

# CAF

CENTRAL ASIA FASHION

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### How to Monetise Creativity in Retail?

*Kazakhstani experts in the field of creative industries shared their opinion on the topic: how to monetise creativity in retail? Speakers of the panel discussion of the business conference of the Central Asia Fashion Autumn-2022 international fashion exhibition discussed a number of topical issues. They include the following: what kind of business can be in the creative industries, who and how now makes money with creativity in retail, how much will it be possible to earn on unique author's content, how influencers build their own economy and determine the rules of a new creative game. The main focus in the discussion of the speakers was one of the most pressing issues of the entire creative community: how to combine business and creativity without losing yourself?*



Panel discussion at the Central Asia Fashion Autumn-2022 business conference

*Ksenia Kuserbayeva, the panel discussion participant at the Central Asia Fashion business conference, the Director General and business coach of Retail Academy, considers interaction with bloggers and influencers to be an excellent opportunity for business development. As an example, the speaker told about the experience of opening the Colab, Kazakhstani multi-format retail platform: "It is commonly believed that retail is a lot of mathematics, financial calculations, system management and systematisation. In the information space, a lot is said about financial models and the calculations necessary for its construction. However, we must not forget that any business is still a creative component. No retail or fashion store will work without a creative idea, without a desire to change the world and without big missions. My personal example is the best confirmation of this - the discovery not typical for the traditional Kazakhstani retail, the Colab multi-format space. At first glance, a simple idea is to combine creative people, artists, designers, bloggers, people of art, with retail on one platform. Now the space already has more than 80 brands, and this means that the same number of Kazakhstanis have received monetisation of their creativity!"*

*In general, no matter how sceptical we are now, the time has come. I recommend going out with your creative ideas to influencers and doing cool collaborations, since that is what will drive the creative industry as a whole."*

In turn, Asel Bekzhan, better known to Kazakhstanis under the creative pseudonym Assol, the speaker of the panel discussion of the business conference, young Kazakhstani artist, blogger @assolyaa, winner of an award from the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, shared her own experience of monetising creativity.



Asel Bekzhan, the artist, blogger, winner of the award from the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan

*“Now I sell paintings and create content of interest in the online community. I show the process of work, share professional life hacks, conduct online workshops for beginner artists, shoot creative video presentations of my work, and all this ultimately results in the monetisation of my work. For example, when I first published a portrait of the President of Kazakhstan, written in the "character graphics" technique, from letters and words, it caused a great stir. The post received about 4 million views on Instagram. And now I draw pictures in this technique on a stream. They are ordered by ordinary customers and companies with pleasure, I am thinking of creating additional merchandise in a similar style.”*

At the same time, Asel Bekzhan notes that initially her work is always based on creativity, not commerce. Advertisers are interested in her work and blog, which subsequently result in commercialisation.



CAF Business Conference Panel Discussion Experts

*“That’s how my soul and mind demand it. First I create, and then it turns out that people want to buy it, and then I start thinking about monetisation... Thanks to the author’s blog and openness to communications, advertisers constantly come to me with various offers. For example, one Kazakhstani brand of women’s clothing approached to make joint merchandise. The result was an interesting creative project and successful retail collaboration: we depicted*

four women on T-shirts - historical figures of Kazakhstan. They are all part of our history. In three months, the project gained popular popularity and was continued. Motivational slogans have now been added to our T-shirts: “be strong”, “conquer the peaks”, etc.”

Meanwhile, Aida Kaumenova, the speaker of the Central Asia Fashion business conference, Kazakhstani, the designer, known as the founder and owner of one of the most famous fashion houses, KaumeNOVA, noted that interest in author’s works is growing now more than ever.



Aida Kaumenova, the fashion designer, blogger, founder and owner of KaumeNOVA Fashion House

*“Some 20 years ago, I first made a collection of corduroy jackets, based on prints with elements of paintings by Modigliani and Picasso. The collection was so well received that at that time such eminent fashionistas as Dinara Yegeubayeva and Bayan Maksatkyzy became my clients. Today, observing client preferences, I see the evolution of the taste of Kazakhstani consumers. Those who used to buy “heavy European luxury” continue their development. Those who purchased clothes exclusively from the mass market are now in search of design and creativity. There are more and more conscious people among consumers who understand what quality and national identity are. This “popular niche” in fashion retail is being actively filled by Kazakhstani designers and local manufacturers. And if earlier someone used to copy, without creativity, now there is a large “creative layer” that skilfully combines creativity and business. This is creative monetisation, and even the biggest creative transformation!”*

Aida Kaumenova, the speaker of the business conference, notable designer and the darling of the people, noted the strengths of Kazakhstani people and called on young designers to cooperate.



