



MOBILE LIVE DEALER COMES OF AGE

A solid, scalable platform is essential when it comes to operators maximising the opportunities presented by the rapid growth of live dealer games on smartphones and tablets, writes **Aleš Gornjec** of Comtrade Gaming.

The rapid development of mobile technologies and the never ending releases of more and more powerful smartphones and tablet devices have started an evolution of the global mobile market, and are substantially changing the online gaming industry for all involved, players, operators and gaming software providers. According to the Global Online Gambling and Betting Market 2014 report, published by German research organization yStats.com, there are three major global trends in online gaming and betting: the growing acceptance of the digital currency bitcoin, social gaming, and, most notably, mobile gaming. As indicated by the research company, mobile gaming is expected to grow at double-digit rates and to reach over 40% of the total online gambling market by 2018, as the number of mobile gambling users increases by 100 million.

Despite the fast development of mobile technology, the regulatory landscape of online gaming varies from continent to continent and even from country to country. Europe has been a leader in adopting regulation regarding online gambling, and the majority of Western European countries have some laws in place to channel online gaming. Even though online gaming in Nevada, New Jersey and Delaware in the United States is legal, there have been many issues regarding banks not being willing to accept payments. We can expect these issues to be addressed when there is more liquidity, more people involved and when transactions become positive for the banks. As for the future of mobile gaming in the United States, there are probably going to be monumental changes, although we cannot really know when the time will come and what is yet to come. In the Asia-Pacific

region, according to yStats.com, we can see over 30% growth of online gaming in Australia, while operators in other Pacific countries, such as Singapore, Japan and China, are still waiting for the regulations to change. In Africa, online gaming is at its starting point and only Kenya has a regulated online gambling website, while South Africa is still waiting for legalization.

When it comes to opinions about which technology is better suited for live streaming casino games on mobile devices, HTML5 or native apps, there are positive and negative sides to both. Native apps bring better live stream and quality, but the complex and restrictive deployment process through Apple or Google marketplace results in slower time to market of new features. On the other hand, HTML5 technology brings a much wider audience, offers seamless integration of games from various vendors into a single portal, and as it develops rapidly, the quality difference compared to native apps is getting smaller each year. Google-like companies that own popular sites like YouTube are forcing users to upgrade their browsing experience to HTML5 compatible browsers, as they are also pushing HTML5 video to replace Flash video. This is a benefit to the gaming industry. As outdated browsers are getting replaced with newer versions, HTML5 games are becoming playable on more and more devices. The trend towards HTML5 games on all platforms, from mobile and tablet to desktop will be picking up going forward as more and more companies are developing their games only in HTML5, foregoing desktop Flash versions altogether. This also spells trouble for the native mobile versions of games, which require a lot of development for each supported platform.

Of course, HTML5 in itself doesn't necessarily mean that you develop the game for small mobile screens and it scales to tablets and desktops with sufficient quality. Players are accustomed to compromises on mobile phones as the screens are smaller. But when it comes to tablets, players expect the game quality to be on par with desktop games due in part to the fact that tablets have replaced the desktop for most tasks be it surfing, banking or gaming/gambling.

There are also some technology challenges that operators need to consider when it comes to optimizing live dealer offerings across multiple mobile devices. A solid, scalable platform needs to be implemented in order to provide a great performance regardless of the number of players. The development of 4G technologies should be a huge driver of bringing live dealer casino offerings to smartphones and tablets, since they enable remote access to the product within a given jurisdiction. Other factors that are also very important for live dealer mobile gaming are broadband availability, Internet speed and usage.

At the end of the day, everything that is being done is done for the players, to enhance their gaming experience, which is why user experience needs to be top of mind when developing a live dealer offering. Therefore, a mobile live dealer solution needs to be developed in a simple way with high response speed and clear navigation.

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