Title
Social Decision Making Strategies in Internet Poker Playing

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/73f0k55j

Journal

ISSN
1069-7977

Authors
Olsson, Anna-Carin
di Zazzo, Nicole
Tjaderborn, Johanna

Publication Date
2007

Peer reviewed
Social Decision Making Strategies in Internet Poker Playing

Anna-Carin Olsson (anna-carin.olsson@psy.umu.se)
Department of Psychology, Umeå University
SE-901 87, Umeå, Sweden

Nicole di Zazzo (ndizazzo@hotmail.com)
Johanna Tjäderborn (johanna_tjader@hotmail.com)

Keywords: Decision making; strategies; social cues, internet poker playing

Decision making and social cues

Obviously poker playing over the Internet is a growing phenomenon. It has to be brought to people’s attention that poker is a game of the minds, and not only a matter of statistics and probabilities. Due to the fact that internet-poker is a relatively new phenomenon and continues to engage people of all ages it is of importance to understand the underlying decision processes. It seems important to enlighten players that there might be more to poker playing than just fast money. The Prospect theory is useful when studying gambling and poker. The theory concerns the judgments under risk and the use of heuristics (for example, representativeness, overconfidence and availability) within the decision making processes (Tversky & Kahneman, 1981).

In every social situation we are aware of how other people act and behave and we use the information to maximize our judgments. We learn about other peoples’ intentions and goals by watching their movements in gaming (Sebanz & Shiffrar, 2006) and make implicit inferences about the meaning of the movements, which we use when we choose a suitable decision strategy in later game situations (Wolpert et al., 2003; Weber, Camerer, & Knez, 2005). In internet poker playing we can not do that. Instead we have to consider earlier experience, the desirability of potential outcomes and their probability (Abele et al., 2004). So, what happens to our decision making strategies when we cannot rely on social information cues? Are these decision making strategies affected by the level of experience?

The aim of the study was to investigate the underlying decision process in poker playing on the internet and further, examine if More experienced players and Less experienced players use different decision making strategies where social information cues are not available.

Results and Discussion

The More experienced players showed to be more willing to lead the game, hence adopt a more aggressive game than the Less experienced players. The results suggests that the most regular mistake the players make is connected to the heuristics of representativeness and availability and are referred to personal experience. Availability connects to a person’s ability to recreate or remember previous events. If recreation is made easily, the likelihood for a memory to be referred to increases. In accordance with this heuristic, a player that devotes plenty of time on a regular basis to poker will have more hands and actions in memory. It will be easier for this particular player to refer to past events and experience and make new decisions in line with these memories. The participants also showed a frequent use of social information cues about the other players when making decisions about their next move in the poker play, even if those cues do not exist since the gaming occurs on the internet. Amongst poker players the general opinion is that statistics and experience are the major strategies used for decision making when playing over the Internet. While analyzing quotes it is clear that psychological factors are of considerable importance. More experienced players show more tendencies to lead and control the game and tend to have their strategies more explicitly and consciously available than the Less experienced players.

References