

## Blog: Understanding why people gamble



Working closely with research company 2CV, our recent research on how gambling fits into people's lives has helped us to get under the skin of the choices people make when they gamble and understand more about gambling behaviour.

Now, here on latest blog about the research, we take a deeper look at gambling typologies, what they are and how they affect the decisions people make. Rather than focusing on demographic characteristics or different sectors of gambling, typologies allow us to zero in on the triggers that are at play, when individuals choose to gamble - leading to a more informed set of

factors for us to consider in our regulation.

## **What are typologies and how are they useful for understanding gambling behaviour?**

Our research among a variety of people who take part in gambling, showed that having fun and winning money were the main reasons why people gambled. However, to understand why people gamble in more detail, we needed to delve deeper into the moment-based reasons for gambling. Detailed analysis of the research uncovered eight different gambling typologies (categories of classification) which help to describe the reasons why people chose to gamble.

The typologies that were developed from this research complement and expand upon Per Binde's motivational model of gambling, which takes account of people's reasons for gambling in general and for playing specific games.

The model comprises five motivational dimensions: the dream of hitting the jackpot and transforming one's life, social rewards, intellectual challenge, mood change induced by playing, and – the fundamental motive for all gambling – the chance of winning.

### **The dream of transformation**

- Just what I do

### **Chance of winning**

- Money to burn
- For the thrill of it

### **Social rewards**

- To be social
- For the banter

### **Intellectual challenge**

- Wise decision

### **Mood change**

- Passing the time
- Joy of the game

## **We identified eight different drivers of decisions to gamble**

Using a framework of features, the research identified eight different types of

drivers that help us to better understand the reality of 'in the moment' decisions to gamble. These fall under four key themes: passionate play, social play, habitual play and spontaneous play.

## **Passionate play**

- Joy of the game - Game enjoyment, play enhancement
- Wise choice - 'Skilled play', informed play, hot tip

## **Social**

- For the banter - Competitive play, friendly wager
- To be social - Collaborative play, playing along

## **Habitual**

- Passing the time - 'Me' time, killing time, prolonging play
- Just what I do - Long term habit, regular treat, subscription bet

## **Spontaneous**

- For the thrill of it - Feeling lucky, on a roll, stars aligned
- Money to burn - Gambling winnings, spare change

It is important to note that these typologies describe triggers/motivations to gamble rather than people, and a single gambling 'mission' can involve a range of momentary drivers as the gambling experience changes.

Sometimes a gambling 'moment' can be driven by a single typology, for example routine lottery play as 'just what I do'. However, gambling drivers can often combine in interesting ways. One of the participants – a male in his 40s from London – described betting on dog racing in a way which encompassed joy of the game, to be social, wise decision, for the banter and money to burn drivers. There are usually a variety of influences behind choices to gamble, which go beyond the simple desire to win money.

## **A single gambling 'mission' can encompass a range of momentary drivers as the circumstances evolve**

"The dogs are my favourite, they are closing all the tracks and it's a real shame because I love going to the dog. It's all about having a laugh really, it's exciting. If we are there early enough I will plan ahead and look at every race, I get all the form guides. I look at how they've finished last time, weight sex etc, and when we go I'm one of the more influential ones. We'll never bet more than a quid each per race, and we'll have had a scream. We go, we each pick a number 1 to 6 and if there's three picked number 4 and give picked number 6 we'll put it on 6. Sometimes I'll say 'you know what you really want to look at

number 42, I always end up saying 'you're wasting your time boys'. We used to walk out of Wimbledon 2-3 grand up. Most races you do £10 (with the money you together) but the last race you put the winnings on because you don't want to split £200. You put £100 winnings on one dog and £100 winnings on another. If it comes in you can split £1000 but if it doesn't come in you've only lost £12. The boys go down there, it's a proper good night out. It costs you nothing and you walk away with a lot and a good laugh. If there's 12 races you've never spent more than £12." **Male, 42, London, frequent player.**

Joy of the game - Game enjoyment

To be social - Building bonds

Wise decision - Informed play

For the banter - Bragging rights

Money to burn - Zero loss

Because the typologies are derived from qualitative research with a relatively low number of participants, we are not yet able to fully size or profile each of them. However, we are exploring integrating the typologies into future quantitative research – which would enable us to gain a further layer of understanding about how these different motivations interrelate for different types of people on different gambling occasions.

For those wishing to look further into this topic, read more detail on each of the [eight typologies](#).

We hope our blogs continue to be informative and create conversation about how future developments in the gambling industry can deliver fairer and safer gambling. We welcome feedback on this or other topics and those wishing to ask further questions can email [insight@gamblingcommission.gov.uk](mailto:insight@gamblingcommission.gov.uk).

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