ocean multivision

ART OF DRIVING CONSUMER ACTION

CONFIDENTIAL CASE STUDY

BRAND REPOSITIONING · DIRECT SELLING

This was never a skincare problem. It was a distributor problem.

How strategic repositioning reopened the middle-class market for a leading direct-selling brand — and re-energized a slowing network.

Client: A Leading Global Direct-Selling Brand (confidential) · Category: Herbal Skincare · Engagement: Brand Repositioning & Market Entry · Year: 2018

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What's inside

01 · EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The one-page version

A fairness skincare brand was losing relevance. But fixing the skincare was never the point. The real job was reopening a market and reviving a sales network.

In 2018, a leading global direct-selling brand faced a quiet but serious problem. Its skincare line — launched years earlier on a fairness and brightening promise — was drifting out of step with a market rapidly moving toward herbal and natural products. On the surface, this looked like a product-relevance issue.

It wasn't. Underneath sat a far more consequential business challenge: the company was widely perceived as **expensive**, and that perception was slowing the rate at which new members joined its direct-selling network — the true engine of its revenue.

Our work repositioned the brand from premium fairness to **affordable herbal wellness**, deliberately engineered as an accessible entry point into the company's product ladder. The goal was not to build the next mass consumer brand. It was to give the network an affordable, culturally-relevant product that would bring new, younger, middle-class customers into the system — and give existing distributors a fresh reason to sell.

+21%	**+33%**	**+18%**
DISTRIBUTOR ADDITIONS · PAN-INDIA · 1 YR	ENTRY-LEVEL SALES VOLUME · 1 YR	NEW SALES PARTNERS · 1 YR

All figures reflect performance within the first year of the repositioning, measured Pan-India.

02 · THE BRIEF — AND WHY IT WAS MISLEADING

The brief is almost never the real problem

Every engagement begins with a brief. And almost every brief describes a **symptom**, not the disease. This one was no exception.

What we were asked

The stated need was straightforward: the skincare brand felt dated, its fairness-led promise was losing traction, and competitors riding the herbal wave were gaining ground. The ask, in effect, was "make the brand relevant again."

What we suspected

A relevance refresh — new packaging, new claims, a herbal reformulation — would have answered the brief. But it would have left the more important question untouched: **why does this brand exist inside this company's portfolio at all, and what business outcome is it actually responsible for?**

> **The reframing question**
> "If this brand were performing perfectly, what would change for the business?" The honest answer had little to do with skincare sales — and everything to do with how many new people joined the network.

That reframing changed the entire engagement. We were no longer fixing a skincare brand. We were solving a customer-acquisition and network-growth problem that happened to wear a skincare label.

> **"Solve the brief as written, and you fix the symptom. Solve the problem behind it, and you change the business."**

03 · MARKET CONTEXT

A category in motion

To understand the brand's problem, we first mapped the ground it stood on. Between roughly 2015 and 2018, the Indian skincare market underwent a structural — not cosmetic — shift.

From chemistry to nature

The earlier decade had been dominated by fairness and brightening claims. By 2018, consumer sentiment had moved decisively. A growing distrust of chemical-heavy formulations, combined with rising cultural pride in Ayurveda and traditional ingredients, created surging demand for herbal and natural skincare.

The scale of the opportunity

The herbal personal-care opportunity in India had grown into a multi-thousand-crore category — large enough that no serious skincare player could afford to sit it out. For a brand still anchored to fairness, the risk was stark: stay the course and become a relic; move late and arrive to a market already claimed.

Why timing mattered

Category shifts reward early, decisive movers and punish hesitation. By 2018, the herbal wave was no longer emerging — it was established. The window to enter credibly was closing, which made the cost of a slow, purely cosmetic refresh dangerously high.

Note on data: Specific market-size and share figures are directional and drawn from the public category context of the period. Where exact proprietary numbers are not disclosed here, they are available on request, in person.

