

From Runway to Algorithm:**How Artificial Intelligence and Fashion Technology Are Reshaping Style Evolution, Consumer Choice, and Fashion Marketing**Author: Jennifer Samarani¹*Affiliation:*

1. *Business School, Holy Spirit University of Kaslik, P.O. Box 446, Jounieh, Lebanon*
2. *CIRAME Research Center, Holy Spirit University of Kaslik, P.O. Box 446, Jounieh, Lebanon*

Abstract:

Artificial intelligence is becoming part of everyday fashion shopping. The fashion industries traditionally depended on designers, seasonal collections, and physical fitting. However, technology is changing and developing quickly. New styles that once developed over seasons can now become popular within days or even hours through platforms like TikTok, Instagram, influencers, and online stores or websites. Consumers can now ask an AI stylist what to wear, receive complete outfit suggestions, use virtual fitting rooms, and get personalized size recommendations. This research examines how these technologies are changing fashion marketing, style discovery, consumer choice, and the online shopping experience. The study uses secondary research and focuses on familiar international examples including Ralph Lauren, Levi's, Gucci, Zalando, and Nike, together with academic research on virtual try-on and consumer engagement. The results show that AI is most useful when it makes shopping a lot easier: helping consumers discover products, build outfits, choose sizes, and move more quickly from inspiration to purchase. Zalando's fitting technology also provides measurable evidence that better size advice can reduce returns. From a marketing and microeconomic perspective, AI can reduce search costs and uncertainty while improving personalization. The study concludes that fashion brands can use AI as a practical marketing tool without replacing the creativity and identity that make each brand recognizable.

Keywords:

Artificial intelligence, Fashion technology, Fashion marketing, AI stylist, Virtual try-on, Personalization, Consumer choice

Introduction:

Fashion has always been influenced by trends, celebrities, designers, and culture. Today, the process is becoming more digital. Consumers discover new styles through social media and online stores, compare products on their phones, and increasingly receive recommendations based on their interests and previous shopping behavior. Artificial intelligence is becoming part of this customer journey.

From a marketing perspective, this creates a new type of competition. As a consumer, I often discover products online and notice how brands recommend it based on what I search or view. Fashion brands still compete on product, price, image, and quality, but they also compete on convenience and personalization. A familiar example is Ralph Lauren's Ask Ralph, an AI-powered shopping assistant that can answer styling questions and create complete shoppable Polo Ralph Lauren outfits. Levi's has introduced an AI-powered Outfitting feature that recommends complete looks, while Zalando uses algorithms, body measurements, and 3D avatars to help customers choose sizes. These examples show that AI is becoming something consumers can actually use rather than a technology that only works behind the scenes.

The microeconomic connection is also simple. Online shoppers spend time searching, comparing, checking sizes, and deciding whether a product is worth its price. AI can reduce these search and information costs. If an AI stylist quickly finds a complete outfit or a fitting tool helps a shopper choose the correct size, the decision becomes easier. For brands, this can improve the customer experience and potentially reduce returns.

The research problem is therefore not whether AI exists in fashion, but how useful it is for consumers and marketers. Fashion remains strongly connected to personal taste, creativity, and brand identity. The challenge is to use AI to make shopping easier without making every brand experience feel the same.

Main research question: How are AI and fashion technologies changing style discovery, consumer choice, and the way international fashion brands market and sell their products?

Research objectives:

1. Identify familiar ways international fashion brands are using AI and digital technology.
2. Examine how AI stylists, outfit recommendations, and virtual try-on can affect the customer journey.
3. Explain how size and fit algorithms can reduce uncertainty in online fashion shopping.
4. Connect these technologies to marketing ideas such as personalization, engagement, and purchase intention.
5. Explain the microeconomic effects of AI on search costs, information, consumer choice, and returns.

Literature Review:

AI stylists and personalized fashion shopping

Personalization is one of the clearest uses of AI in fashion marketing. Ralph Lauren introduced Ask Ralph in 2025 as a conversational AI shopping experience. It allows consumers to ask normal styling questions, such as what to wear to an event or how to style a particular item, and then provides complete shoppable outfit suggestions (Ralph Lauren Corporation, 2025). This is a useful marketing example because the technology is designed to feel similar to speaking with an in-store stylist.

Levi's provides another familiar example. Its Outfitting feature uses product information, images, purchase history, browsing behavior, and trend information to recommend complete looks. The feature updates daily and can suggest products that work together, such as jeans, a shirt, and a jacket (Levi Strauss & Co., 2025). Instead of showing the consumer one product at a time, AI can therefore help market several complementary products as one outfit.

Virtual try-on and product evaluation

Virtual try-on tries to solve one of the biggest problems of online fashion: consumers cannot physically try the product before buying. Nawaz, Guzman, and Nawaz (2025) studied 339 consumers with virtual try-on experience and examined how technology interaction, engagement, and value are connected to behavioral outcomes. In a more recent study on augmented reality, Sarkis et al. (2026) support the idea that fashion technology becomes valuable when it improves the shopping experience rather than simply looking innovative.

