

Brand Bets: Unveiling the Marketing Magic Behind Online Gambling's Success

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ABSTRACT: This paper aims to investigate the intricate dynamics of how online gambling advertisements, celebrity endorsements, and extensive online discussions impact individuals' propensity to engage in gambling activities. In the contemporary digital landscape, comprehending these influences is imperative, particularly in regions like India, where the online gambling sector has witnessed significant expansion. The research employed qualitative and quantitative methods to determine that brand perceptions profoundly influence individuals' gambling behaviours. The finding suggests that advertising influences gambling intentions most, followed by celebrity-brand congruence. These results underscore the critical importance for both marketers and policymakers to cultivate positive brand images as a strategic approach to modulating gambling tendencies responsibly. This research contributes to the academic discourse by highlighting the necessity of fostering favourable brand perceptions to mitigate the potential risks associated with online gambling.

KEYWORDS: Online Gambling, Gambling Advertising, Customer Gambling Intention, Electronic Word-of-Mouth, Sentiment Analysis

I. INTRODUCTION

Online gambling includes all sorts of betting activities conducted on the internet, such as, online poker, casinos and fantasy and live sports betting as well. The Indian online gambling market is estimated to reach US\$2.90 billion in 2024, of which more than 50% is coming from sports betting (Statista Market Insights, 2024). Worldwide, it is observed that the young population is most interested in online gaming and gambling (Barrera-Algarín & Vázquez-Fernández, 2021; Di Censo et al., 2023). At the same time, the impact of advertisements on their growing popularity is also duly noted (De Jans, 2022; Parrado-González & León-Jariego, 2020). In that case, gambling advertising may pose a threat to public health (Griffiths, 2005).

Another key issue is the legal implications of gambling apps. In India, "gambling falls under the jurisdiction of individual states, with only Indian states empowered to legislate on gambling within their boundaries". At the same time, fantasy betting is exempted from the ban in India as it is considered a "game of skills" (Adhikari et al., 2024). It is feasible to research the nature of the effects of gambling advertising, as well as its methods and other elements, including volume and ethical concerns it creates. It is possible to evaluate the relative effects of various advertising strategies on different demographics (Binde, 2014).

Gambling companies have been using extensive advertising to attract new consumers. In an attempt to draw in new clients, the gambling business has long employed strategies centred around appealing to expressive needs as well as manipulating contextual elements. People are being led to believe that gambling is common and acceptable in society by the continuous advertising for gambling. Gaining the credibility of a source is a common strategy used. Constant marketing is used to convince individuals that these goods and websites are reliable (Griffiths, 2005). Advertising campaigns have been found to have a greater influence on problem gamblers as compared to recreational gamblers. (Tessier et al., 2021). In response to online advertising of gambling platforms, many gamblers switched from offline to online gambling (Hing et al., 2014).

The present research aims to test the impact of celebrity brand congruence, advertisement attributes, attitude towards advertising, and attitude towards betting brands on gambling intention. The study also conducted sentiment analysis on review platforms to understand the perceptions regarding gambling. There is rising worry about the spread of internet gambling and its potentially harmful consequences, particularly for younger generations that are more prone to gambling addiction concerns. Understanding how advertising promotes gambling behaviour might provide insight into potential societal harm. Advertising often employs persuasive techniques to influence consumer behaviour. Studying how online gambling advertisements are

designed and how they affect individuals psychologically can contribute to our understanding of advertising's influence on decision-making and addiction.

The present study aims at providing new insights that are very much needed with the advent of social media advertising. At the same time, the rise of sporting leagues has also boosted the usage of fantasy sports and the inclination towards gambling.

