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# MEDIA CONVERGENCE, FASHION, AND TV SERIES

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## **Media convergence and fashion**

Our lives' media scenario has grown increasingly complex. Mobile technologies and digitization have changed our experience in a significant way. We live in media surroundings in which we actively participate, either as consumers of tools and products, or as creators and disseminators of contents. Media are part of the baggage each of us carry around, similar to the shoes and clothes we put on to go out. They can be compared to the objects we always have with us, and we cannot do without. Fashion communication falls within this framework, and as such, is characterized by new rationales and new practices.

This article will primarily focus on a specific kind of media product, the television series, as a textual form capable of connecting with multiple discursive lines, through its links to several media platforms. From the television set to the tablet and smartphone, devices for viewing television series are constantly growing in number and win over different categories of users. Technology thus enables a completely customized consumption and use of these products, within the typical framework of convergence culture.<sup>1</sup> The idea of convergence refers to a radical cultural change, more than a technological one, concerning production and fruition of media products, as well as the social relations they engender, in diverse situational contexts. This means, for example, that while television series like *House of Cards*<sup>2</sup> or *Jane the Virgin*<sup>3</sup> are still followed by a majority of audiences through the classic approach, one episode after the other, and season after season, many groups now follow them through other channels, like social networks. These new avenues attract viewers seeking to further explore some of the narrative and aesthetic lines in the shows and talk about the topics referring to them.

In fact, the importance of television series in terms of fashion has an already established – although quite recently – history. Ralph Lauren used the mansion of *Downton Abbey*<sup>4</sup> – linked to the imagery created by the television series – to present its Fall 2012 collection, as a testimony to the taste conveyed in it, linking its name to a cultural product already provided with strong connotations of style. Brooks Brothers and Banana Republic have already devoted a capsule collection to *Mad Men*.<sup>5</sup> Many tributes have been paid to *Game of Thrones*<sup>6</sup> by several designers: Gucci, Helmut Lang, Manish Arora.

Analyzing the concept of transmedia storytelling is central.<sup>7</sup> This approach contends stories which are articulated through the creation of a complex narrative universe, capable of

exploiting the different options provided by media platforms in order to offer a consistent and articulated narrative structure. In Facebook pages, or in Instagram profiles, the fandom linked to television series takes many shapes, especially regarding the most beloved series. Following the modalities that develop online through the exchanges about outfits, brands, and styles, helps us to understand how fashion is important today in audiovisual productions and how its presence has become fundamental in storytelling.

In television series, references about garments and brands have steadily grown in recent years, thus providing audiences of various ages and interests with the option of linking with contents concerning fashion in addition to narrative. In television shows set in the past, as well as in those set in the present, an increasing number of elements linked to specific styles and known designers can be found. The relationship between television series and fashion appears to be growing in importance: dresses and costumes provide television productions with added value, at not only an aesthetic level, but also to the narrative contents, thanks to the use of meanings referring to specific styles and garments. In some instances, a piece of jewelry, or a jacket, or a pair of shoes, are immediately linked to specific social groups, easily recognizable milieus or subcultures, thus offering viewers a map to navigate through the text and its pathways. The effects of these links impact with the market as well. In many cases, clothing lines linked to successful series have been created, and are sold in several chain stores (for example a *Stranger Things*<sup>8</sup> line and other lines produced by Pull&Bear or Primark). The use that audiences make of some outfits worn onscreen, or of the characters whose style shows affinity to their taste, is likewise relevant. These images and characters become models to imitate, take up and post in their social network profiles. Audiences devote time and energy to them.

