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Experiential Gambling: Interactions Between Consumer Experiences, Emotional Engagement, and Behavioural Settings

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This investigation explores experiential gambling behavior by modifying the stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) framework to build a theoretical model which examines the interactive nature of three variables, Experiences, Emotional engagement and Behavioral settings. Experiential motives such as Entertainment, Education, Esthetics and Escapism (Pine & Gilmore, 1999) are examined in the context of emotional responses (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) of Pleasure, Arousal and Dominance (PAD) and how these responses interact with Open and Closed behavioral settings postulated by Foxall (1999) in the Behavioral Perspective model (BPM). Based upon a statistical analysis of 303 questionnaires, which collected information on gambling behavior in the North East of England, the results illustrate that consumers' emotional engagement and behavioral settings impact upon gambling behavior. However, the relevance of the Experience variable as hypothesised is not confirmed. From a theoretical standpoint, this paper offers an integrated model for understanding gambling behavior while differentiating the nature of its contribution away from situation specific scenarios. On a practical level it highlights design implications that can enhance or limit the potential of gambling activities.
Keywords: Consumers, Experiences, Behavioral settings, Emotional engagement

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Recreational or social gambling has experienced a massive growth in the UK in recent years mainly due to the emergence of new forms of gambling such as the National Lottery (Parliament, 2011). Parallel to the increase in gambling behavior there has been a proliferation of research studies examining the etiology of gambling through multiple theoretical perspectives (Clarke, 2009). Some of the approaches such as the economic perspective asserts the financial motive to be the most coherent and likely reason for gambling. But contrary to the prevalent belief, evidence suggests, that sometimes, losing acts as an incentive. Gamblers are likely to play with their money as opposed to for the money (Andrade & Ganesh, 2009; Nower & Blaszczynski, 2010; Braverman &Shaffer, 2012; Neighbors et al., 2002; Tang et al., 2005). The Cognitive approach is also associated with money but is concerned with the irrational and erroneous beliefs held by gamblers which lead to an overestimation of the amount of money they have won or lost and the extent to which their behavior influences the outcome (Langer & Roth, 1983). The irrational nature of these beliefs has prompted some researchers to link them to problem gambling (Ladouceur & Walker, 1996; Clark, 2009). The psychological perspective elaborates the problem gambling behavior further by highlighting the pathological nature of gamblers, describing them as neurotics and masochists who take pleasure in losing (Bergler, 1957; Bolen & Boyd, 1972; Mendelson & Mello, 1986). However, this approach is limited in its application, as it does not lend

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itself to the examination of non –problematic behavior.

The above approaches disregard the viewpoint that consumers are emotive and direct their activities towards the pursuit of memorable experiences (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). Gambling research, thus, has benefitted from postmodern philosophical debates that seek to analyse individuals and their consumption behavior. Postmodernism signifies the development of a consumption culture in which individuals perform the roles of both consumers and producers. Moreover, consumers are seen as constructors of reality based on sensations, esthetics, signs, mental imagery, consumption dreams and symbolism (Fournier & Guiry, 1993; Firat et al., 1995; Caru & Cova, 2003; Kingma, 2010; Ozorio et al., 2012).

The philosophical notion that consumers engage in emotional information processing that goes beyond the intentional act was initially developed by Holbrook and Hirschman (1982). Using a 'cognition-affect-behavior' framework they draw a contrast between the prevailing and experiential information processing by highlighting the symbolic, hedonistic and esthetic nature of consumption previously neglected by consumer research. As a consequence, there has been a wave of research studies focussing on consumer experiences rather than solely on consumers as the information processor (Caru & Cova, 2003).
Researchers have employed divergent approaches to examine experiential gambling behavior by considering the significance of consumers' motivations/emotional engagement, atmospherics and behavioral settings. Some have opted to focus on internal drivers and have associated gambling behavior with excitement; risk; openness to experience; agreeableness; introversion; need to escape; self - esteem and competitiveness (Coldwell, 2013; Fang & Mowen, 2009; Deci & Ryan, 2008; Chen et al., 2008; McDaniel & Zuckerman, 2003; Sproston et al., 2000; Lam, 2007; Balbanis, 2002; Parke et al.; 2004). Consumers engage emotionally to gambling situations based on their motives and appraise situations before interacting to maximize the potential (Nower & Blaszczynski, 2010; Roseman, 1984). According to Ricketts and Macaskill (2003), consumers manage their emotional state by employing differential gambling strategies and connect with gambling activities at different levels. Consumers' engagement with gambling has been described as two-dimensional and is characterised by the nature and the extent to which they gamble. Some researchers view gambling as a mental state of readiness, while some others consider it to be a reaction to the repetitive exposure to stimuli (Bagozzi et al., 1999; Zajonc & Markus, 1982).

