



Sports Betting Advertising on X and Gambling Behaviour among Youths in Sango Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Background: The rapid expansion of sports betting advertising on social media platforms has intensified concerns about its influence on youth gambling behaviour in Nigeria. X (formerly Twitter) has become a major channel for betting promotions through sponsored posts, influencer endorsements, and real-time sports engagement. Despite increasing exposure, there is limited empirical evidence on how such advertising shapes gambling behaviour among youths in semi-urban communities like Sango Ota, Ogun State.

Objective: This study examined the influence of sports betting advertising on X on gambling behaviour among youths in Sango Ota, with particular attention to exposure frequency, advertisement types, perceived credibility, and socio-economic mediating factors. The study was anchored on the Theory of Planned Behaviour and Social Learning Theory.

Method: A descriptive survey research design was adopted. A total of 350 youths aged 18–35 years residing in Sango Ota were selected using purposive sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequency counts and percentages, with results presented in tables.

Results: Findings revealed a high level of exposure to sports betting advertisements on X, particularly through sponsored posts, influencer retweets, and advertisements displayed during live sports events. Bonus promotions, attractive odds, and celebrity endorsements were identified as the most engaging forms of advertising. The study further established that exposure significantly influenced youths' gambling attitudes and practices, increasing interest and encouraging participation in sports betting. Although many respondents acknowledged exaggeration in promotional messages, the advertisements were still perceived as persuasive. Income level, peer influence, and personal interest in sports were found to mediate gambling behaviour.

Conclusion: The study concludes that sports betting advertising on X significantly shapes gambling behaviour among youths in Sango Ota. Repeated exposure, persuasive messaging, and social influence mechanisms contribute to the normalization and practice of sports betting among young people.

Unique Contribution: This study contributes to literature by providing empirical evidence on how social media-based gambling advertising interacts with socio-economic and peer dynamics to influence youth behaviour in a Nigerian semi-urban context.

Key Recommendation: There is a need for stricter regulation of online gambling advertisements, strengthened digital media literacy programmes for youths, and enforcement of responsible advertising standards to reduce potential gambling-related harms.

Keywords: Gambling habits, social media advertising, Sports betting, X (Twitter), Youths



INTRODUCTION

Sports betting has emerged as a significant social and economic activity in Nigeria, particularly among youths, shifting from a previously stigmatized practice to a normalized form of entertainment and income-seeking behaviour. This transformation has been largely driven by increased internet penetration, widespread smartphone use, and the expansion of digital platforms that enable real-time betting without spatial constraints. Recent studies indicate that these technological developments have lowered entry barriers to gambling, making betting more accessible and attractive to young people who are already deeply embedded in digital media environments (Ojo, 2021; Daniel, Gbuchie & Aniebiet, 2023). As unemployment and economic uncertainty persist, sports betting has increasingly been framed as a viable alternative source of income, further reinforcing its appeal among Nigerian youths.

In parallel, the gambling industry has intensified its use of social media advertising, with platforms such as X (formerly Twitter) serving as strategic spaces for promoting betting services. Through the use of trending hashtags, influencer endorsements, live match updates, and interactive promotional content, betting companies actively engage youths and normalize gambling within everyday online interactions. Scholars argue that such advertising does more than inform; it constructs gambling as exciting, socially acceptable, and potentially profitable, thereby shaping positive attitudes and encouraging repeated participation (Griffiths, 2005; Parke et al., 2014; Akinkoya et al., 2024). Empirical evidence from Nigeria shows that frequent exposure to online betting advertisements is associated with increased gambling participation, higher spending, and riskier betting patterns among young people (Irele & Lawei, 2024; Daniel et al., 2023). These trends have raised concerns about problem gambling, with documented consequences including financial strain, academic decline, and psychosocial distress.

