



The perceived influence of gambling advertising on gambling attitudes
amongst 18–29 year olds in Dublin.

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment for the award of MSc International Business.

Submitted to the National College of Ireland, August 2022.

ABSTRACT

The Irish gambling industry is one that needs more light shone upon it. This study investigates the mechanics of gambling advertisements, while establishing current consumer attitudes towards them and the gambling industry as whole. Through this, the relatively scarce academic literature on the gambling industry grows.

Today, gambling is portrayed as a normative, sociable activity, at the expense of highlighting the risks that are involved.

The advertising techniques that are utilised appear to be successful in instilling positive attitudes towards gambling, while also enabling consumers to partake in gambling activity with incredible ease.

The following study critically reviews pre-existing literature on the gambling industry and the marketing of their products and services, and investigates how this marketing impacts perceptions and resulting behaviour among consumers in the Dublin area between the ages of 18-29.

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Acknowledgements

It is of paramount importance that I firstly thank my supervisor for this body of work, Dave Hurley, for his attentiveness and support throughout the process. Dave's guidance and feedback were key in my completion of this dissertation

My gratitude to the participants of the interviews for this study's research. Your patience and honesty on the subject of gambling added substance to a mere concept.

A special thanks to my Mother, Lorraine, and my brother, Oisin for words of encouragement throughout the year. And to Leon, who's words of persuasion may be the reason for my enrolling in the Master of International Business course 2022.

To Erica. You keep me motivated and make me a better person every day. Thank you.

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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

1.1.1 Magnitude of the Irish gambling industry

In 2020, Gamblers in Ireland lost roughly €1.36 Billion, equating to about €300 for each adult. This made Ireland the home of the fourth-largest gamblers within the European Union. On the world stage, Irish consumers are ranked 14th for average highest losses to gambling, ahead of the United Kingdom and behind only Finland, Malta & Sweden, according to industry analysts H2 Gambling Capital (Hutton, 2021).

The most recent statistics from H2 suggest a major shift towards online gambling in Ireland, moving away from land-based locations such as bookmakers and track betting. In 2019, just over a third (36%) of all bets placed in Ireland were done so through an online platform. In 2020, this figure rose to nearly 50% (Hutton, 2021). Naturally, much of this shift has been pushed by the pandemic.

The shift to the digital space is clear – with 44% of all online bets being placed through smartphones or tablets, as opposed to desktops. The mobile device dominance is forecasted to continue to grow, with 6 in 10 online bets expected to be placed through handheld, mobile devices by 2025. The H2 statistics show Ireland constitutes 2.6% of the European online gambling industry revenue, while representing just 1.1% of the European population (Hutton, 2021).

1.1.2 Precarious advertising in the Irish gambling industry

In 2021, Irish President Michael D. Higgins called for greater regulation within the gambling industry. He discussed the ‘scourge’ that is gambling and the gambling advertisements that are consistently damaging Irish people and their families.

The saturation of gambling advertisements within the media leads to questioning of what has been tolerated up to this point, when the damage being caused is as evident as it is. Our British counterparts have had the UK Gambling commission regulating their industry for more than 10

years. Legislation and regulation are constantly evaluated and investigated, and there are certain rules in place to manage the advertising within the industry (Hutton, 2021).

The lack of a regulating body means that the Irish gambling industry is a very unrestricted space, where gambling operators enjoy a vast amount of freedom. The messages in gambling advertising that should be designed to raise awareness of problem gambling and promote responsible gambling are controlled by the firm's supplying consumers with the platform to gamble, which is a conflict of interest to these firms' business models.

The unrelenting advertising, cunning enticements like free bets and rapidly developing technology has led to a mass platform of enablers. Proposed legislation has not been introduced with any haste in Ireland, as the government delay the introduction of the country's first Gambling Regulatory Authority, that will change the way gambling and its marketing in Ireland is regulated (Dimitrov, 2022).

1.2 Gaps in the research

1.2.1 Qualitative approach to consumer attitudes towards gambling & its marketing

As outlined above, the Irish gambling industry is experiencing consistent growth in terms of revenue generated year after year, with figures from the Department of Justice and Equality suggesting an estimated worth of the industry, all entities included, to be between €6-€8 billion (Department of Justice and Equality, 2019).

For a nation possessing the gambling rate that it does, the author was relatively surprised to uncover the scarcity of previous research centred on exploring Irish consumers' attitudes towards the gambling industry. While there are studies that attempt to investigate consumer attitudes towards gambling and advertising in similar societies such as the UK and Australia, there is a distinct lack of qualitative, in-depth interviews with consumers in Ireland to uncover their perceptions of the industry and its hazardous advertising practices.

This presented a research gap the author thought would be suitable to attempt to fill, using qualitative interviews to gain a more well-rounded, contemporary account of how Irish consumer attitudes towards the industry and its advertising, with potential benefits of these findings present on a variety of levels, not least to further studies attempting to understand the Irish gambling industry through different perspectives.

1.2.2 Link between advertising exposure and subsequent effects

Gambling advertising appears to impact all types of gamblers (Syvertsen, 2021), especially now the modernisation of the marketing is becoming more targeted towards groups in terms of content and how the marketing is communicated (Binde, 2014).

While it is widely regarded that there are positive associations between gambling advertising exposure and subsequent heightened gambling intention (Hing et al, 2013), the author encountered virtually no previous studies that attempted to test this hypothesis and investigate to what extent consumers feel motivated to gamble once they experience exposure to the advertising, but also to establish the level to which consumers actually participate in gambling activity, following this exposure.

The author believed this to be quite a significant gap in the research. With the volume of gambling advertising that is present in Irish society today, it appeared imperative to undertake initial qualitative research that would begin to explore the true impacts of gambling advertising on those who are exposed to it in Dublin.

1.3 Academic Justification

The recent developments in the advertising of gambling practices accentuates the need for further research to uncover the true impacts of gambling advertising. Determining advertising exposure associations with gambling activity could inform priorities in terms of preventative measures & policy decisions for governing bodies, as well as special considerations in clinical work surrounding the repercussions to consumers from gambling activity (Syvertsen, 2021). However, these associations between advertising exposure and perceived advertising impacts do not confirm beyond doubt that exposure to the advertising frequently increases a consumer's receptivity towards them and the content/strategies within. People who feel that that advertising has affected their gambling behaviour may simply be more aware of the marketing. It is therefore suggested that consumers who gamble regularly may be more interested in gambling and find it

easier to recall information about gambling advertisements, but these assumptions are expected to be tested through future research (Hanss, 2015).

Research carried out by Goldsmiths University found that some form of gambling marketing was visible on screen for 71% - 89% of the BBC's 'Match of the day' programmes, widely popular in the UK and Ireland. This is particularly striking considering that the BBC does not carry advertising (Kerr et al, 2021). This statistic encapsulates the level to which gambling advertising has infiltrated sport, a massive part of so many lives, especially when it is considered that none of the gambling marketing seen on the show is run by the BBC, instead dominating the images shown on screen to countless individuals. More light must be shone on how much of a hold gambling advertising has over today's media, and how consumers in Dublin are impacted as a result.

Much of the debate around the regulation of advertising takes place between researchers, harm-reduction and addiction organisations, regulators and politicians. Much of this deliberation draws upon beliefs, norms and values, given that empirical evidence focused on the impact of gambling advertising is scarce (Hanss, 2015). Therefore, the present study contributes to the empirical evidence on consumer attitudes towards gambling advertising that appears to be in its infancy, following an extensive review of the literature on the topic.

1.4 Overall aim of the study

This study is focused on filling the literature gaps as discussed previously, through acquiring a broader, experienced-based understanding of consumers perceptions of the gambling industry in Ireland, the role that the marketing of gambling activity holds, as well as the perceived impacts of this advertising on consumer attitudes and resulting behaviour. These critical areas have not been addressed sufficiently within the current literature, with a shortage of research specific to Ireland, despite the significance of the country's gambling industry, relative to other countries around the world. The author attempts to achieve the aim of this research through the answering of four research questions as follows.

1.5 Research questions

In conjunction with the identified gaps within the current literature reviewed for the purpose of this study, the author poses the following research questions with the intention of exploring areas that are seen to be deficient in research to date:

- 1. What are consumer attitudes towards the gambling industry in Dublin at present?*
- 2. How aware are consumers in Dublin of the gambling marketing around them?*
- 3. What are consumer perceptions on the techniques & strategies used in gambling advertising?*
- 4. How does exposure to this advertising impact consumer perceptions & behaviour?*

These research questions formed the foundation for the research objectives of the present study, which are outlined in Chapter 3; Methodology.

1.6 Methods

After deciding on the research area being centred on the Irish gambling industry, critically reviewing previous literature on the subject area and identifying the gaps to be filled by the present study, the author had to make decisions surrounding the methodological aspect of the research. The two common methods a researcher can decide to deploy are mono methods or mixed methods; the prior refers to choosing between quantitative or qualitative methods, while the latter entails combining both (Saunders, 2015).

As the research questions detailed above are focused on understanding the nature of consumer perceptions and experiences, the author utilised a mono-method qualitative approach in the collection of data for this study, rejecting a quantitative approach as it was seen as an unsuitable method to understand attitudes, perceptions & behaviours.

1.6.1 Scope

Seven semi-structured interviews with consumers in Dublin between the ages of 18-29 were conducted for the present study. The author attempted to gain an understanding of their perceptions of the Irish gambling industry and its advertising, as well as their subsequent behaviour, in attempting to answer the research questions previously outlined in section 1.5. While a small sample size suited this study's research, for deeper insights and optimal efficiency, perhaps a random sample selection, with an equal number of participants from each gender, may have yielded more comprehensive results, had there been more resources available and no time constraints.

Furthermore, the research for this study relied upon self-report measures, which can be subject to bias from participants. Therefore, these self-report measures may not provide completely accurate accounts of true consumer perceptions and behaviour.