Gucci also uses virtual try-on in its digital shopping experience. The brand currently offers a Gucci Beauty Virtual Try-On and includes virtual try-on features within its digital ecosystem (Gucci, n.d.). Although beauty is not clothing, it is a familiar luxury-fashion example of the same marketing idea: allowing a customer to visualize a product digitally before making a decision.

Al Maalouf et al. (2025) determined that ordering via online platforms is increasing in importance, as well as in market size, especially in an age where online influencers have a significant impact on purchase behaviors (Sarkis et al., 2024).

Size algorithms and 3D fitting

Zalando provides one of the strongest examples because its technology directly addresses size uncertainty. The company uses machine learning, purchase and return information, body measurements, and fitting data to provide personalized size advice. Its virtual fitting room can create a 3D avatar based on a shopper's measurements so the shopper can compare how different sizes may look (Zalando, 2024). This connects technology directly with a common consumer problem: 'Will this actually fit me?'

AI and the path from discovery to purchase

Nike provides a recent example of AI changing product discovery. In 2026, Nike announced an AI-powered shopping integration with Google's Gemini app and AI Mode in Search. The goal is to reduce the number of steps between discovering a Nike product and purchasing it (Nike, 2026). From a marketing perspective, this is important because the shopping journey can begin inside an AI conversation rather than on the brand's traditional website; As AI moves from corporate leadership (Subrahmanyam & Khalife, 2025) and financial assets (Beainy & Kamel, 2026) to other non-financial essentials (Kaspard et al., 2025), the research gap this paper aims to bridge is simple yet important. Linking AI more towards consumers.

Existing research often studies individual technologies such as virtual try-on or consumer engagement. Brand examples show that these technologies are now being combined across the

customer journey: AI can help a consumer discover a product, build an outfit, select a size, visualize a look, and complete a purchase. This paper connects these familiar applications with marketing and microeconomic ideas in one simple framework.

Methodology:

This research uses a secondary-data design. I used published academic research for consumer behavior evidence and official company sources for current fashion-technology examples. This approach was chosen so that the project could use real information without inventing survey respondents or statistical results. The international brand examples were selected because they are well-known and represent different uses of fashion technology: Ralph Lauren for an AI stylist, Levi's for AI outfit generation, Gucci for virtual try-on, Zalando for 3D fitting and size algorithms, and Nike for AI-powered product discovery and shopping. The main variables considered are personalization, perceived usefulness, engagement, size uncertainty, product discovery, purchase intention, and returns. From a microeconomic perspective, the study also considers search costs and information costs. The analysis is descriptive: it compares what each technology does, which consumer problem it addresses, and what marketing or economic value it may create.

Results:

The results show that international fashion brands are using AI mainly to make shopping more personalized, easier, and faster. The technologies are different, but they address familiar problems in the customer journey.

Brand	Technology	What the Consumer Can Do	Marketing Value
Ralph Lauren	Ask Ralph AI stylist	Ask styling questions and receive complete shoppable outfits	Personalization and product discovery
Levi's	AI Outfitting	See complete looks based on products, trends, and shopping data	Cross-selling and easier outfit building
Gucci	Virtual Try-On	Visualize selected products digitally before purchase	Digital product experience
Zalando	3D fitting + size algorithms	Create a body-based avatar and receive personalized size advice	Lower fit uncertainty and fewer returns
Nike	AI-powered shopping	Discover and purchase Nike products through AI-powered Google experiences	Shorter path from inspiration to purchase

Finding 1: AI is becoming a digital stylist

Ralph Lauren and Levi's show that AI can move beyond recommending one item. Ask Ralph can respond to open-ended styling questions and produce complete Polo Ralph Lauren looks. Levi's Outfitting also creates complete looks and updates its recommendations using product information, shopping behavior, and recent trends. The result is a more guided shopping experience rather than a simple product list.

Finding 2: Fit technology can reduce a real online-shopping problem

Zalando reported that more than 80,000 customers had used its virtual fitting room by October 2024. In the company's pilot testing, the virtual fitting-room technology was associated with up to a 40% reduction in return rates, although Zalando notes that this result came from a limited testing phase (Zalando, 2024). The company had also reported a 10% reduction in size-related returns for items where size advice was available compared with similar items without that advice (Zalando, 2023). These results provide a clear economic example: better information can reduce costly mistakes in online purchasing.

Finding 3: AI can shorten the customer journey

Nike's 2026 AI-shopping integration is designed to let consumers discover and purchase Nike products through Google's conversational AI experiences. Ralph Lauren and Levi's similarly connect recommendations directly to products that can be added to the shopping cart. Across these examples, AI reduces the number of steps between 'I need something to wear' and 'I found something I can buy.'