The study is structured as follows. The next section discusses the in-depth literature review, followed by the conceptual model and hypotheses. After that, the research methodology adopted by the study is outlined. Next, the qualitative and quantitative analysis is presented. Finally, the study's findings and limitations are discussed.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Celebrity-Brand Congruency

"Celebrity-brand congruence" is a term often used in marketing, particularly in the context of endorsements and partnerships. The aim is to strategically align the characteristics of an advertised celebrity with the brand's core message, which is communicated via various advertising channels. This concept highlights the conscious and thorough fusion of the image and values of the celebrity with the overarching narrative and identity that the brand wants to convey. Celebrity brand congruence emphasises not only the consistency of certain advertising elements but also the seamless integration of the characteristics of the endorsed personality into the overall brand promise and image. According to studies, celebrity-brand congruence and attitude towards the brand have a significant impact on Millennial customers' buying intentions. In other words, millennials perceive a high degree of the relationship between a celebrity and a company and have a good attitude toward the brand, which influences purchase decisions. (Min et al., 2019).

Advertising Attributes

In the context of gambling advertising, advertising attributes refer to a wide range of traits and qualities that are incorporated into the commercials. All these characteristics work together to give the viewer an engaging and visually stunning experience. Research carried out in the past has indicated that characteristics of the advertisement, such as appealing commercials, tempting bonuses, free bets and deposits, have encouraged new players to join, as well as an increase in existing users and longer gambling sessions. Moreover, welcome-back promotions and prompts have triggered gambling amongst problem gamblers who attempt to curtail gambling (Hing et al., 2014). Moreover, findings from a study have shown that influencer marketing has instigated sports betting among the youth. They assume that, since the celebrities make use of such a service, it will not be out of place if they use it too (Asemah & State, 2023).

Attitude towards Advertising

Attitude towards advertisement refers to the viewers' opinion towards the informativeness of the gambling brand, resulting in favourable or unfavourable attitudes. These attitudes are more influential in the case of sponsorships of big sports events (Hing et al., 2013). In India, many such brands, such as Dream 11, My11Circle, and MPL, invest heavily in the Indian Premier League (IPL). However, past studies have discussed the evidences of viewers finding gambling advertisements unfavourable as they tend to mislead the viewers (Binde, 2014).

Attitude towards Brand

In the context of gambling advertising, attitude towards a brand refers to the general opinion and assessment that consumers have developed about a gambling brand. This view is only formed via exposure to the brand's diverse range of marketing initiatives, which include both emotional and cognitive reactions. Positive attitudes, which are frequently developed via persistent and consistent advertising initiatives, represent a good emotional and cognitive relationship with the brand. It is a synthesis of the brand-related experiences, convictions, and feelings that the customer has, all of which impact their decision-making and brand loyalty. Previous studies have reported the impact of corporate credibility depicted in advertising as a significant variable (Goldsmith et al., 2000). Attitudes toward gambling were found to have a statistically significant association with gambling behaviours (Bouguettaya et al., 2020). Experiment studies have also supported the favourable attitude towards the operator than to social media reviews (O'Loughlin & Blaszczyński, 2018). The following research objectives guide the present study:

RO1: To examine the impact of celebrity-brand congruency, advertising attributes, attitude towards advertisements, and attitude towards the brand on Gambling Intentions.

RO2: To test the relative influence of celebrity-brand congruency, advertising attributes, attitude towards advertisements, and attitude towards the brand on Gambling Intentions.

RO3: To study how eWOM communication influences consumer gambling intentions.

III. CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Based on the literature review, the conceptual model tested by the present research is given in Figure 1. The present study employs a mixed methods approach, using quantitative analysis through multiple regression to understand the impact of the independent variables, celebrity-brand congruency, advertisement attributes, attitude towards advertisement, and attitude towards the brand, on the dependent variables, which is consumer gambling intentions. Additionally, Sentiment analysis has been utilised to evaluate the impact of eWOM on consumers.

