The Art of Luxury

Juilee Thakare, Manager - Creative, Nabeel Perfume Industries (FZE), tells **Benjamin Daniel** how Nabeel develops the packaging for new products such as its Pulse of the Gulf perfume.

PMEA: How does the design process start for a new Nabeel product in terms of packaging?
JT: The first step in design process begins with analysing the product positioning. The design of bottle is an important factor while developing the outer packaging.

Our products are positioned under different collections in order of Premium, Elite and Heritage under our Brand Nabeel, Premium being the topmost range.

Keeping abreast of latest materials available and keeping the functionality of the packaging in mind, our design team works to create visually engaging concepts with a tactile appeal. We collaborate with our suppliers to understand the latest offerings in the packaging industry and develop design in synch with our brands identity.

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Based on the collections, we will develop our packaging. If a product is positioned in a Premium collection, we ensure that each product packaging is developed with an innovative concept: rigid boxes with superior finishes and textures, MDF, faux leather, magnetic closures, fancy inserts, satin or flocking inner trays. Premium category products are targeted to the niche market so every aspect of packaging reflects luxury and has a stunning shelf display.

Our Elite collection is positioned for upper mass market. The packaging for this range is elegant with lots of finishing effects, multi-level embossing, patterned design textures. There's a different style of showcasing the bottle in the box to have a striking product display. For our Heritage brand we use simple yet attractive designs with food boards, metallic boards with certain finishing effects.

PMEA: What were the inspirations for the packaging for Pulse of the Gulf?
JT: Nabeel wanted to develop a fragrance as a tribute to Gulf peninsula. The Gulf region has grown from strength to strength over years and is known for its 'richesse'. While developing this product we wanted to imbibe the traditions, culture while capturing the spirit of the Arabian lifestyle.

The architectural heritage crystal bottle design reflects the opulence of this region. The flacon has an intricate design with vibrant golden metal embellishments contrasting against the sea green transparent crystal.

The outer packaging is made with fancy textured paper with gold foiled delicate design embossed on it with magnetic closure. The box was designed with a window and an outer sleeve that flaunts the extravagant bottle inside.

Not to forget, the perfume contains the mystical pure Indian agarwood oil, the most coveted fragrance in this region, and the packaging does justice to the olfactive experience.

PMEA: What do you see as distinctive about the Gulf market's taste in and response to packaging?
JT: The packaging is very elaborate in this part of the world contrary to Western counterparts. This region is about opulence, extravagance and it is well exhibited through their packaging.

The Gulf region is synonymous with luxury flamboyance. The colour hues of brown, gold, black, silver are predominant. Perfume is primarily a luxury commodity, and the packaging needs to exude this facet.

Packaging is the main purchase driver; it is an important marketing tool to communicate to consumers the essence of your brand. Attractiveness of the packaging can solely be instrumental in stimulating a purchase decision: Looks should be as good as it smells.

PMEA: How has Nabeel developed its packaging in line with new packaging technologies?
JT: We work closely with our suppliers to gauge the new packaging technologies. We monitor closely the latest trends in global markets and adapt it to suit local needs. We team up with French designers with high calibre for our designs. We work with new materials, finishes, accessories while maintaining the brand's heritage. Our packaging is eco-friendly and biodegradable.

PMEA: What are the core aspects of Nabeel's brand identity in its packaging?
JT: Every element associated with our packaging – bottle silhouette, box design, finishes, typography, fonts, logos, colour scheme – conveys our brands core values of quality, expertise, prestige, value for money, heritage and sophistication. The entire selection process relies on communication of these values at consumer touch points. The essence of luxury is transmitted via our unique creative packaging.

PMEA: Where do you see yourselves as different from or ahead of your competitors?
JT: Product pricing is our USP. We offer true value for the purchase. We offer luxury at unbeatable price range and this has been our forte since the beginning. The fragrance is crafted with finest and natural raw materials sourced globally and blended to perfection by our master perfumer, Asghar Adam Ali (Al Attar), founder and chairman of Nabeel Group. We have been trendsetters in this market.

Our packaging reflects creativity and artistry, with unique concepts, bottle designs and décor which sets us apart from the cluttered market and our competitors. Product differentiation is another driver. We have products which cater to wide range of consumer segments.

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PMEA: In your view, how critical are the perfume's box or bottle in the purchasing decision?
JT: The box or bottle is of paramount importance and plays a pivotal role when it comes to purchasing a perfume. Perfume is perceived as a luxury and brands need to ensure that the product creates this perception through its bottles and boxes. The bottle, box is the initial visual stimulus to wow the customer and drive him to purchase.

PMEA: How do you calculate the appropriate cost of packaging when developing a product such as Pulse of the Gulf?
JT: Pulse of the Gulf is a special premium product offered by Nabeel. This niche product is designed specifically to cater to Arabic customers. The prime focus for this product is the fragrance ingredient oud and, given the fact that it is the most expensive ingredient in perfumery, costing for the packaging is done according to the premium price bracket.

PMEA: With this specific product, were any other design paths examined and rejected?
JT: Yes we had around six to seven designs concepts with different materials, specifications, ornamentation for this product. We screened these concepts shortlisted around three designs and developed their prototypes. Considering this product had to harmonise with the rich olfactive structure, we developed the final box which resonated with luxury and prestige outlook.

PMEA: What do you see as your firm's greatest successes or most iconic products in terms of packaging?
JT: Our Nabeel range of products has been a breakthrough success since its launch, with Bakhoor Nabeel being the best selling bakhoor in the world.

Some of our bestsellers have simple packaging with touch of elegance. Khaltat Al Shyookh is another product which is doing very well in the market, especially in Dubai Duty Free.

The outer packaging is made in velvet flock paper with gold hotstamping with black and white colours inspired from the royal attire of sheikhs. The crystal bottle epitomises royalty of the region.

To name a few iconic products in terms of packaging we would list: Jaziyah, Mais, Qawafi, Heritage, Wadeema, Mumaiyaz al Nabeel.