

# LAYER UPON LAYER

Fragrances and scented personal care products are essential to Middle Eastern women's grooming rituals.



**bulk buying:** On average, Middle Eastern women buy one large-size fragrance every three weeks

**IN JULY 2012** women started replacing salesmen in Saudi Arabia's perfumeries as part of a drive to boost female participation within the workforce.

At the time, the jobless rate was at 27 per cent among women – four times that of men, according to research by Booz & Co.

Given the kingdom's size and dominance, this has become one of the key developments to support growth in the female fragrance market in the region.

Servicing the premium market in the Middle East has meant providing one-on-one time and catering to the individual needs of wealthier customers.

It's not gone unnoticed by the world's biggest perfume houses, including Spain's Puig, which produces for fashion houses Prada and Comme des Garçons, and owns Payot cosmetics.

Buddy Abrahams, commercial and key account director at Puig Middle East, says: "There is a new trend in which, where

possible, Saudi female consultants can be recruited in the market to sell perfumes in selected stores. The fragrance category is still more than 60 per cent of the beauty business for most retailers in Saudi Arabia, meaning it is still a fragrance market."

"The kingdom is Puig's largest GCC country, with a weighting of approximately 30 per cent," says Abrahams.

Industry insiders say little has changed in how brands communicate with their wealthy female consumers in booming markets, such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

## GREAT JOB



**Trend:** Puig Middle East's Buddy Abrahams



**Layers:** Ajmal Perfumes' Abdulla Ajmal

Both international and local perfume makers are looking for loyalty through uniqueness and prestige, whether that's a specially made fragrance, or a scent bottle using unique and quality materials, such as gems and precious metals.

Recently, for Gucci Premier Female fragrance, the most visible driver of its success was consumer needs and the idea of aspiration. It is made from highly coveted ingredients, including musk and patchouli.

Interestingly, at the mass market end of the spectrum, deodorants have indirectly boosted fragrances, as women use them to reach their desired final individual scent, a process known as layering.

In some markets several years ago, deodorants were purchased as a substitute for mass fragrances, but it seems that thanks to the layering ritual, they now complement each other.

Abdulla Ajmal, GM of Ajmal Perfumes, says: "Fragrances are an integral part of lifestyle, as such, the only change that we see is an increase in use. Deodorants are one aspect that is taken into consideration for layering.

"Also, you have to bear in mind the usage case is very different compared to fragrances. I don't think they can be replaced with one another, as both of these products are used in harmony to create an overall fragrance aura that lingers."

Arab women will continue to buy fragrances in huge quantities, compared to their peers worldwide.

According to Procter & Gamble, Middle Eastern women buy one large size fragrance every three weeks, while the global average is one small size fragrance every three months.

At this rate, and with social changes and demand for uniqueness, the market's performance can only improve this year. ■