The study of 'atmospherics' as an extraneous stimulus has focussed the minds of some academics (Morgan et al., 2009; Shaw, 2005; Kotler, 1973). Classified as either static or dynamic, the academics have explored the impact of atmospheric variables in several environments such as restaurants, sporting facilities, health care and shopping malls (Milliman, 1982; Oakes, 2000). The potential of retail environments to enhance or limit gambling behavior and emotions has been extensively studied by manipulating bright colors, music and lighting (Griffiths & Parke, 2003; Oakes, 2000; Dixon et al., 2013), the floor layout and theme design (Meyer & Johnson, 2003; Friedman, 2000), ambience and ambient aromas (Hirsch, 1995), differences in perceptual, emotional (feelings), ability to control (Cotte & Latour, 2009) and the levels of stress it generates (Finlay et al., 2006).

None of the above approaches, when individually considered, is able to provide a comprehensive explanation of experiential gambling. Although such studies can be seen as useful building blocks towards the understanding of gambling behavior, they have also led to fragmented analysis as they have pri-

marily considered situation specific scenarios. A situation specific investigation may be inadequate to reveal the dynamics involved in gaining an overall experience (Meyer & Johnson, 2003). There remains a need for a generalised model of situational influences that could predict consumer behavior across situations.

Attempts to generate situational inventories have come under criticism because of their inability to encompass all potential variables (Lutz & Kakkar, 1975; Srivastva, 1981). In this context, Belk's (1975) insight is particularly relevant. The authors offer a distinction between a 'situation' and a 'behavioral setting'. Whilst a situation comprises 'time and space', a behavioral setting is broader and also involves temporal, physical and social dimensions. A behavioral setting, thus, offers an opportunity to examine a series or sequence of interconnected behavioral acts, which occur periodically. In the gambling context, because of the multiplicity of the venues, the use of behavioral settings is appropriate. Empirical research highlights conceptual differences into gambling behavior owing to specific venues (behavioral settings). For instance, in an online gambling environment, consumers are less likely to monitor their spending and exercise self-control (Siemens & Kopp, 2011).

As recreational gambling opportunities are presented in an array of venues such as at home, in a casino and betting shop, each are characterised by a unique behavioral setting, the notion forwarded by Foxall (1999) in the Behavioral Perspective Model (BPM) is relevant in this context. Rather than focusing on cognitive precursors, Foxall (1999) proposes the consideration of retail environments in which the behavior occurs in relative Open and Closed settings. These settings are distinguishable by the degree of freedom they offer to the user. Open behavioral settings provide users the potential to maintain a certain degree of control of their gambling environment, whereas in a closed behavior setting the reinforcements that shape the behavior can be manipulated by the designer. Control is two-dimensional and can be either viewed as a situational determinant or an individual's perceived sense of symbolic control of the gambling activity (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Kluger & Rafaeli, 2000). The latter is integral to the conceptual grounding of the BPM. Cotte and Latour's (2009) contextual presentation of differences between two forms of gambling; casino and online and their differential impacts on user behavior, is being used as an illustration to contextualize BPM. Casinos are an example of a medium behavior setting whereas online gambling represents open behavior settings. For instance, a casino may be designed by considering certain behavioral freedom and patterns. The internal layout, including the location of gambling machines, the eating facilities and sitting areas can be designed in such a way that consumers are compelled to act in a predictable manner once they enter the premises but to a lesser extent, consumers may still retain the behavioral freedom of choosing the sequence and nature of gambling and whether to gamble. In comparison, that degree of control does not exist when a consumer is gambling online. Online gambling can be done in any room in the house and at any time and the designer cannot influence either the furniture arrangement or the color scheme in the room (Cotte & Latour, 2009). The gambling venues can be placed on a continuum based on how open or closed they are. Figure 1 displays the theoretical continuum reflecting the relative freedom of behavior each venue offers. With limited behavioral freedom, Bingo Halls provide a contrast to Online gambling.

Purpose of the Study

Grounded in the S-O-R tradition, we propose an interactive model to understand gambling behavior. The S-O-R paradigm posits

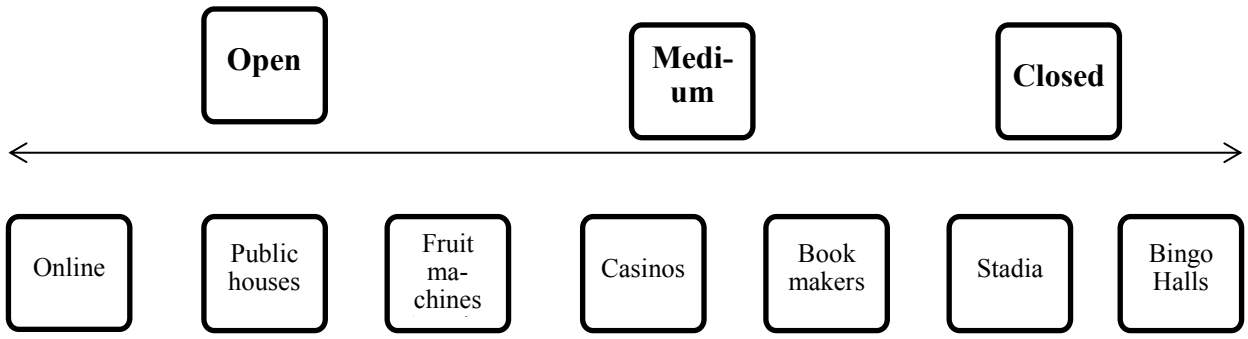


Figure 1. Continuum of Behavioral Settings and Gambling Venues.

that the stimuli in the external environment are antecedents of an individual's cognitive and affective reactions, which act as mediators and influence behavior. Earlier contributions have successfully applied the original and modified versions of the S-O-R framework, largely to examine store environments (Vieira, 2013; Erouglu, et al., 2003; Koo & Ju, 2010; Thang &Tan, 2003).

