Native



NATIVE TALENT TRENDS · MIDDLE EAST

# Fragrance

## The Gulf is setting the brief

Creation houses and finished-fragrance brands are scaling up in Dubai. A summary of investments, skills in demand and senior hires across the Gulf fragrance industry in 2026.

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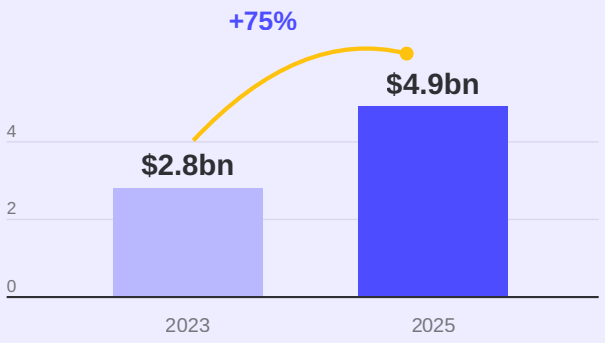

2026

01 · CONTEXT

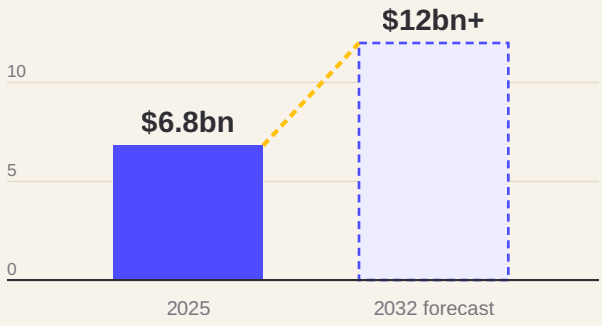
# Creators and brands are scaling up

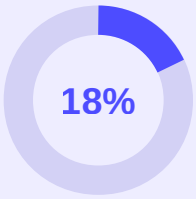
Creation houses, finished-fragrance brands and investors committed new capital to the Gulf through 2026.

**ARABIAN FRAGRANCES**
Global retail sales, $bn




**GCC FRAGRANCE MARKET**
Market size, $bn · implies ~8% a year




## AED 1.6bn

of perfume sold at Dubai Duty Free in 2025: 18% of its sales. Dubai is the region's fragrance showroom.

### Creation houses build locally

Keva, dsm-firmenich and Takasago funded or opened Gulf creation centres.

### Brands go global

Emper, Ajmal and Rasasi are launching in the US, India and beyond.

### Capital follows

Alt Capital, Givaudan and Extravaganza Beauty closed deals in the sector.

Sources: Euromonitor International (Sep 2026); IGTPS via Premium Beauty News (Sep 2026); Dubai Duty Free 2025 results. Euromonitor figure covers global retail sales of Arabian-origin fragrances, not Gulf sales only. GCC figure includes Saudi Arabia; other analysts estimate lower. Annual growth rate is Native calculation from the two GCC figures.

02 · GULF EXPANSION

# Nine expansions in ten months

Investments, new centres and launches in Gulf fragrance, January to October 2026.

BY TYPE




Creation houses · Capital · Brands · Retail

TIMELINE, 2026

**Jan 2026** — **Emper Perfumes** BRANDS
Dubai house debuts luxury sub-brand Perfumes Capital in Miami, then rolls it out in the UAE

**Feb 2026** — **Keva (S H Kelkar)** CREATION
Further AED 5m equity approved for Keva Middle East FZE, its UAE creation arm

**Feb 2026** — **dsm-firmenich** CREATION
Po ONE Lab, a fragrance creative space in Riyadh built with Villa Po ONE

**May 2026** — **Alt Capital, Dkhoni** CAPITAL
Minority stake in the Saudi fragrance company (SAR 600m+ revenue); IPO targeted within 18 months

**May 2026** — **Ajmal** RETAIL
Dubai house targets 170+ exclusive stores in India by end-2026, backed by local manufacturing

**Jun 2026** — **Givaudan, Eurofragance** CAPITAL
Majority stake in the Barcelona creation house (~CHF 185m sales), a major Gulf supplier

