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DO SLOVENIAN DEALERS USE TECHNIQUES FOR INCREASING THEIR TIPS?

Andrej Raspor¹

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Abstract

In 1996 Michael Lynn introduced the idea that restaurant managers could increase tips for their waiters and thus increase turnover by training the waiters to engage tip-enhancing behaviours. Since then, the list of tip-enhancing behaviours has expanded. Therefore the potential to increase tips is more accessible. The purpose of this paper was to examine how Slovenian dealers use strategies to increase their tips.

We tested fourteen techniques to increase tips. The study was carried out among 473 gaming employees, 279 of which are dealers, in the Slovenian gaming industry, in order to find out how they use these techniques and which of them can bring about an increase in their tips.

The study showed that Slovenian dealers mostly do not use these techniques, and that the dealers who do use them tend to receive tips more often. The findings imply that managers and employees should be informed of these techniques in order to increase tips and their overall income. Practical implications are that we suggest that management considers these ideas for increasing flexibility and reducing the cost of work: (1) informing dealers on ways of increasing tips, (2) including the acquisition of this specific knowledge in their career plans, (3) carrying out a reform of the reward system which would include tips. Social implications will be shown in a higher gaming revenue. It is very likely – as shown in our research – that employees will receive higher wages as these will be topped up by tips. The state, in turn, will collect more taxes.

Keywords: waiters, dealers, tip, tipping behaviour, gaming industry.

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Introduction

Despite a big downturn in the global economy the Global Casino Gaming Industry has preserved a growing tendency. By now, most markets worldwide have managed to overcome the recession and are showing increasing numbers and fast-paced rising rates. It was expected that between 2010 and 2015 the overall industry would reach a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 9.2%, representing an upward of USD 117.6 billion in 2010 to USD 182.8 billion in 2015 (PwC Mexico, 2015). The gaming industry of today is facing increasingly complex challenges. Thirty years ago most of the revenue came from the gaming tables. Fifteen years ago it came from the slot machines. Now the trend is VLT and mobile gaming. The same thing happened with key casino destinations. Ten years ago the leading casino destination was Las Vegas. Nowadays it is Macau.

Since "quality service" is being taken more and more for granted by the guests, the skills of the employees must evolve to meet their demands. This is even more true considering the current decline in revenues at gaming tables. For this reason, managers as well as experts are trying to devise ways to persuade employees to enhance the quality of service, improve their motivation to work, as well as intensify the labour output. A large part of the revenue is represented by tips. Las Vegas gaming dealers' tips represent a whopping **71%** of their income (Lee, 2006). In Slovenian casinos they represent from 35% up to 50% (Raspor, 2010) of the total dealers' revenue. However, the tips have been decreasing recently. Due to the gaming industry's work intensity, the increase of salaries and consequently labour costs is undesirable. Since the amount of their wages is not directly related to the quality of their work, employees can gradually become dissatisfied. An innovative approach or a comprehensive reform of reward systems is thus needed to increase the motivation of employees without increasing labour costs. In our opinion, an increase of the share of tips in the income of employees is a viable method which could be implemented through training employees in techniques for increasing tips.

Methods for increasing service quality are implemented differently from country to country. Consumers around the world routinely leave voluntary sums of money (tips) for workers in the service industry who have served them (Lynn, 2009). Paul (2001) claims that after completing their meals, 98% of Americans leave a voluntary sum of money (or tip) for the servers who waited on them. Due to the liberal ways of collecting and sharing tips and the widespread presence of the practice among various groups of employees the theme proved interesting for researchers. They are mainly focusing on questions of the appropriate

sum of the tip in various settings, how tipping affects the quality of service and the mechanisms waiters use to increase their tip-related income (Lynn, 2005).

By and large, research on casino tipping has not yet been carried out. One of the main questions is how widespread the practice really is.

Due to the considerable amount of income generated by tipping, the importance of tipping in Slovenia is likely to grow in the future. This hypothesis is based on research which attempts to devise ways in which to improve the gaming industry's business operations. It is of great importance for the gaming industry as well as the employees to be familiar with and apply methods to increase tipping. However, these methods are not easily transmitted from one socio-cultural system to another – from waiter to dealer. The purpose of this paper is to first establish why tipping occurs, and then how this knowledge is applied among gaming industry employees.

