

**Research Article***Copyright © All rights are reserved by Ezra NS Lockhart*

Exploring the Intersection of Digital Fashion and Human Identity: A Hegelian Dialectic Approach to Digital Technology-Mediated Embodied Cognition

Ezra NS Lockhart**Easy Does It Counseling, 13918 E Mississippi Ave Ste, United States*

***Corresponding author:** Ezra NS Lockhart, Easy Does It Counseling, 13918 E Mississippi Ave Ste #60-638, Aurora, CO 80012, United States

Received Date: November 28, 2024

Published Date: December 13, 2024

Author Bio

Dr. Ezra Lockhart is a licensed marriage and family therapist, licensed addiction counselor, and board-approved supervisor with over two decades of experience. He is also the elected Ethics Chair for the Louisiana Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, and mentor with appointments at the joint NAADAC-NBCC Minority Fellowship Program and the American Indian Graduate Center. Dr. Lockhart emphasizes cultural responsiveness strategic family therapy in clinical supervision and psychotherapy.

Abstract

The intersection of digital fashion technologies and virtual identity is examined through the lens of digital technology-mediated embodied cognition and homuncular flexibility to understand their impact on the fashion industry. Adopting a Hegelian dialectic approach, this research employs a conceptual framework to explore the tensions between traditional material-based fashion and emerging digital innovations, including non-fungible tokens (NFTs), the metaverse, and augmented/virtual reality (AR/VR) technologies. The central research question investigates whether these virtual identities facilitate psychological liberation by enabling expanded self-representation or contribute to identity fragmentation, with potential negative psychological consequences. The analysis uses secondary data to critique the environmental and social impacts of conventional fashion systems, while contrasting them with the sustainability and immersive possibilities offered by digital fashion. The dialectical method of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis provides a structured approach to exploring how digital fashion technologies may reshape consumer engagement, identity formation, and commercial models within the fashion industry. The findings suggest that while digital fashion technologies can enable more sustainable consumption and diverse self-expression, they must be critically integrated with traditional fashion paradigms to mitigate risks of alienation and ensure a coherent psychological experience for users.

Keywords: Digital fashion; Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs); metaverse; augmented reality; virtual reality; embodied cognition; homuncular flexibility; psychological liberation; identity fragmentation; Hegelian dialectic; sustainability; consumer engagement

Introduction

In the modern era, digital technology profoundly influences various sectors, including the fashion industry. This investigation

into the concept of digital technology-mediated embodied cognition, exploring its implications and transformations within the realm of

fashion. Digital technology-mediated embodied cognition refers to the integration of digital technologies in enhancing human cognitive and sensory experiences, fundamentally altering how individuals interact with their environment and perceive their identities [1-3]. The rapid advancement of digital technologies has led to significant developments in the fashion industry, particularly within the metaverse—a virtual reality space where users can interact with a computer-generated environment and other users. Recent studies highlight the potential of the metaverse to revolutionize fashion through digital substitutes and virtual apparel [4-7]. These innovations promise new market opportunities, sustainability, and the dematerialization of fashion products.

However, the integration of digital technologies also raises critical concerns. Jaron Lanier, the father of virtual reality, introduces the concept of homuncular flexibility to describe the human ability to adapt to and inhabit nonhuman avatars [8]. Lanier's works [9-12] provide a critical perspective, emphasizing the potential risks and ethical implications of digital immersion, questioning the impact on human authenticity and social interactions. Using Hegel's dialectical method, as explained by Forster [13], this manuscript synthesizes these contrasting viewpoints. The thesis, supported by the works of Fuchs [1], Gallese [2], and Lockhart [3], suggests that digital technology-mediated embodied cognition enhances human experience and identity. The antithesis, informed by Lanier's critiques [9-12], emphasizes the potential risks of digital immersion, particularly regarding the authenticity of human experiences. The synthesis of these perspectives aims to offer a balanced understanding of how digital technologies can be integrated into the fashion industry, fostering innovation while acknowledging the challenges and ethical considerations.

