

E-COMMERCE IN FASHION BUSINESS: HOW TO EFFECTIVELY USE OWN ONLINE CHANNELS AND MARKETPLACES

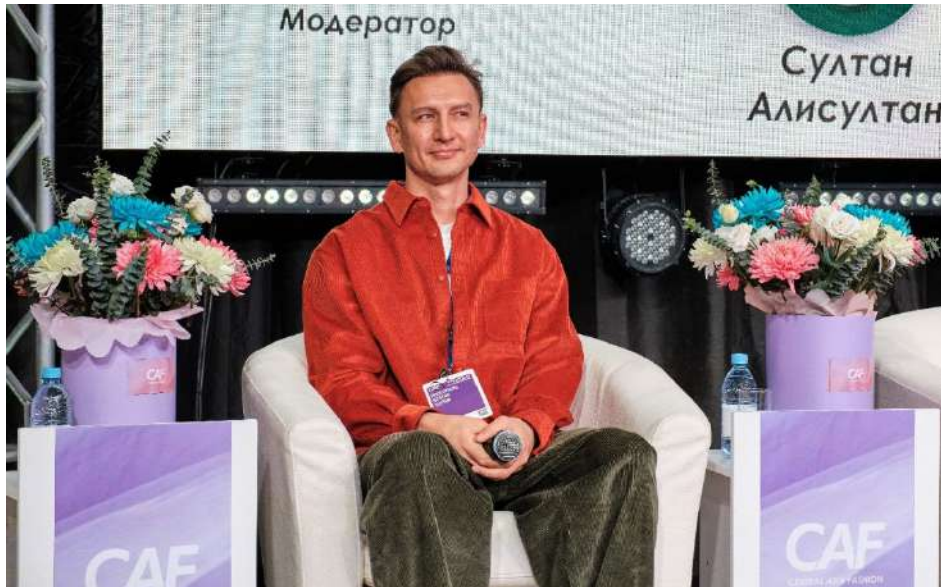
Practical session on how to build sales in the digital environment took place as part of the business conference of the 37th International Fashion Exhibition Central Asia Fashion Spring-2026. Experts discussed what really works in 2026 (own website, social networks, or marketplaces), how to allocate budgets between channels, manage traffic and conversion, and build a sustainable online sales funnel.

The session moderator, Senior Brand Manager at OLX Kazakhstan, Anna Voroshilova posed a general question about how the fashion and e-commerce market has changed over the past 2–3 years. Head of the CIS Partners Group at OZON, Ramina Galiulina replied that on the markets of Russia and Kazakhstan, the share of e-commerce is steadily growing. In particular, on Ozon the fashion category has increased by approximately 1.5 times. This is due to the fact that buyers are increasingly choosing a multichannel format: it is more convenient for them to make purchases online without leaving home. In this context, fashion is becoming one of the key categories.



Senior Brand Manager at OLX Kazakhstan, Anna Voroshilova

Next, Nikolay Konstantinov, General Director of Trend Island and founder of TELEGRAPH department stores, joined the discussion. In his opinion, the clothing market has undergone significant transformation in recent years and has clearly divided into segments: *«Online growth cannot be considered uniform: the luxury and premium segments are growing, but significantly slower than the low-price segment. This is due to differences in consumer behavior. Inexpensive items are easy to buy online without trying them on or interacting with a seller, whereas designer clothing requires a different approach — it is important to try it on, feel the fabric, and receive consultation. One of the reasons for the growth of online sales is the weak service in offline retail. If a customer does not receive attention in a store, they lose motivation to go there, especially when basic items can be quickly and effortlessly ordered online. Today's consumer is noticing the introduction of new technologies. For example, Zara is implementing AI assistants in its app, allowing users to «try on» clothes in a digital format. However, I am skeptical about such solutions. They are more of an entertainment than a full-fledged tool. Technology cannot 100% replace real experience, especially in the designer clothing segment, where fit, tactile sensations, and individual client features are crucial. In the low-price segment this is less critical, but for more expensive items, such solutions still do not deliver accurate results. »*



General Director of Trend Island, founder of TELEGRAPH department stores — Nikolay Konstantinov

