



# trafficology

Marketing & affiliate focus by Gambling Insider

## INSIDE:

**Adam Gros** on  
crypto games

**B90:** Betting on  
diversification

**Q&A:**  
**Campeón Gaming**

**Play Hard:**  
**Caroline Ponseti**

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SEPTEMBER 2022

## TOO BIG, TOO SOON?

Growth is the name of the game. But *Trafficology* ponders whether affiliates can ever grow too fast – at an unsustainable rate

# TRAFFIC REPORT

*Trafficology has partnered with data expert Casino City Press, to provide insight into website and traffic trends across affiliate industries – predominantly in gaming but including others. In this edition, we review affiliate programmes per vertical for July 2022. The below is a breakdown of the top 10 sites globally, including both desktop and mobile, sorted by: overall ranking, casino ranking, sports betting ranking, poker ranking, lottery ranking and financial ranking*



## OVERALL

Rank	Name	Website
1	ESPN	espn.com
2	Cricbuzz	cricbuzz.com
3	FlashScore.com	LiveSport Media
4	Investing.com	investing.com
5	LiveScore.com	livescore.com
6	Diretta.it	diretta.it
7	NetKeiba	netkeiba.com
8	La Gazzetta dello Sport	gazzetta.it
9	HLTV	hltv.org
10	Goal.com	goal.com

## CASINO

Rank	Name	Website
1	CasinoScout.nl	CasinoScout.nl
2	Casino.Guru	casino.guru
3	Apuestas free	apuestasfree.com
4	Online Casino Ground	onlinecasinoground.nl
5	CasinoScout	casinoscout.ca
6	FreeSlots.com	freeslots.com
7	Casino.org	casino.org
8	Chipy	chipy.org
9	Tracksino	tracksino.com
10	AskGamblers.com	askgamblers.com

# SPORTS

Rank	Name	Website
1	ESPN	espn.com
2	Cricbuzz	cricbuzz.com
3	FlashScore.com	FlashScore.com
4	LiveScore.com	livescore.com
5	Diretta.it	diretta.it
6	NetKeiba	netkeiba.com
7	La Gazzetta dello Sport	gazzetta.it
8	Goal.com	goal.com
9	247Sports	247sports.com
10	NBC Sports	nbcsports.com

# LOTTERY

Rank	Name	Website
1	XOSO	xoso.com.vn
2	Euro-Millions.com	euro-millions.com
3	Lottery Post	lotterypost.com
4	Lotto.de	lotto.de
5	Lottery.co.uk	lottery.co.uk
6	JugandoOnLine	jugandoonline.com.ar
7	Lottery USA	lotteryusa.com
8	Estrazione Del Lotto	estrazione dellotto.it
9	Minh Hogoc	minhngoc.net
10	Tujugada	tujugada.com.ar

# POKER

Rank	Name	Website
1	Card Player	cardplayer.com
2	GipsyTeam	gipsyteam.ru
3	Poker News	pokernews.com
4	Shark Scope	sharkscope.com
5	EducaPoker	educapoker.com
6	TwoPlusTwo.com	twoplustwo.com
7	Cardschat	cardschat.com
8	UpSwing Poker	upswingpoker.com
9	The Hendon Mob Poker Forum	thehendonmob.com
10	PokerStrategy.com	pokerstrategy.com

# FINANCIAL

Rank	Name	Website
1	Investing.com	investing.com
2	MQL5	mql5.com
3	Forex Factory	forexfactory.com
4	ProFinance	profinance.ru
5	MyFXStreet.com	fxstreet.com
6	FXStreet.com	fxstreet.com
7	DailyFX	dailyfx.com
8	babypips.com	babypips.com
9	ForexLive	forexlive.com
10	FX Empire	fxempire.com



Rankings are estimated using statistical data and should not be considered absolute ranking values. More than 50 complementary top lists are available on the iGamingDirectory.com website operated by Casino City Press.



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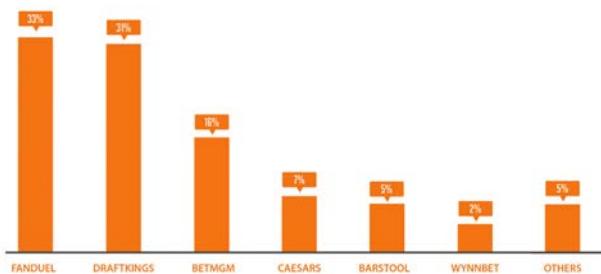
/company/campeongamingpartners

[www.campeonaffiliates.com](http://www.campeonaffiliates.com)

# DATA: BRAND AWARENESS

Affiliate Betting Hero has formed a data partnership with *Gambling Insider* and *Trafficology*. In its first set of data, the company explores brand awareness in regions such as Colorado and Ontario