Despite growing scholarship on youth gambling and digital advertising, existing studies largely concentrate on university students and metropolitan centres, leaving peri-urban communities underexplored. Areas such as Sango in Ogun State present a unique context where high social media engagement intersects with socio-economic vulnerability, potentially intensifying susceptibility to persuasive betting content. Moreover, the specific affordances of X such as real-time interaction, peer endorsement, and algorithm-driven targeted advertising may amplify the influence of sports betting advertisements in ways that differ from traditional media or other platforms (Ogbemudia et al., 2025). This study therefore examines how sports betting advertising on X influences gambling behaviour among youths in Sango, with a focus on exposure patterns, advertising content, and behavioural outcomes. By addressing this contextual and platform-specific gap, the study contributes empirical insights relevant to media regulation, youth protection policies, and responsible gambling interventions in Nigeria.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Sports betting has become increasingly normalized among Nigerian youths, evolving from a socially discouraged activity into a routine form of digital entertainment and income-seeking behaviour, driven largely by the proliferation of online betting platforms and mobile applications. Recent studies indicate that sustained exposure to gambling advertisements across



digital media contributes significantly to this normalization by portraying betting as exciting, socially acceptable, and financially rewarding (Newall et al., 2019; Akinkoya et al., 2024; Daniel, Gbuchie & Aniebiet, 2023). Social media platforms such as X (formerly Twitter) have intensified this influence through algorithm-driven targeting, real-time sports updates, influencer endorsements, and interactive promotional content that are difficult for young users to avoid (Ogbemudia et al., 2025). While some scholars argue that youth gambling behaviour may also be shaped by peer influence, identity construction, and risk-seeking tendencies rather than advertising exposure alone (Hing & Binde, 2014; Irele & Lawei, 2024), empirical evidence remains inconclusive regarding the specific contribution of X-based betting advertisements in the Nigerian context. This gap is particularly pronounced in peri-urban communities such as Sango, Ogun State, where high social media engagement coincides with economic vulnerability and limited regulatory oversight. Consequently, there is a need for context-specific empirical investigation into how sports betting advertisements on X influence the gambling behaviour of youths in Sango, in order to inform evidence-based media regulation, youth education, and responsible gambling interventions.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective of this study is to evaluate the influence of sports betting advertisements on X (formerly Twitter) on the gambling habits of youths in Sango, Ogun State. The specific objectives are to:

1. To examine the extent of exposure of Sango youths to sports betting advertisements on X.
2. To identify the types of sports betting advertisements that are most engaging and influential among youths.
3. To assess the impact of exposure to sports betting advertisements on youths' gambling attitudes and practices.
4. To determine the perceived credibility and persuasiveness of sports betting advertisements among youths.
5. To explore the socio-economic and demographic factors that may mediate the influence of sports betting advertisements on gambling habits.

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Sports Betting

Sports betting refers to the practice of staking money on the predicted outcomes of sporting events such as football, basketball, tennis, and other competitive games, with the expectation of financial gain (Griffiths, 2005). Traditionally conducted through physical betting outlets, sports betting has increasingly shifted to digital platforms, including websites and mobile applications operated by licensed companies. Technological advancements have removed time and location constraints, making betting more accessible, faster, and more continuous, particularly for young



people who are digitally literate and active on social media (Parke et al., 2015). In Nigeria, sports betting has grown rapidly among youths due to factors such as unemployment, the commercialization of sports, and aggressive marketing by betting operators. Recent studies suggest that betting is increasingly perceived not merely as a game of chance but as a potential income-generating activity, especially among economically vulnerable youths, thereby contributing to its social normalization (Ogbemudia et al., 2025; Gbadegesin & Akintunde, 2025).

Historical Development of Sports Betting

Sports betting has a long historical trajectory dating back to ancient civilizations, where individuals placed wagers on competitive activities for entertainment and economic reward. Historical evidence shows that betting was practiced during the Olympic Games in ancient Greece and during gladiatorial contests and chariot races in ancient Rome, although such activities were often regulated due to moral concerns (Griffiths, 2005). During the medieval and early modern periods, betting became embedded in local sporting competitions and social gatherings, particularly in taverns and public spaces (Thomas et al., 2012). The nineteenth century marked the formalization of sports betting with the emergence of organized bookmakers and standardized odds alongside professional sporting leagues, especially in Europe. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, developments in mass media, the internet, and mobile technology transformed sports betting into a global digital industry, enabling real-time wagering and increasing betting frequency, particularly among youths (Parke et al., 2015; Newall et al., 2019). In Nigeria, the liberalization of the gambling industry and growth in digital infrastructure have further accelerated youth participation in sports betting.

