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IMPACT OF AI IN MODELLING INDUSTRY HAS REDUCED THE USE OF LIVE MODELS IN FASHION INDUSTRY

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Abstract: Live models in fashion are the breathing canvases of the industry, bringing designs to life through movement, personality, and physical presence. They bridge the gap between abstract concepts and wearable art, serving as a primary marketing tool for both haute couture and ready-to-wear collections. Artificial intelligence (AI) has significantly impacted the modeling industry by reducing the reliance on live models, particularly for commercial, e-commerce, and fast-fashion photography. Brands are increasingly utilizing AI-generated models, digital clones, and virtual influencers to create campaigns at lower costs, with greater speed, and without logistical challenges. The study explores the use of technology created by AI in the modelling industry which has made the live models jobless. The study will be an exploratory study. The research approach is qualitative and the researchers will collect details said by live fashion models.

Index Terms - Artificial intelligence, live models, digital clones, virtual influencers

I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of using living people to display clothing originated in the 19th century. English couturier Charles Frederick Worth is widely credited as the first designer to use live models to display his creations to clients, largely inventing the modern fashion show in 1858. Professional modeling involves navigating rigorous casting processes, relentless travel schedules during fashion months, and the constant balancing of the profession's glamorous exterior with the business of retail and garment fittings. The fashion models are facing new challenges nowadays as transition from live human models to AI models in fashion replaces traditional photoshoots with digital avatars.

The need for live models in the fashion industry stems from their critical role in runway shows, showrooms, fittings, and brand activations. Live models bring garments to life through movement and real-time client interaction, which cannot be replicated by digital mockups. The fashion industry's live model segment is evolving rapidly, driven by the surge of real-time livestream shopping and the need for relatable, experiential marketing.

The fashion industry is undergoing a digital and technological revolution, driven by the explosive growth of live-commerce and the rapid integration of artificial intelligence. Traditional live runway modeling is expanding to include shoppable digital broadcasts and AI avatars. Runway shows have moved beyond the physical realm. Events like Metaverse Fashion Week allow brands to dress 3D digital avatars in immersive, sustainable, and accessible formats. Augmented Reality (AR) and VTO applications have

become baseline features for online fashion retailers. Consumers can now see how specific garments look on their own body type from home, decreasing the historically high return rates associated with online shopping.

Research Objectives:

- To explore the evolution of AI in fashion shows
- To analyze the thoughts and behaviour of fashion models
- To discover the Pros and Cons of AI in modelling industry

Review of Literature

The rise of artificial intelligence has touched nearly every industry, disrupting long-established workflows and raising concerns about job losses. Now, the fashion world is reckoning with these changes as AI takes hold, from virtual fitting rooms to AI avatars starring in marketing campaigns



Virtual model wearing different three different outfits promoting three different skincare products.

Impact of AI on the Modeling Industry

- **Replacement in Commercial Work:** AI is taking over repetitive commercial modeling, reducing the need for photographers, stylists, makeup artists, and live models for product catalogs.
- **Virtual Clones:** Major brands, including H&M, have experimented with creating digital clones of real models, reducing the need for them to be physically present for shoots.
- **"Flawless" Virtual Models:** AI-generated models, such as those used by Guess and featured in Vogue (August 2025), offer a "flawless" appearance that can be altered in skin color, body shape, and size in seconds, a development that is polarizing the industry.
- **Increased Efficiency and Lower Costs:** AI allows for the generation of studio-quality, consistent images, which is faster and more cost-effective than arranging traditional photoshoots.
- **Job Insecurity:** The rise of AI models is considered a threat to human models, photographers, and makeup artists, with many fearing a decrease in work opportunities.

Industry Perspectives and Quotes

- **On the Shift in Fashion:** "The modeling industry may never be the same. Higsfield just launched Fashion Factory — and it lets you: Upload a single image (real or AI) and generate photos," says *Higsfield AI*.
- **On the Replacement of Models:** "AI will replace most clothing models. It's already happening," notes *Instagram* trend reports.
- **On the Threat to Creativity:** "This use of AI can lead to products not being accurately represented and models losing work and income," warns *10 News+*.
- **On the Future of Modeling:** "I used to be a model and the AI future I forecasted is here," says *Sinéad Bovell*.
- **On the Use of Virtual Models:** "An advertisement featured in Vogue's August print edition showcased a model created entirely by artificial intelligence," noting the rise of AI models, as reported by *YouTube* analysis.
- **On the Controversy:** "Proponents say the growing use of #AI in fashion modeling showcases diversity in the industry," according to *The Grio*.

