

Perception and Exposure of Bet9ja Online Gambling Advertisement Among Nnamdi Azikiwe University Undergraduates

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Abstract

Online gambling has become exponentially popular with the explosion of Internet access over the last two decades (Krogulecki, 2017). Sites for legal gambling have been established and the Internet has made gambling accessible to almost everyone, which also have high impacts on the youth. Survey method was adopted to explore the perceptions and exposure of Bet9ja online gambling advertisement among Nnamdi Azikiwe University undergraduates. Anchored on audience perception theory, copies of questionnaires were used to collect data from the respondents who were 396 from a population of 40,010 full-time undergraduates. The multistage sampling technique was used to select respondents and administer questionnaires for the research. Data was analyzed quantitatively and findings revealed a complex scenario where exposure patterns vary among respondents. Findings underscore the importance of tailoring messages to align with the diverse expectations and preferences of the audience. The study recommends among others that advertisers should tailor their strategies to the preferred mediums of the target audience, with a particular emphasis on social media. The study also recommends that there is need for public health awareness programs targeting university students.

KEYWORDS: Advertisement, BET9JA, Gambling, Perception, social media

Introduction

The phenomenon of gambling is not new (Raspor, Bulatovic, Stranjancevic, & Lucmanovic, 2019). The proliferation of online gambling platforms has become a ubiquitous feature in contemporary times, captivating the attention of diverse audiences, including university students. The gambling industry has changed dramatically in the last few years because of technology, making it easier to access a wide range of betting platforms. Commercial gambling has grown rapidly throughout the world (Badji, Black & Johnston, 2023). Gambling is a form of behaviour that has been identified to have serious consequences on gambler's health, study habit, academic performance and has been reported to be related with some criminal behaviour (Bankole, 2019).

Gambling participation rates vary significantly according to age and gender. While researchers have demonstrated that young men are increasingly engaged in online gambling (Hing, 2021), Younger women's engagement with gambling has changed over recent decades due to a range of socio-cultural, environmental and commercial factors (Simone, 2022). This study therefore takes a look at perception and exposure of undergraduate students to online bet9ja gambling advertisement.

Statement of Research Problem

The impact of the extensive availability, advertising, and legalizing of gambling has been identified as an important public health and addiction concern. (Shaffer and Korn, 2022). Among youths and adults, the prevalence of disordered gambling has increased significantly.

The evidence of high rates of gambling and associated problems amongst youth indicates that the issue of youth gambling must be addressed to minimize harm (Sambo, 2018). Utilizing Bet9ja as a case study, this research aims to investigate various aspects among Nnamdi Azikiwe University undergraduates. Specifically, the study seeks to determine the extent of exposure to gambling advertisements, identify the mediums through which students are exposed to these advertisements, understand the perceptions of gambling advertisements among the undergraduates, and explore the extent of engagement in gambling behaviors as influenced by exposure to these advertisements.

Objectives of the Study

Specific Objectives of the study are:

- To find out the level of exposure to Bet9ja gambling advertisement among Nnamdi Azikiwe University undergraduates.
- . To ascertain the medium of exposure to Bet9ja gambling advertisement among Nnamdi Azikiwe University undergraduates.
- To discover how the Nnamdi Azikiwe University undergraduates perceive the Bet9ja gambling advertisement.
- To explore the extent to which Nnamdi Azikiwe University undergraduates engage in gambling behaviour as a result of exposure to the advertisement.

Research Questions

- What is the level of exposure to Bet9ja gambling advertisement among Nnamdi Azikiwe University undergraduates?
- What are the medium of exposure to Bet9ja gambling advertisement among Nnamdi Azikiwe University undergraduates?
- How do Nnamdi Azikiwe University undergraduates perceive the Bet9ja gambling advertisement?
- To what extent do Nnamdi Azikiwe University Undergraduates engage in gambling behaviour because of exposure to the advertisement?

