

An Analysis of Elderly Gamers' Trip Characteristics and Gambling Behavior: Comparing the Elderly with Their Younger Counterparts

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine trip characteristics and gambling behavior of the elderly and compare them with those of other age groups. Visitors to two large Midwestern commercial land-based casinos completed a follow-up telephone survey. Of the 32 represented variables, 11 indicated a significant difference between age groups: Elderly gamblers were the least likely to engage in other recreational activities besides gambling. They were the least likely to obtain information about the casino and the least likely to use the Internet for this information. They preferred to visit casinos on weekdays, and indicated an interest in buying weekday package trips that include stops at several casinos. With regards to overall trip spending and gambling behavior, there is no statistical significance indicating that the elderly behave any different from their younger counterparts.

Key words: elderly, age groups, casino gaming, market segmentation.

Introduction

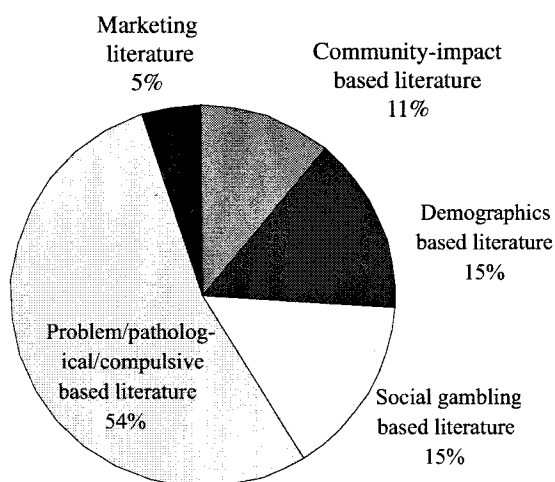
People have now become familiar with the demographic fact that the U.S. population is aging. Figures from the U.S. Census Bureau (Hetzel and Smith, 2001) indicate that the older population (65+) numbered 35 million in 2000, an increase of 3.7 million or 12.0% since 1990. About one in every eight, or 12.4%, of the population is an older American. The number of Americans aged 45-64 - who will reach 65 over the next two decades - increased by 34% during this period. Because they have more free time, are healthier, better educated and in higher economic status, they have and will pursue more fun and a more active lifestyles. In 2000, persons reaching age 65 had an average life expectancy of an additional 17.9 years (U.S. Administration on Aging, AoA, 2002). They generally have more time available for leisure. Some of them may seize the opportunity to participate in leisure activities; many will continue to participate in the same ones they enjoyed in earlier years, while some are eager to try new ones, and a few will adopt new ones (Godbey, 1994; Cordes and Ibrahim, 1999). One of the new endeavors that has been adopted as a leisure activity by an important number of this age group is casino gaming (National Gambling Impact Study Commission, 1999; Tarras, Singh and Moufakkir, 1999). According to Tarras et al., the majority of the elderly that they interviewed started casino gaming in 1991. The National Gambling Impact Study Commission (NGISC, 1999), found that 50% of adults aged 65 and plus participated in casino gaming in 1998, compared to 23% in 1975. The 50% of those aged 65 years and plus constituted 16% of

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the overall gaming adult population in 1998 compared to 5% in 1975. Casino gaming is expected to become more popular in the coming years as casino facilities expand and new ones open in proximity to large populations (Harrah's, 2002).

In general, studies focusing on the elderly are rare (Strain, Grabusic, Searle, and Dunn, 2002), those focusing on the elderly and gambling are even more rare (Tarras, Singh and Moufakkir, 1999; Petry, 2002), and those that are published in peer-reviewed literature in this area are but a few (Munro, Cox-Bishop, McVey, and Munro, 2003). Furthermore, "while modern academic accounts of gambling usually center around gambling as an addiction..., there has been little academic attention to pleasurable aspects of such risk-taking behavior" (Godbey, 1994, p. 34). This argument has been supported by several authors. For example, in their extensive literature review on the elderly and gambling, Munro and colleagues (2003) have indicated that the gambling behavior of the elderly has been studied from many perspectives including economics, morality, addiction, demographics, mental health, and marketing. However, they have found that only 5% of this literature is focused on marketing to this group, while more than one half (54%) is focused on problem gambling (Figure 1).

