TEAM EMPATHY · SEARCH & AI STRATEGY

Own the rongoā answer in New Zealand search and AI.

X ZONE NZ · prepared for Daniel Holt and Jessica Martin

NEW ZEALAND | 14 AUGUST 2026 · TEAM EMPATHY

1. Executive summary

The short version. Your organic search has roughly halved in twelve months, from about 275 clicks a month early in the year to 148 across the five months to July. **73% of the clicks you do get are branded**, people typing X-Zone, and no search strategy grows those. The **27% that is non-branded, 268 clicks a year**, is the only part that can grow. The interesting part is where the room sits: your single best non-branded page is an article about a native herb, and there are **31,665 searches a month** in New Zealand on the exact plants your products are made from. You have the moat and one article proving it works. What you do not have yet is the content, and we cannot size the prize properly until we see your revenue split.

Three things to know

- **Organic is declining, and it has been for a year.** Monthly clicks peaked at 370 in May 2025 and were 99 in July 2026. Impressions fell from 13,225 a month to 5,476 over the same period. This is not a plateau, it is a slide. SEARCH CONSOLE
- **You appear constantly and almost never get picked.** Non-branded search is **69% of your impressions but only 27% of your clicks**, because non-branded click-through is 0.66% against 3.97% on branded. You are on the page, several positions below the answer. SEARCH CONSOLE
- **One article already proves the strategy.** Your post on tūpākihi earns 201 clicks a year at position 5.5, more non-branded traffic than every product page combined. The harakeke post sits on 13,510 impressions and converts 0.30% of them, so the demand is real and the page is not yet good enough to win it. SEARCH CONSOLE

The non-branded market, and the share of it you hold

63,567
addressable non-branded searches a year, after we discount pure plant-lookup traffic

20,341
of those are organic clicks you could win, once ads and AI answers take their share

268
is what you win today, which is 1.3% of the non-branded market

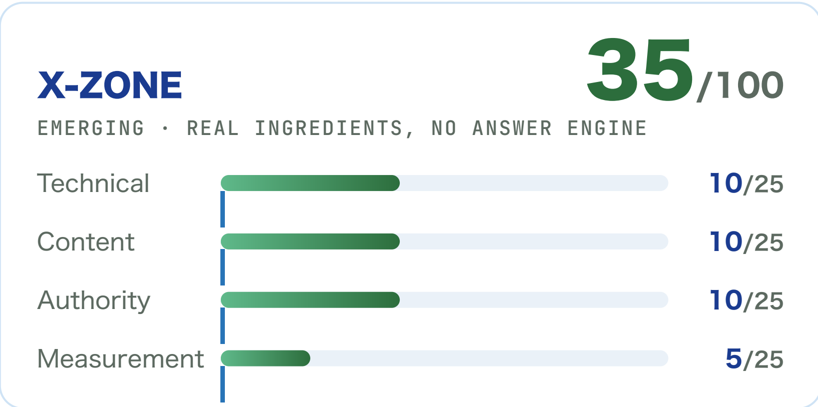
$183
a year in online sales for every extra 1% you take, at your current order value

So the online half of the opportunity is one sentence: **you hold 1.3% of the non-branded organic clicks in your category, and every extra 1% is worth about $183 a year in direct online sales.** Your branded traffic is not part of this and does not change.

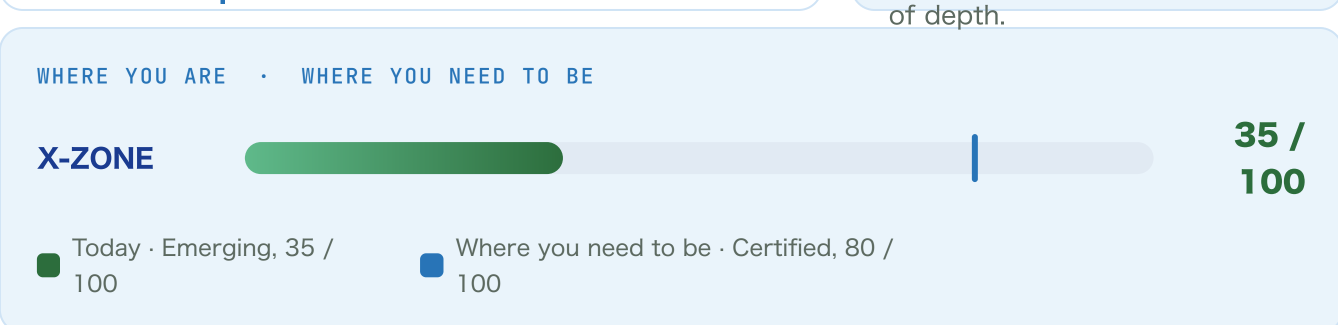
> **Read that number carefully.** $183 per point is small, and we are not going to dress it up. Direct online sales through your own store are not, on their own, a reason to invest in search. The reason to look harder is that your store is one of three places this work pays, and it is the smallest of them. Section 4 sets out all three honestly, and names the one figure we need from you to size the other two.

