

Influence of Sport Betting Advertisement Content on the Rising Popularity of Sports Betting Among Caleb University Students

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Abstract

This study assessed sports betting advertisements and their influence on the popularity of sports betting participation among the students of Caleb University. The research was guided by four questions and hinged on the Theory of Planned Behaviour and User Gratification Theory (UGT). The positivist paradigm of research design was employed. The study used a questionnaire via Google form as a means of data collection. The population was 1,223 students, while the sample size was 294, determined using Krejcie and Morgan's formula. The questionnaires were distributed and administered via WhatsApp and LinkedIn, with all 294 responses returned and used for data analysis. The study underscores the role of educational institutions in raising awareness and promoting responsible gambling. Many students supported educational programs and the prohibition of betting among first-year students. In conclusion, sports betting is prevalent and poses substantial financial and psychological risks. The study highlights the need for targeted educational and policy interventions to mitigate these risks and promote healthier behaviors. The study concludes that there is a need for promoting more stringent laws governing sports betting advertisements—especially on social media—that can lessen undue exposure and safeguard susceptible student demographics. Creating support networks, including counseling programs, can give kids who are addicted to gambling the much-needed help they need. These steps can lessen the appeal and dangers of sports betting for Caleb University students by fostering a safer and better-informed environment and assisting with ongoing research to assess the efficacy of intervention initiatives.

Keywords

Advertisement; Content; Influence; Popularity; and Sport Betting



I. Introduction

Over the last decade, the availability and accessibility to gambling have been expanding and evolving due to technological and sociological developments. However, the consumers of gambling products have changed the way they behave and interact with these products, with a significant number of adolescents, youths, and adults reporting gambling from their homes from internet-connected devices. The availability of the internet and the bombardment of sports betting advertisements across media platforms have necessitated an increase in online gambling and also increased the risk of pathological gambling. Sports betting is one of the most popular forms of gambling worldwide. Conservative estimates showed that the number of Nigerians who engage in sports betting is around 60 million. Every four out of ten Nigerians is exposed to ads promoting sports betting and gambling,

influencing them to play some sports bet. The Southwestern part of Lagos State is notorious for sports betting stalls than any other part of Lagos State (Aliyu et al., 2023).

Sports betting has become increasingly popular among university students worldwide, and Caleb University is no exception. Digital media has made sports betting more accessible, with advertisements promoting betting services pervading various media channels such as social media, television, and online platforms (Hile et al., 2023). These advertisements often highlight the potential for significant financial gains and the excitement associated with sports betting, making it an attractive activity for young adults. The rise in student sports betting participation raises concerns about its potential impact on their financial stability, academic performance, and overall well-being.

With increasing acceptability and legalization, there has been a proliferation of sports betting platforms across the country, such as BetNaija, NairaBet, SportBet, 22Bet, 1xBet, Frapapa, Betano, WazoBet, Accessbet, Betwinner, Bet9ja, BetKing, Paripesa and Betway (Statista, 2023). Recently, these betting platforms have introduced novel features and intensified advertisement on traditional media channels such as radio, television, and newspaper and digital media (Andover et al., 2022). These novel features are introduced to improve the sports betting experience through cash-out options, live-in play options, instant bet options, micro-betting, and simulation betting.

Sports betting has been associated with positive aspects of sports, such as the culture of effort and training ways to improve results. However, there has been increasing concern about the notoriety and negative impact of sports betting and the rise of pathological gambling with sports betting associated with gambling disorder and excessive gambling. Research examining the particular influence of sports betting marketing on university students is scarce despite the fact that sports betting is becoming more and more common among this group of people (Hile et al., 2022). It is essential to comprehend how these commercials affect students' betting habits to create efficient treatments that lessen the possible negative effects of sports betting.

