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# Evaluating the Impact of a Smoking Ban in Las Vegas Casino Resorts

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Evaluating the Impact of a Smoking Ban in Las Vegas Casino Resorts

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A professional paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Master of Science – Hotel Administration

William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration

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### Abstract

Worldwide, the smoking population decreases, leaving hospitality venues to decide how a change in policy affects their revenues. In spite of the ban, bars, pubs, and restaurants in countries with a smoking ban report a consistent level of revenue. Within the United States, there are varying degrees of a smoking ban, with minimal effect on revenue. In Nevada, the Nevada Clean Indoor Air Act's commencement coincided with the Great Recession, skewing hospitality revenue numbers as tourism dwindled. Behaviorally, nonsmokers are more likely to avoid areas with smoke, whereas smokers are not as affected by nonsmoking areas. Casinos in Las Vegas have been operating with smoker comforts in mind, whereas majority of their patrons are nonsmokers. A discussion of compromises to cater more towards nonsmoking guests leads to a method for casinos for implementation. Without a clear and definite change in policy or a casino resort apply a self-imposed ban, smoking is still permitted in the resort.

# EFFECT OF SMOKING BAN IN LAS VEGAS

## EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF A SMOKING BAN IN LAS VEGAS CASINO RESORTS

### **Chapter One**

#### **Introduction**

Las Vegas is synonymous with vices and guilty pleasures. Among these vices and pleasures is tobacco consumption. In Las Vegas, smoking is only allowed in designated areas, such as bars, lounges, and the casino floor. The effects of the smoke, however, have an impact throughout the resort. Restaurants, lobbies, and public hallways are susceptible to the odor and harmful side effects of secondhand smoke, despite mandatory filtration systems. A nonsmoker is required to inhale cigarette or e-cigarette smoke whenever patronizing the casino floor, creating a potentially unhealthy and uncomfortable experience.

Nonsmoking guests can be deterred from entering a smoky atmosphere for a multitude of reasons, and so the business is losing a potential source of income. A smoker can also be a revenue source, but may also be convinced to satisfy their addiction elsewhere than a common area. Las Vegas casinos have become the safe-house of indoor smoking despite both domestic and international legislation promoting clean indoor air.

#### **Purpose**

By considering the effects of smoking bans of varying strictness both nationally and internationally, Nevada will eventually determine whether to include casinos in the existing requirements for indoor air. With an organized discussion of the consequences of bans, the paper will examine results in multiple countries and states, before delving into the efficiency of the Nevada Clean Indoor Air Act. Consumer behavior may also be influenced by external sources, such as the Great Recession, which will also be explored. Evaluating both negative and positive

effects of out-of-state bans will establish the groundwork for Nevada's transition. The paper will provide a series of transition suggestions for the changeover from smoking to nonsmoking.

### **Statement of Problem**

In Las Vegas, the nongaming departments, typically nonsmoking as well, are generating larger revenues than the gaming side. Consumer acceptance towards smoking is declining, given the increased education of the damage caused by tobacco products. Despite this trend, casinos are unwilling to embrace a smoke-free environment to avoid driving away business. Nongaming areas within a resort still have unacceptable air quality, which affects the consumer's perception of said resort. Research will show that casinos should give consideration to current consumer behavior and preferences before disregarding a smoking ban. As casino patrons are likely to be nonsmoking, their gaming environment should reflect the comforts of a nongaming environment.

### **Definitions**

*Secondhand smoke*: the carcinogens and particles that are sent into the air by burning tobacco product.

*Gaming Revenue*: all revenue generated by acts of gambling or placing bets.

*Nongaming Revenue*: all revenue generated by departments within a casino-resort that does not fall under Gaming Revenue.

*Paraphernalia*: ashtrays, lighters, matches, and other smoking related items that may encourage the act of smoking or present passive approval.

*Casino resorts*: hotels that offer entertainment by both gaming and nongaming activities.

## Chapter Two

### Introduction

The City of Sin- people arrive in Las Vegas for an spectrum of reasons. This location is unique because the assortments of guest demographics require continuous growth and modification from the resorts that welcome them. Majority of visitors come from within the United States, with only 16% of visitors being international (Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority, 2015). Casino resorts of Las Vegas each offer a distinctive experience for the guests roaming through their hallways, enticing them with long, decorated esplanades and appealing sounds from the gaming floor.

