

FROM REACH TO REVENUE: CONTENT MARKETING AND INFLUENCERS IN FASHION

Content and influencers must work not only for brand awareness, but also for sales. The invited experts of the business conference at the 38th International Fashion Exhibition Central Asia Fashion Autumn-2026 discussed how to convert audience attention into profit: how to choose partners, evaluate the effectiveness of integrations, and build a content strategy with measurable results.

Content producer and influencer Madina Ramazan outlined the key trends in the fashion business: *«If ten years ago an entrepreneur or brand would simply launch a product or a garment onto the market and it would sell — largely because the assortment was much smaller — almost any new product was perceived as something exclusive, interesting, and unusual. Today the situation has changed. That is why entrepreneurs and brands are advised to pay far more attention to their personal blog and the development of their personal brand. This builds a certain level of trust with the audience, and trust directly influences sales. Moreover, people have grown tired of hard selling, of constant advertising messages and attempts to push something on them. They want to understand who is behind the brand, know its story, understand how it all began, what values and ideas drive it, what makes it unique and what its identity is. That is why today I would place great emphasis specifically on personal branding. Developing and promoting it thoughtfully, in my view, constitutes a significant part of an entrepreneur's or brand's success in the market».*



Madina Ramazan, content producer and influencer

The session moderator, Anna Shelepova — founder of the PR agency Impact PR and the production center Immersive Events — asked the speaker where to begin when building the personal brand of an entrepreneur. Madina Ramazan recommended starting by sharing your personal story, because behind most entrepreneurs lies a very compelling experience, and it is through that story that you can show your journey: *«Audiences are interested in how it all started, what challenges the person faced, what decisions they made, what helped them grow, and how they ultimately arrived at where they are today. That kind of step-by-step storytelling helps the audience understand the entrepreneur better and simultaneously see where they themselves could begin their own path. As we know, there are now enormous numbers of training programs and materials on this subject. People are genuinely interested in observing others' experience — especially those who are just starting out. So first and foremost, I would recommend talking about yourself, your story, and your professional experience on social media.*

Not just showcasing the finished product, but giving the audience the chance to get to know the person behind it. That is what gradually builds trust and turns an audience into loyal clients».



Anna Shelepova, founder of PR agency Impact PR and production center Immersive Events

Creative director, PR specialist, influencer, and founder of the creative studio Neu, Alisa Mezentseva, drew attention to the fact that many companies are currently cutting their production budgets and do not fully understand how to move forward — especially when producing quality content requires additional investment.

The expert shared her recommendations on how to stop losing money on content: *«My primary specialization is art direction and creative leadership. I oversee shoot processes, billboards, advertising campaigns, and shoots for companies — in short, the visual content that is then displayed across the*



Alisa Mezentseva, creative director, PR specialist, influencer, and founder of creative studio Neu

city, in stores, on social media, and across other communication channels. And one of the defining characteristics of 2026 is that content itself has become significantly cheaper to produce than it was, say, in 2021. Back then you could produce a genuinely high-quality shoot, publish it on Instagram, and the brand would already stand out from competitors. Today that no longer surprises anyone. An

enormous amount of content can now be generated using technology — at a fraction of the cost. If you go on Instagram and look at the number of AI creators and the content they produce, it becomes clear just how dramatically the market has changed. So right now, it really is more effective not to spend the kind of budgets on each shoot that we were allocating just a few years ago. At the same time, the buyer has become far more selective. People see thousands of pieces of content every day; there is so much of it that capturing a consumer's attention today is very difficult. Marketing budgets are shrinking at the same time. Accordingly, the volume of content production is also decreasing. Where a year ago we might have been running 16 shoots in a month, now that can drop to one shoot every two or three months».