How employees can affect tipping behaviour – theoretical framework

In the English language the most general expressions for gratuity of guests towards employees in the catering industry is 'to tip (a waiter)'. Also, sometimes the expression 'drink money' is used (Foster, 1972 in Lobb, 2001)¹. At present, there is no law that requires that one must tip for services rendered (Wight, 2006:1); the decision to leave a tip is left to the discretion of the customer. If the customer is satisfied with the service, they will tip, otherwise not (Raspor, 2002a). The tip is therefore an optional part of payment for a service but is nevertheless sometimes expected by the employees for the services rendered (Wight, 2006:1). The amount of the tip is usually calculated as a certain percentage of the value of the receipt. Raspor (2002b:143) defined a tip as a "gift for a high standard service". Therefore, if someone wants to receive a tip, the service has to be of a high standard. Lynn and McCall's research (2000) also found this to be true: the participants in their survey linked tipping with rewarding the service provider for a high quality service.

The techniques used to influence the amount of tip

There are many reasons for deciding on a certain amount of tip. However, there is no research about it in the Slovenian gaming industry. Lynn (2004) collected research findings which demonstrate a positive

¹ In 1972, George Foster, Professor Emeritus of Anthropology at UC Berkeley, looked at the origins of words meaning 'tip' or 'gratuity' in several languages. He found that, frequently, it evolved from 'drink money' – supporting the idea that the practice began in eating establishments. Foster theorized that tipping started with a desire to avoid envy on the part of the server and to send the message that the server should have a drink at the customer's expense.

correlation between certain behaviours on the part of service providers and the subsequent increase in the tip¹.

Table 1: Summary of experiments and quasi-experiments on restaurant tipping

	Author of research	Tip Enhancing Action	Average Tip in the		Percentage Increase in Tip
			Control Treatment	Experimental Treatment	
1	Rodrigue (1999)	Call Customer by Name	14 %	15 %	10 %
2	Rind and Bordia (1996)	Writing "Thank You" on Check	16 %	18 %	13 %
3	Stillman and Hensley (1980)	Wearing a Flower in Hair	\$ 1.50	\$ 1.75	17 %
4	Rind and Strohmets (2001a)	Forecast Good Weather	19 %	22 %	18 %
5	Strohmets et al. (2002)	Give Customer Candy			
		Study 1 (fancy chocolates)	15 %	18 %	18 %
		Study 2 (piece of candy)	19 %	23 %	21 %
6	Lynn, Mynier (1993)	Squatting Down Next to Table			
		Waiter	15 %	18 %	20 %
		Waitress	12 %	15 %	25 %
7	Butler and Snizek (1976)	Suggestive Selling (tip estimated at 15% of bill size)	\$ 1.25 p/person	\$ 1.53 p/person	23 %
8	McCall and Belmont (1996)	Using Tip Trays w/ Credit Card Insignia			
		Restaurant	16 %	20 %	25 %
		Café	18 %	22 %	22 %
9	Rind and Bordia (1995)	Drawing a Picture on Check			
		Waiter drawing smiley face	21 %	18 %	—

¹ Research work which formed the basis of our survey is mentioned in Table 1. Various research findings are indexed by the increase of tip according to a specific technique. For a clearer overview we mention the authors of the research in the first column of Table 1, while they are not mentioned later on in the paper.

		Waitress drawing smiley face	28 %	33 %	18 %
	Gueguen (2000)	Bartender drawing sun	19 %	26 %	37 %
10		Entertaining Customer			
	Gueguen and Legohere (2002)	Share a Joke	16 %	23 %	40 %
	Rind and Strohmetz (2001b)	Give a Puzzle	19 %	22 %	18 %
	Crusco and Wetzel (1984)	Touching Customer			
11		Study 1	12 %	17 %	42 %
	Lynn, Mykal and Sherwyn (1998)	Study 2	11 %	14 %	27 %
	Renee and Zweigenhaft (1986),	Study 3	15 %	18 %	22 %
	Hornik (1992)	Study 4	12 %	15 %	28 %
12	Garrity and Degelman (1990)	Introducing Self by Name	15 %	23 %	53 %
13	van Baaren (2003)	Repeat Order Back to Customer	NLG 1.36	NLG 2.73	100 %
14	Tidd and Lockard (1978)	Smiling	\$ 0.20	\$ 0.48	140 %

Source: Lynn, 2004.

