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An experimental study to test the impact of including betting odds in digital gambling ads for sports betting

What this research is about

Digital gambling advertising is everywhere. Digital advertising directs young adults easily to online gambling websites. This can lead to impulsive gambling behaviours. Also, previous research shows that positive feelings towards gambling advertising might affect the effectiveness of the ads.

Digital gambling advertising is mainly sports-related. Odds advertising is one advertising strategy within digital sports betting advertising. This refers to advertising that includes the odds of winning.

The researcher of this study conducted an experimental study. The aim was to examine how including betting odds in digital gambling advertising for sports betting affects young adults' gambling intentions and attitudes. The researcher also examined if positive feelings towards the advertising explain the effects. In addition, the researcher examined if the advertising format (social media or online banner) and gender make a difference.

What the researcher did

The researcher conducted an online experiment using Qualtrics software. The experiment had four different conditions. These conditions consisted of a combination of:

- (1) one of two different advertising strategies (i.e., no odds advertising or odds advertising).
- (2) one of two different digital advertising formats (i.e., social media ad or online banner).

For example, one of the experimental conditions tested was a social media ad with betting odds.

What you need to know

Digital gambling marketing is mainly sports-related. Odds advertising is one advertising strategy within digital sports betting advertising. This refers to advertising that includes the odds of winning. The researcher of this study examined how including betting odds in digital gambling advertising for sports betting affects young adults' gambling intentions and attitudes. An experiment was designed to see how people responded to one of four different conditions: 1) a social media ad with odds advertising; 2) a social media ad without the odds; 3) an online banner ad with odds advertising; and 4) an online banner ad without the odds. A total of 150 people between 18 and 25 years participated in this study. Young adults were more persuaded by the sports betting ad that included betting odds compared to the ad that did not show betting odds. Including betting odds led to more positive feelings (e.g., excited) towards the sports betting ad. This then led to higher gambling intentions and gambling attitudes. But this relationship was only found for men and not women. Also, the advertising format (social media or online banner) did not make a difference.

To examine the different advertising strategies, the researchers developed two ads using Photoshop. These ads were based on an ad for sports betting from an existing gambling operator in the country where the study took place. The ads were similar in their design and layout (e.g., same brand colours, picture, warning label, positioning of text). But only one ad included a simple betting odds in the format of "Team A wins, Team B wins, or draw".

To examine the two different digital advertising formats, the ads were incorporated either as a Facebook advertisement (i.e., social media advertisement) or as an online banner into an app of a newspaper.

Participants were recruited through social media. In total, 190 people started the online experiment. But 40 people answered none or almost none of the questions. So, responses from 150 participants aged 18 to 25 years were included in the analyses.

Participants were first asked several socio-demographic questions. They were then asked questions about their gambling behaviour and problem gambling profile. Participants who already gambled were asked about their gambling frequency and how much they usually gambled during a gambling session. Problem gambling was assessed using the Canadian Problem Gambling Index.

Then, participants were randomly allocated to one of the four conditions. This means that each participant was shown a screenshot of one of the four digital gambling advertisements. After that, they were asked to answer questions about:

- How they felt toward the ad using the Effects of Gambling Advertising Questionnaire.
- Gambling intention (e.g., “after seeing this ad, I feel like placing a sports bet”).
- Gambling attitude (“I get a good feeling when I think about sports bets”).

What the researcher found

On average, participants were 21 years of age. Most were women (58%). Most were students (82.7%), and 76.7% said that they had previously gambled. Only 32% of participants had previously bet on sports. Most participants were classified as having no gambling problem (40%). About 34.8% were at low risk, 20% were at moderate-risk, and 5.2% were people who gamble in a problematic way.

The results of the experiment show that young adults were more persuaded by the sports betting ad that included betting odds compared to the ad that did not

show betting odds. Including betting odds led to more positive feelings (e.g., being excited) towards the ad. This then led to higher gambling intentions and gambling attitudes. But this relationship was only found for men and not women. Also, digital advertising format did not make a difference.

How you can use this research

Policy makers can use this research to support regulation of different digital gambling advertising formats and strategies.

About the researchers

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