

FRAGRANCE AND PERSONAL CARE

Can Penhaligon's new fragrance win over Chinese consumers?

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Penhaligon's has released a new fragrance The World According to Arthur as part of its popular "Portraits" fragrance collection. Will it sell out in China? Image credit: Penhaligon's

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Penhaligon's, the British perfume house founded in 1870 by William Penhaligon, is adding a new member to its "Portraits" fragrance collection The World According to Arthur with its release March 1 in all boutiques, department stores and online in China and worldwide.

The "Portraits" fragrance collection is Penhaligon's best-selling line in China.

The collection, made up of more than 15 fragrances, has caused quite a stir in the local market, thanks to its one-of-a-kind approach to scent creation.

Each perfume represents a fictional figure inspired by a tongue-in-cheek take on the British aristocracy, represented through an exquisite bottle cap in the form of an animal.

For instance, in "The World According to Arthur" the eponymous king and warrior is represented as a dragon. Additionally, the fragrances are wrapped in hand-drawn packaging by illustrator Kristjana Williams, where she depicts the adventures of each character.

As such, consumers are not only immersed in the olfactive world of Penhaligons, but also in a visual and narrative universe.

The Jing Take: Niche perfumes' appeal to China's millennials and Gen Zers is no longer a secret in the sector.

When searching for "niche fragrance" on the lifestyle platform Xiaohongshu, more than 100,000 user-generated content instances appear in the results.

Given the demand, smaller size labels Serge Lutens, Le Labo, Diptyque and Penhaligon's have experienced skyrocketing sales in China. At Tmall's Double 11 in 2020, **Penhaligons sales** reached \$1.24 million (7.82 million yuan), ranking it ninth in the Top 10.

However, local consumers' appetite for niche perfume brands over established names should not be taken as a

demand for entry price point fragrances.

Rather, domestic shoppers are showing a willingness to pay the price for unique luxury scents that help them express their personalities.

During L'Oral's 2021 annual results conference, Cyril Chapuy, president of **L'Oral Luxe Division**, highlighted that the firm's luxury fragrance had achieved remarkable success in the past year, thanks to China.

Clearly, Penhaligon's high-end positioning (\$280) and its unique narrative fit well with this demand.

However, given the fierce competition in the sector from both established and upstart players, and the rise of **local fragrance brands** Scent Library, To Summer and The Beast there is a serious threat posed to the British perfume house.

To combat this, Penhaligon must double down its efforts to consolidate its positioning. Thus far, no China-exclusive fragrance has been released, and no celebrities have been used in their commercial campaigns.

It would be wise for the brand to start evaluating such options to not only foster deeper connections with Chinese consumers, but also to help the brand carve out a greater share in this emerging and lucrative market.

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