

From Transactions to Relationships: The Digital Future of Lottery



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PGRI Introduction: Norway became the first jurisdiction to require full player registration for lottery play in 2009. Most lotteries then, and today, would be concerned that such a mandate introduces friction and risks losing players. But Norsk Tipping’s experience tells a very different story. What appears, from the outside, to be a bold regulatory leap was in fact the natural culmination of a decade-long evolution toward player identification, trust, and engagement. I asked Silje Tysse to share the story about how this journey unfolded; and why registration has become the cornerstone of the modern lottery strategy based on relationships more than consumer marketing.

Silje Tysse has served in senior leadership roles across draw-based and instant games, brand management, strategy and product development over an illustrious 27-year career with Norsk Tipping. What follows is a conversation that explores not just the challenge of navigating the modern competitive environment, but the fundamental shift in how lotteries think about their relationship with players and how that shift positions lotteries for long-term growth.



Even back in 2009, most Norwegians were already acclimated to all things digital, most players were already registered, and so it was not disruptive to require digital registration.

Silje Tysse: Exactly. Over time, that system evolved. In the early 2000s, we introduced more secure player identification tied to the player card. By then, nearly 90% of players already had a card. So, when we moved to mandatory registration in 2009, it wasn’t really a big leap for the player. It was more like formalizing something that players were already comfortable with. We didn’t have to convince them to adopt something new; we just asked them to now use their card whenever they play.

That’s why we didn’t see any loss of players or sales. On the contrary, players saw it as a benefit. It reinforced the sense of belonging to a community — the Norsk Tipping “family.” If you are part of this, we will take care of you, we will inform you, we will call you when you win. That formed a foundation to build a powerful emotional connection.

It helped, of course, that none of this happened by accident. There were good decisions made early on. Leaders like Reidar Nordby jr. had a vision for what the

Smoothing the Path to Universal Registration

Paul Jason: Many lotteries would be concerned that mandatory registration would be a disruptive action, likely to result in lost revenues and playership. But that was not your experience, was it?

Silje Tysse: For us, the story starts much earlier than 2009. We introduced our first player card in 1992. At that time, it was very simple, what we might call a “soft” card today, but it replaced something even more basic, which had been writing your name on a paper lottery coupon and sending it

to us by mail. With the player card, you registered once, and from then on, you didn’t need to repeat that process. Of course, the player welcomed that as it was much easier for them. And it gave us something very important: a direct connection to the player. People would provide their phone number because they wanted to be called if they won. That idea, “we will call you when you win”, created an emotional connection. And that connection became part of the value proposition. We had a strong marketing concept around becoming a lotto millionaire, and the idea that “we will call you” made it tangible. This simple idea transformed what had been a transaction into what is now a relationship.

relationship between operator and player could become. So by the time registration became mandatory, it didn't feel like an obligation. It felt like confirmation of something that was already in place.

Responsible Gaming as a Strategic Core

How does registration change the responsible gaming piece of the picture?

Silje Tysse: Perhaps the most important application of this data is in responsible gaming.

The social mandate of Norsk Tipping is to ensure that gambling takes place within responsible frameworks, and to help reduce the prevalence of problem gambling. This has been the guidance for our company over many years and is the reason behind many of our strategic moves over the years. Norsk Tipping have a broad portfolio of games, not only draw-based games and scratch tickets, but also sports betting, online casinos and VLTs. We know that the high involvement game categories have more problematic behaviour

than the traditional game categories. The introduction of mandatory registered play was one of the tools we introduced to prevent problem gambling across these types of games. For instance, we observed that players continued to play anonymously after meeting their loss limits, and we needed to counteract. Through registered play, the loss limits became global, across channels and products. Registered play also helped controlling under-age gambling.

Today, registration allows us to monitor behavioral patterns and identify potential risks. We classify players into different risk levels — low, medium, high — based on how their behavior changes over time.

If someone who typically plays occasionally suddenly increases frequency, or begins playing at unusual times, or shifts into higher-risk products, that signals a change. We do not know the reason behind the behavior, or even if there is a problem. But we can observe that something has changed, and that change triggers an assessment which informs our response.

Based on that, we adjust our approach. For instance, high-risk players are not targeted with marketing communications. Instead, we target them with real-time messaging in the app, or we contact them by telephone with our “proactive calls”. The goal is not to maximize revenue from every player, and certainly not to extract more play from our “core” players. The goal is to maintain a sustainable relationship which is best accomplished by encouraging players to budget and stay within limits.

Lottery marketing is not like a typical consumer marketing job where the goal is to maximize sales, margins, and profits. In our industry, we are balancing engagement with responsibility. We are not trying to push players to spend more than they can afford. We are trying to offer entertainment in a way that remains healthy and sustainable.

