

MANAGING CUSTOMER LOYALTY AND VALUE IN THE FASHION INDUSTRY

At the business conference held as part of the 38th Central Asia Fashion Autumn-2026 International Fashion Exhibition, Madi Bekdair delivered a lecture entitled «Customer Loyalty and Value Management in the Fashion Industry» — an image stylist and fashion producer with international experience, founder and trainer at the international school for conceptual image stylists STYLE SESSION, and official stylist for Milano Fashion Week, Paris Fashion Week, New York Fashion Week, Amsterdam Fashion Week and Istanbul Fashion Week. He presented exclusive information specifically for CAF visitors.

In his lecture on loyalty programmes, personalisation and tools for boosting repeat sales, the fashion expert explored how to increase customer value and build long-term relationships with the audience. This topic is now more relevant than ever, as in a volatile market with fierce competition, the brands that succeed are those that know how to retain their customers.



Madi Bekdair began his lecture by asking the audience: «Have you ever had customers who made a single purchase, thanked you and... never returned? If the customer was satisfied, why didn't they come back? Is it true that customer loyalty is demonstrated when the sales assistant is polite, offered a discount, wrapped the purchase beautifully, sent a message on their birthday or gave them a loyalty card? ». He noted that in the fashion industry there is a set of «essential» tools that are generally considered part of customer loyalty management: *«Congratulating them on their birthday, sending a gift – often from unsold stock – inviting them to an event, informing them about a new collection, offering a discount, launching a promotion. In short, doing everything that's «supposed» to be done. And it seems as though everything is done correctly. These tools do indeed work. But the problem is that they work for everyone. They lack uniqueness, which means they don't create a real competitive advantage; they simply maintain a basic level of presence. And this is where a very important point arises. Whilst working at the trade fair and talking to retailers and business owners, we observed a rather alarming picture: around 90 per cent don't even know their customers. They have no systematic customer database, no contact details, and no understanding of who returns to them. And the most telling question we heard from them was: «Why on earth should we maintain a customer database?» Against this backdrop, it's a bit premature to talk about «loyalty» through greetings and newsletters. »*

Madi Bekdair suggested looking at the issue of customer loyalty from a different angle – not the most common, but one of the most effective in practice: *«In our community of stylists, we make a point of not operating on a «you come for the product, you get the product» model». We don't just sell clothes, hairstyles or accessories, because everyone else does that. And it is precisely at this point that businesses drive themselves into fierce competition: on price, on trends, on visual appeal. Instead, we work with a person's story. When a client comes to us, we don't start with the clichéd question, «What can we find for you?». We go deeper – from their Point A to their Point B. Point A is their reality: their lifestyle, constraints, habits and sense of self. Point B is where they actually want to end up. And this is where the most interesting things almost always happen, because the customer's initial request turns out to be superficial. For example, someone might say, «I need a new pair of shoes». But if we don't stop at that level and ask them a few more questions, a completely different story emerges: physical discomfort, a lack of confidence, avoiding heels, shying away from social events, and turning down dates. And at some point, it becomes clear that it's not about the shoes at all. The fact is that the person has stopped feeling desired, attractive, and alive. And that is the real challenge. When we reach this level, the client gets a very strong sense that «I'm really being heard». They're not just being served, but understood. And from then on, we're no longer working with their wardrobe, but with the outcome. We help them reach that very point B, where there is confidence, attention, relationships and fulfilment».*



The expert gave an example. A client from Germany came in with a classic request: «Make me beautiful». If the stylists had followed the standard procedure, they would simply have put together some on-trend looks for her, taking into account her body shape, current trends, silhouettes and colors. However, they went a step further and discovered that her real goal was not beauty, but a desire to establish a personal life, to appeal to men and to get married. And this completely changes the approach, because at that point it's no longer enough to dress someone «just to be fashionable». You need to dress them in a way that helps them achieve their life goal. This is precisely where genuine loyalty to a specialist, a shop or a brand comes into play. And this is the level of customer engagement that almost no one utilizes today, yet which delivers the strongest and most long-lasting results.

