

Body Image and Fashion Styling Trends: Exploring the Role of AI in Personal Styling Assistants

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Abstract

This research explores the relationship between body image and contemporary fashion styling trends, with particular focus on the emerging role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in personal styling assistants. Body image influences how a person perceives their appearance, selects clothing, and responds to fashion trends. As the fashion industry moves towards more diversity, inclusivity, comfort, and individual expression, styling practices are also changing to a wider range of body types and personal preferences. At the same time, advancements in AI are transforming personal styling through personalized outfit recommendations, virtual styling, body-based analysis, and fashion trend prediction. This research analyzes how AI-powered styling tools may influence clothing choices and if they can support more personalised and inclusive approaches to fashion. The study uses research, visual analysis, comparison of styling approaches, and AI-generated visuals to examine the relationship between body image, styling and technology. It also considers potential limitations of AI, including algorithmic bias, limited representation, unrealistic beauty standards, and privacy concerns. The research aims to understand whether AI can contribute to a more inclusive and individualised future of fashion styling while recognising the importance of human creativity, cultural understanding, and individuality.

Keywords

Body Image, Fashion Styling, Styling Trends, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Personal Styling Assistants, Personalised Fashion, Inclusive Fashion, Body Diversity, AI-Powered Styling, Fashion Technology.

Introduction

Fashion is more than a means of clothing, it is a form of self-expression, identity, communication and self representation. Fashion styling brings together clothing, accessories, footwear, hair and makeup to create a particular visual look. The choices made during styling are influenced by individual preferences, cultural values, social influences, current trends and standards of the body. As a result, the relationship between body image and fashion styling has become an important area of study within the fashion industry.

Body image refers to the way individuals perceive, think and feel about their physical appearance. It can influence confidence, clothing choices and the way each individual presents themselves. Fashion can have both positive and negative effects on body image. Clothing that provides comfort, appropriate fit and personal expression can contribute to confidence, while unrealistic beauty standards and limited representation can create insecurities with one's appearance. The increasing diversity of body types in fashion has therefore contributed to discussions surrounding inclusivity, body positivity and the changing definition of beauty.

Contemporary fashion styling is slowly moving away from a single idealised body standard towards greater individuality, diversity and personal expression. Trends such as oversized silhouettes, relaxed fits, gender-inclusive clothing, adaptive fashion and diverse model representation demonstrate changes in how fashion can be approached for different bodies and lifestyles. Social media has further increased these changes by allowing consumers, influencers and creators to participate directly in the development of styling trends.

Alongside these developments, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is beginning to transform the way fashion is recommended and used. AI-powered personal styling assistants can analyse information such as personal preferences, clothing choices, trends and, in some cases, visual or body-related information to generate personalized outfit recommendations. This creates new possibilities for making styling more accessible and personalized. However, the use of AI also raises concerns regarding algorithmic bias, representation, privacy and the possibility of promoting existing beauty standards.

This research examines the relationship between body image and fashion styling trends, while examining the emerging role of AI in personal styling assistants. It aims to understand how body perception influences styling choices, how fashion trends are responding to changing attitudes towards different body types, and whether AI can contribute to a more personalized approach to fashion styling.

Background

Fashion has traditionally been associated with clothing and appearance, but its purpose extends beyond covering the body. Clothing can communicate personality, identity, social status, cultural values and individuality. Fashion styling brings these elements together by selecting and coordinating clothing, accessories, footwear, hair and makeup to create a particular visual look. As fashion has evolved, styling has increasingly become connected with the way individuals perceive and present their bodies. This makes body image an important area of study within fashion and styling.

Body image can be understood as the way an individual perceives and feels about their own physical appearance. It is not determined only by actual body size or shape; it can also be influenced by social expectations, cultural ideals, media representation, unrealistic beauty standards, personal experiences and interactions with clothing. The relationship between clothing and body image is particularly more important because clothing is worn directly on the body and can change how an individual perceives their appearance. Research published in the journal *Body Image* found that women's experiences of clothing fit were closely connected with body confidence. The study found that participants used well-fitting clothing to increase body confidence, cover perceived flaws and attempt to achieve an ideal body shape.

Clothing fit and sizing therefore become important factors of body image. A garment that fits comfortably can boost confidence, whereas an uncomfortable or poorly fitting garment may make an individual more conscious and insecure of their body. Research by Kinley examined the relationship between clothing size, self-esteem and body image and demonstrated that clothing-size experiences can influence how consumers view their bodies. Similarly, research into fashion “misfit” has connected dissatisfaction with clothing fit and sizing to body dissatisfaction. This shows that the fashion industry does not simply respond to existing body-image views; its sizing systems, clothing proportions and styling can also influence consumers' experiences of their bodies.

Fashion styling becomes significant within this relationship because styling can change the visual representation of the body. Silhouette, proportion, colour, fabric, layering, garment placement and accessories can all affect the look of an outfit. For example, a stylist may use structured tailoring to create definition, layering to change proportions, or particular silhouettes to emphasise or reduce visual attention to certain areas. Traditionally, many styling practices have been based on body-shape categories and ideals. However, contemporary fashion is increasingly questioning the idea that there is one “ideal” body type for fashionable clothing.

Fashion trends are influenced by a combination of social, cultural, political, and psychological factors. A 2023 systematic review specifically examining body image and fashion trends identified the importance of these factors in understanding the relationship between fashion and body perception. The study also emphasised that clothing and apparel aesthetics are socially and culturally built rather than being purely personal preferences. This suggests that styling trends cannot be studied separately from the social environment in which people develop ideas about attractiveness and appearance.

One major change in contemporary fashion has been the increasing visibility of different body types in fashion communication. For many years, fashion advertising and editorials frequently promoted a typical ideal of physical appearance. The increased representation of non-idealised models has challenged these standards and created opportunities for more diverse forms of styling. A review published in *Body Image* examined experimental research involving non-idealised models and found that many studies reported positive or neutral effects on body image and well-being, although results differed depending on the context and outcome being measured. This indicates that representation can influence the relationship between fashion and body image, while also showing that simply increasing diversity does not automatically produce the same effect for every person.

