

# Hygiene to Haldi: The Pandemic Product Spree

How consumer goods firms created a new market amid a crisis armed with record number of launches

Ratna.Bhushan@timesgroup.com

**New Delhi:** Never waste a crisis, they say. India's packaged consumer goods companies certainly didn't. In the five-month period April-August, they launched dozens of new products—from vegetable

washes to so-called immunity-boosting juices and even haldi ice cream—responding to pandemic-induced consumer demand and seeking to compensate for the sharp fall in categories such as skin-care and home-care.

India's third-largest listed packaged foods player ITC has launched

over 40 new products in the past five months, including vegetable washes, surface disinfectants and immunity beverages. Just for comparison, ITC had launched close to 60 products in the whole of last year.

"The company's innovation engine was leveraged during the pandemic to meet emerging consumer

demand," ITC chairman Sanjiv Puri said at the company's AGM earlier this month. The manufacturing capacity of ITC's Savlon sanitisers, for example, was ramped up 275 times to meet higher demand.

"New products have been a critical feature for us since April 2020," said Wipro Consumer Care & Lighting president (consumer care business) Anil Chugh. Wipro's launch spree includes soaps, handwashes and sanitisers, disinfectants, 'anti-germ' detergents and fabric conditioners.

Advisories such as those from the Ayush ministry on turmeric also spurred product launches. Dairy giant Amul, for example, has launched haldi ice cream and haldi milk.

"We rolled out over 40 new products within three months since the Covid-19 outbreak," said Dabur CEO Mohit Malhotra.

## Who Launched What

**ITC:** Disinfectant sprays, germ protection wipes, vegetable washes, immunity beverages

**Dabur:** Tulsī drops, amla, giloy-neem-tulsī, aloe vera, wheatgrass juice, immunity kits, hand & air sanitisers

**Wipro:** Soaps, handwashes, sanitisers, disinfectants, anti-germ detergents and fabric conditioners

**Marico:** Honey, turmeric milk mix, vegetable washes

**Amul:** Haldi ice cream, haldi-ginger milk



Illustration: ANIRBAN BORA

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## 'Shift in Consumption Patterns'

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Dabur's Malhotra said new launches will continue in the categories of ayurveda, personal care and household hygiene.

Retailers said there has been a 50-100% pick-up in demand for hygiene products in the past five months. Devendra Chawla, managing director at retail chain Spencer's Retail, which operates over 190 stores, said, "There is no better time for trusted brands to leverage hygiene concerns."

Researcher Nielsen said in a report in July that demand for products such as handwash, chyawanprash and honey more than doubled during the pandemic as shoppers chose these over other personal care products such as creams and deodorants.

"New launches are in response to a definite shift in consumption patterns now centered on personal and domestic hygiene. We are intensifying our presence in these categories," said a spokesperson for Marico, which makes Saffola edible oils and packaged foods.