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THE POWER OF A BRAND IN FASHION: FROM THE IDEA OF A COLLECTION TO PACKAGING

One of the most interesting sessions at the business conference of the 36th International Fashion Exhibition, Central Asia Fashion Autumn-2025, revealed the secrets to creating a powerful and memorable fashion brand. Invited experts examined the process from conception of a collection to final touches in packaging, exploring how each element contributes to brand strength. The session addressed the question of what makes a collection unique, how to convey this to consumers, and the roles of visual components, user experience, and packaging as effective marketing tools.

Ekaterina Antsiferova, the Deputy General Director for Commerce at the Dalli delivery service and moderator of the business session, was the first to give the floor to Sergey Manukyan, the Director of Development at the women's clothing brand Emka. Emka has been in business for 18 years. The brand emerged at the beginning of market reforms, when the era of shortages came to an end and the first retail brands began to emerge in Russia. At that time, many people traded through open wholesale markets, buying and reselling goods.

Sergey Manukyan said that Emka started with a fairly simple product – women's skirts: *«It was a popular item that was easy to produce and sell quickly. Over time, the range expanded, and everything was sold through wholesale channels. Online sales and marketplaces did not exist back then. As the business grew stronger, we took the next step and opened our own retail store. The first store was small, at 50 – 70 square metres. Unfortunately, the project was unsuccessful and we had to close it. We created the second store with*



Director of Development of the Women's Clothing Brand Emka Sergey Manukyan

a better interior design, including fitting rooms, and it worked. Then we opened stores measuring 90 square metres, and today the average area of our boutiques is 200–250 square metres».

The company's sales channels are now quite diverse. About 15% of sales come from the wholesale channel. Emka cooperates with multi-brand stores throughout Russia and Kazakhstan. *«This channel has been stable for over five years, and we have taken great care to preserve it. There was a problem with «group purchases». People would come together on social networks, form a small wholesale order and receive a discount. This led to losses. Rather than fighting this, we came to an agreement: we turned such buyers into small wholesale partners, and began to stimulate and support them. Now, we have a completely different level of cooperation. Direct retail sales generate the highest average bill — 24,000 – 25,000 roubles. However, the market has come under pressure in recent years due to slowing consumption, rising interest rates on loans and the influence of seasonality (for example, last year's extended summer and cold spring). The online sales channel now accounts for over 15% of sales. The average sales receipt on the website is 10,000–11,000 roubles, whereas on the mobile application it is 17,000–18,000 roubles. The app has proven to be very effective because the average bill is noticeably higher there than on the website»,* - the entrepreneur explained.

Brand philosophy Emka is built on values that are transmitted throughout the company, from management to salespeople on the shop floor. These values are openness, a desire to provide the best possible service to clients, and the creation of emotional value in the purchasing experience. Our customers are mainly women who earn their own money, and they work hard for it. Therefore, the brand aims to make every purchase a pleasant experience.

One of the main components of success, according to Sergey Manukyan, is the rebranding of stores: *«A year and a half ago, we updated the concept and the store began to resemble the atmosphere of a four-star-plus hotel. The task here is clear. The client needs to feel as if he is in a good reception area, where he can relax and unwind. Music also plays a role: we have created our own branded playlists that are updated every season, and we have introduced aroma marketing. There are other components of success. For example, the app created its own ecosystem for the brand, increasing loyalty and average bill value. Client days also have a phenomenal effect. Exclusive events for regular clients, where new collections are presented, are in high demand. Special models are also popular. Unique items that are not included in the collection are sometimes made available for purchase. We package these items beautifully and explain that they are exclusive. Clients willingly purchase such items, appreciating their uniqueness».*



Deputy General Director for Commerce of the Dalli delivery service Ekaterina Antsiferova

Ekaterina Antsiferova noted another unique feature of Emka. As is known, many brands attract famous bloggers for promotion, and Emka went even further, because its own employees became the face of the

brand: *«Sales consultants manage social networks, talk about collections, share personal experiences and involve their subscribers in dialogue. As a result, a community is formed around the brand. Friends and acquaintances of the seller become Emka clients. The office staff also participate in the promotion. These are not only the designers and fashion designers who create the collections, but also specialists who are usually not visible, who are, as they say, behind the scenes. The brand gave them the opportunity to open up, and it turned out that their personal involvement provides a huge additional resource. We call this direction «Employee recommends». And it is important that there is no direct interest in selling at any cost. People share information sincerely and it is felt. The value of this approach for employees is also great: they feel their importance, which directly affects team retention».*