## WHAT WAS THE FIRST LEGAL SPORTS BETTING APP YOU USED IN COLORADO?

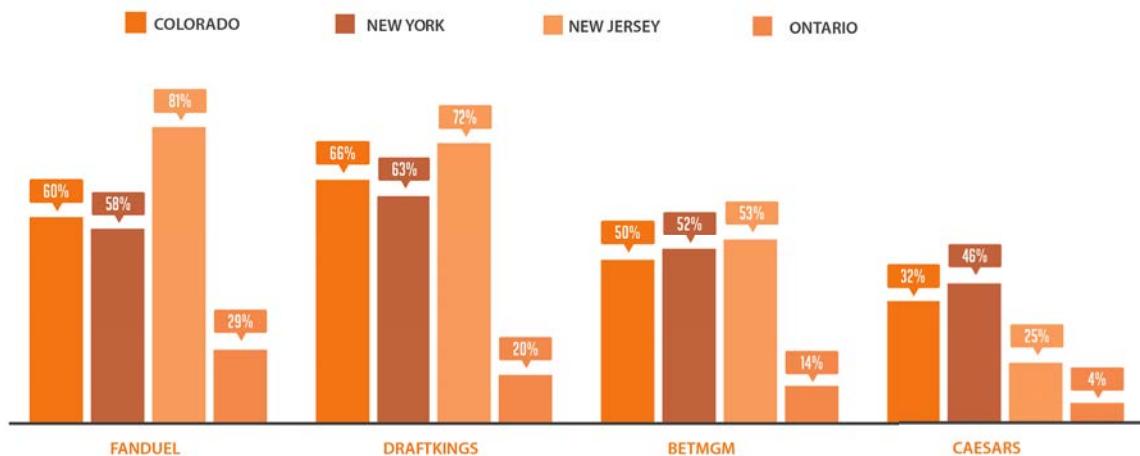


\*MULTIPLE CHOICE

Companies	NY Comparison	NJ Comparison	ON Comparison
FanDuel	20%	34%	13%
DraftKings	28%	47%	-
BetMGM	11%	6%	4%
Barstool	27%	8%	-
WynnBet	-	2%	-
Others	2%	1%	-

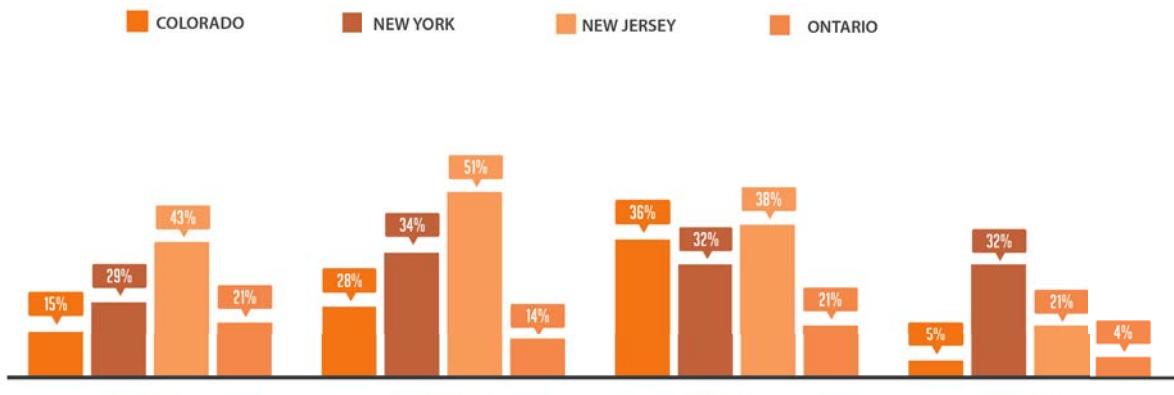
\*29% of total respondents were customers of daily fantasy products prior to Colorado's sports betting launch in 2020

## ONLINE SPORTSBOOK BRAND AWARENESS



## COMPARISON ACROSS MARKETS

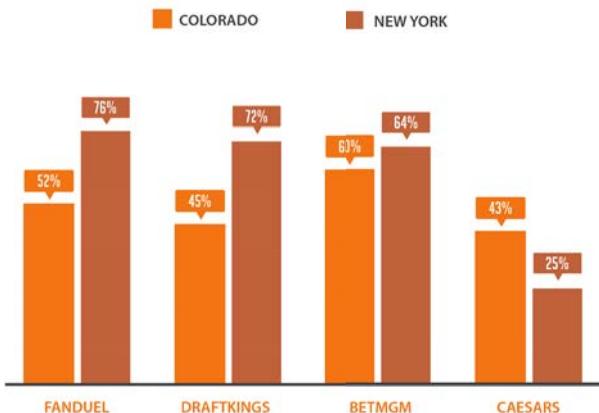
## ONLINE CASINO BRAND AWARENESS



## COMPARISON ACROSS MARKETS

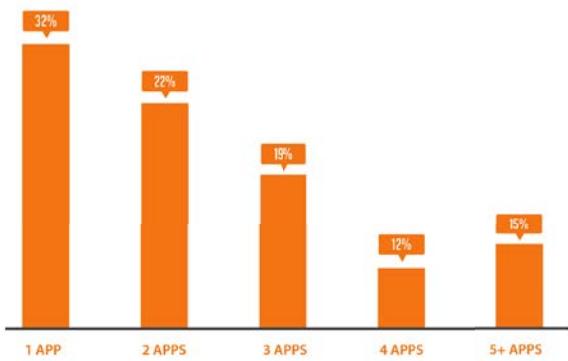
### PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHOSE FIRST APP REMAINED THEIR FAVORITE APP

44% of New Yorkers surveyed placed a mobile bet prior to launch, possibly resulting in higher retention



