

Sewn Into Society: The Influence of Fashion Media on Identity and Belonging



An investigation into how engagement with fashion media impacts adolescents' self-concept, body image, and expression of identity

¹ <https://www.facebook.com/essence> (2025). *It's Time to Put Our Phones Down at Fashion Week*. [online] Essence. Available at: <https://www.essence.com/fashion/no-phones-fashion-week/> [Accessed 27 July 2026].
self-concept

Table of Contents

Contents	2
Introduction	3
Log	5
Chapter 1: The Influence of Influencers	7
Chapter 2: The Ideal Illusion	13
Chapter 3: The future of fashion media	21
Conclusion	27
Annotated Resource List	29

Introduction

Fashion is not simply clothing, but a cultural system that builds identity and influences social behaviour, teaching adolescents what it means to be 'enough' within society. The central hypothesis of this topic is that fashion media reinforces narrow beauty ideals and social expectations, impacting adolescents' self-image, identity, and behaviour through social media and influencer culture. I selected this topic because fashion is a visible part of everyday life, yet its influence on individuality extends beyond surface level, impacting body perception and social pressure from within, with its harmful effects often overlooked or normalised.

The topic of fashion and its impact on self-concept contributes to a better understanding of society and culture by developing awareness of how commodification, commercialisation, popular culture, and generational change (Generation Z and Generation X) shape values and aspirations. Fashion operates as personal expression and a commercial system that sells ideals of beauty, success, and belonging. "In this social world, clothing has been described as the second skin for a person, reflecting their social status, a concept prevalent throughout history²", highlighting its role as a symbolic marker of individuality globally.

This study is structured through three chapters, Chapter 1: The Influence of Influencers, Chapter 2: The Ideal Illusion, engaging with the idea that "fashion and beauty magazines have been the leading charge in disseminating the thin ideal³", and Chapter 3: The Future of Fashion Media, exploring the challenges, consequences and changes within the industry. These sections analyse how ideals are produced and internalised, and how individuals respond to them both positively and negatively. A key idea explored throughout is that many things we recognise in fashion are observed, not explained, meaning individuals often absorb trends and ideals without critically questioning their origins.

² A, Rashid. (2019). The Media Effect: Implications for Manifesting Maintainable Body Image in the Context of Global Fashion Industry. [online] [www.intechopen.com](https://www.intechopen.com/chapters/69096). IntechOpen. Available at: <https://www.intechopen.com/chapters/69096> [Accessed 18 Apr. 2026].

³ B, Harper. and M, Tiggeman. (2007). The Effect of Thin Ideal Media Images on Women's Self-Objectification, Mood, and Body Image | Request PDF. [online] ResearchGate. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/226285128_The_Effect_of_Thin_Ideal_Media_Images_on_Women [Accessed 21 Apr. 2026].

To investigate this, I incorporated primary and secondary research methods. Primary research included a questionnaire, interview, personal reflection, and a qualitative visual media content analysis of fashion-based films, documentaries and series, focusing on influencer culture, body image, and identity. These provided insight into adolescent experiences and perceptions. Secondary research included academic articles, media analysis, and journal articles examining fashion as a social system, alongside sociological theories (social comparison and self-objectification), commodification, and representation. A key guiding source was literature examining how Western beauty standards promote narrow ideals of thinness and attractiveness, shaping self-concept⁴. Findings suggest that while fashion appears increasingly diverse, representation often functions as aesthetic inclusion rather than authentic inclusivity, meaning progress can mask ongoing exclusion. However, the relentless glorification of starving bodies and curated perfection traps individuals into impossible ideals, turning self-expression through fashion into a performance, reducing self-worth to the measure of an image.

Ultimately, this PIP aims to critically explore how fashion media constructs self-expression and influences behaviour, with the intention of encouraging greater awareness of media literacy. As digital platforms continue to evolve, future research could explore how AI or Virtual influencers, and changing microtrends, reshape identity formation and cultural expectations among younger generations.

⁴ N.A, Rudd. and S.J, Lennon. (2000). Body Image and Appearance-Management Behaviors in College Women. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 18(3), pp.152–162.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/0887302x0001800304>.

Log

The allure of fashion media has significantly expanded throughout my adolescence, as I developed taste through films, social media, television series, documentaries, articles and magazines. Growing up connected to the industry exposed me early on to its standards, trends and culture, shaping my understanding of how fashion influences self-perception through demanding expectations. Although social media has positive impacts, there is limited awareness of how industry standards are disseminated through these platforms, reinforcing unrealistic and harmful expectations surrounding appearance among adolescents, including the development of eating disorders. Recognising fashion media's influence on beauty values and identity became essential, as appearance plays a significant role in shaping individual and collective perceptions throughout adolescence. This catalysed my idea, investigating how engagement with fashion media impacts adolescents' self-concept, body image, and expression of identity.

I then recognised that these experiences extended beyond myself. Through observation, I noticed many peers comparing themselves to influencers, models and online trends, demonstrating how continual engagement with idealised beauty standards and curated images reinforces the broader social and cultural significance of this issue; thus, Generation Z became central to my hypothesis. This strengthened my investigation into continuity and change across Generation X and Generation Z.

My first primary research method, a questionnaire, provided statistics that outlined the scope of my topic and guided my chapters. However, some questions generated vague responses due to the general public's limited awareness, highlighting the necessity for secondary research.

I then began my content analysis, involving five sources across three forms of media, developing my understanding of mediatised popular culture. Although it took several weeks to complete, I enjoyed revisiting the sources due to my interests. While I had previously recognised many of the industry's flaws, analysing these sources solidified my understanding of how these messages are constructed and disseminated.

Completing my personal reflection strengthened my understanding of how fashion media shapes identity and body image through my personal experiences.

Furthermore, conducting an expert interview presented challenges surrounding the representation of a single industry perspective. Although Amanda Byram's background in modelling, television and wellness provided valuable professional insight, her experiences reflected an individual career pathway rather than the diversity of perspectives across the wider fashion industry. Therefore, additional secondary research was necessary to contextualise these findings.

Once I had collected and organised my sources, the volume of information became overwhelming. To manage this, I categorised my content analysis, personal reflection, interview transcript, questionnaire responses and secondary sources according to chapter relevance. I organised examples, quotes and statistics into tables using colour coding to identify connections, allowing me to synthesise evidence and construct arguments throughout my PIP.

My PIP journey transformed my understanding of fashion media, encouraging me to approach it with greater critical awareness when viewing and discussing it.

The Influence of Influencers

An analysis of celebrity icons and fashion trends that shape adolescent identity and self-expression in digital culture

The rise of social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook and TikTok have transformed fashion consumption, reshaping how adolescents construct their identity, reinforcing the idea that self-image is no longer developed internally, but dictated digitally and through the growing power of fashion influencers. The transition from traditional print media to interactive digital platforms over the past 20 years has expanded global access to fashion content⁵, constantly exposing adolescents to idealised body types, lifestyles and trends that become internalised into self-identity⁶. Influencers like “SophiaDopha” and “Kate Moss”⁷ have overtaken designers as key drivers of fashion, shaping adolescents’ self-image through their perceived reliability⁸. As fashion becomes increasingly internalised, individuals construct their identities through online aesthetics and values, reflecting a broader societal shift in which influencers have emerged as modern role models and heroes⁹. Consequently, adolescents may feel pressure to conform to trends in pursuit of validation and belonging¹⁰. While social media can promote creativity and self-expression¹¹, algorithm-driven feeds reinforce unrealistic standards, negatively impacting self-concept¹².

A general survey of the social media space suggests that influencers strongly shape adolescents’ self-image and fashion choices. In today’s digital environment, social media has become a central space where adolescents are repeatedly exposed to

⁵ P, Aspers., & F, Godart., (2013) ‘Sociology of Fashion: Order and Change’, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 39, pp. 171–192. doi:10.1146/annurev-soc-071811-145526

⁶ Primary Research: Interview

⁷ Primary Research: Questionnaire Q8

⁸ T., Levin, M, Tiggemann., J, Harriger., and J, Fardouly. (2025). The Influencer effect: Current Findings and Future Directions for Research on Social Media Influencers and Body Image. *Body Image*, [online] 55, p.102000. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2025.102000>.

⁹ V, Pérez-Torres. (2024) ‘Social media: a digital social mirror for identity development during adolescence’, *Current Psychology*.

¹⁰ R, Perloff., (2014). (PDF) *Social Media Effects on Young Women’s Body Image Concerns: Theoretical Perspectives and an Agenda for Research*. [online] ResearchGate. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/271740741_Social_Media_Effects_on_Young_Women [Accessed 1 Apr. 2026].

¹¹ Primary Research: Personal Reflection

¹² Primary Research: Interview

constructed fashion content, trends and lifestyles, portrayed by influencers with mass followings within popular culture¹³, allowing them to define their individuality based on external influences¹⁴. This is reinforced through influencer perspectives, as Sophia-Begg (SophaDopha), one of Australia's most influential content creators amongst Generation Z¹⁵, states: "The influencer scene is so small in Australia, whereas here (South Korea) they love it. In Australia, everyone hates influencers, which is crazy when you travel internationally on brand trips and see the comparison"¹⁶. This highlights how cultural values shape influencer acceptance within society; South Korea's collective, trend-orientated culture embraces influencers as aspirational figures. Whereas Australia's individualistic culture is more sceptical of their authority. Within Generation X, figures like "Kate Moss" have significantly shaped fashion trends and consumer preferences¹⁷, creating a culture where fashion is closely tied to self-expression¹⁸. In the vulnerable adolescence period, seeking peer-approved validation is critical for belonging, leading teenagers, particularly young girls, to consume tailored online content that shapes their personal self-worth in relation to appearance¹⁹.

Numerous, fragmented creators were identified throughout questionnaire responses, with references to a wide range of online personalities rather than one dominant source. 54.8% identified social media fashion figures as their largest influence on fashion, ahead of peers and family²⁰. Another states, "I think about what I could purchase at an affordable level to achieve a similar look to SophaDopha"²¹. This

¹³ Primary Research: Interview

¹⁴ V, Pérez-Torres., (2024) 'Social media: a digital social mirror for identity development during adolescence', *Current Psychology*.

¹⁵ NSW art gallery (2026). *Archibald Prize Archibald 2026 work: AKA Sopha Dopha by Andy Collis*. [online] Nsw.gov.au. Available at: <https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/prizes/archibald/2026/30920/> [Accessed 18 Jun. 2026].

¹⁶ S, Begg, (2026). *A Few Days in South Korea*  VLOG. [online] YouTube. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j9cyHm1atF0> [Accessed 17 Jun. 2026].

¹⁷ Primary Research: Questionnaire Q18

¹⁸ Primary Research: Personal Reflection

¹⁹ A, Papageorgiou ,C, Fisher. & D, Cross. (2022) "Why don't I look like her?" How adolescent girls view social media and its connection to body image', *BMC Women's Health*, 22, article 261. doi:10.1186/s12905-022-01845-4

²⁰ Primary research: Questionnaire Q7

²¹ Primary research: Questionnaire Q18

reflects how influence builds through continuous feed consumption, revealing the importance of “dupe culture”²².

In contrast, the uprising of virtual influencers are majorly reshaping influencer marketing²³. Interview responses indicate that accounts with highly curated aesthetics and consistent branding generate higher trust and engagement, as perceived authenticity increases their persuasive and commercial impact²⁴. Individuals build emotional connections through parasocial interactions, trusting influencers based on attractiveness, similarity, and expertise, reinforcing their popularity among Generation Z, but raise ethical implications such as misleading endorsements²⁵. Virtual influencers are controlled by companies and don't risk scandals, making them more appealing for brands to use²⁶. Their rise may damage careers as they overtake the role of the human influencer, reshaping how companies market their products; therefore, the role of the influencer has become increasingly significant over the past 20 years.

Undoubtedly, influencers hold a clear hierarchy as role models, shaping and creating controversial trends. Even without an active interest in fashion, individuals participate through daily clothing choices, subconsciously experiencing the ‘unconscious influencer effect’²⁷. Initially, fashion media is used for entertainment, but over time individuals become more critical of online ideals.

The transition from print to digital media has expanded access to idealised body types, intensifying adolescents' exposure to crafted, unattainable standards of appearance. Historically, fashion ideals were represented through magazines.

²² K, Robinson (2025). What does dupe culture say about us? | The ethics of democratising fashion. [online] YouTube. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qDF9JTCNdgl> [Accessed 22 July 2026].

²³ A, Audrezet, B, Koles, J.G, Moulard, N, Ameen. and B, McKenna. (2025). Virtual influencers: Definition and Future Research Directions. *Journal of Business Research*, 200, pp.115647–115647. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2025.115647>.

²⁴ Primary Research: Interview

²⁵ A, Jhavar, P, Kumar. and S, Varshney. (2023). The Emergence of Virtual Influencers: A Shift in the Influencer Marketing Paradigm. *Young Consumers*, 24(4), pp.468–484. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1108/yc-05-2022-1529>.

²⁶ A, Jhavar, P, Kumar. and S, Varshney. (2023). The Emergence of Virtual Influencers: A Shift in the Influencer Marketing Paradigm. *Young Consumers*, 24(4), pp.468–484. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1108/yc-05-2022-1529>.

²⁷ Primary Research: Personal Reflection

“Vogue, Harper's-Bazaar, Elle, Rolling-Stone, Seventeen, and Allure magazines were instrumental in defining 90s fashion”²⁸. Algorithm-driven digital feeds have amplified this, with 48.4% of respondents seeking fashion content daily by watching hauls, following trends and scrolling fashion accounts²⁹. Additionally, the most consumed forms of media were online shopping apps (71%) and mainstream global influencer content on social media (64.5%)³⁰, highlighting digital platforms' dominance over print media (32.3%), mainly due to changes in consumer habits and generational implications. Given greater internet access, healthier standards should be promoted instead of unrealistic ones. However, no such change has been implemented within the global fashion industry, so representation remains performative rather than inclusive³¹.

