



## **Online Gambling Scratchies.com Scooping Asia-Pacific Market Using Bizarre Viral Campaign**

*With Australians spending \$95 billion each year on gambling, the Internet gaming industry is scratching its head as to how to get a foot in the door. One operator is playing by the strict rules and still looks most likely to succeed.*

Singapore, Singapore, February 27, 2008 --(PR.com)-- Online gaming portal Scratchies.com has created arguably one of the most off-the-wall gambling advertisements to date. While a cut-down execution of the ad is viewable on the [www.scratchies.com](http://www.scratchies.com) website, Maverick Brands Australasia boss Richard Henderson is embargoing the full release until the transfer of its businesses - currently there is a 'silent auction' involving a gaggle of casinos hungry to eat Asia.

The off-the-wall "Don't dream of a white picket fence!" viral advertising campaign was created by multi award-winning film and commercials director Bo Krabbe out of RT Films and Holmes Defender of the Faith - also representing Spike Lee and Forest Whitaker in the broadcast advertising market.

The Scratchies portal ostensibly represents the key to the most lucrative gaming market remaining globally, being the Asia-Pacific region. "Australians spend around \$95 billion a year on gambling. As anyone in the gambling industry appreciates, the market is virtually impenetrable courtesy of existing legislation that prevents any advertising of online gambling," said Henderson. Australians spend \$600 million on scratchies, the generic name for slots-style instant-win games in Australia - and very much a part of everyday vernacular.

The volume of Asian students in Australia over the last twenty years would suggest that the 'brand' has significant cachet across the region. A total of 228 592 visas were granted in 2006-07 from Japan, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Korea, Thailand and India. This figure does not include Permission to Work, Student Guardian visas or Australians of Asian descent. Scratchies is a household name in New Zealand, and as far away as Quebec where \$460 million annually goes on games they refer to as scratchies or gratteux.

At present, Maverick's scratchies and pokies gaming portals are affiliated primarily with the online arm of casinos holding an Australian government license such as Lasseters and Ausvegas. In an ironic twist, not even these Australian based casinos are in a position to gain a foothold and target its gambling mad inhabitants. They are forbidden from advertising to them. Australian gamblers can legally play online, however, the frustration for any gambling organisation is reaching them. 888.com can boast modest success, primarily due to its sponsorship of international football. But at what cost? Marketing budgets aren't what they used to be.

Clearly Australians and others are already predisposed to gambling on scratchies. Greek gambling giant Intralot announced in December that it had toppled Tattersall's 54 year monopoly and was granted the government licence to market scratchies terrestrially in the State of Victoria. Under the monopoly, the Victorian lottery market reached AUD\$1.2 billion per year and is expected to expand under the new



structure.

"That figure is only representative of one Australian State - one style of gambling," Henderson said, "The Scratchies portal is by no means restricted to operating as an instant-win 'lottery' site. We envisage the group that controls Scratchies.com and the other sites will be far more likely to dedicate it to casino play, sportsbook and pokies. There are lots of ways to win instantly." The balance of the multi-billion dollar spend goes chiefly on 'pokies' [known as 'slots' in most countries], addressed by Maverick's pokies.tv brand.

"The ad is an incentive to any major player wanting to open the door and lock it behind them," he stated. "This viral spot is a teaser. I'd defy anyone not to key in [www.scratchies.com](http://www.scratchies.com) after we release the full uncut version. We're already on page one of all the major search engines, but this is a cool deal clincher for our new partners. We're keeping our options open, but I'd imagine an announcement being made in the not too distant future."

One of the leading commercial directors in Asia, the internationally acclaimed Krabbe has shot advertising campaigns for numerous clients, including Coca-Cola, Volkswagen, Toshiba, Olympus, Nescafe and Unilever.

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