
PROMOTION OF GAMBLING THROUGH TELEVISED SPORT AND CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: A CONUNDRUM FOR SPORT ORGANISATIONS?

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Abstract

AIM

This paper draws upon empirical evidence collected from Australia regarding impacts of exposure to gambling promotions during televised sport. It aims to identify corporate social responsibility implications for sport organisations engaged in commercial arrangements with gambling companies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In Australia the vast growth in sports betting and sports betting expenditure, along with increased integration of gambling promotions in broadcasts of sporting events have facilitated the “gamblification of sport” (McMullan, 2011, p. 4). However, problem gambling is acknowledged as a public health issue with significant negative effects, not just on those who gamble, but on their families, and society more broadly (Productivity Commission, 2010). Concurrently, organisations face increasing pressure to operate in responsible, ethical and sustainable ways. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is grounded in beliefs that organisations have fundamental responsibilities, not only to their own organisation and its immediate stakeholders, but also to society as a whole (Smith & Westerbeek, 2007). Given the proliferation of gambling promotion through televised sport, there is a risk that favourable individual and social attitudes towards gambling could result and gambling problems could increase (Lamont, Hing & Gainsbury, 2011). However, to date there is scant empirical evidence as to whether promotion of gambling through televised sport facilitates viewers’ intentions to gamble, including amongst problem gamblers.

This research was underpinned by the Theory of Planned Behaviour

(TPB; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). According to the TPB, attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control predict behavioural intention, considered the immediate antecedent of behaviour. Of central interest was whether exposure and attitude to gambling promotions during televised sport provide additional explanatory value in predicting sports betting and gambling intention beyond what might be explained by the TPB.

METHODOLOGY, RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA ANALYSIS

A sample of residents in Queensland, Australia (N=1,000) was assembled with assistance of a market research company. This sample was representative of the Queensland adult population by gender and location. An online survey was administered in October 2012.

Regression analysis was used to test the following hypotheses:

H1: Intention to bet on sports in the next six months is predicted by attitude to sports betting, subjective norms about sports betting (family and friends) and perceived behavioural control with sports betting.

H2: Intention to bet on sports in the next six months is predicted by previous sports betting and gambling behaviour and problem gambling severity.

H3: Intention to bet on sports in the next six months is predicted by exposure and attitudes to gambling promotions during televised sport.

RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS/CONCLUSIONS

Exposure to gambling promotions and attitude to gambling promotions were both independent significant predictors; a more positive attitude to gambling promotions during televised sport and greater exposure to gambling promotions during televised sport both were associated with an increased intended sports betting frequency in the next six months. All gambling behaviour variables and subjective norms were significant predictors. Further, sports betting attitudes was a significant predictor, such that as sports betting attitude became more negative, there was an increase in intended sports betting frequency. It should be noted, however, that the bivariate relation between sports betting attitude and intention to sports bet was positive.

Therefore, greater intention to bet on sports in the next six months was predicted by seven variables. In descending order of strength, these were higher problem gambling severity score, previous sports betting participation, higher frequency of exposure to gambling promotions during televised sport, a more positive attitude to gambling promotions during televised sport, more positive subjective norms about sports betting and a more negative attitude to sports betting, and higher previous gambling frequency. Consequently, H1 is partially supported, whilst H2 and H3 are supported.

In conclusion, sport appeals to and attracts large, diverse audiences

possibly encapsulating disadvantaged socio-economic groups (Lamont et al., 2011). This research suggests that sports betting intention amongst some adults can be influenced by exposure to gambling promotions during televised sport. Consequently, such practices could contribute towards increases in problem gambling behaviour in some populations. Questions therefore arise surrounding CSR for sport organisations engaged in commercial arrangements with gambling companies. Arguments for corporate social responsibility suggest that all organisations should conduct themselves in ways that protect vulnerable populations from undue harm. As such, sport organisations should consider putting the best interests of society ahead of commercially attractive benefits gleaned through commercial arrangements with gambling companies, and should consider more carefully the implications of facilitating the promotion of potentially harmful products.

References

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