So where exactly is business losing money on content right now? The business conference expert explained that the cause most often lies in the absence of a system and, as a consequence, chaotic content production: «There are two extremes. The first: a brand publishes an enormous volume of content. You've certainly seen those mass-market accounts that buy clothing in large quantities and show it constantly — three Stories, two Reels, and a post per day. But if you remove the logo and ask: «Which brand did you see yesterday or today?», you most likely won't be able to name it, because visually they all look very similar to each other. The second extreme: designers who create their own clothing. Here a different pattern often applies: the brand shoots a campaign, then a month of silence follows. Then a new shoot happens, with a different team, and silence again. This is also a major mistake — shooting a campaign and expecting it to generate a stream of sales on its own. In the end, you are not holding the consumer's attention at all. They don't understand what your brand is about — especially if you constantly change production teams and each one shoots in a completely different style. In that case, the brand's visual identity stops registering. I've spoken with designers and many of them said: «But we have a unique product. No one makes clothing the way we do». But in reality, today, a quality, well-made product is simply the baseline. A person doesn't go to Dior just because they have a quality T-shirt. They go to Dior because it is Dior. And that comes through in all of Dior's campaigns, social media, stores, and every other touchpoint with the audience».

Alisa Mezentseva believes that working with only one communication channel — specifically Instagram — is a major mistake. In 2026, there need to be many points of contact with the client: Pinterest, Telegram, search engines, websites, PR, marketplaces, and other channels. «A client needs to see a brand several times before deciding to buy. You can't post one Story on Instagram and expect it to immediately drive sales. Moreover, if there is no information about your brand beyond Instagram, you risk disappearing entirely in the new search landscape. Imagine someone asks ChatGPT: «Recommend me an unusual ruffled blouse» or «What interesting clothing brands are there in Kazakhstan?» If the brand has no digital footprint outside of one social network, it simply may not be found and may not be recommended to the user. That is why it's important to be present not in one social network, but across different channels. According to our statistics, 92% of people in Kazakhstan use marketplaces. That is a very telling figure. If someone needs a dress for an evening out, they will far from always search through a thousand different brands on Instagram. They may go to a marketplace, choose a category — short dress, long dress, evening dress — and receive a ready-made selection. Globally, a significant share of purchases today also comes through marketplaces: Farfetch, Revolve, Mytheresa, and other

platforms where people specifically search for clothing and brands. Another important channel is search. Around 42% of users turn to search engines first when they want to find something or learn about it. And now a portion of those queries is gradually shifting to AI search: a person asks ChatGPT a question and receives a ready recommendation. I also want to say a word about email newsletters. They account for a small share of communications — around 2% — yet they can generate up to 30% of a company's revenue. So, imagine how effective it is simply to build a client database and work with it regularly through newsletters. And one more platform I strongly advise not to ignore: Pinterest. Pinterest has hundreds of millions of users worldwide. It's been much more than just a platform with beautiful photos for a long time — it is a visual search platform where people often arrive with a specific intention to find something and, ultimately, to buy it. For example, someone is looking for a particular look. As a clothing store, you publish that look on Pinterest; the user finds it, gets a ready-made solution, clicks through to your website, and makes a purchase there. That is why I recommend making maximum use of this platform and, in general, making an effort to be present wherever your potential client might be searching for you».

