

# **The Influence of Venue Characteristics on a Player's Decision to Attend a Gambling Venue**

**By**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study was funded by Gambling Research Australia (GRA). In late-2008, GRA engaged the Centre for Gambling Education and Research to undertake this research project on the influence of venue characteristics on a player's decision to attend a gambling venue. In articulating the rationale for this study, GRA (2007) noted that 'Gambling venues attract many people. Why people choose a particular venue for gambling activities has not been well explored. Further, linking particular venue characteristics to gambling behaviour (especially in relation to EGMs), has not been carefully examined'. Thus, this study was to particularly focus on the interaction between the patron and the venue, and specifically what characteristics of the venue are major influences on a player's decision to attend a particular venue (GRA, 2007).

### AIMS AND SCOPE

The specific purpose of this research project was to:

- analyse why gamblers choose to gamble where they do; and
- analyse the venue characteristics to determine whether certain features of different types of premises are more or less likely to attract and/or maintain problem gamblers.

GRA (2007) articulated several other considerations for conducting this project. First, it required undertaking the following tasks:

- to review the literature on venue characteristics in terms of their ability to attract customers and how those characteristics impact on gambling behaviour;
- to review the literature on gambler behaviour in relation to selection of gaming destinations and their characteristics;
- to analyse the characteristics of different types of venues in relation to their contribution towards problematic gambling behaviour;
- to analyse gambler choice of gambling venue and destination; and
- to identify the features of venues that contribute protective or risk factors for problem gamblers and at-risk gamblers (i.e. increase or decrease the likelihood of developing problem gambling).

Second, it required the following definition of problem gambling is to be used:

*Problem gambling is characterised by difficulties in limiting money and/or time spent on gambling which leads to adverse consequences for the gambler, others or for the community<sup>1</sup>.*

Third, it required that the research was to explore 'What is the primary reason for visiting a venue and does this vary for different gambling cohorts (at-risk, problem, recreation)?'.

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<sup>1</sup> *Problem Gambling and Harm: Towards a National Definition* prepared for the National Gambling Research Working Party by the South Australian Centre for Economic Studies together with the Department of Psychology, University of Adelaide, December 2005.

Fourth, it required the research to examine a broad range of questions about venue characteristics in relation to problem, at-risk and recreation gamblers, to include (but not limited to) the following:

- What aspects of **location** and **accessibility** influence a gambler's choice of venue (e.g. proximity, distance, streetscape, convenience, availability of public transport or banking facilities)?
- Do the **size**, **type** and **physical** characteristics of the venue influence the decision of a gambler to select one venue in preference to another venue (e.g. preference for small venues, large venues, differences in choice of a pub, club, racetrack, TAB or casino, the importance of multiple gambling opportunities, the role of ambience and any internal or external physical features)?
- What aspects of **in situ EGMs** influence gambler choice of venue (e.g. the physical location and layout of EGMs, numbers of machines, the games on offer, jackpot availability and the like)?
- Are **hospitality features** a crucial factor in choosing a particular venue (e.g. loyalty schemes, free refreshments, staff/customer interaction and the availability of recreation, leisure and dining opportunities)?
- What impact does the **advertising** of gambling products or the gambling venue have on a gambler's choice of venue? What is the role of promotional and **marketing** techniques?

And finally, although this was a national study, the research was also to consider jurisdictional differences in the regulatory regimes that apply and which can determine many aspects of gambling venue environments.

## THE LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review conducted for this study highlighted a number of venue characteristics that may influence a player's decision to attend a gambling venue. Some have also been implicated in promoting continued play once gambling has commenced. By far the majority of research relates to EGMs and even studies of casinos tend to focus on gaming machine play within these sites. On and off-course betting on horse racing is largely absent from studies of venue characteristics.

Evidence from prior research suggests that the location and accessibility of the venue is the most attractive venue characteristic. Gambling density and proximity have been extensively studied, but the other dimensions of accessibility, particularly social accessibility have only recently attracted research attention. The other broad areas would appear to be secondary; however, this may be dependent upon type of gambler (problem vs. non-problem) and research has indicated variation even within these types (AIPC, 2006).

Clearly, research in this area is in its infancy, highlighting the opportunity to conduct the first large-scale population study which analyses why gamblers choose to gamble where they do, and the venue characteristics and type of venue that are more or less likely to attract and maintain problem gambling behaviour.



