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You Can Become a Millionaire: Interrogating the Deception of Gambling Adverts on Nigeria's Youth in Lagos Metropolis

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Abstract. This article critically examines the deceptive nature of gambling advertisements targeting Nigerian youth, with particular emphasis on the portrayal of gambling as a quick route to wealth and success. Gambling, especially online sports betting and casino games, has become increasingly popular in Nigeria, partly driven by aggressive marketing strategies by betting companies. This research focuses on Lagos State, Nigeria's economic and cultural hub, where youth are more likely to be exposed to such advertisements. Through core qualitative methodologies involving 66 respondents, the study conducted 40 In-Depth interviews, 5 Key Informant Interviews and 3 Focus Group Discussions, which were analysed through qualitative thematic content analysis; the study investigates how gambling adverts influence young Nigerians' perceptions of wealth, success, and their engagement with gambling. The findings reveal that gambling advertisements exploit the economic vulnerabilities of youth, promoting unrealistic expectations of financial success, which often leads to risky gambling behaviour, financial instability, addiction, and depression. The study calls for stronger regulatory frameworks, media literacy programs, and social interventions to protect Nigerian youth from the harmful effects of deceptive gambling advertisements.

Keywords: Gambling Adverts, Gambling, Deception, Addiction.

Introduction

The phenomenon of gambling among young people has escalated significantly and continues to captivate the interest of a worldwide audience (Akanle and Fageyinbo, 2016; Owonikoko, 2020). Throughout history, gambling has functioned as a cultural element within society, encompassing verbal bets associated with traditional games. As technology continues to evolve, gambling advertisements have successfully penetrated even the most developed nations, often going unnoticed, and this trend is even more pronounced in developing countries. In Nigeria, despite the regulation of gambling and related activities, numerous loopholes persist. This is evident in the presence of both branded and unbranded billboards, prominently displayed opposite schools, universities, and colleges, as well as in high-traffic areas of densely populated streets. Another is the regulators' non-observance of the acceptable betting age.

According to Rickwood, Blaszczynski, Delfabbro, Dowling & Katharine (2010), gambling is an act of investing money or other resources into a venture. It entails investing capital, managing equipment, operating slot machines, facilitating betting games, or engaging in other enterprises where individuals wager to gain monetary or material rewards. The significant expansion of gambling has been observed not just in Nigeria but globally. Gambling, often described as wagering, entails risking an item of value, like money, on an event determined by chance. Gambling has existed for an extended period, evolving through various forms in society, from individual betting to large-scale lotteries. According to Tade, Chinedu and George (2023), gambling has the potential to lead to addiction. For instance, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual Fifth Edition (DSM-5) categorises gambling disorder (GD) as an addiction characterised by enduring problematic gambling behaviour that results in clinically significant distress and functional impairment (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). The persistence of sports betting behaviour is further reinforced by cognitive biases, such as the illusion of control, which diminishes risk perception and greatly influences gambling behaviour (Valenciano-Mendoza et al., 2023). Hence, when an individual achieves victory, it can enhance the allure of gambling and the anticipation of future success. Nevertheless, losses outweigh victories, ultimately leading to significant poverty, bankruptcy, health issues, family disintegration, psychological distress, and adverse social perceptions. The experience of stigmatisation creates significant discomfort for the individual affected. A significant number of individuals have considered gambling as a potential means to generate income that could alter their life circumstances or a quick way to wealth.

Gambling has a long history in Nigeria, yet it was traditionally perceived as an antisocial behaviour (Akanle and Fageyinbo, 2016). The church actively opposed it, cautioning against the pursuit of rapid financial gain and quick wealth (Pieri et al., 2014). In the late 1990s, Chapter 22, section 236 of the Criminal Code Act saw the Nigerian government legalising specific forms of gambling as a strategy to generate tax revenues

(Law of Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). This has contributed to a greater acceptance of gambling among the public, particularly among younger individuals (Aguocha, Durum, Newton, Amado, Loose, 2018)

Over the past decade, gambling, especially online sports betting, has emerged as a thriving sector in Nigeria. This expansion is primarily driven by the widespread adoption of smartphones, enhanced internet accessibility, and the rising popularity of sports betting platforms. With the expansion of the gambling business, its marketing efforts also proliferate, especially through advertising that frequently portrays gambling as a fast and effortless means to acquire cash and attain success. This narrative is particularly impactful among Nigeria's youth, a generation that is highly impressionable, susceptible to peer pressure, and frequently seeking economic prospects in a nation grappling with elevated unemployment rates and economic instability, particularly those living in urban centres like Lagos.

Lagos, as Nigeria's largest city and economic powerhouse, represents a unique social and cultural context in which youth are increasingly drawn to the promises of quick wealth offered by gambling. Although official statistics on the number of bettors in Nigeria are lacking, media reports suggest that 60 million individuals aged 18–40 are actively participating in sports betting, with an estimated daily expenditure of N 1.8 billion (Vanguard Newspaper, 2022). Thus, a significant number of individuals have considered gambling as a potential means to generate income that could alter their life circumstances. The billboard, television and digital advertisements on smartphones, lifestyle choices, celebrity branding and endorsement, and various other elements have contributed to the allure of the gambling system, particularly appealing to the younger populations. These advertisements frequently overlook the potential dangers associated with gambling, including financial instability, addiction, and adverse effects on mental health. Instead, they highlight the exhilaration of victory and winning, the allure of immediate riches, and the chance to break free from financial struggles, which are deceptive and unrealistic portrayals of the gambling experience. Consequently, young individuals in Nigeria, especially in Lagos, where exposure to these advertisements is higher, are increasingly participating in gambling, frequently without a comprehensive understanding of the implications.