The growth of social media has further complicated the relationship between body image and fashion styling. Social platforms based heavily on visual content allow trends to spread rapidly and enable users to compare their appearance and styling with celebrities, influencers and other people. Social media has also created opportunities for individuals who were previously underrated in mainstream fashion to share styling tips and build communities around body diversity and self-expression. At the same time, edited photographs, filters and carefully constructed images can create unrealistic expectations about appearance. Therefore, social media can function both as a source of body-image pressure and as a platform for challenging traditional beauty standards, this can have both positive and negative effects on an individual's mindset.

Within this changing environment, fashion styling has slowly moved beyond the idea of dressing according to a specific set of body-shape “rules.” styling can focus more strongly on personal identity, comfort, individuality and self-confidence. This can be seen in the popularity of relaxed silhouettes, oversized garments, gender-neutral styling, adaptive clothing and greater diversity in fashion campaigns. Rather than asking only what clothing is considered “flattering” for a specific body type, modern styling can also consider what makes the consumer feel comfortable and confident. This shift is important because it changes styling from a process of correcting the body to a process of expressing the individual.

Technological development has introduced another major change to personal styling through Artificial Intelligence (AI). AI is increasingly being used in fashion recommendation systems to analyse consumer preferences and provide personalised product or outfit suggestions. Research on AI-driven fashion recommendation systems describes how these systems can analyse large amounts of fashion and consumer data to improve recommendations. Because fashion involves combinations of clothing items rather than a single product, AI systems can also focus on an outfit's visual appearance and the relationship between different clothing items.

However, AI should not be considered a solution to body-image concerns. AI systems learn from existing datasets, fashion images and consumer behaviour. If these datasets contain limited representations of body sizes, ages, genders, cultures or physical characteristics, AI recommendations may suggest existing standards. An algorithm that repeatedly recommends clothing based on conventional ideas of what is “flattering” could unintentionally apply the same body ideals that inclusive fashion is attempting to challenge.

This research therefore focuses on body image and fashion styling trends, with particular attention to AI-based personal styling assistants. By examining existing research, current styling practices, visual examples and AI-generated styling recommendations, the study aims to understand how body image influences styling choices and how upcoming technologies may change the way individuals interact with fashion. The research also considers whether AI has the potential to support more personalised and personal styling, or whether it risks repeating existing standards of beauty through algorithmic recommendations.

Objectives of the Research

The main objectives of this research are:

1. **To study the relationship between body image and fashion styling choices**, including how body proportions, fit, comfort, and personal preferences influence clothing decisions.
2. **To identify contemporary fashion styling trends** and understand how trends such as oversized silhouettes, body-fitted styles, streetwear, co-ord sets, athleisure, and inclusive fashion influence personal styling.
3. **To examine the influence of social media on body image and fashion choices**, particularly how fashion content and representation of different body types affect styling preferences.
4. **To explore the role of Artificial Intelligence in personal fashion styling**, including outfit recommendations, colour combinations, body-proportion-based styling, and wardrobe-based suggestions.
5. **To understand people's perceptions and expectations of AI personal styling assistants**, including their interest in using such tools.
6. **To identify the concerns associated with AI-based styling**, such as privacy, inaccurate recommendations, limited representation, unrealistic beauty standards, and lack of human understanding.
7. **To compare conventional human styling with AI-assisted styling** and understand how technology can support, rather than replace, human creativity and personal expression.
8. **To explore the potential of AI to contribute to more personalised and inclusive fashion styling** while recognising its current limitations.

Literature Review

The relationship between body image, clothing and fashion has been widely examined across fashion studies, psychology and consumer behaviour research. Existing literature suggests that clothing is not simply a functional necessity but can influence how individuals see and judge their bodies. Research on dress fit and body image has shown that the experience of wearing clothing can affect body confidence. Grogan . found that participants wearing well-fitting clothing have better confidence, while poorly fitting garments could increase awareness of perceived body imperfections. This highlights the importance of fit and styling in the relationship between clothing and body image.

Research has also examined the relationship between clothing size and self-confidence . Kinley's study on clothing size, self-esteem and body image suggests that clothing-size experiences can influence consumers' feelings about their bodies. This is particularly relevant to fashion styling because stereotypical sizing systems and limited size availability can affect whether consumers feel connected by fashion. Similarly , contemporary styling increasingly considers individual proportions, comfort and personal preferences rather than relying only on traditional body-shape rules.

The representation of bodies within fashion media is another important area identified in the literature. A systematic review of research on non-idealised models examined whether exposure to more diverse body representations could influence body image and well-being. The findings indicate that non-idealised and diverse representations can have positive or neutral effects in many contexts, although the outcomes are not consistent across all studies. This suggests that inclusive fashion imagery can contribute to changing perspectives of beauty, but representation alone does not eliminate body-image concerns.

The relationship between body image and fashion trends has also been examined through social, cultural and psychological perspectives. A systematic review of body image and fashion trends identified the influence of social and cultural factors on fashion preferences and body perceptions. Fashion trends therefore develop within a wider social environment in which ideas about attractiveness, identity and appearance continuously change. The rise of body positivity and body diversity has contributed to increased interest in inclusive styling, diverse models and clothing designed for different bodies.

Recent literature has introduced Artificial Intelligence as an emerging influence on fashion recommendation and personal styling. Research on AI-driven fashion recommender systems demonstrates how machine-learning technologies can analyse fashion products, consumer preferences and relationships between clothing items to generate personalised recommendations. AI-based styling can potentially make fashion recommendations more personalised and accessible by considering factors such as personal taste, occasion and wardrobe preferences.

However, the literature also indicates that AI-based fashion systems require critical examination. Since AI systems learn from existing datasets, limited or biased representation within those datasets can influence the recommendations produced. An AI styling assistant may therefore reproduce existing fashion and beauty standards instead of encouraging body diversity. Questions surrounding privacy, representation, algorithmic bias and the role of human creativity are important when considering AI in personal styling.

