

Project Title
**Re-branding of
Babingtons English Tea Rooms**

Category
**Corporate/Brand Identity
1.2 Design and implementation
costs under £100,000**

Client Company
**Babingtons
Piazza di Spagna
Rome, Italy**

Design Consultancy
Minale Tattersfield

Date
July 2011





The iconic Spanish Steps in Rome at the foot of which Babingtons Tea Rooms are located. To the right an earlier image before restoration.

Executive summary

Babingtons English Tea Rooms has been a Roman institution since 1893. Situated at the foot of the Spanish Steps, in the heart of Rome, Babington's served tea the English way and over time became the place to meet for writers, actors, politicians and artists as well as tourists. The tea rooms today are in the same location and run by the descendents of Isabel Cargill, one of the original owners.

A programme was commissioned in 2010 to re-position the business to emphasise its English heritage, promote the tea rooms to visitors and Romans, increase the sale of branded merchandise and make the concept attractive to potential franchisees.

Minale Tattersfield put the brand at the centre of the solution. The idea was to develop a personality that would be "ownable" by Babingtons. The core thought was English eccentricity, the idea in England that everything stopped for tea.

Advertisements were designed together with menu covers and point of sale material communicating the idea of English eccentricity. Packaging for a new range of teas was created, each featuring a different but very bizarre Victorian invention. Merchandise was developed for the gift shop; attractively packaged home produced jams, decorated place mats, shopping bags, aprons, dish cloths and tea caddies all feature modern stylish designs yet with a Victorian twist to them. The visual identity had also been given a stylish makeover.

Since the new branding has been introduced throughout the store, revenues in the tea room and restaurant have increased by 40%, sales of merchandise have gone up by 60%, online has increased by 10% and discussions are progressing nicely with 2 potential franchisees (in Tokyo and in Dubai).

The budget for all the design work for packaging and promotional material was only £20,000.00 and yet 40% more people are visiting.



The century old tradition of serving afternoon tea still thrives at the Babington's Tea Rooms.

Project overview

1. Outline of the brief

Overall objective: to position Babington's as still being the place to meet for well-to-do Romans, a must-see destination for tourists and provide a platform to increase sales of branded merchandise

Achievement of overall objective by:

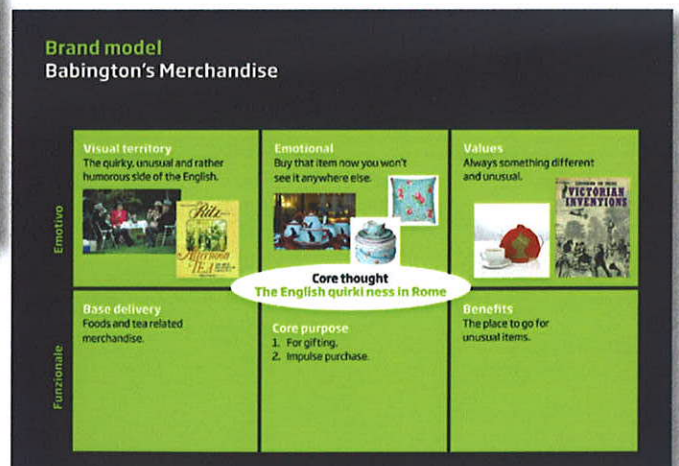
- Creation of a new brand positioning and core thought
- Re-design of corporate identity and all marketing communication material to support the new positioning
- Creation of colour palette to be used throughout the tea rooms to communicate tradition but in a modern stylish way
- Design of packaging for new ranges of branded merchandise

2. Description

Babingtons English Tea Rooms were started by two English ladies, Anna Maria Babington and Isabel Cargill in 1893 in Piazza di Spagna in Rome. At the time this area was called Little England on account of it being the meeting place for all the English tourists doing the grand tour. The business has remained in the hands of the same family since its inception and the premises have remained largely unchanged as well.

Over the years, the tea rooms became the place to meet in Rome for local well-to-do Romans and a well known stop off for tourists. However, with changes in the market, increased competition and a major economic crises facing the world in 2008, the business felt something had to be done to give Babingtons a new focus for the new coming decade.

The challenge was to keep true to the heritage but at the same time keep being relevant to a discerning modern day clientele. At the same time the owners, being ambitious, felt that the potential existed to considerably increase sales and expand outside their base in Rome. Minale Tattersfield was brought in to provide a platform for growth.



Brand models for Babington's Tea Rooms and merchandise. Each one had its own 'core thought', and acted as a steer for the development of the new brand identity.

Project overview cont.



