

Some Las Vegas casinos allowing photos on casino floor

Written by Administrator

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It's getting much more difficult to make sure what happens in Las Vegas stays in Las Vegas.

A growing number of properties across the valley have grown lax on their rules against photography on the casino floor. Some — like The Strat and Four Queens — promote selfies and photos taken by guests. According to casino operators, this change is an easy way for the resorts to promote themselves on social media while enhancing the customer experience.

“People want to share their lives in a manner we didn’t have access to years prior,” said Sam Garritano, director of table games at Rampart Casino at the Resort at Summerlin, which changed its unwritten photo policy as social media grew more popular. “Most people are just wanting to capture themselves in a fun environment, and we can’t fault them for wanting to share.”

A shifting stigma

The no-photography rules go back to “the old days of Vegas,” back when visitors wanted their trip to “Sin City” to be kept under wraps, according to David Schwartz, an instructor in UNLV’s department of history.

Schwartz said a handful of people wanted to stay anonymous in Las Vegas — especially if they were spending the night gambling away with someone who wasn’t their spouse — and the casinos were willing to help.

Players “didn’t want private investigators taking pictures and blackmailing them,” he said. And casinos “really valued discretion and privacy for their customers.”

According to UNLV hospitality professor Anthony Lucas, others didn’t want friends and family to know they enjoyed the act of gambling itself.

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“There’s historically a stigma” against gambling, he said. “People didn’t always want to be seen in a casino, especially politicians.”

But Lucas said that stigma is shifting, and more people are comfortable with gambling today. Of the more than 42 million people who visited Las Vegas in 2018, nearly three-quarters said they gambled, according to a report from the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority.

And it’s getting much harder for casinos to restrict their guests’ urge to post vacation updates on social media. According to a June report from Pew Research, 81 percent of Americans carry a smartphone. It would take most people just seconds to post a fun Boomerang video of a blackjack game to Instagram.

“As social media has become more prominent in everything, Las Vegas has adjusted,” Schwartz said.

Properties leaning in

The Strat leaned into its policy change in August, when it unveiled the hashtag #STRATselfie on its table game felt. While the property encourages photography, floor supervisors are apt to remind guests that the property does not allow videos and livestreaming.

“We want our guests to have fun playing table games, and as part of that fun may be taking a photo to capture that moment, we welcome it,” said Brian Stanton, vice president of table games at The Strat. “We welcome selfies at all games on the casino floor.”

Amid the policy shift, casinos’ urge to protect their guests’ privacy lingers.

A representative of Sahara Las Vegas said the property restricts photos and videos “for the comfort, privacy and security” of its guests.

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A Caesars Entertainment Corp. representative said photos at its properties are allowed “under certain circumstances,” such as after a big slot machine win, but it recommends guests seek guidance from a nearby gaming team member before snapping a pic. The rules are in place “to protect the integrity of the game, the other players and our team members,” the representative said.

Boyd Gaming Corp. spokesman David Strow said the company allows customers to take photos of themselves, friends and family while on a property but does not permit photographs of other customers or team members who may not have consented.

While photos at table games are allowed, “this could be challenging in some situations, as the customer would have to be careful not to include anyone else in the photo,” including the dealer, Strow said. “Boyd team members will have a conversation with guests about guidelines if necessary, but generally speaking, most customers are completely understanding and cooperative.”

The shift to photo-friendly policies has been slow but steady in Las Vegas. Four Queens in downtown Las Vegas has been allowing photos for at least eight years. In 2007, the property put up a sign telling guests to “feel free” to take pictures, according to spokeswoman Michele Richardson. She said Binion’s, which is also owned by Terry Caudill, has the same photo policy.

Lucas said that while some properties might be resistant to change, he expects to see more properties follow the trend and shed the old photo policy.

“It’s going to fizzle out,” he said. “They may not formally remove the rule, but they won’t enforce it anymore.”

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