ChatGPT

Fashion modeling is experiencing significant technological disruption as AI platforms evolve from simple model generation into fully-fledged content creation systems. Precedence Research predicts that the AI fashion market will reach \$60 billion by 2034, with annual growth rates nearing 40%.

The changes underway in fashion provide a template for how other industries can harness AI not only for efficiency but for transformative business model innovation. The fashion industry's blend of creative content, quick market cycles, and direct consumer feedback loops is also found in sectors like hospitality and financial services. This transformation parallels trends in venture capital, where data-driven approaches are reshaping traditional investment frameworks—a movement reminiscent of the way algorithmic trading revolutionized public markets.

AI is Now More Than a Fashion Accessory

Recently, leading retailers have moved from experimenting with AI to full-scale implementation. H&M announced in March 2025 that it intends to create 30 digital versions of existing models. Levi Strauss began exploring AI models in 2023 as part of its diversity initiatives, while Burberry unveiled immersive virtual fitting rooms, among other innovations, that provide personalized experiences.

The Virtual AI Workforce: An Economic Reality

The Bureau of Labor Statistics counts 3600 professional models in the United States. Naomi Ellis of Arizona State University posits that professionals who master AI tools will gain advantages rather than face replacement.

The fashion industry's evolution offers concrete examples. H&M allows models ownership of their digital twins, establishing ongoing revenue streams. Creati's marketplace enables content creators to profit from viral templates they develop. This shift from one-time payment to recurring revenue could revolutionize creative sectors.

These new “infonomics” are compelling. A professional fashion shoot in the US typically costs \$10,000–\$30,000 for a day's production (with luxury editorials occasionally exceeding \$50,000 for exclusive campaigns). Daily model rates usually range from \$500 to \$5,000, with top talent earning more. While creative agencies may charge \$10,000–\$50,000 for digital-first viral concepts—and sometimes up to \$100,000 for major productions—a new wave of AI platforms provides nearly limitless, studio-quality fashion content for just \$29–\$59 per month, significantly lowering barriers for brands and creators.

Street Vogue exemplifies the potential for transformation. Within six months of adopting Creati, the company expanded from one to 20 employees and increased revenue twelvefold. The key: reallocating production budgets toward the distribution and paid amplification of AI-generated content.

However, New York's Fashion Workers Act establishes compliance requirements, including explicit consent, detailed usage parameters, and separate AI agreements. These considerations are likely to emerge in other industries as well, such as healthcare (patient data), finance (algorithmic decisions), and employment (automated evaluations). Regulatory compliance must be integrated into architectures from the outset. Ideally, workforce transformation necessitates proactive planning and value-sharing models.

Market Validation of AI-Based Approaches

Several companies are competing in this space with unique strategies. Botika transforms flat product images into on-model photography, Lalaland.ai develops inclusive digital avatars for 3D design integration, and VModel.ai focuses on bulk processing. Nevertheless, merging viral ideation with content generation appears to be the next frontier.

The broader landscape reveals substantial opportunity. According to Gartner, "91% of retail IT leaders are prioritizing AI as the top technology to implement by 2026." Yet challenges persist: "Despite an average spend of \$1.9 million on GenAI initiatives in 2024, less than 30% of AI leaders report their CEOs are satisfied with AI investment returns." This gap in investment satisfaction suggests that the market needs solutions that deliver measurable business value rather than simply technical capabilities.

McKinsey's analysis offers context regarding creative applications: "Up to 25 percent of the potential of AI in fashion will stem from the creative side," notes the consultancy. Market research firm Market.us

AI Fashion Models: The Upside

As I mentioned back in my 2020 Vogue piece, there are potential benefits.

