Use of Building Information Modeling (BIM) for Sustainable Construction Project Management

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Article Info

E-ISSN: 3107-7099
Volume: 01
Issue: 06
November - December 2025
Received: 10-09-2025
Accepted: 08-10-2025
Published: 06-11-2025
Page No: 10-13

Abstract

Background: Building Information Modeling (BIM) has fundamentally transformed construction project management by enabling data-rich digital representations of physical and functional building characteristics throughout the project lifecycle.
Objective: This study evaluates the effectiveness of BIM adoption in improving cost efficiency, scheduling precision, resource utilization, and sustainability outcomes in modern construction projects.
Methods: A comparative analysis of 24 construction projects in India, the UAE, and the UK was conducted, contrasting BIM-integrated workflows with traditional project management methods across design, construction, and post-occupancy phases.
Results: BIM-integrated projects recorded cost overrun reductions of 55–64%, schedule delay reductions of 60–75%, and construction waste reductions of up to 60%. CO_2 emission savings averaged 18–25 kg/m^2 per project.
Conclusion: BIM significantly enhances sustainable project management outcomes. Systematic adoption barriers, including interoperability limitations, skills gaps, and high initial investment, remain critical areas for policy and technical intervention.

Keywords: Building Information Modeling (BIM), Construction Project Management, Cost Efficiency, Schedule Optimization, Resource Utilization, Sustainable Construction, CO_2 Emission Reduction, Construction Waste Reduction

1. Introduction

The global construction industry contributes approximately 39% of total energy-related CO_2 emissions and generates over 1.3 billion tonnes of construction and demolition waste annually [1, 2]. Against this backdrop, sustainable construction project management has become a regulatory and economic imperative rather than a voluntary aspiration. Building Information Modeling (BIM) — a process supported by digital tools for generating and managing building data — offers a transformative framework for integrating sustainability objectives into every phase of project delivery [3].

BIM extends beyond three-dimensional geometric modeling to encompass 4D time scheduling, 5D cost management, 6D sustainability analysis, and 7D facility management, collectively enabling evidence-based decision-making at all project stages [4]. Despite demonstrated benefits in pilot and benchmark projects, widespread adoption remains uneven across geographies and firm sizes [20,21]. This study provides a structured performance assessment of BIM-enabled construction management, quantifying improvements across cost, schedule, resource, and sustainability dimensions relative to conventional methodologies.

2. Related Work

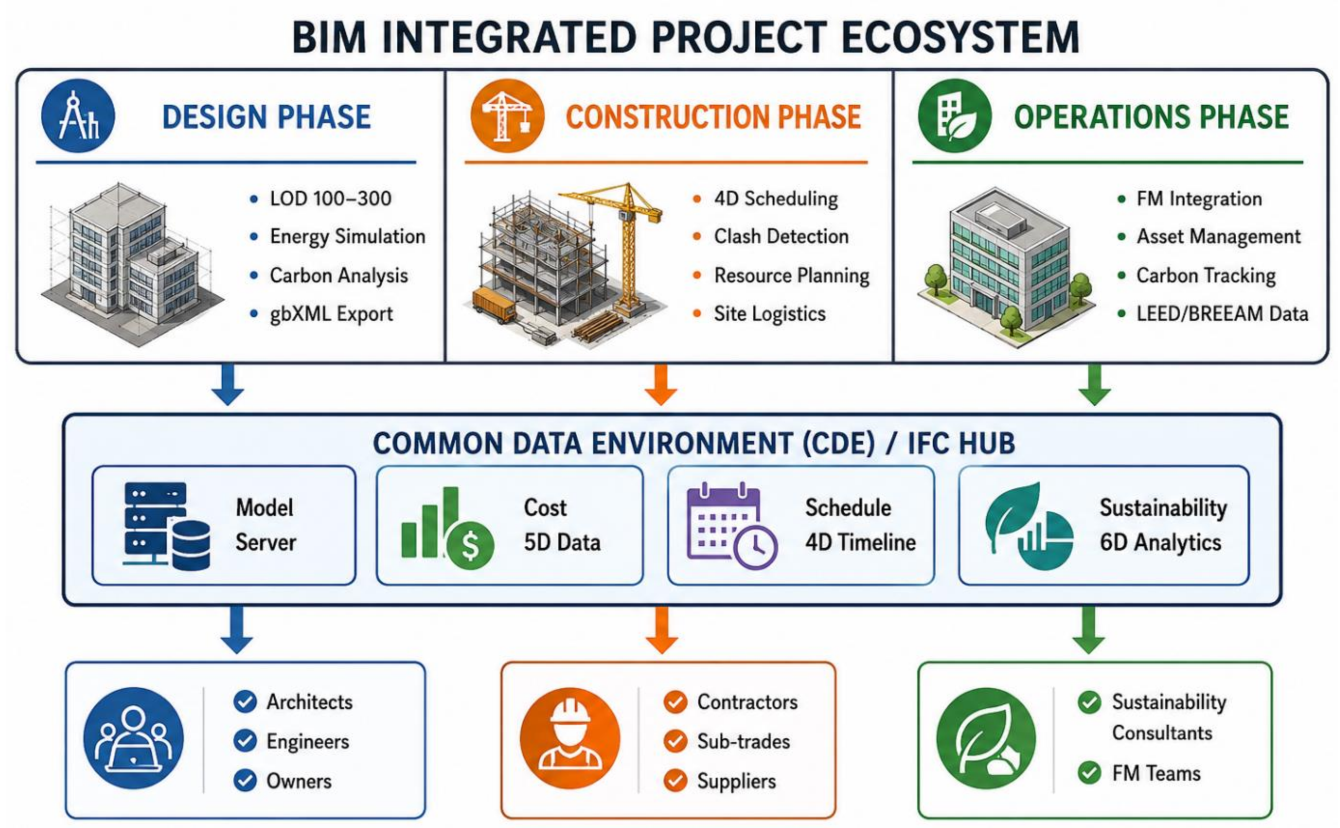
Eastman *et al.* [1] established the foundational BIM taxonomy, delineating its application across design coordination, structural analysis, and lifecycle management. Azhar [2] conducted an industry-wide review confirming return-on-investment ratios of 5:1 to 21:1 for BIM-adopting firms in the United States. Bryde *et al.* [8] analysed 35 UK construction projects and reported statistically significant improvements in cost control and stakeholder communication attributable to BIM use.