For these reasons, the first part of this article focuses on the relationship between television series and fashion. After having defined and explained the context, the second part of the article considers five television series (*Gossip Girl*,<sup>9</sup> *House of Cards*,<sup>10</sup> *The Carrie Diaries*,<sup>11</sup> *Stranger Things*, and *Riverdale*<sup>12</sup>), together with a group of Instagram posts linked and/or devoted to them. These posts have been analyzed in order to understand the ways in which audiences – and mostly fans – seize on television contents linked to fashion, inside the chosen stories.<sup>13</sup>

### **Fashion discourse: a part of the storytelling**

Although it seems a recent phenomenon, it was in fact during the first half of the twentieth century that with cinema, the media industry's expansion started to create "viral" forms of consumption.<sup>14</sup> Many television series today are considered *cinematic* – a high-quality product in terms of script, direction, casting, immersive storytelling, and of course the great attention paid to clothes/costumes. As Mittell wrote, "in the digital era a television program is the origin of an inter-textual network extending its perimeter and blurring the boundary between the viewing of a series and the consumption of para-texts derived from it."<sup>15</sup> In this conceptualization, considering the different para-texts and ancillary moments as an important component of the enjoyment of the television series by audiences, is likewise important.<sup>16</sup>

Let's take for example *Sex and the City*, *Downton Abbey*, *Gossip Girl*, and *Riverdale*. Each of these series presents a specific macro topic, where clothes play a fundamental role. *Sex and the City* instantly became a significant example of the relationship between storytelling and fashion: we can say, without any doubt, that the Manolo Blahnik brand has become known worldwide thanks to Carrie Bradshaw. Even today Carrie's style is still considered something to follow, although the last episode of the television series was aired 15 years ago.<sup>17</sup> A similar phenomenon is at work in a period drama like *Downton Abbey* was much discussed, with great attention paid to the wardrobe of its characters. An exhibition has been devoted to the series, based mostly on

the costumes, which is still running.<sup>18</sup> Considering specific teen dramas also allows in-depth exploration of the features linking the audience to the shows' wardrobes in many Internet social networks: Facebook, Pinterest, and Instagram.

In other words, the narrative complexity of the television series also includes clothing, which not only plays the role of building and defining the individual features of each character, it also becomes a modular element of the serial product. The link between the outfits and the audience develops therefore far beyond the boundaries of the story being told; it runs through the para-textual worlds linked to the television series. Clothing works both as an additional promotional asset, in particular for activities following the first broadcasting of the television series, as well as a socialization tool, for audiences particularly sensitive to the topic.<sup>19</sup>

These television fashion spaces join the recently expanded number and quality of discursive spaces devoted to fashion in the media more generally. For example, *Vogue*, *Marie Claire*, or *Harper's Bazaar* devote a lot of space talking about television series and their outfits. This proliferation of images, articles, audio-videos, and text leads to a new discursive power of fashion: the meanings attributed to fashion refer to increasingly diversified contexts, at times quite distant from the concreteness of dressing and accessories. Fashion is no longer solely an object, but rather the subject of discourse capable of showing itself through the multiple ways in which it appears and for its ability to – metaphorically – speak out. This arguably a phenomenon particularly evident in television series, as these examples seek to illustrate.

Viewed from this angle, it is possible to identify many avenues ways of fashion storytelling in television shows: sometimes fashion is evident, other times it is implicit and more subtle. In television series like *Sex and the City*, *Gossip Girl*, *Lipstick Jungle*,<sup>20</sup> *Atelier Fontana*,<sup>21</sup> or *The Assassination of Gianni Versace*,<sup>22</sup> the fashion discourse is obvious and participates in the narrative construction of the text. In some instances, it is part of the main plot, while in others the characters constantly move in and out of fashion worlds: from famous display windows, to easily recognizable garments or accessories, to shoppers, through a series of clues emerging in most scenes portrayed. In other instances, fashion works as a parallel between the fictional world and the real one. Brands and fashion houses are present in the episodes and are part of the wealth of knowledge of audiences who are capable of identifying them, and thereby recognize their symbolic and value-laden meaning.

There are also television series where the attention to clothes does not go unnoticed; however, the styles are not in line with contemporary taste. This phenomenon mostly applies to narratives set in a different historical period than the present, either in the past, like *Downton Abbey*, *Mad Men*, and *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*,<sup>23</sup> or a fantasy world, like *Game of Thrones*. Here, clothing works not only as a tool to better understand the characters' roles, but also as an implicit guide to taste.