Literature Review

A Brief History of Advertising

. Research showed that the first steps of advertising were in Ancient Empires, for example, in Egypt they used papyrus in promoting slaves' sales and rewards. The concept of advertising grew rapidly because of industrialization and production of goods and services. Industries recruited workers for marketing purposes to influence the buying behavior of population on large scale (Fazal, Farwida, Rosman, Amran, Anwar & Fadillah, 2019)

Advertising in Nigeria is as old as the time people began to settle in the present-day Nigeria. It may not be as sophisticated as it is today as the technology and modernization were not there, hence, it was an archaic form of advertising which was largely non-formal (Keziah, 2018). Advertising grew from the era of just exposing the item at the market square popularly called 'the era of silent trade' to the period where various local means of advertising was used today, advertising in Nigeria has globalized with the use of the internet, mobile telephones and other forms of e-advertising (Keziah, 2018).

Advertising is classified into traditional and digital Advertising. Traditional advertising refers to marketing strategies that targets audience using offline materials, such as print, broadcast, direct mail, phone, and outdoor advertising like billboards (Kayla, 2019). According to Dowd (2020), Traditional Advertising is alive and well despite its stodgy old-school reputation with millennial and Generation Z. Examples of traditional advertising include media ads and outreach strategies such as trade shows that predate the Internet. Even in the digital age, young and old alike still watch TV commercials, listen to radio ads, browse catalogs and read mailers. Traditional advertising has long been conceived as a type of persuasive advertising aimed at changing the habits of individuals. However, advertising is a very dynamic field that will continue to evolve (Taylor and Carlson, 2021). Overtime, traditional advertising has proven to be tried and true, reaches local audience, high-quality perception and connect with niche audiences.

On the other hand, digital advertising encompasses online search advertising, social media advertising, native advertising, display advertising, and paid search advertising. Kristen (2021) defines digital advertising as more precise and flexible than traditional advertising, allowing for quick advertisement deployment and targeted audience reach based on interests, behaviors, and demographics. It includes email marketing, search engine marketing, social media marketing, display advertising, and mobile advertising, and is increasingly delivered via automated software systems known as programmatic advertising. According to Pahwa (2023), Digital advertising is the action of calling public attention to an offering through online and digital paid channels by an identified sponsor. Each type of advertising aims to promote brands, products, and services, and can influence target audience responses differently.

Gambling: A Conceptualization

Gambling is a worldwide game which people engage in to get rich quick. Even some already well to do in the society also get involved in gambling in order to get richer. Kerr and Richards (2020) defined gambling as a paid, owned, and earned mediated communication activated by an identifiable brand and intent on persuading the affective, or behaviour change, now or in the future.

Gambling is a major problem among Nigerian students that has been reported as predisposing young people towards various health-related problems such as depression and even psychoactive substance (Charles, 2020). Gambling among undergraduates is a growing concern, with either three out of four college students having gambled in the past year, legally or illegally (Osborne, 2023). According to studies on gambling, the prevalence of gambling problem among undergraduates is almost three times that of adults.

Effects of Gambling

Gambling has several negative effects, including financial problems, relationship difficulties, and emotional stress. According to Skywood Recovery (2023), approximately 10 million people in the United States live with a gambling addiction problem, which can lead to devastating consequences such as loss of jobs, failed relationships, and severe debt (Mayo Clinic, 2022). The Mayo Clinic notes that compulsive gambling can lead to risking or losing important relationships, a job, school or work opportunities. In addition to financial and relationship issues, gambling can also affect mental health, leading to conditions such as depression, anxiety, and mood disorders. The Mental Health Foundation (2021), highlights that gambling can cause low self-esteem, stress, anxiety, and depression if it becomes a problem, and there is a strong link between gambling problems and thoughts of suicide. Therefore, it is important to be aware of the negative effects of gambling and seek help if needed. Charles (2020) deduced the following as reasons why students tend to go into gambling: Peer pressure, Get quick rich syndrome, Poverty/Environmental influence and Poor Economy.

Correlation of gambling with other social vices

Research has shown that gambling is correlated with various social vices. Social influences can normalize gambling-related harm among higher risk gamblers, and the relationship between parental gambling and subsequent problem gambling by the child is stronger when the parents themselves experience problems with gambling (Alex, Erika and Nerilee (2018). Harms caused by gambling can co-occur with other difficult situations in life, usually intensifying along with crises and continuing even after the problematic behavior ends. Gambling has been linked to social inequality, with higher-income households spending more on gambling, while poorer households lose a higher proportion of their income. Partners and children who share finances with a gambler often experience greater levels of harm, including financial impacts such as increased debt and financial strain. Gambling can also lead to increased demand for social services, and declines in social capital and social integration (Tina, Toni & Anne, 2019).