The aim of this paper is to explore the complex relationship between digital technology, embodied cognition, and the fashion industry. By applying Hegelian dialectics to this intersection, this research seeks to illuminate both the transformative potential and the possible pitfalls of digital fashion technologies. Thus, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of their role in shaping future fashion trends and human identity.

Background and Context

The Background and Context section begins by defining key terms and concepts, which are foundational to understanding the rise of digital fashion. It then explores the growing intersection of the fashion and digital technology industries, highlighting the commercial potential of virtual fashion in the metaverse, augmented by significant investment and consumer engagement. The section further looks into the environmental and social impacts of digital fashion, emphasizing its potential for sustainability and inclusivity, and concludes by explaining why this shift matters in addressing both the industry's resource challenges and its evolving consumer demands for more sustainable and innovative solutions.

Key Terms and Concepts

Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs)

Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs) are digital assets that use

blockchain technology to establish unique ownership of a specific item or piece of content. Unlike cryptocurrencies, which are fungible and can be exchanged on a one-to-one basis, NFTs represent unique items that cannot be replaced with something identical. In the context of digital fashion, NFTs allow for the sale and ownership of digital clothing, accessories, and virtual goods. By linking virtual fashion items to NFTs, creators can ensure their rarity, ownership, and provenance, allowing consumers to buy, sell, and trade these items in virtual spaces.

The Metaverse

The metaverse refers to an interconnected network of immersive virtual environments where users can interact with each other and digital objects through avatars. This virtual space, often accessed via Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) technology, offers a platform for users to socialize, play games, attend events, and shop. The metaverse is rapidly becoming a key area of interest for the fashion industry as companies see potential in creating virtual stores, fashion shows, and even entirely new ways for consumers to experience fashion. With brands like Gucci, Balenciaga, and Nike already establishing virtual presences in platforms like Decentraland and Roblox, the metaverse is becoming a significant space for fashion innovation.

Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR)

AR and VR are immersive technologies that are transforming the way consumers experience fashion. AR allows digital elements to be overlaid onto the real world, enhancing physical experiences with virtual objects. For example, AR/VR technology can be used for virtual try-ons, where consumers can see how a garment might look on them without physically trying it on. VR, on the other hand, creates a completely digital environment where users can explore virtual stores, attend fashion shows, and interact with 3D clothing designs. These technologies are enabling new ways for brands to engage with consumers, reducing the need for physical production and allowing for highly personalized shopping experiences.

The Intersection of the Fashion and Digital Technology Industries

The global fashion industry, valued at over US \$1 trillion, is not only one of the largest sectors in the world but also one of the most wasteful [4]. It contributes significantly to environmental degradation, with textile waste, overproduction, and unsustainable consumption patterns often leading to massive ecological footprints. As awareness of these issues grows, there has been increasing interest in exploring alternatives that decouple fashion from its traditional material constraints [14]. Digital fashion, which embraces technologies such as the metaverse, NFTs, and AR/VR, offers a promising solution. Digital fashion allows for the creation of virtual clothing, avatars, and experiences that do not require physical materials, enabling the fashion industry to rethink its sustainability and production models. As the metaverse, an immersive digital space, becomes more integrated into daily life, digital fashion represents an opportunity to reduce the industry's reliance on traditional, resource-intensive manufacturing. These

technologies, while still in the early stages of their full potential, are rapidly gaining traction among major fashion brands, gaming platforms, and consumers, creating a new paradigm for the future of fashion.

The Commercial Potential of Digital Fashion

The commercial potential of digital fashion has been growing rapidly, driven by both consumer demand and significant investment in virtual technology. In the first five months of 2022 alone, more than \$120 billion was invested in the development of metaverse infrastructure, more than double the \$57 billion invested in all of 2021 [6]. This surge in investment signals a strong belief in the metaverse's ability to reshape entire industries, including fashion. Consumers, too, are becoming increasingly interested in digital and virtual fashion experiences. A recent survey of over 3,400 consumers globally revealed that two-thirds are excited about the prospect of transitioning everyday activities to the metaverse, with particular enthusiasm for virtual socializing and shopping [6]. Nearly 60% of respondents preferred at least one activity in the immersive world over its physical alternative [6].