In these cases, however, audiences are the ones making and sharing much of the content, by describing or at times analyzing the outfits coming from this kind of television series, thereby linking them to the present. In the television series *Reign*,<sup>24</sup> for example, some outfits come from the most recent designer creation, despite the fact that the series is set in the late sixteenth century. In season 1, episode 16, Kenna wears a Rena Wedding Dress by Kite and Butterfly, and in season 3, episode 18, Queen Mary wears a black and brown embroidered wool felt vest by Etro. This contamination between the use of historical costumes and garments from the latest fashion shows has been recognized by viewers as well. The posts in social media often present contrasting views: some viewers do not appreciate the adopted strategy, finding it shallow and careless. Others have instead interpreted the choice as a search for innovation and care in the juxtaposition of styles. In a 2013 interview for *Fashionista*, the costume designer, Meredith Markworth-Pollack, said that the choice of placing some contemporary elements in

the costumes had been made by production, in order to project a sort of “revisited authenticity.”<sup>25</sup>

The observation of the outfits fits perfectly with what Joseph Mittell<sup>26</sup> calls “investigative” fandom and refers to the way audiences watch television series today. This process transforms viewers into amateur narratologists, capable of following the many paths put forward by the ecosystem linked to the television series, as well as creating new thematic itineraries, fashion and styles among them. From the late 1990s, within the new wave of quality television series, in the confluence of interest in new manners of story representation and high-level acting, clothing thus became a focus of debate and sharing among audiences. Clear evidence of this process can be found in the online universe: sections entirely devoted to clothes are present in websites, blogs, forums, and wiki settings, making clothing a much talked about topic, and followed in social networks.

### **Television series, social network, and fashion**

The next pages focus on the television shows discussed in the sample of the Instagram posts examined. These were analyzed according to the ratings of the best television series.<sup>27</sup> Starting from this ranking, we chose *Gossip Girl*, *House of Cards*, *The Carrie Diaries*, *Stranger Things*, and *Riverdale*. They are much loved and followed by audiences, with wardrobes highlighted by institutional figures of the fashion world. For instance, Motivi, an Italian brand, dedicated two capsule collections to *Gossip Girl*, “City Glam” and “Party Chic.”<sup>28</sup> Anna Sui designed a collection for the series as well.<sup>29</sup>

Today the activity of the television series fans is quite visible in social media pages. Institutional profiles devoted to specific television series, pages managed by the fans and devoted to individual characters, or to actors, stylists and costume designers are common. The use of social networks has become a habit for many, a way to stay linked to a specific product, even after the closing credits and the theme song. Fans use social media to explore and understand the fashion discourse which is presented there through the style of characters, the brands being shown and the references to that world. Instagram is now the favorite social network for Millennials and Generation Z, as many studies confirm.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, Instagram is an appropriate place to turn, in order to better understand how much the topic of fashion in television series is becoming part of the discourse circulating in social networks, and which kind of viewers were more interested in it. Instagram, in effect, is not only a space for sharing, but also an information, or even learning, venue. On Instagram mechanisms may be activated which refer not only the social, but also the cultural capital, linked to the flow of knowledge circulating among viewers, the main feature of convergent culture.<sup>31</sup> The concept of convergent culture is in fact closely linked to participatory culture: it describes a dialectics between top/down forces originated in the cultural industry (namely the production and distribution of TV series) and the bottom/up forces which instead spring from active audiences contributing to expand the notoriety of medial products through a process of content production. But not solely that. A large part of the viewers are quite active in posting comments linked to the clothes present in the TV series, together with images and remarks. And this is precisely the context where we have developed the design of the research.

