**Intelligent Materials and Innovations for Eco-Friendly Concrete Construction**

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**Abstract:** This article provides an all-encompassing analysis of prevailing patterns and prospects within the realm of eco-conscious concrete construction. The focal point is on the imperative adoption of environmentally friendly methodologies to curtail the ecological repercussions associated with the construction industry. The investigation explores sustainable materials and technologies, such as eco-friendly concrete, supplementary cementitious substances, permeable concrete, temperature-regulating concrete, and the incorporation of locally procured materials. Furthermore, it investigates groundbreaking innovations such as self-healing concrete, 3D-printed concrete, photocatalytic concrete, electrified equipment, and the principles of carbon capture, utilization, and storage, highlighting their potential to enhance the sustainability of construction processes. The research also addresses the challenges that arise during the implementation of sustainable concrete construction practices, encompassing technical, economic, and societal barriers. It examines the roles played by governments, industry stakeholders, and academia in driving sustainable concrete construction, emphasizing the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration and dedicated research endeavors. Finally, the discussion identifies emerging trends and technologies, including digitization, data-driven methodologies, and circular economy principles, as pivotal forces in shaping the path towards sustainable concrete construction.

**Keywords:** Sustainable concrete construction, Smart materials, Eco-friendly concrete, Permeable concrete, Self-repairing concrete, Photocatalytic concrete, Phase change materials, Strategic management.

**Introduction**

The history of concrete spans millennia, showcasing humanity's ingenuity and adaptability in shaping the built environment. Beginning with rudimentary mixtures used by ancient Egyptians and refined by Greeks and Romans, concrete evolved into a transformative technology during the Roman era, enabling colossal structures like the Colosseum and the Pantheon. The Dark Ages and Renaissance saw a resurgence of interest in classical architecture, which led to renewed experimentation. The Industrial Revolution brought about the invention of cement, paving the way for modern concrete, while the 20th century witnessed the rise of high-strength concrete and innovative techniques like pre-stressed concrete. Today, concrete continues to advance, addressing sustainability and aesthetic concerns, thus ensuring its enduring role in constructing the architectural marvels of the future.

Concrete is a versatile and durable construction material that has been used for centuries. It is the second most consumed substance in the world, after water. Concrete is made from cement, water, aggregates (such as sand and gravel), and admixtures (such as fly ash and slag).The production of cement is a major source of carbon dioxide emissions. The cement industry accounts for about 7-8% of global CO2 emissions. This is because the production of cement requires a lot of energy and heat.

The use of concrete also contributes to the depletion of natural resources, such as aggregates and water. Aggregates are mined from quarries, which can have a negative impact on the environment. Water is also a limited resource, and its use in concrete production can contribute to water scarcity.Despite its environmental impact, concrete can be a sustainable material. There are a number of ways to reduce the environmental impact of concrete production and use.

These include:

* Using low-carbon cements, such as blended cements and geopolymers.
* Using recycled materials, such as fly ash and slag.
* Reducing the amount of water used in concrete production.
* Designing concrete structures to be more energy-efficient.

The construction industry is committed to reducing the environmental impact of concrete. There is a growing trend towards the use of sustainable concrete, and the industry is developing new technologies to make concrete production more environmentally friendly.

The swift pace of urbanization and the expanding global population are driving the need for increased infrastructure and housing, intensifying the ecological repercussions of the construction sector. In the face of persistent challenges posed by climate change and limited resources, there arises a pressing imperative for the development of more environmentally sound approaches within concrete construction.

In response to these challenges, the construction sector is actively engaged in the exploration and integration of more sustainable methods and materials into concrete construction practices. This transition is driven by the goal of mitigating the environmental impact associated with concrete production, extending the longevity of structures, and minimizing resource consumption. Collaboration among researchers, industry specialists, and policymakers is propelling the development and advocacy of innovative technologies, materials, and approaches capable of significantly reducing carbon emissions, energy usage, and waste generation in concrete construction.

One notable example of such efforts is the introduction of a climate-neutral concrete roadmap in 2018 by the Swedish concrete industry through The Concrete Initiative—a network comprising stakeholders spanning the concrete production and construction sectors. Key objectives of this initiative include achieving a 50% reduction in the climate impact of concrete used in housing construction by 2023 (compared to 1990 levels), introducing climate-neutral concrete to the Swedish market by 2030, and ultimately achieving full climate neutrality within the concrete industry by 2045. Similarly, a parallel roadmap within the Swedish construction and civil engineering sector outlines ambitious goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 50% by 2030 (relative to 2015 levels) and achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045.

The importance of sustainability in concrete construction has been emphasized by global agreements such as the Paris Agreement and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These international accords call for immediate measures to combat climate change and promote sustainable development.

In light of escalating apprehensions about climate change, dwindling resources, and waste accumulation, there has been a surge in the establishment of ecologically conscious methodologies. A pivotal facet of this transition involves incorporating sustainable components into concrete construction. Consequently, an array of inventive materials and technologies has emerged, all with the goal of diminishing the environmental impact of concrete construction, amplifying its resilience and efficacy, and ultimately augmenting the sustainability of the constructed landscape.

**Green concrete** encompasses a range of concrete blends that incorporate recycled materials, waste by-products, and eco-friendly components. The objective behind these mixtures is to reduce the use of natural resources, lower carbon emissions associated with cement manufacturing, and alleviate the environmental impact of concrete construction. Examples of materials used in green concrete include recycled aggregates, supplementary cementitious materials, and industrial residues such as fly ash and slag**.** Another approach promoting sustainability involves the utilization of locally sourced materials, resulting in notable reductions in transportation-related emissions and energy consumption. Additionally, local materials frequently possess distinct characteristics that can bolster the strength and longevity of concrete structures. Illustrative examples encompass limestone calcined clay cement, which functions as a partial substitute for conventional cement, and the incorporation of natural fibers or aggregates, facilitating the development of more sustainable and cost-efficient concrete blends.