Moreover, 79% of consumers actively engaged in the metaverse have made purchases within virtual environments, further emphasizing the commercial viability of digital fashion [6]. Fashion brands are tapping into this growing trend by collaborating with gaming companies and digital platforms to sell virtual clothing and accessories [5]. For example, brands like Dolce & Gabbana and Prada have released exclusive digital collections that are only available as NFTs, setting a \$6 million record sale, while others are using the metaverse to host virtual fashion shows and pop-up shops [15]. Executives across various industries are overwhelmingly optimistic about the metaverse's potential to drive growth. According to a recent report, 95% of executives believe the metaverse will positively impact their industries, with a third of them expecting significant change in how their sectors operate [6]. About a quarter of these executives anticipate the metaverse will contribute more than 15% of their corporate revenue within the next five years. These optimistic projections suggest that digital fashion has the potential to become a major revenue stream, with estimates predicting up to \$5 trillion in economic impact by 2030, roughly the size of Japan's economy [6].

Environmental and Social Impacts of Digital Fashion

One of the most compelling reasons to embrace digital fashion is its potential environmental impact. The fashion industry is responsible for a significant portion of global waste and carbon emissions. The manufacturing, transportation, and disposal of physical garments all contribute to this problem. Digital fashion, by removing the need for physical production and materials, offers a way to reduce waste and promote sustainability [4]. Virtual garments can be created, modified, and sold without the need for raw materials, significantly lowering the environmental cost of fashion consumption. Additionally, digital fashion offers an opportunity for more inclusive and accessible fashion experiences. In the virtual world, anyone can design, create, and wear digital

garments, breaking down the traditional barriers to entry in the fashion industry. Virtual fashion allows for greater self-expression and personalization, giving individuals the ability to curate their avatars and identities in ways that go beyond the constraints of physical clothing.

Digital fashion also introduces new creative possibilities. Designers can experiment with materials, shapes, and forms that would be impossible or too costly to create in the physical world. This opens up new avenues for innovation and creativity in fashion design, while also reducing the pressure on designers to produce tangible collections season after season.

Why This Matters: The Intersection of Fashion, Technology, and Sustainability

Understanding the commercial feasibility and potential of digital fashion is becoming increasingly essential as the metaverse, NFTs, and immersive technologies continue to evolve. These innovations represent not only a new way for consumers to engage with fashion but also a crucial opportunity to address the industry's longstanding sustainability issues. By shifting some aspects of fashion into the digital realm, the industry can decouple from its dependence on physical resources and create a more sustainable, inclusive, and innovative future. As major players in the fashion world embrace this shift, it is clear that digital fashion has the potential to reshape the future of fashion, from both a commercial and environmental perspective.

Theoretical Framework

The Theoretical Framework section outlines the key theories and concepts that underpin the research on digital fashion, virtual identity, and the intersection of technology and fashion. These theories provide a foundation for understanding how digital environments, such as the metaverse, impact human cognition, self-representation, and consumer behavior. The following concepts are critical to exploring the role of digital fashion in shaping new forms of identity, ownership, and consumer engagement within virtual worlds.

Digital Technology-Mediated Embodied Cognition

Digital technology-mediated embodied cognition is a theory that explores the relationship between human cognition and digital technologies. Digital technology-mediated embodied cognition focuses on how digital environments, such as virtual and augmented reality, mediate and alter embodied experiences by creating new forms of interaction between the body and digital spaces [1-3]. The theory posits that human cognition is not confined to the mind alone but is shaped and transformed by technology, allowing individuals to experience the world in novel ways. This concept is essential for understanding how digital fashion, within virtual spaces like the metaverse, influences the way individuals perceive themselves and their bodies through mediated interactions with digital fashion items.