The above table shows different techniques that researchers claim are in direct correlation with tipping. They prove that a specific behaviour of the service provider can substantially increase the tip, in some cases by as much as 140%. Simultaneously, there can also be a negative correlation between the service providers' behaviour and the customers' tipping. These findings form a basis for further research and implementation in everyday business operations. Lynn (2004) in his book *Mega Tips* asserts that the above mentioned techniques will first lead to a greater customer satisfaction and only then to a higher tip. On the basis of the above-mentioned research, the author of this paper formed the following hypotheses to be tested out among employees in the Slovenian gaming and catering (Raspor, 2011) industries.

Raspor's research (Raspor, 2009) showed that the customers of the casinos in Nova Gorica tip because of: amiability of personnel (indicated

by 71% of survey participants), professionalism of personnel (69% of survey participants), speed of service (36%), and appearance of employee (25%).

Methodology

The aim of the study was to find out how employees in the Slovenian gaming industry (especially dealers) use techniques for increasing tips and whether or not the application of these techniques actually leads to an increase in tips. We claim our findings to be representative as the survey sample included a variety of gaming enterprises across Slovenia. In accordance with the aim of the research we formed two hypotheses: H1: "Dealers in the Slovenian gaming industry do not use techniques for increasing tips." H2: "Dealers in the Slovenian gaming industry who use the techniques for increasing tips are more likely to receive a tip."

To test the above mentioned hypotheses we used the following research design: on the basis of a literature overview we gathered empirical data by conducting a survey (1) and executing the focus group method (2) among employees of the Slovenian gaming industry. The focus groups were mainly used for clarifying the findings obtained by the survey. We used the probability sample for the survey design. In order to test the hypotheses, statistical methods were used as well as analysis, synthesis and compilation. In the next section, the process of gathering the data and characteristics of the sample are described as well as the measuring instrument we applied.

Research project: Gaming industry employees and tipping 2007

The gathering of data¹ took place between May 2007 and December 2007 (Table 2). The gaming industry employees (dealers, slot supervisors, cashier) were the target population.

According to the Agency for Public Legal Records and Related Services of the Republic of Slovenia (AJPES), there were 28 gaming enterprises² in Slovenia as of 31 December 2007.

¹ The research was part of the author's doctoral thesis *The influence of tips distribution on the employees: comparison between the catering industry and the gambling industry* from the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Ljubljana. The thesis comprised 10 different surveys.

²The enterprises are placed in group 92,001 Gaming industry in the AJPES database (<http://www.ajpes.si/prs/>).

Table 2: General information on "Gaming industry employees and tipping 2007" research project

Duration of research	2007		
Method of collecting data	Mail survey		
Questionnaire	Designed specifically for this project by author		
Site	Slovenia		
Group: Gambling industry	Target population	Questionnaires returned	The share of answers with regard to target population
Number of companies (Source: AJPES)	28	12	43 %
Employees (Source: SURS)			
Gaming tables (dealers)	963	279	29 %
Slots (slot supervisors)	147	72	49 %
Treasury (cashier)	271	122	45 %
TOTAL	1,381	473	34 %

Among the enterprises listed in the above mentioned databases there were 28 companies. They represented our final selection for sampling on the first level. According to SURS, they employ 1,381 persons. We sent a letter with the questionnaire included to the management of each company. They were asked to distribute the questionnaire among their employees working at the gaming tables, slot machines and cashier desks in each of their casinos and amusement arcades. 12 employees out of 13 casinos and 7 (from the total of 36) amusement arcades gave us feedback. The percentage of the answers received from the companies was 43 %. In total, 473 interviewees answered the questionnaire. They worked at slot machines (casino technician, slot supervisors) and at the treasury (cashier's assistant, cashier and head cashier). In the second batch of the answers received there were 29 % from gaming tables, 49 % from slot machines and 45 % from cashiers.