1.7 Dissertation structure

Chapter 1 – Introduction

This study begins with a background into the chosen research topic of the gambling industry, identifying gaps in the literature to justify the undertaking of the research within this study. The main aims and structure of the study are also outlined.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

Within this chapter, the author includes a comprehensive review of the previously published academic literature surrounding the research topic. Academic literature surrounding the components of gambling advertising, and how they influence consumer attitudes are critically analysed.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

The methodology supplies insight into the research objectives for the present study, and the chosen methods for primary research data collection, with justifications. Research philosophies

and approaches are evaluated, with details of the sample and a review of how the data was collected and managed is also included.

Chapter 4 – Research Findings & Discussion

Chapter 4 presents and critically analyses the findings of the primary research conducted. Martin Fishbein's Theory of Reasoned Action was used as an underpinning model, to aid in the understanding of how consumer attitudes are influenced by advertising and support the research objectives relevant to this study.

Chapter 5 – Conclusions and Recommendations

Within the concluding chapter, the author reflects on the conclusions drawn from the previous chapter and determines to what level the research aims and objectives have been satisfied. Recommendations for future researchers and policy – makers conclude the chapter.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Chapter Introduction

This section of the present study involved a critical review of the previously published academic literature surrounding gambling advertising. Due to the relative shortage of qualitative literature exploring the effects of gambling advertising on consumer attitudes, much of the literature review is focused on breaking down the mechanics of gambling advertising, to aid the process of understanding how these mechanisms can potentially influence consumer attitudes.

There are many diverse elements to be considered here, such as the messages contained in the advertising, the deception that is hidden within it, and the measures that are currently being taken to reduce the harm caused to consumers.

The author will explore how these characteristics, through careful delivery and strategic placement, alter consumers' perceptions of and attitudes towards gambling practices, and gambling activity overall. This analysis will be the basis for my own research, to uncover how gambling advertising exposure alters the perceptions and attitudes that individuals hold towards gambling.

2.1 Advertising Narratives

2.1.1 Messages in Gambling Advertising

Advertising is defined as any industry financed communication that utilises vying media sources to encourage engagement with a gambling brand or product (Torrance et al, 2021). While analysing the existing literature surrounding the ambiguous subject of gambling advertising, it became clear that there are several different tactics or methods that are deployed within the advertising. The first trend that presented itself was the sheer volume of content that frames gambling in a positive light. Content analyses that have been carried out in the past have exemplified this, one of which consisted of a study of online casino marketing in the UK found the use of language within the ads to be centred on positive emotions, such as happiness and trust. Land-based casino advertisements were not dissimilar, as Australian casino endorsements were framing their premises as accommodating, comfortable and well- equipped (Torrance et al,

2021). This advertising commonly attempted to focus on better monetary value for customers, while exaggerating the potential chances of success through the gambling activities they were offering. People were encouraged to bring family members, children included, based on the presence of non-gambling related amenities on the premises.

The attempts at framing the act of gambling in a positive light were also noticed upon the examining of online social casino (free to play gambling) advertisements, which boasted bright colours and themes linked to financial success were deployed, clearly glamourising the act. These ads were regarded as having a high chance of enticing young people, due to the inclusion of cartoon animal characters and pop culture references. Supplementary studies on betting advertising backed this finding, citing the use of content containing animations, memes, humour and celebrity endorsement in the advertising that could have particular appeal to younger people (Torrance et al, 2021).

Depicting gambling in a positive manner is a commonly deployed strategy for Gambling operators worldwide. A study conducted by (Gainsbury et al, 2015) concerning the use of social media by gambling operators in Australia found the advertisements on social platforms to be no different. Expectedly, there were posts that glamourised gambling, with others emphasising gambling winnings and how winners have benefitted from their success. Prior research has stated that younger people are particularly susceptible to these underlying messages in the advertising, perceiving that gambling supplies easy money, entertainment and enjoyment, all while requiring minimal effort, certainly not a fraction of the amount required in school or work. This susceptibility is further heightened when the advertising is not countered through harm reductive messages or information on responsible gambling and/or problem gambling (Derevensky et al.2007).

A message that is clearly being utilised by Gambling operators' is the strategic alignment of gambling activity with sport. This alignment, also known as the 'gambification of sport' (McMullan, 2011), has raised concerns regarding its contribution to the desensitisation of gambling, especially within the young male sub-culture (Hing et al. 2013, McMullan, 2011). This is particularly worrying, given that young adult males are the socio-demographic group that are most at risk to problem gambling (Gainsbury et al. 2015). This alignment of gambling and

sport is thought to promote the message that gambling is a way to demonstrate masculinity, sporting knowledge, skill and benefit financially because of these. The messages are clear; gambling, like sport, is healthy harmless fun (Hing et al. 2013). I expect the ‘gamblification of sport’ to be a present concept throughout the collection of my own data, such is the importance it holds, particularly to 18–29-year-olds in Dublin.

A common theme between the past studies is that gambling advertising is essentially very similar to all other forms of advertising; the benefits are emphasised and often exaggerated, with little to no light shone upon the negative aspects. Gambling is marketed as an exciting, lucrative and socially beneficial activity. It is widely assumed that the messages contained within gambling advertisements can change, positively, people’s attitudes towards the activity. This positive change in people’s attitudes may then stimulate them to take part in gambling. These latent messages give us an understanding of the different types of consumers gambling operators target, and also how gambling operator’s hope their industry and offerings are perceived by the public. (Binde, 2014)

2.1.2 Deception in Gambling Advertising

A common sub theme amongst the published literature surrounding gambling advertising is that of deception, and how it is ever-present in the promotion of gambling activity. As gambling activity is widely regarded as a major social and health problem, companies that market the activity as something positive often come under scrutiny for acting unethically and irresponsibly. This criticism concerns a variety of strategies deployed by gambling operators with the aim of making their products – and the consequences of using these products – less harmful than they truly are.

The psychological devices used by gambling operators within their advertisements make them biased towards the positive – as the marketing strategies are not intended to give a whole- honest picture of gambling. This leads us to the belief that a large proportion of gambling advertisements can be seen as deceptive and dishonest. In marketing, there are two forms of misleading advertising, each of which is distinguished from the other. These are known as objectively misleading advertisements and subjectively misleading advertisements. Objectively misleading advertisements are easily identifiable as there is usually an obvious difference

between what is claimed or advertised, and the true characteristics of the product or services marketed. (Binde, 2014)

In contrast, a subjectively misleading advertisement “creates, increases or exploits a false belief about the expected product performance” (Russo et al, 1981). As the claims in this type of advertisement are not technically false, they present more challenges when it comes to identifying them. A key determinant is how people that view the ads perceive and interpret the messages being relayed. A common example of this is lottery advertisements stating “You could become a millionaire!” accompanied by happy smiles and large amounts of cash, is objectively truthful. While the chance of winning the lottery is extremely unlikely, it is true that it may happen to you once you purchase a ticket for that lottery event. However, it is safe to assume that in some viewers, their perceived chances of winning may be heightened upon the viewing of these advertisements. The ads attempt to get viewers to place emphasis on the highly improbable chance of winning the jackpot, while including nothing about each person’s statistical chances of winning it. (Binde, 2014)

The economists Clotfelter, Cook, Edell and Moore have criticised lottery advertisements for misleading the target audience in various different ways. In their report, they provide an overview on many different strategies deployed by lottery operators in the United States, to reach and entice their target customers. The objectives of these advertisements are multi-faceted; motivating non-players to begin playing, encouraging existing players to play more often, or to convince dormant players to begin playing again (Clotfelter, Cook et al, 1999). In order to achieve these objectives, gambling operators aim to make their advertisements as enticing as they can, as quickly as possible.

Of the marketing plans examined by (Clotfelter, Cook et al, 1999), 22 from 25 of them specifically mentioned advertising themes. The 3 most common themes that were identified were:

- Focus on prize / jackpot
- Excitement of playing
- Former - Winner awareness

The constant emphasis on the amount of money that can be won is blatantly misleading. Some ads focus entirely on the potential winnings. For example, a print campaign from Colorado used 80% of the ad space to display “\$10,000,000”. With another 10% of the ad space occupied by the lottery’s logo and 5% for the phrase “What will YOU do with it all?”, 1.25% was reserved to inform the audience of their chances of winning the jackpot (1 in 5,245,786) (Clotfelter, Cook et al, 1999). It is clear to see that the objective here is to divert the customers attention away from their chances of winning and focus it on the sum of money available. Making customers aware of previous winners may further alter their perceived chances of winning through appealing to their sense of relatability, these stories reinforce the idea that it “could be you”. These stories are upbeat and may include the age-old story of the first-time ticket buyer turned millionaire, creating a sense of excitement for the audience and perhaps, successfully, luring them in.

As there is a significant lack of research that has been carried out regarding people’s perceptions of lottery advertising in Ireland, and the frequency in which the Irish public play lottery games, there are opportunities to establish the attitudes towards these advertisements the public hold.

2.1.3 Harm Reductive Content

Most people take part in gambling at least once a year, with participation rates ranging from 65 to 82 percent (Gainsbury, 2013). For a percentage of these people, gambling may indeed add quality to their lives. It can provide an environment for social interactions, competition, intellectual challenge, excitement and escape. Gambling advertising therefore has the capability to add consumer value to the activity, through dispersing information on their products & services. (Binde, 2014)

In contrast, gambling advertising also has the capability to negatively influence consumer perceptions through not holding their best interests and safety at the forefront of their marketing. As this promotion is ever-present, and all around us, there is always more that gambling operators can do to protect the safety and wellbeing of their customers. It is accepted that the main objective of gambling advertising is to spread awareness of gambling brands and products. However, gambling marketing is usually delivered on platforms that have a large reach, such as sport sponsorships and social media. These platforms provide gambling operators with many

opportunities to include more harm reductive content in their marketing. While it is true that there are some safeguards on social media platforms, these are easily bypassed by those who are not of age, inflating their age on these sites, exposing them to previously restricted gambling content. Therefore, social media sites could focus on age verification measures to prevent this marketing of gambling activity to adolescents (Parke et al, 2014).

Currently, the frequency of these harm reductive messages is too low – references to harm reduction were present in only 3% of the world's most popular sports broadcasts (Purves et al, 2020). Further, there were no examples of harm reduction or age restriction messages in high profile locations – such as on the jerseys of the athletes or the advertising boards surrounding the field of play. When these messages were present, they were mostly limited to advertising breaks which, ironically, are no longer a factor due to the recent “whistle to whistle” advertising ban. This restricts gambling ads being shown around live sport, beginning five minutes before the event and finishing five minutes after. Horse and greyhound racing broadcasts are exempt from this ban, outlining how there is still more to be done to protect consumers to gambling advertising exposure (Betting & Gaming Council, 2020).