The first dimension of the model, the internal stimulus (IS), has been derived from Pine and Gilmore's (1999) notion of an experience economy which has added a previously unconsidered dimension to the consumption process, the one that emphasizes a shift in the the delivery-focus from selling, to stage an experience as consumers increasingly buy an experience rather than a product. According to them, consumers seek specific experiences much broader than hedonic consumption such as Entertainment, Education, Escapism and Esthetics when they engage in consumption-related activities. Mehrabian and Russell (1974) lend the second dimension i.e., Emotional engagement (O, the consumer) by indicating that consumers engage with their environment with responses of Plesaure, Arousal and Dominance. For our purpose we note that the PAD framework depicts consumer responses to a given gambling environment rather than acting as environmental stimuli. The emotion-eliciting characteristics of the Pleasure and Arousal dimensions comparatively have received more research attention than Dominance but it is of particular relevance in the present context as it represents the control (or lack of) consumers may feel they have in gambling situations (Russell & Snodgrass, 1987). Foxall's (1999) proposition of behavioural settings contributes towards the third dimension (ES, the external stimulus) i.e., the retail venues offering differential control.

Using this approach for the first time, we hypothesise that the IS generates an emotional response in O which interacts with the ES. This adaptation of the model leads to a slightly different placing of the S variable: the IS is placed before O and ES after, followed by the R dimension which manifests in the choices consumers make with regards to gambling venues and type of activities they undertake, leading to IS-O-ES-R arrangement. Figure 2 presents the hypothesised interaction among the three variables. The modified model, thus, distinguishes itself from situation-specific approaches and provides a rounded view of gambling behavior. In the following section we present a compelling discussion that explains the dynamics between the above variables and also facilitates the formulation of current hypotheses.

Hypotheses Formulation

Hypothesis 1.

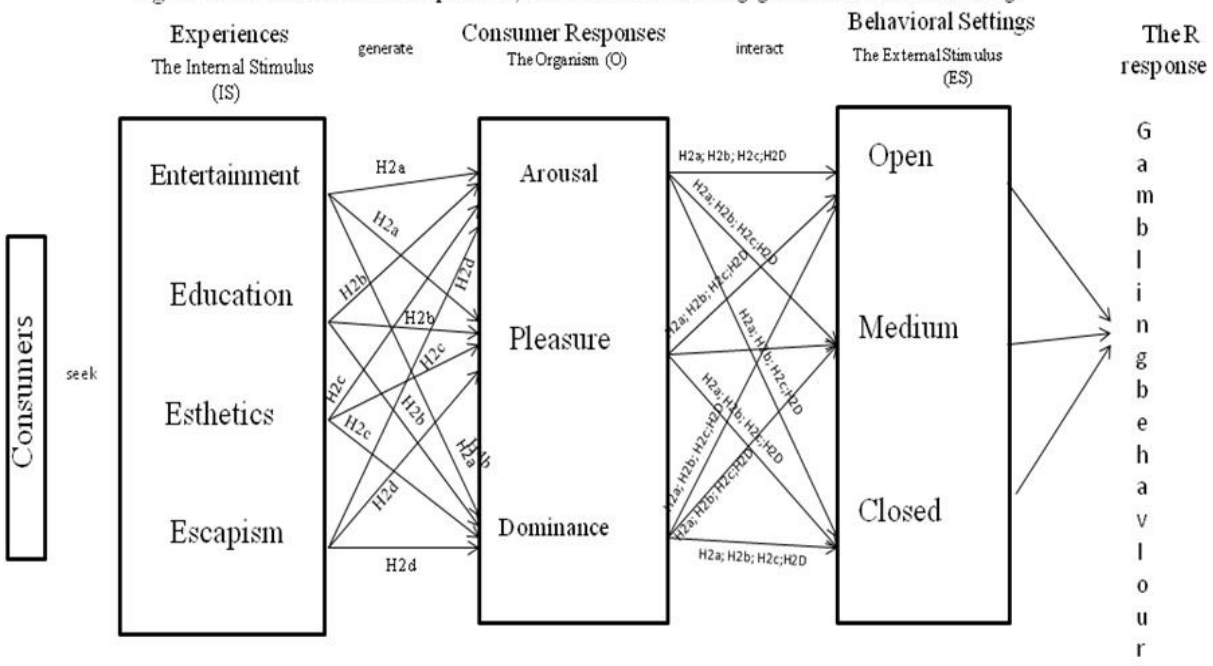
Prior to exploring the above-mentioned interaction it is imperative that the relevance of three variables in the gambling context is examined. As Pine and Gilmore's (2011) no-

tion of the four realms of an experience has not been applied to gambling, the first hypothesis is built around its applicability in this context. This hypothesis also considers the impact of Experiences, Emotional engagement and Behavior settings on gambling behavior.

