

Role of Casinos in Tourism

Albino Roshan Thomson, Goa University

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Abstract:

Casino tourism is one of the recently emerging forms of tourism in many parts of the world. Casinos help in increasing visitations and increasing revenues to stakeholders including governments. The revenues help in destination development and standard and quality of life of residents. Casinos provide excitement, thrill and entertainment to tourists. Casino tourism is particularly suitable for destinations which are low on natural attractions. They also help in reviving destinations which are facing decline stage of life cycle. Casinos help promoting allied business and services like hotels and transport. Casinos can be considered playing an important role in destination development and marketing. This paper examines the role played by casinos in tourism and provides guidelines for effective strategies for implementation of casino tourism at destinations.

Keywords: Tourism, Casino, Leisure, Destination Marketing, Strategies

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's fast paced life more and more people are wanting to get out of the regular routine and escape to different places for pleasure, relaxation, recreation and even serenity and tranquil. Vacation is the most useful and practised method to recharge energy and creativity. It is a form of self-care activity. Vacation seems to have a very strong effect on health and well being. The need for vacation in the busy life has been emphasised by researchers who also established that vacation can be utilised for many meaningful activities (Buettner, Shattell, & Reber, 2011). It is impossible to over worked employees to find time to relax between their work schedules. This will affect their health and well being in the long run (Belkic et al. 2004; Ha'rma 2006). Recovery from this situation is important to improve health and well being and vacation is the best way to attain it. Previous research have established quite a few positive sides of vacation like higher life satisfaction (Lounsbury and Hoopes 1986), better health (Fritz and Sonnentag 2006), and lower levels of exhaustion (Ku'hnel and Sonnentag 2011; Westman and Eden 1997). This can also be supported with Self Determination Theory (Ryan and Deci 2000). The

positive experiences derived from vacation will broaden peoples thought process which in turn will result in improved creativity and productivity. The fulfilment of need for autonomy and relatedness during the vacation in the company of like minded people will also help in increasing well being and persisting in positive goal (De Bloom et al. 2010; De Bloom et al. in press; Ryan et al. 2010). These reasons clubbed with the increase in the spending capacity, most people have started to add tour or vacation to their budget. All these lead to an enormous increase in tourism. With the varied need of the tourist emerged various types of tourism over the years. The activities they prefer to engage in during vacation depend on a great extent on the personal characteristics of the vacationers. Individuals vary in behaviour and so there is varied ways people resort to relax too. While serenity and tranquillity are important to relax for some, others might look out for excitement and thrill to recharge themselves. To cater to these varied needs of the vacationers there has been a tremendous growth in the tourism industry. From the early religious tourism the industry has gone through changes like heritage tourism, wildlife tourism, eco tourism, adventure tourism and now the latest addition like

wellness tourism, food tourism, experiential tourism and gambling tourism. The financial rewards from casinos have been an attraction to governments, investors and other allied industries. Gambling industry help in local economic growth and help other allied business to develop to meet the demand of increasing tourists (Kang, Lee, Yoon, & Long, 2008). The gaming industry also provides direct and indirect employment to a huge number of people. Direct employees are those working in gambling venues dealing with gaming machines (Buultjens, 2006) whereas indirect employees are those working in restaurants, bars, cleaning staff, clerical staff, security staff etc, who support casino operations. Casino based increase in tourism and allied services increase job opportunities in different ways and helps in increasing per capita income of the residents. The tax revenue from casinos can be utilized for tourism promotion, developing educational facilities, health care and transport network which in turn will positively impact the society. Considering these benefits, the negative reservation about gambling industry has been sidelined and gambling has been promoted as a global entertainment in most parts of the world (Thomson and Mekoth, 2020). Gambling provides tourists with fun, excitement, thrill and a venue for socialising. Vacationers who seek thrill and immediate gratification find casinos as the best option and tend to visit gambling destinations. Gambling centres provide many other forms of entertainment as well as food and beverages too. People can engage in non gambling activities at the casinos like viewing shows, eating in restaurants etc (Walker et al., 2019). Another development in this area is destination casino resorts which have become iconic tourist attractions and provide a wide range of entertainment facilities to tourists like leisure gambling, shopping, musical theatre and live shows which stimulate their emotional experiences and lead to satisfaction (McCartney, 2017; Wu & Chen, 2015; Prayag, Hosany, & Odeh, 2013). Gambling is a major tourism development strategy (Kang et al., 2008). There are tourist destinations which are

