

JOE'S TEACO

LONDON'S BEST BLENDS

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How to build a brand
from a tea bag?

Design consultancy
Echo Brand Design Ltd.

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Beverages

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Joe's Tea Company



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Executive Summary

Entrepreneur and tea expert Joe Kinch came to Echo with the objective of launching his own tea brand. Joe's fundamental desire was to create a tea brand that would champion a shift in the category, behave as a lifestyle brand and inject youthful desire into one of the UK's most established sectors. Joe recognised that the tea landscape would change, with growing ranges of speciality teas catering for more health-conscious consumers.

With this in mind, Joe needed to create a brand that would champion this category shift alongside existing premium niche competitors as well as competing with the UK's established stalwarts of tea. Not an easy challenge for a startup.

For Echo, the challenge was on to create a premium, differentiated tea brand that would shake up the category. Echo created the name, brand identity and packaging for Joe's Tea Co.

Joe's Tea Co. has been in the market for 3 years now and due to the strength of the brand design, Joe's objectives have all been surpassed.

- Annual sales have increased by 550% since Joe's Tea Co.'s first year in the market.
- Sales have increased year on year with a 36% increase in year one, 113% increase in year two and an estimated 120% increase in three.
- Joe's Tea Co. is attracting an average of 3-4 new distributors per week.
- Objectives for international expansion were exceeded by over 100% in year two, and over 200% in year three.
- Joe's Tea Co. has been invited to partner with aspirational brands including The Soho House Group, Cowshed, By the Horns Brewing Company and amongst other.
- Joe's Tea Co. has helped drive a shift in the category, championing tea drinking as a lifestyle amongst younger audiences.
- The business recouped the design budget of after only 8 weeks in the market.

Word count : 298



Project Overview

Project Brief

Designing a tea brand from scratch

Joe Kinch approached Echo with the desire to create a premium standout tea brand that would appeal to a growing generation of tea drinkers. Joe, founder and director of Joe's Tea Co., met a challenge with an opportunity when he decided to create a completely unique no-nonsense but aspirational tea brand in an increasingly fast-growing market. Tea drinking has been a proud UK tradition for centuries and with a shift towards health and wellness, this tradition is set to grow. We are seeing more and more people drinking herbal and specialty teas in the quest for a healthier lifestyle. With his great knowledge of tea,

Joe was determined to be on the forefront of the cultural shift in tea drinking and launch a brand that would champion tea as a lifestyle.

Joe approached Echo with a business idea and left with a brand. The original objective for Joe's Tea Co. was that it would sell as a brand of tea for the independent sector, following Joe's hopes to feature the range in cafes, local markets, and pop up stores. His goals were that this in time would build up a community around the brand that would enable it to grow.

Taking no other approach except for brand design (naming, logo and packaging), the key objectives included:

- **To create a brand that would have longevity in a competitive market.**
- **To secure distribution in independent London retailers in year one.**
- **To potentially have the opportunity to expand into international sales in year two.**



Description

Joe approached the team at Echo in the spring of 2012 with expert knowledge of the tea market from his previous experience of managing supplies for an organic food production company.

This involvement led him to the prediction that the coffee revolution of the nineties and noughties would soon be spreading to tea; a category that had previously been led by global brands and based around black tea drinking, would be seeing a shift towards more specialised, niche brands. Joe was, therefore, determined to produce a range of products that was meaningful not only to tea connoisseurs but also to the younger generation of experience-hungry Millennials.

Joe was born into the world of food and drink being raised in a pub by his parents. This upbringing taught him the value of quintessential British traditions that prioritised great quality and great taste without the pretentiousness or bravado commonly associated with fine dining. This philosophy stayed with him for when the time came to start his own business.

In September 2012, Joe's Tea Co. launched with a range of 11 variants that included familiar classics (The Earl of Grey, Proper Peppermint) as well as a host of quirky boutique blends (The Berry Best, Chocca-Roo-Brew).