04 · THE CONSUMER SHIFT

From "fairness" to "herbal" — and why it ran deeper than skincare

The move from fairness to herbal was easy to observe but easy to misread. Treated as a product-feature trend, it would have prompted a simple reformulation. Treated as a cultural signal, it revealed something more useful.

Three forces underneath the shift

- **Distrust of chemicals.** Consumers increasingly associated synthetic, chemical-heavy formulations with harm, and natural ingredients with safety and care.
- **Cultural reclamation.** Ayurveda and herbal traditions carried trust and pride. Buying herbal felt both safer and more authentically Indian.
- **A questioning of fairness itself.** The very idea of "fairness" as a beauty goal was coming under scrutiny, making fairness-led messaging a growing reputational risk.

The pollution layer

Layered on top was a fast-rising urban anxiety: pollution. In major cities, air quality had become a daily concern. This created an unmet need that herbal positioning could credibly address — protection, detoxification, and care — turning an environmental worry into a brand opportunity.

> **"The market wasn't asking for fairer skin anymore. It was asking for protection — and meaning."**

05 · COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE

Everyone already owned a piece of "natural"

Entering the herbal category late meant entering a crowded room. Each major player had already claimed a distinct slice of the "natural" territory, which made undifferentiated entry pointless.

BRAND	POSITIONING DRIVER	WHAT THEY OWNED
Patanjali	Ayurveda	Mass, value, indigenous trust
Himalaya	Herbal trust	Credible, science-meets-herbal
Biotique	Botanical	Premium-natural, ingredient story
Mamaearth (rising)	Natural / toxin-free	Young, digital, "safe for family"
The Brand (before)	**Fairness — fading**	**An eroding, contested position**

The takeaway was clear: simply "going herbal" would drop the brand into the middle of a fight it could not win on the incumbents' terms. Differentiation had to come from somewhere other than the ingredient claim alone — and, as it turned out, from a completely different business objective.

The competitive trap we avoided

Matching competitors feature-for-feature ("we're herbal too") would have made the brand a follower in a category where trust compounds for first-movers. The escape was to compete on a different axis entirely: accessibility and network fit, not shelf differentiation.

06 · THE REAL PROBLEM — A DIAGNOSIS

The brief looked like skincare. The problem was network growth.

Direct-selling businesses don't grow primarily by selling more units to existing customers. They grow by **adding people** — new members who consume, and new sellers who recruit. The health of that engine is the health of the business.

The chain of cause and effect

1. **An "expensive" brand perception**
   The company's flagship lines sat at premium price points, building an overall image of a brand that was costly to buy into.

2. **A higher barrier to entry**
   For a prospective new member or customer, "expensive" raised the psychological and financial cost of joining or trying.

3. **Slowing new-member additions**
   Fewer affordable entry points meant fewer easy "yes" moments — and the rate of new people entering the network softened.

4. **A stalling growth engine**
   Because network growth compounds, even a modest slowdown in entry has an outsized long-term cost.

Seen this way, the skincare brand was not the problem to be solved — it was the **instrument** through which a bigger problem could be solved. The brand could become the affordable, appealing front door the network needed.

07 · THE DIRECT-SELLING LENS

Why a skincare brand is really a recruitment tool

To brief a strategy correctly, we had to judge the brand by the scoreboard that actually mattered to the business — not the one the category usually uses.

Two different scoreboards

LENS	SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE	WRONG QUESTION
FMCG / Consumer	Shelf share, brand fame, unit sales	"Did it become a hero brand?"
Direct Selling	New members, active sellers, repeat consumption, network energy	—

What the brand needed to do

- **Lower the cost of entry** — give first-time, price-sensitive consumers an affordable reason to step in.
- **Energize the sellers** — give distributors a fresh, easy-to-explain, culturally-relevant product to talk about.
- **Feed the ladder** — act as the first rung that, over time, leads consumers toward higher-value lines.

