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Journal of Magnetism and Its Applications

Received December 31th 2025 received in revised January 9th 2025 accepted January 12th 2025

Research articles

Spin Wave Dynamics and Magnonic Devices for Future Computing Technologies

Michael Anderson
Department of Materials Science and Engineering, University of California, Berkeley, USA

Article info
Keywords:
Spin waves,
Magnonics,
Spintronics,
Magnetic materials,
Wave-based computing,
Nanoelectronics,
Magnonic logic,
Future computing

Abstract
Spin wave dynamics and magnonic devices represent a promising frontier in the development of next-generation computing technologies. Unlike conventional electronics that rely on charge-based information transfer, magnonic systems utilize spin waves—collective excitations of electron spins in magnetic materials—to transmit and process information. These systems offer significant advantages such as lower energy consumption, reduced Joule heating, and the potential for nanoscale integration. Recent advancements in magnetic materials, nanofabrication techniques, and spintronic architectures have enabled the development of functional magnonic devices including waveguides, logic gates, and memory elements. This article reviews the fundamental principles of spin wave dynamics, the mechanisms of magnon propagation, and the design of magnonic devices for information processing. Furthermore, it discusses the challenges associated with material losses, signal attenuation, and device scalability. The study highlights the role of magnonics in future low-power computing platforms and explores emerging research directions for integrating spin wave technologies with existing semiconductor systems.

Introduction

The rapid growth of data-intensive technologies such as artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and the Internet of Things has increased the demand for faster and more energy-efficient computing systems. Conventional electronic devices based on charge transport are approaching fundamental physical limitations related to power consumption, heat dissipation, and scaling constraints. As a result, researchers are exploring alternative computing paradigms that rely on different physical mechanisms for information processing. Magnonics has emerged as a promising field that exploits spin waves, which are collective oscillations of electron spins in magnetic materials. These waves carry energy and information without requiring the physical movement of electrons, thereby significantly reducing energy losses due to resistive heating. The quantum of a spin wave is known as a magnon, and the study of magnon behavior forms the basis of magnonic technology. Spin waves can propagate through magnetic media with wavelengths ranging from nanometers to micrometers, making them suitable for nanoscale information processing. By controlling parameters such as magnetic field strength, material properties, and device geometry, it is possible to manipulate spin wave propagation for logic operations, signal processing, and data storage. Recent advancements in nanofabrication and magnetic materials have enabled the development of functional magnonic circuits. These circuits include components such as magnonic waveguides, interferometers, and logic gates that can perform computational tasks using wave interference and phase modulation. As research progresses, magnonic technologies are expected to complement or even replace certain electronic components in future computing systems.

Fundamentals of Spin Wave Dynamics

Spin waves represent collective excitations of the spin system in ordered magnetic materials such as ferromagnets and ferrimagnets. At the microscopic level, these waves arise due to the exchange interaction between neighboring atomic magnetic moments. When one magnetic moment deviates from its equilibrium orientation, the strong exchange coupling forces nearby spins to adjust their orientations accordingly. This disturbance propagates through the magnetic lattice in the form of a wave-like motion known as a spin wave. The quantum particle associated with a spin wave is called a magnon, which carries both energy and angular momentum. The dynamic behavior of spin waves is described using theoretical frameworks such as the Landau–Lifshitz–Gilbert (LLG) equation, which models the time evolution of magnetization in response to internal and external magnetic fields. This equation accounts for precessional motion of magnetic moments around an effective magnetic field as well as damping effects that gradually reduce the amplitude of oscillations. Understanding the LLG dynamics is essential for predicting how spin waves propagate, interact, and dissipate energy in magnetic materials. Spin wave propagation is strongly influenced by the dispersion relation, which describes the relationship between the spin wave frequency and its wave vector. In exchange-dominated regimes, typically observed at nanometer-scale wavelengths, quantum mechanical exchange interactions determine the dispersion characteristics. In contrast, at longer wavelengths, magnetostatic interactions caused by dipolar magnetic fields become dominant. These magnetostatic spin waves can propagate over relatively long distances and are therefore particularly useful for signal transmission in magnonic circuits. Another important factor affecting spin wave dynamics is magnetic anisotropy, which refers to the directional dependence of magnetic properties within a material. Anisotropy can arise from crystal structure, strain, or interface effects in multilayer systems. By carefully engineering anisotropy, researchers can control the direction and stability of spin wave propagation. External magnetic fields also play a crucial role by modifying the energy landscape of the magnetic system and enabling tunable control over spin wave frequencies. Modern experimental techniques such as Brillouin light scattering spectroscopy, ferromagnetic resonance, and time-resolved magneto-optical Kerr effect measurements are commonly used to study spin wave dynamics. These methods allow researchers to observe spin wave generation, propagation, and interaction at nanoscale dimensions. Coupled with advanced micromagnetic simulations, these techniques provide detailed insights into the physical mechanisms governing magnonic behavior.