Babington's range of loose tea packaging utilises Victorian engravings, but with an added quirky modern twist. Typography is minimal, and features the strapline 'Incredible Comestibles'.

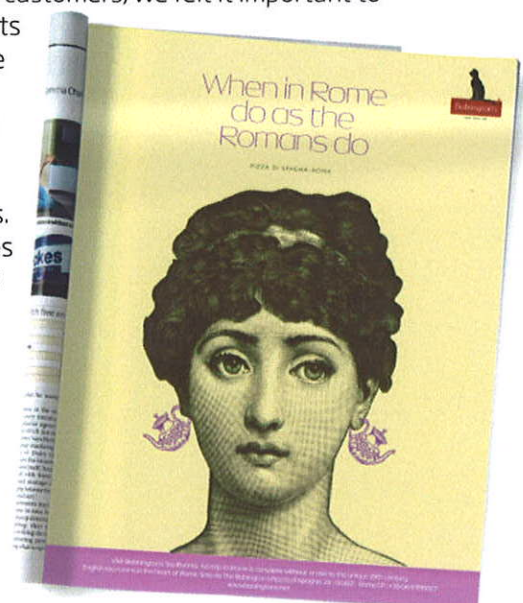
3. Overview of the market

Strictly speaking, Babingtons does not have any direct competition in Rome, other than thousands of cafes and light refreshment bars. However, the location of the business and the quality of the food and products on offer means that the prices charged are high. Increasing the number of people coming into the tea rooms in a time of belt tightening presented a challenge. It was necessary to stress that a visit to Babington's was a unique experience and an important part of the city's history.

For the Romans who represented around 50% of the customers, we felt it important to say to them that Babingtons, although being true to its roots has a new look and is worth coming back to. The tourists who flock into Rome and who all walk down the Spanish steps however represented the greatest potential for increased sales.

The tourists are generally only in Rome for a few days. They are influenced by guide books, tourist magazines and the leaflets they find in their hotels. We designed a series of advertisements to go into the tourists magazines. Leaflets were created for the reception areas of hotels announcing that Babingtons was a destination not to be missed.

Press ad for Babington's, proclaiming - When in Rome do as the Romans do!



Project overview cont.

4. Project launch date

Minale Tattersfield was briefed by Babington's in March 2010 and developed the new positioning, branding, marketing material and pack designs between then and August 2010. Implementation of the new branding took place from September 2010 onwards. A new website was created in early 2011 and incorporate the new identity, new look and feel and colour palette.

5. Size of design budget

The budget for all the design work for packaging and promotional material was only £20,000.00.

6. Outline of design solution

Babingtons is unique in Italy because not only does it promote tea in a country known for its coffee shops but it serves English tea. The idea at the centre of the rebrand therefore is to highlight and celebrate this uniqueness.



The small Babington's Piaggio 'Ape' delivery van uses the identity to maximum visual effect as it dashes around the busy streets of Rome.

Project overview cont.



Examples of the gift packaging, each containing a different selection of products from the Babington's range.

6. Outline of design solution - cont.

At the same time Babington's has a heritage going back to the 19th century. This heritage needed to be promoted but be made relevant to today.

There are two distinct market segments for Babington's. There are the well-off Romans who admire style and a unique atmosphere and the tourists who flood into this area of Rome by the Spanish steps. The redesign and promotional campaign had to appeal to both audiences.

We had to take account in our design solution of the very limited budget and so could not employ any specialist illustrators or photography.

We wanted to capture the uniqueness of an English tea room in Rome by communicating the idea of English quirkiness. It was the idea that everything in England centred around tea. We were fortunate in finding a number of Victorian etchings which we could use on a royalty free basis. These etchings featured strange and wonderfully eccentric Victorian inventions. We customised these by adding articles associated with tea drinking. We then brought these etchings up to date and made them stylish through the use of vibrant modern colours.

Project overview cont.

6. Outline of design solution - cont.

These designs were applied to menus, a range of teas, dishes, bags, gift boxes and other merchandise. These items certainly appealed to the style conscious Romans. Leaflets and press adverts were designed using these designs to inform tourists that Babingtons was an essential stop on the tourist circuit.

We suggested a small fleet of 3 wheeler moped vans be purchased which would feature the different Victorian etchings. So far only one has been purchased and now turns heads round when delivering orders, publicising the tea rooms in a uniquely Roman way. The van is all set to become a little Roman icon in the same way that the tea rooms have become.

The shop too has gone through a total new re-design and refurbishment to do justice to the new range of products.



Babington's range of jams features an interpretation of the original stone sign, still to be found on the exterior of the building.