Overall, existing research establishes a strong connection between body image, clothing, representation and fashion behaviour, while newer studies show the growing role of AI in personalised fashion recommendation. However, the intersection of **body image, contemporary styling trends and AI-powered personal styling assistants** remains an emerging area of research. This study aims to bring these areas together by examining how styling can respond to diverse body perceptions and how AI may influence the future of personalised and inclusive fashion styling.

Research Gap

Although previous studies have explored **body image, clothing choices, fashion trends, social media influence, and AI-based fashion recommendation systems**, these areas are often studied separately. There is limited research that examines the relationship between **body image and contemporary fashion styling while also considering the growing use of AI personal styling assistants**.

Existing research discusses how clothing fit, body representation, and fashion media can influence body image, while research on AI mainly focuses on recommendation systems, personalisation, and technology. However, less attention has been given to whether AI styling tools can provide recommendations that are **including different body types, individual preferences, and personal identities**, without reinforcing unrealistic beauty standards.

There is also a need to understand how users themselves see AI-assisted styling, particularly their **expectations, concerns about privacy and representation, and willingness to use such technology**. This research therefore attempts to address this gap by bringing together body image, contemporary styling trends, user perspectives, and AI-based personal styling within a single study.

Methodology

The research follows a **mixed-method approach**, combining secondary research, visual analysis, primary data collection and practical experimentation with Artificial Intelligence (AI). The methodology was designed to investigate the relationship between body image and fashion styling trends while examining the potential role of AI-based personal styling assistants.

1. Secondary Research

Secondary research was conducted using academic research papers, fashion journals, books and credible online sources related to body image, clothing and body perception, fashion styling, inclusive fashion, social media representation and artificial intelligence in fashion. Research papers were reviewed to understand existing findings and identify major themes related to body confidence, clothing fit, representation and personalised fashion recommendations.

2. Visual and Trend Analysis

Contemporary fashion images were collected from fashion magazines, brand campaigns, social media platforms and online fashion sources. The selected visuals were analysed according to **silhouette, garment fit, colour, proportion, layering, accessories, model representation and overall styling**. Particular attention was given to the representation of different body types and the use of styling techniques that either emphasise or alter the visual perspective of body proportions.

Current trends such as oversized silhouettes, relaxed clothing, body-positive styling, inclusive representation and personalised fashion were examined to understand how attitudes towards body image are reflected in contemporary styling.

3. AI-Based Styling Experimentation

AI tools were used as part of the practical research process to investigate how AI approaches personal styling. Similar styling requirements were provided to AI-based tools, and the resulting outfit recommendations and visual outputs were documented.

The AI recommendations were examined according to factors such as **body proportions, garment silhouette, colour coordination, occasion, comfort, personal style and inclusivity**. Screenshots and generated visuals were retained as part of the visual documentation of the research process.

4. Comparative Analysis

A comparison was conducted between manual styling approaches and AI-generated styling recommendations. The comparison focused on the differences in outfit selection, personalisation, representation and styling logic. The purpose was not to determine which method is better, but to understand the strengths and limitations of AI-assisted styling in relation to human styling.

5. Primary Research

A questionnaire was designed to understand the relationship between body image, clothing choices and fashion styling among young consumers. Participants were asked about factors influencing their clothing choices, their preferred silhouettes, the importance of fit and comfort, exposure to fashion trends through social media, and their willingness to use AI-based personal styling assistants.

The responses were organised and analysed to identify common patterns and differences in styling preferences.

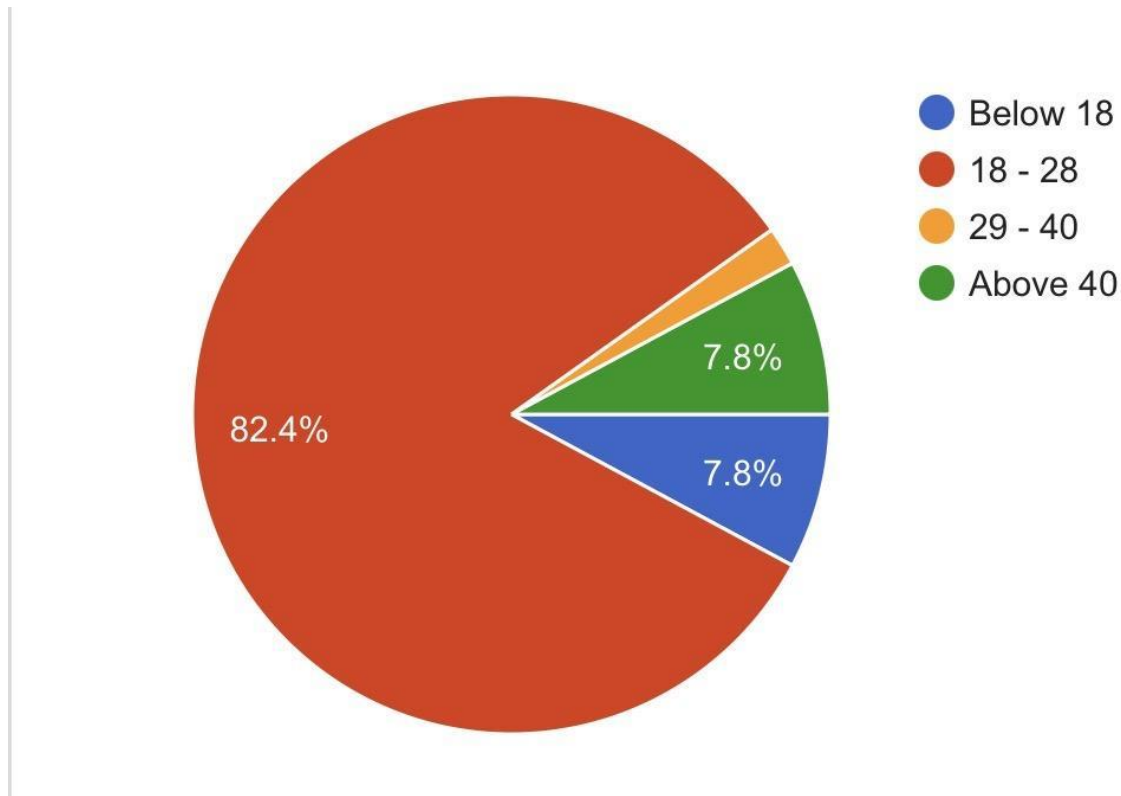
6. Data Analysis

The information collected through secondary research, visual analysis, AI experimentation and the questionnaire was compared and interpreted according to the research objectives. Quantitative questionnaire responses were represented using charts or percentages, while visual observations and research findings were analysed qualitatively.