Figure 1
Seniors who gamble: themes in the gaming literature, 2003.



Source: Munro, Cox-Bishop, McVey, and Munro, 2003, p. 8.

Recognizing gambling as a form of leisure expression (Godbey, 1994) that has become mainstream in the US (American Gaming Association, AGA, 2004; NGISC, 1999), there seems to be a need to balance the gambling research focus to also include studying the pleasurable side of this popular activity, especially that the majority of those who engage in it do not seem to have problems with it (AGA, 2000; Munro et al., 2003). "Often the popular literature about the consequence of senior's gambling is more negative than some researcher findings suggest it needs to be" (Munro et al., 2003, p. 8). Hope and Havir (2002) caution people, researchers, and the elderly themselves not to fall into the exaggeration that a large number of the elderly are addicted and or vulnerable to gambling addiction, because they found no strong evidence supporting that.

The popular literature about the consequence of senior's gambling is more negative than some researcher findings suggest it needs to be.

Furthermore, studies focusing on the elderly who gamble have often taken this market as one homogeneous group that includes those who play Bingo, those who play the lottery, those who buy instant-win or scratch tickets, those who play Video Lottery Terminals (VLTs) in bars or lounges, those who bet on the outcome of sporting events, those who bet on charity-sponsored sport pools, those who gamble on the Internet, those who gamble in local casinos, and those who take day trips to a gaming community as part of a fun day out, regardless of their respective needs, wants and wishes. Surely, there are many forms of gambling and many types of gamblers, as there are differences in their characteristics and behaviors (Volberg & Moore, 1999).

The focus of the present study is on the elderly gamers; defined as those who take a pleasure trip to a gaming community outside of their place of residence. The purpose is to describe their gaming trip characteristics and behavior. An examination of trip expenditures, gaming behavior, trip information source, and gaming interest and preference, may help policymakers, casino managers, tourism marketers, program developers, and senior centers to better serve the elderly, contribute to the quality of their gaming experience and quality of life. In addition, the importance of this segment of the gaming market lies in the fact that for many casinos “these players keep a constant influx of revenue, even when the high roller tables are slow” (Munro et al., 2003, p.21).

Before showing the results of this study, it is worth mentioning, at this point, that while reviewing the literature it appeared that there exists a lack of consensus among researchers with regards to age group categorization and age terminology of elderly people. Lack of agreement has made comparison across existing studies difficult (Moufakkir et al., work in progress).

Review of the literature

General information about elderly gamers

Gaming has become popular among the elderly (AGA, 2000). In 1998, 50% of elderly people participated in casino gaming, twice as much as in 1975. They represent the most growing number of gamers (National Opinion Research Center, 1999) (Table 1). Despite this, research on the elderly gamers is underserved by the tourism and leisure academy (Tarras, Singh and Moufakkir, 1999), especially with regard to marketing (Munro et al., 2003). The proprietary nature of gaming marketing research (Moufakkir, 2002), and emphasis on addiction and problem gambling (Munro et al., 2003) have made the marketing information less visible in the academic literature. In a conference paper delivered to the National Conference on Gambling titled “A History of Gambling,” Blaszczynski (1996) argued that: “One percent of the adult population suffers from problem gambling but this is no reason to preclude access to the remaining 99% of the community...” (Munro et al., 2003, p. 35).

Table 1
Past-year gaming by age group, 1975 and 1998.

Age group	Percentage 1975	Percentage 1998
18-24	73	64
25-44	69	67
45-64	60	66
65 and over	23	50

Source: National Opinion Research Center, 1999.