Gambling Advertisements

Gambling advertisements refer to paid or sponsored promotional messages designed to promote gambling activities such as sports betting, online casinos, lotteries, and other wagering services (Parke et al., 2014). These advertisements aim to attract and retain participants by emphasizing potential winnings, bonuses, promotional odds, and ease of participation, while often minimizing the risks associated with gambling. Scholars have noted that repeated exposure to gambling advertisements contributes to the normalization of betting by framing it as entertaining, socially acceptable, and culturally integrated, particularly when linked to popular sports or celebrity endorsements (Thomas et al., 2012; Griffiths, 2005). In the digital era, gambling advertisements have become more targeted, personalized, and pervasive, raising concerns about their influence on youth attitudes and gambling behaviour. Empirical evidence suggests that such promotional content is associated with increased gambling participation and the development of risky betting patterns among young audiences (Newall et al., 2019).

Platforms for Gambling Advertisements

Gambling advertisements are disseminated across various media platforms, each playing a distinct role in shaping public awareness and engagement with betting activities. Traditional media such as television, radio, newspapers, and outdoor billboards have historically served as major channels for gambling promotion, with television particularly effective due to its wide



reach and frequent association with live sports broadcasts (Griffiths, 2005). With the advancement of digital technology, online platforms including websites, mobile applications, and email marketing have become dominant advertising channels, enabling real-time promotion and immediate betting participation (Parke et al., 2015). Social media platforms have further transformed gambling advertising by integrating promotional content into everyday online interactions. Platforms such as X (formerly Twitter) allow betting operators to embed advertisements within sports discussions, trending hashtags, influencer endorsements, and live match updates, making such content highly visible and difficult to avoid, especially for youths who are highly active on social media (Newall et al., 2019).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theory of Planned Behaviour

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), developed by Ajzen (1991), posits that human behaviour is guided by behavioural intentions, which are shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. In the context of youth gambling, TPB explains how exposure to sports betting advertisements on platforms like X (formerly Twitter) can influence intentions and actual betting behaviour. Positive attitudes toward gambling are reinforced when adverts highlight potential financial rewards, entertainment value, and social prestige, increasing the likelihood of participation (Thomas et al., 2012; Newall et al., 2019). Subjective norms are similarly shaped as youths perceive betting to be socially accepted through peer engagement, influencer endorsements, and online discussions, creating implicit social pressure to conform (Akerlele et al., 2025). Perceived behavioural control is strengthened by digital platforms that make betting convenient, accessible, and user-friendly, reducing barriers and enhancing confidence in the ability to gamble (Ogbemudia et al., 2025). Together, these TPB components provide a robust framework for understanding how advertising exposure can translate into gambling intentions and behaviours among Sango youths.

Social Learning Theory

Social Learning Theory (SLT), proposed by Bandura (1977), emphasizes that behaviour is learned through observation, imitation, and modelling within social contexts. Applied to youth gambling, SLT suggests that individuals acquire attitudes and behaviours by observing peers, family members, celebrities, or social media influencers engaging in betting. Platforms like X, Instagram, and TikTok facilitate this observational learning, as youths are exposed to gambling content through adverts, shared posts, and influencer endorsements, often highlighting rewards and social recognition (Akerlele et al., 2025). Reinforcement plays a critical role: positive outcomes such as monetary gain or social approval encourage imitation, while negative consequences are often minimized or absent in online portrayals (Bitainihirwe & Ssewanyana, 2021). In Sango, the interplay of modelling, imitation, and reinforcement helps explain how exposure to gambling content shapes youth attitudes, perceptions, and engagement. SLT thus complements TPB by emphasizing the social and observational pathways through which digital advertising can influence gambling behaviour.



EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Recent empirical evidence highlights the strong association between social media advertising and youth engagement in sports betting. A 2025 study of Nigerian youths found that 80.5% of respondents agreed that sports betting has been popularised through social media advertising, with 96.6% indicating that pervasive exposure to betting promotions increased their participation and addictive tendencies (Ogbemudia et al., 2025). The research also reported that online adverts not only raised curiosity about betting but encouraged frequent wagering, underscoring the persuasive power of digital promotions among young Nigerian populations.

International studies affirm similar patterns of advertising influence on young bettors. A 2024 investigation in Australia and the UK found that sports betting marketing—including exposure to inducements and tailored promotions was significantly associated with higher problem gambling severity among youths aged 18–24, even after controlling for non-marketing variables such as impulsivity and spending patterns (*Journal of Gambling Studies*, 2024). These findings suggest that betting advertisements and incentives can intensify risky gambling behaviours, supporting calls for stricter advertising regulation to protect vulnerable youth groups.

Research on young people’s recall and perception of sports betting advertisements further demonstrates the high visibility and impact of digital marketing. A study conducted around the 2022 FIFA World Cup revealed that a majority of young people aged 18–24 recalled frequent exposure to diverse betting promotions, such as in-play betting and bonus offers, particularly through social and personalized media channels (Springer, 2024). The study also found that higher-risk gamblers were more likely to recall such advertising, suggesting a link between advertising exposure and gambling risk profiles.

Empirical work within Nigerian universities indicates that social media advertisements contribute to sports betting participation among student populations. A 2024 thesis focusing on Lead City University, Ibadan, showed that constant exposure to sports betting ads across platforms like Facebook, Twitter (now X), and Instagram created a unique environment where students encountered and engaged with betting promotions regularly, highlighting the role of digital media in shaping betting behaviours among young adults (Lawei, 2024).

While much of the literature emphasizes advertising influence, some studies point to the nuanced role of social context and mediating factors in shaping gambling behaviour. For example, research on the use of sports influencers in gambling advertising found that while youths are exposed to influencer promotions, their actual betting behaviour was more strongly motivated by expectations of financial gain and promotional rewards than by influencer presence alone (Akerele et al., 2025). This suggests that advertising effects may interact with individual motivations and socio-cultural factors, highlighting the complexity of influences on youth betting behaviour.



METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to investigate the influence of sports betting advertisements on X (formerly Twitter) on the gambling behaviour of youths in Sango, Ogun State. The population comprised youths aged 18 to 35 years who are active on social media and have been exposed to online sports betting content, representing a target group most likely to engage with digital gambling platforms. Using Yamane's formula at a 5% margin of error, a sample of 400 respondents was purposively selected to ensure relevance to the study objectives. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire covering demographic characteristics, exposure to betting advertisements, social media engagement, attitudes toward gambling, and self-reported betting behaviour. To ensure validity, the instrument was reviewed by experts in media studies and social psychology, while reliability was assessed through a pilot study with 20 youths, achieving a Cronbach's alpha above 0.70. Questionnaires were administered both in person and online following informed consent procedures. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and mean scores, alongside inferential statistics such as correlation analysis to examine relationships between exposure to sports betting advertisements and youth gambling behaviour, with results presented through tables, charts, and narrative interpretation to align with the study objectives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Out of the 400 questionnaires administered, 350 were correctly completed and returned, representing an 87.5% response rate, which was considered adequate for meaningful analysis. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistical tools such as frequency counts and percentages and were presented in tables for clarity and ease of interpretation.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 4.1: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18–21	72	20.6
22–25	104	29.7
26–30	96	27.4
31–35	78	22.3
Total	350	100.0

SOURCE: FIELD 2025

From Table 4.1 above, 72 respondents representing 20.6% were between ages 18–21, 104 respondents representing 29.7% were between ages 22–25, 96 respondents representing 27.4% were between ages 26–30, while 78 respondents representing 22.3% were between ages 31–35.



This shows that the majority of the respondents were between ages 22–25, indicating that youths within this age bracket are more actively represented in the study.