Founder of the brand MERSELIS, Elena Ishutina drew the audience's attention to small and medium-sized businesses. According to her, besides large corporations, there are entrepreneurs with annual turnovers of 100–300 million rubles. Of course, this is incomparable with Zara and other giants, but these are the people who work and earn in the industry every day. According to Elena's observations, the market has changed for the better in recent years: *«Diving deeper into the processes, I came to the conclusion that consumers are starting to get tired of the low-price segment. People no longer want to deal with a large amount of low-quality goods and mass-market «cheap stuff». Buyers are becoming more conscious, they are beginning to better understand the real cost of things, value their time, and are not willing to sort through dozens of unsuccessful purchases to find one good one. Interestingly, with my own brand, I see the opposite effect: when we raise the price on certain models, the sales volume also increases. This indicates that the audience is increasingly choosing quality over the lowest price. People are willing to pay more if they understand the value of the product, and they are gradually «filtering out» overly cheap offers, realizing that quality materials and good tailoring cannot cost too little. »*



Founder of the brand MERSELIS, Elena Ishutina

Seller on Wildberries and founder of the brand Dream tones, Dilyara Mendeeva shared her experience of working on marketplaces. According to the entrepreneur, the economics of sales have changed significantly in recent years: *«If in 2022 it was relatively easy to launch a product with an investment of about \$10,000 and quickly recoup the investment with comparable profit, now the situation has become much more complicated. Margins have noticeably decreased, competition has increased, and the requirements for quality of work have grown. Now it is necessary to build a full-fledged brand: obtain originality marks, work on packaging and visual style, and maintain a high product rating (at the level of 4.9–5.0). Costs for the team have increased significantly — it is no longer enough to have just a basic manager. You need to bring in marketers, conduct constant analytics, test CTR, and optimize advertising expenses. The entry threshold for purchases has also risen: if earlier it was possible to work with small batches and high margins, now achieving the same financial results requires significantly larger sales volumes and, accordingly, more frozen capital. At the same time, money has become more «expensive», and operating expenses have grown. Nevertheless, sales volumes continue to increase, and the market is gradually clearing itself. It is becoming easier to sell in large volumes with lower margins. I believe that 2026 will be a turning point: mainly larger players and ‘white’ businesses will remain on the marketplaces, especially on the Wildberries platform. »*



Wildberries seller and founder of the brand Dream tones, Dilyara Mendeeva

Founder of the women's clothing brand Lalina, Linara Ablayeva supported her colleague: *«If just a few years ago Kaspi.kz offered great opportunities for growth with a small markup, now the situation has changed. Sellers from China are actively entering the platform, competition is intensifying, B2B tools and wholesale offers are appearing, which simplifies market entry for new players. For manufacturers, the key focus remains on the client. It is important not just to sell clothes, but to create value: understand the audience's needs, create comfortable and stylish products, and build proper communication. Promotion through Instagram plays a significant role — a large part of the traffic comes from there. When a brand clearly and qualitatively communicates information about the product, the client is willing to pay more and return for repeat purchases. »*

Discussing the factors that most strongly influence the success of fashion brands in e-commerce today, Linara Ablayeva pointed out that from a pricing perspective, the market has already undergone significant transformation: *«The consumer is gradually moving away from the cheapest segment toward the mid- and premium segments. However, content now plays the key role. It is not enough to simply have a product — it is crucial how it is presented: how detailed the model is shown, how its features are revealed — down to the smallest details. The atmosphere of the presentation and the way the brand conveys the value of the item*

are of great importance. For example, if a dress can be styled in different ways and worn in various situations, this must be reflected in the content. Then the client better understands the product and is more likely to make a purchase decision. »



Founder of the women's clothing brand Lalina, Linara Ablayeva

Nikolay Konstantinov agreed with Linara Ablayeva's opinion: «Today, everyone lives inside content. It is literally «in the hand» of every person, and the user constantly interacts with it. In the work of Trend Island, where about 400 brands are presented, mostly in the mid and higher segments, the team consciously abandoned the low-price segment and focused on rethinking communication with the audience. The key change is related to the shift in generations: the new audience perceives fashion and content differently. To remain relevant to them, it is important to understand what these people live by, what their interests are, and how to speak the same language with them. Take our case of integration into dance culture: the team analyzed the trend of growing popularity of dancing, attracted influencers from this sphere, and created video content that spread actively and received a strong response from the young audience. The result was measurable: after the campaign, the flow of customers from a younger audience noticeably increased, which was even visible in the changed structure of visitors in our offline spaces. This confirmed that modern advertising works differently. Classic image videos with abstract aesthetics are giving way to content in which a person can recognize themselves. »