Headwear designer, founder of the EDIS brand and the Academy of Hat Design and Modeling «Shapolie», winner of the Pierre Cardin and Vyacheslav Zaitsev award Natalia Edis shared important information about brand packaging and product packaging as a promotion tool. According to the fashion expert, brand packaging is not just a box and a bag, it is a visual and intellectual image of the company: *«It creates associations and moods, just like Chanel, Tiffany and Louboutin. The functions of brand packaging are quite simple and straightforward: to stand out from competitors, create a mood and atmosphere, attract customers time and again and foster brand loyalty. However, product packaging is what the client actually holds in their hands. Its functions are different. For example, it can be protective (for storing hats for years to come, or even passing on by inheritance), transport-related (boxes, corrugated cardboard and additional elements), functional (soap flowers in a box to protect against moths), or advertising-related (recognition and emotions upon unpacking) ».*

Natalia Edis gave examples of successful packaging of global brands: Apple iPhone - the pleasure of the unpacking process, cosmetics with heat paint - a tactile effect that is remembered, coffee with roast indicators - functionality plus design, Tiffany - an iconic corporate color and an instant association, Louboutin - a red sole as a brand element.



Founder of the EDIS brand and the Academy of Design and Modeling of Hats «Shapolie» Natalia Edis

As for the EDIS brand packaging, it is distinguished by round and geometric boxes corresponding to the collections; each box contains an aroma element (soap-flowers). The so-called collection effect is formed in customers; they immediately recognize the hat from the box, and it turns out that the packaging works as part of the brand's history. Natalia Edis claims that even for the middle segment it is possible to come up with a «trick» of packaging: *«Packaging should be visually attractive, functional and unique. The real strength of a brand is in the little things that make it recognizable. I always encourage designers to look for their own special idea, unique only to their brand, and convey it in the packaging. This works both for sales and for the love of customers».*

Dmitry Mun, CEO of the premium men's clothing brand BML, believes that being a premium brand is always a challenge: *«I often compare it to a restaurant. Guests don't go there for a unique dish, but for consistent quality. Every salad, every second course and every ingredient must be impeccable because that is what the client is paying for. The requirements in premium men's clothing are even higher. The client literally «asks for every penny». Our task, year after year, is not only to maintain this level, but also to surprise and delight. For me, premium means compliance with high standards above all else. We shoot our advertising campaigns in Europe and other countries, always looking for new locations, unusual models and fresh ideas. Our brand is all about creators. I often talk about musicians, chefs, artists and film directors. These are people who create values «at a distance». They largely make up our audience — the intellectual elite for whom clothing is a way to express themselves. A man in the premium segment is a special client: on the one hand predictable and consistent; on the other, extremely demanding».*



CEO of premium men's clothing brand BML Dmitry Mun

The speaker of the business conference emphasized that in order to work with such an audience, creating one suit or jacket is not enough. BML creates a unique customer experience. Several years ago, the company launched the Mobile Atelier project: *«This is a real showroom on wheels: it can come to the client's home, office, or even to the St. Petersburg Economic Forum. Inside, you can calmly try on clothes, choose fabrics, and place an order. Everything happens in a comfortable atmosphere: champagne, confidentiality, a personal approach. No one has yet repeated this format either in Russia or in Europe. It delights men! »*

For over 20 years, the company has remained true to the principle of impeccable tailoring and does not compromise on the choice of fabrics: no «ultra-synthetics», only the best world factories Piana, Cotonificio Albini, Getzner and others. *«BML creates things for every episode of life - from a business meeting to a social evening. Timeless code is timeless clothing, collections that are easy to combine with each other. Strong personalization: tailors work in all boutiques, the price includes fitting of the product, individual embroidery is possible. The company also provides a lifetime guarantee on suits - a fact that many customers have learned about only recently, but which has become the most important part of their loyalty. Even basic items are not repeated, each collection has its own uniqueness. According to the sales structure, about 50% is formal men's clothing: suits, shirts, coats. The rest is casual, smart casual and accessories. By the way, we carry out individual tailoring with a unique competitive advantage, we make a suit in a European factory in six weeks, while for top brands this period reaches three months», - the speaker said.*

Today BML has 12 boutiques in Russia, the average bill is about \$500, and the loyal customer base exceeds 60,000 people. The average age of the buyer is 43 years. These are entrepreneurs, top managers of large companies, representatives of government agencies. *«And, what is especially important, they stay with us for a long time. LTV (from English Lifetime Value – «lifetime value») exceeds three years. Today, we are*

scaling our project, entering the markets of Europe and the CIS countries. Kazakhstan is especially interesting for us, since we see huge potential and a promising audience here. If we talk about the sales structure, then more than 75% is retail. At the same time, the online direction is growing rapidly. Unfortunately, offline in Russia today is behaving unstable, traffic has noticeably fallen, and I think many colleagues in the market will confirm this. As Tolstoy said in Anna Karenina: «All happy families are alike, each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way». About the same thing is happening in our industry. Marketplaces are actively growing, but I do not see a problem. Within the framework of the omnichannel strategy, it is important that the client can choose any convenient way of buying. It is not so important where exactly he placed the order, the main thing is what kind of service he ultimately receives. This is what builds trust», - Dmitry Mun concluded.