While some people can successfully take part in the activity specifically for leisure, others aren't so lucky, and for them it may lead to significant problems in their lives. Ireland ranks 14th for average highest losses on gambling in the EU (Hutton, 2021), with roughly 12,000 problem gamblers in the country, according to a survey carried out in February 2022 (Health research board, 2022). Therefore, it may be safe to assume that harm-reductive content in Irish gambling advertising is not having the desired effect, and the lack of research regarding this concept allows for the author to appraise the interviewee's perceptions of safer gambling messages.

Harm-reduction messages have the capability to counter the promotional message by encouraging safer gambling, drawing attention to the negative aspects of the activity, and making it known there are institutions devoted to helping people who have developed problems. Research tells us that harm-reduction messages can initiate moderate changes in consumer gambling activity. However, the effectiveness of such messages is reliant on their positioning, design and content. These factors ultimately influence the message's dissemination. Where harm

reduction messages are included in gambling marketing, roughly three-quarters have age warnings and terms & conditions with very poor visibility, with more than half having harm-reduction messages with very poor visibility. (Critchlow et al, 2020). This is consistent with the perception that the consumer protection message is subordinate to the promotional content, and strategically placed as little attention as possible compared to the marketing.

A key issue with these messages surrounds those that are distributing them. It is suggested that gambling marketing is carefully designed to cue gambling activity, as most measures taken to combat gambling harms are led by operators within the industry. Independent research carried out on these campaigns, ones funded by beneficiaries of harmful products such as alcohol and tobacco, continuously found them to be ineffective, misleading or promoting the industry and its players (van Schalkwyk et al, 2021). A recent comparative study carried out in Australia is perhaps the most recent to show this. Harm-reduction messages in advertisements run by both public health agencies and alcohol industry social aspects found the latter were less effective at motivating the intent to reduce alcohol consumption, inciting positive fun-related perceptions towards those who consume alcohol (Van Schalkwyk et al, 2021).

The possible negative consequences of gambling are rarely, if ever, discussed within harm reduction messages. Nor is there any straightforward, objective advice on how someone viewing the message can control or improve their gambling activity. Instead, phrases that are commonly used include “When the fun stops, stop”, “Enjoy gambling responsibly” and “Play it safe”. Further, they simply include telephone numbers or site addresses to sources of support for problem gambling, when there is potential for a more in-depth message. “When the fun stops, stop” is perhaps the most common harm-reduction message attached to gambling marketing in Ireland and the UK, but there are fundamental issues with the message. The attempts to focus people's perceptions on the “fun” that may be enjoyed while gambling is clear, as the word is usually displayed more prominently than the other words in the message.

The content analysis carried out by (Critchlow et al, 2020) found that this particular message was present in roughly two-fifths of the advertisements they analysed. This is concerning, not least because of the perceived lack of fun that people have when they are gambling. In 2018, the UK

Gambling Commission found that 29% of people who were engaging in gambling activity were doing so for fun (Critchlow et al, 2020).

It is for these reasons that these types of advertisements have been criticised for not providing people with enough information and guidance for responsible gambling, relying on the consumers interpretation of what responsible gambling looks like.

2.2 Advertising Characteristics

2.2.1 Structural Features of Gambling Advertising

The marketing of gambling is conducted on various platforms and devices, ranging from conventional methods to more innovative ones, some of which will be detailed later in this section. Before gambling advertising can be disseminated through these platforms, operators try to ensure the marketing is as enticing as possible, to maximise the impact the marketing will have on those exposed to it. The structural elements of gambling marketing are designed to appeal to an array of emotions and cognitions to encourage gambling. There is an emphasis on the use of team colours, as well as the dramatising of sentient features of gambling, as if it were a sport – stimulating sights and sounds, the challenge of competition and the joy of winning (Sproston et al, 2015).

Research carried out by Ebiquity, a media investment analysis firm, found that gambling marketing on television have shifted their focus from practical & retail themes to brand engagement & emotional persuasion (Sproston et al, 2015). The growth that social media platforms have enjoyed since this literature was published has undoubtedly led to even more brand engagement for these gambling firms. A substantial portion of the engagement on these platforms is driven by the fact that consumers can “like”, repost or join in the conversation under a post, which are usually cleverly worded to drive as much engagement as possible. Paddy Power are experts at this, with their well-known advertising campaigns often catching headlines. Today, gambling firms do not even need to post marketing in order to have consumers bet with them, as there are countless “tipster” pages on all social platforms that post predictions that followers then use for their own bets with their chosen bookmaker.

It is safe to assume that these structures are put in place to drive gambling activity as much as possible. In order to make the process of viewing the advertising and then engaging in the activity as seamless as possible, at the forefront of each gambling firm's social media pages is a direct link to their site, where bets can be placed in seconds. The impact of the advertising would be compromised if it was difficult to engage in the activity after being exposed to the marketing of it, so it is in gambling operators' best interests to make it as easy as possible for potential customers.

2.2.2 Delivery & Strategic Placement of Gambling Advertising

Advertising campaigns are constructed with the target audience in mind. Firms will try to market their products with as much volume as possible, on the platforms in which they know their customers will be engaged. The forms of media that we consume are constantly growing and evolving and gambling operators have invested heavily in advertising in these spaces. The UK's gambling industry advertising spend increasing more than 17% from 2014 to 2018 is testament to this (Torrance et al, 2021). This level of funding has facilitated the development of sophisticated advertising campaigns that are dispersed across various forms of media, including most forms of social media, as well as being deeply intertwined in sports.

Gambling operators are shifting their focus to extending the reach of their advertising into these digital spaces, as it supplies them with continuous advertising space. Naturally, The Covid-19 pandemic was a major factor in the shift of focus to advertising in the digital sphere. Therefore, attempts to reduce the volume of television advertising, such is the case currently in Ireland and the UK, will do little in reducing the overall exposure to gambling advertising amongst potentially vulnerable audiences. (Torrance et al, 2021).

When exploring previous literature on the strategic placement of gambling advertising, two main topics of discussion arose most frequently. These were the extensive inclusion of gambling advertising in all aspects of sport, and the circulation of gambling promotional content on social media. A study examining the frequency and nature of gambling advertising on major sport television broadcasts in the UK made for some interesting reading. Of all the major sports, viewed by millions worldwide, boxing broadcasts were found to contain the most frequent

gambling references, with promotional content appearing approximately every thirteen seconds (Purves et al, 2020). Football broadcasts were the next most saturated in gambling marketing references, with one appearing every twenty-one seconds. The samples examined were mostly English and Scottish premier league games, although champions league and international fixtures were also observed. The latter pair contained much fewer gambling references from the domestic games. These references included, and were not limited to, the advertising boards surrounding the pitch, gambling firm's logos on player shirts and pre & post-match interview boards. Most of these references were present in strategically selected locations, such as pitch-side and on player's shirts, and at times where viewership would be at its highest point (Purves et al, 2020). These are measures taken to increase the size of the audience for gambling marketing and promotional content.

Although these conventional methods of television and print media are still popular, it is the digital space that seems more appealing for gambling operators to pursue their marketing. The global reach of today's social media platforms supply gambling operators with opportunities to drive brand awareness, recruit new customers and interact with new and existing customers seamlessly. The most popular platforms used by operators to distribute gambling marketing include Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube (Gainsbury et al, 2015). A brief navigation through any of these apps will almost always be interrupted, in some sense, by gambling marketing. These instances include sponsored posts directly from gambling firms, which the social media site will place on the 'timeline' of a certain number of accounts, irrespective of whether they are following the gambling firm or not.

Similarly, YouTube ads are a method of advertising that consumers cannot simply unsubscribe or opt-out from, and Bet365 have taken advantage of this, with their 15 second non-skippable ad at the forefront of many YouTube videos on the site today. It makes sense for Bet365 to focus on these advertising opportunities, as they are an online-only company and have no land-based promotion. Professional athlete endorsements are another popular strategy, a major driver of brand awareness and activity, depending on the reach of the athlete. Athletes partnering with betting companies for promotion is more popular in combat sports, but the popularity of these

athletes is growing over time, leading to more people being influenced by their posts to social media, which are commonly in partnership with a gambling firm.

Past research has found that younger people tend to perceive these types of promotions as depicting gambling as an activity that provides enjoyment and easy money, especially when these messages are not countered by information on responsible/problem gambling, which we have seen is far too common. It has been suggested that the digital marketing strategies such as the ones outlined above have the potential to embed brands in the lifestyles of their consumers, creating a relationship between individuals and brands (Gainsbury et al, 2015).

It is hard to measure the true reach of a gambling promotional campaign on social media, because as people interact with them through replies or 'likes', the more eyes become exposed. This is particularly concerning, as the potential sharing of this content may aid gambling operators in marketing their products to vulnerable audiences, such as those who are under 18 years of age. Operators can include age restrictions on their content, preventing those not of age from 'liking' and sharing. However, the ease in which one can falsify their age, with no age checks conducted by Facebook or Twitter, is striking. Even more alarming are the findings from a study that found 38% of people under the age of 18 on Facebook are under the 13-year-old age requirement, and over half of 12-year-olds observed in Europe declaring they actively use a social media site of some kind (Gainsbury et al, 2015).

Increased regulation of gambling advertising has, unsurprisingly, been strongly associated with lower problem gambling rates (Syvertsen, 2021). The lack of restrictions on social media concerning this genre of content, ongoing problems within monitoring it, coupled with its viral use amongst today's youth, suggest that more measures must be taken, and additional research carried out, for us to understand more about the distribution of gambling marketing across digital platforms, and how it shapes consumer attitudes and perceptions.

When placing marketing in locations with high exposure isn't having the required effect, operators occasionally utilise other methods of reaching their audience. A relatively untapped method of marketing, at least in the UK and Ireland, is direct messages to customers. An alternative to the more general methods of advertising such as TV ads and social media

promotions, emails and texts allow the firms to reach their targeted customers immediately, with little to no barriers between the parties.