These advertisements often promise immense financial rewards, portraying gambling as an easy, risk-free means to escape poverty and achieve success. Hence, this article attempts to unravel how gambling advertisements targeting Nigerian youth are highly deceptive, particularly in Lagos State. This research aims to investigate the misleading characteristics of gambling advertisements and their impact on wealth expectations, as well as their role in promoting risky gambling behaviours among young people in Lagos metropolis.

Review of Related Literature

Gambling is becoming a worldwide occurrence, criticised by some as being exploitative, while others perceive it as a form of entertainment (Lindridge, Beatty & Northington, 2018). Problem gambling (PG) is acknowledged in numerous nations as a significant public health concern that requires attention through the regulation of the gambling market and its implementation.

People engage in gambling for various reasons. The factors encompass ego, recreation and relaxation, resource accumulation, and therapeutic purposes, including adherence to group norms to avoid sanctions or the demonstration of addiction. Gambling has emerged as a significant global industry, leading to its taxation and regulation as a legitimate business (see Requirement of Online Sports Betting in Lagos 2015; National Sport Policy of Nigeria, 2009). For example, Statista (2015) indicates that accurately estimating the total value of global sports betting is challenging due to inconsistencies and financial regulations. However, historical evidence indicates that the practice of wagering on spectator sports has persisted since their inception. The initial documented occurrence of this transpired in Ancient Greece when bettors conjectured the results of the Olympic Games. Since then, the sports betting business has had numerous transformations and expanded into an industry with a market value exceeding 70 billion US dollars in 2024 (Statista, 2025). The emergence of internet sports betting has significantly enhanced accessibility to sportsbooks, simultaneously increasing the potential risks related to compulsive gambling. In 2021, online sports betting surpassed in-person sports betting in market size, comprising approximately 60 per cent of total industry income in 2024, with projections indicating growth to over 50 billion US dollars by 2029 (Statista, 2025). Certain bookmakers estimate that the value of sports betting has surpassed one trillion US dollars (PR Newswire, 2014)

Consequently, Akanle and Fageyinbo (2015) argued that sports gambling and football betting are significant economic and social activities in Western history. Yet, their global transnational impact, driven by capitalism, leads to the expansion of profits in new regions and the reinforcement of established ones through unconventional methods such as football. Football betting is rapidly emerging as a prevalent domain for resource exchange within the framework of capitalism in many nations where it is practised.

A report by Geo-poll (2019) highlights that approximately 50% of low-income gambling consumers fall within the 18-25 age range across various age groups. The report suggests that the youth are probably the most engaged, considering their strong connection to mobile phones, sports, and the prevailing unemployment rates. Consistent media advertising persuasive techniques serve as a continual reminder that betting is a tangible activity, with the potential for anyone to win millions of shillings by investing as little as twenty shillings. Furthermore, hybrid advertising

formats possess distinct characteristics, including advertising content, which encompasses persuasive and commercial messages and sometimes celebrity branding and endorsement. These messages are frequently interwoven with non-promotional media content, such as entertainment and information, in a more or less integrated manner (Hellemans, Lievens and Valcke, 2015)

The interrelationship between commercial and editorial content may exert a considerable societal influence. Firstly, consumers cannot disregard the commercial message due to its intrinsic association with the informational component (Hellemans, Lievens & Valcke, 2015). According to Hellman, Örnberg & Livingstone (2017), levels of harm correlate not only with the degree of regulation but also tend to fluctuate based on the underlying logic of the systemic equilibrium between stakeholder revenues and gambling-related societal costs. Although the nature of gambling practices is debated, substantial evidence indicates that gambling can escalate into a severe disorder, resulting in various adverse effects for individuals, communities, and societies.

Agnihotri, Bhattacharya, and Prasad (2018) conducted a study to investigate the impact of several brand celebrity endorsement tactics on corporate performance and the various features of celebrities related to corporate performance. The research examined the influence of celebrity reputation and familiarity, alongside social media as a promotional platform, on the economic efficacy of various business endorsement techniques. The results demonstrated that an increase in the percentage of a company's brands backed by celebrities corresponded with a rise in the firm's market valuation. Furthermore, several brand endorsements elevated the market value of Indian companies. The research also analysed specific characteristics related to celebrity endorsers that affect the market valuation of companies. One study indicated that an enhancement in celebrity repute corresponded with an increase in the firm's market value (Odour, 2024).