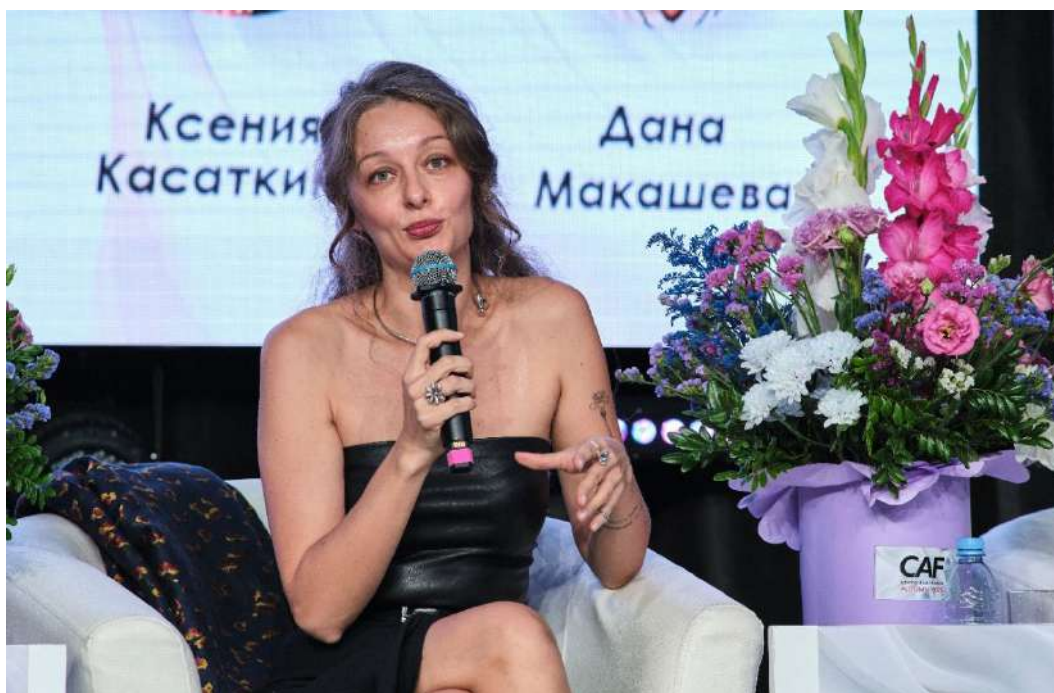


The invited experts of the CAF business conference discussed how to convert audience attention into profit

Alisa Mezentseva also offered a number of recommendations to ensure that content budgets genuinely pay off. The first principle: plan business objectives, not shoots. Seasonality should be planned at least three months ahead, with a clear understanding of what will be placed, where, and when during that period. «Ask yourself: which shoots does your brand actually need? For which platforms? What materials will be needed for the website, the marketplace, social media, PR, and other channels? This way you can select one production team to work with on an ongoing basis. With a consistent partnership, you can negotiate more favorable terms, and the team will already understand your brand's specific needs and objectives for the coming months. Moreover, a single shoot can be used far more effectively. In one shoot day you can produce an enormous variety of different materials. The second principle: separate content by function. There is image content — the campaign. Through it you define the brand's style, mood, and visual language. This content can be used in email newsletters, on billboards, in outdoor advertising, on LED screens, on social media, and across other channels. The campaign is the visual expression of your brand. There is commercial content — lookbooks, product cards, video, demonstrations of fit, details, and materials. Its purpose is much closer to the direct selling of the product. And there is trust-building content: client reviews, people wearing and choosing your

brand, behind-the-scenes footage, the production process, the team, and how the product is made. This is also very important to show, because you shouldn't just be selling a product — you need to give people the opportunity to understand who you are, how your brand works, and why it can be trusted. And the third principle: plan the life cycle of your content. For example, once you've completed a shoot, you should already know in advance where and how you will use the resulting materials. Working with buyers is also a very effective tool — when a designer or brand builds relationships with buyers from the outset, they gain the opportunity to scale the business and enter new countries and markets. There is a small formula I use in my own work: around 20% of content represents investment — campaigns and other materials whose purpose is to build awareness, form an image, generate PR, and build trust in the brand. This is content that can be used for a long time. And 80% is exploitation: content directly tied to sales — try-ons, demonstrations of how the clothing fits, influencer collaborations, product cards, styling, and so on».

Ksenia Kasatkina, creative director of the Le Jeu brand and stylist, answered the question of how to choose an influencer correctly. In her view, before looking for an influencer, it is very important for a brand to understand itself and clarify the message it is trying to communicate to its clients: *«The core idea of working with an influencer is to find someone who thinks roughly the same way as you, who values the same things, shares your values, and at the same time aligns visually with your brand. I know there is a common practice of looking at which influencers your competitors work with, spotting where a certain collaboration performed well, and then approaching those same people. But in my view, that is entirely the wrong approach. First, it simply may not work for you, because the DNA of different brands is different. Second, a situation that now occurs quite frequently is one where the same influencer is promoting an enormous number of different brands. As a result, the buyer loses clarity about what any given brand actually represents, what it stands for, and which brand the influencer is promoting right now — this one or already a different one? A small life hack for small brands: you most likely already have some loyal audience, and it is within that audience that you can fairly easily find your first influencers. The best kind of influencer is someone who genuinely loves your product, is sincerely interested in it, and understands its value — and your clients are precisely those people who*



