

New categories opening up for corporate sponsors

THINK “ENTERTAINMENT DESTINATIONS” and likely you’ll think of theme parks, maybe arenas and sports stadiums, perhaps even a concert hall or live theatre venue. It’s likely you won’t think of airports or shopping malls. It’s less likely that you will think of a hospital. But that may change.

Arenas and concert halls and shopping malls and hospitals are all places where people gather and linger. As such they are all destinations, says Judy Haber, Senior Partner at Performance Sponsorship Group, a company that specializes in securing naming rights. Get people to linger, and spend, and you have an opportunity to attract sponsorship.

Haber points to the United States, where naming rights have been sold in a number of “non-traditional” categories, and suggests this maybe an emerging trend that will soon cross the border. At the University of California at Los Angeles, children receive medical treatment at the Mattel Children’s Hospital. In the state of Rhode Island, Hasbro has purchased naming rights to the children’s hospital in Providence.

Haber does not yet count hospitals and shopping malls among her clients, but she suggests that may change soon.

“We are looking at it,” she says, “and they are looking at us.”

Non-traditional venues can offer foot trade and price to naming partners and corporate sponsors.

“Malls can deliver 22 million people,” says Haber. “That’s one mall. The Skydome will never see 22 million people in 10 years.”

As to price, Haber suggests that sports, the category leader, is in danger of choking on its own success. “Sports has outpriced itself,” suggests Haber, “and it’s also very crowded with so many sponsors.

The challenge to those other categories, says Haber, is to “package their assets like sports has

done so well. They have to make sure that visitors spend every dollar in their wallet with them, like sports has done for so long.”

Not-for-profits look at sponsorship as a way to survive. Mall developers are ‘looking at sponsorship as a way to enhance the experience for the visitor. Both are arriving at the same point from different directions.

Hospitals are no strangers to sponsorship, “but the really clever hospitals are going to get into sponsorships to enhance the experience for the visitor, the patient, the patient’s family,” says Haber. Hospitals should consider the development of zones aimed at specific demographics to enhance the “hospital experience.”

Commercial enterprises want the corporate sector to enhance their venues not just by investing money, but by creating “participatory engaging experiences” for visitors. “So it’s not just about a logo on the poster or a sign in the mall,” says Haber. In shopping malls, sponsored entertainment experiences - a hiking trail, a skateboarding park - can offer a corporate client a valuable opportunity to connect with its market 365 days a year.

At the end of the day,” says Haber, “it’s really about the same thing: giving more back to the patron and finding clever companies who want to participate and help.”

The Sponsorship Report is published for corporate sponsors, sponsored groups and intermediaries in sports, arts and entertainment, and causes.