

Nizuc

Nizuc reflects the ancient Mayan belief that in the beginning, nothing existed but sea and sky. Nizuc is where the Mayan culture embraces the twenty-first century.

Nizuc is an ultra-luxury resort property located on Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula. Its world-class architecture, preservation of the wild, natural landscape, and level of service redefine luxury in a region filled with legends of Mayan civilization.

Goals

Envision a lifestyle brand.

Distinguish from other world-class luxury destinations.

Attract the world's best partners.

Establish a strong brand before opening.

The brand unified the team around one central vision.

Alan Becker

Visionary

Nizuc



Process and strategy: Soon after Alan Becker, Nizuc's developer, purchased the twenty-eight-acre estate of the former Mexican president, he began a search for a hotel operator. He interviewed a number of international upscale hotel management companies who were more interested in extending their brand equity than developing a vision for his site's unique attributes. "We wanted to be Mayan without being thematic," he says. Becker envisioned the architecture to reflect the culture and heritage of the Mayan civilization.

Becker brought in Carbone Smolan Agency (CSA) to create a unique brand platform to establish the core ideas from which all other decisions and partnerships would emanate. Becker and CSA collaborated over the next nine months to understand conceptually and visually what the soul of this new ultra-luxury destination would feel like and look like. The theme was "Mayan culture brought into the twenty-first century." This branding-first approach was considered a radical departure in the hotel industry.

Creative solution: The luxury destination exists on a peninsula, Punta Nizuc, which inspired the name. CSA began the creative process by designing a modern Mayan glyph as the landmark. The iconic, strong form lent itself to

creating beautiful patterns and facilitated the design of objects of desire, from amulets to soaps and cookies. The second phase of the process was about creating images that captured the soul and experience of a destination that was not yet built. Led by design director Carla Miller, the creative team packed twenty-two boxes of props and flew down to Mexico with a staff of designers, stylists, models, and photographer Quentin Bacon. Seven eighteen-hour days created a series of images that celebrated beauty, magic, design, high-end luxury, and otherworldliness. These images were then designed into a brand book that illuminated the essence of the destination.

Results: The Nizuc branding process channeled the vision of the developer, who brought in architect Jean-Michel Gathy and Indonesian interior designer Jaya Ibrahim. Amid the destruction of the financial markets, Becker's vision was put on hold. But Nizuc lived. Five years later, a new developer, Las Brisas Hotels, heard the story of Nizuc and bought the land and the brand. Establishing a brand platform and a branding-first approach worked from an investment perspective as well as a marketing perspective.

Design was at the heart of our process. We needed to create a place before there was a place. We needed to capture the experience of Nizuc.

Leslie Smolan
Cofounder and
Director of Creative Strategy
Carbone Smolan Agency