The AGA (2000) has dedicated a chapter to elderly gamers. Respondents to a survey conducted for the AGA were asked: "When you go casino gambling, do you usually go with your spouse, your family, your friends, with an organized group or alone?" For the majority of the elderly, casino gaming is a social activity. Similar to the average casino customers, only 3% of the elderly respondents said that they visit a casino alone. The most important reason to visit a casino was "go out/socialize" (AGA, 2000). For the majority of the elderly visiting a casino is a fun night out, because casinos offer them excitement, entertainment, as well as social benefits (Thompson, Powell and Hilt, 1994). According to Thompson et al., casinos offer the socialization that many elderly people crave. This is a reason why senior centers offer gaming trips to the elderly (Higgins, 2001). Senior centers filled an average of one bus per gaming trip and some centers reported filling at least two buses per trip, each holding between 45-55 persons. Several senior centers directors interviewed by Higgins said that seniors are requesting more gaming trips. According to a study by Desai and colleagues at Yale School of Medicine, in the American Journal of Psychiatry, there appears to be an association between recreational gambling and good health among elderly persons. The professor suggests that: "Although the underlying reasons remain hypothetical, proposed reasons included the increased activity, socialization, and cognitive stimulation that are related to engaging in gambling" (Ziegler, 2004).

For the majority of the elderly, casino gaming is a social activity.

To attract customers, the gaming industry "consciously creates gambling environments that are much more than just places to play games of chance (Munro et al., 2003, p. 21). To attract the elderly and gain their loyalty, casinos offer them free drinks, cigarettes, medication discounts, and gambling education programs (Higgins, 2001). Some researchers have advocated strict government gambling regulations and advertising laws to protect the elderly (Munro et al., 2003).

Method

To obtain information about trip characteristics and gambling behavior of the elderly, visitors to two large commercial land-based casinos in the Midwest were randomly intercepted in the non-gaming areas of the facilities, for a period of five months (May through September, 2000). Intercepts took place in two randomly selected weekdays and two randomly selected weekends, between 10:00a.m. and 4:00p.m. or between 4:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. Visitors who indicated their willingness to participate in a follow-up telephone survey --consisting of 42 questions-- provided the interviewer with a telephone number. The questionnaire is a compilation of questions from the gaming literature (see for example Las Vegas Visitor Statistics Annual Reports prepared by GLS Research), tourism literature, and marketing literature. It was revised by faculty in the department of Park, Recreation and Tourism Resources, Michigan State University, and piloted on 50 respondents. (The questionnaire may be requested from the author).

Of the 1374 collected phone numbers 842 respondents completed the telephone follow-up questionnaire, representing a response rate of 61.3. Of the 842 respondents 170 were aged 65 years and over (Table 2). This paper focuses on the elderly defined as those who are 65 years or older. In order to understand this market segment better, it is compared with other age groups identified in Table 3. The data on which this study is based is part of a larger data set that was collected by the present author to conduct a study for the Travel, Tourism and Recreation Resource Center (TTRRC) at Michigan State University, which was commissioned by the Greater Detroit Convention and Visitors Bureau. The primary purpose of TTRRC's larger study was to profile casino visitors and calculate their economic impact on the local community (Moufakkir et al., 2000; Moufakkir, 2004). Data of this study were processed using SPSS 12.0.1 for Windows. The Chi-square and T-test statistics were computed to compare the elderly with their younger counterparts on various variables.

Table 2
Age categories of the sample.

Age category	Frequency	Percent
18-34	99	11.8
35-44	148	17.6
45-54	239	28.4
55-64	186	22.1
65 and over	170	20.2
Total	842	100.0

Findings

The purpose of this paper was to examine trip characteristics and gambling behavior of the elderly. To understand these better and provide marketers with useful information, the elderly market segment was compared to their younger counterparts. An examination of the demographic characteristics of gamers is followed with trip characteristics, trip spending, gambling behavior, gaming interest, and finally, trip information source.

Demographic characteristics of gamers

It is no surprise that the demographic profile of the elderly gamers is different from that of those of the other age groups. And it is no surprise that it is not different from the elderly Americans. Overall, most of the elderly gamers are single, retired, with a lower household income, and no children living at home (Table 3).

Table 3
Demographic characteristics of gamers, by age group.

