Does Offering Tangible Rewards in Social Casino Games Influence Gameplay Intensity or Future Gambling Behaviour? Preliminary Findings

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INTRODUCTION

- Social casino games are free-to-play, online gambling themed games where players wager virtual credits instead of real money.
- Some social casino games (e.g., MyVegas Slots) offer the ability to "cash-in" credits for tangible rewards such as discounts on meals, show tickets, and hotel rooms.
- Offering "cash-in" opportunities for tangible rewards attaches a monetary value to these credits and may encourage increased gameplay intensity.
- Furthermore, it is conceivable the provision of these rewards may influence future gambling behaviour.

METHODS

- Participants were recruited using TurkPrime (an online crowdsourcing platform). All participants had played social casino games and gambled within the past three months.
- Participants (N = 111) completed a battery of self-report questionnaires and were randomly assigned to either a control (n = 54) or reward group (n = 57).
- All participants were asked to play a social casino game called Lucky Lolly Slots every day for one week.
- Participants in the reward group were told that at the end of one week, they would be able to trade in the total number of credits they earned from playing Lucky Lolly Slots for a cash bonus of $1.00 to $5.00.
- After one week, all participants completed a battery of follow-up self-report questionnaires for which they were compensated $5.00. They were then given an opportunity to wager their compensation in an online gambling game called Lucky Roulette at a rate of $0.01 per credit.

HYPOTHESES

Relative to participants in the control group, those in the reward group would:

- **(H1):** Play Lucky Lolly Slots more intensely (i.e., wager more credits, spend more time playing).
- **(H2):** Be more likely to choose to gamble in Lucky Roulette following one week of social casino game play.
- **(H3):** Play Lucky Roulette more intensely (i.e., wager more credits, spend more time playing).

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

- Mean age: 36.7 ± 10.6 years.
- Gender distribution: 50.5% female; 49.5% male.

RESULTS

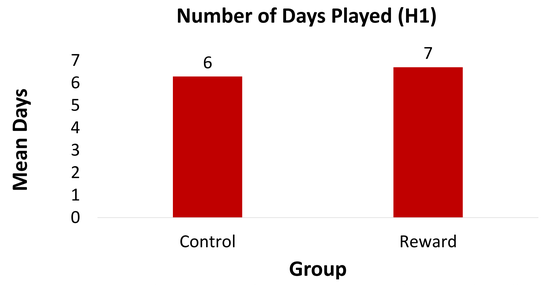

Figure 1: The number of days participants played Lucky Lolly Slots. U = 1275.0, p = .041, r = 0.19.

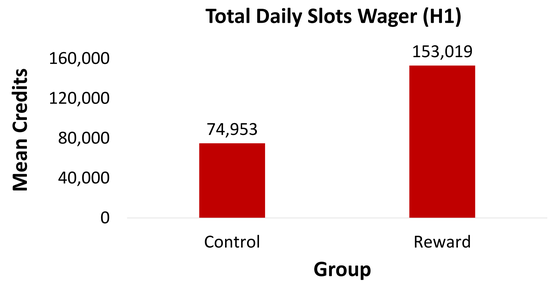

Figure 2: The number of credits wagered per day in Lucky Lolly Slots. U = 1082.0, p = .007, r = 0.26.

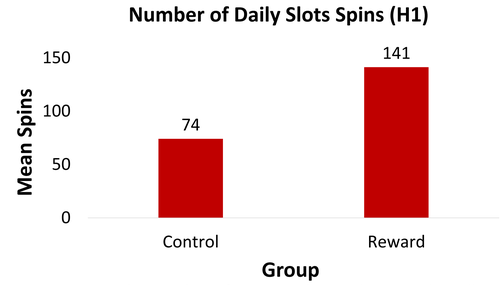

Figure 3: The number of spins made per day in Lucky Lolly Slots. U = 627.0, p < .001, r =0.51.

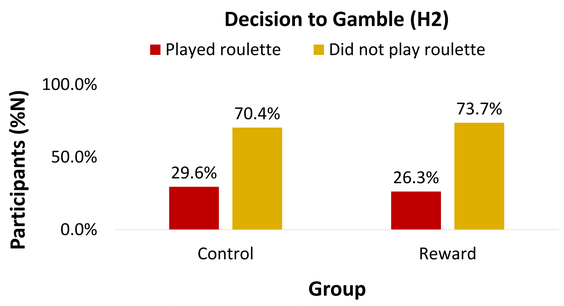

Figure 4: The percentage of participants who did and did not gamble in roulette. χ^2 (1, N = 111) = 0.2, p = .697, V = 0.04.