**Sep 2026** — **Extravaganza Beauty, Roja** CAPITAL
Gulf distributor buys UK niche house Roja London outright to fund its global expansion

**Oct 2026** — **Takasago** CREATION
New Dubai creative centre with application, compounding and GC-MS labs

**Oct 2026** — **Rasasi, Lattafa, Armaf** BRANDS
Beautyworld launches, incl. Rasasi's new luxury house Kenz de Rasasi aimed at global markets

Sources: company announcements and filings (S H Kelkar via BSE/NSE, dsm-firmenich, Alt Capital, Givaudan, Takasago); Gulf News (Emper, Kenz de Rasasi); Retail4Growth (Ajmal, May 2026); BeautyMatter and Premium Beauty News (Roja London, Sep 2026). Month of announcement.

03 · BEAUTYWORLD 2026

# What the show told us

The 30th edition put creation houses and finished brands on one floor, with the brands looking beyond the Gulf.

**1,300**
exhibitors from 56 countries

**62,130**
visitors, 6–8 Oct 2026

**Top 10**
UAE rank among exporters of finished perfume by value

**2027**
moves to Expo City Dubai, 19–21 Oct

## 01
### Brands go global
Rasasi launched Kenz de Rasasi, Lattafa unveiled three fragrances and Armaf added Club de Nuit launches, while eyeing the US, Latin America and South Asia.

## 02
### Marketplaces are the route
Mercado Libre opened talks with Lattafa, Armaf, Afnan and Rasasi at the 2025 show and several went live. Lattafa and Armaf also sell direct through TikTok Shop.

## 03
### Creation houses court regional brands
Takasago opened its Dubai centre and showed 13 creations. Sozio, Argeville and Cosmo International launched Middle East collections.

## 04
### Originality over dupes
Dubai is still linked to perfume dupes. Suppliers such as Takasago are positioning on original creation for regional brands going global.

## 05
### New formats, new skills
Alcohol-free primers and balms (Expressions Parfumées, SFA Neroli) and layering sets are reshaping evaluation and application work.

## 06
### Visitor numbers dipped
Attendance was below 2025 amid the US–Iran conflict, though fragrance halls stayed busy. Hiring plans should allow for regional volatility.

Sources: Premium Beauty News — “Beautyworld Middle East stands out as a global fragrance hub amid Gulf tensions” (19 Oct 2026), “Beautyworld Middle East turns 30” (7 Sep 2026), “Takasago expands its Middle East presence” (9 Nov 2026); Gulf News and Gulf Today (Oct 2026). Show now branded Beautyworld Dubai in some coverage.

04 · SKILLS IN DEMAND

# Every new centre needs a bench

Creation centres and finished-fragrance houses are scaling in Dubai. In our view, senior regional talent is the constraint.

| ROLE | KEY SKILLS IN DEMAND | NATIVE VIEW |
|---|---|---|
| **CREATION HOUSES** | | |
| **Perfumery & creation** | Arabic accords (oud, amber, musk, rose), fine-fragrance and attar formulation, regional consumer insight | SCARCE |
| **Evaluation & application** | Sensory evaluation, oil-based and alcohol-free formats, heat-stability testing | |
| **Commercial & accounts** | Selling to regional brand owners, private-label deal structuring, GCC distributor management | SCARCE |
| **FINISHED-FRAGRANCE HOUSES** | | |
| **Product development & brand** | Launch pipelines and line extensions, layering ranges, managing perfumer and supplier briefs | |
| **E-commerce & marketplaces** | TikTok Shop, Mercado Libre and other marketplaces, direct-to-consumer growth | |
| **International distribution** | Entering the US, Latin America and South Asia; distributor and travel-retail management | |
| **Regulatory & compliance** | GSO standards, SFDA and MoIAT (ECAS) registration, IFRA standards, halal certification | SCARCE |
| **Sourcing & supply chain** | Oud and natural raw-material sourcing, free-zone and duty logistics, filling and packaging, cost control | |

**15+** nationalities among the 68 staff at Mane's new Dubai HQ. Dubai teams are multinational by design.

Sources: Mane via Food Business MEA (Dec 2025) and Premium Beauty News (Dec 2025). UAE conformity scheme: MoIAT (formerly ESMA, merged 2020). Skills by role and scarcity: Native analysis.