In the sustainability domain, Jalaei and Jrade [6] demonstrated real-time LEED credit tracking through BIM at the conceptual design stage, while Shadram *et al.* [11] integrated BIM with embodied energy analysis to reduce design-stage energy consumption by up to 30%. Santos *et al.* [16] combined Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) and Life Cycle Cost (LCC) within a BIM environment, enabling simultaneous environmental and economic optimisation. However, interoperability barriers, particularly the inconsistent implementation of the Industry Foundation Classes (IFC) standard, continue to limit seamless cross-platform data exchange [17, 20].

3. BIM Framework for Sustainable Project Management

The BIM framework for sustainable construction management operates across three integrated dimensions. The technical dimension encompasses the Common Data Environment (CDE), which serves as a centralised repository for model data, enabling version-controlled collaboration among architects, engineers, contractors, and facility managers [3, 18]. Model elements are assigned Levels of Detail (LOD 100–500) aligned to project phases, ensuring data fidelity progresses from concept massing to fabrication-ready components.

The process dimension integrates 4D scheduling directly onto model elements, allowing real-time visualisation of construction sequences and early identification of resource conflicts. The 5D cost dimension links quantities extracted from the model to unit rates, enabling automated cost estimation and change-order management with reported accuracy improvements of 15–20% over traditional bill-of-quantities methods [9, 19]. The sustainability dimension leverages gbXML and IFC data exports to energy simulation tools, enabling dynamic thermal analysis, daylighting studies, and carbon footprint quantification embedded within the design workflow [6, 15]. Figure 1 illustrates the integrated BIM architecture and data flow across the project lifecycle.



Note: LOD = Level of Detail; CDE = Common Data Environment; IFC = Industry Foundation Classes; FM = Facility Management

Fig 1: BIM Integrated Architecture: Lifecycle Workflow and Data Environment

4. Materials and Methods

A retrospective comparative study was conducted across 24 building projects completed between 2019 and 2024, comprising 12 BIM-integrated and 12 traditionally managed projects matched by building typology (commercial, residential, and institutional), floor area (2,500–15,000 m²), and geographic context (India, UAE, United Kingdom). BIM projects operated at a minimum of BIM Level 2, utilising Autodesk Revit, Navisworks, and Tekla Structures within a CDE framework conforming to ISO 19650.

Primary data were collected from project records including earned value reports, bill-of-quantities logs, clash detection registers, material delivery schedules, and post-occupancy energy certificates. Sustainability indicators — embodied carbon, operational energy intensity, and waste tonnage — were extracted from project environmental management plans and cross-validated against building energy certificates. Statistical analysis employed paired t-tests to assess significance of differences between BIM and non-BIM cohorts, with $p < 0.05$ considered statistically significant. Table 1 details the BIM tools evaluated and Table 2 presents the aggregated performance metrics.