The digitalisation of the gambling industry creates a betting experience that is extremely easy to tap into, whereas previously people had to take more active steps if they wanted to take part in gambling. Both promotional emails and text messages usually contain direct links to the operators' site or app, e-mails facilitate a more intriguing form of communication, with the inclusion of images and longer text, while texts are usually brief and contain only text. These messages sent from Gambling operators directly to consumers act as a double-edged sword. While they are distributing targeted promotions and incentives, these also act as a broad reminder for people to engage in gambling activity (Hing et al. 2018).

The sheer volume of people that encounter some form of gambling advertising through these placement and delivery strategies makes the relative scarcity of previous research in this field surprising, although it leaves the present study with more opportunity to gain an understanding of perceptions towards the marketing techniques.

2.3 Impacts of Gambling Advertising

Gambling operators devote astronomical amounts of money to their advertising campaigns, in sports venues, newspapers, billboards, television, radio and the many channels on the internet. Many countries have experienced an increase in the volume of this marketing in the recent past. The rationale for this increased investment in gambling advertising is that investments will pay off in the form of increased levels of gambling participation (Hanss, 2015).

Measuring the impacts of advertising on consumers is a challenging task. A portion of the content used in the marketing is purposely tweaked in order to suppress critical observations. In enticing fashion, the marketing may change consumer perceptions of gambling in a more favourable manner. People can measure the perceived influence that gambling advertising has on them, although this is often biased through the "third person effect", in which people downplay the impact advertising has on themselves and to exaggerate the effect on other people. Moreover, people can approximate the amount of advertising they are exposed to when it is requested, although bias may also be present here, in the form of recall errors and differing interest in the

products & services advertised (Binde, 2018). It is conceded that this bias may be present throughout the data collection of the present study.

2.3.1 Shaping perceptions

It is argued that perceptions are influenced by every-day interactions and approved social norms (Nyemcsok, 2022). The influence of perceived social norms is a concept that is also suggested by Martin Fishbein's theory of planned behaviour, an underpinning theory in the analysis of data in this study, to be discussed later in this section (Ajzen, 2012).

Social risk theorists believe that by analysing the social processes that shape risk perceptions may aid in the understanding of why people engage in activities that are potentially detrimental to their health and wellbeing. For example, Zinn (2019) claims that younger people are motivated to partake in risky behaviour, as a means of developing their social identity and position in their social circle. Therefore, social context is an underlying factor when evaluating people's motivation for risky behaviour. For example, social norms in an individual's everyday environment may encourage them to make choices that are more agreeable or aligned with society's choices. The consistent and widespread exposure to gambling advertising may desensitise people to the effects of the activity, gradually aligning it with society's norms. This is consistent with the previously discussed 'gamblification of sport' (McMullan, 2011). This refers to the deep lying role that gambling advertising holds in sports broadcasts today. Young men's sports betting attitudes and activity suggest that they perceive gambling as a normalised activity for men who are active fans of sport, and this can lead to their own participation in gambling.

The present study will attempt to grasp a clearer reasoning as to how the alignment of gambling with sport, amongst other factors, has facilitated in the normalising of gambling advertising. Most people are exposed to the gambling industry, in one way or another, before they even reach the legal age to gamble. These early life experiences are where an individual's initial attitudes are formed on a subject such as gambling (Nyemcsok et al, 2022). These experiences are not limited to exposure to gambling advertising; it may be a young child going to the dog track with their family and being encouraged to take part in informal gambling or being bought scratch cards to scratch on the way home from the supermarket. The children in these cases, as well as their

parents, may not be fully aware of the level of gambling exposure their child is subject to. Many people would probably not even consider scratch cards to be a form of gambling, which is further indicative of the lack of information on gambling and all its forms. Gambling advertising is not dissimilar. For a child to avoid being exposed to any form of gambling or gambling marketing before they are 18 would be extremely difficult, such is its deep lying role in today's media. Therefore, it is this premature exposure that first influences people's perceptions of gambling. A key objective of the present study is to gauge how promotional gambling content can influence people's perceptions of gambling now they are of age to participate.

2.3.2 Influence on behaviour

In the recent past, the gambling industry has enjoyed numerous technological advances and modernisations that have led to new online gambling products, some of which have been discussed previously in this section of the dissertation. The range of different products now available to people, on different devices and locations, has changed the way they interact with them. Studies suggest that the increase in availability and accessibility of opportunities to gamble is directly linked to the increase in problem gambling among people (Killick, Griffiths, 2020).

These studies have also reported that the viewing of gambling advertising is closely related to an increase in desire to gamble among people with different activity levels, from low-risk participants to problem gamblers. The association between the viewing of gambling advertising and the subsequent altering of the viewers perceptions of gambling activity have also been discussed. It has been conceded that further research in this field should study the self-perceived influences of gambling advertising by observing variables such as the channels through which the advertising is distributed and existing attitudes towards gambling and gambling advertising (Binde, 2018). Therefore, the author plans to incorporate these shortcomings of previous studies into the objectives of this present study, investigating how consumer attitudes towards gambling are influenced by the advertising they are exposed to across various media channels.

As previously discussed in this section of the dissertation, gambling advertising is becoming more focused on target audience groups in terms of placement and content, through various channels. Those that are more likely to be targeted are those that are problem gamblers or

members of the younger demographic, as these are the consumers that the advertising is most likely to influence (Binde, 2018). Previous studies have observed positive associations between gambling advertising exposure and heightened gambling intention, which may be affected by changes in perceptions of gambling (Syvertsen, 2020). Content analyses of marketing in this industry tell us that much of the content features promotional material, such as increased odds and other potential enticements. Promotional advertising may be particularly impactful as it encourages and normalises gambling more directly, as opposed to when the message is one emphasising the brand awareness and positive company image (Hing et al, 2018, Binde, 2018). Those that already perceive gambling in a positive light have a higher tendency to evaluate gambling content positively and interact with it wherever possible, such as social media. Therefore, triggering gambling activity or normalising the behaviour is an outcome among people that are already interested in the industry (Kaakinen, 2020).

A Swedish study conducted in 2018 analysed consumer's self-perceived negative influences of gambling advertising, arriving at some intriguing conclusions. A strong association between these negative influences and self-imposed limits on time and money to be spent on gambling was noted, with 1 in 3 people who reported consistent negative influences of advertising having set these such limits. The most likely reasoning for this association is that gambling advertising exposure prompted impulses to gamble that are hard to stifle and damaging to the person's efforts to gamble responsibly (Binde, 2018). Of the respondents, 17% reported negative influences surrounding the advertising for "bonuses" - such as boosted odds or money-back offers. This relatively high figure arose from the overrepresentation of people with a higher education, among those who reported negative influences.

It is speculated that this may be due to such people attempting to be as informed as possible and exploiting offers and benefits. This will make these consumers more interested in the advertising, and more displeased, and likely to voice that displeasure if the advertising has influenced them to gamble more than they had set out to (Binde, 2018). Attempting to establish how consumer attitudes towards gambling are shaped through advertising enticements – such as 'bonuses' above – is a key research objective of the present study, as well as investigating the levels to which this advertising motivates and results in gambling participation.

2.4 Influence of Literature on Methodology

As previously outlined, Martin Fishbein's Theory of Planned Behaviour was chosen as an academic framework to underpin the research carried out in this study. Fishbein's theory of planned behaviour has led to a wealth of empirical research that supports the components of the theory. It has been suggested that behavioural, normative and control beliefs supply a basis for attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. These three components combined influence a large portion of the deviation in behavioural intentions in people, and these intentions and the perceived behavioural control the person holds can be used to predict actual behaviour (Ajzen, 2012).

The present study chose Fishbein's Theory of Planned Behaviour as an underpinning research model as it supplies a stable theoretical framework that allows the author to examine consumer standpoints on attitudes towards gambling, societal norms, perceived behavioural control and gambling intention among the sample selected for primary data collection. In essence, the Theory of Planned Behaviour proposes that a consumer will experience a strong intention to perform the behaviour (gamble) if they view it positively, believe that their significant others would approve of them to perform the behaviour (societal norms), and they believe that it is easy to perform the behaviour (Lee, 2012).

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The identification of gaps in the literature is a futile process unless there are plans to fill these gaps with new findings. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the primary research methods that will be deployed through this study to gather more data on the area of focus.

According to (Jaradat, 2018), Research Methodology is clearly defined as the steps researchers use in order to collect and analyse data. They continue to outline the steps involved in the process;

- Deciding when and how often to collect data.
- Developing / Selecting measures for each variable.
- Identifying a sample test or population.
- Choosing a strategy for contacting subjects.
- Planning the data analysis.
- Presenting the findings.

These processes are not dissimilar to those that underpin Saunders' research 'onion', which will be critically discussed later in this section. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019) make it clear that research methods and research methodology have contrasting definitions. They suggest that research methods are techniques or procedures that are used in the collection and analysing of data, such as interviews and questionnaires. Research methodology, however, refers to the theory of how research should be carried out. The researcher should have a grasp of these concepts, so that the most suitable choices surrounding the research process can be made.

3.2 Research Aims and Objectives

The primary aims of this research were to facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of gambling advertising for the reader, while assessing the influence that this marketing has over those who are exposed to it. The author viewed this as a suitable area of study due to the relative lack of previous literature on the Irish gambling industry, in addition to the perceived need for

more light to be shone on the influences that gambling advertising imposes on consumers who encounter it.

To carry out this research and achieve the research objectives in the most efficient way possible, the most suitable research methods had to be selected. As a variety of alternative methods could have been chosen at each stage, the methods that were applied throughout the research process were selected through a critical evaluation of all potential techniques, each with their own disadvantages and drawbacks, in order to rule out those that were not feasible for this study.