Variables	21-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	X =
<u>Marital status</u>						311.35*
Single	57.1	29.7	11.3	9.7	4.8	
Married	29.6	52.7	69.5	73.0	58.9	
Divorced	5.1	11.5	12.6	10.3	6.0	
Separated	1.0	2.6	2.1	2.2	0.6	
Widow	0.0	0.7	0.7	4.9	29.8	
In permanent non-marital situation	7.0	2.7	2.5	0.0	0.0	
Children in household						
Yes	32.7	48.6	25.9	5.4	4.7	129.61*
No	67.3	51.4	74.1	94.6	95.3	
<u>Employment</u>						439.25*
Employed	78.6	74.8	67.2	38.7	8.3	
Self-employed	10.2	16.3	15.1	11.8	3.6	
Retired	0.0	1.4	8.4	40.3	85.8	
Student	9.2	7.5	8.8	9.1	2.4	
Unemployed	2.0	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	
1999 household income						111.53*
Under \$37,000	23.5	22.3	18.9	19.9	45.0	
\$37,000-50,000	25.5	22.3	12.2	22.0	21.3	
Over \$50,000	37.8	45.9	58.8	47.8	11.8	
Chose not to answer	13.3	9.5	10.1	10.2	21.9	

* Significant at the 0.05 level.

Trip characteristics of gamers

Table 4 shows trip characteristics of the represented age groups, including the elderly. What is worth noting is that of the 10 represented variables the difference between the groups is statistically significant in 5. This suggests that there are differences and similarities between the trip characteristics of the elderly gamers and the other segments. An overview of the table shows that over one half (58%) of the elderly were day-trippers, and first time visitors to the casinos where they were intercepted. Over one-fourth were on a charter bus trip compared to only 5% of those aged 21-34 and 18% of those aged 55-64. The elderly were the least likely to stay overnight. Those aged 21-34 and 45-54 were more likely to stay overnight. Almost three-fourth of the elderly indicated that visiting the casino was the primary reason for their trip to the gaming community. Those aged 21-34 were the least likely to visit the community because of the casinos. The elderly and those aged 55-64 were more likely than the other age groups to visit other casinos while on trip. A little over one-fourth of the elderly engaged in other recreational activities besides gaming. They were the least likely to do so compared to the others. While only 14% traveled alone, the elderly were the least likely to do so compared to the other age groups. Nearly 8% of those who did not travel alone were accompanied with children. This was the largest percentage of those who travel with children. Although about one-half of the elderly who stayed overnight stayed in hotel/motel, compared with the others, they were more likely to patronize hotels than those who were in the age category 35-44 and 55-64. About one-half of the elderly stayed with friends and relatives. The least likely to stay in the homes of friends or relatives were those aged 21-34 and 45-54.

Table 4
Trip Characteristics of gamers, by age group.

Variables	21-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	X =
First trip to casino						5.81
Yes	52.5	52.7	46.0	49.5	57.6	
No	47.5	47.3	54.0	50.5	42.4	
Trip category						61.78*
Bus tour	5.1	10.8	10.9	17.7	64.7	
Non-bus tour	94.9	89.2	89.1	82.3	35.3	
Over night stay						6.93
Yes	41.2	30.4	33.9	28.5	27.5	
No	58.8	69.6	66.1	71.5	72.5	
Primary reason for trip is casino						9.98*
Yes	49.5	59.5	54.4	62.4	65.9	
No	50.5	40.5	45.6	37.6	34.1	
Visit other casinos while on trip						14.71
Yes	20.2	20.9	23.0	34.4	32.4	
No	79.8	79.1	77.0	65.6	67.6	
Engage in other recreational activities						11.30*
Yes	59.6	44.6	49.8	46.8	39.4	
No	40.4	55.4	50.2	53.2	60.6	
Travel alone						4.44
Yes	24.2	17.6	18.0	18.8	14.1	
No	75.8	82.4	82.0	81.2	85.9	
Travel with children						17.71*
Yes	1.0	1.4	2.9	2.2	7.6	
No	99.0	98.6	97.1	97.8	92.4	
Stay in hotel/motel						9.77*
Yes	69.0	40.0	57.7	45.3	47.9	
No	31.0	60.0	42.3	54.7	52.1	
Stay with friends/relatives						8.13
Yes	28.6	53.3	37.2	50.9	45.8	
No	71.4	46.7	62.8	49.1	54.2	

* Significant at the 0.05 level.