Homuncular Flexibility

Homuncular flexibility, a concept introduced by Jaron Lanier [9], describes the human ability to inhabit different avatars or digital representations in virtual environments. Lanier's theory suggests that technology provides humans with the unique capacity to explore and express multiple identities, roles, and forms of self-representation. This flexibility allows individuals to shift between different modes of existence in the virtual world, which is particularly relevant for the study of digital fashion. In digital spaces, individuals can experiment with various virtual identities, projecting their style and personal aesthetic through avatars and digital clothing in ways that challenge traditional notions of identity.

Virtual Identity

Virtual identity is the concept of self-representation in digital or virtual environments. According to [3], virtual identity is formed through the use of avatars, digital objects, and interactions within virtual worlds. Unlike physical identity, which is fixed and shaped by bodily presence, virtual identity is fluid, dynamic, and constructed through digital tools and choices. Virtual identity allows users to project different personas, experiment with self-expression, and interact with others in a digital space, where the limitations of the physical world are minimized. This flexibility in identity construction makes virtual identity a key aspect of digital fashion, as it enables users to express themselves through virtual garments and accessories in immersive, virtual environments like the metaverse.

Methodology

This study adopts a conceptual and exploratory framework to analyze the intersection of digital fashion, virtual identities, and technological advancements within the fashion industry. The central question of this analysis concerns whether these new technologies offer an opportunity for psychological liberation through the expansion of self-representation or whether they risk fragmenting human identity in ways that could be psychologically damaging. Guided by the principles of the Hegelian dialectic [13], this paper synthesizes conflicting perspectives and theories to provide a deeper understanding of the potential psychological and social implications of digital fashion and virtual identities. This dialectical method, through the steps of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, will explore the tension between traditional fashion paradigms and emerging digital technologies, especially NFTs, the metaverse, and AR/VR, in relation to their impact on human identity.

Thesis: Traditional Fashion Industry and Identity Construction

The starting point of this study is the thesis, which represents the traditional fashion industry. Historically, fashion has been a key medium through which individuals express their identities in the material world. This identity construction is often tied to the consumption of physical clothing, which is a reflection of personal, cultural, and social identity. The traditional fashion industry, however, comes with significant psychological challenges, particularly in terms of its environmental impact, unsustainable consumption patterns, and its reinforcement of social pressures regarding appearance and status. Through secondary data on

consumer behavior and the environmental footprint of fashion, this section sets the foundation for understanding how fashion has historically shaped self-representation, identity, and societal norms.

Antithesis: Digital Fashion and Virtual Identities

The antithesis introduces the emergence of digital fashion and virtual identities, facilitated by emerging technologies such as NFTs, the metaverse, and AR/VR. These digital technologies disrupt the traditional framework of fashion by allowing individuals to construct virtual identities that are not confined by the limitations of physical reality. In virtual spaces, digital avatars and virtual fashion items can be used to represent oneself, offering new forms of self-expression and self-representation. However, these technologies also present a potential risk: they could fragment human identity if these digital selves do not align with the physical self or fail to provide meaningful, authentic forms of identity expression. This section will explore the psychological implications of this shift, particularly the tension between psychological liberation through digital expansion and the psychological damage that could arise from identity fragmentation or the loss of grounding in reality. This will involve a review of key theories on digital technology-mediated embodied cognition [1-3] and homuncular flexibility [9-10], examining the potential for psychological harm versus empowerment through digital identity construction.

Synthesis: Resolving the Tension Between Traditional and Digital Fashion

The synthesis integrates the conflicting perspectives of the thesis and antithesis, offering a new understanding of how digital fashion can contribute to both psychological liberation and identity fragmentation. By drawing on the insights of both traditional fashion's identity-building role and the innovations offered by digital technologies, the synthesis aims to address the contradictions between authentic self-representation and the risk of digital identities becoming fragmented or inauthentic. This section will explore whether digital fashion, when integrated thoughtfully, can enhance self-expression and empower individuals to transcend traditional material constraints, or whether it exacerbates issues of identity fragmentation and alienation.