3.2.1 Objectives:

The primary objectives of this study are to analyse current consumer perceptions of the Irish gambling industry, establishing the role of which gambling advertising holds and critically analyse how this marketing content alters consumer perceptions towards gambling and the levels to which it motivates consumers to participate in the activity. Whilst challenging, the author attempted to remain unbiased throughout the data- collection phase of the research.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

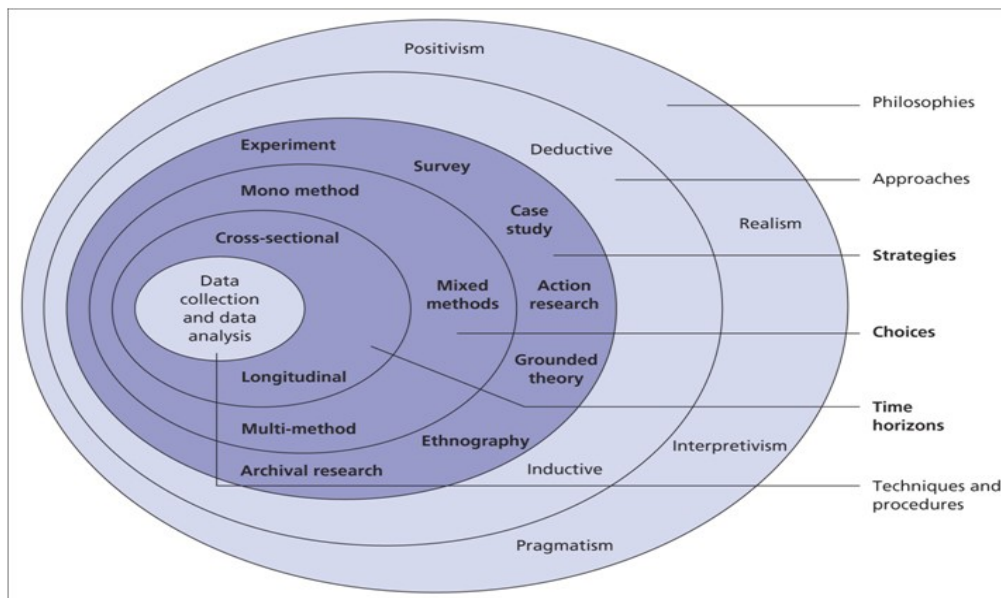
Research objective 1	1. To establish current attitudes towards the gambling industry among consumers in Dublin.
Research objective 2	2. To explore the perceived levels of gambling advertising awareness among consumers in Dublin.
Research objective 3	3. To assess consumer attitudes towards techniques and strategies used in gambling advertising.
Research objective 4	4. To investigate the perceived influence of this advertising on consumer attitudes towards gambling.

3.3 Proposed Research Methodology

As outlined above, it was the primary aim of this study to establish current consumer attitudes towards gambling advertising, how aware consumers appear to be of the advertising, and how the promotional content can influence consumer attitudes towards the activity. The author aimed to achieve these objectives through exploratory, qualitative research. Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill's (2015) 'research onion' model was used as a guide by the author, to ensure the research process was methodical and focused throughout.

The research onion diagram gives structure to the research, by illustrating the different data collection methods that the researcher must evaluate and choose between. The outer two layers of the onion are concerned with choices of underpinning philosophy and theory development, while the inner three layers are methodological choice, research strategy and time frame (Saunders et al, 2019). As critical choices are made at each 'layer', the alternatives are rejected, and these choices must be justified. It is crucial for researchers to be able to justify why they have chosen certain methods over others. The justification of choices and rejections is key in outlining that the research is of a certain standard and should therefore be taken seriously (Saunders et al, 2019).

FIGURE 3.3: THE RESEARCH 'ONION'



3.4 Research Philosophy

Saunders et al (2019) describe research philosophy as a system of beliefs and assumptions about the development of knowledge. While they concede that this definition may be profound, they make assurances that this is precisely what research is; developing knowledge in a particular area. Adams et al (2014) declare research to be a studious investigation aimed at the discovery of new facts or findings. The importance and relevance of utilising research paradigms and philosophies is emphasised, to encourage researchers to observe phenomena in multiple ways, and to subsequently derive knowledge from different philosophical perspectives (Bell et al, 2022).

Each research philosophy has its own benefits it can give to the researcher, as they all offer a valuable contribution to business research. However, it is argued that awareness of the differences between these philosophies is critical, which will lead to easily justifiable philosophical choices for the researcher.

Each philosophy is distinguished from the next through the assumptions typically made by scholars working within that philosophy (Saunders et al, 2019). The three main research assumptions of focus to evaluate are ontology, epistemology and axiology.

3.4.1 Ontology, Epistemology & Axiology

Ontology is the philosophical study of the nature of reality (Fisher, Buglear, 2010). Alternatively, Saunders et al describe ontology as the assumptions about the nature of reality (Saunders et al, 2019). Ontological assumptions influence the way people view the world of business, and the dynamic relationships and processes within it. It is therefore safe to assume that the author's own ontological assumptions influenced the decision to carry out research within the Irish gambling industry. Similarly, the interviewees recorded answers will be influenced by the person's own ontology. In sum, an individual's ontology influences how they see the business world (Saunders et al, 2019).

Epistemology is comparable to ontology as it is also a study of assumptions; those made towards knowledge, what makes genuine knowledge, and how we can disseminate this knowledge to other people (Saunders et al, 2019). Alternatively, epistemology refers to theories about what is

known, or what we can know (Bell et al, 2022). Where ontology may appear to be quite abstract, the relevance of epistemology is clearer to see. As the world of business and management is multi-faceted, this means that there is a broad range of different forms of knowledge that can be considered legitimate. This knowledge may be presented through text, visuals, numerical data, factual statements and opinionated ones. The expansive range of epistemologies available supplies the researcher with a variety of methods to choose from.

Axiology is associated with the roles of values and ethics in research. A key consideration for researchers utilising an axiological approach is the degree to which they wish to view the influence of their own values and beliefs on the research as a positive. Therefore, the researcher will need to establish how they will evaluate their own values, supplementary to the values of those already included in the research process (Saunders et al, 2019). Heron (1996) proposes that values are the guiding reason for all human action, and while it is inevitable that the researcher will carry their values with them through the research process, it is imperative that they can observe and reflect on their values as the research is conducted.

3.4.2 Positivism, Realism, Interpretivism & Pragmatism approaches

According to Saunders' research onion, there are 4 comprehensive approaches regarding the philosophies of ontology, epistemology and axiology. Positivism is the first approach included in the peripheral layer of the research onion, associated with an emphasis on strictly scientific methods designed to produce pure data and facts, free from the influence of human interpretation or bias (Saunders et al, 2019). Fisher & Buglear (2010) elaborate, suggesting positivism can only predict the average behaviour, not the individual, and in many instances, it is just as important to understand particularities as it is to understand the norm. Stephen Hawking provides an idea on what positivism constitutes; *"If one takes the positivist position, as I do, one cannot say what time actually is. All one can do is describe what has been found to a very good mathematical model for time and say what predictions it makes"* (Adams et al, 2014). As the research in this study is not concerned with data & facts but opinions & perceptions, the author viewed positivism as an unsuitable approach and subsequently rejected it.

Realism is an alternative philosophy included in the research onion, that has drawn some comparisons to positivism due to its stance that *'what researchers see is what they get: what we experience through our senses portrays the world accurately'* (Saunders et al, 2019). It is suggested that realism is an underpinning theory of positivism and was therefore also rejected for this methodology.

Researchers who adopt the Interpretivism approach believe that our understanding of reality is socially constructed, through individual's interpretations of reality, and how theirs and other people's attitudes also contribute. Interpretivist researchers are interested in the particularities of a situation, viewing the unique accounts people give on different topics as paramount (Fisher & Buglear, 2010). Interpretivists argue against positivism in viewing humans as different from physical phenomena, as we create meanings, and interpretivists study these meanings. Moreover, the wealth of insight that can be obtained is compromised if it is rigidly aligned with law-like generalisations (Saunders et al, 2019).

As the research required for this study is critically evaluating individual's perceptions and how these can be affected or changed by certain stimuli, it is clearly interpretivism that is the most suitable philosophy to align with. The author was therefore drawn to this interpretivism for this study, and this stance strengthened after learning that pragmatism, the final philosophy, is usually selected by researchers who are struggling to align their research to one of the other philosophies (Saunders et al, 2019). It is for these reasons that interpretivism was the selected philosophy for this methodology.

3.5 Research Approach

Within the next layer of Saunders' research onion are the two approaches to theory development or scientific enquiry; Inductivism and Deductivism (Adams et al, 2014). The inductivist approach is concerned with empirical verification of theories that have been derived from observations - involves observing the 'world' and coming to a generalisation about it. These observations create patterns and trends among the area of interest, and these patterns are used to construct general theory of the nature of behaviour surrounding that variable (Adams et al,

2014). In contrast, the deductive approach is not concerned with empirical validation, instead emphasising laws or hypotheses that have been drawn from a wealth of previous literature on the topic and are rigorously tested against observations made. Should the results of the analysis not be consistent with the hypothesis, the theory must be rejected or modified, and the process repeated. (Saunders et al, 2019)

Each different philosophy tends to draw researchers to different approaches: positivists to deduction, interpretivists to induction, and pragmatists and critical realists to abduction. An area of study where there is a pre-existing wealth of literature from which a theoretical framework and hypothesis can be constructed is more suited to deductivism. With research into a topic that is relatively new, spurring much debate and there is a scarcity of existing literature, it is most suitable to work inductively by creating data and critically analysing and reflecting on this data collected, to identify the themes that the data presents (Saunders et al, 2019).

Furthermore, Saunders et al (2019) suggest that researchers adopting the inductive approach are critical of the deductive approach, due to its tendency to deploy a rigid methodology, with little concern for alternative explanations of what is happening. It is for these reasons the author decided to apply an inductive approach to the research, due to the open-ended nature of the data to be collected and critically assessed in this study.

3.6 Research Strategy

The two main research strategies are quantitative and qualitative. A key distinction is usually drawn between these strategies in business research. These terms, quantitative and qualitative, represent the type of research methods used in a study. Quantitative research is associated with the collection of numerical data, while qualitative research focuses on the collection of data that consists of written or spoken words (Bell et al, 2022).

As quantitative research is built on the pillars of positivism, as well as aligning to the components of a strict research design, it appeared to be an unsuitable strategy for this study from the outset (Adams et al, 2014). Contrastingly, qualitative methods mostly use in-depth, unstructured or semi-structured data to gain insight into consumer behaviour (Turner et al, 2021).

