

## Opportunities for Australian retailers and designers

Carol Hanlon, CEO, TCF Australia

Australian fashion retailers and designers need to expand their client bases into the massive Asian region of booming fashion consumers. Asia collectively has a population of more than three billion consumers and a rising middle class of consumers heavily into luxury fashion and accessories who value design and textiles, and are seeking increased individuality and unique product with a story to tell.

TCF Australia and TCF Global have extensive fashion industry trade networks in the Asian region and beyond, and link members with opportunities to visit these markets for sourcing or exhibiting - many with sponsored accommodation, airfares, or sponsored exhibition spaces.

To start, initially all Australian retailers and designers should expand their online shopping sites and social media networks to appeal to the Asian consumers. Where possible, include bilingual sites and link with local fashion portals in your country of choice and market to existing retailers and concession holders to gather market feedback and develop targeted collections, sizing, labelling, and packaging. Customer service and customer experiences

are something the Asian consumer expects, so this is an area that Australia really needs to lift. TCF Australia hosted four Australian designers to exhibit at World Boutique Hong Kong this year, where orders were obtained from Taipei and Singapore.

Australia is lucky enough to have a clean and green image, and in Asia, energy efficiency, environment issues, and ethical fashion is becoming a growing focus, making it important for Australian firms to gain accreditation for 'Sustainable Fashion'.

### Becoming energy efficient

Through simple and low cost steps most retailers can reduce energy costs by 25 per cent, and up to 40 per cent in many instances.

TCF has a range of free and easy to follow fact sheets, webinars, recordings, and advisors who can work one to one with small businesses.

Some of the common queries TCF receives from retailers are around how to use LED lights that have the best colour effects for fashion displays; how to stop staff changing the temperature gauge on air conditioners; commercially leasing solar for my retail shop; and reducing the energy footprint through entire supply chains to reduce costs.

Timing is vital in the fashion industry, with the onslaught of the international retailers already set up in Australia and a population of only 23 million, marketshare for the local Australian retailer or designer is dwindling away.

Develop a strategic timeline and plan. It has

never been easier for a small business to export and promote themselves globally and gain attention, but it takes effort and preparation to really look at what your competitive advantage or unique selling point (USP) is.

If you do not know this, first undertake research to develop your niche product or service to attract new audiences and new markets.

TCF runs webinars on the five latest retail concepts from the U, which includes some clever concepts.

### Current TCF buying mission opportunities

Hong Kong Fashion Week & World Boutique takes place in Hong Kong from January 19 to 22, 2015. First time buyers may be eligible for up to three nights free accommodation or a travel allowance in our TCF Mission.

This is a great opportunity to check out new suppliers, undertake research and look at what your competitors are buying.

At Textrends, New Delhi, in India from January 28 to 30, 2015, established retailers can join TCF Global, with our mission to source men's, women's, and children's suppliers and manufacturers, including accessories and textiles.

Firms may be eligible for sponsored airfare and accommodation support.

India International Handwoven Fair, Chennai, India in March 2015 is another upcoming event with sponsored air and accommodation, which includes homewares, curtains. ■

