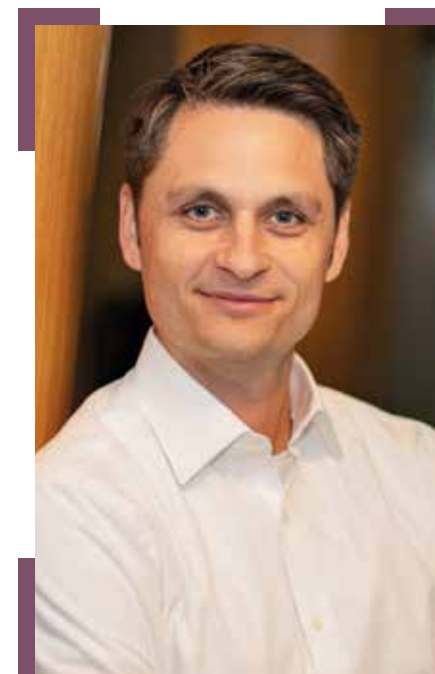


BIG QUESTION

Gambling Insider asks industry experts: How can the online slot experience match the land-based slot experience?



MICHAEL BAUER - CFO/CGO, GREENTUBE



The presentation of online gameplay is vastly different in comparison to land-based gaming. Slot games are limited to user devices, which are most commonly mobile phones with limited

screen sizes and hardware. Network problems can also play a role in the overall player experience, and rich game sounds are played through weaker speakers which can be muted by players. External factors can also have a more significant effect on online gameplay, as players can be distracted more easily, resulting in their focus being broken more often. In addition to the size of the screen that can affect online gaming, players are also limited to one screen only. Game designers need to continuously invent innovative new ways to use the provided space to keep games interesting.

When comparing the two experiences from this hardware-based perspective, it does not however, highlight the countless capabilities of the online gaming space. By moving gaming online, the industry has been able to attract a whole new audience and change the perception of how games can be played.

Online slot games are available 24/7 and players are not bound to location or situational restrictions. They can play these games anytime, anywhere, whether that is during their mid-morning break, while on public transport or while they are watching TV from the comfort of their own sofa. As accessibility is exceptionally better online, in many situations, the user experience overtakes the land-based gaming arguments stated previously.

To counter the additional arguments against online slots, current trends in technology are providing more players with better access to high-speed internet, creating better screens and longer battery life in newer mobile devices. All of this is to the advantage of the online slot developers, who are able to provide better quality games with progressively more features - this increase in quality can be seen in the recently-launched top-tier games.

We should approach both industry verticals individually and keep inventing the best possible user experience for both independently. Land-based games will continue to advance with the aid of stronger visuals and cinematics. This innovation in hardware is essential, as these games compete against others on the same floor. In the mobile world, games do not compete through visuals, but through captivating gameplay.

In conclusion, both land-based and online approaches to hardware and the player/game experience should be seen as complementary methods of gameplay rather than operating against one another, as both methods have an array of potential strengths to capitalise on. Instead, we should challenge ourselves and our industry to see beyond the limitations and boundaries that land-based and online gaming bring.

ALEX CZAJKOWSKI - CMO, RTG ASIA

Is that a loaded question? Does it have to? Should it?

Arguably, the online experience is already better... but we'll get to that.

I do love those enormous screens. I was recently playing some quasi-skills-based games at G2E Asia in Macau that were amazing.

But you have to go to the casino and find a machine. You then sit there and attempt to be immersed while people are passing by and waitresses generously offer drinks, and you can forget about smoking in most places these days. You feed in coins, get more when you run out, and deal with them when you win (of course many machines are coinless these days, so deal with slips of paper instead).

For slots players, it is all about immersion; the goal is to get "lost" in the game, mesmerised by graphics and sound and motion. Winning is secondary; entertainment and immersion are key.

So then you have to look at segments of slots players. While almost every slots player online has their "favourite" game, the one they go back to time and time again, for whatever reason (see my article on how familiarity breeds contempt—except with slots players, originally published by *GI Friday*), there's also a large segment that loves to try new slots, searching for a better immersive experience.

As soon as we release a new slot online, thousands of players jump on it to try it out. They then adopt it as a new favourite or rapidly abandon it if it's not satisfying their particular requirements. For these players, online slots are the better alternative; they don't have to move chairs or stop smoking. A new, maybe better experience is a simply a click away.

But it is all about segments. Replicating a successful formula does work in the online space for a core segment of players. That said, a surprising number of western players quickly took to our recent take on a popular game in Macau. We expected it to be a big hit online in Asia and were pleasantly surprised by its adoption in the west. Like making movies, you just never know what is going to be a hit or a flop with your players.

So for the smokers, the people who don't like to travel and/or prefer the comfort of their own home, or those who like a greater choice in games, you can't beat the online experience with the land-based experience. It's simply more convenient, more flexible and as immersive as anything land-based can offer.

But if you prefer to play with a soothing glass of red in hand, you won't find that outside the VIP areas. ▶