## METHODOLOGY

Quantitative methods were considered most appropriate to address the research aims, given the requirements for a national focus and for the research to consider the influence of venue characteristics in relation to problem, at-risk and recreational gamblers. Meeting both of these requirements required a large sample that captured adequate numbers of respondents across Australia and in each gambling group. Thus, survey methodology was considered most appropriate and comprised a national telephone survey of gamblers and a survey of problem gamblers in treatment.

The project specifications identified numerous venue characteristics to be included in the research and this was the starting point for developing the survey instrument. It was also informed by the literature review to identify all possible characteristics of venues which can potentially influence player choice of venue and their gambling behaviour. The researchers' own knowledge of venue characteristics gained from their previous gambling research, much of it conducted in venues, also assisted, as well as their expertise in appropriate measurement and analytical techniques.

The survey instrument contained the following key sections:

- Frequency of gambling during the previous 12 months on gaming machines, keno, casino table games, horse or greyhound races and sporting events.
- Type of venue that the respondent gambled at most frequently during the previous 12 months (hotel, club, casino, racetrack or stand-alone TAB agency).
- Venue characteristics considered important when deciding where to gamble in terms of various aspects of location and accessibility, internal features, venue hospitality, venue advertising and, for respondents whose most frequented venue was a hotel, club or casino, gaming machine facilities.
- Type, location and gambling facilities of the respondent's most frequented venue.
- Respondent's gambling at their most frequented venue in the previous 12 months in terms of frequency, duration and expenditure.
- Characteristics of the respondent's most frequented venue in the previous 12 months in terms of various aspects of location and accessibility, internal features, venue hospitality, venue advertising and, for respondents whose most frequented venue was a hotel, club or casino, gaming machine facilities.
- The Problem Gambling Severity Index of the Canadian Problem Gambling Index (Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, 2001).
- Age, gender, household type and postcode/suburb of residence.

The national telephone survey was conducted by a market research company which initially screened for gender and state/territory to match adult population norms. It then included only people who had gambled on non-lottery forms of gambling and who had also gambled at a hotel, club, casino, racecourse or stand-alone TAB in the previous 12 months. Attempts were made to gain an equal sample of regular (at least weekly) and non-regular gamblers on non-lottery forms of gambling. However, a higher than expected refusal rate to participate in a survey about gambling venues and a lower than expected proportion of regular gamblers amongst respondents meant that

adhering to this sampling strategy would have been unaffordable. Thus, the sampling strategy was altered and resulted in a sample of 501 gamblers, with 137 classified as regular and 364 as non-regular gamblers. Within this sample, 3.6 per cent were classified as problem gamblers, 11.2 per cent as moderate risk gamblers, 16.2 per cent as low risk gamblers and 69.1 per cent as non-problem gamblers, when measured on the *Problem Gambling Severity Index* (PGSI). Within this sample, 42 per cent most often frequented a club, 22 per cent most frequented a hotel, 11 per cent most frequented a casino, 17 per cent most frequented a stand-alone TAB agency and 8 per cent most frequented a racecourse.

The survey of problem gamblers in treatment was ‘publicised’ through gambling counselling agencies. Gambling help agencies in every Australian state and territory were asked to promote the study to clients who had recently commenced counselling for gambling-related problems. Some displayed the information sheet in a prominent position in the agency (waiting rooms, noticeboards), whilst others had the counsellor select which clients they thought were appropriate. In total, 200 participants completed the survey. The majority completed this online between May and July 2009. However, there was a facility for people to complete the survey over the telephone with one of the research team, and a small number of participants did so. Each participant was offered a \$30 StarCash voucher as reimbursement for their time. From the 200 surveys, 186 were deemed usable. Of these 186 problem gamblers in treatment, 78.0 per cent scored as problem gamblers, 11.9 per cent as moderate risk gamblers, 1.7 per cent as low risk gamblers and 8.5 per cent as non-problem gamblers. Within this sample, 20 per cent most often frequented a club, 56 per cent most frequented a hotel, 8 per cent most frequented a casino, 15 per cent most frequented a stand-alone TAB agency and 2 per cent most frequented a racecourse.

Data from both surveys were entered into separate spreadsheets in SPSS v. 17 and the following statistical techniques applied.

