

Dant Kanti: The oral care giant gets its first toothache in 25 years

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Source: WARC Prize for Asian Strategy, Entrant, 2017

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Patanjali's Ayurveda-based toothpaste brand, Dant Kanti, used a TV campaign to take on the market giants and grow beyond its category, in India.

- Toothpaste is one of the oldest, most-saturated categories in India, and is one that is dominated by Colgate and experiences slow growth.
- The challenge in getting people to switch brands was the legacy that Colgate had built in the minds of Indian consumers, so Dant Kanti knew that for the consumer to notice its superior ingredients, they first needed to see beyond Colgate's legacy.
- Dant Kanti took on Colgate's "white coat" imagery and highlighted some of the "white lies" behind it in a 30-second TV spot.
- The campaign helped Dant Kanti gain a 4.5% value share in the market, with post-campaign volume growth rising by 124%.

Campaign details

Brand: Dant Kanti

Brand owner: Patanjali Ayurved Limited

Lead agency: DDB Mudra Group

Country: India

Industries: Oral health

Media channels: Television

Budget: Up to 500k

Executive summary

Dant Kanti, a herbal toothpaste brand from Patanjali, was too small to be noticed by anyone. Unlike the popular

approach of going after the closest competitor first, it unlocked unprecedented growth by moving beyond segments and doing the unthinkable: taking on the giant Colgate. In doing so, the brand also diluted the strength of Colgate's biggest symbol: "the white coat."

Market background and cultural context

"All that Patanjali touched was not turning to gold"

Patanjali enjoyed success with almost all of its 400+ FMCG products. Backed by the power of Ayurveda, it had disrupted a sector which most experts thought of as saturated and way past its peak. The brand which was thought of as small and regional, suddenly was gaining ground across categories such as herbo-mineral healthcare, food, cosmetics, toiletries, hair care and other products.

But Patanjali had hit a major roadblock in one critical category. Despite the mother brand's (Patanjali) strong momentum, Dant Kanti, an Ayurveda-based toothpaste launched in 2009, had failed to pick up for almost six years and could only manage a market (value) share of less than 1%. (*Source: Client data*)

A deeper dive into the toothpaste category revealed that Dant Kanti had only managed to grow its business by winning business from the "natural/herbal" toothpaste segment, a small part of the toothpaste category, accounting for only 13% to 14% of the larger Rs.7600 Cr pie. (*Source: Nielsen market data*)

Toothpaste in India is one of the oldest, most-saturated categories, and one that also experiences slow growth. With less than 1% volume growth in 2015-16 (*Source: Economic Times*), the category is a tough nut to crack for any player.

What makes the category even more challenging is the degree of competition and multiplicity of formats. This meant that its appeal and relevance was getting restricted to a niche consumer segment. In such a scenario, recruiting untapped segments is next to impossible, so for success the only play left is that of getting people to switch brands.

Objectives

Success in this category meant garnering share for Dant Kanti. And it needed to take it from the larger, non-herbal category – the high-science category. The objectives for the campaign were to:

- Drive up market share from less than 1% to 3%.
- Drive up sales volume by 60%.
- Boost Dant Kanti's contribution to Patanjali's revenue by 50%.

Insight and strategic thinking

How do we ignite growth for Dant Kanti in a market dominated by science-based toothpastes, largely one brand – Colgate?

What was evident was the fact that the Ayurvedic segment only had a limited number of believers. Those who believed in the segment would, eventually, switch to Dant Kanti from other natural offerings. But the share, overall, would continue to be limited, reducing us to a small brand with just big ambitions. Hence, we decided that Dant Kanti needed to take on the high-science-based segment, too.

A closer look at the larger category revealed something that would turn out to be our biggest challenge: Colgate. What really makes it tougher for any new player to make an impact in this category is the dominance of Colgate, which has been a household name for decades.

Synonymous with the category:

Since its inception, the brand has made itself a deep part of the oral care culture in the nation. Colgate sees itself responsible for establishing the category in India for almost eight decades and the brand is responsible for changing oral care preferences to what they are today.

One out of two is a Colgate consumer:

Colgate, through multiple variants, had grown to become a part of one out of two Indian households. At a share of 57.8% (*Euromonitor, Nielsen, 2015*), Colgate is a name that would pop up spontaneously in anyone's head, the moment you say toothpaste in India.

