

# Why Fashion and Television Are Cosier Than Ever

Fashion's budding love affair with TV was on full display at this year's Emmy Awards, where brands large and small dressed the industry's next crop of likely ambassadors.

By Diana Pearl



The campaign's face, Britt Lower, the star of Apple TV's "Severance," may lead one of television's most talked-about shows, but she's not a household name and had never appeared in a fashion campaign. Still, the brand was confident she was the right fit. The campaign was centred around telling artists' stories in NYC, where the brand is headquartered; Lower, too, lives in the city. Plus, they could time its release to arrive just before the Emmy Awards, where she was nominated for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Drama Series.

Theory's bet looked particularly prescient after Lower landed her first Emmy on Sunday night, but for the brand, she was already a proven winner. The response to the campaign, according to Dinesh Tandon, Theory's global CEO, had been "tremendous," thanks in large part to Lower's dedicated fan base, who shared photos on social media of their visits to Theory stores to see the campaign videos in person and even made fan art of the images.

"TV actors are incredible storytellers at heart, they have the ability to embody a role and connect emotionally with audiences," Tandon wrote in an email. "We of course like to work with talent 'first,' but our interest in Britt extended far beyond that. We recognise that she's a talent with real grit and staying power."

Historically, higher-end labels favoured film stars to front their campaigns and populate their front rows, preferring their mass appeal and proven bankability. But as brands are forced to get extra creative to stand out and nab consumer attention, they're looking to rising small screen stars for the very reasons they once shied away from them.

With TV, the names are usually not as recognisable, but "there is a lot more room for discovery," said Lindsay Peoples, the editor in chief of *The Cut*, which hosted a pre-Emmys luncheon in Los Angeles last Wednesday. Buzzy shows offer a crop of new faces that are familiar and intriguing but not yet ubiquitous. Plus, TV audiences are highly engaged, tuning in week after week, year after year, rather than just watching a movie once.





“TV shows have such a frenetic, crazy fan base that brands are excited to dress those people,” said the stylist Ilaria Urbinati, who styled nominees including Adam Brody of “Nobody Wants This” (in Prada) and Adam Scott of “Severance” (in Thom Browne).

Fashion’s interest in TV was on full display at Sunday night’s Emmy Awards in Los Angeles, where a wide range of brands dressed top talent. That included plenty of major European luxury houses. Louis Vuitton was a major presence, dressing Erin Doherty, who won for “Adolescence,” Quinta Brunson, nominated for “Abbott Elementary,” “Hacks” winner Hannah Einbinder and Selena Gomez. Valentino also dressed multiple stars, including nominees Kathryn Hahn, Parker Posey and Meghann Fahy. Both Giorgio Armani and Armani Privé were a frequent sight on the carpet, too, dressing Anna Sawai, Molly Gordon, Kristen Bell, Leslie Bibb and Cate Blanchett.

But there were more unexpected names, too: Nominee Jenny Slate wore a black-and-white gown from New York-based Rosie Assoulin; “The Penguin” winner Cristin Milioti wore a magenta dress from American designer Danielle Frankel, who is best known for bridal; while Brittany Snow wore a pink sequined number from New York label Wiederhoeft. Presenter Catherine Zeta-Jones was dressed by American couture label Yara Shoemaker and Alan Cumming wore a custom black tuxedo with white piping from New York label Tanner Fletcher. Plus, for the first time since the relaunch of Calvin Klein Collection last year, the brand dressed a woman — Lower, just two days after she sat front row at their show at New York Fashion Week — for the ceremony, while GapStudio, Gap’s new higher-end label, created a suit for “Adolescence” star Owen Cooper.

It was “Hacks” star Meg Stalter, however, that wore the most unconventional outfit — jeans, a white T-shirt and a black bag with the word “Ceasefire!” printed on it.

## TV’s Prestige Peaks

While prestige television, of course, is not a new phenomenon, for the bulk of the 2010s, the medium was barely on fashion’s radar. It took Elisabeth Moss seven years into “Mad Men”’s eight-year run to land a fashion campaign — and when she did, it was for the mass-market Gap. The same goes for “Game of Thrones” Sophie Turner and Emilia Clarke, who only scored deals with luxury brands several seasons into the series’ run. Even stars of teen-targeted shows were more likely to score a Neutrogena campaign than be tapped as a luxury ambassador. (“Gossip Girl”’s Blake Lively was an exception, appearing in a Chanel ad in 2011.)

Cut to today, and brands are much quicker to pay attention to those rising on the small screen. Anna Sawai, for instance, nabbed an ambassadorship with Dior within months of taking home her Emmy for the first season of “Shogun” in 2024. Loewe dressed “The Bear” actress Ayo Edebiri for the Met Gala just months after she won her first Emmy, and cast her in its spring 2025 pre-collection campaign last October. “The White Lotus” is a brand ambassador factory, with Aimee Lou Wood fronting a Burberry campaign, Patrick Schwarzenegger starring in one for Skims and Sam Nivola named an ambassador for Dior.

And it’s not just the prestige shows: Teen romance “The Summer I Turned Pretty” star Lola Tung has fronted campaigns for Coach, while Antonia Gentry of Netflix’s mother-and-daughter drama “Ginny & Georgia” sat front row at Miu Miu earlier this year.

Fashion’s embrace of TV is a sign of the times. For one, with big name talents like Nicole Kidman and Meryl Streep appearing in talked-about shows, the lines between a film actor and TV actor are blurrier than ever. That’s helped lift TV’s cultural clout while film’s is on the decline: Even one-time box office slam dunks, like Marvel movies, are falling short of expectations.

With TV stars, the path may be less clear, but reward is potentially bigger. Casting someone early on in their rise to stardom means they can play a role in their ascendance. Look at Miu Miu, whose own hot







streak has mirrored the explosion of brand ambassador Sydney Sweeney, first working her in 2022 when she was still primarily known for “Euphoria.”

“Some brands just have that long-game vision and can really see who is going to blow up,” said Urbinati. “There is something to jumping on board early and building that relationship.”

TV actors on the cusp of stardom are also cheaper to hire than even a mid-tier movie star (and the A-listers typically have multi-year deals with luxury houses, putting them off limits to other brands).

Without a contract limiting their choice, stylists have greater freedom with TV stars, too. Stylist Rose Forde, who worked with Lower throughout her “Severance” press tour, styled her in Prada and Loewe, but also smaller labels like Coperni, Conner Ives and recent CFDA womenswear nominee Kallmeyer.

“The fun of it all is to create that story for them on the red carpet and in their press appearances, and really hone in on their forward-facing image,” said stylist Chloe Hartstein, who dressed “Severance” producer and director Ben Stiller at Sunday’s show, and works with clients including “Succession” actors Kieran Culkin and Nicholas Braun. “In that sense, the lack of contract is always fun, because then we can dip our toes into younger designers.”

The benefits, of course, are two-fold. For up-and-coming talents, landing a fashion campaign or sitting front row at a buzzy runway show offers cachet and a way to prove their place in the zeitgeist. That not only makes them attractive to casting directors, but also provides extra income that allows them to be choosier in selecting their next role. Both Hartstein and Urbinati said they see more Hollywood talent interested in inking fashion partnerships now than ever before.

It all speaks to a growing shift in how fashion works with talent — and vice versa.

“Brands are being a little bit braver,” said Hartstein. “Obviously, it’s all about the aesthetic, but there’s a little bit more depth now when it comes to the relationships with talent.”

