

How Pulse candy captured the market:

In February last year, the DS Group - manufacturer of brands such as Rajnigandha (Pan Masala), Baba (Tobacco) and Catch (spices) -- entered the candy segment with Pass Pass 'Pulse'. Today, the KacchaAam-flavoured hard-boiled candy with a tangy twist, which fans also call the 'magical core' or the 'masala bomb', is a Rs 100 crore brand (as of January 2016), Shashank Surana, vice president, new product development, DS Group, tells us.

Pulse claims to have crossed the Rs 50 crore mark within six months of its launch. It contributed close to 40 per cent to the Group's revenue in the confectionery segment in the year gone by. And, this was achieved without any formal advertising push.

So, when and how was this product, on which the company is pinning its hope of becoming the category leader, conceived?

Pulse was launched to capitalise on the fastest growing HBC (Hard-Boiled Candy) segment in the confectionery basket. As per the market research and insight firm Nielsen India, while the overall sweet candy category, pegged at Rs 6,000 crore, is growing at 14 per cent year-on-year, the Rs 2,100 crore HBC segment is growing at 23 per cent. KacchaAam (26 per cent) and Mango flavour (24 per cent) together claim 50 per cent share in the HBC market. Raw mango was thus, the obvious choice. The makers further realised that there were only straight flavours such as mango, orange and caramel in the market. Hence, there was a need for innovation.

"In India, the common practice is to eat raw mango with something tangy. Whether it is 'aampanna' or a slice of raw mango sold on the roadside, it is incomplete without the tang/spices. That's how we got the idea of a powder-filled candy," says Surana.

Since Rajasthani and Gujarati cuisines share a similar tanginess as Pulse, the company decided to test-market it in these states first. The exercise proved so successful that it had to be converted into a full-fledged launch.