

Dilmah x The Hits

CASE STUDY

Challenge

Dilmah has been a household name in New Zealand for decades, with more than 9 million cups enjoyed by Kiwis over the past 33 years. However, the brand faced a long-term demand challenge, with over 42 percent of hot tea drinkers aged 60 plus. To future-proof tea consumption, Dilmah needed to recruit a younger audience and shift perceptions among millennial consumers.

At the same time, Dilmah's Sri Lankan provenance and purpose-led story, including reinvesting 15% of profits into the MJF Foundation to support humanity and the environment, provided a strong platform to connect with a more conscious generation. Any promotional approach needed to reflect these values to ensure the campaign felt authentic and true to the brand.

Campaign & execution

Dilmah partnered with NZME and two of The Hits Breakfast hosts, Jono & Ben, to deliver a multi-platform "Tea Tourism" campaign. Jono & Ben travelled to Sri Lanka and explored tea plantations, local communities and iconic experiences including the elephant orphanage. Each night, they broadcast their breakfast show live back to New Zealand from some of the most remote locations, recapping their adventures and sharing highlights from the day. Daily content was shared across radio and social, creating authentic, in-the-moment storytelling.

To drive engagement, Dilmah released special Jono & Ben branded packs, offering consumers the chance to win the same Sri Lankan experience by finding a Golden Tea Bag, marking the first time Dilmah featured talent on-pack. To bring the promotion to life, Jono & Ben "planted" the Golden Tea Bag during the trip and wore gold suits, creating playful content moments that amplified the campaign. The storytelling was extended online with a recap published via the NZ Herald Travel platform, ensuring the campaign reached audiences across broadcast and digital.



"We are incredibly proud of this campaign and the measurable impact it delivered against our commercial objectives, The Hits demonstrated exceptional creativity, cultural sensitivity, and genuine partnership throughout - transforming a traditional tea brand into an adventure people wanted to be a part of. This stands as one of our most successful and memorable promotional activations."

- Nicole Campbell - Country Manager, Dilmah



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Results

Jono & Ben played a key role as Travel Guides, bringing a new perspective that helped Dilmah connect with younger consumers. Their journey through Sri Lanka brought Dilmah’s provenance and purpose to life through authentic storytelling, strengthening brand connection and relevance among new audiences. The campaign delivered a +6% increase in Dilmah usage among millennials during the campaign period, with 18% of consumers new to the brand, a significant outcome for an established household name.

The campaign also delivered strong retail impact, generating an average weekly sales lift of +13% and a +23% uplift in units sold versus the pre-period. Importantly, 39% of customers were new to the product or reactivated, demonstrating the campaign’s ability to drive both recruitment and re-engagement. Audience engagement extended beyond broadcast, generating 1 million organic social views across the Sri Lanka trip week, while on-air integration remained strong with an average of 12 minutes of Dilmah Tea Tourism content per hour while broadcasting from Sri Lanka.

Key highlights



Millennial +6% in usage over the campaign period



Average weekly sales lift of 13% & until uplift of 23% vs the pre-period



+39% of customers were new to the product or reactivated

1M+

1 million organic views on Social across the Sri Lankan trip week