Participants stated, “Social media has made me aware of my body and how I don't fit the standard”³². The “perfect body” has changed over time, but media persistently promotes narrow expectations, with internet accessibility making self-comparison and body dissatisfaction common. Developed in 2009 by the Australian Government's National Advisory Group on Body Image, the Voluntary Industry Code of Conduct on Body Image encourages the media, fashion and advertising industries to promote body positivity and reduce digitally manipulated images³³. Yet little changed following its introduction. In the UK, expectations rely on self-regulation, government regulation and parliamentary inquiries³⁴. Across 13 Australian women's fashion magazines published in 2015, “74% of models were underweight, white (90%), and young (99%), with only 1% being older, and little representation of larger

²⁸ T, Weigel. (2025). *90s Fashion Magazines: Setting Trends for Generations*. [online] Vintage and Antique Gifts. Available at: <https://vintageantiquesgifts.com/blogs/news/90s-fashion-magazines-trendsetters?srltid=AfmBOoq9wAiD44Z7IGznC2hJ7x23jEitOTF12lqKqL-QubD5bUI2GUoS> [Accessed 2 May 2026].

²⁹ Primary research: Questionnaire Q3

³⁰ Primary research: Questionnaire Q4

³¹ A, Rashid. (2019). *The Media Effect: Implications for Manifesting Maintainable Body Image in the Context of Global Fashion Industry*. [online] www.intechopen.com. IntechOpen. Available at: <https://www.intechopen.com/chapters/69096> [Accessed 18 Apr. 2026].

³² Primary research: Questionnaire Q10

³³ Body Image Code for advertisers, Media - ABC News. (2009). *ABC News*. [online] 27 Oct. Available at: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2009-10-27/body-image-code-for-advertisers-media/1118510> [Accessed 2 May 2026].

³⁴ Mental Health Foundation (2019). *Implications and Recommendations for Policy and Action*. [online] www.mentalhealth.org.uk. Available at: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/our-work/research/body-image-how-we-think-and-feel-about-our-bodies/implications-and-recommendations-policy-and-action> [Accessed 17 Jun. 2026].

body sizes or ethnic diversity³⁵. This is reflected within my personal observations of contemporary fashion media, where dominant beauty ideals continue to be reinforced through influencer content, despite growing discussions surrounding diversity³⁶. Both traditional and digital media promote similar aesthetics³⁷; however, unlike print media, digital platforms amplify these glorified standards through their oversaturation and accessibility, intensifying their reach.

Individuals often conform to fashion trends through social media and peer influence, driven by a desire for validation, belonging and alignment with perceived social standards. 38.7% of respondents said trends such as “clean-girl-aesthetic”, “old-money”, “Y2K” or “quiet-luxury” influence their personal style³⁸. Although individuals may not depend on trends, constant viewing influences them, with one respondent stating that trends “sync subconsciously, and new trends replace old habits”³⁹. Repeated encounters with slim bodies and polished appearances normalise these ideals, encouraging individuals to align their appearance with expectations promoted by powerful industry professionals such as Anna Wintour⁴⁰. However, not everyone conforms. One participant stated, “I’m confident and don’t compare myself to others”⁴¹, suggesting that self-confidence can reduce media influence and feelings of exclusion. Nevertheless, Australia’s social media users were as follows, in January 2026: Instagram (12 million), TikTok (5.8 million), and Facebook (19 million). Such reach to vulnerable audiences each day increases the likelihood of sustained engagement with idealised content⁴². Due to this access, individuals may be mentally and physically challenged, for example, “I was 16 suffering from eating disorders and body dysmorphia because I wanted to be as

³⁵ C, de Freitas, H, Jordan. and E.K, Hughes. (2018). Body Image Diversity in the media: a Content Analysis of Women's Fashion Magazines. *Health Promotion Journal of Australia*, [online] 29(3), pp.251–256. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1002/hpja.21>.

³⁶ Primary Research: Personal reflection

³⁷ Primary research: Content Analysis

³⁸ Primary research: Questionnaire Q5

³⁹ Primary research: Questionnaire Q12

⁴⁰ Primary research: Content Analysis, The September Issue

⁴¹ Primary research: Questionnaire Q10

⁴² SocialMediaNews (2026). Social Media Statistics Australia – January 2026. [online] Socialmedianews.com.au. Available at: <https://www.socialmedianews.com.au/social-media-statistics-australia-january-2026/> [Accessed 17 Jun. 2026].

skinny as the girls in the magazines”⁴³, illustrating continuity within beauty ideals across generations despite the shift from print to digital media.

Conformity to trends, even when harmful, is not a conscious decision, but a subconscious response to social pressure. Individuals conform not only for aesthetic preferences, but also for social acceptance from others in their social networks⁴⁴. This is reinforced through personal observations, "subconsciously, if you're using social media you have the potential to be influenced"⁴⁵. This aligns with the social comparison theory, where individuals evaluate themselves against others online⁴⁶. Ultimately, conformity is driven by media interactions, though its extent depends on self-confidence.

Overall, fashion media and influencers strongly shape adolescents' self-image, identity and engagement with trends through constant contact with curated content. This encourages comparison, normalises idealised body standards⁴⁷ and can lead to subconscious conformity for peer validation. Although some resist these pressures through critical awareness, fashion media continues to shape self-expression and perception of others, highlighting the powerful role of digital fashion culture. In saying this, the second chapter will explore these effects, focusing on appearance-based ideals and self-worth.

⁴³ Primary research: Questionnaire Q13

⁴⁴ N, Namazova (2025). Perspective Chapter: the Role of Social Influence on Consumer Behavior. IntechOpen eBooks. [online] doi:<https://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.1010384>.

⁴⁵ Primary research: Personal Reflection

⁴⁶ R, Perfloff. (2014). (PDF) *Social Media Effects on Young Women's Body Image Concerns: Theoretical Perspectives and an Agenda for Research*. [online] ResearchGate. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/271740741_Social_Media_Effects_on_Young_Women [Accessed 1 Apr. 2026].

⁴⁷ V, Pérez-Torres, (2024) 'Social media: a digital social mirror for identity development during adolescence', *Current Psychology*.

The Ideal Illusion

“In particular, fashion and beauty magazines have been accused of leading the charge in disseminating the thin ideal”⁴⁸

This chapter examines how fashion media influences adolescents' perceptions of body image and self-worth through the constant promotion of idealised beauty standards. It explores how representation, exposure and changing generational attitudes shape perceptions of attractiveness within contemporary society; however, authentic diversity remains limited, reinforcing that appearance is heavily tied to value and desirability. 38.7% of respondents feel fashion media makes them aware of their body shape, skin, weight and/or appearance⁴⁹. Others "view fashion media as a product that has been generated and marketed to sell a specific ideal"⁵⁰, exposing generational differences. Overall, findings suggest that while critical awareness can reduce comparison, ongoing visibility to glamorised bodies continues to influence adolescents' self-identity.

The glorification of idealised body types influences adolescents' self-esteem, reinforcing narrow beauty standards⁵¹. “Unsurprisingly, eating disorders are perpetuated when unobtainable bodies are correlated with beauty, popularity, happiness and success”⁵². Adolescents are exposed to curated images across magazines, runways, advertisements, influencers and algorithms, where unrealistic ideals are maintained through excessive exercise and disordered eating behaviours. Therefore, many internalise the belief that appearance is tied to personal value⁵³. Questionnaire responses revealed influencers and curated online images encourage

⁴⁸ B, Harper. and M, Tiggeman. (2007). The Effect of Thin Ideal Media Images on Women's Self-Objectification, Mood, and Body Image | Request PDF. [online] ResearchGate. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/226285128_The_Effect_of_Thin_Ideal_Media_Images_on_Women [Accessed 21 Apr. 2026].

⁴⁹ Primary Research: Questionnaire Q9

⁵⁰ Primary Research: Questionnaire Q10

⁵¹ Primary Research: Personal Reflection

⁵² Z, Alderton,. (2024). 'Nothing Tastes as Good as Skinny Feels'. International Journal for the Study of New Religions, 12(2), pp.157–184. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1558/ijnsr.27320>.

⁵³ C, Rani. & G, Mahavidhyalya, (2025) 'Clothing Choices and Self-Image Among Adolescents', *International Journal of Scientific Development and Research*, 10(8), pp. 86–90.

comparison⁵⁴, while designer claims of 'inclusivity' often contrast with actual show content⁵⁵.

Mass media communicates body image stereotypes, explained by psychological theories including social comparison and self-objectification⁵⁶. Highly glorified images of women fitting narrow body types across Instagram and TikTok reinforce impractical standards⁵⁷, and the visibility of likes, comments and shares strengthens the connection between appearance and social validation. As a pertinent contemporary example, Netflix smash hit '*Emily in Paris*' showcases a lavish, validation culture as the epitome of young female success⁵⁸. Research demonstrates that women viewing thin female bodies in magazine advertisements increases self-objectification, negative mood, and appearance anxiety⁵⁹. A similar popular culture example can be seen in the 2000s box office smash, '*The Devil Wears Prada*' where characters normalise extreme dieting, "I'm just one stomach flu away from my goal weight", reflecting how unhealthy behaviours are glamorised within fashion culture⁶⁰, relating thinness with beauty and success⁶¹. Furthermore, interview participants state, "In modelling and television there's this unspoken belief that thinner is better, and your body is something you need to fix/control"⁶². Over time, this can contribute to a disconnection from natural bodily needs⁶³. Questionnaire

⁵⁴ Primary Research: Questionnaire Q10,13

⁵⁵ M, Shoaib. and L, Maguire. (2026). *The Vogue Business Fall/Winter 2026 Size Inclusivity Report*. [online] Vogue. Available at: <https://www.vogue.com/article/the-vogue-business-fall-winter-2026-size-inclusivity-report> [Accessed 13 May 2026].

⁵⁶ B, Harper. and M, Tiggeman. (2007). The Effect of Thin Ideal Media Images on Women's Self-Objectification, Mood, and Body Image | Request PDF. [online] ResearchGate. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/226285128_The_Effect_of_Thin_Ideal_Media_Images_on_Women [Accessed 21 Apr. 2026].

⁵⁷ R, Perloff. (2014). (PDF) *Social Media Effects on Young Women's Body Image Concerns: Theoretical Perspectives and an Agenda for Research*. [online] ResearchGate. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/271740741_Social_Media_Effects_on_Young_Women [Accessed 1 Apr. 2026].

⁵⁸ Primary Research: Content Analysis, *Emily in Paris*

⁵⁹ B, Harper. and M, Tiggeman. (2007). The Effect of Thin Ideal Media Images on Women's Self-Objectification, Mood, and Body Image | Request PDF. [online] ResearchGate. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/226285128_The_Effect_of_Thin_Ideal_Media_Images_on_Women [Accessed 21 Apr. 2026].

⁶⁰ Primary Research: Content Analysis, *The Devil Wears Prada*

⁶¹ Z, Alderton. (2024). 'Nothing Tastes as Good as Skinny Feels'. *International Journal for the Study of New Religions*, 12(2), pp.157–184. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1558/ijsnr.27320>.

⁶² Primary Research: Interview

⁶³ A, Rashid. (2019). *The Media Effect: Implications for Manifesting Maintainable Body Image in the Context of Global Fashion Industry*. [online] www.intechopen.com. IntechOpen. Available at: <https://www.intechopen.com/chapters/69096> [Accessed 18 Apr. 2026].

respondents similarly noted that seeing different body types from theirs online can make them question “what’s wrong with my body?”⁶⁴, demonstrating how frequent interaction negatively affects self-perception among developing adolescents⁶⁵. This is echoed in the 2009 documentary *‘The September Issue’*, where the significant representation lies in the harmful workplace attitudes surrounding appearance. Body shaming comments like “we need to fix her” and criticisms regarding a model’s “big fat legs” reveal how body judgement is normalised within the industry⁶⁶. Similarly, 41.9% of participants identified “model-thin” ideals as the body standard they feel most pressured by⁶⁷.

Media role models who appear fit and healthy often conceal dysfunctional relationships with food, exercise and lifestyle, a reality evident in “iconic” fashion supermodel Kate Moss, who became central to defining attractiveness. “Images of Moss have caused social panic based on the clear influence and desires of everyday women to replicate her style through dangerous means, imagined as extreme caloric deprivation and drug use, especially triggered by her notorious catchphrase: **“nothing tastes as good as skinny feels”**”⁶⁸. Another source recalls the phrase “so vividly”, demonstrating the lasting impact of words from admired figures⁶⁹. Such statements reinforce perfectionist mindsets among vulnerable individuals, throughout decades⁷⁰. These behaviours become normalised as society continuously rewards a specific body type, making ongoing interaction particularly harmful. Adolescents in today’s generation are immersed in social media, where this influence is intensified through algorithms and constant digital engagement⁷¹. On a meso and macro scale, these ideals become embedded within Western cultural values, associating thinness, appearance and attractiveness with desirability and social acceptance. Therefore,

⁶⁴ Primary Research: Questionnaire Q10

⁶⁵ R, Perloff. (2014). (PDF) *Social Media Effects on Young Women’s Body Image Concerns: Theoretical Perspectives and an Agenda for Research*. [online] ResearchGate. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/271740741_Social_Media_Effects_on_Young_Women [Accessed 1 Apr. 2026].

⁶⁶ Primary Research: Content Analysis, The September Issue

⁶⁷ Primary Research: Questionnaire Q11

⁶⁸ Z, Alderton. (2024). ‘Nothing Tastes as Good as Skinny Feels’. *International Journal for the Study of New Religions*, 12(2), pp.157–184. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1558/ijsnr.27320>.

⁶⁹ Primary Research: Interview

⁷⁰ Primary Research: Interview

⁷¹ V, Pérez-Torres., (2024) ‘Social media: a digital social mirror for identity development during adolescence’, *Current Psychology*.

