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Elastic Brand?

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STRETCHING '100% PURE'

New Zealanders have always been proud of our ability to over-achieve for our small population. As a prime example, the 100% Pure campaign has cemented New Zealand's place on the tourism world-map. However what we advertise isn't how it really is, 100% Pure is just a dishonesty of tourism.

New Zealand is ranked 12th in the world for per-capita greenhouse gas emissions and our ecological footprint per capita is the 9th largest in the world. These are statistics that we are definitely punching above our weight on – and we shouldn't be. Gifted a country of astonishing natural beauty, our greenhouse emissions are fast suffocating the goose that lays the golden eggs.

The question was recently raised as to whether we should convert 100% Pure from a campaign line into a national brand. But can we live up to the promise? Given any degree of scrutiny, the answer is clearly not. And we know it; 53% of New Zealanders surveyed in 2008 were 'deeply concerned' that we were not doing enough to protect the environment.

Mark Twain said, "Man is the only animal that blushes. Or needs to." To be sure of making 100% Pure a reality, we must be embarrassed about the state of things as they are now – and we should be. Agriculture, power generation, manufacturing, transport – even energy inefficiency at the office and wastage in the home – wherever we work, live or play we must love the idea of 100% Pure in order to defend it. No amount of regulation will force our hand, and the time for pointing fingers at individual sectors is well and truly past.

That's not to say that 100% Pure is a threat or that we should abandon it. In fact, becoming able to truly lay claim to that promise is one of the greatest opportunities we have. But it may not have the breadth to be a truly national brand. As a tourism centric phrase, it captures us magnificently. It could stretch particularly well to agriculture and food production, especially as traceability and food safety come to the forefront of consumer conscience. To take an example, our green-lipped mussels are a treasure that we consistently undervalue.

But there are elements to New Zealand that 100% Pure cannot convincingly portray. How would such a brand portray our Maori culture? How would it reflect on our arts, our manufacturing, our technology or our people? In the FutureBrand Country Brand Index for 2008, New Zealand ranked first in the world in both 'Friendly Locals', and 'Authenticity' – for sticking true to our essence of culture and people, not just for our nature. 100% Pure is not the brand that can portray these elements – but as a country, we should be developing something that will.