

Insight/ Traditional Media

Five Hit TV Shows Add Merchandise To The Cast

CMO EXCLUSIVES | April 21, 2016

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CMO.com



Most entertainment merchandise skews to youth: Star Wars' light sabers. Frozen's wands. Glee's T-shirts.

But five hit TV series—"Empire," "Downton Abbey," "The Good Wife," "The Biggest Loser," and "Star Trek"—reveal how creative and diverse products can be, and that adults are just as keen as kids to own a piece of a show they adore. In fact, each program has its own distinct niche.

"Understanding how fans feel is more of an art than a science," said Liz Kalodner, executive vice president and general manager of CBS consumer products. "You can have fantastic ratings, or simply a show with dedicated, passionate fans and a great merchandising hook."

Big picture, licensed entertainment-related products generated \$11.9 billion in U.S. retail sales last year, up 8% from 2014, according to trade publication [The Licensing Letter](#).

"Licensed merchandise for a TV series can be an important part of the marketing mix, bringing additional exposure, a tangible experience, and an expanded audience, all while also generating revenue," Kalodner said.

Empire

The runway has fueled the runaway success of Fox's "Empire" since its debut a year ago January. Fictional rap royalty the Lyons are steeped in bad-ass 'tude and über-hot hip-hop couture. Matriarch tough Cookie (Taraji P. Henson) tops leopard-print and leotard-



tight Balmain and Gucci with Fendi furs. Patriarch Lucious Lyon (Terrence Howard) dons Prada and Burberry.

Fashionistas have become loyal subjects. Within a month, Hood by Air sent models sashaying down catwalks to sound bites of Empire dialogue.

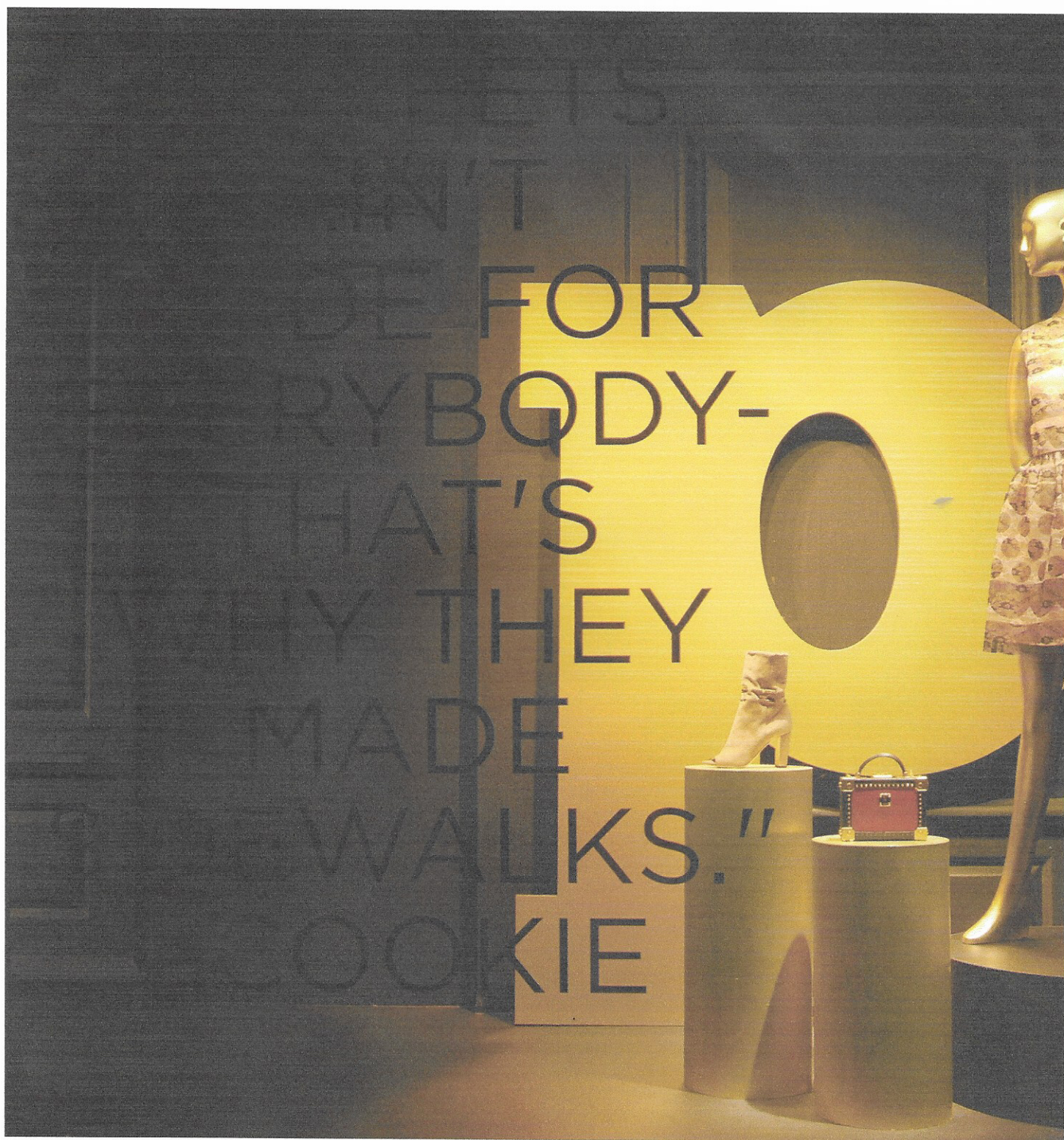
Then this decade's "Dynasty" went from rapper to dapper when Hood by Air followed with Empire-themed sweatshirts and backpacks, while upscale department chain Saks Fifth Avenue launched its Empire x Saks clothing and accessories line just before September's season two premiere. Participating Retail High Rollers include Alexis Bittar Jewelry, MCM Handbags, Jimmy Choo Footwear, And Cushnie Et Ochs Womenswear.