2. How AI-ready you are today: the AEO scorecard

We score every brand out of 100 against our AEO Maturity Model: four pillars (Technical, Content, Authority, Measurement), each out of 25. **Certified is 80 out of 100**, Professional on all four, the standard we build clients to. X-Zone is at 35 today.



+45
points to Certified. The scores are even across the first three pillars, which is unusual and useful: there is no single broken thing, there is a consistent lack of depth.



Three findings sit behind that score. Your **mobile performance is 55/100 with a largest-contentful-paint of 7.5 seconds**, well outside Google's 2.5 second threshold.

You carry **no FAQ or question schema on any of 79 pages**, which is the single most direct way to be quoted by an AI answer. And your **Domain Rating is 18 despite 470 referring domains**, so the links exist but they are not the kind that carry weight. Full detail in the appendix.

3. The market you are missing: search and AI

We triangulated 112 category terms across Google Keyword Planner, Ahrefs and SEMrush, taking the median of the three. The result splits cleanly into two very different pools, and the split matters more than the total.

Native herb research

31,665 SEARCHES / MO

YOUR MOAT

Kawakawa, harakeke, horopito, kumarahou, rongoā. Enormous volume, mostly people learning about the plant. You make the products from these plants and nobody owns the answer.

Commercial pain relief

4,710 SEARCHES / MO

THE BUYERS

People looking to buy a rub, balm, spray or cream. Small in New Zealand, and where the direct online revenue actually comes from.

Remedy and symptom

1,305 SEARCHES / MO

THE BRIDGE

Sore muscles, joint pain, sport-safe questions, anti-doping. The path from someone with a problem to someone holding your product.

Triangulated NZ volume, August 2026, median of three sources. **We have deliberately given the 31,665 native herb searches a zero revenue weighting in the money model.** Most of that traffic is plant identification, weaving, gardening and cultural research, not buying intent, and counting it as demand would have inflated the model roughly tenfold. It is reported here as reach and authority, which is exactly what it is worth. GKP + AHREFS + SEMRUSH

Validated demand, and where you rank today

Term	Searches / mo (NZ)	Your rank now	AI Overview live?
kawakawa balm	3,600	Not ranking	Yes
tūpākihi	390	5.1	-
natural health products nz	170	Not ranking	-
sore muscle cream	140	38.3	-
kawakawa benefits	140	Not ranking	Yes

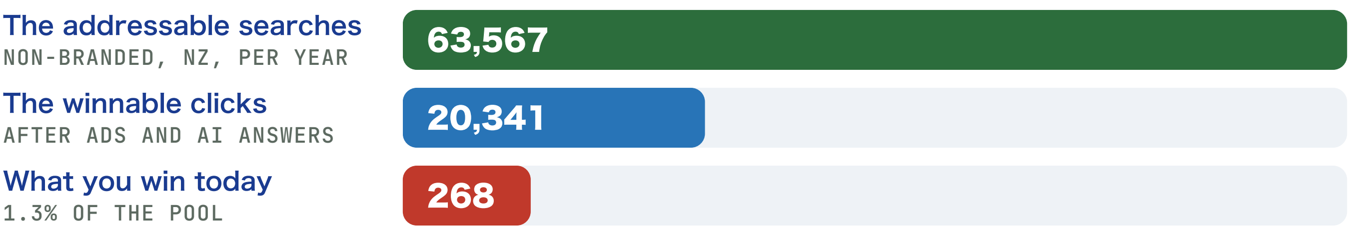
Term	Searches / mo (NZ)	Your rank now	AI Overview live?
turmeric supplement nz	140	Not ranking	-
pain relief cream	110	30.4	Yes
kumarahou benefits	110	12.0	-
natural pain relief	90	11.0	Yes
arthritis cream nz	55	12.7	Yes
natural pain relief nz	30	7.5	-
muscle rub nz	30	8.3	Yes

Rank is your current average Google position from Search Console; "not ranking" means the term returns no impressions at all for your site. Several of the ranks shown sit on a handful of impressions a year, so they are a foothold rather than a position. **15 of the 112 terms already carry a live AI Overview**, including most of the commercial ones. Full triangulation in the appendix. GKP + AHREFS + SEMRUSH GSC

The window that is actually open. There is no New Zealand brand systematically publishing the answers to rongoā and native herb questions. The searches run into the tens of thousands a month, AI Overviews are already firing on the commercial terms, and the brand that answers first becomes the default source those answers are built from. X-Zone has a stronger claim to that ground than anyone, because you do not just write about these plants, you make things out of them and you have independent lab results on the products.