Goran and Karlo (2019) notes that gambling during adolescence has been associated with psychiatric, social, and substance misuse problems in adulthood. It has been observed that gambling in adolescents is linked to psychological and social consequences. Excessive gambling may contribute to substance abuse, depression, and strained relationships, affecting an individual's overall well-being. Additionally, financial losses from gambling can lead to economic hardships, potentially fostering illegal activities to cope with financial difficulties.

Solutions to Gambling Addiction

Gambling addiction can significantly affect a person's life, from their health and finances to their relationships. While compulsive gambling can be challenging to manage, you can break the cycle. Gateway foundation (2023) gives practical ways to stop gambling: understand the problem, pinpoint your triggers, identify your thoughts and feelings, avoid high-risk situations, challenge your beliefs, and delay the decision

Bet9ja: An Overview

Bet9ja is a popular Nigerian betting site that offers sports betting, casino games, and virtual racing. It is known for providing a wide range of events and great odds for bettors in Nigeria. Founded in 2012 under KC Gaming Networks, Bet9ja has become one of the most recognized and trusted sports betting brands in the country. Bet9ja was co-founded by Ayo Ojuoye and Kunle Soname who are its CEO and chairman respectively. The platform is also known for its virtual horse and dog-racing product, Bet9ja Races, which offers huge jackpots. Bet9ja is focused on rewarding customer passion and continuously improving the user experience, product offerings, promotions, and customer service. It is widely used for its comprehensive betting service, entertaining the audience with sports betting, virtual racing, and casino games

Perception of Bet9ja Advertisement among Undergraduates

In recent times, there is no denial that sports betting is a rapidly emerging sector of the gambling industry, which has permeated almost every strata of human existence. While most forms of gambling on sports have been stable or decreased over the last few years, online betting has nearly doubled its prevalence rate in 2009-2014 periods (Uzuchukwu & Ohiri, 2021). This is due to the popularity of sports among people of different generations hence participants see it as an avenue to enjoy their favourite leisure time while earning from the game they love (Killick & Griffiths, 2018). The growing popularity of sports betting in Nigeria and the active involvement of youth and sports fans is an indication that sports betting is firmly ingrained in the country's mainstream culture through sport activities as popularized by advertising. The sports betting industry has been able to take advantage of Nigeria's huge football culture (Saawuan, Udak and Christiana, 2023).

A study by Lopez-Gonzalez, Estevez, and Griffiths (2017) revealed that sports bettors and fans experience a saturation of sports betting advertising during televised sports consumption. This pervasive exposure acts as an incentive for their sports betting behavior, creating additional challenges in resisting the urge to engage in such activities.

Men and women have different levels of gambling involvement. Currently, studies have revealed that the female folks now engage in gambling activities as opposed to the

participation of only male folks. Research carried out by Gambl (2016) found that 91% of college men and 84% of college women reported engagement with gambling.

Theoretical Framework

The Audience Reception Theory

This study is anchored on Audience reception theory. Developed by Stuart Hall, the theory posits that the audience decodes the messages in different ways, leading to dominant, oppositional, or negotiated readings. This means that the audience members may interpret the text in line with the producer's intended meaning (dominant reading), in opposition to it, or in a negotiated manner, accepting some parts and rejecting others. Reception theory is used to understand how media texts are read and interpreted by audiences, taking into account the various factors that influence their readings, such as age, beliefs, and culture, gender, and life experiences.

The Audience Reception Theory and Undergraduate perception of Bet9ja Advertisement

The Audience Reception Theory posits that media audiences are not passive consumers but actively engage with media texts, interpreting them based on their own experiences, beliefs, and values. In the context of studying the perception of Bet9ja advertisement gambling behaviours, this theory suggests that individuals do not just passively absorb the messages conveyed in the advertisements but actively construct meaning from them. The theory posits that audience members actively engage with Bet9ja advertisements, interpreting the content through their own lens of understanding. They may relate the advertisements to their personal experiences with gambling, their cultural background, or societal norms regarding gambling behaviours. Each individual constructs his or her own meaning from the advertisements. This meaning can be influenced by factors such as personal attitudes towards gambling, previous exposure to gambling-related media, and social influences from peers or family members.