As the popularity of smoking decreases, businesses and governments began adapting to the new social norm. The dangers of secondhand smoke are recognized and studied, prompting governments to enforce new regulations. Internationally and domestically, various forms of smoking bans have developed for workplaces and hospitality locations. Smoking cultures shifted patron behavior, which affects local businesses. Although most locations experienced minimal long-term effect, some were negatively affected.

In areas of hospitality, such as restaurants and bars, the consumer perception of smoking is vital to the decision to engage in the practice. Using the United States population as a guideline, smoking trends are changing towards health-conscious decisions and avoiding tobacco products. The success and failure of restaurant, bar, and pub smoking bans foreshadow the implications of a casino smoking ban.

Specific to Nevada, the Nevada Clean Indoor Air Act was developed to increase the quality of air with several exceptions. The success and failures of the Nevada Clean Indoor Air

Act must also be compared with The Great Recession, which had a significant impact on the economy. Both influenced the reported revenues and patronage of local businesses.

### **Las Vegas Casino Resort Visitors**

Casino gaming is a founding pillar of the Las Vegas tourism economy, and the city has since grown into the entertainment capital of the world. The Nevada Gaming Control Board defines gaming as “any game played with cards, dice, equipment or any mechanical, electromechanical, or electronic device or machine for money, property, checks, credit, or any representative of value...” (NRS 463.0152). The essentials in a casino are the table games, slot machines, or race/sports betting. Although gaming is a primary reason for visiting Las Vegas, the nongaming features are becoming increasingly attractive. Nongaming activities including shows, restaurants, nightclubs, concerts, spas, etc. are continuing to grow in popularity (Ro, 2013).

With so much to offer in the city and surrounding areas, 47% of visitors named pleasure or vacation as their primary reason to visit (Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority, 2015). These tourists are entitled to imbibe in the vices that can be offered in an environment unlike any other. Although smoking is one of the habits that accompany gaming, people do not go to the casino for the sole reason of smoking a cigarette.

Additionally, there is an adjacent benefit to a smoking ban that contributes to the overall health of occasional smokers. Occasional smokers identify themselves as someone who does not have a daily habit, but imbibes socially. Since this population does not identify themselves as a habitual smoker, they would have less of an opportunity to smoke and therefore make smoking areas even less of an issue. By offering fewer opportunities to smoke, the chances of someone becoming addicted dwindle (Eriksen & Cerak 2008).



Over the past few decades, states besides Nevada have realized the incredible impact of commercial gaming on the local economy. To name a few benefits in addition to the gaming taxes, casinos offer jobs, communities, and the expansion of city infrastructure (Bradley & Becker, 2011). Las Vegas faces steep competition as other states incorporate gaming into their list of activities. Bradley and Becker (2011) found previous studies had shown that people who spend money gambling are more likely to smoke; these same studies find that a smoky atmosphere negatively affects the decision of a nonsmoker to game more so than the decision of a smoker in a non-smoking atmosphere.

### **Secondhand Smoke**

Secondhand smoke is a result of a smoker's exhalation of a tobacco product, and carries at least 50 carcinogenic toxins and 250 known chemicals (Cochran, Henriques, York, & Lee, 2012). In 2006, the Surgeon General's Report reestablished the dangers of passive smoking. Besides general discomfort, the report revisited the evidence showing a causal relationship between secondhand smoke and heart disease, various lung infections, pneumonia, and cancer (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2006). Despite a resort's effort to create nonsmoking areas and restrict active smoking, there is no way to completely eliminate smoke exposure without completely removing smoke from the casino. Fu et al. (2015) found that secondhand smoke still exists in designated nonsmoking indoor areas depending on the quantity of smokers immediately at the outside entrance.

### **Smoking Bans Internationally**

The start of a smoke-free hospitality environment is already reality in countries such as Australia, Ireland, and Germany. Originally, there was concern that a smoking ban would

negatively affect bars, taverns, and restaurants. Consumer behavior could possibly shift so that people would not be going out as much, and therefore affect revenues.

