

An Overview of Internet of Things: Architecture, Applications and Challenges

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Abstract: The Internet of Things is a nuanced technology that has the potential to change the world. The Internet of Things is a technology that enables communication among physical objects and with their surroundings. Each physical object in the network can be identified uniquely. This technology is powered by its structural architecture whose layers provide different functionalities and collectively form the IoT systems. This paper discusses the various protocols that have been deployed to provide secure transmission of data. The IoT is capable of automating systems thereby making it desirable for the users. It has been employed in various sectors to enhance performance, reduce errors and reduce human intervention. Its application in many sectors like healthcare, agriculture, transportation, and retail has also been discussed. Though these sectors are using this technology, it has not been fully adopted. This is due to the issues of scalability, interoperability, and also the risks associated with security. These challenges and issues have also been summarized in the paper along with a few combatting strategies.

Keywords—IoT, MQTT, COAP, Service Management, Database Provisioning, Smart Cities, Smart Farming, SSL, DTLS, MEGAN.

I. INTRODUCTION

In this era of nuanced technology and ever-increasing demand for emerging technologies, the Internet of Things has emerged as a multidisciplinary and multifaceted technology in the mass market. The Internet of Things enables an interconnected network system of edge devices, each with its capability of sensing, processing, and capacity of transmitting data, to communicate without any human intervention. The physical edge devices comprise computing, digital, and electrical components with embedded sensors and actuators facilitating communication over the Internet. The individually addressable devices can be any physical entity that can be identified using Unique Identifiers which is a pattern given to uniquely identify a single entity or a group of entities within a specific context [1].

The essence of the Internet of Things was first felt when local programmers in London used to connect to a refrigerator appliance through the Internet to check the availability of cold drinks [2]. The term was finally coined by Kevin Ashton in 1999 [2].

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A literature review can be conducted in many different ways with various strategies, standards, and guidelines. This literature review has been used as a methodological tool to comprehend and consolidate the theory in the area of the Internet of Things. The main aim of this literature review is to summarize the knowledge from prior research. This literature review offers an overview of the topic and summarizes the various aspects of the topic. This literature review was conducted in a systematic manner. To begin with relevant

literature on the topic of the review was gathered from publications based on the subject. Most of the material is selected from Google Scholar. In order to gain better insights on the topic websites pertinent to the topic are also sampled [1]. Then a qualitative analysis is done to develop a thorough understanding of the topic and provide a review. Finally, some pitfalls are highlighted and relevant solutions for the same are discussed [2].

III. INTERNET OF THINGS ARCHITECTURE

The structure and provision for the physical components, their functional organization, their operational principles, protocols, and principles and procedures are deployed through a common framework. Different researchers have proposed different architecture schemas, with overlapping technologies in model layers [3]. This framework is not defined, and modifications are made according to different use cases. The basic architecture of IoT can be interpreted as a group of five horizontal layers that have their functionalities and purpose and collectively form the IoT ecosystem. The five functional blocks of IoT architecture are elaborated under [4].

3.1 PERCEPTION LAYER

This is the bottommost layer of the architecture and is made up of physical devices. All the end devices are present at different locations along with sensors from the perception layer. The function of this layer is to gather the information given to the applications in the form of signals [5]. The sensors present in the device collect information from environmental parameters such as temperature, humidity, the concentration

of particulate matter, etc. [6]. It then processes the data and the information about these physical parameters are converted into electrical signals. Thus, this layer is known as the perception layer as it perceives the data sent from the physical world [7]. This layer is also known as the sensing layer. The data emitted by this layer is in the form of digital signals and act as a feed to the subsequent layer of the architecture.

- The working involves the conversion of analog signals received from the real world to machine-interpretable digital signals and vice-versa when analog signals are converted to digital signals [8-10].

- Along with sensors edge devices are also embedded with electronic devices, actuators, or indicators that produce motion as output from signal inputs. The working is reversed when digital signals are converted to produce motion by the end devices in the real world [11].

There is no standard for the size of components present in this layer and the devices can be of various sizes ranging from small units such as sensors to complex systems such as an automobile [12].

3.2. NETWORK LAYER

This is the second layer of the IoT architecture and is responsible for the transmission of data among the devices and to the internet. As IoT has a multitude of edge devices, enormous amounts of heterogeneous data are received from heterogeneous devices [13]. This data has heterogeneous formats. So, firstly this data is cleaned by removing noises. Then this clean data is used to deduce relationships to uncover patterns present in the target dataset. This deduced pattern is used

to extract meaningful and valuable data from groups of datasets. The obtained meaningful data are clubbed together and can be utilized as per the requirement [14]. As IoT systems are vast networks of interconnected devices that interact with each other and their surroundings, many security threats and risks are posed to them. Apart from facilitating communication, the network layer also renders additional security features to cater to any such security attacks. According to the recent research, the network layer is the most developed layer by far of the complete IoT architecture as it is capable of advancing the relevant information for relevant procedures [15-19].

