

autumn fair
معرض الخريف
by informa •••

The Award-Winning Autumn Fair

Revealed: Secrets Behind the World's Best
Shopping Show Campaign

A case study on the multiple award-winning marketing operation

24 January – 2 February 2027 | Exhibition World Bahrain



Measuring Success By Exhibitor Outcomes

A case study on the marketing machine behind one of the world’s largest consumer shopping festivals.

Mahmood and Amal AlHajri¹ packed enough textiles to last a full ten-day selling season at the 2026 Autumn Fair. By the fourth day, thirty per cent of their stock had cleared and they were placing replenishment orders from the exhibition floor. “In any other event,” Amal said, “our initial stock would have lasted us months.”

Their experience is one of thousands that emerge from this festival every year. Mahmoud Ashour² brought his Jordanian food brand Tanateesh for the first time and sold through his entire labneh supply by Day 3, confirming his return before the fair had closed. Ahmed Al Riyami³ shipped Irf Perfumes from Oman for a second year, having doubled his quantities after selling out the first time, and still ran dry before the final weekend.

The Autumn Fair is the Gulf’s largest consumer shopping festival, now approaching its 37th year, and for thousands of traders from across the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and beyond, it’s the anchor of the selling year. Every year, hundreds of thousands of shoppers pour into Exhibition World Bahrain with trolleys, suitcases, and shopping lists, buying directly from exhibitors at full retail price across every day of the run. Admission is free, and the 200,000+ who attend do so because they intend to buy.

\$18.2 Million
in Purchases over Ten Days

In 2026, those shoppers made 380,504 purchases and spent \$18.2 million in ten days.

What makes these results possible is a marketing operation that knows its audience with extraordinary precision: who these shoppers are, where they come from, what they buy, what brings them back, and how to reach them at the right moment with the right message. That intelligence, refined over more than three decades and deployed through campaigns that have now won three major industry awards, is what fills Exhibition World Bahrain with buyers rather than browsers.

This case study explains what the industry’s leading judges found when they evaluated that operation, and why it is a story you should pay attention to if you sell, source, or trade in consumer goods anywhere in this region.



In any other event, our initial stock would have lasted us months.

Mahmood & Amal AlHajri, Venus¹ | Cosmetics | Exhibitor 2026*



Where The Bakhoor Meets The Bazaar

What is Autumn Fair?

Walk through the doors at Exhibition World Bahrain and the scent of frankincense from the Omani Perfume House finds you before you find the stall. Regulars request their mukhallat by name, some a decade into the habit, and the perfumers who blend their own fragrances will walk you through every note while you browse. Further along, the Syrian Quarter fills with jalabiyas in dense rows, hand-embroidered in motifs available nowhere outside these halls, alongside tablecloths, curtains, cushion covers, and bolts of cloth sold by the metre. The sellers here carry a decade of history in this festival and a sharp memory for their customers.

In the Palestinian Food Hall, the atmosphere shifts entirely. First-pressing olive oil from families who have been tending groves for generations, zaatar mixed to recipes that have never been written down, labneh sealed in oil the old way. This is the section where the trolleys fill fastest and where shoppers are still reaching for that olive oil well into spring. The African Quarter brings handicrafts, woven textiles, and carved woodwork from Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, and a widening roster of nations cultivating a Gulf following through this event. The Turkish Bazaar handles the domestic wishlist: ceramics, copperware, hand-painted coffee sets, carpets in colourways that settle into any living room as though they had always been there.

Outside, a sprawling food court with grilled meats turning on open coals, fresh coffee brewed to order, and a stage that fills the evening air between shopping rounds. This is where you will find Dabdoub and Dabdouba, the festival's much-adored mascots who have developed a cult following among local families, drawing crowds every evening for selfies, dance-offs, and the kind of spontaneous chaos that keeps children begging to come back. In Bahrain, where supervised children's activities carry a genuine cost, a free kids' zone is a practical reason families visit, linger, and return for a second or third day. Ladies-only mornings carve out dedicated hours for female shoppers twice during the run.