H1a. The four realms of an experience as postulated by Pine and Gilmore will be relevant in the context of gambling.

H1b. Experiences, Emotional engagement and Behavioral settings each will impact on gambling behavior.

Figure 2. Interactions between Experiences, Consumer Emotional Engagement and Behavioral settings



Hypothesis 2.

The second hypothesis examines the interaction between the three named variables. As it is not possible at this stage to ascertain the nature of the interaction, therefore, this hypothesis encompasses all theoretically possible combinations, which include the four experiences, three emotional responses and open, medium and closed settings. It is proposed that consumers initiate the gambling process based on particular experiences they seek. They engage in gambling with the emotional responses of Pleasure, Arousal and Dominance. The emotional responses interact with Closed, Medium and Open behavioral settings and lead to gambling behavior.

2a Entertainment will lead to emotional responses of arousal, pleasure and dominance which will interact with Open, Medium and Closed behavioral settings.

Entertainment as an experience: this can be experienced in numerous ways such as by winning or watching others win, being happy and enjoying a social outing with friends. In

an open setting, the behavior is underlined by personal motives such as winning and actively participating in gambling activities. However, in closed behavior settings, organisations can offer reinforcers to enrich this experience by staging activities in a variety of ways that provide consumers with a choice of either performing the gambling task by actively engaging or passively absorbing events unfolding in front of them (Fisher &Arnold, 1990; Fisher, 1993; Jeong et al., 2009).

2b Education will generate emotional responses of arousal, pleasure and dominance which will interact with Open, Medium and Closed behavioral settings.

Education as an experience: educational experience is determined by the type of gambling activity consumers engage in (Smith &Preston, 1984; Arnold &Reynolds, 2003). For instance, less education or know how is required for chance games but more skilled games require prior learning and skills. The knowledge base accumulated over a period of time, as a result of prolonged exposure to gambling, such as playing strategies can be applied and tested in closed and open settings. Potentially, learning can occur in both contexts. In open settings consumers engage in gambling by following instructions provided by the designer. In a closed setting, however, social pressures are higher therefore there is an increased likelihood that learning may occur by observing and being coached by others, such as family and friends.

2c Esthetics will generate emotional responses of arousal, pleasure and dominance which will interact with Open, Medium and Closed behavioral settings.

Esthetics as an experience: this experience can be enhanced by the ambience of the venue such as the decor and the furniture arrangement, which can stimulate sensory pleasures (Cotte & Latour, 2009; Baker et al., 2002). For instance, one may consider a trip to Las Vegas as the ultimate in terms of esthetic experience, where situational determinants are staged to maximise this experience. In the context of open settings, the significance and the level of esthetic experiences are determined and created by consumers themselves by exercising control over their immediate surroundings, such as manipulating the ambience of the room where the gambling activity is occurring.

2d Escapism will generate emotional responses of arousal, pleasure and dominance, which will interact with Open, Medium and Closed behavioral settings.

Escapism as an experience: Gambling may be commonly associated with this experience in both open or closed settings as it provides an escape from the routine or discontentment in one's life (Kusyszyn, 1984; Pine & Gilmore, 2011; Fiore & Ogle, 2000; Mathwick et al., 2001; Babin et al., 1994). The extent of escapism provided by open and closed settings will vary depending on sensory stimuli available and the means to access them. In closed settings, as the provision of stimuli is determined by organisations, such means will be limited by what is on offer. In an open setting, an individual has more freedom to create stimuli that heighten the sensory impact, such as introducing their favourite piece of music and being engrossed in it in such way that it transports them into a different world. An individual becomes a part of and the actual or virtual environment and consequently affects it.

METHOD

Participants and Procedure

A systematic sampling procedure was used to collect data in the North East of England, a region with comparable gambling characteristics to the rest of the country (National Centre for Social Research 2011). Four electoral constituencies were selected randomly. Researchers were instructed to start from a house beginning with number one within their allocated areas and proceed to interview every fourth household. In the case

where there was no response, they knocked at the next-door and proceeded systemically with interviewing every fourth household. Respondents were included if they engaged in any form of gambling including the National Lottery. This resulted in a valid sample of 303 respondents. Respondents were requested to provide information on their gambling activities and behavior in the following areas: (1) gambling experiences (2) responses on emotional engagement (3) behavioral settings and (4) gambling behavior.