### HOW MANY APPS DO YOU USE IN ONTARIO?

\*MULTIPLE CHOICE



\*MULTIPLE CHOICE

Apps	NY Comparison	NJ Comparison
1 App	17%	24%
2 App	19%	27%
3 App	18%	24%
4 App	23%	9%
5 App	24%	16%

2.6

AVERAGE NUMBER OF APPS

(NEW YORK AVG OF 3.3)

(NEW JERSEY AVG OF 2.8)

# TOO BIG, TOO SOON?

*Trafficology* asks executives at Kafe Rocks, Craze Affiliates and The Game Day if there is such a thing as affiliates growing at an unsustainable rate



RACHEL FITTER

Earlier this month, Catena Media made headlines in the affiliate world when the group announced it was expanding its strategic review to cover its entire European business. The review, which was launched in May of this year, aims to explore the sale of certain assets, including those in the company's financial trading segment, as well as the AskGamblers brand.

The decision to include the company's entire European online sports betting and casino affiliation business comes as Catena aims to save at least €5m (\$5.1m) per year, with the group noting that its European business has faced many challenges in recent years, namely regulatory changes in the UK, Sweden, Germany and the Netherlands. General market developments have also played their part in the group's European outlook.

All in all, Catena is eager to free up resources, ones which can be used to grow elsewhere, with elsewhere in this particular case being North America, Latin America and the Asia-Pacific region.

*Trafficology* spoke to Kafe Rocks COO **Justin Tonna**, Craze Affiliates Head of Affiliates **Rimante Nemanyte** and The Game Day Director of Affiliate Partnerships **Rachel Fitter**, in a bid to gauge just how difficult it is for affiliates to grow in the current climate, and interestingly, what can happen to affiliates if they end up growing too big too soon.

### PRIORITIES AND DIFFICULTIES WITHIN AFFILIATE GROWTH

Affiliates, like any other industry segment, certainly have their priorities. But balancing these priorities is by no means an easy task, with several different aspects – major and minor – all combining in the process of business growth.

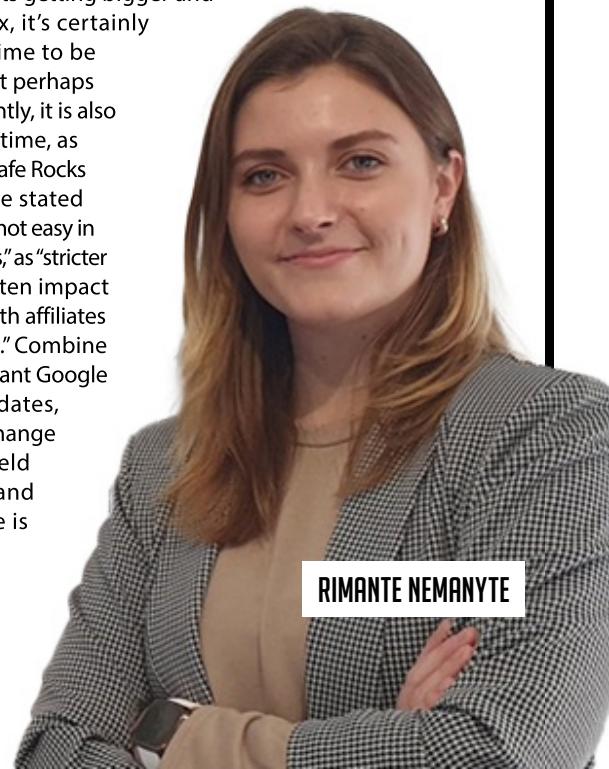
Kafe Rocks' Tonna explained that SEO-related considerations are among the main issues for affiliates: how easy is it to rank in a market, what the player appetite and operator appetite is in that market, and how easy it will be to get organic links due to the market's perceptions of gambling.

He continued: "The value of the players in the market is also important as this will impact the deals you can obtain with operators and ultimately your bottom line. Obviously, this makes established markets very attractive, but the cost of getting rankings in those markets is often very high and not for small-time operations anymore."

Craze Affiliates' Nemanyte, meanwhile, noted that it all depends on affiliate sources. However, aspects such as "understanding the niche and demographic of the desired traffic," along with the "selection of strong keywords and brands," are hugely important when it comes to affiliate marketing.

When asked about the main priorities for affiliates when trying to grow, Fitter, The Game Day's Director of Affiliate Partnerships, put it simply to *Trafficology*: "The main priorities are getting as many operator deals in place as possible, while staying on top of relevant content and the current deals with operators you already have in hand."

With new markets constantly forming, and old markets getting bigger and more complex, it's certainly a promising time to be an affiliate; but perhaps more significantly, it is also a challenging time, as explained by Kafe Rocks COO Tonna. He stated that "growth is not easy in today's markets;" as "stricter regulations often impact margins for both affiliates and operators." Combine this with constant Google algorithm updates, which often change the playing field for affiliates, and the landscape is a challenging one. Tonna



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added that gambling is often the target of negative PR, which leads to "difficulties when doing our own digital PR, as sites often shy away from linking to sites that are connected with gambling."

For Nemanyte, "choosing the right niche is a priority, but also a big challenge for affiliates." Such a decision can undoubtedly determine the further success of the website. She added that the content and correct translations are another challenge in the journey towards affiliation success.