### ***Instagram as a research tool***

In order to understand the ways through which fashion is present in television series, and then used in the diverse contexts of Instagram, we analyzed a specific group of images, part of the

research corpus of the larger study from which this essay's analysis is drawn. The goal of the research – still in progress – consists in observing and understanding the ways through which audiences express their appreciation for the outfits present in the TV series, through social platforms such as Instagram. As written previously, Instagram was chosen because at the moment is one of the most used social media, with an increasing number of users.<sup>32</sup> Fashion is also one of the most widely discussed topics, so much so that all the most famous brands as well as emerging ones, are present with constantly updated profiles.

The chosen methodology is qualitative and based on the visual analysis of posts.

The first step of the research has consisted of the definition of the sample of the TV series on which to work, from a relevant number.<sup>33</sup> For each of one, we picked the images using a series of hashtags that included the title of the individual television series; the name of the most interesting characters under the outfit profile; and some words deemed to be search keys common to all cases (“fashion,” “wardrobe,” “style”). For every television series, 100 images and related posts were selected. We did not take into consideration the profiles of the users as starting points to analyze; rather we opted to follow the trajectories identified through the hashtags. This path led us to observe the identity of users in a later phase, which we shall discuss.

The emerging corpus of images is thus made of five hundred images published on Instagram with their related remarks. Each of these images has been analyzed according to the tools of the visual methodology.<sup>34</sup> In particular, we focused on the meaning of each image, with reference to the profile where it was posted. Therefore, in its being linked to a specific television series, each image turns out to belong to a social identity defined specifically by the television narrative. An additional effort consisted of understanding the interpretation which users have given to the images and the way they were put into focus. For example, in some instances the images are presented in connection with the audiences' real world, and not with the location and setting of the television series. In this regard, the remarks have turned out to be quite useful. These images, in effect, as Pinney<sup>35</sup> writes, represent “compressed performances” in some cases, because they refer to dynamic moments of the television series, quite well known among fans, where clothing and costumes are part of the plot and its meaning.

We also took into account the fact that in Instagram pages, users adopt several communication strategies, according to the type of audience they want to reach, and the role they want to play. Following the study by Lev Manovich<sup>36</sup> linked to the different modes of expression provided by Instagram, we have used three strategies defined by the author: “home mode,” “imagery mode,” and “self-expression mode.” The “home mode” is used for all the images intended mostly for a “private” audience, made of friends or relatives. These are photos comprising selfies and shots from everyday life, small events like dining with friends and relatives, birthday celebrations, holidays, where the person managing the profile is often present. The visual quality is not the best; these are usually amateur photos.

In contrast, the “imagery” strategy is used for images which are published in order to attract a wider mass audience. These are quality photographs often depict the author of the page, posing according to traditional codes. This “imagery” strategy consists in “images intended to persuade, promote, or otherwise perform strategic intentions.”<sup>37</sup> In these instances, the aesthetic feature is particularly relevant and detailed. These shots refer to a specific symbolic universe, where both figures and backdrops are highlighted, as they are linked to recognizable cultural images.

The last strategy, that of “self-expression,” takes place when “people use particular visual aesthetics and styles to define their membership in subcultures, to signal their “identities,” and to identify with particular lifestyles.”<sup>38</sup> In this instance the published images aim at narrating the user through his/her aesthetic and cultural choices. These categories are useful for arranging the

images of the corpus according to the characteristics described by Manovich, in order to analyze them starting from a preliminary value-based framework.

### ***The analysis of the television series and their use on Instagram***

The work on the analysis of the images has entailed a few steps. For each image a series of elements have been taken into consideration in order to proceed with the cataloging with respect to the previously mentioned categories (“home mode,” “imagery,” and “self-expression”). First of all, the quality of the shot has been considered. For example, an image taken from a photoshoot made on the set would look quite differently from a selfie. Then the setting and the subject of the image have been analyzed. The qualitative study has also included an interpretation of the way the images talk about fashion and the type of connection with the style of the TV series they refer to.

A summary sheet was then prepared for every TV series, comprising all the collected data. In this way, several trends have emerged more clearly.

