



**GAMBLING
COMMISSION**

Qualitative Study into Machine Gamblers

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A report by GfK NOP Social Research, commissioned by the Gambling Commission

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1 Executive summary

1.1 Introduction

The Gambling Commission commissioned GfK NOP Social Research, working in partnership with Dr. Mark Griffiths (Professor of Gambling Studies at Nottingham Trent University), to undertake qualitative research with British machine gamblers. The research aimed to provide an insight into players' motivations and the potential impact of social responsibility measures. Its overall aim was to provide the Gambling Commission with an exploratory look at the impact of gaming machine features on problem and non-problem gamblers in Britain. Its objectives were to understand:

- player motivations for gaming machine play in the context of their gambling activity
- structural characteristics of machines: for example the impact of stakes and prizes, impact of frequency and size of wins, and the availability of note acceptors on player behaviour
- situational characteristics: for example the accessibility of machines to players and the availability of additional funds within a venue (e.g. ATMs)
- player attitudes to smart cards and other technologies which track individual behaviour and allow spending limits to be set.

In order to address these, GfK NOP employed a multi-method qualitative approach consisting of two stages, identified in the diagram below. A total of 48 people (including both gamblers and managers) participated in the research.

Participatory design

- Four interviews with regular gamblers, with observation of machine play
- Interviews with five managers of venues in which play was observed, with further observation of the layout and use of the environment
- Aim: to acquire observational data, compare accounts of play with observation and to help design focus group / depth interview approach



Focus groups / Depth interviews

- Five focus groups with range of machine gamblers (35 respondents in total)
- Four interviews with problem gamblers
- Aim: to explore the research objectives through discussion with a broad range of machine gamblers

The table below shows the sample structure for this research.

Respondent type	Method	Total no. respondents	No. respondents by location				
			London	Dudley	Liverpool	Glasgow	South Wales
Participatory Design							
Regular	4 Interviews	4	2	-	1	-	1
Managers	5 Interviews	5	2	-	1	1	1
Focus Groups / Depth Interviews							
Regular	2 Focus Groups	14	7	-	-	-	7
At-risk	2 Focus Groups	13	-	-	7	6	-
Problem (recovering)	1 Focus Group	8	-	8	-	-	-
Problem (current)	4 Interviews	4	1	-	1	1	1
Total no. respondents		48	12	8	10	8	10

Regular gamblers, at-risk gamblers, recovering problem gamblers and current problem gamblers were defined using a list of nine characteristics derived from the Canadian Problem Gambling Severity Index. These were:

1. I have bet more that I can afford to lose.
2. I have needed to gamble larger amounts of money to get the same excitement.
3. I have gone back to try and win the money I have lost.
4. I have borrowed money or sold something to get money to gamble.
5. I have thought that I might have a problem with gambling.
6. I believe gambling has caused me health problems, including stress or anxiety.
7. Other people have criticised my gambling, or told me that I have a gambling problem.
8. My gambling has caused financial problems for me and/or my household.
9. I have felt guilty about the way I gamble and/or what happens when I gamble.

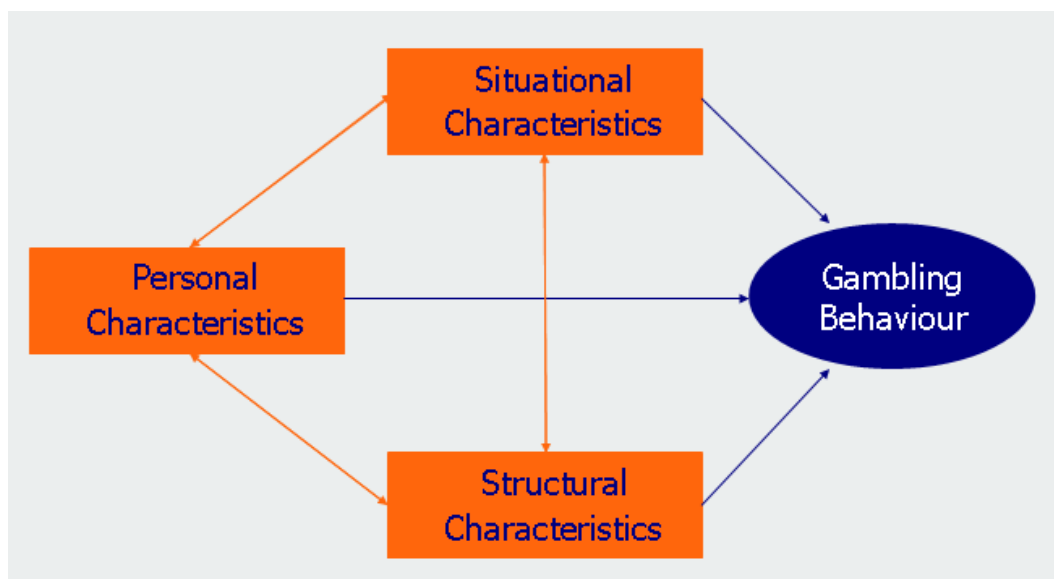
Potential participants were asked how many of the above statements they agreed with and were categorised on the following basis:

- Agreed with 0-1 statements: regular gamblers.
- Agreed with 2-3 statements: at-risk gamblers.
- Agreed with 4-9 statements: problem gamblers.

1.2 Main findings

1.2.1 Motivations for gaming machine play

The research found that machine gambling behaviour is affected by a number of characteristics including personal, structural and situational factors. These characteristics interact (as shown below) and are not mutually exclusive.



Personal characteristics include all the characteristics of the individual gambler insofar as they impact upon his or her gambling behaviour, including factors such as social relationships, financial circumstances, pleasure and enjoyment, and self-affirmation.

Structural characteristics are the features of an individual gaming machine that act to drive and motivate play: e.g. perception of a near miss, the speed of play and frequency of payouts.

Situational characteristics include all the characteristics of the gambling environment impacting upon individual gamblers and their gambling behaviour: e.g. access to gaming machines, their prevalence, social facilitation in the gambling environment and familiarity with that environment.

Within these categories, the research found the following factors to be key drivers of machine gambling behaviour amongst the 43 gamblers researched:

- **Personal**
 - > **Enjoyment:** this included escapism from everyday life and the thrill and excitement of machine gambling motivated by its speed and the sense of real-time risk.
 - > **Social:** for many regular gamblers machine gambling was seen as a social activity while for problem gamblers it tended to be more solitary; bingo halls, casinos and betting shops were all seen to facilitate social gambling while gambling in adult gaming centres was perceived to be more solitary.
 - > **Mastery:** players perceived that through learning to play the machine and by identifying 'tricks', they could minimise the risk of the gamble, and increase the likelihood of winning.
 - > **Financial:** problem gamblers often played to win (or would chase their losses), while regular gamblers usually saw money as a way of facilitating continued play.
- **Structural**
 - > **Near miss¹:** perceptions of a 'near miss' encouraged people to continue playing and sometimes to extend their pre-defined budget for that particular day.
 - > **Speed and simplicity:** the instantaneous thrill and real-time risk of machine playing was intensified by speedier and simpler games. Slower and more complex games were favoured by those less interested in winning (typically regular rather than problem gamblers) and looking to play for longer or to kill time.
 - > **Frequency of payout:** many were encouraged to continue playing when they won small payouts, as it made them feel that they were on a lucky streak. Incremental payouts added to this and sometimes led to more aggressive gambling behaviour.
 - > **Familiarity and skill:** many chose to play a specific machine or game as they had played it many times before and felt that their knowledge of it increased their likelihood of winning, as well as providing them with a feeling of comfort and control.

¹ Deliberate near-misses are subject to regulatory control, and would be non-compliant with s5.2 of the Gaming Machine Technical Standards, June 2007.
(www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/shared_content_areas/gaming_machines_technical_stan.asp)



- **Situational**

- > **Machine density and access:** all machine gamblers believed that machines were easy to access and cited a range of venues where they could play the gaming machines in their local area. The availability of machines was not considered a barrier to machine gambling.
- > **Presence of others:** as identified above, some were attracted to a specific venue due to the opportunity it provided for social interaction; problem gamblers often preferred more solitary, asocial gaming environments.

This research indicated that there may be some distinctions between problem and regular gamblers. In particular, the following differences emerged:

- **Excitement vs. escapism** – Problem gamblers were more likely to cite gambling as an exciting activity whilst regular gamblers tended to focus on it as a way of escaping the realities of everyday life.
- **Chasing money (jackpot, debt) vs. money to facilitate play** – Overall, problem gamblers were more likely to talk about chasing the jackpot or their debt when compared to regular gamblers. Problem gamblers fantasised about the way in which they would spend their winnings. However, regular gamblers often sought to win money to facilitate continued play – these players were looking to play for a long period of time using as little money as possible.
- **Isolated vs. social** – Regular gamblers often discussed the social aspects of machine gambling. Some noted that gambling was important to their social life. Others viewed machine gambling as part of a night out when they would socialise with friends. Problem gamblers tended to view machine gambling as a more solitary experience and most preferred to gamble alone.
- **Itinerant vs. familiar venues** – Continuing from the point made above, problem gamblers tended to be more itinerant in their choice of gambling venue. Their venue choice tended to be driven by machine or game type rather than on the basis of social interaction. Regular gamblers, as noted above, played at familiar venues where they knew fellow gamblers and staff and felt comfortable.

Interestingly, the research did not find that problem gambling was related to jackpot size. Whilst jackpot size was considered important, availability of funds tended to be a stronger driver of behaviour, with funds dictating the category of machine played. Therefore, problem

gamblers were as likely to play category C machines as B1, B2, B3 or B3A,² depending on how much money they had.

² Machine categories are defined in the table below:

Machine	Maximum stake	Maximum prize
B1	£2	£4,000
B2	£100 (in multiples of £10)	£500
B3 / B3A	£1	£500
B4	£1	£250
C	£1	£70



1.2.2 Attitudes towards social responsibility measures

When it came to exploring reactions to social responsibility measures, participants agreed that where social relationships existed within the gambling environment, there was an opportunity for gamblers to be supported in changing their behaviour (either by members of staff or even by fellow customers, who might be able to identify and address any obvious problem gambling behaviour). However, it was observed that these types of social relationships did not always exist and that such social relationships may be more likely amongst regular rather than problem gamblers, as regular gamblers were more likely to be loyal to particular venues.

Despite this, it was widely felt that not all venues the gamblers participating in the research had attended were doing enough to support and assist problem gamblers. In particular, two of the recovering problem gamblers gave examples of staff in different venues not implementing self-exclusion arrangements properly. In one case, the gambler felt he had been hindered from self-excluding from an adult gaming centre, where the proprietor said he did not have the appropriate forms to implement a self-exclusion when approached. In the other, the gambler had self-excluded himself from a betting shop but sent a friend in to play the machines on his behalf. When the proprietor saw him standing outside, looking in through the window, he did not try and stop him from playing vicariously and actually asked how his game was going.

Furthermore, in one of the venues visited, the visibility of gaming machines was impeded while in others, staff showed a reluctance to address problem gambling for fear of aggression on the part of the customer. This suggested that more could be done in venues, whether through their physical arrangement or through staff training, to improve customer interaction as a route to addressing problem gambling.

