C Suite: Look for Fringe, Statement Belts and Jewelry-esque Mini Bags This Fall

By Vicki M. Young
As CEO and president of the Accessories Council, Karen Giberson has been busy working with members seeking tariff relief in the U.S.-China trade war, and now on supply chain issues resonating from the impact of the global coronavirus.
Now that factories in China have largely re-opened, Giberson has been working with council members on navigating sourcing and the supply chain, particularly as firms told her there’s a shortage of parts critical to making their product. Now she’s helping member firms with virtual presentations as industry trade shows and group gatherings have been scrapped as COVID-19 leaps from country to country.

Through it all, Giberson also had time to study fashion accessories trends from New York Fashion Week for the upcoming Fall/Winter season to better guide her industry members. Here is a look at what Giberson saw as upcoming fashion trends later this year in the second installment of a new series from the C Suite.

**Sourcing Journal: Do accessories play an even bigger role now on the runways from five or 10 years ago?**

**Karen Giberson:** Back then, not many incorporated accessories, but designers understand that they must have more than just clothes to have a healthy business. A designer’s fan base wants more than just the outfit. They want to include that feeling that the brand represents across different categories, whether that’s optical, a belt or a shoe.... I hope we never go back to the minimalism we saw in the 1990s, because business dictates that we sell more than just clothes.

**SJ: So what are the trends you see for fall? What’s new?**

**KG:** I saw some monochromatic dressing that screams for a pop of color or accessories that might be bolder than in seasons past. I saw a lot of belts of all shapes and sizes and materials. There were a lot of wrap styles and apparel that were so voluminous that one needed to reign that in in some way. And there was fringe.

**SJ: Tell me about the fringe?**

**KG:** I saw tons and tons of fringe, tassel or fringe on a bag, which was also kind of fun. There was reasonable length fringe to super dramatic long fringe, the kind that was almost unwearable.
Karen Giberson Talks What’s Hot in Fall Fashion Accessories Trends – Sourcing Journal

SJ: You mentioned fringe on a bag. When you say accessories, handbags seem to come to mind first, before shoes, belts or even eyewear. Was there any new handbag trend for fall?

KG: The one thing I saw—and I saw a lot of it—that I’ve not ever seen on the runway before were multiple shows where models were wearing more than one bag. I saw them carrying a clutch, along with a tote bag, or carrying a wristlet and a tote bag. It seemed that more was more. That was different this past season.

SJ: Does that mean that the small skinny bag companies produce as an entry price point to a brand is out as a trend?

KG: Actually, I saw a ton of mini bags, some were even on another bag. Others were on some wrists, almost like jewelry. Tom Ford sent out a model wearing a mini bag that replaced a [traditional] necklace. Who knows what you put in those tiny bags because they don’t fit anything. There were a lot of satchels, some squishy ones and also some lady-like bags.

SJ: You mentioned the mini bag used as jewelry? Was that a theme?

KG: The crazy thing is that I barely saw a necklace outside of those little bags. A lot of necklines had self ties—it was a scarf look that was part of the blouse. I saw a lot of ties, soft ties as well as tassel and fringe. On the hand, the wristlet was the bag. I didn’t see bracelets. The one piece of jewelry I saw was the earring. Earrings were the story in jewelry.

SJ: So let’s go back to the bag. If models weren’t wearing much jewelry, were the bags then accessorized with unusual statement hardware?
KG: No, the bags were simple, basic tan or brown leather bags, usually neutral to balance out a lot of the plaids that I saw, with hardly any hardware. I can’t think of seeing even one heavy-duty hardware statement piece. That’s actually consistent with what we’re seeing with consumer spending trends. Consumers of all ages seem to want less logo bags, and hardware often reflects a brand’s logo.

SJ: You mentioned shoes as an accessory that designers have embraced in their collections. What is the footwear trend for fall? Are sneakers still a thing?

KG: I saw a lot of shoes with pointy toes, or pointier-toed footwear. That was a trend. I didn’t see sneakers on either the attendees or on the runway. The fall looks showed apparel that’s more suiting in style. There were a lot of head-to-toe suits across multiple runway shows. The looks were a little bit more feminine, and really didn’t lend themselves to that sportier look.

I also saw lots of boots, all different up and down the leg. There were boots from thigh high to over the knees. Many did have a chunky piece of hardware somewhere, such as in biker boots. There were also some whimsical heels, some artistry at the heel. Generally, the footwear seemed more simple. While the casual boot saw some hardware, the boot look to complement the suiting had simple and clean lines, or something neutral to complement a plaid look and not compete with the pattern.