Kunkel, Walker, and Hodge (2019) examined the impact of advertising appeals on consumer perceptions of the brand image associated with athlete endorsers. They employed MANOVAs with post hoc analyses and regression analysis to determine the differences across advertisement appeals and to investigate the impact of consumer sentiments towards the commercial on the views of the athletic endorser. The study revealed that prevalent advertising appeals might affect consumer views of athlete endorsers. The impressions of the athlete endorser were affected by the style of advertising appeal employed. The study additionally revealed that snowball effects occurred from the advertisement appeal to the athlete endorser and that pre-existing attitudes towards both the advertisement and the athlete endorser influenced respondents' evaluations of the athlete endorser in certain cases. Moreover, the attitude towards the advertising affected views of the athlete's likability and trustworthiness across all four appeals, whereas the pre-existing attitude towards the athlete endorser influenced perceptions of competence in the informative and warm appeals.

Uzobo et al. (2023) indicate that stress associated with gambling frequently results in depression, anxiety, impulsivity, and suicidal tendencies, particularly when debts escalate to severe levels (see also Oduor, 2024; van Schalkwyk, 2020; Shand, 2019; Welte et al. 2011; Delfabbro et al., 2005; Derevensky et al., 2003; Delfabbro & Thrupp 2003; Derevensky & Gupta, 2000; Volberg 1999; Moore & Ohtsuka 1997; Shaffer et al. 1999; Ladouceur et al., 1994; Lesieur & Klein 1999; Zinberg, Shaffer 1999).

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design to comprehensively understand the impact of gambling advertisements on Nigerian youth. The research combines 40 Key Informants Interviews (KII), 5 In-depth Interviews (IDI) and 3 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs- with 7 persons in each) methods to gather data on the perceptions, behaviours, and experiences of young Nigerians with regard to gambling advertisements in Lagos State.

Lagos was chosen for this study due to the fact that it is the headquarters of all betting companies in Nigeria, as well as having the highest prevalence of sports bettors and betting establishments in the country. Lagos also features an abundance of betting billboard advertisements aimed at attracting young bettors. The study employed a non-probability sampling method, utilising snowballing and accidental procedures to pick participants. The sampling was purposeful, as the researcher specifically sought bettors and interviewed only those who consented to participate in the study. Hence, majority of participants were approached in betting shops and centres.

Hence, the target population for this study consists of Nigerian youth aged 18-35 who are active Internet users and are regularly exposed to gambling advertisements. The study is situated in Lagos State, Nigeria, where the concentration of youth and exposure to media, especially digital platforms, is currently the highest (Ogedengbe & Oyeleye, 2021). In all, the study conducted 5 KIIs with owners of betting and game centres, 40 IDIs and 3 FGDs.

Consequently, 66 Youths, including 8 females, aged 18-35, were selected through snowballing and accidental sampling from various purposively selected neighbourhoods and betting centres in Ikeja, Surulere, Amukoko, Ijora, Lekki, Yaba and Victoria Island (all in Lagos State). The majority of the streets and corners in the selected areas are dotted with several betting shops and centres. It should be noted that the dearth of female bettors is due to the difficulties in accessing female bettors and their unwillingness to participate in the study as respondents. These individuals were selected based on their engagement with gambling platforms or their exposure to gambling advertisements on social media and billboards to provide detailed insights into their gambling behaviour and attitudes towards advertisements. The data gathered was content analysed to identify

recurring themes and deceptive and manipulative tactics used in the ads. This included the analysis of advertisements on television, social media platforms, and billboards, as well as how gambling is framed as a pathway to instant wealth and the psychological appeals used to target youth in Lagos State.

Theory

This research is based on Audience Reception Theory. Formulated by Stuart Hall, the theory asserts that audiences interpret messages variably, resulting in oppositional, dominant or negotiated readings. This indicates that targeted audience members may understand the text according to the advert producer's intended meaning (dominant reading), in contrast to it, or in a negotiated manner, accepting certain aspects while rejecting others. The audience reception theory analyses how audiences receive and interpret media texts, including numerous influencing elements such as culture, gender, age, beliefs and life experiences (Chukwuemeka, 2024).

Chukwuemeka et al. (2024) argued that media audiences are not passive recipients but actively interact with media texts, understanding them according to their individual experiences, views, and values. The theory posits further that individuals actively construct meaning from bets and gambling adverts rather than passively absorbing the communicated messages. It asserts that audience members actively interact with bet commercials on billboards, television, pop up on social media, as well as during live matches, interpreting the content of the text of their adverts through their individual perspectives. Hence, many youths connect the commercials to their personal experiences with gambling, cultural heritage, or societal conventions concerning gambling behaviours. The deception of becoming rich through betting is being derived from personal significance from the commercials. This interpretation can be affected by factors including individual attitudes towards gambling and exposure to gambling-related adverts that promise immediate wealth or easy access to money.

This theory offers a framework for comprehending how individuals interact with and interpret media messages, such as betting adverts and commercials, and how these interpretations can influence attitudes and behaviours associated with gambling.