Trip spending patterns of gamers

There is no statistical significance indicating that there is a difference in spending patterns between the represented age groups.

Respondents were asked to record the amount they spent inside the study area on each one of the six spending categories (Table 5). For example, they were asked: "How much did you spend on lodging?" and "How many persons did your spending party include?"

Looking at the six spending categories, there is no statistical significance indicating that there is a difference in spending patterns between the represented age groups. However, the largest majority of the elderly (41.5%) indicated that they spent some money on food and beverages inside the casino, and 32.3% on food and beverages outside the casino.

Table 5
Trip spending of gamers, by age group.

Variables	21-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	X =
Percentage of those who spent money						240.82
<i>On lodging</i>						
Yes	22.7	14.4	14.5	13.6	14.3	
No	77.3	85.6	85.5	86.4	85.7	
<i>On food & beverage Inside the casino</i>						233.14
Yes	51.5	48.3	47.0	44.6	41.5	
No	48.5	51.7	53.0	55.4	58.5	
<i>Outside the casino</i>						201.00
Yes	54.6	38.8	39.3	32.6	32.3	
No	45.4	61.2	60.7	67.4	67.7	
<i>On gasoline purchase</i>						153.49
Yes	49.5	38.8	38.0	37.5	23.6	
No	50.5	61.2	62.0	62.5	76.4	
<i>On Other expenses</i>						58.33
Yes	21.6	18.4	17.9	15.2	9.9	
No	78.4	81.6	82.1	84.8	90.1	

On average, the elderly spent about \$18 on food and beverages inside the casino and \$33 outside the casino. They were the least spenders on other spending activities such as souvenirs (\$8 compared with \$44 for those aged 55-64). This supports the previous finding that, unlike the other age groups, the majority of the elderly do not participate in recreational activities outside the casino.

Table 5a
Amount of \$ spent per party per trip on the following six spending categories, and number of persons in spending party.

Age category	\$	1*	2*	3*	4*	5*	6*	F=	# of persons
18 - 34	Mean	54.65	21.69	51.97	14.44	2.87	26.13	1.026	1.55
	Maxi**	1000.00	300.00	600.00	150.0	120.00	350.00		5
35 - 44	Mean	27.62	25.24	38.01	14.92	1.21	37.93	.433	1.76
	Maxi	480.00	1000.0	1000.00	500.0	60.00	2000.0		8
45 - 54	Mean	31.86	19.33	32.62	12.42	.6923	29.20	.858	1.83
	Maxi	900.00	300.00	1000.00	300.0	65.00	1000.0		8
55 - 64	Mean	37.91	21.63	30.33	13.58	2.60	44.141	2.022	1.72
	Maxi	1000.00	600.00	500.00	300.0	160.00	2200.0		5
65 & +	Mean	32.07	18.34	33.35	6.06	1.11	7.52	1.285	1.79
	Maxi	600.00	400.00	1000.00	100.0	85.00	450.00		6
Total	Mean	35.19	20.98	35.50	12.12	1.55	29.50	1.522	1.75
	Maxi	1000.00	1000.0	1000.00	500.0	160.00	2200.0		8

*1=spending on lodging, 2=spending of food and beverages inside the casino, 3=spending on food and beverages outside the casino, 4=spending on gasoline, 5=spending on local transportation, 6=spending on other expenses, such as gifts and souvenirs.

**Maximum.

Gambling behavior of gamers

Respondents were asked how often they set a budget for gambling before they go on a casino gaming trip. The majority of all age groups set a budget. The largest percentage (18.6%) of those who said that they never set a budget before visiting a casino was those aged between 21 and 34, followed by those between 55 and 64 (15.1%), and the elderly (13%). However, as can be seen in Table 6, the difference between the groups is not statistically significant.

Table 6
Percentage of those who budgeted for gambling.

