Digital Fashion

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Digital fashion currently exists in different material culture spaces from fashion non-fungible tokens (NFTs) such as Fabricant’s *Iridescent Dress* selling for roughly $9,500 as the first recorded fashion NFT sale in May of 2019 to 40,000 attendees at the “Metaverse Fashion Week” in February of 2022 where designer Jonathan Simkhai sold NFT designs for $3,000 so that buyers could receive actual clothing from the collections (Baukh, 2022). Not simply limited to video games, the metaverse space is a virtual space where avatars of individuals are designed and programmed to wear virtual clothing (Nguyen, 2022). Alongside this virtual world of clothing exists a subcategory of digital fashion that belongs to the wearable technology category. Wearable technology allows the wearer to interact and engage with the virtual world of digital technology blended into the context of everyday lived experiences and realities. Wearable technology can be thought of as digital realities coming to life through clothing. For instance, Anouk Wipprecht’s *Spider Dress* utilizes digital sensor robotics in reaction to proximity movements (Dickens, 2021). Similarly, the Marchesa IBM Watson *Cognitive Dress* worn to the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Fashion in an Age of Technology Gala analyzed the emotions shared in social media tweets to light up the dress’ LED lights to corresponding colors (Kelly, 2016).

Compared to the relatively new existence of digital fashion as NFTs, wearable technology has been recently researched according to the field of neuroaesthetics (Rolling, 2018). Neuroaesthetics research allows the complexities of these digital fashion as artforms to be better understood according to the physiological responses of individuals based on their aesthetic experiences (Chatterjee & Vartanian, 2014). Due to fashion NFTs providing relatively new stimuli for individuals to process, it is important that research is conducted to determine the neuroaesthetic experiences of individuals towards these artforms. Thus, this conceptual paper addresses a current gap in the literature on neuroaesthetic responses to NFTs by examining previous literature neuroaesthetic research in relation to wearable technology in order to determine future applications for assessing individuals’ neuroaesthetic experiences towards fashion NFTs.

Upon examining the literature, it is proposed that future research be conducted on the “aesthetic triad” by focusing on individual's Sensory (motor), Knowledge (meaning), and Emotion (valuation) together, also known as SKE responses (Shimamura, 2013; Vartanian & Chatterjee, 2021). By utilizing the grounded theory model developed by Rolling (2018) that uses both a modified version of Shimamura’s (2013) I-SKE model in conjunction with Raju’s (1980) Optimal Stimulation Levels (OSL), this framework can be used to more accurately assess individual’s responses to NFTs. Furthermore, a comparison between individual’s neuroaesthetic responses to NFTs compared to wearable technology should be assessed. In this way, similarities and difference in the neuroaesthetic responses towards fashion NFTs compared to wearable technology can further be discussed especially since NFTs have the capability of becoming wearable technology garments for an individual to wear. These results can help advance digital product creation by informing designers on how individuals are responding to their fashion NFTs to improve on design weaknesses. Ultimately, this would help designers determine future paths for their fashion NFTs to potentially increase purchase intentions based on aesthetic responses.

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