known as world renowned gambling centres like Las Vegas, Macau, Genting Highlands and many more. The major attractions of all these destinations are the world class casinos. Many countries are adding gambling as a tourist attraction and trying to earn foreign revenue from the tourists through gambling. Although gambling has earned a positive status as a tourist attraction there has been only limited research on the role of casinos on tourism. This paper is an attempt to further explore the role of casinos in tourism, and to set a framework for promoting casino tourism.

Casinos and Tourism

Tourism as a whole is the world's largest and fastest growing industry in the past few decades. It plays a vital role in the economy as it supplements various other allied industries. The number of tourist arrival per year is also an indicator of a progressive economy. Government all across the globe spend huge amount of money for tourism promotion activities which enforces the importance of tourism to the economy. Both developed and developing countries take measures to attract tourist to various destinations and attractions across the country. All these are practised mainly because the revenue earned by tourism contributes to the overall development of the communities (Kalaiya and Kumar, 2015; Yu, Chancellor, and Cole, 2011). Attractions are a core component of tourism. Attractions include places, people, events and things that amuse tourists. Swarbrooke (2002) was the first scholar to categorise attractions from the tourists' point unlike the others who divided attractions based on their physical aspects. Destination managers attempt to attract maximum number of tourist to their countries. Tourism is a seasonal activity and destinations strive to attract tourists all round the year by adding various other attractions to the natural attractions (Connell, Page, & Meyer, 2015). Moreover various destination promotions are required to attract visitors once the destination reaches its maturity stage and lose its uniqueness, destination managers strive to provide the tourists

with various other attractions. Alternative attractions like major events and casinos play a vital role to fill this gap left by off season and depletion of natural attraction. There is close association between tourism and gambling. Gambling provides entertainment throughout the year. Destinations provide tourists with different forms of gambling, for eg: casinos are the top tourist attraction in Australia. Owing to the thrilling experience provided by casinos they have become an integral part of tourism all around the world. The top most casino destinations of the world are Macau and Las Vegas. Macau is known as the “Gambling capital of the world”. Gross annual income generated from casinos is almost 6 billion USD and 3 billion USD respectively. Not far behind these two are Monte Carlo, Atlantic City, Bahamas, Singapore City, Baden- Baden, London and so on. This shows the reach of casino. Various researchers like Nickerson (1995), Cho (2002), Back and Bowen (2009) have studied the relation between casinos and tourism. The relation between casinos and tourism was first defined in 1989 by Leiper. Casino tourism could be defined as a tour of the tourists inspired by their desire to entertain and gain experiences offered to casino visitors. The development of gaming industry can be attributed to the efforts to increase tourism by introducing a wide range of leisure and entertainment activities (Platz & Millar, 2001; Wong & Rosenbaum, 2012). In the same lines as the tourism industry casino industry too is growing at an outstanding rate and has been refined to offer world class gaming experience to the customers. The total revenue generated from casino industry globally amounts to around 200 billion. This has given a great boost to the tourism industry in the sense that destination managers need not worry about other forms of entertainment for tourist on vacation.

