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Background Reading: E-waste

Problems and Solutions for the E-waste Crisis

Today, the technology sector is one of the most dynamic and **innovative** industries in business. New and improved electronic **devices** are constantly created, and in high demand by consumers who want the most recent product. Due to these ever-changing technological advances, people are replacing their electronic devices faster than ever before. This means that electronic waste, referred to as e-waste, is one of the fastest growing types of waste. Wang (2015) defines e-waste as any electrical or electronic equipment and its parts that are **disposed** of without an intent for reuse. E-waste ranges from a variety of products such as video cameras, mobile phones, tablets, and computers to items like televisions, washing machines and electric stoves. Although these electrical devices make life easier, they are being **discarded** at an alarming rate.

Studies show that in 2012, global consumers generated approximately 54 million tons of e-waste that went to **landfills** (Lewis, 2013). Other research (Solving the E-waste Problem, 2012) claims that by 2017, this number will increase to 72 million tons. E-waste is such an important issue because it contains many toxic and bio-hazardous materials that are harmful to people's health and the environment. Due to its **vast** amount, a number of **initiatives** have been suggested to solve this ever increasing problem.

One solution is for greater **recycling** of e-waste. When e-waste is recycled properly, it protects human and environmental health. However, recycling e-waste is problematic because it is very expensive. There are also many restrictive environmental laws and regulations. Because of this, many companies find it difficult to recycle, which leads to a lot of illegal dumping in poor countries. Others have suggested that a better option to reduce the amount of e-waste is **refurbishment**. Refurbishing is when an electronic device is **repaired** or **restored**, so it can be used again. Once a product goes through a restoration process, it can be re-sold or given away for further use. Unfortunately, this practice also has many limitations.

Many organisations and researchers have called for more creative solutions to reduce the increasing volume of e-waste. Nevertheless, the sprawling amount of e-waste continues to increase and negatively impact both human lives and the overall health of the environment.

References

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Problems and Solutions for the E-waste Crisis

Pollution from technological innovation is a significant problem. Each year, an increasing number of electronic devices such as mobile phones, laptops, tablets, and digital cameras are thrown away. For example, in 2012, China had more than 11.1 million tons of e-waste, with the United States following closely behind at 10 million tons (Vidal, 2013). E-waste is harmful because most electronic devices contain hazardous, toxic chemicals like lead and mercury. Unfortunately, the problem of e-waste also seems to be getting worse. Research shows that there is approximately 50 million tons of e-waste every year (Jefferies, 2014). To solve this issue, many have stressed the need for recycling. Another solution to reduce e-waste is to have technology companies adopt a business model where electronic devices are rented instead of purchased (Nield, 2016). Others believe that the metals and other materials used in disposed electronic devices should be recovered to make new products.”

References

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