Table 4.2: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	228	65.1
Female	117	33.4
Prefer not to say	5	1.5
Total	350	100.0

SOURCE: FIELD 2025

From Table 4.2 above, 228 respondents representing 65.1% were male, 117 respondents representing 33.4% were female, while 5 respondents representing 1.5% preferred not to indicate their gender. This shows that the majority of the respondents were male, suggesting a higher participation of males in sports betting and related social media activities.

Table 4.3: Educational Qualification of Respondents

Educational Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Secondary School	58	16.6
OND/NCE	104	29.7
HND/Bachelor's Degree	152	43.4
Postgraduate	36	10.3
Total	350	100.0

SOURCE: FIELD 2025

From Table 4.3 above, 58 respondents representing 16.6% had secondary school education, 104 respondents representing 29.7% were holders of OND/NCE, 152 respondents representing 43.4% possessed HND or Bachelor's degrees, while 36 respondents representing 10.3% had postgraduate qualifications. This indicates that the majority of the respondents were well educated, which may influence their level of exposure to online advertisements.



Table 4.4: Employment Status of Respondents

Employment Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Student	142	40.6
Employed	96	27.4
Self-employed	68	19.4
Unemployed	44	12.6
Total	350	100.0

SOURCE: FIELD 2025

From Table 4.4 above, 142 respondents representing 40.6% were students, 96 respondents representing 27.4% were employed, 68 respondents representing 19.4% were self-employed, while 44 respondents representing 12.6% were unemployed. This shows that students constituted the largest group of respondents, indicating a high level of social media engagement among youths in educational institutions.

Exposure to Sports Betting Advertisements on X

Table 4.5: Frequency of Exposure to Sports Betting Advertisements on X

Frequency of Exposure	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very often (daily)	132	37.7
Often (several times a week)	96	27.4
Occasionally	68	19.4
Rarely	38	10.9
Never	16	4.6
Total	350	100.0

SOURCE: FIELD 2025

From Table 4.5 above, 132 respondents representing 37.7% reported that they encountered sports betting advertisements on X very often (daily), 96 respondents representing 27.4% indicated often (several times a week), 68 respondents representing 19.4% encountered them occasionally, 38 respondents representing 10.9% rarely encountered them, while 16 respondents representing 4.6% indicated that they never encountered such advertisements. This shows that a majority of the respondents are frequently exposed to sports betting advertisements on X.



Table 4.6: Forms of Sports Betting Advertisements Encountered on X

Form of Advertisement	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sponsored advertisements	118	33.7
Tweets from betting companies	92	26.3
Retweets from friends or influencers	88	25.1
Hashtags or trending topics	52	14.9
Total	350	100.0

SOURCE: FIELD 2025

From Table 4.6 above, 118 respondents representing 33.7% mostly encountered sports betting advertisements in the form of sponsored advertisements, 92 respondents representing 26.3% encountered tweets from betting companies, 88 respondents representing 25.1% encountered adverts through retweets from friends or influencers, while 52 respondents representing 14.9% encountered betting adverts through hashtags or trending topics. This indicates that sponsored advertisements are the most common form through which youths are exposed to sports betting messages on X.

Table 4.7: Time of Encounter with Sports Betting Advertisements on X

Time of Exposure	Frequency	Percentage (%)
During live sports matches	124	35.4
Before matches	72	20.6
After matches	56	16.0
At any time of the day	98	28.0
Total	350	100.0

SOURCE: FIELD 2025

From Table 4.7 above, 124 respondents representing 35.4% mostly encountered sports betting advertisements during live sports matches, 72 respondents representing 20.6% encountered them before matches, 56 respondents representing 16.0% encountered them after matches, while 98 respondents representing 28.0% indicated that they encountered betting advertisements at any time of the day. This shows that sports betting advertisements are strategically placed around live sporting events, increasing their visibility among youths.