Findings and Discussion

Gambling Advertisements and Deceptive Messaging

The examination of gambling history in Lagos shows that football betting is effectively capitalised on the established socio-cultural history of gambling in Lagos State, particularly in its notorious areas like Amukoko and Ijora Badia, where all nooks and crannies are dotted with different betting shops. While influenced by a distinct social dynamic characterised

by strong engagement – the fandom of football clubs – various forms of gambling such as pool, lottery, Baba Ijebu, card games, dice rolling, snooker bet, table tennis betting, and sometimes WHOT betting were already established prior to the rise and dominance of football betting. Additionally, many individuals who now participate in football betting had previously taken part in these gambling activities; however, these previous betting schemes had no social media influence. It is important to recognise that numerous individuals engaging in football betting lacked prior gambling experience and were primarily drawn to this activity as a means of expressing their fandom for football clubs. Over the past decades, the rise of extensive football enthusiasm in Lagos has occurred, and the momentum is becoming increasingly clear and established. Cueing behind this, a 32-year-old Male Igbo trader, who also owns a betting shop, narrated in an interview that:

"While football betting originated in the Western world, and it is a common activity among football enthusiasts globally. In contemporary times, individuals in Nigeria engage in betting with fervour, often transforming it into a commercial endeavour. We all know that pool existed prior to the emergence of football betting in Lagos. The introduction of football betting in "Lag" (the short form of Lagos) was driven by the recognition of the sport's growing popularity and social engagement among diverse communities, including those in ghetto and rural areas, as well as the evident passion people have for the game.

He further argued that:

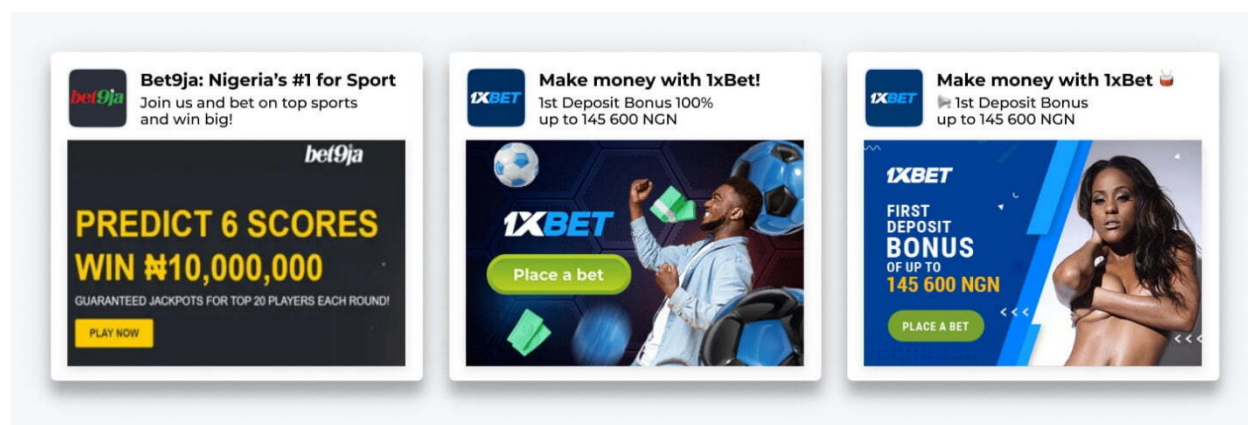
The primary factors that attract young men into gambling and sports betting specifically are the financial implications and the prevailing poverty conditions in the country. Individuals seek to improve their lives and generate income through betting. Some people even go as far as selling their property just to play this bet. The reason individuals engage more in football betting compared to other betting forms is that they possess a deeper understanding of football, particularly regarding the clubs they may be supporting at that particular time and always feel that they can predict the outcomes of football with greater accuracy than any other form of betting."

The above assertions slightly correlate with Gbemi, Bombo & Ekpeyong's (2020) findings that a significant percentage of young individuals primarily relinquish profitable jobs to focus their efforts on betting, effectively transforming it into a full-time occupation.

The swift expansion of internet accessibility and the continuous stream of information it facilitates have revolutionised the advertising industry. In today's digital landscape, navigating the web without encountering online bet advertising has become quite challenging. This advertising frequently manifests as visual display ads on various websites, including pop-ups and pop-downs, as well as textual ads on search engines. It is clear that online betting adverts have significantly shifted business away from conventional advertising methods like newspapers, mail, and broadcast media to smartphones and other digital gadgets. Online advertisements can exhibit significant diversity in their visual presentation. The most straightforward advertisements consist of text that is completely characterised by a sequence of words, the colour and size of the characters, and the measurements of the bounding text box of the advertisement. These advertisements provide merely the fundamental level of interactivity. The viewer has the option to click on the advertisement, which will direct them to the bet advertiser's website or, more precisely, the advertisement's landing page.

According to Odunola and Adewuyi (2021), recent technological developments in mobile banking payment systems and fintech have enabled sports betting companies to broaden their audience, often streamlining the betting process and account funding to a straightforward text message. The convenience and ease provided by these fintech and betting companies enable players to effortlessly place stakes on games and verify their winnings online; this has been facilitated by advancements and the utilisation of the internet.

In an actual sense, advertising is designed to inform consumers about the value of products. Deception, on the other hand, encourages product sales because of the ability to "fool" consumers into wanting to try the product. Deceptive advertising is not only wrong but also risky as it generates negative word-of-mouth and could damage the reputation of the company and its products. The most important skill a marketer can learn is manipulation (Ku & Chen, 2020). Manipulation is the holy grail in sales and marketing. It can be constructive or destructive. Manipulation can be either passive or active. The passive form may take the form of omitting important information. The active form is to include false statements, but the omission of important information is the most used form of deception in advertising. For example, in gambling advertisements, there is often a specific account of a significant winner; however, the promotion fails to clarify that this depiction does not represent the average outcome for users of the service.