Leading the international front was the Irish; on March 29, 2004, the Republic of Ireland banned smoking from all workplaces. Norway, New Zealand, and Uganda followed suit that same year, to varying degrees of success (Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights, 2015). Smoking is more common in these countries, and so the ban affected a greater percentage of the population than it would in the United States. For the Irish health, there has been an 83% reduction in air pollution and an 80% decrease in airborne carcinogens (Barth 2014). Although consumers declare that the pubs seem cleaner than before, some businesses found it difficult to rebound from the ban.

Germany, for example, is traditionally a country where the smoking population is relatively high. In 2008, Germany passed a ban on smoking in public places. Out of concern for their businesses, bar owners were irate at the thought of legislation going forth that would ban smoking. Although some people adjusted their habits, it was the smoking habit that changed and not the socializing portion (Anger, Kvasnicka, & Siedler, 2011). People either smoked fewer cigarettes or generally smoked less, which leads to the overall health of the country. As the smoking regulation was accepted as a social norm, customers continued to frequent their bars. A smoking ban may affect changes on an individual basis regarding everyday life, but the general finding was no reduction in the population's patronage in bars or restaurants.

Australian bans are determined at the state level to varying degrees of indoor smoking bans and outdoor regulations. Similarly to the effects in other countries, the Australian population originally had a difficult time embracing the law, which has since become the accepted norm (Boes, Marti, & Maclean, 2015). As have the other countries, Australia has found

that the slight decrease in patronage from existing smokers has been compensated by an increase in nonsmokers. If smoking is not permitted in many public areas, it will shift the social norm of smoking indoors to be the norm of smoking outdoors (Philpot, et al., 1999).

Although China's strict anti-graft laws have already cost casinos \$113 billion, the 2014 smoking ban in Macau is expected to continue sending gamblers elsewhere (Lee 2015). Overall, Macau has experienced a 2.6% drop in gaming. A major concern is the proximity of other casinos or gambling parlors in countries that do not have the same smoking restrictions, and the elasticity of patrons to spend their money elsewhere.

The federal law against smoking in Switzerland was passed in 2010. Similar to the law in Nevada, smaller bars were permitted to allow smoking inside the establishment. The condition allowing them to keep smoking indoors was that there is a ventilation system working to filter the air (Boes, Marti, & Maclean, 2015). Although this exception developed to keep small bars and taverns from going out of business, evidence has already proven that the ventilation does not completely clear the air nor protects those inhaling its emissions. While approximately 25% of Swiss adults smoke, Boes et al. (2015) found no evidence of a negative of a smoking ban's impact on patronage.

### **Smoking Habits across the United States**

The Surgeon General's Report of 2006 reiterated that secondhand smoke is toxic and harmful to health, yet there are still municipalities and states that have not restricted smoking in public areas. Thirty-six states and five U.S. Territories currently have laws in effect for a 100% smoke-free non-hospitality workplace (Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights, 2015). There is a clear public acknowledgement of the dangers of smoking and the acceptance of the bans in the

United States. On average, less than 18% of American adults smoke, or approximately one in five do.

Guests are more likely to choose a restaurant that has a smoke-free indoor atmosphere (Roseman, 2008). As a smoke-permitting zone, casinos alienate nonsmokers who are more likely to view the smoke as a nuisance. Smokers, on the other hand, are less likely to see a smoking ban as a barrier to their decision of where to go. Casinos also assume that smokers are inelastic regarding how they will spend, and will not adjust their behaviors. The businesses put more weight on this opinion rather than recognizing the nonsmokers who are not spending because they do not want to deal with the effects of secondhand smoke.

There has yet to be significant research establishing a negative economic impact on venues of hospitality (Roseman, 2008). Although there are certainly exceptions to the rule, establishments with enforced smoke-free legislation are not generally suffering from direct economic loss. Those venues that have withstood a negative backlash have generally been able to recuperate their loss after time has passed.

### **Smoking Bans in the United States**

A smoking ban in the United States invokes mixed feelings for business decision makers. Although research indicates an acceptance of the ban without dramatically affecting the smoking patrons, there is still a correlation between gamblers and smokers.

