

# Andrzej Bekisz – General Manager, Haleon Saudi Arabia

---



Saudi Arabia is not just one of many markets; it is now the center of gravity for the Middle East and Africa

---

13.03.2025

Tags:

[Saudi Arabia](#), [Haleon](#), [Consumer Healthcare](#), [OTC](#), [Strategy](#), [MEA](#)

---

*Saudi Arabia is rapidly transforming into a key battleground for the consumer healthcare industry, and Haleon is positioning itself at the forefront of this shift. With a growing appetite for innovation, a highly engaged consumer base, and a regulatory landscape that demands agility, the company is reshaping its strategy to stay ahead. From localized manufacturing and digital expansion to new product launches in pain management, multivitamins, and oral care, Haleon Saudi Arabia – under the leadership of General Manager Andrzej Bekisz – is making bold moves.*

## **How is Haleon positioned in Saudi Arabia, and how does it align with its global vision?**

Haleon, established over two years ago following its spin-off from GSK Consumer Healthcare, has rapidly positioned itself as a key player in Saudi Arabia’s consumer health sector. Operating as an independent legal entity based in Jeddah, the company ensures that its globally recognized brands – identical to those available in markets like the UK and the US – are accessible to Saudi consumers. Its portfolio spans four key categories: pain management (Panadol, Voltaren), multivitamins (Centrum), oral care (Sensodyne, Parodontax, Corega), and respiratory health (Otrivin, Panadol Cold & Flu).

Despite its relative youth, Haleon operates within a well-defined strategic framework centered on its core purpose: “Deliver everyday better health with humanity.” This vision underpins its global

---

approach, ensuring consistency across diverse markets from the Middle East to North America.

In Saudi Arabia, Haleon mirrors its global ethos, operating with the same strategic priorities, organizational mindset, and commitment to excellence. The team ensures that its local operations remain fully aligned with the company's global mission of broadening access to high-quality consumer healthcare solutions.

### **What strategies are driving Haleon's expansion in Saudi Arabia, and how is it strengthening its market position?**

Haleon has built a strong presence in Saudi Arabia by aligning its global expertise with local market needs across key consumer healthcare categories. In oral care, it leads the market with Sensodyne, the top toothpaste and manual toothbrush brand, complemented by Parodontax for gum health and Corega for denture care. Recognizing the need for improved oral hygiene awareness, Haleon launched Healthy Saudi Smile initiative, an awareness campaign, now in its third year, to educate consumers on best practices. A key focus has been toothbrush replacement frequency, currently averaging 12-13 months, despite the recommended 3-4 months, as well as the underutilization of mouthwash—both areas with significant room for improvement.

In pain management, Haleon's Panadol and Voltaren remain market leaders. To enhance availability and streamline distribution, the company localized Panadol manufacturing in Saudi Arabia, reinforcing its commitment to the region. This move, formalized through a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Investment, strengthens Haleon's long-term strategy for growth in Saudi Arabia and the broader Middle East and Africa.

The multivitamin segment is another key area of expansion, with Centrum, gaining momentum in Saudi Arabia. Given the rising demand for vitamin supplements, Haleon is actively investing in digital marketing and consumer education to increase awareness and market penetration.

Saudi Arabia's OTC healthcare sector is experiencing significant growth, and Haleon operates within the strict regulatory framework of the Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA), which mandates uniform pricing across all pharmacies. This ensures that products such as Panadol, Voltaren, and Otrivin are available at the same price, whether in premium urban outlets or rural areas. Through market leadership, localized production, and targeted consumer engagement, Haleon continues to strengthen its position as a key player in Saudi Arabia's evolving consumer healthcare landscape, reinforcing its commitment to delivering high-quality, accessible healthcare solutions.

### **Why is Saudi Arabia a high-priority market for Haleon, and what makes it a unique growth opportunity?**

Saudi Arabia holds a pivotal position in Haleon's Middle East and Africa (MEA) strategy, recognized as a must-win market despite its relatively smaller population of 33-35 million compared to larger consumer bases in Turkey (90+ million), Egypt (100+ million), and Pakistan (200+ million). What sets Saudi Arabia apart is its robust economic trajectory, strong consumer purchasing power, and government-led initiatives under Vision 2030, all of which create a highly attractive investment landscape. This significance is reflected in Haleon's decision to localize Panadol manufacturing, a commitment formalized through a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Investment, further cementing Saudi Arabia's status as a regional hub for consumer healthcare innovation and expansion.