We then subdivided the TV series of the corpus into two macro-groups: the first group of television series taken into consideration is the one linked to the use of fashion in the course of the show’s storytelling (*Gossip Girl*, *House of Cards*, and *The Carrie Diaries*). The second, instead, comprises the series where the outfits of the characters seem to have the same importance as the other elements in the plot (*Stranger Things* and *Riverdale*).

We found a series of occurrences that were shared by all the cases considered: *Gossip Girl*, *House of Cards*, and *The Carrie Diaries*. First, the chosen images are quality photos and do not only show clothes, but also trendy locations and design objects. This use of the “imagery mode” is particularly present whenever an aestheticizing choice of the photos to publish on the profile is made. Second, these posts are usually linked to imageries known by the audience, connected to well-represented settings in the media, inhabited by social groups shown to belong to the upper middle class (*Gossip Girl*) or political elites (*House of Cards*). There are some exceptions, however. *The Carrie Diaries*, for instance, appears to be different, as it expresses its attachment to fashion starting from the search for a style based more on passion and recognition of elegance by characters, than on their social status.

On Instagram, the titles of these television series work as taste-defining indicators, thus falling in tune with what is stated in television products. As such, they work as a sort of meta-brands, capable of adding value to the user’s discourse according to the recognition attributed by the audience to the television product. For this reason, the images pertaining to these series are mostly published by users calling themselves “fashion bloggers,” “influencers,” and “shop assistants.” They are professional (or aspiring) figures who want to openly express their love for the fashion world.

These are not the only categories of viewers using these specific television series in their profiles, however. We also found the fans of the series, or of some of their characters. Some are expressly devoted to the outfits shown on screen and the images refer to screenshots taken from the episodes. Others are photos taken from magazines or other media, portraying actors outside the set, on special occasions (photo shoots for magazines, attendance in social events, or awards ceremonies). There are other instances which are compositions of several images made into one: stage photos placed alongside a sort of scrambling of the outfit; photos of the characters and selfies of the users dressed in the same way; photos of the outfit and photos of model/s on the runway with the same garments.

In contrast, in television series where fashion seems to be less relevant in the overall economy of the story, the profiles found through the chosen hashtags belong mostly to people



using social media as expressive tools of their fandom. In many instances a “home mode” strategy emerges: the images and the posts seem addressed mostly to users’ groups with whom there is already a connection, therefore not a wide and anonymous audience. We refer here to the other two teen dramas of the corpus: *Stranger Things* and *Riverdale*. They are quite different texts, both in terms of the stories being told, and the chosen settings. In both of them, specific brands cannot be recognized, except in *Stranger Things*, where it is possible to see the sneakers used by the characters, as they are recognizable and useful to establish a link with the 1980s, the historical period where the series takes place. For the rest, there aren’t any explicit references to the fashion world and its brands. Instead, style markers are used to define the role of the characters and their identities. For many of the protagonists of these two shows, the wardrobe makes reference to specific stereotyped styles (like preppy, casual, or underground), adjusted to be functional to the narrative. For example, the outfits making reference to youth groups and specific subcultures are well outlined. The “Serpents” of *Riverdale*, use an aggressive aesthetic quite close to that of metal fans, with a corresponding following in Instagram posts. Interestingly, this manner of staying connected with the story even beyond the viewing of the individual episodes, as a sort of tribute made through the use of a “uniform,” is capable of going beyond the boundary of gender: there are many girls, for example, showing selfies wearing the clothes of male characters (in particular Jughead Jones).

Even if *Riverdale* is set in the present time, the clothes, as well as the design, recall a retro atmosphere highlighted in some characters. Instagram users are aware of, and underline this choice of style, and their discourse especially and clearly distinguishes between Betty, Veronica, and Cheryl, the most popular female characters. If the first character embodies the simple and linear style, perfectly describing the personality of the good girl, Veronica represents the only character showing an evident “flair for fashion.” Cheryl is clearly different from the other two because, although provided with a well-designed wardrobe, she seems much closer to a fabled imagery than reality.

