

# Swimming Upstream: Challenges and opportunities in video-streaming of gambling and simulated gambling

Joseph Macey and Brett Abarbanel

# Swimming Upstream

- What is gamblification?
  - The term was first used in late 2000s
  - Has since been used in wider contexts, particularly in describing the presence of gambling content in digital games.
    - Often used as a synonym for “convergence”.
  - “Gamblification is the use of gambling (or gambling-related content) in non-gambling contexts as a tool to achieve desired outcomes.”
  - It incorporates two main aspects:
    - affective (employing cultural values/signifiers of gambling);
    - effective, (employing gambling games and activities).
  - “Gamblification: A definition.” (2022). J. Macey & J. Hamari.  
New Media and Society.



# Swimming Upstream

- What are the potential impacts of gamblification?
- Concerns have been raised in relation to:
  - A) the normalization of gambling and the subsequent increase in problematic gambling behaviours.
  - B) the excessive, and some would say exploitative, monetisation of users
  - C) that gamblification may lead to an increased preference for risk-based interactions more generally.
  - D) that gambling which is “hidden” or obscured from consumers leads to impaired decision-making, especially in situations characterised by lack of transparency or information asymmetry.



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- What are the potential impacts of gamblification?
- Examples of gamblification also exist which can be considered positive, even pro-social:
  - Encourage vaccination
  - Promote recycling
  - Reduce fare-dodging
  - Support health and wellness



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- What forms does gamblification take?
  - Present across a range of products and services, most obvious in contemporary digital games (arguably).
    - Within games
    - Alongside games
    - Above or beyond games



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- Passive consumption of games, watching others play
  - Esports is mainly spectated via online streaming services
  - Esports isn't the only form of play that is spectated
    - Walkthroughs
    - Let's play
    - Speedrunning
  - Twitch is considered by many as the main streaming service for spectating play
    - Stream points (different from "Bits")

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- Gamblification of spectated play
  - Battle Passes
  - Twitch: streamed gambling (huge growth in recent years)
    - Lots of issues similar to streamed skins lotteries
  - Twitch: streamer-led
  - Twitch: 3<sup>rd</sup>-party, stand alone gambling bots
    - Stream points – settled in stream
    - Cash – announced in Discord and settled via Bitcoin transfer (or similar)

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- Conclusion
  - It's complicated!
  - The gamblification of games takes many different forms, it can offer increased value to many users, but can also be potentially exploitative
  - The separation of the 3 main elements means it is hard to categorise as gambling and, consequently, even harder to regulate from that perspective
  - Given the lack of evidence concerning long-term implications of gambling in/on/around games, longitudinal research is needed into potential consequences
  - Advances in digital technology means new opportunities are constantly being exploited (nothing new here), both positive and potentially negative
    - Question: what can or should be expected of different stakeholders in such an environment?

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Any questions?

(and possibly answers... )