- To develop a profile of respondents in terms of socio-demographic characteristics, gambling behaviour, and gambler sub-type (CPGI categories), frequency distributions for these variables were conducted.
- To determine the perceived importance of venue characteristics that attract respondents to a gambling venue, respondents’ ratings for each importance item were measured on a 4-point Likert scales (from ‘strongly agree’ to strongly disagree’) and then ranked by mean scores.
- To analyse differences by age, gender and gambler sub-type in the perceived importance of venue characteristics that attract respondents to a gambling venue, the mean scores of the importance of venue characteristics when choosing where to gamble were compared, using correlational analysis. A relationship was accepted as statistically significant if it had an alpha of  $p \leq .05$  and a Pearson’s  $r \geq .20$ .
- To identify the characteristics of respondents’ most frequented gambling venues for gaming and wagering, respondents’ ratings for each specific venue characteristic item were measured on a 4-point Likert scales (from ‘strongly agree’ to strongly disagree’) and then ranked by mean scores.
- To analyse differences by age, gender and gambler sub-type in the characteristics of respondents’ most frequented gambling venues, the mean scores of the specific characteristics of the respondents’ most frequented venue

were compared, using correlational analysis. A relationship was accepted as statistically significant if it had an alpha of  $p \leq .05$  and a Pearson's  $r \geq .20$ .

- To determine venue characteristics that contribute to risk factors for gambling problems, venue characteristics considered important by the gambler and which were significantly and positively correlated with PGSI score and venue characteristics which were present in the gambler's most frequented venue and which were significantly and positively correlated with PGSI score were identified. Additional cross-correlations are conducted to determine whether the interplay between venue characteristics that respondents considered important when choosing where to gamble and the presence of these characteristics in their most frequented venue amplified these potential risk factors.

It is important to note the limitations of the methodology. As well as the usual constraints associated with telephone and online surveys, a further limitation that must be acknowledged is the self-reported nature of the data. This may be particularly problematic in relation to a sensitive topic such as gambling, where people may be likely to under-report gambling frequency, expenditure and session length. However, the key methodological limitation was the sample sizes which were able to be attained within budgetary constraints, especially for a national study that aimed to examine the potential implications of different regulatory and gambling environments. The surveys did not capture adequate numbers of respondents from each Australian jurisdiction and in each gambling group, and this ultimately affected the data analysis. Further, the national sample gained an under-representation of people aged below 45 years and an over-representation of those aged 45 to 69 years. As such, the study's findings are indicative only. While this study contributes to a better understanding of the issues, no firm conclusions can be drawn.

## RESULTS FOR OBJECTIVE ONE

The first research objective was to analyse why gamblers choose to gamble where they do. To address this objective, the characteristics that were considered most important to the respondents when choosing where to gamble and the characteristics that were most often present in their most frequented venue were analysed and compared. The findings are summarised below.

In choosing where to gamble, **the general population of gamblers who most frequented hotels, clubs and casinos** were found to prioritise good service, a safe and secure environment, low denomination machines, reasonable entry or membership prices and opportunities to socialise with other people. These priorities appeared well catered for, with these gamblers reporting that their most frequented hotel, club or casino had these characteristics. These gamblers also prioritised a choice of bar and dining facilities and non-gambling entertainment activities, comfortable seating and free or discounted refreshments. However, these characteristics were less likely to be present in their most frequented venue.

In choosing where to gamble, **the problem gamblers in treatment who most frequented hotels, clubs and casinos** were found to also prioritise good service, a safe and secure environment, and low denomination machines and comfortable seating, but reported greater importance than the general population of gamblers on the venue having their favourite machines, machines with bonus features and enough machines so they do not have to wait. These priorities appeared well catered for, with

these gamblers reporting that their most frequented hotel, club or casino had these characteristics. These problem gamblers also prioritised being able to gamble without feeling watched and free refreshments, although both of these characteristics were less likely to be present in their most frequented venue.

In choosing where to gamble, **the general population of gamblers who most frequented a stand-alone TAB agency** were found to prioritise good service, a safe and secure environment and a location convenient to home. They considered it important that the agency is uncrowded and has adequate betting facilities so they do not have to wait and that they can maintain some privacy around their betting. These priorities appeared to be well met, with these punters reporting that their most frequented TAB agency had these characteristics. These punters also considered it important that a TAB is not too noisy, provides comfortable seating and allows them to gamble uninterrupted. However, these characteristics were less likely to be present in their most frequented agency.

