

# Smooth take-off

INNOVATION, CONSTANT BRAND REFRESH & DISTRIBUTION DEPTH HAVE TAKEN SUNSILK'S TURNOVER TO OVER ₹1,000 CR

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**HINDUSTAN UNILEVER'S (HUL)** legacy hair care brand Sunsilk has entered the ₹1,000 crore club — nearly 65 years after its launch in India. With this, the brand joins the company's other major hair care brands Clinic Plus and Dove, that have also crossed the ₹1,000 crore mark. HUL credits the brand's growth to its relentless effort to modernise the brand, strong consumer trust and deep penetration across rural and urban markets.

Sunsilk now reaches one in two Indian households, says Sairam Subramanian, VP, hair care, HUL. He says the brand saw its most ambitious refresh in over a decade in 2025. "Packaging was redesigned with brighter, more contemporary visuals and premium cues like holographic foiling, and core formulations were upgraded with science-driven ingredient complexes," he says. The key objective of the refresh was to retain the trust of existing consumers while preparing the brand to reach modern beauty expectations.

Subramanian says the brand has, over the years, democratised hair-care by bringing the newest trends to the masses at affordable prices. "From the iconic ₹1 sachet to newer launches like Silk Smooth Yellow and Sunsilk Super Shine serum, the brand playbook has stayed consistent," he says, adding that its pricing doesn't compel consumers to choose between aspiration and access.

The Indian hair care market is valued at \$4-\$4.3 billion and is expected to cross the \$6 billion mark by 2030, driven largely by premium, natural and targeted hair care solutions. Experts say the core shampoo market growth is still slower — especially in urban markets — than the overall haircare segment, as consumers seek specialised products such as serums, hair fall treatments, masks and creams. Non-urban markets have greater headroom for penetration compared with urban markets with over 90% penetration.

Non-urban India is central to the Sunsilk growth strategy, contributing a significant and faster-growing share of the business than urban. "Two things do the heavy lifting here — access and trust. The ₹1 sachet continues to be one of the strongest

## ON THE BOUNCE

■ Sunsilk was launched in India in 1962

■ In FY26, the brand's turnover was  
**₹1,017 cr**

■ It reaches **one in two households** today; its ₹1 sachet has been key to its growth

■ It is the **third biggest brand** in HUL's hair care portfolio, after Clinic Plus and Dove

Source: HUL, industry



enablers of category access. It helps consumers experience the same product quality as larger packs, while enabling seamless trade-up through formats ranging from 80 ml to a litre," he says.

### Riding on legacy

At a time when consumers are seeking specialised hair care products and solutions, a legacy brand like Sunsilk faces challenges from new-age, D2C haircare products that are popular especially among urban, Gen Z consumers. According to Chetna Israni, co-founder and director, Morning Star BrandCom, though Sunsilk has reinvented itself over the decades, its main challenge is building "cultural sharpness".

HUL has far greater scale than any D2C brand. Its footprint spans over 9 million retail outlets and over 3,500 distributors. Its haircare portfolio commands over 60% of India's shampoo market, with three brands — Clinic Plus, Dove and Sunsilk. Even if D2C players pose threats in certain urban pockets, they pose no major risk to legacy brands at a national level, says Santosh Sreedhar, partner, Avalon Consulting. Legacy brands should leverage consumer trust they have built over the years, while cultivating relevance among younger consumers through new product variants and packaging, and by extending into adjacent

categories. "The hair care category tends to have high brand loyalty with low involvement, and hence people tend to continue using a brand once they have a good experience," says Sreedhar.

Where new brands are winning is in cultural intimacy, says Israni. "They are quicker, more niche, more conversational and often better at making consumers feel individually seen. Sunsilk needs to keep showing younger consumers that it understands how beauty, identity and self-expression are evolving," she adds. Sunsilk continues to score over new brands because of inherited trust built over the decades, she says.

Sunsilk understands that relevance is key. It now offers conditioners designed to match the shampoo lines; hair serums, designed to combat frizz, and protect against heat styling damage; hair mists and perfumes as part of its new Gen Z-focused lines.

"India was the first market to launch a Sunsilk serum, rooted in the need for frizz-free hair post-wash in hot and humid conditions," points out Subramanian. Sunsilk also has built a naturals range around ingredients that resonate with the Indian consumers and climate, whether it is coconut and aloe vera or onion and jojoba. All of these address certain hair care issues that affect Indian consumers, such as humidity-related frizz and hair fall.