The whole operation spans four halls and 31,500 square metres, draws sellers from countries spanning three continents, and runs for ten straight days. The atmosphere is what keeps shoppers on the floor for hours, coming back across the week, filling those trolleys again and again. What happens during those hours, commercially, is where the story gets interesting.



The Frenzy On The Floor

The audience that buys

Picture your stand on the opening morning. The doors open, and within minutes the aisles are full. The shoppers arriving in front of you aren't browsing; 82% of them walked in with the specific intention of buying, and by the time the run is over, 96% will have done so. If you're selling food, 69% of the crowd is looking for what you've got. Clothing, 68%. Perfumes, 64%. Nearly a third will spend above BHD 150 in a single visit, and more than one in ten above BHD 400. They'll come back an average of 1.3 times across the run, and the purchasing rhythm holds steady at roughly 38,000 transactions every day for the duration.

The timing is the single most powerful driver of that intent. The fair runs directly before Ramadan, and for many shoppers this is the annual haul: the one concentrated window to source products from countries across the globe that are simply unavailable in the local market for the rest of the year. They arrive with trolleys and lists. They come to stock up for the months ahead, food for the kitchen, clothing for gatherings, perfumes and oud for the season, gifts for family, and the categories at the fair mirror what the season demands. In 2027, Ramadan falls closer to the fair dates than in any recent year, narrowing the preparation window and intensifying the

urgency for shoppers to buy while the exhibitors are still in the halls. Some families have been building their year around this festival for a generation, and the closer Ramadan sits to the closing day, the more concentrated the buying frenzy becomes.

Shereen⁴, who has attended for nineteen years straight, described it as "a must." Zain Ali Al-Attas⁵, a household goods trader in his sixth year, watches customers arrive with product photographs saved on their phones from three and four years ago, hunting for his exact pitch. Omar Al-Hashmi⁶ brought his Moroccan cooperative Terreva for the first time and offered a trader's perspective: "Come with quality. The market here values quality, and if your product has it, you will find your audience."

The Saudi contingent has quadrupled over the past five years, increasingly crossing the King Fahad Causeway with the specific intention of shopping at this event. This is an audience that already exists, already spends, and already returns, delivered to the floor by a marketing team whose understanding of these shoppers is precisely what the industry's top judges recognised and awarded.



Come with quality. The market here values quality, and if your product has it, you will find your audience.

Omar Al-Hashmi, Terreva⁶ | Moroccan Cooperative | First-time exhibitor 2026



The Award-Winning Formula

The secret ingredient? The team measures its success by exhibitor outcomes

Imagine you're a trader who has exhibited at this fair before. You've seen what happens when the marketing campaign lands: the aisles fill earlier, the crowd skews younger, shoppers arrive asking for products they saw on Instagram the night before. That shift, from a crowd that stumbles in to a crowd that arrives with intent, is the difference between a good selling day and an extraordinary one, and it's what the marketing team behind the Autumn Fair engineers every year. Knowing your customer this deeply is rare in any industry, and rarer still at the scale of 200,000 shoppers across a ten-day run. Three judging panels have now independently highlighted one quality above all others: the precision of the audience intelligence and the creativity of its deployment on a lean budget.

Abdulrahman⁷, who has had a stand in the shows Syrian pavilion for fifteen years, described what this intelligence looks like from the other side of the counter: "You could see it in the streets, on television, in the media coverage. The effort was visible, and it brought people in." He has been through enough years to recognise when something has shifted, and what shifted was the reach and buying intent of the crowd arriving at his stand.

The campaign that the EN Awards recognised in March 2026 delivered a 63% surge in shoppers and trader sales that have since more than doubled, on a marketing budget of less than half a per cent of event revenue. Fifty influencer partnerships spanning Bahraini, Indian, Filipino, and Saudi audiences drove over 6,700 registrations alone.

