

Be Keen targets niche fragrance brands for partnerships



From left: Be Keen President Antoine Khouzami and Business Development Manager Abla Bencheikh

Distribution company Be Keen says it is targeting sustainable growth as it celebrates its 10th anniversary in 2022.

Be Keen has been the strategic partner for a host of luxury fragrance brands since business partners Abla Bencheikh and Antoine Khouzami set up the business in 2012. The company says its vision and pioneering approach in both travel retail and domestic markets has expanded into emerging and challenging markets such as China (since 2013) with sustainable, controlled growth.

"Be Keen is first and foremost a human adventure between creators, retailers and our team members. Bold, passionate, with a strong retail expertise on niche fragrance brand and a solid network on long-standing local partners in various countries," said Be Keen President Antoine Khouzami.

"Some of the niche brands out there try to go global on their own, but it can be very challenging to go direct - that's where Be Keen steps in. With a complementary portfolio of brands to answer everyone's needs and a highly trained and professional team, Be Keen has developed over the years a trustworthy, solid relationship with its partners," he adds.

Be Keen is marking its decade-long niche fragrance expertise with a focus on sustainable growth and image; reinforcing market share for its partner brands in powerhouse domestic markets while continuing the roll-out of its portfolio in key airport retail locations.

"We are proud to celebrate 10 years of successful business operations in partnership with our valued luxury brand portfolio. Premium fragrance houses such as Creed, Etat Libre d'Orange, Escentric Molecules, Juliette has a gun, Montale, Mancera or Tiziana Terenzi are our lifeblood; they define Be Keen as a distribution business and we share a common goal to help travel retailers deliver a more premium offer to their customers," said COO Abla Bencheikh.

"During the pandemic luxury consumers shifted to shopping online and this has shown how unique brands with emotive stories can stand out from the crowd. We want to amplify our brands' personalities in travel retail. There is still a big opportunity for niche fragrance brands to target travelers in luxury airport retail environments. Luxury consumers are looking for authentic brands with genuine stories to tell; Be Keen specialises in translating those emotional, creative stories into human connections," explained Bencheikh.

Be Keen's global reach now stretches to 27 countries across five continents and works hand in hand with leading travel retailers such as Aer Rianta, DFS, Dufry, Gebr. Heinemann and James Richardson. It is now looking to further develop how its portfolio of luxury brands is represented within travel retail. It also specialises in domestic growth for brands in countries such as Turkey, France, Mexico, Romania or China.

In particular, Be Keen has identified the UK as a key market for its top selling fragrances.

"The UK is our number one performing market. Our top brands sold there are Tiziana Terenzi, Montale, Mancera, Etat Libre d'Orange, Une Nuit Nomade through our partnerships with luxury department stores," said Khouzami.

As part of its 10th anniversary plans, Be Keen is set on a steady growth plan to develop market share and brand image of the niche fragrances it exclusively represents, driving new partnership opportunities across markets such as South America (Argentina, Brazil, Panama) as well as South East Asia and further into China as these important Asia markets start to open up.

Over the last decade Be Keen has showcased its portfolio of luxury brands as leaders in the niche fragrance category, including:

- Creed, worldwide expansion continues for the indisputably number one niche luxury artisanal fragrance house that has been producing unique scents for both royalty and global consumers since 1760
- Tiziana Terenzi one of Be Keen's very first partner brand in travel retail and despite no brand awareness, did very well from the beginning. The Italian brand now sits among the top niche fragrances available in the market, with outstanding market share and worldwide presence
- Etat Libre D'Orange features a different approach for a brand partnership - one that brings creativity and quirkiness to the fore. The niche French fragrance house specialises in off-kilter and unexpected collaborations, best epitomised by the recent Ghost in the Shell scent

"After some very tough and challenging times throughout the pandemic, the travel retail industry is back in action and with renewed energy for searching out niche brands. In 2022 the market is more competitive than ever. Travelers are looking for premium brands with character and personality; today's travel retail offer continues to be a key growth driver and worldwide window for many leading luxury brands," said Khouzami.

"As travelers become more sophisticated, online marketplaces develop and airports are more demanding in their requirements for differentiation, retailers are increasingly looking for something with premium appeal. The introduction of a niche luxury brand offer is an important element in this.

However, it can be very challenging for brands to navigate the nuances of the market without a deep understanding of the industry's intricacies and key success factors – this is where Be Keen comes in," says Bencheikh. Travel retailers find in Be Keen and its brands a trustworthy company to develop the niche category.

The next decade

On the company's future, Khouzami said his most important mission will be to consolidate partnerships with existing brands and retailers. "We wish to keep true to our roots and continue growing market share wherever relevant. There is a real appeal for niche brands nowadays, with a lot of retailers wishing to diversify their offer. We want to resist distributing those beautiful brands where they don't belong, and remain truly 'niche' and 'artistic.'"