

SMART MARKETING = DOING GOOD

Lifebuoy, Surf Excel, Pureit & Brooke Bond *Sehatmand* lead HUL's sustainable living plan

BS REPORTER

When Hindustan Unilever Chairman Harish Manwani said at the company's annual general meeting last Thursday that HUL motivates its customers (two-thirds of all Indians use Unilever products every day) to take small actions that collectively make a big difference to sustainable living, it wasn't only a sales pitch.

HUL is doing some smart marketing by walking the talk with quite a few of its brands. Consider Lifebuoy. The company conducted the biggest home and personal care clinical trial with more than 2,000 families in Mumbai some time ago. Half were given Lifebuoy and education about the importance of hand washing five times a day. Compared to the control group, the target group had 25 per cent less cases of diarrhoea; 19 per cent fewer respiratory infections; and 40 per cent fewer days off school.

Lifebuoy has covered a huge distance since then. Manwani says the leading soap brand with over 18 per cent market share leads the company's hand washing campaign in India to teach basic hygiene habits. The project has reached over 135 million people in India. By 2015, Manwani says, the Lifebuoy brand aims to change the hygiene behaviour of one billion consumers across Asia, Africa and Latin America by promoting the benefits of hand washing with soap.

There is more. In oral care, HUL figured out that brushing twice a day with fluoride toothpaste can reduce tooth decay by up to 50 per cent in children compared to only brushing once. Pepsodent, an oral care brand, goes to 180 schools across the country every year to educate more than 150,000 children about the 'right-brushing, night-brushing' practices.



halve the water associated with the use of its products by 2020.

In India, rinsing accounts for more than 70 per cent water consumption in the washing process. Surf Excel, HUL says, is a product that resolves this problem as the formulation produces less lather and hence requires less water while rinsing.

Surf Excel quickwash, HUL says, saves up to two buckets of water. Considering the company's large consumer base for this product, it makes a big difference, especially in the southern states where laundry accounts for up to a quarter of the total water used.

Unilever's commitment to sustainable development is not new. In fact, it has been recognised as leaders in the FMCG industry by the Dow Jones Sustainability Index for 12 years running.

Manwani says all these are part of the Unilever Sustainable Living Plan which has three big goals: To halve the environmental footprint of our products across the value chain, to source 100 per cent of our agricultural raw materials sustainably and to help more than a billion people take action to improve their health and well-being.

Over the past 15 years, Unilever's global network of 250 factories across the world have reduced greenhouse emissions by almost half, reduced water usage by two thirds and cut waste by three quarters. Unilever conducted a full lifecycle analysis of over 1,600 products across 14 countries covering 70 per cent of its sales. The analysis showed that the company's own direct impacts remain small.

Research showed that 68 per cent of the environmental impact of FMCG products is generated during consumer use.

Unilever currently sources 10 per cent of the agricultural raw materials from sustainable sources. The Sustainable Living Plan commits the company to source 100 per cent of these raw materials sustainably by 2020 – a tenfold increase. Some target dates are even closer. The company has committed to purchase all palm oil from certified sustainable sources by 2015.

So, as Manwani says, HUL has put its 'skin in the game' to achieve what he calls responsible growth.

HUL, Manwani says, is also investing in ways to supplement diets for millions of consumers including those at the bottom of pyramid. Last year, it launched Brooke Bond *Sehatmand*, a tea with vitamins, to address the nutrition needs of low-income consumers. Three cups of *Sehatmand* tea provides 50 per cent of the recommended daily allowance of key B vitamins – B2, B6, B9 and B12.

Pureit is yet another product in this area. The water purifier provides water as 'safe as boiled' by removing harmful viruses, bacteria, parasites and pesticide impurities, and it delivers all this without the need

for electricity and running water.

The National Institute of Epidemiology conducted a year-long scientific study and established that homes using Pureit had a 50 per cent lower incidence of diarrhoea. Unilever is now launching Pureit to other markets globally where consumers have difficulty in accessing safe drinking water.

Health & hygiene is just one part of sustainable living. Manwani says HUL recognizes the fact that the key to success is to design products which allow consumers to get the results they want with less energy and water. For example, in water scarce countries, nearly 40 per cent of the domestic water footprint comes from washing clothes.

In many of these markets, people do the laundry by hand. Across South East Asia, Unilever has launched Comfort One Rinse fabric conditioner which needs only one bucket of water for rinsing instead of three. This saves 30 litres of water per wash for the average household.

"If we could convert all our laundry product users in Asia and South Africa to Comfort One Rinse, we would save more than 500 billion litres of water a year," Manwani says.

The company in fact plans to

HINDUSTAN UNILEVER CHAIRMAN HARISH MANWANI SAYS
the company recognises the huge business opportunity, but also understands its responsibilities for sustainable growth