Panel discussion at the Central Asia Fashion Autumn-2022 business conference

*“The strength of our people is creativity! Our people are great at making movies, singing, performing concerts, making clothes, and drawing pictures. The Kazakhstanis are great at it all! I, as a designer with experience, really like to work with young creative people. Since I, as an established brand with a sustainable business model, already have my own experience, creative expertise and technical capabilities. Now any factory can print fabric of a rendered author’s print for me, and this immediately means the production of at least 600 meters of fabric. A beginner designer will not be able to afford this. However, if a designer has a cool creative idea that I can finalise, then together we can create a collection from which the beginner author will already receive a percentage of sales,”* Aida Kaumenova said.

Mira Bergen @mira\_bergen, another panel discussion expert of the CAF business conference, the popular stylist and blogger, shared information about the "forced" but commercially successful work of her team.



Mira Bergen, the fashion stylist, author of the legendary StyleBergen course, blogger

*“Before opening my own store and brand, I went through about a thousand shopping trips with ordinary people with their real needs. I saw their types of figures and the range of stores available. That is, stylists, unlike designers, are always very dependent. We cannot take and create something. We come to the store and work with the conditions offered by retailers. And when once again I realised that my team of stylists did not find what they needed, we had to create on our own. As a result, our creativity turned out to be forced, since we could not find the offers that we now sell in our own store. However, it turned out that this format is super successful! Already in the first month after the opening of the store, we reached a payback and completed 108% of the commercial plan. It appears that I turned my experience of working with real people into creativity! As a result, business results in creativity, and this works and is commercially in demand.”*

## **Creativity and Commerce**

Irina Abasova, the invited expert of the CAF business conference, the founder of the UNIMO Community of Private Investors, spoke about the support and interest of investors in the creative projects of Kazakhstanis.

*“I am part of a community of private investors with about 100 people. These are ordinary people who have free money, and we want the funds to work, so we started investing in an existing business. We are interested in supporting the creative industry of our country and the manufacturing industry of Kazakhstani business. For example, young designers want to launch a line but don’t have the money to launch it. This can now be solved with the support of a private investor.*



Irina Abasova, the founder of the UNIMO Community of Private Investors

*Many entrepreneurs think that an investor is a kind of Karabas-Barabas who will take away the business. We want to change this stereotype and consider all proposals on equal terms. A person does not go to ask for money, he/she comes with own idea and proposal. It is desirable that the entrepreneur be ready to provide figures and data for a certain period of business operation. Such a project can attract investments in different formats: from a simple loan of funds, both from a bank, to the sale of a share or a project partnership. In fact, investors are quite flexible people and they can agree on any conditions. For example, to pay not from the first month, but after four months, Irina Abasova says. - I heard that creative people don't like to count. Then you need to find someone who will put all the figures together for you in the right format and calculate them, because if you do want to make money and not just create, you have to find a compromise somehow. You need to understand that real investments without specific figures are simply impossible."*

At the same time, Kseniya Kuserbayeva, the speaker of the CAF business conference, believes that the main problem is that the authors of creative projects often do not understand how to turn an idea into a business and do not have sufficient knowledge to defend the project before an investor.



Kseniya Kuserbayeva, the co-founder of the Colab multi-format platform

*"Now there is a huge gap between our creators and consumers. It often happens that our Kazakhstani consumer is not yet ready to understand the design or prints. Therefore, in addition to successful creative projects, there are millions of unsuccessful ones, when the consumer simply does not want to buy another T-shirt with an ornament turned upside down and a different colour. Yes, young fashion brands are emerging, but there is no one to learn from them yet, the*

*industry as a whole is young. It certainly sounds tempting: “Go and get money from the state, because we have affordable programmes for creative industries.” But this is where the challenge begins: it is necessary to make a deposit, write a business plan, calculate the financial model, and our creative industry simply does not know how to calculate the margin. So far, the most painful question of the creative community: where to look for funds and how to learn how to prove performance?”*

At the end of the panel discussion, the speakers of the Central Asia Fashion business conference gave advice to those who wish to earn from creativity to monetise trade. Thus, Asel Bekzhan, the artist, wished creative people not to lose their love for creativity and find a way to earn money through their favourite work. Irina Abasova, the founder of the community of private investors, noted the need to combine talents in art and business for the success of projects. Aida Kaumenova, the designer, recommended that all creative people adhere to their plans, believe in their dreams and purposefully go to the end.



Panel discussion speakers (from left to right): Kseniya Kuserbayev, Mira Bergen, Aida Kaumenova, Milena Ershova, Irina Abasova, Asel Bekzhan

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