> **"In direct selling, a launch isn't only aimed at consumers. It's aimed at the network that sells to them."**

08 · OUR APPROACH

Research before rhetoric

We didn't start with the message. We started with the market. Strategy first, communication second — that sequence is the whole difference.

It is tempting, under deadline pressure, to jump straight to creative: a new line, a new look, a clever campaign. We deliberately resisted that. A message built on assumption is a guess with a budget behind it. A message built on evidence is a strategy.

Our operating principle

Before a single line of communication was written, we committed to understanding four things with rigour: what was truly driving the herbal shift, who the middle-class consumer actually trusted and why, what was causing the slowdown in network entry, and what price-and-positioning combination could credibly reopen the door.

> **Why this matters commercially**
> Communication is the most visible — and most expensive — part of any brand effort. Getting the underlying strategy wrong doesn't just waste the creative budget; it amplifies the wrong message at scale. Research is the cheapest insurance a brand can buy.

> **"We don't start with what to say. We start with what's true. The message is just the last step."**

09 · RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

How we dug into the market

Our research was organised around the decisions it needed to inform. Each strand of inquiry mapped directly to a strategic question the repositioning would have to answer.

RESEARCH STRAND	QUESTION IT ANSWERED
Category & trend analysis	Was the herbal shift durable or a fad? How much room remained?
Consumer behaviour & trust	Who did the middle-class buyer trust, and what made a product feel "safe"?
Price-sensitivity mapping	At what price does "try it" become an easy yes for a first-time buyer?
Network / distributor inputs	Why had new-member entry slowed? What did sellers need to sell more easily?
Competitive benchmarking	Which positions were already owned — and which were still open?

From findings to direction

The research consistently pointed in one direction: the opportunity was not to out-herbal the herbal brands, but to be the most **accessible** credible herbal option — priced and positioned to bring new people in, and easy for distributors to put in front of them.

Note on methodology: Specific sample sizes, instruments, and proprietary findings are summarised here at a strategic level and can be detailed on request.

10

The Core Insight

Herbal wasn't a trend to ride. It was the most affordable, most trusted way back into mass-market India — and the perfect bait for a slowing recruitment engine.

[redacted]

11 · THE REPOSITIONING STRATEGY

From premium fairness to affordable herbal wellness

The strategy translated the insight into a set of deliberate, reinforcing decisions. Each one served the underlying goal: lower the barrier to entry and feed the network.

The four strategic moves

1. **Reposition the promise**
   Shift from fairness/brightening to herbal wellness with a pollution-protection benefit — culturally relevant and future-facing.

2. **Price for accessibility**
   Position the brand as the affordable, low-risk entry product — the easiest "yes" in the portfolio.

3. **Make it sellable**
   Give distributors a simple, trusted, on-trend story they could explain in one sentence and sell with confidence.

4. **Connect it to the ladder**
   Frame the brand as step one of a journey toward the company's higher-value lines — an acquisition funnel, not a standalone.

> **The strategic bet**
> Win the entry decision, and everything downstream — repeat consumption, exposure to other lines, distributor momentum — becomes possible. Lose it, and no amount of premium positioning elsewhere can compensate.

12 · THE ACQUISITION FUNNEL

Position it as the first rung of the ladder

The most important strategic idea was to stop treating the skincare brand as a destination and start treating it as a **doorway**. The portfolio became a ladder, and the repositioned brand became its first, most accessible rung.

Step 1 — The Entry Product (today)
Affordable herbal skincare. Low risk, high cultural relevance. The easy first purchase that brings a new, younger, middle-class consumer into the system.

Step 2 — Nutrition (tomorrow)
Once trust is established, the consumer is far more open to the company's nutrition lines — a higher-value, habitual category.

Step 3 — Premium Beauty (the future)
With a relationship built, the premium lines that once felt "too expensive" become a natural, aspirational next step.

This is how an affordable skincare product quietly becomes one of the most valuable assets in a direct-selling portfolio: not through its own margin, but through the customers and sellers it brings into the entire system.