To explore the nature of gambling behavior, data on the frequency of several gambling activities, such as the National Lottery, Scratch Cards, Machine and Card Games, Bingo, Bets on Horses and Dogs, was gathered. To consider the significance of behavioral settings, various gambling venues were incorporated, such as Online; Casinos; Bookmakers; Stadia; Bingo halls; Fruit Machine arcades and Public houses and the respondents provided information on their usage of these venues. Based on the exploratory factor analysis the venues were classified as 'Open', 'Medium' and 'Closed' on their potential to offer behavioral freedom. Open behavioral settings were classified as Online Public houses and Fruit machine. Casinos, Bookmakers and Stadia were classified as Medium and Bingo halls as Closed behavioral settings. Consumers' emotions were measured by Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) PAD framework based on a five-point scale. Pine & Gilmore's proposition of four realms of an experience has been tested empirically in tourism in terms of 'bed and breakfast' and 'website patronage' sectors (Oh et al., 2007; Jeong, et al., 2009). Oh et al. (2007) have developed a measurement scale which taps Pine and Gilmore's proposed experiences and consider it to be conceptually sound and stable across situations. This scale has also been validated by other studies in relation to visitors' and cruisers' experiences (Hosnay &Witham, 2009; Cole & Chancellor, 2009). A modified version of this scale has been used by changing any reference of types of accommodation to gambling experiences on a five point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

MEASUREMENT

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) versions 21 has been used for the data analysis. As the 'experience' dimension proposed by Pine &Gilmore (2011) is being applied for the first time in the gambling context it is therefore imperative that the nature of this construct is understood and the accurateness of the observed variables in estimating it is examined by using the Exploratory (CFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analyses (CFA). Initially the EFA was conducted and the pattern matrix thus developed formed the basis upon which the measurement model was built (Nadirova, 2000). The 'fit statistic' has been used to assess the model fit using the widely recommended criteria (Hu & Bentler, 1999, Hooper et al., 2008).

To consider the second dimension, in accordance with the theory, a structural model has been built to examine the inter relationships and the direct/indirect effects of the latent and other variables, namely emotional responses (Emotions: sum of Pleasure, Arousal and Dominance), Experiences (sum of the three realms of an experience; Esthetics, Education and Escapism), Behavioral settings (sum of the Open, Medium and Closed behavioral settings) and gambling behavior. The third dimension involves a regression model to examine the overall pattern of gambling linking experiences, emotions and behavioral settings.

RESULTS

The total valid sample of 303 consists of 51% male and 49% female respondents. 42% of the respondents in the sample are married and 35% are single. The sample comprises

22% of respondents aged between16-25; 23% between 26-35; 20% between 36-45;14% between 46-55, 11% between 56 -65 and 10% are 60 and over. Most respondents indicate that they are in full time employment (47%) followed by 19% who work on a part time basis and 13% who are retired.

The EFA has highlighted four factors which account for 72.28% of the total variance. For the resulting four factors, Cronbach Alpha coefficients range from 0.76 to 0.96, showing a strong internal consistency in all the cases. Although, four factors have been obtained it has not been possible to ascertain if the results identify all four realms of an experience. Factor three presents a combination of 'Entertainment' and 'Esthetics' items and does not point towards it being a meaningful factor. Therefore, the CFA procedure has been applied to understand the conceptual nature of the experience variable specific to gambling and also to interpret factor three. The initial model obtained during the CFA was judged to be 'an unacceptable fit' based on the fit criteria proposed by Hu & Bentler (1999). An examination of parameter estimates, fit indexes and standardised residuals led to modifications in the original model, resulting in an experience scale which appears to be structurally stronger, thus, considered to be of an 'acceptable fit' (Schreiber et al., 2006). The proposed model comprises three factor structure/experiences, Escapism, Education and Esthetics. Items such as 'feels like a different world'; 'feels like a different place and time; 'I imagine to be someone else' and 'I escape reality' are associated with the Escapism whereas items such as 'I learnt a lot through gambling'; 'I have enhanced my skill and knowledge' are linked to Education. The Esthetic experience incorporates items such as 'the atmosphere is important for me; 'I would travel to Las Vegas' and 'I enjoy being seen in a casino'.

The 'goodness of fit' statistics indicate that the X^2 is 1.61(df: 29; P =0.02), CFI is 0.99, GFI is 0.97, IFI is 0.95, AGFI is 0.94, .NFI is 0.98, TLI is 0.99 and RMSEA is 0.04. Although a non-significant Chi value is preferable as an indicator of a good fit but it is also sensitive to large sample sizes, however, the majority of indexes listed above are within the acceptable range as postulated by Hu & Bentler (1999)**.**

The Cronbach Alpha is 0.90 suggesting a high internal consistency (Nunnally, 1978). Convergent and divergent validities have been examined by computing the average variances (AVE) and construct reliabilities (CR). The CR is higher than 0.70 and average variance extracted is higher than 0.50 for all three constructs. All standardised factor loadings for each experience construct are higher than 0.65 indicating strong convergent validity. A high divergent reliability has been demonstrated by the AVE estimates, which are higher for each construct than the squared inter-factor correlations (Paswan, 2009; Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). The modified model and the factor loadings between the observed and the latent variables are presented in Table 1.