---

A defining characteristic of this market is its exceptional receptiveness to innovation. Saudi consumers readily embrace advanced healthcare solutions, as demonstrated by the rapid success of Sensodyne Clinical White, the first clinically proven whitening toothpaste. Introduced as a priority launch, it swiftly gained significant market share, highlighting a consumer base that is both progressive and highly engaged with new product offerings. Unlike in more conservative markets, Saudi consumers actively interact with digital campaigns, media-driven awareness initiatives, and professional healthcare endorsements, reinforcing the country's role as a launchpad for innovation within the MEA region.

Demographics further amplify this potential, with over 60% of the population under 30, creating a dynamic and health-conscious consumer landscape. This younger generation prioritizes preventative healthcare and wellness, a trend evident in the enthusiastic reception of Centrum Immune Support at the Riyadh Marathon, where Haleon's activation saw overwhelming consumer engagement. With strong economic fundamentals, an innovation-driven market, and a rapidly evolving healthcare sector, Saudi Arabia remains central to Haleon's growth strategy. The company's localized investment, focus on innovation, and commitment to consumer engagement continue to position it as a leader in the country's expanding consumer healthcare landscape.

### **How is Haleon adapting to Saudi Arabia's shift toward preventive care and self-medication, and how is this reflected in its portfolio?**

As Saudi Arabia embraces preventive healthcare and self-care, Haleon has made these principles central to its strategy, both globally and within the region. While self-medication involves managing minor ailments independently, self-care takes a broader approach, emphasizing preventive health measures, lifestyle improvements, and early intervention to reduce dependency on clinical treatments. Haleon actively encourages preventive habits, such as the use of therapeutic oral care solutions to manage tooth sensitivity before costly dental treatments become necessary.

A key pillar of this approach is the "Pharmacy First" initiative, which promotes pharmacist consultations as the first step before seeking specialized medical care. In Saudi Arabia, where hospital wait times for specialists can be considerable, this model streamlines healthcare access while reducing pressure on medical professionals. By advocating for early intervention and pharmacist-led guidance, Haleon ensures that consumers receive timely, informed support, reinforcing its broader commitment to enhancing accessibility and empowering individuals to take charge of their health.

This emphasis on prevention and consumer empowerment is reflected in the company's portfolio balance, with approximately 70% of its Saudi business dedicated to over-the-counter (OTC) consumer healthcare products, while the remaining 30% focuses on therapeutic oral care, featuring brands such as Sensodyne, Parodontax, and Corega. Haleon's oral care solutions cater to a diverse consumer base, from children to elderly individuals using dentures, ensuring a comprehensive and lifelong approach to oral health. Through initiatives like Healthy Saudi Smile, the company continues to elevate awareness around preventive dental care, reinforcing its alignment with the growing demand for self-care and proactive health management. By integrating preventive healthcare advocacy, pharmacist-led guidance, and a well-structured portfolio, Haleon is solidifying its leadership in Saudi Arabia's rapidly evolving healthcare landscape, ensuring greater accessibility, consumer engagement, and long-term market expansion.

---

## **How does Saudi Arabia's regulatory framework impact Haleon's operations, and what are the key opportunities and challenges?**

Saudi Arabia's regulatory landscape presents distinct characteristics compared to Western markets, particularly in OTC price regulation. Unlike in Europe and the U.S., where market forces determine pricing, the SFDA mandates fixed pricing upon registration, ensuring uniform costs across all pharmacies. Whether in Riyadh or a smaller city, products like Panadol maintain the same price, promoting affordability and accessibility for consumers.

A notable advancement in recent years has been the wider availability of essential OTC medicines, with products such as paracetamol and diclofenac now accessible in supermarkets—an approach that aligns with European retail models and enhances convenience for everyday healthcare needs. However, advertising regulations remain a constraint. Unlike in Europe, where companies operate under self-regulated promotional guidelines, Saudi Arabia requires SFDA pre-approval for all advertisements, which can extend lead times, limit market responsiveness, and, in some cases, prevent certain campaigns from launching altogether. Given that consumer healthcare operates at the intersection of pharmaceuticals and fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG), these restrictions pose challenges in driving brand awareness and consumer engagement for products like Panadol, Voltaren, and Otrivin.