More than a quarter of a million shoppers pre-registered and 71% came through the doors, primed to buy.

The compounding effect is the real story. While the marketing grows the audience, the event team invests in the experience that anchors them: new country pavilions introduced each year, an expanding outdoor food court, free children's programming, ladies-only mornings, and the kind of improved organisation that returning shoppers like Zainab⁸ notice immediately, "the food court looks much tidier, more tables, the shuttle bus very well organised." More shoppers, staying longer, spending across more categories, coming back, telling others. The exhibitors benefit, return, and expand their commitment. That cycle, sustained and accelerating over more than three decades, is what earned this team three industry awards and what builds the commercial case for the next.



*The effort was visible, and
it brought people in.*

*Abdulrahman, Beit Al Dimashqi⁷ |
Syrian Pavilion | 15 years exhibiting*



Five Secrets Behind The Autumn Fair's Award-Winning Marketing

1

Audience intelligence that goes deeper than demographics.

The team doesn't just know who their shoppers are — they know which communities to reach through which voices. Fifty influencer partnerships target Bahraini families, Indian and Filipino expat groups, and Saudi shoppers in the Eastern Province, each through creators who speak their language and cover their culture. Messaging adapts by Arabic dialect between Saudi and Bahraini audiences. Campaigns pivot in real time around what's happening in Bahrain that week — weather, salary day, local trends — because relevance drives registration and registration drives footfall.

2

A conversion engine, not a broadcast campaign.

243,000 shoppers registered. 82.3% of them showed up. That conversion rate comes from a fully integrated funnel: paid digital captured high-intent demand, SMS drove 24,800 registrations through timely direct messaging, a raffle competition integrated across email, social, website, and on-site activation drove thousands more through a single creative mechanic, and every channel was continuously optimised based on live performance data. The team reallocates budget to what's working while the campaign is still running.

3

Cultural fluency that generic campaigns can't replicate.

Content strategy is built around how Bahrainis and Gulf audiences actually behave, not around industry templates. Trend-led formats from TikTok. Humour aligned with local culture. Collaborative posts with sponsors, exhibitors, and venue partners that feel organic rather than promotional. The result: page engagement up 735% and Instagram reach of 6 million, built on a marketing budget of less than half a per cent of event revenue.

4

A compounding model where each year builds on the last.

Visitor numbers have grown 57.6% over three years. Registrations have grown 48%. Exhibitors sales have more than doubled. The marketing grows the audience while the event team invests in the experience that retains them — and the team layers new initiatives onto the base each year rather than repeating the same playbook. The niche influencer strategy, the raffle mechanic, the refined visual identity, and the expanded community targeting were all introduced for the most recent campaign.

5

Measurable commercial impact, not vanity metrics.

Everything connects back to what exhibitors earn in the halls. Exhibitor sales exceeding \$18.2 million. 92% of exhibitors confirmed to return. The marketing team measures its success by exhibitor outcomes, and the judges who assessed them evaluated the same connection between marketing activity and commercial performance.

