

Matti Zinder, head of Spin<sup>3</sup>, tells *eGaming Review* why the fast food approach to the international mobile casino market is doomed to fail

# MCMOBILE? THINK AGAIN

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WHILE MOBILE GAMBLING is a global business, it does not operate in a single, global marketplace. Instead, the target area is splintered into national markets, each with its own cultural heritage, language demands and set of regulations. This means that when entering a new market, aspiring gambling operators have to take these barriers to entry into account in order to thrive and be successful.

As the online gambling marketplace matures, solid localised products and marketing plans are required to successfully compete in each national target area. Hot emerging markets include the Asia Pacific region, Latin America and Eastern European countries such as Romania, Bulgaria and Poland. In this one sentence, we have touched on three very different continents with numerous languages.

When McDonald's first expanded to countries outside North America in the early 1970s, its approach was to offer the same menu no matter where the restaurant was based. While this proved to be successful to some extent, the company soon realised that not all markets are the same and tastes differ across the world.

Almost four decades later, the case is very similar with mobile gambling. Knowledge of local markets proves invaluable for any new entrant: languages, regulation and technology in each country need an approach that goes beyond 'one size fits all'. These issues pose particular challenges, and overcoming them is what makes entering a new market so exciting.

Each country has unique regulatory challenges, ranging from places where interactive gambling services are prohibited, to places with few regulatory hurdles. As a solution to entry barriers, Spin<sup>3</sup> offers play-for-fun games. For markets that are more open to mobile gambling, play-for-real games are the medium of choice.

The number of different models and brands of mobile phones in circulation is huge. Any mobile gambling operator is facing the demand to keep on top of technological development and adapt its games for as many models as possible. The challenge this poses to Spin<sup>3</sup> is enormous and we answer it by having a large team of developers who are constantly working on adapting the games for more models. Spin<sup>3</sup>'s complete portfolio of games is currently supported on more than 1,000 mobile phone types

worldwide, including the latest models.

In many Asian countries, particularly south-east Asia, English is the unifying language and English language mobile games are enthusiastically adopted. European countries present a different picture and games in the local language are the first step to meeting the growing demand for mobile entertainment.

## Don't supersize me

While the choice of language is a fairly straightforward issue, finding the right games to appeal to a local community is the more difficult field. That is why it is essential to work closely with local partners. Their market intelligence is the best tool to identify which games will grab end-users' attention and give them the buzz of winning.

Our two-pronged approach so far has been very successful: some games have a universal appeal – poker, progressive jackpot games and blackjack are classic games that have been popular with people throughout the world for generations.

Other games are developed with a specific market in mind and are more localised and specific – *Pub Fruity* is an example of this. Based on the highly popular British fruit machine, the three-reel and one pay line *Pub Fruity* slot machine game is a real milestone in mobile casino gaming, incorporating advanced sound effects, 3D simulation and two bonus feature games.

Overcoming all these challenges takes a lot of factors – a dedicated, enthusiastic team to work on the technical side, language experts to adapt to the local lingo and, last but not least, partners who can offer inside knowledge of the local culture. Spin<sup>3</sup>'s success in making our games available in a growing range of countries proves that we have found the right, unique way for each country. Our mobile casinos are far from being McMobile casinos, they are localised with a lot of effort, care and inside knowledge.

McDonalds eventually realised that their one-menu approach needed to change as well. The fast food company now offers localised versions of their menu, including the Maharaja Mac in India; the Teriyaki Burger in Japan; the McLaks, a salmon burger in Norway; and many more national adaptations.