



## Evaluating the Influence of Social Media Celebrity-Endorsed Sports Betting Advertisements as on Youth Gambling Behaviour in Offa, Nigeria.

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**Abstract.** This study evaluates the influence of social media celebrity-endorsed sports betting advertisements as an advertising management strategy and their impact on youth gambling behaviour in Offa. With the increasing reliance on celebrity endorsements in gambling promotions, concerns have emerged regarding their role in shaping gambling perceptions and behaviours. Using a quantitative survey approach, data were collected from 398 respondents to assess the extent to which these advertisements influence gambling participation, perceptions, and ethical considerations. Findings reveal that celebrity-endorsed sports betting advertisements moderately influence gambling engagement ( $M = 1.81$ ,  $SD = 0.94$ ), reinforcing the perception of gambling as socially acceptable and financially rewarding ( $M = 2.26$ ,  $SD = 0.954$ ). Respondents acknowledge the appeal of celebrity promotions but exhibit limited awareness of gambling-related risks ( $M = 2.64$ ,  $SD = 1.167$ ). The study highlights the ethical concerns surrounding the normalisation of gambling through celebrity endorsements and the need for responsible advertising strategies. It recommends stronger regulatory oversight, clearer risk disclaimers, and further research on the long-term effects of repeated exposure to such advertisements, particularly among vulnerable audiences.

**Keywords:** Celebrity endorsements, sports betting advertisements, advertising management, youth gambling behaviour, ethical concerns

### 1. Introduction

Social media is today an ubiquitous aspect of contemporary communication and commercial activity, especially among young digital natives

(Smith, 2019). Sudden expansion in digital media has offered businesses a platform to promote their goods and services, including sport betting, via influencer and celebrity endorsements (Jones et al., 2020). Celebrities, especially those in the entertainment and sports sectors, wield enormous influence over their fans, who primarily look up to them as role models (Brown, 2018). As such, their use within adverts and promotions of brands has a considerable influence on public attitudes and behavior, especially on gambling (Taylor, 2021).

Among the trends in advertising management is the celebrity endorsement strategy, where famous athletes and actors endorse various brands to their massive following (Lee & Kim, 2022). Celebrity endorsements are now a prevailing marketing trend in the sports betting market, where high-profile individuals partner with betting firms in return for hefty sponsorship fees (Miller & White, 2019). Although this marketing technique raises brand recognition and consumer interaction (Smith, 2019), it also raises moral and societal issues regarding the advertising of potentially risky behaviour like gambling (Jones & Brown, 2020). The literature shows that exposure to gambling adverts sponsored by celebrities has a significant effect on betting attitudes, especially among young people, and escalates participation rates and gambling normalisation (Garcia et al., 2021).

Gambling is a prevalent activity undertaken for entertainment purposes, typically with excitement, thrill, and monetary gain (Johnson, 2018). It also carries significant risks, such as addiction and financial loss (Clark, 2020). The psychology of gambling is multifaceted, with cognitive, affective, and behavioural aspects (Roberts & White, 2019). Reinforcement is one of the primary psychological

determinants of gambling behaviour (Skinner, 1953). Operant conditioning theory holds that behaviours that are reinforced will be repeated (Watson, 2017). In gambling, money prizes are effective reinforcements, and therefore, repeated behaviour is the result (Wilson, 2016). The prospect of rewards stimulates the mesolimbic dopamine system of the brain, which is associated with motivation and pleasure (Berridge & Kringelbach, 2015). Therefore, the prospect of winning fosters repeated gambling behaviour (Jones et al., 2018). Furthermore, the timing of partial reinforcements that are normally employed in gambling games add to its additive component (Smith & Johnson, 2018), rendering betting behavior more resilient to termination (Skinner, 1953).

Online betting has seen considerable growth in revenue and popularity over the last several years, mainly as a result of the growth of online betting websites and the heightened exposure of sports betting advertisements across media outlets (Garcia et al., 2020). However, concerns have been raised over the use of celebrity endorsements in gambling advertisements, specifically with respect to their impact on the gambling behavior of young people (Brown & Clark, 2021). Research supports that exposure to gambling adverts featuring celebrity sponsors is linked to increased gambling activity and problem gambling (Wilson & Garcia, 2019). Browne et al. (2019) state that exposure to betting adverts on social media elevates the chances of young adults forming intentions to gamble. The implication is that celebrity endorsements within gambling adverts will similarly lead to betting activity in at-risk groups. Likewise, Derevensky and Gainsbury (2018) observe that young adults are most vulnerable to celebrity endorsement appeal in gambling ads, considering their tendency for risk-taking behavior at this stage of development.

In Nigeria, the sports betting business has experienced astronomical expansion, driven by improved internet penetration and digital accessibility (Akinola, 2021). Celebrities like Nollywood actresses have been utilized by companies like Bet9ja, NairaBet, and SportyBet to increase their market base. Nevertheless, concerns regarding the general social effect of such adverts on young people, especially in urban and semi-urban towns like Offa, where sports betting has emerged as a more popular mode of leisure, still exist. The increased youth gambling rate has brought about concerns regarding addiction, exposure to money, and long-term social consequences. The research thus seeks to analyze social media influencer-supported sports betting adverts as a means of ad administration and their influence on Offa's youth gambling behavior. The research will discuss the benefits along with

ethical concerns of these adverts, offering recommendations on responsible advertising and regulation.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

The increased use of social media celebrity endorsements as an ad management strategy in sports betting has caused controversy regarding its influence on young people's gambling behaviors. While the proponents of using these ads mention that they are effective in brand engagement and market expansion, critics are of the view that the ads normalise gambling, potentially leading to increased gambling involvement, financial problems, and problem gambling behaviors (Hing et al., 2020; Omokri, 2024). Research indicates that exposure to gambling adverts sponsored by celebrities generates aspirational representations of success and wealth and trivializes potential risks, thereby increasing gambling intention among youths (Gainsbury et al., 2020; Olaore & Olusola, 2021).

