

## Spiritual Route To Marketing In Indian Context

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**Abstract:** *Is spirituality the new dimension of marketing? In the words of Philip Kotler, today's marketing is not just about winning the mind share and heart share but winning the spirit share as well. So what is the link between spirituality and consumer goods? Once a human being follows the spiritual path, he understands how it is connected with the body and mind. He comes to know about the importance of pure and organic food and the harmful effects of using chemicals on the body. Spirituality is all concerned with the human spirit as opposed to the materialistic things. It is something more than the individual. Spirituality per-exits in people's lives to create a meaning. The spiritual leaders have tried to do the same by creating meaning in the customer's life by introducing an array of FMCG products. The present study is based on qualitative research and focuses on the case study of Patanjali Ayurved Ltd, Sri Sri Ayurved Trust and other spiritual organizations. The data is collected from various secondary sources such as brochures, stores, website, etc. The data collected from different sources is analyzed thoroughly to extract relevant information for the study. This paper attempts to understand the challenges faced and techniques employed by these spiritual gurus for reaching out to the Indian masses.*

**Keywords:** *Spirituality, Patanjali, Ayurved, Positioning, Consumers, FMCG, Marketing*

### I. INTRODUCTION

Following the FMCG giants, some of India's spiritual leaders are exercising their spiritual and political influence to launch a portfolio of consumer products. Indians who already follow them and their teachings either through television or mass congregation have welcomed their products inside homes. The best example is of Patanjali Ayurved Ltd. The big question arises? After HUL, P&G, Marico, ITC, Emami and Baba Ramdev's Patanjali- Who will follow the suit? Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh and Isha Foundation's Jaggi Vasudev are there to name a few. Who will be the next spiritual leader to take a spiritual route to mainstream marketing? Will the model of Patanjali be replicated by other spiritual gurus? The time will only tell. The product quality is comparable, the prices are competitive, and the distribution is really putting a pressure on the major MNCs to reengineer their efforts on marketing and distribution front.

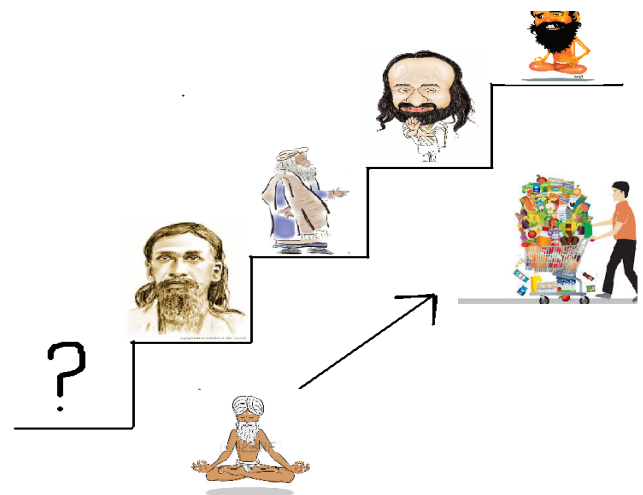


Figure 1

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Warrier (2003) has explained in his research about how the Spiritual gurus are affecting the consumption behavior of people as well as changing their overall behavior and personality. The organizations started by these gurus, as a part of their publicity and promotion efforts are using pamphlets, newsletters, audiotapes, posters, video cassettes and CDs for proving a glimpse of their teachings. Mercer, J. A. (2006) has talked about how the spirituality of children is capitalized for overcoming parental anxiety by offering an array of products promoting a child's spiritual growth. Kumar et., al (2014) in their case on marketing through spirituality has revealed how pranayam and yoga have influenced the consumption behavior of people and therefore proved to be very effective marketing tools. Sexena et., al (2017) in their study have highlighted how Patanjali Yogpeeth and various spiritual organizations have used the digital platform for launching their products through websites (.org and .net) and social media networks. Rawal (2016) in her paper has quoted how the emerging spiritual leaders of modern India (with special reference to Patanjali Ayurved Ltd), have entered the consumer product market by parlaying their spiritual influence and making the consumers aware of leading a healthy and good quality of life.