The Game Day's Fitter told *Trafficology* that there are difficulties when it comes to producing content in volume, to market to the partners it works with. Moreover, "it becomes increasingly difficult to prioritise and list all operators while keeping up with offer changes, new opportunities and technical changes that may need to be made for an operator."

All of this is combined with the need to ensure that affiliates are optimising current deals to their fullest potential, added Fitter.

### GROWING TOO QUICKLY, AND THE CONSEQUENT DANGERS

So can affiliates grow too big too quickly? Is Catena, for example, becoming too unmanageable? The recent expansion of its strategic review into the group's European assets seemingly suggests this could be the case. But is that a potential risk for a super affiliate like Better Collective, as well?

Kafe Rocks' Tonna told *Trafficology* that this is, in fact, a very common situation for affiliates to grow in such a way. "Affiliates can sometimes hit a great market, or have a site suddenly jump up the rankings," he said. "They immediately expand into multiple markets and take on more staff, believing that double the staff will equate to double the profit. But it doesn't work this way."

Tonna explained that scaling up headcount requires more support structures, while HR departments need to be established to look after the workforce and recruit new members, with finance needing to keep track of all the deals that are being done as the company enters new markets. This requires more people, and importantly a management layer to ensure the smooth running of every operation. But this all costs. Tonna continued by noting that growing too quickly also stretches an operation very thin.

"SEO is massively competitive today and affiliates often find their resources stretched across multiple markets, leading to half-hearted attempts to rank that just don't work," he added. Affiliates must keep a clear focus on what works for their business, as well as what markets to invest in. Keeping a careful eye on which resources that you as an affiliate can actually afford is, therefore, crucial. Tonna concluded: "We are in a new affiliate landscape today where decisions are expensive and projects take time to mature. Being overly bullish or unrealistic about what can be achieved will just cost you."

Craze Affiliates' Nemanyte concurs that such situations do indeed occur, with quick growth not always determining the quality of gained traffic: "Less valuable keywords can attract great volumes of players, but whether it is going to be high-value traffic is questionable."

The Head of Affiliates added that the group has partners who have grown their business in a short space of time, and have indeed produced satisfactory traffic. But for Nemanyte, it is ultimately affiliates' knowledge, experience and luck that determines the business' success.

Meanwhile, Fitter said there is "certainly a bandwidth issue" when it comes to affiliates growing too quickly/big. In this respect, she explained that The Game Day's job is to "get eyes on our partners," which it does through a consistent flow of content and marketing. She added that it becomes a lot to tackle the

more operators you have listed on your site, which is unsurprising given just how much detail there is in every done deal.

If that is the case, Fitter continued, there is a real threat of becoming overpopulated. "If you aren't careful, you can sacrifice quality for quantity, which is something we are always wary of," she noted. "And you want to give attention to each operator and not forget to include everyone into the fold."

Catena's story will undoubtedly be an interesting one to follow. The lead generation affiliate, has reported six consecutive quarters of revenue growth, with its fastest-growing market being North America. Given its rapid growth in recent years, the region is unsurprisingly a popular one for most affiliates, big and small.

Close followers of the group's strategic review are expected to be provided with an update before the end of September, but it could yet all end in an anti-climax, with the company noting in May 2022 that it "may conclude the best alternative is to make no changes in the near term."

It seems unlikely, however, given the August announcement regarding its expansion into Europe. Has it grown too big too quickly? That remains to be seen – and the answer will set an important precedent for other affiliates.



# THE TREND IN MOTION: CRYPTO GAMES

Gambleneers owner **Adam Gros** looks at how crypto casino games first came to be and why they shouldn't be overlooked by operators



In recent years, as cryptocurrencies were starting to be integrated into the online gambling industry, crypto casinos began developing their own games. This gave them more control and the ability to satisfy the player's need for result verification. In addition to the latter being enabled by the distinct mechanisms of blockchain technology, these games were hosted exclusively by crypto casinos, which is why players have accepted the term crypto casino games for these operator-made games.

Since they've originally been developed by casino operators themselves, they are sometimes also referred to as "mini" or "nano" games, popular enough to have their own category, lobby or even to have an entire casino built around them.

The idea began with two games – Crash and Dice, which were

featured on gambling websites, specifically dedicated to either one of these games. These one-game crypto casinos were run more or less by individuals, as they didn't require much management or maintenance – this was the reason why such an idea even had grounds to flourish. The crypto community at that time consisted of technically savvy people who, upon seeing the opportunity for combining crypto with gambling, had decided to create new games, thus catering to the specific demands of the crypto community. Crypto games have proven to be an easy product to manage and a potential market for expanding gambling, while still catering to player demands. Surprisingly, exclusively Crash or Dice-only casinos built a significant audience, which indicated that the demand for these games was high and rising. With just one game, these

casinos were able to sustain themselves and some of them still continue to do so today.

With single-game crypto casinos having proven to be of great interest to players, some operators started to develop several such different crypto-specific games and feature them on their websites. These were the pioneers among crypto casinos. They featured Dice and Crash, the obvious choices, coupled with a custom slot or a wheel-spin-type of game. Since then, most of these casinos have adopted games from other game providers as well, but some continue to turn profits despite providing only crypto games. Even today, casinos that had nothing to do with crypto games initially include these games on their websites. It goes to show the interest in crypto games is big enough to suggest great potential.

