# Digital fashion offers sustainable style but risks fuelling further consumption



The emergence of digital fashion, often referred to as "e-fashion," represents a significant shift in how consumers engage with clothing in an increasingly virtual world. A recent study highlights that individuals driven by sensory experiences are particularly attracted to digital garments, which are designed for virtual avatars and exist within digital environments. This burgeoning trend has seen established fashion brands partner with online platforms—ranging from video games to social networks—to launch their e-fashion collections.

The allure of digital clothing stems from its potential sustainability advantages. According to Kokho Jason Sit, a senior lecturer in marketing at the University of Portsmouth, e-fashion does not result in the physical production and consumption typically seen in the clothing industry. “Nothing is physically produced, consumed and then disposed of, and thus no landfills and no modern slavery,” he states. This aligns with broader industry discussions on mitigating the detrimental environmental impact of traditional fashion, which has been a major contributor to pollution and resource depletion.

However, the transition to embracing digital garments as a sustainable alternative hinges on their genuine ability to replace physical purchases. The findings from Sit's research suggest that while digital clothing can capture consumer interest, it is crucial that it diverts attention from purchasing physical items. In the studies conducted across the UK, Italy, and the US, participants exhibited a willingness to pay more for digital items perceived as unique, particularly those with a strong need for sensory interaction—an intriguing result considering that one might normally presume tactile interaction would favour physical items instead.

The concept of digital garments not only seeks to satisfy consumer desire for novelty but also raises concerns about potentially exacerbating consumption habits. As consumers increasingly clothe their avatars in an array of stylish digital options, there is a question of whether this will lead to heightened expectations for physical wardrobes to match. Some industry experts are wary; will e-fashion merely satiate a craving for novelty, or will it ignite further consumption in the tangible world?

Supporting the idea of digital fashion as a sustainable alternative, several fashion brands have taken steps to incorporate eco-friendly practices. Brands like Carlings have introduced entire collections of digital garments, illustrating a growing commitment to reducing the traditional industry's carbon footprint. Furthermore, innovative technologies such as augmented reality (AR) and 3D design are being employed to enhance the shopping experience, minimising waste and returns by allowing consumers to virtually try on clothes before purchasing.

Moreover, the integration of digital fashion within the metaverse suggests a new frontier in fashion sustainability. The rapid digitalisation of the apparel industry is posited as a pathway towards addressing critical environmental concerns, from biodiversity loss to climate change. By merging digital experiences with physical fashion, experts advocate for a more sustainable future where consumers can express their style without the adverse environmental impacts of fast fashion.

Ultimately, the rise of digital fashion raises essential questions about the relationship between consumption and sustainability in the fashion sector. The conversation is no longer just about the tangible garments people wear but extends to how technology can reshape our understanding of style, while also promoting responsible consumer behaviour. It remains to be seen whether e-fashion can stand as a viable solution to the industry's environmental challenges, or if it will simply provide a new avenue for indulgence.

Reflecting on this duality, Sit adds, “Our work instead aims to provide a conversation on how to use e-fashion for a greater good… targeting fashionistas that like to try new fashion items but don’t necessarily want to own them.” This approach suggests a promising shift in consumer desires that could ultimately lead to a more sustainable and innovative fashion landscape.

**Reference Map**

1. Paragraphs 1, 2: Source 1
2. Paragraphs 3, 4: Source 2
3. Paragraph 5: Source 3
4. Paragraph 6: Source 4
5. Paragraph 7: Source 5
6. Paragraph 8: Source 6
7. Paragraph 9: Source 7

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.anthropocenemagazine.org/2025/05/virtual-fashion-is-coming-will-it-improve-clothing-sustainability-or-just-increase-consumption/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/02/how-digital-fashion-offers-to-resolve-the-environmental-impact-of-fast-fashion/> - This article discusses how digital fashion can mitigate the environmental impact of the traditional fashion industry. It highlights the use of digital clothing to reduce emissions, pollution, and labor abuses associated with garment production. The piece features examples like Swedish model Lisa Anckarman showcasing digital jackets on Instagram, emphasizing the environmental benefits of virtual garments. The article also mentions brands like Carlings, which have launched digital fashion collections, and notes the potential of digital fashion to meet consumer demand for new styles while promoting sustainability.
3. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s44265-023-00016-z> - This review article examines the influence of digital fashion and the metaverse on sustainability within the fashion industry. It discusses the rapid expansion of the apparel industry and its significant contribution to environmental issues like biodiversity loss and climate change. The paper explores how digitalization, particularly through the metaverse, is driving the fashion industry toward a more sustainable trajectory. It analyzes the primary challenges faced by the industry and how metaverse technologies can address these sustainability concerns, fostering discourse among researchers and industry professionals.
4. <https://thefword.ai/eco-chic-how-ethical-fashion-tech-is-revolutionizing-sustainability/> - This article explores how ethical fashion technology is transforming sustainability in the fashion industry. It introduces innovative solutions such as 3D design technology to reduce material waste, virtual garments produced only when necessary, and augmented reality (AR) try-ons to minimize returns and overstocking. The piece emphasizes that these advancements make sustainable fashion more practical, accessible, and impactful, highlighting the role of technology in promoting responsible fashion consumption.
5. <https://www.textileconsult.co.uk/2023/07/31/digital-fashion-the-way-forward-for-sustainability/> - This article discusses the potential of digital fashion to increase sustainability in the industry. It acknowledges the need to balance innovation with real-world applications, noting that while digital fashion cannot entirely replace physical clothing, it offers a unique space for creative expression without the environmental consequences of overconsumption and waste. The piece suggests that incorporating both digital and physical fashion elements can lead to a more sustainable future without compromising style or functionality.
6. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_fashion> - This Wikipedia page provides an overview of digital fashion, a field of fashion design that utilizes 3D software or artificial intelligence to create hyper-realistic, data-intensive digital garment simulations. It discusses how digital garments can be worn and presented in virtual environments, social media, online gaming, virtual reality (VR), and augmented reality (AR) platforms. The page highlights the aim of digital fashion to contribute to a more sustainable future for the fashion industry by promoting innovation, reducing waste, and encouraging conscious consumption.
7. <https://www.joor.com/insights/the-rise-of-sustainability-in-fashion> - This article examines the rise of sustainability in the fashion industry, focusing on how fashion technology is reshaping sustainability through the development of sustainable materials. It discusses innovations such as biodegradable fabrics, recycled fabrics, and 3D printing, which minimize waste and reduce the environmental impact of production. The piece emphasizes that using sustainable inputs in clothing and footwear production helps reduce the industry's ecological footprint, highlighting the role of technology in promoting sustainable practices.