**Permeable concrete** is a specialized form of concrete engineered to facilitate the passage of water through its structure, effectively diminishing storm water runoff and promoting the replenishment of groundwater. This inventive material assumes a pivotal role in advancing sustainable urban development, offering solutions for mitigating urban heat island impacts, lowering flood risks, and enhancing water quality. Beyond its environmental merits, permeable concrete presents potential advantages such as reduced construction expenses and maintenance needs, potentially obviating conventional storm water management systems like gutters, drains, and retention ponds. Another eco-conscious material, cool concrete, is devised to curtail the environmental imprint of concrete construction. This variation of concrete incorporates reflective or light-coloured components, which help reduce heat absorption, thereby lowering the surface temperature of concrete structures. This cooling feature can effectively counter urban heat island effects and help reduce energy consumption for cooling buildings. Furthermore, the use of cool concrete has the added benefit of enhancing the durability of concrete structures by mitigating thermal stress and preventing cracking caused by temperature fluctuations.

**Ultra High Performance Concrete (UHPC)** is a precisely formulated cementitious mixture known for its exceptional mechanical properties, high strength, enhanced fire resistance, and long-lasting durability.UHPC's exceptional performance not only allows for optimized material usage in projects, thereby lessening the ecological impact of concrete construction, but also brings about prolonged sustainability. The heightened durability inherent to UHPC contributes to an elongated lifespan for concrete structures, subsequently curbing the necessity for maintenance, repairs, and replacements. This material's potential benefits extend to enhanced energy efficiency and thermal qualities in buildings, stemming from its formidable strength and minimal permeability.

In tandem with eco-friendly materials, the concrete construction sector is actively pursuing ground-breaking technologies and methodologies to enhance the sustainability, functionality, and efficiency of structures. The adoption of these emerging practices plays a crucial role in the industry's ongoing efforts to reduce its environmental footprint and enhance the resilience of built environments. One noteworthy innovation is self-healing concrete, which incorporates substances or agents that enable autonomous repair in response to damage. This advancement extends structural lifespan, diminishes upkeep demands, and curbs the requirement for resource-intensive repairs. Utilizing additive manufacturing techniques, 3D-printed concrete constructs intricate structural elements with precision and efficiency, leading to reduced material consumption and waste generation. Additionally, it enables the creation of complex geometries that would be challenging to achieve using conventional methods.

Photocatalytic concrete introduces photocatalytic components that break down pollutants and organic compounds on the concrete surface when exposed to sunlight, thus improving air quality and fostering a cleaner environment. By combining the structural strength of reinforced concrete with the energy efficiency of high-performance insulation materials, insulated concrete forms deliver energy savings and increased thermal comfort within buildings. Incorporating waste-derived fuels such as biomass or industrial refuse in cement production offers a potential alternative to traditional fossil fuels, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions and the overall carbon footprint of concrete construction.

**2 Sustainable materials in concrete construction**

**2.1 Green concrete**

The term "green concrete" has gained increasing prominence in recent years, representing the use of environmentally enhanced materials in concrete construction. This concept centers on the adoption of eco-friendly components and processes to mitigate the environmental impact of both concrete manufacturing and building activities. The production of green concrete involves a variety of approaches, including the utilization of recycled aggregates, industrial by-products, and alternative binders. These methods collectively contribute to a reduced carbon footprint and more responsible consumption of natural resources. This category of concrete is also known as ecological concrete or climate-improved concrete. It encompasses practices such as the incorporation of Supplementary Cementitious Materials (SCM), the application of Geopolymer concrete, and the utilization of Alkali-activated concrete.

**2.2 Permeable concrete**

Permeable concrete, also known as pervious concrete, represents an innovative technology and approach in concrete construction designed to allow water to pass through its structure. This method promotes natural drainage while simultaneously reducing surface runoff. This type of concrete stands out due to its increased porosity, achieved by minimizing the inclusion of fine aggregates or sand in the mixture and increasing the proportion of coarse aggregates. This results in interconnected voids within the concrete, facilitating the unimpeded flow of water. Consequently, permeable concrete emerges as an environmentally conscious option for various construction applications.

Permeable concrete, exemplified by its ability to enable water infiltration through pavements and into the soil, plays a pivotal role in managing stormwater runoff. This characteristic aids in diminishing the potential for flooding, erosion, and water contamination. Additionally, this natural drainage mechanism contributes to replenishing groundwater reserves and lessening the necessity for extensive stormwater infrastructure. The permeable nature of such pavements also fosters the filtration of water, effectively sieving out pollutants like oil, heavy metals, and sediments. This action prevents their entry into water bodies and the subsequent exacerbation of water pollution.

Permeable concrete, with its porous composition, serves as an effective solution against the urban heat island effect. It achieves this by promoting evaporative cooling and reducing heat absorption by paved surfaces. Moreover, the porosity of permeable concrete prevents water from accumulating on its surface, reducing the risk of hydroplaning. This characteristic also enhances skid resistance, improving safety for both pedestrians and vehicles in wet weather conditions. One significant advantage of permeable concrete is its lower maintenance requirements compared to traditional non-porous pavements. This is mainly because it eliminates the need for stormwater drainage systems like curbs, gutters, and storm drains. As a result, property owners and municipalities can potentially benefit from reduced maintenance costs and long-term expenses. Typically, routine cleaning activities such as vacuum sweeping or pressure washing are sufficient to maintain the infiltration capacity of permeable concrete pavements.