Use of player or loyalty cards as a social responsibility measure was viewed with scepticism by participants. None of the respondents were using cards at the time and while they could see them as being used by venues for marketing and promotions, they were doubtful of their applicability in a social responsibility context. One of the suggestions made by participants was that venues might phone them up to check everything was all right if they noticed a spike in their spending patterns. However, most did not believe that venues would use them in such an interventionist way, or that such an approach would be particularly effective.

Most of the suggestions focusing on interrupting the flow of machine play (mandatory game breaks, time limits, money limits) were unpopular as they were perceived to run against the pattern of play, which was often repetitive and protracted. Specifically, many players were concerned that machines would stop when they were on a lucky streak or close to winning and interrupt the momentum they had achieved. There were also concerns that such disruption could aggravate violence and aggression amongst gamblers.

However, regular gamblers were open to the idea of pop-up messages informing them of money spent or length of time played. A small number of players felt that this type of information would be useful and could encourage them to stop and think about their behaviour and potentially modify it if deemed necessary.

Overall, it should be noted that participants considered the social responsibility measures discussed in the research rather ineffectual given the prevalence of machines and the ease of access described by respondents during the focus groups and depth interviews. If gamblers were deterred from playing machines in one venue, there was likely to be another venue where they could play in the vicinity.

2 Introduction

2.1 Background

The Gambling Commission regulates gambling in the public interest. It aims to do this by keeping crime out of gambling, by ensuring that gambling is conducted fairly and openly, and by protecting children and vulnerable people from being harmed or exploited by gambling. The Commission also provides independent advice to local and central government on gambling in Great Britain.

In March 2008 the Minister for Sport, Gerry Sutcliffe, asked the Gambling Commission to identify what further research could be done to understand the impact of high-stake, high-prize gaming machines on problem gamblers. The Commission suggested a programme of research, including some qualitative work, to explore the relationship between gaming machines and problem gambling. Initially, in-house desk research (Gambling Commission, 2008) was carried out to review the available research evidence. This found that a limited body of research was available on machine gambling amongst adults in the British context and that most of this had been carried out by a small number of academic researchers. The international research evidence needs to be assessed in terms of its direct applicability in Great Britain because the characteristics of gaming machines in other jurisdictions are often different (eg scale of provision can be different; other differences include frequency of wins, speed of game and the combination of stake size and prize). It was also highlighted that most British slot machines are very different from machines elsewhere in the world because they do not use random number generators (ie British machines tend to use compensated technology providing guaranteed payouts in much shorter time periods than machines using random number generator technologies). Caution is therefore required when interpreting findings and implications from other jurisdictions to the situation here in Britain³. The Gambling Commission (2008) desk research concluded that:

- though there was no agreement on the impact of high-stake, high-prize gaming machines on problem gambling, available evidence suggested that there were associations between gaming machines and problem gambling
- while gaming machines appeared to appeal to many gamblers, they seemed to be particularly attractive to those at risk of, or with a gambling problem; problem gamblers tended to play on gaming machines more frequently and spend more time and money on them than non-problem gamblers
- the accessibility of gaming machines had some association both with levels of gambling and problem gambling rates – local access to machines appeared to be important in this respect

³ A more detailed summary of British and international research on gaming machines can be found in the Appendix.



- further research, conducted in the gambling environment, was needed to understand why most gamblers could enjoy using gaming machines in moderation while others could not.

Following this evidence review and to fulfil commitments made in the letter to the Minister in June 2008, the Gambling Commission commissioned GfK NOP, working in partnership with Dr. Mark Griffiths, Professor of Gambling Studies at Nottingham Trent University, to undertake qualitative research with British machine gamblers – the subject of this report. The research aimed to provide an insight into players' motivations, the factors influencing their behaviour (including machine and environmental features) and the potential impact of social responsibility measures such as smart card technology. It was also required to suggest recommendations for future research.

2.2 Objectives

The overall aim of the research was to provide the Gambling Commission with an exploratory look at the impact of gaming machine features on problem and non-problem gamblers in Britain. Its objectives were to understand:

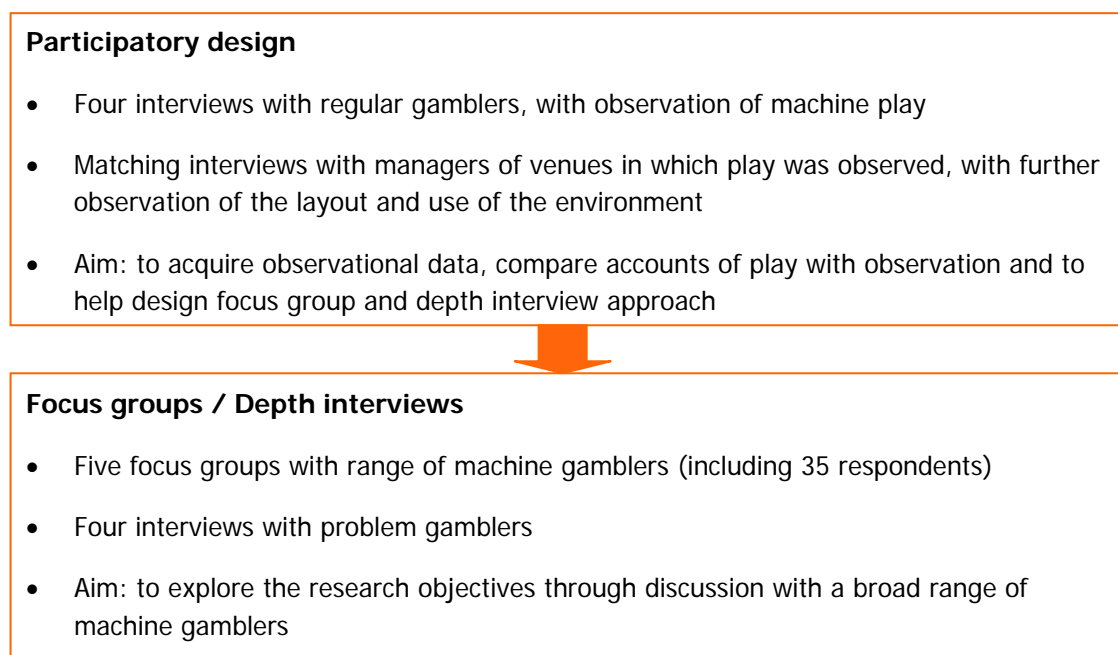
- player motivations for gaming machine play in the context of their gambling activity
- structural characteristics of machines: for example the impact of stakes and prizes, impact of frequency and size of wins, and the availability of note acceptors on player behaviour
- situational characteristics: for example the accessibility of machines to players and the availability of additional funds within a venue (e.g. ATMs)
- player attitudes to smart cards and other technologies which track individual behaviour and allow spending limits to be set.

2.3 Methodology

GfK NOP employed a qualitative approach to meet the objectives for this research, which aimed to uncover the range of motivations for machine play and attitudes towards various elements of the machine playing experience. Qualitative research enabled researchers to explore individual motivations at length and provided a suitable forum for discussing technological innovations. In addition, our qualitative approach was coupled with observation. This was particularly important to addressing the requirements of this study. In order to identify the structural and situational characteristics influencing machine gambling behaviour, it was necessary to observe gamblers in the gambling environment. Players' behaviour often diverged from their account of it and observing behaviour was an effective way of uncovering these disparities. Furthermore, the academic literature has suggested that only scientifically and ecologically valid research (i.e. conducted in a genuine gambling setting) should guide decision-making regarding problem gambling (Parke and Griffiths, 2007). This directed the research team towards carrying out research in a 'natural' setting (i.e. in the gambling environment).

At the outset, a decision was made to include managers of gambling premises in the research, as well as gamblers themselves. It was considered that the perspective of managers would

enable researchers to take a broader view of the machine gambling experience and its various features. While gamblers would be able to talk about their own individual experiences, managers would be able to offer a perspective on their customers as a group. In particular, it appeared likely that managers would be able to offer an insight into structural and situational characteristics of which individual gamblers might be less aware (for instance, it seemed fair to assume that they would know more about how gaming machines are designed in order to encourage play). Given these considerations, GfK NOP suggested a multi-method qualitative approach consisting of two stages, identified in the following diagram. Each stage is discussed in more detail beneath the diagram.



2.3.1 Participatory design

As the Gambling Commission's desk research had shown, little research has been done amongst adult machine gamblers in the British context (Gambling Commission, 2008). Therefore, rather than develop hypotheses to be tested in this research (and questions through which to explore them) based purely on existing data, GfK NOP sought to interview and observe machine gamblers in context in order to design the research approach, identifying hypotheses and developing questions and materials through contact with them. This process was called participatory design.

The participatory design enabled us to gather naturalistic data (i.e. observational and verbal data acquired in the gambling environment) and to inform the design of the focus group and depth interview stage of the research. This first stage of the research involved five venues across the country: one casino, one adult gaming centre, one bingo hall and two betting shops. Within each of these we carried out:



- one depth interview with a regular gambler, lasting one and a half hours⁴
- observation of the regular gambler's machine play, lasting half an hour
- general observation of the venue and of machine play within it, lasting up to one hour
- a depth interview with the manager of the venue, lasting one hour.

Venues were selected for a national spread, with venues in England, Scotland and Wales represented (see Section 2.4 Sample Structure, below). Each of the venues selected hosted machines of the category B2, B3 or B3A, with the exception of the casino, which hosted B1 machines only. The bingo hall and adult gaming centre visited also hosted category C machines. An explanation of these categories is given in the table below, which shows the maximum prize and stake amounts for each.

Machine	Maximum stake	Maximum prize
B1	£2	£4,000
B2	£100 (in multiples of £10)	£500
B3	£1	£500
B3A	£1	£500
B4	£1	£250
C	£1	£70

This approach enabled GfK NOP to get an initial understanding of how to approach the motivations surrounding machine play, and to identify elements for exploration in focus groups. It also allowed researchers to explore awareness of and attitudes towards the structural and situational characteristics at work, as well as potential social responsibility mechanisms, among both regular gamblers and venue managers.

The participatory design raised a variety of insights which were fed into design of the focus groups and depth interviews. These are discussed at more length in the section of main findings and include:

- the influence of social factors and social restraints on machine play
- the relationship between gaming machines and other forms of gambling (particularly the use of machines in 'downtime' periods at bingo halls and betting shops)

⁴ Two betting shops were included in the research due to difficulties interviewing a gambler at the first venue selected. Therefore, while two betting shops did participate, a regular gambler was only interviewed at one of these establishments.



- different types of play and different types of motivation (e.g. 'excitement' vs. 'escape')
- discrepancies between gamblers' accounts of their experience (how much they spend, how long they play for) and their actual play.

2.3.2 Focus Groups/ Depth Interviews

Following the participatory design, a series of focus groups and depth interviews were carried out. Five focus groups were carried out with a range of machine gamblers (regular, at-risk and recovering problem gamblers) and four depth interviews were carried out with current problem gamblers. Each focus group included between six and eight participants and lasted for one and a half hours. Each depth interview lasted one hour. The focus groups and interviews took place across the country in Liverpool, London, Dudley, Glasgow and South Wales (see Section 2.4 for details of sample structure).