13 · MESSAGING ARCHITECTURE

What we said — and what we deliberately stopped saying

With the strategy set, the communication followed logically. The shift in language was as important as the shift in product.

DIMENSION	BEFORE	AFTER
Core promise	"Visibly brighter skin"	"Herbal radiance + pollution protection"
Emotional territory	Fairness / appearance	Wellness / care / safety
Hero ingredients	De-emphasised	Herbal actives, foregrounded as proof
Target mindset	Premium beauty seeker	Young, value-conscious, first-time buyer
Role in portfolio	Standalone skincare	Entry point to the ladder

Why "stop saying" mattered

Retiring the fairness narrative did more than refresh the message — it removed a growing reputational liability and freed the brand to stand for something with a future. Subtraction, here, was as strategic as addition.

> **"Confusion is the biggest branding mistake — not competition. We made the brand mean one clear thing."**

14 · EXECUTION FRAMEWORK

Turning strategy into a coordinated rollout

A repositioning only works if every touchpoint tells the same story. Our execution framework was built to ensure consistency from the shelf to the seller to the screen.

The pillars of rollout

- **Brand & communication.** A clear herbal-wellness narrative carried consistently across consumer-facing materials.
- **Ingredient storytelling.** Herbal actives positioned as visible proof of the promise, not fine print.
- **Distributor enablement.** Simple, repeatable talking points so every seller could explain the brand in one clear line.
- **Entry-point framing.** Positioning and price cues that made the product the obvious first purchase.

For the live case study: this section is where Ocean's specific deliverables — campaign assets, packaging, films, distributor kits, and channel-level activations — should be shown as visuals. Replace this note with the actual creative once finalised.

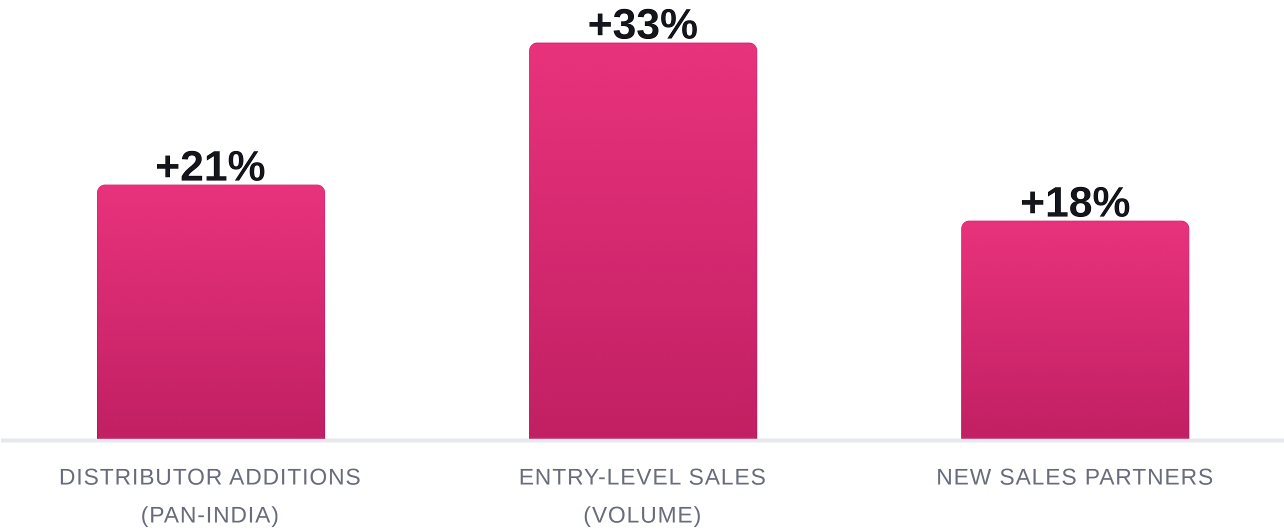
The principle that governed everything

One team, one thesis. When strategy, creative, and rollout are owned together, the message doesn't dilute at the handoffs — because there are no handoffs.