An additional complexity lies in the lengthy OTC registration process, which slows the introduction of new products. While oral care products such as Sensodyne and Parodontax benefit from a streamlined approval system, allowing simultaneous launches in Saudi Arabia and Europe, OTC medicines require longer regulatory timelines, impacting speed-to-market and product availability. Despite these regulatory challenges, Saudi Arabia remains a priority market for Haleon, offering significant growth potential as the sector continues to evolve. With ongoing regulatory advancements, there is opportunity for greater efficiency in approvals and expanded consumer access. By leveraging its global expertise, localized strategies, and commitment to innovation, Haleon is well-positioned to navigate these complexities and strengthen its leadership in Saudi Arabia's dynamic healthcare sector.

## **How does Haleon adapt its go-to-market strategy in Saudi Arabia while maintaining a strong global brand identity?**

Haleon employs a highly localized approach in Saudi Arabia, ensuring that its globally recognized brands, such as Panadol and Sensodyne, remain culturally relevant and deeply connected to local consumers. While the company operates within a global marketing framework, its execution is carefully tailored to reflect Saudi values, traditions, and consumer behaviors, making its branding both familiar and locally resonant.

A critical aspect of this adaptation is representation in advertising. Haleon ensures that campaigns prominently feature Saudi families, men, and women, creating a sense of local authenticity and relatability. The company also develops customized campaigns for culturally significant periods, such as Ramadan, aligning brand messaging with moments that hold strong emotional and societal relevance. Further reinforcing this localized approach is Healthy Saudi Smile, a dedicated initiative designed specifically for the Saudi market, underscoring Haleon's commitment to consumer education and community-driven healthcare awareness.

Despite this localization, Haleon maintains a cohesive global brand identity. Its marketing strategy remains aligned worldwide, ensuring that messaging retains a unified voice while accommodating local nuances. For instance, Sensodyne's campaigns consistently position dentists as key

---

advocates. In Saudi Arabia, this principle remains unchanged, but the company ensures that local, practicing Saudi dentists, rather than actors, serve as brand ambassadors, enhancing credibility and strengthening consumer trust. By seamlessly integrating global expertise with locally tailored execution, Haleon ensures its brands are not only internationally recognized but also deeply embedded in the Saudi healthcare landscape, reinforcing its leadership in the region's evolving consumer health sector.

### **How does Haleon optimize its retail strategy in Saudi Arabia across pharmacies, mass-market retailers, and digital platforms?**

Haleon has developed a multi-channel retail strategy in Saudi Arabia, ensuring widespread availability of its products through pharmacies, mass-market retailers, and digital platforms. While nearly 70% of its business is concentrated in pharmacies, where brands such as Panadol, Voltaren, Otrivin, and Centrum hold strong market positions, the company has also established a robust presence in mass-market retailers, including Panda, Carrefour, Lulu, Danube, and BinDawood, ensuring that essential healthcare products are easily accessible in everyday shopping environments.

Recognizing Saudi Arabia's high digital penetration, Haleon has introduced targeted digital initiatives to enhance its reach, particularly in remote areas where pharmacies and healthcare professionals have limited direct access to the company's network. Pharma Connect, a platform developed specifically for Saudi Arabia, enables pharmacies and wholesalers in underserved regions to place orders digitally, eliminating the need for physical sales representatives and improving supply chain efficiency. The platform has been highly successful and is now being considered for expansion into other markets.

To further strengthen its engagement with HCPs (healthcare professionals) beyond major urban centers, Haleon launched Haleon HealthPartner, a digital platform providing scientific insights and product knowledge for general practitioners, pediatricians, and other HCPs. This initiative ensures that medical professionals, even in remote areas, have access to up-to-date information on Haleon's portfolio and the latest industry developments, reinforcing the company's role as a trusted partner in healthcare education and professional support.