- **Sustainability:** "Digital models drastically reduce the environmental footprint associated with photoshoots and bringing clothes to market. It's not uncommon for a model to shoot over 50 outfits in a single day for an e-commerce shoot, and many of those samples end up in landfills." Yes, AI systems have their own carbon footprint, but a quick back-of-the-envelope calculation likely shows AI generation coming out ahead on net emissions.
- **Efficiency & Accessibility:** "An argument can also be made for efficiency and cost-effectiveness. Digital models can work on multiple 'shoots' simultaneously, requiring a significantly smaller team." This could democratize fashion creation, allowing emerging designers without big budgets or new kinds of digital artists to bring their fashion visions to life.
- **Radical Inclusivity:** Imagine the possibility for true inclusivity – not the illusionary AI-generated representation, but the chance to literally see *yourself* in the clothes. If algorithms were fed enough (ethically sourced) data about us as individuals, "they could generate content featuring us, each one of us, as models," as I shared in 2020.

AI Fashion Models: The Downside

The fashion industry has long operated within an infrastructure prone to exploitation – from overseas manufacturing plants to the lack of protections for models themselves.

- **Exploitation & Consent:** Despite modeling being quite structurally similar to acting, fashion models in most countries (including the US, though the Fashion Workers Act taking effect this June offers more protection) aren't typically allowed to unionize. When Hollywood actors went on strike two years ago, with AI being a core concern, fashion models were largely left out of the conversation. Yet, AI systems are being trained on the likeness and labor of hundreds of thousands of models. Has anyone truly addressed the question of their consent? Even creating digital twins improves the underlying technology that ultimately enables automation.
- **The Illusion of Diversity:** AI models create new avenues for exploitation and misrepresentation through performative diversity. Brands could potentially create avatars representing identities and experiences no one on their team has lived through, speaking *for* those communities without genuine understanding or connection. This isn't to say AI characters must look exactly like their creators, but it raises urgent questions about representation, appropriation, and harm. Imagine a brand creating an AI representing a community historically wronged by that brand, or misrepresenting a community in a way that further marginalizes actual people, all while profiting from their likeness without benefiting anyone from that community. Society needs to figure out where we draw new cultural lines in an AI-generated world. I don't have the answers.
- **Automation & Job Displacement:** AI-generated fashion models could displace tens of thousands of jobs. Photoshoots are collaborative efforts involving creative directors, stylists, hair and makeup artists, photographers, assistants, and the models themselves. While some new roles will emerge (perhaps AI-first creative directors or prompt engineers specializing in fashion), many traditional roles face obsolescence. This phenomenon isn't unique to modeling – I've written extensively about the broader workforce disruption AI brings. But we still have to grapple with the consequences.

By reducing costs associated with physical photoshoots, travel, and production, AI models provide financial advantages for brands. While human models, photographers, and stylists may face reduced opportunities, brands benefit from increased agility, faster time-to-market, and the ability to test concepts digitally. The shift encourages creative experimentation while optimizing budget allocation.

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Result and Discussion

Study on live Model

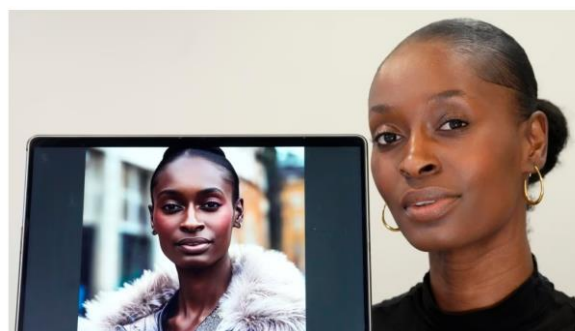
Case 1



The famous quote, "I am a model and I know that artificial intelligence will eventually take my job," She originally stated this as the title of her 2020 op-ed published in *Vogue*. Sinead Bovell, a former model and now tech entrepreneur, wrote an article for *Vogue* five years ago about the risks of AI replacing modelling. She tells the *BBC* that not labelling AI content clearly is "exceptionally problematic" because it could have a detrimental impact on people's mental health.

"Beauty standards are already being influenced by AI. There are young girls getting plastic surgery to look like a face in a filter – and now we see people who are entirely artificial," she says.

