizations, Governments, Multinational corporations are now joining the move towards GREEN IT or Green Computing. Which is a completely new environmentally friendly and cost-effective way of power usage. Businesses and individuals are being called upon to:

Reduce the amount of energy used in their computing needs Start Using green(er) or more sustainable energy sources When replacing their IT infrastructure, to buy more Earth- friendly IT infrastructure - in terms of the energy they consume and the material from which they are made.

To comprehensively and effectively address the environmental impacts of computing/IT, we must adopt a holistic approach and make the entire IT lifecycle greener by addressing environmental sustainability along the following four complementary paths.

Green use — reducing the energy consumption of computers and other information systems as well as using them in an environmentally sound manner

Green disposal — refurbishing and reusing old computers and properly recycling unwanted computers and other electronic equipment

Green design — designing energy-efficient and environmentally sound components, computers, servers, cooling equipment, and data centers

Green manufacturing — manufacturing electronic components, computers, and other associated subsystems with minimal impact on the environment.

a. Using Virtualization to Reduce Numbers of Servers

The traditional model of dedicated servers to specific computing functions has been broadly adopted due to resilience based on isolation. Most software vendors like Microsoft have suggested dedicated servers for the different utility functions like domain controllers, file servers, email and database servers. This has resulted in an explosion of servers in the data-centers, runaway demands for power and air-conditioning. With this extensive growth of server estate has arisen more issues of standardization and patch management adding to the overall cost of ownership. Most of the servers in conventional traditional production environments are able to run well below optimal memory, CPU and disk usage. Having a Green Computing Strategy is not an abandonment of the logical model, merely the physical model. Where servers are generally underused,

b. Virtualization can be utilized to divide one physical machine into several virtual servers

From an environmentally friendly point of view the overall effect is typically a significant decrease in power and air conditioning needs saving money and energy and therefore lowering the carbon footprint of the server estate. Applying Virtualization to Save Power and Disposal Needs of Desktops Virtualization of desktops can be an emotive topic. The mention of removing users PCs and replacing those dumb terminals easily start a mutiny! However this is simply fear of change and the reality can be very different. Virtualization of the desktop basically does mean replacing PCs with dumb terminals the reality is that users PCs are migrated to virtual PCs running on the server estate. Nothing need be lost from the PC, and better still for the user, the user's PC will follow them around wherever they go, whether they are in the office, working from home or even the other side of the globe. If they have remote access it is relatively simple to enable them to run their virtual PC from anywhere. Boot times can also be dramatically reduced and the users instantly gain the resilience levels of the company's server platforms lower maintenance and cost of ownership. The green benefits of changing the desktop lie primarily in reduced power consumption, but also that dumb terminals will not need to be upgraded as often as PCs so purchasing and equipment disposal requirements are reduced. By reducing maintenance requirements and also centralizing maintenance we are also able to reduce traveling engineers and support workers, cutting their carbon footprints in the process.

c. Replacing Paper Systems with On-line Communication Systems

Reducing paper purchasing and consumption helps to reduce consumption of forests, as well as reducing toner requirements and maintenance requirements on printing equipment. It is important to remember that by reducing any purchasing that the operating company's carbon footprint can be reduced as manufacture and supply of virtually any commercial goods typically carries high levels of carbon emissions.

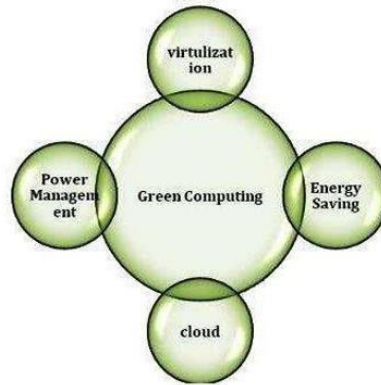
d. Reducing Travel Requirements of Staff, Customers and Suppliers

For many organizations the level of travel required can be challenged for staff, customers and suppliers. In recent years we have seen a large upturn in commuting and traveling requirements for employees due to enhanced infrastructure and the general ease of mobility. This has clearly generated substantial increases in carbon emissions and can often provide an area for substantial savings. The implications for the CTO (Chief Technological Officer) may mean improving remote working technologies, setting up conference calling facilities, or video conferencing, or investment in web cams through to adoption of instant messaging software to allow better remote communications. These technologies are all relatively inexpensive and can easily be justified against the costs of traveling.