However, despite its many benefits, permeable concrete also comes with challenges and limitations. Its increased porosity and relatively lower strength, compared to conventional concrete, make it less suitable for applications involving heavy loads or areas with high traffic flow. Nevertheless, it remains an excellent choice for low-traffic areas like parking lots, sidewalks, residential streets, and other lightly used spaces. Over time, sediment, debris, or organic matter can accumulate within the voids of permeable concrete, reducing its infiltration capacity (Singh et al., 2020). To address this, regular maintenance, including vacuum sweeping or pressure washing, is essential to preserve the concrete's permeability and ensure long-lasting performance. In certain cases, the inclusion of geotextiles or filter layers beneath the permeable concrete can help prevent clogging and maintain infiltration capacity.

In regions that experience freeze-thaw cycles, the effectiveness of permeable concrete can be affected by the expansion and contraction of water within its interconnected voids. This dynamic can lead to a reduction in strength, durability, and overall performance. However, careful mix design and the incorporation of air-entraining admixtures can enhance the freeze-thaw resistance and extend the service life of permeable concrete structures. It's worth noting that the installation costs for permeable concrete may exceed those of traditional impermeable pavements due to the specialized mix formulation and installation techniques required. Nevertheless, this initial investment can potentially be offset by the reduced need for stormwater infrastructure and long-term maintenance cost savings.

**2.3 Cool concrete**

Cool concrete, alternatively referred to as high-albedo or reflective concrete, embodies an innovative technological and methodological advancement in the realm of concrete construction. Its primary objective is to mitigate the urban heat island (UHI) effect by incorporating materials with heightened solar reflectance, either within the concrete mixture itself or through surface coatings. This type of concrete is distinguished by its capacity to redirect a larger portion of solar radiation back into the atmosphere, leading to significantly cooler surface temperatures in comparison to conventional concrete. In addressing the UHI effect, cool concrete makes valuable contributions toward fostering sustainable and comfortable urban surroundings, while concurrently aiding in the reduction of energy consumption related to building cooling requirements.

Cool concrete effectively combats the urban heat island (UHI) effect by reducing the temperature of paved areas, including sidewalks, parking lots, and roadways. This outcome leads to more comfortable outdoor environments, improved air quality, and reduced heat stress on urban ecosystems. By decreasing the heat absorption of paved surfaces, cool concrete significantly contributes to lowering the cooling requirements for nearby buildings, resulting in energy savings and reduced greenhouse gas emissions. The lower surface temperatures associated with cool concrete also offer the added advantage of extending the lifespan of pavements by minimizing thermal stress and temperature-related issues such as cracking or expansion. Moreover, the cooler pavement surfaces play a role in reducing the temperature of stormwater runoff, thereby protecting aquatic ecosystems from thermal pollution and enhancing the overall quality of urban water bodies.

While cool concrete offers significant advantages, it does face challenges and limitations. The integration of high-albedo materials or specialized coatings in cool concrete may result in higher initial costs compared to traditional concrete. However, the long-term benefits of reduced energy consumption, increased durability, and improved environmental efficiency could potentially offset these initial expenditures. Over time, the surface of cool concrete can accumulate dirt, dust, and other pollutants, reducing its solar reflectance and, consequently, its cooling effectiveness. To maintain the high-albedo characteristics and ensure the ongoing performance of cool concrete, regular cleaning and maintenance practices become essential. Additionally, the selection of materials with elevated solar reflectance can present constraints, as some high-albedo substances may not offer the same strength or durability as traditional concrete components. Further research and development are necessary to identify and develop suitable high-albedo materials capable of meeting both performance and sustainability requirements in cool concrete applications. It's important to note that cool concrete surfaces may have a lighter color or different appearance compared to traditional concrete, which may not align with all architectural aesthetics or urban surroundings. Consequently, incorporating cool concrete into specific projects requires an additional layer of consideration, taking into account aesthetic preferences and compatibility with design elements.

Cool concrete is expected to become increasingly significant as both a technology and methodology in concrete construction, opening up new opportunities for mitigating the urban heat island effect and promoting sustainable urban development. By addressing the challenges and limitations associated with cool concrete, including aspects such as initial costs, maintenance, material selection, and aesthetic considerations, the construction industry can harness the full potential of this innovative material. In doing so, it can play a pivotal role in creating more sustainable and pleasant urban environments.

**2.4 Ultra-high-performance concrete (UHPC)**

Ultra High Performance Concrete (UHPC) has surfaced as a compelling and eco-friendly option in concrete construction, boasting considerable advantages vis-à-vis conventional concrete. UHPC stands as a meticulously crafted, fiber-reinforced cementitious amalgam distinguished by its extraordinary mechanical attributes, heightened strength, and robust longevity. Such characteristics render UHPC a captivating material for a diverse array of construction applications. Be it bridges, buildings, or infrastructure undertakings, UHPC's capabilities prove particularly enticing where augmented performance and sustainability are the desired outcomes.

One outstanding advantage of UHPC lies in its remarkable strength and durability, which can lead to reduced material requirements for a given project (Meng et al., 2017). This reduction in material consumption offers a dual benefit. Firstly, it contributes to an overall reduction in the environmental impact of concrete construction, as it reduces the demand for energy and resources in production, transportation, and installation. Secondly, the enhanced durability of UHPC results in extended service lifespans for concrete structures, reducing the need for maintenance, repairs, and eventual replacements. This ripple effect leads to a decrease in the consumption of raw materials, energy, and emissions associated with concrete construction in the long term.

Another noteworthy advantage of UHPC lies in its potential to improve the energy efficiency and thermal performance of buildings while enhancing fire safety measures. Due to its formidable strength and minimal permeability, UHPC can act as an efficient insulator for buildings, effectively reducing heat transfer and thereby lowering energy consumption for heating and cooling systems. This, in turn, contributes to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions linked to building operations, supporting global efforts to combat climate change. Additionally, UHPC's low permeability enhances the resilience of concrete structures against environmental factors such as freeze-thaw cycles and chloride intrusion, increasing their longevity and reducing maintenance requirements.

