

Emami sniffs success with HE

The Kolkata-based FMCG player has proved its mettle in the men's fairness segment; it is now hoping for a repeat in deodorants as well

DIGBIJAY MISHRA
Kolkata, 15 June

Emami took the market by surprise last Tuesday when it announced the launch of its men's deodorant brand, 'HE' in an already overcrowded personal care space. The Kolkata-based FMCG player, however, says it has a plan in place to capture a fair share of the male grooming segment.

To begin with, it has roped in Hrithik Roshan as brand ambassador. But the high-voltage brand campaign isn't the only differentiator. Emami already has a presence in the men's segment through Fair & Handsome, which has made its mark in the men's fairness cream segment. The likes of HUL have followed suit with their variants, but Emami's F&H has cashed in on the first mover advantage by holding on to its significant market share.

Now, with HE, the company says it is planning to strengthen its position in the segment, which has a huge potential. According to trade estimates, the deodorant market, pegged at about ₹2,000 crore, has been growing at over 20 per cent and is slated to maintain the momentum for the next three to four years at least. Perhaps, this is why brands such as ITC's Engage, HUL's Axe, Park Avenue, Wild Stone, Fogg, and many more, are jostling it out in the market, which experts believe is still small.

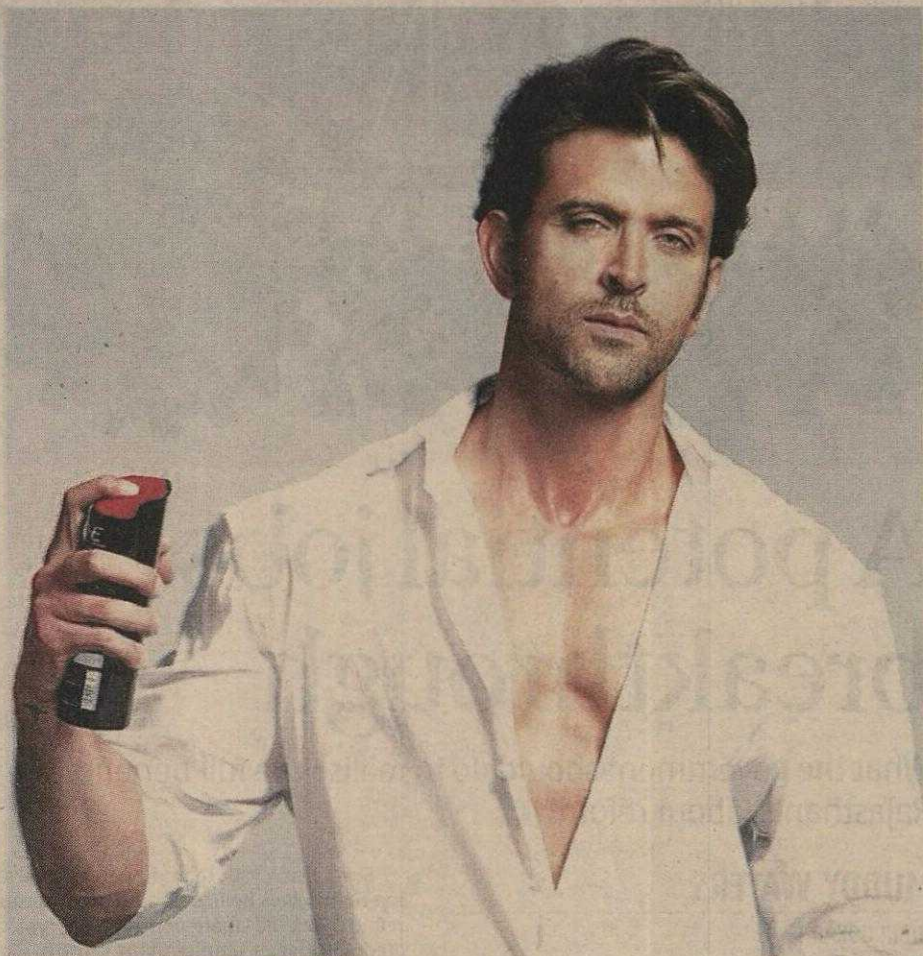
Before, Emami, ITC was the last entrant in the deo market with Engage, which is positioned as a brand for both the sexes. Emami's HE is only for men –

in line with Emami's broader male grooming strategy. In a short span of time, ITC, however, has cornered about five to six per cent share so far, according to trade sources.

Analysts believe entering the male deodorant market is a smart move by the Agarwals. "The market is still small and will grow in the coming years. With new players joining in, the size of market would expand and everybody would get a fair chance to corner some market share to sustain in the long run," said an analyst at Sharekhan.

"Deodorant, despite being in a cluttered space, is still the largest and fastest growing in the male grooming segment clocking double digit growth. The level of penetration being very low, the segment has dynamic prospects. Moreover, consumers have been shifting brand loyalty in this category with a multitude of me-too brands, all in the chic magnet space jostling for consumer attention," says Harsh V Agarwal, director at Emami.

Emami, this time around, is not trying too hard to be different from its competitors. The pricing and positioning is not starkly different from others. The



PHOTOS: EMAMI

target group is of course the youth.

"It is not only about pleasing the other sex. We have positioned it as a brand for youth who are interested in doing things differently. While youth remains our focus, the positioning also helps to cater to men who are

above 30 also," adds Agarwal.

The difference, on the face, is probably the packaging of the deo. The brand has a premium fibre exterior with snazzy graphics offering differentiated packaging to break the clutter and appeal to the youth. It has been designed by a London-based firm. "Interesting packaging can help a brand create its own identity and a foothold in the market, specially where many players are present," an analyst added.

While the Kolkata based company has got it right mostly so far, distributing the product pitted against the likes of FMCG giants such as HUL and ITC could turn out to be challenging. Emami has a sizeable distribution network across the country but

battling out against the biggies or the established brands coming from relatively smaller companies could be a challenge. The pan-India rollout of the product is currently under way. The product will be available across all markets focusing on 23 top cities including metros and mini metros, tier I and tier II cities in the North, West and East markets of the country in the initial phase. The brand will be introduced in Hyderabad and Bangalore markets in the second phase.

The top three players in the small yet exciting market of men's deo are Fogg, Park Avenue and Axe. ITC has started making its presence felt as well. The Agarwals are hoping Emami would be able to replicate its F&H strategy with HE.



"Deodorant, despite being in a cluttered space, is still the largest and fastest growing in the male grooming segment clocking double digit growth. Besides, consumers have been shifting brand loyalty because of too many me-too brands"

HARSH V AGARWAL
Director, Emami