

knowledge snapshot



A review of how gambling advertisements impact gambling attitudes, intentions, and behaviours

What this article is about

The gambling industry has grown in the past two decades. Gambling has now become a public health issue because of its social, economic, and health care costs. The gambling industry faces little restrictions around advertisements to promote its products. Increased exposure to advertisements about gambling can impact people's gambling attitudes, intentions, and behaviours.

Past research has noted that in many cases, gambling ads can promote gambling by showing how exciting it is. These ads can create an illusion that gambling is a normal and socially acceptable behaviour that could benefit people who win. Exposure to gambling advertising could make some people gamble more often and develop an addiction. Yet, the effects of gambling advertising are not well understood compared to other areas of addiction, such as smoking and alcohol use. This study sought to review the latest literature to show that advertisement has a relationship with gambling attitudes, intentions and behaviours.

What was done?

The authors followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines. First, they searched for past studies about gambling advertising and its relationship to gambling-related attitudes, intentions, and behaviours. The authors looked for studies published since 1999 in English. They used various research databases (i.e., ISIWeb of Knowledge, PsychInfo, PubMed, Scopus) and Google Scholar. The authors looked for empirical studies that collected data from participants and

Why is this article important?

This article summarized the evidence on the link between gambling advertisement and gambling attitudes, intentions, and behaviours. The authors did a critical review of 27 studies. Findings revealed that higher exposure to gambling advertising was related to more favourable attitudes towards gambling. Also, people who were exposed to more gambling advertising had greater intentions to gamble. They tended to gamble more frequently and spend more money on gambling. Thus, there was some evidence for a dose-response relationship. The authors discussed the limitations in current studies and made suggestions for future research.

reported on them. They excluded previous review articles and commentaries.

The authors found 255 articles. After reviewing the abstracts and full text of one article, they had 27 studies that were eligible for the review. Meta-analyses were done for studies that provided enough statistical information. Meta-analysis is a set of statistical methods used to combine and analyze the results from different studies. It can be used to evaluate the strength of the evidence.

What you need to know

Eleven studies examined the link between advertising and gambling-related attitudes. Overall, evidence showed that increased exposure to gambling advertising was associated with more favourable attitudes about gambling. Thus, there was some evidence for a dose-response relationship. In other

words, more exposure to gambling advertising could lead to more favourable attitudes.

A total of eight studies examined the link between advertisement and gambling-related intentions. Most studies measured intentions by simply asking people if they were going to participate in a gambling activity within a set period of time. Overall, most studies reported that when people watched more ads, it increased their intentions to gamble. Hence, there was also a dose-response relationship, especially among people who gambled to higher degrees.

A total of 23 studies examined the link between advertisement and gambling behaviours. The evidence suggested that people who were exposed to more gambling ads tended to gamble more frequently and spent more money on gambling.

The authors found many limitations in the reviewed studies. First of all, many studies did not explain in enough details how they measured exposure to gambling advertising, gambling attitudes, intentions, or behaviours. These studies also varied greatly in their measurement methods. The studies on gambling behaviours often relied on scales to measure problem gambling. This could overlook the impact of gambling advertising on a broad range of gambling behaviours.

Furthermore, many studies did not provide enough statistical information. There was also a lack of longitudinal and experimental research. Most studies only collected data from participants at a single point of time. Therefore, little is known about the impact of exposure to gambling advertising over time.

Who is it intended for?

This review could be used by policy makers, prevention workers, and researchers. More policies could be developed to restrict the type and number of gambling ads people are exposed to. Prevention workers could use this information to educate others about how gambling advertisement may shape their attitudes, intentions, and behaviours. Future research could further examine these links using experimental or longitudinal designs.

About the researchers

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About Gambling Research Exchange (GREO)

Gambling Research Exchange (GREO) has partnered with the Knowledge Mobilization Unit at York University to produce Research Snapshots. GREO is an independent knowledge translation and exchange organization that aims to eliminate harm from gambling. Our goal is to support evidence-informed decision making in safer gambling policies, standards, and practices. The work we do is intended for researchers, policy makers, gambling regulators and operators, and treatment and prevention service providers.

Learn more about GREO by visiting greo.ca or emailing info@greo.ca.