Furthermore, interpretation of the advertisements is also influenced by broader cultural and social contexts. The way individuals interpret Bet9ja advertisements can affect their

attitudes towards gambling and potentially influence their gambling behaviours. For instance, repeated exposure to advertisements that glamorize gambling may contribute to the normalization of gambling and increase the likelihood of individuals engaging in such behaviors.

Analyzing the audience reception of Bet9ja advertisements offers the researchers valuable insights into the diverse interpretations and perceptions of these ads across different audience segments. This understanding can inform interventions aimed at promoting responsible gambling or regulating the content of gambling advertisements to mitigate potential harm.

This theory provides a framework for understanding how individuals engage with and make sense of media messages, such as Bet9ja advertisements, and how these interpretations can shape attitudes and behaviors related to gambling.

Methodology

The methodology adopted for this study was survey design. Babbie (2010, p.85) describes it as an excellent method for measurement of attitude and opinion of people within a large population.

Population of the Study

The population of this study was the undergraduate regular students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, comprised of 40,010 persons according to the data supplied by the university Academic Planning Unit for the 2022/2023 academic session (December 2023).

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A sample of 396 was drawn from the study population of 40,010. This was accomplished using Taro Yamane's formula for calculating sample size. Therefore 396 copies of questionnaires were distributed to the randomly selected Students and 371 copies were successfully retrieved and analysed. The multistage sampling procedure was used to select the respondents across faculties and departments. The first stage involved the selection of faculties from Nnamdi Azikiwe University. The faculties of arts and faculty of management

sciences were randomly selected. The second stage ensured the selection of departments. The departments of music, english & literature, banking & finance and business administration were randomly selected. At the third stage, the researcher employed the convenience sampling method to select 99 students from each of the four departments.

Method of Data Analysis

The method for data analysis adopted was quantitative and data analysis involved frequency and simple percentage tables.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

Demographic Variables

The response rate for the survey, revealed a robust engagement with a 94% response rate from 371 respondents. Conversely, 6% of the respondents comprising 25 individuals, did not return the questionnaire and (157) 42% of the respondents are males while (214) 58% are females. Respondents were categorized into four age brackets. The data shows that 33% of the sample, falls within 21-25 age group. Other significant groups include those aged 16-20 (25%), 26-30 (24%), and 31-35 (18%). This distribution sets the stage for exploring potential age-related patterns in the context of perceptions of bet9ja advertisements and gambling behaviours among Unizik students. The distribution of respondents across different departments, business administration constitutes the largest group with (111) 30%, followed closely by English language and literature (105) 28% banking and finance (91) 25%, and music (64) 17%. Level 200 has the highest representation with (98) 26%, closely followed by levels 300 at (95) 26%. Level 400 comprises (87) 23% of the sample and 100 level at 91(25%)

Research Questions 1: What is the level of exposure to Bet9ja gambling advertisement among Nnamdi Azikiwe University undergraduates?

Table 1: Exposure to Bet9ja Advertisement

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	132	36%
No	105	28%
Maybe	134	36%
Total	371	100%

Source: Field Research (2024)

Table 1 reveals respondents' exposure to the bet9ja advertisement. 36% (132) mentioned having seen or read the advertisement. 28% (105) reported no exposure and 36% (134) expressed uncertainty. This diversity in responses underscores varied experiences and perceptions among participants regarding their interaction with bet9ja advertisements.

Research Question 2: What are the medium of exposure to bet9ja gambling advertisement among Nnamdi Azikiwe University Undergraduates?