The synthesis will also consider the environmental and social impacts of these digital innovations, analyzing whether the psychological benefits of digital fashion (such as freedom from material constraints and new avenues for self-representation) can outweigh the potential dangers (such as the exacerbation of identity crises, loss of real-world connection, or the commercialization of virtual identities). It will be argued that these technologies have the potential to address sustainability and consumer engagement in ways that traditional fashion cannot, but only if the psychological and social impacts are critically addressed.

Analytical Approach: Hegelian Dialectics and Psychological Exploration

In adopting the Hegelian dialectic as the analytical framework, the study will focus on the psychological tensions between traditional and digital fashion. The dialectical method allows for the

exploration of contradictions not just between fashion paradigms but between personal identity, virtual self-representation, and material consumption. The thesis (traditional fashion) and antithesis (digital fashion technologies) will be analyzed for their psychological impacts, particularly how they shape identity and self-expression. The synthesis will propose a new model of digital fashion that bridges the physical and virtual realms while addressing the complexities of psychological liberation and identity coherence.

Limitations

As a conceptual and exploratory study, this research does not involve primary data collection or empirical testing but relies on secondary sources such as academic literature, case studies, and industry reports. While the Hegelian dialectic provides a robust framework for analyzing the intersection of digital fashion and identity, this study is subject to limitations, including the evolving nature of digital fashion technologies and the lack of empirical data regarding their long-term psychological effects. Furthermore, the research relies on existing theories and case studies to explore how digital fashion can both empower and fragment identity, recognizing that these insights will need to be tested and expanded as digital fashion continues to evolve.

Analysis

This analysis explores the psychological implications of digital fashion technologies and virtual identities, focusing on the potential for psychological liberation through self-representation, as well as the risk of identity fragmentation. Guided by the Hegelian dialectic [13], the analysis synthesizes the contrasting views of traditional fashion (thesis) and emerging digital technologies (antithesis). Drawing on theories such as digital technology-mediated embodied cognition [1-3] and homuncular flexibility [9-12], this section examines how these opposing paradigms can reshape not only the commercial landscape of fashion but also how they influence personal identity in the context of both the physical and virtual worlds.

Thesis: Traditional Fashion and Identity Construction

The traditional fashion industry, valued at over US \$1 trillion, remains deeply entrenched in material-driven production, relying heavily on natural resources and energy-intensive processes. These practices contribute significantly to environmental degradation, from carbon emissions and textile waste to water consumption and overuse of raw materials. The industry is notorious for its fast fashion model, which promotes the rapid turnover of clothing and often results in low-quality, disposable garments. This model not only places immense pressure on the planet's resources but also perpetuates labor exploitation in garment factories, where workers in developing countries face poor working conditions and low wages [17]. The environmental and social costs of traditional fashion are staggering. According to the Global Fashion Agenda [16], the fashion industry accounts for 4 to 8% of global carbon emissions, and millions of garments end up in landfills each year. These realities underscore the need for a fundamental shift towards

more sustainable practices within the fashion industry.

Psychologically, traditional fashion allows individuals to express their identity through physical clothing that acts as a reflection of social status, lifestyle, and belonging. Yet, this expression is deeply tied to a system of material scarcity and inequality, where identity is constructed based on access to physical goods and the consumption of materials that are increasingly difficult to sustain. From a psychological standpoint, traditional fashion limits the breadth of self-expression through the physical limitations of clothing. Societal norms often impose restrictive standards that shape how individuals present themselves. Moreover, the environmental impacts of the fashion industry, including waste, carbon emissions, and labor exploitation, exacerbate the psychological burden of consumers who feel complicit in unsustainable practices. This traditional paradigm raises the question of whether it limits individual autonomy or whether it provides an authentic platform for self-representation.