«These days, people aren't buying clothes. They're buying a goal or a dream! If you can't be distinguished from other shops in terms of customer service, you'll only be compared on price! And

that's a losing proposition. Would the customer reach her Point B in her new clothes? Yes, of course she would. But the question is a different one – exactly how, with what feeling, at what pace, and how well the new clothes meet her actual needs. And this is precisely where the difference between superficial and in-depth work with the customer lies. Because a person never simply buys an item. They do not choose a dress, shoes or a shop in isolation from themselves. They are always fulfilling some inner need – sometimes a conscious one, but more often not. It might be about self-esteem, confidence, how they feel about themselves, self-love, loneliness, or the desire to be liked, noticed or chosen. Not because they «have nothing to wear», but because something inside them isn't being fulfilled. Yes, it sounds almost like philosophy or a speech from a beauty pageant – «We make people happy! ». But, to be honest, there's a practical point to this, because clothes, jewellery and shoes are sold by everyone and in abundance. But that feeling of «they really understand me here» – that's a rarity. And the moment a customer feels that you're not just seeing their outward request, but reading what lies behind it – that's when the magic happens. After that, no discounts are needed», - says Madi Bekdair.

The three things that genuinely build customer loyalty – rather than merely imitating it – are as follows: people return to places where they don't have to explain who they are all over again every time. They remember them: what they've bought, what styles suit them, what they don't wear, where they work, what events they attend, what they find difficult to choose, what they feel self-conscious about, and what sort of lifestyle they lead. The second point is that the customer's time is saved: by the time they arrive, a curated capsule collection is ready, along with outfit combinations, a range of sizes, footwear and accessories, and looks for specific occasions. And the third point is that the client gets results: an understanding of how to mix and match, appropriateness, integration with their existing wardrobe, and an understanding of which outfits can be put together and which items are worth buying later.



«The client changes thanks to you. It's brilliant when they don't have to come in every time and explain all over again what their name is, what size they are, what they love and what they can't stand. For example, we always note down not only measurements but also what's off-limits: what a person would never wear, and which colors, textures and prints annoy them. And conversely – what they love, what they're used to, and which brands they wear. This gives a very comprehensive picture. And then some

very simple yet powerful things happen. Clients come back to me a few years later; I might not remember their name – well, it happens... – but I do remember: red boots, patent leather knee-high boots, a white trench coat with a snakeskin pattern. And when I mention this, they're amazed: «What do you mean? You remember me? » At that moment, that's it – an emotional connection has been forged! Because people don't remember brand names or surnames; they remember the feeling: «I felt good here!». Saving the client's time is the one factor that businesses really ought to learn from stylists. Because a stylist never starts by saying, «Let's go and see what's available». First, they gather information: measurements, lifestyle, goals. This can be done quickly, online, without any hassle for the customer. Then comes understanding where the person wants to end up, and only then do they select the clothes. As a result, the customer doesn't come just to 'browse the shop', but for specific solutions. They don't get tired, they don't get annoyed, and they don't spend half a day trying things on. And they really appreciate this, because these days, time is probably the most precious resource. And thirdly – and most importantly – it's about tapping into their true motivation. Not «I need to buy this», but «why do I actually need this?». Because as soon as you start working at this level, competition in the usual sense disappears. People stop comparing you to «that shop across the road» or «that brand on Instagram». Because you're no longer just selling; you're solving a problem. And when people sense this, they start recommending you, coming back and bringing others along – not because you're running a promotion, but because that kind of experience is hard to replicate», - explains the image stylist.

Expanding on the topic of purchasing motivation, Madi Bekdair pointed out that the buzzwords «archetypes², «psychotypes» and «psychological interviews» are not actually about «clever» techniques, but about something very simple: understanding what state a person is in right now and what state they want to be in. People don't change their hairstyle simply because they've «got fed up with the old one», nor do they buy a new dress because «there's nothing in the wardrobe»: «*There's always something behind it. A new state of being, new events, new people, new sensations. It's as if we want to give our lives a bit of a fresh start through our appearance. And so, if you dig a little deeper, it becomes clear: people don't buy clothes just to spend money. That's not what it's about at all. Never! It's always about an inner need; it's just that it isn't always put into words. And that's when the*



professional work begins. Once you've gathered all the information about the client, you don't rush straight into the shop floor. You move on to a stage I call «monitoring». This is the moment when you match the person and their taste, their reactions, their psychological type and archetype with the range on offer. Because if you're dealing with, say, a «Jester», you're not going to dress them in a boring grey three-piece suit, are you? Even if it's a suit, it'll still have character – with striking details, a certain mood, a touch of playfulness – so that the person looks at it and thinks: «Oh, that's me! They've really got me here».

