TV SERIES AND FASHION
A Look to the Audiences’ Activities

Abstract
TV series have a relevant place in today’s media scenario, as a genre that is greatly appreciated by audiences and which has multiple fruition options. TV series have moreover some flexibility, allowing viewers to appropriate them in several ways. Clothes represent just one of these opportunities, involving audiences, stylists and producers all at once. Costumes and fashion generally, constitute a significant component in the production of TV series, that is recognized by many audiences as an autonomous pathway or an essential motif that helps to make the narration consistent, on the one hand, and on the other appears relevant even when detached from the story and progressively branching out on its own. Clothes and accessories become therefore a possible extra-diegetic interpretative key, that can further enhance television series. To study this scenario, the article takes into consideration three series (Downton Abbey, ITV 2010-2015, Pretty Little Liars, ABC Family 2010-, and House of Cards, Netflix, 2013-) as well as selected web and especially Pinterest pages that are linked to the series, where connections to the fashion world are made explicit.

Keywords
TV series; fashion; media convergence; audience; online spaces; narratives.

1. INTRODUCTION

In today’s medial scenario TV series take up a relevant place, in their being a genre much appreciated by audiences and with multiple fruition options. They are loved for the stories they tell, the setting they present, the atmospheres they create and at times the clothes worn by their characters.

TV series belong to the forms of television textuality – typical of the present historical phase – capable of creating flows of vision, linking to different types of cross-media audiences. The medial convergence is in fact fueled by forms of textuality linked to a ‘Source’ text, from which several in-depth pathways spread out, residing in different spaces in the individual episodes. In line with their context of reference many TV series present themselves to their audiences as ‘surplus’ narrations, characterized then by a technological, economic, cultural and aesthetic excess.

As summarised quite well by Jason Mittell,

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in the digital era, a television program is suffused within and constituted by an intertextual web that pushes textual boundaries outward, blurring the experiential borders between watching a program and engage with its paratexts. Similarly, the serial text itself is less of a linear storytelling object than a sprawling library of narrative content that might be consumed via a wide range of practices, sequences, fragments, moments, choices, and repetitions.

The dynamics that are activated by this type of narratives tend in some instances to reconfigure the relation between reality and fiction: the stories told in TV series, increasingly captivating and universal, aim at stimulating the audiences’ identification with the characters, or with some of their vicissitudes, thus fostering possible forms of correlation and participation. The links between products and audiences are evident, especially in online spaces where there are venues wholly dedicated to individual TV series (web sites, blogs, Facebook pages, Instagram profiles…) where users express their forms of sharing and relations with the text. There are many examples: in the case of successful series, the quantity of material found in web pages is truly impressive. From Reign (The CW 2013-), to House of Cards (Netflix, 2013-), The Vampire Diaries (The CW 2009-), Pretty Little Liars (ABC Family 2010-), Stranger Things (Netflix 2016-): the official pages go hand in hand with a plethora of spaces self-produced and self-managed by audiences, where the current narrative lines are enhanced through the breaking up of each individual episode to several discursive elements. The wide catchment area of contents, archetypes, symbolic images found in a TV series becomes in effect a material made available to audiences appropriating them in several ways. Clothes do represent one of these opportunities and seem to involve audiences, stylists and producers all at once.

By looking at these processes we have asked the following: which kinds of practices are put to motion by audiences/users in their medial wanderings? What is the meaning today of thoroughly participating in a medial product? When has the relationship between fashion and TV series become relevant? And how much does it involve television audiences and fashion fans?

In view of finding answers to these questions we have drafted a path of research which at present may be defined as ‘in progress’. It consists in a questionnaire administered to a sample comprising a group of university students from Bologna and Milan Universities, in the 18-to-22 age bracket. A portion of the project refers to the analysis of some TV series and a some online settings, in particular the Facebook pages linked to these series. In order to analyse the exchanges focusing on fashion we have used mostly Instagram and Pinterest linked to the chosen TV series and devoted to the outfits of the character on screen: in these pages the sharing of television experience combines with other kinds of experiences put in motion by the audiences (self-experimentation, connection with other people, personal performances...), including the display of one’s own skills on matters of clothing.

