



Behind The Brand: Interview With Abdulla A C.O.O. Of Ajmal Perfumes

BY [RAUL DIAS](#) ON 26TH SEPTEMBER 2020[Facebook](#)[Twitter](#)[Flipboard](#)[Email](#)[Pinterest](#)[More](#)

Sixty-nine is the number of years of experience Ajmal Perfumes has in the perfumery industry. 100,000 is the number of perfume bottles manufactured by the brand daily. 150,000 is the square footage of their state-of-the-art factory located in Dubai, UAE. 1, is the number of dealerships and distributors of the brand's fragrances around the world. 300 plus is the number of fragrances in their portfolio. And finally, 150 is the number of countries where Ajmal's global essence has now spread to.

Coming from humble beginnings in Assam, India, Ajmal Perfumes is today a luxury perfumery brand to reckon with. We sat down a tête-à-tête with Abdulla Ajmal, the scion and deputy C.O.O. of the brand to talk all things fragrantly luxe.





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What gives Ajmal that cutting edge in the Oriental perfumes market and what has its journey been like thus far?

Our journey started from the remote jungles of Assam where, to our good fortune, oudh trees (the dried bark of which is the main ingredient in Oriental perfumery) grew in abundance. My grandfather, the late Haji Ajmal Ali was our pioneer, he was the first from the Ajmal family to venture into the jungles in search of this precious commodity. As time progressed, we grew as a business and diversified from only oudh, to producing varied lines of fragrances that were considered Oriental (our given term is mukhallaf).

Having spent a considerable amount of time extracting, creating blends and doing research in the realm of Oriental perfumery, we have now arrived at a point where we have the knowledge to impart and consult our peers on the use of Oriental ingredients with fragrances. This is our cutting edge. Innovation is key to our process, as we continually strive to bring something new and exciting to our consumers.

What makes Oriental perfumes such a high-end, luxury product?

These fragrances contain mainly extracts that are derived from a natural source and are blended together to craft products that fall into a category that we call mukhallat. This is a word which is synonymous with Oriental/Arabic fragrances within the Gulf region.

A typical blend would revolve around the use of oudh, rose and shammamatul amber which is an essential oil blend created through hydro distillation of over 26 raw materials. Depending on the country of origin of these raw materials, the fragrances are priced accordingly. They are sold as either fragrance oils (concentrated perfume oils) or sprays (eau de parfum).

Natural essences tend to be very diffusive and if used in the concentrated oil form, can emanate all day long from the wearer's body. This is a category that over the past 10 years has become international. Before then, it was only fragrance manufacturers like us that were using the precious ingredients to craft blends. The west is yet to fully embrace these fragrances as concentrated perfume oils but as things progress, I think that is the next natural move.





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How easy is it to innovate and come out with radically different, newer fragrances in such a traditional sphere Oriental perfumery to suit a younger customer base?

Innovation is important, but this could be in the form factor of the product, this could be in the raw materials used or in the way fragrance is dispersed or actuated. When it comes to Oriental perfumery, consumers are looking for something new, yet relatable

The older generation still prefers the rudimentary, raw, unprocessed feel of some of the heavier essences. It is something that is rooted, and a traditional ornament to their overall attire. The newer generation, when they look at the Oriental category, are looking for something that reminds them of their roots and family.

There are only a limited number of natural raw materials that are currently being used. As time progresses, more and more of the raw materials will be replaced by nature-identical, synthetic raw materials. When we look at the west, we find a lot of innovation in Oriental perfumery, that is because they do not use naturals. But when they do, their fragrances appear like ours.

What is one of the biggest challenges to you as a perfumer when it comes to Oriental perfumes vis-à-vis French/Western ones?

Every fragrance is a challenge, as for every fragrance you need to have a distinct outline on who you aim to target and what is the appeal to that segment. Oriental fragrances are crafted to exude confidence and reach, Western fragrances are crafted to reflect sensuality and intimacy. Sometimes the worlds collide, in the Gulf region that is more often than not!

Our customers wear blends that they create themselves. On one hand they will apply Oriental fragrances, either as an oil or a spray, both, and on top of that they will wear an international western blend, or two. It is all about individuality and creating something unique for them. We must bear all this in mind when we approach a new product.



French fragrances such as Blu have seen increasing popularity

Given its origins in India and the fact that one of your main ingredients oudh is majorly sourced from India, how has the Ajmal brand incorporated India's rich perfumery traditions of attar and spices into its perfumes?