Saks further pumped up the volume by filling its flagship windows in Manhattan and Beverly Hills with Empire attire fetching up to \$1,500. Empire gets exposure. Saks gains coolness.

"The Saks collaboration has exceeded our expectations," said Peter Leeb, Fox consumer products' vice president of global brand management and strategy.

"Cookie Lyon has become a fashion icon, with everyone from Vogue to Entertainment Weekly writing about our characters' style."

Cookie clones are clamoring for more—and Fox and Saks plan to deliver, including Clive Christian scents, Leeb said. "With all the media and fan chatter, we have the true sense this lifestyle brand is here to stay," he added.



Downton Abbey

Merchandising a PBS upstairs/downstairs period piece might seem a stretch.

"People said, 'You can't license a period drama because the average viewer is a woman, age 55-plus, who's literate and not the core fan for licensed merchandise,'" said Carole Postal, president of Knockout Licensing.

Nonetheless, enchanted by Downton's writing, characters and Edwardian setting, she pursued the British show six years ago—before PBS aired it stateside. How right she was. "The \$3.67 billion U.S. quilt market alone turned out to be a bonanza," Postal said.

Knockout has spun an astounding array of goods from 30-plus licensees, including Weeks Roses, Heritage Lace bedding, Republic of Tea teas, Langley/Empire candles, 1928 jewelry, Quilted Koala jewelry travel rolls and River of Goods' lamps. What unites them is they're all true to the show, though repositioned to match modern consumer tastes.

