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Casino Capers!

by
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Those casinos keep popping up all over the country, and with them new sources of covers, at least for the time being. The spread of casinos in recent years to riverboats and Indian reservations has sent casino revenues soaring. From 1991 to 1995, casino revenues rose from \$8.9 billion to \$20.3 billion! And who's going to all these casinos? People in the North Central and the South regions of the country accounted for most visits to casinos in 1995, which was the latest census data available.

Competition is getting fierce! And the casinos are pulling out all the stops in keeping you there once you arrive. Casinos hire some of the smartest advertisers, marketers, mathematicians, and game designers to do the job....and matchbooks are just the tip of the iceberg.

Casino strategies run the gamut—from the obvious (liquor) to the subtle (maze-like floor plans that discourage wandering). Their ads play on our wildest dreams of easy wealth and assure us that, even if we don't win big, gambling is great fun. A powerful new tool in the effort to part us from our money is the riverboat. They're particularly effective because you're on board for a few hours with few distractions, and guess how you tend to spend your time!

An unwritten rule in Nevada and Atlantic City is never to put windows in a casino. That's so players can't be lured by the neon signs of other competitors. But, it's also so that customers will lose their sense of time...and how many clocks have you seen in casinos? The longer you play, the greater the house advantage. All games give the casino a mathematical edge, so the longer the player is at the table or in front of the machine, the greater the house's chance of winning. Casinos install cash machines and credit-card advance machines to let you play as long as your bank account will allow.

Casinos use tokens and chips instead of coins and bills to encourage the feeling that what you're losing is play money, and casino executives always refer to the process as "gaming" rather than "gambling."

Color schemes? Consultants have found that dark reds, blues, purple, and black attract slot players, and red is a favorite of casino designers because it helps keep people excited.



Rumor has it that casinos even pump oxygen into the play areas to keep energy levels high. That hasn't been proven, *but* some casinos *have* experimented with introducing pleasant smells into the gambling areas and found betting increased by 45%! How about "scratch-n-sniff" matchbooks?!

I *have* heard that the once flood of Casino matchcovers is dwindling considerably, with reports that some casinos have gone to generic matchbooks. But, having just returned from AMCAL 2010, I found *a lot* new Casino covers that were certainly new to me! Just take a look at these beauties!