Table 2: Most Prominent Medium for Bet9ja Gambling Advertisement

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Newspaper	31	8%
Magazine	34	9%
Television	78	21%
Radio	17	5%
Social Media	211	57%
Total	371	100%

Source: Field Research (2024)

Table 2 examines the perceived prominence of various mediums for bet9ja gambling advertisement among respondents. Social media emerged as the most prominent medium, with 57% (211), followed by television at 21 % (78). Magazine and newspaper had

percentages of 9 % (34) and 8% (31), respectively, while radio accounted for 5% (17). These results underscore the significant influence of social media in the perception of prominence, suggesting it is a dominant channel for bet9ja gambling advertisement. The findings highlight the diverse opinions among participants regarding the prominence of different mediums in conveying these advertisements, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the impact of various channels in the promotional landscape.

Research Question 3: How do Nnamdi Azikiwe University undergraduates perceive the Bet9ja gambling advertisement?

Table 3 Rating of Exposure to Bet9ja Gambling Advertisement

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High	136	37%
Low	77	21%
Average	105	28%
Poor	53	14%
Total	371	100%

Source: Field Research (2024)

Research Question 4: To what extent do Nnamdi Azikiwe University Undergraduates engage in Gambling Behaviour as a result of exposure to the Advertisement?

Table 4: Engagement in Bet9ja Gambling Behaviors

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	68	18%
No	303	82%
Total	371	100%

Source: Field Research (2024)

Table 4 delves into respondents engagement in bet9ja gambling behaviors. A majority, 82% (303), indicated that they do not engage in bet9ja gambling behaviors while 18% (68) affirmed their engagement. These findings suggest that a significant portion of the respondents do not actively participate in bet9ja gambling. The results prompt further inquiry into the factors influencing respondents decisions to abstain from such behaviours and the potential impact of the bet9ja advertisement on gambling engagement among the surveyed group. The data underscores the need for a nuanced exploration of the motivations and attitudes surrounding bet9ja gambling behaviors among the respondents.

Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question 1: What is the level of exposure to Bet9ja Gambling Advertisement among Nnamdi Azikiwe University Undergraduates?

The analysis of Table 1 reveals that 36% of the participants reported exposure to bet9ja advertisement, while 28% reported no exposure. Additionally, 36% expressed uncertainty about their exposure. This indicates a varied range of experiences among Nnamdi Azikiwe University undergraduates regarding exposure to Bet9ja Gambling Advertisement. The substantial percentage of uncertainty suggests that some participants may not be consciously aware of their exposure, emphasizing the need for further exploration into the factors influencing awareness and recognition of gambling advertisements.

Research Question 2: What are the medium of exposure to Bet9ja Gambling Advertisement among Nnamdi Azikiwe University Undergraduates?

Table 2 illustrates that the majority of respondents (59%) are exposed to Bet9ja gambling advertisements through social media, emphasizing the significant role of digital platforms. Magazines, television, newspapers, and radio also contribute to exposure, but to varying degrees. This diverse medium distribution highlights the multifaceted channels through which Nnamdi Azikiwe University undergraduates encounter Bet9ja advertisements. The dominance of social media suggests the evolving landscape of advertisement consumption among the younger demographic, warranting further investigation into the specific characteristics of these mediums that influence perceptions.

Research Question 3: How do Nnamdi Azikiwe University Undergraduates perceive the Bet9ja Gambling Advertisement?

The analysis of Table 3 indicates diverse perceptions of bet9ja gambling advertisement among Nnamdi Azikiwe University undergraduates. Ratings vary, with 37% considering their exposure as high, 21% as low, 14% as average, and another 14% as poor. This diversity in perceptions suggests that undergraduates at Nnamdi Azikiwe University have varying opinions about the intensity and effectiveness of the bet9ja gambling advertisement. Understanding these subjective assessments is crucial for advertisers and policymakers to tailor communication strategies that resonate with the diverse preferences and expectations of the target audience.

Research Question 4: To what extent do Nnamdi Azikiwe University Undergraduates engage in Gambling Behaviour as a result of exposure to the Advertisement?