The methodology therefore combines **theoretical research with practical styling experimentation**, allowing the study to examine not only existing knowledge about body image and fashion styling but also the emerging possibilities and limitations of AI-assisted personal styling.

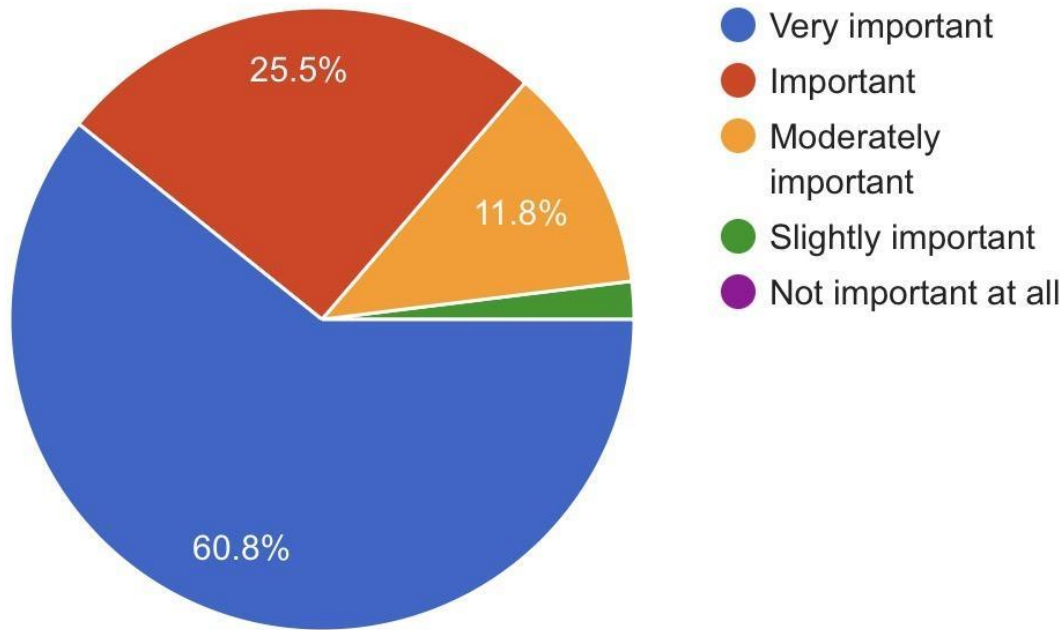
Analysis:

The survey responses show the distribution of participants across different age groups. The largest proportion of respondents belonged to 18-28 . This provides an understanding of the age demographic represented in the study.



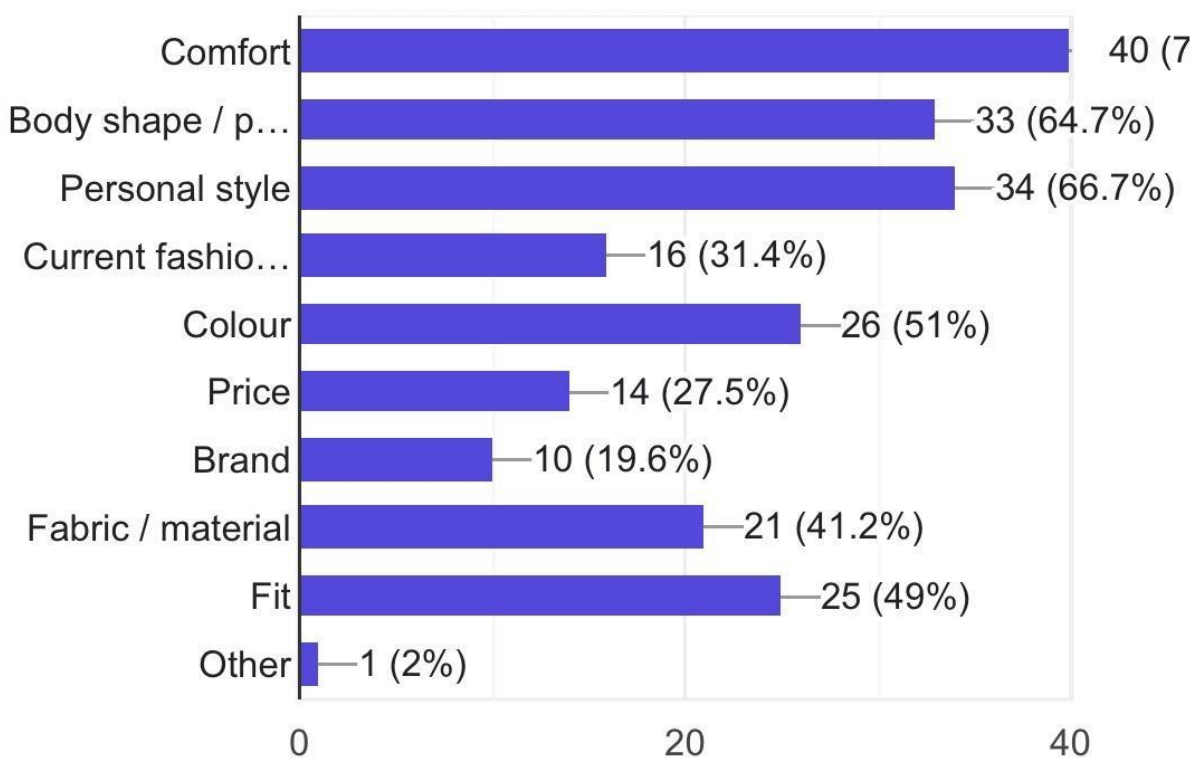
Importance of body appearance when choosing an outfit

The responses indicate the extent to which respondents consider their physical appearance when selecting clothing. A higher proportion of respondents selecting “Very Important” or “Important” would suggest that body image plays a significant role in everyday clothing decisions.



