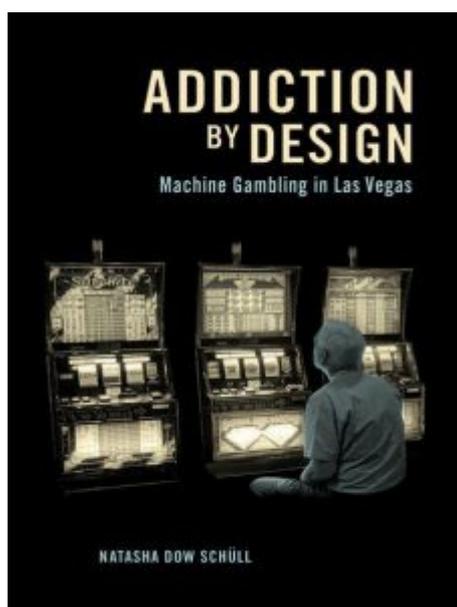


I read this book because a small part of it was referenced in a book I read earlier this year. It presents an interesting view of what gambling is in Las Vegas, and how important machine gambling is. It also presents an interesting perspective of why people gamble - essentially they gamble because they need to, not because they want to win.



A quote from Mollie (a gambler), when asked if she was hoping for a big win:

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*"In the beginning there was excitement about winning," she says, "but the more I gambled, the wiser I got about my chances. Wiser, but also weaker, less able to stop. Today when I win - and I do win, from time to time - I just put in back in the machines. The thing people never understand is I am not playing to win."*

*Why, then, does she play? "To keep playing - to stay in that machine zone where nothing else matters."*

The author talks about the rise of gambling machines, by the late 1990s, gambling machines had been moved to key positions on the casino floor and were generating twice as much revenue as all “live games” put together. Prior to this they had been placed along hallways or near elevators and reservation desks, rarely without chairs or stools, the devices had occupied transitional spaces rather than gambling destinations. At industry conventions such as G2E the machines were being referred to as “cash cows”, “golden geese”, or the “workhorses” of the industry. In 2003 it was estimated that 85% of industry profits came from machines.

Machines gambling is distinguished by its solitary, continuous, and rapid mode of wagering. Without waiting for “horses to run, a dealer to shuffle or deal, or a roulette wheel to stop spinning,” it is possible to complete a game every three to four seconds. It involves the most intensive “event frequency” of any existing gambling activity.

The author talks about the increase in rate of game play when machines change from pull handle machines to push button machines. The rate of game play could double from 300 to 600 games per hour.

The CEO of Las Vegas Stratosphere said this about slot machines - “When we put 50 slot machines in, I always consider them 50 more mousetraps. You have to do something to catch a mouse. It’s our duty to extract as much money as we can from customers.

One surprising development is the decrease in denomination used for game play. In 2000 nickels began to overtake quarters as the most popular denomination of play. However it is not really nickel players, as machines also multiple line play at the same time. “You are not really a nickel player when you are playing 90 nickels at one time”.

The book talks about the two different casinos in Las Vegas; the tourist casinos and the local casinos. “Local-market casinos are not designed for enchantment; they are designed for connivence and habit.”