In 2002, Delaware became one of the first states to enforce a smoking ban that included casinos/racinos. It experienced a slight decline in gaming revenues, dropping 13% in gaming revenue (Bradley & Becker, 2011). Interviewed managers reported that although revenue declined, operational costs decreased as well, such as ventilation maintenance and cleaning.

Illinois river boats originally held some hesitation and frustration due to the smoking prohibition in 2008. Revenue dropped from \$1.98 billion in the fiscal year 2008 to \$1.37 billion in fiscal year 2011. This -30.8% decrease in gaming revenues seemed to prove the case of those opposing the smoking ban. The Illinois Gaming Board attributed the decline not only to the smoking ban, but the general downturn in the economy (Barrow & Borges, 2014).

Similarly, the success of Colorado's smoking ban was measured by the decline in gross gaming revenues. Revenues plunged from \$816 million in 2008 to \$716 million in 2009; Colorado's revenue increased to \$766 million in 2014, indicating some responsibility to the economic recession. The two reasons are not mutually exclusive, and therefore would be taken into consideration regarding any sharp decline in the aftermath of a major legislation.

The implementation of the smoking ban in Boston, Massachusetts focused on the effect it would have on their bars. Boston did not see any major changes in patronage to their bars and the smokers did not change their patterns of going out (Biener, Garrett, Skeer, Siegel, & Connolly, 2007). During this time, bars were compliant with their enforcement of the law. Once the smoking ban in New York City was enforced, research found that locals eat out six times more often due to the city's smoke-free ordinance (Kooreman, Judson-Patrick, & Wright, 2009). If smoking was permitted, 58% of people would go out less to avoid the secondhand smoke. New York City has a high tourism industry as well, paralleling Las Vegas.

There are certain areas and states that are more likely to harbor smoke allowance policies than others. Kentucky residents have a strong relationship with tobacco, as agriculture is a foundation to the Kentucky economy (Barrow & Borges 2014). Approximately one in four Kentucky adults considered an active smoker, compared to one in five adults for the United States population (Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights, 2015). As in Las Vegas, smokers are

more accepted and permissible in public areas. Still, the proportion of nonsmokers outweighed that of smokers. Smokers in Kentucky were less likely to go out with a smoking ban, however, nonsmokers and former smokers would be more likely to be out more often (Roseman, 2008). Those who do not smoke would likely compensate for any lost business from those who do smoke.

In areas that are generally not as tobacco-centered, smoking bans have not had a significant effect on restaurant revenues. Flagstaff, Arizona is primarily a college town, and their students are less likely to be dramatically addicted to nicotine (Menke, 2009). In this city, partially due to their typical clientele, the smoking ban did not lead to a short term change in bar patronage.

California's 1995 indoor smoking ban had a negative but temporary impact on alcohol-serving restaurants. Restaurants experienced an immediate backlash; however, the economy recovered from their slouch and has not seen further issues specifically regarding the smoking ban (Stolzenberg & D'Alessio, 2007). The causal relationship between the smoking ban and restaurant revenues can account for the sudden dip in income. Smokers did not want to leave home and patronize places that were subject to the prohibition, specifically bars and taverns. As people got accustomed to the smoking ban, and learned how to adjust their lives to accommodate the habit, revenues stabilized and returned to their pre-ban numbers.

California currently has a smoke-free policy for indoor areas with the exception of tribal casinos, which remain immune to the state's control over indoor smoking. Despite patrons' expressed interest in a tobacco prohibition in the casino, tribal casinos continue the practice of letting guests smoke. Timberlake, Wu, and Al-Delaimy (2012) found that majority of the guests moved around the casino in order to avoid secondhand smoke. The tribal casinos are a remnant

of previous smoking days, where casino patrons can enjoy their tobacco products freely throughout the building.

### **Perception of Smoking**

Separating smoking and nonsmoking sections is no longer acceptable as a form of secondhand smoke prevention. As warned by the Surgeon General, the only way to completely avoid secondhand smoke is to eliminate smoking from indoor areas (Claycomb & Headley, 2013). Guests would be willing to continue to support restaurants and bars that ban smoking, and will likely increase their visits despite a smoking prohibition. A high quantity of nonsmokers would be more likely to spend time in the casino and its amenities rather than seeking an escape from the smoke. One in five guests is a smoker, and by catering to the minority's desires, businesses placed a higher value on the smokers' value.

