

Iconic Brands Shed Inhibitions to Go Boldly Into the New World

Cos reposition products as wellness and health become a priority for Indians

Ratna.Bhushan@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Some of the country's oldest and biggest brands, including Lux, Dettol and Cadbury Dairy Milk, are moving out of their comfort zones to respond to increasing consumer consciousness about wellness and health as well as an intensely competitive marketplace.

Hindustan Unilever, the largest consumer products maker in the country, is in the process of extending its popular soap brand Lux into the herbal and natural segment with a Lux Botanicals range. Earlier this week, Cadbury Dairy Milk, the oldest and most popular chocolate brand in the country, was introduced in a 30% less-sugar variant in the first such move globally for brand owner Mondelez.

Reckitt Benckiser, maker of Dettol soap, has launched a first-time chemicals-free range of Dettol soaps and handwash devoid of parabens, dyes and talc. "We went ahead of the curve for this range, to offer mot-

hers exactly what they want," said RB South Asia (health) chief marketing officer Pankaj Duhan.

The UK-based healthcare and consumer products maker had researched extensively with 800 mothers and the mandate was they wanted lesser chemicals, didn't want ingredients they don't understand, and no compromise on germ protection. "We may branch out into different categories depending on how these pan out; but right now these are our focus," Duhan said.

India is among the top five markets for Reckitt Benckiser. Dettol has more than 10% market share in value terms in the bar soap category while in the smaller hand-wash category it has 45-50% share.

"There is a fundamental shift happening in consumer consciousness, and brands are following the trend, not leading it," brands specialist Santosh Desai told ET. "Brands are moving from the super-performance jargonised language of overnight results claims, to products that are more aligned to natural, herbal and healthier claims."

For Mondelez, introducing a 30% less-sugar variant of Cadbury Dairy Milk is its biggest bet yet. "This is the first time ever we are doing something like this; we are empowering consumers to snack right and this is our biggest innovation for the brand in the country," Mondelez In-

dia president Deepak Iyer said.

The 70-year-old Cadbury Dairy Milk contributes about 50% to Mondelez's India business.

Dairy Milk has become the first brand in the ₹10,000-crore domestic chocolate market to reduce sugar to such a large extent, in line with the chocolate maker's global commitment to reduce sugar and FSSAI's 'eat right' initiative for packaged foods companies. The existing Cadbury Dairy Milk will continue to sell in its current form.

An HUL spokesperson said, "There is a segment of consumers who are interested in using herbal and natural products and we have launched several brands and products to cater to this consumer segment."

Over two years back, HUL had made a splash in the ayurvedic personal care products space under its smaller Lever Ayush umbrella to take on Baba Ramdev's Patanjali brand of Ayurveda products. Lux is a big leap into this space. The spokesperson said the company is "constantly innovating its portfolio and creating categories of the future".

Marketing and retail experts believe the risks are worth it. "For consumers, premium and innovations are more than price; these are superior experiences and brands that can upgrade specially in health & food categories tend to do well," said Spencer's Retail CEO Devendra Chawla.

Winds of Change

THUMS UP COLA
Launched
42 years ago
Now: Thums Up charged no-sugar



SAFFOLA EDIBLE OIL
Launched
60 years ago
Now: Milk shakes, soups and green coffee and tea



CADBURY DAIRY MILK
Launched
70 years ago
Now: 30% less-sugar



DETTOL SOAP
Launched
86 years ago
Now: Chemical-free soap and handwash



LUX SOAP
Launched
90 years ago
Now: Lux Botanicals