Media-driven representations can encourage unrealistic expectations as individuals internalise these ideals in pursuit of attaining a similar appearance.

Traditional print media shaped fashion ideals for earlier generations; however, in the digital age these influences have intensified by transforming fashion into an open, constantly accessible space⁷². Social media enables the continuous global circulation of idealised body standards in real time. This rapid dissemination of popular culture through algorithm-curated platforms is a critical factor in the intensity and scale of influence on adolescents' self-image. It ensures that interaction is no longer limited or localised, but constant, immediate and globally pervasive. My observations identified that “every few posts, I see something fashion-related”, demonstrating the unavoidable presence of fashion media in daily life⁷³. This reinforces narrow beauty standards and pressure to conform⁷⁴. As a result, fashion media reflects societal beauty standards and actively constructs them, shaping how individuals evaluate themselves within a highly visual, digital landscape⁷⁵. As seen in *‘Emily in Paris’*, where follower counts are associated with social status/influence⁷⁶.

However, “Runway shows and magazines still create fashion’s top-tier narrative. Teenagers may not study Vogue every morning, but they scroll through TikTok or Instagram for hours”⁷⁷. This reflects the deliberate platform strategy designed by the programmers of TikTok to retain attention, psychologically conditioning adolescents to repeatedly seek the dopamine hit associated with scrolling⁷⁸. This is where influencers become unofficial role models, shaping values and habits among

⁷² F, Byrne. (2023). Australian Academy of Fashion Design | Blog | The Impact of Social Media on the Fashion Industry. [online] www.fashiondesignacademy.com.au. Available at: <https://www.fashiondesignacademy.com.au/blog/the-impact-of-social-media-on-the-fashion-industry> [Accessed 23 Apr. 2026].

⁷³ Primary Research: Personal Reflection

⁷⁴ N.A, Rudd, and S.J, Lennon. (2000). Body Image and Appearance-Management Behaviors in College Women. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 18(3), pp.152–162.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/0887302x0001800304>.

⁷⁵ V, Pérez-Torres, (2024) ‘Social media: a digital social mirror for identity development during adolescence’, *Current Psychology*.

⁷⁶ Primary Research: Content Analysis, *Emily in Paris*

⁷⁷ Primary Research: Interview

⁷⁸ Thomolerox (2025). TikTok and Dopamine: How the App Hijacks Your Brain. [online] Medium.

Available at:

<https://medium.com/digital-gems/tiktok-and-dopamine-how-the-app-hijacks-your-brain-16e6d2f6611e> [Accessed 18 Jun. 2026].

vulnerable audiences through parasocial interactions and perceived authenticity⁷⁹. “Influencers translate trends, fashion houses create them, and algorithms decide what's shown”⁸⁰. Similarly, *‘The September Issue’* presents Anna Wintour as “the pope” and Vogue as “the bible” of fashion⁸¹, reflecting fashion as a cultural system of authority and identity formation⁸². Fashion has become a pseudo-religion, reflecting a generational shift toward treating fashion figures as messianic “saviours” in place of traditional organised religion.

Frequent encounters with idealised body types in fashion media normalise narrow beauty standards, meaning awareness of curation does not prevent its impacts on self-worth⁸³. Adolescents compare their developing bodies to adult models and edited images, chasing these ideals to mimic acceptance within society. Despite recognising that content is constructed, feelings of envy persist, as “Adolescents today are more aware than previous generations that fashion media is constructed because they understand the filters/editing”⁸⁴. Many respondents reported feeling inadequate because of their appearance, stating, “I see girls online my age that are much smaller, making me question myself”⁸⁵. However, others viewed fashion as a “way of self-expression, not comparison”⁸⁶, revealing that fashion media can encourage creativity, while also damaging both mental and physical development.

“Curve models on the runway are increasingly rare, and increasingly obvious, as the rest of the models continue to shrink”⁸⁷. Greater body-positive representation can

⁷⁹ A, Jhawar, P, Kumar and S, Varshney. (2023). The Emergence of Virtual Influencers: A Shift in the Influencer Marketing Paradigm. *Young Consumers*, 24(4), pp.468–484.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1108/yc-05-2022-1529>.

⁸⁰ Primary Research: Interview

⁸¹ Primary Research: Content analysis, *The September Issue*

⁸² ABC Religion & Ethics. (2022). How Fashion Turned Consumers into Commodities. [online] Available at:

<https://www.abc.net.au/religion/fashion-turned-consumers-into-commodities-robyn-ferrell/14108774> [Accessed 15 Jun. 2026].

⁸³ L, Wasylikiw, A.A, Emms, R, Meuse, and K.F, Poirier, (2009). Are All Models Created Equal? A Content Analysis of Women in Advertisements of Fitness versus Fashion Magazines. *Body Image*, 6(2), pp.137–140. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2009.01.005>.

⁸⁴ Primary Research: Interview

⁸⁵ Primary Research: Questionnaire Q13

⁸⁶ Primary Research: Questionnaire Q13

⁸⁷ M, Shoaib, and L, Maguire. (2026). *The Vogue Business Fall/Winter 2026 Size Inclusivity Report*. [online] Vogue. Available at: <https://www.vogue.com/article/the-vogue-business-fall-winter-2026-size-inclusivity-report> [Accessed 13 May 2026].

challenge unrealistic standards when implemented consistently. Although representation has improved slightly, the plus-size community continues to face barriers through limited size and advertising visibility, as well as runway representation. Greater inclusivity may encourage individuals to feel “confident expressing themselves authentically rather than conforming to trends for validation”⁸⁸. This lack of inclusivity is reflected through Australian women's fashion magazines, where “most models were underweight (74%), with little representation of larger body sizes or ethnic diversity”⁸⁹. Representation only works if it is genuine; occasional appearances of inclusive bodies cannot challenge a dominant ideal that remains thin, polished and filtered⁹⁰. While body-positive influencers can provide more diverse representations, meaningful change requires industry-wide inclusion, stronger regulation, education and media literacy programs⁹¹. Across *Emily in Paris*, *The September Issue* and *The Devil Wears Prada*, diversity is overshadowed by repeated thin ideals and appearance-based value systems⁹². Although fashion is more inclusive than 20 years ago, “thinness and particular body proportions are still presented as an aspiration”⁹³.

Progress remains inconsistent across major fashion week capitals. NYFW-2026 was described as “one of the least size diverse NYFW’s in history”, with less than 1% of plus-size models and 97.1% size 0-4, despite average body sizes being significantly larger⁹⁴. This inconsistency often makes diversity feel reflective rather than structural⁹⁵. Styling techniques can create the illusion of diversity; for example, peplums, panniers and padded garments were used to create curves on straight-size models. Therefore, apparent progress can mask the absence of authentic inclusivity,

⁸⁸ Primary Research: Personal Reflection

⁸⁹ C, de Freitas, H, Jordan, H. and E.K, Hughes.(2018). Body Image Diversity in the media: a Content Analysis of Women's Fashion Magazines. Health Promotion Journal of Australia, [online] 29(3), pp.251–256. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1002/hpja.21>.

⁹⁰ Primary Research: Interview

⁹¹ C, de Freitas., H, Jordan, and E.K, Hughes,.(2018). Body Image Diversity in the media: a Content Analysis of Women's Fashion Magazines. Health Promotion Journal of Australia, [online] 29(3), pp.251–256. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1002/hpja.21>.

⁹² Primary Research: Content Analysis

⁹³ Primary Research: Interview

⁹⁴ S, Chiwaya. (2026). *NYFW Has A Size Diversity Problem — But These Designers Are On The Right Side Of History*. [online] Refinery29.com. Available at: <https://www.refinery29.com/en-us/new-york-fashion-week-2026-plus-size-model-diversity-issue> [Accessed 16 Jun. 2026].

⁹⁵ Primary Research: Personal Reflection.

reinforcing that representation is often aesthetic rather than meaningful⁹⁶. Questionnaire findings support this, with 41% of respondents reporting pressure from narrow body ideals⁹⁷. Although progress has occurred across London Fashion Week 2026 with “92.7% of looks being straight-size, 6.5% mid-size, and 0.8% plus-size”⁹⁸, this remains limited compared to the continued dominance of smaller bodies⁹⁹, so diverse representation exists but remains the exception rather than the norm¹⁰⁰.

The disconnect between representation and accessibility is visible to customers, as “a brand might throw in a mid-size or plus-size model, but you can’t buy those pieces in those sizes.”¹⁰¹ This is reinforced by Vogue Business, which found that “plus-size representation has dipped to the same level in *FW25*, the lowest since *Vogue Business* began tracking size inclusivity three years ago”¹⁰², demonstrating stagnated progress despite increasing calls for inclusivity. This highlights a structural gap between runway representation and consumer accessibility, where brands promote diversity without implementing meaningful change¹⁰³. The fashion industry effectively absorbs social movements and translates them into marketing, commodifying inclusivity by using body positivity as branding without addressing deeper inequalities¹⁰⁴. Consequently, fashion media continues to construct

⁹⁶ S, Chiwaya. (2026). *NYFW Has A Size Diversity Problem — But These Designers Are On The Right Side Of History*. [online] Refinery29.com. Available at: <https://www.refinery29.com/en-us/new-york-fashion-week-2026-plus-size-model-diversity-issue> [Accessed 16 Jun. 2026].

⁹⁷ Primary Research: Questionnaire Q11

⁹⁸ M, Shoaib. and L, Maguire. (2026). *The Vogue Business Fall/Winter 2026 Size Inclusivity Report*. [online] Vogue. Available at: <https://www.vogue.com/article/the-vogue-business-fall-winter-2026-size-inclusivity-report> [Accessed 13 May 2026].

⁹⁹ C, de Freitas, H, Jordan. and E.K, Hughes. (2018). Body Image Diversity in the media: a Content Analysis of Women's Fashion Magazines. *Health Promotion Journal of Australia*, [online] 29(3), pp.251–256. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1002/hpja.21>.

¹⁰⁰ Primary Research: Personal Reflection

¹⁰¹ M, Shoaib. And L, Maguire. (2026). *The Vogue Business Fall/Winter 2026 Size Inclusivity Report*. [online] Vogue. Available at: <https://www.vogue.com/article/the-vogue-business-fall-winter-2026-size-inclusivity-report> [Accessed 13 May 2026].

¹⁰² M, Shoaib. and L, Maguire. (2026). *The Vogue Business Fall/Winter 2026 Size Inclusivity Report*. [online] Vogue. Available at: <https://www.vogue.com/article/the-vogue-business-fall-winter-2026-size-inclusivity-report> [Accessed 13 May 2026].

¹⁰³ F, Byrne. (2023). Australian Academy of Fashion Design | Blog | The Impact of Social Media on the Fashion Industry. [online] www.fashiondesignacademy.com.au. Available at: <https://www.fashiondesignacademy.com.au/blog/the-impact-of-social-media-on-the-fashion-industry> [Accessed 23 Apr. 2026].

¹⁰⁴ ABC Religion & Ethics. (2022). *How Fashion Turned Consumers into Commodities*. [online] Available at:

aspiration-based consumption patterns, encouraging individuals to modify their appearance to align with socially valued ideals¹⁰⁵. This reflects how popular culture shapes self-concept, behaviour and values through repetition and promotion of dominant beauty standards¹⁰⁶.

Overall, fashion media continues to influence adolescents' self-image, confidence and identity by reinforcing unrealistic beauty ideals. Through social media, influencers and algorithms, idealised body types are repeatedly promoted, encouraging comparison and body dissatisfaction. Although diversity has increased, much remains inconsistent. While some recognise fashion media as constructed and profit-driven, many still experience pressure¹⁰⁷. Ultimately, fashion media not only reflects but actively shapes beauty standards within contemporary society. In saying this, the third and final chapter explores the future route of fashion media in the next decade and its continued influence on adolescent identity, body image and self-concept.

<https://www.abc.net.au/religion/fashion-turned-consumers-into-commodities-robyn-ferrell/14108774> [Accessed 15 Jun. 2026].

¹⁰⁵ Primary Research: Interview

¹⁰⁶ N.A., Rudd, and S.J. ,Lennon, (2000). Body Image and Appearance-Management Behaviors in College Women. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 18(3), pp.152–162.

doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/0887302x0001800304>.

¹⁰⁷ Primary Research: Interview

The future of fashion media

An examination of the challenges, consequences and future evolution of fashion media

This final chapter explores the future trajectory of fashion media and its ongoing influence on adolescent attitudes, body image, and belonging. It examines how current trends driven by social media platforms, algorithmic content distribution and globalised fashion industries shape cultural understandings of value and appearance, where identity itself is increasingly commodified. The chapter then considers potential future outcomes if these patterns continue, before discussing pathways for change, including media literacy and industry regulation.

Fashion media continues to evolve alongside digital technology, with social media platforms increasingly dictating trends, consumer behaviour and beauty standards¹⁰⁸. Unlike traditional forms of fashion media, where magazines controlled trend dissemination, platforms like Instagram and TikTok have accelerated the speed at which fashion content is produced, shared and consumed¹⁰⁹. This is reinforced by the rapid pace of digital dissemination, as “magazines were occasional, monthly, weekly at most. However, social media is constant”¹¹⁰. Algorithm-driven platforms repeatedly circulate idealised bodies and trends, intensifying comparison and pressure to achieve certain appearances, reducing self-confidence¹¹¹. As a result, fashion media is no longer a distant cultural influence, but a daily presence shaping adolescent identity¹¹². 54.8% of respondents consumed brand content, with social media creators exerting the greatest influence on fashion decisions¹¹³. This was further reflected within the content analysis, where influencer content consistently

¹⁰⁸ C, Rani & G, Mahavidhyalya, (2025) ‘Clothing Choices and Self-Image Among Adolescents’, *International Journal of Scientific Development and Research*, 10(8), pp. 86–90.

