

Youth Gambling International

International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High-Risk Behaviors
Centre International d'étude sur le jeu et les comportements à risque chez les jeunes

FEATURE ARTICLE

Interactive television gambling

Professor Mark Griffiths

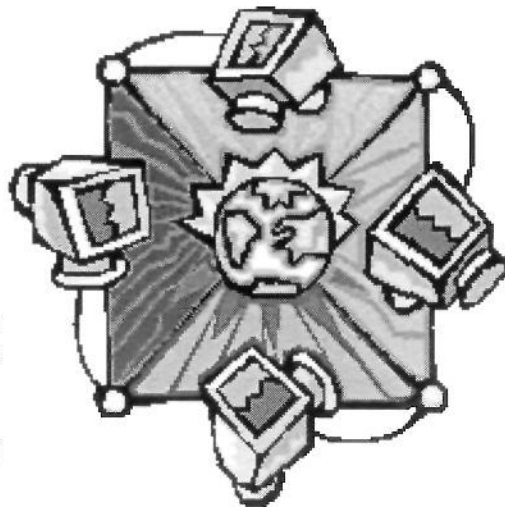
International Gaming Research Unit, Nottingham Trent University

With the advent of betting on the Internet, by telephone, and through interactive television (i-TV), gambling has arrived into the UK home. In February 2003, BSkyB reported that it had generated £33 million of revenues through i-TV gambling in the final six months of 2002.

Through the television remote control, punters can bet at the push of a few buttons. Such income streams are likely to grow rapidly with many

interested parties hoping to cash in (e.g., bookmakers, broadcasters, sports rights-holders, etc.). Merrill Lynch predicts the global online gambling industry will be worth £125 billion by 2015, and that i-TV gambling is likely to account for 50% of revenues. This would be more than 10% of the overall world gambling industry (estimated at £600 billion). In addition, Datamonitor published a report 'iTV Games and Gambling in Europe' (2003) noting that games and gambling are two of the most profitable revenues streams for i-TV. The report also noted that "pay-per-play" business models will dominate i-TV games service provision,

accounting for over 60% of revenues by 2007. They also predicted that by 2007, lotteries would account for almost three-quarters of i-TV gambling revenues, and that the UK and France would have over 50% of the market share.



In the UK, most betting currently takes place on just three sporting activities (70% horse races, 20% dog races, and 5% football matches). Bookmakers and broadcasters know this could substantially change with i-TV gambling. Television viewers could gamble on a much wider array of events via credit card payment through their digital interactive

service. This could include many non-sporting events like who will win the Eurovision Song Contest, who will be evicted from the Big Brother house, or who will pick up an Oscar. Such non-sport betting may also bring in new clientele, including female gamblers. The take up of i-TV gambling may also be very popular with people who would not dream of going to a casino or betting shop. The use of i-TV gambling may help change people's attitudes about gambling by destigmatising and demasculinising it. Such gambling could lead to a more social experience shared by clientele across the demographic spectrum.

Furthermore, Sky has made no secret that it wants to earn £400 a year from each of their digital viewers (in addition to their basic subscription package). The plan is to recoup the cost of interactive services through online quizzes, games, gambling, and broadcast-driven television applications. Whether i-TV will have an effective revenue model remains to be seen, but television-commerce, premium-rate telephony, games, and gambling may provide a commercial source of revenue. For the television viewer, gambling increases interest in the event they are watching and has the added advantage that it boosts

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Interactive Television Gambling	1
Bet You Didn't Know	2
Public Health Focus	3
It's Your Lucky Day	5
Our Visit to the Senate of Canada	6
High-Risk Research at a Glance	7
Let's Talk Prevention	9
Ottawa Legislation	10
New Publications	11
New Youth Gambling Book	12
* * *	
News from Centre	13
Upcoming Events	15

ratings for television companies. In Australia, digital television operators want restrictions on sports wagering relaxed to allow bets to be made on sporting events after they have begun (e.g., cricket). Questions are raised to what extent this is exploitative and to what extent some people will develop gambling problems as a result of such technologies.

Social responsibility and interactive television gambling

Like Internet gambling, i-TV gambling appears to be introduced with little concern for the social implications that may affect a small percentage of the population. Bringing gambling to a television set in the home carries with it a special social responsibility. A 2002 "White Paper" (Design Guidelines for Interactive Television Gambling by Stephen Voller of TV Compass), did at least try to address some of the issues raised by the introduction of i-TV gambling. The six broad design criteria are access, reality checks, separate payments, messages, information, and self-exclusion periods. More specifically :

Access – No-one under 18 years should be able to gamble. Therefore to access the gambling functions there

should be a regularly changing pin code with three attempts before a lock-out. Voller also suggests there should be a physical access device (e.g., token, smart card, etc.) that has to be inserted by the adult gambler.

Reality checks – The technology must allow reality checks (such as a built-in pause every 20 minutes to help overcome the engrossing and intensive nature of gambling) to give the gambler time to reflect on their actions.

Separate payments – On opening credit card accounts there should be a customer-led credit limit for a predetermined period of time. It is crucial to separate the setting of credit limits from the gambling process itself so that people cannot just press a button on their remote to raise credit limits.

Messages – During the gambling process there should be socially responsible gambling messages displayed at significant points in the gambling process (e.g., "Bet with your head, not over it" when first accessing the gambling platform). Further responsible gambling messages could automatically scroll down the screen at regular intervals.

Information – All systems should be able to provide easy access to information such as account details, the amount won or lost in a session, and advice on where to go for help if they have a gambling problem. Furthermore, there should be no encouragement to reinvest winnings or chase losses.

Self-exclusion periods – Households should easily be able to exclude themselves from the gambling process (which may include returning the remote control itself) and not be able to reapply for an agreed minimum period.

Hopefully, if socially responsible measures are adopted by operators, it will help minimise the potential problems brought about by (what is in effect at present) an unregulated form of gambling.

Note: A longer version of this article was published in *World Online Gambling Law Report* (2004, Vol 3 [3]).

Professor Mark Griffiths, International Gaming Research Unit, Psychology Division, Nottingham Trent University, Burton Street, Nottingham, NG1 4BU, United Kingdom or e-mail: mark.griffiths@ntu.ac.uk.