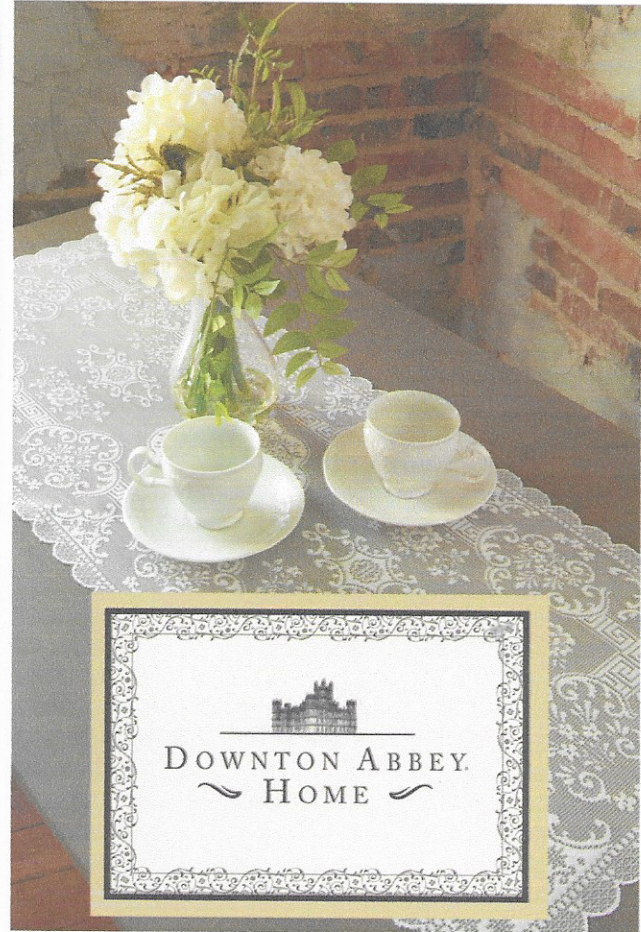
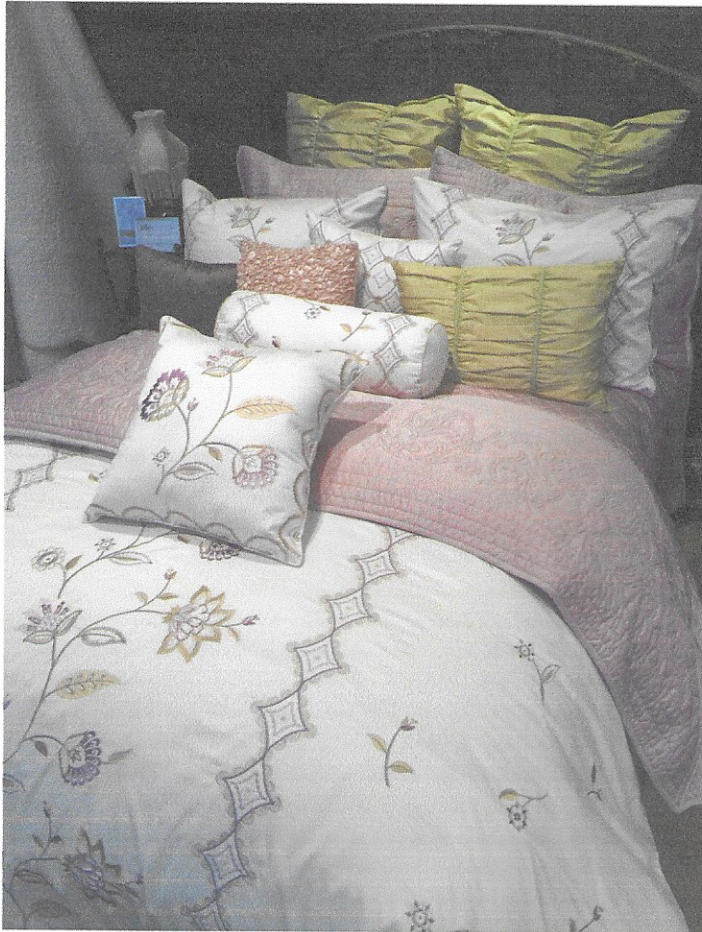
Insights from Downton's creator, producers, and set and costume designers filter down to each detail—even color palettes, with sensual yet sharp claret/burgundy for Lady Mary, subtle peach/apricot for Lady Edith, stately purples for Lady Violet, and hot-blooded fuchsia for Lady Rose.