Case 2



Fashion model Alexandrah poses with a computer showing an AI generated image of her, in London, Friday, March 29, 2024. (AP Photo/Kirsty Wigglesworth)

Alexsandrah is a **fashion** model in London. She has a **twin**. But her twin is not her sister. The twin is a product of Artificial Intelligence, or AI. Whenever Alexandrah is not available to work with a photographer, the **virtual** twin takes her place. When a company chooses to use the AI Alexandrah, the real-life version gets paid. Alexandrah said her AI twin is exactly like her. Alexandrah's twin is an example of how computer images are influencing creative industries.

Case 3

Fashion Brand Ralph Lauren Enters AI Age

By ISABELLE BOUSQUETTE

David Lauren is intent on propelling the fashion brand his father built into the artificial-intelligence age, despite the critics.

Ralph Lauren, where Lauren serves as chief branding and innovation officer, on Tuesday launched Ask Ralph, a conversational AI-powered fashion styling helper for users of its U.S. app.

Trained on decades of Ralph Lauren archives and lookbooks, it can suggest outfit options for events and answer vital fashion questions in natural language. (Yes, it's OK to wear white after Labor Day, Ask Ralph says. The brand confirmed the real Ralph, who still runs his company, would concur.) The AI stylist was built in collaboration with Microsoft using OpenAI's foundation models on Azure.

"Every brand can use any technology today. Using it in a way to help enhance your vision is the key," he said. There will almost certainly be feedback, criticism and evolution, he said.

Nearly three years into the generative AI adoption cycle, companies are getting more comfortable putting AI-generated content and experiences in front of customers. But luxury brands in particular have hesitated over concerns that a more tech-driven experience

isn't always what luxury shoppers are looking for.

Since joining the company in 2000, Lauren has been looking to incorporate more digital tech into the industry. That was the year Ralph Lauren became one of the first luxury brands to sell online, and since then he's helped develop the PoloTech "smart" shirt, which tracks biometric data, and spearheaded a holographic runway show.

Lauren sat down with The WSJ Leadership Institute to talk about the new Ask Ralph tool, why he anticipates some initial criticism and how an early shift to e-commerce has impacted ongoing tech investments. Edited excerpts from the conversation are below.

WSJ: Why is now the right time to launch this AI stylist?

Lauren: We would have liked to have launched it a while ago, but it's taken us a year to work with Microsoft to develop. There's a lot of learnings to do this. The first couple of experiences may not be optimal, the first couple of questions may not be as personal, may not be as relevant, but there are going to be ways for us to get better quickly. I think with AI we have to accept that no matter what the criticism is, it's a learning curve. And we want to get on that curve quickly so we can



David Lauren serves as chief branding and innovation officer of the storied fashion brand his father built.

learn as much as we can.

Do you anticipate criticism?

Lauren: Yeah, but that's OK. It's like putting a line on the runway. Part of fashion is exposing yourself with newness and evolving. You've got to go on the runway. You have to put those new ads out there. And we know there's a critic for everything. But we also know that that's feedback. We'll decide if that feedback is useful or not. We want to get in the game. And sometimes we'll hit it out of the park, and sometimes it'll just be a step in a direction of evolution.

Back in 2000, you became one of the first luxury brands to sell online. What was behind that decision?

Lauren: [Back then] people didn't know how to shop [on the internet] yet. People didn't have the confidence to put their credit card in to buy anything more than \$50. We never worried about the story leaking out about RalphLauren.com coming because nobody cared.

How did that early decision to sell items online impact ongoing tech investments?

Lauren: It's enabled us to

be first with many other technologies. We were the first brand to launch QR technology [on clothing tags]. We were using augmented reality and all kinds of touch screen technology and three-dimensional technology, shoppable windows, magic mirrors.

Now we are dedicated to learning how to use AI across our company. This is our first real consumer-facing [AI] experience. We think there are certain areas that are resonating and certain [areas] that are not. There's no doubt that it's going to become central as part of our world.

What kind of shift is AI driving today in luxury retail?

Lauren: I think today people have accepted that every company has to be a digital company. I think people have accepted that you have to have really good IT teams, which people didn't have years ago.