VI. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Like other devices, computers have created significant environmental issues. Hazardous substances that damage the environment, such as lead, mercury, and arsenic, are found in computers. It is understandable that more use of electricity by computers is responsible for the global warming, CO₂ emissions, and energy issue. A few computers end up in landfills once their life is over. Looking for methods of utilizing green computing in resolving the largest environmental and health concerns affecting mankind has been necessitated as data centers continue to increase in size and demand additional servers in order to suffice for the needs of air-conditioning and ventilation machines.

This has raised energy demand and the quantity of toxic and harmful chemicals such as lead, cadmium, and mercury.



VII. CHALLENGES

As per analysts, previously the key emphasis in computing has been on efficiency of performance and minimizing IT equipment and infrastructure-related costs. Previously, these resources were cheap and easily accessible. But with increasing demand for computing capability, escalating energy prices, and heightened concerns regarding global warming, the IT infrastructure is now a primary bottleneck. This change poses an enormous challenge for the IT sector. Therefore, researchers today are giving more importance to aspects such as the consumption of power, cooling mechanisms, and optimized usage of data center space. On one hand, the demand for greater processing capability is still essential to companies, and on the other, there is a pressing need to respond to environmental issues and infrastructure constraints [9]. The problems of green computing extend not just to the users of IT equipment but also to the manufacturers of IT equipment. Several top vendors have taken great leaps in this field. For example, Hewlett-Packard (HP) recently introduced what it describes as “the greenest computer ever”—the HP rp5700 desktop PC. This system outdoes the US Energy Star 40 norms, with a life expectancy of more than five years, and constructed using 90% recyclable material [3]. Likewise, Dell has accelerated its efforts in minimizing the consumption of toxic substances in its products. Their newest Dell OptiPlex desktops are 50% more energy-efficient than similar models introduced in 2005, owing to innovations such as energy-efficient processors and enhanced power management capabilities [3]. IBM too is pushing in the right direction by innovating cost-saving and efficient solar cells, besides other green IT solutions. According to green computing researchers, several key challenges still remain, which continue to hinder the full implementation of eco-friendly computing practices.

High Equipment Power Density and Limitations in Power and Cooling Capacity:

Modern IT equipment often requires high power density, placing a strain on existing power and cooling infrastructure, making it difficult to maintain optimal performance and efficiency.

Rising Energy Demands and Costs in Data Centers:

As data centers continue to expand to meet growing computational needs, their energy consumption is increasing rapidly, resulting in higher operational costs and greater environmental impact.

Escalating Demand for Heat Removal Systems:

The increased power usage by IT equipment leads to greater heat generation, which in turn necessitates more advanced and energy-consuming cooling systems to prevent overheating.

Lifecycle Management of IT Equipment (Cradle to Grave):

Managing the complete lifecycle of computing equipment— from manufacturing to disposal—poses a major challenge in terms of sustainability, requiring better planning, design, and recycling strategies.

Electronic Waste Disposal:

The improper disposal of obsolete electronic devices contributes to environmental pollution due to the presence of toxic substances, underscoring the need for responsible e- waste management practices.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Green computing has become a vital approach in today's technology-driven world. As computer use and data center usage grows, the footprint that IT puts on the environment like high power usage, emissions, and waste generated by electronic goods has greatly escalated.

Green computing aims at keeping this impact small through practices of sustainability like implementing energy-efficient systems, recycling promotion, using minimal hazardous substances, and applying virtualization and cloud computing.

Adopting green computing techniques not only assists in safeguarding the environment but also provides business-oriented advantages in the form of cost reduction, efficient use of energy, and reputation enhancement.

It facilitates long-term resilience, disaster recovery, and sustainable development within a competitive market.

The way forward for green computing is continued research and innovation particularly in increasing energy efficiency within data centers, proper e-waste disposal, and adopting renewable energy resources.

Cooperation among people, corporations, and governments is necessary to bring these about.

Overall, green computing is an environmental and moral imperative.

By embracing green IT, we can lower our carbon footprint, minimize our consumption of resources, and help create a cleaner, greener world for generations to come.

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