3.2.1 Secured transmission

The integrity of data is maintained by passing the data through either secure hardware or firmware channels. It is the main processing unit of the IoT architecture [20]. The sharing of data can be instrumented through various technologies like wireless, wired, Radio Frequency Identification, Bluetooth, and Near Field Communication [21]. Many hardware channels use conventional protocols MQTT and COAP. In Message Queue Telemetry Support the end devices are clients that produce data. This data is published to an address in a common server known as a broker which is responsible for categorizing the data into topics [22]. The clients can subscribe to multiple such topics and receive every message published on these topics [23]. Another common protocol is COAP which is based on a client-server model. The end devices are clients that can send the request to a server and in return receive responses [24].

3.2.2 Low Power Wide Area Network

The edge devices consist of sensors of various sizes. Some sensors are small and consume less power to function. They can be harnessed with Wide Area Network and be used for communication between devices with a low power range [25-35]. This can cover distances with I in the range of 50 km and transmit 10 to 1000 bits per second.

3.3 MIDDLEWARE LAYER

This is the third layer of the architecture and lies between the network layer and the application layer. It is a software interface that utilizes the technologies of other layers and plays a very crucial role in the system's functionality [36]. The purpose of this layer is to process the data coming from the network layer and evince only the data that is required by the developers for the application development process. It works on the data to enhance interoperability [37]. The Interoperability of IoT can be understood as the ability of components to work together for the exchange of information [38].

After receiving the information, the data is abstracted and compared with the results achieved from ubiquitous computing. These comparisons are used for decision-making and stored in databases for further utilization [39]. Another significant task of this layer is to grant access control to devices by authenticating users.

- **Service Management:** This involves all the exercises including processing received data, making decisions evaluating the data with previously obtained results, and delivery of the requested services across the network [40].

- **Database Provisioning:** Multitudes of IoT systems generate varying amounts of data. In this case, a single static database will not be feasible in such a situation. There is a need for a flexible database whose capacity is extensible and scalable [41]. Intelligent devices generate data along with connectivity requirements. To cater to the challenges and serve these demands popular databases DBMS and NoSQL are used. Database provisioning is best achieved by deploying a database provisioning setup with all services on a common platform [42]. Morpheus Virtual Alliance is a single platform that unifies the necessary tools like DBMS and enables cloud services of multiple clouds [43].

- **Information Processing:** This refers to the translation of sensory data, yielded from edge devices into machine-interpretable or human interpretable data form [44-46].

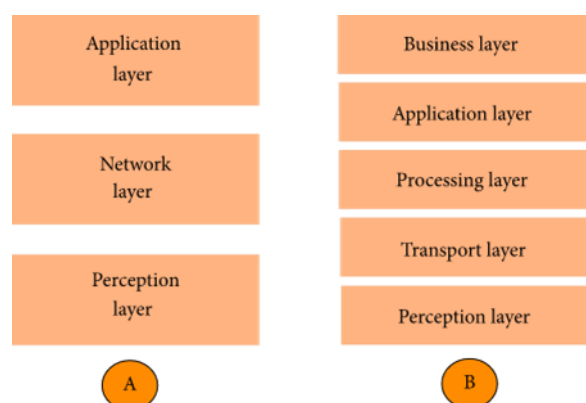
3.4 APPLICATION LAYER

This is the fourth layer of the architecture which takes the processed information from the middleware layer and analyzes this to provide insights. This layer constitutes software based on different technologies, with varying complexities and functions [47-50]. A basic example includes mobile apps that can interact with home appliances.

3.5 BUSINESS LAYER

This layer is present on top of the application layer. The main purpose of this layer is to analyze gathered insights and generate models from them. These models help in data-enabled decision-making. Such models are needed for the growth of the business [51]. As this is the end layer it receives the data from the application layer on which statistical algorithms

have been applied. These statistics are used to create pictorial representations of data in the form of models. These models dictate the further action plan of the business. The models answer four questions namely who, what, how, and why, and on the basis of the answers received it generates models that are of great value to any business [52-56].