While there has been increasing research on the relationship between sports betting and gambling disorder, most of these studies treat sports betting as a form of online gambling rather than as a single entity. Most studies on sport betting often focus on the demo-graphical and clinical characteristics of individuals engaged in sports betting such as the differences in sport betting among males and females, rural and urban centers (Obada et al., 2021). However, this study seeks to focus on the influence of sports betting advertisements and how it influence pathological gambling. This study will conduct a study on factors that influence sport betting behaviour among the students of Caleb University. Most studies have failed to identify the prevalence of sport betting behaviour among the Nigerian youth, this study aims to add to the body of knowledge on these.

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and the Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) provide a theoretical framework for understanding the motivations behind students' engagement in sports betting (Aondover et al., 2022). TPB suggests that an individual's behavior is driven by their intentions, which are influenced by their attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Maikaba & Msughter, 2019). UGT, on the other hand, posits that individuals actively seek out media that satisfies their specific needs and desires. In the context of sports betting, students may be influenced by advertisements that promise financial rewards and social approval, leading to increased participation (Obada et al., 2021).

The proliferation of sports betting advertisements has raised concerns about their impact on university students, who are particularly vulnerable to persuasive marketing tactics. While sports betting are often promoted as a harmless and entertaining activity, it carries significant risks, including gambling addiction, financial losses, and negative effects on academic performance (Vitalis et al., 2023). Caleb University students are increasingly exposed to sports betting advertisements through various media channels, yet there is limited research on how these advertisements influence their betting behaviors and the associated risks.

Participation in sports betting continues to soar in tandem with deregulation, aggressive advertising, and availability of high speed internet and advent of technologies (Mojaye & Aondover, 2022). This has provoked research into sports betting behaviour, the relationship between sports betting behaviour and exposure to media contents that promotes it, prevalence of gambling and its risk factors. It is known that individuals engaging in sport betting gambling represent a particularly vulnerable demographic, with a higher proportion of individuals who are single, younger, and of lower socioeconomic status, report an earlier onset of gambling participation, endorse higher rates of substance use disorders, report greater psychological distress and have distinct personality profiles (i.e., higher impulsivity, reward dependence, and novelty seeking) (Granero et al., 2020). This study seeks to fill this gap by examining the influence of sports betting advertisements on the betting behaviors of Caleb University students. It aims to identify the most influential media types, assess the prevalence of sports betting among students exposed to these advertisements, and determine the key risk factors associated with their participation. By understanding these dynamics, the study aims to inform the development of targeted interventions and policies to protect students from the potential harms of sports betting.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

1. To determine the factors that has influenced the popularity of sport betting among Caleb University students.
2. To ascertain if Caleb University students are exposed to sport betting advertisements.
3. To ascertain which platforms they are exposed to sports betting adverts the most.
4. To determine the ways that sport betting have influenced the Caleb University students into participating in betting.

II. Review of Literature

This study adopted the “Theory of Planned Behaviour” as the theoretical underpinning of the study. The rationale for the choice of this theory is based on its ability to capture and explain the phenomenon under study. The theory also helps to explain non-volitional behaviour. The theory of planned behaviour is an extension of the theory of reasoned action. The theory was developed by Ajzen in 1991 (Msughter et al., 2023). The central argument of the theory is that individuals make logical decisions to engage in a specific behaviour (gambling behaviour) by evaluating the information (odds) available to them. The performance of such behaviour is based on the intention (win money) by engaging in such behaviour and the individual has control over his/ her perception. The theory posits attitude towards such behaviour, subjective norms shaping the behavioral intention of the individual are the key components of individual’s intention (Oreoluwa et al., 2024). The first construct of the theory is behavioral intention. There are two

antecedents of behavioral intentions-attitude and subjective norm. The second construct of the theory is the attitude towards such behaviour which is the extent to which has a favourable or unfavourable appraisal of such action (Yar'Adua et al., 2023). The third construct of the theory is perceived behavioral control which is the perception of people about the ease of difficulty in engaging in gambling behaviour.