¹⁰⁹ F, Byrne . (2023). Australian Academy of Fashion Design | Blog | The Impact of Social Media on the Fashion Industry. [online] [www.fashiondesignacademy.com.au](https://www.fashiondesignacademy.com.au/blog/the-impact-of-social-media-on-the-fashion-industry). Available at: <https://www.fashiondesignacademy.com.au/blog/the-impact-of-social-media-on-the-fashion-industry> [Accessed 23 Apr. 2026].

¹¹⁰ Primary Research: Interview

¹¹¹ A, Papageorgiou, C, Fisher & D, Cross, (2022) “‘Why don’t I look like her?’ How adolescent girls view social media and its connection to body image”, *BMC Women’s Health*, 22, article 261. doi:10.1186/s12905-022-01845-4

¹¹² V, Pérez-Torres, (2024) ‘Social media: a digital social mirror for identity development during adolescence’, *Current Psychology*.

¹¹³ Primary Research: Questionnaire Q4

received higher engagement than traditional fashion media¹¹⁴. Similarly, algorithms reinforce aspirational content through continual interaction with idealised imagery¹¹⁵. Although platforms have changed, the underlying process of shaping self-concept through comparison remains unchanged, demonstrating continuity despite rapid technological changes¹¹⁶.

If these trends continue, adolescents may become increasingly exposed to personalised fashion content that reinforces insecurities and appearance-based values. As algorithms become more sophisticated, social comparison and pressure to conform to idealised standards may intensify¹¹⁷. The distinction between authentic self-expression and commercial influence may also become increasingly blurred, especially with the rise of virtual influencers, artificial intelligence and targeted advertising¹¹⁸, challenging adolescents' ability to develop identities independent of commercial interests. Over 54% of respondents reported that social media often/very often makes them aware of their body shape, weight/appearance¹¹⁹. Similarly, interview participants described social media as a constant presence, reinforcing appearance-focused messaging beyond traditional fashion media¹²⁰. As a result, it is appropriate to suggest that future generations may face increasing pressure to construct identities around appearance and consumer behaviour if algorithmic systems continue prioritising engagement over wellbeing. Although body diversity has increased in some spaces, underweight and young models continue to dominate fashion representation¹²¹. This suggests that many preexisting beauty ideals continue to be ingrained within societal values, demonstrating continuity, as

¹¹⁴ Primary Research: Content Analysis, Emily in Paris

¹¹⁵ A, Papageorgiou, C, Fisher & D, Cross, (2022) "Why don't I look like her?" How adolescent girls view social media and its connection to body image', *BMC Women's Health*, 22, article 261. doi:10.1186/s12905-022-01845-4

¹¹⁶ P, Aspers, & F, Godart, (2013) 'Sociology of Fashion: Order and Change', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 39, pp. 171–192. doi:10.1146/annurev-soc-071811-145526

¹¹⁷ T, Levin, M, Tiggemann, M., J, Harriger. and J, Fardouly. (2025). The Influencer effect: Current Findings and Future Directions for Research on Social Media Influencers and Body Image. *Body Image*, [online] 55, p.102000. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2025.102000>.

¹¹⁸ A, Jhawar, P, Kumar. and S, Varshney. (2023). The Emergence of Virtual Influencers: A Shift in the Influencer Marketing Paradigm. *Young Consumers*, 24(4), pp.468–484. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1108/yc-05-2022-1529>.

¹¹⁹ Primary Research: Questionnaire Q9

¹²⁰ Primary Research: Interview

¹²¹ C, de Freitas, H, Jordan. and E.K, Hughes. (2018). Body Image Diversity in the media: a Content Analysis of Women's Fashion Magazines. *Health Promotion Journal of Australia*, [online] 29(3), pp.251–256. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1002/hpja.21>.

contemporary digital platforms reproduce many beauty standards previously promoted through magazines¹²².

Although runway shows and magazines remain “top tier” fashion narratives, social media has become the primary space where the diffusion of trends are emotionally reinforced through hierarchy systems¹²³. Platform design strategies prioritise engagement through content feeds, encouraging emotional investment in products and lifestyles¹²⁴, a process further driving commodification¹²⁵. From a critical perspective, this reflects the commodification of attention, where users become the product being sold to advertisers. This raises concerns about the psychological fragmentation of adolescent attention, where identity formation is shaped by short-form and high-frequency content that rewards comparison and visual approval. Fashion has transformed consumers themselves into commodities, where bodies become platforms through which social value is measured and displayed¹²⁶. Rather than simply selling clothing, fashion media sells idealised identities that users are encouraged to emulate¹²⁷. For example, social media influencer Zhen Xiang-Xiang sells goods via livestreams, illustrating how consumers become commodities and how bodies function as commercial platforms. Xiang-Xiang’s visibility, performance and engagement are directly converted into sales and economic value¹²⁸. “Influencers don’t just sell clothes; they are selling a lifestyle, popularity, beauty, independence and belonging”¹²⁹. Questionnaire responses exposed that participants frequently associated influencers with confidence, attractiveness and social status rather than fashion products¹³⁰. The repetition of aspirational lifestyles and luxury consumption is heavily promoted across influencer accounts in *‘Emily in Paris’* as “Luxury is defined by sophistication and taste”¹³¹. This suggests that those who do

¹²² Primary Research: Personal Reflection

¹²³ P, Aspers, & F, Godart, (2013) ‘Sociology of Fashion: Order and Change’, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 39, pp. 171–192. doi:10.1146/annurev-soc-071811-145526

¹²⁴ V, Pérez-Torres, (2024) ‘Social media: a digital social mirror for identity development during adolescence’, *Current Psychology*.

¹²⁵ (Wikipedia Contributors, 2019)

¹²⁶ (ABC Religion & Ethics, 2022)

¹²⁷ N, Namazova (2025). Perspective Chapter: the Role of Social Influence on Consumer Behavior. IntechOpen eBooks. [online] doi:<https://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.1010384>.

¹²⁸ (2026). *Zheng Xiang Xiang*. [online] Instagram.com. Available at: <https://www.instagram.com/popular/zheng-xiang-xiang/?hl=en> [Accessed 8 July 2026].

¹²⁹ Primary Research: Interview

¹³⁰ Primary Research: Questionnaire Q12, 18

¹³¹ Primary Research: Content analysis, *Emily in Paris*

not conform to these trends risk social exclusion or reduced perceived status. Consequently, adolescents are not only consuming fashion content but are increasingly encouraged to view themselves through the lens of marketability, appearance and social approval. Identity formation becomes increasingly intertwined with commercial interests. Algorithms become more effective at predicting behaviour as the distinction between genuine self-expression and commercially influenced self-presentation may become increasingly difficult to recognise¹³², highlighting the role of AI in shaping personalised content.

If these systems continue without intervention, sustained exposure to narrow beauty ideals may contribute to ongoing body dissatisfaction and mental-health concerns, including the development of eating disorders¹³³. Emerging technologies, including AI-driven content, influencer marketing and virtual influencers, may further increase corporate control over representation¹³⁴. This raises concerns about authenticity as idealised bodies become fully manufactured for engagement, further blurring the line between real and constructed identity. While the technologies used to distribute fashion media continue to evolve, the underlying beauty ideals remain largely unchanged, reinforcing appearance-based expectations through increasingly personalised and immersive digital environments, representing both continuity and change.

Without meaningful intervention across the next decade, future fashion media environments are likely to continue reproducing appearance-based pressures across generations, particularly the twentieth century, reinforcing the continuity of unrealistic beauty ideals despite ongoing calls for change. Although delivery methods have shifted from print media to algorithm-driven online platforms, the emphasis on attractiveness, social acceptance and physical appearance remains. Female questionnaire responses identified the “model-thin” ideal as a significant source of

¹³² Lo, C.K.Y. & J, Lin, (2021) ‘Social media and luxury: A systematic literature review’, *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/352766198_Social_media_and_luxury_A_systematic_literature_review

¹³³ Z, Alderton. (2024). ‘Nothing Tastes as Good as Skinny Feels’. *International Journal for the Study of New Religions*, 12(2), pp.157–184. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1558/ijsnr.27320>.

¹³⁴ A, Jhavar, P, Kumar. and S, Varshney. (2023). The Emergence of Virtual Influencers: A Shift in the Influencer Marketing Paradigm. *Young Consumers*, 24(4), pp.468–484. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1108/yc-05-2022-1529>.

pressure on body image, while interview participants described comparisons with fashion models¹³⁵. These findings suggest that without greater regulation, future generations may experience greater appearance anxiety and body dissatisfaction¹³⁶.

Despite these challenges, potential for change exists through media literacy, regulation, and industry accountability. Limited progress suggests the 'Australian Voluntary Industry Code on Body Image' is insufficient¹³⁷. Therefore, it could be argued that voluntary approaches alone are insufficient to challenge deeply embedded industry practices. However, stronger regulation and inclusive representation policies could shift industry norms¹³⁸, and media literacy education can help determine what is curated and what is authentic¹³⁹. Questionnaire responses revealed many recognise unrealistic beauty standards, demonstrating growing media literacy among younger audiences¹⁴⁰. Gradual change can be seen through increased representation at London Fashion Week 2026, which included greater mid and plus-size representation on the runway¹⁴¹. This suggests that adolescents are not passive recipients of fashion media but are increasingly capable of critically evaluating the content they consume. Ultimately, the future of fashion media is not predetermined. While current systems continue to reinforce narrow appearance standards, greater media literacy, authentic representation and structural reform have the potential to reshape fashion media into a space that supports individuality and self-expression rather than conformity and comparison. Therefore, although fashion media continues to exert significant influence over

¹³⁵ Primary Research: Interview

¹³⁶ B, Harper. and M, Tiggeman. (2007). The Effect of Thin Ideal Media Images on Women's Self-Objectification, Mood, and Body Image | Request PDF. [online] ResearchGate. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/226285128_The_Effect_of_Thin_Ideal_Media_Images_on_Women [Accessed 21 Apr. 2026].

¹³⁷ C, de Freitas, H, Jordan H. and E.K, Hughes. (2018). Body Image Diversity in the media: a Content Analysis of Women's Fashion Magazines. Health Promotion Journal of Australia, [online] 29(3), pp.251–256. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1002/hpja.21>.

¹³⁸ M, Shoaib. and L, Maguire. (2026). *The Vogue Business Fall/Winter 2026 Size Inclusivity Report*. [online] Vogue. Available at: <https://www.vogue.com/article/the-vogue-business-fall-winter-2026-size-inclusivity-report> [Accessed 13 May 2026].

<https://www.vogue.com/article/the-vogue-business-fall-winter-2026-size-inclusivity-report>

¹³⁹ Primary Research: Personal Reflection

¹⁴⁰ Primary Research: Questionnaire Q10, 13

¹⁴¹ C.M., Donnell. (2026). *Body Diversity Returns to London Fashion Week as Wider Industry Heads ultra-thin*. [online] The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2026/feb/22/body-diversity-london-fashion-week-wider-industry-ultra-thin> [Accessed 1 Jul. 2026].

adolescent identity construction, its future impact will depend on the extent to which individuals, platforms, and industries challenge systems of representation and commodification¹⁴².

Overall, the continued dominance of social media, algorithm-driven content, and commercialised fashion systems suggests that fashion media will remain a powerful force in shaping adolescents' individuality and physical self-perception. While these platforms can offer opportunities for creativity, self-expression, and global connection, they also reinforce narrow beauty standards and intensify comparison through regular consumption and engagement-driven content design. Without meaningful change in regulation, representation, and media literacy, these influences are likely to persist and further normalise appearance-based validation across generations within Western culture.

¹⁴² ABC Religion & Ethics. (2022). How Fashion Turned Consumers into Commodities. [online] Available at: <https://www.abc.net.au/religion/fashion-turned-consumers-into-commodities-robyn-ferrill/14108774> [Accessed 15 Jun. 2026].

Conclusion

This PIP revealed to me that fashion has always reflected society, but in the digital age it has transformed into a powerful force influencing how adolescents construct their personal identity, perceive their bodies and understand belonging. This PIP investigated how fashion media influences adolescents' identity and body image, revealing that while it can encourage creativity, self-expression and connection, it can also reinforce appearance-based expectations through idealised representation, comparison and frequent interaction.

Throughout this investigation, my understanding of fashion media developed significantly. Initially, I recognised that social media influenced trends and fashion choices; however, I underestimated the extent to which influencers and algorithms shape adolescents' self-perception. Through my research, I discovered self-concept is not framed independently, but is continuously negotiated through interactions with media, peers and society at a broader level. Although adolescents often recognise that online content is edited and curated, this awareness does not remove the pressure or desire created to fit unrealistic expectations.

Both my primary and secondary research supported my hypothesis that fashion media plays a significant role in forming adolescent identity. Questionnaire responses demonstrated the strong influence of particular fashion influencers on fashion-based decisions, while also revealing how online aesthetics and trends contribute to appearance perceptions. The specialist interview, personal reflection and content analysis further highlighted the commodification of authenticity, showing how fashion media promotes aspirational lifestyles connected to consumption and visibility. Secondary research reinforced these findings by identifying links between social media exposure, social comparison and body dissatisfaction, demonstrating that representation remains limited despite discussions surrounding inclusivity.

Society and Culture concepts were central to this investigation. Power was evident through the influence of fashion corporations, influencers and algorithms in controlling which ideals gain visibility, while socialisation demonstrated how adolescents learn expectations surrounding beauty through their peers and the

media. The concepts of continuity and change were also significant, as although fashion media has evolved from magazines to digital platforms, the same ideals exist.

Completing this PIP strengthened my understanding of fashion as a cultural institution that shapes societal values. The use of primary and secondary research allowed me to triangulate my findings and develop a deeper understanding of the issue by synthesising my results. Ultimately, this analysis revealed that fashion media does not simply reflect adolescents' individuality; it actively shapes self-worth, belonging and perceptions of appearance. As technology continues to advance, media literacy, authentic representation and greater industry accountability will be essential in ensuring adolescents can engage with fashion media through individuality rather than pressure to conform, fostering a more inclusive and self-aware future.