Figure 1: Gambling Advert

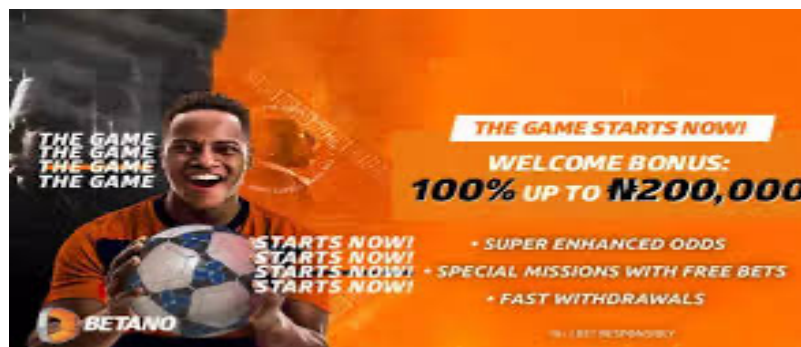
Source: Hubkina (2025)

Figure 2: Cross-section of Youth engaging in Sports betting in a Betting Centre

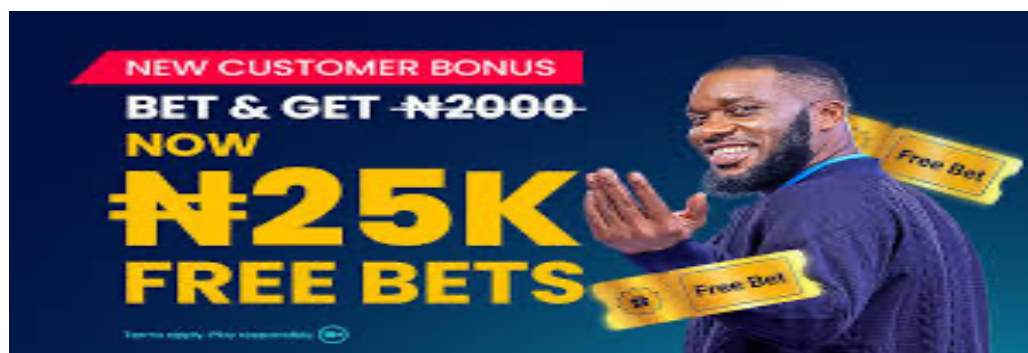
Source: Elenaya (2023)

The investigation of gambling advertisements uncovers a recurring trend of misleading communication and deceptive messaging. Gambling advertisements frequently depict gambling as a thrilling and safe endeavour that guarantees immediate riches. The portrayal of young men and women in these advertisements effortlessly winning substantial amounts of money perpetuates the misconception that gambling offers an easy solution to financial difficulties.

A considerable number of the advertisements neglect to address the substantial risks associated, including the possibility of addiction and severe financial loss. In the case of sports gambling advertising in Nigeria, the same advertising tries to deceive the users to promote a service. The way in which the brand presents itself, and the role it seeks to play in people's lives using advertising is an important influence on the profile it assumes within society. The profiles may be both real and intended. The real profile relates to the brand positioning it has achieved historically in the market. A brand may have obtained numerous associations and legalities through the activities that have linked it, perhaps unwittingly, with a particular target market in a specific way.

Figure 3: Betting advert for Bettano

Source: Nassone (2023)

Figure 4: Betting advert for Betking

Source: Nassone (2023)

Just as revealed in Figures 1 and 3 above, where customers are promised a refund of 100% on the first deposit into their betting account, this is to lure young adults into the betting scheme, making them feel that they have the opportunity to win even before they stake or risk their money. This is regarded as testimonial advertising. The concept of testimonial advertising often revolves around the idea that a potential consumer can be positively swayed to try a product when it receives commendation from another consumer or a recognised figure that the consumer aspires to imitate. This somewhat encourages consumers to buy a product or service without reconsideration. The bandwagon effect represents a thoroughly studied manifestation of collective thinking. This falls within the opinion of a 19-year-old young bettor, who is currently a student at the Department of Sociology, Lagos State University, Ojo, narrated in one of the FGDs:

"Most of us who participate in sports betting do that because of the promise of huge returns when we stake our money. Some even open different betting accounts so as to benefit from the bonuses which are given to new accounts. In my case, I opened one with my phone number and got a 200%

refund bonus for new accounts; after that, I opened another account with my mother's phone number without her consent. However, I thought I would be able to withdraw the money immediately. I wasn't aware that the bonus can only be used to play bets on the bet apps and platform. Sometimes, the betting company emphasises time-sensitive offers, like bonuses or complimentary or free bets, to foster a sense of urgency and enthusiasm. These are done to lure punters and new customers, especially young people, to participate, especially during the weekend. Other times, they coordinate their adverts and campaigns with significant sporting events to leverage increased enthusiasm for betting, with well-defined and appealing offers that have the potential to greatly enhance more betters".

