

THE FUTURE OF INTERNET GAMBLING

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Brief overview of presentation

- Factors that make Internet gambling attractive to punters
- Online poker and betting exchanges
- Behavioural tracking technologies
- Implications for DSM-IV criteria for Pathological Gambling
- BGPS Survey (Internet gambling secondary analysis)
- Online therapy: Natural fit for Internet gamblers?

Generic factors that make Internet gambling attractive to punters (Griffiths et al, 2006)

- Access
- Affordability
- Anonymity
- Convenience
- Disinhibition
- Escape
- Social acceptability
- Long working hours

Specific factors that make Internet gambling attractive to punters (Griffiths et al, 2006)

- Sophisticated gaming software
- Integrated e-cash systems (including multi-currency)
- Increased realism (e.g., “real” gambling via webcams, player and dealer avatars)
- Live remote wagering (for both gambling alone and gambling with others)
- Improving customer care systems
- Inter-gambler competition
- External legislation (e.g., smoking bans in public places)

Online poker and betting exchanges

- In the UK, two fastest growing forms of online gambling are online poker and online betting exchanges (*Griffiths, 2005*).
- Three main reasons for the growth (*Griffiths, 2005*).
 - Provide excellent financial value for the gambler. There is no casino house edge or bookmakers' mark-up on odds.
 - Gamblers have the potential to win because there is an element of skill in making their bets.
 - Gamblers are able to compete directly with and against other gamblers instead of gambling on a pre-programmed slot machine or making a bet on a roulette wheel with fixed odds.

Other factors in the rise of online poker

(Wood, Griffiths & Parke, 2007; Griffiths et al, 2009)

- The social acceptability of this type of gambling
- Promotion through televised tournaments on terrestrial and cable channels
- Belief that this is predominantly a game of skill that can be mastered.
- The increasing number of celebrities endorsing and playing poker
- Players can learn to play for free
- Players can play for low stakes (as low as 1 cent)
- Individuals have 24-hour access and can play at any time, any day via the Internet.

Behavioural tracking technologies (1)

- In 2002, two separate academic papers examined behavioural tracking:
 - Wang & Aquino (2002) highlighted the advantages to the gaming industry in relation to slot machines
 - Griffiths & Parke (2002) highlighted the disadvantages to the players in relation to Internet gambling
- Both papers claimed that companies could keep track of what the customer was playing, time spent playing, the the number of wins and losses.

Behavioural tracking technologies (2)

- Behavioural tracking can clearly be used both positively and negatively.
- However, various companies are now beginning to use tracking technologies as a way of helping problem gamblers rather than exploiting them (e.g., *Svenska Spel, 888.com*).
- Evaluation is therefore needed on whether these tracking interventions really work.
- Tracking technologies may also have implications for future diagnostic criteria for problem gambling

Internet gambling: Implications for DSM-IV criteria for Pathological Gambling

- Is preoccupied with gambling (e.g. reliving past experiences, planning next venture, thinking of ways to get money)
- Needs to gamble with increasing amounts of money in order to achieve the desired excitement
- Repeated unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back, or stop gambling
- Is restless or irritable when trying to cut down or stop gambling
- Gambles as a way of escaping from problems or of relieving a dysphoric mood (e.g. helplessness, guilt, anxiety, depression)

- After losing money gambling, often returns another day to get even (“chasing” one’s losses)
- Lies to family members, therapist, or others to conceal extent of involvement with gambling
- Has committed illegal acts such as forgery, fraud, theft, or embezzlement to finance gambling
- Has jeopardised or lost a significant relationship, job, or educational or career opportunity because of gambling
- Relies on others to provide money to relieve a desperate financial situation caused by gambling

DSM-IV Summary

- Salience/Preoccupation (good possibility)
- Tolerance (possibly)
- Relapse (possibly)
- Withdrawal (unlikely)
- Escape from reality (unlikely)
- Chasing losses (definitely)
- Conceal Involvement (unlikely)
- Unsociable Behaviour (unlikely)
- Ruin a Relationship/Opportunity (unlikely)
- Bail-out (slight possibility)

Actual online problem gambling behaviour?

- Chasing losses
- Total preoccupation with gambling
- Increase of gambling behaviour (time & money) over time
- Playing a variety of stakes
- Playing a variety of games
- Player 'reload' within gambling session
- Frequent payment method changes
- Verbal aggression in chat rooms
- Constant complaints to customer services
- Most importantly it is change in usual behaviour

BGPS: INTERNET GAMBLING SECONDARY ANALYSIS

(Griffiths et al, 2009)

- The 2007 BGPS data were further examined to see whether:
 - Any particular demographic variable was significantly associated with Internet gambling
 - Any particular demographic variable was significantly associated with non-Internet gambling.
 - The demographic profile between Internet and non-Internet gamblers was significantly different.

