# H&M and others disrupt fashion marketing with AI digital twins amid ethical concerns



Fast-fashion companies, notably H&M, are increasingly integrating "digital twin" technology—lifelike AI replicas of actual human models—into their marketing and design strategies. This innovative approach, heralded for its potential to revolutionise fashion, relies on extensive processes including full-body scanning and voice modelling to create digital avatars capable of promoting products, interacting with consumers, and virtually modelling clothing.

H&M recently highlighted this shift by unveiling an initiative that cloned 30 real-life models using digital-twin technology. While the company posits that these digital twins can enhance creative expression and streamline marketing efforts, concerns are mounting about the broader implications of such technology. This issue is not restricted to H&M other brands, including Levi Strauss and Zalando, are also exploring AI models to cut costs and expedite marketing efforts. Zalando, for example, has reported dramatically reduced production times for imagery, achieving remarkable efficiency improvements from several weeks down to just a few days.

However, the advent of digital twins raises critical questions about labor fairness, identity, and environmental impact. The use of AI-generated models introduces apprehensions for fashion professionals—models, photographers, and influencers—who may find their roles diminished as brands pivot towards cost-effective digital solutions. Furthermore, those with established prominence in the industry may harness the technology to enhance their portfolios, potentially sidelining those without substantial followings or industry visibility.

The environmental stakes are substantial as well. Fast fashion is already notorious for generating over 92 million tons of textile waste each year. The introduction of AI models could exacerbate this issue by further minimising the reliance on human labour and, consequently, commitment to sustainable practices. Digital twins are designed to sell physical products, perpetuating a cycle of overproduction that contributes to environmental degradation.

Despite these challenges, there are voices within the industry calling for transparency and fairness in the utilisation of digital twins. Some companies are taking strides to ensure that models retain rights over their digital likenesses, allowing them to control how their image is used. Jul Parke, a PhD student at the University of Toronto, emphasises the necessity of establishing regulatory frameworks that guarantee fair compensation for creative professionals whose identities are digitised.

As this technology continues to advance, it compels all stakeholders—companies, models, and consumers alike—to engage in discussions surrounding ethical practices in AI. For consumers wishing to counter the adverse environmental impacts of fast fashion, opting for secondhand or thrifted clothing can contribute to extending the life cycle of garments and reducing waste.

Amid these developments, H&M asserts that digital twins are intended to complement rather than replace human models, responding to increasing demands for diverse and inclusive representation in fashion marketing. Yet, as the conversation evolves, it is clear that the intersection of AI and fashion necessitates thoughtful deliberation to ensure that both human workers and environmental standards are safeguarded.

The integration of digital twin technology in the fashion industry is transforming paradigms, ushering in novel marketing strategies while simultaneously eliciting a complex array of ethical considerations. What remains crucial is that as the technology expands, it must do so without marginalising the very individuals it aims to represent.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7: [[1]](https://www.thecooldown.com/green-business/digital-twin-ai-fashion-industry-hm/)
2. Paragraphs 2, 4, 5: [[2]](https://apnews.com/article/aaa489111bd8e793aa6e5a531dc7ade2)
3. Paragraph 2: [[3]](https://www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/zalando-uses-ai-speed-up-marketing-campaigns-cut-costs-2025-05-07/)
4. Paragraphs 1, 6: [[4]](https://www.leadraftmarketing.com/post/h-m-introduces-digital-twins-for-modeling)
5. Paragraphs 3, 6: [[5]](https://modnet.io/trends/hm-experiments-with-ai-clones-of-its-models-whats-next/)
6. Paragraph 4: [[6]](https://fashnfly.com/2025/03/hm-knows-its-ai-models-will-be-controversial/)
7. Paragraph 5: [[7]](https://techinformed.com/fashion-retailer-introduces-ai-twins/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.thecooldown.com/green-business/digital-twin-ai-fashion-industry-hm/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://apnews.com/article/aaa489111bd8e793aa6e5a531dc7ade2> - This article discusses the potential of AI-generated models to revolutionize the fashion industry by enhancing diversity and reducing waste. It highlights the experiences of London-based model Alexsandrah and her AI-generated twin, emphasizing the benefits and challenges of integrating AI into fashion modeling. The piece also addresses concerns about AI models displacing human professionals and the ethical implications of using AI to simulate diversity without true representation. Companies like Levi Strauss are mentioned for their AI initiatives, with a focus on the need for ethical and transparent use of AI in fashion.
3. <https://www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/zalando-uses-ai-speed-up-marketing-campaigns-cut-costs-2025-05-07/> - This article reports on European fashion retailer Zalando's integration of generative AI to accelerate content production for marketing campaigns, significantly reducing both time and costs. By utilizing AI to create imagery and digital twins of models, Zalando can more swiftly respond to fast-moving fashion trends popularized on social media. The technological shift has cut image production times from six to eight weeks down to three to four days, slashing associated costs by 90%. The piece also discusses the broader industry trend of AI usage by brands such as H&M.
4. <https://www.leadraftmarketing.com/post/h-m-introduces-digital-twins-for-modeling> - This article explores H&M's adoption of digital twin technology, creating AI-generated models to showcase new collections realistically. It discusses the advantages of digital twins in fashion, including cost reduction, sustainability, customization, and enhanced diversity and inclusion. The piece highlights how H&M leverages AI to develop high-quality virtual models, enhancing e-commerce by allowing customers to visualize clothing on various body types and enabling personalized marketing campaigns. It also addresses the sustainability aspect, noting the reduction in environmental impact due to fewer physical photoshoots.
5. <https://modnet.io/trends/hm-experiments-with-ai-clones-of-its-models-whats-next/> - This article examines H&M's initiative to create digital twins of human models, raising questions about the future of fashion imagery and creative professionals. It details the process of developing digital replicas of 30 models for use in marketing campaigns and social media, emphasizing the collaborative approach where models retain ownership rights to their digital counterparts. The piece discusses the technology behind these digital twins, involving extensive photography sessions to capture models from multiple angles and in various lighting conditions, ensuring authenticity in the virtual representations.
6. <https://fashnfly.com/2025/03/hm-knows-its-ai-models-will-be-controversial/> - This article delves into H&M's collaboration with technology partner Uncut to create AI clones of its models, acknowledging the potential controversy surrounding the initiative. It discusses the company's perspective that digital twins complement physical models rather than replace them, aiming to meet the high demand for imagery in marketing campaigns, e-commerce, and social media. The piece also touches upon the compensation structure for models, noting that deals will be structured similarly to current arrangements, with models being paid for the usage rights of their digital twins.
7. <https://techinformed.com/fashion-retailer-introduces-ai-twins/> - This article reports on H&M's plan to use AI to create digital versions of 30 real-life models for advertising materials. It discusses the potential divisiveness of this move and H&M's intention to lead a conversation that considers the interests of models, agencies, and the fashion industry. The piece details the collaboration with technology company Uncut to photograph models from various angles and lighting conditions, and mentions that models will retain the rights to their digital likenesses, allowing them to decide which campaigns they participate in.