Focus groups were GfK NOP's preferred approach to the second stage of this research as they enabled researchers to talk to a larger number of people than individual interviews would have done. They allowed for debate and discussion to take place and encouraged respondents to share and reflect on their experiences. They also provided an environment in which group exercises and games could be used to get respondents discussing their behaviour amongst themselves without the intervention of a moderator. During each focus group respondents were split into teams to discuss, list and explain the various structural and situational features that most attracted them. However, a focus group approach was not appropriate to current problem gamblers. These were individuals who had self-identified as problem gamblers but were not currently seeking help or support. It was felt that speaking to these respondents in a group would not be productive for researchers or comfortable for the respondents, given the sensitivity of their situations.

The purpose of the focus groups was to address each of the research objectives with a broad sample of machine gamblers, in light of the findings from the participatory design. Researchers sought to explore: respondents' motivations; the impact of machine gambling on their wider life; the interplay of machine gambling and other forms of gambling they were involved in; their awareness of, attitudes to and perceptions of the impact of structural and situational characteristics; and their experience of and attitudes to a range of socially responsible technologies and measures. The focus groups and depth interviews enabled us to provide the Gambling Commission with detailed insights around each of the objectives for this study, based on the views of a range of British machine gamblers.



2.4 Sample Structure

The table below shows the sample structure for this research.

Respondent type	Method	Total no. respondents	No. respondents by location				
			London	Dudley	Liverpool	Glasgow	South Wales
Participatory Design							
Regular	4 Interviews	4	2	-	1	-	1
Managers	5 Interviews	5	2	-	1	1	1
Focus Groups / Depth Interviews							
Regular	2 Focus Groups	14	7	-	-	-	7
At-risk	2 Focus Groups	13	-	-	7	6	-
Problem (recovering)	1 Focus Group	8	-	8	-	-	-
Problem (current)	4 Interviews	4	1	-	1	1	1
Total no. respondents		48	12	8	10	8	10

A total of 43 gamblers participated in the research:

- 11 were women and 32 were men.
- All were gambling⁵ on category B machines at least once a week (most were also gambling on category C machines as well, though this was not included in the recruitment criteria), with the exception of one respondent to the participatory design who was gambling on category C machines only.
- All were participating in at least two other forms of gambling each week, these included:
 - > National Lottery

⁵ With the exception of the recovering problem gamblers interviewed in Dudley who were not gambling at the time of research.

- > other lotteries
 - > online
 - > football pools
 - > betting on horse or dog races.
 - > betting on other events with a bookmaker
 - > casino gambling (e.g. roulette, blackjack, poker)
 - > scratch cards
 - > bingo
 - > spread betting
 - > private bets.
- Across the sample, a range of gambling venues were visited, including bingo halls, casinos, betting shops and adult gaming centres.

Locations were selected to include machine gamblers in England, Wales and Scotland, with the north and south of England covered. Respondents to the participatory design were identified from a list of venues provided by the Gambling Commission, based on the four predetermined venue types and locations. Venues were approached and asked to participate in the research. Where they agreed, the venue manager gave permission for GfK NOP to recruit one of their customers on site. Once this was achieved, the interviews and observation were carried out. Respondents to the focus groups and depth interviews were free found in the areas specified⁶. All respondents were screened prior to participating in the research using a questionnaire covering their demographic profile and gambling behaviour (see Appendix, Section 4.3, Recruitment Screener).

The table below shows the spread of ages and socio-economic groups (SEG) included in the research. In each of the focus groups and across the depth interviews and participatory design, a range of ages was recruited.

Age				SEG			
18-24	25-39	40-59	60+	AB	C1	C2	DE
12	12	13	11	8	17	15	8

⁶ Recruitment of the participatory design diverged from this in one case, where GfK NOP was not given permission to recruit a customer on site. In this case, the venue selected a customer for researchers to interview, rather than allowing for random recruitment on site.

Clear definitions were set on the different types of gamblers recruited to the research. These included: regular gamblers, at-risk gamblers, recovering problem gamblers and current problem gamblers. These definitions were set using a list of nine characteristics indicating problem gambling behaviour. These characteristics were derived from the Canadian Problem Gambling Severity Index (Ferris & Wynne, 2001; used by the Gambling Commission in the British Gambling Prevalence Survey, 2007).

They are:

1. I have bet more than I can afford to lose.
2. I have needed to gamble larger amounts of money to get the same excitement.
3. I have gone back to try and win the money I have lost.
4. I have borrowed money or sold something to get money to gamble.
5. I have thought that I might have a problem with gambling.
6. I believe gambling has caused me health problems, including stress or anxiety.
7. Other people have criticised my gambling, or told me that I have a gambling problem.
8. My gambling has caused financial problems for me and/ or my household.
9. I have felt guilty about the way I gamble and/ or what happens when I gamble.

During the recruitment process, potential participants were shown this list and asked to tell the recruiter how many of the statements they agreed with. They were not required to say which ones they agreed with as it was felt that this might deter participation in the research, given its sensitive nature. Following this, respondents were categorised on the following basis:

- Agreed with 0-1 statements: regular gamblers.
- Agreed with 2-3 statements: at-risk gamblers.
- Agreed with 4-9 statements: problem gamblers.

While all current problem gamblers were recruited on an opportunistic basis, the recovering problem gamblers were all recruited via Gordon Moody Association, a residential treatment centre based in Dudley, treating problem gamblers from all over the country.

3 Main findings

3.1 Case studies

The advantage of qualitative research is that it can bring researchers closer to an understanding of individuals' lived experiences than quantitative methods. Therefore, it is appropriate to start this research with case studies of two gamblers – one regular gambler and one problem gambler. These case studies offer an insight into the gambling behaviour of these individuals, the impact of structural and situational characteristics and show the role gambling played in and the effect it had on their wider lives.

The case studies also illustrate some of the differences found in this research between regular gamblers (those exhibiting 0-1 problem gambling characteristics – Case Study 1 below) and those at the other end of the spectrum, exhibiting 4-9 problem gambling characteristics (Case Study 2). These include:

- the variety of venues visited to play machines (with problem gamblers visiting more)
- use of familiar and non-familiar venues (regular gamblers are more likely to stick to familiar venues)
- the ability to control finances and manage spend (with regular gamblers doing this more successfully)
- introduction to machine gambling during adolescence amongst problem gamblers (with introduction during adulthood more common amongst regular gamblers).

In addition, the case studies indicate the importance of social relationships on machine gambling behaviour, with respondents discussing their relationships with staff and other gamblers, as well as the impact of their gambling on family relationships. They also show the relationships that can form between gamblers and the machines themselves (particularly in Case Study 1) and the way in which players use the machine gambling experience to add drama to their lives (Case Study 2). All of these observations are discussed more fully in subsequent sections.



Case study 1: Regular gambler

Player Y is 86 years old and lives in South Wales with her husband. She is financially secure and has a good pension.

She is a regular customer at a bingo hall and goes there at least five days every week. She typically arrives at 11am and leaves at around 4pm. She is very loyal to the bingo hall which is a place where she socialises, has lunch, plays bingo and plays category C gaming machines.

Each day she takes around £100 with her in cash and spends or loses between £20 and £40. This spend includes her lunch, machine play and games of bingo.

A large part of her experience at the bingo hall is the social aspect – she considers fellow gamblers and members of staff to be friends.

"I love all the people in here, they are good people. They look after us in here. As for [name of machine technician] on the machines, he'll be breaking his leg one day because he's dashing round the machines. Oh, he's lovely, he really is lovely."

She enjoys playing the machines as they offer a sense of escape. Her husband has cancer, and has recently become blind, so the machines provide a way for her to forget about these worries.

"It takes your mind off the worries...when I'm on that machine, oh, the world's gone."

Player Y only plays the machines at this venue, and plays one machine in particular. She plays this machine because the game is simple and straightforward (reel machine) and she is familiar with it.

"I concentrate on my machine, I talk to it. And it knows me too."

Her aim is to win money to facilitate continued play, as she spends a large amount of time on the machine every day, and aims to do this whilst putting as little as possible into the machine.



Case study 2: Problem gambler

Player X is 39 and lives in London with his wife and children. He plays gaming machines at a range of venues including betting shops, casinos, pubs and a social club. He also bets on horse and dog races, plays the lottery, gambles online and occasionally plays table games at casinos.

Player X had a serious gambling problem in the past, when he used to gamble a lot on gaming machines, and started gambling online. This led to his being over £20,000 in debt which he has been paying off over the past six years. He has previously attended Gamblers Anonymous.

Nowadays, Player X still gambles but not to the extent that he used to. There are times when he relapses (sometimes spending £500 in two weeks).

Despite attending Gamblers Anonymous, he finds it a continual battle to prevent himself from gambling excessively. When going into town at the weekend, he only carries the amount of cash he needs for the things he intends to buy and no credit or debit cards, in order to avoid the temptation of going into a betting shop and placing a bet. He does not discuss this behaviour or feelings about it with his family or friends.

His favourite game is roulette (played on category B2 machines). He is drawn to the machines because of the excitement that he gets from winning.

"I like the thrill of the win, I like to win the jackpot."

Incremental and small wins had an impact on Player X's gambling behaviour. If he won small amounts, he was encouraged to increase his stake so that the next win would reap a larger reward.

"I've won, okay, I'll have another go...and you just keep loading your bet up. So what's a £10 win is a £20 win."

He has a number of strategies to try and limit the amount of money that he spends on the machines. As mentioned above, this includes leaving credit cards at home and physically avoiding places where he knows there will be machines. This is often difficult as he helps to manage a social club where there is a machine, and he will sometimes find himself playing the machine at night when the other people have gone home. He admits that it is difficult to avoid playing the machines.

"It's a constant battle every day not to go and spend money and have a little gamble."

He noted that his machine playing tends to be cyclical. He may spend £500 over the course of two weeks, and then he will feel guilty and will not play for a month or so. His feelings of guilt have a major impact on his relationship with his wife and his family. He feels guilty for playing on the machines and spending the money, so that when he does win he mediates his guilt by buying gifts for his family (e.g. televisions, laptops).

"I feel very, very guilty...when I win and I spend it on my wife to try and repay for what I've done."

3.2 Machine gambling behaviour

Throughout the research, players described how and when they played on gaming machines. Even amongst individual groups (e.g. regular, at-risk or problem gamblers), patterns of play were extremely varied. Players exhibited different behaviours and approaches to machine gambling. For instance, while some preferred to play in betting shops because of their social atmosphere, others preferred the more solitary environments of adult gaming centres; while some enjoyed playing relatively complex machines (with detailed feature boards or multiple



reels), others preferred simpler, three reel machines. However, a number of general behavioural themes emerged. These are briefly described below and are discussed in detail throughout the subsequent sections of this report.

Introduction to machine gambling

Whilst some players had been machine gambling since adolescence, others had not started machine gambling until adulthood. All problem gamblers included in this research had started machine gambling during adolescence. This had involved visiting adult gaming centres (referred to in some respondent quotations as 'arcades') near their homes, playing on machines in fast food restaurants and pubs or going to betting shops with their fathers and playing on machines there. Most of the problem gamblers said they been introduced to gaming machines by a member of their family (usually their father or grandfather) who had initially played with them or whom they had observed playing on machines. This seemed to have normalised the machine gambling experience for them and removed any sense of machine gambling being an illicit or risky activity. Amongst regular gamblers, only a minority said they had started playing machines before adulthood. These observations appear to confirm a lot of 1990s British research on adolescent slot machine playing (e.g. Griffiths, 1993a; 1995).