Only once the stylist has understood the brief do they start putting together suggestions – and they do so in advance. The client isn't even in the shop yet. They've got their own things to do and don't want to waste time on endless fittings and searching. This stage is called pre-shopping. A capsule collection is put together, containing ready-made looks – not just abstract items, but specific combinations.

Madi Bekdair advises asking clients about their plans: *«If someone says, «I'm going on a business trip for a month» – that's it, you've got all the information you need. You understand the climate, the geography, the pace of life and the tasks involved, and based on that, you put together a wardrobe for them that will actually work. And, very importantly, it fits straight into the budget without that strange business of «Let's add this, and that, and just a bit more on top». The aim isn't to sell as much as possible. The aim is to put together exactly what the person needs, taking into account their constraints, lifestyle, personality and destination.»*

After that, there's a meeting with the client in the shop, where the most interesting part begins, because instead of the usual stress, the person suddenly has a completely different experience. No need to rush between the racks, no need to listen to comments like «Nothing suits you», no need to doubt yourself in the fitting room. *«Let's be honest: for many people, going to a shop is stressful. Huge! And it's not even about the clothes. Life is already «weighing them down» – finances, work, uncertainty, everything under the sun. And then they come into the shop, only to be dealt the final blow: no sizes available, no choice, the wrong height, the wrong figure. Of course, you can wrap all that up in a smile and kind words, but if nothing actually changes, then the feelings don't change either. Here, though, it's a different story. You don't have to search for your size with trembling hands and*



pray that the garment will at least fasten. There's no need to worry that the underwear won't fit or that they're «not quite themselves today», because the stylist has thought it all through in advance. They advise on what to wear, which underwear to choose, how to prepare, even whether to eat before the appointment and what sort of water to bring along. These are small things, but they actually add up to a sense of care. «As a result, a person doesn't just leave with their purchases; they leave feeling that someone has thought about them in advance, that they've been understood, that their time has been saved, and that the whole process can be a pleasure rather than a source of stress», - says Madi Bekdair, revealing the secrets of customer loyalty.

The underlying reasons why a client is willing to pay are as follows: they don't like what they see in the mirror; they don't like current fashion trends or the range of products in shops; they find it difficult to dress appropriately for their body shape; they don't know how to choose and wear jewellery; they are struggling to come to terms with their age; they want to look younger; their clothes don't help them achieve their goals; they're too lazy to go out to events and socialise with people; they look too ordinary and lack flair; they don't look successful at work; they don't stand out from the crowd; and they can't afford stylish clothes.

And here, according to Madi Bekdair, lies a wealth of ideas for creating social media content: *«The next time you find yourself wondering what to film, there's no need to go back to that guide titled «40 Ideas for Posts That Sell». There's far too much of that on social media, and it simply doesn't work anymore. Look deeper. Over the years, you've built up a huge wealth of observations: clients' fears, doubts, triggers, desires. That's your content. There's no need to dance in front of the camera – your competitors do that enough. But actually, listening to people and giving voice to what's inside them – that's a rarity. For example, a very common story: «I don't like modern fashion». And the person walks around, looking at things – «none of it's my style», «it's all strange», «it's all just not quite right». But this isn't really about fashion. It's about a state of mind, because at some point a person stops embracing the new – music, visuals, aesthetics, culture. And this is the first sign that they're starting to 'get stuck' and, in essence, grow old – not in terms of their age on their passport, but in terms of their perception. The aim here isn't to argue or try to change their mind, but to gently steer them back to the point of interest: «Do you actually want to feel young in five years' time? Then let's see what will be considered beautiful in those five years. Let's broaden our perspective just a little». Or another story: «I find it hard to find clothes that suit my figure». Behind this there's almost always a real story – not about clothes, but about self-rejection, self-consciousness, and the feeling that «something's not right with me». And if you start to see this and work with it, that's when you become more than just a salesperson, and even more than just a stylist. You become the catalyst through which a person's state of being truly changes, and that's a whole different level of value. A client «cheats on» you not because they've received poor service, but because they didn't feel anything for you».*

The expert set out in detail the objectives that each clothing range is designed to achieve. For example, the business capsule is designed to maintain or strengthen one's personal brand, increase earnings, promote career progression and expand one's business. An evening capsule wardrobe is designed to improve existing relationships, build high-value relationships from scratch and boost one's sex appeal. A casual capsule wardrobe meets the client's need to be a beautiful, modern, happy and free person, and conveys the image of a happy and successful life within society.