"You're asking fans to take a piece of the series into their hearts and home," Postal said, "so lifestyle products need to be inspirational, aspirational, and authentic."

Toward that end, retail distribution skews to a narrow, elite segment of each market.

The series may have ended March 6, but, like "Star Trek," "Downton" endures. New items—including at least two more rose bushes—will sprout later this year, Postal said. "Viewers are unwilling to say goodbye," she said.





The Good Wife

The “Good Wife” is another seemingly odd choice for merchandisers: a drama about an attorney with job stress, a drinking habit, two teens, and a womanizing, politically ambitious hubby.

But its core audience admires the substantial, contemporary furnishings of the law offices and attorneys’ homes, leading CBS to move beyond the predictable picture frames and mini-flask pendants. A conversation with the set decorator led CBS to partner three years ago with Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams furniture stores and its website.

“She told us she’d purchased a tremendous amount of MG+BW furniture for the show,” CBS’s Kalodner said.

Now viewers can buy title character Alicia Florrick’s office sofa, attorney Cary Agos’ bed, and investigator Kalinda Sharma’s apartment chair.

“The audience remembers scenes, which makes the furniture meaningful,” Kalodner said. “I was a little worried about blood being on Kalinda’s chair in one episode, but it did not affect sales.”

Nor have departures of key characters over the years.



When “The Good Wife” fades to black in May after seven seasons, its furniture will still sell at MG+BW because the show’s appeal remains, as will the show via syndication, streaming, DVD and Netflix, Kalodner said.



The Biggest Loser

Real-life dieters make “The Biggest Loser” a marketing natural, said Tamaya Petteway, senior vice president of brand and licensing at NBC-affiliated Endemol Shine.

“When you see a 40-year-old mom who has tried to create healthy habits her whole life and struggles, you cannot help but identify with her,” Petteway said. “The contestants are learning, and so are viewers while being entertained.”

By weighing in with everything from food journals and Garmin’s Vivoactive smartwatch to cookbooks and fitness videos, “we’re giving fans something physical outside the show that they can get behind,” she added. In contrast to “Biggest Loser’s” voracious merchandising appetite—and the rigorous competition itself—its dozens of diet books and exercise videos preach moderation, and more. “Our products are about dedication to reaching your goals and empowering yourself,”

Petteway said

In return, the 17-season (and counting) series not only buys credibility but longevity, she said.

But nothing is forever in the health arena. “The marketplace is always changing,” Petteway said. So “Biggest Loser” raced to launch its wearable activity tracker. “You’re watching contestants monitor their weight and exercise. It was a no-brainer,” she said.

Star Trek

Once a Trekker, always a Trekker, and the TV trailblazer’s bold enterprise lives on.

“You’ve got to have a show that’s a touchstone for a generation, just like ‘Friends’ and ‘Seinfeld,’ to perpetuate merchandise,” said Max Goldberg, entertainment



industry strategist and president of Max Goldberg & Associates, in Studio City, Calif.

Trekkers' geek minutiae drives a galaxy of spin-offs: Borg Cube mini-fridge, captain's chair pool float, "communicator" Bluetooth phone, Starfleet Academy diplomas, Spock hand-signal business cardholders, and even a sushi set with chopsticks forming Enterprise's twin engines. "This is what we do all day—come up with these," CBS's Kalodner said.

Hundreds of new collectibles join the starscape yearly, driven by devotees via social media. "We have a real-time connection and what once was business-to-business has become a direct-to-consumer business."

Surprising to outsiders, perhaps, is 50% of aficionados are female, and the age range extends from those who watched the original show a half-century ago to those first exposed by new movie reboots.

"We're lucky to work on a brand with that kind of dedicated fans," Kalodner said. "They have the true love of a sports team follower."