Resource List

Primary Research Method - Expert Interview, conducted on the 8th of May 2026

The expert interview was conducted with Amanda Byram, a television presenter, former model and wellness advocate with experience across fashion, entertainment, and image-led media. Her career has provided significant insight into how media representations can shape confidence, aspirations and self-worth, particularly among young women. To effectively prepare for the interview, my questions were edited and prepared in advance with teacher feedback to ensure ethical guidelines were followed. When conducting the interview, I began with an ethical disclaimer and received verbal approval to include Amanda's name and to record the interview for only transcription purposes. She then responded to a series of related questions, providing expert input into the way in which fashion media impact adolescents' self-identity, body image and sense of belonging, from personal and professional experience. This online interview included seventeen questions, such as "How has the shift from magazines (Gen X) to social media platforms (Gen Z) changed the intensity and frequency of fashion influence on adolescents?" and "In your opinion, which has a greater influence on adolescents today: fashion trends promoted through traditional media like runway shows and magazines, or trends shared by social media influencers?". These questions were targeted towards chapters two and three and provided real-world examples or scenarios to support my overall argument. Other questions were beneficial for my first chapter, as Amanda discussed industry roles in shaping influencer impact on wider society and how curated content can severely damage mental and physical health. Her opinions and experiences proved to be valuable arguments to many topics throughout my PIP, challenging me to further explore similar concepts, examples and quotes that have remained throughout Amanda's 25-year career, reinforcing any generational changes to how individuals perceive fashion media. However, this is a single voice that cannot be responsible for the entirety of the fashion industry, with some responses holding possible bias, impacting the validity of observations. Yet due to Amanda's culturally and socially relevant examples and well-valued career, the method remains valid. The reliability of this research method was strengthened through further secondary investigation conducted before incorporating findings into my synthesis. This primary

method was valuable in providing expert insight as part of my triangulation; however, it reflected a single perspective on worldwide issues and, as such, additional research was required to validate the findings completely.

Primary Research Method - Content Analysis (Qualitative), conducted from the 2nd of February to the 21st of April 2026

The content analysis provided qualitative data on how fashion media influences identity formation and perceptions of self-image over the past 14 years (2006 - 2020). This involved the exploration of 3 different types of media through the analysis of 5 sources that accounted for the changes from Generation X to Generation Z. The aspects of popular culture I analysed were fashion-related films, documentaries, and television series. In doing so, this presented a broad view of fashion within popular culture by investigating sources such as *The September Issue* (2009), *Confessions of a Shopaholic* (2009) and *Dior and I* (2014). Through this, I was able to identify trends of both continuity and change across different time periods, which I included in each chapter of my PIP. I discovered that all aspects of the fashion industry involve powerful hierarchical systems and harmful industry/workforce norms, which were included in chapters 1 and 3. Similar to this finding, collecting direct quotes and observations based on a table sheet, which included topics such as 'Gender Roles & Power Dynamics', 'Language Around Appearance/fashion', and 'Industry pressure and control'. For example, across 14 years between *The Devil Wears Prada* (2006) and Netflix's contemporary hit *Emily in Paris* (2020), similar industry-driven attitudes and comments remain embedded within fashion culture, with quotes such as "I'm just one stomach flu away from my goal weight" reinforcing harmful perceptions surrounding body ideals, assisting with my overall argument throughout my PIP. However, when recording results from these sources, personal bias was inevitable as I set out to identify specific industry flaws and to compile certain results which could benefit my arguments. Therefore, skewing my perception and must be acknowledged. Despite my best efforts to remain neutral, the reliability and accuracy of these observations may be affected. To improve the accuracy of my analysis, I ensured they were supported by secondary research before including any areas of my PIP. Yet, this method was highly valid, as

observations were gathered from many trustworthy platforms like Netflix, Stan and Disney+, with the media spanning across 14 years. This primary research method provided me with relevant examples to strengthen my overall argument and findings, but it did take approximately 11 weeks to thoroughly complete and analyse the results effectively and accurately.

Primary Research Method - Questionnaire (Qualitative and Quantitative), published on the 4th of December 2025

The questionnaire was essential in gaining insights into my topic by providing both qualitative and quantitative data from the general public's opinion and experiences within fashion media and its impacts on their individual identity. Before it was sent out, an editing process concurred with teacher feedback to ensure all grammar was correct and questions were well aligned with each of my chapters. An ethical disclaimer was added to the beginning of the questionnaire, with reassurance that all responses are used only for research purposes and will remain 100% anonymous; helpline resources were also included alongside any trigger warnings surrounding uncomfortable topics. It included 19 questions, 8 of which were open-ended and 11 were closed, all of which were relevant to specific chapters to ensure the findings of each were equally spread across my PIP. For example, some questions included 'Has fashion media ever made you feel excluded or 'not good enough' because of your body or appearance? Please explain with examples', 'Name a fashion influencer or figure who affects how you see yourself and/or how you dress. What about them influences you?', and 'How often does fashion media make you aware of your body shape, skin, weight, and/or appearance?', which apply to chapters one, two and three. This variety of questions provided me with invaluable data to include throughout my entire PIP. There were 31 responses; however, some questions were answered poorly due to a lack of understanding and broad statements. Despite my editing, more refinement could have decreased the prevalence of vague answers and statements. This error could relate to my personal bias, as my desire to receive certain responses and examples may have skewed the questions when I was writing them. The questionnaire was used throughout the synthesis of generational experiences, yet only 19.4% of respondents were Generation X. Although results

remained anonymous, the demographic of each respondent was likely high-income families across Sydney and the UK, allowing greater access to fashion media. 64.5% of individuals were from Generation Z and female, which may affect the validity of the results. This questionnaire revealed individuals' opinions, beliefs and personal experiences with fashion media and its impacts on their self-identity and perceptions, but requires more variety amongst respondents' age and gender to confirm these results, and is supported by other secondary sources throughout the entirety of my PIP.

Primary Research Method - Personal Reflection, completed on the 22nd of April 2026

The personal reflection documented my thoughts, experiences and evolving understanding of how fashion media influences identity, body image and self-concept throughout the development of my PIP. It explored my personal connection to the topic, the experiences that shaped my interest, and how my perspectives developed through ongoing engagement with primary and secondary research. Reflection upon my own experiences with fashion media, alongside interactions within my micro, meso and macro worlds, enabled me to critically examine how social influences shaped both my perceptions and those of others. This source was useful across all chapters of my PIP, as it provided insight into my personal motivation and experiences for the investigation while allowing me to continually evaluate and connect my findings to real-world scenarios. The source is a first-hand account of my own reflections recorded throughout my research process, making it a valid source of information that accurately represents the development of my understanding over my teenage years. A potential bias exists as the reflection is based on my own perspectives and experiences. However, this was minimised by comparing my reflections and synthesising my results with credible secondary sources as well as my existing primary research methods, ensuring that my findings were supported by multiple sources of evidence. Overall, this reflection strengthened the authenticity of my investigation by connecting academic research with my own lived experiences and critical understanding of fashion media and its lasting impacts on adolescents' sense of self.

Secondary Research Methods

Alderton, Z. (2024). 'Nothing Tastes as Good as Skinny Feels'. *International Journal for the Study of New Religions*, 12(2), pp.157–184. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1558/ijsnr.27320>.

This peer-reviewed journal article examines the persistence of thinness as an ideal and explores how contemporary beauty standards can influence individuals' beliefs, behaviours and sense of self. This source was particularly beneficial across Chapters 2 and 3 of my PIP, as it supported my investigation into how fashion media contributes to body image concerns, social comparison and the pressure to conform to unrealistic appearance ideals set by a very specific influential supermodel within the fashion industry (Kate Moss). The article was especially valuable because many of its findings closely reflected themes identified in my interview responses, reinforcing the consistency between existing academic research and my personal primary research. The source is highly valid as it is published in a peer-reviewed academic journal and presents evidence-based analysis supported by scholarly research. A slight bias may be present, as the article primarily focuses on the harmful consequences of thinness ideals and appearance pressures, placing less emphasis on the potential positive influences of fashion and social media. Despite this, the article provides a well-supported and balanced discussion of contemporary beauty standards, making it a highly significant source for understanding how media representations influence adolescents' body image, self-esteem, and social expectations. The article will assist my PIP by highlighting the greater effect that Kate Moss had on the 90s and early 2000s era, shaping self-image for generations of individuals.

Aspers, P & Godart, F. (2013) 'Sociology of Fashion: Order and Change', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 39, pp. 171–192. doi:10.1146/annurev-soc-071811-145526

The article examines fashion as a sociological phenomenon, highlighting how it operates as an ongoing process of social order and change, reflecting the continuity and change syllabus points. The authors discuss how fashion evolves through time, through imitation, distinction and diffusion, shaping collective and individual identity. The authors argue that fashion isn't just about what you wear but is a symbolic practice that signals social status, class and even cultural belonging. Fashion leaders or “heroes” in the fashion industry provide a framework for self-conception. The article provides an understanding of how social systems, power structures and social norms shape participation in the creation and evolution of fashion as a whole, which links back to identity formation. It's written through a sociological lens, which supports my PIP topic by examining how engagement with such fashion media enables individuals to construct self-concept and belonging whilst being influenced by a wider society. It provides the base concepts of fashion and how it is influenced through a global lens. Relating to the studies of identity, self-expression, and overall media impacts on adolescents. This source was useful throughout the entirety of my PIP, as it provided the sociological foundation for understanding how fashion influences identity, belonging and self-expression. It supported my analysis across all chapters by explaining how fashion operates within wider social systems. The source is highly valid as it is a peer-reviewed article published in the *Annual Review of Sociology* and written by established sociologists, ensuring credibility through academic research and theory. However, the article demonstrates a limited bias, as it presents a balanced sociological perspective by analysing both continuity and change within the fashion system rather than promoting a particular viewpoint. However, its focus on sociology may limit discussion of individual psychological experiences.

Audrezet, A., Koles, B., Moulard, J.G., Ameen, N. and McKenna, B. (2025c). Virtual influencers: Definition and future research directions. *Journal of Business Research*, 200, pp.115647–115647. doi:10.1016/j.jbusres.2025.115647.

This article examines the concept of virtual influencers, defining them as digitally created personas designed to engage audiences in a similar way to human social media influencers. It also discusses their growing popularity within marketing strategies and explains why brands may focus on virtual influencers due to their greater control, reliability and lower risks. This source was useful across Chapter 1, 2 and 3 of my PIP, as it provided a clear and credible definition of a virtual influencer that established the foundation for my discussion before analysing their influence on identity, body image and consumer behaviour. The source is highly valid as it is published in a peer-reviewed academic journal and is supported by current research examining digital marketing and influencer culture. A potential bias is minimal, although the article approaches virtual influencers from a marketing perspective, placing emphasis on their commercial value and not their social or psychological impacts, which can mislead the overall significance. As I primarily used this source to define the concept of a virtual influencer, it served as a reliable and authoritative reference throughout my PIP.

ABC Religion & Ethics. (2022). *How Fashion Turned Consumers into Commodities*. [online] Available at: <https://www.abc.net.au/religion/fashion-turned-consumers-into-commodities-robyn-ferrall/14108774> [Accessed 15 Jun. 2026].

This article examines how fashion and consumer culture have shaped modern ideas of the body, identity, and social value. It argues that the human body has become central to social perception, where appearance is closely tied to ideas of success, normality and attractiveness. It traces the history of fashion from bespoke tailoring to the rise of haute couture and eventually mass-produced ready-to-wear clothing. This shift is shown to have standardised the body, as clothing sizes imposed fixed measurements that individuals are expected to conform to. As a result, people are encouraged to compare their bodies to idealised size norms, creating anxiety about

not meeting these strict standards. The article also explores how media and consumer culture reinforce the “ideal” body types. Particularly through extreme dieting, exercise culture, and television representations that contrast “acceptable” bodies with those deemed undesirable. It highlights how statistical ideas of the “average” or “normal” body have historically been used in health and social policy, further embedding body norms into society. Overall, the article suggests that consumer culture produces a strong pressure towards conformity, where individuals are encouraged to regulate and reshape their bodies according to socially constructed ideals. It argues that this process reduces bodily differences and contributes to widespread body dissatisfaction by positioning the “normal” body as something to be achieved rather than naturally existing. The source was useful across all chapters of my PIP, as it supported my analysis of how fashion media influences identity, body image, consumer behaviour and societal expectations surrounding appearance; it provides a broader understanding of how fashion systems shape individual perceptions and social values. The source is valid as published by a highly recognised media platform, and draws on historical and cultural analysis to examine the relationship between fashion, bodies and society. A potential bias exists as the article presents a critical perspective on consumer culture and the fashion industry. However, this perspective is relevant to analysing the social pressures created by fashion media and appearance standards.

APEX JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES (2026). View of Media Influence on Fashion and Identity: a Study of Female University Students. [online] Apexjss.com. Available at: <https://apexjss.com/index.php/AJSS/article/view/15/56> [Accessed 31 Mar. 2026].

The article focuses on how fashion trends and external influences such as media, peers, and cultural norms influence clothing choice and identity among female students at the University of Quaid-i-Azam. Arguing that fashion plays a significant role in how students present themselves within media and peer groups, with cultural norms acting as a major influence on how they present themselves and dress. The study highlights that exposure to fashion shows, social media content, and peer

values encourages students to adapt to current fashion trends, to appear attractive and accepted socially, turning against personal identity. The research suggests that fashion functions as both a form of self-expression and as a means of conforming to social norms within the university environment, showing the complexity between individuality and external influences. This article will assist my PIP by providing evidence of how media and social influences impact identity formation, self-presentation, and overall fashion engagement among young adults.

(2009). Body image code for advertisers, media - ABC News. ABC News. [online] 27 Oct. Available at: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2009-10-27/body-image-code-for-advertisers-media/1118510> [Accessed 28 July 2026].