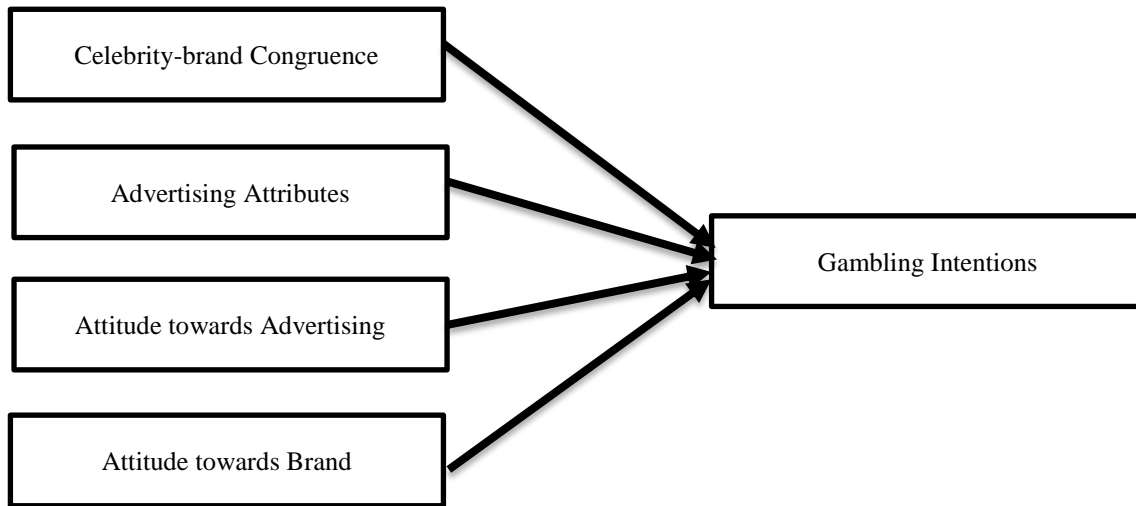


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

The study aims to test the following hypotheses:

- H1: Celebrity-brand congruency positively impacts gambling intentions.
- H2: Advertising attributes positively impact gambling intentions.
- H3: Attitude towards advertising positively impacts gambling intentions.
- H4: Attitude towards the brand positively impacts gambling intentions.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The data is collected on a convenience sample of 203 participants using an online questionnaire. Primarily, the questionnaire was utilised to gather information regarding respondents' attitudes toward gambling advertisements and their perceptions of their intentions to gamble, which was constructed using Google Form, consisted of close-ended questions and utilised a 7-point Likert scale (1-least likely & 7-most likely) to measure 17 independent and one dependent variable. Most of the questions were designed and modified from the previous research questions that fit with the research objectives (Zafar & Rafique, 2012).

For the qualitative method, the primary source of the data was Reddit. The authors have included 1942 posts and 1003 comments from 798 accounts. 15 gambling-related search phrases were used to choose the gambling communities. Terms like "gambling", "problem gambling", "betting", "win", "loss", "hit", "life", "odds" and "addiction" were among those used in the search. The search terms were created using terms commonly used in the gambling industry and Reddit subreddit searches. The study extracted data from the "r/problemgambling" and "r/gambling" subreddits. This is done to include both healthy and problematic gambling and to consider the opposing views on gambling (Kaakinen et al., 2020). A Reddit API called "Reddit Scrapper" is used to extract the posts and comments. Also, the VADER tool is used to run the sentiment analysis, which provides distinct metrics for positive and negative comments (Brown et al., 2021)

V. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Demographic Statistics

Table 1 summarises the respondents' profiles on the key characteristics of age, gender, educational background and engagement with Gambling platforms.