Nonsmokers and former smokers regard secondhand smoke as a problem and are more likely to base their decisions on air quality than smokers (Roseman, 2008). Customers create opinions based on all factors of their environment, and unpleasant smells or soiled air contribute to a negative opinion. Though hotels use air scents through the vents to mask the smoke, an odor still lingers through the disguise. A company seeking to take full advantage of potential revenue should cater to their customers' demands; if majority do not smoke, this should be reflected on the casino floor (Thalheimer & Ali, 2008). Although there are other parts of the casino that may not permit smoking, secondhand smoke is not being adequately ventilated.

Worldwide, indoor smoking bans are going into effect without a negative impact on the economy. Although Las Vegas casinos seem to be the last of a dying refuge for smokers, the general shift is that more people prefer not to smoke, whether passively or actively. The gaming

industry claims that more than half of their gamblers are also active smokers, despite lack of scientific studies for back up (Pritsos, Pritsos, & Spears, 2008).

### **Restaurant Smoking Bans**

There are three main possible outcomes from a smoking ban. One common industry perspective would be that hospitality venues are negatively affected due to the loss of smoking patrons. The opposite opinion is that nonsmokers will frequent public areas more often and increase restaurant revenues. The final opinion states that a ban would have little effect on revenues, because smokers will continue to visit smoke-free restaurants. Current studies may not accurately reflect the long term effect of smoking bans, given the recent history of their enactment.

During concept development, restaurateurs account for décor, lighting, sound, and comfort. Air quality and environmental stimulants should also be taken into consideration, as the venue's allure is greatly affected by smells. Generally, the overall appeal of the restaurant or resort improves dramatically when people are not breathing in musty air from residual tobacco or ashes (Morrison, 1993). As the connotation exists between stale air and a dirty resort, businesses are inclined to keep their air fresh.

Restaurants that do not allow smoking indoors enjoy a substantial cost reduction. There is a significant difference in cleaning costs, fire risk, and damage to company property (Morrison, 1993). Restaurants and resorts have a purpose to not only create an enjoyable environment for their guests, but to also generate a profit. Businesses must strike a balance between smoking consumers and nonsmoking consumers to create equally comfortable environments without ostracizing the other (Hyland, Puli, Cummings, & Sciandra, 2003). Air



quality in the indoor environment is just as important as the lighting or sound, and is meticulously considered.

### **Nevada Clean Indoor Air Act**

In November 2006, a majority of Nevada residents voted in favor of an indoor clean air law; this law was enacted in January 2007 under the title “Nevada Clean Air Act.” The Nevada Clean Air Act prohibits smoking within indoor workplaces including: movie theaters, child care facilities, arcades, government buildings, grocery stores, and indoor areas of restaurants.

Excluded from the statute are enclosed areas of stand-alone bars which prohibit patrons under 21 years of age, strip clubs, brothels, tobacco retail stores, and casinos. In addition to barring the act of smoking, businesses are also to post signage and remove any paraphernalia such as ashtrays or matches (NRS 202.2483).

Immediately after the NCIAA went into effect, games and tables saw a plunge in the taxable gross revenue for the first quarter of 2007. Around the same time, the entire country experienced the Great Recession, which officially lasted between December 2007 and June 2009 (Mukalian, Lin, Cochran, Shen, & York, 2010). Because Las Vegas depends so heavily on gaming and tourism, this sudden drop was a shock to businesses. By the second quarter, gaming revenues had rebounded to their pre-ban expectations. Upon further analysis of the previous year, gaming revenues began dropping the second quarter of 2006, indicating that the fall was to be expected (Mukalian, Lin, Cochran, Shen, & York, 2010).

In the months after the NCIAA enforcement from 2007-2008, there were declines in revenue for food and beverage establishments that are not retail (Mukalian, Lin, Cochran, Shen, & York, 2010). This decline, however, was consistent with the economy across the country at the time. Just as in the gaming section, the NCIAA was not entirely responsible for the decline

of restaurant revenue. The Great Recession had a significant impact on the economy worldwide, regardless if there was a ban in place or not.