As this study is driven by the need for more understanding of how consumers perceive and feel about life experiences in relation to gambling and its advertising, coupled with the shortage of previous gambling advertising research, a mono-method qualitative approach was chosen by the author. The previously discussed selections of the Interpretivist and Inductive research approaches further justify this selection. Additionally, it is argued that the business environment and human society is becoming more dynamic, so qualitative research and its related methods are critical to drawing credible data from respondents, aiding the interpretation of data that provides meaningful explanations of phenomena (Turner et al, 2021).

3.7 Primary Qualitative Data Collection

Due to the interpretivist nature of this study's methodology, the primary collection of qualitative data is necessary to understand, in depth, the motivations for people's attitudes and behaviour (Adams et al, 2014). Interviews are carried out in-person, over the telephone or through video calls, allowing for a wealth of diverse information to be collected. However, they are time-consuming, and the sample sizes used are generally small (Adams et al, 2014). Qualitative research interviews are categorised into two 'non-standardised' types; semi structured and unstructured. Semi structured interviews are built on a pre-existing list of themes, and key questions directly linked to these themes (Saunders et al, 2019). These act as a 'road map', ensuring to guide the interview (Adams et al, 2014).

Where an interpretivist approach is adopted, how the themes are addressed is likely to be more adjustable and dependant on what each interviewee says. Where semi structured interviews are conducted through the inductive approach, such is the case in this study, the interview will naturally be of an explorative nature, allowing the interview themes to evolve depending on the information drawn from the analysis of the data collected (Saunders et al, 2019). Therefore, semi-structured interviews have been selected as the primary qualitative data collection method for this study, to facilitate flexible information that can be easily aligned with the research objectives, as well as Fishbein's model of consumer behaviour.

3.7.1 Secondary Data Collection

The author completed a critical review of the pre-existing literature on gambling advertising and its influences on consumer perceptions, attitudes and behaviours. The academic material was accessed mostly through the databases included on the NCI library website. This was a time-consuming element of the study but was critical in allowing the author to establish a deeper understanding of the gambling industry, including different gambling environments and systems in a range of countries. This critical review of the literature was fundamental in identifying gaps within the research, therefore stimulating the thought process for the research this study would aim to carry out.

3.8 Population

A total of seven semi-structured interviews, each containing 17 questions, were carried out during the collection of qualitative data for this study. The population sample consists of seven members of the public between the ages of 18 and 29 in Dublin, Ireland. The researcher decided to focus on this age group due to concentration of promotional gambling content present in today's advertising, particularly on social media platforms. Moreover, this age group was the most accessible for the researcher, which aided a fast and efficient process. The interviews were conducted through two methods; via teams call, which automatically transcribed the data, and voice recordings, which were manually transcribed by the researcher. The transcriptions were then critically analysed for any similarities that could be drawn from pre-existing literature detailed earlier in this study.

As outlined later in this section, the selected sample is not without its limitations. Of the participants who were interviewed, 86% were male and 14% were female. The researcher did not view this as a major hindrance to the research, however, as the distribution of gambling activity heavier among males than females (Christie, 2020).

3.9 Analysing Qualitative Data

Analysing qualitative data presents a challenge to the researcher, in relation to reducing what may seem like a daunting amount of data gathered throughout the interview process. In some cases, intricate computer systems can be used to aid the analysing process. However, for the type of research usually involved in an undergraduate or Master's level study the amount of data collected can be sufficiently managed through traditional, manual techniques (Adams et al, 2014).

Each interview session was recorded, either with video & audio or audio alone. The recordings were then manually transcribed by the author, to facilitate the initial search for recurring themes identified based on responses from the interviewees. This search for themes or patterns in the data is a key element of thematic analysis, a popular approach to analysing qualitative data (Saunders et al, 2019). Thematic analysis involves the researcher coding the collected qualitative data to identify common themes for further exploration, directly linked to the research questions of the study (Saunders et al, 2019).

3.10 Ethical considerations

An ethical review form was completed by the author for the activities carried out during the duration of the research. This ethical review form was submitted to the National College of Ireland, to ensure that all participants of this study are treated in an ethical fashion. Any form of sensitive or personal information regarding the interviewees was removed from transcripts and recordings, in order to further protect their best interests.

3.11 Limitations to the research

While this study successfully contributes to the current literature on the gambling industry, it is not without its limitations. Firstly, this cross-sectional, time constrained study attempts to understand consumer perceptions towards gambling and its marketing. While the author believes the present study has sufficiently explored these, without limitations, the author would increase

the sample size, while also randomising it, exploring the effects of advertising on consumer attitudes in a longitudinal fashion. It should also be noted that this study relied upon self report measures from participants, that can be subject to bias.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter will present and discuss the findings from the seven semi-structured interviews carried out during July 2022. The analysis techniques are aligned with the methodology as outlined in Chapter 3, which discussed the use of thematic analysis as a method of analysing the collected data. These themes supplied this chapter with structure, allowing for the author to explore the narratives drawn from the interviewee's responses, in correspondence with the research objectives.

TABLE 4.1: RECURRING THEMES BASED ON RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Research objectives	Major themes	Minor themes
1. To establish current attitudes towards the gambling industry among consumers in Dublin.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Varying participation ● Inherent gambling culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Need for further regulation & education
2. To explore the perceived levels of gambling advertising awareness among consumers in Dublin.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Acute awareness ● High volume 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ‘Gamblification’ of sport & social media
3. To assess consumer attitudes towards techniques and strategies used in promotional gambling content.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Disapproval ● Need for transparency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Exploitation
4. To investigate the perceived influence of gambling advertising on consumer attitudes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Attitudes influenced ● Impact on Behavioural intention ● Behavioural consequences 	

The explorative, inductive methods utilised by the author during the interview process allowed for more versatile, comprehensive interviewee perspectives and attitudes to be established. The research objectives were structured in a way to draw information from the interviewees on the research question *“The perceived influence of gambling advertising on gambling attitudes amongst 18–29-year-olds in Dublin”*. The components of Martin Fishbein’s Theory of Planned Behaviour, as discussed previously, aided the design & structuring of the interview questions, while also supplying the author with more criteria in which to explore the data collected, to gain a more well-rounded understanding of the consumer attitudes towards promotional gambling content and the gambling industry.

4.2 Research objective 1

“To establish current attitudes towards the gambling industry among consumers in Dublin.”

The themes related to the first objective were discussed during the first 5 questions of the interview. The interviewees outline the ways in which they currently interact with the gambling industry, the societal norms associated with gambling and the changes they would implement to the industry if they had the ability.

Interview themes

- Active participation
- Inherent gambling culture
- Need for further regulation

4.2.1 Active participation

The initial questions derived from the first research objective were essentially gauging the extent to which the interviewee interacts with the gambling industry, and their main motivations for these interactions. The first recurring theme during this phase were the participant’s active and often frequent participation in gambling, although the levels and forms of this participation varied between participants:

“I’d mainly gamble through the betting apps on my phone a few times a week, it’s rare that I’d be in the bookies, especially since Covid hit and they were closed for ages, I just got used to using my phone.” (Interviewee 5)

“I wouldn’t really gamble at all, maybe a couple of times a year. When Cheltenham comes around, I like to pick a couple of horses, but even then, I just pick them based on their names, I don’t know anything about it really. I might do the lotto with the bookies the very odd time too actually, if I’m doing it for my Mam or something.” (Interviewee 6)

While exploring participant’s motivations for engaging in gambling activity, a common motivator appeared to be for the purpose of enjoyment, such as in a social setting, rather than being solely motivated by the potential financial gain:

“Just for fun, I guess. The thing that I would do most is play poker online. I’d often just sit down and play a couple of games every night or something before bed, but I enjoy playing the game, the money is just a side thing, you know? It’s not like I’m gambling to try and make a living, I just enjoy playing the game and I enjoy getting better at the game” (Interviewee 1)

“I think it’s just for the bit of excitement, the chance of winning. When everyone is getting in on it around Cheltenham that probably makes it more appealing. I don’t really gamble much so the money isn’t really a motivator for me” (Interviewee 6)

However, there were instances of participants being motivated by the potential financial gain of gambling:

“First of all, to win money, secondly for entertainment. It makes games that I would not have initially had an interest in more interesting, as the result of the game would have an effect on me winning money.” (Interviewee 4)

“I feel the main motivation for everyone in gambling is to win money and be at a profit.”
(Interviewee 3)

Moreover, Interviewee 5 discussed their motivations for gambling with commendable transparency:

“In the beginning the main reason was just for entertainment, it made whatever I bet on more exciting, but eventually, I started using it as an extra source of income or to win money when I found myself a little short of money that month.” (Interviewee 5)

The engagement levels with the gambling industry evident from the interviews, as well as the motivations for this, suggests that there is a tolerant attitude towards gambling activity among the sample. As attitudes are a pillar of Fishbein’s theory of reasoned action, consumer participation levels suggest gambling activity can be perceived positively, at least enough to lead to some participation among consumers.

The narrative that some forms of gambling are perceived differently to other forms soon became apparent to the researcher as, multiple times throughout the interviews process, the participants would discuss their gambling activity in comparison to other more negatively viewed methods:

“I wouldn’t be sitting in the bookies betting on virtual horse races or anything like that”.
(Interviewee 1)

The idea that certain forms of gambling activity are ‘safer’ and more socially accepted, the author believes; is beneficial for the gambling industry and reinforces the strong gambling culture present in Dublin.