The versatility and adaptability of UHPC are crucial to its role as a promising sustainable construction material. Its composition can be finely tuned to align with specific applications and performance requirements, enabling the development of innovative and eco-friendly construction solutions. UHPC seamlessly integrates with other materials, including recycled aggregates, supplementary cementitious materials, and natural fibers, to create hybrid materials with enhanced properties and reduced environmental footprints. This adaptability forms the foundation for the creation of innovative, sustainable concrete solutions capable of meeting the evolving needs of the construction industry.

While UHPC offers numerous advantages, several challenges and barriers must be overcome to unlock its full potential as a sustainable construction material. The primary among these challenges is the substantial cost of UHPC, especially when compared to traditional concrete, which poses a significant obstacle to its widespread adoption. This higher cost is mainly attributed to UHPC's complex composition, which includes specialized fibers, admixtures, and fine aggregates.

**2.5 Use of local materials**

Incorporating indigenous materials into concrete construction is a crucial aspect of sustainable development, as it effectively reduces environmental impacts, lowers transportation costs, and supports the local economy. Utilizing locally available materials in concrete formulations provides a pathway to enhance the sustainability of construction projects while still meeting the required performance and durability standards. There are various local material options that can be employed in concrete construction, including natural aggregates, recycled aggregates, natural pozzolans, locally sourced fibers, and indigenous binders.

Aggregates are a fundamental component of concrete production. Sourcing these materials from nearby quarries and deposits results in reduced emissions from transportation and lower energy consumption. By choosing locally available aggregates, the resulting concrete mix can be better tailored to the specific environmental conditions, such as freeze-thaw cycles, salt exposure, or soil characteristics in the region. Incorporating recycled aggregates, such as crushed concrete, brick, or glass, promotes resource conservation and reduces waste. These recycled materials can be obtained from local sources of construction and demolition waste, thereby repurposing them in new concrete blends and reducing the need for excessive aggregate extraction.

Certain regions are endowed with natural pozzolanic materials like volcanic ash or calcined clays, which can serve as supplementary cementitious materials. These indigenous resources can replace a portion of Portland cement in concrete mixtures, thereby reducing the environmental impacts and resource depletion associated with cement production. Using locally sourced fibers, whether natural (such as sisal, coir, or jute) or derived from local industries (such as steel fibers from industrial waste), can enhance concrete performance and promote sustainability. These fibers can be incorporated into concrete mixes to improve tensile strength, increase crack resistance, enhance durability, and reduce dependence on synthetic fibers or imported materials. In some geographical areas, alternative binders that partially or entirely replace Portland cement may be available. Examples include locally produced lime, natural hydraulic limes, or indigenous geopolymers. Utilizing these region-specific binding agents reduces the carbon footprint of concrete production and supports the local economy.

Limestone Calcined Clay Cement (LC3) is an innovative and environmentally conscious cementitious material that has gained attention as a viable alternative to traditional Portland cement in concrete construction. LC3 combines clinker, calcined clay, limestone, and gypsum, resulting in reduced carbon emissions and lower energy consumption during its production compared to conventional cement. Using LC3 in concrete construction offers several advantages over traditional materials. It leverages locally available raw materials like limestone and clay, effectively reducing transportation costs and associated emissions. Furthermore, the lower calcination temperature of clay in LC3 production leads to reduced energy consumption and carbon dioxide emissions. LC3 not only demonstrates comparable or even superior mechanical and durability properties in certain compositions compared to conventional Portland cement but also has the potential to address the increasing demand for cement by efficiently utilizing abundant clay resources, thereby relieving the pressure on clinker production.

Utilizing local materials in concrete construction offers numerous benefits. Sourcing materials locally helps reduce emissions related to transportation, lower energy consumption, and decrease the overall carbon footprint associated with construction projects. Incorporating indigenous materials promotes resource conservation and waste reduction by encouraging the repurposing and reuse of locally abundant resources, including waste and by-products from nearby industries. Supporting local suppliers and industries revitalizes the regional economy, fosters job creation, and promotes the adoption of sustainable construction practices within the area. Local materials often align well with regional environmental conditions, potentially resulting in structures with increased resilience and suitability for addressing the specific challenges and requirements of the area. However, it is essential to ensure that the use of local materials does not compromise the quality and performance of the concrete. Rigorous testing, comprehensive characterization, and meticulous mix design are essential to ensure that the desired attributes and durability requirements are met while harnessing the potential of locally available materials in concrete construction.

**3. Innovative technologies and practices**

**3.1 Self-Healing Concrete**

Self-healing concrete stands as a groundbreaking technology and methodology within concrete construction, holding the promise of bolstering the longevity, functionality, and sustainability of concrete structures. This innovation centers on the idea of empowering concrete to independently mend cracks and impairments, thereby elongating the operational lifespan of structures while concurrently curtailing the demand for maintenance and repairs.

The capacity of self-healing concrete to autonomously mend cracks and address damage plays a pivotal role in extending the operational longevity of structures, concurrently diminishing the vulnerability to corrosion and other modes of deterioration. As the requirement for manual inspections, upkeep, and repair interventions is lessened, self-healing concrete effectively ushers in noteworthy cost efficiencies throughout a structure's lifespan. The extension of concrete structures' service life, coupled with a decreased reliance on maintenance and repairs, significantly contributes to the mitigation of resource utilization, waste production, and the overarching environmental footprint.

Although presenting promising advantages, self-healing concrete technologies encounter certain challenges and constraints. These include the translation of successful laboratory outcomes to real-world scenarios, the endurance and dependability of self-healing mechanisms over extended periods, and the augmented initial expenses incurred during technology implementation. Overcoming these hurdles and fully harnessing the potential of self-healing concrete within the construction sector necessitates the imperative of intensified research and development efforts. Additionally, comprehensive full-scale trials and on-field demonstrations are essential to navigate these challenges and unlock the complete potential of self-healing concrete.

