

TABLES NEED NEW BOOST
CASINOS IN THE 21ST CENTURY
THE SLOT REVOLUTION



We have come a long way from the first Casinos to open their doors on the old continent, and my, how things have changed! Many of these changes are totally logical and can be explained as progress over time. This is the case of decoration and design, for example, where new techniques, materials and ideas have revolutionised the Casino look, both inside and out. A similar case is lighting. New light systems make it possible to create several distinct environments in the same Casino.

Along with these changes, pertaining to Casino aesthetics, there is another, much more important, one, which has to do more strictly with actual gaming. The unstoppable advance of slots is practically marginalising the tables, which had always been the most important part of Casino gaming. Up until a few years ago, table games were the major income-creators for Casinos, but they have now been overtaken by slots. Accordingly, many Casino managers are now increasing their slots area, even if they have to sacrifice a table or two. The reasons behind this change are fairly clear. The main culprit is technology. Slots are constantly incorporating new technological advances. A clear example is the implantation of the Ticket In-Ticket Out (TITO) system in recent years. Proof of this is that the manufacturers' R+D departments increasingly have bigger allocations in their yearly budgets and, to a great extent, now define the progress of their companies. Nowadays, a company without a qualified R+D department has no chance of competing in the international market and is doomed to failure. Slots offer gamers better new entertainment options: low bets, bigger bonuses, better picture and sound, different games in a single machine, etc., not to mention interconnected slots offering huge jackpots. In short, players participate in the outcome of the game and feel as if they make a difference. Additionally, Casinos are constantly updating their slots, ensuring that players always have access to all the newest games.

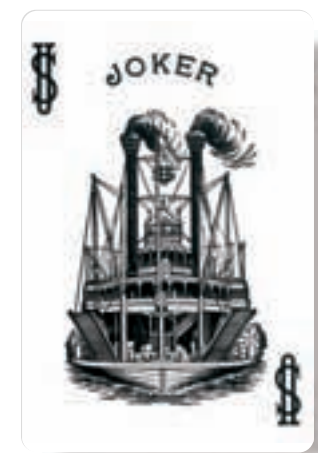
The situation has changed totally with regard to a few years ago, when players simply inserted a coin and waited to see what happened. That was their only role. However, players have now gone from being passive observers to being active participants in their game.

The complete opposite is happening with tables. For reasons inherent to the games themselves, the only changes have had to do with the materials used or the structure of the tables, but little else. Roulette, poker and blackjack are played exactly the same now as 20 years ago. However, if we compare one of today's slot machines with one from two decades ago, we will see enormous differences, both inside and out. This doesn't stop big European manufacturers such as Abbiati, Caro Developpement and Hispania from offering tables of increasingly high quality, made with the best materials and beautifully finished. Who can doubt that the appearance of the tables has also changed in recent years, but practically the only novelties are the double-height tables and the use of electronic displays in roulette. Not a lot, when we compare them to the evolution slots are undergoing.

Another factor that explains this change in tendency is the economic aspect. For a slot to be up and running, all it needs is a technician to plug it in and turn it on. Each table, on the other hand, needs up to 8 croupiers to attend the games properly. And if a table is closed because there are not enough people to play, the Casino still has to pay them. In other words, tables have much higher expenses than slots.

Taking all these aspects into account, it should come as no surprise that new players in European Casinos, particularly young people, are much more attracted by slots than by traditional table games.

The laws must take quite a bit of the blame for the situation. In general, European gaming laws are obsolete and out of touch with reality. Gaming concepts need to be reviewed and redefined. Likewise, the lawmakers must show more concern for the disadvantaged situation affecting table games, and treat them with a little more affection. However many technological advances there have been and are still to come, tables are still the heart of Casino gaming.



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