It is trust that makes it a reflex purchase:

Colgate is almost a reflex purchase for anyone out in the market to buy a toothpaste. Rated among the top ten most-trusted brands in India for more than a decade, it not only enjoyed top-of-mind awareness, but also had a considerable amount of equity.

Omnipresent:

Sold across 50 lakh outlets, Colgate is available in formats ranging from gels and powders to white toothpastes and mouthwashes. And the giant also presents offers to the natural segment consumer through its range of toothpastes with additional natural ingredients, such as salt. Colgate is everywhere the consumer looks for toothpaste.

Colgate's presence was such that those who didn't even use the brand also knew about it and saw it as a safe choice.

Getting people to switch from Colgate wasn't something that could have been achieved by showing product superiority. Colgate, over the years, had erased all doubts about its performance and planted enough doubt about efficacy of other products, especially the natural ones. And to grow, we didn't want to be perceived just as a herbal alternative to Colgate, appealing to a niche audience.

Colgate had also out-muscled any communication by any competitor in the market, which meant that we needed to stand out more than ever.

But even Colgate's product supremacy or its sheer size wasn't something that worried us. The real challenge in getting people to switch was the legacy that Colgate had built in the minds of Indian consumers. A legacy built on codes, which even its competition embraced, rather than challenging them.

The red pack, its familiar taste and some iconic "lines" like "kya aapke toothpaste mein namak hai" ("does your toothpaste have salt?") had made Colgate more Indian than any other brand in the market.

For the consumer to notice our superior natural ingredients, they first needed to see beyond Colgate's legacy.

Our attempt at decoding Colgate's success revealed a code that was instrumental in building its legacy. It was something that aided the brand in shifting popular opinion away from the "natural" segment over the years. And that code was the consistent use of an archetype that is trusted around the world: the man in the white coat.

Colgate, for decades, had been tapping into a truth based on the Indian audience's vulnerability around this archetype. The truth was that we inherently trust and don't really question whatever comes from a person in the white coat. Be it a lack of knowledge, or the image of the person in that white coat, questioning them seems not fit for the common man despite any doubts in the back of his mind. And the only thing they trust over someone in a white coat is another person in a white coat who may come from a position of authority.

With this, Colgate had planted a simple equation in the consumer's head:

Toothpaste = white coat = Colgate.

Even other players from across the segment (Pepsodent, Dabur, Sensodyne, etc) have mimicked this equation. And the white coat grew in stature for the consumer which, eventually, played into Colgate's hands.

This not only helped Colgate position itself as the authority on toothpastes, it also made the brand, and its point of view, unquestionable. What started as a tool to build trust, became Colgate's weapon to keep the consumers away from free thinking and trying anyone else.

And research reinforced our belief that people weren't even thinking of looking beyond the white coat. That the white coat as a symbol reassures them of their purchase and creates belief in the product's effectiveness, even though it isn't proven.

Armed with this insight, our strategy was to urge consumers to look beyond the white coat and see the power of Ayurveda. And, with that, our big idea was born.

Creative and/or channel execution

We took on the white coat by taking it off

With people's consciousness about products rising across markets, we believed that not only was it an opportunity to take Colgate on, it was also a chance to make an actual change in how we see the truth when it comes to toothpastes.

And our idea broke this code by unveiling what is behind the white coat: a white lie.

We showed them how a "white lie" of natural ingredients being inferior to Colgate's formulation, said with the power of a "white coat" keeps us away from something that can be naturally good for us.

While the idea had the potential to take on Colgate, we had to rely heavily on the power of storytelling due to one key constraint: we had 10% of Colgate's ad budget. For any FMCG player, television is the primary medium

to spread awareness and create trust, but with Colgate having the power to out-muscle any brand in terms of communication, it was imperative for our communication strategy to make a quick impact.

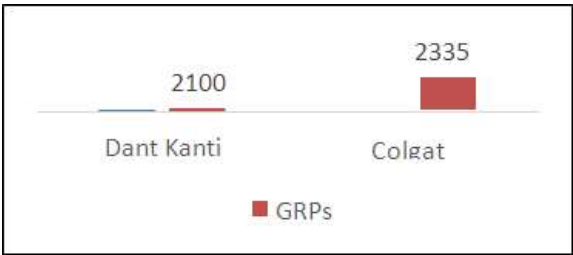
This pushed us to create a sharp, hard-hitting story that unveiled the "white lie" by taking on the "white coat" in just 30 seconds and giving the audience something to think about.