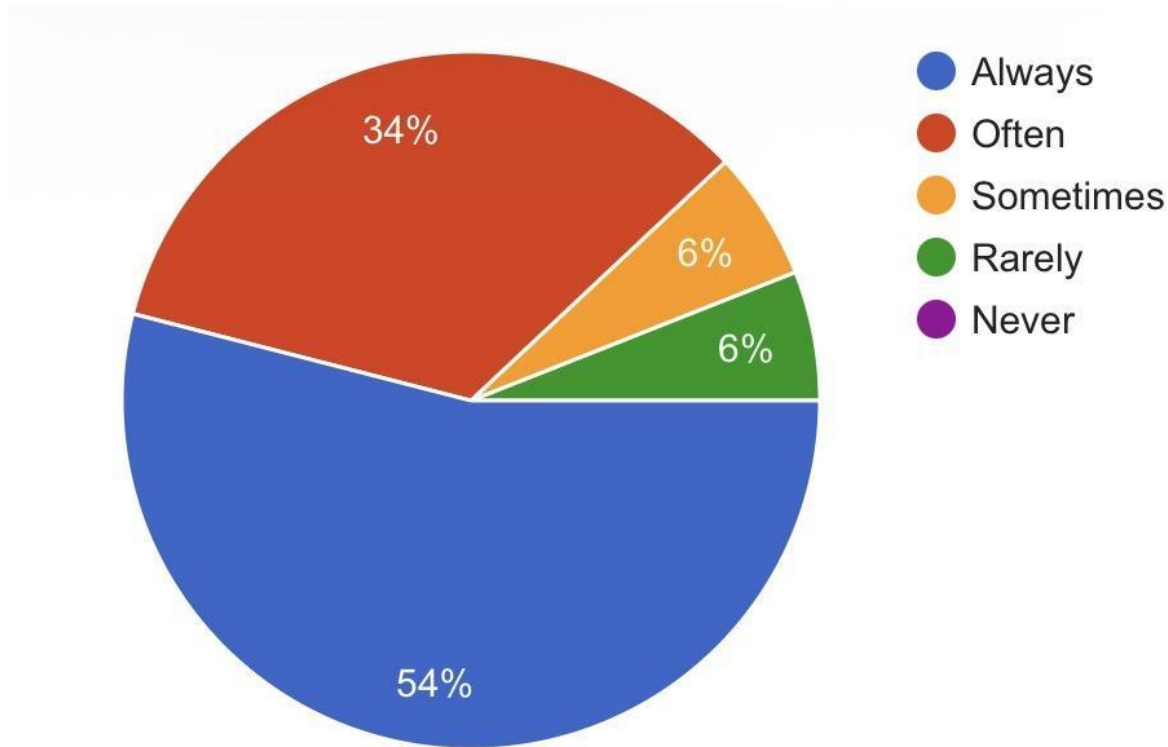
Factors influencing clothing choices

The responses show the different factors that respondents consider while selecting clothing. Factors such as comfort, fit, personal style, body proportions, fashion trends, colour, price, occasion, and social media provide an understanding of what influences contemporary consumers.



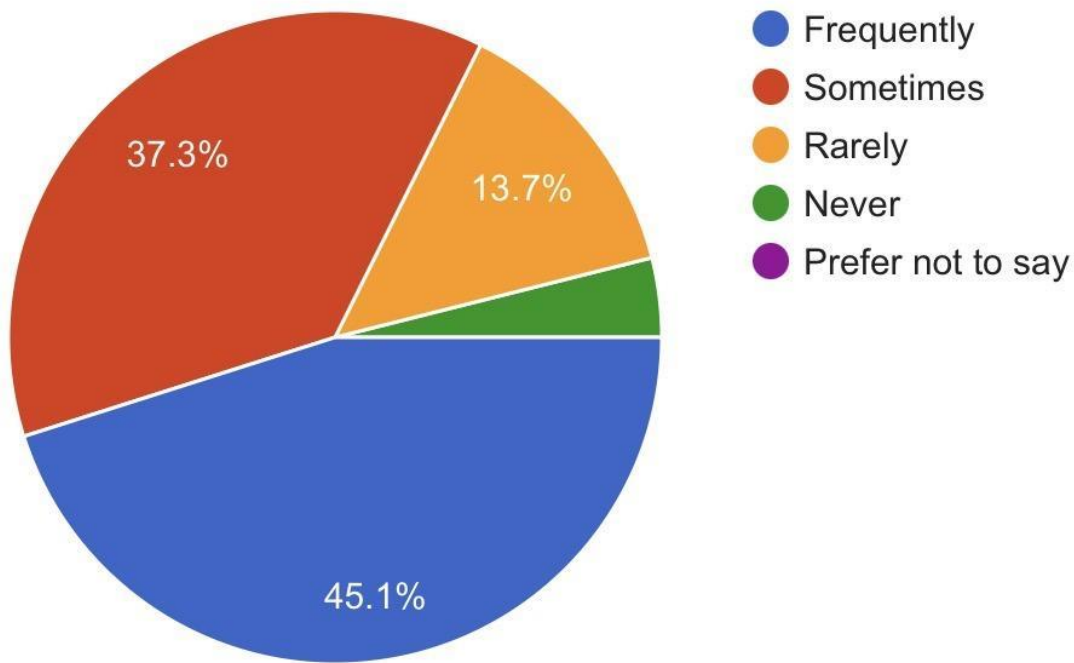
Consideration of whether a particular style suits the respondent's body

This response examines how frequently individuals consider their body shape or proportions when choosing a particular style. Frequent consideration of body proportions would indicate that body image and perceived suitability remain important elements of personal styling.



