



PRE SHOW: CASA BACARDI!

Attractions Management quizzes Ian Buxton, managing partner of The Edinburgh Consultancy, about a rather exotic project in the pipeline

what is it?

The global rum giants Bacardi are developing Casa Bacardi!, a new brand experience centre to be constructed at their principal distillery in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

how are you involved?

The Edinburgh Consultancy is acting as creative director for the project, after we undertook the initial feasibility study and design development.

the concept

Starting in Cuba in 1862, Bacardi offers a compelling story, with the founder's family still involved directly. Visitors to the new centre will take an involving journey through time and spirit, with every experience individually customised through interactive opportunities.

The centre is around 16,000sq ft and will include a small training centre for the company's own rum development programme. The creation of Casa Bacardi! marks a new step in building deeper relationships with both consumer and trade audiences in a transactional-based marketing model, in line with trends in other global brands.

project status and players

The project began in November 2000 with a major feasibility study. Principal contractors were appointed earlier this year and include Scenic Route Ltd of York, UK (heritage fit-out), The Larson Company, Tucson, Arizona, USA (themed environment construction), ETI, El Segundo, California, USA (AV systems and process control)

and Mirage TV of Edinburgh, UK (AV production). Architects are Ramos + Ramos of San Juan, Puerto Rico. The Edinburgh Consultancy will project manage this international team, with a target opening of December 2002.

main challenges

So far as The Edinburgh Consultancy is concerned, the principal project challenge has been the co-ordination across cultures and time zones between the client and the international project team, to say nothing of the creative balance between the company's heritage and the Bacardi brand's contemporary positioning.

market predictions

I definitely see corporate and brand-building work as being hugely important to the visitor attractions industry. We are building the spaces in which the 'Experience Economy' actually happens, permitting brands to get closer to their consumers and to build sustainable relationships.

With traditional media fragmenting, and increased importance being attached to Customer Relationship Management (CRM) principles, the brand homeplace is going to be an increasingly important tool in marketers' armouries.

Our industry can take its museum and visitor attraction experience and apply it in this tougher commercial environment. The challenge will lie in combining truly engaging visitor experiences with the commercial messages of the owner.

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