Types of Sports Betting Advertisements on X

Table 4.8: Types of Sports Betting Advertisements that Attract Youths on X

Type of Advertisement	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Bonus and odds promotions	138	39.4
Celebrity or influencer endorsements	86	24.6
Winning testimonies	74	21.1
Live match betting updates	52	14.9
Total	350	100.0

SOURCE: FIELD 2025



From Table 4.8 above, 138 respondents representing 39.4% indicated that bonus and odds promotions attract them most, 86 respondents representing 24.6% were attracted by celebrity or influencer endorsements, 74 respondents representing 21.1% were attracted by winning testimonies, while 52 respondents representing 14.9% were attracted by live match betting updates. This shows that financial incentives, such as bonuses and attractive odds, are the most appealing features of sports betting advertisements on X.

Influence on Gambling Attitudes and Practices

Table 4.9: Influence of Exposure to Betting Advertisements on Betting Decisions

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes, frequently	118	33.7
Yes, occasionally	102	29.1
Rarely	76	21.7
Not at all	54	15.4
Total	350	100.0

SOURCE: FIELD 2025

From Table 4.9 above, 118 respondents representing 33.7% indicated that exposure to sports betting advertisements on X frequently encouraged them to place bets, 102 respondents representing 29.1% indicated that it encouraged them occasionally, 76 respondents representing 21.7% indicated rarely, while 54 respondents representing 15.4% stated that exposure did not encourage them at all. This shows that a majority of the respondents were positively influenced by betting advertisements to engage in gambling activities.

Table 4.10: Effect of Betting Advertisements on Attitude toward Gambling

Effect on Attitude	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Increased my interest in gambling	124	35.4
Made me curious but cautious	98	28.0
No noticeable effect	78	22.3
Reduced my interest in gambling	50	14.3
Total	350	100.0

SOURCE: FIELD 2025

From Table 4.10 above, 124 respondents representing 35.4% reported that frequent exposure to betting advertisements increased their interest in gambling, 98 respondents representing 28.0% stated that it made them curious but cautious, 78 respondents representing 22.3% experienced no noticeable effect, while 50 respondents representing 14.3% indicated that their interest in gambling was reduced. This indicates that betting advertisements tend to shape positive attitudes toward gambling among a substantial proportion of youths.



Perception of Credibility and Persuasiveness of Advertisements

Table 4.11: Perceived Persuasiveness of Sports Betting Advertisements on X

Level of Persuasiveness	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Highly persuasive	104	29.7
Moderately persuasive	118	33.7
Slightly persuasive	78	22.3
Not persuasive	50	14.3
Total	350	100.0

SOURCE: FIELD 2025

From Table 4.11 above, 104 respondents representing 29.7% regarded betting advertisements on X as highly persuasive, 118 respondents representing 33.7% regarded them as moderately persuasive, 78 respondents representing 22.3% found them slightly persuasive, while 50 respondents representing 14.3% found them not persuasive. This shows that betting advertisements possess a strong persuasive appeal among a majority of youths.

Socio-economic and Demographic Influences

Table 4.12: Factors Influencing Response to Sports Betting Advertisements on X

Influencing Factor	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Income level	118	33.7
Peer influence	96	27.4
Educational background	56	16.0
Personal interest in sports	80	22.9
Total	350	100.0

SOURCE: FIELD 2025

From Table 4.12 above, 118 respondents representing 33.7% indicated that income level influenced their response to sports betting advertisements, 96 respondents representing 27.4% reported peer influence, 56 respondents representing 16.0% reported educational background, while 80 respondents representing 22.9% indicated personal interest in sports. This suggests that economic and social factors play a major role in shaping youths' response to betting advertisements.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Research Question 1: How frequently are youths in Sango exposed to sports betting advertisements on X (formerly Twitter), and what is the nature of this exposure?

The study revealed that youths in Sango are frequently exposed to sports betting advertisements on X, with the majority encountering adverts either very often or often. Most exposure occurred during live sports matches and through sponsored content or retweets from friends and influencers. This finding aligns with previous research by Newall et al. (2019), which noted that



social media platforms provide constant and unavoidable exposure to gambling content. The high visibility and interactive nature of X make it an effective platform for reaching young audiences, normalizing betting as a routine online activity.

