What are the effects and consequences of gambling advertising?

New Swedish data in the light of previous research

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Gambling advertising: 
A critical research review

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Content of presentation

Effects and consequences of gambling advertising for society and harm to individuals – but not possible benefits for consumers and gambling companies

1. Macro dimension – population level
2. Micro dimension – individual level
3. Concluding discussion – previous research & areas for future study

Why is this topic important?

• Concerns about the harmful impacts of gambling advertising
• Should advertising be regulated? In what way?
• Research is limited, although growing (about 50 empirical studies)
Share of gambling advertising expenses
licensed and unlicensed companies in Sweden, 2014

- Licensed in Sweden (offering online and traditional gambling)
- Unlicenced in Sweden (offering only online gambling)

Source: The Swedish Gambling Authority
1. Macro dimension
Gambling advertising expenses in Sweden

Source data: SIFO
Gambling participation
In Sweden

Participation at least yearly, monthly and weekly. Source: Swegs and Swelogs population studies. The Public Health Agency of Sweden
Gambling expenses (net loss), percent of disposable income

In Sweden

Data: The Swedish Gambling Authority (participation data 1998, 2008 and 2015 from Swegs and Swelogs population studies)
Problem gambling
In Sweden

1998: data from Swegs (DSM-IV and SOGS, converted to PGSI according to conversion rates in Williams, et al. 2012); 2008 and 2015: data from Swelogs (PGSI); The Public Health Agency of Sweden
Calls to national helpline
In Sweden

Statistics from the Swedish national problem gambling helpline.
Helpline callers’ main form of gambling
In Sweden

Statistics from the Swedish national problem gambling helpline.
Attitudes towards gambling
2011-2015, Svenska Spel survey*

* Image tracking 2011-2015 (Swedes 18-75 years); unpublished data; figure translated to English by P. Binde

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www.onagambling.org
Attitudes towards gambling advertising*
In Sweden, 2014

2. Micro dimension
(Swelogs EP4, 2014)
Self-perceived negative influence of gambling advertising

Data: Swelogs EP4 (2014), n=3,559. Negative influence: “---gamble more often or for more money than you intended...”
Self-perceived negative influence of gambling advertising – PGSI scores

Data: Swelogs EP4 (2014), n=3,559. Negative influence: “--- gamble more often or for more money than you intended...” PGSI: Problem Gambling Severity Index
Self-perceived negative influence of gambling advertising – self-imposed limits on gambling

Data: Swelogs EP4 (2014), n=3,559. Negative influence: “--- gamble more often or for more money than you intended...” Self-imposed limits: “... do anything particular to limit the amount of money or time that you spend on gambling.”
3. Concluding discussion
Micro dimension
– quantitative population study –

Results confirm the conclusions from previous studies.

• Problem gamblers react more strongly to gambling advertising than others

• Gambling advertising make things worse for some problem gamblers

• Gambling advertising makes it harder for some problem gamblers to control their gambling
Macro dimension (1)  
– empirical observations –

Contrary to what might be assumed, massive gambling advertising is not necessarily associated with …

• … a greater number of people gambling
• … increasing problem gambling prevalence
• … increasingly positive attitudes towards gambling  
  (might be the opposite, gambling advertising is much more disliked than other forms of advertising)

Little previous research on these issues; some studies show a link on the individual level between advertising recall and positive attitude towards gambling
Macro dimension (2)
– a cluster of co-occurring phenomena –

**Hypothesis**

- Massive advertising for internet casinos

Internet casino has been a fast-growing market
Gamblers spend (lose) more money than before
Problem gambling in the population does not decrease, despite fewer people gambling regularly
Big increase in problem gambling related to internet casinos
Internet casinos are generally regarded to be a particularly harmful and addictive form of gambling

Hot & lucrative market

Stimulates gambling
How much do advertising contribute to problem gambling?

Conclusion from previous research and empirical observations:

In general, the impact of advertising on the prevalence of problem gambling is likely to be relatively small ...

... but not insignificant and greater in some specific circumstances.

Very difficult to measure.
Closing comments

- The effects and consequences of gambling advertising are complex – e.g., bidirectional influence on attitudes
- There is a need in research to capture the big picture (individual & population) - multi-method studies are recommended
- What groups are especially vulnerable (problem gamblers, youth ...)?
- What messages have the most negative impact? Bonuses – jackpots, etc.?
- Good prospects of gaining more knowledge!
The anthropology of gambling
www.ongambling.org

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