This is also where the broader regulatory model plays a role. In Norway, Norsk Tipping operates within a highly controlled market, with strong enforcement



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against unauthorized operators. That creates a stable environment in which these principles can be applied effectively. But again, the key takeaway is not a particular regulatory model. It is the idea that data can and should be used to protect players, not just to drive revenue; and that high regulatory standards do not in themselves create friction. They can in fact be the platform for better communication and connection; and for lottery to forge proprietary relationships with the players that is the best protection from competition and change going forward.

Trust, Culture, and Digital Readiness

How important is it to stay aligned with the lifestyle and attitudes of the consumer?

Silje Tysse: It's extremely important. Registration is not just a technical or operational issue — it is cultural. In Norway, and in the Nordic countries generally, trust is a fundamental part of society. People trust each other. They trust the government and public institutions. They trust that systems are designed to work fairly and transparently. That makes a significant difference when introducing something like mandatory registration.

Trust is really a building block in our society which we see across many aspects of life. Our tax system is fully digital. Our healthcare system is digital. We use a digital ID to identify across public services. So, when the state-owned lottery asks players to register digitally, it fits into a lifestyle system that people already use and trust.

You're thinking about how to connect lottery with the way people are thinking and feeling and living.

Silje Tysse: Yes. But we are also connecting to what we might call digital maturity and digital readiness. The Nordics are among the very early adopters of new technology. Smartphone penetration was high at an early stage. Digital payment systems were trusted early. Today, cash is almost gone. People transfer money instantly between each other, and they trust that it works. People are used to interacting digitally in all parts of their lives, so using a digital ID to play lottery games does not feel like a barrier.

All of these elements reinforce each other. It is not one single factor that explains the

success of registration; it is the combination. That is why it is difficult to create a best-practices regulatory model that can be replicated across the board. But that certainly doesn't mean there aren't important lessons to be learned. Trust, transparency, and a clear value proposition are essential. I would think that would hold true everywhere. Without those cultural touchpoints, registration can feel like friction. With them, it can feel like a benefit.

From Data to Dialogue: The Power of CRM

How does full registration affect the way you do business? What does that actually look like in practice?

Silje Tysse: Moving from anonymous transactions to identifiable relationships changes everything. For one thing, Customer Relationship Management — CRM — becomes central. Of course, this enhanced connection comes with responsibility. In Europe, we operate under strict data protection rules like GDPR. Players must consent to how their data is used, and we must handle it carefully to comply with all GDPR directives. But when done properly, the benefits are significant — for both the operator and the player.

At a basic level, registration allows us to communicate. We can welcome players, send reminders, notify them of winnings, and keep them informed about games and opportunities. These things alone improve the player experience. We are selling dreams, and when those dreams come true, even occasionally, we can share that moment directly with the players.

And the interaction is both ways. You reach out to the players, but they also reach out to you.

Silje Tysse: Yes, the real transformation comes from understanding behavior. With data, we can segment players into groups based on how they play, how often they play, and what types of games they prefer. This allows us to tailor communication so that it is relevant rather than intrusive.

For example, if a player has already participated in a draw, we do not send a reminder. That seems simple, but it is important. It shows that we are paying attention. If a player prefers frequent updates, we can provide them. If another prefers less communication, we respect

that. It is about aligning communication style and cadence with preference.

We use operational segmentation models and continuous testing to refine this approach. We adjust messaging and targeting based on what works. Did behavior shift? Did engagement improve? Did we move players in the right direction? Are our methods supporting a sustainable pattern of play?

This creates a feedback loop. Data informs action, action produces results, and results generate more data to help us further refine the model. Over time, especially with the additional layer of AI tools, this becomes a powerful system for managing relationships at scale.

It is also important to clarify that this is not purely one-to-one personalization. Instead, it is a structured approach to grouping players with similar behaviors and tailoring communication accordingly. Our approach sits between mass messaging and individual targeting. And it works because it is grounded in data based on actual player behavior and continuous learning.

AI, Competition, and the Next Phase

Looking ahead, how do you see artificial intelligence changing the equation?

Silje Tysse: Artificial intelligence will amplify everything we are doing. We are still in the early stages, but the potential is quite clear. AI can process large volumes of data, identify patterns more quickly, and support decision-making in ways that would take humans much longer.

For CRM, this could mean optimizing messaging, predicting player behavior, and refining segmentation models with greater precision. It could also enhance responsible gaming by identifying risk patterns earlier and more accurately. And it enables everything to happen either instantly or in a much more timely fashion.

But; we must still keep the human touch and not leave everything to automation. These AI considerations are important for all, but especially for a company with our kind of mission. For us, the priority is to use these tools not just to improve performance, but to strengthen our role as a responsible operator. The cornerstone of our connection to the player, trust and legitimacy, depends on us assuring a safe and sustainable form of entertainment.

