

Advertising and gambling in the digital age: Insights and trends

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Abstract:

Technological changes have provided an unprecedented opportunity to access and engage everywhere and all the time with gambling in the digital environment. The growth of online gambling markets fueled by technological advancements, with an increased reliance on online payments, and global digitization have completely transformed advertising in the gambling industry. In the last years, the gambling industry has witnessed rapid and profound changes, with new and hybrid forms of gambling activities emerging, a trend that is expected to continue in the future (e.g., King et al., 2010; Stehmann, 2020). In addition, the gambling industry has started to use digital channels to communicate with its targets and advertise (online) gambling activities. Digital technology has an undeniable impact on gaming industry advertising, making it a key component of their marketing strategy. Digital gambling advertising has allowed a more tailored communication towards the targets, regarding content and types and communication, leading to increased investment in this advertising. Targeting young people who are frequently exposed to gambling advertisements has proven to be especially effective when done through social media and partnerships with digital influencers. These commercials may be promoted directly on social networks, through embedded YouTube videos, or through gaming streaming services like Twitch.

Despite the ever-growing investment in the online gambling industry and advertising, the growing adherence of young people to online gambling and the plethora of ways through which these can be impacted by online gambling advertisements, frequently subtler and more diffuse, but also more frequent than those in traditional media, the scholarly work remains incomplete and fragmented. Attending to the pivotal role of advertising on gambling behavior and considering that this research domain is still under development, a comprehensive review of the extant research is deemed as necessary. This paper focuses on how gambling advertising on digital platforms affects consumers/gamblers online behaviors. A systematic review of the relevant studies published in peer-review journals was conducted to identify the key themes and dominant effects. The analysis of the set of papers considered for this review sheds light on the direct and indirect effects of digital gambling advertising on online gambling behavior. Based on this analysis, the general impact, but also the role of specific types of digital advertising and advertising in specific digital platforms in shaping online gambling attitudes, perceptions and behaviors are discussed. Based on the existing evidence and the identified research gaps, we propose future research directions that reflect emerging and unexplored relevant areas. Conclusively, implications of this study for theory and practice are also addressed.

Keywords: Online gambling, digital gambling advertising, gambling behavior, gambling attitudes