Table 1: Demographics

Demographic	Frequency	Percent	
Gender	Male	128	63.05
	Female	75	36.95
Age	14-17	23	11.33
	18-30	164	80.79
	30-45	14	6.90
	above 45	2	0.99
Occupation	Student	181	89.16
	Employed	13	6.40
	Unemployed	2	0.99
	Self Employed	7	3.45
Income Level	< 0	148	72.91
	0-1 lakh	30	14.78
	1-10 lakhs	14	6.90
	> 10 lakhs	11	5.42
Geographical Location	Urban	180	88.67
	Sub-Urban	22	10.84
	Rural	1	0.49
Qualification	Below High School	14	6.90
	High School	93	45.81
	Bachelor degree	77	37.93
	Graduation	16	7.88
	Associate's degree	3	1.48
Tried Gambling platform due to advertisement	Yes	97	47.78
	No	86	42.36
	Not Sure	20	9.85

Source: Authors' work

Factor Analysis

The purpose of the study is to find the impact of the independent variables, celebrity-brand congruence (CBC), advertising attributes (AA), attitude towards advertisement (ATA), and attitude towards brands (ATB) on gambling intentions (GI). The study conducted an exploratory factor analysis on seventeen independent variables to combine the variables having high correlation on SPSS. Two factors were removed due to low loading on the components. As shown in Table 2, the KMO value above 0.5 proves the data is adequate for factor analysis. Bartlett's test was also found to be significant, which means that there exist correlations between variables and factor analysis is required (Field, 2012).

Table 2: Test of Sampling Adequacy

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.882
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1258.950
	df	105
	Sig.	0.000

Source: Authors' work extracted from SPSS

Table 3 explains each component derived by factor analysis. The recommended eigenvalue of 1 designates the presence of four factors explaining 64.81% of the variation in the model. Therefore, these four factors are taken for further analysis. The rotated component matrix is given in Table 4.

Table 3: Total Variation Explained

SN	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	5.814	38.760	38.760	5.814	38.760	38.760	4.023	26.820	26.820
2	1.538	10.250	49.011	1.538	10.250	49.011	2.096	13.971	40.791
3	1.294	8.629	57.639	1.294	8.629	57.639	1.875	12.499	53.290
4	1.076	7.170	64.810	1.076	7.170	64.810	1.728	11.519	64.810
5	0.820	5.465	70.275						
6	0.732	4.880	75.154						
7	0.597	3.980	79.135						
8	0.583	3.888	83.023						
9	0.511	3.409	86.431						
10	0.481	3.209	89.640						
11	0.430	2.863	92.503						
12	0.355	2.369	94.872						
13	0.273	1.821	96.693						
14	0.266	1.771	98.464						
15	0.230	1.536	100.000						

Source: Authors' work extracted from SPSS

Table 4: Rotated Component Matrix

	AA	ATB	CBC	ATA
AA1	0.833			
AA3	0.807			
AA4	0.797			
AA5	0.782			
AA2	0.760			
AA6	0.525			
ATB3		0.727		
ATB1		0.727		
ATB2		0.679		
CBC2			0.730	
CBC1			0.717	
CBC3			0.578	
ATA2				0.749
ATA1				0.688
ATA3				0.683

Source: Authors' work extracted from SPSS

It is evident that the first component explains advertising attributes, the second component is the attitude towards the brand, the third is celebrity-brand congruence, and the fourth is the attitude towards advertising. Further, to find the influence of the derived components, the factor score for each component is saved for regression analysis.

Regression

A regression analysis is conducted, taking GI as the dependent variable to test the study's hypotheses. Table 5 gives the summary of the regression models. Durbin-Watson value is close to 2, showing independence of error terms (Rubenking & Bracken, 2021). The study used a step-wise method to test the relative importance of each independent variable. Table 5 shows that the explanation of gambling intentions significantly increased with the inclusion of each variable in the explanation of the model. As per this model, the independent variables explain 53% of the variation in the dependent variable.