4. The opportunity, in dollars

Search pays X-Zone in three places. We can measure one of them precisely, and we need a number from you to size the other two. Rather than blend them into a single flattering figure, here they are separately.



Roughly one search in three survives ads and AI answers as a winnable organic click, and you take about one in seventy-six of those. MODELLED

LAYER 1 · MEASURED

Your online store

+$1,956 / yr

The mid case, taking your share of non-branded clicks from 1.3% to 12%. Built on a $60 average order value from your live catalogue and a 1.5% conversion rate. Precise, and small.

LAYERS 2 AND 3 · NEEDS YOUR NUMBER

Stockists and retail sell-through

Unsized

New wholesale accounts that find you through search, and shoppers who research online then buy at a pharmacy or health store. Neither lands in Shopify, so neither shows up above. This is almost certainly the bigger half.

Layer 1 in full: what the online store is worth

Each non-branded click is worth $0.90 to your store, because non-branded search converts at a modelled 1.5% on an average order value of $60. Every case below multiplies that figure. Your branded organic sits on top, unchanged. MODELLED

Case	Share of the non-branded market	Non-branded clicks / yr	Online revenue / yr	New revenue / yr
Today	1.3%	268	$241	–
Conservative	6.0%	1,220	$1,098	+$857
Mid	**12.0%**	**2,441**	**$2,197**	**+$1,956**
Strong	20.0%	4,068	$3,661	+$3,420

The conversion rate above is the one number in this document we have had to assume, because the Google Analytics access did not come through before this was written. If your real figure is 3% rather than 1.5%, every number in that table doubles. It is still not, by itself, a business case.

Layers 2 and 3: the number we need from you

X-Zone is not primarily a direct-to-consumer business. You have a stockist network, retail distribution, sponsored athletes and a wholesale side, and Dan's own framing was growing both B2B and B2C. Search feeds all of that, and none of it appears in an ecommerce conversion rate.

Here is why it changes the answer. Suppose an average stockist account is worth **$2,000 a year** in wholesale orders. If this work brings in **ten new accounts a year**, that is **$20,000 a year**, roughly ten times the entire online opportunity above. We are not asserting either of those numbers. We are showing that two figures only you have, the annual value of a stockist account and how many you add in a year, decide whether this is a small project or a significant one.

> **What we need before recommending anything.** Your annual revenue and how it splits between direct online sales and wholesale or retail, the average annual value of a stockist account, and roughly how many new accounts you take on in a year. With those three, we can size layers 2 and 3 with the same rigour as layer 1, and give you a straight answer on whether this is worth doing.

What the reach is worth, stated without a dollar sign

Separately from all of the above, the native herb pool is **31,665 searches a month**. At a 10% share that is roughly **12,000 visits a year** from people actively researching the exact plants in your products, with no revenue attached to it in this model. For a brand whose entire proposition is eleven New Zealand healing herbs, being the source that Google and ChatGPT quote on those plants is worth something real. We have not put a number on it, because we cannot measure it honestly yet.

5. The six-month transformation

The work itself would follow our standard path: **foundations** (fixing the 7.5 second mobile load, adding FAQ and product schema across all 79 pages, cleaning up the sponsor content that has you ranking for barcodes, and setting up measurement that can actually see wholesale enquiries), **owning your territories** (the native herb hub and the remedy content that turns 31,665 monthly searches into a position nobody else holds), and **authority and compounding** (turning your independent lab results and practitioner relationships into the kind of citations that lift a Domain Rating of 18). We move into each phase as the site is ready, not on a stopwatch.

We have deliberately not included pricing or a proposal in this document. Until we can see layers 2 and 3, recommending a size of engagement would be guessing, and you would be right not to trust it. Let us get those numbers on Friday and we will come back with a scope that matches the actual prize.

Traffic, rankings and impressions are from your own Google Search Console, twelve months to 11 August 2026. Average order value is derived from your live Shopify catalogue. Conversion rate is modelled, not measured, because GA4 access was not available. Search volumes triangulated across Google Keyword Planner, Ahrefs and SEMrush (NZ), August 2026. Domain Rating, referring domains and AI Overview flags from Ahrefs. Core Web Vitals from a local Lighthouse run against your homepage on mobile. AEO score from our AEO Maturity Model against a live crawl of all 79 indexed pages. Revenue figures are directional and are not a guarantee of results.

