

A sneak peek shisha sesh

A few weeks ago, Al Fakher attended its first duty free exhibition: TFWA Exhibition and Conference 2019 in Cannes. Speaking with Ziad Jabre, the head of global travel retail shared that the milestone came 18 months after the company established its travel retail department. Due to the unique nature of the business, the team aimed to expand its presence and stay relevant within each participating market. When Al Fakher introduced its product(s) in travel retail, the brand was present in 10 points of sale; the team closed 2018 with 30 locations and will close this year with almost 50 locations. As re-emphasized by Jabre: the growth is there.

Based in the UAE, Al Fakher is proud of its Middle Eastern heritage and place in the growing shisha community around the world. As a leader in the industry, Al Fakher is recognized as the number one global producer of shisha and hookah tobacco with a market share of 40% and distribution in over 85 countries. A decade later, the team is going strong and stepping up its flavor game. Showcasing the recreational activity as a way for “people from all walks of life to come together” and press pause, the company noted it was time to strategically position itself within the travel retail channel to enhance its “small but mighty footprint.”

Arranging TFWA '19 as a sneak peek, Al Fakher showed off its new packaging, which will be launching in the next quarter. In the works for almost one year, the new look and fresh logo is ready to be unveiled.

Describing the smoking of shisha as all about taking the time to slow down, exchange words and appreciate life, in many areas of the world the flavorful release is a cultural tradition. Having experienced significant growth in regions connected to its history and heritage, the opportunity to develop outside of its core market is on the rise. Beyond the Middle East, the product is found on streets and in bars across the Americas, Europe and Asia. All over the world, people of all ages, ethnicities and backgrounds are connecting over a shisha session.

The bottom line: Al Fakher is closing 2019 with nearly 60% growth - and with the confidence that it will continue to experience double digit growth moving forward. Although as of now the company's primary focus is airports (and airlines), the team plans to learn more about travel retail cross-channels such as cruise ships and border stores.