

# South Bend Tribune

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## Japan the trendsetter

### 'Cool' hunter watches fads for the world

Associated Press

TOKYO -- Loic Bizel leads visitors through alleys packed with wild-haired youngsters, makes his way into tiny boutiques tucked beneath stairwells and points out fatigue-inspired jackets, handpainted sneakers and plaid miniskirts.

Part tour guide and part business consultant, the 32-year-old Frenchman is a "cool" hunter, with a mission to uncover the ever-changing street fads of Japan and translate them into a language the rest of the world can understand.

"The people in the streets are very creative," Bizel said, pointing to a young man wearing baggy shorts on top of long pants, a look that's all the rage in Tokyo. "The search to be unique, to be different, creates style."

Bizel's expertise is in demand because Japan has shifted from being a powerhouse of manufacturing to an exporter of culture, including "manga" animation, gourmet sushi and now fashion tastes. Global businesses eager to get a glimpse of what's in store for the future are sending their executives here just to hang out with the cool hunter and absorb what's hip. ■ ■ ■



Loic Bizel, a 32-year-old Frenchman, walks an alley packed with youngsters in Tokyo's Harajuku shopping district. Bizel is what's known in the trend-watching industry as "a cool hunter," a person whose mission is to keep abreast of the pulsating ever-changing street fads of Japan and translate them into a language the rest of the world can understand.

AP Photo/CHIAKI TSKUMO



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