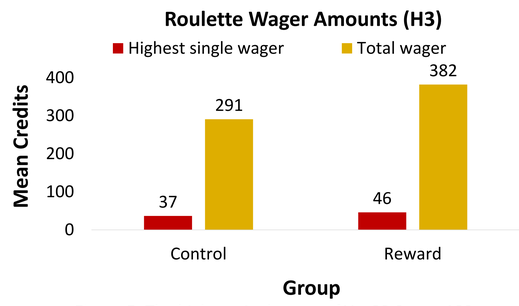

Figure 5: The highest single wager [U = 89.0, p = .189, r = 0.13] and the number of credits wagered in Lucky Roulette [U = 77.0, p = .147, r = 0.14].

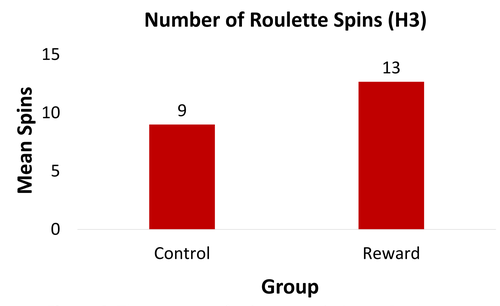

Figure 6: The number of spins made in Lucky Roulette. U = 79.5, p = .169, r = 0.13.

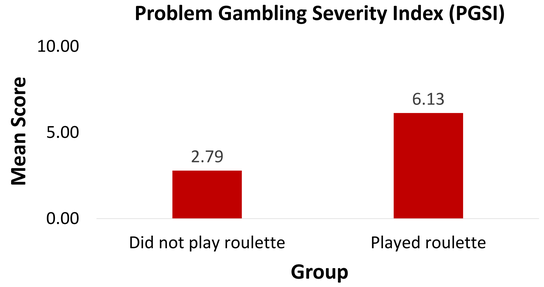

Figure 7: The PGSI score of those who did and did not play Lucky Roulette. U = 906.5, p = .026, r = 0.21.

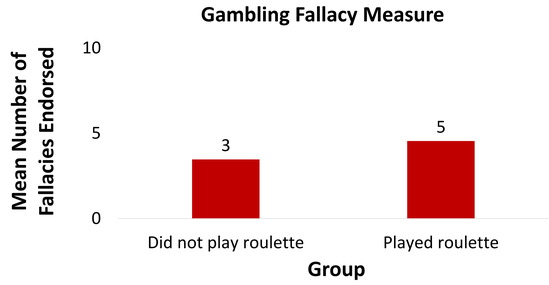

Figure 8: The number of gambling fallacies endorsed by those who did and did not play Lucky Roulette (out of 10). U = 877.0, p = .016, r = 0.23.

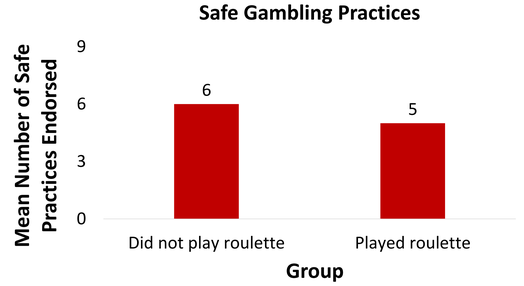

Figure 9: The number of safe gambling practices endorsed by those who did and did not play Lucky Roulette (out of 9). U = 897.0, p = .022, r = 0.22.

SUMMARY AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- In line with hypothesis 1, participants who had an opportunity to trade in their Lucky Lolly Slots credits for a small cash bonus (i.e., reward group) played more intensely than those who played without a cash bonus incentive (i.e., control group). This was signified by spending more days playing, wagering more credits per day, and playing longer each day.
- Failing to confirm hypotheses 2 and 3, there were no statistically significant differences between the reward and control groups regarding who decided to play roulette, or intensity of roulette gameplay.
- These results suggest offering tangible rewards can affect the intensity of social casino game play, but may not directly influence future gambling behaviour.
- Regardless of which group they were in, participants who did choose to play roulette reported higher problem gambling severity, endorsed more false beliefs about how gambling works, and engaged in fewer safe gambling practices in their daily lives.
- Future research could examine more closely the characteristics of those who gamble and play social casino games (e.g., clinical factors, beliefs about how gambling works). Doing so could aid in better understanding relationships between social casino gaming and gambling, and who may be at increased risk of experiencing harms associated with playing social casino games or gambling.

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