

Let's get sentimental

Smelling good has always been a part of being well-groomed. Excavations have proved the age-old practice of applying fragrant pastes made from sandalwood, ambergris, oils extracted from flora and the burning of wood and resin. It is believed that the early Egyptians were the first to use the smoke of burning incense - a tradition still prevalent in the Middle East in the use of dokhoon. This also explains the origin of the word "perfume" from the Latin words "per" and "fumus", which mean "through smoke". It was the Greeks, though, who've been credited with the creation of liquid perfumes - a mixture of fragrant powders and heavy oils - which was also used by the Romans. The French used perfumes, not just on their clothes but on furniture and linen, too. Today there is a wide range of specially created fragrances for men and women. Abdullah Ajmal, deputy general manager at Ajmal Perfumes, one of the UAE's leading perfumeries, explains the process: "The perfume-making process lasts about 18 to 24 months. The first step is to conceptualise an individual and put together a profile." "For instance, one of the briefings for the perfumery and packaging teams goes like this: An Arab lady who wears an abaya but is liberal in her thinking," Ajmal says. "After the perfume is created, a panel of evaluators analyses it."

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Did you know...

Arabs played an important part in the progress of the perfume industry. It is said that the Arabian chemist Ibn Sina, or Avicenna, as he was known in the West, developed a distillation process to extract oils from flowers.

The first flower he tried his process on was the rose. Up until then, liquid perfumes had been made from mixtures of oil and crushed herbs or petals, which made quite strong perfume. Avicenna's process produced much lighter rose water and it quickly gained popularity.

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Manjari Saxena uncovers the story behind the little bottle sitting on her dressing table

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Over the centuries

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How to wear a fragrance

- || Wear on pulse points — This creates maximum heat and generates the best effect.
- || Walk into a mist — If you need to smell good without overwhelming.
- || Wear on the clothes — It tends to last longer
- || Layer your skin — If you shower with one scent and use the same eau de cologne, it tends to last longer.



Packaging is key to attracting buyers

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Scent of a woman

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It's all in 'the Nose'?

Abdullah Ajmal, deputy general manager, Ajmal Perfumes, feels that the first time you may buy a fragrance for the packaging but the second time, it would definitely be for the scent. That's where the importance of "the Nose", or the perfumer, lies.

"If the product promises sensuality, does the consumer feel sensuous after wearing it? To deliver this sensuality is the role of the perfumer. And this is what determines the success or failure of the product," he says.

The final product is really up to "the Nose." "Earlier, we would tell 'the Nose' that we want citrus or marine notes with further classification. For instance, in marine notes, there are sea or freshwater notes, or going further — rain, dew, sea breeze, etc," Ajmal says. "But now we try not to influence 'the Nose' so that his creativity flowers. Now we describe the scent as 'effervescent', 'brilliant', 'sensuous' or 'sporty' — depending on the personality of the wearer."

The Egyptians used exotic materials such as alabaster, ebony and porcelain.

"There are two aspects of packaging — the primary packaging is the bottle while the secondary is the box," Ajmal says.

Flower power

— Women prefer floral scents such as rose and jasmine, while men go for citrus and woody scents.

"A good product targets consumers besides being in tune with the trends. Since women form a chunk of the consumers, floral scents are popular. The trend will continue because men are also switching to floral scents," Ajmal says.

Find out more by taking a walk with Abdullah Ajmal through the sights and smells of a perfume-making factory at www.gulfnews.com/gntv

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