Secondhand smoke is still a significant issue in casino-resorts, as patrons are constantly exposed to fine particulate matter less than 2.5 mm ( $PM_{2.5}$ , found to be higher than outdoor circulated air. Outdoor levels average  $PM_{2.5}$  levels are  $5 \text{ mg/m}^3$ , and areas that are supposed to have “clean air” averaged  $31 \text{ mg/m}^3$  (Cochran, Henriques, York, & Lee, 2012). The ventilation system is inadequate to remove toxins and particles from the air, causing everyone in the building to be subjected to secondhand smoke. Both children and adults are exposed to the risk, regardless if they have been actively gaming or not. There is no safe environment for either party, as the air quality is not sufficiently separated between the zones, despite patrons complying with the regulations of the NCIAA (Cochran, Henriques, York, & Lee, 2012). Three years after the NCIAA was passed, particle matters were still found in “safe” areas surrounding the casino floor (York & Lee, 2010).

Particles can waft from the smoke-permitting casino floor into nonsmoking areas, such as restaurants, children’s areas, and movie theaters. Casino space designated for nonsmoking will still find the air unacceptable for a smoke-free zone (Repace, 2009). Even if smoking is quarantined to only certain areas, these will have a higher concentration of smoke, and therefore not safeguard against secondhand smoke. After an air quality assessment of three unnamed strip casinos, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) suggested that smoking be forbidden on Las Vegas casino floors in 2009 (Barrow & Borges, 2014). When the Nevada Clean Indoor Air Act passed in 2006, there was little improvement three years later.

Casino resorts are a microenvironment that doesn’t require a guest to leave property in order to have a complete experience. Most resorts are self-contained with entertainment,

relaxation, gaming, dining, and other activities. The high concentrations of smoke in this microenvironment offer no escape for guests (Cochran, Henriques, York, & Lee, 2012). The NCIAA has failed to keep children and nonsmokers safe when visiting casino resorts. However, as one of the few places where smoke is acceptable in an indoor public area, Las Vegas could be a risky place to enforce a full indoor smoking ban. Little research has been done to investigate the impact of a smoking ban on the guests and their behavior. Although Las Vegas continues to be heavily reliant on the gaming, the shift in patron smoking habits has not been fully addressed.

### **Chapter Three**

#### **Introduction**

As consumers trend towards being more health-conscious and aware of the environmental factors around them, Las Vegas casinos must determine whether to embrace the change or to remain a haven for smoking patrons. Smoking bans around the world have had different impacts, as well as the law in other states. Casino-resorts can take advantage of the impact of a smoking ban prior to a law requiring it, and provide the benefits to its guests. The guest is ultimately the one who keeps the casinos afloat; catering to their needs is paramount to an establishment's success.

#### **Results**

Summarizing the previous section's findings, smokers adapt to the ban in place, and continue to visit the establishments in question. Although there is may be a lull in business as guests adjust to the new rules, the overall effect is minimal. Other economic factors affect a patron's decisions more than the presence of a smoking ban, such as recession or seasonal business.

Nevada's current clean air laws are holding establishments to a minimum standard, and are not successful in creating a clean environment for their guests. Ventilation systems do not make the air completely safe, and smoke can easily drift from a smoking area to a nonsmoking area. Adults are not the only ones affected, as children may be temporarily present on the casino floor to reach their final destination.

Nonsmokers are more inconvenienced than smokers to be in a smoky atmosphere, and are more likely to avoid visiting a smoky venue. On the other hand, smoking patrons are likely to visit the establishment to be part of a social scene rather than avoid it; the discouragement of

tobacco consumption is not a factor in their decision to go out. Moving forward, businesses can be assured that the ratio of smoking gamblers to nonsmoking gamblers in Nevada are similar to the statistics of the United States. A casino smoking ban in Nevada would show similar effects to those smoking bans elsewhere in the country.

### **Recommendations**

The best recommendation for casinos is to eliminate indoor smoking completely to avoid any drifting or cross-contamination. Without a law to command compliance, a complete removal of the pastime is not likely. Once guests begin to make their preferences known, businesses will review and adjust their offerings.