In choosing where to gamble, **the problem gamblers in treatment who most frequented a stand-alone TAB agency** were found to also prioritise good service, a safe and secure environment and a location convenient to home. They also considered it important that the agency is uncrowded, has adequate betting facilities so they do not have to wait and that they can maintain some privacy around their betting and not be interrupted. These priorities were well met, with these problem gamblers reporting that their most frequented TAB agency had these characteristics. These problem gamblers also considered it important that a TAB agency has extended opening hours and that it is not too noisy, but these characteristics were less likely to be present in their most frequented agency.

In choosing where to gamble, **the general population of gamblers who most frequented a racecourse** were found to prioritise good service, a safe and secure environment, opportunities to socialise, a lively atmosphere, reasonable entry or membership prices and adequate betting facilities so they do not have to wait. These priorities were generally met, with these problem gamblers reporting that their most frequented racecourse had these features. These gamblers also considered it important that a racecourse has a wide range of bar and dining facilities, comfortable seating, and is easily accessible by car or public transport, but these characteristics were less likely to be present at their most frequented racecourse.

Important venue characteristics for **problem gamblers who most frequented a racecourse** were not able to be determined due to the small size of this cohort in the sample.

## RESULTS FOR OBJECTIVE TWO

The second research objective was to analyse the venue characteristics to determine whether certain features of different types of premises are more or less likely to attract and/or maintain problem gamblers. To address this objective, the venue characteristics which correlated significantly and positively with PGSI score, both in terms of characteristics which respondents considered important and those found in their most frequented venue, were considered. Those venue characteristics that were positively associated with problem gambling were considered potential risk factors. Similarly, venue characteristics that were negatively associated with problem gambling were considered potential protective factors.

Thus, two types of potential risk factors were identified from the data collected for this study:

1. The first were those venue characteristics considered important by the gambler and which were significantly and positively correlated with PGSI score. These are potential risk factors *associated with the gambler*, in that it is the gambler who prioritises these characteristics as important. However, it must be noted that if venues did not provide these features, then they would not be in the choice set for these gamblers in the first place.
2. The second were those venue characteristics which were present in the gambler's most frequented venue and which were significantly and positively correlated with PGSI score. These are potential risk factors *associated the venue* in that it is the presence of these characteristics in the venue which were associated with PGSI score.

Similarly, two types of potential protective factors can be identified from the data collected for this study – those associated with the gambler and those associated with the venue.

Key findings relating to these potential risk and protective factors are summarised below.

Only one potential gambler-based risk factor was found for the **general population of gamblers who most frequented a hotel, club or casino**, and this was a potential risk factor shared with the problem gambler cohort as well. This was extended opening hours.

A further 15 potential gambler-related risk factors were found for the **problem gamblers who most frequented a hotel, club or casino**. These were prioritising convenient physical access to the venue, easy access to an ATM in the venue, and various specific features of gaming machines, including linked jackpots, bonus features, favourite machines, a large choice of machines, low denomination machines, a layout that allows privacy and an atmosphere that reflects the glitz and glamour associated with Las Vegas. These gamblers do not want to wait to get on a machine nor to be interrupted while gambling. Thus, it is the gambling facilities that are most important to these gamblers, rather than other facilities or activities on offer in a venue. They prioritised the types of gaming machines on offer, the layout in the gaming room and the atmosphere created there, and wanted to be able to access these easily and at the times and for the length of time of their choosing. One potential protective factor was found for the problem gamblers who most frequented a hotel, club or casino. Considering it important that a hotel, club or casino has a wide range of non-gambling activities when choosing where to gamble was significantly and negatively correlated with PGSI score.

Potential venue-based risk factors associated with hotels, clubs and casinos are those venue characteristics that were most common in the most frequented venue and which were significantly and positively correlated with PGSI score. Only one potential risk factor was found for the **general population of gamblers who most frequented a hotel, club or casino**. This was that the venue has the gambler's favourite gaming machines. However, it must be noted that the restricted range of PGSI scores in this sample may have obscured the identification of further potential venue-based risk factors. This seems particularly likely, given the numerous potential risk and

protective factors identified amongst the problem gambler cohort who most frequented a hotel, club or casino.

