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Non-problem gamblers' experience with responsible gambling tools online

What this research is about

Many online gambling services have responsible gambling (RG) tools in place to reduce the likelihood of harms associated with problem gambling. RG tools include being able to set limits on how much time or money one spends, getting feedback on one's activity online, taking online self-tests, or freezing one's account.

Regulated gambling operators usually offer many RG tools on their websites. However, this may not be case with illegal operators. There is an assumption that RG tools interrupt or inconvenience recreational gamblers. For that reason, they may withdraw from or abandon a gambling service. However, research has shown contradictory results. Past studies have found that many customers have a positive attitude about RG tools. It is usually the high-risk gamblers who quit gambling sites that have many RG tools. They are also the ones who may seek a website with low or no RG tools. The current research is the first to investigate whether RG tools inconvenience non-problem gamblers. The authors aimed to examine recreational gamblers' experience with RG tools.

What the researchers did

The researchers worked with a publicly governed gambling platform in Finland, paf.com, which provides slot-games, poker, betting, casino games, and bingo games to customers online. After pilot testing the questionnaire, an email invitation was sent to active customers with a link to the questionnaire. In total, 1223 Swedish-speaking customers completed the survey online.

The survey described three main RG tools: setting a monetary or time limit, conducting a self-test on

What you need to know

This study examined the experience of non-problem gamblers with responsible gambling (RG) tools online. The researchers surveyed 1223 customers of an online gambling platform in Finland. Results revealed that RG tools did not interrupt non-problem gamblers at all. They were not bothered by them. In fact, non-problem gamblers had more positive reaction to RG tools than people with problem gambling. People with problem gambling had the highest rates of wanting to, and actually abandoning, a gambling site due to being exposed to RG tools.

symptoms of problem gambling, and freezing one's account. There were also three pictures that helped to illustrate what information on RG tools might look like on a real gambling website.

The researchers used three main measures (concepts) that are important to understand what consumers think of a product. They used the Attitude Towards the Ad and Perceived Relevance of the Ad to examine what the participants' experiences with the RG tools were. The participants rated their overall reaction and then chose specific reactions that fit their experience. The options included: Like/Dislike, Good/Bad, Pleasant/Unpleasant, Informative/ Uninformative, Important/Unimportant, and Helpful/Useless. The researchers also adapted the Perceived Intrusiveness of the Ad scale. This measured how disturbing, forced and intrusive the participants thought of the information. Finally, the Irritation scale was used to measure how irritating the information was.

In addition, the researchers asked about some socio-demographics, including age and gender. They included the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) to measure the severity of gambling problems. They also asked the participants to estimate their gambling intensity and whether they would abandon an online gambling site due to overexposure to RG tools.

What the researchers found

Based on the PGSI, there were four main gambler groups: non-problem gambling, low-risk gambling, moderate-risk gambling, and problem gambling. When comparing their reaction to the verbal descriptions of the RG tools, moderate-risk gamblers reported more positive attitudes, and experienced them as less irritating than non-problem gamblers. When comparing their reaction to the pictures, people with problem gambling had more negative reaction than non-problem gamblers.

When asked whether they had ever abandoned an online gambling site due to overexposure to RG tools, non-problem and low-risk gamblers had the lowest rates of this occurrence. People with moderate-risk and problem gambling had the highest rates of doing so. Even their inclination rates to abandon a site due to overexposure to RG tools were higher than non-problem gamblers.

Participants with more severe gambling problems tended to react more negatively to the pictures of RG tools. As a consequence, they were more likely to abandon an online gambling site due to overexposure to RG tools. Overall, the results showed that RG tools did not inconvenience non-problem gamblers.

How you can use this research

This research could be used by governments, online gambling regulators, and other policy makers. Finding out that RG tools do not inconvenience non-problem gamblers could increase the promotion of the use of RG tools online. Future research could examine the effectiveness of RG tools. Further studies could also investigate why people with problem gambling are more prone to abandoning gambling sites that use RG tools.

About the researchers

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