"I started playing on the 10p machines in the burger bar when I was about 13." (Problem Gambler)

"My dad used to take me down the bookies and I'd play on the slots there." (Problem Gambler)

Loyalty to venue

The research included a mix of players who were loyal to a specific venue (i.e. only played machines at that venue) and those who were more wide-ranging, playing at a range of venues. In this research, those who were loyal to a specific venue tended to be regular gamblers, while problem gamblers played in more venues. Problem gamblers were also more likely to play at different types of venues (betting shops, casinos, adult gaming centres, etc.) than regular gamblers. It was also clear that most respondents to the research (whether regular or problem gamblers) had favourite machines that they would play regularly and establish a 'relationship' or 'rapport' with. Many were also averse to certain machines, either because they did not like the particular game or because they had lost on them previously. This is indicative of previous research highlighting the fact that frequent machine gamblers tend to have favourite machines (e.g., Fisher, 1993; Griffiths, 1995).

Strategies and Rituals

All players described the various strategies they employed and rituals they performed in order to enhance and control their machine gambling. The role of rituals and strategies by slot machine players has been well documented in the academic literature (e.g., Fisher 1993; Parke & Griffiths, 2006).



In this research, the strategies respondents reported using to enhance their machine play included: recording previous winning numbers on roulette machines and betting on or avoiding these; testing different machines with small bets before deciding which one to play; watching different machines before playing to try and predict which would pay out. Furthermore, the way in which machines worked, how and when they paid out and what strategies worked and which did not were a constant source of theorising and discussion amongst machine gamblers during the research.

Most gamblers put strategies in place to control the amount of money that they spent on machine gambling. This included not taking credit cards out to a venue, carrying a limited amount of cash, restricting themselves to placing a maximum stake, and setting a budget for themselves before going out to a venue. It should be noted that these strategies were not always employed successfully, either by problem gamblers or by regular gamblers. For instance, during the observational work, a regular gambler who had set himself a limit of £3.60 per spin on a game of roulette on a category B2 machine eventually ended up betting over £10 on each spin as his stake increased and his play became more aggressive.

"I go with money to play but then I end up delving into other money, it ends up like that." (Problem Gambler)

"I wouldn't ever put in a card [i.e. use a card to pay over the counter in a betting shop] – I can't trust myself." (At-risk Gambler)

"If I go on a night out I'll take out the money I want to play with and leave my bank card at the house because, I've done it before, my wages have come through, I've gone out and taken my bank card and I've woken up in the morning and there's no money in my bank account." (At-risk Gambler)

Some players also mentioned that they avoided alcohol when playing the machines – again, this was a strategy that they felt helped them to manage and regulate their gambling behaviour.

"I think it numbs your senses in a way, it gives you a false sense of security." (Problem Gambler)

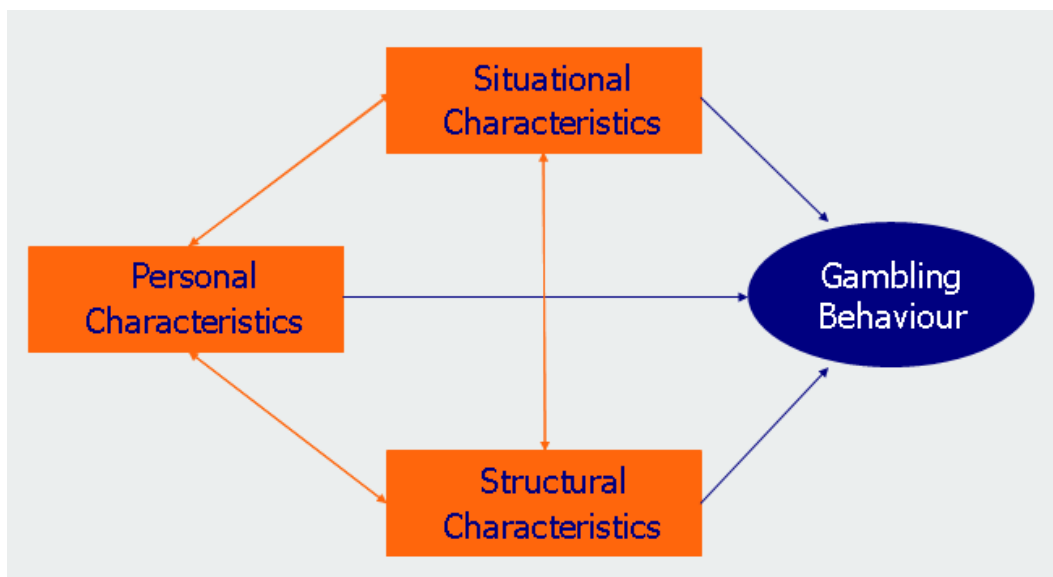
The performance of rituals was widespread amongst all gamblers, especially those in the at-risk and problem gambler groups. These were not ostensibly rational strategies adopted to enable successful game play on a given machine. Rather, they were admittedly irrational acts or routines that individual players thought would bring them luck. They included: only playing on favoured machines and betting on 'winning' numbers (such as a child's age).

"I have numbers like my kid's birthdays and stuff." (At-risk Gambler)

"I play the same three numbers every time, every day, I never change my numbers." (At-risk Gambler)

3.3 Motivations

Gambling behaviour is affected by a number of characteristics including personal, structural and situational (e.g., Abbott, 2007; Abbott, Bellringer, Volberg & Reith, 2004; Blaszczynski & Nower, 2002; Griffiths & Parke, 2003; Parke & Griffiths, 2007; Shaffer et al, 2004) characteristics. These interact (as shown below) and are not mutually exclusive.



Personal characteristics would include all the characteristics of the individual gambler insofar as they impact upon his or her gambling behaviour. They would include characteristics such as an individual's biological make-up, their social setting, and their individual development and psychology (Blaszczynski & Nower, 2002).

Structural characteristics are the features of an individual gaming machine that act to drive and motivate play. Those commonly mentioned in the existing academic literature include the psychology of the near miss, the speed of play, frequency of payouts, sound and lighting effects, stake and jackpot amounts, and payment method amongst others (Parke & Griffiths, 2007).

Situational characteristics include the characteristics of the gambling environment impacting upon the individual gambler and their gambling behaviour. These include factors such as: access to gaming machines, their prevalence, social facilitation in the gambling environment and familiarity with that environment (Abbott, 2007).

3.3.1 Personal Characteristics

This research showed that personal characteristics (i.e. the character and psychology of the individual gambler) had an important role to play in motivating machine gambling behaviour. The investigation of personal motivations led researchers to group these under four broad headings:



1. Enjoyment (feelings of pleasure, including escape and excitement, deriving from the gambling experience).
2. Social facilitation (the mediation of social relationships through the gambling experience).
3. Mastery (feelings of self-affirmation or self-respect engendered by the acquisition of knowledge and skill in machine play).
4. Financial (the availability of money, its acquisition and loss during the gambling experience and its role in motivating play).

The role of each of these is dealt with in detail below.

A) Enjoyment

All players enjoyed playing machines and found the gaming experience pleasurable. However, not all respondents enjoyed playing in the same way and two distinct types of enjoyment emerged during the research. These were enjoyment generated by a sense of escape and that generated by a sense of excitement. Each of these is discussed below.

Many commented that playing the machines afforded them a sense of **escape**⁷. For these players, playing the machines eliminated the worries and concerns of every day life. In some cases these worries were significant and painful (for instance, concerns about family members illness and concerns about financial difficulties), in others they were rather more mundane, with players seeking to escape the daily realities of going to work, doing the shopping, household chores, etc.

"I feel when I'm fed up I go to the machines...you're in a different world [when you play the machines], certainly myself, I just sit in this chair and I just relax." (At-risk Gambler)

"It's just you and the machine. And whilst you are concentrating on the machine you haven't got a care in the world. Everything is left outside the four walls. You don't have to face reality, it's unreal." (Problem Gambler)

"I've often thought I'm in a trance...it's not excitement, its escapism, that's what it is." (Regular Gambler)

⁷ This has been noted in the general gambling literature (e.g. Diskin & Hodkins, 1999; Blaszczynski & Nower, 2002; Grant & Kim, 2003) as well as the more specific British empirical gaming machine gambling literature. Most of this research has been carried out by Griffiths and includes in published case studies (e.g., Griffiths, 1991b; 1993a; 1995; 2003), non-participant observation (Griffiths, 1991; Fisher 1993), and ecologically valid studies (e.g., Griffiths, 1993b; 1994). It has also led to the formation of a model of gaming centred on the gambler's desire for escapism – the escape-based coping model of gambling (Wood & Griffiths, 2007).



As with previous studies, this study found that when playing machines, respondents felt that they could forget the mundane realities of everyday life such as work and shopping. Others noted that they were able to forget serious problems such as financial difficulties. One participant felt that machine gambling enabled her to escape from a serious illness in her direct family (see Case Study 1 in Section 4, above).

Many players were keen to express the **excitement** that they got from machine gambling. For these people, machine gambling added drama to their lives, and was a way of injecting thrills into daily life. Again, this has been widely reported in the empirical literature in almost all types of study including case studies, questionnaires, observational studies and experimental studies (e.g. Fisher, 1993; Griffiths, 1995; 2002; Coventry & Hudson, 2001; Diskin & Hodgins, 2003). This sense of thrill was most strongly voiced by problem gamblers, and at its height, was described by one recovering gambler as 'life and death gambling'.

"If you've gone in with your last £500 in the world and it's Christmas next week and you haven't bought any presents and you're down to your last £5, that last £5 bet, the life and death stakes, is so immense that if you succeed, the thrill of that is so great that you can actually want to go back there again. And the next umpteen times you do it and you don't actually get there is never quite the buzz again. The life and death – will I or won't I? Am I dead or alive? That to me as a gambler is what it was all about. It wasn't about winning the £500 jackpot or getting £20,000 and buying a Mercedes it was, am I alive or dead? What happens with this bet?" (Recovering Gambler)

The instantaneous nature of machine play added to the excitement of the game and was seen as an essential element of machine gambling by many participants. Machine gambling provided an instant gratification not available through most other forms of gambling. In a matter of seconds, a player would know whether they had won or lost. Therefore, the thrills and excitement involved were immediate. In comparison, other forms of gambling such as the lottery or horse racing were seen as a slower and less exciting (or at least, the excitement was delayed), with a player having to wait for an outcome. In comparison, machine gambling offered a real-time risk, which was appealing to many players. This dimension of gambling (i.e. event frequency) has received much discussion and comment in the gambling literature particularly in relation to slot machines (Delfabbro & Winefield, 1999; Delfabbro et al. 2005; Parke & Griffiths, 2006; 2007).

"I like the instant fix, and the constant instant fix. And the anticipation of the next win I found very exciting. And the speed of it. I could never do horses and wait seven minutes for the race to run. I want that thrill instantly. I found when I was gambling I found my heart rate was constantly high for a very long period of time. The lights and everything. I found it really absorbing and really enthralling. As it says on arcades, I was amused. I was amused constantly." (Problem Gambler)

"With the horses you can do a bit of research and find out whether the going's fair, whether it's soft or what the jockey's been up to and what the horse is like ... but on the fruit machines it's like you're shooting guns in the OK Corral. It's all action." (Problem Gambler)

Players liked the thrill of chasing the win, and often fantasised about winning. For example, some players hoped that they would win so that they could spend money on leisure activities



such as going on a night out, on holidays, or on household goods such as TVs⁸. Those with financial difficulties imagined that they would pay off some of their debts if they won. In this respect, respondents felt that winning on gaming machines might positively affect their wider lives.