Head of the CIS Partners Group at OZON, Ramina Galiulina, continuing the discussion, highlighted several key factors that directly influence business growth and scaling: *«First of all, it's price. No matter how much entrepreneurs develop content or assortment, today's customer is used to comparing offers across different marketplaces, so price often becomes the decisive factor. Next — assortment and seasonality. It is important not only to develop the sales channel, but also to understand which products are in demand and to prepare in advance for seasonal spikes. After forming the assortment, it is critically important to properly work on the content: a high-quality product card, good reviews, clear description, video content, and infographics — all of this builds trust in the brand and directly affects sales growth. Another important factor is logistics. The buyer always pays attention to delivery times; if they are too long, it reduces the attractiveness of the product. Speaking about working formats, sellers have several main schemes — PBS, PPO, and FBO. The latter allows, based on analytics, to pre-place goods in the warehouse, which significantly reduces delivery times and increases customer loyalty. In addition, marketing plays an important role. It always works toward sales growth, but it is important to choose the right tools. For*

example, there is no need to participate in all promotions at once — it is more effective to promote the most marginal or promising items in a targeted way. Ozon has a wide range of promotion tools. First of all, these are regular promotions that actually run constantly, and the seller can choose where it is most beneficial to participate. Banner placements and «hammers» also work well — this is a format we relaunched in Kazakhstan. Separately, I want to highlight analytics. Ozon has a very powerful tool for sellers — detailed data analytics. It allows tracking demand in different regions and cities, seeing the entire dynamics of sales and brand development in numbers. Using this data, one can make more precise decisions: understand which products and in which season are better to promote, and thereby effectively increase sales. »



Head of the CIS Partners Group at OZON, Ramina Galiulina

Elena Ishutina added a few words about the importance of understanding which communication channel works best with the client: *«Often the same assortment can attract completely different audiences. For some, visual appeal is important, for others — a detailed textual description. For example, the audience on Ozon is more «intellectual» — there it is important to describe everything in detail: composition, seams, lining, and characteristics. At the same time, visual formats also work very well. For instance, videos with light dancing by the model and lively presentation generate a good response and increase sales. However, there is a category of buyers who do not react to videos at all — they only care about clear facts and detailed descriptions. There are also those for whom the format of a live explanation is important: when you personally show the item, explain how it fits, and demonstrate it on different body types. For example, in short review videos where I show the model in detail, turn it inside out, and explain how it looks on different sizes, the response is significantly higher. But again, this doesn't work for all products. If we're talking about more trendy items like oversized hoodies, a strong visual wow-effect is often enough — the person 'reads' the idea and buys without extra explanations. In my case, about 70% of the audience is a more mature and thoughtful group who need to see, hear, and read. Therefore, the key task is to develop all channels and understand which one works best for a specific product. »*

Continuing the topic, Dilyara Mendeeva recommended distributing goods across warehouses as widely as possible: *«Today, it is no longer enough to ship to 5–6 warehouses. It is much more effective to work with 14–15 points. Why this is important: imagine a customer, for example, a mother who orders several items at once to try them on. If out of six ordered items only two arrive at her pickup point and the rest come later, she will most likely choose from what is already there, and simply won't redeem the others. That is why we decided to expand the geography of our warehouses. As a result, we saw an increase in the redemption rate, higher profit, and a decrease in the share of advertising expenses. We work through*

fulfillment: goods arrive from Kazakhstan to Moscow and are then distributed across warehouses. The second important point is working with the product card. Previously, we underestimated the details: the manager would give a brief to the designer, the designer would create a beautiful card, and everything looked aesthetic. But when we started analyzing more deeply and comparing ourselves with competitors, it became clear that even small changes give a noticeable effect. For example, the wording of the guarantee: «12 months» and «365 days» give different CTR. The difference can be about 1%, but with advertising budgets of 1–2 million rubles per month, this directly affects the economics and reduces the share of advertising expenses. Next — working with conversion. We began testing the order of slides, messages, and presentation. We analyze our funnel and our competitors' funnels, export the data to Excel, and see where the indicators are higher. If a competitor has higher conversion to adding to cart, we figure out why: delivery time, price, presentation, or messaging. If it's about delivery times — we shorten them. If it's about price — we either optimize it through volume or strengthen the product's value through communication, explaining why it costs more. Even a simple rearrangement of slides can increase conversion. That is why we have a dedicated responsible person, and one of the key rules is not to accept low indicators. If conversion drops, it is the team's area of responsibility. »