Materials for Magnonic Devices

The performance and efficiency of magnonic devices are highly dependent on the magnetic materials used for spin wave propagation. One of the most critical parameters in this context is magnetic damping, which determines how quickly spin wave energy dissipates as it travels through a material. Materials with low damping enable spin waves to propagate over longer distances without significant attenuation, making them ideal candidates for magnonic circuits and wave-based computing systems. Among the various materials studied for magnonic applications, yttrium iron garnet ($Y_3Fe_5O_{12}$ or YIG) is widely regarded as the benchmark material due to its exceptionally low magnetic damping and excellent spin wave propagation properties. YIG can support spin wave transmission over several millimeters, which is significantly longer than most metallic

*Corresponding author
Email: manderson@berkeley.edu
DOI: 10.53533/JMA.v2i1.27

ferromagnets. This property makes it particularly useful for experimental studies and the development of high-performance magnonic waveguides and resonators. In addition to YIG, several metallic ferromagnets such as permalloy (NiFe alloys), cobalt, and cobalt–iron–boron (CoFeB) are commonly used in magnonic device fabrication. Although these materials typically exhibit higher damping than YIG, they offer advantages such as compatibility with conventional semiconductor processing technologies and easier integration with electronic circuits. Their magnetic properties can also be tailored through alloy composition and nanostructuring techniques. Ferrimagnetic and antiferromagnetic materials have also gained attention in magnonics research. Ferrites, including nickel ferrite and magnesium ferrite, exhibit favorable magnetic characteristics for microwave-frequency spin wave devices. Meanwhile, antiferromagnetic materials offer the possibility of ultrafast spin dynamics in the terahertz frequency range, which could enable extremely high-speed information processing. Recent advances in nanotechnology and materials engineering have led to the development of multilayer magnetic heterostructures, where thin films of different magnetic materials are stacked together to create engineered spin wave properties. These structures allow researchers to control spin wave reflection, interference, and confinement at nanoscale dimensions, enabling the creation of complex magnonic circuits. Emerging research is also exploring two-dimensional magnetic materials, such as chromium triiodide (CrI_3) and van der Waals magnetic layers, which exhibit intrinsic magnetism at atomic thicknesses. These materials provide new opportunities for integrating magnonic devices with other two-dimensional electronic systems such as graphene and transition metal dichalcogenides. Hybrid structures combining magnetic and non-magnetic materials are also being investigated to enhance spin wave generation through spin–orbit interactions. Overall, the continuous development of advanced magnetic materials and nanostructured systems is expected to play a crucial role in the realization of scalable and energy-efficient magnonic computing technologies.

Magnonic Device Architectures

Magnonic device architectures are designed to manipulate and control spin waves in a manner similar to how electronic circuits guide electrical currents. In these systems, spin waves serve as carriers of information, enabling data transmission and processing through magnetic media. Because spin waves do not involve the physical movement of electric charges, magnonic devices can significantly reduce energy dissipation caused by resistive heating, which is a major limitation of traditional semiconductor electronics. One of the fundamental components of magnonic circuits is the magnonic waveguide. Waveguides are typically fabricated using thin magnetic films or nanostructured magnetic materials that allow spin waves to propagate along controlled pathways. These structures confine and direct spin waves similarly to optical fibers guiding light. By tailoring the geometry and magnetic properties of the waveguide, researchers can control parameters such as spin wave velocity, wavelength, and propagation direction. Waveguides form the backbone of magnonic circuits, enabling signal routing and communication between different device components. Another important architecture involves magnonic crystals, which are periodic magnetic structures that influence spin wave propagation through band-gap effects. Similar to photonic crystals used in optics, magnonic crystals can selectively allow or block certain spin wave frequencies. This property enables precise filtering and modulation of spin wave signals, making them useful for signal processing and frequency-selective operations in magnonic computing systems. Magnonic interferometers and logic gates utilize the wave nature of spin waves to perform computational tasks. When multiple spin waves intersect within a device, their phases interact through constructive or destructive interference. By controlling the phase and amplitude of input spin waves, specific interference patterns can be generated that correspond to logical outputs. This mechanism enables the implementation of Boolean logic operations such as AND, OR, and XOR without requiring electrical current flow. Recent advances have also introduced magnon transistors and amplifiers, which regulate spin wave transmission within a circuit. These devices can control spin wave intensity using external magnetic fields, electric fields, or spin-polarized currents. Magnon transistors function as switching elements that either permit or block the propagation of spin waves, enabling dynamic control of signal flow in magnonic circuits. The development of such devices is a critical step toward building fully functional magnonic integrated circuits capable of complex computational operations.