"You think about all these things you could get – you could pay that off, or you could pay this off, just different things." (Problem Gambler)

The fantasy of spending winnings often interplayed with the way in which machine gambling impacted on personal relationships. Some players talked about the pleasure they took in being able to spend winnings on family gifts. Equally, they mentioned the guilt they felt in losing money that could otherwise have been spent on the family. In this way, personal relationships might affect the way in which gamblers spent their winnings.

"Sometimes I can win lots of money, can win a couple of thousand pound and I walk away and I felt guilty about playing and winning and I'll spend that on my wife and kids and we'll go and do something with it, buy a laptop, I don't know, but spend it on something as opposed to going back in [to the bookmaker's] and spending it again." (Problem Gambler)

Escape and excitement were not mutually exclusive. For some of those who found the machine gambling experience an exciting one, it was clear that the excitement experienced enabled them to forget their cares, worries and mundane matters. For example, one recovering problem gambler reported how, having lost all his money during a session on the machines, he left the arcade to discover that he didn't have enough money for the car park, a consideration he had not given thought to while playing. Also, a number of players noted that playing the machines had a calming effect on them and that doing something familiar (playing the machines) made them feel relaxed. Interestingly, even when players mentioned the calming nature of machine gambling they talked about the thrill and the buzz of playing.

"Once you're in it you're in it...it's just an adrenalin thing. It calms me as well, it calms me a lot." (Problem Gambler)

It should be noted that although players mentioned both the escapism and excitement associated with enjoyment of machine gambling, problem gamblers were more likely to mention the 'excitement' elements of gambling as key motivations for playing. In particular, they were more likely to mention the thrill of the real-time risk, and the drama of winning and losing compared to regular gamblers. Regular gamblers, in contrast, were more likely to focus on the escapism involved in machine gambling and to a lesser extent reported being engaged by 'thrill seeking'. It is worth noting that some of the empirical literature to date has tended to suggest it is regular players who seek excitement and that problem gamblers seek escapism (e.g., Delfabbro, 2000) although Griffiths (1995; 2002) has written extensively on

⁸ Existing UK research shows that these observations have usually been noted in activities such as playing the lottery, rather than in slot machine playing and may be a new finding of this study (Griffiths & Wood, 2001; Wood & Griffiths, 2004).



primary slot machine addicts (whose primary motivation is excitement) and secondary slot machine addicts (whose primary motivation is escape).

B) Social

Many players considered machine gambling a social activity. For instance, regular gamblers playing machines in bingo halls saw machine gambling as part of a wider social occasion, during which they would also play bingo, have a drink and socialise with their friends. Similarly, regular gamblers attending casinos often did so with friends as a part of a night out, combining machine play with other forms of gambling, as well as with dinner, socialising and drinking. Such observations about the social reinforcement aspects have been well reported in the literature. For instance, Abbot and Volberg (1999) cite studies that examine the role of gambling in affirming individual and community identity, although the meaning of community is diverse, ranging across age, gender, and geographical location. They argue that some forms of gambling such as bingo, poker machines and track betting can play a role in sustaining community identity and providing social support networks.

"It's not just the gambling, it's the social life and the whole evening." (Problem Gambler)

Even in betting shops (which were generally seen as male-dominated and less open to social interaction), machine play had an obvious social dimension. For instance, during the participatory design, a crowd of onlookers formed around the respondent being observed while he was on a winning streak and a sense of camaraderie began to emerge, with onlookers muttering words of support. At one point, another customer (unknown to the gambler) purchased a cup of coffee and handed it to him in a gesture of support. Similarly, machine gamblers in betting shops were often said to share tips, knowledge and skills – for example, concerning which machines were not paying out and which numbers to bet on (during games of roulette). In contrast, adult gaming centres were seen as far less conducive to social interaction and respondents using these venues commented that they did so when they wished to avoid other people.

A small number of players viewed the place where they played the machines as a second home. This was particularly where social life revolved around the venue, as was noted in the case of a few users of bingo halls and casinos. These players were dedicated to a specific venue, and often went there every day (as described in Case Study 1). They considered other gamblers and staff at the venue as their friends and were observed by researchers to have established personal relationships with them.

"There's a lot of people play the machines and you get to know them so there is a wee kind of social circle to it as well." (At-risk Gambler)

Not all social motivations for machine gambling involved direct interaction between individuals in the gambling environment, however. Indeed, indirect social facilitation was also observed during the research. For instance, as previously noted, some gamblers reflected on items they would buy for family members while playing, if they were to win. On losing, these respondents also claimed that they would be filled with remorse at the impact their loss might



have on their family. In these cases, family relationships were highly relevant to the experience of machine play.

Across the research, it was evident that regular gamblers were more likely to cite the social aspects and benefits of machine gambling as a key motivation to playing. Problem gamblers, on the other hand, were more likely to prefer to play machines in a solitary and anonymous way.

C) Mastery

An important motivation for many players was the challenge to beat the machine. They enjoyed learning to play the machine and hypothesising about different techniques and tricks that they felt would maximise their likelihood of winning. Many players chose to routinely play the same game to improve their level of skill, improving their success through heightened knowledge. To some extent, gaining mastery gave players a sense of self-affirmation that they were skilled players and were controlling the risk associated with machine gambling.

"I learned how to do the wee tricks and things like that, you know, what buttons to press and how you get the choices...it's like a personal thing, you feel as if you know how to use it and another person doesn't." (Problem Gambler)

"...You're more knowledgeable on that machine aren't you?" (Regular Gamblers)

"I know how the machine works. I play it, I understand it, we have a relationship between me and the machine." (Problem Gambler)

In demonstrating skill and mastery, some players noted that they gained respect from venue staff and other gamblers and this became important to their self-image as a knowledgeable and skilled gambler. However, no clear distinctions emerged between regular and problem gamblers. While it may be that attitudes to skill and mastery have different impacts on the motivations of each of these groups, no such conclusion is borne out by the findings of this study.

D) Financial

While all players did want to win money through playing machines, financial motivations were rarely given most emphasis by respondents. Furthermore, the role of money – its significance and how it was to be used – differed from one type of gambler to the next.

For instance, some players – typically regular gamblers – wanted to win money in order to facilitate continued play. This has been described as 'playing with money rather than for it' and 'staying on the machine as long as possible using the least amount of money' (Griffiths, 1990a; 1994).

"If I put £50 in those machines as I did today, I get that back and feed the machine with what I got out." (Regular Gambler)



Other players, particularly at-risk or problem gamblers, focused on winning or chasing the jackpot. They were intent on beating the machine and were often prone to fantasies about what they would do with the money when they won, which went beyond putting it back into the machine (e.g. they fantasised about buying consumer goods, holidays or paying off debt).

"If it comes in [the jackpot] you'll have a big change – you'll buy the bookie's, you know what I mean... [in my mind] I've got the flights booked and everything!" (At-risk Gambler)

"You think you've got to get your money back so you put more in." (At-risk Gambler)

3.3.2 Structural characteristics

A range of structural motivations were discussed during the research. Of these, **speed** and **perception of a near miss** were consistently recognised by participants as being most important to motivating machine play. Participants also indicated that the **simplicity** of the game, **frequency of payouts** and **familiarity** of the machine or game, **level of skill** and the **jackpot amount** had an important role in motivating machine play. Payment method and ambient features such as sound and light effects were seen by participants as having less importance in motivating play.

A) Perception of a near miss

The perception of a near miss and the 'psychology of the near miss' stimulated by gaming machines played an important role in respondents' attitudes to machine play. Some players talked about near misses as 'the one that got away' and the perception that they had nearly won or got close to accruing a greater amount of credit encouraged them to continue playing. For this reason, the perception of a near miss often resulted in gamblers increasing their spend. During the observational work, one respondent was observed to place more and more money on each bet (i.e. roll of the ball in a virtual roulette game) as certain lines of numbers he was betting on appeared to win more frequently than others. Furthermore, many gamblers commented that the perception of a near miss often encouraged them to exceed their pre-determined budget. If they thought they had experienced a near miss they would put some extra money into the machine to see if they could win on the next go.

"If it comes up with the right numbers on the roulette you might put more in and carry on playing because your numbers might come up." (Problem Gambler)

Near misses also contributed towards beliefs about how the machines worked, and encouraged players to theorise about how the machines were programmed, and what skills and tricks could be learnt from this. For example, one participant suggested that there was a pattern to a roulette machine, and that if a certain number came up when he started playing the game, he could determine which numbers would come up subsequently.

"Well on the roulette, even though it's meant to be random, there is still a pattern to it. If a nought comes in within seven spins you do get a zero or a five. Every time. You're going to do £50 a spin to get it, because you think its going to come up." (Problem Gambler)



In many cases this kind of theorising and speculation demonstrated the ‘suspension of disbelief’ at work in the machine gambling experience. While gamblers knew their beliefs (e.g. that a zero or a five would follow a zero within seven spins in a game of roulette) were not true, or at least that they were highly tendentious, they simultaneously maintained their faith in them and believed they would bring them reward. During interviews and focus groups, many gamblers observed that the machines they played were random, and that they could not predict patterns in them. However, when they actually played, this reality was forgotten and their beliefs about the machine and how it worked took over.

B) Speed and simplicity

As previously mentioned, the instantaneous nature of machine play, and the real-time risk involved was a key motivation for many players. This was only enhanced by the speed of machine gambling compared to some of the other forms of gambling. For instance, two of the recovering problem gamblers commented on how they preferred playing virtual roulette games to actual roulette games in casinos because they were so much faster and time was not wasted with the collection of chips and the placing of bets by multiple players.

“I played roulette on the table and it wasn’t quick enough for me. I was too impatient, I couldn’t wait. So I’d play the machines.” (Problem Gambler)

“It’s quick and easy, you can just walk in, play your money and walk out...it’s something to do, a quick fix.” (At-risk Gambler)

“They’re very fast. A gambler’s trait is impatience and there’s no waiting around ... Its just you and the machine, pressing the button.” (Problem Gambler)

“I didn’t go for the feature games, I went for simplicity. Your sevens, bars. Simple, repetitive, quick. I assumed I knew how to play them and was more likely to win on them.” (Problem Gambler)

A few problem gamblers likened machine play to taking a drug. The more they played, the more they wanted to play, driving the need for faster and faster games that enabled greater frequency of play.

“I like the instant fix, the constant fix.” (Problem Gambler)

Many facilitated faster play by using the ‘autoplay’ function on the machines. Machines that enabled multiple lines or bets were also liked for this reason. A minority of the problem gamblers also mentioned that they sometimes played more than one machine at a time to speed up the playing experience.

The simplicity of the machine played could determine the speed of the game and simpler machines were often seen as being faster (i.e. having greater frequency of play) than more complex machines which required thought and might take longer to operate. Games such as virtual roulette and simple three reel machines with no feature boards were usually seen as faster than more complex machines with feature boards and multiple reels.



Interestingly, we found that the majority of problem gamblers preferred to play simpler rather than more complex machines. This was because they could play faster and enjoy more opportunities to win within the time they were playing. Simpler, faster machines also added to the sense of instant gratification and instant, real-time risk sought by these gamblers.