In the same token, the appeal to the quest for and control of the bettor's mind was another deceptive technique utilised by the advertisers in "mindful" or subsurface psychological tactics. This strategy moved from portraying various types of illusions, including mental illusions, in the minds of the young punters who engage in betting. This includes the betting company's strategies to psychologically manipulate the minds of young adults into engaging and pursuing gambling as a career path, which can make them sudden millionaires if they engage in betting or patronising them. They are able to achieve this by reducing the weight of risk, stress factors, and the need for financial transparency, such as taxes and tithing, completely ignoring the fact that such efforts are fraught with a correlated risk index of 100/100. If this is not deception and mind control, then what is it?

Figure 5: Bet Adverts Showing How Millions Could Be Won Easily



Source: Nassone (2023)

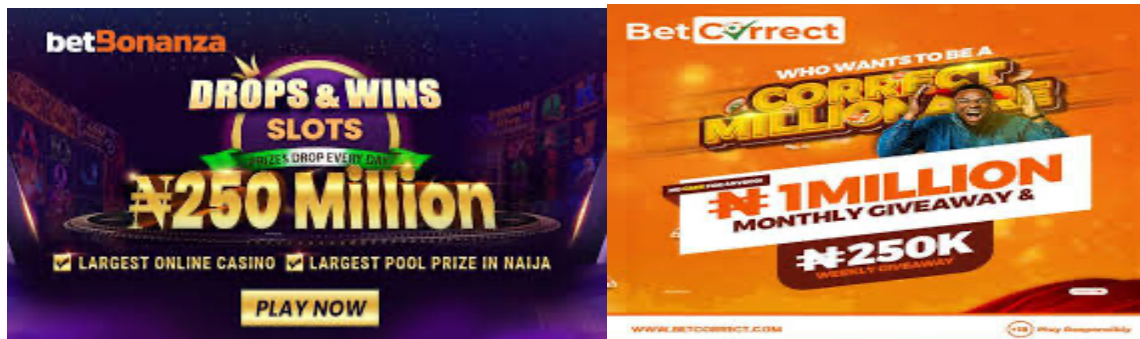
Furthermore, the rationale provided by the participants during the FGDs emerged in three distinct categories: winning, belief, and persuasiveness. The participants contended that the individuals featured on social media adverts and television as winners influenced them to engage in betting with the hope of achieving similar success and becoming millionaires overnight. There were prevailing notions that testimonials in advertising led individuals to perceive betting as genuine, consequently prompting their participation in it.

The other reason was the compelling nature of advertisements. The individuals who succeeded or who win big amounts in bets are made to present the winning process as straightforward, although in reality, it was quite complex" Just as shown in the "betPawa" advert above, where Utibe Amos revealed that he had won a huge One Million and Eight Hundred thousand Naira, from a meagre 100 naira bet, many testimonial advertisements were characterised as convincing and had the potential to draw youths into compulsive betting behaviours. "Testimonials provide encouragement to individuals considering a wager." "It also provides encouragement to individuals who have yet to achieve a victory in their bets," stated a respondent in one of the FGDs. These findings align with the work of Akpan, Nda & Nketa (2015), which indicated that testimonial advertising effectively influences prospective customers to try a product when it has received positive feedback from another consumer. The reasoning behind testimonials is that when an individual claims to have used a product and expresses satisfaction with it, another person may be inclined to consider trying the product themselves (Oduor, 2024). He posits further that testimonial advertising, just as revealed in figure 5, aims to positively influence potential consumers to try a product when it is endorsed by another consumer or a recognised figure whom they aspire to emulate. This, to some extent, compels people to acquire a product or service without further consideration. The bandwagon effect is a recognised manifestation of groupthink in behavioural research. The prevailing principle is that behaviours or ideologies disseminate among individuals, as fads and trends promote personal adoption (Maxwell, 2014).

Lastly, according to Oduor (2024), the prospect of becoming a millionaire has always been seen as an enticing factor that attracted university students to sports betting. Data from the interview also revealed that each youth who participated in sports betting aspired to achieve millionaire status. The wording and intentions of the betting company through their adverts, conveyed through social media and billboards, suggested that achieving millionaire status was an exceedingly straightforward endeavour. With illustrations on billboards and pop-up ads on smartphones such as '#10 Million Naira could be Won', "Who wants to be a Correct Millionaire", and "One million naira Monthly giveaway". Hence, the young people in Lagos get engrossed in these easy manipulations and deceptive ads and continue to engage in sports betting, exhibiting a strong commitment to achieving the ads-promising millionaire status.

However, over time, securing a modest win appeared to instil a belief that a larger victory was within reach.

Figure 6: Bet adverts showing how millions could be won easily



Source: Nassone (2023)

Achieving victory was an additional attraction. The individuals who participated in the interviews aimed to win their wager when they placed a bet. The advertisers consistently emphasised that 'the more they played, the greater their chances of winning', leading many to continue engaging in sports betting with the hope of achieving a win someday.