As we shall see further down, for this article three TV series have been taken into

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4 In detail the group comprised 256 people, 197 girls and 59 boys.
5 We are considering these TV series: Sex and the City, Gossip Girl, Mad Men, Pretty Little Liars, Downton Abbey, House of Cards, Gomorra.
6 The research takes into consideration some TV series where the discourse about fashion seems to be quite relevant, and their related social media pages especially browsed by audiences. Please consider that there are no official Facebook or Pinterest pages in Italian for many foreign series. For this reason some of the pages run by audiences act as official pages and are often linked to Instagram and Pinterest pages.
consideration (*Downton Abbey*, ITV 2010-2015, *Pretty Little Liars*, ABC Family 2010- and *House of Cards* Netflix, 2013-); ten Instagram pages and seven Pinterest pages, which were linked to the series, and where the relationship with the fashion world was made explicit.

**2. MODULAR NARRATIVES**

In many ways TV series might be considered forms of virtual hypertexts based on a “new form of relation between the narrative discourse and the text”7. Of course there are no links which can be clicked within the scenes as they are displayed linearly on the screen. There are however vertical segments being indicated – and not always highlighted – which emerge and live on, away from the individual episodes of the series, and can therefore be expanded, remixed, used up. In *Downton Abbey*, for example, the discourse about food is present in almost every episode. Part of the storytelling is in effect set in the kitchen downstairs where exchanges about the country’s political occurrences (for example the war), the Crawley family’s vicissitudes (deaths, births, new loves), or the servants’ personal lives would overlap and be interspersed with indications about meal preparation and their presentation. This discursive ‘surplus’ is perceived by attentive viewers who, if interested, can find a series of in-depths in other spaces which may be called ‘off-fiction’ for simplicity’s sake. From the books on the topic (Larry Edwards, *Edwardian Cooking. 80 Recipes Inspired by Downton Abbey’s Elegant Meals*, 2013; Emily Ansara Baines, *The Unofficial Downton Abbey Cookbook: From Lady Mary’s Crab Canapes to Mrs. Patmore’s Christmas Pudding*, 2012; Pamela Foster, *Abbey Cooks Entertain: 220 Recipes Inspired by Downton Abbey*, 2014, to mention just a few), to Facebook pages (“The Food of Downton Abbey”, “The Downton Abbey News Emporium”8) o Pinterest9, where recipes and photographs abound referring to the imagery created by the TV series.

The case of *Breaking Bad* is significant in its being the inspiration for in-depths regarding chemistry, like the eponymous Facebook page described as follows: “It is a group ALL about CHEMISTRY! A space to share anything related to chemistry”10. The notoriety of the series and the features linked to chemical compounds have brought about multiple-tiered consequences: in 2013 the Yale Scientific magazine published an article by Blake Smith underlining how what appeared on screen was *de facto* the outcome of wrong compositions11.

Likewise, *Mad Men* has been associated with advertisement: in Italy a blog called ‘Bad Avenue’ has become quite famous because it exploits the graphic layout of the series’s opening sequence, the postures of the protagonist Donald Draper, in order to

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talk about advertising counter-information\textsuperscript{12}. These are just a few telling examples of the ways specific discursive pathways are included in the plots of TV series: on the surface, the narratives progress linearly and interspersed with flashbacks, forward and parallel stories. They also show vertical progressions testifying of their modularity linked to specific topics. The theme lines crossing the narrative surface layer present in effect in-depth indications which might attract audiences besides the mainstream stories in the series. One of these options often concerns the discourse about fashion.

3. fashion as an autonomous narrative discourse

The quality of the clothes depicted in TV series seems to enjoy the same attention given to the story, its acting, location and filming. It is a component of the complexity now reached by TV series making them “cinematic”\textsuperscript{13}, increasingly similar to a filmic product.

Costumes, clothes, simply fashion, make their contribution to a relevant component of the production of TV series, which many audiences recognise as an autonomous pathway, an essential thematic line which helps to make narration consistent on the one hand, and on the other hand appears to be relevant even when detached from it and progressively branching out on its own. The research we are carrying out seems to indicate that this way of using the dress code can produce several effects on audiences. First of all, for some, this could turn into a new opportunity to become literate in fashion: no longer circumscribed within strictly defined codes, or present in venues recognised as institutional (catalogues, magazines, windows displays, archives...), fashion appears in fiction as well, where it is linked to entertainment, and generates yearnings. A phenomenon producing consequences in the consumption of the medial product, which is certainly appreciated for its plot, direction and acting, but also – for many – precisely for the fashion discourse that is conveyed through it. On-line settings show in many instances where audiences share their views about the outfits from the series characters: from exchanges in forums, to Pinterest or Instagram pages, down to messages on Facebook. The link between medial products and fashion appears therefore to be clear and stable, generating on-going nuances between the on-screen and off-screen of clothes: inside and outside the fictions, increasingly closer to audiences’ everyday lives.