Finding 4: Virtual experiences support product evaluation

Gucci's Virtual Try-On and Zalando's 3D fitting room show two versions of the same marketing idea: giving the consumer more information before purchase. Academic research on virtual try-on also supports the importance of technology interaction and engagement in the shopping process (Nawaz et al., 2025). The technology is useful because it addresses uncertainty rather than because it is AI by itself.

Finding 5: AI can support cross-selling and personalization

Levi's outfit generation shows how AI can create marketing value beyond a single product sale. A customer looking at jeans can be shown a matching top, jacket, or accessory. Ralph Lauren's AI stylist similarly produces head-to-toe suggestions. This gives brands an opportunity to market complete looks while giving consumers a more convenient way to style products; what is most surprising was that the different brands are not all using ai for the same purpose.

Discussion and Conclusion:

This research shows that AI in fashion is becoming practical and familiar. It is no longer limited to complicated technology behind a website. Consumers can interact with an AI stylist, receive outfit ideas, visualize products, get personalized size advice, and even discover products through an AI conversation.

From a marketing perspective, the strongest examples are the ones that solve a clear consumer problem. Ralph Lauren helps with styling, Levi's helps build complete outfits, Zalando helps with size and fit, Gucci adds a digital try-on experience, and Nike is making product discovery and purchasing more direct. These technologies can strengthen personalization and make the customer journey more convenient, easier and realistic.

From a microeconomic perspective, the main benefit is a reduction in search and information costs. Consumers spend less time searching through products and may have better information before buying with access to a load of information and designs beforehand. Zalando's reported reduction in size-related returns also shows that better information can create value for both consumers and the company.

The study has limitations. Most of the brand evidence comes from company sources, so it describes how the companies present their own technologies. Not every company publishes detailed sales or conversion results, and new AI features can change quickly. The academic evidence also focuses on specific technologies rather than every brand discussed in this paper.

Future research could survey university students about which feature they would actually use: an AI stylist, automatic outfit generation, virtual try-on, or personalized size advice. It could also test whether these tools increase purchase intention or willingness to buy more than one item. As a marketing student, I believe the most interesting change is that AI is starting to act like a personal shopping assistant. The brands that use it to make shopping easier while keeping their own style and identity can create a more useful customer experience.

References

- Gucci. (n.d.). Gucci Beauty virtual try-on. <https://www.gucci.com/int/en/nst/vto-landing>
- Nawaz, M. Z., Guzman, F., & Nawaz, S. (2025). Technology-enabled engagement process of brand virtual-try-on services. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 34(1), 44-60. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-12-2023-4859>
- Al Maalouf, N. J., Sayegh, E., Makhoul, W., & Sarkis, N. (2025). Consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions toward food ordering via online platforms. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 82, 104151.
- Sarkis, N., Jabbour Al Maalouf, N., & El Lakiss, R. (2024). Examining influencer marketing: the roles of para-social relationships, unpaid collaborations, and trustworthiness in shaping consumer buying behavior. *Cogent Business & Management*, 11(1), 2419501.
- Sarkis, N., Jabbour Al Maalouf, N., Saliba, E., & Azizi, J. (2026). The impact of augmented reality within the fashion industry on purchase decisions, customer engagement, and brand loyalty. *International Journal of Fashion Design, Technology and Education*, 19(2), 224-233.
- Subrahmanyam, S., & Khalife, D. (2025). AI Integration in Corporate Leadership: Navigating the MENA Landscape. In *AI in the Middle East for Growth and Business: A Transformative Force* (pp. 297-315). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.
- Kaspard, J. A., Khalil, F. C., & Kamel, C. A. (2025). Factors contributing to non-financial performance of companies. In *Sustainable Economic Development: Utilizing Non-Financial Performance, Sustainability Reporting, and Corporate Governance* (pp. 413-442). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.
- Beainy, R., & Kamel, C. (2026). Gold and Bitcoin: A Quantitative Comparative Analysis. *The Banking and Finance Review*, 17(1).
- Zalando. (2023, April 24). Zalando brings a virtual fitting room pilot to millions of customers. <https://corporate.zalando.com/en/technology/zalando-brings-virtual-fitting-room-pilot-millions-customers>
- Zalando. (2024, October 17). Zalando enhances its virtual fitting room by enabling customers to create a 3D avatar with their body measurements. <https://corporate.zalando.com/en/technology/zalando-enhances-its-virtual-fitting-room-enabling-customers-create-3d-avatar-their-body>
- Ralph Lauren Corporation. (2025, September 9). Ralph Lauren introduces Ask Ralph, a new conversational AI shopping experience. https://corporate.ralphlauren.com/pr_250909_AskRalph.html
- Levi Strauss & Co. (2025, November 17). Outfitting: Levi's AI tailored to you. <https://www.levistrauss.com/2025/11/17/levis-ai-outfitting/>
- Nike, Inc. (2026, May 19). Nike is serving athletes faster through AI-powered shopping on Google. <https://about.nike.com/en/newsroom/releases/nike-is-serving-athletes-faster-through-ai-powered-shopping-on-google>