- a. Applying this theory to the study, an individual who engages in gambling behaviour subject his actions to logical decision by evaluating the amount of information regarding gambling available to him. For instance, a person who wants to place a wager on a football game may decide to look at the past performances of the team, their position on the league table, head-to-head, goals scoring statistics and the risk involved. The intention of the wager is to win the game which has placed a wager. The wager's action is based on three things: Behavioral intention which measures how strong the wager's intention is. The higher his intention to win, the higher the chances that the wager will engage in the gambling behaviour.
- b. Attitude towards such behaviour which is based on how the wager perceives the stake as favourable or unfavourable. For instance, a student who wants to double his school fees by placing bet may subject his decision to critical appraisal regarding the risk involved. The perceived behavioral control which is the extent to which people perceive the attempt by the student to place a bet using his school fees as easy or difficult.

Similarly, Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) was employed in the study, which was developed by Elihu Katz, Jay G. Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch in the 1970s, is a psychological communication theory that examines why and how people actively seek out specific media to satisfy specific needs. Unlike other media theories that focus on what media do to people, UGT emphasizes what people do with media (Yar'Adua et al., 2023). UGT assumes that the audience is active and goal-oriented in their media use. Individuals select media based on their personal needs and desires. People use media to fulfill certain gratifications, which can be categorized into different types, such as cognitive needs (information and knowledge), affective needs (emotional and aesthetic experiences), personal integrative needs (credibility, status), social integrative needs (interaction with family and friends), and tension release needs (escape and diversion) (Yar'Adua et al., 2021).

The theory posits that media compete with other sources of gratification for users' attention. This means that individuals choose media that best meet their needs in the context of other available options. The theory acknowledges that social and psychological factors, such as individual characteristics and social context, influence media choice and usage. UGT suggests that the effects of media are driven by the audience's use and their gratifications sought, rather than the media itself having direct effects (Onyejelem & Aondover, 2024a). UGT can be integrated into study to explore how individual characteristics (e.g., personality traits, risk-taking behavior) and social context (e.g., peer influence, family background) affect students' media choices and their engagement in sports betting. The study can categorize the gratifications sought by students into specific types, such as:

- a. Seeking information about odds, betting tips, and sports analysis.
- b. Affective Gratifications: Seeking thrill, excitement, and emotional highs associated with betting outcomes.
- c. Personal Integrative Gratifications: Enhancing self-esteem and credibility among peers through betting success.

- d. Social Integrative Gratifications: Engaging in social interactions and discussions with friends who also bet.
- e. Tension Release Gratifications: Using betting as a form of escape from academic pressures or personal issues (Onyejelem & Aondover, 2024b).

2.1 Empirical Review

In their stadium and broadcast census of Australian football league matches, Samantha Hing et al. (2015) found that sports betting were marketed using a variety of platforms, including static and dynamic signage, scoreboard advertising, logos, shirt sponsorship, and animated sponsored goal replays. This diverse range of marketing platforms ensured that audiences were almost constantly exposed to sports betting advertisements during matches. On average, there were 58.5 episodes (median 49.5, standard deviation 27.8) and 341.1 minutes (median 324.1 minutes, standard deviation 44.5) of sports betting marketing per match at stadiums. The marketing episodes ranged from 99 episodes and 406.3 minutes at the Carlton vs. Brisbane match to 36 episodes and 310.1 minutes at the Geelong vs. Hawthorn match. The Etihad Stadium had a greater average amount of sports betting advertising (73 episodes, 361 minutes) compared to the MCG (44 episodes, 321.3 minutes). During broadcasts, seven wagering brands were marketed: Centrebet, TABSportsbet, Bet24/7, Sportingbet, Sportsbet.com.au, DeesBet, and CrowsBet.

