



# RESEARCH SYNOPSIS

**Gainsbury, S. M., Delfabbro, P., King, D. L., & Hing, N. (2015). An exploratory study of gambling operators' use of social media and the latent messages conveyed. .**

## **RESEARCH QUESTION(S)**

How do gambling operators use social media to promote gambling activities? What latent messages are conveyed by social media?

## **WHAT IS THIS RESEARCH ABOUT?**

Some researchers argue that high levels of gambling advertisements have led to the perception of gambling as a harmless and acceptable activity. Gambling companies often use social media sites like Facebook and Twitter to promote their businesses. Because gambling advertising on social media is a relatively new phenomenon, it is unclear whether advertising for gambling on social media include warnings to gamble responsibly. This study looked at the types of messages used on Australian gambling industry websites. The authors examined the content of the messages and identified latent messages (i.e., underlying themes or ideas) suggested by the social media accounts.

## **WHAT WERE THE KEY FINDINGS?**

Most gambling operators had a social media presence including a Facebook page (87%) or a Twitter account (52%). Operators posted a variety of information on the social media accounts, including promotions and special offers, betting tips, and sports and racing news. There was very little responsible gambling information on the gambling operators' social media accounts. In fact, only 12% of operators included any responsible gambling information. The social media accounts promoted positive messages about gambling such as encouraging gambling and making gambling seem easy and glamorous. Gambling operators did not appear to be misleading consumers about the chances of winning or promoting gambling as a financial investment, however.

## **WHO CAN USE THIS RESEARCH?**

Policy makers could use this research to create stricter policies regarding the marketing of gambling on social media. Gambling researchers could conduct studies to investigate the impact of social media marketing on gambling behaviour.

## **HOW WAS THE STUDY DONE?**

One hundred and one Australian gambling websites were chosen to be analyzed. Over a 4 week time period in 2013, the researchers visited each website and made note of the company's use of social media, the number of likes, subscribers and followers, and the type of content promoted by the website on social media. The researchers also noted whether the website included any responsible gambling messages on social media. A thematic analysis to analyze the types of underlying messages on the social media accounts was used.

## **WHAT WERE THE LIMITATIONS?**

This study analyzed the messages on gambling operators' social media accounts, but it did not examine the impact of these messages on gamblers. Future research could examine whether the gambling messages are effective at changing gamblers' behaviour.

**KEYWORDS:** gambling operators, social media, social networking, public health, Internet marketing, advertising, responsible gambling

## **URL:**

<http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs10899-015-9525-2>