This article examines the voluntary code of conduct on body image in 2009 by the Australian Government's National Advisory Group on Body Image to encourage the media, fashion, and advertising industries to promote positive body image and reduce the impact of unrealistic, digitally manipulated images. After this code was introduced, there was little to no difference in body diversity in fashion magazines despite the code. This article is useful for highlighting the attempted changes to the industry but still the consistency of unchanged behaviour continuing throughout the industry and media. This source was useful across Chapters 1 and 2 of my PIP, as it supported my analysis of how fashion media influences beauty standards and how industry regulations attempt to address unrealistic representations of bodies; it provided evidence for evaluating the effectiveness of this policy designed to improve inclusivity within fashion media. The source is valid as it is published by ABC News and reports on a government-led initiative, providing reliable information about Australia's approach to body image regulation. A potential bias exists as the article focuses on the limitations of the code and the need for industry change; however, this perspective is relevant when evaluating whether existing policies have effectively addressed representation issues.

Byrne, F. (2023). Australian Academy of Fashion Design | Blog | The Impact of Social Media on the Fashion Industry. [online] www.fashiondesignacademy.com.au. Available at: <https://www.fashiondesignacademy.com.au/blog/the-impact-of-social-media-on-the-fashion-industry> [Accessed 23 Apr. 2026].

This article explains how social media has transformed the fashion industry from a closed system controlled by designers into a more open and accessible space. It highlights the democratisation of fashion, where anyone can influence trends, build a following, and even create a career online. Social media has led to the rise of influencers, who now play a major role in shaping trends and promoting brands. It also allows for direct interaction between brands and consumers through features like live streams, comments, and shoppable posts, making fashion more interactive. Additionally, trends now move faster and are no longer limited to seasonal cycles, while global connectivity has increased diversity and cultural exchange in fashion. The article also notes that consumers now hold brands more accountable, encouraging more ethical and sustainable practices. This article will assist my PIP by providing evidence of how social media has shifted power within the fashion industry, through the rise of influencers and direct consumer engagement. It was particularly useful in Chapters 2 and 3 of my PIP, as it supported my analysis of how online fashion communities and influencers influence identity, representation and individuals' connections with wider social groups. The source is valid as published by the Australian Academy of Fashion Design, an organisation focused on fashion education with relevant industry examples and insights into modern trends. However, as it is a blog article rather than a peer-reviewed academic source, it may rely more on industry perspectives than formal research data. This article demonstrated some bias as it primarily highlights the positive impacts of social media, including accessibility, diversity and consumer engagement. However, it also acknowledged challenges such as ethical concerns and brand accountability, providing a balanced perspective on the changing relationship between social media and fashion.

Chiwaya, S. (2026). NYFW Has A Size Diversity Problem — But These Designers Are On The Right Side Of History. [online] Refinery29.com. Available at:

<https://www.refinery29.com/en-us/new-york-fashion-week-2026-plus-size-model-diversity-issue> [Accessed 16 Jun. 2026].

This article explores the lack of size diversity at New York Fashion Week and explores how limited representation within the fashion industry continues to reinforce narrow beauty standards despite increasing calls for inclusivity. This source was particularly useful in Chapter 2 of my PIP, as it supported my investigation into how fashion media influences perceptions of the “ideal” or “perfect” body. It provided contemporary examples and statistics demonstrating that representation within high fashion spaces remains limited, strengthening my analysis of how unrealistic beauty ideals continue to be normalised throughout the fashion industry. The source was useful in demonstrating how limited representation within fashion media can influence adolescents’ perceptions of beauty, body image and self-worth by reinforcing dominant appearance standards. The source is published by Refinery29, which is a widely recognised digital media publication that covers fashion, culture and social issues, and incorporates current industry data, designer perspectives and examples from New York Fashion Week to support its discussion. This increases the validity of the source as it draws on current events and industry examples; however, as a media article instead of an academic study, it may not provide extensive practical research. However, a potential bias exists because the article is written from an advocacy perspective that strongly supports greater size inclusivity within the fashion industry. As a result, it places greater emphasis on the shortcomings of current representation than on the progress that has been made. Despite this, the source provides a balanced and well-supported discussion of ongoing representation issues, making it highly relevant to my investigation.

de Freitas, C., Jordan, H. and Hughes, E.K. (2018). Body Image Diversity in the media: a Content Analysis of Women's Fashion Magazines. Health Promotion Journal of Australia, [online] 29(3), pp.251–256. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1002/hpja.21>.

This article investigates body image diversity in Australia's women's fashion magazines and whether industry efforts to improve representation have been effective or not. It analysed 13 Australian women's fashion magazines in 2015, five years after the introduction of the Australian Voluntary Industry Code on Body Image, which aimed to encourage healthier and more diverse representations of body size, ethnicity, and age in the media. It was found that diversity was limited across all categories. Most models were underweight (74%), white (90%), and young (99%). Only 1% were older models. With very little representation of larger body sizes or ethnic diversity, with no difference between editorial and advertising content. Magazines show limited change despite the guidelines. The article suggests that stronger measures such as stricter regulations and stronger education and media literacy programs are needed to create effective and meaningful change. It also acknowledges the importance of ongoing monitoring of media content, especially with the social media rise. This article will assist my PIP by proving that the media still promotes narrow standards, supporting discussions on how media influences body image and the effectiveness of policies aimed at improving these challenges. This source was useful in chapters 1 and 3 of my PIP, as it supported my analysis across the chapters. The source is highly valid as it uses a content analysis methodology to examine 13 Australian women's fashion magazines, providing measurable data and evidence to support its conclusions. It is also published in the Health Promotion Journal of Australia, a peer-reviewed academic journal, increasing its credibility. The article demonstrated limited bias as it is based on systematic content rather than personal opinion; however, as it focuses specifically on women's fashion magazines in Australia, its findings may not fully represent global fashion media or other forms of digital media such as social platforms.

Donnell, C.M. (2026). *Body Diversity Returns to London Fashion Week as Wider Industry Heads ultra-thin*. [online] The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2026/feb/22/body-diversity-london-fashion-week-wider-industry-ultra-thin> [Accessed 1 Jul. 2026].

This article examines the return of body diversity at London Fashion Week while exploring the wider fashion industry's shift towards ultra-thin beauty ideals. This source was particularly useful across chapters 2 and 3 of my PIP, as it supports my investigation into how runway fashion media influences body image, self-esteem, and societal expectations surrounding appearance. The article demonstrates how limited representation within the fashion industry can reinforce narrow beauty standards, while inclusive casting practices may contribute to greater acceptance and belonging among individuals. It strengthened my analysis of how fashion media representations influence individuals' perceptions of themselves and their connection to wider communities by shaping what is considered socially accepted or desirable. The source is valid as The Guardian is an established news organisation, and the article incorporates industry perspectives from designers, casting professionals and relevant fashion data to support its discussion. However, as a news article rather than an academic study, it may provide more journalistic analysis than extensive empirical research. A potential bias may exist as the article focuses on the perspectives of individuals advocating for increased diversity, meaning it may emphasise the importance of inclusivity while providing less attention to alternative viewpoints within the fashion industry. Despite this, the source provides a balanced understanding of the ongoing tension between progress towards body diversity and the persistence of traditional beauty ideals, making it valuable for analysing how fashion media shapes identity and community expectations.

Fan, P. (2023). *The Shaping and Influence of Virtual Communities on Adolescent Identity in the Social Media Era*. *Media and Communication Research*, [online] 4(7). doi:<https://doi.org/10.23977/mediacr.2023.040709>.

This article explains that virtual communities in social media play a major role in shaping adolescent identity by providing spaces where young people can interact,

express themselves, and explore different aspects of who they are. It shows that online communities can have positive effects, such as supporting self-expression, cultural understanding, and confidence through connection with other people with shared interests. However, it also recognises the negative impacts, including self-comparison and possible peer judgement. The study emphasises that adolescent identity is influenced by a combination of digital environments such as peers, family, and schools, and suggests that support systems are needed to help young people navigate these influences in a healthy, efficient and effective way. This article will help my PIP by providing strong evidence on how online communities directly shape adolescent identity, supporting my analysis of both the positive and negative impacts and effects of social media, linking digital interaction to self-concept, body image, and expression of identity.

Harper, B. and Tiggemann, M. (2007). The Effect of Thin Ideal Media Images on Women's Self-Objectification, Mood, and Body Image | Request PDF. [online] ResearchGate. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/226285128_The_Effect_of_Thin_Ideal_Media_Images_on_Women [Accessed 21 Apr. 2026].

This article found that when women view magazine advertisements showing thin female bodies, they experience increased self-objectification, negative mood, appearance anxiety, and body dissatisfaction compared to women who view non-body product advertisements. It slowly showed that these effects occur even without drawing explicit attention to one's own body, supporting the objectification theory. The article demonstrates how media exposure can influence young women's self-perception by encouraging them to see themselves from an external perspective. This article will assist my PIP with the argument that fashion and beauty media created unrealistic beauty standards, which then leads young women to compare themselves and feel worse about their bodies. This source was useful across all chapters of my PIP, as it provided evidence of how fashion and beauty media influence identity formation, body image, self-worth and social expectations surrounding appearance. It supported my analysis of influencer and trend impacts,

representation of idealised bodies, and how media influences individuals' relationships with themselves and others. The source is valid as it is based on an experimental study that compares participants' responses to different media images, allowing researchers to identify the relationship between thin ideal exposure and body-related outcomes. It was also published by researchers in the field of psychology, strengthening its academic credibility. A potential bias existed as the study focuses specifically on women's responses to thin ideal media images, meaning it may not fully represent all genders, age groups or different forms of contemporary digital media. However, its focus provides valuable insight into the psychological impacts of appearance-based media exposure.

Jhawar, A., Kumar, P. and Varshney, S. (2023). The Emergence of Virtual Influencers: A Shift in the Influencer Marketing Paradigm. *Young Consumers*, 24(4), pp.468–484. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1108/yc-05-2022-1529>.

This article explores the rise of virtual influencers and how they are reshaping influencer marketing. A virtual influencer is a computer-generated social media personality that looks and acts like a real person online, but isn't actually a human. It explains that people build emotional connections with them through parasocial interaction, and trust them based on factors such as attractiveness, expertise, trustworthiness and similarity; this reinforces their popularity amongst Generation Z and Millennials. It also shows that virtual influencers are different from regular human influencers because they are fully controlled by companies, are available online, and don't risk scandals or mistakes, which makes them safer and more appealing for brands to use as opposed to human influencers. They are widely used in industries like fashion, beauty, and luxury marketing. This article will assist my PIP by providing information on why influencers are effective and influential towards consumers, especially in shaping adolescents' attitudes and behaviours. This source was useful across all chapters of my PIP, especially throughout chapter 1, as it supported my investigation into how influencer culture impacts identity formation, body image, consumer behaviour and social belonging. It provides insight into how virtual influencers shape trends and the connections between individuals and online communities. This source is valid as it is a peer-reviewed article published in *Young*

Consumers, an academic journal, and uses established theories including parasocial interaction and source credibility to analyse influencer marketing. This strengthens its reliability when examining the relationship between influencers and consumer behaviour. A potential bias exists as the article focuses primarily on the effectiveness and commercial value of virtual influencers, which may place greater emphasis on their benefits for brands. However, it also acknowledges concerns surrounding corporate control and authenticity, providing a balanced perspective on their growing influence.

Levin, T., Tiggemann, M., Harriger, J. and Fardouly, J. (2025). The Influencer effect: Current Findings and Future Directions for Research on Social Media Influencers and Body Image. Body Image, [online] 55, p.102000. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2025.102000>.

This article reveals how social media influencers have strong impacts on young people's body image. Influencers tend to post a lot of appearance-based content on social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, often showing idealised and unrealistic beauty standards, with followers able to engage through likes, follows, direct messages, shares and commenting. Because some influencers may feel relatable or “real”, followers are more likely to trust them and compare themselves to them, despite their qualifications or honesty. This can lead to body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, and unhealthy lifestyle behaviours such as disordered eating and excessive exercise. However, not all influencer content is harmful; many body positive influencers show diverse, unedited, and realistic body types which may improve body image and allow people to feel more comfortable and confident within their own skin. This article will assist my PIP by providing evidence that social media influencers can both positively and negatively shape body image through content. This source was useful in chapters 1 and 3 particularly, as it supported my analysis of how influencers shape attitudes, behaviours and identity through online interactions. It also demonstrated how digital communities and parasocial relationships influence individuals' connections with others and their sense of belonging within online spaces. The source is valid as it is a recent peer-reviewed article. It draws on current research findings to examine the

relationship between influencer exposure and psychological outcomes, strengthening its credibility. A potential bias exists as the article primarily focuses on the negative impacts influencers can have on body image. However, it also acknowledges the positive role of body-positive influencers, providing a balanced perspective on how influencer content can produce harmful and beneficial outcomes.

Lo, C.K.Y. & Lin, J., (2021) 'Social media and luxury: A systematic literature review', *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/352766198>

Social media and luxury A systematic literature review

The article reviews how luxury fashion brands use social media to influence consumer behaviour, engagement, and identity performance and conception. It argues that platforms like Instagram and TikTok have shifted marketing from traditional elite gatekeepers (magazines, runway shows) to influencer-driven, platform-focused strategies, mostly online through the use of social media. This directly impacts how adolescents perceive style, beauty, belonging, and themselves as individuals. The authors reveal that luxury brands strategically craft curated images and trend cycles to create desire and reinforce appearance-based norms to strategically change adolescents' self-concept. Modern influencers act as "heroes," shaping global trends and consumption, reflecting mythology, power and authority, globalisation and identity within the fashion scene. This article is useful for my research topic as it reveals how fashion media structures adolescents' self-concept, body image, and identity construction in a globalised digital landscape, and links directly to sub-questions on influencer impact and body image. This source was particularly useful in Chapter 3 of my PIP, as it supported my investigation into how social media creates online communities, influences belonging, and allows individuals to construct identity through engagement with fashion communities and digital trends. The source is valid as it is a systematic literature review published in the *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, analysing existing academic research to identify patterns in the relationship between social media, luxury fashion and consumer behaviour. This strengthens its credibility by drawing on multiple studies rather than individual observations. A potential bias exists as the article focuses

specifically on luxury fashion and brand strategies, which may emphasise commercial perspectives and consumer engagement rather than the personal experiences of adolescents. However, its broad analysis of social media and identity provides valuable insight into how digital fashion spaces influence belonging and self-concept.

