Out the box thinking’ - a much-used phrase that’s become somewhat passé as marketers continually push the boundaries of what’s been done before. However, the entertainment philosophy adopted within the Tsogo Sun Gaming Group, is nothing less than revolutionary, and is undoubtedly creating local and, even, international benchmarks. When you think ‘Montecasino’, big brands like Celine Dion, Boktown, Disney’s The Lion King, SA Tennis Open, Andrew Lloyd Webber’s Cats, the SA Tattoo, Mamma Mia!, Grease, Riverdance, JC Superstar and Phantom of the Opera come to mind. In the 10 years since opening its doors, Montecasino has grown to become Gauteng’s premier entertainment destination. While this growth and enviable brand positioning can undoubtedly be attributed in part to the world-class facilities that have been developed at Montecasino – specifically the Piazza, Outdoor Entertainment Area and Teatro – the success of Montecasino as a leisure destination is also due to the strategy of ensuring the right mix of events and entertainment, marketing them strategically and appropriately, and adopting a business model based on partnerships with top local and international producers.

Comments Noéleen Bruton, Director of Marketing of Tsogo Sun Gaming, “When the East-end was developed we realised the power of our brand and, with the huge interest by event management companies, concert promoters and entertainment producers, we realised that we had the opportunity to make Montecasino the home of world-class entertainment in Gauteng. We wanted to create a win-win situation for the entertainment companies that brought their shows and events to our property. And so we set aside the conventional thinking of being a landlord, and approached Montecasino’s entertainment from the perspective of being a partner.

“The first part of ensuring the ideal entertainment offering is our strict selection process when securing events or productions for any of our venues. We are very specific in our selection of product for these three areas, be it for the Piazza, Outdoor Event Area or the Teatro, and look at the history and credibility of the producer or promoter, the product itself in the context of our target markets and the pricing of the product,” says Bruton. “In this way, we only showcase shows and events that are the right fit for the Montecasino brand. We embrace the brands of these shows wholeheartedly and utilise all the marketing resources at our disposal to work together with the producers to ensure their success. We expose the productions to our extensive and extremely powerful databases and property footfall; we leverage our media partnerships and incorporate the brands into every possible marketing medium, from menus to point-of-sale to our on-property network of screens, banners and posters,” she says. In some cases, this strategy of partnering with entertainment brands has extended even further. “We learnt a huge amount from Disney, with whom we worked on the marketing of The Lion King initially and then on Beauty and the Beast and High School Musical, all of which were staged in the first 18 months of the Teatro’s opening. We rapidly developed our knowledge of the marketing of theatre and events, applying this knowledge to the best possible advantage of Tsogo Sun Gaming, its properties and its entertainment partners”. This winning business model of partner as opposed to landlord has been adopted across Tsogo Sun Gaming’s existing seven properties, with the newly acquired properties adopting this approach in the near future.

BY VANESSA NAUDE