

research snapshot

summarize | mobilize



Rewarding the use of responsible gambling tools can increase willingness to use the tools and attitudinal loyalty

What this research is about

The gambling industry often uses loyalty programmes as a marketing strategy. People who choose to enrol in a casino-based loyalty programme are usually given rewards points in exchange for money spent on gambling. In turn, points can be redeemed for rewards, such as more time on the device or food.

Previous research has suggested that casino loyalty programmes may contribute to the development of disordered gambling. People with disordered gambling are more likely to enrol in these programmes and be in the top tiers. But loyalty programmes may also be used to encourage members to use responsible gambling tools. Responsible gambling tools aim to help people gamble in a safer manner, such as by allowing people to set a limit on how much money they are willing to lose in a session. While these tools may help reduce gambling-related harms, few people use them.

The researchers did two studies. In the first study, they examined whether people would be more willing to use a money limit setting tool if they were rewarded with points for using the tool and if that would be associated with greater attitudinal loyalty (i.e., greater identification and satisfaction with the casino). The second study used an experimental design. The aim was to examine whether rewarding people for the use of a money limit setting tool would impact their willingness to engage with the tool and, in turn, their attitudinal loyalty.

What the researchers did

In the first study, the researchers used Amazon's Mechanical Turk to recruit participants. After screening for eligibility and data quality checks, a total

What you need to know

The researchers did two studies. The aim was to examine whether being rewarded for using responsible gambling tools would encourage casino loyalty programme members to be (a) more willing to use the tools and (b) have higher attitudinal loyalty (i.e., greater identification and satisfaction with the casino). In the first study, the researchers surveyed 242 casino loyalty programme members in the USA. They found that the members who were more willing to use a money limit setting tool if they were rewarded had higher attitudinal loyalty. In the second study, the researchers did an experimental study. Participants who were told a casino was going to reward the use of a money limit setting tool were more willing to use the tool. In turn, this increased their attitudinal loyalty.

of 242 responses were used in the analyses. To be eligible for the study, participants had to live in the USA. They could not be seeking nor could they have previously sought treatment for their gambling. Participants had to be members of an American casino loyalty programme and had gambled over \$100 in the past 12 months. Participants' casino offers access to responsible gambling tools through their loyalty programme, but participants had never used the tools before.

Participants completed the following: (1) Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI); (2) Willingness to use a money limit setting tool if granted rewards points (a new scale created by the researchers); and (3) An attitudinal loyalty scale capturing satisfaction,

identification, and emotional connection to the casino. This scale was also created by the researchers.

In the second study, the researchers conducted an experimental study. A total of 424 participants were recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk. After screening for eligibility, 208 responses were used in the analyses. Participants had to meet the same inclusion criteria as in Study 1.

The researchers randomly assigned participants to one of two conditions. In the experimental condition, 100 participants read that a popular American casino chain would be introducing a new responsible gambling programme. In that programme, members would be given rewards points for setting and sticking to their monetary limits. In the control condition, 108 participants read that a standard responsible gambling programme was being introduced that would provide access to a limit setting tool. There was no mention of granting rewards points for using it.

Participants completed the following: (1) PGSI; (2) Willingness to use the limit setting tool (a new scale); and (3) Attitudinal loyalty was measured using the scale from Study 1 but adapted to the current study's context.

What the researchers found

Participants in the first study were mostly male (56.6%). On average, participants were 38.7 years old. The average score on the PGSI was 4.23, suggesting a moderate level of disordered gambling. Participants who were more willing to use a limit setting tool if they were rewarded showed higher attitudinal loyalty toward the casino. This relationship did not change regardless of level of disordered gambling.

In the second study, more participants were male (53.4%) than female (45.7%). The average score on the PGSI was 5.58, suggesting a moderate level of disordered gambling. Age, gender, and disordered gambling severity were similar across both conditions. When compared with participants in the control condition, those in the experimental condition were more willing to use the limit setting tool, which in turn predicted higher attitudinal loyalty. This relationship

did not change regardless of level of disordered gambling.

How you can use this research

This study could inform casino operators and gambling regulators. Further research is needed to understand the effects of providing rewards points for using responsible gambling tools, including long-term effects and unintended negative consequences.

About the researchers

Samantha J. Hollingshead and **Michael J. A. Wohl** are affiliated with the Department of Psychology at Carleton University in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. Michael J. A. Wohl is also affiliated with the Mental Health and Well-Being Research and Training Hub at Carleton University in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. For more information about this study, please contact Michael J. A. Wohl at Michael.wohl@carleton.ca.

Citation

Hollingshead, S. J., & Wohl, M. J. A. (2022). Loyalty program rewards increases willingness to use responsible gambling tools and attitudinal loyalty. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11469-022-00905-y>

Study funding

The researchers did not declare any specific funding sources for this study.

About Greo

Greo has partnered with the Knowledge Mobilization Unit at York University to produce Research Snapshots. Greo is an independent knowledge translation and exchange organization with almost two decades of international experience in generating, synthesizing, and mobilizing research into action across the health and wellbeing sectors. Greo helps organizations improve their strategies, policies, and practices by harnessing the power of evidence and stakeholder insight.

Learn more about Greo by visiting greo.ca or emailing info@greo.ca.

