

# Business Standard

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## For Dalda, health & taste go together



But experts say the signal may be confusing.

Health and taste – do they go together as far as edible oil is concerned? At a time when every single edible oil brand is focusing solely on the health platform, Dalda – the iconic 75-year-old brand – is going off the beaten track.

Bunge India, which bought the languishing Dalda from Hindustan Unilever in 2003, is reinventing the brand to position it as something that stands for health without compromising on taste. That is the brand's new USP, says Videh Jaipurkar, vice-president, food business, Bunge India, the arm of the NYSE-listed company.

It's quite a leap for the Rs 550 crore brand which was synonymous with "vanaspati ghee" when "health" hadn't become a part of everyday lingo. For now, it's only a relaunch – updated products with vitamins A, D and E and higher level of anti-oxidants and re-branding with a new logo and packaging. Two months from now, Dalda will introduce new variants like rice brand and coconut oil in the edible oil category.

Jaipurkar says "though Indian consumers are getting more health conscious, there is also a latent perception that they are compromising on taste while trying to consume healthier food".

Dalda has done two things: First, it has changed its look and imagery for the first time in 75 years; and second, it will now market its mass market oils like soyabean, mustard, sunflower and groundnut under the "Husband's Choice" range. The name "Husband's Choice" has been arrived at based on extensive consumer research. Indian housewives have this tussle going on between health and taste. The housewife is always concerned that her family eats healthy food, while the husband is only interested in eating tasty food.

"Husband's Choice" therefore conveys to the housewife that while Dalda oils are healthy, it will also help her provide food, the taste of which will be liked by the husband. It is also banking on pricing. In each of the category, the prices would be competitive.

Dalda's makeover has taken a long while in coming. But Jaipurkar says the new identity has been almost a year and a half in the making with extensive consumer research at each stage of the process. "This isn't a facial change in package graphics but also a product upgrade. It's an attempt to connect better with the younger generation," he says.

Not everybody is convinced and feel the signal may be confusing. Anand Ramanathan, Manager, Business Performance Services, KPMG, isn't optimistic. "The brand is yet to come out of its vanaspati connotation. With such a legacy, it's very difficult to compete on the 'health' element, specially so when the category is ruled by innovative players like Saffola which has a great legacy of variants vouching for heart benefits, less sodium etc."

Harish Bijoor, brand expert & CEO, Harish Bijoor Consults Inc, agrees: "The brand suffers from a non-healthy imagery in an era where health is the primary driver to usage of oils across markets." Bijoor says the brand needs to talk more volubly to its non-users than users. A tweak on good health with product centricity in its advertising is the only thing that will help.

But Bunge says the changeover is a part of a much larger strategy to upgrade the entire product offering. Dalda operates in vanaspati as well as edible oil segment. In vanaspati, Dalda is the market leader with a 12 per cent market share, where it intends to further consolidate. In edible oils, its lead variant, soyabean oil, is the third largest brand nationally with a market share of 6 per cent. It now plans to corner a 15 per cent market share in two years.