Since crypto games are a relatively new invention, there are still numerous, unexplored ways of executing the idea behind the term. One example is the Crash game, which differs from other casino games in one key aspect – betting. The bet isn't placed on a possible outcome but is instead defined on whether the cashout is executed in time. This evokes a certain rush in the player, demanding them to perform an additional action as opposed to just placing a bet. A variation of this game is built as a multiplayer, in which players can observe other participants' bets and cashouts, which brings forth a whole new social component to the gameplay, affecting players' decisions in a completely new way. Where other multiplayer casino games might give some insight into bets of competitors, multiplayer Crash can significantly influence someone's cashout decision based on the displayed cashouts of other players.

The problem with most traditional casino games is that they're more or less stagnant, which is why they'll never satisfy all players. Especially in the online world, the trend of searching for new ventures and experiences is inevitable. And while many players do stick to standard casino games, many will eventually wander into some novelty. Even more so, when there's a suggestively lucrative title involved – like crypto, which adds a certain psychological sense of intrigue and potential. All of this points to the fact the number of crypto players is steadily rising, which makes crypto games a viable option.

To further the player's satisfaction, these games are also among those most commonly equipped with the provably fair feature. This provides the player with the opportunity to check the truthfulness of their result – verifying that they haven't been cheated by the casino.

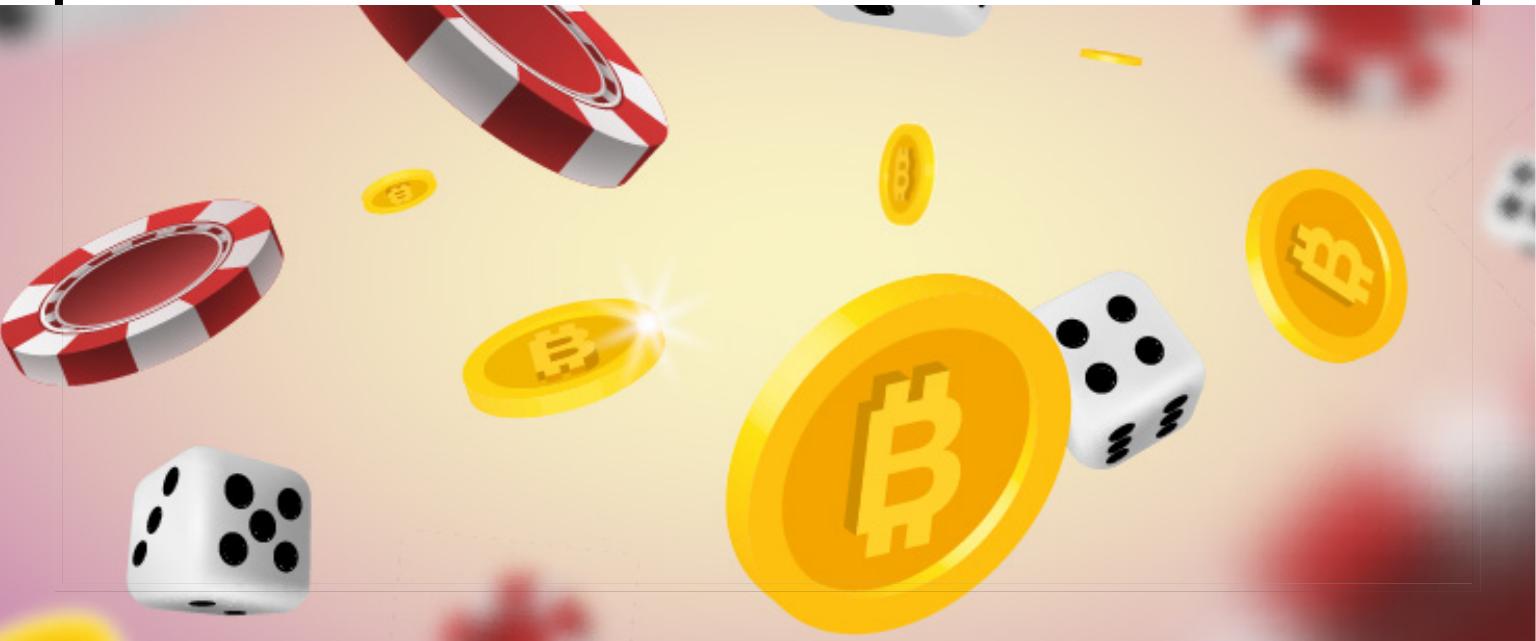
**"SO FAR, EVERYTHING SEEMS TO BE POINTING TO THE HIGH LIKELIHOOD CRYPTO GAMES WILL STICK AROUND FOR THE FUTURE"**

This feature contributes to the trust a player must establish with the casino. This makes them more likely to return and, in turn, helps build the casino's reputation.

Proving fairness is also a unique characteristic of blockchain technology, known for enabling insight into every transaction inside a block and, with it, into the whole blockchain. It provides a transparency component, which is particularly desired among online users in this age.

Some casinos even take things a step further, offering completely custom deals to affiliates if they bring in players who play Crash or Dice. This confirms once more that crypto games play an important part in a casino game repertoire. There are even some game providers now who specialise in crypto games, or at least try to include some aspect of these games into their products. For example, crypto games from Sprise can be found in almost any crypto casino that doesn't have its own crypto games, and BGaming has been known to include the provably fair feature in its games for a while.

