

A REVIEW ON ICONIC BRIDGE OVER SAN FRANCISCO BAY IN SAN FRANCISCO

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Abstract

In order to better understand the concept of experiential retailing, this paper will provide insight into the consumer experience of Borgata Hotel Casino and Spa located in Atlantic City, New Jersey. The research conducted will include visiting the retailer to absorb the full atmosphere and activities along with secondary sources that are focused on the Borgata's operations, consumers, services, and ambiance. The context of this study is centered on the types of consumption and retailing utilized by the business in order to attract and retain customers. Due to the nature of casinos, the Borgata's sensory consumption techniques will be explored. In regards to the types of retailing that exist within a casino environment, thematic will be the primary category present; however, entertainment retailing is also seen throughout the various activities offered within the Borgata. The following study explores how this specific retailer achieves the transformation from products and services to a total consumption experience.

Keywords: *experiential retailing / luxury / sensory consumption / Borgata*

Introduction

Raising the bar for Atlantic City casinos, Borgata strives to offer a more luxurious getaway than its nearby competitors. This hotel wants customers to not only gamble, but to stay overnight, dine, entertain, play, and shop. Entertainment and lifestyle based, Borgata incorporates aspects of

luxury and an affluent lifestyle into every moment. Sensory stimuli are plentiful as the casino Vegas-style theme is consistently present. With so many venues of entertainment available, one would need days to take advantage of all Borgata has to offer. Luxury lifestyle, thematic, and entertainment retailing along with sensory consumption are utilized in this multi-faceted retailer. Every inch of the actual building and services offered have been crafted to carefully send the message that this casino is to be distinguished from the others. Borgata aims to change conceptions of Atlantic City casinos and bring a bit of Las Vegas to the Jersey Shore.



Figure 1: Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa.
Photo courtesy of Arianna Riccioni. All rights reserved.

Borgata History

As the first new casino to be built in Atlantic City, NJ since 1990, Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa opened in July 2003 and has since served as the model for the new atmosphere of the city. This bronze-mirrored “lipstick tube” is a joint venture by Boyd Gaming and MGM Mirage (Capuzzo). Borgata, meaning “village” in Italian, was the first billion-dollar casino built in this Southern New Jersey town (Rivlin). This high-end hotel’s debut gave hope of a hint of Las Vegas appearing at the Jersey Shore and exposed other neighboring casinos to the potential for a new market. At a time when most frequenters of Atlantic City were either high rollers or retirees with fifty to one hundred dollars to spend, Borgata set out to draw in adults with disposable incomes along with a younger, trendier crowd. Its location away from the beach where most other hotels stand together with their prohibition of bussing in daily visitors adds to the exclusivity of the retailer.

In 2006, the luxury casino spent \$200 million dollars on an expansion including restaurants linked to chefs Wolfgang Puck

and Bobby Flay, the flashy night club, Mur.Mur, a poker room (the largest in Atlantic City), and a larger casino floor (Sloan). The second phase of Borgata’s \$600 million expansion launched in June 2008 in the form of a \$400 million boutique hotel named the Water Club. A niche in the market for a cosmopolitan experience is being filled through this addition. Many luxury amenities are offered in order to portray a sense of style and sophistication. The new signature hotel “represents Borgata’s continued progressive departure from the archetypal Atlantic City experience of the past” (“Boyd Gaming”).

Stay

From the moment one walks into the main entrance of Borgata they can sense the atmosphere of lavishness and excitement. Sensory consumption is in full force throughout the hotel and casino in order to give the customer a memorable, unique experience. Involvement of the senses can be achieved through sight, sound, feel, taste, and smell. Such stimulating cues create emotional reactions in consumers during interactions with their environment (Kim 159). Visually exciting are the glass sculptures in the lobby which are bold, grand and appear throughout the rest of the casino hanging from the ceiling. The sleek, clean, polished décor reeks of refinement and class; however, a couple of feet away are the many rows of slot machines with bright lights and ringing bells.



Figure 2: Borgata lobby with glass sculpture hanging from ceiling. Photo courtesy of Arianna Riccioni. All rights reserved.

When checking in, the people at the front desk are extremely accommodating and ask if they can make any reservations or do anything else for you. The customer service is excellent as employees go out of their way to make each person feel important. After checking in, one goes through a lounge area that can only be accessed with a room key, adding a feeling of exclusivity for those staying the night. The area before the elevators has many plush couches and chairs, artwork, and a bar where snacks can be purchased. This hotel makes great use of the elevators, a place where a consumer is typically unengaged, by placing televisions in each one showing a movie like Chicago or Casablanca. Providing stimulus for the customer, even during their elevator ride, shows entertainment retailing at its finest. The upper levels where the rooms are situated steer away from the casino theme and draw more upon the

lifestyle retailing they have established. More artwork and statues adorn the hallways and rooms are kept simplistic and tasteful. Checking out is even made easy through the option of doing so on the TV in one's room.