Table 5: Regression Analysis

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R ² Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	0.648 ^a	0.420	0.417	1.450	.420	145.367	1	201	.000
2	0.696 ^b	0.484	0.479	1.370	.064	24.955	1	200	.000
3	0.718 ^c	0.515	0.508	1.332	.031	12.701	1	199	.000
4	0.734 ^d	0.538	0.529	1.303	.023	9.931	1	198	.002
a. Predictors: (Constant), AA									
b. Predictors: (Constant), AA, CBC									
c. Predictors: (Constant), AA, CBC, ATB									
d. Predictors: (Constant), AA, CBC, ATB, ATA									
e. Dependent Variable: GI									

Source: Author's work: Extracted from SPSS Output

Table 6: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	305.576	1	305.576	145.367	.000 ^b
	Residual	422.522	201	2.102		
	Total	728.099	202			
2	Regression	352.449	2	176.224	93.824	.000 ^c
	Residual	375.650	200	1.878		
	Total	728.099	202			
3	Regression	374.986	3	124.995	70.442	.000 ^d
	Residual	353.113	199	1.774		
	Total	728.099	202			
4	Regression	391.851	4	97.963	57.685	.000 ^e
	Residual	336.248	198	1.698		
	Total	728.099	202			
a. Dependent Variable: GI						
b. Predictors: (Constant), AA						
c. Predictors: (Constant), AA, CBC						
d. Predictors: (Constant), AA, CBC, ATB						
e. Predictors: (Constant), AA, CBC, ATB, ATA						

Source: Author's work: Extracted from SPSS Output

Next, the ANOVA test, as per Table 6, shows significant F statistics, which supports the models. The coefficients table shows that all the independent variables are statistically significant to the dependent variable and thus support all four hypotheses. At the same time, Table 7 presents the relative importance of the variables.

Table 7: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.443	.102		33.838	.000
	AA	1.230	.102	.648	12.057	.000
2	(Constant)	3.443	.096		35.797	.000
	AA	1.230	.096	.648	12.755	.000

3	CBC	.482	.096	.254	4.996	.000
	(Constant)	3.443	.093		36.830	.000
	AA	1.230	.094	.648	13.123	.000
	CBC	.482	.094	.254	5.140	.000
4	ATB	.334	.094	.176	3.564	.000
	(Constant)	3.443	.091		37.647	.000
	AA	1.230	.092	.648	13.414	.000
	CBC	.482	.092	.254	5.254	.000
	ATB	.334	.092	.176	3.643	.000
	ATA	.289	.092	.152	3.151	.002

a. Dependent Variable: GI

Source: Author's work: Extracted from SPSS Output

As per the findings, the advertising attributes ($\beta = 0.648$) have the highest impact on gambling intentions, followed by celebrity-brand congruence ($\beta = 0.254$), attitude towards advertisement ($\beta = 0.176$), and attitude towards the brand ($\beta = 0.152$). As per the study's hypotheses all impacts are positive. The regression equations are given as

$$GI = 3.443 + 1.230 AA + 0.482CBC + 0.334ATA + 0.289ATB$$

Sentiment Analysis

Upon conducting the sentiment analysis on r/gambling, it was found that the average VADER compound sentiment score was 0.5868. (Table 5) The sentiments within this positive subreddit possessed a very high variance, being a minimum of 0.4459 to a maximum of 0.9997. These values imply a rather positive sentiment within this subreddit, showcasing a varied spectrum of attitudes among members of the subreddit.

In contrast, the sentiment analysis conducted on the 1003 comments from r/problemgambling yielded an average VADER compound score of 0.4136. This score lies in the negative to neutral region. These findings add up as this subreddit is considered the subreddit that shines light upon the negative aspects of gambling. The sentiments prevalent within this community showed a narrower range, exhibiting a minimum score of 0.0028 to a maximum of 0.6034.