Casino operators who aim to generate crypto-related traffic to their websites should consider adding crypto games to their repertoire. So far, everything seems to be pointing to the high likelihood crypto games will stick around for the future, and bring in increasingly more players and greater profits.





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# BETTING ON DIVERSIFICATION

B90 Holdings Executive Chairman, **Karim Peer**, recently sat down with *Trafficology* to discuss the future of the affiliate, as well as its recent acquisitions and move into the B2C operator space



## **Which markets are the ones you're most focused on right now?**

The best way to answer that question is to look at how the business is split. We have two sides to our business; the operator side, where we have two brands right now in Bet90 and Spinbookie; and the affiliate side, where we own our own affiliates. Our operator brands are predominantly based in Latin America right now, specifically Brazil and Chile, but the plan is to expand out as time progresses. Our own brand affiliates currently work in Norway and Germany – two very different markets really – and those are both acquisitions. The plan is to see not only how we can build the operator side of the business by expanding into new countries, but also expand out the affiliate side as well. You can get quite a lot of synergies between the work you do between your own brand affiliates and your own operator brand.

## **You bought Spinbookie last December. Was that part of a targeted campaign to expand into the operator market?**

Yes, it's kind of a hybrid position that we've got. We think there is a space in the market for us to do both sides of the equation. On the operator side, originally Bet90 was just going to focus on sportsbook and Spinbookie was more casino. What we've actually

done is mix and matched, and tried to leverage both brands, either into the same player base or targeting them subtly and differently in each country that we're in.

## **Why was the decision made to expand into the operator side, because you started out as a pure-blooded affiliate?**

Back in the mists of time, before I joined the business, it was purely affiliate minded. Management at the time thought there must be a way to capitalise on what you do as an affiliate. So I asked the question: what do you do as an affiliate? You find players and pass them on, so why not use that model to try and pass some players to yourself? This would be done with a view to try and keep your cost of acquisitions as low as possible and increase the lifetime value of your players. Because, if you have a dedicated player base with those coming in through the affiliates that you can then pass on using your own brands, it should make life easier.

## **Have you found that to be true?**

Well, we're nine months into the project, meaning it's early days yet. But we know we have to get the balance right, because you do need some barriers between the affiliate business and the operators. But my take

on it is that it's all about getting the balance right, and what we'll try and do over time is to prove the point I have just made: we can reduce the CPA (cost per acquisition) – that's the key bit for me. If my cost per acquisition can come down, if I own an affiliate, I've kind of sunk the cost, meaning it doesn't cost me anything to find the player. Equally, getting players to other brands is quite profitable.

#### **When it comes to expanding into new areas, are you looking at the US market with interest?**

The honest answer is of course it's a market of interest, why wouldn't it be? However, we have to be realistic. For a company of our scale, you need incredibly deep pockets with very long arms to find marketing dollars. In my opinion, right now, there's a risk that it's just a race to the bottom. You know, who can spend the most? For us, it's not appropriate. The other side is if you look at our business structure and the markets that we're targeting, we like markets that aren't heavily regulated – but we want them to be regulated. Because, if you can position yourself in a market that you know has got some regulatory legs or has got the bones of it and will move to be more regulated – if we position ourselves well in those markets, we can probably do quite well going forward. Whereas the US is just a beast that's just a little too big for us to crack right now. We have a responsibility to our shareholders because we're not a private business, so we have to make sure that whatever we do, we do it with real shareholder value. That's why we think the Latin American market is where we need to be.

#### **Speaking about your shareholders, looking at the stock price, it has taken a downward turn since last December – right around the time you bought Spinbookie – is that something that concerns you?**

I'm smiling because there are two or three answers to that question. I've run previous businesses that have been stock market-listed and those that are private, and the dynamics are all very different. When you run a private business, you don't have to worry about the value of your business so long as you are driving the revenue and are making it work. The way our business operates today, we're a small company, our shares are traded on AIM – so not on the main market – and forgive me for stating the obvious, but one thing that can drive your share price is liquidity. If people are not buying and selling your shares, it can make the price fall.

The simple fact is you can look it up, there have been few sales in shares recently and that has depressed the price slightly. Do I worry about it? Not particularly, because I'm confident the plan and strategy we have in place will start to push the price back up. So, when we release our half-year results, there will be more news about what we've done in the market and hopefully there will be a reaction.

#### **As the dip started when you purchased Spinbookie, how long do you think it will be before the market reacts positively?**

I wish I could predict that; I might not be sitting here if I could. The honest answer to that is a tricky one because the one thing the market looks for, in my opinion, is good news stories regularly. Something we've done is gone through a period of tidying things up: we acquired a couple of businesses, we've started to try and develop a much stronger business, we've done things like replace technology and a whole host of real heavy lifting. The challenge for us now is if we can regularly put these items out into the market. If we do that, it's positive news and I'd like to think the share price would react – though, of course, I can't guarantee it.

#### **Do you plan to keep acquiring other companies?**

We've stated very clearly that what we want to do is expand organically, and by acquisition. We would look, potentially, at growing out our business in a number of ways. But it doesn't necessarily mean we're buying an operator or another affiliate business – although we might. But I'm very keen on looking at what sits on the periphery of our business. What I'm trying to get across is that it is about finding things that are going to add real value to what we give to the players. We have a tagline (who doesn't love a tagline?) in which we say we want to provide maximum excitement to the players. We could simply sit there and use the technology we've got with the experience, that's fine. But how do you make that better? Maybe the sorts of things we might look to acquire is some technology that can sit around the edge to help us understand player behaviour better, and help us deliver a different type of content. For me, that's a crucial part of what we actually do in terms of how we grow.

