

When considering the different drivers within the mobile gambling market, it is very difficult to pinpoint where one factor ends and another begins

FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

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MOBILE PENETRATION IS A significant factor behind the growth of the mobile gambling market. Even countries with low internet penetration have made significant advances in mobile technology, with mobile phones outnumbering fixed lines by as many as seven to one in some places. Thanks to the expanding mobile channel, gambling has never been so accessible.

Legal restrictions have proved a fundamental inhibitor for the growth of the mobile gambling market. However, positive legislation such as the UK's Gambling Act indicates that the tide is turning and legislators are recognising that not only is the industry here to stay but that government, enterprise and consumers alike will benefit from such regulation.

Providing customer security

As regulation gives the market a green light, technology is breaking down barriers. One such is security. Consumers will not gamble via their mobiles if they don't trust that their money is secure with the mobile casino operator. The industry has worked hard to build safeguards to protect consumers and ensure the integrity of financial transactions. Technical security builds trust – and establishes the foundation for a lasting relationship between a casino operator and its customers.

A similar hurdle tackled by technology is age verification. In 2005, five million UK school children owned a mobile phone. Regulators must ensure that these individuals cannot gain access to mobile gambling services. As with security, technological advances and new processes are addressing this issue. Network operators around the world have enforced age-verification procedures to ensure users are of the correct age. For example, many operators are using a PIN number system, allowing adult players to access special accounts based on credit card ownership.

The technology behind the delivery and implementation of the games themselves plays a considerable role in the growth of the market. Mobile broadband is a key market driver for mobile games as it allows more information to be delivered at a faster rate. The emergence of 3G technology has enabled network

operators to offer a wide range of rich, advanced media services. At the same time, technology has ensured that mobile games can be designed in small and manageable files. Downloading mobile games is very quick, very simple and totally safe.

As technological advances result in an exciting user experience, much to the benefit of the consumer, enterprises from both the online and land-based gambling sectors are recognising the opportunities available to them through the addition of a mobile channel. Additional revenue streams, extended branding and brand-loyalty programmes are all driving enterprises to adopt a mobile strategy.

The variety and quality of mobile content, which is increasingly entertaining and exciting, helps drive consumer demand. Consumers can now play casino style games, lotteries, and access sports-betting all from their mobile phones.

The variety of mobile games is significant. For example, Spin3 offers a total of 11 games in its existing portfolio including unique branded and progressive video slots, and this number is constantly growing.

As we witness greater adoption of mobile gambling around the world, it is increasingly important that mobile casino games meet the needs of the local market to drive penetration. Translating the game to local languages and availability of games that are preferred by a certain region is critical to a casino operator's success. Consequently, Spin3 has translated a number of its games into multiple languages and recently launched baccarat particularly for the Asian market, understanding its great popularity in the region.

With real and sustained growth in the number of mobile gamblers, as well as the bottom-line figures, 2007 is the year the mobile gambling market has become truly established as a viable business.

The buy-in of big consumer brands like Ladbrokes has been crucial in establishing gambling as a key player in the mobile content space. The fact that established, well-known and trusted brands have supported the sector has secured consumer confidence in the new mobile technology.