

Chapter 13

Responsible Gambling Laws' Contributions to Behaviour Change in Problem Gamblers in Online Poker

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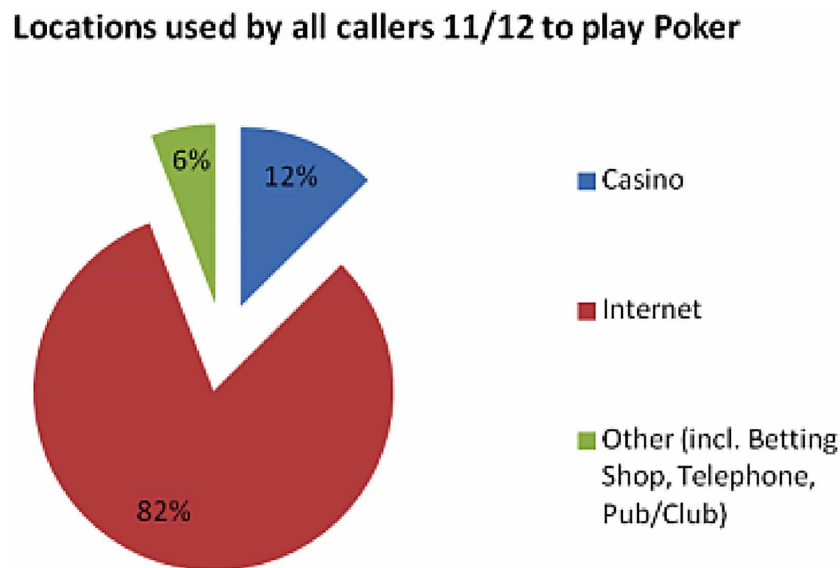
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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the application of responsible gambling legislation and controls in online poker software and to explore if these have an impact on changing consumer gambling behaviour. This study is needed for three reasons, the infancy of the industries completed research, the continued growth of the online gambling market and the risks to consumers and society of higher levels of problem and pathological gambling disorders. Using the current literature to identify the behaviours of problem and pathological gamblers and the features that the online poker operators have in their software, the consumer survey was created. The analysis showed that online poker consumers have a high rate of identified problem gambling behaviours compared to the publicised research of the gambling charities and that having accessed the responsible gambling information the consumers also had a high success rate at modifying them positively. There is also evidence that having the material available to the consumer leads to a higher level of social awareness when looking to the poker operators.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-8595-6.ch013

Figure 1. Consumer location (Gamcare, 2013)



INTRODUCTION

In the modern world of high speed connectivity and instant access, consumer consumption is at an all time high of all things digital. Virtual companies run twenty four hour a day operations globally almost autonomously, so it is ever more important for them to be run legally and with the greater good of the consumers and their social impact in mind. This is especially true for operations that can have a negative impact on its consumers like the online poker industry. The largest proportion of poker players now play online rather than anywhere else (Figure 1).

For the online poker provider's government led legislation is becoming a topic that is dominating the online poker world as the markets are constantly changing in legality and business operation financially. Both protection of the consumer and their money and taxation of the business are high on the agenda over the last year especially in the UK (HM Revenue & Customs, 2014). This consumer protection extends into the requirement of the operators to adhere to responsible gambling guidelines within the legislation in order to provide the consumers with the necessary knowledge to be able to make informed decisions when using the services. As online poker has grown in popularity over the last decade the level of internet usage has grown due to availability and mobile usage. This has led to a product that can be consumed at a speed to cause serious damage to addicted individuals. Problem gambling is well known and has been studied extensively across all forms of sports and casinos and has aided in the creation of the responsible gambling education information available today via charities and gambling operators. Each location in the world has different regulation and for this study the UK will be the main focus.

For any gambling over the internet there is little research in how effective the responsible gambling measures or legislation is on protecting or educating the consumer. Research in any area takes time to build and this piece of work is intended to be a starting point to aid in this respect. It will cover the areas of how effective at creating behavioural change in consumers of online poker the responsible gambling information is when read and if the consumers believe that the operators have a social responsibility to protect the players.

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