



A 'very Cambodian' identity

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Kingdom Breweries says its marketing strategy will be all about the Kingdom

A "VERY Cambodian" identity is to form the core of the marketing strategy for Phnom Penh's newest brewery, currently undergoing a US\$4 million refit on the banks of the Tonle Sap river, according to its company director.

In a behind-the-scenes tour of the 65,000-square-foot former Hagar International soy milk factory, Peter Brongers, CEO of Kingdom Breweries Ltd, revealed on Tuesday what he said will be the secret of success for the new beer, which is scheduled to roll its first bottles off the conveyer belt in June.

The businessman, who worked in Thailand's steel and jewellery industries before coming to Cambodia, said: "It was a dream I'd always had to make my own beer. I want to make it the best in Southeast Asia.

"It will have a very, very Cambodian identity. We are looking at producing lager, ales, and more seasonal beer – perhaps Kampot pepper and mango beer. We are trying to be creative."

Phnom Penh-based marketing agency Bates 141 has been employed to oversee branding.

One of the more unusual ideas rumoured to be on the table is a label showing a dinosaur drinking beer.

"One of the ideas did involve a Stegosaurus," Brongers confirmed. "But that process is still being undertaken."

Bates 141's CEO and executive creative director, Marianne Wooler, said the agency has been investigating Cambodia's 16th- and 17th-century history to gain inspiration for the brand.

"The people who come to Cambodia are here for a little bit of adventure. They are looking for something different," she said. "We want the brand to reflect that and be recognisable as Cambodian."

Though refusing to go into detail about the potential label or the stegosaurus, she emphasised the importance of creating a strong brand early in the business process.

"It is very much a work in progress, but we are really happy with the decisions we are going with," she said. "We hope we are doing something really cool for the country, which can help Cambodia feel proud of producing a world-class beer."

While creative discussions are under way, a more traditional logo has been decided upon. It shows the words 'Kingdom Breweries' on a dark blue background.

Work in progress

Work at the factory is also gathering pace, with specialist brewing equipment, water purifiers and 30 fermentation vats being brought in from countries as far afield as the Czech Republic and Australia.

Next year, the firm will import 500 tonnes of hops from Germany, Canada and France to help produce the boutique-style brews, which Brongers said should account for between 1 percent and 2 percent of the domestic market. Sales would be concentrated in Phnom Penh, Siem Reap and the south coast, but Brongers said Kingdom was also aiming to export to Tokyo, Singapore, Shanghai and Hong Kong.

At the Phnom Penh site, space for brewery tours, a riverside mezzanine bar – with views of the Japanese Friendship Bridge – and a glass frontage revealing the brewing process are being constructed by 35 Cambodian workers.

Once brewing is under way, the firm is set to employ 100 Cambodians. A specialist German master brewer is to join the enterprise in February 2010.