Comparing the Twitter Posting of British Gambling Operators and Gambling Affiliates: A Summative Content Analysis

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DECLARATION OF INTEREST/FUNDING

- Funding – The study is a part of a wider PhD project funded by GambleAware.

- Declaration of interest – I can declare that I receive funding from GambleAware to carry out my PhD studies, a company that may be affected by the research reported in the discussed study. The remaining 3 authors have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this study.
▪ Marketing of gambling takes place across multiple platforms – television advertising, online marketing, social media (SM), kit sponsorship, stadium sponsorship etc

▪ Growing amount of literature exploring the content of television advertisements in Great Britain (Cassidy & Ovenden, 2017; Lopez-Gonzalez, Guerrero-Solé, & Griffiths, 2017; Newall, 2017).

▪ 1 in 20 of UK’s fifteen million regular Twitter users follow an account dedicated to posting gambling content (Miller, Krasodomski-Jones, & Smith, 2016) and 1 in 4 regular online gamblers follow a gambling operator on SM, a number which is higher in young age groups (Gambling Commission, 2018).
OPERATORS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

- Companies use social media to build their brand and advertise their product (Barreda, Bilgihan, Nusair, & Okumus, 2015; Okazaki & Taylor, 2013)

- Evidence suggests individuals who interact with brands using SM demonstrate a number of “positive” marketing outcomes (Hudson, Huang, Roth, & Madden, 2016)

- In gambling context, international research has assessed how SM has been used to market gambling (Gainsbury, Delfabbro, King, & Hing, 2016; Gainsbury, King, Hing, & Delfabbro, 2015; Thomas et al., 2015)
AFFILIATES ON SOCIAL MEDIA

- Affiliates – 3rd party firms who are financially incentivised to attract custom to a gambling operator.

- Presented as being ‘betting communities’ or tipping accounts (Savage, 2018) and very little understanding on how such accounts are viewed by bettors.

- 2x the number of affiliate accounts compared to gambling operators on Twitter and largest community of gamblers generally follow affiliates as opposed to bookmakers (Miller et al, 2016)
Aims to assess what type of content is posted on social media by gambling operators and gambling affiliates.

Also aims to investigate whether the frequency of each type of content differs between operators and affiliates. This will allow for inferences to be made on whether operators and affiliates employ similar marketing strategies.
METHOD – SAMPLING

- Audited social media accounts of top 40 grossing gambling operators. Twitter identified as the most commonly used SM platform.

- 5 identified with most followers: PaddyPower (652,136), Bet365 (383,504), SkyBet (361,582), Coral (347,455), William Hill (204,639).

- Manual search of “people” section on Twitter to identify affiliates – specific search terms used. Followed the ‘you may also like’ section from each identified affiliate.

METHOD – ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

- Summative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) used to quantify number of Tweets made for a range of different reasons.

- Initial coding scheme developed from a subset of data (n=1,000) – then applied to the rest of the data set (n=13,374). 2nd researcher applied coding scheme to just over 10% of data (n=1,400).

- Chi-Squared Test of Independence used to compare proportion of posts from operators and affiliates.
# Results – Sample Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Followers</th>
<th>Total Posts</th>
<th>Total Posts Per Day</th>
<th>Mean Retweets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paddy Power (@paddypower)</td>
<td>652,136</td>
<td>1,472</td>
<td>105.14</td>
<td>85.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bet365 (@bet365)</td>
<td>383,504</td>
<td>1,008</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>35.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SkyBet (@SkyBet)</td>
<td>361,582</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>25.50</td>
<td>17.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coral (@Coral)</td>
<td>347,455</td>
<td>1,806</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>11.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Hill (@WilliamHill)</td>
<td>204,639</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>29.93</td>
<td>9.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operators' Total</td>
<td>1,949,316</td>
<td>5,059</td>
<td>361.56</td>
<td>38.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footy Accumulators (@FootyAccums)</td>
<td>583,407</td>
<td>1,565</td>
<td>111.79</td>
<td>42.55</td>
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<td>Live Football (@livefootball)</td>
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<td>1,023</td>
<td>73.07</td>
<td>0.27</td>
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<tr>
<td>Football Super Tips (@FootySuperTips)</td>
<td>409,270</td>
<td>1,862</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>3.83</td>
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<tr>
<td>My Racing Tips (@myracingtips)</td>
<td>267,451</td>
<td>1,288</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>0.91</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Winners Enclosure (@TWEnclosure)</td>
<td>194,858</td>
<td>2,577</td>
<td>184.07</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affiliates' Total</td>
<td>1,866,358</td>
<td>8,315</td>
<td>593.93</td>
<td>9.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RESULTS — TYPES OF CONTENT POSTED

Operators posted more:

▪ Sports Content (39.59% vs 12.80%)
  ▪ Humour (18.48% vs 3.73%)
▪ Promotional Content (3.80% vs 0.60%)
  ▪ Safer Gambling (1.62% vs 0.26%)
  ▪ ‘Other’ (0.87% vs 0.06%)

Affiliates posted more:

▪ Direct Advertising (34.31% vs 22.10%)
▪ Betting Assistance (29.66% vs 4.43%)
▪ Customer Engagement (1.62% vs 0.26%)
▪ Update of Bet Status (5.64% vs 0.83%)

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Twitter thread:

Mike Ashley: 'Rafa, do you want a massive Sports Direct bag to put all of your stuff in?'

Rafa Benitez: 'Thanks Mike, very kind. You're not so bad after all.'

Mike Ashley: 'You're welcome. That'll be £1.'
RESULTS – DIRECT ADVERTISING

- Affiliates posted a higher proportion of tweets containing direct advertising – but it was relatively common for both (34.31% vs 22.10%)

- For affiliates, direct advertising tended to focus on highly attractive sign-up offers whereas for operators it was usually presenting specific markets or bets.
RESULTS — BETTING ASSISTANCE

▪ Affiliates also posted a lot more suggested bets and tips than operators (29.66% vs 4.43%)

▪ These bets were not followed up very often (5.64% of affiliate posts) and when they were they tended to focus on winning bets or near misses.
RESULTS – SPORTS CONTENT

- Operators posted more sports content than affiliates (39.59% vs 12.80%)

- Sports content focused on providing match previews/commentary and sporting news. This allows their content/brand to be seen by wider sporting audience.
RESULTS — SAFER GAMBLING

- Very little content focussed specifically on safer gambling (1.62% for operators vs 0.26%).

- Messages on safer gambling tended to be descriptive in nature – focusing on gambling slogans or safer gambling messages which are available.
DISCUSSION - CONCLUSIONS

▪ Operators more focused upon ‘building brand’ whereas affiliates are more interested in the ‘hard sell’.

▪ ‘Gamblification of sport’ (Lopez-Gonzalez, Estévez, & Griffiths, 2017) extends to the online environment. Concerns about this level of exposure for at-risk populations.

▪ Affiliate marketing has potential to develop unrealistic expectations of winning – availability heuristic (Fortune & Goodie, 2012)

▪ Very little focus on safer gambling and no age restrictions on affiliate accounts
DISCUSSION - LIMITATIONS

- Multi-purpose tweets
- Software used to download Tweets
- No coverage of how the accounts interact with consumers.
DISCUSSION – FUTURE DIRECTIONS

▪ Research assessing how gamblers respond to SM marketing from operators and affiliates. Also, a need to explore perceptions of affiliate marketing?

▪ Can social media be used as a platform to successfully promote safer gambling? If so, what type of messages are most useful?
REFERENCES