Antithesis: Digital Fashion and the Psychological Shift in Virtual Identities

In contrast to the materially constrained self-expression of traditional fashion, digital fashion introduces new possibilities for embodied cognition through avatars and virtual goods. The theories of Fuchs [1], Gallese [2], and Lockhart [3] suggest that technology allows the body to extend into virtual spaces, thus altering how individuals experience and project their identities. Through digital fashion, individuals can engage with new forms of self-expression that are not limited by material constraints. In the metaverse, individuals can experiment with limitless avatars, non-physical clothing, and virtual environments, offering a potential for psychological liberation where identity can be fluid, diverse, and boundless. However, the antithesis also reveals potential psychological risks. Lanier's [9-12] concept of homuncular flexibility explains how our human identity is increasingly intertwined with virtual avatars and digital platforms. By decoupling fashion from the material world, these technologies allow individuals to create personalized avatars and fashion items that exist purely in the digital realm. This creates a new form of identity representation that is fluid, mutable, and potentially empowering.

While digital fashion could liberate consumers by allowing them to express more facets of their identity, it is equally possible that the disconnection from the physical world might result in a psychological detachment from reality. The potential for psychological harm, such as a loss of grounding or self-doubt, emerges as a significant concern. As individuals shape their online selves through avatars and digital identities, there is a risk of fragmentation of the self, which could lead to alienation or the loss of authenticity. This creates an identity crisis, as users struggle to reconcile their physical self with their virtual self. Digital technologies provide the freedom to curate multiple versions of oneself, but this may cause confusion or disconnection between the virtual self and the embodied self. The idea of inhabiting different avatars and exploring various identities could lead to a disintegration of a unified, coherent self-image, which may cause

psychological distress.

Lanier and others warn of the psychological dangers of excessive reliance on these virtual selves, which can lead to feelings of detachment or disembodiment—the disconnection from one's own physicality and the real world. Additionally, the increasing emphasis on virtual consumption in the metaverse may create new forms of social comparison, fostering the same pressures seen in traditional fashion but through the lens of digital experiences. In this sense, digital fashion presents a double-edged sword: it can be empowering and psychologically freeing, but it can also erode the authenticity of identity, especially when the boundaries between the physical and the virtual become increasingly blurred.

Synthesis: Reconciliation of Digital Fashion and Identity

The synthesis between traditional fashion and digital fashion, seen through the lens of Hegelian dialectics, offers the potential for a more sustainable and psychologically integrated fashion system. While digital fashion technologies present a new means of self-expression, they must be approached with caution. The freedom to construct and modify digital identities could lead to greater psychological liberation, particularly if digital environments allow individuals to explore multiple facets of their identity without the pressures of material consumption and the constraints of physical appearance. However, the psychological implications of digital fashion need to be considered carefully. To avoid the potential psychological damage associated with excessive digital consumption, ethical design principles must ensure that virtual identities are not used to exploit or alienate users. As Fuchs [1], Gallese [2], and Lockhart [3] suggest, the theory of digital technology-mediated embodied cognition provides a framework for understanding how digital embodiment can enrich human cognition and expression. Still, it requires a balanced approach that recognizes the dangers of over-immersion in virtual environments.

Yet, the synthesis also acknowledges the need for balance between virtual and physical identities. A sustainable model of digital fashion would consider how these two realms—digital and material—can coexist in a way that prevents psychological fragmentation. The psychological coherence between the two would be necessary to ensure that digital fashion does not simply become another form of consumption or comparison, but rather serves as a meaningful and enriching form of self-expression that enhances individual well-being. Moreover, as digital fashion technologies continue to evolve, it will be important to establish psychological safeguards that help individuals navigate the complexities of multiple identities.

A sustainable future for digital fashion, then, would be one where psychological well-being is prioritized, ensuring that virtual self-expression does not replace or alienate the physical self but complements it. The future of fashion must balance environmental sustainability, technological innovation, and psychological health. Technologies like NFTs and the metaverse can offer new commercial avenues, but their implementation must be mindful of their impact

on identity and mental health.

Discussion

Implications for Sustainability and Consumer Engagement

The shift to digital fashion is not only about psychological well-being but also about environmental sustainability. By reducing the need for physical resources, digital fashion has the potential to reduce the fashion industry's environmental footprint. While digital fashion offers a pathway to sustainability, it also presents new forms of consumption that need to be critically evaluated to ensure they do not merely replace one form of waste (e.g., material) with another (e.g., data and energy consumption). The potential for consumer engagement in the metaverse is also significant, as more individuals are attracted to the immersive, interactive nature of these technologies. However, the psychological impact of transitioning to virtual fashion must be considered. As virtual fashion offers new forms of consumer identity, it is crucial to ensure that these virtual engagements are enriching rather than exploitative, supporting both psychological health and sustainable practices.