A teapot from the Babingtons range of ceramics

Summary of results

Babingtons English Tea Rooms are unique in Rome and so any increase in market share is not relevant here. The business is very reliant on tourism for much of the income so one of the biggest factors in their sales pattern is the overall strength of the tourist market in Rome and indeed in Italy. As such tourist numbers and overall spending has been under pressure in Italy for the last two years due to the recession.

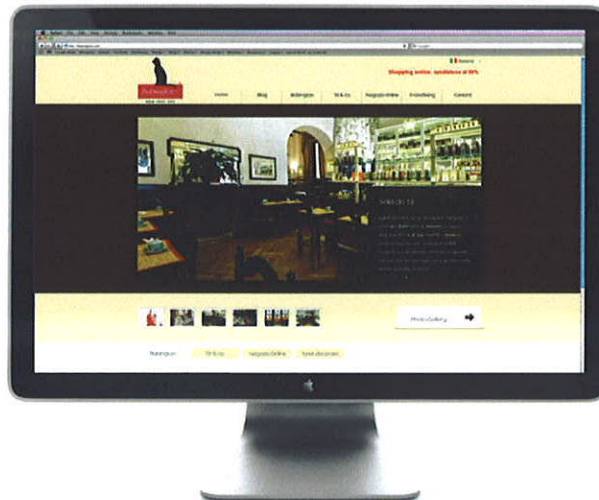
Notwithstanding the difficult market conditions, sales in all parts of the Babingtons business increased in 2010 as a result of the work undertaken by Minale Tattersfield.

For 2010, total footfall across the premises increased by 40% (source: client) as a result of the leaflets and press advertising carried out using the Minale Tattersfield promotional material. In 2010 in the restaurant and tea rooms there was an increase of 40% (source: client) in sales value, a 60% increase in sales in the shop and a 10% (source: client) increase in online merchandise sales.

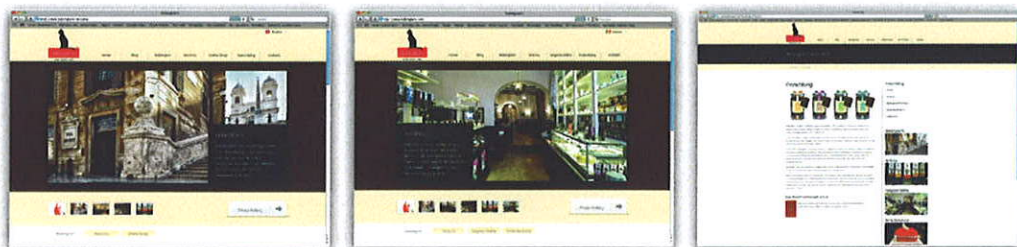
A PR campaign was mounted to announce the newly designed merchandise available in the shop and to promote the tea rooms as being the must-see destination on the tourist map and a place where heritage and modern design comes together with unique effect. The PR campaign resulted in an increase in coverage in the tourist and local media in Rome.

One of the corporate objectives has been to develop a franchise business operating in major cities. One agreement has been concluded so far, with a Babingtons English Tea Rooms opening in Tokyo later this year, other talks are in progress with a private business owner in Dubai.

Before the re-brand, service levels were slow and customers waited too long to be served. Now staff motivation has improved greatly and there is a marked improvement in service with customers being served in a timely manner.



Babington's internet presence takes the form of a fully comprehensive guide to the tea rooms, from its place in history, to present day online shopping facilities.



Other influencing factors

The uplift in footfall and sales has been helped by changing the main access door from a side street onto the main square of Piazza Di Spagna. This has meant that the tourists who throng into this area can easily find their way into the shop and the tea rooms.



Babington's range of carrier bags, utilising the new colour palette and each one featuring its own relevant colour based saying.

A word from our client

Our client Babingtons is delighted with the work done by Minale Tattersfield and their part in creating the upsurge in interest in the Tea Rooms and its merchandising.

“Babingtons is a small family business in a wonderful location in the heart of Rome that over the years has become a famous meeting place for locals and visitors alike. We needed to find a way to inject new life into the business to attract more Romans and tourists and to increase the amount each customer spent. We needed to find a way to do this with a very limited budget.

Fortunately for us, Minale Tattersfield came up with a winning strategy that was within budget and allowed us to take on a new engaging personality that has captured the hearts and minds of our customers. Through very clever use of found illustrations to which they added a witty twist, Babingtons Tea Rooms have been transformed into a fascinating and lively destination not just for a cup of tea or a stylish gift but for a really unique experience.

We are very grateful to the Minale Tattersfield team for helping us to transform the business and setting us on a path for growth.”

Rory Bruce

Managing Director
Babingtons English Tea Rooms