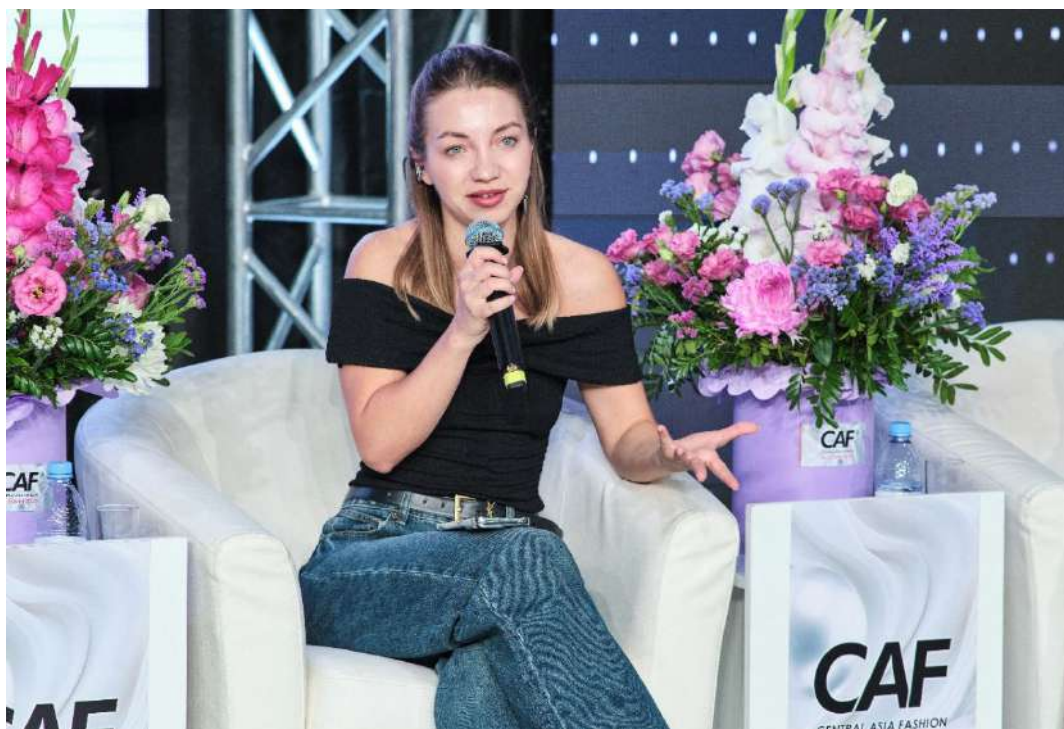
Ksenia Kasatkina, creative director of the Le Jeu brand, stylist

already understand that value. When you start working with influencers, it's important to understand that this should not be a one-off integration; you need to build a loyal community around the brand. And that community is not only influencers. It's your clients, the stylists you work with regularly, the people you invite to your events. It's important to keep working with the same people consistently and let them know that you value this collaboration and want to develop it further. When you have already built such a loyal community — including influencers — even if at some point you are not purchasing a paid integration from them, they may talk about you of their own accord between paid placements. For example, a new drop or new collection drops. Your loyal bloggers find out about it and may well tell their audience about the brand — simply because they are loyal to you, you are loyal to them, and they understand that you will continue working with them. And an interesting situation emerges: by effectively paying for three integrations, you can receive significantly more attention and, in practice, far more brand mentions».

However, there are situations when a collaboration with a public figure can deliver unexpected results. Ksenia Kasatkina shared an instructive story from personal experience: *«I was working with a clothing brand; the task was to raise awareness and build an association with the creative industry — so that the brand would be perceived as the clothing of people from the art world: musicians, actors. We were looking for such people and carefully assessing how well they matched us aesthetically and in terms of values. At one point, a stylist named Olga reached out to us — she was quite a public figure at the time: she worked with Alexander Rogov, accompanied him on shopping trips and filmed vlogs for YouTube. She really loved one of the skirts, and the stylist was a genuine fit for us visually, aesthetically, and in values. We did the integration, and after the post went live, we saw that new followers were coming in from it. But the most interesting thing happened later: activity on the website grew unexpectedly around that specific skirt — even though we had barely talked about it, and it was nearly out of stock. We looked into it and found that Olga had worn our skirt in one of the vlogs with Rogov and casually mentioned the brand — and apparently tagged it in the video description. From that completely organic mention, which we hadn't even arranged, a large number of people came to us. But we were never able to understand exactly what that additional traffic converted into and how many sales we could have had, because the item was nearly gone. So, when you gift a product to an influencer or agree on a collaboration, it's important to think not only about the integration itself, but also about whether you are ready for the result. Do you have enough stock? Can you meet the demand if after the post a large number of people really do come your way? Because sometimes the problem isn't that the integration didn't work — it's the opposite: it worked, but the brand wasn't prepared for the resulting demand».*

