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TIME FOR SPORTSBOOK "APPIFICATION"

METRIC CEO MARTIN DE KNIJFF ON WHY MOBILE SPORTS BETTING OPERATORS STILL NEED TO ESCAPE THE DESKTOP MENTALITY

Cramming a desktop interface onto a mobile phone is an inevitably doomed proposition. A recent study of Millennials (the coveted demographic typically defined as those born between 1980 and the early 2000s) indicates that over 80% have their smartphones with them 24 hours a day – behaviour that likely holds true for both younger and older demographics as well.

It is accordingly imperative that mobile operators understand not only the mobile interface itself, but the context in which that interface is being used – namely, while the user is on-the-go, distracted and engaged in other activities (such as traveling, socialising, or watching sports).

While most of today's mobile sportsbooks have embraced native applications, they have generally adopted the desktop mentality, where navigation still relies heavily on menus and sub-menus. Bettors must specify sport, league, date, game, bet type (straight wager, teaser, pleaser, parlay) and bet amount, not to mention numerous additional possible features such as wager cash outs, point buying or even the purchase of pre-game "options".

This approach is largely unnecessary as the vast majority of punters already know what sport or even game they wish to bet when logging in – meaning valuable real estate is being wasted, and the user experience frustrated, by presenting information and options in which the punter has no interest. Instead, it is time to embrace the "appification" of content that the broader mobile sector is experiencing.

CUSTOMISED APPROACH
Specialised sports-betting apps would help resolve many of these issues, allowing punters effectively to enjoy a user experience that is fully customised to their preferences at any given moment. This strategy provides advantages not only in terms of space-saving efficiency, it would also allow the flexibility to architect apps that are uniquely optimised for the particular wagering activity selected.

For example, while conventional pre-game wagering interfaces might be the same or similar across all sports, a specialised, point-by-point tennis betting app might look completely different, with only two large buttons (each representing the opposing players), a visualisation tool (providing live match updates), and intuitive betting options (where bet amounts are either pre-designated for one-click betting, or selected among pre-populated options).

While such highly-specialised wagering interfaces would have been unnecessary only a few years ago, with the recent emergence of truly instant gratification betting markets, a need has arisen for mobile interfaces that complement this type of constant punter interaction.

ADAPTING TO THE INSTANT
Indeed, because in-game sports wagering apps are intended primarily as a "second-screen" experience (with the live television broadcast of the match itself serving as the main attraction), the importance of a highly streamlined, completely seamless mobile interaction becomes even more critical.

Otherwise, truly instant-gratification betting propositions (such as whether a player will sink an imminent birdie putt or score an upcoming penalty kick) simply wouldn't work, as punters would be unable to place their wagers in time and return their attention to the live broadcast to watch their wager unfold.

In an industry notorious for outdated platforms and stubborn inertia in the face of breakthrough technologies, we are finally starting to see strides towards embracing new real-time betting options that technology has only recently made possible.

As these products inevitably proliferate and evolve, however, operators will similarly need to evolve to take full advantage of this new functionality. The result is likely to be the emergence of highly specialised, sports wagering apps – in harmony with the rest of the mobile marketplace. ●