Appendix A: where you sit today

Twelve months of Search Console, to 11 August 2026.

Measure	Branded	Non-branded	Total
Clicks / yr	711 (72.6%)	268 (27.4%)	979
Impressions / yr	17,928 (30.6%)	40,676 (69.4%)	58,604
Click-through rate	3.97%	0.66%	1.67%

These are query-level figures. Google anonymises rare queries, which accounts for a further 1,453 clicks and 59,132 impressions across the property (about 50% of impressions). Anonymised queries are long-tail by definition, so we have treated them as non-branded when describing the pattern but excluded them from the split above rather than assume. Property totals for the year were 2,432 clicks and 117,736 impressions at an average position of 10.6.

The decline, month by month

Period	Avg clicks / mo	Avg impressions / mo
Sep 2025 – Jan 2026	275	11,271
Mar 2026 – Jul 2026	148	7,222
Change	–46%	–36%

Five-month blocks compared like for like, skipping February to avoid a partial-month distortion. August 2026 is excluded as incomplete. The peak month in the record was May 2025 at 370 clicks and 13,225 impressions.

Where the traffic lands

Page	Clicks / yr	Impressions / yr	CTR	Avg pos
Homepage	1,039	24,665	4.21%	9.3
Blog: tūpākihi, the bone mender	201	12,124	1.66%	5.5
X-Zone Sports Rub	141	8,504	1.66%	8.0

Page	Clicks / yr	Impressions / yr	CTR	Avg pos
Collection: X-Zone Joints	130	8,748	1.49%	5.7
Collection: X-Zone Sports	108	18,229	0.59%	6.6
Blog: harakeke, flagship ingredient	41	13,510	0.30%	8.2

The last two rows are the argument for this whole strategy. Two pages carry over 31,000 impressions a year between them and convert well under 1% of it. The demand has already found you; the pages are not yet winning it.

Appendix B: the scorecard in detail

Pillar	Score	What we found
Technical	10 / 25	Every one of 79 pages carries a meta description and JSON-LD, which is better than most brands we assess. Product schema on all 16 products, Article schema on 42 posts. Against that: **mobile Lighthouse 55/100, LCP 7.5s, total blocking time 778ms**, so Core Web Vitals fail. **Zero FAQPage or QAPage schema anywhere**, which is the most direct route into an AI answer. Page titles run 71 to 95 characters and truncate in results. Two pages have no H1.
Content	10 / 25	42 blog posts is a real library, but roughly 25 of them are "Introducing [athlete]" sponsorship pieces. They rank beautifully for the athletes' names and earn almost no commercial traffic. The handful of ingredient articles that do exist are the best performing pages on the site. There is no FAQ hub, no comparison content, no symptom-led content, and no page targeting the commercial category terms.
Authority	10 / 25	**470 referring domains and 622 live backlinks, but a Domain Rating of 18.** The volume is there and the quality is not. You hold assets most brands would envy and do not use for links: independent lab results with a named scientific evaluator, practitioner partners, and a sponsored athlete roster. No systematic digital PR.
Measurement	5 / 25	GA4 and Search Console are installed, which is table stakes and does not lift a score off level one. There is no AI visibility tracking, no view of which content drives wholesale enquiries, and no attribution connecting online research to retail or stockist sales. The GA4 property could not be shared before this report, which is itself a signal about how much the data is currently used.

Certified is 80/100, meaning Professional (20/25) on all four pillars. Most brands we assess before an engagement score 5/25 on Measurement, so X-Zone is not unusual there.

The barcode problem

One finding worth calling out on its own. Your post introducing Barcodes New Zealand has you ranking on **22 barcode-related query variants**, including "barcodes nz", "new zealand barcodes" and "buy barcodes new zealand", for **6,773 impressions a year and exactly zero clicks**. It is not costing you money directly, but it tells Google your site is partly about barcodes, and that dilutes the topical signal you want to be sending about herbal pain relief.

Appendix C: where to play, your content territories

Nine clusters came out of the triangulation. Ranked by what we would build first.