Every brand can use any technology today. Using it in a way to help enhance your vision is the key. That's where the magic happens. And that's where mistakes can happen. There also has to be patience.

Isabelle Bousquette writes for WSJ Pro CIO Journal.

H&M's Digital Twin Program (2025)

The Swedish retailer deployed AI replicas of 30 real models—including Mathilda Gvarliani and Vilma Sjöberg—for social media and marketing campaigns developed with vendor Uncut. Models retained rights, granted permission, and received compensation at agency rates when twins were used. Images featured watermarks for transparency.

Levi's Partnership with Lalaland.ai (2023)

Levi's partnered with Lalaland.ai to create diverse AI models representing varied skin tones and body types for online product pages. The brand stated the pilot would "supplement, not replace" human models. Public reaction was severe—critics questioned why the company didn't simply hire more diverse human models, viewing the approach as "cheapening diversity" rather than genuine DEI action.

Guess in Vogue (August 2025)

A fully AI-generated blonde model appeared in a two-page spread in Vogue US wearing Guess's summer collection. Produced by AI marketing agency Seraphinne Vallora, the campaign sparked intense consumer debate and criticism from models regarding unrealistic beauty standards. Small print disclosed "Produced by Seraphinne Vallora on AI," but the controversy highlighted reputational risks of deploying synthetic models in premium editorial contexts.

Luxury Brands: Valentino and Balenciaga

Valentino's September 2025 collaboration with Vans featured AI-generated video and images based on original AW25 runway footage. The brand explicitly stated AI use and confirmed "informed consent of the models and all talents involved," earning praise for transparency. Balenciaga's SS22 "Clones" runway show grafted artist Eliza Douglas's face onto stand-in models using deepfake technology, framing it as commentary on digital identity.

Case 4

Does this look like a real woman? AI model in Vogue raises concerns about beauty standards

27 July 2025



Seraphinne Vallora

This model isn't real, but her beauty standards might still be influential. There's a new supermodel in town. She's striking, stylish... and not real. In August's print edition of Vogue, a Guess advert features a flawless blonde model showing off a striped maxi dress and a floral playsuit from the brand's summer collection. In small print in one corner, the ad reveals that she was created using AI. While Vogue says the AI model was not an editorial decision, it is the first time an AI-generated person has featured in the magazine. The advert has been met with controversy and raises questions about what this means for real models who have fought for greater diversity, and for consumers - particularly young people - already struggling with unrealistic beauty standards. Seraphinne Vallora is the company behind Guess's controversial advert. Its founders, Valentina Gonzalez and Andreea Petrescu, tell the BBC they were approached by Guess's co-founder, Paul Marciano, on Instagram and were asked to create an AI model as part of the brand's summer campaign. "We created 10 draft models for him and he selected one brunette woman and one blonde that we went ahead and developed further," Gonzalez says.

Case 5

Indian Fashion's New AI Models

AI models are taking over fashion world: Can you tell which of these ads are real and which are AI-made?

Freedom fighters to fictional K-pop stars—homegrown brands debut campaigns fronted by AI models, expanding technology's impact on fashion and human aspiration

Indian eyewear brand Lenskart Studio's new collection takes inspiration from K-Pop, riding the wave of popularity that South Korean pop music enjoys across the globe. Fronting the campaign is Astro IRIS – a K-Pop band comprising four members, namely Jiang, Dawn, Valentine and Lyla. All dressed up in striking acetate glasses with colour-blocked rims from the label. For a collection inspired by K-Pop, having musicians as campaign stars only makes sense.



While AI has been used in fashion design and manufacturing, Indian brands are now beginning to dabble with it in consumer-facing campaigns. Earlier this month, homegrown athleisure brand Good Indian marked Independence Day with a campaign starring leaders from the freedom struggle. Using AI, personalities such as BR Ambedkar, Jawaharlal Nehru and Bhagat Singh among others were reimaged in white sports gear. “Embracing the power of AI, we’ve created a potent campaign that not only captivates but communicates a profound message. This AI integration significantly reduces costs, making it an ideal fit for a startup like ours,” Avneesh Gadgil, co-founder of the brand, said in a press statement marking the launch.