The average number of marketing episodes during televised broadcasts was 50.5 (median 53.5, standard deviation 45.2) with an average duration of 4.8 minutes (median 5.0 minutes, standard deviation 4.0). Integrated advertising included live wagering odds announced by the broadcast team, sponsorship announcements acknowledging TAB Sportsbet, and live odds updates through 'pull-through banners' or 'pop-ups' during the match. Some integrated advertisements included responsible gambling messages, though these were not consistently present. The study highlighted the impact of saturation marketing strategies, where audiences are unable to avoid exposure to marketing messages. This is similar to strategies seen in other public health issues like tobacco marketing, and it raises concerns about the constant exposure of individuals to gambling advertisements. The study noted two main limitations: it only captured sports betting marketing during a specific time period (Round 12 of the AFL season), and it was limited to stadiums in Victoria, which might not represent the situation in other states or at other times during the season. The findings suggest that the extensive use of multiple marketing platforms ensures continuous exposure to sports betting advertisements during matches, which could contribute to the normalization of betting in sports culture. There is a need for further research to understand the variations in marketing strategies throughout the season and across different regions.

In their systematic review, Moreira et al., (2023) identify and examine the risk factors associated with gambling disorder. They discover that, with prevalence rates ranging from 0.12% to 5.8%, gambling problem affects a tiny portion of the world's population and is linked to serious issues like depression, substance misuse, domestic violence, bankruptcy, and a high suicide rate. The review identifies a number of risk variables, including being under 29 years old, being a man, being unmarried or recently married, living alone, and having a poor socioeconomic and educational position, for both the development and maintenance of gambling disorders. Significant risk factors also include a high prevalence of personality disorders, particularly Cluster B disorders (e.g., antisocial, borderline, histrionic, narcissistic), and parents or other relatives with gambling issues. The review also highlights the substantial correlations that exist between substance

use, including alcohol, marijuana, and other drugs, and gambling disorders. It also highlights how economic downturns and a decline in social support during the COVID-19 epidemic can exacerbate gambling problems. The results highlight the necessity of a thorough strategy that takes into accounts both specific and more general social aspects in order to comprehend and treat gambling problem.

Kalischuk et al. (2006) review the existing literature on the impact of problem gambling on families, highlighting several key findings. The review notes that problem gamblers frequently originate from homes with great emphasis on money or material goods and harsh but inconsistent discipline. It also cites family dynamics as a crucial component in the development of problem gambling. These settings frequently lack cohesiveness and individual autonomy, which exacerbates family discontent. The review also describes the negative impacts of problem gambling on family members, such as lower levels of relationship satisfaction, higher levels of conflict, and financial stress for spouses, in addition to emotional and psychological difficulties including anxiety and depression in young adults. The researchers emphasize the value of support networks and family-focused therapy in treating the wider effects of gambling addiction. The review also emphasizes the necessity for more thorough and representative research on this subject in order to comprehend gambling's social and cultural surroundings.

The study conducted by Severin-Nielsen (2024) explores the impact of gambling advertising on teenagers and adolescents in Denmark. The main findings of the research show that teenagers report seeing a lot of adverts for gambling, with men claiming more exposure than women. Adolescents often believed these commercials had a minimal impact on them, despite their extensive exposure. The self-perceived influence of gambling advertising, however, was found to be significantly correlated with at-risk or problematic gambling behaviors as well as financial responsibilities of spending on gaming activities. According to the report, in order to lessen these effects, gambling advertising regulations should be put in place, and social media companies and national gaming authorities should work together to identify and remove ads that specifically target young people. These results highlight the urgent need for legislative actions to shield young people from the possible negative effects of gambling advertising.

III. Research Methods

This study the positivist paradigm of research design, which informed the choice of survey method. Stratified sampling was employed to ensure representativeness. Data were collected through an online survey. The online questionnaire, created via Google Forms and distributed through WhatsApp and LinkedIn, addressed questions related to the types of media influencing betting behaviors and the prevalence of sports betting among students.