Many pictures in line with the “imagery mode” are devoted to Veronica and Cheryl, where graphic quality and aesthetics are very polished. For both of them, spaces belonging to dream-like imagery are often evoked, following a trajectory linked to the highlighting of outfits. If in one case, there is a highlighted link between the personality of the Instagrammer and that of the “possible” wardrobe, in the other case the personal taste towards a utopian vision of the garment is staged, as is often the case in high-fashion runway shows.

In general, both for television series where fashion discourse seems explicit, and for those where fashion does not seem relevant, fans on Instagram show many examples linked to the “self-expression” mode often appearing through practices which might be labeled as “get the look”: these are posts at times presenting double images (the television character on the one hand, and the user on the other hand) to highlight the similarity of the outfit, as a first step in the relationship between the fan and the character. While the recognition of the style and the aesthetic appreciation linked to this type of representation of the outfit appear clearly, even when the clothes are copied to be worn and shown to other users, the effect of closeness with the character can be better understood by also analyzing the remarks accompanying the images. The outfit and in many cases the hairstyle or the makeup become signs of the wish to take hold of the character’s traits. We found in several instances that users – more women than men – say they have dressed in a certain way (as in the photos) to feel like a given character because they were facing difficult personal circumstances: the chosen outfit makes them feel stronger. These provocative instances will provide grounds for further research as our project progresses.



## Conclusion

Television series are steadily growing in importance, not only in the scenario of media fiction, but also in the much wider fashion discourse. The examples we have reported here show the extent to which the outfits shown on screen have become desirable and valuable in socialization spaces. They play not only an aspirational role but also move people towards creative research and activity involving style, personality, and relations. We interpret Instagram participation as a reflection of the social and cultural environment linked to the fashion world, where television series work as an additional driver to specifically expand and influence that fashion environment. In the current phase of evolution, linked to the mediatization of culture and society, this research reveals a transformation of new habits of fashion fans,<sup>39</sup> who are in many instances fans of television series as well.

Even for the instances where fashion follows an implicit line, as in *Stranger Things*, we find clear statements of appreciation for fashion that adds to fashion discourse more broadly. The 2017 Louis Vuitton presented on the runway a T-shirt dedicated to the series, as a testimony of the passion its creative director, Nicolas Ghesquière, has for the show is but one example.

Our findings indicate that there is now a short circuit between fiction and fashion, where it is no longer clear which influences which. We found audiences play a role in this mechanism, whether they belong to a group of experts, like designers or fashion bloggers, or are simply fans, with their own taste and knowledge. What they are showing on Instagram is in fact something more than a mere aesthetic choice, it is part of the making a fashion world.

## Notes

- 1 Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, New York: New York University Press, 2008.
- 2 *House of Cards* (2013–2018, USA: Netflix/Sky Atlantic).
- 3 *Jane the Virgin* (2014–, USA: The CW).
- 4 *Downton Abbey* (2010–2015, UK: Carnival Film, Masterpiece/ITV).
- 5 *Mad Men* (2007–2015, USA: AMC).
- 6 *Game of Thrones* (2011–2019, USA: HBO).
- 7 Jason Mittell, *Complex TV: The Poetics of Contemporary Television Storytelling* (New York: New York University Press, 2015).
- 8 *Stranger Things* (2016–, USA: Netflix).
- 9 *Gossip Girl* (2007–2012, USA: The CW).
- 10 *House of Cards* (2013–2018, USA: Netflix/Sky Atlantic).
- 11 *The Carrie Diaries* (2013–2014, USA: The CW).
- 12 *Riverdale* (2017–, USA: The CW).
- 13 The analysis in this article is drawn from a larger research project carried out with the participation of students following the degree course in Fashion, Communication and Management of Bologna University.
- 14 Fashion has always played a central role in media productions. Wilson (*Adorned in Dreams. Fashion and Modernity*, London: Virago Press, 1985) writes that the 1930s were already considered the gilded era of Hollywood dressing. The dresses linked to cinema productions started then to be sold in several chain stores in the USA, including Macy's in New York. Being readily available in this way cost them some of the mystique they previously had but contributed to making the audiences' desire for appropriation come true: placed in easily accessible stores, made with mass market fabrics, "cinematographic" garments became a sort of *trait-d'union* between the imagery of cinema and the concreteness of reality. In this way, the symbolic, aesthetic, and functional value of the clothes on screen progressively took hold, and eventually expanded to television productions.
- 15 Jason Mittell, *Complex TV: The Poetics of Contemporary Television Storytelling* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 20.