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The Inevitable Shift to Digital

Tell us about the transition to a digital-only distribution and connection to the player.

Silje Tysse: In Norway, this transition has always unfolded organically, as natural transitions that players readily adapt to. Today, around 94–95% of play is digital, with the majority occurring through mobile apps.

This was not driven by aggressive migration strategies. We did not push players to abandon retail. They simply chose digital because it is more convenient and fits into their daily lives. Our players became omnichannel-customers. At a certain point, that shift becomes decisive.

For us, the decision to phase out land-based terminals by 2028 was primarily a consumer-driven business decision. When retail playership drops below a certain level, it no longer makes sense to invest

in new hardware and IT infrastructure to support retail sales. The cost cannot be justified, especially when consumers overwhelmingly choose digital channels because they offer better capabilities for both engagement and responsible gaming.

This does not mean that retail is obsolete or that others should follow this path. It simply reflects a natural evolution for us in Norway. Other markets do seem to be moving in the same direction, though at different speeds. The trajectory is clear, even if the timeline varies.

Lessons That Travel

Lastly, as other lotteries think about Norsk Tipping's methods and strategies, what should they take away; and what should they not assume?

Silje Tysse: It is important to emphasize that there is no singular “best-practices” model that applies to everyone. It is not practical to think that Norway’s model

should be replicated in other markets. Every country has its own cultural context, gaming history, competitive environment, and regulatory framework.

The key is to identify principles that are transferable. Building relationships over time matters. Registration works best when it is built over time and positioned as a benefit. Trust is essential. Without trust, even the best-designed system will struggle. Data is powerful, but only when used responsibly. And the future of the industry lies in relationships, not transactions.

The most important shift may be conceptual. Lottery is no longer just about selling tickets. It is about managing a long-term relationship with the player — one that balances engagement, enjoyment, and responsibility.

Paul Jason: Thank you, Silje Tysse. What an extraordinary journey and glimpse into the future of the industry. ■

The ART of Data-Science: Turning Information into Insight, and Insight into Growth—continued from page 18

Khalid Jones illustrated this with a simple but powerful analogy: the transition from BlackBerry to iPhone. At the time, surveys suggested that users preferred physical keyboards and would resist touchscreen devices. “We all said, ‘I’m never going to switch from my chicklet keyboard,’” Jones recalled. “And of course, people did the exact opposite.”

The lesson is not that players are dishonest, but that they are unreliable narrators of their own behavior. They respond to surveys based on what they believe, what they aspire to, or what they think they should say, not necessarily what they will actually do.

This disconnect has real consequences. **Jones** shared that scratch-off products selected based on top-performing survey results often delivered only average performance in market. In response, his team adopted a deliberate counterbalance: for every data-driven decision, they would also launch a product based on intuition. “For every scratcher you pull from survey data,” he explained, “I want one based on your intuition.”

The result is not a rejection of data, but a reframing of its role. Data should inform direction, not dictate it.

Interestingly, the dynamic shifts in digital

environments. In iLottery, where behavior can be observed in real time and at scale, data becomes far more reliable. “Players tell me what they like,” **Jones** said, “and I don’t have to worry about them misinterpreting their own motivations because they’re actually speaking through their behavior.”

This creates a bifurcated model: intuition and experience play a larger role in slower, less observable channels like retail, while data takes precedence in fast, feedback-rich digital environments.

Rethinking Research: From Surveys to Signals

Monika McMahon described how this realization has led to a rethinking of research methodologies. Traditional focus groups, long a staple of product development, are increasingly seen as flawed. “It’s like going to the doctor,” she said. “They ask how often you exercise or how much you drink, and you tell them what you think they want to hear, or what you’d like to believe about yourself.”

In response, her team shifted toward a more granular, component-based approach. Instead of asking players to evaluate entire

tickets, they analyze individual elements—design features, themes, mechanics; and use data analytics to recombine the most appealing components.

The results have been striking. A \$50 ticket developed using this approach sold out in half the expected time.

On the digital side, the feedback loop is even tighter. A/B testing allows teams to experiment continuously; changing a button color, a message, or an offer, and immediately measure the impact. This is where data delivers its greatest value: not in predicting success with certainty, but in accelerating learning.

The Tyranny of Too Much Data

As data becomes more abundant, it also becomes more overwhelming. The challenge is no longer access to information, but curation and prioritization. “We have so much data now,” **Jones** noted, “that figuring out what’s important and what’s not is the current challenge.”

This overload can lead to misinterpretation. Conclusions are derived from patterns. Correlations are mistaken for causation.