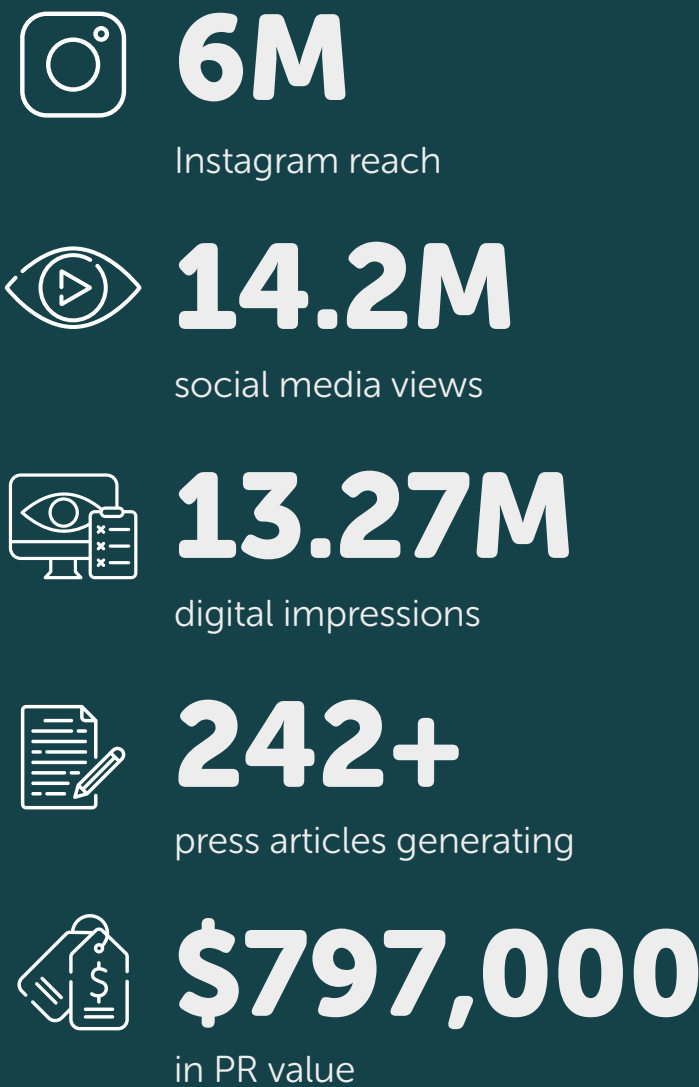
The proof

Three awards in two years from the AEO Excellence Awards and the EN Awards (two of the exhibition industry's most respected judging bodies) confirm that this operation performs at the highest level in the international events industry.