**3.2 3D Printed Concrete**

3D-printed concrete emerges as a pioneering technology and approach within concrete construction, characterized by the utilization of computer-controlled robotic systems to strategically layer concrete material according to a preconceived digital design. This process encompasses the creation of structural elements and, in some instances, entire edifices. Referred to as additive manufacturing or digital fabrication, this technology harbors the capacity to transform the construction sector by ushering in a myriad of advantages spanning efficiency, tailored design, and sustainability.

The potential of 3D printing to notably truncate construction timelines in contrast to conventional approaches is noteworthy. This technology facilitates the concurrent fabrication of multiple components or structures. Moreover, it curtails the requirement for manual labor and formwork, fostering heightened efficiency and diminished labor expenses. By embracing 3D printing, intricate and intricate geometries can be actualized, a feat often challenging or unattainable through traditional construction techniques. This unfetters design latitude, endowing customization and an avenue for pioneering architectural concepts that optimize both structural efficacy and material utilization.

3D printing has the potential to significantly reduce material waste by precisely depositing concrete only in necessary areas, thereby minimizing raw material consumption and the generation of construction debris. This innovation enables the creation of optimized, lightweight structures, effectively reducing the overall material demand required for achieving desired structural efficiency. The resulting decrease in material usage, waste production, and labor requirements associated with 3D-printed concrete makes a substantial contribution to promoting a more sustainable construction sector. Additionally, this technology could potentially facilitate the incorporation of recycled components or innovative environmentally friendly materials into concrete mixtures, further enhancing the ecological performance of the resulting structures.

The challenges and limitations associated with 3D-printed concrete primarily revolve around technological and material aspects. Ongoing refinement of 3D printing systems, materials, and processes for concrete construction remains a focal point. Advances in areas such as robotic systems, printing speed, concrete mixture formulation, and curing methods are crucial for realizing the full potential of this technology. The integration of 3D-printed concrete into the construction sector requires the development of new codes, standards, and guidelines to ensure the quality, safety, and durability of the structures produced. The shift towards digital fabrication and automation may also require the retraining and upskilling of the construction workforce to effectively embrace new technologies, tools, and methodologies. While the long-term prospects of 3D printing include reduced labor and material costs, the initial investment in equipment and technology can be substantial.

With ongoing research and development, the trajectory of 3D-printed concrete is poised to rise, making it an increasingly essential technology and methodology in concrete construction. This evolution is set to bring about new opportunities for improved efficiency, customized design, and sustainability.

**3.3 Photocatalytic Concrete**

Photocatalytic concrete represents an innovative technology and approach in concrete construction, involving the incorporation of photocatalytic substances like titanium dioxide (TiO2) into the concrete mixture or surface coatings. When exposed to sunlight or ultraviolet (UV) radiation, these substances generate reactive oxygen species (ROS) capable of decomposing various pollutants such as nitrogen oxides (NOx), volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and particulate matter (PM). This inherent self-cleaning and air-purifying characteristic of photocatalytic concrete has the potential to improve air quality and promote enhanced sustainability in urban environments.

Despite its advantages, photocatalytic concrete does have certain challenges and limitations. The incorporation of photocatalytic materials like titanium dioxide can lead to higher initial costs compared to conventional concrete. However, the long-term benefits of improved air quality, reduced maintenance, and increased durability may potentially outweigh these initial expenses. Photocatalytic reactions require exposure to sunlight or ultraviolet radiation to initiate the generation of reactive oxygen species. The effectiveness of photocatalytic concrete may be reduced in shaded areas or during periods of limited light, such as cloudy days or nighttime. This limitation could restrict the overall performance of photocatalytic concrete in specific settings or situations.

Selecting the appropriate photocatalytic materials and effectively integrating them into the concrete mix or surface coating can present challenges. Factors such as particle size, distribution, and concentration can significantly impact the efficacy of photocatalytic concrete. Ongoing research and development are necessary to identify and refine suitable photocatalytic materials and formulations that can meet both performance and sustainability criteria across a range of construction applications. While photocatalytic concrete has the potential to improve air quality, it is important to note that the reactive oxygen species generated during photocatalytic reactions could potentially produce secondary pollutants or have adverse effects on nearby materials or ecosystems. Further investigations are essential to comprehensively understand and mitigate any potential environmental impacts associated with photocatalytic concrete.

**3.4. Insulated concrete forms**

Insulated Concrete Forms (ICFs) represent an innovative technology and practice in concrete construction. They involve the use of lightweight, interlocking foam forms to create a continuous insulation layer around cast-in-place concrete walls, as illustrated in Figure 5. After the concrete is poured and cured, the foam forms remain in place, providing a structurally robust and energy-efficient building enclosure. ICFs have gained significant popularity in both residential and commercial construction due to their numerous advantages over conventional construction methods. The thermal insulation provided by ICF walls is highly effective, resulting in significant reductions in heating and cooling requirements for buildings. Consequently, energy consumption decreases, greenhouse gas emissions are reduced, and occupants enjoy financial savings. The combination of concrete and foam insulation creates a strong, unified wall system capable of withstanding severe weather conditions such as hurricanes, tornadoes, and earthquakes, demonstrating remarkable resilience.

ICF walls serve as an effective barrier against the propagation of outdoor noise, fostering a tranquil indoor ambiance and enhancing occupants' comfort. The installation of ICFs is relatively straightforward and swift, often resulting in expedited construction timelines and diminished labor expenses in contrast to conventional methods. The concrete core inherent to ICF walls offers robust fire resistance, thus minimizing the likelihood of fire propagation within rooms or across neighboring structures.

The initial cost of ICF construction can exceed that of conventional methods due to expenses related to foam forms and specialized installation procedures. However, the long-term benefits of reduced energy consumption and lower maintenance costs could potentially offset these initial expenditures. While ICF construction can accommodate various architectural designs, intricate or unconventional shapes may be more challenging or expensive to achieve compared to traditional techniques. This may require additional coordination and planning between the design and construction teams to ensure that the desired architectural features align with ICF feasibility. Specialized training and skills are necessary for proper ICF installation, and these resources may not be readily available in all regions or markets. The scarcity of skilled contractors can result in higher labor costs or limited access to proficient professionals.