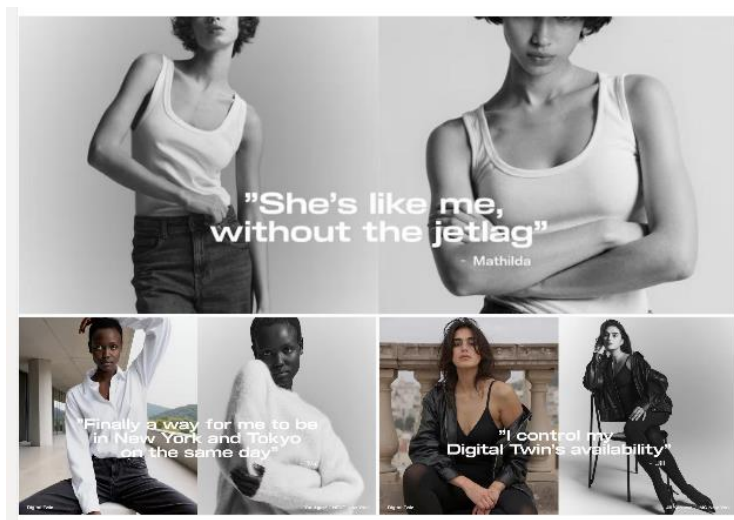
AI generated model, dress, design and location by fashion designer Gunriddh Sial (House of Gulaal)

Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based designs and models are going to be the next big thing and globally things have started moving in this direction. Recently, denim company Levi's announced its partnership with an AI studio to create AI-generated fashion models which will supplement human models.

Criticism of the fashion industry

The fashion industry has often been criticized for using models who are only white or tall or who fit one idea of beauty. Activists for including many groups in fashion say some companies could seem like they are employing minorities when they are just using AI models.

- "Generative AI in the modelling industry... is a double-edged sword. It presents an incredible array of opportunities... Yet, it also poses significant challenges..." — Taryn Williams
- "AI can positively impact the industry, but there need to be meaningful protections for workers." — Sara Ziff, Founder of Model Alliance
- "Digital models could create an unattainable and distorted view of beauty within the industry." — Sandra Reynolds Agency
- "AI is reshaping modeling work... treating models' labor as data." — ILR School, Cornell University



Research Methodology

The methodology outlines how the research was structured, executed, and presented. Since artificial intelligence (AI) in the Indian fashion modelling industry is a contemporary and evolving subject, achieving absolute precision in results is not feasible. Instead, the methodology provides the framework that connects the research problem with the findings. By integrating statistical evidence with personal experiences and professional opinions, qualitative data is presented to establish the foundation of how AI models are reshaping the Indian fashion industry.

Qualitative insights were obtained through expert interviews and observations of fashion platforms utilizing AI applications. These methods offered deeper perspectives on how experts view AI in relation to unemployment, sustainability, and creativity.

In-depth Interview Analysis

1. AI is the future of fashion

Many respondents expressed awareness of the growing inclusion of AI in the fashion industry, but they also highlighted its disruptive impact on employment. While AI-driven fashion models and digital platforms are praised for their efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and ability to deliver flawless visuals, they simultaneously reduce the demand for traditional roles such as photographers, makeup artists, stylists, and even human models. This shift has created concern among industry professionals who feel that their creative contributions are being overshadowed by algorithmic outputs. For some, AI represents innovation and sustainability, but for others, it signals a loss of livelihood and diminished opportunities in an already competitive field. The perception is that AI, despite its advantages, has displaced many skilled individuals whose expertise once formed the backbone of fashion production, raising questions about the balance between technological progress and human employment.

2. AI's Virtual Twin Modeling

Human models in the fashion industry are increasingly being compelled to adapt to the rise of virtual twin modelling, as they recognize that their faces or likenesses may eventually be replaced by digital replicas. This practice involves creating AI-generated twins of real models, which can then be used repeatedly across campaigns, advertisements, and fashion shows. Typically, the live model is compensated once for the use of their image, after which the virtual twin can be deployed multiple times without additional payment. While this arrangement ensures efficiency and cost savings for brands, it leaves human models with limited choices — either accept twin modelling or risk losing relevance in a rapidly digitizing industry. For many, this shift represents both an opportunity and a compromise: they maintain some presence in fashion through their digital twin, but at the expense of traditional modelling opportunities and ongoing income. The growing reliance on AI avatars underscores the tension between technological innovation and human employment, raising questions about fairness, sustainability, and the future of creative labor in fashion. AI modelling is a sustainable.