IV. APPLICATIONS OF THE INTERNET OF THINGS

When the word IoT is mentioned majorly the first picture created in our mind is of an automatic industry with automatic machines doing the work without any human intervention. Well, this is surely a use case and a subpart of IoT called Industrial IoT, but not the whole of IoT [57]. IoT has significantly entered into our daily lives over the last two decades, with its presence in almost all sectors of living. The increasing amount of population and their technology-driven choices are contributing to the growth of IoT applications. Arising from the discipline of innovation, smart devices are turning into assets. According to Oracle, currently, there exist 10 billion connected IoT devices, and this number is expected to grow to 35 billion IoT devices by the end of this year. Truly IoT is one of the rapidly growing industries [58-60].

4.1 SMARTCITIES

A smart city is an area where the Extensive usage of radio frequency identification and sensors will be required to build smart cities. The top use case of IoT includes Remote Asset Monitoring Adoption [61]. In this, there is a real-time and continuous monitoring of assets and the reports are generated against the manual MS EXCEL reports. In India, some major cities like Delhi, Jaipur, and Pune are going through drastic changes with the mission to get transformed into smart cities. These cities will offer lucrative facilities like smart water-supply networks, smart libraries, and other community services. This will be made possible by collecting data from citizens, processing it, and then gathering insights from it to make decisions [62]. Such applications will offer significant breakthroughs in terms of saving money and energy. Not only this, many other services like parking meters, sewage systems, and streetlights can be made intelligent with the collaborative use of IoT and AI. All these will be interlinked and connected to the internet to facilitate communication and monitoring [63-65].

4.2 HEALTHCARE

The healthcare systems have evolved and advanced greatly in terms of medicines and medical procedures, however, many underdeveloped countries have inept healthcare systems falling short in their accuracy and precision. This creates ineffectual healthcare systems. Healthcare devices can be developed with IoT to alleviate the situation [66]. Wearable devices like wristbands can be used by patients to monitor their blood sugar levels, blood pressure, heart rate, and oxygen levels. These can also keep a track of medicine schedules and act as reminders for patients without the need for attendants. Wearable devices can be used by physicians also for monitoring patients' conditions and record keeping. In recent times, the pandemic made us realize the importance of oxygen [67]. With the help of IoT, we can track the real-time location and availability of the self-saving oxygen cylinders. Not only this availability of many other types of equipment can be tracked in real-time without any hassle [68]. Additionally, these advanced systems provide better authentication and identification of patients to avoid any mismatch incidents. Automated data collection from medical inventory will instrument will help in providing ease for purchase on time. If these operations are conducted smoothly and on time then the overall workflow of the hospital is enhanced, contributing to the hospital's profit [69-70]. These technologies and automated machines can greatly improve the plight of healthcare systems across the world.



4.3 AGRICULTURE

India's 60% population is dependent upon agriculture for their livelihood [71]. Not just India, many countries have the agriculture sector as the major contributing sector to their economy. Keeping the facts and figures about economy and GDP aside, agriculture is the most important sector as it produces our fuels, without which our lives would come to an end. Thus, agricultural practices should be very efficient. However, most of the agricultural practices, especially the farming methods used are primitive [72]. With the help of IoT, we can use smart farming methods that will provide a promising solution to the sector. Smart farming methods combine farming and IoT technology by using sensors. Manual methods are used to regulate climatic conditions. Automation of farms will help regulate the climatic conditions inside the farm, this will enhance the production and quality of crops [73-76].

Sensors embedded in the harvesting devices can monitor information about the type of soil, and its moisture content and provide better field management [77].

Biofortification is the production of crops with desired amountsofnutrition.IoTcanhelpbetterregulatethenutrients in the crops with real-time monitoring. IoT assists in better electricity and water management thereby reducing the costs. Smart farming methods encourage organic crops as very few pesticides and fertilizers are used[78-80].



4.4 RETAIL AND LOGISTICS

There are numerous advantages provided by IoT in the retail field. Usually, retail shops are overcrowded by customers who are running in different sections to find their desired products. IoT systems can provide information about products, their availability, and their location [81]. Sensors can be installed in the production factories and organizations that will gauge any change in the levels of gases and moisture. Alert signals would be immediately sent to the monitoring devices or alarm bells can be rung through actuators. Automatic surveillance of the machinery will detect any damages or failure, and accordingly schedule repair routines without any delay [82]. Various business processes like inventory management, product procurement, material requirement planning, order management, and billing can be carried out by IoT [83].