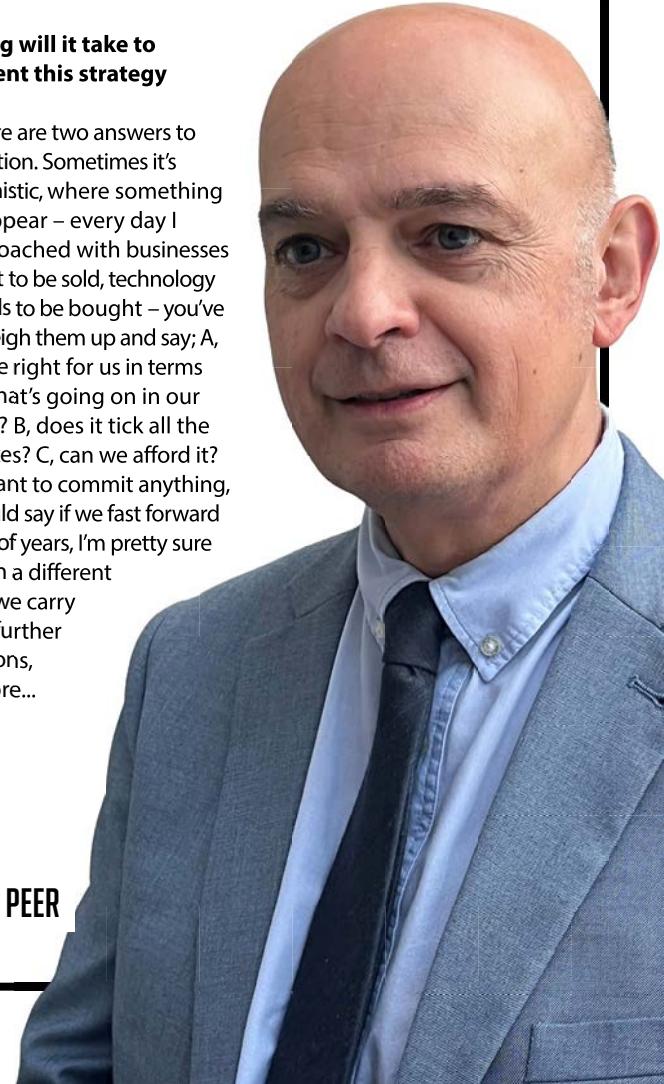
#### **Purchasing these companies wasn't a random move... it was all a part of a grand plan to target expansion, correct?**

The question we have to ask ourselves is, how do you differentiate? How do you become something that isn't just the same as everything else? That, I think, is the hard bit. Our plan and strategy was to say: let's do that. Sure, you have to offer the basic services, right? Otherwise, nobody will come to you. But then, what can we do around it or alongside it that adds value? That is where the acquisition and expansion strategy came from.

#### **How long will it take to implement this strategy for you?**

Well, there are two answers to this question. Sometimes it's opportunistic, where something might appear – every day I get approached with businesses that want to be sold, technology that needs to be bought – you've got to weigh them up and say; A, is the time right for us in terms of stuff that's going on in our business? B, does it tick all the right boxes? C, can we afford it? I don't want to commit anything, but I would say if we fast forward a couple of years, I'm pretty sure we'll be in a different shape if we carry out two further acquisitions, if not more....

**KARIM PEER**



# CAMPEÓN GOES WEST... AND EAST

Campeón Executive Affiliate Account Manager, **Kyriaki Saranti**, speaks to *Trafficology* about new markets and the benefit of good payment systems



## How is Campeón Gaming progressing with its current expansion plans?

At Campeón, we're currently working on our new B2B project, which is a white label solution for casino operators – something very new and fresh that we're focused on and we're very excited about. It's our new back-office platform. We didn't have most of our brands on our software until recently, but now we're looking forward to having all of them involved by the end of the year. We hope to expand our network to this side, too, since we believe that Nexo Gaming is going to be a good solution for our casino operators. Right now, we have many partners offering our platform and many casinos use our platform too, so we believe it will be a new subset from our company.

For the affiliation side, we're continuing to expand our

network, hopefully into new regulated markets. For now, the markets we're focused on are Canada and Japan. Japan we've focused on since launching the Supacasi brand, which operates in the region. As for Canada, it's a very strong market that we want to focus on and get to know better, since we see great value there. It also works pretty well for us because we have a good payment method in place. We're considering working on licensing there for the near future – but we're still only considering it at the moment; it is not definite yet.

## Are you interested in the US & other markets?

We're not in the US yet – we're considering it for the future but not right now. We recently began operating in India, but it's a difficult market for us, and in general for everybody – the value there has

**"JAPAN IS A MARKET WHERE MOST OPERATORS AND AFFILIATES DON'T WORK, SO THERE'S NO ONE BIG PRESENCE THERE"**

been low up until now, from what we have seen. So expansion in India is not a priority for us, to be honest. Right now, we're strongly focused on Canada, Japan and the LatAm market – especially Brazil and Mexico.

