



NOOA™
PERFECTLY NATURAL



NOOA: New brand launch

Client Name: NOOA

DBA Design Effectiveness Awards Entry 2026

For publication

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



NOOA launched in November 2022 with a clear and ambitious mission: to elevate rooibos, a uniquely South African botanical, into a premium, design-led global product capable of competing with the most iconic names in luxury tea. This was not a superficial packaging exercise or a niche wellness trend. It was a comprehensive brand creation that sought to redefine rooibos as a product of provenance, refinement, and purpose within the global luxury category.

The founding vision emerged from a broader commercial insight. Despite rooibos being rich in health benefits and steeped in South African cultural heritage, it had never been presented with the design language, storytelling strategy, or commercial positioning required to succeed within aspirational retail and hospitality spaces. In particular, the Gulf region represented an untapped opportunity, a rapidly expanding market for luxury food and beverage offerings, where tea holds cultural and ceremonial significance, but rooibos had yet to make a premium impact.

NOOA was conceived to meet that opportunity directly. A brand built on clarity and restraint, designed to be both sophisticated and sensory, it offered an alternative to the legacy tea brands dominating the region. And because it launched without above-the-line media, trade incentives, or existing distribution leverage, its success would rest entirely on the strength of its design.

Since its launch in late 2022, NOOA has grown rapidly, achieving commercial credibility, retailer trust, and customer loyalty purely through the strength of its brand and packaging design. Over the past year, the business has continued to build momentum, REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA

Since launching in November 2022,

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- Twelve premium listings across the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, including placements in landmark destinations such as Dubai Mall, Doha Airport, and Galleria Mall Abu Dhabi
- A reorder rate of 45 percent across retail and hospitality channels, confirming product-market fit and trade confidence
- Plastic-free packaging across the entire range, with an estimated 50 percent reduction in carbon footprint
- Geographic expansion from urban capitals into boutique hotels, eco-retreats, and concept stores across the wider Gulf region

This was not a story of media spend or distribution muscle.

NOOA's market impact was achieved through the power of design — strategically, verbally, visually, and materially.

From its distinctive identity and tonal restraint to its structural form and packaging system, every commercial outcome was the result of intentional creative decisions. In a region shaped by legacy players and visual excess, NOOA introduced a new aesthetic of calm, credibility, and conscious luxury- and it worked.





BUSINESS CONTEXT AND CHALLENGE

NOOA, short for Naturally Out of Africa, was founded with a bold strategic aim: to introduce a refined and ethically grounded rooibos tea brand that would compete not just in terms of product quality, but through a premium brand experience rooted in design. Unlike traditional wellness-positioned rooibos teas that often occupy the margins of supermarket health aisles, NOOA sought to reposition the ingredient at the heart of a globally appealing, luxury lifestyle offering.

The business context for this ambition was multifaceted. Rooibos, although grown exclusively in South Africa and recognised globally for its antioxidant properties, remained underdeveloped as a luxury product. Historically, its narrative had been tied to functionality and heritage, but not aspiration. Meanwhile, the global and regional luxury tea markets were dominated by entrenched European brands like Fortnum & Mason, TWG, and Mariage Frères, all of which benefitted from longstanding reputations, legacy aesthetics, and expansive commercial distribution.

This market dynamic created an evident gap. Despite a growing interest in ethical sourcing and wellness-led choices, consumers in aspirational markets, particularly in the Gulf, had no premium rooibos offering that was aligned to their design sensibilities or cultural preferences. The Gulf region in particular had evolved into one of the most design-literate and fast-growing destinations for high-end hospitality, luxury gifting, and curated food and beverage experiences. The audience in this region had become increasingly discerning, placing value on product story, aesthetic quality, and environmental credibility.

Yet, despite this readiness, rooibos was still largely absent in luxury spaces. It appeared inconsistently, when at all, and almost never with a design system that matched the formality or subtlety of high-end environments.

For NOOA, this gap represented both an opportunity and a commercial challenge. As a startup brand entering highly competitive and culturally distinct markets, there would be no margin for vague positioning. NOOA had to feel instantly credible. It needed to earn its place beside globally recognised names and justify its premium status from first impression to product performance. And it needed to do so without the advantages of retail slotting's, ATL spend, or existing customer equity.



The founders approached the agency with a challenge grounded in necessity. Build a brand from zero, one that could:

- Instantly signal confidence and modernity without visual clutter or clichéd cues
- Represent rooibos as a refined African export worthy of a luxury tier
- Balance elegance and earthiness in both visual tone and verbal storytelling
- And most importantly, provide all commercial leverage through brand and packaging design alone

NOOA was not to rely on provenance alone. It needed to offer a retail and hospitality experience that felt timeless, tactile, and considered. The design had to do more than sell tea. It had to build belief, belief in the product, the region it came from, and the potential of rooibos to transcend its previous role and become a luxury mainstay.

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MARKET CONTEXT & OBJECTIVES



NOOA entered a category long defined by legacy incumbents and slow-moving innovation. But the brand did so with a sharp understanding of where the market was shifting, and who it was failing to serve.