We do not forget that roots enable the tree to grow and prosper. India has also been the core of our existence and that will never change. This has been there from the time where the customers used to travel to us in India in the 60s to the time where we came through the launch of our first store outside of India in the Gulf region in 1976. We have been using Indian attars and ingredients since our inception and I do not see the trend changing anytime soon.

Apart from blends, we sell Indian attars as perfumery compounds as well. Some of our customers purchase these compounds to blend into other fragrances and some use them to create dakhoun, an incense product used to enhance the ambience.

What are some of your current bestselling fragrances and what, in your opinion, makes them so popular?

The Ajmal Perfumes portfolio embraces more than 300 fragrances across both Oriental and French lines. It is not just a large offering; it is a very varied offering. Some of our all-time best-selling Oriental perfumes include Dahn Al Oudh Shams, Dahn Al Moattaq, Saif Al Hind, 1001 Nights Alf Laila O Laila and their mukhallat versions. When it comes to French fragrances, we have increasing popularity and off-takes from our creations such as Aurum, Blu, Aristocrat, Raindrops, Evoke and some of our newer Signature Series creations; W Series, M Series, A Series, and Oudesire to name a few.

We believe they are popular because they embody the trust generations have reposed in them across time. The Ajmal signature is a distinct signature; one whiff and you know that it is unmistakably Ajmal. A true connoisseur of fragrances will recognise and celebrate every Ajmal perfume for its quality, purity and time-trusted values.

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Give us an insight into Ajmal's more contemporary western, bespoke and home fragrances verticals?

Ajmal Perfumes is a global essence. We consider ourselves a leader in realm of Oriental perfumery across the Gulf and the Middle East. We do recognise and respect the fact that Oriental perfumery has given us our market standing and prestige across the decades. But we also had an eye on expanding and diversifying our range of offerings, mainly across the Western and home fragrances range.

Our range today reflects this. We manufacture and retail not just Oriental and French fragrances, but also verticals like body care products that embrace this need to cater to new tastes. Hence, our range of deodorants, fragrant body butters, hair mists, body lotions, body powders, etc. Then comes our extensive home fragrances range, which includes dakhoun/incense, oudh, agarwood room fresheners.

At Bespoke, we aim to deliver a fragrance crafted to your very own specifications. This was more to give budding entrepreneurs the opportunity to approach us to create new references for them. Through Bespoke we have done many successful projects and we to continue in the same vein in the future.

Where do you see Ajmal perfumes a decade down the road?

Well, for starters, 2021 is a big year for us. We celebrate our 70th year of existence and it gives us great pride in being part of so many lives, over seven decades through our fragrances and relations developed with our stakeholders, internal and external. Very few fragrance companies, especially from our part of the world, can boast of such a rich legacy.

Ajmal has always prided itself on being a pioneer. We have always been true to our roots and traditions, and yet always embrace modernity without losing on our core. Today, brand Ajmal is available across 150 countries. We sell across the continents and are embracing new customers every day.

Simply put, our ambition over the next decade as we move into our 70th year is to become a significant player in the global perfume market.

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If you could give an ‘Ajmal spin’ to any fragrance, Oriental or Western, which one would that be and why?

As perfumers and creators, the process of crafting is what excites us most at Ajmal. That is what has kept us constantly in the pursuit of perfecting things we are good at, innovating things we have a good gut feel about and learning new dimensions of perfumery every day.

Whilst Western perfumery is obviously a vast and innovative field, and calls for large doses of creativity, we believe the true challenge of the creative excitement, comes from Oriental perfumery. After all, there is still so much that is age-old in this sphere. The ingredients like oudh, amber, musk and rose. The craftsmanship that comes with experience. The ‘nose’ and ‘nous’ of understanding the cornerstones a perfumer brings to what is traditional.

We have already created one such ‘spin’ with a new range that we have launched in Europe called Purely Orient which takes the traditional beauty of Oriental fragrances and blends them with the bespoke luxury of European fragrances. This has been done via Ajmal Perfumes in collaboration with top European perfumers and international design houses. Thus, creating a true testament to Oriental luxury. Our DNA is linked with the orient and with seven decades of mastering the art of oriental perfumery, as a perfume powerhouse, we believe we can ‘Ajmalise’ any product!

Lastly, as a perfumer what smells come to mind when you hear the word ‘luxury’?

Oudh, there is no better essence expression of luxury than oudh. It is a rich, deep, sensorial, musky fragrance like none other. It is a cultural touchstone and a highly prestigious, acquired taste. It is everything you believe luxury could be and beyond. And it will continue to be the cornerstone of all that Ajmal Perfumes is and will be.

ajmalperfume.com

All imagery courtesy of Ajmal Perfumes.