Editorial

Greening the net: why is it important to global health greening the internet and its implications for human health?

Abstract

Technology advancements like the rise in internet usage have had a negative influence on the environment, which then has an impact on people. All kinds of mobile devices and online activities increase pollution that some people are unaware of. Greenhouse gases are being emitted into the atmosphere that calls for the attention of the population at a large scale. Carbon neutrality and ways to minimize carbon emissions are explored together with countries who are working towards making the nation greener.

Keywords: internet pollution, carbon dioxide, greenhouse, carbon neutrality, environment, technology

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Introduction

Environmental pollution is increasing gradually and causing harmful effects on living organisms. Numerous initiatives have taken place in order to protect the environment and decrease the irreparable damage pollutants are causing, one of which is Greening.[1] Greening is the action of making the environment more friendly by reducing dependency on resources that are depleting such as fossil fuels, water, oil and nuclear energy. Environmental sustainability and climate action represent the fundamental issue that should be tackled. Despite knowing the term "eco-friendly," it is seen that people do not give it much thought.[2]

Eco friendly surfing

Moreover, while surfing the internet seems like a harmless activity, it should also be made "eco-friendly".[3] Present days technological advances have transformed the way we work and live. Despite the fact that the internet has many advantages for our society, it is important to remember that the internet also contributes to harmful pollution, uses energy, and produces e-waste. The world is under new stress as a result of these enduring problems. It is becoming more and more popular to switch to green net in order to increase the benefits and lessen the negative consequences of modern technology.

Environmental impact

The pollution due to the internet trafficking is just as harmful as urban air pollution. The internet, mobile devices like smartphones and tablets, streaming, emails, and so forth, all contribute to pollution in ways we cannot see. Consequently, the majority of people understand how to use the Internet but are unaware of its negative consequences. A solo Google search produces about 0.2 grams of CO_2 whereas; a single email can have a carbon footprint of 0.03 to 26 grams. Lack of knowledge about how consumers' digital activity and excessive use of technology causes pollution adds to the inaction of people about the issue. However, the majority of individuals are inactive, which is interpreted as them being unaware of this knowledge, resulting in 1.6 billion tons of greenhouse gas emissions per year.[4]

Net zero

Carbon neutrality is a state of net-zero carbon dioxide emissions. It can be achieved by either educating societies to stop emitting emissions or by balancing out carbon dioxide internet emissions. Although a limited number of the populations has started using the internet in a way that conserves energy and reduces their carbon footprints, ranging from websites, emails, files, and packages. Most of the time, it's not enough. Most people and companies' renewable energy instead of fossil fuel electricity.

A significant fraction of resource consumption comes from our digital performances like sending emails, using search engines, as well as storing and saving data consequently emmiting 2% of the overall CO_2 emission. A website with 100,000 page views per month would emit 2,112kg of CO_2 annually, according to the online carbon calculator Website Carbon, which estimates that the average website emits 1.76g of CO_2 for every page view. It is extremely upsetting to know that Internet users are ignorant to this matter which might have long-lasting environmental and well-being damage.

Green websites

Websites with low carbon emissions work by lowering the weight of the web page weight. The removal of old fonts, as well as the use of filler photos and auto playing videos. Other easy ways for reducing page weight include using caching to free up space, making sure code is clean and simple, and getting rid of third-party tracking scripts. The website can be made carbon neutral and greener by following steps such as eliminating anything that is not necessary, review media to reduce your page's file size and by switching to a green host.

Making a contribution towards preventing the most harmful effects of the Internet on the Earth should be carried out by each individual.

Simple actions like cleaning up your inbox at the end of the week, unsubscribing from spam emails, and the drive to improve eco-friendly internet habits can thus result to less greenhouse emissions since keeping those emails uses electricity and water, both producing greenhouse gases causing negative health symptoms like fatigue, dizziness, headaches, disorientation, flushing of the skin, and even respiratory difficulty.

The largest internet companies are substantial polluters. Since 2007, according to Google, its net operational carbon emissions have been zero. To achieve this, the internet giant purchased an equal amount of carbon offsets and renewable energy. Another company that is net-zero is Sinopec, which fell into this category in 2021 which at the time seemed unthinkable. In the year 2019, Amazon unveiled its "Climate Pledge." The e-commerce giant pledged to achieve carbon neutrality by 2040 as part of the plan. It indicates that the businesses that use energy use offsets and other ecologically friendly measures, and that their servers are powered by renewable energy that helps the environment. They are a good example for others to follow, which may result in a reduction in CO_2 emissions into the atmosphere.[5]

Global efforts

Actions taken toward making communities greener should be given importance to contribute towards the health of the people and the planet simultaneously. Achieving a carbon dioxide balance can help lessen climate change, improve air quality and prevent adverse health effects. One of the first countries that has reached carbon negative state is also one of the countries voted as the happiest, Bhutan which may correlate to higher life expectancy. However, it should be noted that there are numerous other factors affecting life expectancy such as socioeconomic status.

It has been noted that Bhutan generally absorbs more CO_2 from the atmosphere than it alreleases, consequently becoming carbon neutral. Although it is not easy, this landlocked country showed us that it is doable and not at all impossible. Japan, Korea, Canada, and New Zealand have passed laws committing to achieving net zero by 2050 while Ireland and Fiji have proposed legislation. The UK has a legally binding net zero target by 2050 and targets to reduce emissions by almost 80% by 2035.

Every package delivered should also be made carbon neutral, for all consumers, at no extra cost for them. Companies can do that by measuring the overall CO_2 emissions, by striving to reduce them, and by offsetting the remaining emissions. It can be achieved by monitoring CO_2 emissions, making efforts to cut them, and compensating for any emissions that remain. This shows that it is everyone's collective responsibility to put in the effort to lessen the adverse effects of the surplus of carbon dioxide, especially big companies that emit large amounts.

A website's energy consumption and environmental impact increase with its complexity. Sustainable websites should be created with the well-being of society, the environment, and business in mind. Making use of the least amount of renewable energy while operating like Google and Sinopec, for an example. They should also be moral, add value, and not exploitative. This is important because in addition to other health measures, going green will be more efficient and benefit more people in a global perspective.

Conclusion

It is not enough to know the steps we can take on how to be eco-friendly when it comes to using the Internet but also why these are necessary even for the average person who goes online. People's collective efforts, as well as greener websites, cleaner inboxes, and carbon neutral packages, will go a long way. Knowledge about Internet pollution must be brought to light to have informed citizens that support measures toward emission reduction projects. Internet use's negative effects on the environment, including climate risks and problems, can be lessened, which in turn will improve individual health and have a good impact on health in a global capacity.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declares that there are no conflict of interest.

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