"When a feature came up it wasted your time. You just wanted to know whether you'd won or you'd lost. That was good enough for me. No messing around." (Problem Gambler)

Slower and more complicated games tended to be preferred by those gamblers who enjoyed developing their skills and knowledge of a game while playing it. Most of these respondents were regular gamblers, though this group also included some at-risk and problem gamblers. These players were often looking to kill time rather than chase winnings and this was facilitated by playing slower games. Longer play was enabled by more complex machines and games, for example those that included a feature board or multiple reels. More complex machines were also preferred by people who sought skill-based games.

"You've got to do more so it makes your money last longer." (Regular Gambler)

C) Frequency of payout

Frequency of payout was fundamental to machine play. If gamblers were not winning something frequently (however small the credit awarded) they would not continue playing the machine. Frequent payouts gave respondents the sense of being on a 'winning streak' and encouraged them to keep playing a particular machine.

As discussed, problem gamblers preferred faster games and therefore desired a higher payout frequency. These gamblers were more likely to be chasing the jackpot offered by a particular machine and were looking to achieve this as quickly as possible, building up their credit in increments. Those who played to acquire mastery of a game (and who therefore played slower, more complex games) were less demanding, though they still desired frequent payouts.

Throughout the research, we found evidence to suggest that frequent payouts tended to:

- encourage more aggressive play, with gamblers staking higher amounts as their credit increased
- encourage belief in the near miss – if a gambler built up a large amount of credit quickly and subsequently lost it, he or she was often left with the feeling of having come close to having a big win
- encourage gamblers to play beyond their intended budget, as there was always the chance of winning money in the next few plays.

Most players were sensitive towards machines that had recently paid out large amounts of money. Many hypothesised that once a machine had paid out a large amount of money, it would not pay out again until a substantial amount of money had been spent (and lost) on it. For this reason they avoided machines that had recently paid out and some warned or received warnings from fellow gamblers in this regard. Given the adaptive logic ('compensator') systems that many British slot machines utilise, this was a rational assumption



for players to make in many cases (Parke & Griffiths, 2006; 2007). However, it was evident that gamblers wrongly applied these assumptions to random machines, such as virtual roulette machines.

D) Familiarity and skill

As mentioned previously, players often favoured a particular machine or game. They commented that they felt comfortable playing a game or machine that they felt they knew. Some players even formed relationships with particular machines, for instance, choosing only to play one or two machines in a particular venue.

"I only play on three of the machines – I won't play on any of the other ones...if you go in on a regular basis you know roughly when it's about time when one of the machines is going to drop the jackpot...and which of the machines play better than others." (Regular Gambler)

"I always play the same machine [and game] because you're risking it if you're going into a game blind...because you don't know how to play that game." (Problem Gambler)

Another example of this is Case Study 1, reported in Section 3.1 above. The respondent here visited a bingo hall five days a week yet only ever played on two machines in the venue. This was despite the fact that there were other machines of exactly the same type in that venue. She saw herself as having a close relationship with these machines and only felt comfortable playing them.

A sense of familiarity enabled respondents to feel in control of the game they were playing and helped them to relax, as they believed they knew the machine and how it worked. They also felt it helped them to develop their level of skill and proficiency on a particular game. The longer they played a machine, the more familiar they were with the way it functioned, the various features it possessed and the frequency with which it paid out. All of these things added to the gamblers' sense of comfort and helped them to feel in control of the game they were playing.

E) Jackpot and stake size

Before discussing the importance of jackpot and stake size, it is worth considering how these operated. Firstly, the ratio of stake to jackpot was seen as important, both by managers and by gamblers. Where this ratio was too small (i.e. a high stake was required to win a low jackpot), as it was seen to be on certain category C machines, the machine was likely to be disregarded.

"Some machines are no good for us. If the stake is too high compared to the jackpot, people won't play them." (Manager)

Secondly, it was rarely the case that gamblers would be able to win the jackpot in one play (though this was the case for some machines, such as virtual roulette). Rather, players would build up their credit through incremental wins. Given this, it was still rare that anyone would actually 'win the jackpot'. A successful player was more likely to stop playing once they had

won an amount they were satisfied with rather than the full jackpot. Where a player did win the jackpot they were likely to stop playing the machine that had just paid out. However, they would not always stop playing altogether and might well begin playing another machine at this point.

This research did not find evidence that jackpot amount was a strong driver of gambling behaviour. Respondents did not indicate that they were drawn to play machines (rather than engage in other forms of gambling) because of the size of jackpot offered. Rather, it was the funds available to an individual gambler that dictated which machines they played and how they played them. Where a gambler would have preferred to play a B2 machine (maximum stake £100, maximum prize £500) but funds did not permit this, it was often the case that he or she would resort to playing a category C machine (maximum stake £1, maximum prize £70). This indicates that stake size had a larger effect on which machines were played and how they were played, with gamblers playing on machines requiring smaller stakes when they could not afford to play on more expensive machines.

While it is true that problem gamblers were more likely to chase the jackpot than regular gamblers, whose play was more controlled, problem gamblers were likely to play in this way (i.e. chasing the jackpot) whatever category of machine they were playing. It was certainly evident that problem gamblers preferred playing high jackpot machines, but they would play category C machines where lack of funds dictated. Again, stake size had an influence on the machine played in these instances.

"[The machine I played] varied depending on how much money you've got. I literally went into an arcade when it opened at nine o'clock in the morning and stayed till it closed at nine o'clock at night." (Problem Gambler)

In addition to winning money or credit, some players also reported enjoying 'winning' bonus features or additional prizes such as:

- free plays
- free credit
- access to additional features such as a feature board.

"If you won, there was a free spin of the wheel and you could increase your win. It was like a coloured wheel and as a winner [at roulette] you could go onto this. In it was little things like that, that other roulette machines didn't have, that I used to like." (Problem Gambler)

It should be noted, however, that although it has been reported that high jackpots appear to be important in acquisition of gambling behaviour (Griffiths & Wood, 2001), the high jackpots in question are usually hundreds of thousands of pounds or millions rather than the relatively small jackpots on British slot machines.

3.3.3 Situational Characteristics

A number of situational characteristics were reported as motivating gambling behaviour across the research. Most important in motivating gaming machine players to gamble were **access** to gambling environments and **prevalence of machines**. Again, **familiarity** was

considered important, as was the **presence of others** and the availability of **food and drink**. To a lesser extent freebies and floor layout were mentioned by players.

A) Machine prevalence and access

All respondents agreed that they had easy access to machines. None reported having to travel very far to play them and most played machines within walking distance of their home or work. It was also clear that players were able to gamble on machines at most times during the day and night if they so desired, whether in betting shops, adult gaming centres, bingo halls, casinos or pubs. The opening hours of gambling establishments were not considered a barrier to access and many noted how the opening hours of venues such as betting shops had increased in recent years.

"It's convenience, it's on your doorstep. I can walk across from my front door and there's a machine there and they all know me, been going there for 20 years, you know." (Problem Gambler)

Furthermore, gaming machines were felt to be more prevalent than they had ever been in the past. Many respondents commented that betting shops in particular had only started hosting machines in recent years and that prior to this, did not have them on the premises. It was also observed that bingo halls had started hosting machines or were hosting more machines than previously and that these were now being installed in rooms separate to the main hall to enable continued play during games of bingo. (In fact, this phenomenon was observed by researchers in the bingo hall visited, which was being refurbished at the time.)

"You find them [gambling machines] everywhere now. When did they introduce them to bookies? There was a time not so long ago when you wouldn't have found them in there." (Problem Gambler)

Gamblers perceived the effect of this increase in prevalence to be a decrease in 'downtime' or periods between betting in these venues. For instance, where there had been frequent breaks between races in bookmaker's in the past, respondents noticed that these had now been filled by foreign races, virtual races and the presence of gaming machines.

One respondent commented on how the accessibility of gaming machines, combined with the availability of online gambling, presented almost unlimited opportunities for gambling:

"I'd start work at nine but I'd get to the bookmaker's in town for half eight, have half an hour before I went to work. Then because I worked in an office I'd be on the internet gambling till half ten. That's when the smokers would have a break. I didn't smoke but I'd use that time to go downstairs, go round the corner to the bookmaker's, getting a quick fix on the roulette. Back to the office at twenty to eleven, on the internet till lunch, in the bookmakers and then after lunch casino till about one, two – then come home. I'd always find money, however it was, you know." (Problem Gambler)



B) Presence of others and familiarity

The presence of others at the gambling venue and specifically around the gaming machines had an effect on respondents' motivation to play. Some players were attracted by the opportunities for social interaction presented by certain venues. For example, those attending bingo halls often went in groups or met friends there and, between games of bingo, would play on the machines. This often involved conversation with friends on neighbouring machines, during which players would discuss how their game was going. Social interaction was present in casinos and betting shops as well, though adult gaming centres tended to facilitate a more solitary gaming experience.

For those who enjoyed socialising while playing machines, the availability and quality of food and drink was an additional factor determining their attitude towards the gambling environment. For example, in one group a few regular gamblers chose to go to a particular local casino for a night out with friends because they could play machines and start the evening with a good quality meal. This made this type of gambling experience more of an event.

"If you're out with a group you want decent food, decent environment, somewhere where you can sit back for the night and enjoy yourself." (At-risk Gambler)

Problem gamblers were less likely to report the importance of the presence of others. They were also more likely to be more itinerant than regular gamblers, visiting a number of different venues. This observation concurs with much literature showing that as gambling becomes more problematic, the activity becomes more asocial and that such gamblers are more likely to play on their own (Griffiths, 1999a; 2006).

Many respondents were attracted to familiar gambling environments and familiar gaming machines. This has been discussed previously. The research shows that regular gamblers tended to stick to venues and machines they were familiar with, while problem gamblers played at a wider variety of venues and on a wider variety of types of machine.



3.4 Social Responsibility

Across the research, players were asked to comment on a number of social responsibility measures aimed at helping machine gamblers monitor time and money spent gambling. These were described as follows:

Player cards

- Players can put credit on player cards and use these to play on gaming machines⁹. Venues can monitor play and take action if a player is getting into trouble (e.g. playing for too long, spending too much).

Pop-up messages

- Pop messages could be shown on gaming machines when a player has been playing for a long time or spent a lot of money, to warn them of this.

Mandatory game breaks

- Gaming machines could shut down for 5 minutes each hour to ensure players are taking regular breaks from playing machines.

Time limits

- Limits on the amount of time someone can play a gaming machine in one session.

Money limits

- Limits on the amount of money someone can spend on a gaming machine in one session.

Number of machines

- The number of machines in each venue could be limited.

Responsible gambling information on site

- Leaflets and posters providing information about responsible and safe gambling within the venue.

Self-exclusion programme

- People with gambling problems can exclude themselves from gaming machines at specific venues. This is done voluntarily. Once excluded, the individual would not be allowed to play gaming machines at that venue.

Discussion of these, as well as spontaneous discussion of the various ways in which gamblers thought problem gambling was tackled generated three broad topic areas with regard to social responsibility. These were **social restraints, restricting access and breaking up play**. A discussion of each of these follows in the sections below.

⁹ To increase participant understanding the term 'slot machine' was used when presenting these measures to respondents.