05 · WHO MOVED

# Creation talent is on the move

Perfumers are trading creation houses, and senior fragrance leaders are stepping into general management.

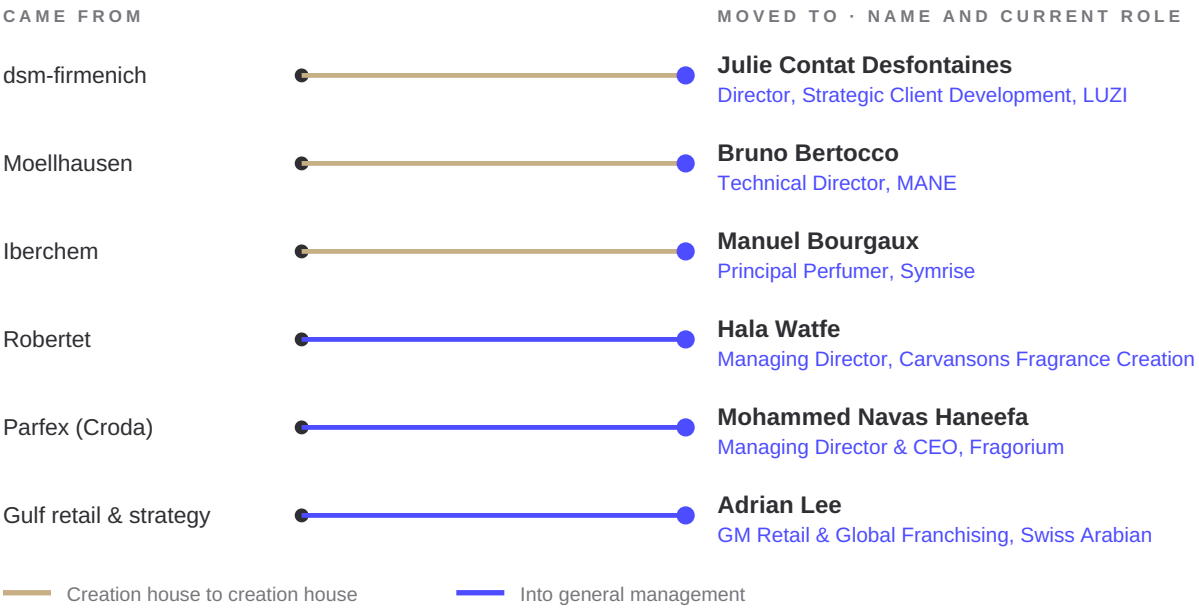
**6** senior Middle East fragrance moves in 2026

**3** between creation houses

**3** into MD or GM roles

**26+ yrs** in fragrance for each of the two most senior movers

## TALENT FLOWS, 2026




### Dubai centres trade talent

Perfumers and technical leaders moved between LUZI, MANE, Symrise and their rivals.

### Creation leads to the top

Sales and creation leaders from Robertet and Parfex now run Carvansons and Fragorium.

### Regional houses build boards

Swiss Arabian added a GM Retail & Global Franchising and a retail board seat.

Sources: LinkedIn announcements by the individuals and companies (Oct–Nov 2026); Beautyworld Dubai 2026 speaker listing; Iberchem (2025); Gulf News; RocketReach. Curated sample of public moves in 2026, not a full market census. Native analysis.

06 · OUR VIEW

# The next phase will be decided by leadership

Global houses are investing in regional creation and technical capability, while finished-fragrance businesses expand manufacturing, distribution and international operations. Demand now runs from master perfumers to general managers.

**01** **Build regional leadership**
Develop management teams with local market understanding and international experience.

**02** **Strengthen technical capabilities**
Secure specialist talent across creation, R&D, manufacturing and product development.

**03** **Drive international expansion**
Hire commercial leaders who can take regional fragrance businesses into international markets.



TALK TO US

To discuss leadership hiring in fragrance, reach out to

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