Casinos and Recreation

Casinos games are not only thrilling and enjoyable it is also very engaging. The most crucial role of casinos is as a major recreation provider in order to attract repeat customers and offer them world class

facilities which in turn will make them as loyal patrons. Gambling is holds a deviant leisure perspective (Hayward and Smith, 2017; Smith and Raymen, 2016). Previous researchers established entertainment and leisure as the major benefits of tourism (Walker, 2007). Gambling provides tourists very high quality recreation. Gambling is one of the most popular commercial recreation activities in the United States (Waller and Martin, 2017). Gambling houses or casinos as they are popularly known provide the customers with a variety of games to choose from like poker, blackjack, slot machines, roulette and so on. In poker the players bet that the value of their cards is higher than the rest of the players and the person with the highest hand wins at the end of the bet. Blackjack is an American variant of popular banking card game known as twenty one. It is a game of comparison between one or more players and a dealer; the players do not compete with each other instead they play against the dealer in turn. In slot machines players are expected to place bet on three or more spinning wheels by pulling a lever or pushing a button. Roulette is a French term for wheel. It's a very simple yet a quite fascinating casino game. Countless combinations are possible on roulette starting with a single number between zero and thirty six or a single colour between red or black and going forward with multiple times multiple numbers or betting on odd number, even numbers, numbers between one to eighteen, nineteen to thirty six, first twelve, second twelve, third twelve and so on. The tourist can engage in any form of gambling according to their interest and liking. Scholars have categorised gambling as a leisure activity which provides pleasure, enjoyment and amusement to the visitors (Rojek, 2000; Hing et al., 2012; McCown & Chamberlain, 2000). Burger, Dahlgren, & MacDonald (2006) established gambling as an activity which will help in forgetting one's trouble. Gambling also provides challenge, excitement and thrill. Sensation and adventure seeking tourists enjoy gambling due to the thrill and risk taking involved in gambling (Neighbors, Lostutter, Cronic, & Larimer, 2002; Griffiths & Delfabbro, 2001; Vong, 2007; Wu

& Tang, 2011). Casino gambling is a major substitute for adventure tourism. Thrill seeking tourists who are either physically changed or have grown old to participate in physically challenging activities like mountaineering, skiing, parasailing try to seek the thrill and excitement from gambling (Eadington, 2003). Tourists also engage in gambling for relaxation (Hsu et al., 2010). Gambling also helps business tourists who are looking for options to relax and unwind after a hectic day. This will help them to mitigate their stress and fatigue since gambling lightens their day with thrilling and exciting games. Previous researchers have indicated that the gambling helps to relax, release tension, escape stress and other troubles (Delfabbro, 2000; Mohammad & Som, 2010). Tourists gamble with a motive to relax and as a form of socialising. Gambling helps to fight loneliness and to enjoy socialising with friends and family and also in making new friendship with like minded people at the venues (Fang & Mowen, 2009; Hing et al., 2012; Breen, Hing, & Gordon, 2011). Gambling is considered as a pass time of the elite class. It is considered as a form of self worth (Back et al., 2011). Many a people gamble for the prestige associated with it. Prestige is a validation given by others which indicates how others consider an individual (Chantal, Vallerand, & Vallieres, 1995). Tourists tend to visit destinations which others appreciate in order to gain their approval (Kau & Lim, 2005; Monaghan & Derevensky, 2008). Considering all these motivational factors many a tourists and locals engage in gambling as a recreational activity.

Casino and Allied Services

Gambling tourism is a combination of gaming as well as travel. Though the main purpose of a casino tourist is gambling he will also use many other allied services. Casinos are linked with allied services like hotels, restaurants, airlines, rental cars, health care, and real estate and varied other personal services. Increase in casinos have impacted various allied areas differently (Hsu, 2000; Lee et al., 2010).

Gambling is gaining popularity in Asian market (The Standard, 2004a), where it is mandate to offer hotel and other entertainment services. Casino tourists travelling within the country or international contribute substantially to other sectors of tourism industry like, hotel industry. Gambling is a major tourist attraction in many parts of the world and provides significant source of development to various services associated with tourism (Israeli & Mehrez, 2000). In Asian context land casinos are always attached to a hotel and most patrons of the casinos use these hotels for own as well as accompanying persons accommodation. Hotels are known as “home away from home”. Accommodation in the tourism context means a temporary provision to stay while being away from own home. This in turn gives a boost to the hotel industry. Even casino tourists travelling to other continents too will help the hotel industry since they approach hotels for their accommodation during the visit. Other major sector which directly benefits through gambling tourism is food and beverage sector. In major gambling destinations mass tourism is promoted and this helps to double up the food and beverage sales in the gaming venue as well as in the locality. The airline industry too reaps the benefit of both domestic and international tourists travelling regularly to gambling destinations. Other allied sectors like private and public sector transport, tour operators and travel agents too benefit from casino tourism.