A) Social restraints

Overall, social restraints were seen as key to tackling problem gambling tendencies. It was widely felt that social relationships could enable problem gambling to be identified, monitored and addressed. Three relationships were seen as important in this regard:

- Between the gambler and members of staff at the venue.
- Between the gambler and fellow customers at the venue.
- Between the gambler and his or her family and friends.

Support from family and friends was seen as important in overcoming gambling problems by a few of the problem gamblers. Friends and family could help deter individuals from engaging in problem gambling behaviour, help them develop strategies to avoid gambling, and encourage them to seek support and advice from other sources. However, many of the problem gamblers admitted that their friends and family did not know the extent of their gambling problem and for many, the barriers to disclosing their problems to friends and family seemed insurmountable. Furthermore, it was commonly acknowledged that as it was very difficult for a gambler to admit that he or she had a problem, they would be unlikely to confess this to anyone else.

Members of staff and fellow customers at gambling venues were seen as better positioned to identify gamblers who were exhibiting problematic behaviour. Where relationships between gamblers and staff or fellow customers were close, there was a possibility that these staff or customers might intervene to prevent them from running into severe difficulties. However, where relationships were not so close, this kind of intervention was unanimously seen as less likely. Furthermore, most felt that the problematic behaviour would have to be fairly pronounced to warrant any kind of intervention – e.g. displays of aggression or violence, despair or anxiety.

A small minority of respondents were close to certain fellow customers or members of staff at particular venues and in some cases considered them to be their friends. In these instances it was felt that the customers or members of staff in question would be likely to identify that they had a problem (e.g. if they were spending more money than usual or if they appeared to be behaving differently) and to talk to them about it. This might involve having a quick chat at the machines or even taking them away from the machines to talk to them in a different part of the venue. As one manager commented:

“If a member of staff sees evidence of problem gambling – someone playing out of character or spending more money than usual, they will report it to the manager who would have a quiet word with them out of sight and earshot.” (Manager)

However, the presence of this type of social relationship was often lacking, making this kind of intervention unlikely or difficult. This was particularly the case for those who gambled anonymously in many different venues and had learnt to keep their problem gambling concealed.

“My husband knows about my gambling but he doesn’t know it’s as bad as it is.” (Problem Gambler)



Moreover, many respondents were sceptical about how much responsibility venue staff would be willing to take for monitoring or restraining problem gambling behaviour. They queried whether venues that made money from gambling would be likely to take this approach. In this context two of the recovering problem gamblers gave examples of staff in different venues not implementing self-exclusion policies properly.

"I self-excluded from an arcade and they were good about that, they made sure I didn't go in there 'cos they were worried about losing their licence if I was seen going in there on CCTV. Having said that, at another arcade where I self-excluded, they made it very difficult for me to self-exclude 'cos they didn't want me to exclude myself. You know, 'I haven't got the form' and, 'I've had to send off.'" (Problem Gambler)

"I exclude myself and ... sent a friend in [to a betting shop] with the money [to play the machines]. I was watching through the window and the manager came out and said, 'How are you getting on? Up or down?'" (Problem Gambler)

In addition, members of staff themselves were sceptical about how much responsibility they could take for identifying and tackling problem gambling in their venue. Two managers were of the view that taking a gambler aside if their behaviour seemed erratic could be counter-productive, potentially leading to anger and aggression and therefore felt that this might not always be the socially responsible thing to do.

In some instances, the gambling environment itself, and particularly the floor layout, was seen as a barrier to machine players forming social relationships with staff, or even of being watched and monitored by them. For example, in one venue there were physical barriers – a room divider and partition wall – restricting the view of the area between the door and the gaming machines from the desk (counter), potentially hindering staff from observing players when entering the venue and when playing some of the machines.

Given the scepticism most respondents had with regard to members of staff monitoring, identifying and addressing problem gambling (as well as the reluctance of some to implement self-exclusion policies), the use of player cards for social responsibility purposes was viewed with great scepticism. None of the respondents were using cards at present and while they could see them as being used by venues for marketing and promotions, they were doubtful of their applicability in a social responsibility context. Respondents did not believe that venues would, for instance, phone them up to check everything was all right if they noticed spikes in their spending patterns.

B) Restricting access and breaking up play

Two of the social responsibility measures discussed involved restricting gamblers' access to machines. These were: self-exclusion programmes and limiting the number of machines in a given venue. While players saw these as valid ways of restricting access and curbing problem gambling behaviour they also saw them as having severe limitations. Self-exclusion programmes required gamblers to identify that they had a problem and address this with a venue manager and, therefore, would not be very effective in the case of those who did not consider that their gambling was problematic. Equally, attempts to restrict the number of



machines in a given venue failed to take into account the prevalence of gaming machines and venues hosting gaming machines (as discussed in Section 3.3.3 above) reported across the sample.

Most of the suggestions focusing on breaking up the flow of machine play (mandatory game breaks, time limits, money limits) were unpopular. This was because they were perceived to run against the logic of machine play, interrupting the flow of the game. Specifically, players were concerned that machines would stop when they were on a lucky streak or close to winning and interrupt the momentum they had achieved. There were also concerns that such disruption could aggravate violence and aggression amongst gamblers.

"You can't have that. The machine would stop when you're on a roll and all hell would break loose." (Problem Gambler)

"It depends on whether it [the machine] is shut down and brought back up to that person ... How would that work?" (Problem Gambler)

However, regular gamblers were open to the idea of pop-up messages informing them of money spent or length of time played. A small number of players felt that this type of information would be useful and could encourage them to stop and think about their behaviour and potentially modify it if deemed necessary.

"I thought the pop-up one was quite good – at least the people that make the machines, at least they're warning you. It's whether you take that warning or not." (At-risk Gambler)

Even regular gamblers were keen that any pop-up message should not significantly interrupt play, or change their current status/stage of play. Furthermore, problem gamblers said they would ignore such messages or keep playing in spite of them and did not think they would have an impact on their behaviour.

Overall, it should be noted that the social responsibility measures discussed in the research were considered to be rather ineffectual by respondents given the prevalence of machines and the ease of access described during the focus groups and depth interviews. If gamblers were deterred from playing machines in one venue, there was likely to be another venue where they could play in the vicinity.

3.5 Recommendations for Further Research

The Gambling Commission asked the research team to make recommendations for further research based on the findings detailed above. These are discussed below.

A) Research methods

While the focus groups generated a good deal of debate and discussion, we would recommend that any future qualitative research prioritises a depth interview methodology over focus group work. The depth interviews worked particularly well for this research as they enabled players to speak openly and candidly about their experiences and views. It was evident that problem gamblers in particular enjoyed taking part in the depth interviews and

were more than willing to describe their experiences, perhaps because they had not been able to do so before amongst friends and family members. In contrast the focus groups seemed to produce less candid responses, with participants opening up less about their emotional states while gambling and more often limiting themselves to discussion of financial considerations.

The observational component brought significant benefits to this research. It enabled researchers to observe the wider gambling environment, and understand gambling behaviour in context, which increased their ability to explore the situational and structural characteristics motivating play. A vital element of the observational element was the ability to compare verbal descriptions of behaviour and actual behaviours. This allowed GfK NOP to explore differences between players' stated strategies and the actual way in which they played. Asking players about these disparities, on completion of the observation, further enabled them to reflect and be more considered in their responses. This would also support studies that could collect machine data on actual play over continuous periods if access to this data were granted by the industry. Livingstone et al (2006) suggest data collection could include:

- Expenditure per specific gaming machine game/platform per annum.
- Numbers of gaming machines per venue.
- Use rate of gaming machine game/platform.
- 'Free' spins won.
- Use rate of gamble feature.
- Average expenditure per gaming machine.
- Values of banknotes inserted within sessions of play.
- Bet values.
- Aggregate expenditure at venue.
- Expenditure rates for high credit value gaming machines.
- Time spent playing per player.

Interviewing venue managers was also worthwhile and shed greater light on the impact of venue design and machine features on gambling behaviour. It also enabled researchers to look beyond the sample of gamblers interviewed, drawing on anecdotes and experiences from the gambling environment provided by these venue managers.

B) Typologies

Due to the relatively small sample in this research it is difficult to carry out a detailed analysis of different demographic groups and types of gamblers. It would be worth exploring and investigating the findings arising from this study with a larger, more representative sample of British gamblers so that results could be segmented according to:

- age, gender, socio-economic group
- gambler type (whether the categorisation of regular/at-risk/problem is appropriate and how behaviours vary across these types)
- venue type (bingo hall, casino, bookmaker, adult gaming centre).



This research also suggests that further research could investigate player behaviour and attitudes by machine category. Specifically, it would be interesting to explore any correlation between machine categories and pattern of play, and whether problem gambling differs across machine categories.

C) Research agendas

Given that this research was exploratory and the sample was small, its conclusions would have to be validated through further research carried out with a representative sample of British gamblers. Each of the areas explored in this study could be investigated further through more detailed and robust research, whether qualitative or quantitative. Some suggestions for this are made below:

- Player motivations for gaming machine play in the context of player gambling activity:
 - > The nature and prevalence of direct and indirect social relationships and how these impact on existing and potential social restraints.
 - > Excitement vs. escapism – how these personal motivations influence gambling behaviour and to what extent they influence the amount of control that players actually exercise or perceive they have over their gambling.
- Structural characteristics of machines, their interplay with personal and situational factors and the extent to which they drive gambling behaviour:
 - > Simplicity vs. complexity of machine – what role does the complexity of the machine/ game have on gambling behaviour?
 - > The extent to which jackpot size motivates gambling behaviour compared with stake size or value for money (ratio of stake to jackpot).
 - > The extent to which structural characteristics be manipulated to discourage problem gambling.
- Situational characteristics and the dynamics of different venues:
 - > Social vs. isolated play and the extent to which machine gambling behaviour differs across different types of venue.
 - > To what extent do social responsibility measures need to be adapted to different venue types (e.g. 'social' venues such as bingo halls vs. 'isolated' venues such as adult gaming centres).
- Player attitudes to smart cards and other technologies which track individual behaviour and allow spending limits to be set:
 - > Real time studies in gaming environments would provide far stronger data on the effect and appropriateness of each of the measures and technological adaptations discussed in this research.
 - > This research indicates that different measures are more appropriate for different kinds of gamblers and this could be tested further.



4 Appendix

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4.2 British and international research on Gaming Machines

There have been a number of recent literature reviews relating to gaming machines and problem gambling by the Responsible Gambling Council in Canada (White et al 2006), the Independent Gambling Authority in South Australia (Livingstone & Woolley, 2008), and the British Gambling Commission (2008). These reviews reported that there was no consensus on the extent to which gaming machines cause gamblers to become problem gamblers, and whether this is greater than for other forms of gambling. However, much research in other jurisdictions (including prevalence surveys) suggests that there are associations between machines and problem gambling. In addition, data from many countries (including Britain) show that machine players are most likely to contact national telephone help lines (GamCare 2008; Meyer, Hayer & Griffiths, 2009).

The Responsible Gambling Council in Canada found that although problem gamblers preferred to gamble on more activities than non-problem gamblers, the strongest relationship between type of activity and gambling problems was related to gaming machine participation (Wiebe et al 2006). This was based on prevalence data from 2005 on gambling and problem gambling in Ontario. This finding is supported by several other studies (as discussed in White et al [2006]). White et al (2006) concluded that while the evidence may be inconclusive as to whether gaming machines lead to problem gambling, there is consensus in the literature that gaming machine use and problem gambling are strongly related.

