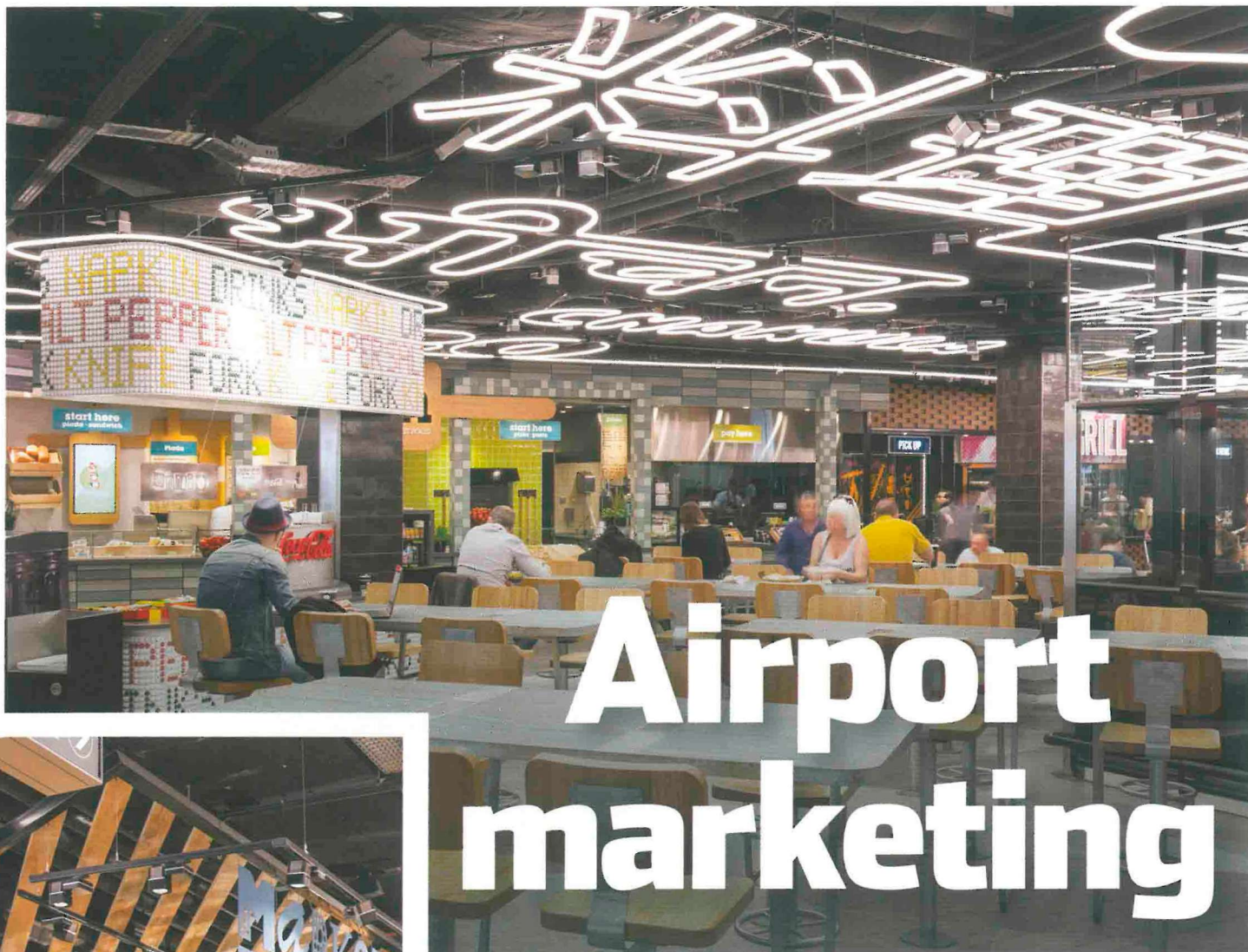


Waiting for a plane doesn't have to be the sterile experience that characterises so many air terminals. **John Ryan** reports on a development at Amsterdam's Schiphol airport



Airport marketing

One of the more tawdry experiences of modern living is time spent in an airport. Frequently, there is little to divert, and what the traveller is confronted with is an air-conditioned unit in which, at best, selected versions of a notional luxury high street are on offer. Occasionally, however, airport retail can raise the bar.

London's T2, at Heathrow, is a case in point, with a broad mix of shopping, from John Lewis to Prada. The same is true of Amsterdam's Schiphol airport, which as well as shops that you might actually want to visit now boasts a food court area that succeeds in not feeling like a food court.

The new space, owned by HMSHost (a subsidiary of Autogrill) in the airport's Lounge 2, covers 10,750 sq ft and has been designed by Amsterdam-based consultancy UXUS. It is comprised of three parts: The Grill, The Oven and the street-food-themed The Market, inspired by the Dutch capital's food markets, according to the design consultancy.

Both The Grill and The Oven are well executed, but perhaps, in a more rustic and

“Airports don't have to be locations where all that is involved is a tedious wait”

visually appealing sense, they are what you'd expect from their names. This means food in The Grill that is grilled in front of customers, while interior elements that are intended to remind the onlooker of a pizzeria do much of the work in The Oven.

But it is The Market that will provide the greatest point of difference from other airports for the simple reason that although it is relatively modest in size, it is more reminiscent of real markets such as the recently opened Mercato Metropolitano, or Borough Market, both in London.

For visitors this means wooden crates and boxes, bold graphic typography and a lot of fresh food. There is, of course, no escaping the



The Market is the biggest point of difference at the airport because it evokes real street markets

At The Grill, food is prepared in front of waiting customers, while The Oven (below) is designed to resemble a pizzeria



fact that you are in an airport, but much has been done to mitigate this by leaving the ceiling void without a covering and with the air-conditioning trunking exposed, meaning that it is, in effect, black and therefore begins to pass unnoticed in the face of the bold colours of the market.

This is Amsterdam, which tends to mean canals, tulips and bicycles for many of those passing through it, and perhaps for this reason there are tables to stand and eat at that are supported by brightly painted city bikes similar to those ridden around the city by tourists.

Also worth noting is the fact that this may be a market in style, but it is about food on the move, rather than edibles for consumption back home. This means, in one part of the market, a lot of oranges, waiting to be turned into juice and housed in wooden crates, for instance.

The truth of the matter is that what has been done here is to create a market ambience, instead of a market proper. The aim is to make the traveller feel more relaxed at a moment, which is all too often a mix of boredom and mild stress.



"It is more reminiscent of real markets such as the recently opened Mercato Metropolitano, or Borough Market"

Airports don't have to be locations where all that is involved is a tedious wait to get to the gate and board. The new HMSHost area at Schiphol shows that it can be made enjoyable and the phenomenon of people arriving at an airport early to shop and dine, as mentioned from time to time by airport operators, can actually become some sort of reality.

And if you want to experience how bad things really can be, try heading for a US airport, with the possible exception of a recently made-over part of Los Angeles' LAX. Bland and impersonal are things that an airport doesn't have to be.