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At-risk gamblers are not likely to look at responsible gambling messages in sports betting advertisements

What this research is about

Many gambling advertisements are shown to people as they watch sports matches on television. Advertisements for sports betting are especially common on Australian television. These advertisements may increase gamblers' urge to gamble and encourage them to continue gambling.

Sports betting advertisements make gambling look easy. They also suggest that gambling is a reasonable way to earn a lot of money. Sports betting advertisements are usually directed towards young men. Young men are more likely to be sports bettors than females and men in older age groups. Many states in Australia have policies that regulate when sports betting advertisements are shown on television. Many states also require that advertisements have responsible gambling messages.

Responsible gambling messages encourage people to gamble safely. However, there is little evidence showing that these messages change gamblers' betting behaviour or their attitudes about gambling. Research suggests that most gamblers are not able to remember the content of responsible gambling messages they see in gambling venues.

There are several features that responsible gambling messages should have to increase the chances gamblers remember them. These features include having movement, colour, and being shown where gamblers can easily see them. In this study, the researchers examined whether gamblers look at responsible gambling messages when they are shown alongside gambling incentives in sports betting advertisements.

What you need to know

In this study, the researchers investigated whether gamblers look at responsible gambling messages in sports betting advertisements. Participants were 59 adults classified as non-gamblers, low-risk gamblers, moderate-risk gamblers, and people with problem gambling. Participants watched six sports betting advertisements that were previously shown on television during sporting events. The researchers monitored their eye movements using an eye-tracker device. Regular gamblers looked at betting incentives more than responsible gambling messages. Non-gamblers were more likely to look at the responsible gambling messages than gamblers. The physical characteristics of responsible gambling messages appeared to influence how much attention was paid to them. Messages shown in a block colour (with high contrast) were looked at more.

What the researchers did

Market research panel providers recruited participants for the study. Participants were 59 adults who bet on sports at least once every two weeks in the past year, as well as adults who did not gamble. Participants completed the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI). Based on their scores, the researchers identified participants as non-gamblers, low-risk gamblers, moderate-risk gamblers, and people with problem gambling. Participants completed questionnaires that asked about their demographic information, such as their age, sports betting behaviour, drug use, and familiarity with advertising companies.

Participants watched 12 advertisements. Six were sports betting advertisements that were previously shown on television during sporting events. These advertisements were the focus of the analysis. Two were general brand awareness advertisements (ads E and F). Four showed gambling incentives including bonus bet (coded as ad. A), better odds (ad. B), reduced risk (ad. C), and cash rebate (ad. D).

The researchers monitored participants' eye movements, using an eye-tracker device, as they watched each advertisement. Between each advertisement, participants responded to a questionnaire that asked about their reaction to the advertisement.

What the researchers found

Participants who gambled regularly looked at betting incentives more than responsible gambling messages. This finding suggests that responsible gambling messages in sports betting advertisements are probably ineffective at changing gamblers' attitudes or behaviours about gambling. On the other hand, participants who did not gamble were more likely to look at responsible gambling messages than gamblers.

Participants looked at the responsible gambling messages in Advertisement A (bonus bet) much more than they did in any other advertisements. This might have been because the messages in Advertisement A were shown in a block colour and stood out more. Participants looked at Advertisement B (better odds) a lot less than the others.

In general, responsible gambling messages were in small text, static, and did not have any sound to draw participants' attention to them. However, betting incentives were shown using colour, drama, and exciting music. These results suggest that the physical characteristics of responsible gambling messages, such as size, length, and colour, may determine how much viewers pay attention to them.

How you can use this research

Researchers could use this research to identify which advertisement characteristics gamblers find more interesting. Betting companies could use the

information to create responsible gambling messages that are more likely to be watched by gamblers. Researchers could also explore if there is a link between people's attitudes about responsible gambling and how much they look at those messages in advertisements. More research is needed to explore which aspects of responsible gambling messages attract more attention than others.

About the researchers

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Citation

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