Through its brand design alone, Joe's Tea Co. met its promise of bringing surprise, delight and desirability to everyone who loves a brew, even for those who were just getting started.



Market

Tea drinking is an established tradition that has lent itself to coinage such as the tea party, tea break and teatime, as well as more commonly playing its part in many of our daily routines. The trend has evolved into something of a national institution with the total sales value of tea in the UK reaching almost £600m in 2014 with nearly £100m of this coming from fruit, herbal and green tea.¹

The market is ever-changing, however. While the majority of tea consumption is still of the black tea variety, trends for health and wellness are leading preferences towards more premium, speciality brands. Moreover, it is generation Y who are leading this move with 73% of Millennials accountable for tea consumption.² Joe's intention was to help drive this shift; helping the increasingly adventurous and health-conscious consumer ditch the standard black tea and spend more on high-quality specialty teas and herbal infusions.

When entering this saturated market, Joe's Tea Co. took on the challenge to compete with both the industry giants who have been serving the nation with traditional black breakfast tea for decades (PG Tips, Tetley, Taylors of Harrogate and Twinings) as well as the vast array of niche players specialising in herbal infusions and boutique blends. These included Brew Tea Company, Lov Organic, Momo Cha, Teapigs and Pukka, amongst many others. There were over 150 niche brands already in the market at the time Joe's Tea Co. launched. And the market saw

the big power players focusing on speciality and herbals teas as well.


Entering this market is not for the faint hearted and it was going to take a really strong brand to survive.



¹ Statista

² Mintel

Project Launch Date

September 2012 

Size of Design Budget



Echo were challenged with creating a premium-looking brand and packaging with a limited design budget.

Word count : 806

Design Solution

The story and positioning

The challenge was to create a unique brand that would stand out and really engage consumers in the market of premium specialty teas. However, Echo felt strongly that Joe's Tea Co. had a great attitude that would set it apart from the rest. Valuing its expertise and premium quality at the fore, while maintaining a down-to-earth 'after all, it's just a great cup of tea' attitude would

enable it to connect with the masses. Echo's creative solution was, therefore, to really base the brand around the man behind it – Joe. Echo wanted the brand to celebrate Joe's London heritage in a lighthearted but meaningful way. East London was where Joe lived, worked and socialised and it was also a place of heritage and story telling for the tea market.