*Emergence of FMCG Arm of Spirituality: Patanjali Ayurved Ltd (PAL)* has a major advantage that the name itself is associated with Baba Ramdev, the famous Yoga Guru. He does not have any holding in the Patanjali Ayurved Ltd, but still he is the face of the company. He is driving people back to basics of Ayurved and guiding them to living a simple and healthy lifestyle. Baba Ramdev is the perfect fit for, what Patanjali products offer and what consumers are looking for. They have used world renowned wrestler Sushil Kumar for promoting one of their product, Cow's Ghee (clarified butter). These are one of the best examples of how a proper Source selection influences the effect of a promotional campaign. He perfectly fits into the three basic Source factors used in the promotion of the products namely Source credibility (expertise and trustworthiness), Source Attractiveness (Similarity, Familiarity and Likability) and Source Power (the power to elicit desired response).

PAL on distribution front initially they created an alternative distribution network through word of mouth publicity. They opened three types of stores/clinics – Arogya Kendra, Chikitsalaya and Swadeshi Kendras. There would be a registered medical practitioner who would give free consultation and guide you to the Arogya Kendra counter. At this counter the staff would cross sell ayurvedic medicines and FMCG products (like toothpaste, biscuits, shampoos and hair oils). These stores convinced the early adopters to bring in additional patients and consumers to the clinics through the word of mouth publicity. Patanjali Ayurved products were bought mostly by people who had faith in yoga. These consumers followed naturopathy. Most of them were not necessarily, the followers of Baba Ramdev. Now the consumers started asking for these products in the nearby mom and pop stores too. These general stores/ grocery shops/ medical stores started stocking Patanjali products with the fear of losing a customer. It is known fact that it is five times

costlier to lose an existing customer than to attract a new customer.

This was just not enough. The brand started selling in the retail chains namely stores by Future group and Reliance Retail. Parallel to this, they also explored their business prospects on the e-commerce front by introducing patanjaliayurved.org (corporate website) and patanjaliayurved.net (e-commerce website). Owing to the growing demand, they have opened Patanjali Mega Stores in many cities in 2017. They have 4000 distributors, 10,000 stores and 100 mega-marts spread all across India.

*PAL- a basket of products:* All these factors do not restrain the importance of the Product quality. To make the selling of a product superfluous, the product quality has to be the best and match the expectations of a consumer. The superior product quality of Patanjali products like Dantkanti, Ghee, Honey, Hair Oils have made it soar high in the sales figures beating the giant MNCs. The products are made from ayurvedic and natural ingredients which promote healthy living and spirituality. They kept a simple yet attractive packaging for their products emphasizing that they contain no harmful chemicals.

*Patanjali's MARCOM:* The Marcom of PAL created a positioning in the minds of people, an image of being "Swadeshi products" They have even cited the same through their packaging mentioning "Made in Bharat". They have reinforced the concept that their products are "natural and pure" and also that every Indian penny spent stays in India. This is the additional Value Proposition which is true for all products. For over a past few months, Patanjali has been among the most prolific advertisers across all genres on the Television. Vermillion, a Delhi based media agency has the account of all Patanjali products except for - its noodles, clarified butter and Dant Kanti, the rights for which are with DDB Mudra North. They are using comparative advertising and highlighting that their products are chemical free products as compared to other brands selling similar products (as in the case of Mustard Oil).

## III. BRANDING

The branding of all products is done under one brand name of Patanjali. This is the Umbrella Branding strategy wherein all the products are sold under a single brand name as opposed to the branding strategy followed by the other FMCG companies like P & G and HUL. This has helped them create easy Brand recall and Brand recognition among the masses.

## IV. PRICING

Patanjali has used competitive pricing i.e. priced its products either equal or 15-20% less as compared to rival brands. This has reduced the switching costs and has led to easy adoption of their products. Cow's Ghee which is a premium priced product, is an exception to this pricing technique. They aim at penetrating every household with this kind of pricing strategy. With the use of natural and domestically manufactured ingredients, they are able to keep

their costs low. They have exactly followed the ITC's e-Choupal method of sourcing raw materials. By sourcing directly from the farmers and cutting on middlemen, they are able to reduce their procurement costs and in turn pass on this benefit to the ultimate consumer in the form of price-reduction and discounts.