To ensure validity and reliability, the study adhered to established theoretical frameworks, used standardized data collection instruments, and applied consistent and repeatable methods. Data analysis involved descriptive and inferential statistical methods, with regression analysis employed to identify the relationships between variables. The population for this study was 1,223 students, and a sample size of 294 was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's formula. Total population (N) = 1250 (1100 for Mass Communications + 150 for Political Science). Confidence level = 95%. Population proportion (P) = 0.5 • Margin of error (d) = 0.05

$$S = 3.841 * 1223 * 0.5 * 0.5 / 0.052 (1223-1) + 3.841 * 0.5 * 0.5$$

$$S = 3.841 * 1223 * 0.25 / 0.0025 * 1222 + 3.841 * 0.25$$

$$S = 1173.26575 / 3.055 + 0.96025$$

$$S = 1173.26575 / 4.01525$$

$$S = 292.16 \approx 293$$

The desired sample size is 293.

IV. Results and Discussions

Table 1: Which media promotes sport betting ads on their platforms to you the most?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Social Media	117	40%
Sports Telecasts	88	30%
Newspaper	38	13%
Television	50	17%
Total	293	100

Table 1 shows a total of 117 responses which posits social media as the leading platforms that promotes sports betting ads to students, followed by sport telecasts such as football, basketball, and tennis matches with a total of 30%. 17% of the respondents are certain that sport betting ads are frequent on television programs too, while a only 13% of the respondents think of Newspaper as the platform with most sport betting ads. The low number regarding the newspaper can be closely linked to the stereotypical aspect of youths not turning to newspapers for the news or entertaining, thereby substituting it for social media. This is in line with the findings of Williams et al. (2012) who pointed out that young adults have a higher propensity for gambling. The study further posits a high level of familiarity with sports betting advertisements (70.13% are either very or somewhat familiar) indicates that knowledge and exposure through social media and internet ads significantly influence participation.

Table 2: How often do you come across sports betting advertisements via Social Media, Newspaper, or Television?

VARIABLES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Daily	67	23%
Weekly	47	16%
Often	59	20%
Once in a while	53	18%
Never	67	23%
Total	293	100%

Table 2 shows that 23% of the respondents come across sports betting ads via, while equally, another 23% never does. 20% does often, while the remaining 18% sees it once in a while. The frequency of coming across sport betting media contents varied and differs among respondents. While some encounter it daily, others never does. The distribution shows a mix of regular and occasional viewers, reflecting diverse viewing instances and levels of engagement with sports betting. This simply illuminates the findings of Griffiths (2005) that highlighted that gambling addiction often leads to neglect of responsibilities, including academic duties, which can adversely affect academic performance.

Table 3: Which sports betting platform advertisements are you familiar with the most?

VARIABLES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Bet9ja	32	11%
Sportybet	173	59%
All	50	17%
None	38	13%
TOTAL	293	100%

Table 3 posits Sportbet ads is the most familiar sport betting website among the respondents with 59%, while 11% encounters those of Bet9ja. 17% of the respondents come across the two websites advertisements actively, while 13% don't. Sportybet is the most recognized platform, followed by a significant number of respondents familiar with all platforms. A notable portion of respondents indicated familiarity with none, suggesting varying levels of awareness and engagement with different betting platforms. These results are consistent with Griffiths' (2005) description of problem gambling, which is characterized by gambling practices that has the potential to cause substantial financial harm.

Table 4: Do you believe sports betting are quick way to make money and solve financial problems?

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
I partially agree	85	29%
I beg to differ	73	25%
I couldn't agree more	88	30%
No, unlikely	47	16%
TOTAL	293	100%

The table above depicts the reality of respondents' opinions about their belief that sport betting is a quick way of making money. The table shows that over 50% agrees with the notion, whether wholeheartedly or partially. 25% clearly didn't feel the same way, while 16% thinks its unlikely for sport betting to be a means of making quick money. Whether sports betting are a fast way to gain money is always a topic of disagreement. There are diverse opinions regarding the financial sustainability of sports betting, with nearly half of respondents believing it may be a means to gain quick money (certainly or probably)

Table 5: Have you ever borrowed money or used credit cards to fund your sports betting activities?