Victoria Prin', a PR specialist in the fashion space (whose clients include STUDIO 29, ST.CASANIER, Rushev, Surovaya, Yanina, Fetiche, KATYA DOROGINA, Tokiyo Atelier), addressed the important topic of how to work with influencers correctly and why it is worth bringing their attention into the offline space: *«The world of fashion is largely about tactility and sensation — and unfortunately, those can't always be conveyed through a screen. We still enjoy going to a store, touching the clothing, trying it on, seeing how the cut, color, and texture actually look. That is precisely why I believe that offline events are needed by both small and large brands alike: they can generate not only significant reach, but also real sales. The first benefit is organic PR — native coverage in the media about your event and brand, mentions in Telegram channels and other new media that can bring additional reach. With Telegram channels it's important to build relationships in much the same way as with influencers: not just inviting them to an event, but building a connection so that they genuinely want to come and talk about you.*

The same applies to influencers and guests in general. For an event to truly deliver results, several factors need to align: a strong brand and quality product, an interesting concept for the event itself, and an atmosphere that makes people want to stay longer. Guests love interactive elements — the opportunity to make something with their own hands, to have a new experience. Gifts that build loyalty matter, as do food, drinks, and other details. All of this is important regardless of the format: whether it's a closed store presentation, a client day, a meeting with stylists, or an event for new guests. A separate area is working with personal stylists. Here the conversation is more specifically about sales. Stylists have their own clients to whom they can recommend your clothing, so building relationships with them is very important for a brand. And my main conclusion: don't be afraid of offline events or assume they necessarily require enormous budgets. You absolutely don't need to spend several million. You can hold an intimate event right in your own store — the main thing is for it to feel welcoming, interesting, and genuinely worth being at. It is especially valuable when the designer or founder personally talks with guests, speaks about the collection, and presents the brand. That is something no digital content can fully replace, because in person a person receives not just information about the brand, but a personal experience of it».



Victoria Prin', PR specialist in the fashion sphere

Entrepreneur, fashion designer, and influencer Dana Makasheva shared her experience in online and offline marketing: «In 2016 I launched my first project with a \$100 investment. The mechanics were simple: buy fabric, sell it, use the proceeds to buy more, sell again — and gradually scale up the volume. Then in 2020 we launched a project with a \$100,000 investment. It was childrenswear. And in that project, we operated entirely online, selling clothing exclusively through our website — no offline stores, no Instagram sales. We built a strong strategy to make customers ready to purchase directly through the site. And this is where I can answer the question of how to enter the market correctly. First: develop a strategy and a financial plan — understand where you will be, who you will be, who you will work with, who your target audience is, and for whom you are creating the product. If we are creating a product for the mass market, we can accordingly build a strategy around marketplaces — Kaspi, Lamoda, and other platforms. If we're working in the premium segment, we need our own store — a

space where the client can fully immerse themselves in the brand. In other words, the chosen strategy determines exactly how we develop the project and through which channels».



Dana Makasheva, entrepreneur, fashion designer and influencer

Dana Makasheva also gave a clear example of how offline activities work: «In 2023 I sold all my projects and began working with brands. And here I want to talk specifically about offline activities. I want to highlight one major advantage: when we work with influencers, we spend a fairly significant budget on each individual one. An offline event allows you to optimize that budget. For example, we spent around 2.5 million on an event and invited around 50 influencers. The result was a very large reach at a relatively low cost per contact. With the same budget through individual integrations, we could have reached a maximum of five mid-tier bloggers, or for example two large ones and a handful of smaller



CAF business conference speakers (left to right): Anna Shelepova, Madina Ramazan, Alisa Mezentseva, Ksenia Kasatkina, Victoria Prin', Dana Makasheva, Natalya Mironova

ones. So, both online and offline strategies work. It all depends on where your brand is, where it's heading, and what audience you want to attract. At its core, marketing is about building the maximum number of quality touchpoints along the client's path. People are different, their needs are different — so by understanding who we're targeting, we build our communication precisely along the path of that specific consumer. And that increases the likelihood that at the moment when someone unexpectedly feels like buying a dress, a suit, or something else, they will think of your brand».

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