4.2.2 Inherent gambling culture

The researcher had a preconceived assumption that there was a strong gambling culture ingrained in Irish society and attempted to test this by gaining participant perspectives on the topic. From the data collected throughout the interview process, arguably, there are many indicators of a strong gambling culture in Dublin, as outlined below:

“So, I think in Ireland there’s a big correlation between gambling and alcohol. Nearly everywhere you look, there’s a pub, and there’s a bookies beside it. It’s really put out there and a lot of people talk about it through word of mouth, and you’ve the advertising on top of that. The horse racing industry is so big here, it’s on every single day, and some of the best horses in the world are Irish horses, so it’s no wonder why it’s so normalised” (Interviewee 2)

“It goes as far as the national lottery, which is run by the state, yet is still made out to be some sort of game that you can’t miss out on” (Interviewee 4)

The influence of a strong gambling culture in Ireland goes beyond the general public, and may hold more influence than people first realise, as interviewee 1 discusses:

“It’s actually one of the reasons why this trading firm that I work for is based in Dublin, as they do a lot of sports betting in there as well, and that’s just not allowed in a lot of countries. I remember the CEO speaking about how the Irish attitude towards gambling and making bets really lines up with this trading firm’s core ethos of making bets on the financial markets. So, it’s clear that these high-level CEOs and stuff recognise that the Irish attitude towards gambling is a lot more open. It’s kind of a ‘hush hush’ topic in America, barring Vegas, you might need to know a bookie or some guy behind a bar or whatever, whereas here it’s a lot more accessible.” (Interviewee 1)

4.2.3 Need for further regulation & education

A common narrative among the participants' answers when asked about what changes they would make to the gambling industry if they had the power was the need for more regulatory measures to be introduced. While most were unclear of what exactly this increased regulation would look like, the sample was not without some interesting ideas, as participants propose:

“People shouldn’t be allowed to be served in the bookies if they’re drunk, and if you’re doing something online (gambling), I don’t know how you’d implement it, but if you had to show that

you're somewhat financially stable before gambling; I'd definitely try to incorporate something like that." (Interviewee 2)

"Maybe a bit more honesty from the gambling firms would make the industry better. They always say gamble responsibly and things like this, but if the government forced them to include taglines like 'the house always wins' or 'the bookies always win' that could go a long way I think."
(Interviewee 1)

"I think a good idea is to get rid of all the signage around the actual betting shops like their branding and their offers in the window and things like that. Just have really it really plain, not attracting any more people than are already going in." (Interviewee 7)

Participants also stressed the need for more education of young people about the dangers of gambling, as current regulatory measures do not appear to be a sufficient means of protecting the vulnerable:

"Gambling can start so young these days. FIFA, one of the most popular games ever, has a mode where you can use actual money to buy player packs, with the chance of getting some good players. I know in some countries this game mode is banned; you can't spend real money in the game at all. It's gambling, and it could be the first step a lot of these kids take. More education on the dangers of gambling and when to know when enough is enough could make a big difference." (Interviewee 4)

"For a country with such a big gambling culture, it's amazing really the lack of education that's given to people on what gambling can do. You see things about the dangers of drink and drugs and how them addictions can cause so much damage to people's lives, but gambling is never talked about in the same way. There needs to be more done to spread awareness of the effects that gambling can have on people I think". (Interviewee 6)

It appears, from the accounts given by the participants, that there is a strong gambling culture present in Dublin. Gambling activity was discussed by each member of the sample, although some with varying degrees of frequency and motivation than others.

The author found it interesting that while consumers appeared to speak sceptically of the Irish gambling industry from the beginning, each participant seemed to engage in gambling activity in some form. The author viewed the data collected from the first set of questions adequately satisfied the first research objective, in attempting to establish current consumer attitudes towards the gambling industry in Dublin.

4.3 Research objective 2

“To explore the perceived levels of gambling advertising exposure among consumers in Dublin”

The themes established here were drawn from the data collected from the questions under the second research objective. Participants discuss what they feel to be the main objectives of gambling advertising, and display awareness of the promotional gambling content around them, with clear recollections of where exposure levels to gambling advertising are the highest.

Interview themes

- **Acute awareness**
- **High volume**
- **Saturation of sport & social media**

4.3.1 Acute awareness

The interviewees displayed awareness on multiple levels throughout the interview process. The first, perceived awareness, the author first aimed to establish how participants viewed the objectives of gambling advertising. Consumers, represented by the sample, displayed an acute awareness of what the main objectives of gambling advertising are:

“To get as many people as possible to gamble their money. The betting companies will always profit, and the more people they have gambling, the more profit they will make.” (Interviewee 4)

“The main goal of gambling advertising, in my opinion, is to get as many new customers as possible, which will lead to more bets being placed, and more money for these companies.”
(Interviewee 3)

The author found this to be an interesting connection; as consumers appear to be aware of the true intentions of gambling advertisements, but are still occasionally influenced by them.

4.3.2 High volume

Given that participants appeared to be aware of the more subliminal elements of the gambling industry, the author assumed that the qualitative data collected would reflect a high level of consumer awareness to the volume of gambling advertising in their environment. This proved to be the case. Participants were asked about where they encounter gambling advertisements, with each person able to name various locations and channels where they have come across them:

“It feels like it’s everywhere now to be honest, all over the media, and you still see old fashioned forms like the billboards or the signs on the bus Paddy Power sometimes do, or ads in the paper that will have a free bet you can cut out”. (Interviewee 7)

“I’d watch a lot of poker videos on YouTube, professionals playing each other or videos giving advice on how to play and things like that, and you’ll always, always get ads on those videos to do with poker, even in the videos themselves, every one of the professionals will be wearing, like, ‘pokerstars.eu, join this site now’ or ‘GG poker’ and things like that, so they’re sponsored professionals”. (Interviewee 1)

The author thought these quotes to represent the reach of gambling advertising today perfectly. The methods and strategies contained within gambling advertisements are constantly developing.

4.3.3 Saturation of sport & social media

From the discussions surrounding the volume and forms of gambling advertising, a key theme among the interviewees was the shared perception that sports broadcasts and social media channels are overrun with promotional gambling content. Upon asking the interviewees about where they encounter the highest concentration of gambling advertising, without a doubt the most common answers were surrounding sports and social media platforms:

“Yeah, I come across it whenever I’m watching sport, any time there’s a break in the game or any sort of commercial break you’d always see some sort of gambling ad. Even before the breaks, you’re going to see it somewhere on the screen, whether it’s on the players’ jerseys or the boards surrounding the pitch.” (Interviewee 2)

“You can’t have a scroll on your phone for 30 seconds before coming across one I’d say. A big thing now is the endorsements with athletes, and UFC fighters and boxers are the first ones to come to mind. These fighters have massive followings, and they’re being paid to get on and tell people to ‘only bet with this firm’ or ‘get over to their site and place your bets now’, it doesn’t sit right with me.” (Interviewee 3)

“I feel like I see a lot of it on twitter, the Paddy Power twitter page has been doing a few of them sketches they do, especially now that the football is back soon.” (Interviewee 7)

The author expected the advertising capacity of sports broadcasts and social media channels to be a recurring theme throughout the interviews, and this appeared to be the case. Discussed above are consumer attitudes towards the saturation of sport and social media in promotional gambling content. These quotes draw parallels to the previous literature reviewed and discussed in Chapter 2 of this study, as Purves (2020) discusses the consumption of sport in gambling advertising, a topic touched on frequently throughout the interviews for this study, as discussed by Interviewee 2. Further links to the previous literature are made by Interviewee’s 3 and 7 as

they discuss how common promotional gambling content on social media is, as outlined by Gainsbury (2015) in Chapter 2 of this study.

4.4 research objective 3

“To assess consumer attitudes towards techniques and strategies used within promotional gambling content”

Throughout the qualitative data collected from the questions surrounding the third research objective, there were some particularly persistent themes derived. These were established as participants conveyed their attitudes towards the tactics deployed within gambling advertising, and what measures they would implement to make gambling advertising safer for consumers.

Interview themes

- **Disapproval**
- **Need for transparency**
- **Exploitation**

4.4.1 Disapproval

When asked about their opinions of the techniques and strategies used by gambling operators in their advertising, the participants unanimously hold negative attitudes towards the methods of these gambling operators. Interviewees 4 & 5 expressed their views eloquently:

“They make out that they are on your side, and that money is easily won. They push false hope that you will be better off using their platform. Paddy Power is a good example, with their twitter account they use a lot of humour, trying to play it off as if they’re just your mate, when in reality their main objective is to take as much of your money as you are willing to hand over.”

(Interviewee 4)

“I think they use far too many fake scenarios to convince people they are going to win big. They either use celebrities or current events that are in the news at the time to get people engaged, which I think is clever on their part, but basing their advertising off people winning crazy amounts of money is wrong because you need to spend big to win big, and most people just end up losing big”. (Interviewee 5)

Consistent with the scepticism towards the gambling industry as a whole is participant’s mistrust of gambling advertisements. Participants appear to be aware of the deception that is extremely common within promotional gambling content, developing another link to the literature reviewed for the present study, as discussed by Binde (2014) in this study’s literature review.

4.4.2 Need for transparency

Stemming from the narrative of consumer disapproval of gambling marketing strategies was the call for more honesty and transparency from gambling operators in their advertising. This was a recurring theme when participants were asked about what changes they would make to gambling advertising if they could, as discussed below:

“If they could be more transparent about exactly what they’re advertising, for example, they could say “Gambling has ruined X amount of lives in Ireland; always gamble responsibly”. (Interviewee 1)

“I would remove the big jackpot wins that are used in most gambling advertisements because they give a false sense of what actually happens when you gamble, they make it look like every time you gamble you win big money, and they need to be more honest about how that’s not the case. I understand why they do it but if I could get rid of them from the ads I would.” (Interviewee 5)

“Alcohol ads always have a message at the end telling people to ‘always drink responsibly’, Gambling ads don’t really have that. That would probably be the first thing I’d do, because they

usually spend the ad trying to get you to bet, but don't even tell you to be careful if you are, and it's probably the bare minimum that they could do.” (Interviewee 7)

It appears that consumer attitudes towards gambling advertisements could be improved by some minimal changes to the advertising. Increased honesty and transparency are clearly high on the list of priorities for consumers in Dublin, and would undoubtedly lead to a safer environment for consumers, whilst improving perceptions towards industry operators.