The results do not confirm the relevance of the four realms of an experience in the gambling context (Table 1). Instead only three realms have been identified, namely; Escapism, Esthetics and Education, therefore, the first hypothesis (H1a) cannot be accepted.

Table 1 also presents the standardised parameter estimates, which indicate that Behavioral settings and Emotional engagement have a significant impact on gambling behavior (0.67** and 0.15* respectively). The joint effect of the Experience variable is the least influential in predicting gambling behavior (0.05). But, examining the overall interaction among the three variables, it can be seen that Experience is strongly linked to Emotional engagement (0.67**) and Emotional engagement shows a strong association with Behavioral settings (0.56**). H1b can be partially accepted.

Table 1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Structural Model

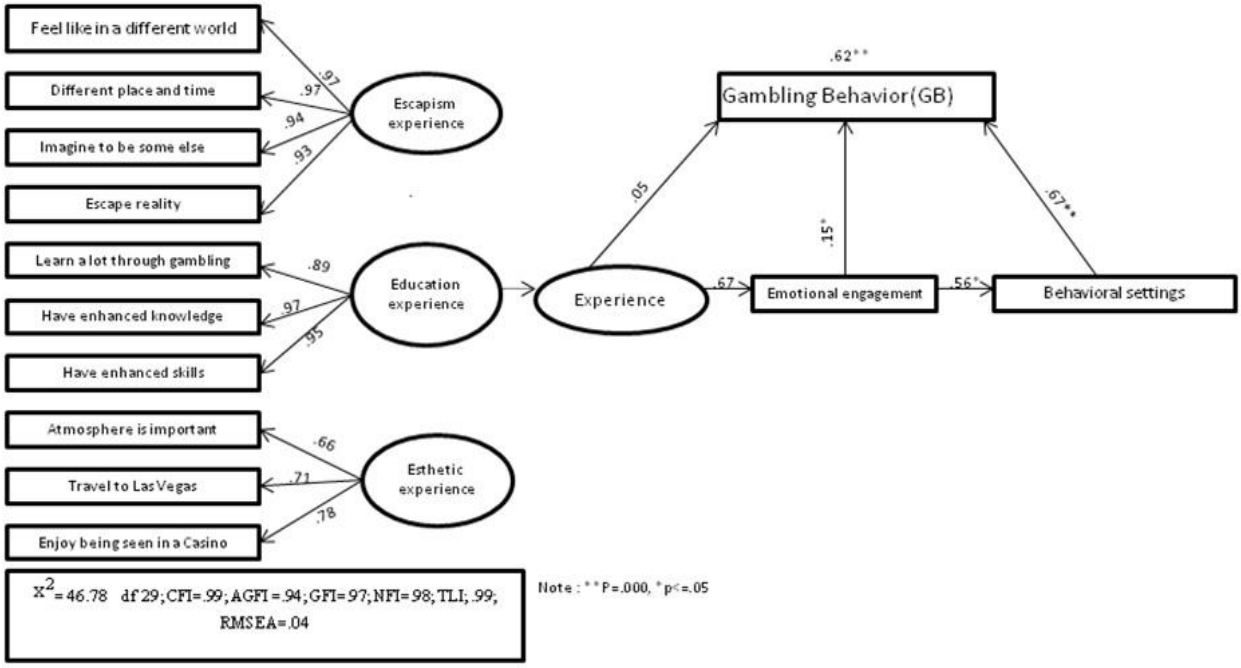
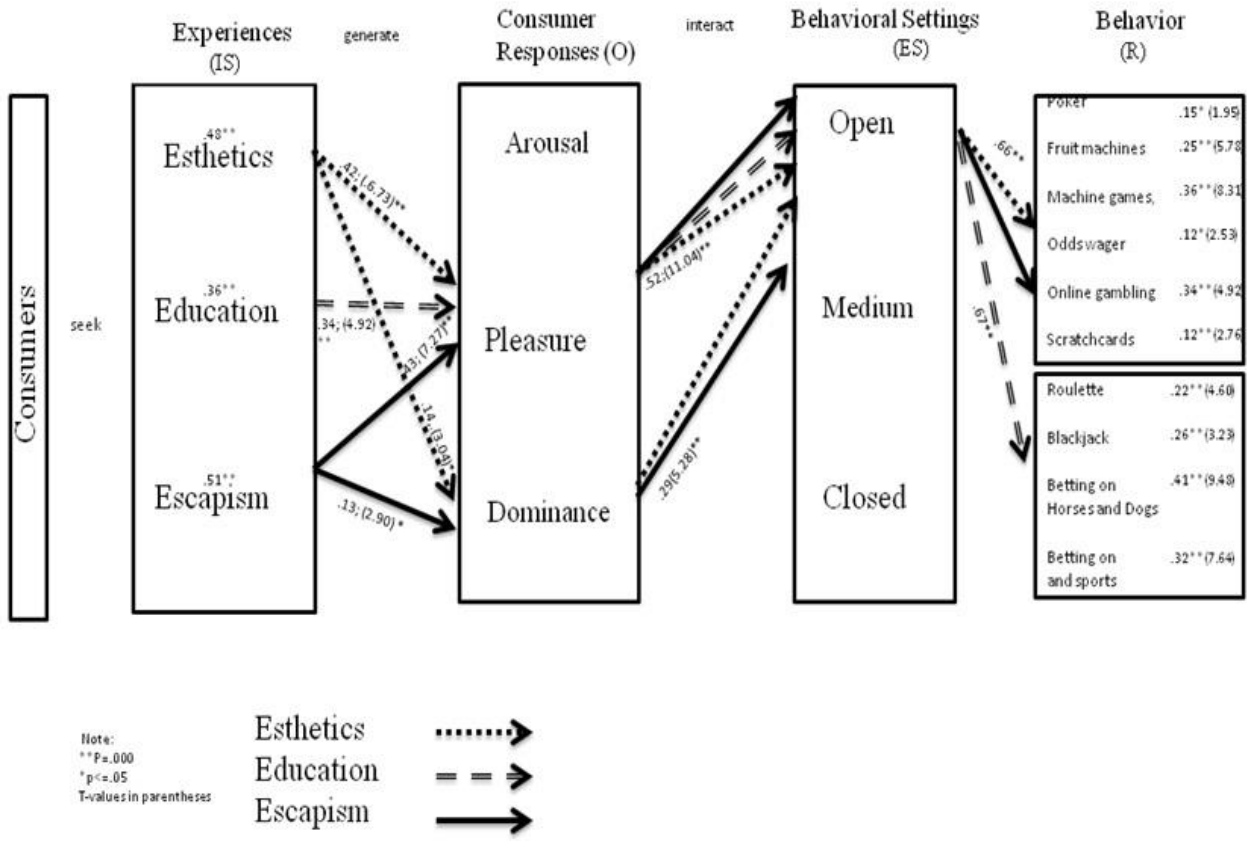