INTERNET GAMBLING AND GENDER

- Of the total sample, 6% had gambled on the Internet (9% male and 3% female).
- Results showed that Internet gamblers were significantly more likely to be male – 74% men vs. 26% women ($F(1,158) = 170.33; p < 0.001$).
- There were no gender differences for non-Internet gamblers ($F(1,158) = 0.20; p = 0.65$).

INTERNET GAMBLING AND AGE

- Age was significantly associated with online gambling ($F(6,153) = 25.25; p < 0.001$)
- Results showed that Internet gamblers were more likely to be people aged 34 years and younger (55%).
- Only one in five Internet gamblers (21%) were aged over 45 years.
- The prevalence of Internet gambling was highest among those aged 16-24 years and 24-34 years and decreased with advancing age.

INTERNET GAMBLING AND TYPE OF GAMBLING ACTIVITY

- Internet gambling prevalence was also examined by gambling activity. Those most likely to have gambled on the Internet
 - Spread betting (64%)
 - Fixed odds betting terminals (47%)
 - Casino games (38%)
 - Football pools (27%)
 - Greyhounds (24%)
 - Slot machines (20%)
 - Horses (17%)
 - Scratchcards (13%)
 - Bingo (12%)
 - National Lottery draw (8%)

INTERNET GAMBLING AND PROBLEM GAMBLING

- Overall, problem gambling prevalence among Internet gamblers using the DSM-IV was 5%.
- The base sizes were too small to analyse by age and gender but an analysis by age showed that problem gambling prevalence rate peaked at 5.7% in the 35-54 year age group.
- Further analysis of DSM-IV scores showed that problem gambling prevalence rate was significantly higher among Internet gamblers than non-Internet gamblers (5% vs 0.5%) ($F(1,158) = 52.09; p < 0.001$).

DISCUSSION OF BGPS FINDINGS

- Study is the first ever analysis of a **representative national sample** of Internet gamblers.
- When compared to non-Internet gamblers, Internet gamblers were more likely to be **male**, relatively **young adults**, **single**, **well educated**, and in **professional/managerial employment**.
- **Problem gambling** (as measured by the DSM-IV) was also **significantly more likely among Internet gamblers** when compared to non-Internet gamblers.

- **Spread bettors, FOBT players, and casino patrons** were the most likely to have also used the internet to gamble.
- These types of gambling are very closely associated with **dedicated gambling environments** and gaming operators.
- In essence, individuals engaged in these types of gambling activity are **people who seek out particular gambling experiences** in particular types of environment.
- It is perhaps therefore no surprise that it is these individuals who are also more likely to gamble on the Internet as they are looking for **value** and **convenience**

- **Internet gamblers were more likely to be problem gamblers** has been reported previously in a number of smaller scale studies in both the UK and the US
- Internet gambling could be a **less protective environment** for vulnerable gamblers
- To a problem gambler, Internet provides possibility for **24/7 gambling** all year round from comfort of one's own home.
- Given the **low levels of social responsibility** that have been found in empirical studies of Internet gambling sites this is of particular concern.

- Gaming companies need to acknowledge they will need to provide even **better social responsibility infrastructures** online than offline - some companies are starting to do this.
- Furthermore, there is also the issue of how Internet problem gamblers **can be helped**
- Recent research suggests that online problem gamblers appear to **prefer to seek help online**
- **Online help, guidance and treatment** may be a potential way forward to help those who may feel too stigmatised to seek traditional face-to-face help

Online therapy: The key advantages

(Griffiths, 2001; Griffiths, 2005; Griffiths & Cooper, 2003; Wood & Griffiths, 2007)

- Convenience
- Cost effectiveness
- Helps overcome social stigma
- Overcomes barriers that may prevent people from seeking face-to-face help
- Allows service providers to reach an exponential amount of people

CONCLUSIONS

- Internet gamblers were more likely to be male, relatively young adults, single, well educated, and in professional/managerial employment (*Wardle et al, 2007*).
- Problem gambling prevalence rate is significantly higher among Internet gamblers than non-Internet gamblers (*Wardle et al, 2007; Wood, Griffiths & Parke, 2007; Griffiths & Barnes, 2008*).
- Adolescents are gambling on the Internet (*Wood, Griffiths, et al, 2007*).
- Increasing numbers of women gambling remotely and gender swapping is common (*IGRU, 2007; Wood et al, 2007*).

THE FUTURE?

- Internet gambling cannot be viewed in multi-media isolation (*Griffiths, 2003; Griffiths et al, 2006*)
- TV quiz shows as gambling? (*Griffiths, 2007*)
- Convergence between gambling and gaming (*Griffiths, 2008*)
- Where is gambling going? Satellite navigation systems?
Google Earth?