Mental Health Foundation (2019). *Implications and Recommendations for Policy and Action*. [online] www.mentalhealth.org.uk. Available at: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/our-work/research/body-image-how-we-think-and-feel-about-our-bodies/implications-and-recommendations-policy-and-action> [Accessed 17 Jun. 2026].

This article from the Mental Health Foundation examines body image policies and recommendations in the UK, including self-regulation, government regulation and parliamentary inquiries rather than legally binding requirements. This source was useful for Chapter 1 of my PIP as it provided insight into how external regulations and industry guidelines attempt to address the influence of fashion media and appearance-based standards on individuals. It allowed comparison between UK recommendations and Australia's Voluntary Code on Body Image, demonstrating different approaches to managing media representation and its impacts. It helped demonstrate the wider cultural environment in which trends and media representations develop, shaping how individuals perceive themselves and present their identities. The source is valid as it is published by the Mental Health Foundation, an established organisation focused on mental health research and advocacy, providing credible discussion of body image concerns and policy responses. However, the source's usefulness is limited when examining Australian approaches, as it specifically focuses on UK regulations and recommendations. A potential bias may be present as the Mental Health Foundation advocates for improved mental health outcomes, which may result in greater emphasis on the negative impacts of body image pressures rather than the positive aspects of fashion and self-expression. Despite this limitation, the source provides a valuable comparison between UK and Australian guidelines, supporting my analysis of how

policy responses and media accountability influence the representation of beauty standards within fashion.

Namazova, N. (2025). Perspective Chapter: The Role of Social Influence on Consumer Behaviour. IntechOpen eBooks. [online] doi:<https://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.1010384>.

This article focuses on how social influences shape consumer behaviour, revealing how individuals' purchasing decisions are strongly affected by the specific groups that they belong to, the norms within those groups and the influence of the leaders of those groups. It highlights that peer influence is stronger amongst younger consumers, with identity and a sense of belonging playing a crucial role in decision-making. Namazova also discusses how social networks and digital platforms have intensified these effects, allowing trends, recommendations, and opinions to spread more quickly and widely online. Overall, it argues that consumer behaviour is not individually based but heavily shaped by social relationships and online interactions in the modern digital environment in particular. This article will assist my PIP by showing that adolescents' social norms are shaped by peers and influence within online communities, which directly affects individuals' behaviour and self-expression in fashion media contexts. This source was useful across chapter 1 and 3 of my PIP, as it supported my analysis of how social groups, online communities and influencers shape fashion trends, consumer behaviour and identity. The source is valid as it is published through IntechOpen and applies existing research on social influence and consumer behaviour. A potential bias exists as it focuses mainly on social influences, with less emphasis on individual choice. However, this perspective is relevant to understanding how society shapes adolescent behaviours

NSW art gallery (2026). *Archibald Prize Archibald 2026 work: AKA Sopha Dopha by Andy Collis*. [online] Nsw.gov.au. Available at: <https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/prizes/archibald/2026/30920/> [Accessed 18 Jun. 2026].

This institutional webpage examines the description of Sophia Begg (SophaDopha) as described by artist Andy Collis and her success as one of the most influential creators in Australia. This was particularly beneficial in chapter 1 of my PIP, where I examine the influence that trends have on individuals and the ways in which influencers may shape identity formation and self-expression. Sopha Dopha is a very crucial example of an influencer within my PIP, as she holds significant influence amongst young people's fashion decisions, as reflected in my questionnaire responses. Standing at over two million followers on both Instagram and TikTok, SophaDopha is also a successful business owner of fashion brand 'All for Mimi' and was featured in the Australian Forbes 30 under 30 issue. The source is valid as it is published by the Art Gallery of NSW, an established institutional organisation, and presents verified information regarding SophaDopha's achievements. However, a slight bias may be present as the webpage focuses primarily on her success and positive contributions, rather than examining potential limitations of influencer culture. This source reflects a balanced perspective of online influencer success and demonstrates how social media visibility can be transformed into entrepreneurship, economic value and a role model for many individuals globally.

Papageorgiou, A., Fisher, C. & Cross, D. (2022) “‘Why don’t I look like her?’ How adolescent girls view social media and its connection to body image’, *BMC Women’s Health*, 22, article 261. doi:10.1186/s12905-022-01845-4

This article explores how adolescent girls view social media images and the impact it has on body image, self-esteem, and identity development. Papageorgiou, Fisher, and Cross (2022) argue that constant exposure to images online encourages girls to compare themselves with not only peers but celebrities, shaping their overall self-concept and personal self-worth related to external appearance. Seeing so much of this particular content online creates a sense of normality and dismisses the

harmful effects simply because it is so normalised. The text identifies four key ideas: expectation, comparison, validation and striving, all highlighting how appearance-based norms influence individual behaviour. Girls consider peers more relatable and attainable than celebrity images, because ultimately they may feel that they are similar and resonate with them. The authors emphasise the potential for media literacy and critical awareness to mitigate the many negative effects on body image and self-concept. Therefore, this article will assist my PIP by demonstrating how peers, social media, and appearance-focused imagery influence adolescent self-concept, personal image, expression of identity and body image. This provides evidence that aligns with my analysis of fashion media, trends, and their particular role in shaping adolescents' identity. This source was useful across chapter 1 and 3 of my PIP, as it supported my analysis of how social media, peer influence and online communities shape identity, belonging and appearance expectations. This source is valid as it is a peer-reviewed article published in BMC Women's Health and uses research involving adolescent girls to examine real experiences of social media use. A potential bias exists as the study focuses on adolescent girls, meaning the findings may not represent all genders or age groups. However, this focus is relevant to my investigation of adolescent experiences.

Perloff, R. (2014). (PDF) *Social Media Effects on Young Women's Body Image Concerns: Theoretical Perspectives and an Agenda for Research*. [online] ResearchGate. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/271740741_Social_Media_Effects_on_Young_Women [Accessed 1 Apr. 2026].

The article focuses on how the mass media plays an important role in communicating stereotypes around the aesthetics of body image-related issues, focusing on psychological theories such as social comparison and self-objectification. It argues that the highly glorified images of women on social media platforms such as Instagram set unrealistic expectations and beauty standards for women. Perloff highlights that common interaction with these images can lead to dissatisfaction with one's own image, leading individuals to compare themselves to others. Additionally, the article recognises the power of social media

interaction, such as likes, comments and shares on posts, reinforcing the idea that validation is critical for self-appearance and overall physical attractiveness. The article urges further research to be completed to understand how specific social media platforms affect individuals, specifically those that may cause harm. This article will assist my PIP by providing crucial insight into how social media contributes to body image concerns and identity formation. This source was useful across Chapters 1 and 2 of my PIP, as it supported my analysis of how social media and influencers reinforce unrealistic beauty standards, influencing adolescents' identity formation and body image. The source is valid as it is a peer-reviewed academic article that draws on established psychological theories, including social comparison and self-objectification, to explain the effects of social media on body image. A potential bias exists as the article primarily focuses on the negative impacts of social media on young women. However, it acknowledges the need for further research, providing a balanced and evidence-based perspective.

Pérez-Torres, V. (2024) 'Social media: a digital social mirror for identity development during adolescence', *Current Psychology*.

The article examines empirical research on how social media shapes adolescent identity development through self-presentation, social comparison, and exposure to online role models. The authors argue that platforms such as Instagram and TikTok act as "digital mirrors," allowing adolescents to construct, evaluate, and refine their identities in response to feedback, curated images, and influencers, ultimately shaping their own perception from others' opinions. This directly supports my PIP focus by showing how adolescents' engagement with fashion-focused media contributes to self-concept, body image and identity expression. The article explains that influencers function as modern cultural "heroes," similar to iconic fashion figures like Kate Moss, whose idealised images influence appearance norms, trend adoption, and consumer behaviour. It also highlights how globalised digital media spreads fashion standards rapidly, reinforcing gender expectations while simultaneously creating spaces for empowerment and identity experimentation. Therefore, this source aligns with syllabus concepts including globalisation, identity formation, the mythology of heroes, and the construction/deconstruction of gender. It

will assist my research by demonstrating how social media and influencers shape adolescents' identity formation, trend engagement, and body image within contemporary fashion culture. This source was particularly useful across all chapters of my PIP, as it supported my analysis of how social media influences adolescents' identity formation, trend engagement, body image and sense of belonging. It provides a theoretical foundation linking influencers, self-presentation and online interactions to fashion media. The source is valid as it is a recent peer-reviewed article published in *Current Psychology*, drawing on practical research to examine adolescent identity development through social media. The article demonstrates limited bias as it considers both the negative and positive opportunities for identity exploration and the impacts of social comparisons. This source provides a balanced perspective on social media's role in adolescent development.

Robinson, K. (2025). *What does dupe culture say about us? | The ethics of democratising fashion.* [online] YouTube. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qDF9JTCNdgl> [Accessed 22 July 2026].

This YouTube vlog documents the meaning behind 'dupe culture' and its impacts on consumers, as well as the ethics behind the term and its overall relevance within the fashion industry. It also explores the characteristics of good and bad dupes and the future of dupes in a constantly evolving fashion market. This source was particularly useful in Chapter 1 of my PIP, as it provided a clear and effective definition of dupe culture, explaining the concept of consumers purchasing affordable look-alike items instead of expensive designer originals to achieve similar aesthetics promoted by influencers. Robinson explains that this trend is driven by social media, economic pressures, and a desire to access trendy styles without paying luxury prices. This supported my analysis of influencers' overall influence on adolescents' purchasing decisions and the pressure to conform to trends in order to look a particular way in regard to what is deemed acceptable or trendy in regard to these influential role models. This source is valid as it is produced by a sustainable fashion-focused creator with over 78,000 YouTube subscribers who discussed contemporary fashion trends using relevant examples and current industry discussions. While the source demonstrates some bias through its sustainability focus, Robinson presents a

balanced perspective by acknowledging that although dupes make fashion more affordable and accessible, lower prices often involve trade-offs, such as reduced quality of products, lower manufacturing standards or less ethical supply chains. This balanced evaluation strengthened my understanding of the complexities surrounding dupe culture and its significant impacts on the fashion industry and consumers.

Rani, C. & Mahavidhyalya, G. (2025) 'Clothing Choices and Self-Image Among Adolescents', *International Journal of Scientific Development and Research*, 10(8), pp. 86–90.

The article focuses on how adolescents' self-image and clothing choices are influenced by peers, media, and fashion norms. Rani and Mahavidhyalya (2025) argue that adolescents' clothing choices are a key reflection of their developing self-image and are strongly shaped by social and media influences, including both traditional fashion magazines and modern social media platforms. In particular, the authors highlight that fashion media and peer groups play a major role in shaping adolescents' perceptions of attractiveness, confidence, and social belonging, emphasising the importance of external influences in identity formation. Moreover, they find that low self-esteem often leads to conformity with popular trends, while higher self-esteem encourages individuality and authentic self-expression through personal style choices. Finally, the study suggests that promoting media literacy and inclusive fashion representation can help adolescents develop healthier self-concepts and reduce the negative effects of unrealistic body ideals. Therefore, the article will assist my PIP by demonstrating how media, peers, and fashion norms influence adolescents' self-concept and identity, providing evidence that directly supports my analysis of body image, identity expression, and the social impact of fashion engagement. This source was useful across chapters 2 and 3 of my PIP, as it supported my analysis of how fashion media, peer influence and clothing choices shape adolescents' body image, identity and sense of belonging. The source is valid as it is published in the *International Journal of Scientific Development and Research* and presents current research on adolescents' self-image, clothing choices and media influences. The article demonstrates limited bias, as it considers both the

negative impacts of media influence and the positive role of self-expression and media literacy, providing a balanced perspective on adolescent identity development.

Rashid, A. (2019). The Media Effect: Implications for Manifesting Maintainable Body Image in the Context of Global Fashion Industry. [online] www.intechopen.com. IntechOpen. Available at: <https://www.intechopen.com/chapters/69096> [Accessed 18 Apr. 2026].

This article focuses on the relationship between ‘thinness’ in movies, magazines and TV programs, specifically in the 19th and 20th centuries, heavily targeted at women, involving increased body dissatisfaction. It argues that due to increasing accessibility to the internet, a healthy and realistic body standard should be showcased, opposed to an unrealistic one; however, there have been no implications of maintaining this in the global fashion industry. Rashid recognises that body image is connected to body dissatisfaction and leads to an increase in mental health issues such as depression, anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa. Also recognising the plus-size community and their shopping experiences, whether that includes expanded sizes in store or seeing plus-size models. Rashid states that “In this social world, clothing has been described as the second skin for a person, reflecting their social status, a concept that is prevalent throughout history”, with fashion being described as a way of expression of a lifestyle and desire for a body shape influenced by factors such as gender, cultural values, age, social norms, media and social attitude. The article explains that idealised body standards have changed over time, but the media continues to promote narrow and often unrealistic standards, with online and printed platforms increasing exposure to these ideals, making self-comparison more common, frequent and intense. The chapter argues that this constant exposure can negatively impact self-esteem and body image, especially within young people, because they feel pressure to conform to these ideals. It also highlights that the media has the potential to promote these healthier standards if used responsibly and effectively. Overall, the article suggests that while fashion media strongly influences body image, there is a need for more balanced, realistic, and inclusive portrayals of body image to support positive self-perception. This source was useful across Chapters 1 and 2 of my PIP, as it supported my analysis of how fashion media and

idealised beauty standards influence adolescents' identity, body image and self-perception. The source is valid as it draws on existing research to examine the relationship between fashion media and body image within a global context. A potential bias exists as the chapter strongly advocates for more inclusive body representation. However, it acknowledges both the harmful influence of media and its potential to promote positive body image, providing a balanced perspective.