A recent overview of problem gambling in Europe by Meyer, Hayer and Griffiths (2009) included many studies about slot machine gambling. The recent national prevalence survey in Germany (Meyer & Hayer, 2009) showed that of all the problem gamblers, slot machines were the most problematic with over 20% of all problem gamblers reporting that machine gambling was their primary type of gambling (9% gambling machines; 7% casino slot machines; 5% amusement with prizes machines). Other prevalence studies in Europe have reported that problem gamblers were most likely to be gaming machine players including Estonia (Lansoo & Niit, 2009), Holland (Goudriaan, de Bruin & Koeter, 2009), Norway (Götestam & Johansson, 2009), Sweden (Jonsson & Rönnerberg, 2009) and Switzerland (Häfeli, 2009). Other studies have also found similar results with adolescents reporting that the main type of problem gambling among adolescents is related to gaming machine play in several countries, including Great Britain (Griffiths, 2009), Iceland (Olason & Gretarsson, 2009) and Lithuania (Skokauskas, 2009).

The latest British Gambling prevalence Survey (Wardle et al, 2007) examined problem gamblers' participation in gambling activities and reported that FOBTs (Fixed Odds Betting Terminals, these are now called category B2 machines) had the second highest prevalence among those who had gambled in the last year while slot machines ranked eleventh. However due to the cross-sectional nature of prevalence surveys, no conclusions can be drawn in relation to causality. The 2007 BGPS also found that on average, problem gamblers participated in over six forms of gambling. This means that it would be extremely difficult to use this survey to single out particular form(s) of gambling that are especially related to problem gambling. Vaughan Williams et al (2008) undertook secondary analysis of the 2007 BGPS data set and reported that when frequency of play is taken into account the ranking of the activities most associated with problem gambling is not the same, with slot machines featuring in the third position and FOBTs considerably lower down in the ranking. Vaughan Williams et al reasoned that when studying the link between gambling activities and problem gambling, the frequency of participation should be considered.



Internationally, a growing proportion of problem gamblers contacting helplines or assessing treatment are identifying gaming machines as their primary form of gambling (Abbott et al, 2004). This finding has been confirmed in Europe (Meyer, Hayer & Griffiths, 2009) where many countries reported that problem gaming machine gamblers were most likely to seek treatment and/or contact national gambling helplines including 60% of gamblers seeking help in Belgium (Druine, 2009), 72% in Denmark (Linnet, 2009), 93% in Estonia (Laansoo & Niit, 2009), 66% in Finland (Jaakkola, 2009), 49.5% in France (Valleur, 2009), 83% in Germany (Meyer & Hayer, 2009), 45% in Great Britain (Griffiths, 2009), 75% in Spain (Becoña, 2009), and 35% in Sweden (Jonsson & Rönnerberg, 2009). It has also been reported that the “vast majority” of all those attending various treatment programmes in Slovakia are gaming machine gamblers (Zivny & Okruhlica, 2009).

Loss of control is a central feature of problem gambling (May-Chahal et al 2007) and gaming machines are associated with greater loss of control than other forms of gambling. Focal Research (2001) found that problem gamblers find it especially hard to stop playing gaming machines once a gambling session has begun. This lack of control is confirmed with gamblers who are considered to be high frequency players playing at least once per week (Dickerson 2003). Irrational cognitive beliefs may be important. For example, players may feel that the longer they play, the greater the chances of winning – because of probability and/or compensation – or because they do not want anyone ‘skimming’ their machine (i.e. winning the money that they have personally put into the machine) (Griffiths, 1994). Alternatively, gamblers may be engaged in ‘positive thinking’ where losses are turned into ‘near wins’ regardless of outcome (Parke, Griffiths & Parke, 2007). It is not clear to what degree and which structural and situational factors encourage chasing and excessive play and to what degree this is dependent on players’ personal characteristics (e.g. discipline, sensation seeking, etc).

The belief in the problem generating potential of gaming machines is further strengthened by the continuous quality of the game and the presence of the high winning odds including recurrent near wins (Griffiths, 1999b; Cote et al 2003). The combination of event frequency, the result of winning or losing, the length of pay-out interval, and the time gap between each winning (or near winning) gamble are said to be structural factors that contribute to the addictiveness of gaming machines (Parke & Griffiths, 2006). Both Griffiths (1999) and Williams et al (2007) further claim that the most ‘addicting’ or dependency-prone forms of gambling will tend to be the ones that offer the greatest frequency of reinforcement (typically all forms of gaming machines). This is very similar to substance abuse, where drugs with the highest frequency of administration have the highest rates of addiction (e.g. nicotine) (Williams et al 2007).



4.3 Recruitment Screener

Good morning/afternoon/evening. My name is _____ and I am from Criteria Fieldwork, a market research company. We are working with GfK NOP, an independent market research company, who are conducting market research into machine gambling. The research is being carried out for the Gambling Commission. We are looking for people to take part in a group discussion/one-to-one interview. As a token of our appreciation for participation eligible attendees will receive high street vouchers/a cash incentive to thank you for your time. I just need to ask a few questions first...

DEMOGRAPHICS

Q1a Code Gender:

Male	1
Female	2

Depths 1-4:

Please recruit at least 1 male and at least 1 Female across interviews at Q1a

Depths 5-8:

No quota at Q1a

Groups 1-4:

Please recruit a minimum of 3 Females and 3 Males per group at Q1a

Q1b Age: _____

Depths 1-4:

Please aim to recruit at least 1 respondent from each of the following age ranges at Q1b:

18-24 years

25-39 years

40-59 years

60+ years

Depths 5-8:

No Quota at Q1b

Groups 1-4:

Please recruit the following ages in each group at Q1b:

2 x 18-24 years

2 x 25-39 years

2 x 40-59 years

2 x 60+ years



Q1c Occupation of Chief Income Earner (*Probe fully*):

Qualifications: _____

Number in Charge of: _____ SOCIAL GRADE: _____

**All to be BC1C2D social grade at Q1c
Please aim for a mix of social grade in each group and across
depths at Q1c**

Q1d Occupation of respondent if not Chief Income Earner:

Please record response at Q1d

Q1e Ethnic group describes how you see yourself and is a mixture of culture, religion, skin colour, language and the origins of yourself or your family. It is not the same as nationality. Please indicate the ethnic group to which you feel you belong...

White

- British 1
- Irish 2
- Polish 3
- Other white background 4

Asian or Asian British

- Indian Sikh 5
- Indian Gujarati 6
- Pakistani 7
- Bangladeshi 8
- Any other Asian background 9

Black or Black British

- Caribbean 10
- Africa 11
- Other black background 12

Mixed

- White and black Caribbean 13
- White and Black African 14
- White and Asian 15
- Any other mixed background 16

Chinese

- Chinese 17
- Any other ethnic group 18

Groups 1-4:

Please aim for 2 per group to be from ethnic minorities at Q1e

Depths 1-8:

No Quota at Q1e



OCCUPATION/INDUSTRY EXCLUSIONS

Q2 Thinking about the following occupations, can you tell me which, if any:

- a) you currently work in or have worked in the past?
- b) any member of your family or close friends currently work in?

Read out:	a)	b)
Advertising	X	X
Market Research	X	X
Public Relations	X	X
Journalism	X	X
Marketing	X	X
Central Government	X	X
Local Government	X	X
Politics	X	X
Casinos, Betting Shops/Bookmakers	X	X
Bingo halls	X	X
Adult Gaming Centres	X	X
None of the above	0	0

**If yes to any responses above the line, close interview
All to code None of the above at Q2a and Q2b**

Q2c Do you intend to work in any of those occupations in the next 6 months?

Yes	X	Close
No	2	Continue

PREVIOUS ATTENDANCE

Q3a Are you scheduled to participate in a market research group discussion/depth interview in the near future?

Yes	X	Close
No	2	Continue

Q3b Have you ever attended a market research group discussion/depth interview?

Yes	1	Ask Q3c
No	2	Go to Q4

Q3c How long ago did you last attend a market research group discussion/depth interview?

In the last 6 months	X	Close
6 Months-3 years ago	2	Ask Q3d
More than 3 years ago	3	Ask Q3d

None to have attended in the last 6 months



Q3d How many market research group discussions/depth interviews have you attended in total?

If more than 3 market research group discussions/depth interviews attended in total close

Q3e What was each of those market research group discussions/depth interviews about?

4.3.1 Interviewer write in:

4.3.2

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

If on a similar subject as this survey, close interview

Q4 Can you tell me which of the following activities, if any, you do at least once a week nowadays?

- Bet on Horse or dog racing 1
- Bet on other things at the Bookmakers 2
- Gamble on Slot/Fruit Machines 3
- Gamble Online 4
- Place private bets with friends 5
- Play Bingo 6
- Play Casino games such as roulette 7
- Play Football pools 8
- Play Other lotteries 9
- Play Scratch cards 10
- Play the National lottery 11
- Spread betting 12

All to gamble on Slot/Fruit Machines at least once a week nowadays at Q4

Plus:

All to engage in at least 2 of the other activities at least once a week nowadays at Q4



Q5 You mentioned that you play on slot/fruit machines nowadays. Can you tell me where you play on those machines at least once a week?

Betting Shop/Bookmakers	1
Bingo Hall	2
Casino	3
Over 18's Gaming Centre/Area	4
Private Members Club	5
Pub	6
Other	7
(write in):	_____

**All to play on slot/fruit machines at Betting Shops/Bookmakers, Bingo Halls, Casinos, Over 18's Gaming Centres or Private Members Clubs at Q5
Plus:**

NONE to only play slot/fruit machines in the pub at Q5

Q6 And thinking about the machines that you play on again, can you tell me which of the following best describes the machines you play at least once a week?

5p or 10p Maximum Stake, £5.00 Jackpot	X
25p or 30p Maximum Stake, up to £25.00 Jackpot	X
£1.00 Maximum Stake, £500.00 Jackpot	3
£10.00 Maximum Stake, £500.00 Jackpot	4

All to play £500.00 Jackpot machines at least once a week nowadays at Q6



Q7 Thinking about the past 12 months, how many of the following statements would you say apply to you?
[USE SHOWCARD]

- | | | |
|----------|---|---|
| A | I have bet more than I can afford to lose | 1 |
| B | I have needed to gamble with larger amounts of money to get the same excitement | 2 |
| C | I have gone back to try and win the money I have lost | 3 |
| D | I have borrowed money or sold something to get money to gamble | 4 |
| E | I have thought that I might have a problem with gambling | 5 |
| F | I believe gambling has caused me health problems, including stress or anxiety | 6 |
| G | Other people have criticised my gambling, or told me that I have a gambling problem | 7 |
| H | My gambling has caused financial problems for me and/or my household | 8 |
| I | I have felt guilty about the way I gamble and/or what happens when I gamble | 9 |

Depths 1-4 AND Groups 1 & 2 (Regular Gamblers):
All to code 0-1 of the listed statements and no more at Q7

Groups 3 & 4 (At Risk Gamblers):
All to code at least 2 and no more than 3 of the listed statements at Q7

Depths 4-9 (Problem Gamblers):
All to code at least 5 of the listed statements at Q7

INVITE TO PARTICIPATE IF RESPONDENT MEETS ALL QUOTAS