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The Guardian, Thursday 22 January 2004

Dicey business

Jack Schofield's glowing account of casino loyalty cards failed to mention some of the possible downsides of such schemes (Casino rewards total loyalty, January 15). When it comes to gambling, there is a fine line between providing what the customer wants and exploitation.

On joining loyalty schemes, players supply lots of information including name, address, telephone number, date of birth, and gender. Operators know a gambler's favourite game and the amounts they have wagered. They will be able to send the gambler offers and redemption vouchers, complimentary accounts, etc. Supposedly all of these things are introduced to enhance customer experience. However, more unscrupulous operators will be able to entice known or suspected problem gamblers back onto their premises with tailored freebies.

The introduction of loyalty cards has come at a price, and that price is an invasion of the gambler's privacy. I sincerely hope that behavioural tracking data is used to identify problem gamblers and help them rather than to exploit them.

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