The figure of the ‘stylist’ has also contributed to enhance this effect, considering that stylists have almost come to replace the ‘costume designer’ in the most recent medial productions. The stylist – or image maker – is the person picking clothes, working creatively with the wardrobe starting from ready-made clothes; a sort of assembler, a skilled go-between, playing with fashion knowledge, its translation into concrete objects to be used in the series production, and providing hints about their possible interpretation by audiences. As explained by Sarah Mower\textsuperscript{14}, the professional value of the stylists derives precisely from their ability in making clothes “part of a wider story […] by going beyond fashion trends […] A brilliant styling can make it possible to sell

\textsuperscript{12} “Bad Avenue”, Facebook Page. Accessed February 1, 2017. https://www.facebook.com/Bad-Avenue-144405778952318\. The name of the blog, now a Facebook page, is a play on words derived from the title of the series. Mad Men, in fact, means also ‘men from Madison Avenue’, namely the street of advertising agencies in New York in the 1960s.

\textsuperscript{13} Mittell, \textit{Complex Tv}, 2.

clothes, change the way we dress, convey new ideas on who and what is beautiful in a revolutionary manner, encourage us to fantasize how and where we could live."^{15}

Stylists usually start their work from already existing clothes, activating a sort of *rapprochement* between what is on the screen and the audience: what is at times shown in the scenes is similar to what can be found in the wardrobe of some audience groups (for example, typical garments of some subcultures or specific social groups), or it may be linked to their imagery of medial consumers (clothes already shown in fashion magazines, in television shows etc.). The outfits worn by characters in a series can thus be seen as fragments of imageries capable of attracting the audience’s attention in several ways. Some of them may get the idea of belonging to a ‘group of style’, through the sharing of a specific code, a fashion idiolect which moves towards their ordinary lives from television screen, in order to be then shared with others.

All of this is particularly evident in some television series, where the fashion discourse is more meaningful: brands and griffes seem to take the centre stage, in clothes, in the characters’ discourse, in the interiors of stores. In *Sex and the City* (HBO 1998-2004), *Ugly Betty* (ABC 2006-2010), *Gossip Girl* (CW 2007-2012) or *Mad Men* (AMC 2007-2015) clothes work as a full-fledged visual metaphor of the character’s identity: they are never sloppy nor ordinary, they are instead customised, unique and well outlined, offering viewers a series of visual elements capable of guiding them through the interpretation of the role’s complexity. In particular, the case of Patricia Field (*Sex and the City*) or Eric Daman (*Gossip Girl*), shows quite well how much in TV series “was the clothing which captured the interest of the viewers”^{16} through the creation of wardrobes linked to ‘urban subcultures’, providing “many ideas for fad and trends”^{17}, turning stylists into new celebrities. And the viewers seem to welcome these indications. The adopted choices on the matter of style seem in fact to be based on a partial and supposed complicity with the audience, conceived as the ideal recipient of the series: as shown by the data from the present research skill and cooperation is required from the latter in order to recognise the dressing patterns being used on screen, as well as the ability to find one’s bearing among several reference models, such as the preppy^{18}, fashionist^{19}, casual, work uniform, typical clothes from the Sixties, and so forth^{20}.

For many *quality dramas*^{21} the dress elements – in particular the explicitly signature clothes – and fashion – namely the set of collective practices giving rise to precise

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^{18} Preppy, preppie, o prep (all short for the term preparatory) refer to a modern and popular US style. Of the main features characterising the preppie style, a particular and subcultural development should be mentioned which also includes a specific way of speaking (vocabulary, accent...), a special set of clothes, affectation and etiquette which are easily recognisable. Usually preppies are associated with the traditional style of the upper classes in the US West Coast, typical of WASP families. In New England the term refers to a ‘normative’ dress code. The term preppy is quite common for American teen-agers to indicate groups of their peers attending famous schools, paying great attention to their looks and showing off their wealth unabashedly. In this instance the term has a negative connotation (see the entry ‘preppy’ in Wikipedia. Accessed February 1, 2017. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Preppy).