Variables	21-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	X =
						7.96
Never	18.6	9.7	12.4	15.1	13.3	
Sometimes	20.6	24.1	20.2	25.3	26.7	
Always	60.8	66.2	67.4	59.7	60.0	

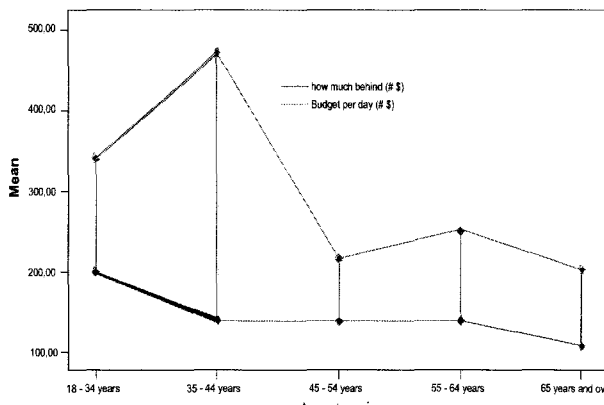
Regarding the amount budgeted for gambling respondents were asked: "how much do you budget per a gambling day?" The mean amount (\$202.3) budgeted by the elderly was the smallest compared to the 45-54 years old segment (\$215.9), the 55-64 years old (\$250.9), the 21-34 (\$340.2), and those aged 35-44 (\$471.8) (Table 6a). To estimate spending on gambling, respondents were asked: "Did you come out ahead or behind on the money you wagered on the day we intercepted you in the casino?" Regarding the gambling loss, the mean amount lost by the elderly (\$118.3) was the smallest compared, for example, to the youngest group who reported an average loss of \$206.5, or those aged between 55-64 and 45-54 (\$143.8 and \$143.5, respectively). However, the maximum amount lost was \$3000 for the elderly, \$1100 for the 55-64 age category, and \$2000 for those aged 35-44. It was only smaller next to the 21-34 years old who reported a maximum loss of \$8000, and those aged between 45 and 54 with a maximum loss of \$5000. Again, it is worth noting that the difference between the represented age categories is not statistically significant (Table 6a).

Table 6a
Gambling behavior of gamers, by age group (continued).

Age category	Mean	Median	Maximum	Minimum
<i>Average amount budgeted per gambling day (F=519)</i>				
21 - 34 years	340.26	100.00	10,000.00	20.00
35 - 44 years	471.89	135.00	35,000.00	10.00
45 - 54 years	215.91	100.00	5000.00	10.00
55 - 64 years	250.97	200.00	2000.00	10.00
65 years and over	202.33	150.00	1000.00	10.00
<i>Average gaming loss (F=491)</i>				
21 - 34 years	\$206.52	20,00	\$8000.00	
35 - 44 years	166.07	62,50	2000.00	
45 - 54 years	143.52	50,00	5000.00	
55 - 64 years	143.83	85,00	1100.00	
65 years and over	118.31	22,50	3000.00	

Figure 2, shows the average \$ amount casino visitors budgeted per gambling day and the average \$ amount they lost on the day they were interviewed in the casino. Results indicate that like the other age groups, the elderly gamers gamble responsibly, in that their gambling losses do not exceed the amount they had budgeted. However, these findings must be interpreted cautiously, because there might be a tendency to minimize losses because of the feeling of guilt or simply because it was a lucky day.

Figure 2.
Mean \$ budget and mean \$ lost on gambling per gambling day, by age group.



Trip information source of gamers

About one-fourth of the elderly obtained information about the casino before the trip began. They were more likely than the other age groups to do so. The major source of information for all age groups was friends and relatives. The second major source of information about the casino for the elderly was radio/television (about 10%). The elderly were the least likely to obtain information on the Internet.

Overall, casino visitors were less likely to obtain information about the community before trip. However, the Internet was the major source of information for all age groups. Although about 12% obtained information from the Internet, the elderly were the least likely to do so, compared with the other age groups. Magazines were the other most popular information source for the elderly (Table 7). Respondents were asked to check all options that apply.

Table 7
Trip information of gamers, by age group.