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Sometimes	105	36%
Almost Always	88	30%
Rarely	41	14%
Never	59	20%
TOTAL	293	100%

From the table above, a total of 36% often find themselves borrowing money to fund their betting activities, followed by 30% who almost always go into debt just to finance their betting activities, then followed by 14% respondents who rarely do so, and then followed by 20% of the respondents that will never enter any financial problem because they want to sustain their sport betting appetite.

Table 6: Have you ever felt the need to bet more money to get the same excitement or thrill due to the advertisements you have seen?

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Absolutely	91	31%
Not Really	53	18%
Sometimes	61	21%
Never	88	30%
TOTAL	293	100%

From the table above, a total of 91 respondents absolutely felt the need to bet more money to get the same excitement or thrill closely influenced by the ads they have seen especially the ones promising bigger payout and newer bonuses, followed by 61 respondents who sometimes feel the need as well, then followed by 53 respondents who doesn't really need such thrill, and finally followed by 88 of the respondents that never have the need to pursue some excitement by betting more money.

Table 7: Do you find yourself constantly thinking about sports betting and planning your next bet?

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Almost always	85	29%
Sometimes	94	32%
Rarely	50	17%
Never	64	22%
TOTAL	293	100%

In the table above, 29% of the respondent are shown to be constantly thinking and planning about their next bet, and then followed by 32% who sometimes do. 17% of the respondents are shown to rarely think about sport betting constantly, while 22% of the respondents don't have such dilemma to deal with. From the table, its shows that how truly addictive sports betting can become if left unchecked, as the percentage of those constantly thinking about it outweighs those that doesn't.

Table 8: Have you experienced financial losses due to sports betting?

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes, significant losses	105	36%
Yes, minor losses	76	26%
No, I haven't lost money	73	25%
Prefer not to say	39	13%
TOTAL	293	100%

Table 8 shows the prevalence of financial losses among respondents, as 36% and 26% have recorded significant and minor losses respectively. Though, 25% of the respondents have not lost money, but the remaining 13% that preferred not to say, only adds to the confirmation that sports betting addiction can actually lead to monumental losses. These findings align with existing literature that emphasizes the importance of regulatory measures to prevent gambling addiction (LaBrie et al., 2003) and reinforces the argument for incorporating gambling awareness programs into the educational curriculum

Table 9: Do you think sports betting can lead to gambling addiction?

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes, definitely	138	47%
Yes, partially	70	24%
No, unlikely	50	17%
No, not at all	35	12%
Total	293	100%

The table above shows case the respondents view on if sports betting can lead to gambling addiction. 138 respondents think that it can, 35 others believes sports betting can not at all lead to gambling addiction. 70 respondents think it can partially lead to addiction, while the remaining 50 respondents didn't say no out-rightly, they simply think the belief is far-fetched and very unlikely.

V. Conclusion

The study came to the conclusion that media coverage of sports betting significantly affects Caleb University students' betting habits. The considerable influence of commercials, especially those on social media, is highlighted by the high prevalence of betting among students exposed to such media content. Students' aversion to betting is considerably reduced by social media marketing that establish a compelling and customized appeal, frequently with targeted promotions and popular influencers. Due to peer pressure and the novelty of betting, younger students—especially those in their first year—are more susceptible. Regular exposure to advertisements normalizes betting, which instills a sense of urgency and Anxiety by portraying betting as a risk-free, routine activity.

It is important to employ comprehensive intervention measures in order to minimize the detrimental impacts of advertisements related to sports betting. Educational initiatives and campaigns within the university might highlight the unpopular and unspoken risks of sports betting, which entails financial loss and the possibility of growing into an addiction. Furthermore, promoting more stringent laws governing sports betting advertisements—especially on social media—can lessen undue exposure and safeguard susceptible student demographics. Creating support networks, including counseling programs, can give kids who are addicted to gambling the much-needed help they need. These steps can lessen the appeal and dangers of sports betting for Caleb University students by fostering a safer and better-informed environment and assisting with ongoing research to assess the efficacy of intervention initiatives.

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