A Region in Transformation

Across the Gulf, particularly in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, consumer behaviour has changed dramatically over the past five years. The rise of design-conscious, sustainability-minded consumers has been driven by rapid socio-economic change and national development strategies such as Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030. With these shifts, the traditional codes of luxury, formality, ornamentation, and Western heritage, have evolved to include simplicity, ethics, and culturally rooted design. Tea remains deeply embedded in the region's social and ceremonial life. However, the fastest-growing segments of the category are now those offering curated, design-led, and sustainable options. The premium tea and coffee sector across the Gulf is valued at over £1.2 billion, with significant growth coming from boutique cafés, wellness resorts, and luxury gifting channels. Yet rooibos remained notably underrepresented. It was either bundled into generic herbal ranges or positioned purely as a medicinal or dietary product. Rooibos had provenance and wellness credibility, but no brand had managed to elevate it through design.

STRATEGIC MARKET GAP

This absence was not due to lack of demand. It was a failure of positioning and presentation. Rooibos had the story, but not the staging. It required a brand that could bring it into modern luxury environments with visual sophistication, structural credibility, and emotional resonance.

NOOA identified this opportunity and built its business strategy around it, starting with the trade. To succeed, the brand needed to be embraced not just by consumers, but by the gatekeepers of hospitality, gifting, and design-led retail in the Gulf. Every decision, from pack format to tone of voice, was shaped by this understanding

TARGET AUDIENCES

NOOA was designed for a layered ecosystem of decision-makers and tastemakers:

- Trade buyers in boutique hotels, cafés, and wellness resorts seeking visually elegant, sustainable, and premium beverage options
- Retail and gifting buyers focused on curated product selections, seasonal demand, and aesthetic alignment with high-end spaces
- Influencers and cultural curators looking to support African innovation and recommend new brands aligned with modern ethical luxury

The packaging system needed to speak fluently across all these audiences, retail-ready but hospitality-appropriate, giftable but grounded, premium yet regionally sensitive.

Strategic Objectives

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1. Secure 5 to 10 premium listings across retail and hospitality in the Gulf in the brand's first commercial cycle
2. Achieve a reorder rate of 40 percent or higher among trade customers, demonstrating sell-through and retention
3. Maintain full price point without relying on promotional pricing, rebates, or introductory incentives
4. Deliver a 100% plastic-free packaging system, reducing total carbon footprint relative to conventional competitors
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These goals were set not only to test market viability, but to prove a thesis: that design, done well, could launch a challenger brand into one of the most exclusive categories in the world, and win.

DESIGN SOLUTION

With no media budget, listing fees, or retail placement support, NOOA's brand world had to carry the full weight of market entry. The design system was not a final layer, it was the go-to-market strategy in its entirety. Every business objective, from sell-in to reorder rate, would be delivered or denied through the quality and coherence of design.

The agency was engaged from the outset as the sole brand design partner. The task was to develop a full identity system, packaging structure, tone of voice, and brand narrative capable of introducing an unfamiliar product into a highly curated luxury environment, and making it feel at home.

CORE DESIGN STRATEGY

The design needed to communicate trust and taste at a glance. It had to be culturally aware without becoming cliché, minimal without being forgettable, and ethical without relying on overt green claims. Most importantly, it had to deliver on two key asks from trade buyers: visual clarity and immediate perceived value.

KEY CREATIVE DECISIONS INCLUDED:

Naming and identity

The name "NOOA", an acronym for "Naturally Out of Africa", was developed to evoke origin and credibility while feeling modern, ownable, and internationally legible. Its symmetry and phonetic simplicity gave it presence both in print and in conversation.

Verbal tone and typography

A restrained tone of voice was adopted to convey confidence and calm. The serif wordmark suggested literary elegance while the typographic system favoured space, pause, and sophistication. It positioned the brand as one that belonged in cultural, not just commercial, conversations.

Structural packaging

A rigid cylindrical tube was selected as the hero format, referencing both modern gifting and ceremonial display. It offered shelf presence, protection, and tactile distinction. For hospitality, compostable sachets were introduced in recyclable sleeves with consistent branding.

Material and finish

From matte FSC-certified boards to metallic foil highlights and blind emboss details, every packaging element was selected to cue luxury without visual noise. Colour was used sparingly, reinforcing a sensory identity of natural warmth and design clarity.

Plastic-free execution

Plastic was eliminated across all packaging components. A fully compostable system was engineered, offering both performance and environmental reassurance. This decision had a downstream effect on trade interest, allowing NOOA to qualify for sustainability-focused retail programs and eco-resort listings.

Trade materials and POS

Bespoke trade kits and samples were developed to mirror the final product experience, not as a support tool, but as an early demonstration of the brand's full retail readiness.