Eleven potential venue-based risk factors were found for the **problem gamblers who most frequented a hotel, club or casino**. It appears that these problem gamblers tended to patronise venues which have convenient physical access, extended opening hours, easy access to an ATM, and gaming machines that offer bonus features, linked jackpots and low denomination play. Staff in these venues do not interrupt people while they are gambling and the venue also conducts external advertising. Thus, the hotels, clubs and casinos that most attracted these problem gamblers enable people to play uninterrupted and for extended periods of time, to access cash easily, and to play machines with features, such as low denomination, bonus features and linked jackpots, that have been shown to be preferred by problem gamblers. No potential venue-based protective factors were found for respondents to either survey who nominated a hotel, club or casino as their most frequented venue.

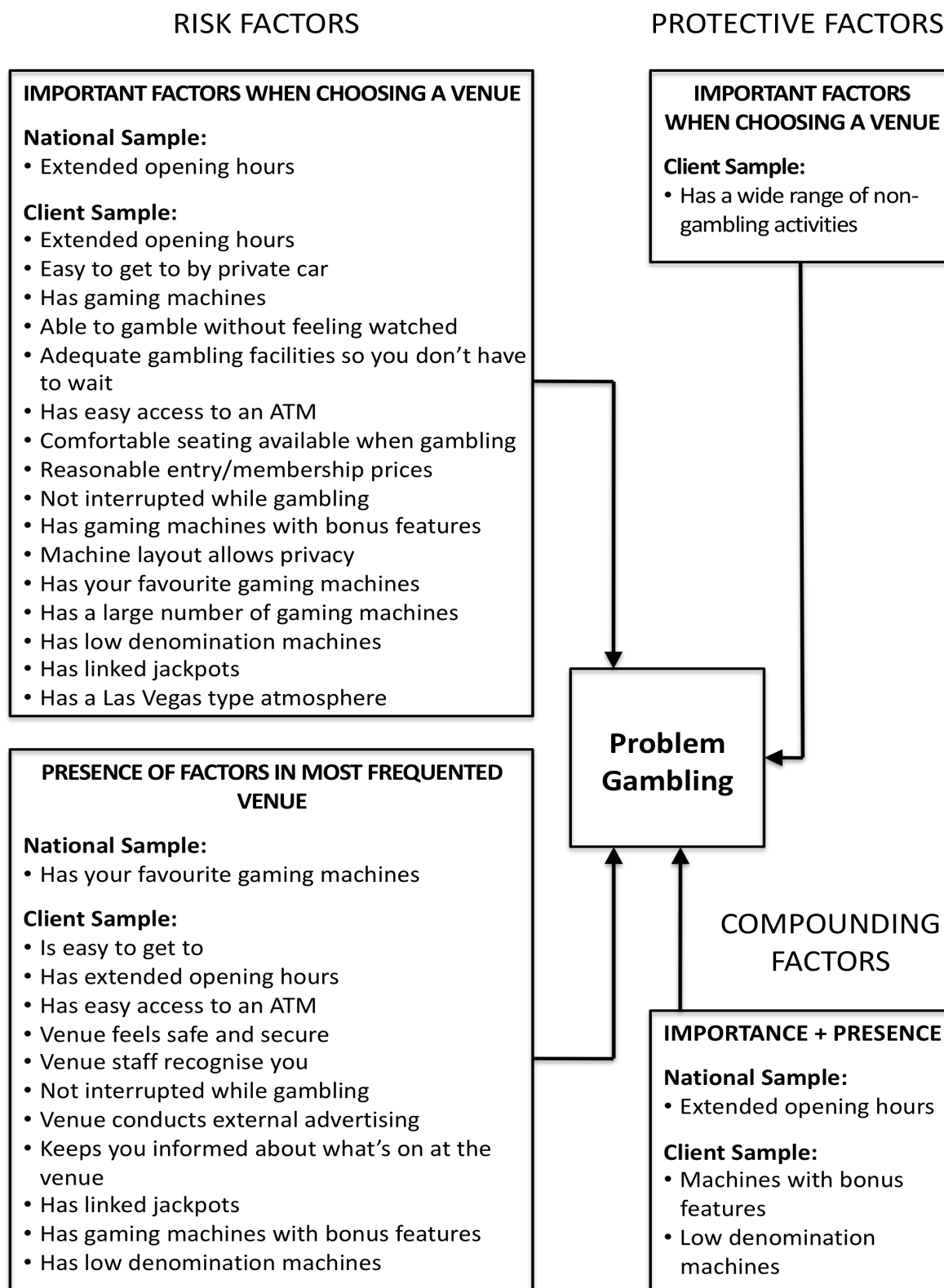
No potential venue-based risk factors were identified for the **problem gamblers whose most frequented venue was a TAB agency**, although this finding probably reflects the small sample size of this cohort, rather than the absence of risk factors *per se*. This seems particularly likely, given that eight potential risk factors were identified for the **general population of gamblers who most frequented a TAB**. These gamblers appear to prioritise extended opening hours, location near other hospitality venues, and being able to place bets promptly and find comfortable seating in the TAB whilst gambling. These gamblers do not like the TAB to be too noisy nor to be interrupted while gambling. Thus, being able to place bets conveniently and quickly appeared important, although they also prioritised being able to socialise with other people at the TAB. No potential gambler-based protective factors were found for respondents to either survey who nominated a stand-alone TAB as their most frequented venue.