While sports betting has continued to serve as a lucrative venture for operators and betting companies both in Lagos metropolis and around the world, the increase in betting activity leads to greater profits and surplus values for sports betting companies. In contrast, the opposite effect is observed for the bettors and social systems, reflecting the enduring characteristics of capitalist dynamics over time. Based on the analysis of the data presented and the conclusions drawn, it appears sustainable; the prominence of football betting and its consequences will likely persist over time, barring any unforeseen events that can occasionally occur in social contexts, such as the outright banning of sports betting or rigid restructuring of the lottery regulatory act with strict compliance.

Psychological Impact of Gambling Advertisements

It is clear that gambling advertisements have a significant psychological influence on young people in Nigeria. When they watched the advertisements, many respondents confessed that they had an emotional connection to them and frequently experienced excitement and anticipation of being a winner or of winning their next bet. This emotional appeal is a significant strategy that is utilised in marketing for sports gambling because it appeals to the need for rapid pleasure, success and instant wealth. A substantial number of those who were interviewed stated that advertisements for gambling made them feel hopeful and driven to try their luck, even though they were aware of the risks of losing their wager involved.

Many of the youths who participate in sports gambling suffer from addiction to gambling (Eboh, 2015). According to Orford et.al (2009), Gambling is addictive and, if left unchecked, may result in significant health issues. Such measures prompted discussions regarding the reasons individuals may suffer from gambling-related harm, which primarily centred on whether the "fault" resides in the individual (i.e., personal traits such as impulsivity), the product (distinct characteristics of gambling activities due to the manipulative ads), or the environment (opportunities for gambling, accessibility of gambling, promotion of gambling products).

Respondents in the FGDs shared accounts of situations where they experienced financial losses from sports betting, minimal or no winning at all, yet found themselves unable to cease the gambling activity, reflecting a pattern similar to addiction. Their accounts indicate that they encountered minimal success, yet they could not abandon betting. The participants provided detailed descriptions of their personal experiences with sports betting, and these experiences were evident in each of their accounts. Here are some illustrative examples drawn from their own narratives:

"...you see, the most devastating part is that I keep losing and bets over and over again, but you can't stop playing.... I don't even know if I have been jinxed with sports bets; you see, I lose and play and continue to play, which is bad for me. I think It has become an addiction because I sometimes get thrilled the moment I see any advert showing that someone just won money," said Participant 52 Male, 27 years old.

"...I wish I had never started this sports betting at all because it is not as if I am winning a lot of money," said Participant 4, a 28-year-old female.

"... it's a terrible thing, you can't win, but you cannot cease playing. You continue to be in a loop of endless hope of winning a million one day," said Participant 6, a 32-year-old male motor mechanic.

"...if I'm being completely honest, I literally cannot recall the last time I have even won a bet, but as you can see, I continue to engage in sports betting", said participant 3, a 25-year-old male bus conductor.

"... sports betting is seriously eating my money, and I know I need help on how to stop but don't even know how to stop," said Participant 19, 20 Years old male barber

In the same vein, other respondents also revealed the following:

"...the thing eats money, and if I tell you how much money I have spent on this sports betting without any significant return or profit, you will ask me why I am still playing the game. Many times, my wife has even abused and threatened to abandon or divorce me based on this issue of football betting," said Participant 61, 29 Years old male raw food seller.

..."this thing called gambling is bad because you will be losing at the same time that you are betting more money," said Participant 21, a 27-year-old Female motor park attendant.

I began gambling more than 10 years ago. It is my intention to continue. Since the funds are no longer available, I had to cut back on my staking power. I mostly stake online, so most folks have no idea that I'm a gambler. Playing live matches is how I attempt to control the odds. You bet it everything, no matter how little. You have a chance to win, but we usually end up losing too. You are not guaranteed a victory in every wager, said Participant 29. 34-year-old male secondary school teacher.

The narrative evidence presented above suggests that many of the youths in Lagos who engage in sports betting were in a state of being unable to cease betting on sports due to the fact that they have become addicted to sports betting, despite the fact that they are unable to win their bets or recover the resources they have invested into bets.

While gambling could be a satisfying form of recreation, excessive gambling could lead to serious negative consequences. Several Studies have shown that gambling is a controlled and enjoyable leisure activity for most youths (Shand, 2019; Gupta & Derevensky, 2000). However, several young adults have also developed an uncontrolled and desperate desire to chase their financial losses, which has leading to depression. Respondents from this study described their experiences with sports betting as being characterised by overwhelming negative feelings, including irritability, wrath, and melancholy. Respondents narratives include:

"The experience of losing a bet is distressing because I am hopeful of victory and winning; however, when the outcome is unfavourable, I consistently feel sadness and anger towards those around me; my younger brother, who leaves with me, does not always want to be around me whenever I lose a bet", said participant 29, 27 years old male trader.

"Once it is cut, I will be extremely disorganised because I occasionally wager substantial amounts", stated participant 33, 29 years old unemployed male.

"Everybody knows me when it comes to my losing bets; if my game is interrupted (lost), I do not wish to listen to anyone, even in my workplace. I just want to be left alone without any interference", said participant 15, 33-year-old Civil servant.

"I consistently experience anger whenever I lose my wagers, and this happens a lot", said participant 38, 26-old-male generator engineer.