4.4.3. Exploitation

A common topic throughout the interviews was the call for the introduction of increased safety measures of various forms within the industry. Within the advertising however, the interviewees discussed the targeting and exploitation of vulnerable consumers, such as those who are young and impressionable:

“I'll use the example I talked about earlier, with Paddy Power having that snapchat account. The whole reason they made the account is to raise their awareness and target people that use snapchat, which I'd assume is mostly younger people.” (Interviewee 1)

“I think they try and target a younger audience sometimes, especially with the amount of advertising you get on social media these days. The younger audience are more easily led and might think they'll be able to beat the bookies after seeing the ad's, because of the way they're designed, so I'd say they're a prime target.” (Interviewee 5)

“A lot of their efforts seem to go into trying to get people to gamble who don't gamble already. A lot of the offers you see are boosted odds for new members or 'sign up now for a free bet' and things like that. For younger kid's that might not know any better, that could be all they need to see.” (Interviewee 3)

4.5 Research objective 4

“To investigate the perceived influence of gambling advertising on consumer attitudes”

Throughout the discussions under the fourth research objective, participants expressed how gambling advertising shapes their attitudes towards the activity, their perceived behavioural control following advertising exposure, and how the advertising impacts their behavioural intentions and the societal norms around them. The themes derived throughout these questions correlate with the components of Fishbein’s Theory of Planned Behaviour. The author expected some bias within the data collected under the fourth research objective, as participants discuss, essentially, how gambling advertising affects them.

Interview themes

- **Attitudes influenced**
- **Influence on behavioural intention**
- **Behavioural consequences**

4.5.1 Perceptions influenced

When asked about how their exposure to gambling marketing makes them think about gambling, there were varying degrees of perceived influence of the advertising on each participant’s attitudes towards gambling. The author expected this to be the case, as some participants describe:

“Well, the majority of the time if I saw a gambling ad it would make me consider the offer being advertised. I think that once you have an interest in gambling, any advertisements are going to peak your interest.” (Interviewee 4)

“I sometimes do find myself looking at the specials when they pop up on the screen, seeing how much I’d win if I put this amount on, so I suppose sometimes they would catch my eye and I’ll give it some thought to see if it’s worth it.” (Interviewee 7)

While these participants appear to have their attitudes towards gambling influenced in one way, the sample was not without participants whose exposure to advertising influenced their attitudes in the opposite way:

“I guess it reinforces to me that the bookies always win, it’s really clever marketing, I know myself from the industry that I work in that there’s actually a lot of quantitative methods that go behind calculating them. So, people would see the marketing, but aren’t aware of this quantitative aspect, and I guess it just reinforces to me that the bookies are smart and you’re not going to win much by playing on their terms.” (Interviewee 1)

4.5.2 Impact on behavioural intention

Contrary to the author’s preconceived assumption that there was a strong correlation between gambling advertising exposure and subsequent heightened behavioural intention, in this case, participation in gambling. The data collected from the sample for this study did not align with this assumption. When asked about the extent to which their viewing of gambling advertising motivates them to gamble, participants recall:

“When I see the ads, they don’t really motivate me to bet more than I already do to be honest, maybe because I know that whatever they’re advertising isn’t as good or as easy as they make it out to be”. (Interviewee 3)

“It’s rare. If I saw an advertisement for an offer that appealed to me, I would consider betting on it, but the sports events I am interested in motivate me to gamble more so than the marketing.” (Interviewee 5)

“Not very much. Not at all, actually. It wouldn’t necessarily be that I see something and say, okay, I want to bet on that. Probably the opposite actually; when I’ve already decided I want to bet on something, I’ll look through the offers different companies have on it”. (Interviewee 1)

“They don’t motivate me to gamble at all really. I do see them a lot, but I can’t remember thinking to myself ‘That would be good to bet on’ whenever I see the ads. Occasionally when I see a EuroMillions ad I’ll think of the winnings, but not enough to where it’ll make me want to go and buy a ticket”. (Interviewee 6)

Evidently, the participants selected for this research do not appear to be motivated by gambling advertisements, despite the high volume and frequency of advertisements they encounter.

4.5.3 Behavioural consequences

Consumer attitudes in this sample, in terms of motivation to perform the behaviour, appeared to be minimally affected from exposure to gambling advertising. Therefore, the author expected these perceived minimal effects to extend into the discussions of how exposure to gambling advertising influences attitudes in terms of performing the behaviour, and this appeared to be the case:

“A couple of times a year if even that, during the big events. That’s just me though, there’s people out there that are affected by it a lot more; once they see it, they think ‘oh I’ll do that’. I’d imagine it would affect a lot of people in that way, but for me in particular, it doesn’t really get me to gamble”. (Interviewee 2)

“Not much, only if it’s on Premier League football. I’d put one or two bets on each day of the weekend which covers the football, and I look forward to that. But rarely does me seeing an ad lead to me gambling, unless it’s related to the football.” (Interviewee 4)

“Not very often, my main reason would be if there was an event that’s really popular or I know I’m going to sit down and watch it. The advertising rarely gets me to go and gamble.” (Interviewee 5)

“It’s hard to say, but I’d guess once every couple of months. It could be more sporadic than that, but I’d say once every two months on average.” (Interviewee 7)

Consistent with the discussions surrounding the level to which gambling advertisements increase behavioural intention, the participants supplied a similar consensus when discussing how often their viewing of gambling advertisements subsequently leads to them gambling, and it appears to be a rare occurrence. However, the author is aware that there may be some mitigating factors throughout the answers given by the participants, such as recall bias, which is an ever-present potential mitigating factor within self report measures.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion to the Study

The main objective of the research carried out for this study was to exploratively establish public attitudes towards the Irish gambling industry, and to examine how gambling advertising influences these attitudes consumers hold towards gambling. In response to the research objectives initially outlined in Chapter 3, and discussed in Chapter 4, the author trusts the data collected to supply a broader understanding of the chosen topic. While the results did not align with the authors preconceived assumptions, it is believed the research objectives have been achieved as a result.

The qualitative, inductive nature of the primary data collected, which was then thematically analysed, the author believes to have achieved a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between gambling, promotional gambling content and Irish consumers, by exploring their attitudes and experiences surrounding the Irish gambling industry and the promotion of their products & services.

The interviews carried out have facilitated the author in outlining how the Irish public are an active group within the gambling industry, and the degree to which consumers are desensitised to the activity, evident from the strong gambling culture on the Island. While this culture runs deep, it has not consumed the calls for change within the industry that are still present, and must be heard.

The majority of the participants displayed a good awareness of the advertising around them, displaying an ability to critically discuss the marketing techniques they come across frequently during their day-to-day lives. This awareness was present throughout, and greatly aided the assessing of consumer attitudes towards the marketing techniques deployed by gambling operators. Collectively, the sample articulated negative perceptions of the techniques used, once

again displaying acute awareness, and disapproval of, the strategic techniques used by gambling operators.

If one were to simply read this study and use it as a measure of how effective advertising is in terms of convincing people to buy a product or service, they would come away with poor expectations of advertising abilities. This is due to the sample discussing how little motivation to gamble they experience from viewing gambling advertisements, with one or two minor exceptions. However, the true effect of advertising on behavioural intention could be diminished by a range of factors, such as bias and recall errors.

The same is true for the levels to which advertising exposure subsequently leads to participation in gambling, as participants in the sample discuss how they find themselves rarely gambling as a result of an advertisement or an offer they have come across. Although, the bias may be a factor to consider here also, as it may depend on how the participant views gambling as an activity, but perhaps more importantly, how they believe other people view gambling, as societal norms are a key aspect when exploring why consumers engage in the behaviour they do.

In sum, it is clear the sample selected for this study holds negative attitudes towards the gambling industry and the advertising seen within, despite varying levels of participation and tolerance. While the consumers' perceptions appear to be on a similar level, the activity/engagement levels do not. Therefore, Irish consumers may benefit from potential changes in the industry more than they might think.

5.2 Recommendations

5.2.1 Industry Recommendations

Through carrying out the research needed for this study, the author found himself immersed in usually unknown territory. From the outset, the gambling industry appears to be a slightly grey area on multiple different levels. In Ireland, the absence of a dedicated gambling commission is striking, considering the level to which gambling is present in the region. This was a common

theme throughout the interviews, as participants felt there is a problematic lack of integrity and regulatory measures within the industry.

Clearly, through the introduction of a dedicated body focused on the implementation of tighter regulation, the gambling industry may be able to begin changing how they are viewed amongst Irish consumers. It is therefore recommended to governing bodies to hasten the delayed introduction of the Irish gambling commission, to regulate operations within the industry, in the best interests of the Irish public.

5.2.2 Recommendations for future research

The present study outlines multiple potential areas that warrant future research. While this study has contributed to the relative lack of qualitative research on the topic, specific to the Dublin region, it has merely begun discussions that have the capacity to run much deeper. Perhaps a similar study carried out on the age group of 13-18 year olds would yield different, and more striking results, shedding more light on the need for change within the gambling industry.

While the sample selected for this study is concise, future researchers that may be more quantitatively inclined could embark on a quest to uncover the true level to which advertising exposure leads to consumer engagement, among a broader sample of participants. Further, the possible presence of bias could be reduced with distributed questionnaires, as opposed to face-to-face interviews that upheld this study's data.

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Objective 1 “To establish current attitudes towards the Gambling industry”.

- Q1. How do you currently interact with the gambling industry?
- Q2. If you participate in gambling, what are your main motivations for this?
- Q3. What are your current thoughts on the Irish gambling industry?
- Q4. How do you think wider society views the gambling industry?
- Q5. What, if anything, would you change about the gambling industry?

Objective 2 “To explore the perceived levels of gambling advertising awareness among consumers in Dublin.”

- Q1. What, in your opinion, are the main goals of gambling advertising?
- Q2. How aware do you feel you are of the gambling advertising around you?
- Q3. How often do you encounter promotional gambling content?
- Q4. Can you tell me about where you encounter this content?

Objective 3 “To explore consumer attitudes towards techniques and strategies used in gambling advertising.”

- Q1. What are your thoughts on some of the marketing techniques used in gambling advertising?
- Q2. Who do you think these techniques are used to target?
- Q3. What promotional gambling content do you feel you encounter most?
- Q4. If you had the power, what changes would you make to gambling advertisements?

Objective 4 “To investigate the perceived influence of this advertising on consumer attitudes towards gambling”

- Q1. How does your viewing of gambling marketing make you think about gambling?
- Q2. To what extent does gambling marketing motivate you to gamble?
- Q3. How often does this motivation from advertising lead to your participation gambling?
- Q4. How, in your opinion, does gambling advertising impact the general public?