Customized Responsible Gambling Messaging as a Tool to Encourage Help-Seeking

Summary Report for the Manitoba Gambling Research Program

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Research Priority:
Increase understanding about the responsible gambling and problem gambling information needs of different population segments and how best to reach them (e.g. by age cohort, gender, ethnic or cultural group, physical/ mental health status, socioeconomic status, etc.).

Significance

Responsible gambling (RG) messages are important to enhance informed choice amongst gamblers and direct gamblers to engage with tools to assist them to stay within appropriate limits. Relevant resources and tools to assist gamblers are available, however, many gamblers do not engage with these.

Research Questions

The aim of this project was to design targeted responsible gambling messages that increase use of RG tools among specific cohorts and facilitate responsible gambling behaviour.

More specifically, this study aimed to address the research questions:

1. How can discriminating factors in customer relationship databases be used to create more effective RG messaging?

2. What wording can be used in RG messages to enhance relevance to specific cohorts and increase engagement with RG tools?

Methodology

The first phase of the methodology was a comprehensive literature review to identify the groups who are most likely to benefit from targeted RG messages, and the most appropriate message content to increase their effectiveness for each cohort.

The second phase of the methodology was a series of focus groups to gain feedback on the proposed wording of RG messages for each player cohort. Participants were recruited from Manitoba and discussed various messages to provide insight from their unique perspectives.

Key Findings

Literature supports the use of messages that encourage gamblers to consider their own gambling, rather than providing explicit directions or information. When individuals generate arguments and conclusions themselves these are more convincing than statements provided by external sources.

Messages are more likely to be persuasive if they promote positive attitudes towards the desired behaviour, which is particularly effective if this is mutually exclusive (e.g., setting deposit limits vs. having no limits). Motivation can be enhanced by reducing the 'cost' of compliance, increasing the perceived ability to perform a specific action, using a positively-framed message, and appealing to the individual's sense of value.

Making messages specific may increase their effectiveness in terms of user engagement. For example, messages should be simple with one specific action suggested and conveying a sense of urgency. Gamblers are more likely to engage with responsible gambling resources if they believe that these resources are typically used by their peers, and those that they respect.

Messages that characterise problem gamblers as being irresponsible, reckless, or having other negative traits and behaviours may increase stigma towards problem gambling rather than encourage gamblers to engage with RG resources and help.

RG campaigns may focus on using a variety of messages to cater for different target audiences, with repeated presentation of a message, but changing these over time to avoid saturation and loss of effectiveness as novelty reduces.

Evidence suggests that different player cohorts would benefit from specifically targeted messages. The most relevant cohorts which could be detected by gambling operators included young adults (aged 18-24), seniors (aged 60+), frequent gamblers (gamble at least once per week), and those who play gambling activities that involve an element of skill (poker or sports betting). Although there were some common themes throughout the groups, the difference between cohorts was supported by focus groups with each of the targeted segments.

Conclusions

The following messages are recommended to be tested to target specific cohorts of online gamblers.

Group	Generic	Message 1	Message 2
Young Adults	Only spend what you can afford to lose. Check out the play management tools.	Are you a gambling expert? Test your knowledge of gambling odds.	Keep it a game. Check out these 7 tips to become a more responsible gambler.
Seniors	Only spend what you can afford to lose. Check out the play management tools.	How much have you spent gambling? Check out your play summary here.	Stick to your limits and keep gambling fun. Have you set a spending limit?
Skill Game Gamblers	Only spend what you can afford to lose. Check out the play management tools.	Check out your gambling odds. Test your game knowledge here.	Check out your play summary. Click here to see your spending habits.
Frequent Gamblers	Only spend what you can afford to lose. Check out the play management tools.	What kind of gambler are you? Take this short assessment quiz here.	Even frequent players should have limits. Have you set your spend limit?

Note: Included with each message should be a link to the respective play management tool.

Implications

The increased incorporation of technology and player tracking into gambling allows for customized responsible gambling offerings. Creating responsible gambling messages that are relevant for specific gambling cohorts may enhance use of play management tools.