Focus groups with the employees

We used this method for clearing up certain inconsistencies which emerged while surveying employees. The focus group method is a qualitative research method where the respondents are invited to a group session without prior knowledge of the conversation content. The topic is clearly defined by the research team. The moderator has a set of pre-prepared questions, but can also react to the debate in order to obtain clearer answers.

We carried out the focus group sessions immediately following the completion of the survey in the years 2007 and 2008. The focus groups usually lasted 2 hours and a half. Moderating was performed by the author of the questionnaire. We conducted focus groups in 6 casinos (Casino Kastel, Igralni salon Dama, Igralnica Fontana, Casino Ljubljana, Casino Maribor, Igralnica Čatež) owned by 4 gaming companies (Hit, d. d., Nova Gorica; Casino Ljubljana; Casino Maribor; Casino Portorož) and two Casino and entertainment centres (two focus group sessions were conducted in Perla and two in Park). In total, we carried out 8 focus group sessions with 100 participants.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire included several thematic components¹. In this article we will only mention the questions which are relevant to the application of the techniques for increasing tips and the frequency of tipping. The answers to the survey questions were either YES or NO, or alternatively from 1 to 5 where 1 stands for "I always do" and 5 "I never do".

The focus groups consisted of 20 participants, who were divided into groups of five. To achieve consensus on the questions among group participants we devised a two-phase procedure. In the first phase we looked for consensus among participants in a smaller group, and in the second phase among the participants in the entire focus group. The composition of groups differed somewhat if the group participants were from the gaming industry (dealers, slot supervisors, cashiers) or from the gambling industry (including other employees working in the casino). In the second phase the smaller groups presented their standpoints to the rest of the focus group participants, who then reacted to the views they had expressed. The question was dealt with until a consensus among all the participants was reached. Again, only the questions relevant to this paper are mentioned.

Data processing

In accordance with the aims of the research, statistical analysis of the data collected was performed by using the SPSS software package. In the first phase we conducted a univariate analysis and in the second phase we used the bivariate analysis to investigate the correlation between the pairs of variables.

¹ Due to a very broad range of questions included in the questionnaire only the ones most relevant for the content of this paper are mentioned here.

Application of techniques for increasing tips – research findings

Gaming industry employees in Slovenia (Table 3) rarely use the above mentioned techniques for increasing tips. 3.8 % of employees do not use them at all. All 14 answered that they do not use such techniques. On the other hand, there is only one respondent among the dealers who does not use any of the techniques, while not even one employee uses all 14 techniques. Employees apply 4.85 techniques on average, and dealers 5.9 techniques on average (Table 6). Dealers from the casino that regulate tip sharing use the techniques more frequently (5.42) than their colleagues in companies with an irregular system of sharing tips (5.29).

Table 3: Application of the techniques for increasing tips

Gaming industry			Dealer's		
Number of persons using a specific technique	Percentage	Number of techniques used	Number of persons using a specific technique	Percentage	
15	3.8 %	0	1	0.5 %	
6	1.5 %	1	3	1.6 %	
28	7.0 %	2	14	7.4 %	
27	6.8 %	3	11	5.9 %	
45	11.3 %	4	21	11.2 %	
70	17.6 %	5	35	18.6 %	
44	11.1 %	6	28	14.9 %	
60	15.1 %	7	29	15.4 %	
41	10.3 %	8	22	11.7 %	
25	6.3 %	9	10	5.3 %	
17	4.3 %	10	6	3.2 %	
10	2.5 %	11	6	3.2 %	
9	2.3 %	12	2	1.1 %	
1	0.3 %	13	0	0.0 %	
0	0.0 %	14	0	0.0 %	
398	100 %	Total	188	100%	

Source: Raspor 2010.

The techniques (Table 4) used by the majority of the participants (more than 51%) are: thanking the guest for the tip (75 % in gaming industry and 84 % among dealers); offering the customer additional service (52 % and 78 % respectively); wishing the guest a pleasant stay (60 % and 67 % respectively); smiling while working (69 % and 74 % respectively); using jokes (54 % and 60 % respectively), repeating the order (40 % and 67 % respectively).

