



Towards Socially Responsible Gambling Advertising: A New Normal Perspective

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Study Purpose



- Examine online marketing messages by casino operators in the United States
- Identify initiatives associated with responsible marketing

Casino Locations by Category

- Land-based or Riverboat Casino
- 🐎 Racetrack Casino^{1,2}
- 👤 Tribal Casino³
- 🎴 Card Room^{4,5}
- 🎰 Electronic Gaming Device⁶



Source: American Gaming Association

Introduction



- Gambling continues to be questioned as a panacea for all economic woes
- Extant literature reports escalation of tension between economic objectives and social responsibilities.
- Problem gambling is now being considered a public social issue.
- This extends the notion of impacts beyond an individual level and emphasis on a broader spectrum of social harm.

Why Responsible Advertising of Gambling?



- It has become crucial for the casino operators to demonstrate efforts to minimize harm
 - Increased criticism has emerged of the manner in which commercial gambling is marketed.
- There is a need “for setting advertisement standards, limits on inducements to gamble and more responsible practices for frequent player reward schemes” (IPART 1998: 77).
- It is argued that regulated marketing can help minimize harm and promote responsible gambling tourism.

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maximumVegas. MGM GRAND

LANGUAGE ▾

SPECIAL OFFERS

HOTEL

RESTAURANTS

NIGHTLIFE

AMENITIES

ENTERTAINMENT

CASINO

MEETINGS

M life
Players Club

TABLE GAMES

SLOTS

POKER

RACE & SPORTS

RESPONSIBLE
GAMING

MARKER LIMIT

HOLIDAY
GIFT SHOPPE

CASINO

LET THE GAMING BEGIN

MGM Grand Hotel and Casino provides the maximum gaming experience; poker, blackjack, slot machines, VIP

POKER: UNMATCHED FOR COMFORT

STATE-OF-THE-ART RACE AND SPORTS

Why Responsible Advertising of Gambling?



- Nowadays, only a handful of studies have examined the controversial link between gambling and the content of advertising messages designed by casino operators from the lens of socially responsible marketing.
- This study extends the aforementioned line of inquiry by evaluating online marketing messages of US casinos based on pre-determined criteria.
- Next few slides provide a synopsis of studies focusing on this topic.

Literature Review



- **Binde (2009)**
 - Binde conducted a qualitative study on a focused sample of problem gamblers to examine the impact of gambling advertising.
 - Approximately 25% were not influenced by the advertising content while 50% stated that advertising had a minor impact on their gambling intentions.
 - Only one-fifth of the respondents reported being influenced by gambling advertising in a pronounced manner that weakened their boycott resolution.
 - In summary, the author confirmed that “the negative self-perceived impact was primarily that advertising triggered impulses to gamble.

Literature Review



- Dyall, Tse & Kingi (2009)
 - No formal regulations are set in place to govern socially responsible advertising but there exists an Advertising Standards Code
 - The authors also made an attempt to determine if the Maori perspectives were taken into consideration by the gambling marketers.
 - ✦ To date, no real efforts are visible to establish a dialogue with the indigenous population to ensure safeguard of their interests.
 - ✦ The Maori are more likely to remember gambling advertisements.
 - ✦ The study concluded that a public health approach is needed to minimize gambling related harm.

Literature Review



- Evidence of efforts to monitor gambling advertising also exists in other countries.



- Griffiths (2005)

- Regulations in Quebec require that the state lottery should truly depict the winning odds.
- A new gambling product that is being introduced needs to inform the audience of the associated risks.

Literature Review



- Several authors suggest a social marketing perspective to influence excessive indulgence behavior of problem gamblers.
- Hing (2002)
 - Emergence of problem gambling is a corporate social issue in Australia and argues that the social marketers need to address it.



Source: A Gamblers Guide

Literature Review



- The need for responsible marketing conduct of gambling operators is also reiterated by Slu (2007).
 - Several examples exist in Australia where responsible gambling is regarded as a public health issue.
 - ✦ For instance, the Productivity Commission in Australia (1999) advocates a public health perspective.
 - ✦ Evidently, controlled use of gambling advertising is mandated by several states in Australia.

Literature Review Highlights



- At the international level, interest has emerged with regard to socially responsible gambling advertising and efforts are being put in place to minimize focus on vulnerable populations such as minors, low income people, problem gamblers, and ethnic communities with high recall of advertisement messages.
- However, most of the gambling marketing-related studies in the US focus on commercial aspects such as identifying target market segments and seeking information on consumer profile, travel and spending behavior.
- For instance, a variety of topics are covered including customer preferences and casino selection criteria (Potenza, Maciejewski & Mazure 2006; Yi 2008).
 - Therefore, this study extends this line of inquiry to the US as little research so far has critically examined the online marketing message of casinos across the country using a socially responsible lens.

Methodology



- Two sets of data
 - ✦ One set of data were collected in 2009. This data examined signature websites of casinos from all across the United States to determine if socially responsible online advertising is employed.
 - ✦ The second set of data were collected in 2010 and required students of a South Western university to examine casino websites to see if the socially responsible patterns are presented in a visible manner.
- For the most part, content analysis method is used to analyze data and identify recurrent themes.

Methodology



- The first set of data is collected in two phases.
 - For the first phase, the following priori-based themes are used to gauge the extent to which casinos pursue socially responsible online marketing
 - ✦ Responsible gambling and problem gambling, emphasis on rewards.
 - ✦ Odds of winning, and warnings of excessive gambling and how to keep over-indulgence in check.
 - ✦ In addition to identifying pre-determined themes, pronounced themes from the websites were gleaned from a preliminary examination of ten casino websites:
 - As well as focusing on the casino products, hotels, entertainment, activities, reservations, directions, and transportation also revealed the strength of supply-chain links.