Table 8: Sentiment Summary

		Gambling	Problem Gambling
MAX	Positive	0.999998	0.999972
	Negative	0.44944	0.445916
	Neutral	0.597919	0.59978
MIN	Positive	0.600321	0.603356
	Negative	0	0
	Neutral	0.453562	0.45829
Std Dev		0.319755	0.354938
Average		0.586806	0.413649
N		1003	1003

Source: Author's work: Extracted from Azure Machine Learning

The mixture of sentiments from both subreddits, which were given equal weights in the analysis, produced an average VADER score of 0.5002 for the total 2000 comments. This nearly neutral score signifies a nuanced balance between the positive and the negative sentiments within the wider discourse on gambling. The contrasting sentiments observed in r/gambling and r/problemgambling contribute to a more enriched interpretation, showing a diverse array of users' experiences and attitudes prevalent within the gambling community.

The difference between the opinion scores of r/gambling and r/problemgambling helps to identify and understand the different responses of the gambling public. Creating effective communication strategies to resonate with these opposing emotions can help foster specific engagement. Focused feeling changes in gambling highlight the range of conversations and challenges faced by people with gambling problems. Stakeholders in this industry should be sensitive to such audiences.

VI. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In addressing RO1, the model revealed a significant relationship between the predictors and gambling intentions. Notably, advertising attributes, such as creativity, enjoyment, and informativeness, emerged as the most influential predictor. As per the first regression model, advertising attributes alone explain 42% of

gambling intentions, addressing RO2. These findings corroborate the heavy advertising expenditure by the gambling platforms (Barrera-Algarín & Vázquez-Fernández, 2021). The element of enjoyment shown in the advertisements is also reported to be resulting in problematic gambling behaviours (Hing et al., 2014). The findings confirm that the inclusion of a celebrity in the advertisement improves the intention by 6.4% (Min et al., 2019). Notwithstanding the growing popularity of betting brands, it has the least influence on intentions, indicating that betting platforms are yet to create brand power. Overall, the four independent variables explain 53% of gambling intentions.

For RO3, Sentiment analysis sheds light on eWOM in the gambling industry. r/gambling's higher average sentiment score indicates many positive eWOM opportunities. Marketers can take advantage of these positive feelings and improve their brand by combining user experiences and success stories with their campaigns. The concentrated negative opinion on r/problemgambling provides insight into problem gambling. The industry stakeholders must take active measures, such as implementing responsible gambling initiatives, allocating resources, and building a positive image to effectively respond to these challenges (Hopfgartner et al., 2022).

The integrated brand names, advertising features, and customer satisfaction with the brand and advertising are just a few of the factors that are affected by gambling, and the study's findings shed light on these relationships. The present study contributes to the body of knowledge as it has conceptualised and tested a model to understand gambling behaviours. At the same time, the use of discussion platforms such as Reddit offers a great insight into first-hand consumer understanding and feedback towards both problematic and non-problematic behaviours.

Notwithstanding the paucity of research in this area, it is evident that one of the main tasks of gambling operators is to improve the brand reputation by enhancing product quality and aligning with consumer expectations.

Overall, this study is important for further research into understanding consumer behaviour regarding gambling and providing recommendations for people involved in this work. The managerial significance of the study is that the findings emphasise better practices of marketing, particularly informative advertising and brand building.

Future researchers may use other methods, such as experimental based on observation, to test the impact of advertising related attributes. Technology Acceptance Model, Unified Theory of Uses and Acceptance of Technology, and Uses and Gratification Theory can further extend the study's model. In the future, as consumer behaviour matures for this product, longitudinal studies might also help in studying the change in behaviour.

VII. CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

The present research has been able to meet all its objectives in finding the factors influencing gambling intentions quantitatively and qualitatively. Firstly, it was found that all the study's variables significantly influence intentions, advertising attributes being the most important one. Secondly, it confirms the importance of informative and persuasive advertising for relatively new products such as gambling apps.

The study's major limitation is its inability to through light on problematic gambling behaviours. The sentiment analysis provides a balance between problematic and non-problematic gambling behaviour. Future studies may take up other variables, such as user experience, enjoyment, and interface, to study the problematic behaviour. The findings of this study and its model can be extended to other online products, such as streaming platforms and social media networking sites. It can also be extended to more diverse age groups and with a larger sample size.

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