



HOTTEA MAMA – AN AWARD-WINNING COMPANY WHO ARE MAKING TEAS TO SUPPORT WOMEN'S WELLNESS.

Using tea science and 100% natural ingredients, HotTea Mama's teas are blended to meet the needs of women when they are facing issues with periods, gut health, hormonal balance, breast-feeding and hot flushes.

We had a chat with Bethan, one of HotTea Mama's founders, to discover how the business has grown over the past six years. "I set up HotTea Mama back in 2017 with my best friend Kate. It was essentially inspired by my experience as a tea buyer and blender. I've always worked in the tea trade. I'm a bit unusual, I have degree in tea science. I was the first non-Chinese person to get one from the University of Agriculture in China. With my own and Kate's experience in having children and being on caffeine restricted diets, while we were pregnant and breastfeeding, we came up with the idea to use my tea knowledge and target it at women's wellbeing.

As the business progressed, we had a lot of family members and customers going through peri-menopause, having PMS and bad periods and asking if there were teas that could support with that. So, we now have a full range of teas to support all these issues and different life stages and all the lost sleep in between.

We produce everything in the UK with whole leaf ingredients and have been growing very quickly, with the support of OxLEP, over the last 6 years. Originally, we were just on-line, but we're now listed nationwide with Holland & Barrett, we're in Selfridges and we have a partnership with the shopping channel, QVC, as well. We're growing very fast. You could say we're taking over the tea world!"



SUPPORT FROM OXLEP BUSINESS SINCE 2017

Bethan and Kate connected with OxLEP during the early stages of setting up the business. Since then, they have gained support across three of OxLEP's flagship business support programmes; Innovation Support for Business (ISfB), eScalate and Elevate.

Bethan tells us how OxLEP's support has been crucial in their business success. "I have a very niche set of skills. I'm very comfortable producing products and buying. But when it comes to setting up a business you need to know how to manage finance and HR and how to create business plans and policy documents etc. We needed external support. I'd heard of OxLEP Business through the Saïd Business School and got in touch to see if they could help. They signposted us to a business support programme called Elevate. We received one-to-one support on all the things that we had absolutely no knowledge or understanding of. It was incredibly valuable for us when setting up and starting to employ people.

As the business developed, we needed support in other areas, a key one being financial support. We were scaling up rapidly and producing new products. We engaged with another OxLEP programme called eScalate. It was through this that we gained a lot of guidance and support on scaling up and investment. We also won an eScalate grant which supported us with promoting new products and bringing them to market. It enabled us to bring in consultants to help with our Amazon listing and Google advertising. It was great and helped increase our revenue."

IT'S TEATIME TO GET INNOVATIVE

A big leap forward for HotTea Mama was following their engagement with OxLEP's ISfB programme. Bethan explains how the innovation support has taken their business to the next level. "We were thinking about future product development and what would work well with retailers. So, we were looking at producing tea that contained vitamins. We knew this would be a huge selling point. But because our bags have a lot of holes in them, they wouldn't be suitable to add powered vitamins.

It was time to get innovative and start researching other minerals that we could use instead. We knew this was going to involve quite a bit of money. So, we got in touch with OxLEP and they informed us about their Go-Create grant which was available through ISfB. Their team, once again, were brilliant. It takes a lot of time to fill in all the forms and without their encouragement we might not have gone through with it. We had a long call with an innovation advisor prior to the application to make sure our idea was suitable. As a small business we really don't know what we're doing a lot of the time with things like this, but they were always there to support us if we had any questions or queries. We were really impressed with them. And we won the grant which was fab.

Bethan continues, "We used the funding to develop and adapt 'beadlet' technology for the vitamins, which has never been used in teas before. The funding has accelerated our growth massively. We got the grant in November and are now ready to launch our new vitamin product. It's been approved to go into Holland & Barrett. The first delivery of the new format tea is actually going out today. It'll also be going into Selfridges and we're in conversations with other large well-known retailers as well."

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AN EXCEP-TEA-ONALLY EXCITING FUTURE

Bethan closes by telling us about their future plans. "The future looks super exciting for HotTea Mama. The ISfB programme has opened up potential collaborations to help us with our business and R&D work in the future. Plus, gaining OxLEP's financial backing has instilled confidence in larger investors, knowing we have the support of a government body organisation. This has meant we've been able to apply for much bigger grants to support our growth.

All our products are now compliant for the European market so we can sell our products overseas, allowing us to expand internationally which is great. We're in some very exciting talks with retailers as well as a large organisation who would be our distribution partner into America. We're trying to target Europe as much as possible and get out to as many bigger people as we can. And soon we'll also look to expand our internal team to meet demand.

We can't thank OxLEP enough for their support. Right from the beginning they have played a pivotal role in getting us to where we are today. And it's just going to get bigger and better! Right, is it time for tea yet?"

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON HOTTEA MAMA
PLEASE VISIT: [HOTTEAMAMA.COM](https://hotteamama.com)

HOTTEA  MAMA

Find out more about the support
available from OxLEP Business:

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