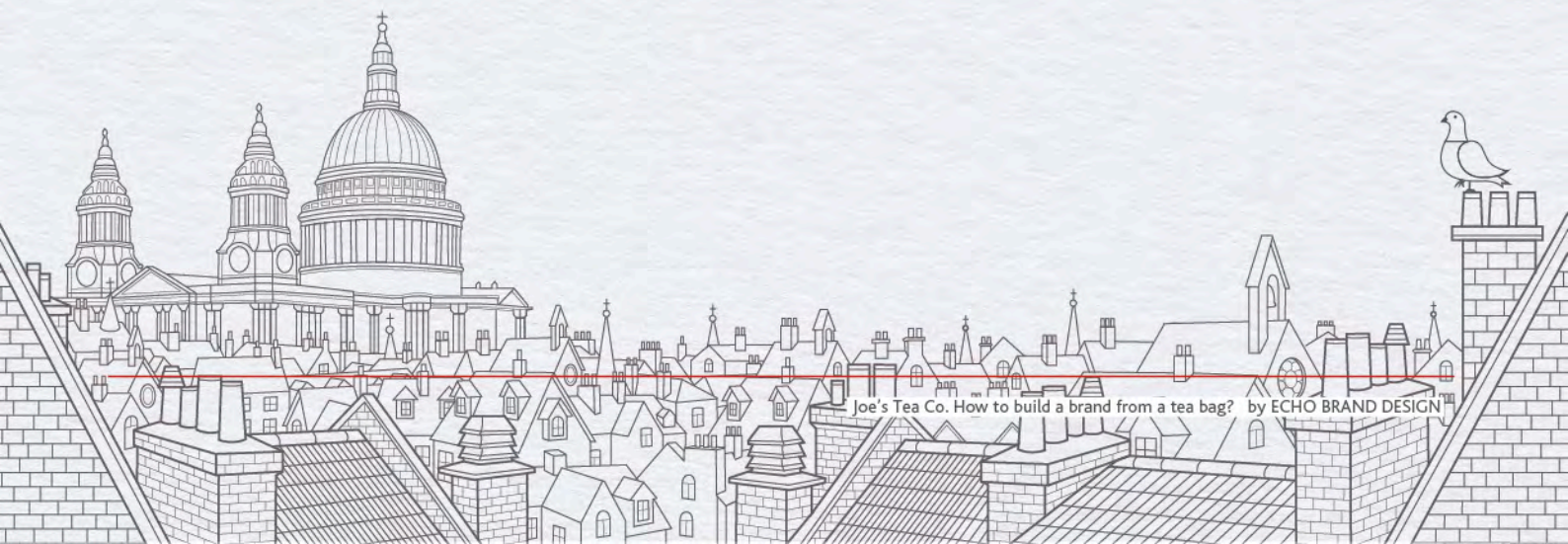
This idea of using crests was inspired by the world of London guilds – historically responsible for protecting the quality and reputation of their trade and craft. Reviving this idea, the design unfolds a story within each illustration revealing individual characters and scenes that embody the history of London’s bustling East End. The stories are intrinsically linked to the flavour or variant of the tea, for example Sweet Chamomile symbolises the Victorian East London flower seller; the Earl of Grey embodies the quintessential eccentric English gentleman, and St Clement’s Lemon portrays St Clement’s Danes whose bells ring out the tune of the famed rhyme. Injecting contemporary humour into British heritage was crucial for meeting Joe’s intentions for a modern day makeover of the tea category.



NAME & IDENTITY

Echo felt that the name of the brand should not stray far from its founder. Joe could stand for anyone and everyone for as long as the question is 'shall I put the kettle on?' So, the brand soon

became Joe’s Tea Co. This was communicated through a simple yet effective black-and-white square logo. The strapline is just as confident with its declaration of being London’s Best Blends delivered by clean typography for a strong and premium look.



PACKAGING



The pack design combines the brand's core values; expertise and provenance. The front of pack displays the brand logo, a unique crest, and the variant name, supported by a small description. The back of pack includes a biographical introduction into the world of Joe's Tea Co., continuing the brand's informal language of storytelling across all of its messaging.

As the sole brand to champion the new generation of tea in a quintessentially British way, we felt that the packaging design should encompass this entirely, producing a great looking tea that is rooted in heritage and craftsmanship.

Saving costs retaining quality

Echo were working with a very low print budget, which meant we had to print locally. We rose to this challenge without sacrificing

our vision by printing the background of the stock to give the impression of the old paper stock. This proved to be a fantastically clever and cost-efficient way of creating the premium authentic look we intended as part of the design.

Word count : 497



Summary of results

The financials - Increase in sales

Due to the power of the design, Joe's Tea Co. has seen sales increase and carry on increasing meeting Joe's prime objective of being a business with longevity. The financial target at the outset was to be profitable and grow without hindrance. The product and branding alone has exceeded these objectives.

Joe's Tea Co. exceeded sales objectives by 83% in year one.

This was then exceeded by 36% in year two and 113% in year three. Year four has sales forecast at 120% increase on year three.



That's a sales increase of 550% since year one. April 2015 had triple the sales of April 2014.

Distribution

Although Joe's business objective in the first year was to have his product stocked in local East London cafes, markets and pop up stores, it was not long before Harvey Nichols had caught a glimpse of the design and decided to stock the whole range. This was not only the case for Harvey Nichols - out of 32 distributors in year one, 80% of them said that the branding was one of the key reasons they wanted to sell Joe's Tea Co.