Research Question 2: What types of sports betting advertisements on X are most engaging and influential among youths in Sango?

Results indicated that bonus promotions, odds incentives, and influencer endorsements were the most engaging and influential advertisement types for respondents. Visual formats such as images and short video clips were preferred over text-only tweets, while promises of quick financial gain and free promotions made adverts appealing. These findings are consistent with studies by Griffiths (2005) and Thomas et al. (2012), which highlighted that incentive-driven and visually appealing advertisements are more likely to capture attention and influence attitudes among youths.

Research Question 3: How does exposure to sports betting advertisements on X influence the gambling attitudes and practices of youths in Sango?

Exposure to sports betting advertisements was found to positively influence gambling attitudes and practices. A significant proportion of respondents reported being encouraged to place bets frequently or occasionally, and frequent exposure increased interest in gambling. This supports the argument by Parke et al. (2015) that continuous advertising normalizes gambling behavior and may lead to increased participation. The results suggest that social media exposure can translate directly into actual gambling practices, reinforcing risky betting habits among youths.

Research Question 4: How do youths perceive the credibility and persuasiveness of sports betting advertisements on X?

The study showed a mixed perception of credibility: while many respondents considered adverts somewhat or very credible, over half believed the advertisements exaggerated chances of winning. Despite this awareness, advertisements were still reported as moderately to highly persuasive. This finding is in line with Hing and Binde (2014), who observed that individuals may recognize manipulative strategies yet still be influenced by them. It highlights the dual role of credibility and persuasiveness in shaping youth engagement with betting content.

Research Question 5: What socio-economic and demographic factors mediate the influence of sports betting advertisements on the gambling habits of youths in Sango?

Income level, peer influence, and personal interest in sports emerged as key factors mediating the impact of advertisements on gambling habits. Financial situation significantly affected the frequency of betting, while peers and social media influencers shaped decision-making more than family members. These results echo Gbadegesin and Akintunde (2025), who noted that social and economic factors, alongside peer networks, are critical determinants of gambling behaviour among youths. It underscores the importance of contextual factors in understanding how advertising translates into actual gambling practices.



CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that sports betting advertisements on X significantly influence the gambling habits of youths in Sango. High exposure levels, coupled with appealing advertisement types and persuasive formats, have normalized betting and encouraged frequent participation. The study also confirms that perceptions of credibility and the persuasive nature of adverts, alongside socio-economic and peer-related factors, play a crucial role in shaping gambling behaviors. Therefore, social media platforms are not only channels for information but also powerful tools that affect decision-making and risk-taking behaviors among young people.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Regulatory Enforcement:** Government agencies such as the National Lottery Regulatory Commission (NLRC) should strengthen monitoring and regulation of sports betting advertisements on digital platforms to reduce exposure to vulnerable youths.
- 2. Digital Media Literacy Programs:** Educational institutions and youth organizations should implement programs to enhance digital media literacy, enabling youths to critically evaluate online gambling content and understand associated risks.
- 3. Parental and Peer Guidance:** Parents and community leaders should engage youths in discussions about gambling risks, while peers should be encouraged to promote responsible attitudes toward betting.
- 4. Platform Responsibility:** Social media platforms like X should introduce age verification systems, advert restrictions, and content warnings for gambling advertisements to prevent excessive exposure to underage users.

Suggestions for further studies

Future studies could explore the long-term effects of exposure to online gambling advertisements on youth financial behavior, academic performance, and mental health. Comparative studies across other social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook could also provide broader insights.

Ethical clearance

Ethical consent was sought and obtained from the participants used in this study. They were made to understand that the exercise was purely for academic purposes, and their participation was voluntary.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Authors' Contributions

Damilola Saanufunmi OMITOGUN conceived the study, including the design, and also collated the data, and Oluwaseun Kazeem ODUNTAN handled the analysis and interpretation, while Damilola Saanufunmi OMITOGUN the initial manuscript. All authors have critically reviewed and approved the final draft, and are responsible for the content and similarity index of the manuscript.

Data availability statement

The datasets on which conclusions were made for this study are available on reasonable request.

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