“For me, influencers are a game changer,” says Maria Giulia Prezioso Maramotti of Max Mara, underlining the house’s committed effort to connect with a younger generation.

And if that also means handing over a great deal of editorial control, then it’s well worth the effort, explains Prezioso Maramotti in an interview in a hotel suite overlooking the Brandenburg Gate this week in Berlin, where the brand staged its 2020 cruise collection show.

In a telling example, last year when Max Mara staged their latest Coats exhibition – originally first launched in Berlin in 2006 – in Seoul, the house hooked up with a series of Korean influencers.

“They decided they wanted to take our collection vintage shopping. And shot Max Mara mixed up with vintage pieces. It’s something we would never have thought of, and light years away from this,” says Prezioso Maramotti, pointing to Steven Meisel’s latest Max Mara campaign that channels reinvented power dressing.

“Yet the images created by Korean influencers were very striking. And connected us with a new generation; and quite frankly someone who would never dream of going into a Max Mara store!” concedes Prezioso Maramotti, the latest generation of her family to enter the business, founded by her grandfather Achille Maramotti back in 1951 in the cathedral city of Reggio Emilia with just a coat and a suit. Myth has it that the name Max Mara was a blend of Maramotti and a playboy noble named Count Max, who partied his fortune away, while looking elegant throughout. Achille would leave this world as one of the richest men in Italy, with an art collection that included Giorgio Morandi, Anselm Kiefer, Giorgio de Chirico, Eric Fischl and Julian Schnabel.

Among the influencers is Caroline (Caro) Daur, the Hamburg-born blogger with the most Instagram followers of any German – 1.7 million – who pulled off three shoots with various international tiles, always wearing Max Mara.
any German – 1.7 million – who pulled off three shoots with various international tiles, always wearing Max Mara, albeit in her own way. Using the Max Mara collection, Daur will star in shoots for Elle Singapore, Maria Claire Australia and Grazia Italy. Not a bad return for the Italian fashion house.

Or Eleonora Carisi, an Italian “it-gal” with 685,000 followers, who posted an album of Berlin photos including looks from the Max Mara cruise show inside the Neues Museum; herself in a caramel outfit by the brand; the menu of the post-show dinner of caviar pizza and a famed Berlin wall painting of Brezhnev kissing an East German communist leader.

Or BryanBoy, with 683,000 followers, seen in a chalk stripe pantsuit – for women, to Helena Bordon – Brazil’s star blogger with 1.1 million fans – seen everywhere online from the Brandenburg Gate to legendary power restaurant Borchardt – always in Max Mara.

“We have to put the consumer at the center of our business, with an omnichannel business, where you can go online and then pick up your purchase in a store, or got to a boutique and buy online. It sounds easy, but the implementation of this project takes time. It’s been an increasing element for us. It’s where our capital is being invested right now,” explains Prezioso Maramotti, whose title is Vice President of US Retail and Global Brand Ambassador.
Last year, the Max Mara group scored an annual turnover of 1.6 billion euros. It's a truly global brand with over 2,300 sales points, including fully owned stores, concept boutiques and department stores. In 107 countries worldwide with a staff of 5,500, the majority of them in retail.

In Germany alone, the house boasts 10 boutiques, along with shop-in-shops inside major department stores like KaDeWe and Galeries Lafayette.

“Though the German shopper is fundamentally different. She is a local woman with a career; while in Paris I’d say that probably 90% of our business is from tourists,” she explains. After Italy, Germany is their biggest European market, with stores there since 1993.
Last September, the house first began talking about coming to Berlin for the cruise show.

“Initially the museum said ‘No, no, no!’ But when they realized it was not for 5,000 people but an intimate moment for 200 they gradually came around. For us, the idea is to spin a concept about what is happening in the world. And a way of Max Mara reminding people that 30 years ago there was a huge wall dividing this city!” she added.

She sees Max Mara's future growth as essentially organic growth.

“In two ways: attract a new client base. We really targeted addressing clients that didn’t necessarily buy Max Mara, a younger aspirational generation. And capturing women with spending power, but for whom Max Mara was not on the map.”

She sees her role as creating a “certain circularity,” including relationships with influencers whose taste reflects the Max Mara world.

“Like Caro Daur, who truly likes and enjoys our product. Influencers have a really interesting following. It’s one thing to see a look on a catwalk, the other is to see a regular woman wearing that look on the street when she put it together. They have a very diverse platform and audience. That before you couldn’t really touch. A teenager who wouldn’t even go to the Max Mara website.”

Max Mara operates by giving influencers clothes; agreeing on a story, and paying on a case by case basis.

“They can create a story with a magazine and even file a report with the magazine. Or they take over our Instagram page for a few days, by doing their own editing. If you do this, you have to be organic, otherwise it won’t work,” she concludes.

By Godfrey Deeny

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