Take a deep breath and dive into our first show issue of 2007. It’s an issue that resonates with the themes that came under the spotlight at last month’s ACI Airport Business & Trinity Forum in Dubai.

One of them was the case for an industry ‘travel trail’ approach, eloquently and powerfully argued by Diageo Managing Director Global Travel and Middle East – Worldwide Ron Anderson. The travel retail industry’s marketing messages, he said, were largely confined to the stores, “when the traveller is at his most stressed and distracted”.

“Why don’t we collaborate as an industry and get our messages to their hire cars, their taxis and their hotels?” asked Anderson.

It’s an issue that more and more brands are giving serious thought to – and Pernod Ricard, Diageo’s great rival in the drinks business – is one. In North America the group’s travel retail division is developing programmes with its domestic market counterparts to target passengers before they reach the airport, cruise ship or border store (page 132).

Like these brand owners we think the travel retail label should mean far more to consumers beyond the confines of the stores. This industry must become an integral element of the travel – and destination – experience if it is to force them to re-evaluate their (often negative) perceptions of our business.

We believe that a strong Sense of Place – sadly too often lacking at the world’s major airports – can be a critical ingredient in changing those customer expectations. That’s why we champion outstanding travel retailing initiatives that capture and promote a sense of national or local identity.

Caribbean ARI’s new stores at Barbados Grantley Adams International Airport do just that. When the joint venture (between Aer Rianta International and Caribbean Airways) won the contract to manage five stores there last year it pledged to meet the airport’s demand that retailing should reflect the best of Barbados.

The partnership has delivered that, and more, in its execution (page 92). The beauty store, incorporating typical Bajan chattel house roofs and palm trees, is a real surprise – but it retains the upscale look that the world’s great brands rightly expect.

InterBaires’ vibrant new look at Buenos Aires Ezeiza Airport has that star quality too. Its Made in Argentina store is destination merchandise all right – but with a difference. It delivers a premium offer that features high-end Argentinean brands, brands that are making waves well beyond their homeland in stores such as Nieman Marcus or Barneys in New York (page 86).

The tremendous partnership between the Greater Toronto Airport Authority and The Nuance Group North America also delivers national identity with integrity and class in Toronto’s Pearson’s new Pier F (page 64). Nuance’s destination store Tastefully Canadian makes good the promise of its name. High-quality food and wine – particularly icewine, Canada’s great gift to duty free – is promoted in the right way. It’s understated, yet premium.

These initiatives couldn’t take place without the cooperation of the airports though – and in each of these cases the interests of airport and retailer have been closely aligned. Unmistakably, the message that Sense of Place matters is taking root. We saw it in the Airport Leaders session at the Trinity Forum, when some of the airport world’s most influential senior managers embraced and articulated the theme with enthusiasm (page 54).

Homogeneity is the death knell for the airports business, said Manchester Airports Group CEO Geoff Muirhead. Vancouver Airport, said CEO Larry Berg, strives to reflect the “land, sea and air” of the North American west coast. And in Nairobi a new terminal expansion will mirror the stunning wildlife of Kenya right at the airport, said Kenya Airports Authority Managing Director George Muhoho.

The days when airports all accepted the same look, design and commercial offer are being rapidly consigned to history. Let’s hail the progressive companies that are hastening the process.

– Dermot Davitt, Editor
If electromagnetic waves can penetrate walls, imagine what they can do to your skin. Today, electromagnetic waves generated by a host of modern day devices join the list of well-known pollutants which can damage skin. For the first time, Clarins Research has revealed the link between accelerated skin ageing and exposure to artificial electromagnetic waves*. Clarins introduces Expertise 3P™ (Poly Pollution Protection) - a worldwide first.

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