

Markets & Analysis

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Times are changing - and spread-betting firms across London are fighting to keep up. It is 18 months since City Index became the first group to launch an iPhone application that put many of its services straight into its clients' pockets.

Since then, mobile investing has ballooned.

Industry figures show that more than 70% of financial spread betters have either already used a mobile to place a trade or intend to do so in the next 12 months.

And the number of people saying that mobile access would be important to them when making a decision over which spread-betting group to use doubled between 2009 and 2010.

"This is absolutely a growth area," said Mic Mills, head of electronic trading at ETX Capital.

"For most people, not being stuck to a laptop or computer has opened so many more opportunities. We consider this as the most important thing to be involved in at the moment, being at the forefront of new technology."

But that now means more than just the iPhone.

Spread betting groups are racing to produce apps for android phones and of course, the iPad. While many iPhone apps work on the iPad, investors are demanding an even better platform to take advantage the bigger screen.

This means that clients have access to more information, and in particular charts which can help inform the investments they make. [CMC Markets](#) hopes to have its iPad app up and running in the next four to five weeks.

IG Index, the granddaddy of spread betting, also has one in the pipeline. And ETX Capital is looking at developing apps for both androids and the iPads.

The apps are free, and allow punters to do almost everything they can do on their computers almost anywhere in the world. Tim Hughes, managing director at IG Index, said: "We estimate that 25% of our clients are regularly accessing the trading platform both over their mobile devices and with a traditional PC.

"We found that on average, clients were placing two trades for each login being made over the iPhone - significantly more than we see on other platforms. We're now getting around 10% of our applications in the UK from an iPhone or an iPad."

So on holiday this Easter, those glued to their phones may be doing more than just checking emails or writing texts - they could be trading from the beach or a mountain-top.

Since CMC launched its latest app in November, it has seen 41% of its daily trades come through it each day. More than 30% of its new accounts are mobile accounts.

[Michael Hewson](#), market analyst at CMC Markets, said: "It is getting more and more popular as you can trade on the move. It is certainly a big market for us.

"We are adding new products to it all the time. We see this growth extending rapidly to the point where over 50% of our trades could be generated by mobile device or tablet in the next 12 months. The iPhone app also works on the iPad but is a slimmed-down version of the new iPad version due to be launched in May this year.

"This growth should be enhanced when we launch our new iPad application in April for both Spread bet and CFD clients.

"This will bring the desktop experience to the tablet, giving users a fully functional mobile trading experience with charts and news with a look and feel pretty much identical to the desktop product."

But what about the social issue? What about making it so much easier for punters to invest - or should that be to gamble?

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"We are not worried that spread betting is an issue as far as that is concerned," said Mills, pointing to tight regulations from the [Financial Services Authority](#) over who can be taken on as a client. "Sports betting may be an issue because you only have to be 18, but we are much more highly regulated."

Pawel Rokicki, a senior analyst at Investment Trends, said those involved in mobile spread betting "are some of the market's most technologically savvy investors".

He added: "Brokers will need to ensure that their service and trading platforms can keep up."

As technology continues to advance at breakneck speed, expect spread-bettors to be tracking it all the way.

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