Two potential venue-based risk factors were found for the **general population of gamblers who most frequented a TAB**. These were that it is easy to get to and has easy access to an ATM. Easy access to an ATM was also the one potential venue-based risk factor found for the **problem gamblers who most frequented a TAB**. Clearly, easy access to an ATM enables convenient cash withdrawals and facilitates spending more than intended and chasing of gambling losses. No potential venue-based protective factors were found for respondents to either survey who nominated a stand-alone as their most frequented venue. Again, the restricted samples may have obscured significant relationships.

Unfortunately, no potential risk or protective factors associated with problem gambling could be identified for either the **general population or problem gamblers in treatment who most frequented a racecourse**, due to the limitations of the samples and the restricted range of PGSI scores.

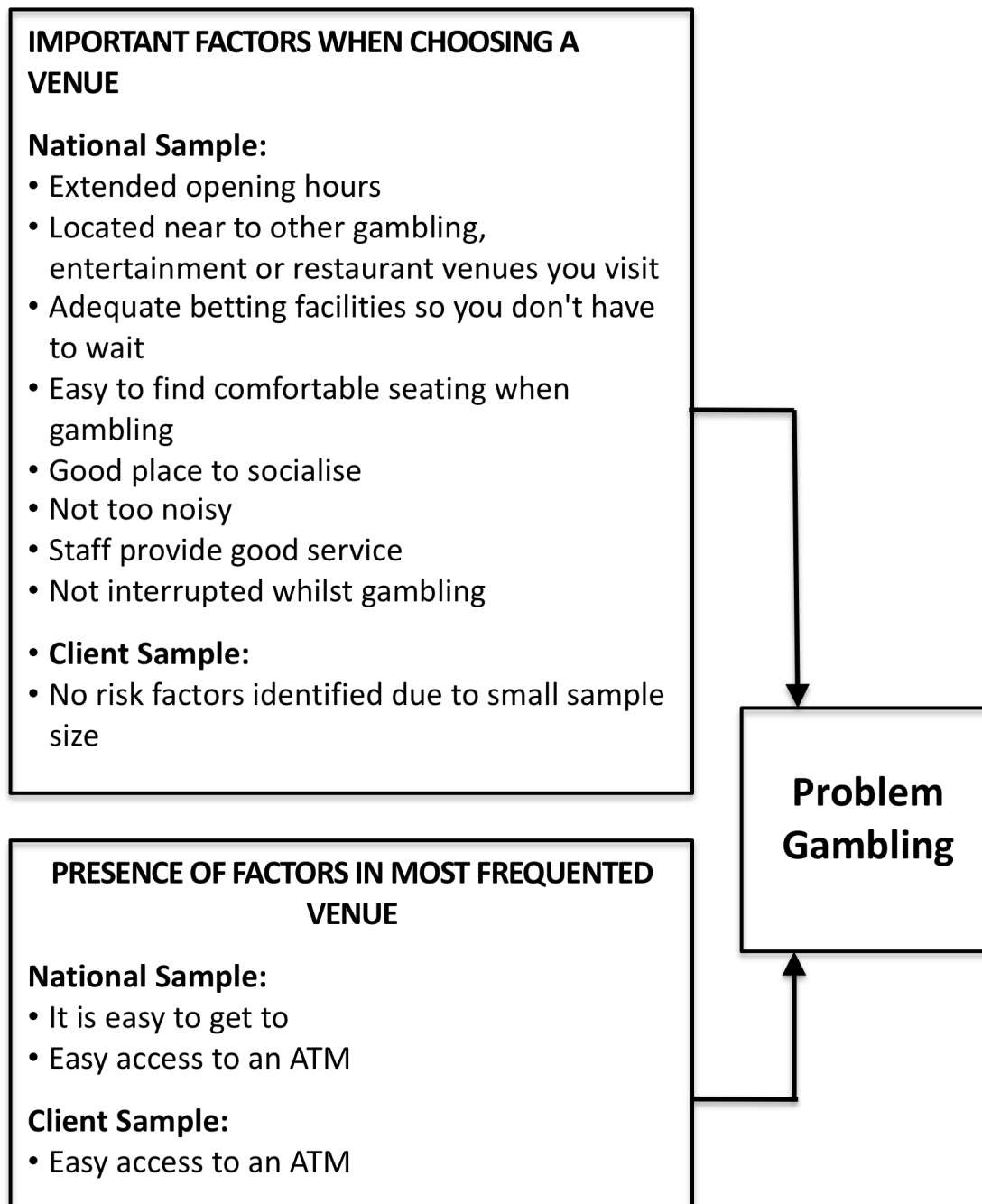
Figures A and B summarise the potential risk and protective factors identified in this study for hotels/clubs/casinos and for stand-alone TAB agencies.