15 · THE RESULTS

One year. Pan-India. The network grew.

The repositioning was judged against the scoreboard that mattered — network growth — and it delivered measurable movement within the first year.



What the numbers represent

- **+21% distributor additions, Pan-India** — more people entering the network, the core growth metric.
- **+33% entry-level sales volume** — the affordable entry product doing exactly its job: driving trial and trade-up.
- **+18% new sales partners** — a re-energised selling base, recruiting and activating again.

All figures measured within the first year of the repositioning, Pan-India.

16 · READING THE RESULTS CORRECTLY

Judge it by the right scoreboard

The same outcome can look like a disappointment or a triumph depending on the lens. This is precisely where most analysis goes wrong — and where strategic clarity earns its keep.

	AS A CONSUMER BRAND	AS A GROWTH STRATEGY
Verdict	Moderate success	**Clear success**
Why	Never became a mass hero brand like the category leaders	Reopened the middle market and revived network entry
But	That was never the goal	That was always the goal

Held to the FMCG scoreboard, the brand would be called a partial win — it did not dethrone the category's giants. But that was never the objective. Held to the direct-selling scoreboard — new members, active sellers, market re-entry — it did exactly what it was designed to do.

The lesson in one line

Measuring the right thing is a strategic act. Pick the wrong scoreboard, and you'll kill a winning strategy for failing at a game it was never playing.

17 · STRATEGIC TAKEAWAYS

What this case teaches

Beyond this single engagement, the work surfaces principles that apply to almost any brand-and-business challenge.

1. **The brief is almost never the real problem**
   A skincare brief hid a recruitment problem. The first job of strategy is to find the question behind the question.
2. **Branding is a business strategy, not a marketing activity**
   The decision wasn't about looking better; it was about reopening a market and growing a network.
3. **Research before rhetoric**
   Evidence-led positioning is cheaper, safer, and far more effective than assumption-led creative.
4. **Catching a trend keeps you relevant; owning a position makes you a leader**
   Riding the herbal wave bought relevance. Sustained, single-minded positioning is what builds a lasting brand.
5. **Measure against the right scoreboard**
   Outcomes are meaningless without the correct frame. Define success before you chase it.

18 · WHAT WE'D WATCH NEXT

The discipline that protects the gain

A successful repositioning is a beginning, not an ending. The single biggest risk to the gains made was — and remains — the temptation to keep changing the story.

The drift risk

Brands that change their core narrative every few years can ride successive waves but never compound into category leadership. The discipline of **holding** a position — even when a new trend beckons — is what separates a brand that stays relevant from one that becomes iconic.

> **Our recommendation**
> Commit to a single, clear position — for example, a modern, affordable herbal brand for young middle-class India — and hold it consistently for five to seven years. Let the equity compound. Resist the urge to chase the next trend before this one has paid off.

> **"Reading the shift is strategy. Holding the position is what builds a brand."**

19 · HOW OCEAN WORKS

Strategy at the core. 360° in execution.

This engagement reflects how we work on every brief: we find the real problem, build strategy on evidence, and carry it all the way through to measurable results.

The Ocean approach

R **Review**
Existing perception, market positioning, communication gaps.

R **Research**
Audience behaviour, competitive benchmarking, emerging opportunities.

R **Renew**
Clear positioning, messaging framework, communication direction.

R **Roll-Out**
Multi-platform execution, consistent storytelling, targeted delivery.

Why clients stay

Founder-led thinking, a multi-sector lens that reveals patterns single-sector agencies miss, and an obsession with outcomes over output. We don't sell projects. We build partnerships that compound — with 8+ years of average client retention to show for it.

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Is your brand solving the wrong problem?

If you're looking for an agency that makes pretty decks — we're not it. If you want a partner that finds the real problem and builds the strategy that solves it — we should talk.

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