Insulated concrete forms (ICFs) hold the potential to become a significantly important technology and practice in concrete construction, offering new opportunities for energy-efficient and resilient building design. Ongoing advancements in material science, manufacturing methods, and construction approaches have the potential to enhance the effectiveness, cost-effectiveness, and versatility of ICF systems. Furthermore, integrating ICF construction with other sustainable strategies, such as incorporating recycled materials or using renewable energy sources, can elevate the overall environmental performance of concrete structures.

**3.5. Electrification**

The electrification of construction equipment and vehicles is an emerging and innovative technology within the construction industry. Its goal is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve energy efficiency, and decrease the overall environmental impact. Embracing electric-powered construction equipment and vehicles plays a pivotal role in advancing sustainable construction practices, aligning with global efforts to combat climate change and transition to more environmentally friendly energy alternatives.

However, the electrification of equipment and vehicles in concrete construction faces certain challenges. The initial cost of electric alternatives can often be higher than that of their diesel counterparts, potentially creating financial barriers for smaller construction firms and projects with limited budgets. Additionally, the availability of charging infrastructure, especially in remote construction sites, may be inadequate, impeding the effective implementation of electrification. Electric equipment and vehicles also tend to have shorter operational ranges and longer charging times compared to their diesel counterparts, which could impact productivity and scheduling on construction sites. Given the novelty of electric options in the concrete construction industry, concerns about their reliability, performance, and durability may also arise when compared to the more established diesel choices.

To address these challenges, ongoing research, development, and investment in electric equipment and vehicles are essential. Advances in battery technology and charging infrastructure must be pursued to enhance the practicality of electrification. Governments and industry stakeholders can contribute to this transition by providing incentives, subsidies, and regulatory frameworks that promote the adoption of electric equipment and vehicles in concrete construction. This comprehensive approach can help overcome obstacles and facilitate the sustainable integration of electrification in the industry.

**3.6. Waste-derived fuels**

Waste-derived fuels (WDFs) represent an innovative approach within concrete construction. This method involves using alternative fuels derived from various waste sources to replace conventional fossil fuels in the cement production process. These alternative fuels can come from a wide range of waste materials, including municipal solid waste, agricultural residues, industrial by-products, and discarded tires. The integration of WDFs in cement manufacturing has the potential to promote more sustainable construction practices. This is achieved by reducing dependence on fossil fuels, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions, while also advocating for effective waste management strategies.

Substituting conventional fossil fuels with waste-derived fuels (WDFs) has the potential to significantly reduce the carbon dioxide emissions associated with cement production. This can make a substantial contribution to the broader effort to mitigate climate change while helping the concrete industry achieve its sustainability goals. The use of waste materials as substitute fuels serves a dual purpose: diverting these materials away from landfills and incineration, thus promoting a circular economy and optimizing resource utilization. WDFs offer a valuable energy source for the cement manufacturing process, thereby reducing the industry's reliance on non-renewable fossil fuels and enhancing energy security. In some cases, the incorporation of WDFs can even lead to reduced fuel costs compared to conventional fossil fuels, providing economic advantages for cement producers. This becomes particularly evident when waste materials are readily available, and the costs associated with their disposal can be avoided or minimized.

While the use of waste-derived fuels (WDFs) in cement production offers significant benefits, it is not without its challenges and constraints. Incorporating WDFs may require adjustments to existing kiln systems, process controls, and specialized handling and storage solutions for waste materials. These technical adaptations can introduce initial investment costs and operational complexities for cement manufacturers. Additionally, the use of WDFs can be subject to a range of environmental regulations and permitting requirements, which can vary across different jurisdictions. Cement manufacturers must navigate these regulatory landscapes effectively to ensure compliance with standards and avoid potential fines or penalties.

Certainly, the adoption of waste-derived fuels (WDFs) in cement production should be approached with careful consideration due to potential air quality concerns. While WDFs can contribute to greenhouse gas emissions reduction, it's crucial to recognize that the combustion of certain waste materials may generate other air pollutants, including nitrogen oxides (NOx), sulfur oxides (SOx), and heavy metals. Therefore, thorough material selection and processing are essential to prevent unintended compromises in air quality standards. Public perception and community concerns are also factors to address when implementing WDFs. If concerns arise regarding potential air quality deterioration, public health impacts, or environmental harm, it's vital for cement manufacturers to engage in open and transparent communication with stakeholders. Such efforts can help alleviate skepticism and build public trust in the responsible use of WDFs. The heterogeneous composition of waste materials adds another layer of complexity. Given the variability of waste, ensuring consistent and appropriate fuel quality becomes crucial. This necessitates investments in advanced technologies and quality control measures to ensure that WDFs meet the necessary specifications, allowing for their effective and safe integration into cement production processes.

Effective collaboration among researchers, industry experts, policymakers, and relevant stakeholders plays a crucial role in advancing the use of fuels derived from waste in the production of cement. This entails the development and application of optimal approaches for the selection, treatment, and incineration of waste materials. It also involves the establishment of robust monitoring and quality assurance systems to ensure the safe and efficient use of waste-derived fuels. Additionally, integrating waste-derived fuel technology with other eco-friendly strategies and innovations in concrete construction, such as the incorporation of supplementary cementitious materials, carbon capture and utilization, and energy-efficient architectural design, has the potential to enhance the overall environmental impact of the industry. By promoting interdisciplinary research, sharing knowledge, and creating innovative solutions, the construction sector can work toward the successful adoption of waste-derived fuels and other sustainable methods, ultimately making a significant contribution to the development of a more resilient and sustainable built environment.