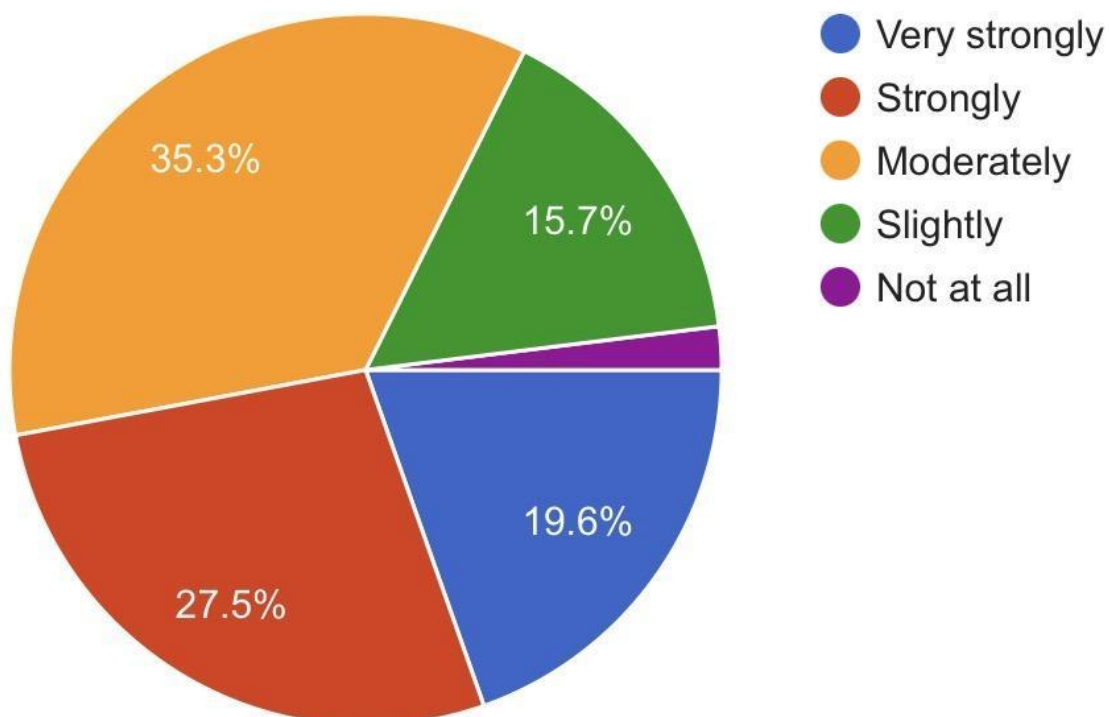
Respondents who have avoided particular styles because they felt they did not suit their body

The responses demonstrate whether perceptions of body suitability can restrict clothing choices. Respondents who frequently or sometimes avoid certain styles may indicate that body image affects not only what people choose to wear but also what they choose not to wear.



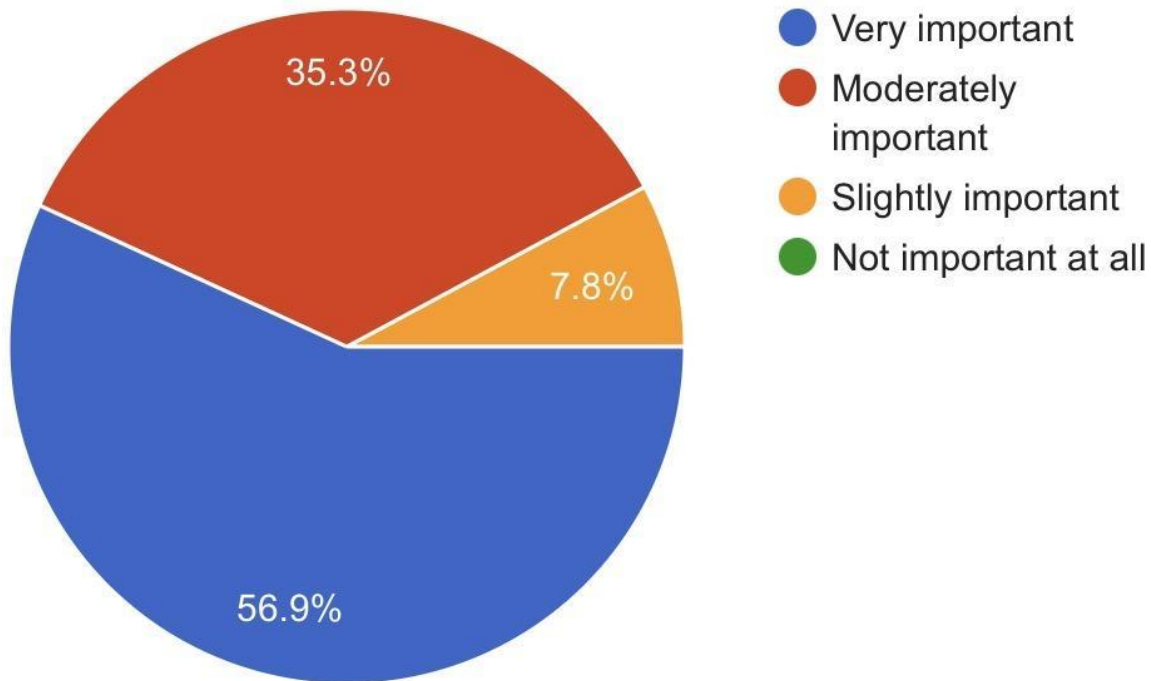
Influence of social media on respondents' fashion choices

The results illustrate the extent to which social media platforms influence fashion preferences. Social media can expose individuals to trends, influencers, styling inspiration, brand campaigns, and different forms of body representation.