Design to Deliver Objectives

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Objective

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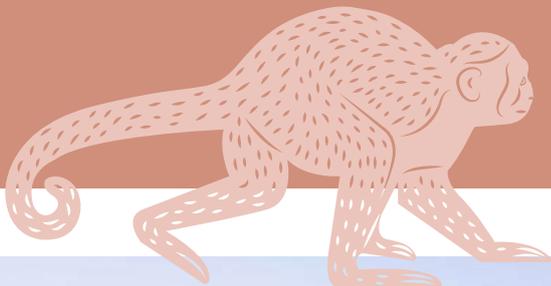
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Design Solution

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LAUNCH AND BUDGET

NOOA launched commercially in November 2022, with no ATL media, no trade rebate programs, and no retail listing incentives, the launch was designed to prove that a premium brand could enter a competitive category using design alone, as both its storytelling engine and its sales tool.



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LAUNCH STRATEGY



The business prioritised presence over noise. Rather than blanket the region with marketing or promotional offers, the team focused on carefully curated trade outreach, direct samples, and listings in high-visibility, credibility-building locations. The belief was simple: if the brand felt right in the hand and looked right on the shelf, it would succeed.

Initial outreach targeted buyers with strong design sensibilities and a known appetite for sustainably positioned, premium products. Each received a fully branded presentation kit, designed to echo the unboxing and product experience. The absence of promotional pricing further reinforced NOOA's premium tier positioning.

Launch Details:



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Design Investment:

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RESULTS & DESIGN EFFECTIVENESS

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Performance Against Objectives

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Results in Detail

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TRADE RECEPTION: KEY OBSERVATIONS

1. Shelf Presence Without Noise

Buyers repeatedly noted that NOOA stood out because it was quiet. The brand's restrained colour palette, clean typography, and structural packaging drew attention without relying on overused cues like gold, florals, or dense storytelling. It gave retail and hospitality teams confidence in its fit.

2. Ease of Recommendation

Trade partners found the product easy to recommend because the design did the work for them. The packaging communicated quality and ethics immediately, requiring no further explanation.

3. Gifting and Display Value

Across boutique retail and wellness destinations, NOOA's format was praised for its giftability and front-of-store display potential. It became not only a product offering but a visual merchandising asset.



TRADE & CUSTOMER RECEPTION

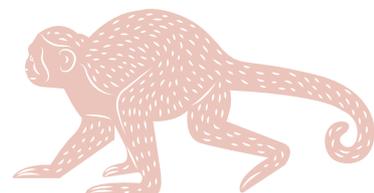
NOOA's reception by both trade buyers and end users was immediate and distinct. The brand did not need to shout to gain attention, its visual restraint, structural elegance, and tonal clarity resonated precisely because it felt different from everything else in the category.

Retail and hospitality buyers across the Gulf responded not only to the product's sustainability and provenance, but to the experience it offered. NOOA was not simply a new rooibos product. It was a new standard for how design could elevate a lesser-known ingredient into a luxury object.

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Customer feedback mirrored trade sentiment. Without brand awareness campaigns or influencer partnerships, the brand gained traction by delivering an experience that felt sensory, grounded, and shareable.

- Repeat buyers cited the tactile feel of the packaging, the ritual of opening it, and the brand's aesthetic calm as reasons for purchase
- Many customers discovered the brand through hospitality experiences, in hotels, cafés, or curated retail, and sought it out for gifting or home use
- The packaging's elegance and the perceived effortlessness of its storytelling built emotional connection and trust



SELECTED TRADE TESTIMONIALS

“NOOA made it into our store because it had the story, the look, and the values. But it stayed because it sold.”

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**Head Buyer, Gifting**  
Dubai

“We replaced our legacy tea range in the suites with NOOA. Guests notice the difference, and the staff find it easier to present. It feels complete.”

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Director, Hospitality
Riyadh

“For our boutique, it hit that rare, sweet spot. You have a story, you have sustainability, and you have something that looks beautiful on the shelf.”

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**Owner, Concept Store**  
Doha



## CONCLUSION

NOOA began with a belief: that design could launch a premium African product into one of the world's most exclusive and competitive luxury markets, without media support, trade discounts, or inherited reputation.

**That belief has now been validated.**

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**Design Delivered These Outcomes**

- 12 listings across flagship retail and high-end hospitality
- 45% reorder rate, proving customer pull and trade confidence
- Zero discounting, maintaining full retail price across markets
- Plastic-free packaging system, reducing carbon impact by 50%
- Geographic expansion into regional and eco-luxury destinations



## OTHER INFLUENCING FACTORS

There were no ATL campaigns, price promotions, or visibility incentives. Retail listings were secured through design credibility alone. There were no market booms or rooibos category tailwinds. Every result presented in this entry is a direct outcome of the brand and packaging design.

**Launch & Budget**

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- The brand didn't succeed because it filled a market gap.
- It succeeded because design made that gap visible and made NOOA the answer.
- Design turned an overlooked ingredient into a globally desirable product.
- Design turned trade scepticism into belief.
- Design built a brand that the Gulf region didn't just accept but began to emulate.

**NOOA didn't follow a trend. It set one.**

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