



Chasing of losses and wins between gambling sessions in an online eCasino

What this research is about

Chasing behaviour describes when people continue betting to recover money that was spent. It is believed that this occurs after losing money from gambling, called 'chasing losses'. However, other research has found that chasing can also happen when a person has previously won. Chasing behaviour is often seen in people living with problem gambling.

Between-session chasing happens when a person returns to a gambling venue or website on a different occasion after a previous gambling session. Most studies have investigated chasing in land-based venues, finding that chasing wins is more frequent than chasing losses. The present study aimed to explore between-session chasing in online gambling.

What the researchers did

For this study, the researchers obtained a dataset of online gambling outcomes from the PlayNow.com eCasino, the provincial gambling website in British Columbia, Canada. The dataset allows for an assessment of between-session chasing using real gambling behaviour, which was based on activities in people's gambling accounts. The researchers were able to examine 527,015,222 separate bets, which were placed by 29,964 people, between October 1, 2014, and August 31, 2015. The data included in this study were first anonymized by the British Columbia Lottery Corporation (BCLC).

Over that period of time, people were able to gamble on 240 unique products from five different gambling categories. These included slot machines, roulette, blackjack, video poker, and probability games. First, the data were aggregated into sessions. Individual bets were combined into a 'session', defined as a

What you need to know

Previous studies of between-session chasing behaviour in gambling have focused on chasing losses. This occurs when people return to gamble at a later time to try to recover money that was previously lost. Furthermore, most research has examined chasing behaviour in land-based gambling. However, some studies have found that chasing behaviour following gambling wins is actually more common.

The present study aimed to further explore between-session chasing, but specifically with online gambling. The data used in this study were obtained from the British Columbia Lottery Corporation. The dataset contained online gambling outcomes from the PlayNow.com eCasino.

Analyses of between-session chasing were conducted on 1,909,681 sessions from 15,544 people. The outcome variable of interest was time to return, defined as the number of hours that passed between the end of a prior gambling session and the start of the next. It was found that people returned more slowly on average if they lost money in the previous session, with the exception being roulette. Contrary to predictions, online roulette, and not slot machines, was linked with faster return to gamble after both prior losses and wins.

period that starts when the first bet is made and ends with the final bet, with at least 30 minutes of inactivity afterwards. In one session, a person was able to gamble on a single type of gambling (which

happened in 79% of the sessions) or more than one type (the remaining 21% of sessions). The latter were termed 'mixed' sessions. The proportion of sessions were as follows: slots (56.6% of sessions), mixed sessions (21.6%), probability games (9.7%), blackjack (7.4%), video poker (2.6%), and roulette (2.1%).

Next, the researchers narrowed their planned analyses to people who had gambled on the eCasino more than five times, which was deemed necessary to capture between-session chasing behaviour. After other outliers were removed, the final dataset consisted of 1,909,681 sessions from 15,544 people.

For the outcome variable of interest, the researchers focused on 'time to return', measured as the number of hours that passed between the end of the prior session and the start of the next. The key predictor variables were type of gambling, win or loss, outcome (amount paid minus winnings in a session), session order, the start hour, weekend (vs. weekday), and occurrence on a holiday (vs. not a holiday).

What the researchers found

First, people lost the most in mixed sessions, followed by slot machine sessions. Roulette had the smallest losses. Time to return was slowest for roulette and fastest for probability games.

For all types of gambling, except for roulette, people returned more slowly on average if they lost money in the previous session. This pattern of not chasing losses between sessions has been previously seen in land-based gambling. In contrast, there was stronger evidence of 'win chasing'. This occurred when people made a quicker return to gambling after winning in the prior session. The analyses revealed that rates of win chasing were similar across slot machines, blackjack, probability games, and video poker. However, roulette and mixed sessions displayed significantly shorter times between sessions.

The prediction that chasing behaviour would be more frequent in online slot machines was not supported. Instead, these findings suggest that win chasing is far more common than loss chasing in online gambling, and this effect is particularly notable for roulette.

How you can use this research

This study can inform policy related to online gambling in Canada. This study offers further support that win chasing is more common than loss chasing. Furthermore, these findings highlight roulette as a gambling product that warrants further investigation.

About the researchers

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