Caesars Entertainment Corp., the world's largest casino operator, said Friday that it reported a loss for its fourth quarter as gamblers kept a tight rein on their spending.But Caesars said Las Vegas is showing signs of stabilizing while Atlantic City still struggles.The privately-held casino and resort operator said it lost $196.7 million for the period ended Dec. 31. That compares with net income of $295.6 million a year earlier, including a substantial one-time benefit.

Caesars said its quarterly revenue rose 1 percent to $2.12 billion from $2.1 billion; its full-year revenue fell 1 percent.

Caesars CEO Gary Loveman said the company's results since the recession started in 2008 show customers still want to visit U.S. casinos, but they can't spend as much as they once did because they have less cash.

"We monitor this person by person, and we observed our customers continuing to visit us with very similar frequency to the buoyant period up to late 2008, yet their spend per visit fell off rather substantially," Loveman said on a conference call. "They just couldn't reward us in the same way as they did when their own economics were better."

Loveman said the company is starting to see gambling go up again, particularly in Las Vegas, however.

Analyst Andrew Zarnett of Deutsche Bank said the results largely met his expectations.

"Caesars experienced stabilization across many of their markets, except for Atlantic City, which continues to remain challenged due to competitive neighboring properties and the broader economy," Zarnett told investors.

Caesars recorded $49 million in impairment charges, compared with $12.3 million in 2009's fourth quarter. Most of the charges, $38 million, reflect the declining value of intangible assets in Illinois and Indiana. The company also recorded a one-time gain of $66.9 million for extinguishing debt early.

The company said buying the Planet Hollywood casino-resort in Las Vegas in February 2010 boosted its net income, but lower consumer spending overall hurt it. Caesars' other properties include the Flamingo, Bally's and Caesars Palace.

CFO Jonathan Halkyard said customers using the company's loyalty programs made 5 percent fewer visits during the fourth quarter, compared with a year earlier, but they spent 1 percent more per trip.

The company's Las Vegas revenue rose 11.9 percent for the quarter, with hotel occupancy staying above 90 percent.

In Atlantic City, though, Caesars revenue fell 10.6 percent as casino visitors spent less per trip.

Caesars, known as Harrah's Entertainment until a name change in November, withdrew plans for an initial public offering that month when it couldn't agree with potential investors on an opening share price.

Loveman said the company's balance sheet is healthy enough that it can go on without the offering, but it will eventually make sense to raise more cash.

"I think we'll look for conditions and markets that would indicate the equity will be well received and well valued," Loveman said. "I would say there are many such indicators right now."

The company gave a 15.7 percent share of its common stock to affiliates of Apollo Management VI, TPG Capital and Paulson&Co. for relief of $1.1 billion in debt in November.

Loveman said in a statement that the company began streamlining its operations during the fourth quarter, and he is confident Caesars will end 2011 "an even leaner, more efficient and responsive organization."

Caesars said it had $987 million in cash as of Dec. 31 and $18.8 billion in long-term debt.

For the full year, Caesars lost $831.1 million, compared with net income of $827.6 million in 2009.

2009's results, for both the fourth quarter and the full year, included large one-time gains for extinguishing debt. The figure was $686 million for 2009's fourth quarter and $4.97 billion for the year.

Annual revenue dropped 1 percent to $8.82 billion from $8.91 billion.

Caesars reports its financial results because it has a significant amount of publicly traded debt.

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AP Retail Writer Michelle Chapman in New York contributed to this report.

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