3. AI models are economical and time saving

Arranging a traditional human model photoshoot is often a costly and time-consuming process. Expenses include hiring professional models, photographers, makeup artists, and stylists, along with managing indoor studio setups or outdoor location arrangements. Each shoot requires careful planning, coordination, and logistics — from lighting and props to travel and accommodation — all of which add significantly to the overall budget. In contrast, **AI fashion models** offer a far more flexible and efficient alternative. They can be developed digitally within a short span of time, without the need for physical arrangements or repeated costs. Once created, AI models can be reused across multiple campaigns, customized to fit different brand aesthetics, and adjusted instantly to meet creative requirements. This makes them not only cost-effective but also adaptable, allowing fashion brands to produce flawless visuals quickly and at scale. While human photoshoots emphasize authenticity and individuality, AI models prioritize efficiency, consistency, and accessibility, reshaping how fashion content is produced in the modern industry.

4. AI models are flawless

AI fashion models may appear flawless at first glance, but in reality, they are carefully designed digital creations that simulate perfection rather than embody it. Their "flawlessness" comes from the fact that they are generated or enhanced using algorithms that can smooth skin, adjust proportions, and eliminate imperfections in ways that human models cannot naturally achieve. Designers can adjust height, body shape, skin tone, and facial features to fit brand aesthetics without physical limitations. Unlike human models, AI avatars don't age, get tired, or vary in appearance — they can look identical across multiple shoots. Overly polished AI models can look unnatural, reducing relatability for consumers. While flawless, AI models lack the spontaneity, personality, and emotional depth that human models bring to fashion.

5. AI's inclusion in modelling field has created hallucination

AI avatars can generate flawless skin, perfect symmetry, and idealized features, but these are only surface-level aesthetics. They lack the emotional depth and individuality that human models naturally convey. While AI can mimic a smile or replicate a pose, it cannot capture the genuine spark behind someone's eyes, the lived experiences that shape confidence, or the cultural nuances embedded in human expression. The replacement of human models with AI avatars raises ethical questions about employment, fairness, and the value of human creativity. It challenges the balance between technological efficiency and human artistry.

Conclusion

The replacement of human models with AI-generated versions is poised to bring significant changes to the modelling industry. It could alter traditional work environments, reduce job opportunities, and diminish the demand for real models. For brands, AI avatars are appealing because they can be easily created, modified, and tailored to suit specific audiences and industry needs. However, this convenience comes with risks: many consumers struggle to connect emotionally with products showcased on AI models, which may harm a brand's reputation. Real models contribute relatability and authenticity to campaigns, qualities that AI has yet to replicate convincingly. As Levi's Global Head of Digital and Emerging Technology noted, "AI models will not completely replace humans, but will serve as a supplement intended to aid in the brand's representation of various sizes, skin tones and ages."

The rise of digital model agencies could, however, open new financial opportunities for human models, provided they retain ownership rights over their likeness and digital representations. This ensures protection when their bodies or faces are used as AI twins or when they wear digital clothing. Ideally, AI fashion models should complement human models rather than replace them. While challenges remain — including ethical concerns, employment impacts, and questions of authenticity — the technology also offers exciting possibilities. It can enhance online shopping experiences, reduce product returns, and help minimize waste in the fashion industry. Supporters argue that AI avatars allow companies to showcase clothing on diverse body types and skin tones, something costly and difficult to achieve with human models alone. Yet critics emphasize that this efficiency comes at the expense of jobs for models, makeup artists, and photographers.

Ultimately, while AI saves brands money and time, it risks stripping campaigns of their emotional depth and human connection. Without real people, advertising risks becoming sterile and forgettable, more like staring at mannequins than engaging with living personalities. AI algorithms can create the illusion of beauty, but they cannot replace the humanity, authenticity, and individuality that real models bring to fashion.

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