...if I lose, I will simply feel anger and distress", said participant 64, 30-year-old Female Hairdresser.

"I dislike myself when I lose bets, as it is visibly apparent on my face, making me feel friendless during those ugly moments, said Participant 44. 24-year-old Male student at the University of Lagos.

"As you know, If one game is eliminated, then everything is concluded, and you will inevitably find yourself in pain and hidden tears, most time you can't even tell those who are close to you why u feel rejected, my 'broda'; it's a feeling you don't even want to let it happen; however, it happens almost every day, and we move," said Participant 9, 19-years-old Male electrician apprentice.

'for me, I will not heed any advice when my bet slip has resulted in a loss," said Participant 31, a 26-year-old male private security guard.

The narratives above reveal that experiences with sports betting were regretfully characterised by negative emotions, as most of their gambling endeavours resulted in losses, eliciting sentiments of wrath, grief, and other adverse emotions.

From a public health standpoint, gambling advertising is regarded as a societal risk factor that promotes gambling participation (Shaffer, LaBrie, & Laplante, 2004), with increased exposure potentially placing a larger segment of the population at risk for problem gambling (Shaffer et al., 2004). Although the difficulties in quantifying the effects of a particular advertising campaign on gambling behaviour have been recognised, Shaffer et al. (2004) contended that heightened advertising or general exposure would incite renewed interest in gaming and elevate overall involvement. Consequently, an escalation in advertising within an underdeveloped

market is more probable to result in heightened gambling participation; however, this effect is likely to be tempered by the Social Adaptation Model (Shaffer et al., 2004), which posits that social adaptation will transpire as individuals encounter adverse consequences linked to gambling, leading participation to revert to pre-exposure levels (Binde, 2014; Shaffer et al., 2004).

Recommendations

To mitigate the detrimental impacts of sports betting, it is imperative to enforce more stringent laws and promote cooperative initiatives among betting industry stakeholders. The National Lottery Regulatory Commission must enhance its outreach to the betting public. This betting education must be conducted alongside its fundamental purpose of safeguarding the interests of players, stakeholders, and the public in the national lottery. This can be accomplished by regulatory, instructional, and support measures that encourage responsible gambling behaviours and mitigate adverse effects, especially among the youths who are at-risk populations. Considering the significant influence of the bandwagon method in advertising, the study proposes the implementation of comprehensive sensitisation programmes in Universities and secondary schools regarding the techniques employed by advertisers to mitigate students' susceptibility to addictive sports betting.

Furthermore, the promotion of sports betting during live sporting events and television programmes should be strictly controlled and censored, governed by the Nigeria Broadcasting Commission (NBC) and the Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria (ARCON) to preserve the integrity of sports and athletic competitions. Also, public awareness efforts by the Nigerian Orientation Agency (NOA) aimed at youngsters, parents, and educators are essential, highlighting responsible gambling habits and the associated hazards of sports betting. Furthermore, the National Lottery Regulatory Commission (NLRC), as well as the Lagos State Lotteries and Gaming Authority (LSLGA) must ensure strict regulations of limiting the proximity of betting adverts on billboards, betting shops and centres to educational institutions, thereby reducing young people's exposure to sports betting advertisements. Ultimately, sports betting firms, including Bet9ja, Betano, 1Xbet, Betking, 9jabet, naira bet, winners bet and others, must allocate resources towards public education and the proficient management of gambling-related issues to foster responsible gambling behaviour in the country.

It is further recommended that the state government collaborate with social psychologists and counsellors from the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital in the state to develop counselling programs aimed at young gamblers. This will prevent future juvenile engagement in chronic gambling activities and cognitively rehabilitate those already affected by problem gambling.

Conclusions

Gambling commercials aimed at Nigerian youth, especially in Lagos State, are misleading and predatory. These advertisements distort young individuals' notions of affluence, achievement, and the simplicity of attaining financial status via gaming. It is so apparent that while sports betting may be motivated by the anticipated earnings that the youths foresee due to the manipulative and deceptive adverts, which promised easy and huge, even with little wager, there are adverse repercussions when the predicted gains are not realised by them. The findings of the study indicate that gambling advertisements not only promote engagement in gambling but also facilitate the normalisation of hazardous behaviours, such as financial instability, loss of investment as well as anger, addiction and depression.

To alleviate the detrimental impacts of these betting promotions, the Nigeria Lottery Regulatory Commission must enact and enforce more stringent regulations on gambling advertising. In this regard, stakeholders in the sports sector should organise appropriate orientation for the youth regarding betting. Comprehensive media literacy programs are necessary to educate youth about the perils of gambling. Social media sites and influencers should be held responsible for their involvement in promoting gambling, and more stringent regulations ought to be implemented.

Statement of Competing Interest

None declared

Ethics approval

The Study was approved by the Faculty of Liberal Studies Ethics Review Committee of the Osun State University, Nigeria, with approval code FLSERC/2025/002 on 01/02/2025.

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Research Promotion

This study critically analyses the misleading nature of gambling advertisements aimed at young people in Lagos, Nigeria. The findings indicate that gambling ads take advantage of the economic vulnerabilities of young individuals, fostering exaggerated expectations of financial success, which result to financial instability, addiction, and despair.

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