Beyond its proprietary digital platforms, Haleon collaborates with Saudi Arabia's leading pharmacy chains, including Nahdi Medical Company and Al-Dawaa Medical Services Company, both of which are publicly listed and play a critical role in shaping the country's retail healthcare landscape. By leveraging their digital infrastructure and e-commerce capabilities, Haleon further strengthens its market penetration and consumer accessibility. By integrating strong pharmacy partnerships, mass-market distribution, and cutting-edge digital solutions, Haleon ensures seamless consumer access, operational efficiency, and long-term growth, reinforcing its leadership in Saudi Arabia's rapidly evolving consumer healthcare sector.

### **How does Haleon foster a strong corporate culture in Saudi Arabia while ensuring employee engagement and talent retention?**

At Haleon, cultivating a dynamic, engaged, and consumer-focused workforce is a cornerstone of its strategy in Saudi Arabia. The company places a strong emphasis on employee engagement, consistently measuring internal performance and achieving scores well above industry benchmarks. While specific figures remain undisclosed, Haleon is recognized for having one of the highest

---

engagement levels within the Middle East and Africa region, underscoring the strength of its workplace culture and leadership approach.

A defining element of Haleon's corporate philosophy is its consumer-first mindset, which is deeply embedded in its operations. The company reinforces this through Consumer Day, an initiative that requires employees across all levels—from administrative staff to senior executives—to spend time in retail environments, directly engaging with consumers. By observing purchasing decisions and gathering real-world insights, employees gain a firsthand understanding of consumer behavior, ensuring that business strategies remain highly relevant and consumer-driven. Leadership actively supports this approach, with Andrzej Bekisz frequently visiting key retail partners and healthcare institutions, reinforcing the principle that the most impactful business decisions are shaped at the point of consumer interaction.

Beyond engagement, talent development and localization are central to Haleon's long-term vision. Saudi Arabia has emerged as a strategic hub for the Middle East and Africa region, attracting leading talent and corporate investment. In alignment with Saudization policies, Haleon has achieved 100% Saudi representation among its medical representatives serving wellness portfolio, earning platinum employer status from Saudi Arabia's labor office—a recognition of its commitment to developing local talent, fostering professional growth, and maintaining a competitive workforce. As Saudi Arabia continues to position itself as the regional epicenter for multinational healthcare companies, Haleon remains committed to building an engaged, high-performing team, ensuring that its workforce is not only aligned with its corporate values but also equipped to drive long-term growth in the country's rapidly evolving healthcare landscape.

### **What are Haleon's strategic priorities for 2025, and how is the company positioning itself for sustained growth in Saudi Arabia?**

Haleon has outlined three key priorities for 2025, reinforcing its commitment to innovation, market leadership, and deeper healthcare engagement in Saudi Arabia. The first focus is the expansion of the Centrum portfolio, with the introduction of new SKUs, including Centrum Men, Centrum Women, and Centrum Kids Gummies. As the market leader in multivitamins, Haleon aims to strengthen consumer appeal through innovation, ensuring the brand remains a cornerstone of the growing self-care segment in Saudi Arabia.

The second priority is pain management, where Haleon continues to lead with Panadol, Voltaren, and Advil. To further reinforce this category, the company is launching a Pain Management Institute, a platform dedicated to enhancing healthcare professional education and awareness around pain relief solutions. Additionally, Haleon is expanding its respiratory portfolio with the launch of PanaNatural Cough Syrup, a non-prescription product under the Panadol brand, now being rolled out across Saudi Arabia.

The third focus is therapeutic oral care, with the Saudi launch of Sensodyne Clinical White, Parodontax Active Gum Repair, and Parodontax Gum & Breath. Haleon remains closely engaged with the dental community, with Sensodyne recognized as the most recommended brand by dentists in Saudi Arabia. Initiatives like Healthy Saudi Smile further emphasize the company's commitment to oral health awareness and patient education.

Beyond product innovation, Haleon views Saudi Arabia as a strategic hub for regional growth, supported by favorable investment conditions and an evolving regulatory landscape. The company has reaffirmed its long-term commitment by localizing Panadol manufacturing, aligning with its broader strategy of market integration and sustainable expansion. With a robust pipeline of

---

innovations, deeper collaboration with healthcare professionals, and a strong commitment to local investment, Haleon is well-positioned for continued leadership and growth in Saudi Arabia's evolving healthcare market.

[See more interviews](#)

---