**Figure A: Potential risk and protective factors in relation to characteristics of hotels/clubs/casinos**



**Figure B: Potential risk factors in relation to characteristics of stand-alone TAB agencies**

## RISK FACTORS



NB: Not all TAB characteristics were tested for being risk or protective factors due to limits of the sample size and variability of PGSI scores.



## **IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS**

Policy implications arising from the results of this study can be considered in relation to the several venue characteristics found to be modifiable potential risk and protective factors for problem gambling.

### **Easy physical access**

Easy access to the venue was a potential risk factor for the problem gamblers in treatment who most frequented a hotel, club, casino or a stand-alone TAB. This finding supports previous research on the link between accessibility to gaming machines and problem gambling, although there has been no research on TAB gambling to compare this result to. A move towards more destination-style gambling (Young *et al.*, 2007) is one measure that would reduce this risk factor.

### **Extended opening hours**

Extended venue opening hours were a potential risk factor for both the national sample of gamblers and the problem gamblers in treatment who most frequented a hotel, club or casino. This is an issue that has been subject to considerable policy attention in recent years. Nevertheless, despite some reforms in this area, 24 hour gambling is still possible in all jurisdictions. Mandated, consistent and reasonable shutdown periods for gambling facilities in these venues would reduce this risk factor.

### **Easy access to an ATM**

This was a potential risk factor for the problem gamblers who most frequented a hotel, club, casino or stand-alone TAB. Prior research has also highlighted the risks of ATMs in venues. While ATMs have been removed from venue gaming areas in all jurisdictions, and from venues altogether in some, their close proximity to gambling facilities still appears a potential risk factor. Consideration might be given to identifying an appropriate distance that ATMs should be placed away from gambling venues in order to address this risk factor.

### **Linked jackpots**

Linked jackpots were a potential risk factor for the problem gamblers in this study who most frequented a hotel, club or casino. The results of several studies support this finding and lend weight to a need to consider their removal. Further research could distinguish between the influences of different *types* of linked jackpots on gambling behaviour and if and how much their removal might reduce enjoyment for recreational gamblers.

### **Bonus gaming machine features**

Similarly to linked jackpots, bonus features were a machine characteristic associated with increased severity of gambling problems (as measured by PGSI score) amongst the problem gamblers in this study. Again, some prior research aligns with this finding. Decisions about their removal might also be informed by research into how this would impact on recreational gamblers.

### **Favourite gaming machines**

Both the gamblers and problem gamblers who prioritised the importance of and patronised a venue having their favourite gaming machines faced increased risks of gambling problems. This reflects the holding of erroneous beliefs and suggests the

need for player education emphasising the randomness of machine results and that no machines are luckier or more likely to pay out than others.