*Sri Sri Ayurveda (SSA) Trust:* The FMCG arm of Sri Sri Ravi Shankar's Art of Living Foundation, was the first to enter the consumer market with their products in 2003. SSA's FMCG and spiritual category of products were primarily sold at select franchise stores (600), besides promoting them at the "Divine shops" set up at Sri Sri Ravi Shankar's gatherings. Now it has planned and started aggressive expansion on marketing and distribution fronts. According to the Edelweiss reports, Sri Sri Ayurveda is beginning to use mass media, point-of-sale advertising and online retailing. In October 2016, the group began selling a range of ayurvedic health drinks under the Ojasvita brand and signed Olympic silver medalist P. V. Sindhu to help promote it in a market dominated by GlaxoSmithKline's Horlicks brand. SSA is planning to build a product portfolio very similar to that of Patanjali. Sri Sri branded products include toothpaste, ayurvedic medicines, spices, honey, health drinks, herbal tea, pulses, biscuits, soaps, lotions, face wash, juices and so on. They are promoting their products as being pure, organic, ayurvedic and vegan products.

SSA has a facility in Bengaluru with a research and development division, quality control unit and a marketing department. Sri Sri Products are sold through their website [srisritattva.com](http://srisritattva.com), [sattvastore.com](http://sattvastore.com), Facebook page and Twitter as well as on Amazon.com and Bigbasket.com. Future Group has also shown interest in selling them thru their giant retail stores. SSA plans to open 2,500 stores across India by 2017 with an extended range of modern, daily consumption products with the essence of ancient wellness, the report added.

An average Indian consumer strongly believes in both the personalities of Baba Ramdev and Sri Sri Ravishankar and similar belief is extended to their products also. They are perceived to be Indian, pure, healthy, having good quality and having no side effects. A good example of this is the selling of "Authentic Indian Pasta".

Sri Sri Ayurveda's strategy is analogous to that of Patanjali. Thus, its choice of products, and their positioning, looks similar to Patanjali's, though its products are priced at a slight premium to Ramdev's brand. SSA THE brand is synonymous with authenticity, efficacy and novelty. According to its website, the employees meditate daily to ensure that products are developed in the most positive and energetic atmosphere ever. Through the sale of the products, Art of Living funds its various service initiatives like the 185 free schools which it runs in the Naxal and the tribal belts of India,"

*Sant Shri Asaramjibapu Ashram, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, and BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha:* In addition to satisfying the spiritual needs of millions of followers, Sant Shri Asaramjibapu Ashram, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, and BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha are various other spiritual organizations are also entering this consumer war. Selling the holy products through mobile vans, outlets at ashrams and at

devotees' homes are a few of the methods of distribution adopted by Ahmedabad's Sant Shri Asharamji Ashram. Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS), the social-spiritual Hindu organization that runs Swaminarayan temples and Akshardham in New Delhi and Gandhinagar, retails at 800 temples across India, US and UK. Its chyawanprash, honey, oil, tea, shampoo and dental care products, sold under BAPS Amrut brand, are also retailed online. Other spiritual leaders could follow the same trend, the report added. Some, such as Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev's Isha Foundation already have entities (Isha Arogya in this case) that sell ayurvedic products.

## V. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Baba Ramdev's Patanjali Ayurved Ltd is the surprise challenger in the FMCG market and definitely has the first mover advantage in this emerging sector but the FMCG arms of other spiritual gurus like Sri Sri Ravishankar having 370 million of global followers will pose a significant challenge to this leader company. Firms like PAL and SSA will not only face a stiff competition from new emerging firms but also from existing global companies. Hindustan Unilever Ltd being the largest FMCG Company of India has reacted to PAL by launching a wide range of Ayurvedic products under their existing brand name Ayush. This is very similar to the strategy adopted by them a few years back, launching Wheel vis-a-vis Nirma in detergent segment. Dabur, Emami and P & G will need to fight back to sustain in this sector.

India is a huge domestic market for Ayurvedic products. Owing to the increased awareness of the benefits of Ayurvedic, herbal and organic products, celebration of June 21 as International Yoga Day, and with worldwide followers of the spiritual leaders, this segment definitely has a wide scope in the near future. The companies can explore the rural market, similarly as done earlier, by launching their products in smaller units and at an affordable price. These companies will need to maintain and expand their distribution network so as to sustain in the market. They will have to change the mindset of people and encourage them to use their cosmetics and personal care products by giving out free samples in their mass gatherings, which should also be made available at a lower price.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The spiritual gurus have a tough task, to make the people understand the connection between leading a healthy life and the wide product portfolio that is offered by their FMCG arms. With the dual motive of directing the people towards spirituality and living a healthy life, these leaders can harness their ready-made customer base of hundreds of followers to make their pure and organic products reach out to every household.

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