**4. Challenges and barriers**

The implementation of sustainable approaches in concrete construction introduces a range of technical, economic, and societal obstacles. It's essential to confront these challenges and overcome potential resistance to adoption in order to facilitate the broad incorporation of sustainable methodologies throughout the construction sector.

**4.1 Technical Challenges**

Enhancing the sustainability of concrete construction comes with a set of technical challenges, which encompass:

* Material Characteristics: The use of new materials like supplementary cementitious materials (SCMs) and alternative binders can result in different performance characteristics compared to traditional concrete. This may require additional research, development, and adjustments to construction methods to ensure optimal durability and performance.
* Emerging Innovations: Technologies such as self-healing concrete, carbon capture methods, and 3D printing need further refinement and extensive testing to establish their long-term reliability, efficiency, and overall effectiveness.
* System Synergy: Sustainable construction often involves seamlessly integrating various systems, including energy efficiency, renewable energy generation, and water management. Achieving this integration can be complex, necessitating intricate design and engineering solutions to ensure flawless operation and maximize the benefits.

**4.2. Economic challenges**

Challenges on the economic front for enhancing sustainability in concrete construction comprise:

* Initial Expenditure: Embracing sustainable concrete construction methods can involve greater upfront expenses due to the utilization of progressive materials and technologies. This aspect might serve as a hindrance to adoption, especially in markets sensitive to costs or for smaller ventures with constrained budgets.
* Acceptance in the Market: The construction industry typically adheres to conventional practices and may be hesitant to embrace new methods. Persuading stakeholders like developers, contractors, and clients about the long-term benefits of sustainable concrete construction can be challenging, especially when faced with higher initial costs..
* ROI Considerations: Sustainable construction often requires a longer-term perspective on return on investment (ROI). Stakeholders may hesitate to invest in sustainable methods if they don't see immediate financial benefits or perceive significant associated risks..

**4.3. Social challenges**

Social challenges in advancing sustainability in concrete construction encompass:

* Awareness and Education Gap: There may be a lack of understanding or awareness regarding the benefits associated with sustainable concrete construction, both among industry professionals and the general public. This knowledge gap could hinder the adoption of new practices, as stakeholders may not fully grasp their significance or their potential for long-term cost savings and environmental benefits.
* Skills and Training of the Workforce: Embracing sustainable concrete construction requires a workforce that is well-trained in new materials, technologies, and methods. The industry might face a shortage of skilled labor, which could slow down the widespread adoption of sustainable practices.
* Regulatory Challenges: Existing building codes, regulations, and standards may not fully support or accommodate sustainable concrete construction approaches. This situation could create difficulties for projects that aim to incorporate innovative materials and technologies, potentially resulting in regulatory obstacles or project delays.

**4.4. Potential ways to overcome challenges**

Potential strategies for tackling these challenges and barriers encompass:

* Investment in Research and Development: Ongoing funding in research and development has the potential to enhance the performance, reliability, and cost-efficiency of sustainable materials and technologies, making them more attractive to the construction industry.
* Education and Training Initiatives: Increasing awareness about the benefits of sustainable concrete construction among industry professionals and the general public, along with providing training and educational opportunities for the workforce, can address skill gaps and encourage the adoption of innovative practices.
* Government Support and Incentive Programs: Governments and regulatory bodies can play a crucial role in advocating for sustainable concrete construction. This may involve updating building codes and standards, offering incentives to promote sustainable methods, and supporting the advancement of innovative materials and technologies.
* Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing: Fostering collaboration and the exchange of knowledge among various industry stakeholders, including architects, engineers, contractors, material suppliers, and researchers, can effectively tackle technical challenges and enhance understanding of the benefits of sustainable concrete construction. This collaborative approach can also expedite the development of best practices and innovative solutions for widespread adoption.
* Showcase Projects and Case Studies: Highlighting successful examples of sustainable concrete construction projects can overcome market acceptance challenges by providing tangible evidence of the advantages and feasibility of incorporating sustainable practices. These projects serve as valuable learning experiences and offer insights into overcoming technical, economic, and social obstacles.
* Life-Cycle Assessment and Cost Analysis: Conducting comprehensive life-cycle assessments and cost analyses can underscore the long-term environmental and economic benefits associated with sustainable concrete construction. This approach informs decision-making processes and motivates stakeholders to invest in sustainable practices, even when initial costs are higher.

Surmounting the obstacles and hurdles associated with the adoption of sustainable concrete construction practices necessitates a united endeavor involving various stakeholders such as industry experts, governmental bodies, researchers, and the general populace. Through initiatives like research and development investments, educational campaigns and training, policy and regulation updates, fostering collaborative interactions and knowledge dissemination, highlighting exemplar projects, and conducting comprehensive life-cycle assessments and cost analyses, the construction sector can stride toward a future characterized by greater sustainability—ultimately benefiting both humanity and the environment.

**5. Strategies and policies for promoting sustainable concrete construction**

The promotion of sustainable concrete construction relies heavily on the active participation of governments, industry players, and academic institutions. It is imperative that these stakeholders collaborate closely to stimulate innovation and ensure the broad implementation of sustainable methodologies across the construction sector.

**5.1. Government strategies**

Governments play a pivotal role in driving forward sustainable concrete construction because of their ability to influence public policy, introduce incentives, and enact regulations that have a substantial impact on the construction sector (Goh et al., 2020). Governments have the authority to:

* Create and enforce building codes and standards that promote sustainable concrete construction practices, including the use of low-carbon materials, energy-efficient design strategies, and waste reduction measures.
* Provide financial support, such as tax breaks, grants, or subsidies, to incentivize developers, contractors, and property owners to adopt sustainable construction techniques.
* Invest in research and development for sustainable concrete technologies, facilitating partnerships between academic institutions and industry players to accelerate innovation.
* Promote the formation of collaborations between the public and private sectors to implement sustainable construction projects, thereby showcasing the feasibility and benefits of sustainable practices..