### **Gaming machine layout that allows privacy**

A potential risk factor for the problem gamblers who most frequented a hotel, club or casino was prioritisation of a gaming machine layout that allows privacy. There has been some research conducted to support this finding, and logic suggests it is heavier or more frequent gamblers who most seek out this privacy. However, any policy response would need to also consider the consequences of gaming machine configurations that further expose non-gamblers or recreational gamblers to heavy gambling by having the machines more closely integrated with other venue facilities and the venue's patrons.

### **Enabling uninterrupted gambling**

A potential risk factor for the problem gamblers in this study who most frequented a hotel, club or casino was not being interrupted whilst gambling. This has implications for the recent policy interest in more proactive engagement of venue staff to identify and intervene to assist at-risk and problem gamblers. However, efforts to reduce this risk factor would need to be accompanied by substantial staff training, as well as gambler education that such interventions are within the expected roles of venue staff.

### **Large and glitzy gaming venues**

A potential risk factor for the problem gamblers who most frequented a gaming machine venue was a preference for venues with a large choice of gaming machines and an atmosphere that reflects the glitz and glamour associated with Las Vegas. These characteristics are typically found in casinos, but also in larger hotels and clubs. However, additional research would be needed to establish whether problem gamblers would simply go to smaller, less glamorous venues if these were the only ones available.

### **Provision of non-gambling activities in venues**

Only one potential protective factor was identified in this study – prioritisation by the problem gamblers of a wide range of non-gambling activities in a hotel, club or casino when choosing where to gamble. Provision of such activities would thus seem to potentially contribute to a safer gambling environment, by providing diversionary activities apart from gambling.

### **Impacts on recreational gamblers**

In further considering potential interventions to lower risk factors for gamblers, it is useful to also consider venue characteristics which were potential risk factors for the problem gamblers in treatment, but which were not important to the general population of gamblers when choosing where to gamble. These are venue characteristics that could be modified to lower the risk of problem gambling without affecting the choice of venue amongst the general population of gamblers.

For respondents who nominated a hotel, club or casino as their most frequented venue, three venue characteristics were potential risk factors for the problem gamblers in treatment, but were not important to the general population of gamblers:

1. The venue has extended opening hours;

2. It is easy to access an ATM in the venue; and
3. The venue has a Las Vegas type atmosphere.

Thus, reducing venue opening hours, removing easy access to ATMs and reducing the glitzy and glamorous atmosphere associated with Las Vegas casinos may lower the risks of problem gambling in hotels, clubs and casinos, without affecting choice of venue amongst the general population of gamblers.

For respondents who nominated a stand-alone TAB agency as their most frequented venue, one venue characteristic was a potential risk factor for the problem gamblers in treatment, but was not important to the general population of punters:

1. That there is easy access to an ATM near the TAB.

Thus, reducing the proximity of TAB agencies to ATMs would likely lower the risks of problem gambling in TABs, without affecting choice of venue amongst the general population of TAB gamblers.

## CONCLUSION

This study has analysed why gamblers choose to gamble where they do and analysed the venue characteristics to determine whether certain features of different types of premises are more or less likely to attract and/or maintain problem gamblers.

Potential risk and protective factors were identified and the opportunity for interventions to moderate these risks was discussed. Consumer education can raise awareness of the risk factors associated with the gambler, while problem gamblers in treatment may benefit from cognitive-behavioural and other therapies that help to reshape their thinking and behaviours around gambling. Additionally, regulation, policy changes and industry practices can help to modify other identified potential risk factors to provide a safer gambling environment.

Several limitations to this study need emphasising here. While the sample sizes for both the national telephone survey and the problem gambler client survey were of reasonable size, some analyses could not be undertaken as the required sub-samples were too small. Further, the range of venue characteristics that could be examined was limited by the requirement to include several types of venues, yet the need to keep the survey questionnaires to a reasonable and affordable length. The quantity of analyses required for this study also increased the risk of Type I error. Further, the research was subject to the usual limitations of telephone and online survey techniques and the self-reported nature of the data.

Nevertheless, the research results have good face validity and can be considered reliable within the constraints already outlined. Thus, it is hoped that this study has contributed to a better understanding of the potential influence of venue characteristics on gambling behaviour and the associated risk and protective factors.

However, it must be emphasised that this was an exploratory study, with results that clearly indicate the need for further research with much larger sample sizes to capture adequate responses across the range of PGSI scores, for all forms of gambling and across all Australian jurisdictions.