Experts at the CAF Business Conference Analyzed Effective Promotion Strategies in E-Commerce

The experts took a detailed look at the most common mistakes fashion brands make when entering marketplaces or developing their own online channels. One of the most frequent and serious mistakes is the lack of calculated economics. Many brands enter marketplaces without understanding their unit economics. Commissions on Ozon and Wildberries have grown significantly and can now total 30–50% or even higher, depending on the operating model. As a result, an illusion of growth is created: there is turnover, sales are happening, but when entrepreneurs calculate net profit, it turns out that there is either none or the business is operating at a loss. The mistake lies in the fact that at the launch stage, not all expenses are taken into account — such as commissions, logistics, marketing, and operating costs.

Another common problem is working with stock balances and delivery times. For example, on Kaspi.kz, the customer expects to receive the goods within a specific timeframe, especially before holidays. If the item runs out of stock or the seller fails to ship the order on time, it directly affects the rating of both the product and the seller. Even a one-day delay can lead to customer dissatisfaction. That is why it is extremely important to closely monitor stock levels and ensure stable product availability. Placing goods in nearby warehouses not only speeds up delivery but also positively affects ranking, as items with faster delivery are shown higher in search results. It is equally important to work correctly with traffic and stop thinking that the same content will work across all sales channels. Content must be adapted for each

platform and audience. The same product may require several different photoshoots and advertising campaigns. It is very important to test hypotheses and not rely solely on your own perception, because it often does not match the real reaction of the audience.

Head of the CIS Partners Group at OZON, Ramina Galiulina continued the session with clarifications regarding the company's growth: *«If the fashion category on Ozon has grown almost 1.5 times, it is important to understand that this is not just organic growth — the platform is actively investing in the development of local infrastructure. Previously, sellers worked under less favorable conditions, but at the end of last year, a new offer was launched with a more attractive pricing policy. Looking at the dynamics since 2020, we see steady growth across all key indicators: turnover, number of orders, and number of customers. What does Ozon do to make working with the platform comfortable for sellers? Firstly, it offers free storage of goods. In Kazakhstan, sellers can store products in warehouses for free. In Russia, there are also preferential periods — on average about 120 days, depending on the cluster. Secondly, the platform invests in price: thanks to discounts, goods become more attractive to buyers. Regular promotions and promo campaigns are held to help increase sales and drive traffic. At the same time, client infrastructure is being developed. Currently, two large warehouses are operating in Kazakhstan — in Almaty and Astana — along with about 900 pickup points across the country. In addition, pickup points can also be used as points for accepting goods, which simplifies logistics for sellers. An important factor is the availability of postpaid and installment payment options. Installment plans were launched relatively recently, and this is a critically important tool for the Kazakhstani market, where buyers have already become accustomed to this payment format. »*



Speakers of the CAF business conference (from left to right): Anna Voroshilova, Ramina Galiulina, Nikolay Konstantinov, Linara Ablayeva, Dilyara Mendeeva, Elena Ishutina

Linara Ablayeva, summarizing the session, gave several more practical tips for entrepreneurs: *«An interesting insight from practice: our peak orders occur in the late evening and after midnight. People finish their daily tasks, and active online shopping begins. We even have a dedicated manager who works during this time, which gives a noticeable increase in sales. From the point of view of brand development, marketplaces provide a quick launch, flexibility in pricing, and the ability to occupy top positions in search results. However, there are nuances. For example, on Kaspi.kz we faced a situation where competitors copied our models and somehow «attached» themselves to our product cards. As a result, customer reviews of someone else's goods appeared on our card, which strongly affected the brand's perception. The solution is to register a trademark. After that, the platform protects the card, and no one can connect to it. The key promotion factors are content, precise targeting of the audience, and working with reviews. It is especially important to close all possible customer questions in advance in the product card, because not all platforms*

allow replying to reviews. Also, if a product is added to the cart but not purchased, it means something is missing. This is a clear signal to improve the product card. »

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