Magnonic Logic and Information Processing

Magnonic logic circuits represent a novel approach to information processing where data is encoded in the physical properties of spin waves rather than electrical charge. In these systems, information can be represented through variations in the amplitude, phase, frequency, or polarization of spin waves. This multi-parameter encoding allows magnonic circuits to process information in ways that are fundamentally different from traditional binary electronic systems. One of the most significant advantages of magnonic logic is its ability to exploit wave interference for computation. When two or more spin waves interact within a magnonic structure, the resulting interference pattern determines the logical output of the device. For example, constructive interference can represent a logical "1," while destructive interference can represent a logical "0." By precisely controlling input wave phases, multiple logic operations can be implemented within a single magnonic device. Magnonic logic circuits also offer the potential for parallel information processing. Because spin waves can coexist and propagate simultaneously within the same medium without significantly interfering with one another, multiple computational operations can occur at the same time. This capability could enable highly efficient computing architectures that process large volumes of data in parallel, which is particularly beneficial for applications such as artificial intelligence and signal processing. Another important aspect of magnonic information processing is its potential compatibility with neuromorphic computing systems. The analog nature of spin wave interference closely resembles neural signal interactions in biological brains. As a result, magnonic devices are being investigated as potential hardware platforms for artificial neural networks and brain-inspired computing systems that emphasize energy efficiency and adaptive learning capabilities. Integrating magnonic logic with conventional CMOS technology remains an active area of research. Hybrid magnonic–electronic systems could combine the advantages of both technologies, using electronic circuits for control and input/output operations while employing magnonic structures for energy-efficient computation. Such hybrid architectures could enable gradual integration of magnonic components into existing semiconductor technologies.

Challenges and Future Research Directions

Despite the considerable promise of magnonic technologies, several technical challenges must be addressed before these systems can be widely adopted in practical computing platforms. One of the most significant limitations is the attenuation of spin waves as they propagate through magnetic materials. Energy losses caused by magnetic damping reduce the amplitude of spin waves over distance, which limits the size and reliability of magnonic circuits. Developing materials with extremely low damping coefficients remains a critical research priority. Another major challenge lies in the generation and detection of spin waves at nanoscale dimensions. Many existing experimental systems rely on microwave antennas or inductive elements to excite spin waves. While effective in laboratory settings, these methods are difficult to scale down for highly integrated nanoscale circuits. Researchers are therefore exploring alternative techniques such as spin-transfer torque, spin–orbit torque, and voltage-controlled magnetic anisotropy to generate and manipulate spin waves more efficiently. Fabrication complexity also presents a significant barrier to large-scale magnonic device integration. Magnonic circuits often require precise nanoscale patterning and carefully engineered magnetic interfaces to maintain consistent spin wave behavior. Advances in nanolithography, thin-film deposition, and materials engineering are essential for achieving reproducible and scalable device architectures. Another emerging research direction involves the exploration of quantum magnonics, which studies the interaction between magnons and quantum systems such as superconducting qubits and photons. Quantum magnonic systems may enable new forms of quantum information processing, where magnons act as intermediaries for transferring quantum states between different physical platforms. Future developments are expected to focus on hybrid computing architectures that combine magnonic, electronic, and photonic technologies. Such systems could leverage the energy efficiency of spin wave devices while maintaining compatibility with established semiconductor infrastructures. As advances in materials science, nanotechnology, and spintronics continue to accelerate, magnonic technologies are increasingly viewed as a promising candidate for next-generation low-power computing systems capable of overcoming the limitations of conventional electronics.

Summary
Spin wave dynamics and magnonic devices represent a transformative approach to information processing by utilizing the collective oscillations of electron spins rather than the movement of electrical charges. Magnonic technologies provide significant advantages in terms of energy efficiency, scalability, and operational speed. Advances in magnetic materials such as yttrium iron garnet and nanoscale fabrication techniques have enabled the development of functional magnonic components including waveguides, logic gates, and signal processors. Although several technical challenges remain, particularly related to signal attenuation and device integration, ongoing research in materials science, nanotechnology, and spintronics continues to advance the field. The integration of magnonic devices with conventional semiconductor technologies may lead to hybrid computing architectures capable of overcoming the limitations of traditional electronics. As a result, magnonics is expected to play an important role in the development of future energy-efficient and high-performance computing systems.

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