Territory	Searches / mo	Terms	AI Overviews live	Priority
New Zealand native herbs	36,080	23	6	1 · the moat
Topical pain relief (core)	410	15	4	2 · the buyers
Turmeric and golden paste	370	11	2	3 · you already rank
Muscle rub and sports recovery	295	17	2	4
Buying, retail and stockists	170	6	0	5 · B2B door
Joints, arthritis and mobility	165	11	1	6
Symptom and use-case	110	14	0	7
Sport-safe and ingredient assurance	60	8	0	8 · differentiator
B2B, wholesale and trade	20	7	0	9

Volumes are the triangulated median across all three tools. The native herb cluster carries the volume; clusters two through nine carry the buyers. A working strategy needs both, which is why the content plan would run down this list rather than chase the biggest number.

The questions AI is already being asked

A sample of the question set your category generates. These are the shapes an answer engine matches against, and today X-Zone is quoted in almost none of them.

- What is kawakawa good for, and does it actually work for pain?
- What is the best natural pain relief cream in New Zealand?
- Is there a muscle rub that is safe for drug-tested athletes?
- What is rongoā Māori and which plants are used for injuries?

- What can I use instead of Voltaren or Deep Heat?
- Is harakeke gel good for skin and muscle recovery?
- What is tūpākihi and why is it called the bone mender?
- Which New Zealand-made pain relief products are plant based?
- What is the difference between essential oils and fragrance in a rub?
- Where can I buy natural pain relief near me?
- Is turmeric golden paste worth taking for joint pain?
- What do I use for growing pains in kids that is not a painkiller?

A full prompt library, scored and mapped to pages, is built during the engagement rather than estimated here. We would rather show you twelve real question shapes than assert a number we have not done the work behind.

Appendix D: who you are up against

The honest competitive picture is unusual, and it is in your favour.

Ahrefs sees only **10 organic keywords** for xzone.nz in New Zealand, against 2,429 distinct queries showing in your own Search Console. That gap is itself the finding: you are essentially invisible to the third-party indexes that AI systems and researchers lean on, even though Google does see you. Because Ahrefs sees so little, it cannot produce a meaningful competitor set for you either, so the usual head-to-head table would be noise.

What we can say from the category directly: the commercial terms are contested by pharmacy chains and mainstream brands (Chemist Warehouse, Bargain Chemist, Fisiocrem, Antiflamme, Voltaren, Tiger Balm), and those are hard, low-margin fights on generic terms with small New Zealand volume. **The native herb and rongoā terms have no committed commercial owner at all.** That is where a brand with real products, real lab results and a genuine story wins, and it happens to be the pool with 31,665 searches a month in it.

Signal	X-ZONE	What it means
Domain Rating	18	Low. Links exist but carry little weight.
Referring domains	470	Genuinely good volume for a brand this size.
Live backlinks	622	The raw material is there to build on.
Organic keywords (Ahrefs, NZ)	10	Near-invisible in third-party indexes.
Indexed pages crawled	79	Small, tidy site. Nothing to untangle.

Ahrefs Site Explorer, 13 August 2026, subdomains mode, New Zealand.

Appendix E: where the numbers come from

Search Console. Twelve months to 11 August 2026, final data state. Branded is any query containing x-zone, xzone, x zone, sportsxzone, zone cream or equality products, including misspellings. Everything else is non-branded. Query-level rows are used for the branded split; property totals are quoted separately where stated.

Keyword volumes. 112 category terms plus 13 brand terms, pulled from Google Keyword Planner (Google Ads API), SEMrush and Ahrefs on 14 August 2026 for New Zealand. The working volume for each term is the median of whichever sources returned a figure. 20 of the 112 terms disagree by threefold or more across the three tools, which is why no single source is used alone.

Intent weighting. Terms are graded A (commercial, weighted 1.0), B (ingredient and remedy research, weighted 0.45) or C (plant identification, weaving, cultural research, weighted 0.0). Addressable demand is the weighted sum. Winnable organic clicks apply a 32% click survival rate to account for ads, shopping, AI answers and zero-click behaviour.

Economics. Average order value of $60 is derived from your live Shopify catalogue: single products run $26 to $33, bundles $40 to $58, and free shipping begins at $70. The 1.5% non-branded conversion rate is **modelled, not measured**, because GA4 access was not available before publication. This is the single largest assumption in the document and we would replace it with your real figure immediately.

Technical. All 79 URLs in your four sitemaps were crawled on 14 August 2026 for titles, meta descriptions, canonicals, headings, structured data and word count. Core Web Vitals from a local Lighthouse run against the homepage, mobile form factor.

What we could not see. Google Analytics 4 and Shopify admin. Without those we have no measured conversion rate, no average order value from actual orders, no channel mix, and no view of AI-referred sessions or revenue. Every figure in this document that depends on those is labelled modelled.