^{19} The character that is the most knowledgeable about fashion, a sort of fashion victim of the group.

^{20} This is true for many successful series which have many pages devoted solely to outfits. These include: *Gossip Girl*, *Pretty Little Liars*, *Games of Throne*.

social dynamics – are increasingly incorporated and made more relevant, as they become the supporting frame of the entire storytelling. Clothes and accessories become therefore a possible extra-diegetic interpretation key, capable of further enhancing television series. Clothes can therefore turn into an exploration opportunity – alongside other modules – leading to the analysis of fruition motivations and the impacts that texts do have in audiences’ lives. This could become a possible triggering factor for the creation of a medial ecosystem, set in-between genres, beyond fiction and reality.

This also occurs when the links between TV series and the world of fashion turn into directions which at first sight may seem less evident, thus demanding a deeper knowledge and expertise from viewers.

Examples abound and the reference to fashion seems to point mostly at those audiences already attuned to the topic, and showing – as we shall see – that in online settings they are capable of understanding these additional meanings, by detecting and underlining them, or even at times hyper-interpreting details which at first sight would appear to be of little importance. Let us mention here a period drama like Reign (CW, 2013-) where clothes work as a breaking away from the time of its setting (second half of the 16th century): the historical reference staged through the use of farthingale skirts, corsets, and brocades, is constantly mixed with haute couture and vintage garments that blend quite well with the atmosphere created by the storytelling. Clothes then become a topic around which a precise critique can be developed, in particular by the audiences looking for period costumes on screen and not finding them perfectly matching the historical setting. At the same time this becomes an extremely appreciated motif: for some groups of viewers the wardrobe of many characters becomes a repertory of models to imitate.

Whenever the dressing language does not emerge for its surplus of aesthetic attention, the link with fashion is established through other channels. These are cases where the series works as a brand, as a value multiplier, although seemingly far away from the creation of a style or the use of already famous brands. A recent example of this is given by Stranger Things (Netflix, 2016-). Actors wear garments from the early 1980s appearing quite neutral with respect to the period setting: no particular outfits are exhibited; no reference is made of brands nor of shopping sprees in trendy stores. However, Nicolas Ghesquiere, the creative director of Louis Vuitton, has chosen the young protagonists of the series and sat with them for a (seemingly) amateur photo shoot published on his Instagram profile, later taken up and posted by other profiles and many fashion magazines. Fashion seems to consider TV series as a feasible communication channel, even when clothes are never overemphasized.

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23 There are many references online, in particular in Instagram pages. An example: https://www.instagram.com/reign_fashion/.
In the attempt to find answers to the questions asked at the beginning of this article, we have taken into consideration the TV dramas *Pretty Little Liars*, *House of Cards*, and *Downton Abbey*. They show marked differences at narrative level: the first is a thriller-teen drama, the second a political thriller, and the third a period drama. All pertain however to the category of *quality dramas*: they are characterised by important casts, genre hybridization, self-reflection and marked propensity towards realism, in a context characterised by high production standards and aesthetic research."25"

Each of these examples shows a degree of care for the characters’ wardrobes, which do not pass unnoticed. Many fashion magazines have realised that: *Harper’s Bazaar*, *Vogue* and *Teen Vogue*, or even *Vanity Fair* have used their covers and many articles to praise the style of the characters in these series. Besides the stories being told – which will not be discussed here – these products display full-fledged repertoires of dressing styles capable of attracting groups of audiences socialising together precisely in order to share interpretations, thoughts, suggestions linked more to the fashion theme than to the characters’ stories.

In particular, and as anticipated in the above pages, the social media spaces are the ones mostly used by surfers to talk about their favourite programs.26 The ways they are activated vary depending on the chosen context.27 For *House of Cards*, for example, audiences meet in different social networks, but prefer Instagram instead to talk about aspects linked to clothing.28 The language used there is mainly visual: audiences publish images, or search for them. When the visual material they scroll is of their liking, then they leave a trace of their appreciation by adopting the ‘like’ approach, or by adding remarks, or even copying the images on their profile.