- 16 Cfr John Caldwell, "Second-Shift Media Aesthetics," in *New Media: Theories and Practices of Digitextuality*, eds., A. Everett and J. Caldwell. USA – UK: Routledge, 2003.
- 17 Vogue Italia: <https://www.vogue.it/moda/tendenze/2018/09/06/carrie-bradshaw-look-da-copiare-sarah-jessica-parker-sex-and-the-city>. Accessed November 2020.
- 18 <https://www.downtonexhibition.com>. Accessed November 2020.
- 19 Antonella Mascio, "Television Series and Fashion. A Look to the Audiences' Activities," *Comunicazioni Sociali* 2017, no. 1, Milano: Vita & Pensiero, 2017, 79–90.
- 20 *Lipstick Jungle* (2008–2009, USA: NBC).
- 21 *Atelier Fontana* (2011, Italy: Rai Fiction/Rai1).
- 22 *The Assassination of Gianni Versace – American Crime Story* (2018, USA: Fox 21 Television Studios/FX).
- 23 *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* (2017–, USA: Amazon Prime Video).
- 24 *Reign* (2013–2017, USA: The CW).
- 25 Online: <https://fashionista.com/2013/10/reign-costume-designer-interview>. Accessed November 2020.
- 26 Jason Mittell, *Complex TV: The Poetics of Contemporary Television Storytelling* (New York: New York University Press, 2015).
- 27 We used a group of specific web sites, including the Internet Movie Database and Ranker: <https://www.imdb.com/chart/toptv/> <https://www.metacritic.com/> and <https://www.ranker.com/>. Accessed November 2020.
- 28 <http://www.trendstoday.it/trendstoday/gossip-girl-una-capsule-collection-per-manchattan-girls/>. Accessed November 2020.
- 29 <https://www.refinery29.com/en-us/anna-sui-gossip-girl-inspired-t>. Accessed November 2020.
- 30 <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/new-social-media-demographics/#Instagram>. Accessed November 2020.
- 31 Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2008).
- 32 See <https://www.statista.com/>. Accessed November 2020.
- 33 At first students were asked to pick and work on the TV series they were familiar with and liked. This is why the initial sample is larger (35 titles) than the one presented here.
- 34 Gillian Rose, eds., *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials* (London-Thousand Oaks-New Delhi-Singapore: Sage, 2016).
- 35 Christopher Pinney, *'Photos of the Gods': The Printed Image and Political Struggle in India* (London: Reaktion Books, 2004).
- 36 Lev Manovich, *Instagram and Contemporary Image*, Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International Creative Commons license, 2017 ([http://manovich.net/content/04-projects/154-instagram-and-contemporary-image/instagram\\_book\\_manovich\\_2017.pdf](http://manovich.net/content/04-projects/154-instagram-and-contemporary-image/instagram_book_manovich_2017.pdf)). Accessed November 2020.
- 37 J. Schroeder, "Snapshot Aesthetics and the Strategic Imagination," *InVisible Culture: An Electronic Journal for Visual Culture* (IVC), 18 (2013) (<http://ivc.lib.rochester.edu/snapshot-aesthetics-and-the-strategic-imagination/>). Accessed November 2020.
- 38 Lev Manovich, *Instagram and Contemporary Image*, Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International Creative Commons license, 2017: 40.
- 39 Agnes Rocamora, "Mediatization and Digital Media in the Field of Fashion," *Fashion Theory* 21, no. 5 (2017): 505–22.