Media used

Type of media	Date of implementation	Budget / media spend	% of overall budget
Television	1 December 2015 – 20 March 2016	US\$ 385,625	100%

Performance against objectives

Our strategy of taking Colgate, its legacy and its most potent weapon of the white coat head on gave Dant Kanti that quick runaway success it had been yearning for.



With just 10% of Colgate's media budget and equivalent GRPS, we were able to make a strong impact in the category to achieve all of our objectives.

Objective 1: Increase market share from less than 1% to 3%.

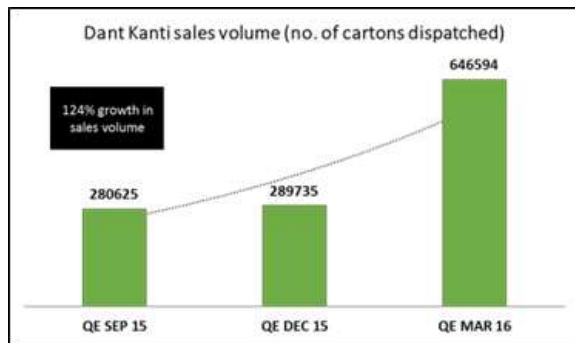
The campaign performed beyond expectation to help Dant Kanti gain a 4.5% value share in the market.



Source: Client data

Objective 2: Drive sales volume up by 60%.

The campaign helped Dant Kanti sell record volumes, as the post-campaign volume growth shot up by 124%.



Source: Client data

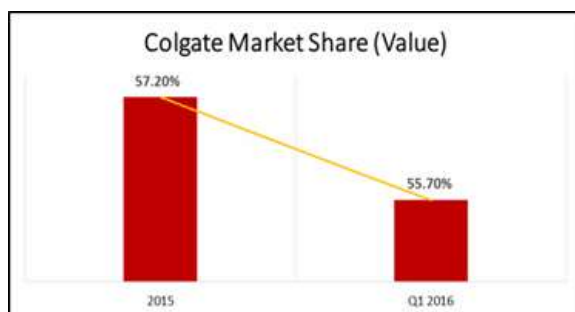
Objective 3: Increase revenue by 50%.

The campaign boosted revenue growth by 155%. The brand crossed the 450 cr mark in 2015/16 to become the fastest-growing brand in Patanjali's portfolio and its contribution to overall revenue went up by 153%.



Source: Client data

To top it all, we made Colgate sweat after years. Colgate's market share dipped from 57.8% in 2015 to 55% in 2016 (January to April) and the impact was so hard that the brand's stock price fell by more than 9%.



Source: ICICI Securities

With its smile dented, in August 2016, Colgate was forced to launch Cibaca Vedshakti, an Ayurveda-based toothpaste, at price point cheaper than that of Dant Kanti, in a segment it once moved India away from.

Lessons learned

In a crowded, well-established market, underdog brands often look at building a niche or owning a unique space in the market – an approach which comes with a big risk of the brand being reduced to a novelty.

The other trap that underdog brands fall into is to try to mimic the leader. While it gives them some traction in the short run, the brand tends to lose its true essence in the longer-term. This can also lead to a scenario where the underdog, when mimicking the leader, ends up strengthening the codes of the leader itself and makes them synonymous with the category codes (white coat used by other brands only gave them some momentum while, in the longer run, it became a category code thus helping Colgate tighten its grip further).

For any underdog brand, exponential growth can be unlocked if it takes on the biggest strength of the biggest player and reinterprets it for the audience. Such an approach not only draws eyeballs, but also helps the brand establish its performance credentials, link itself to the core category benefit sought by the audience and tap into larger sources of business/growth. All of this while staying true to what the brand has always been.

Client's view

Patanjali at its very core is striving to revive Ayurveda in India. A science which had largely been discarded and was lost somewhere behind the more accepted modern-day "science". This approach didn't just help us grow Dant Kanti, but also helped us take Ayurveda back into households and help enrich the lives of people every day.

Dant Kanti, as a product, had all the makings of being a hit but somehow wasn't cutting through. Which is where we realised that something disruptive had to be done for the brand to have any significant impact on the market.

Taking on Colgate, and the category's single largest "code", was a big challenge but the rewards outweighed the risk and our mission to make Ayurveda apart of everyday life was accomplished.

Dant Kanti has become one of the fastest-growing brands in Patanjali's portfolio and has given us a solid platform to increase our offerings under the Dant Kanti umbrella.

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