*As for House of Cards*, the attention paid to outfits points consistently at the character of Claire Underwood, who has become a real style icon for many women viewers. In the Instagram pages there are essentially two types of images depicting her: either frieze-frames taken during the series episodes or audiences’ shots. In the former instance, they are mostly a series of outfits, postures, moments in the plot showing the character in different moods and circumstances. In these cases the focus is precisely on the character, and also the wardrobe is highlighted in its wide range and well suited for every situation. In the latter instance, instead, a relevant number of shots, mostly selfies, are made available to Instagram users, where viewers can show themselves in their ‘coming closer’ to Claire Underwood. The copying of some outfits is linked to the desire to show their search for clothes matching the character’s wardrobe, together with

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27 The pages chosen for the analysis belong to a wider corpus which the author has been researching since 2013. For this article, the online spaces considered are addressed each time in a footnote. They were monitored using the textual analysis and the ethnography online analysis.
28 The research has taken into account Facebook pages and Pinterest as well. Specifically, it was considered a Claire Underwood Instagram page’s and a number of its derivatives (“Claire Underwood Style”), period of observation: May-September 2016, https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/claireunderwoodstyle/).
a posture aimed at evoking her role as well. At time even the expression on the face is constructed with great care – severe and in line with Claire’s attitude.

Besides images, users indicate in their introduction posts the close relationship between the character’s style and personality. Dressing in a certain way, taking up certain postures, would mean ‘feeling’ like Claire Underwood, and showing it also to others, as is clearly shown in some remarks: “Feeling a little like Claire Underwood today” (BM); “Hj eu saio de Claire Underwood” (V04); “Iol new identity” (RB); “Channeling my inner Clair Underwood today because I’m also truly not the sort of enemy you want to make” (K).29

Claire Underwood and her wardrobe turn therefore into the bearers of symbolic meanings recalling a complex imagery, linked to a very well-off life-style where the wardrobe must be elegant but also easily wearable for work. Taking up on oneself a fragment of Claire Underwood, through a dress, an accessory, or the haircut, would mean for many women bringing in their everyday life a sort of motivational drive to feel more at ease and assured in their activities. A model, then, to refer to at multiple levels. Aesthetically many of the copied outfits often recall the value of the power suits30 that are represented according to the users’ personal revisitations. But also professionally and emotionally, the character’s clothes produce relevant effects. Claire Underwood is in fact considered by many the type of woman to aspire to, “timeless, decisive and feminine”31, as can be read in some posts: “Working in a bank means trying to get Claire Underwood’s look on daily basis!” (365S); “Searching for some looks that a young Claire Underwood would wear… the hunt continues!! The key to a conservative professional look is perfect tailoring! I’m petite so I’ll always need some tweaking!!” (CBC).

In the case of Pretty Little Liars fans talk about fashion mostly on Facebook and Pinterest. In Facebook pages taken into consideration in the research32 the posts dedicated to clothes appear in several places during the exchanges, especially after the broadcasting of a new episode or at the end of a season. Italian fans are quite critical of the female characters’ wardrobes. They essentially express a lack of aesthetic appreciation across several episodes: “Do you realize how many outfits we have studied and criticized throughout all these seasons? And how many did we love and covet? […] Even though, if we think about it, very rarely have they been truly loved and coveted!” (PLL). In the majority of cases, the remarks are ironic or even sarcastic, especially concerning the character of Aria Montgomery often taking first place in the hit parade of the worst outfits of an episode: “Had I been in Ezra’s place, in seeing her like that, with that jumper, I would’ve taken back my marriage proposal” (AM) “But seriously, can you imagine her wedding dress?” (GCDG) “Oddly enough Aria was the best dressed […] we’ve hit bottom!!” (AI).33

In general Italian fans do not seem to appreciate the aesthetic choices linked to

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29 Only the initials of names or nicknames have been indicated for privacy’s sake.
33 These remarks were published in the Facebook page “Pretty Little Liars Italia” in the period July-August 2016. Only the initials of names or nicknames have been indicated for privacy’s sake.
clothes, differently from the case of Gossip Girl, for example, a teen drama specifically connected with fashion. Probably a reason for that lies in effect in the taste conveyed through clothes: in Pretty Little Liars, set in a rich (and fictional) suburbs of Philadelphia, the characters dress by complying with the canons of the local middle class and respond to a contextual and cultural taste. In Gossip Girl, instead, characters cross the wealthy streets of Manhattan’s Upper East Side, wearing signature dresses recognizable by a global audience appreciating their different combinations.