Dine

With several celebrity chefs' restaurants located inside Borgata, choosing one to dine in becomes a difficult task. Each eatery appears to be its own world away from the casino with styles that are unique according to the cuisine and type of restaurant. The setup of these places makes the customers feel as though they are engulfed by the atmosphere and thematic retailing is evident in how each restaurant is presented. Such retail strategies help the consumer to identify and develop a story line. This creates an escape from ordinary consumer experiences (Kim 252). An ethnic theme appears within many of the food service retailers at Borgata. Wolfgang Puck is a rustic-type setting where one can dine on the periphery that feels like a patio, or further inside. SeaBlue has blue glass surrounding the exterior and gives the effect of being behind a wall of water. Old Homestead, on the other hand, is more traditional looking and is pushed back so that one must walk down a hallway area to reach the host. Izakaya, a modern Japanese pub, has its own unique exterior with a patterned wall and entrance that protrudes out into the area around the casino.



Figure 3: Outside of Izakaya Restaurant with unique exterior that fits its theme.

Photo courtesy of Arianna Riccioni. All rights reserved.

When entering this restaurant, the customer walks over a glass bridge with stones underneath and is then greeted by a host. The interior is visually stimulating while reinforcing the Japanese theme. It is very luxurious with deep colors, plush red chairs, and large paintings and the music consists of simple, upbeat melodies without lyrics. As opposed to traditional-sounding Japanese songs that typically are heard in such places, contemporary, trendy beats fill the room in order to keep with the vibe of Borgata itself. The food and service is exceptional and customers are made to feel as though they are having an experience rather than just a meal. All of the fine dining establishments in the hotel provide an ambience that goes beyond the actual food. Even the casual dining places and cafeteria are detailed in their presentation and contain their own theme that is followed through one hundred percent.

Entertain

Some of the most well-known comedians and musicians have performed at Borgata's two entertainment venues, The Music Box

and Event Center. Both settings have a close, intimate feeling so that even the last seat in the house has a great view of the stage. The Music Box is where most of the regular comedy shows are held and there is no designated seating, while the Event Center is larger with big name musical acts and comedians taking the stage. The first half of the interior is general admission standing and the back contains raised seating. By attracting celebrity performers such as John Mayer, Jay Leno, Mary J Blige, and No Doubt, Borgata is able to offer top notch entertainment shows. This is yet another category of products offered that make this hotel and casino something more than just a place to gamble. Performances and venues like these heighten the entertainment retailing, lifestyle retailing, and sensory stimuli Borgata has to offer.

Play

Although this hotel prides itself on offering an entire luxury getaway experience with spa treatments, shopping, entertainment, and dining, the casino remains to be the central attraction and largest part of Borgata. The thematic side of the retailing revolves around the casino and even though the obvious gambling, card playing theme and symbols do not carry over into the rest of the hotel, the casino floor and poker room have a very distinct ambience. Sensory consumption is a large part of what occurs amidst the gambling action. The scent of cigarettes can be smelled in some of the areas where smoking is permitted. Sounds include the ringing and buzzing of the slot machines and, when on the perimeter of the casino floor, contemporary music from popular artists is heard. Sights are infinite and include other gamblers, flashing neon lights, rows of machines and tables, dealers, security guards, and cocktail waitresses in skimpy outfits. The sense of touch is achieved through the requirements to play the games. Whether it is the button on a slot

machine, cards as a table game, chips one is carrying around, or a drink one is handed, touch is being used. Even taste is stimulated by the offerings of free drinks while gambling. Simply being on the casino floor is a full sensory experience that all revolve around the general theme of the retailer.



Figure 4: Slot machines on Borgata casino floor.

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Shop

Borgata's many shops offer more ways to spend money. A variety of merchandise at all price points is offered throughout the stores all located in one section of the hotel off of the casino floor. A specific affluent lifestyle is further emphasized through the retail shops of the hotel. Since shopping has become a means of self expression for consumers, they look for products, brands, and stores that reflect the way they live or want to be perceived and lifestyle retailers can create strong images that appeal to consumers (Kim 273). The many high-end items for sale in Borgata represent a certain standard of living that appeals to those who stay at the hotel.

An upscale women's boutique called Carina features designer labels and Borgata

Jewels sells luxury jewelry. Borgata Collection offers Borgata label apparel and items adorned with the company's logo along with small gifts and snacks while one can buy electronics and home goods at Whim and souvenirs and gifts at Caio!. Signs of lifestyle retailing are rather straightforward and there is not much difference appearance-wise between these shops. Since they are all next to each other down one stretch of space, there is a strong coordination. All exteriors are clean, sleek, and polished looking. There is a space in the middle where flowers and plants are situated like a garden and a skylight shines down on this green area. Columns line the walls and entrances to the stores. Overall, a feeling of sophistication is given by the décor when walking by the shops.



Figure 5: Entrance to shops area.
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Conclusion

Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa has set the standard for the direction Atlantic City wants to follow. Other casinos have already started to compete by undergoing renovations and adding new stores and restaurants to attract a trendier, younger crowd. This experiential retailer utilizes

sensory consumption in addition to other types of retailing in order to create the type of experience they want to offer the consumer. Borgata has crafted their hotel so that it is appealing to their target customer. This brand is selling an affluent lifestyle and all around entertainment.

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