We now have platforms there and we have a PIX payment method, which is local for Brazil; we're having pretty good results there so far. From the two, we're more concentrated on Brazil right now, because the value there is higher than in other places – while the volume is also much better than other places in LatAm.

**How important is it to have a user-friendly payment method?**

The payment method is very important for us because the experience for players is better when payments are faster. For example, when a player can deposit and withdraw the conversion faster, it is better because the players who deposit will withdraw again if the procedure is easy.

That's why we're focused on LatAm, because they have a big spending method and it's very easy for busy players who play in the casino to buy and withdraw – meaning it's very easy for us to keep the player.

**Why has the Japanese market been targeted?**

It is a market where most operators and affiliates don't work, so there's no one big presence there. We want to focus on the market where we have the space to increase our value.

**Is that lack of competition the reason why you're targeting those markets?**

It is not about lack of competition, but it is a market that is not saturated. We have a lot of competition operating in Europe, which is why we're targeting those other markets. We believe there is potential there.

KYRIAKI SARANTI





# PLAY HARD

**In the UK, William Hill frequently uses the song "sweet Caroline" in its adverts. Caroline – do you like this song?**

How lucky am I that I share a name with such a classic song? I'm not surprised "Sweet Caroline" has become

an anthem for so many sports teams. I always get a rush when I hear the intro chords, knowing that the next three minutes are guaranteed to be good ones. The times when we're all belting "good times never seem so good" huddled up with friends – or sometimes strangers – are often the moments that turn into the best memories. I decided at a young age that my dad and I would dance to "Sweet Caroline" at my wedding; and that will become a reality in March.

## A serious industry question (sorry!)... What do you make of the affiliate market in the US right now?

I've led media relations for several different industries in my career as a communications strategist, but none have had a media market as unique as the gambling industry. I've seen the US gambling affiliate market go through three distinct phases over the past few years – each mirroring the growth of the US legal sports betting market. When states began legalising sports betting in 2018, a handful of well-established sites dominated the affiliate space but it didn't take long for the market to begin consolidating, creating today's affiliate power players in the process.

Next came the expansion phase. As new states seized the legal sports betting opportunity, so too did affiliate companies. We've seen companies like Betting Hero take the traditional online affiliate model offline to acquire customers in person. Affiliate media empires also expanded their content to include state-specific sites.

Looking at this trajectory, it should be no surprise that the affiliate market is reaching a saturation point just as state legalisation and customer acquisition are slowing down. I'm curious to see how the market evolves in the legal sports betting market's next phase.

## What's the craziest/funniest story from your career?

Back when I led media relations for the American Gaming Association, we held a March 2019 Sports Betting Executive Summit at MGM National Harbor in Maryland, just down the river from our office in Washington, DC. The summit was essentially the first major event involving the top executives from both the sports and gambling worlds. The two industries have become so intertwined in recent years that it's easy to forget how different the dynamic originally was. Since education was a major goal of the event, we decided to get creative with our communications strategy and geotarget MGM National Harbor's zip code with Google ads about where sports betting was legal – which brings me to my favorite

affiliate moment.

At the time, the gambling industry was concerned about the public not understanding the distinction between offshore sportsbooks and the legal, regulated market. As one of our speakers was explaining how offshore sportsbooks hoodwinked consumers into thinking their sites were legal, he encouraged everyone to open their phones and google "Where to place a sports bet in Maryland." As expected, some of the top search results directed the audience to affiliate sites that promoted offshore books. Yet because of our ad campaign, the very first search result each person saw was a sponsored search result directing to an AGA page that listed if and where you could bet legally in each state.

This was a bit of an "aha!" moment for me because it showed not just the reach and prowess of unregulated affiliates but also the opportunity to dilute and hopefully overpower their message. These days, a Google search on where to place a sports bet reveals just how far we've come.

## If you could change one thing about the gaming industry right now, what would it be?

After years of people asking if I work in the video game industry, I've realised that the gambling industry's reliance on jargon is holding it back. Gambling has become a mainstream form of entertainment, but the industry has become so accustomed to using buzzwords and acronyms like "omnichannel," "RG," or "PASPA" that it doesn't realise the mainstream world might not understand. I know the US industry isn't going to start calling itself the "gambling" industry overnight, but I will keep advocating for a shift away from jargon and to language that anyone can understand.

Funnily enough, my first day at the American Gaming Association was May 14, 2018. Yes, that day. The Supreme Court announced it had overturned the federal ban on sports betting an hour after I walked in the door as the new media relations director. I didn't even have time to learn my phone number or email address before I dived right into media requests. That day was the start of a nonstop sprint to tell legal sports betting's story in the media and help lay the groundwork for future expansion.

## How do you plan on enjoying Las Vegas while you're at G2E?

To me, G2E is about the people. Being in Las Vegas is just an added benefit. As cliché as it sounds, my favorite G2E days are filled with media tours, long-overdue catch ups with industry and media friends, meeting new faces at after parties, enjoying good food and hopefully getting enough sleep somewhere in between.

## Congratulations on being engaged! But... if you had to choose between getting married on the moon or scuba diving in the Atlantic Ocean, which would you go for?

Definitely the moon. The views would be breathtaking. But I'm just crossing my fingers that DC's cherry blossoms are in bloom during the wedding weekend.



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