If, in fact, we consider the official Facebook page of Pretty Little Liars, mostly browsed by American fans, a different tone used by audiences may be remarked: “They should make a PLL line of clothing. I WILL BE IN HEAVEN!” (BC); “I love every outfit Aria wears. I love all the outfits they wear” (TG); “Arias clothes are always nice wish i could dress that way” (RJ); “I absolutely love it!! Aria and Hanna r my inspiration for fashion! I always love what they wear! This outfit looks so cute on aria” (MCB); “Aria always looks so cute in her outfits but wouldn’t last a day attending a high school in the inner cities, because she is so small and timid; they would beat her up before school even started” (JC); “I copy Aria’s style!!!” (XA); “Fashion is about having your own style. Personally, I’m pretty close to Aria’s, although my style is pretty eclectic and it depends on my mood. However, Aria (or at least the show’s stylists) always wears what she loves no matter the gap it seems to create for some people. Sometimes, I decide to combine my clothes in a certain way or a special accessory and my sisters tell me that it’s ‘weird’ well whatever I like it so I wear it! And in some way, Aria’s character teaches us that it’s okay and cool to be who we are! (Yeah pretty pointless comment as no one will read)” (GC). In these cases a shared aesthetic sensitivity is being outlined: fans appreciate what the female protagonists wear and in many occasions they try to copy their style.

The last case that seems important to recall here is Downton Abbey. Differently from the previous examples, This series is set in another historical period than the present one: the series tells the stories of a British noble family in the early 20th century. The characters’ clothes are quite rigorous, even making reference to Paul Poiret (Harem Pants) or Madame Vionnet. Despite the time-span distance, the sophisticated style, the attention to fabrics, the elegance of shapes have all produced a relevant impact on media fashion experts and on audiences that have appreciated the protagonists’ wardrobes. Many covers and articles have been dedicated to the series by Vogue, Elle, Harper’s Bazaar and it is in Pinterest pages that we find the highest number of audience tributes to the series: “Some Lady Mary inspiration” is for example the caption of a selfie of a viewer’s hairdo. Or, “When you watch too much Downton Abbey” goes with the selfie of a viewer with a hat in Edwardian style. And again “Two sisters take a little trip back in time. Just missing our Edith” portrays two girls with 1920s’ accessories. But perhaps the most successful page for the series fans is “Downton Abbey Inspired Clothing for Sale”37. This is a sort of bulletin board holding images taken from the series, together with shots of similar clothes, made to be sold. A sort of e-commerce profile exploiting

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37 https://it.pinterest.com/vintagedancer/downton-abbey-inspired-clothing-for-sale/.
the fans’ passion for the imagery which *Downton Abbey* belongs and refers to, in order to promote a period-based style, provided with outfits revisited to fit to modern canons.\(^{38}\)

Considering the analysed pages we may suggest that Pinterest works both as a social milieu for the promotion of TV series, and as a tool for the sharing of images about dresses and costumes linked to them. In many cases it looks like a real mood board on which references may be found or even ideas to create garments of choice. This is a function that this social medium performs for all the examples mentioned here: besides *Downton Abbey*, for *House of Cards* and *Pretty Little Liars* as well. It plays a different role with respect to the other social media surfed by fans: it is a device much closer to the fashion discourse, or at least to the practical features characterizing it. For Claire Underwood, for examples, together with images, there are also real style indications: the reference to Armani, together with the mentioning of garments by Ralph Lauren and Narciso Rodriguez, the shirts recalling those by Donna Karen, the bag Muse by Yves Saint-Laurent displayed in several episodes and Louboutin shoes.\(^{39}\) As for *Pretty Little Liars* in Pinterest there are pages devoted to the wardrobe of the protagonists where there are garments attuned with their style, and the brands of reference that could be purchased in different price ranges.\(^{40}\) Pinterest appears therefore to be a sort of multi-perspective catalogue, especially suited to the discourse on clothes: in this social medium the wardrobe takes hold over the character, through an ongoing statement of appreciation by audiences, as shown by the number of pins and the exchange of images. The story being told in the series is replaced by an image-based itinerary of the outfits that are displayed in it.