Table 2 presents the overall interactive pattern obtained among the three variables. The R^2 for Esthetics experience is 0.48**. Esthetics is significantly linked to Pleasure (0.42**) and Dominance (0.14*) but insignificantly and negatively to Arousal (-0.02). Considering the Education experience, the R^2 stands at 0.36**. Education has a positive and significant association with Pleasure (0.34**), an insignificant link with Dominance (.09) and a negative/insignificant association with Arousal (-0.09). The R^2 for Escapism is 0.51**. The results highlight a statistically significant relationship with Pleasure (0.43**) and Dominance (0.13*) but in the context of Arousal, it is insignificant (0.03). Pleasure and Dominance are significantly associated with Open settings (0.52** and 0.29** respectively).

In behavioral terms, gambling activities such as the use of Scratch cards (.12**), Fruit machines (.25**), Machine Games (.36**), Poker (0.15*), Odds wager (.12*), and Online Gambling (.34**) are strongly associated with Open settings. The above-mentioned activities (not including Online) also significantly associate with online gambling which highlights that Escapism and Esthetics experiences are maximised by engaging in online gambling in which users can control the gambling situation. In comparison, the Education experience is only associated with Pleasure and Open settings and not with Dominance. Gambling activities such as the Roulette (0.22**), Blackjack (0.26**) and Betting on Horses/Dogs (0.41**) and Sports (0.32**) are linked to it and the preferred venues are casinos and public houses, which can be described as medium

Table 2 Interactions between Experiences, Consumer Emotional Engagement and Behavioral settings



behavioral settings. These gambling activities are not significantly linked to online gambling. As Experiences have generated consumer emotional responses and these responses have interacted with behavioral settings to determine gambling behavior, hypothesis 2 (2b, 2c and 2d with the exception of 'a') can be accepted. Hypothesis 2a cannot be accepted as the Entertainment experience has been factored out of the study.

DISCUSSION

We contribute to the on-going research in experiential gambling by diverging from a situational focus to the one that examines behaviours across a range of gambling situations i.e. venues. The theoretical variation (IS-O-ES-R) demonstrates the significance of the interaction between Experiences, Emotional engagement and Behavioral settings in the gambling context. Results indicate that for all three experiences consumers have opted for open settings but only in the case of consumers seeking Esthetic and Escapism experiences, a preference to be in control is highlighted. Esthetics and Escapism experiences therefore, may simultaneously be attained as long as the control dimension coexists in open settings.

Education seekers report deriving pleasure in enhancing their knowledge and skills through gambling. They also choose Open behavioral settings but their preference for gambling venues, which comparatively offer freedom to a lesser extent, namely medium

behavioral settings such as casinos and public houses, is counter intuitive. The significance of the Dominance dimension explains this noteworthy anomaly. As they do not seek to be in control in order to educate themselves, casinos and public houses offer them a combination of formal and informal learning opportunities. Here, in addition to formally indulging in gambling by following structured instructions offered by organisers, there are adequate opportunities to socialise with a view to learn by watching friends and families.