As a compromise, there should still be an area where smokers can enjoy their tobacco products without significant impact on other guests. Smoking guests should not be shunned because of the habit they perpetuate. Areas that allow smoking should not only be on a separate ventilation system to avoid contamination, but every effort should be made for this to be outdoors with small possibility for drifting.

First, the resort should evaluate the guest that stays on property in the guest rooms. By comparing the number of nonsmoking room requests to smoking room requests, the resort can establish what percentage of their guests prefer to be in a nonsmoking atmosphere. The ratio is a justification if most guests prefer to be in building with clean air, as opposed to filtered, perfumed air.

Bars, lounges, and nightclubs are already a popular gathering place for guests to enjoy themselves with a cigarette or cigar. Any bar or lounge that is connected to or serves as a waiting area a public space should be a nonsmoking area. Bars or lounges in the lobby or other public areas targeting nongaming guests would be in a prime location for accidental secondhand smoke

to drift into designated nonsmoking areas. The indulgent nightclub atmosphere should be evaluated on a case by case basis, as some are marketed towards being a haven for guilty pleasures. Nightclubs that continue to allow smoking should follow the original recommendation of having a separate ventilation system, or outdoor use only.

Indoor areas of restaurants are already required to be a nonsmoking area by the NCIAA, but outdoor areas of the restaurant are exempt. The outdoor areas connected to the restaurant can be designated as a nonsmoking area as well, to ensure a pleasant experience for all dining guests. Because the indoor and outdoor areas are part of a single venue, the policy should remain the same for consistency. A challenge for restaurants bordering the casino floor would be committing to the prevention of secondhand smoke from wafting in. For this issue to be irrelevant, casino floors would also need to be part of the transition to nonsmoking.

Finally, the casino itself can be smoke free. Guests playing at slot machines or table games are easily able to vacate the area if the air quality is not to their liking. If these guests choose not to breathe in secondhand smoke, they have the flexibility to avoid the smoke and the casino. The guests leaving are also taking their business in the many departments they would spend their money at the resort, such as retail and food and beverage. The casino floor should be inviting to all guests, and if majority are nonsmokers and choose not to negatively affect their health, the floor should reflect the guests' desires.

Exceptions can be made to suit a particular demographic, such as in the VIP area. This area should still be enclosed and separated from the main casino area with a separate ventilation system. To prevent the entire casino from being designated as VIP, a predetermined percentage should be reserved as such. Twenty percent is recommended to reflect the population's smoking to nonsmoking ratio.

Specialty areas such as a smoking area or cigar lounge should also be on a separate filtration system, to avoid circulating the particles emitted in the secondhand smoke. Outdoor areas should be clearly labeled as a smoking or nonsmoking area, to avoid unwilling guests from passing through a cloud of smoke. Without neglecting the needs of the smokers, resorts can make their casino floor more inviting to all guests. By enforcing these policies before being required by law, the first resorts to do so stand to gain a share of the nonsmoking market that is otherwise untapped.

### **Limitations**

Enacting a smoking ban in Las Vegas casinos would be difficult to endorse without confirming actual consumer reactions. Casinos rely on the consistency of a smoker's habit; by not requiring them to get up and leave their gaming area to satisfy their addiction, smokers are able to continue to game and provide revenue. Jeopardizing this practice will disturb expected revenues, and anticipating the effects of the disturbance is a gamble most businesses would not take.

Additionally, Las Vegas has a reputation of being a safe harbor for various vices, and a smoking ban can harm that reputation. Consumers will want to give the socially acceptable answer, and so the research can be tainted by the social desirability effect. Additionally, as a nonsmoker, the researchers must be consciously aware to not demonize tobacco products when conducting the research.

### **Conclusion**

Smoking in hospitality locations has undergone significant change in the past decade. More states and countries are requiring some kind of indoor smoking ban to be upheld. As more people embrace the social acceptance of a smoking ban, the venues have not seen a permanent

drop in the revenues. The Las Vegas casino resort is unique in that the casino floor is in such close proximity to other outlets. By creating an environment in which smoking is restricted and controlled, the resort can be more inclusive for the nonsmoking guests without victimizing smokers.



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