**5.2. Industry strategies**

The construction industry plays a crucial role in implementing sustainable concrete construction practices through the establishment of industry standards, certifications, and voluntary initiatives. Key players in the sector can:

* Create and adhere to industry benchmarks and best practices that prioritize sustainability in concrete construction processes and materials.
* Seek certifications and endorsements from relevant sustainability organizations to showcase their commitment to environmentally-friendly construction methods.
* Participate in voluntary efforts aimed at reducing the environmental impact of concrete construction, including initiatives focused on waste reduction, increased energy efficiency, and the promotion of eco-friendly materials.
* Collaborate with research institutions and experts to explore and implement innovative sustainable technologies and practices in concrete construction.
* Provide education and training for the workforce to raise awareness about sustainable construction methods and the importance of environmental responsibility.
* Advocate for sustainable policies and regulations at local, regional, and national levels to create a supportive regulatory framework for eco-conscious construction practices.

By taking these steps, the construction industry can actively contribute to the promotion and realization of sustainable concrete construction, thereby positively impacting the environment.

**5.3. Academic strategies**

Academic institutions assume a pivotal role in propelling research, development, and ingenuity within the realm of sustainable concrete technologies and methodologies. Academic entities can:

* Spearhead research initiatives into sustainable materials, technologies, and construction methodologies. This involves pursuits like exploring alternative binders, the creation of self-healing concrete, and the advancement of carbon capture technologies.
* Forge collaborations with industry collaborators to assess and validate novel sustainable concrete technologies and practices, ensuring their feasibility, effectiveness, and potential for scalability in real-world scenarios.
* Offer educational programs and training courses that center on sustainable construction, catering to both students and professionals. This endeavor helps bridge the existing knowledge and skills gap within the industry and fosters a workforce proficient in executing sustainable practices.
* Arrange conferences, workshops, and seminars aimed at facilitating knowledge exchange and networking among researchers, industry experts, and policymakers. This serves to stimulate the exchange of ideas and promote collaboration within the sphere of sustainable concrete construction.

The collaboration among governments, industry, and academia is essential for promoting sustainable concrete construction practices. Governments can play a facilitating role by implementing public policies, offering incentives, and enforcing regulations. At the same time, the construction industry can make valuable contributions by adopting and promoting standards, certifications, and voluntary initiatives that prioritize sustainability. Academic institutions hold a crucial position in driving research, development, and innovation in sustainable concrete technologies and methodologies. By working together and supporting each other's initiatives, these stakeholders can accelerate the transition toward a construction industry that prioritizes sustainability and environmental responsibility.

**6. Future trends and opportunities**

Emerging trends, technologies, and materials offer promising opportunities to enhance the sustainability of concrete construction. Digitalization and data-driven strategies optimize construction processes, leading to improved communication, collaboration, and decision-making among stakeholders. This results in resource efficiency and reduced environmental impact, as well as opportunities for refining construction methods, material choices, and project management.

The integration of circular economy principles and the concept of 'design for disassembly' can augment sustainability in concrete construction. Designing structures with consideration for their end-of-life phase enables streamlined dismantling and recycling of materials, reducing waste generation and preserving resources. Additionally, adopting a circular economy mindset promotes the use of waste-derived materials and products in concrete production, further reducing the construction sector's ecological footprint.

Promising trends, technologies, and materials, including digitalization, data-driven methodologies, nanotechnology, smart concrete, and circular economy principles, have the potential to enhance sustainability in concrete construction. Interdisciplinary cooperation and knowledge exchange among stakeholders are crucial for fostering innovation and widespread adoption of these practices. By embracing novel technologies, materials, and design concepts, the construction industry can move towards a more sustainable future.

In conclusion, this study has explored various trends, technologies, and materials aimed at enhancing the sustainability of concrete construction. These include green concrete, supplementary cementitious materials, permeable concrete, cool concrete, self-healing concrete, 3D-printed concrete, photocatalytic concrete, insulated concrete forms, waste-derived fuels, and carbon capture solutions. Given the construction sector's significant role in global greenhouse gas emissions and resource consumption, adopting sustainable practices is essential for mitigating climate change and conserving natural resources.

Certainly, here are some suggestions for future research, policy, and industry actions to accelerate the shift towards sustainable concrete construction:

* Invest in Research and Development: Continue to allocate resources for research and development, focusing on sustainable materials, technologies, and practices. Encourage collaboration and knowledge sharing between academic institutions, industry experts, and policymakers.
* Supportive Policy Measures and Incentives: Implement policies, incentives, and regulations that incentivize developers, contractors, and property owners to adopt sustainable concrete construction practices.
* Standardization and Certification: Advocate for the adoption and promotion of industry standards, certifications, and voluntary initiatives related to sustainable construction. This will encourage the adoption of best practices and provide competitive advantages to companies committed to sustainability.
* Collaboration between Academia and Industry: Strengthen partnerships between academic institutions and industry stakeholders to facilitate the testing and validation of emerging sustainable concrete technologies and practices. Ensure that these innovations are practical, efficient, and scalable for real-world applications.
* Education and Training Programs: Develop educational and training programs tailored to sustainable construction for both students and professionals. Build a skilled workforce capable of effectively implementing sustainable practices in the field.
* Integration of Circular Economy Principles: Promote the integration of circular economy principles and the concept of 'design for disassembly' in concrete construction. This approach minimizes waste, improves resource efficiency, and extends the lifespan of materials.
* Digitalization and Data-Driven Approaches: Encourage the adoption of digitalization and data-driven strategies within the construction sector. Utilize technologies such as Building Information Modeling (BIM), Artificial Intelligence (AI), and the Internet of Things (IoT) to optimize resource use, reduce waste, and enhance project management.

By following these recommendations, collaborative efforts among research, policy, and industry sectors can accelerate the transition to sustainable concrete construction, creating a construction landscape that is environmentally responsible and resilient.

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