Rudd, N.A. and Lennon, S.J. (2000). Body Image and Appearance-Management Behaviours in College Women. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 18(3), pp.152–162. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/0887302x0001800304>.

This article explores how college women experienced body image and how they manage their appearance in response to cultural beauty ideals. It explains that Western society promotes narrow standards of beauty focused on thinness, attractiveness, and fitness, strongly influencing how women think and treat their own bodies. It was found that many women engage in regular appearance management behaviours such as dieting, exercise, makeup use, and clothing choices, with some engaging in dangerous behaviours like disordered eating or obsessive exercise. An influence was social comparison, where constant comparison is done from peers, models and media images, leading to dissatisfaction with self-image. Some external influences include friends, parents, coaches, and media reinforcing these pressures. Rudd and Lennon show that body image is closely linked to identity and self-esteem. Many women felt pressure to adjust their appearance to fit social expectations, even when these ideals are unrealistic and recognised as so. Appearance management was often seen as a way to gain control, confidence, or social acceptance. This article will assist my PIP by giving me concepts like appearance management and body dissatisfaction, which can help explain how fashion media and influencers impact adolescents' self-concept over time. The source was particularly useful in Chapter 2 of my PIP, as it supported my analysis of how appearance management, social comparison and cultural beauty ideals influence adolescents' body image, self-esteem, and identity. The source is valid as it is a peer-reviewed study published in the *Clothing and Textiles Research* journal, using research to examine body image and appearance management behaviours. A potential bias exists as the study

focuses on college women, meaning the findings may not fully represent adolescents or other demographic groups. However, it provides valuable insight into the relationship between body image, self-esteem and appearance-related behaviours.

Shoaib, M. and Maguire, L. (2026). *The Vogue Business Fall/Winter 2026 Size Inclusivity Report*. [online] Vogue. Available at: <https://www.vogue.com/article/the-vogue-business-fall-winter-2026-size-inclusivity-report> [Accessed 13 May 2026].

This article is the fall/winter 2026 size inclusivity report from Vogue Business. Featuring relevant data and statistics to provide insight into the effectiveness of introducing size-inclusive models at high-exclusivity events such as London Fashion Week. It provides insight into consumer patterns conducted via survey. Highlighting the raw emotions and feelings regarding fitting into certain trends or ideals from consumers. Vogue Business gathered data on the largest number of sizes bought from products. In varying countries, plus-size is defined as other numbers, so the ability to accurately and evenly analyse the data is limited in synthesising authentic results. This article will assist my PIP by providing key quotes and evidence from reputable sources and designers in their opinions on plus-size fashion and its inclusivity on runways, fashion week and everyday lives. This source was particularly useful in chapters 2 and 3 of my PIP, as it provided current statistics and examples from Fashion Week to support my analysis of body representation, size inclusivity and the influence of runway fashion on body image and belonging. The source is valid as it is published by Vogue Business and incorporates recent Fashion Week data, consumer survey findings and perspectives from designers, providing contemporary industry evidence to support its conclusions. A potential bias exists as the report is produced by a fashion industry publication, which may emphasise industry progress and commercial perspectives. However, it also presents current statistics and acknowledges ongoing limitations in size inclusivity, providing a balanced overview of the issue.

SocialMediaNews (2026). *Social Media Statistics Australia – January 2026*. [online] Socialmedianews.com.au. Available at: <https://www.socialmedianews.com.au/social-media-statistics-australia-january-2026/> [Accessed 17 Jun. 2026].

This report from social media usage statistics for January 2026 outlines the number of active users across major platforms including Instagram, TikTok and Facebook. This source was particularly useful in Chapter 1 of my PIP, as it provided current statistical evidence to support my discussion of the widespread reach of social media and the extent to which adolescents are exposed to fashion trends, influencers and online content. These statistics strengthened my analysis by demonstrating that platforms associated with fashion and identity formation are accessed by millions of Australians, increasing the likelihood of repeated exposure to idealised content and digital trends. The source is valid as it compiles platform usage data from recognised digital marketing and analytics sources, providing up-to-date and relevant information for the Australian context. However, a slight bias may be present as the website is primarily focused on reporting social media and digital marketing trends, meaning its content is intended for industry audiences rather than academic research. Additionally, the report presents usage statistics without examining the broader social or psychological impacts of social media. Despite this, the source provides a balanced and reliable overview of Australian social media usage, making it valuable for establishing the scale of social media's influence within my research.

Sonal, M., Gaikwad, M., Student, Rane, N. and Gaikwad, S. (2024). *The Influence of Fashion on Today's Youth*. [online] Available at: <https://www.homesciencejournal.com/archives/2024/vol10issue1/PartE/10-1-53-780.pdf> [Accessed 21 Apr. 2026].

This article explains that fashion has a strong influence on youth identity, behaviour and self-image. It argues that young people are very focused on appearance and fashion is commonly used for self-expression, social acceptance, and peer belonging. The authors highlight that media, fashion magazines, celebrities, and social influencers play a huge role in shaping and creating trends amongst young

individuals, with many adolescents then imitating celebrity styles or relying on magazines for fashion guidance. The article also discussed the negative and positive impacts. Positively, fashion can boost confidence, encourage individuality, and help young people socially connect. Negatively, fashion can lead to obsession with appearance, distraction from studies, financial pressure, and, in some cases, issues like anxiety, depression, or body dissatisfaction due to unrealistic fashion standards and peer pressure. The article states that while fashion helps shape youth culture and identity, excessive media exposure and peer influence/pressure can negatively affect wellbeing, self-esteem, and priorities. This article will assist my PIP by demonstrating the role that fashion media plays in shaping adolescents' identity, body image, self-esteem, and behaviour. It supports my argument that media pressure is connected to self-comparison and harsh beauty ideals that may negatively affect mental wellbeing and self-perception amongst adolescents.

Sopha Dopha (2026). *A Few Days in South Korea*  VLOG. [online] YouTube. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j9cyHm1atF0> [Accessed 17 Jun. 2026].

This YouTube vlog documents SophaDopha's experiences while travelling in South Korea, showcasing fashion, beauty, lifestyle and consumer trends through the perspective of a successful influencer. This source was particularly useful in Chapter 1 of my PIP, as it provided a contemporary example of how influencers shape adolescents' identity formation and self-expression by normalising fashion choices, product recommendations and lifestyle aspirations through everyday content. The vlog also demonstrated how influencers seamlessly integrate promotional content into personal experiences, reinforcing the relationship between social media, consumer behaviour and trend adoption. It further revealed how cultural values shape perceptions of influencers, with SophaDopha explaining that influencer culture is embraced more positively in South Korea than in Australia. This supported my analysis of how different societies and cultures influence the acceptance of influencers and their role in shaping identity and fashion trends. This source is valid as it comes directly from SophaDopha herself, allowing direct analysis of her experiences and opinions. However, a potential bias exists because the vlog is

designed to entertain, strengthen her personal brand and maintain audience engagement, meaning the content presents a curated and largely positive representation of influencer culture. Despite this, the vlog provides valuable firsthand insight into influencer marketing and supports my investigation into how social media contributes to adolescent identity formation and self-expression.

Thomoleroux (2025b). *TikTok and Dopamine: How the App Hijacks Your Brain*. [online] Medium. Digital GEMs. Available at: <https://medium.com/digital-gems/tiktok-and-dopamine-how-the-app-hijacks-your-brain-16e6d2f6611e> [Accessed 28 July 2026b].

This article examines the relationship between TikTok's design features, dopamine responses and user engagement, arguing that the platform is intentionally designed to encourage prolonged use and repeated scrolling. This source was useful for Chapter 2 of my PIP, as it supports my investigation into how social media platforms influence adolescents' body image through continuous exposure to appearance-based content, trends and idealised representations. The article highlights how repeated engagement with TikTok may increase exposure to beauty standards and encourage comparison, which can impact self-esteem and perceptions of identity. The source is valid as it discusses the psychological concepts surrounding reward systems and digital engagement; however, it does not provide primary research or extensive academic evidence to support all claims. A potential bias is present as the article adopts a critical perspective towards TikTok and focuses on the negative psychological impacts of the platform, with limited consideration of positive aspects such as creativity, self-expression and building online communities. Despite this limitation, the source provides valuable insight into how platform design can influence adolescent behaviour and contributes to understanding the relationship between social media consumption, body image and identity formation.

Wasyliw, L., Emms, A.A., Meuse, R. and Poirier, K.F. (2009). Are All Models Created Equal? A Content Analysis of Women in Advertisements of Fitness versus Fashion Magazines. *Body Image*, 6(2), pp.137–140. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2009.01.005>.

This article analysed advertising in the fitness/health and fashion/beauty industry magazines to examine how women's bodies are portrayed. The study found that both contained women who are predominantly thin, young, and caucasian, reinforcing narrow beauty ideals. However, fashion magazines place a stronger emphasis on appearance through more posed and fragmented images (links back to interview question - consumers knowing that it's to make profit), while fitness magazines showed slightly more active and performance-based portrayals. Both types continued to promote unrealistic body standards, despite the differences, suggesting ongoing media objectifications of women and limited body diversity overall. The article revealed that the internalisation of societal views of the ideal woman leads to significant physical and psychological consequences. With many noting that the ideal woman is thinner than the average woman and has unattainable body proportions. This article will assist my PIP by highlighting the industry differences yet consistent similarities of the narrow beauty standards being thin and attractive held against women. This source was particularly useful in Chapter 2 of my PIP, as it supported my analysis of how fashion media reinforces unrealistic beauty standards through limited representation and idealised portrayal of women. The source is valid as it is a peer-reviewed study and uses content analysis to compare representations of women across fitness and fashion magazines, providing evidence-based findings. The article demonstrates limited bias as it objectively compares both fitness and fashion magazines using a consistent research method; however, its focus on print media may not fully reflect the influence of contemporary social media platforms.

Wikipedia Contributors (2019b). *Commodification*. [online] Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation. Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commodification> [Accessed 28 July 2026b].

This webpage was used in Chapter 3 of my PIP to provide a clear definition of commodification, establishing the concept before applying it further to my investigation and its influence on fashion media and social media on adolescent consumer behaviour. The source was useful as it presented the term in an accessible and straightforward manner, allowing me to introduce the concept before supporting my discussion with more detailed academic and media sources. It was particularly useful in chapter 3 as it established a foundational concept for analysing how fashion, identity and consumer culture have become commercialised through social media, providing a useful framework for my PIP. However, the source has limited validity as Wikipedia is an open edit platform, so its content can be modified by users and is not subject to the same editorial review as academic publications. A potential bias is minimal, as the page aims to provide a neutral overview rather than promote a certain viewpoint. As I only used this source to define the actual term itself, and not support my analysis or findings, it served as an appropriate introductory reference to the term 'commodification'. Overall, it served as an appropriate introductory reference to the term commodification itself.

Zancu, S.A. and Enea, V. (2016). *Eating Disorders among Fashion Models: A Systematic Review of the Literature*. *Eating and Weight Disorders - Studies on Anorexia, Bulimia and Obesity*, [online] 22(3), pp.395–405. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1007/s40519-016-0293-5>.

This article reviews research on eating disorders among fashion models. No strong evidence was found that models have higher rates of full eating disorders than non-models, such as anorexia or bulimia. However, models are often underweight and more likely to show partial symptoms of eating disorders, such as strong pressure to remain thin. In terms of body image, models have a positive body image and higher body satisfaction, which may protect them from developing serious eating disorders. Despite this, they place very high importance on appearance and

thinness. The article explains that more studies are needed due to the lack of research and information on this topic, so firm conclusions cannot be made. This source will support my PIP by providing evidence that challenges the stereotype that all models have eating disorders, allowing me to present a balanced argument. Also highlighting how thin ideals and appearance-based pressure are still persistent, even if they don't always lead to full disorders, linking to my focus on how fashion media influences adolescents' self-concept and body image.

(2026). Zheng Xiang Xiang. [online] Instagram.com. Available at: <https://www.instagram.com/popular/zheng-xiang-xiang/?hl=en> [Accessed 8 July 2026].

This social media page examines the real-world impacts of commodification on individuals and the way in which they produce personal income by selling goods on social media livestreams. This was particularly useful in chapter 3 of my PIP where I explore the impacts of commodification and platform design within the fashion media industry, and its severe impact on consumer behaviour and creation of commercial platforms. Zheng Xiang Xiang was a valid example of how individuals can function as commercial platforms, demonstrating how personal visibility, audience engagement and overall digital performance can be converted into consumer influence, sales, and economic value. Zheng Xiang Xiang spends only three seconds showing each product and is famously known for her rapid e-commerce sales. The high-speed method of selling products drove up to 18.7 million dollars worth of sales in only one week, revolutionising live commerce. This is a tactic different from typical live streams where individuals showcase products for several minutes or hours; instead, Zheng Xiang Xiang relies on the pure impulse of the consumer, placing products as low as ¥10 or \$1.50 to prompt immediate buyer action. This also strips away from traditional in-store purchasing from luxury stores. Sales assistants typically spend anywhere from 30-60 minutes attempting to sell luxury goods to clients. Sales Associates focus on building a luxury experience and emotional connection with their customers instead of rushing the purchasing experience, as the actual experience of purchasing designer goods is a luxury itself. Despite the social media page's usefulness in showcasing commodification, there may be a slight bias

towards traditional shopping methods, as not all consumers actively participate in livestream shopping or experience its influence. This may limit the reliability of the source, as it may not fully represent the broader impact of livestream commerce on consumer behaviour.