

research snapshot

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How do people who gamble view gambling marketing?

What this research is about

Gambling-related harms can influence various areas of life, including finances, mental health, and work performance. Research has shown that gambling-related harms not only affect people who gamble, but also their significant others. Thus, it is important to evaluate factors that contribute to gambling-related harms.

Research suggests that gambling marketing likely negatively impacts people who gamble. Marketing strategies can normalise gambling as being socially acceptable. They can also influence children and encourage gambling behaviour among people who want to quit. Research examining the impact that gambling marketing has on people who gamble is limited. As marketing can contribute to gambling-related harms, it is important to understand how people who gamble interact with gambling marketing.

In this study, the researchers explored how people who gamble view gambling marketing and how they make sense of its role in their gambling behaviour.

What the researchers did

The researchers used a research approach called interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to examine people's views of gambling marketing. IPA is a method focusing on how people make sense of their world and experiences. It explores feelings, emotions, and meanings people attach to a phenomenon. In this study, IPA was used to examine the role of gambling marketing from the views of people who gamble.

The researchers recruited ten adults who were between the ages of 20 and 32. All participants reported gambling frequently (at least three days a

What you need to know

Gambling-related harms significantly affect the lives of people who gamble and their loved ones. Research indicates that gambling marketing likely contributes to gambling-related harms. In this study, the researchers explored how people who gamble view gambling marketing and the role it plays within their gambling lives. The researchers conducted in-depth interviews with ten adults between the ages of 20 and 32. The participants reported gambling frequently (at least three days a week). The researchers identified three main themes: (1) gambling marketing as a way to increase chances of winning; (2) gambling marketing as a test of self-control, as it tempts people to gamble; and (3) safer gambling messages from gambling companies as ineffective and insincere. These findings emphasize the importance of addressing gambling marketing and developing effective safer gambling messages.

week), mostly in response to marketing. Most participants were male and white British (90%), aged 20 to 23 (80%), and university students (90%). According to the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI), most participants experienced moderate risk (50%) or problem gambling (40%). None of the participants had a diagnosis of gambling disorder.

The interviews focused on the participants' experiences with gambling marketing. The interviews included examples of gambling marketing (e.g., images) and open-ended questions related to personal gambling history, television advertisements, social media marketing, and gambling within sport.

Each interview was transcribed by the lead researcher, and the data were analysed using IPA. Themes from each interview were identified. Findings from the participants' interviews were summarised and examined to uncover common themes.

What the researchers found

The researchers identified three main themes from the interviews. The first theme 'taking advantage of gambling marketing for personal gain' reflects how the participants viewed marketing as something they could use for their own personal gain to increase their chances of winning. This theme suggests that the participants viewed gambling marketing as being beneficial (e.g., by placing an initial bet that meets certain conditions, they can earn 'free' bets). Some participants saw betting with 'free' bets as a way to reduce financial risk, which appeared to ease the internal conflicts about their gambling frequency. In other words, gambling marketing offers allowed the participants to justify their gambling behaviour, potentially leading them to gamble for longer. Although people who gamble may believe marketing offers reduce the risks of gambling-related harms, such offers may lead to riskier behaviour over time.

The second theme 'gambling marketing as a test of self-control' describes how certain types of marketing may tempt people to gamble. One participant reported that marketing drew him back to gambling after attempting to take a break. Yet, most participants stated that gambling marketing did not have any serious impacts on their gambling. Their concerns were related to others who they saw as having problematic personalities (e.g., lack of control) or experiencing problem gambling.

The final theme 'safer gambling messages perceived as ineffective' reflects the lack of trust the participants felt towards safer gambling messaging from gambling companies. Such messages were seen as 'insincere' and an 'afterthought' by gambling companies. Some participants stated they would prefer safer gambling messages to come from a less biased source.

How you can use this research

This study highlights the importance of creating effective and informative safer gambling messages. The findings can be used by gambling regulators and public health. For instance, public policy could focus on regulating various aspects of gambling marketing that may exacerbate gambling problems.

About the researchers

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