Table 4: Application of the techniques for increasing tips: gaming industry

Techniques by order of importance as established by the survey (Table 1)	Please, list the techniques for increasing the tips that you use at work (n=473)	Gaming industry		Dealing staff	
		The share of respondents that use a specific technique among all respondents that answered the question	The number of respondents that answered the question	The share of respondents that use a specific technique among all respondents that answered the question	The number of respondents that answered the question
1	(10) I thank a customer for leaving a tip.	75.5 %	386	84.5 %	188
2	(5) I offer the customer additional service (I bet his chip, do the replacement chips, call supervisor, coffee, refreshments, taxi service).	52.4 %	344	77.8 %	182
3	(11) I smile while working.	68.7 %	386	74.3 %	188
4	(8) I wish a customer a pleasant stay in our casino.	60.5 %	386	67.5 %	188
5	(9) I use jokes while working.	53.9 %	386	59.7 %	188
6	(4) I repeat the order (beat) after the customer.	39.7 %	344	56.8 %	182
7	(12) I advise the customer on payment methods in use at specific venue and where the exchange or provisioning can be done (e.g. cheques, bank cards).	29.0 %	386	27.7 %	182
8	(7) I share a joke with the customer.	21.8 %	344	25.2 %	182
9	(13) I present customers with small complimentary gift/giveaways (sweets, pens, coffee, etc.)	24.3 %	386	18.4 %	182
10	(6) I shake hands with customers or lightly touch him/her in order to manifest respect	19.0 %	344	15.5 %	182
11	(3) While talking to the customer I come closer or sit next to him/her.	17.1 %	344	15.1 %	182
12	(14) I use the customer's name to greet him/her.	16.3 %	385	14.1 %	182
13	(1) I use accessories which are not too conspicuous (badges, brooches, hair accessories).	5.5 %	344	6.8 %	182
14	(2) I introduce myself by my first name.	5.1 %	344	4.9 %	182

Source: Raspor 2010.

As follows from the table of techniques, "I introduce myself ..." (6 % and 5 % respectively), and "I use accessories ..." (5.5 % and 6.8 % respectively) are used very rarely.

If we compare the order of importance of individual statements in our research (Table 4) with the previous findings by other researchers (Table 1) we can observe a major deviation in statement 2 ("I introduce myself by my first name") and statement 6 ("I shake hands with customers"). These findings point to the fact that employees still have some manoeuvring space for increasing tips by personalizing the service (introduction, physical contact). We can also observe the relative restraint of the employees who prefer not to share a joke with a customer or use jokes in general while working (statements 7 and 9).

By carrying out focus group sessions with employees, it was our intention to further explore why employees prefer some techniques to others and why some are not used at all. We have learned that employees are not familiar with the findings about which techniques affect tipping and in what way. They also believed that certain techniques cannot be applied to the circumstances in Slovenia for various reasons (e.g. internal rules forbid sitting down with the customer, it is too 'American to wear accessories, etc.).

The correlation between the number of techniques used and the frequency of tips received is positive (Table 5), that is the more techniques an employee knows and chooses to implement, the more frequently they will receive a tip.

Table 5: Pearson's correlation coefficient between the number of techniques applied for increasing the tip and the frequency of receiving a tip

		How often have you received a tip lately?	
		Gaming industry	Dealer's staff
Number of applied techniques for increasing the tip	Rank correlation coefficient	-0.484**	-0.365**
	Statistical significance (two-sided test)	0.000	0.000
	Number of respondents	444	197
**Statistically significant at $p < 0.01$ (a).			
*Statistically significant at $p < 0.05$ (a).			

Source: Raspor 2010.

A medium correlation between the variables is characteristic of the employees in the gaming industry (Pearson's correlation coefficient

0.484)¹, and for dealers (Pearson's correlation coefficient 0.365): employees that use more techniques also receive a tip more often. Employees in the gaming industry who usually receive tips (always receive tip, very often receive tip, often receive tip) use on average 6.18 techniques, while those who do not receive tips (rarely receive tip, almost never receive tip, never receive tip) use on average only 3.34 techniques (Table 6). Dealers who usually receive tips (always receive tip, very often receive tip, often receive tip) use an average of 5.93 techniques, while those who do not receive tips (rarely receive tip, almost never receive tip, never receive tip) use only 3.41 techniques on average.