Variables	21-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	X =
Obtained information						
<i>About the casino</i>						
Yes	21.2	20.3	18.8	20.4	24.3	1.84
No	78.8	79.7	81.2	79.6	75.7	
<i>Source of this information</i>						
Internet	33.3	33.3	28.9	21.1	4.9	11.69*
Direct mail casino	0.0	6.7	2.2	13.2	7.3	5.80
Newspaper	4.5	3.3	2.2	7.9	4.9	1.65
Magazines	0.0	3.3	0.0	2.6	0.0	3.26
Radio/television	0.0	0.0	2.2	2.6	9.8	7.04
Relatives/coworkers	4.8	16.7	15.6	0.0	29.3	15.60*
<i>About the community</i>						
Yes	13.4	15.5	12.1	14.5	10.1	2.68
No						
<i>Source of this information</i>						
Internet	30.8	39.1	34.5	25.9	11.8	4.13
Direct mail casino	0.0	8.7	6.9	0.0	5.9	3.23
Newspaper	15.4	8.7	6.9	14.8	0.0	3.53
Magazines	7.7	4.3	0.0	3.7	11.8	3.73
Relatives/coworkers	7.7	8.7	0.0	18.5	17.6	10.57*

* Significant at the 0.05 level.

Gaming interest of gamers

Respondents were asked whether they preferred to visit casinos during weekends or weekdays. They were also asked about their interest in buying a gaming package. Over one-half of the elderly preferred to visit a casino during weekdays. They were more likely than the other age groups to do so. Only one-fourth said they preferred to visit on weekends. The greatest majority of those aged 35-55 preferred weekend visits. Like the other age groups, more than one-half of the elderly were interested in package tours that include gaming. The greatest majority of them preferred day gaming packages, while the greatest majority of those aged 21-34 preferred overnight gaming packages (Table 8).

Table 8
Gaming interest of gamers, by age group.

Variables	21-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	X =
Casino visitation						49.23*
Preferred weekday	38.1	24.3	32.9	43.0	55.6	
Preferred weekend	47.4	60.1	49.8	39.2	25.4	
No preference	14.4	15.5	17.3	17.7	18.9	
Interested in gaming package						8.15
Yes	46.9	64.2	53.6	57.0	53.8	
No	53.1	35.8	46.4	43.0	46.2	
Type of package						10.66
Day package	17.4	26.9	20.5	25.0	32.2	
Overnight package	58.7	48.4	49.6	49.0	34.4	
No preference	23.9	24.7	29.9	26.0	33.3	
Type of package preference						39.57*
Weekday	26.1	20.7	19.8	39.0	47.2	
Weekend	58.7	57.6	57.9	41.9	23.6	
No preference	15.2	21.7	22.2	19.0	29.2	

*Significant at the 0.05 level.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Overall, comparing trip characteristics and gambling behavior of the elderly with their younger counterparts, the findings indicate that out of the 32 variables that were included in the telephone questionnaire, only 11 were statistically significant:

- Demographic characteristics of the elderly gamers do not differ from those of the elderly population.
- Trip characteristics of the elderly gamers do not differ from those of the other age groups, except that the elderly are more likely to indicate that:
 - They are on a charter bus trip,
 - The primary reason for their trip to the community is the casino,
 - They do not engage in other leisure activities besides gambling, while on trip,
 - That (although empty nesters) they go casino gaming accompanied with their children,
 - That they patronize hotels/motel.
- Trip spending patterns of the elderly do not differ from those of the other age groups.
- Gambling behavior of the elderly does not differ from the other age groups:
 - They do not lose more proportionate to the amount they have budgeted per gambling day. They are recreational social gamblers. Social gambling is defined by the APA as “gambling which lasts for a limited time with predetermined acceptable loss”.

- Gaming interests of the elderly gamers differ from those of the other age groups. They are more likely to indicate that:
 - They prefer to visit a casino during weekdays,
 - They would prefer to buy a weekday gaming package that includes stops at several casinos,
- Trip information source of the elderly does not differ from that of the other age groups, except that the elderly are more likely to indicate that:
 - They do not use the Internet to get information about the casino,
 - That they rely on word-of-mouth to get information about the casino and gaming community.

Based on the above mentioned conclusions, overall, the elderly gamers are not different from their younger counterparts. This may suggest that what is good for the general casino customers is also good for the elderly customers, except with regards to gaming package interest. The gaming industry may focus their promotion campaigns to include weekday package trips that offer stops at several casinos. They also have to rely on word-of-mouth to attract more elderly customers.

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