The Harvey Nichols listing was a great start but set the bar high above the initial business objectives that Joe had set for the brand. Joe's Tea Co. now has 150 customers in the UK alone and receives an average of three calls each week from potential new distributors wanting to stock the range.



International Expansion

For the second business year, Joe had new goals in mind; international expansion into 5 different countries. By the end of year two, Joe's Tea was stocked in not just 5 but 11 countries worldwide, which continued to grow reaching 16 in year three.

Joe comments, "We are now working with distributors across the globe including Scandinavia, Japan, Malaysia. We are also currently working on five further deals in new territories. The branding really helps with this and we are fielding enquiries on a weekly basis from new international distributors approaching us."

Joe's Tea Co. became the only food and drink brand to be stocked in Amsterdam's droog store. Famed for its selectivity of brands that are behaving differently, the concept store pays tribute to the branding and design of Joe's Tea Co. and was very much in line with Joe's desire to be seen as a lifestyle brand. Joe's Tea Co. launched in Scandinavia at the same time as competitor Brew Tea Co. and outsold them from the start.

Driving a shift in the category

Joe's Tea Co. has been pivotal in shifting the on-trade tea category to really compete with coffee. Gone are the days of selling a bog standard 'builders brew' alongside an artisan coffee. Joe's Tea Co. has reborn tea as a perfected craft to be experienced and enjoyed, earning back its place on the shelf alongside the coffee offering. As a result,

Joe has been supported by an abundance of lifestyle and service companies summing in 90% of Joe's Tea Co. customers in London. These include popular Millennial hangouts Loaf, The Breakfast Club, and The Hungry Guest, as well as Waterstones, Leica Camera, and University of the Arts.

"We love a beautifully designed product at The Hungry Guest and Joe's Tea Co. looks inviting on the shelves at our delis and cafés and always starts a conversation with our customers. It was interesting to hear the stories behind each image on the packs and their link to the tea inside and this captivating mixture of the exotic and faraway tea production with the utterly British drinkers. It also helps that it's the best tea in the world and sold by such an authentic group of people."

- The Hungry Guest

Desired for brand partnerships

In tribute to the branding, Joe's Tea Co. has been increasingly approached by other brands wanting to partner. Joe's Tea Co. features as the key tea brand in Soho House group, collaborating with Cowshed for a sleepy cow tea variant, as well as collaborating with By the Horns Brewing Co. to create a tea-infused beer "Old Smoke". Joe's Tea Co. was approached directly for all ventures. The Sleepy Cow range has now sold 1500 units of Joe's Tea Co. in less than three months.



SOHO HOUSE
LONDON

COWSHED



Improved recruitment/ Staff Morale

Joe's Tea Co. is led by a small but ambitious team. The team is now needing to grow as the brand marks its transition from start-up to business. Joe's Tea Co. has seen its lifestyle-centred brand help entice an increasing amount of interest from high-calibre applicants from other lifestyle companies. Receiving an average of 12 LinkedIn application messages weekly, this is a clear indication that the brand is outwardly helping to communicate the company as a positive and attractive place to work.



Other influencing factors

Health and happiness are at the very tip of the value pyramid for the younger generation of consumers with 97% placing a premium on happiness and 95% saying that health is paramount.³ A shift towards healthy lifestyle and wellness marked a shift in the tea industry towards more specialty tea brands that communicate claims for better health. For Joe's Tea Co., this meant they were entering an ever-increasing market of brands specialising in herbal variants. The pressure was on to create a strong and standout brand in a very saturated market. What's more this had to be achieved through design and design alone with no spending budget going towards any other marketing communications or PR throughout its 3 years in the market. Despite this, brand design allowed Joe's Tea Co. to surpass all objectives and continue growing as their journey commences.

REFERENCES

- Statista
- Mintel
- GSW Allidura and Harris Poll



³ GSW, Allidura and Harris Poll