Table 6: Number of applied techniques for increasing tips

	What techniques for increasing the tips do you use at work?			
	Gaming industry		Dealer's staff	
Frequency of receiving tips	N	Mean	N	Mean
Always receive tip, very often receive tip, often receive tip	278	6.18	168	5.93
Rarely receive tip, almost never receive tip, never receive tip	166	3.34	29	3.41
Total	473	4.85	188	5.90
t-test (difference between two means)	F=31.447, stat. sig. < 0.0005		F=8.093, stat. sig. < 0.005	
	t=9.346, stat. sig. < 0.0005		t=4.071, stat. sig. < 0.000	

Source: Raspor 2010.

It has also been established that those employees who receive tips frequently (always receive tip, very often receive tip, often receive tip) characteristically use most of the techniques more often (64 % or 9 out of 14 for those in the gaming industry). 50 % (7 out of 14) of the wait staff receive tips frequently if they use the techniques more often.

Discussion and recommendations

¹ To interpret Spearman's correlation coefficient and Pearson's correlation coefficient we defined the following scale: 0–0.1- no correlation; 0.11–0.3- weak correlation; 0.31–0.6 - medium correlation: more them 0.61 – strong correlation.

We can confirm both of the hypotheses:

Hypothesis	Statistical method	Results shown	Hypothesis confirmed/ rejected
H1: : "Dealers in the Slovenian gaming industry do not use techniques for increasing tips"	Descriptive analysis (comparison on the basis of shares)	Table 3 Table 4	Confirmed
H2: "Dealers in the Slovenian gaming industry who use the techniques for increasing tips are more likely to receive a tip".	Pearson's correlation coefficient t-test	Table 5 Table 6	Confirmed

This research was carried out in various gaming enterprises across Slovenia. We obtained relevant results on the usage of techniques for increasing the tips among Slovenian gaming industry employees. The findings also confirm that employees who use the techniques generally receive tips more often.

Therefore, the research can be of practical value to managers and team leaders for motivating their employees to offer higher quality service. The research results can be a useful tool for managerial personnel in motivating and directing their subordinates towards offering a higher quality service. In accordance with Wang (2010), we strongly recommend that managers implement a policy of pooling tips.

The research highlights how techniques for increasing tips are applied among Slovenian gaming industry employees and how the application of these techniques can influence the frequency of tipping.

Combined with the findings on the effectiveness of the aforementioned behaviours, this suggests that casino managers have an opportunity to increase their dealers' tip income by training them to engage in these behaviours. Both common sense and prior research (Lynn 2002 and 2003, Lynn & McCall, 2009) indicate that doing so will help to increase turnover. This is not an answer for the turnover problem plaguing the industry, but it does promise to help and costs very little to implement. We invite managers to download a training manual entitled Mega Tips free of charge from the Cornell Center for Hospitality website (<http://chr.cornell.edu>) and to train their servers to engage in these tip-enhancing behaviours.

Conclusion

Our research showed that gaming industry employees in Slovenia are not familiar enough with and rarely apply techniques for increasing tips. We believe there are several reasons for that: (1) the tipping is traditionally part of the casino cultural repertoire, but (2) research on tipping techniques has only been carried out recently and (3) the managerial staff do not know how to use tipping to stimulate their employees towards higher quality service and flexibility, (4) although it has been established that gaming industry employees who use techniques for increasing tips receive them more frequently.

The estimation on the overall amount of tipping indicates that the relatively high sums might be of interest also to legislators. The law requires that the management of casinos must earmark the tips entirely from the employees' salaries. At the same time, the management team are excluded from the distribution of tipping income, and the distribution itself is dependent on the amount of tips gathered at specific work posts. An innovative approach – or a comprehensive reform of reward systems – is needed to increase the motivation of employees without increasing labour costs. In our opinion, increase in the share of tips in an individual employee's income is a viable method which could be applied through training employees in methods for increasing tips.

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