

BrandWagon

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Riding the wellness wave

WITH THE FIRST BREATH OF WINTER, BRANDS ARE SCURRYING TO REPACKAGE CHYAWANPRASH FROM A HERBAL TONIC TO A HEALTHCARE SUPPLEMENT

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AS TEMPERATURES PLUNGE across the country, the familiar chyawanprash is preparing for its seasonal comeback. The category, infused with Ayurveda and nostalgia, usually sees a sales bump of around 70% in winter, which is a time when consumers seek immunity and warmth in equal measure. But today, where wellness is smoothly packaged in gummies, protein powders and effervescent tablets, the old favourite faces a new challenge: staying relevant.

For companies like Dabur, whose winter-focused portfolio including chyawanprash, Lal Tail, Honitus and honey contributes roughly a third of its December-quarter revenue, according to industry estimates, this is the most crucial season of the year. Yet the challenge today is about convincing a generation that is used to functional beverages and supplements that chyawanprash belongs in their wellness routine too.

"Competition has always been part of the landscape, and it's nothing new for us," says Amit Garg, marketing head, health supplements, Dabur India. "The entry of new players helps grow the size of the pie and brings more non-users into the category." Garg adds that Dabur's dual approach — staying rooted in its 141-year Ayurvedic heritage while contemporising formats and communication — has been key to maintaining leadership. "We remain true to our heritage and continuously update our portfolio in line with changing consumer demands. Our USP is science-based Ayurveda," he says.

That balance of heritage and modernity is precisely what the category is wrestling with. "Chyawanprash has been around for decades, but the way people think of health today is changing fast," says Partap Chauhan, founder & director of Jiva Ayurveda, another manufacturer of the product. "The traditional spoonful after dinner might have worked for earlier generations, but younger consumers now for health that fits easily into their daily routine."

Chauhan believes that small things can make a big difference, such as lighter taste, less sugar, cleaner labels, and packaging that doesn't look dated. He adds that while the product's association with winter and sickness is hard to shake off, the

IN SEARCH OF RELEVANCE

Trends influencing the growth of chyawanprash:

- Growing awareness of health and nutrition
- Increased preference for traditional remedies

■ Increased marketing emphasis, including adding variants for sensitive segments such as diabetics, lowering cost of trials with sachets & smaller SKUs etc.



opportunity is big. "If brands can position chyawanprash as part of an everyday health habit, they can reach an entirely new audience," he adds.

The market, estimated at ₹1,200-1,300 crore and growing at 8-10% annually, is dominated by Dabur that has over 60% share. Other key players include Himalaya, Emami, Bajaj, Patanjali, and Baidyanath, besides many regional and digital-first Ayurvedic brands. "Three trends are driving the growth of the category," says Santosh Sreedhar, partner, Avalon Consulting. "Growing awareness of health and nutrition, a renewed preference for traditional remedies, and the increased marketing spends by key players, touting sugar-free variants and smaller SKUs to lower trial barriers."

That said, format and flavour remain barriers for younger consumers. "Chyawanprash's traditional proposition has been of general strength and immunity, which makes it weak for consumers looking for specific benefits," he says. "Start-ups have experimented with gummies and ready-to-drink versions, but the overall impact is limited."

Signs of change

That may soon change. Brands are reimagining the formulation to appeal to what marketers describe as a more "ingredient-aware" consumer.

Garg notes that consumption patterns have evolved dramatically after the Covid pandemic. "The post-pandemic demand is increasingly powered by a more Ayurveda-aware consumer, particularly Millennials and Gen Z, who scrutinise labels for purity, natural sourcing, and specific herbs like amla and ashwagandha." Dabur, for instance, has introduced sugar-free, jaggery-based, and date-based variants such as 'Khajurprash' to appeal to those looking for clean-label, functional nutrition.

Experts say that evolution is essential if the category hopes to outgrow its winter identity. "In the beauty space, the language of science and clinical efficacy has powered a new generation of brands," observes Nisha Sampath, managing partner, Bright Angles Consulting. "Reinvention at a communication level is not enough; they need to start with reimagining the product itself." Sampath points to innovations such as traditional kashayams being sold in teabag format. "Chyawanprash can similarly be brought out in an innovative format," she says.

The call for modernisation goes beyond convenience. Says Ambika Sharma, founder & chief strategist, Pulp Strategy, "Most consumers under 35 still associate chyawanprash with winter, sickness, or nostalgia. The category has been slow to

innovate in sensory experience, packaging, and brand storytelling." She adds that the category is also competing with global nutraceuticals and D2C wellness brands that are more aspirational and data-backed. "The task now is to shift from medicinal to lifestyle without losing the heritage of trust."

For some, that reinvention also demands better quality assurance. "The presence of heavy metals in traditional medicines, such as ayurvedic and herbal supplements, is a significant concern," says Saurabh Arora, founder & managing director, Auriga Research, which conducts advanced testing across pharmaceuticals, food, water, environmental, nutraceuticals, cosmetics, and medical devices. "Manufacturers should conduct and publish batch-specific heavy metal testing reports to ensure compliance and protect public health."

Despite these challenges, chyawanprash continues to command deep-rooted trust. Ramya Ramachandran, founder & CEO of Whoppl, says the opportunity lies in bridging nostalgia and modernity. "We have to take it out of the 'grandmother's kitchen' narrative and move it into modern formats like gummies, shots, or spreads, and pair that with sharp storytelling," she adds. "It's time Indian brands own that narrative, to make heritage a form of innovation."