

Chapter 6 Goodies > How-to Conduct a Forecasting Buying Trip

While this may sound like all fun and games, learning how to spot trends is not for the faint of heart. This section of the text incorporates my own 20 years of travel experience. Along the way I have solicited insights from several pros, such as Clair D from Cotton Incorporated, and others to help you to better understand how to make the most of your next travel experience. You don't have to be a paid professional to practice the skills needed for successful forecasting. As a fashion student you are using this skills every time your shop a mall or flip the pages of a magazine. You are on the hunt for the new, the unique, and the next big trend.

Naturally, one of the best parts of the job will be shopping and in many casing buying! This not just any shopping -- this about searching for new ideas and trends that can be found anywhere including from high boutiques to local flea markets.

But what you are searching for???? How do you spot the beginnings of a new trend? Let's begin by defining what is a trend. A trend is the direction that fashion is moving in. While that sounds simple enough, how do you break down the specifics of what constitutes a trend? Or how does one spot a trend? A trend usually is comprised of one of the following:

- Color

- Detail

Fabrication

Silhouette

Finishing

As a fashion sleuth you need to be on the lookout for items and ideas that might morph into a trend anywhere from 6 months to several years down the road.

Each of the elements of spotting a trend can be your ticket to successful forecasting. There are several companies worldwide that will send out teams for the express purpose of photographing ideas as well as buying up samples for closer examination.

The most obvious element for a new trend is often color. It wouldn't be long before your eye is trained to look for new colors or color palettes that you feel may be the next big thing. Accompanying color is fabrication: the touch --the feel--the hand of a fabric or fiber that is garnering your attention is every bit as important to new ideas taking hold. Think about what catches your eye and compels your hands to explore further the tactile qualities of a fabric or garment. Often times seeing familiar techniques in new ways can become a trend that crosses cultures and soon finds its way into main-street stores a world away.

Details refer to specific parts of a garment such as sleeves, necklines and other items that appear to be a new spin on a familiar item.

Next is the silhouette, or shape of the garment. Silhouette can be described often in terms of letters, numbers or even geometric shapes. For example, “A” line or Bell sleeves to perhaps an “S” silhouette. All of these connote a particular emphasis of shape to either a part of a garment or perhaps the overall garment itself.

Finally the finishing of how a garment is put together can be a telling sign of a new direction for fashion. Seams and findings tell much more to the savvy eye than most recognize. All or parts of these elements are critical clues for the fashion forecaster.

With the final coup de’ grau in how items are often pulled together by the wear. Often a great design is really a great sense of personal style for pulling together a look that become new, fresh and vital to the organic every changing world of fashion.

Now that you know what to look for let’s put into practice what we have just learned, to start with any season fashion professional will tell you that knowing how to pack is a must. As a rookie fashion sleuth you will need the right equipment.

For starters, you will need (2) suitcases, one for your clothes and supplies and a larger---empty suitcase to place your smaller suitcase inside of. Why the empty

suitcase? Naturally you will need one suitcase to carry your travel necessities and one suitcase to bring home your new treasures.

Other essentials are of course a camera—I suggest both a traditional 35 mm camera and a digital camera. Both serve different purposes. The digital is great for immediate feedback, while the manual camera allows for quick repeated shots. For the seasoned veteran, a laptop to download files and to type up impressions of the day's activities and insights is helpful, you can also go low tech and use a travel journal to chronicle your ideas while perhaps having that nice cup of cappuccino.

While this may seem like a dream to some of you that someone actually gets paid to go shopping, you had better be well versed in trend spotting in order to divorce yourself from your particular wants and needs ---unless you have a great personal track record for spotting trends! You must keep in mind who your ultimate target market is and how the ideas you are searching out will be of importance to them!

Where do you go first? Walking the major city main streets is a must, armed with camera in hand, finding an ideal spot to begin to people watch to get your bearing is frequently a great place to start. Situating yourself at a major intersection or sidewalk café will have you primed and ready to go.

Visiting, festivals and shopping areas is essential to immerse yourself in the local cultural. A great idea is talk with people, the waiter at the café, the bellmen at your front desk, the clerks who work in the shops, run the gambit of simple one-on-one personal interviews for where the best places and shops are and why.

It is not uncommon for a designer to go on a exotic holiday and come back all fired up with ideas to transmute a museum cultural experience into a new embroidery or the site of colorful row house nestled into a hill side to become inspiration for the next season color palette.

Impressions and images can be adapted for patterns, color stories or even mood and theme boards.