V CHALLENGES OF THE INTERNET OF THINGS

In this modern world of advanced technology, the importance of interconnecting networks is of utmost importance which brings smart devices together. We have become heavily dependent on devices for our chores. Not only this working of regulatory bodies in many countries is instrumented by IoT technologies. For instance, a few days back speaking about the importance of the interconnecting network, the NV Ramana struck a common ground on the immediate need for the creation of national and state-level bodies to seek out the backlog of cases pending over in the courts since a long time in the subordinate courts, which has eroded the people's faith in the judiciary and has posed a great challenge[84-85]. The strengthening of IoT infrastructure and connectivity everywhere on a priority basis will help in this. However, as IoT systems are dense networks of systems that communicate with each other risks are inevitable. These risks pose many challenges to the IoT system[86]. Despite all the comfort provided by these systems, which have successfully

developed confidence in the users, these challenges instill hesitation[87].

5.1 SECURITY

Ensuring security is the utmost concern of any system. A dense system of IoT requires extremely efficient security measures as a huge amount of user data is at stake. At the node level, security measures including authentication, and authorization are required to keep the data safe and intact. IoT users have come from different skill backgrounds, so their acquaintance with technologies used in IoT is an unfair expectation[88]. To bridge this gap further research on cryptographic security services should be conducted that will devise services operable on resource-constrained IoT devices. Proficient security protocols should be deployed at every communication layer to confer security. Secure Socket Layer (SSL) and Datagram Transport Layer Security (DTLS) are cryptographic protocols that are implemented between the transport and application layers to provide security [89, 90]. Mostly, the IoT systems are wireless, thereby making them even more prone to threats.

5.2 INTEROPERABILITY

Interoperability of any system refers to its capacity for communication with other components of the system. The IoT technology is heavily dependent on data sharing, thus IoT developers must strive to improve the interoperability of these systems. Myriads of heterogeneous edge devices and technologies make up the system, due to this the different data produced may not be compatible with each other, thereby raising interoperability issues[91]. To combat this issue researchers have provided a set of solutions collectively known as interoperability handling approaches. These approaches include adapters. Adapters or gateways are designs that perform the conversion of protocols from sending device to receiving device and vice-versa [92]. This facilitates interoperability. By far the best strategy to encourage interoperability is MEGAN which stands for Multipurpose EnerGy-efficient Adaptable low-cost sensor Node a new sensor that has the ability to interface 32 different sensors and actuators. Its reliability is evident from its capacity to operate under different operating conditions[93-96].

5.3 SCALABILITY

The scalability of any system refers to its capacity to deliver the same efficiency with changes in the size of the system. So basically, an IoT system should be able to deliver the same performance with the addition of equipment's and services. Currently, there are more than 13 billion active IoT systems across the world. This number is expected to have an explosive growth of 30.9 billion devices by the end of 2025[97]. As IoT is rapidly growing, the scalability of IoT systems is an important concern.

•Automated Bootstrapping: To initiate the working of any new device upon its addition to the system, the device must be bootstrapped, registered with the server, and configured for security. These processes are generally conducted through a manual operator. However, manual operation will not be practical in the future. Thus, devices

should be equipped with bootloaders and security keys to enable the automatic set-up of the device in any location [98-101].

- Adopt Multiple Data Storage Technologies: When it comes to technology selection, best-suited technology must be used to build different portions of IoT like user interface, data stream processing, and data for batch processing. All of this would require different database technology for their optimal function therefore the type of data should dictate the choice of database technology [102].

5.4 LEGAL AND REGULATORY

Sharing of data across the internet has certain vices such as it collects biometric data of individuals and based thereon, the reputation is maligned. The Right to Reputation of an individual cannot be sacrificed and crucified at the alteration of the Right of Freedom of Speech and Expression of another [103]. Observations and false allegations have the propensity to cause irreparable harm to one reputation. Generally, it is seen that as the data is shared from one end to another it moves across areas of different jurisdictions [104]. Legally it encroaches upon civil rights, personal liberty and privacy, and data detention beyond its jurisdiction, which is highly discriminatory.

VI CONCLUSION

The adoption of the Internet of Things is a boon to humanity. It is a revolutionary embarkment that will help in creating a better future. In this paper, the architecture of the IoT, its multidisciplinary applications, and the challenges faced by it have been discussed in a comprehensive manner. Several architectural schemas have been proposed by different researchers, here the 5-layer architecture has been discussed that can be mapped onto the 3-layer architecture [105-110]. IoT technology has been able to permeate almost all sector so four livelihoods. The positive impact on four of the main sectors including smart cities, healthcare, agriculture, and retail have been discussed. Along with the benefits of IoT, this technology faces certain challenges that need to be looked upon by the IoT developers [111-120]. Certain novel strategies have been discussed whose adoption can ease the degree of challenges.

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