# Fashion industry debates AI models as human creativity and ethics hang in the balance



The fashion industry, renowned for its constant evolution, finds itself at a pivotal crossroads with the rapid emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) in modelling. As brands increasingly turn to AI-generated models, concerns about the implications for human creativity, diversity, and authentic representation in fashion are mounting.

H&M’s recent campaign featuring AI models stirred significant debate, with many describing it as an unsettling glimpse into a future that might sacrifice genuine human expression for digitally constructed perfection. Initially perceived as a captivating technological novelty, the reality of AI’s role in fashion is resonating uncomfortably within the community, from professional models to industry veterans. Paul W Fleming, General Secretary of Equity, the UK trade union for fashion models, articulates a growing anxiety: "As we move forward with generative AI, it is vital that models and other creative workers retain full control over their likeness and are paid fairly for its usage." The push for enhanced rights is underscored by mounting evidence that many AI systems employ data sourced without consent, raising ethical concerns around intellectual property and workplace rights.

The allure of AI is undeniable; brands can exploit these digital entities without incurring the costs associated with human models, such as travel and styling teams. Yet this efficiency poses a significant threat to human professionals whose livelihoods depend on their artistry. An anonymous international model expressed her dismay at the digital encroachment, lamenting the loss of the emotional connection integral to fashion shoots. "Fashion is about more than just aesthetics; it's about emotion, energy, storytelling," she stated. This sentiment highlights the human element that AI struggles to replicate—an integral factor that enriches the narrative of fashion itself.

Echoing her resolve, celebrated model Saskia de Brauw publicly defended the irreplaceable nature of human involvement in modelling. On social media, she emphasised that "Modelling is a human endeavour; it requires skill, practice, collaboration, and emotion to truly exist." Her stance underscores a broader resistance within the industry, advocating for a collaborative spirit over a profit-driven push towards automation. The call for solidarity among models comes not just from a desire to preserve their craft, but from an awareness that a rush to exploit AI can dilute the narratives and identities that real models bring to fashion.

On the other hand, some proponents of AI suggest it may foster greater diversity. AI models can represent various races, genders, and body types, potentially leading to more inclusive fashion representations. Insights from recent discussions reveal that AI could cater to a broader array of demographics, thus combating the stereotype of a singular beauty standard. However, critics argue that the use of AI as a mere simulation of diversity falls short of true representation, often perpetuating existing biases rather than dismantling them.

Despite such potential benefits, the ethical ramifications of deploying AI models remain pressing. There’s a fear that companies may turn to these digital alternatives as a cover for neglecting genuine diversity initiatives. The focus on cost-saving rather than authenticity threatens to erode the very foundations of ethos in fashion.

Luca Arrigo, CEO and Co-Founder of BetterGroup, proposes a more balanced perspective. He likens AI to Photoshop—initially met with skepticism, yet ultimately embraced as a tool to augment creative expression. While he emphasises the potential for AI to elevate the roles of both digital and human models, Arrigo acknowledges that this must be underpinned by stringent ethical standards and regulations. "Models must have control over the images shared and the products they endorse. Collaboration is essential," he insists, reflecting a growing recognition within the tech community that the relationship between AI and human creativity must be symbiotic rather than adversarial.

As the fashion industry traverses this uncharted territory, it is critical that stakeholders engage in a vital discussion about the implications of AI on artistry, authenticity, and inclusivity. If approached thoughtfully, AI could indeed serve as a complement to human creativity rather than a replacement. Ultimately, the essence of fashion—the celebration of beauty, individuality, and human connection—must not be overshadowed by the inexorable advance of technology. There remains a profound truth: no algorithm can encapsulate the spirit that makes fashion a uniquely human endeavour.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 5, 6
2. Paragraph 3
3. Paragraph 4
4. Paragraphs 8, 9
5. Paragraph 7
6. Paragraph 10
7. Paragraph 11

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.mirror.co.uk/3am/style/modelling-human-endeavour-models-push-35142822> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://apnews.com/article/ai-fashion-model-digital-diversity-aaa489111bd8e793aa6e5a531dc7ade2> - This article discusses the impact of AI-generated models on the fashion industry, highlighting both potential benefits and concerns. Proponents argue that AI can enhance diversity by creating models of various races, genders, and sizes, leading to more tailored shopping experiences and reduced fashion waste. However, critics worry that digital models may displace human models, makeup artists, and photographers, and that companies might use AI to simulate diversity without true representation. The article also touches on the ethical implications of using AI in fashion and the need for regulations to protect models' rights.
3. <https://www.scmp.com/lifestyle/fashion-beauty/article/3259141/ai-ruining-fashion-industry-real-life-models-particular-people-colour> - This article examines the rise of AI-generated models in the fashion industry and the concerns it raises, particularly regarding real-life models of color. While AI models can showcase diversity and reduce costs, there are fears that they may replace human models and perpetuate existing biases. The piece highlights the experiences of models like Alexsandrah, who has an AI-generated twin, and discusses the broader implications for the industry, including potential job displacement and ethical considerations.
4. <https://www.marketingweek.com/hm-should-rethink-its-cgi-models/> - This article critiques H&M's use of computer-generated images (CGI) of women in its online advertising. It discusses the implications of using digital models, including concerns about unrealistic body standards and the potential impact on women's body image. The piece also questions the authenticity of using AI-generated models and suggests that it may send a message that real women are not good enough for advertising purposes.
5. <https://www.lbbonline.com/news/ai-beauty-fashion-models-attractive-investment-ethical-eyesore> - This article explores the use of AI-generated models in the fashion industry, focusing on the ethical and consumer trust issues it raises. It discusses how brands like L'Oréal have implemented policies regarding AI-generated content and emphasizes the need for transparency when using AI in advertising. The piece also highlights consumer discomfort with AI-generated brand ambassadors and the importance of clear disclosure to maintain trust.
6. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/lifestyle/fashion/aigenerated-models-could-bring-more-diversity-to-the-fashion-industry-or-leave-it-with-less-101713154931565.html> - This article delves into the potential impact of AI-generated models on the fashion industry, particularly concerning diversity. It presents both sides of the debate: proponents argue that AI can enhance diversity and reduce fashion waste, while critics fear that digital models may displace human models and perpetuate existing biases. The piece also touches on the ethical implications and the need for regulations to protect models' rights.
7. <https://www.thebubble.org.uk/lifestyle/fashion-and-beauty/ai-in-the-fashion-industry-friend-or-foe/> - This article examines the role of AI in the fashion industry, discussing both its potential benefits and drawbacks. It highlights concerns about job displacement, loss of creativity, data privacy, and ethical considerations. The piece also addresses the environmental impact of AI and the need for a balanced approach to integrating technology into fashion.