

HUL launches brand to give a natural spin to home care

VIVEAT SUSAN PINTO
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Hindustan Unilever (HUL) has launched a new brand called Nature Protect, its fourth label in the naturals or herbal portfolio targeting home care. The firm already has products under beauty, skin, and haircare brands. Analysts say HUL is filling “white spaces”, tapping areas where there is major consumer momentum.

“Hygiene has grown exponentially during the Covid-19 pandemic. Nature Protect is an answer to the need for good household products that are sustainable at the same time,” said Kaustubh Pawaskar, associate vice-president, research at brokerage Sharekhan.

In response to a mail, an HUL spokesperson said hygiene remained a lifestyle issue and required a holistic



approach. “Nature Protect is an indigenously developed and a 360-degree range for India, keeping in mind every surface and touch-point that is a potential source of germs and causing consumer anxiety. This launch brings together three important pillars like efficacy, safety, and naturally derived, which we believe is

a gap in the market,” the spokesperson said. The new range uses plant-based extracts such as neem for hygiene requirements and has detergents, germ-kill sprays and wipes, disinfectant surface, and floor cleaners as well as fruit and vegetable cleaners.

HUL’s naturals portfolio has largely been led by brands such as Ayush

(Ayurvedic line of beauty and personal care products) and Indulekha (hair-care). Nature Protect will ride on the distribution might of HUL, helping it gain a foothold in the market and widen reach in the herbal category, said Abneesh Roy, executive vice-president, research (institutional equities), Edelweiss. “This is the right time to launch a hygiene brand since people are learning to live with the virus. Many want an efficacious product that has natural extracts,” Roy said.

HUL say its existing naturals brands (such as Ayush and Indulekha) will continue to be part of its portfolio. It had introduced global brand Citra in India in 2017 to strengthen its naturals skincare range. But some analysts say Citra and Ayush have seen limited success, prompting HUL to introduce newer products to keep the excitement going in the category.

“Ayush was an answer to Patanjali as well as other competitors such as Dabur active in the naturals segment. However, it is a challenge to grow in a market where there are strong incumbents. Which is why HUL is now looking at getting newer brands in the category,” said Sachin Bobade, vice-president, research, at brokerage Dolat Capital. But the HUL spokesperson said Covid-19 had led to structural changes in the market, prompting a response from the company.

“Constant cleaning and sanitizing are the new normal. As things normalise, this will get adjusted. But the surface cleaner market will continue to be a high-growth segment, given that even in the largest segment of floor cleaners, only 1 in 5 households use a branded floor cleaner. For other surfaces, it is less than 1 in 100 households,” the spokesperson said.