«It's essential to understand that, if it's a business capsule, there are actually completely different needs behind the purchase of a suit. These include income growth, scaling up, and reaching a new level—including on an international scale. But the customer won't say this outright. They'll say: «I need

a suit. Preferably a versatile one, so I can wear it with trainers, to a meeting, and on a trip». They aren't obliged to elaborate further – it's the salesperson's job to see what lies behind this. And this is where the real work begins – when you tap into the actual need rather than just the words. Evening wear isn't about impressing your friends; it's about energy, about self-expression, about the opportunity to be seen. And there's a very direct link here: no social life in the evenings means no personal fulfilment. Many women live in a «work-home-household chores» cycle and genuinely don't understand where to find the impetus for change in their personal lives. And there won't be any change if there's no space where that energy can manifest itself at all», - explains the image stylist.



Madi Bekdair also shared, with his characteristic sense of humour, how to work with jewellery and accessories: *«I don't know how to choose jewellery» – that's a phrase I hear all the time. When you ask the audience this question, almost everyone gives the same response: «I like it on others, but not on myself – either it's too bright, or it looks odd, or it's like a Christmas tree». But jewellery is always about self-expression. Jewellery is like a spice. And I'm used to being plain, aren't I? I'm used to being dull, inconspicuous... And as soon as a bit of spice appears, that's it – I immediately back off; I can't do it, because it's scary there – it's a different state of being. There's attention there; God forbid someone asks me out on a date or offers me a project or something else. And I'm not ready; my sense of self-worth and energy levels are low. Yes, any «spice» starts to scare me, because with it comes attention, reactions, new opportunities. And that's a whole different level of energy and responsibility, one for which a person is often not internally prepared. And this is where style starts to work on a deeper level. Sometimes I ask what might seem like strange questions: zodiac sign, archetype, even a totem animal. People are surprised at first, but then they get into it, because using such creative tools makes it much easier to find something that's truly their own. When a piece of jewellery is connected to your story, your interests, your character and your inner meanings, it ceases to be something foreign; it becomes an extension of you. And then there's no longer any need to chase trends or try to «dress like everyone else». You get the feeling that «this is about me», and the transition into that style becomes gentle, natural and stress-free».*

Another sensitive topic that is rarely discussed openly is the refusal to accept one's age. At first contact, as a rule, nobody admits to this: everyone is at a «wonderful age» and «always 18 at heart».

But if you dig deeper, especially during the second or third stage of the process, this issue comes up with almost all clients, and you need to know how to deal with it. Madi Bekdair explains in detail how: *«It's important to be honest here: if your goal is growth, status, money or recognition, then constantly trying to look younger at any cost starts to work against you. Because status is directly linked to experience, and experience is time. We intuitively understand the difference between a specialist with 20 years' experience and a beginner. Trust stems not from youth, but from depth and the journey you've been on. That's why sometimes the key task isn't to look younger, but, on the contrary, to present maturity in the right light – to show it as a strength, rather than something to be hidden. It's very telling when a client looks in the mirror and says, «This makes me look old». And here it's important to bring her back to reality: more often than not, it's not the garment that makes her look old, but a lack of energy in her face, in her demeanour, in her bearing; a lack of self-care, of spirit, of inner life. Because even in the simplest of clothes, a person can look attractive if they radiate light, confidence and are in touch with themselves. Conversely, you can wear the perfect dress, but if you're «switched off» on the inside, it won't save you. This leads to the next important point for business: stop focusing solely on price. Relying on discounts, promotions and sales as your main tool is a dead end. If you compete solely on price, you've already lost, because there will always be someone who can do it cheaper. A strong business is built not on discounts, but on purpose: why you're doing this, what value you provide, and what your position is. When this understanding is in place, customers come not for the «cheapest option», but for results, for a sense of fulfilment. And then everything changes for the better: sales, loyalty, and the calibre of the customers you work with».*

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