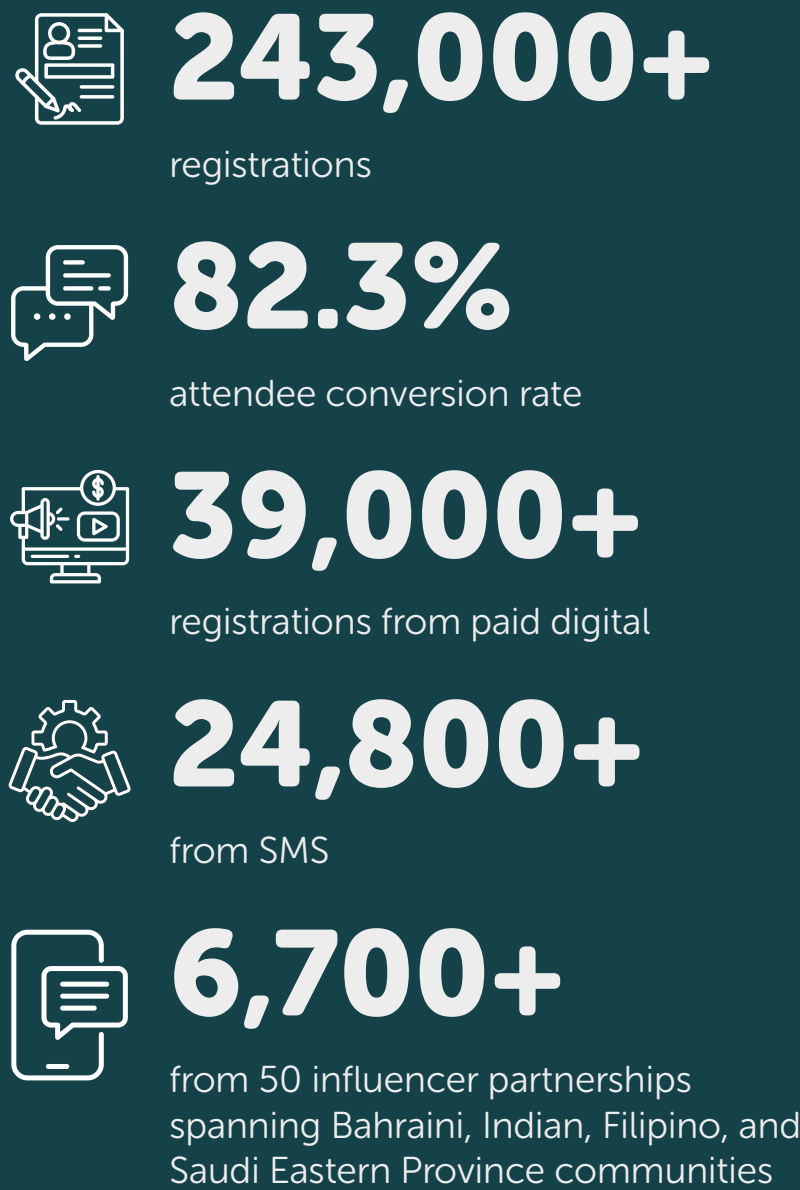


The marketing operation: a snapshot from 2026

The Reach



The Conversion



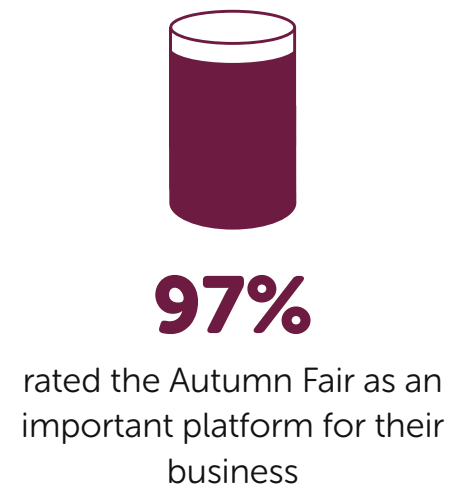
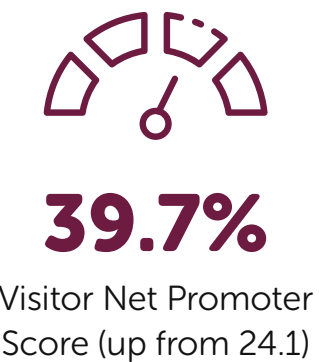
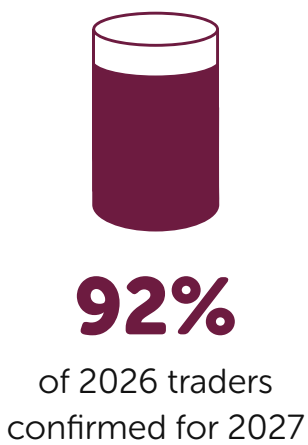
The Efficiency

Marketing budget of less than half a per cent of event revenue.



Source: The Autumn Fair 2026 Post-Show Report

Bigger Every Year, And The Data Proves It



Three Awards. Two Judging Bodies. One Verdict.

This is one of the most successful exhibitions in the Gulf.

If you've read this far, you've already formed a view of what this event delivers. Two of the exhibition industry's most respected judging bodies formed theirs independently, and arrived at one conclusion.

The Association of Event Organisers (AEO) named them Marketing Team of the Year in 2024. The EN Awards, the ceremony widely known as the Oscars of the exhibition industry, awarded them Best Consumer Show Marketing Campaign in March 2026. At the AEO People's Awards in January 2026, they won Marketing Team of the Year for a second time, and Noha Youssef, Marketing Manager, was individually recognised as Marketing Manager of the Year.

The judges published their comments alongside the results. On the team: "This high-performing team thinks so far outside the box they're practically in the next room, delivering incredible achievements and revitalising a historic event

with remarkable impact."⁹ On Noha: "Truly above and beyond, with standout achievements driving commercial, digital, and creative impact, while elevating team culture and the event's global reputation."⁹ These are published assessments from panels who reviewed the evidence and formed their own view.

