

Cornell Quarterly Article Aims to Boost Loyalty of Casino Slot Club Members

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Most casinos offer slot clubs with the idea of boosting customer loyalty, but too many customers are just in it for the deal. Ways to increase casino patrons' loyalty are examined in the featured article in the May 2008 issue of the Cornell Hospitality Quarterly.

The article, 'A Qualitative Analysis of Slot Clubs as Drivers of Casino Loyalty,' leads off a focus section on gaming. The featured article is available at no charge from Cornell's Center for Hospitality Research at <http://www.hotelschool.cornell.edu/research/chr/pubs/quarterly/featured/>. The full Quarterly is available by subscription from Sage Publishing (<http://www.sagepub.com/>).

Authors Flavia Hendler and Kathryn A. LaTour, both based at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, used an in-depth interview technique to examine customers' attitudes toward slot clubs. They found notable differences between how tourists and locals view the slot clubs. Tourists separated the slot club from the resort, for instance, but locals saw the two as a single entity.

Tourists saw the resort as upscale and luxurious, but viewed the slot club as impersonal—even though they appreciated the exclusivity of being club VIPs. The locals saw the club as their home away from home, where they are among friends. At the same time, locals were canny regarding the clubs' potential rewards, especially as compared to those of other casinos. The locals thought of their club membership and play as a form of investment.

Based on the information from Hendler and LaTour's investigation, the casino's managers took steps to boost the loyalty of these diverse groups, both of which are important to the casino's revenues. One step was to improve the club's flexibility, so that members can determine how and when their rewards will be granted. The change makes it easier for the locals to claim their 'investment.' At the same time, the casino expanded the number of employees who can authorize rewards and upgrades, thus making the club more hospitable to tourists.

Hendler and LaTour note that their in-depth interview methodology, known as the Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique, can be used to determine consumers' views in any industry. In addition to spoken words, participants are encouraged to bring in pictures or other images that represent the business in question. The resulting information is far richer and deeper than simple question-and-answer interviews, especially since many participants try to give the 'right' answers.

Other articles in the gaming focus section of the May 2008 Cornell Hospitality Quarterly analyze the unexpected recovery of Las Vegas after the 9/11 attacks, examine ways to use radio frequency identification tags to improve table game play, and explain the evolution of leadership in the Las Vegas casinos.

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