5. Conclusions

In the universe of *quality dramas* clothes identify the individual characters of the fiction and are essential in determining the links between the universe of fiction and reality: in many cases the individual garments may be purchased in real stores, or copied in home-made productions.\(^{41}\) For these reasons social network pages become even an interesting space to observe cultural dynamics linked to taste: in *Pretty Little Liars*, for instance, the success of the series remains unquestioned in all the contexts. Instead the appreciation of clothes differs: on the one hand Italian fans do not feel any affinity with the displayed outfits and even distance themselves from the choices presented in the series. On the other hand, American fans seem to be perfectly in tune with the presented aesthetic choices, becoming in some cases points of reference, real models to follow. What is at stake here is the difference in cultural capital,\(^{42}\) activated precisely through the aesthetic ideas linked to clothes.

In general, and from the data we have collected, an attempt may be made to define a category of activities produced by audiences around the outfits shown in TV series: in some instances remarks on their quality (as for *Pretty Little Liars*) made by critical user;

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\(^{40}\) See in particular [https://it.pinterest.com/PrettyLittleLiars/](https://it.pinterest.com/PrettyLittleLiars/).


in other instances full-fledged studies on the dress are presented and carried out (as for *Downton Abbey* and *House of Cards*) through an analysis of every individual garment to trace back its production ‘source’, brand or designer. It is the case of the user is a *researcher*. Finally, in all cases examined. there is the *enthusiast* user who falls in love with the garment on screen and starts looking for the original, a similar copy or decides to make it her/himself.

These are practices of production consumption and poaching enabling audiences to ‘take part’ in TV series, or to bring them in their everyday lives through the appropriation of some of their fragments. Clothes, accessories and styles they refer to are part of this appropriation process.

The attraction engendered by costumes on screen has also caught the attention of fashion houses as well. In 2014 Aéropostale devoted four womenswear lines to *Pretty Little Liars*: one for each protagonists. The models of the Fall/Winter 2015-2016 collection by Hugo Boss recall instead the 1950s and the world of *Masters of Sex* (Showtime 2013-). The collections by Hermès and Rundholz (F/W 2014-2015) evoke *Game of Thrones* (HBO 2011-). Finally Ralph Lauren in 2012 drew inspirations from *Downton Abbey* for his Fall / Winter collection, by using Highclere Castle, the location of the series, for the fashion show. There are many, more or less explicit, connections, to the point of creating a real short circuit between TV series and the runways: what inspires what? And how much is the audiences’ opinion participating in the dissemination of taste and styles put forward by the fictions?

As we have seen, the fruition of a series is undoubtedly enriched by social networking, which for audiences attentive to fashion would mean increasing the value of the series and the outfits worn by its characters through the adoption of relevant practices, which focus on the sharing by groups of users of tastes rooted in the medial capital they have in common; usually TV series fans love the genre and are not interested in an individual product.

Thanks to the different consumption practices taking place in online settings, therefore through the production of contents and exchanges that audiences carry out, processes of value enhancement are activated for different products (TV series, outfits) with social, symbolic, cultural and economic implications as well. The medial capital appears therefore to be quite relevant, similarly to other forms of capital studied by Pierre Bourdieu. Following this line of thought, Nick Couldry developed the concept of media meta-capital to outline the form through which the media exercise their power both over other forms of power or over other fields, thus focusing the audiences’ attention on specific themes, modes, and practices. The media may in fact increase the symbolic capital of a TV series also through the elements comprising it, enhancing for example the style of the outfits, and including garments or atmospheres in photo shoots for fashion magazines, a practice – as we have seen – which is being increasingly adopted. The visibility of the wardrobes determines in effect the acquisition of an increased notoriety.

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46 Bourdieu, *La Distinzione*.
for them, therefore the affirmation of the style displayed in the fiction, contaminating different fields. When the covers of magazines such as Vogue, Marie Claire, Harper’s Bazaar show outfits or characters from a TV series, a symbolic and value-laden shifting would certainly take place from the world of television storytelling to the fashion narrative. In the era of connected audiences and convergent culture, audiences’ activities contribute strongly to the definition of this effect, to the creation of shifts in meanings and values, which do not only refer to different field, but also come closer to everyday experiences. The sharing entailed in the making of an outfit which has been inspired by a TV series falls therefore within the framework of a consumption dynamics placed between multiple levels, and it is further enhanced when highly appreciated at the level of social media.