The hypothesised pattern linking the three variables forwarded in the conceptual framework (figure 2), thus needs to be revised in the light of the results. The revised version needs to incorporate the Escapism, Education and Esthetics experiences which lead to consumers' emotional responses of Pleasure and Dominance and Open behavioral settings and this ultimately influences the type of gambling activities that consumers indulge in.

Although the results do not support the presence of the Entertainment experience explicitly, arguably, it could have been an underlying motive for the other three experiences or may have fused with other experiences as consumers overwhelmingly report that they derive pleasure from their gambling. Gambling has been linked to entertainment proneness and is highlighted by current results, as consumers consider gambling as fun and indicate that they would travel to Las Vegas, which is known to offer a combination of gambling and entertainment activities (Dandurand & Ralenkotter, 1985; Jeong et al. 2009). A noteworthy issue in this context is that this study focuses on recreational gambling and some of the entertainment items incorporated in the study to ascertain the 'entertainment' experience can be perceived as associating with the 'winning aspect' which may have contributed to the exclusion of the entertainment factor. Items such as 'not winning feels like wasting time'; 'gambling is boring if not winning'; 'continue to gamble after losing' and 'bad gambling experience puts me off gambling in future' could highlight negative connotations regarding gambling. It is also possible that conceptually, these realms are intertwined and thus, the word 'experience' is synonymous with gambling (Jeong et al., 2009). The results may thus imply that these realms do not have clearly defined boundaries (Jurowski, 2009). Pine and Gilmore (2011) allude to the fluid nature of these boundaries when they suggest the notion of "sweet spot" whereby all experiences are in one 'distinctive place' to provide a total experience. Various experiential dimensions can be created by combining the proposed four realms to form newer dimensions such as, Educapist, Escasthetic and Enteresthetic. In the interest of further exploration, studies in future can embed the 'sweet spot' notion with behavioral settings as experiences can act as discriminating stimuli and characterise each setting uniquely. The simultaneous presence of motives is a psychological phenomenon and can only be understood by evaluating consumers' interpretations of the sweet spot and four realms of an experience. The possibility that the escapism experience has combined with esthetics to form a new dimension of 'Escasthetic' cannot be ruled out at this stage. Therefore, conceptual clarification is needed to establish how, if at all, independent these experiences are from each other in influencing gambling behavior. A focus on this will provide a better understanding of why consumers gamble, whether they have motive to seek a particular experience and if it is a combined impact of all four realms they seek. For instance, consumers who want to be entertained can do so by learning something new, escaping from their reality or being in pleasant surroundings. This study raises pertinent issues and, therefore, future generalisation will require further testing and validation of the proposed framework

by forging causal relationships amongst variables in the study.

Researchers have long argued for taxonomy of situations to incorporate the psychology of emotions and physical stimuli to draw meaningful situational analysis. Inspired by the PAD (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) and BPM (Foxall, 1999) frameworks, we have provided a step forward in this direction. Disparate gambling pursuits have been synthesized based on their underlying commonalities. Meaningful associations, for instance, can be formulated in the knowledge that the Escapism and Esthetic experiences link to the Pleasure response which leads to a preference for Open settings. A deviation from this occurs where a desire to be 'dominant' is also activated and when it interacts with open settings especially in the context of the Education experience, a different set of gambling pursuits become relevant.

The above associations offer functional guidance to decision makers with regards to the design of their venues to optimize gambling experiences based on behavioral freedom. Gambling venues, such as casinos and public houses, stand to benefit from the understanding of contextual factors that alter or maintain behavior. For instance, the design features that enhance the atmospheric impact such as opportunities to socialise and the ambience of gambling venues can all be modified to enable optimal freedom for Education seekers. In comparison, behavioral freedom is the most salient characteristic associated with open settings offering organisations an insight into the kind of specific gambling activities that could be aligned with this freedom. Although gambling activities such as Poker and Odds wager are widely available online and are a part of any established online provision, however, the understanding of the interactive process is new which reveals that the participants in such activities will primarily be the Escapism and Esthetic experience seekers.

LIMITATIONS

There are a number of limitations in this study. We tested a theoretical framework by contextualising it in a specific geographical location and the focus was specifically on recreational gambling. Its application, therefore, in different contexts such as habitual or problem gambling situations in different geographical areas, needs to be further tested before any generalisations either to the specific sub groups or general population, can be forwarded. As reinforcing behavior is crucial in the S-O-R paradigm, therefore in the context of habitual or problem gambling, there is a possibility that a Stimulus-Response framework may be more appropriate because informed by their learning history consumers may directly seek gambling venues that are pleasure, dominant or arousal eliciting. These emotions potentially may become a part of gambling environments. Future studies can further extend the potential of the proposed framework by exploring the significance of learning histories in providing a feedback mechanism and act as a reinforcer for gambling behavior.

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