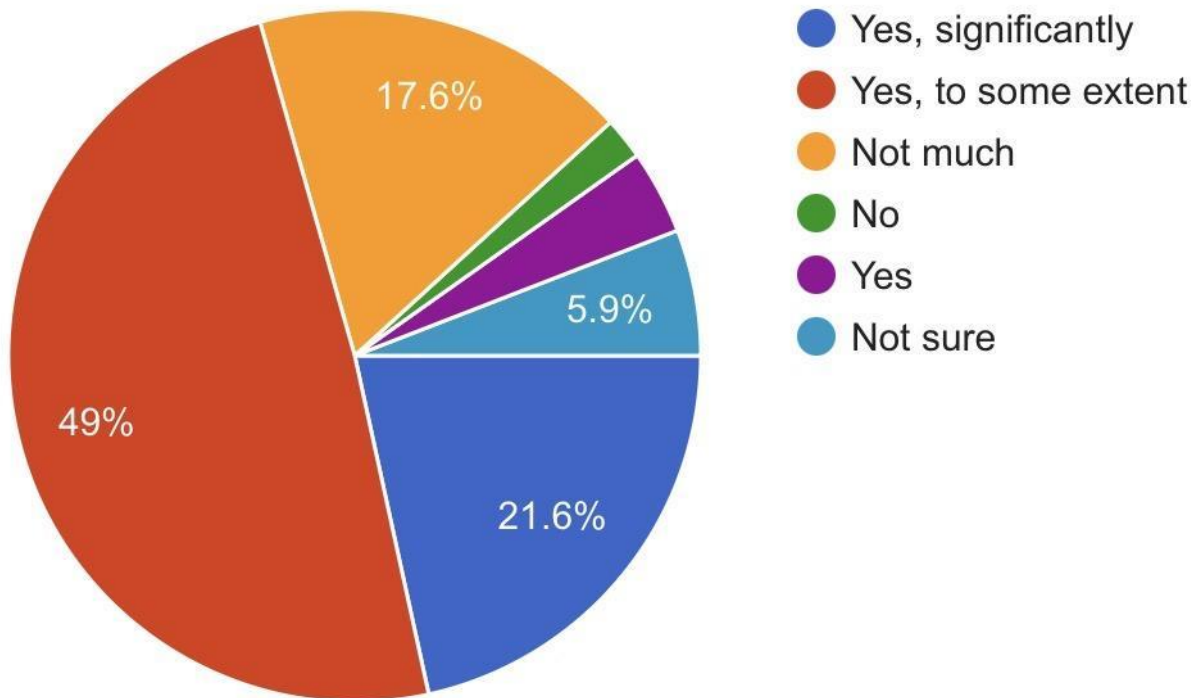
Importance of diverse body representation in fashion

The responses indicate how important respondents consider the representation of different body types within fashion. A high level of importance would demonstrate an increasing expectation for fashion media, brands, and styling content to represent a broader range of bodies rather than relying on a limited physical ideal.



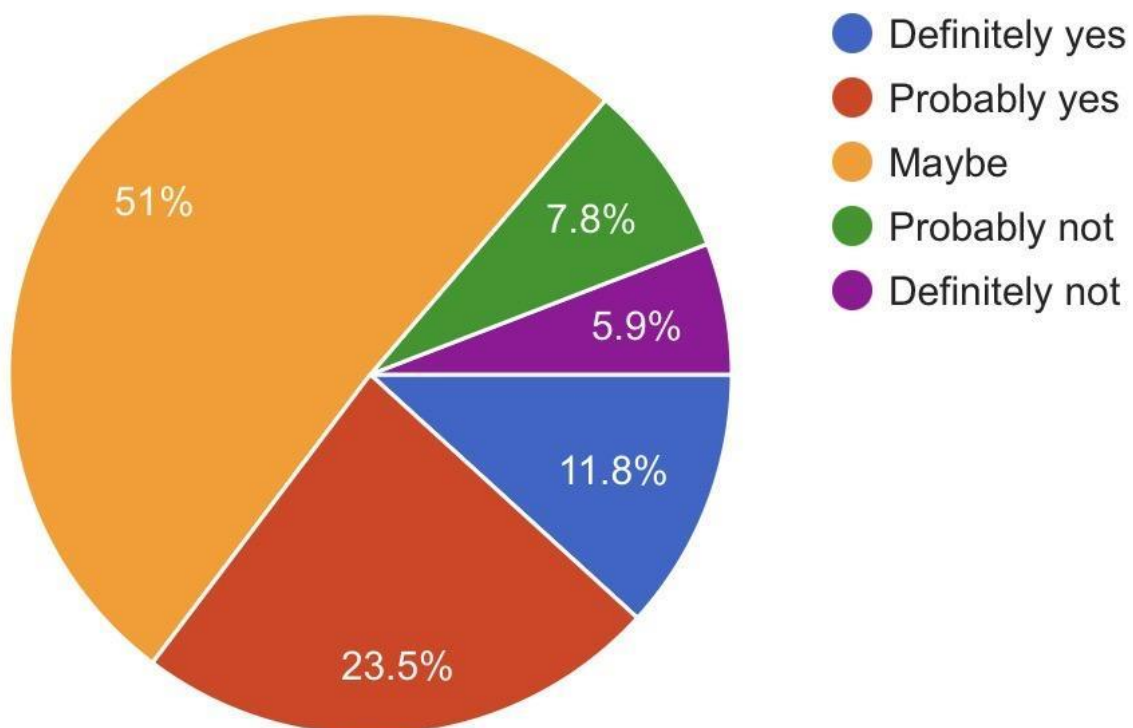
Respondent's perception of whether fashion is becoming more inclusive

This question examines whether respondents perceive contemporary fashion as becoming more inclusive of different body types. The results can be compared with the previous question to understand whether people not only value diverse representation but also believe that the fashion industry is making progress towards greater inclusivity.