The CAF Autumn-2025 business conference also revealed the secrets of creating a powerful and memorable brand

Representative of the ethnic brand YAKA Timur Bektemirov spoke in detail about the brand, inspired by the rich heritage of Kyrgyzstan and all of Central Asia, which is being promoted in Moscow. The name «YAKA» has two meanings: «ethnics» and «ethics», because it is important for the authors to create things with meaning. Each collection is a synthesis of the past and the present: *«We integrate traditional forms and ornaments into modern designs to make cultural heritage look relevant and stylish. The brand's founder, Anna Obydenova, was inspired by her first visit to Kyrgyzstan: the beauty of the mountains, the unique atmosphere, and the rich culture. It was based on these impressions and her love for traditions that the YAKA brand was born. Despite being a new brand, it quickly became recognisable and acquired a loyal audience.*



Representative of the ethnic brand YAKA Timur Bektemirov

Our products always combine traditional techniques with modern technologies. We collaborate with artisans who preserve ancient methods such as hand-felting wool, using natural dyes and mosaic techniques. However, we also use a modern design approach and ensure high-quality execution».

The YAKA collection also includes interior items, such as shyrdaks - famous felt carpets known in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. The showroom is located in Moscow, the space is open not only to clients, but also for cooperation with craftsmen and brands. *«We strive to develop a culture of dialogue, to combine the traditions of Central Asia with the modern style of the metropolis. Today, well-known media write about YAKA, we are becoming more and more recognized, a loyal audience is emerging both in Kyrgyzstan and in Russia. In Kyrgyzstan, our products are often bought by tourists as memorable souvenirs, and in Russia - by people who want to emphasize their individuality. We are not yet implementing plans for Kazakhstan, but, of course, this is a direction for the future. We have a common cultural basis, very similar traditions and ornaments. When we appear in Kazakhstan, it will be a natural and very harmonious continuation of the brand's path»,* - Timur Bektemirov believes.

Creator and designer of the Rox brand Nassenova Roxana Nassenova surprised and won over the audience with her straightforwardness, sincerity and unusual view of the world of fashion: *«For me, fashion has always been a tool with which to tell stories. I don't see the point in creating clothes for the sake of clothes. It is common knowledge that the fashion industry is among the world leaders in terms of harm to the planet. 85% of things are burned, 60% of all clothes are synthetics. Ecological catastrophe is becoming part of our everyday life. Knowing these figures, it is impossible to honestly launch another brand for the sake of packaging and sales. My clothes have always had meaning. It was a statement, the voice of the generation of which I am a part. Through my collections, I tried to convey emotions: anxieties, fears, hopes, in a word, everything that the post-Soviet generation feels. The situation in the fashion industry of Central Asia is difficult. We are integrated into a raw materials economy, any brand in the region is forced to adapt to external demand. In Central Asia, there are no institutions, schools, grants that would provide designers with knowledge and resources. Young brands have no chance to compete with global giants like LVMH or Kering. It is estimated that 130,000 new brands were registered worldwide in 2023, but no more than 4% of them survived for at least three years. In our region, the situation is even worse. Therefore, young brands have only one option: to use fashion as a form of expression. We all live within the algorithms of social networks. These algorithms dictate tastes and encourage us to imitate Western brands, turning local projects into cultural fast food. Many brands that claim to celebrate traditions merely use them for decorative purposes. But culture is not decoration. It should unite and make things universal, not divide. I suggest we look at fashion*



Rox brand designer Nassenova , creator Roxana Nassenova

from a different angle. Fashion is not just an industry for profit; it is a language through which we can talk about the future, culture and meaning. If you use fashion in this way, it can really change the world».

Ekaterina Antsiferova supported the young designer: «Yes, this is exactly what needs to be discussed openly. Even at business events for the fashion industry in Russia, such questions are rarely raised. The situation in Russia is similar in many ways: lots of new brands enter the market, but most of them find it very difficult to survive and compete. Only those who create their own business philosophy and build a brand based on meaning and mission have a chance to develop. It's not just clothes; it's an idea, a history and a value behind each item. Therefore, your speech sounds like a timely warning for those who are just planning to enter this industry. Just as a student entering medical school should ask themselves: «Is this my calling? », a future designer should ask himself whether he is ready to devote himself to this path. Or will it be a waste of time and resources, causing additional harm to the environment? But let's focus on the positive. Fashion has endured and will endure. A clear understanding of your audience, your purpose and your opportunities can help any business to grow and help society to move forward. As for Kazakhstan, I don't think the situation here is that dramatic. Many of the problems are part of a general trend. However, there are also positive aspects: people want to buy things, try new things and discover new brands. The key task for all of us now is therefore to identify the growth areas and find opportunities that will enable every business to realise its potential».



Experts at the CAF business conference urged the audience to think about the meaning of the fashion sector

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