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BEAUTY

Why fragrance is getting the wellness treatment

Promising benefits like clearer minds and calmness, new and established fragrance brands alike are getting into the wellness space.

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July 29, 2025

Fragrance brand, Moods. Photo: Courtesy of Moods

Moods claims to have “mind-altering” properties. Bella Hadid’s Orebella promises skin nourishment. Edeniste’s Lifeboost range is intended to incite a cognitive response, like peaceful sleep or relaxation. The next generation of fragrances are capitalising on an increased appetite for wellness, as customers look to get more out of their everyday products.

“Today’s consumers are looking for more than perfumery — they are seeking mood support, mental clarity and sensory comfort,” says Michael Nolte, SVP and creative director at Beautystreams, an insights platform for the global beauty industry. Edeniste is now one of Harrods’s standout brands in the fragrance space, according to the multi-brand retailer’s beauty buying director Mia Collins, while Vyrao, a line of crystal-charged fragrances that received investment from

LVMH-backed private equity firm L Catterton, is a top performer at Liberty, according to beauty buyer Hannah Richardson.

Vyao launched in 2021 with a range of crystal-charged functional fragrances which use natural oils to increase consumers' energy levels. Photo: Courtesy of Vyao

Moods was launched earlier this year by Gregory Allen and Daniel Smith, two veteran beauty executives who saw an opportunity to “reframe aromatherapy for a new generation”, says Allen. “Consumers increasingly want functionality across every part of their routines, so it’s only natural that scent is the next frontier. But that only works when it’s backed by substance. Today’s customer can tell the difference between marketing and measurable impact. They want more than a nice smell; they want results.”

Think of it as aromatherapy for the modern age, backed by neuroscience and for a more discerning consumer. Established players are leaning in as fragrance — which has recently become beauty’s growth engine — shows signs of slowing down.

The Estée Lauder Companies (ELC) reported a sharp decline in fragrance growth, from 30 per cent in 2022 to 1 per cent in 2024, while Coty’s fragrance growth decreased from 18 per cent in 2022 to the “mid teens” in 2024. Puig’s fragrance (and fashion) division dropped from 40 per cent in 2022 to 6.7 per cent in the second quarter of 2025.

Puig-owned Charlotte Tilbury introduced fragrance in 2024 with six science-backed, emotionally amplifying scents, including More Sex, which it claims delivers an “alluring aura” for up to 18 hours, and Calm Bliss, which it says encourages peaceful relaxation. ELC-owned Tom Ford Beauty released Bois Pacifique this year, a scent meant to promote calmness, balance and mental clarity.

Brands are tapping into a growing space. Some 78 per cent of UK consumers think that fragrances can improve their mental well-being and that brands should lean into mood-boosting perfume merits, according to global

marketing firm [Mintel](#). But it must be done in a meaningful way, say experts. “We will see brands increasingly use aromatherapy-inspired fragrances as a gateway to connect with new consumer segments, but doing so successfully requires authenticity, sensorial depth and emotional resonance,” adds Nolte.

But whether or not these fragrances live up to their stated claims will decide how well this performs as a hybrid category. Already, experts warn that customers may see through these functional benefits as merely a rebrand of aromatherapy. “A wellness edge can provide a meaningful difference, but only if it feels authentic to the brand,” says Liberty’s Richardson. “We’ve seen more and more brands tapping into this holistic angle, but it’s key that it’s embedded in the brand DNA, not just a marketing layer.”

Rethinking aromatherapy

Affiliation with the aromatherapy market could prove lucrative. In Nielsen IQ’s ‘2025 Global Health & Wellness Trends’ report, the consumer intelligence firm named the age-old practice as one of the key trends for this year, with 24 per cent of consumers actively seeking it out. Mintel also notes that consumer interest in functional fragrance is likely to heighten as global rising living costs and inflation continue to weigh on consumers’ minds. Mood-boosting fragrances — especially those that provide stress relief, mental clarity and an energy lift — will be an increasingly important purchasing factor as consumers desire relief and escapism in a challenged economic climate.

Jo Kellett, qualified aromatherapist and owner of From the Seed Aromatherapy, says it’s an update on an age-old practice: “Pure aromatherapy remains therapeutic, while functional fragrance leans into emotional design and accessibility. Aromatherapy is a holistic therapy using pure essential oils to support physical and emotional health, rooted in holistic and herbal traditions, while functional fragrance is a modern, mood-targeting scent blend designed to enhance cognitive states like focus or calm. It’s often wearable, science-backed and lifestyle-driven.”

According to Dr Mark Moss, head of psychology at the University of Northumbria who conducted the clinical trials for Moods, the ancient concept has been given a refreshed purpose through modern developments. “Aromatherapy is the original functional fragrance,” says Moss. “But Moods has redefined the category by giving it scientific credibility via neuroscience and clinical trials.”

Mood's Fit fragrance. Photo: Courtesy of Moods

Owen Cox, COO of wellness app Others, which has its own range of functional fragrances, is of the same opinion: “Fragrances have been used for wellness — and religious or spiritual practice — for thousands of years; think of incenses, oils and ointments. Neuroscience is now proving the capacity of scent to change how our minds process thoughts, emotions and experiences. This new market is shining a modern, science-backed light on something humans have been doing for a long time.”

For Moss, perfumes described as ‘functional’ should use the power of natural essential oils to engage the brain and affect mood and cognitive function, while synthetic blends can only activate the hippocampus (memory). “When the term ‘functional fragrance’ is used to describe synthetic perfume, it’s often just a wellness spin,” he says. “Synthetic perfume is only emotionally evocative, so it’s not biologically active in the way essential oils are.”

Future opportunity

How can brands strike the right balance to connect with the consumer? “Though wellness can offer a smart way for fragrance brands to engage new customers and carve out a point of difference, ultimately, the scent still has to lead,” says Richardson. “If the fragrance itself doesn’t deliver, no amount of crystal healing or mood-boosting claims will make someone want to wear it.”

Beautystreams’s Nolte agrees. “Scent quality, authenticity and functional benefit are all at play,” he explains. “Functionality can’t come at the cost of olfactory pleasure, because people still want a scent that they like. Authenticity comes from transparency and context — when brands root their stories in real needs. Whether it’s sleep support, mood enhancement, or focus, they connect emotionally.”

Nolte explains that success hinges on direct results. “What’s crucial is that the functional aspect feels real, not performative,” he says. “If a product claims to calm or energise, it needs to deliver on that promise — through ingredients with proven efficacy, or rituals that connect meaningfully to the consumer’s lifestyle.”

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