

# In the water, with sharks

Nelson Moura | 27/09/2016 | in

The local gaming regulator says it has no plan to promote skills-based games in the territory.

Introducing more skills-based games would take "massive and co-ordinated" efforts from every jurisdiction, Ben Lee, the managing partner of Macau-based consultancy company iGamiX told Business Daily.

In fact, many gaming experts believe that skills-based games would be a way for Macau to diversify its gaming offerings, especially in the market targeting the younger generations, as reported by Business Daily in its special report published yesterday.

However, Mr. Lee believes there are many obstacles for skills-based gaming to be implemented, not only in the local territory but in the whole of Asia.

"Skills-based games go against the grain of most gaming laws, which require games to be based upon chance," Mr. Lee told Business Daily. "For casinos to introduce more skills-based games, the jurisdictions they operate in will need to have major changes of heart and that will take a massive and co-ordinated effort," he added.

## Games with sharks

In addition, from the perspective of the gaming expert, skills-based games are inherently unfair to newcomers as they would become "fodder for the veterans of the games".

"Poker is a classic example where the sharks - being the veteran players - usually lie in wait for the novices who enter the game and end up paying for their 'education'," he said. "Poker is now dying out in Las Vegas and not only that, casinos make very little if any money out of these types of games".

Meanwhile, the iGamix analyst indicates that the regional "lack of trust in computers and online technology" are big "roadblocks" to the online betting of skills-based games. In addition, the lack of a viable, easy, instant and trustworthy payment system will also continue limiting the development of these segments.

"Online betting as well as sports are against gaming that has evolved in Western cultures. Whilst there has been some take up, I'm not sure if they're the future of the industry here in Asia," the analyst said.

## Hooking the Millennials

Nevertheless, Mr. Lee agrees that the Millennial - people born between 1980 and 2000 - have a bigger interest in betting on skills-based games such as peer-to-peer games.

This type of game allows a gamer to compete against another gamer - compared to chance-based gaming, such as slot machines.

"The Millennial has grown up [with] online and peer-to-peer games, and there have been some land-based games that became very popular in Asia," the gaming expert indicated.

"The fishing game seen in some amusement arcades all around Asia, including Macau, is one such success story. It's a peer-to-peer skills-based game, and their appearance in some Asian casinos can only be described as explosive," he elaborated.

And this type of game is available in some of the city's casinos, such as The Venetian Macao of Sands China Ltd, which is running a skills-based slot machine game called Paradise Fishing. This game, developed by Aruze Gaming America Inc., allows players to compete against each other in virtual fishing competitions.

## No intention to promote

Despite skills-based games becoming popular among the younger generation, the city's gaming regulator told Business Daily that the government will not promote such kind of games in the territory.

"Currently, the government has no plan to promote skill-based games in Macau," the Gaming Inspection and Co-ordination Bureau (DICJ) informed Business Daily in an email.