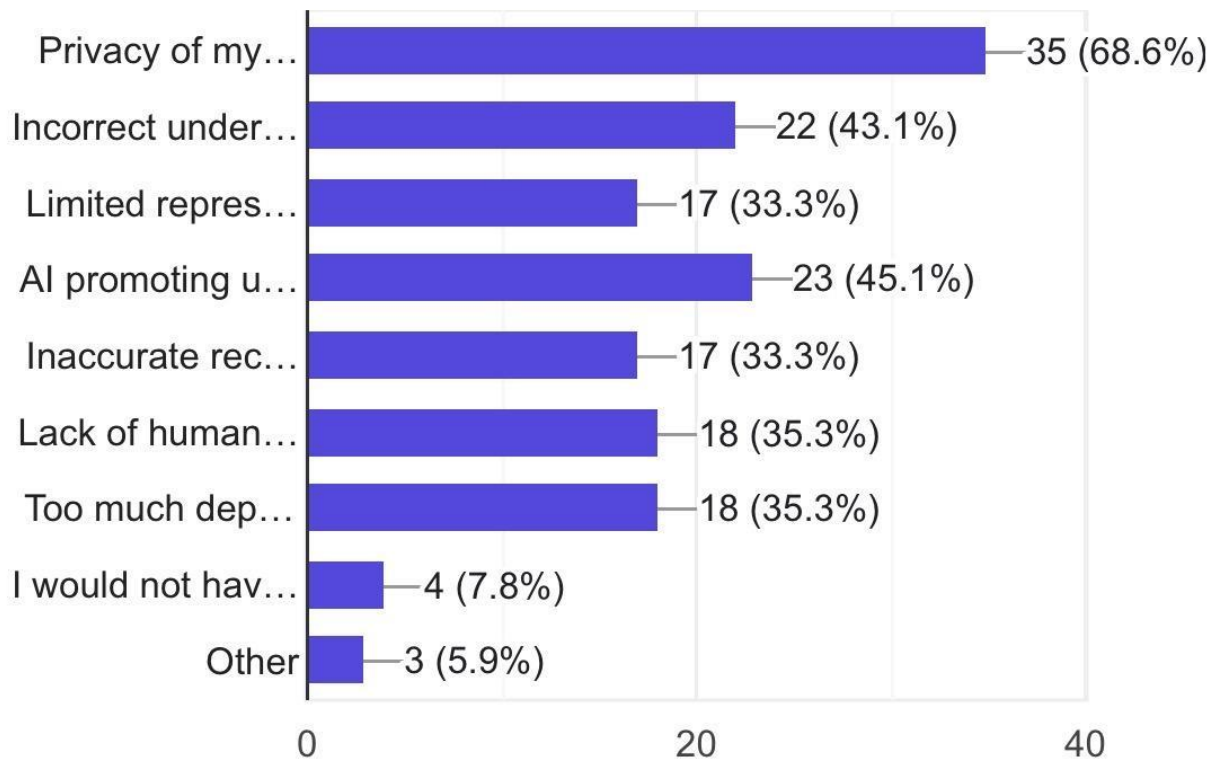
Interest in using an AI personal styling assistant

The responses demonstrate the level of interest in AI-based personal styling. Interest in such tools may indicate that consumers are becoming more comfortable with technology-assisted fashion decisions. AI styling assistants may provide recommendations based on preferences, body proportions, existing wardrobes, occasions, colours, and current trends.



Concerns regarding AI-based personal styling

The responses identify the major concerns associated with using AI for fashion recommendations. These may include privacy, inaccurate understanding of body proportions or preferences, limited representation, unrealistic beauty standards, inaccurate recommendations, and lack of human understanding.



Respondents' views on whether AI can make personal styling more personalised and inclusive

This response explores respondents' overall perception of the potential of AI in fashion styling. The results can indicate whether respondents view AI primarily as a useful styling technology, remain uncertain about its capabilities, or have concerns about its ability to provide genuinely inclusive recommendations.

Overall Findings

The survey provides an understanding of the relationship between body image, clothing choices, social media, fashion inclusivity, and emerging AI technologies. The responses can be used to see whether individuals consider their body proportions while dressing, whether body image can influence the styles they avoid, and how strongly digital platforms influence their fashion choices.

The findings also provide insight into changing expectations about representation and inclusivity in fashion. The AI-related responses further demonstrate the potential interest in technology-assisted styling while voicing concerns surrounding privacy, representation, accuracy, and unrealistic beauty standards.

Overall, the survey findings contribute to the research objective of understanding how contemporary styling is moving towards greater personalisation and inclusivity, while also examining the opportunities and limitations presented by AI-powered personal styling assistants.

Conclusion

This research explored the relationship between **body image, contemporary fashion styling trends, and the growing use of AI in personal styling**. Through secondary research, visual analysis, AI styling experiments, and the survey conducted for this study, it was observed that the way people choose clothes is influenced by factors such as comfort, fit, body proportions, personal style, fashion trends, and social media.

The research also shows that fashion is gradually becoming more diverse and personalised. Trends such as oversized silhouettes, relaxed fits, co-ordinated outfits, streetwear, and inclusive representation allow people to experiment with clothing in ways that are not limited to one particular body type or beauty standard. At the same time, social media can influence how people see their own bodies and what they feel they should wear.

The survey findings showed that people are interested in using AI for practical styling needs such as **colour combinations, outfit suggestions, styling according to body proportions, and styling clothes they already own**. However, participants also expressed concerns about privacy, inaccurate recommendations, unrealistic beauty standards, and whether AI can truly understand individual preferences.

Overall, AI can be a useful **supporting tool for personal styling**, especially for generating ideas and personalised suggestions. However, fashion styling is not only about matching clothes to measurements or trends. Human creativity, experience, cultural understanding, emotions, and personal identity are equally important. Therefore, the future of personal styling could involve **AI and human stylists working together**, with technology helping people explore more possibilities while keeping individuality and inclusivity at the centre of fashion.

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