



11/11/2014 – New independent study questions links between social games and gambling

ISGA publishes independent academic research focused on concerns surrounding free-to-play social casino games and younger users

The global body representing the social games industry with over 350 million players worldwide, the International Social Games Association (ISGA), today released independent academic research addressing concerns that social casino games encourage young people to gamble or develop problem gambling behaviour.

The research - carried out by academics at 'Harvest Strategy' and led by Dr Rohan Miller, Senior Lecturer in Marketing at The University of Sydney - questions the speculation among critics that social casino games, based on the freemium monetisation model, are driving minors towards real money gambling.

Research was commissioned by the ISGA in order to provide an evidence-based approach to inform policy making. As well as undertaking a review of existing academic literature and data, Harvest were given access to a large-scale data snapshot from ISGA members' games, covering in excess of 12 million player data points¹ across the UK, EU, Australia and US during the month of May 2014.²

Harvest analysed the ISGA data to discover that a tiny proportion of under 18's are playing social casino games. Over 99% of social casino players were found to be adults. The findings are consistent with industry data indicating that social casino games appeal to an older demographic, and not to young people.

Data from the ISGA snapshot also showed that paid play by youth 13 to 18 years made up only a small fraction (0.15%) of players that pay to play and contributed 0.07% of all social casino market expenditure. The level of play and revenue generation amongst under 18's was found to be so low that it is difficult to support the claim that social games companies groom young people for commercial gambling.

In its review of academic literature, Harvest could not find any market where the proliferation of social games had coincided with a rise in problem gambling. Harvest also found that social games models - which are played using mobile devices, casually and for shorter time periods than real money gambling products - do not fit well with models for addictive gambling behaviour, leading them to urge caution in the use of slippery slope assumptions to suggest an inexorable path from moderate to addictive behaviour.

ISGA CEO Luc Delany said, *"The research and data analysis provides a valuable contribution to the discussion on social games. Despite social casino games being an increasingly popular genre of game amongst adults this data shows that young people are not interested in the genre. Furthermore, despite social casino being popular with adults there has been no impact on the prevalence of gambling addiction.*

Notes

The academic report, entitled "A Snapshot of Youth in the Digital Playground" was undertaken by Harvest Strategy, a research group composed of academics from the University of Sydney.

¹ Please note that data is age categorized on the basis of 13 through to 18 year olds ('under 18's) and over 18's. For reasons of commercial sensitivity the games' titles are anonymous.



The full report can be found at www.i-sga.org/research.

The ISGA is a global non-profit trade association established to develop and communicate best global practices in consultation with public policy makers and regulators around the world. It has been set up by a group of leading social games companies to explain to the public, policy makers and regulators what the social games industry does, how it works and the value that it generates, both for the people who enjoy playing social games as well as for the digital economy.

Upholding best practice principles and self-regulation to ensure compliance with laws and advertising standards is a key component of the ISGA's work. The ISGA is also committed to researching the social impact of its sector and has launched two new research projects in this regard over the past year (please visit www.i-sga.org/research).

Members include Zynga, Plumbee, Playtika, PlayStudios, MGM, IGT, High 5 Games, Gamesys, Big Fish Games, Bally Technologies, Aristocrat, Akamon and Abzorba Games.