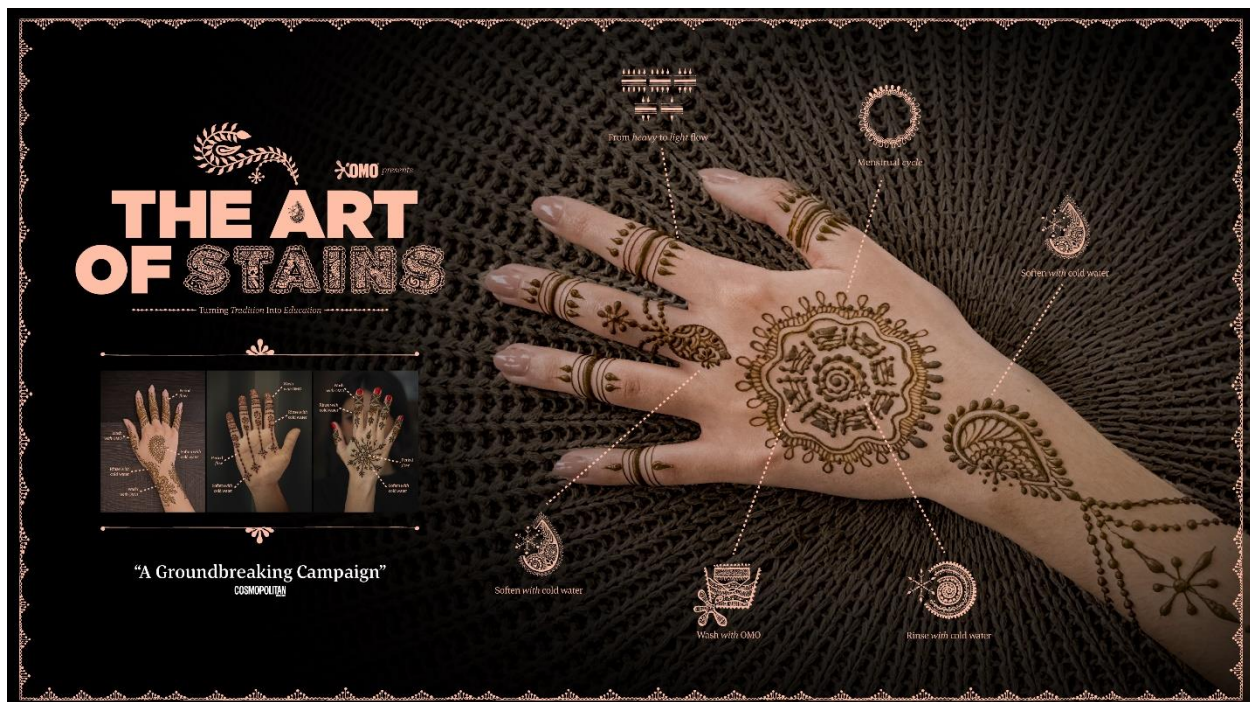


campaign Middle East

OMO: Turning tradition into a canvas for change

[Ishwari Khatu](#)

OMO's "Art of Stains" campaign wasn't about disruption – it was about understanding. Unilever's Sara Qazi shares the thinking behind the campaign.



In a region where conversations about menstruation are still largely held in whispers, OMO's 'Art of Stains' campaign in Saudi Arabia set out to do something simple but powerful: make those whispers count.

Menstruation remains a taboo subject for many women in the Middle East. Our research showed that 72 per cent of Saudi women don't openly talk about their periods. In fact, 90 per cent don't know how to remove period stains from their clothes. These are not just statistics, they're a reflection of a lived reality shaped by generations of silence. As a brand rooted in care and empowerment, we knew we had a role to play.

But the challenge wasn't just about what we wanted to say, it was how to say it. Talking openly about menstrual health in a culturally conservative environment isn't just ineffective, it risks alienating the very women we want to reach. So instead of breaking with tradition, we chose to speak through it.

Enter henna, a centuries-old ritual and a deeply personal form of expression in the region. Henna salons are intimate spaces where women gather, share stories, and celebrate cultural milestones. It was here, in the familiar comfort of these spaces, that we saw an opportunity for change. We partnered with respected henna artists across Saudi Arabia and trained them to embed simple stain-removal tips into intricate designs. These three-step messages, rinse with cold water, wash with OMO, rinse again, were transformed into art that adorned the hands of thousands of women.

This wasn't just a campaign, it was a quiet revolution.

What made it work wasn't just the creativity, it was the cultural fluency. We co-created the campaign with real women from the region. Their stories shaped our tone, our message, and our approach. Our film featured unscripted conversations with henna artists and participants. Some chose to remain anonymous, a reminder of how sensitive the subject still is. But their voices gave the campaign its heart.

We also knew that social media would play a crucial role in amplifying the message. From salon activations and custom henna kits to Snapchat lenses that allowed women to apply the designs virtually, every touchpoint was designed to be discreet, beautiful, and empowering. It was a campaign that felt personal and protective, by design.

The results speak for themselves. 'Art of Stains' became the number one driver of social conversation in Saudi Arabia. We saw a 40 per cent increase in social share rate, 96.3 per cent positive sentiment, and a 23 per cent increase in sales. Time spent with content exceeded 26 hours, and market share rose by 46 per cent. But perhaps most importantly, women started talking – to each other, to their daughters, to their communities.

What this campaign reinforces is that doing good isn't just about what you stand for, it's about how well you understand the people you serve. Creativity that is expressive but not rooted in insight can feel disconnected. Likewise, purpose without execution can feel performative. But when we bring inclusive storytelling, cultural understanding, and business ambition together, we create work that resonates deeply and drives real change.

At Unilever, inclusivity isn't a tactic, it's a mindset. It's about designing brand experiences that are relevant, respectful, and grounded in the cultural nuances of each community. Whether that means turning henna into a storytelling medium or working with local voices to shape our message, we are always asking how we can bring people closer to the solutions they need, in ways that feel authentic to them.

OMO's "Art of Stains" wasn't about shouting louder, it was about listening more closely. Listening to what matters to women, to how they communicate, where they gather, and what they're willing to share. That's the difference between a campaign that speaks at people and one that speaks with them.

As we look ahead, we're excited by the possibilities of continuing this approach, blending insight, creativity, and purpose to build brands that are not only commercially successful but culturally meaningful. Because when brands show up in ways that truly reflect people's lives, we don't just change perception, we create lasting impact.

And sometimes, the quietest messages are the ones that stay with us the longest.

By **Sarah Qazi**, General Manager, Home Care, Unilever Arabia