

Singapore's tourism receipts doubled to \$18 billion within two years of opening the Marina Bay Sands and Sentosa casino resorts in 2010, and visitor arrivals jumped nearly 50 percent. Lured by Singapore's success, the Taiwan Legislature could soon allow the opening of casinos. And Japan, with an official goal of tripling the number of foreign tourists in 20 years, is considering building casinos. Analysts believe that gambling in Japan could generate gross revenue of \$15 billion annually.

But these countries should also pay attention to another aspect of Singapore's experience apart from revenue. Singapore has gone to considerable lengths to shield some of its most vulnerable people from the negative social consequences of gambling. Promoters naturally emphasize the positives of gambling, mainly how casinos attract foreigners and their money. But they say little about the negatives: addiction, broken families and criminal activities like loan-sharking, all of which fall heavily on local communities and on low-income groups. To dampen these effects, Singapore levies an \$80 casino entrance fee on local residents, while foreigners enter free. After a 2011 survey showed an increasing proportion of low-income gamblers playing with ever-larger sums, the state decided to prohibit entry by the unemployed, people on welfare and people who have filed for bankruptcy protection.

As South Korea's experience shows, local residents generate lots of money. Of the country's 17 licensed casinos, only one, Kangwon Land Resort, in a remote mountain area more than 100 miles from Seoul, is open to locals. But its revenue, about \$1 billion annually, exceeds that of the other 16 foreigners-only casinos combined.

Casino investments under consideration in Taiwan and Japan could total several billion dollars. The promoters, of course, advertise gambling as a revenue-producing leisure activity. But if these investments go forward, both countries need to consider the downside and, at the very least, seek ways to curb addictive and self-destructive behavior.

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