Casinos and Destination Marketing

Destination image is an integral part of traveller’s decision making process related to visit intention (Gallarza, Saura, & Garcia, 2002; Rezende-Parker, Morrison, & Ismail, 2003). Destination image on the social media is of crucial importance to destination marketing practitioners (Choi, Lehto and Morrison, 2007). Since the legalization of casinos has a massive positive impact on tourism, destination managers worldwide are using casinos as a major marketing factor for the tourism sector. The tourism industry and casino industry mutually complement

each other, and they are interdependent. The growth in one industry positively affects the other in return. Along with giving entertainment to tourist and keeping them engaged, casinos also help the tourism industry as an alternative source of income. In case of destinations where the natural resources are depleting and have nothing much to offer, attraction like casinos can be a major marketing strategy to promote tourism and earn maximum revenue. Gartner (1993) established that destinations could attract tourists with successful destination image strategy showcasing various facilities. Casino gambling could be promoted as a major entertainment in destination marketing. Casinos are a matter of novelty to many tourists as many parts of the world consider casinos as illegal or undesirable. The sheer fact that casinos are rare and novel adds immense value to tourists. Casinos are centres of attractions also due to the fact that tourists seeking luck expect to make a good fortune from their visits to casinos. Many of the casinos have regular customers who stake very high amounts in search of luck. The ambience and the entertainment provided by casinos are unique. The marketing significance of casinos for tourism is evident from the attraction it gives to visitors. Casinos are attractive to the extent they are often addictive. Modern tourist values thrilling experiences as opposed to learning. Customers who visit casinos are having a kind of self which is complete in the experience itself. The thrill of visiting casinos with friends and having entertainment and fun is unparalleled. Many small destinations which are not rich in natural resources or cultural heritage can bank on casinos as a sure way of tourism success.

Marketing Strategies

Casino industry has a direct impact on tourist arrivals. Government agencies and other stakeholders must chalk out plans to boost the industry considering the various benefits derived out of casino to tourism industry as well as overall economy. Following strategies will help improve the number of players.

1. Significant marketing effort is essential for the success of any business and it will be applicable to casinos too. Appropriate marketing techniques should be adopted. It is also very important to apply different strategies for different segments of players. Defining and incorporating proper marketing strategies at the government level will help promote casinos.
2. Sales policies also influence the casinos. Sales techniques to attract high quality foreign players must be in place to achieve maximum revenue. One of the ways to do this will be cooperating with specialised tour agencies and travel agents abroad.
3. Package deals between casinos, agencies, carriers, hotels and restaurants will help to promote casinos since the marketing effort put in will increase by multiple folds.
4. Support from government departments in various stages is a must for promoting casinos. Support from various government bodies like Ministry of Tourism, Tourism Department and National Tourism Organisation is important to help promote casinos.
5. Government can assist by reducing taxes related to casino in order to promote casino tourism and a reduction in entry fee will benefit in attracting more and more players.
6. Casino marketing needs to be envisaged at two levels. Favourable policies in terms of tax concessions, incentives, assistance for setting up and training can be implemented at government and destination managers at the macro level. Marketing and promotions at organisational levels can be implemented by individual casinos to attract high value players.
7. Casinos can adopt mass promotion and advertisement to attract tourists at large. While this is a high volume low value strategy targeted incentive based marketing

and promotions can be directed towards high value regular players.

8. To engage the players it is important to make those accompanying them comfortable. Various services like play area and babysitting for children, reading or activity areas for teenagers and other forms of recreation and entertainment for elderly non players from the group will go a long way in attracting tourists.

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