Ahmed Al Riyami³, the Omani perfumer who sold out in both of his years at the fair, brought double the stock the second time and still ran dry: "This is one of the most successful exhibitions in the Gulf." When a trader and two judging panels reach the same verdict from entirely different vantage points, the conclusion carries weight. If you're evaluating whether the marketing operation behind this event can deliver an audience worth travelling for, the answer has already been given by people whose sole purpose is to make exactly that assessment.

What is the AEO?

The Association of Event Organisers is the UK's premier trade body for companies that create, develop, and manage trade and consumer events, with members responsible for over 2,000 events a year. The AEO Excellence Awards are assessed through an independent, third-party process managed by an external company. Judges score without knowledge of other judges' marks, with a minimum of four per category. 65% of judges come from outside AEO membership. All scores are verified before results are shared.



What are the EN Awards?

The EN Awards are run by Exhibition News, the leading trade publication for the UK and international exhibition sector. Widely described as "the Oscars of the exhibition industry," the annual ceremony attracts over 700 senior professionals. Best Consumer Show Marketing Campaign assesses creativity relative to budget, performance across all routes to market, and measurable commercial results.



Why The 37th Edition Matters

This festival was built by the community it serves and sustained because that community continues to depend on it.

In a region where disruption has occurred, recovery is a rhythm rather than an exception. Through regional conflicts, volatile markets, and a global pandemic that shuttered exhibition halls worldwide, this festival has continued in Bahrain.

That record is worth understanding if you're weighing up a commitment to what comes next. When COVID disrupted the global events industry, the GCC was among the first regions in the world to bring live exhibitions back to full capacity, and Gulf exhibition companies returned to growth faster than any other major market, with UAE operators reporting profits 91% above pre-pandemic levels by 2024. The Autumn Fair's own trajectory tells the same story: trader sales grew from \$10.2 million to \$18.2 million across successive recent years, with the audience and the commercial momentum expanding in tandem. The structural reasons behind that resilience are worth understanding, because they apply beyond any single disruption. The categories this festival trades in, food, clothing, perfumes, household essentials, are driven by the rhythm of family life, by Ramadan preparation, seasonal gifting, and the annual household restock, and that demand is cultural rather than discretionary.

It persists because the need it serves persists.

After any period of disruption, the appetite for what the Autumn Fair provides intensifies. When supply chains are constrained and access to international goods is limited, the concentrated selling window becomes more valuable for shoppers and sellers alike, because it offers direct access to products from around the world that the local retail market simply can't provide in ordinary times.

For local businesses, artisans, and food producers across Bahrain, the fair is how they reach a mass audience in a single window. After a year where those concentrated selling opportunities have been harder to come by, the commercial case for participating is stronger than it has ever been, and the demand from shoppers preparing for the season ahead will be, if anything, more intense.

The marketing team behind this festival understands its community with a depth and precision that only three decades of continuous operation can produce, and two of the industry's leading judging bodies have confirmed it.

Organised by Informa Markets Bahrain in partnership with the Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority, under the patronage of Her Excellency Fatima bint Jaffar Al Sairafi, Minister of Tourism.





The Autumn Fair has always been more than a commercial event for us. It is part of Bahrain's fabric. The team behind it brings a passion for this community and a relentless belief in what this festival means for the exhibitors, families, and local businesses that depend on it. The recognition from the AEO and the EN Awards confirms what we see on the floor every year: a marketing operation that genuinely understands its audience and delivers for them. The 37th Autumn Fair will be our strongest statement yet, a proof of resilience, a commitment to recovery, and an invitation to every trader who wants to be part of what comes next.



Mohammed Ebrahim,
General Manager, Informa Bahrain

autumn fair
معرض الخريف

by informa •••

The 37th Autumn Fair

Shop. Taste. Discover.

Exhibition World Bahrain | 24 January – 2 February 2027

Official support:



Organised by:



Book Your
Stand



Download
Event Brochure



Arrange a meeting
with the Event
Director