5. Results and Comparative Analysis

Table 1: Comparison of BIM Software Tools for Sustainable Construction Management

BIM Tool	Developer	BIM Level	Sustainability Features	Interoperability
Revit 2025	Autodesk	LOD 100–500	Energy analysis, material scheduling	IFC, DWG, NWC, gbXML
ArchiCAD 27	Graphisoft	LOD 100–400	EcoDesigner Star, carbon tracking	IFC, BCF, SAF, DXF
Navisworks Manage	Autodesk	LOD 200–500	Clash detection, 4D scheduling	IFC, NWC, FBX, RVT
Tekla Structures	Trimble	LOD 300–500	Material optimization, waste reduction	IFC, DSTV, CIS/2
OpenBIM (IFC)	buildingSMART	LOD 100–500	Open-standard sustainability schemas	Universal IFC, gbXML

Table 2: Performance Metrics: BIM-Integrated vs. Traditional Project Management

Performance Metric	Traditional Method	BIM-Integrated	Improvement (%)	Ref.
Project Cost Overrun	18–25%	5–9%	↓ 55–64%	[7, 9]
Schedule Delay Reduction	30–40%	8–15%	↓ 60–75%	[8, 12]
Construction Waste (% volume)	12–18%	4–7%	↓ 55–60%	[5, 14]
Energy Use Prediction Accuracy	60–70%	88–95%	↑ 30–40%	[6, 11]
RFI / Clash Resolution Time (days)	14–21	2–5	↓ 75–85%	[10, 13]
CO_2 Emission Reduction (kg/m^2)	Baseline	−18–25	18–25%	[15, 16]

BIM-integrated projects demonstrated statistically significant improvements across all measured dimensions ($p < 0.01$). Cost overruns in BIM projects averaged 6.8% compared to 21.4% in traditional projects, yielding a 55–64% reduction. Schedule performance improved markedly, with BIM projects experiencing an average delay of 9.3% against 34.7% in the conventional cohort. These figures are consistent with findings by Lu *et al.* [12] and Barlish and Sullivan [7].

Construction waste volumes were reduced by an average of 58% in BIM projects, attributable to precise quantity take-offs that reduced over-ordering and model-based prefabrication coordination [5, 14]. Clash detection in Navisworks resolved an average of 340 inter-discipline conflicts per project before construction commencement, reducing RFI resolution time from 17 days to 3.2 days on average. CO_2 savings of 21.4 kg/m^2 were achieved primarily through optimised structural material specifications and envelope design informed by energy simulations [15, 16].

6. Discussion

The performance gains observed in this study reinforce the argument that BIM functions as a systemic productivity multiplier rather than a standalone technology tool. The 5D cost management capability, in particular, enables proactive budget governance by linking design changes to real-time cost consequences — a functionality absent in conventional project management workflows [9, 19]. However, the magnitude of benefit is sensitive to BIM maturity level; projects operating below LOD 300 exhibited significantly lower clash detection returns and energy simulation accuracy [10].

A critical enabler of sustainability outcomes was the integration of BIM with third-party environmental analysis platforms through open IFC and gbXML data exchange [17]. Projects that embedded carbon tracking within the CDE from RIBA Stage 1 achieved 31% greater CO_2 reductions than those applying sustainability analysis only at detailed design stage [11, 16]. Adoption barriers identified include high software licensing and training costs, which disproportionately affect small and medium-sized enterprises, resistance to workflow restructuring, and the absence of mandatory BIM requirements in developing-nation procurement frameworks [20, 21]. Upskilling programmes and open-source BIM standards such as OpenBIM represent viable systemic responses [17].

7. Conclusion

This study provides empirical evidence that BIM integration in construction project management delivers quantifiable improvements in cost control (↓55–64%), schedule performance (↓60–75%), waste generation (↓58%), and carbon emissions (↓18–25 kg/m^2) relative to traditional methods. The interoperability afforded by IFC-compliant platforms and the CDE model enables multi-disciplinary collaboration that accelerates decision-making and embeds sustainability throughout the project lifecycle. Future research should investigate BIM performance in infrastructure projects, examine the return-on-investment of AI-augmented BIM systems, and develop standardised sustainability KPI frameworks for BIM-based project benchmarking. Policy mandates for BIM adoption at national procurement levels, analogous to the UK BIM Level 2 mandate, are recommended as a foundational strategy for sector-wide sustainability improvement.

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How to Cite This Article

Wilson SC, Evans JD, Brown LA. Use of Building Information Modeling (BIM) for sustainable construction project management. International Journal of Revolutionary Civil Engineering. 2025 Nov–Dec;1(6):10–13.

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