Methodology



- For the second phase, advertising format such as message type objectives and execution styles in addition to matching content with a predetermined set of socially responsible advertising indicators .
 - ✦ An updated version of indicators was used.
 - Big payouts, attractive and enticing gambling offers, new games, promotional offers, rewards, display of cultural icons, beyond-casino products, and supply chain promotion.

Methodology



- The second set of data collection required college students to examine signature websites of casinos and answer the following questions:
 - Warnings of repercussions of excessive gambling behavior such as information on odds of winning
 - Aim of the website: informative or persuasive and pushy so that desire is ignited to gamble straightaway?
 - Use of local cultural icons or signs to attract people (such as living life style of the community where the casino is located or heritage festival or event happening in the location or handicrafts etc. thereby misusing the local resources.
 - Repetitive text to catch attention
 - Message appeal and execution style does the website use
 - Focus on new games and attractive offers and big payouts
 - What is it selling?

Methodology



- Content analysis was conducted of the signature websites of spatially-dispersed and both tribal and non-tribal selection of casinos in the United States.
- Each website was viewed for key advertising and information content. Manner and colors in which information was presented was also noted.
- The first step in the content analysis was to develop a detailed, clear, and manageable framework for coding the data.
 - ✦ Using two independent coders enhanced the quality of the findings.
 - ✦ The themed contents were then matched with the predetermined list of socially responsible indicators.
 - ✦ Bias was minimized with the help of inter-coder checks.

Findings



- Few signature casino websites in 2009 display information on problem gambling (16.8%).
- Most websites do not offer information on odds of winning (86.5%) neither do they warn audience against the repercussions of over indulgence or excessive gambling (13.5%).

Socially Responsible Items	Yes (Frequency)	No (Frequency)
Problem Gambling	16.8	83.2
Responsible gambling	45.1	44.9
Odds of winning	13.5	86.5
Warnings of excessive gambling	13.5	86.5
Enticement of rewards	75.5	24.5

Findings



- Information of on-site restaurants and lodging also receives paramount attention.
- Approximately 25% offer information on related services in the adjoining areas, thereby providing evidence of supply chain connections.

Pronounced Themes	Yes (Frequency)
Entertainment	72.2
Activities	82.5
Hotels	80.6
Restaurants	94.1
Directions	55.4
Transportation	17.4



Findings



- The key advertising objective appears to be persuasive in addition to informing the audience of the casino activities and products.
- Attractive lights and colors present an enticing appeal and persuasive message creates a sense of urgency and leaves the audience believing he or she must get to the casino fast to win the prize.



Source: Fort McDowell Casino

Findings



- Messages are predominantly reported to be emotional in nature.
 - Centered round ideas such as need for fun and excitement and seeking to evoke emotions related to luxury.
 - Rational appeal messages also appear but to a smaller extent and these relate to the self interests of customers.
- Approximately 34% of the casino websites use the local history or culture to draw audience but all refrain from misuse of cultural icons
- Casinos with most cultural icons were Native American casinos and they indeed have authority to display selected expression of their culture.

Finding Highlights



- Only 10% of the casinos promote other attractions and services on their websites although recent trends of casino advertising content reveal extended attention to the non-casino products on the property.
- Responsible gambling continues to receive inadequate coverage on the casino websites.
- Most of the responsible gambling related content appears in small font and is not clearly visible.

Conclusion



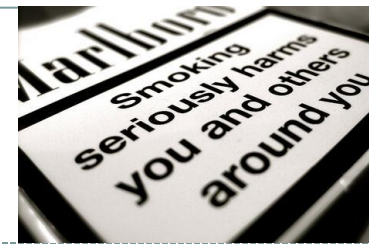
- The promotional messages of the majority of the casinos across the United States are designed to entice and persuade individuals to participate in different types of gambling activities.
- Normalization of gambling within the American society is promoted in a pronounced manner as messages show that gambling is a necessity of day-to-day life style and is a normal part of life.

Conclusion



- The major use repetitive text and slice of lifestyle pictures and pictures of winners to create fake imagery of winnings and fun.
- Gambling related harm is not presented in a visible manner to warn people and provide an accurate view of odds of winning.
- Little mention is provided next to gambling information of warnings of excessive gambling, odds of winning, and responsible gambling.

Implications



- Lessons can be learned from the results of this study and other countries.
- Gambling advertising needs to be more subtle and less persuasive and provide a truthful picture of odds and winning.
- There is a need to regulate advertising messages.
- New harm minimization policies are required to regulate exposure to gambling opportunities that have the potential to be harmful and efforts are thus needed to promote awareness of gambling issues and signs so that problem gaming thresholds are not crossed.



Recommendations



- Future studies should include focus on more comprehensive sample of commercial and tribal casinos.
- A hybrid approach to marketing content should enable future researchers to evaluate non-cyber promotional material employed by casinos.
- It is also suggested that efforts are made to interview marketing personnel of a random selection of casino operations to gain a backstage view of their contemporary efforts to be socially responsible.

Winner & Loser



Source: <http://newyorknewyork.com/casino/>

The New Normal

- More versatile use of marketing is required to proactively encourage responsible participation in gambling.
 - Therefore, a “New Normal” gambling marketing conversation from a socially responsible perspective needs to be embraced by casino operations in the United States.

Thanks for Listening!



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