Psychological and Social Considerations: Liberation or Fragmentation

Ultimately, the question remains whether digital fashion will lead to psychological liberation or whether it will fragment human identity. The synthesis reveals that digital fashion holds great promise for enhancing self-expression and enabling individuals to create more authentic identities. However, it must be approached with caution, as the proliferation of digital avatars and virtual experiences can lead to psychological fragmentation if not carefully managed. The goal should be to balance freedom of expression with the need for a cohesive sense of self, ensuring that virtual identities do not replace or dilute the embodied self.

Conclusion

By applying the principles of digital technology-mediated embodied cognition and homuncular flexibility within a Hegelian dialectical framework, this study found that the tension between psychological liberation and identity fragmentation in the context of digital fashion is a complex and evolving issue. Digital fashion technologies offer exciting opportunities for self-representation and psychological freedom, but they also introduce risks that need careful consideration. The potential for a psychologically healthy integration of digital fashion with traditional fashion paradigms depends on the ability to reconcile these competing forces. The future of fashion lies in a balanced model that embraces the benefits of both worlds, ensuring that digital fashion becomes a force for empowerment without contributing to psychological harm or further environmental degradation. Thus, a synthesized approach to digital and physical fashion is needed, one that reconciles technological advancements with the preservation of authentic, sustainable, and psychologically integrated identities.

References

1. Fuchs T (2020) *In defense of the human being: Foundational questions of an embodied anthropology*. Oxford University Press.
2. Gallese V (2024) *Digital visions: The experience of self and others in the age of the digital revolution*. *International Review of Psychiatry* 36(6): 656-666.
3. Lockhart ENS (2024) *What it means to be human: A response to Harzheim*. *Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics* 1(3): 1-3.
4. Schauman S, Greene S, Korkman O (2023) *Sufficiency and the dematerialization of fashion: How digital substitutes are creating new market opportunities*. *Business Horizons* 66(6): 741-751.
5. Bloomberg (2021) *Clothes that don't exist are worth big money in the metaverse*. Bloomberg.
6. McKinsey (2022) *Meet the metaverse: Creating real value in a virtual world*. McKinsey.
7. Alexandrova E, Poddubnaya M (2023) *Metaverse in fashion industry development: Applications and challenges*. *E3S Web of Conferences* 420(1): 1-8.
8. Won AS, Bailenson JN, Lanier J (2015) *Homuncular flexibility: The human ability to inhabit nonhuman avatars*. In *Emerging Trends in the Social and Behavioral Sciences: An Interdisciplinary, Searchable, and Linkable Resource* pp. 1-16.
9. Lanier J (2011) *You are not a gadget: A manifesto*. Vintage.
10. Lanier J (2014) *Who owns the future?* Simon and Schuster.
11. Lanier J (2017) *Dawn of the new everything: Encounters with reality and virtual reality*. Henry Holt and Company.
12. Lanier J (2018) *Ten arguments for deleting your social media accounts right now*. Random House.
13. Forster M (1993) *Hegel's dialectical method*. In F. C. Beiser (Ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*. Cambridge University Press pp. 130-170.
14. Fenech C, Walton B, Majury A (2024) *The sustainable consumer: Understanding consumer attitudes to sustainability and sustainable behaviours*. Deloitte.
15. Wang A (2021) *Dolce & Gabbana sets \$6 million record for fashion NFTs*. *The New York Times*.
16. John Kerr, John Landry (2018) *Pulse of the fashion industry*. Global Fashion Agenda & The Boston Consulting Group.
17. Fletcher K (2020) *Fashion, needs, and consumption*. In M Barnard (Ed.), *Fashion theory: A reader* (2nd ed.). Routledge pp. 177-187.