Table 4 demonstrates that a significant majority (82%) of Nnamdi Azikiwe University undergraduates do not engage in bet9ja gambling behaviours. Only 18% affirm their engagement. This finding suggests that the exposure to bet9ja advertisement may not necessarily translate into active participation in gambling behaviours among the surveyed group. The high percentage of non-engagement implies a level of resistance or disinterest among the participants, indicating the need for a deeper examination of the factors influencing their decision-making regarding gambling behaviours.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study provide a nuanced understanding of the perceptions, exposure levels, and engagement behaviors of Nnamdi Azikiwe University undergraduates in relation to bet9ja gambling advertisement. The data unveils a complex landscape where the level of exposure varies significantly among respondents. While 36% reported exposure, 28% claimed no exposure, and 36% expressed uncertainty. This suggests that a substantial portion of the student body may not actively engage with or recognize bet9ja advertisements. The high uncertainty percentage signals a need for further exploration into the factors influencing students' awareness and acknowledgment of gambling advertisements, highlighting the potential effectiveness of targeted and impactful promotional strategies.

The predominant medium for bet9ja gambling advertisement exposure among respondents was social media, constituting 59%. This underscores the evolving nature of advertising consumption among the younger demographic, emphasizing the pivotal role of digital platforms. While magazine, television, newspaper, and radio also contribute to exposure, their lower percentages suggest a shifting preference towards online channels. Advertisers should consider optimizing their strategies for social media platforms to effectively reach and resonate with the target audience.

The diverse perceptions regarding the intensity of exposure to bet9ja gambling advertisement, as reflected in the ratings provided by respondents, underscore the subjective nature of their assessments. While 37% rated their exposure as high, 21% perceived it as low, and 28% found it not persuasive. These findings indicate a range of attitudes and opinions among Nnamdi Azikiwe University undergraduates, emphasizing the need for advertisers to understand the varied expectations and preferences of their audience. Tailoring messages to align with the diverse perceptions could enhance the overall effectiveness of gambling advertisements.

A notable finding is that the majority of respondents (82%) do not engage in bet9ja gambling behaviors, with only 18% affirming their engagement. This suggests a level of resistance, disinterest, or perhaps a critical evaluation of the consequences associated with

gambling. Advertisers and policymakers should consider these findings when assessing the potential impact of their promotions on actual behaviors, recognizing that exposure may not directly translate into active engagement. Considering demographic patterns, such as gender, age, department, and academic level, could influence participants' perceptions and behaviors. Future research could delve into these demographic nuances to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play within the Nnamdi Azikiwe University undergraduate community.

Conclusion

This study highlights diverse exposure patterns, with social media emerging as the predominant medium for bet9ja advertisement. This underscores the need for targeted advertising strategies that align with the preferred channels of the target audience, ensuring effective reach and engagement.

Moreover, a significant proportion of participants perceived an impact of bet9ja advertisement on public health and gambling behavior. However, there is a need for further exploration to understand the nuanced nature of these perceptions and the factors influencing them. This insight is crucial for advertisers, policymakers to tailor their messaging, and regulations to address the specific concerns and beliefs of the student population.

The study also uncovered a high-perceived persuasiveness of bet9ja gambling advertisements, raising questions about the potential influence on attitudes and behaviors. Additionally, the widespread perception of these advertisements as a distraction highlights the need for responsible advertising practices that consider the potential impact on focus and attention. Advertisers should be mindful of the fine balance between capturing attention and avoiding excessive distraction, especially among a young and academically focused demographic.

Notably, the majority of participants indicated non-engagement in bet9ja gambling behaviors, suggesting a divergence between exposure and active participation. Understanding the factors influencing this disconnection is crucial for both advertisers and policymakers. It may indicate a gap between the impact of advertisements on perception

and their actual influence on behaviors, necessitating further research to uncover the motivations and barriers that shape students' decisions regarding gambling engagement.

Recommendations

1. Advertisers should tailor their strategies to the preferred mediums of the target audience, with a particular emphasis on social media. Understanding the dynamics of exposure can enhance the effectiveness of advertising campaigns.
2. Considering the perceived impact of Bet9ja Advertisement on public health, there is a need for public health awareness programs targeting university students. These programs can provide information on responsible gambling and potential consequences.
3. Advertisers should adopt responsible practices, considering the persuasiveness and distracting nature of bet9ja advertisement. Ethical advertising can contribute to a positive university environment that prioritizes academic focus and well-being.
4. Additional research is recommended to delve deeper into the nuanced perceptions and behaviors related to gambling advertisements. Exploring the factors influencing perceived impact and engagement can provide a more comprehensive understanding.

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