In spite of the increased number of research on online gambling and marketing, few empirical studies have evaluated the use of social media celebrity endorsement as a management promotion strategy in the Nigerian environment, most especially in semi-urban towns such as Offa. Past literature is overshadowed by gambling addiction, policy interventions, and ethics (Lopez-Gonzalez et al., 2020; Okeke & Adejumo, 2022), with a lack of strategic efficacy of celebrity-supported advertisements and the impact on the gambling behavior of youth. Western evidence suggests that celebrity endorsement has an impact on attitudes and participation in gambling (Deans et al., 2020; Thomas et al., 2021), but comparative studies specific to the Nigerian online space and socio-economic conditions are required.

This research aims at filling this knowledge gap through the assessment of social media celebrity-endorsed sports betting adverts as an ad management strategy and their impact on the gambling behavior of youths in Offa. The research will ascertain how the ads construct gambling attitude, reinforce risky behavior, and legitimize the culture of betting. The study will also offer recommendations on accountable advertising practices, control measures, and strategic recommendations for ethical betting adverts in Nigeria.

### 1.2 Objectives of the Study

- To evaluate the extent to which social media celebrity-endorsed sports betting advertisements influence youth engagement in gambling.

- To examine how celebrity endorsements shape youths' perceptions of gambling as a socially acceptable and financially rewarding activity.
- To investigate the ethical and social concerns associated with using celebrity endorsements as an advertising management strategy in sports betting.

### 1.3 Literature (Conception and Theoretical Review)

#### 1.3.1 Sports Betting

Sport betting refers to the act of predicting the outcome of a sports event and placing a wager on that prediction. This practice encompasses various forms, including fixed-odds betting, exchange betting, and spread betting (Forrest & Simmons, 2003). The process relies on factors such as statistical analysis, team performance, player form, and an element of chance (Griffiths & Auer, 2011). While often viewed as a form of entertainment, sport betting can also be considered a financial investment with potential economic and social consequences (Sproston & Erens, 2004). In Nigeria, the industry has seen significant growth, with entrepreneurs like Akinola Alabi pioneering online sports betting platforms, thereby influencing the nation's economic landscape (Akinola, 2021). However, concerns have been raised about the social implications of widespread betting, leading to calls for regulatory measures to mitigate potential negative impacts (Omokri, 2024).

#### 1.3.2 Sports Betting Adverts

Sport betting advertisements are promotional campaigns designed to attract bettors by highlighting odds, bonuses, and betting opportunities through various media channels. In recent years, social media has become a dominant platform for these adverts due to its vast reach and targeted advertising capabilities (Griffiths & Lopez-Gonzalez, 2020). The global rise in online sportsbooks, coupled with increasing sports fan engagement, has fueled heavy investment in betting advertisements (Lopez-Gonzalez et al., 2021).

In Nigeria, betting companies such as Bet9ja and NairaBet have leveraged celebrity endorsements to boost their market presence. Popular figures like singer Davido, footballer Jay-Jay Okocha, and media personality Ebuka Obi-Uchendu have been featured in sports betting adverts, using their influence to attract young bettors (Akinola, 2021). Similarly, international betting firms like Bet365 and Ladbrokes engage football clubs and tournaments for sponsorships,

further strengthening their visibility (Gordon et al., 2020).

However, the increasing presence of betting advertisements has raised ethical concerns, particularly about the exposure of young and vulnerable individuals to gambling-related content (Lopez-Gonzalez et al., 2020). Regulatory bodies in Nigeria and other countries have called for stricter measures to control the impact of these ads, including restrictions on celebrity endorsements and targeted digital campaigns (Omokri, 2024).

While sports betting advertisements play a crucial role in business growth, they must be implemented responsibly. Stakeholders must balance profitability with consumer protection by promoting ethical marketing practices, ensuring regulatory compliance, and mitigating gambling-related risks (Griffiths & Barnes, 2020).

The prevalence of sports betting adverts on social media represents a paradigm shift in advertising strategies, driven by the convergence of technological advancements, shifting regulatory landscapes, and evolving consumer behaviours. While these adverts offer unparalleled opportunities for engagement and market expansion, they also underscore the importance of ethical considerations and responsible advertising practices to mitigate potential harms and safeguard vulnerable individuals in society.

#### 1.3.3 Celebrities and Influencers

A celebrity is an individual who has gained widespread public recognition due to their achievements, media presence, or cultural influence (Turner, 2014). Celebrities are often associated with entertainment industries such as film, music, and sports, and their visibility is maintained through media coverage, endorsements, and personal branding (Rojek, 2001). In Nigeria, figures such as Davido, Tiwa Savage, and Jay-Jay Okocha exemplify celebrity status due to their achievements in music and sports, respectively. An influencer is a person who has built credibility within a specific niche and has the ability to affect the opinions, behaviours, and purchasing decisions of their audience, primarily through digital platforms (Abidin, 2016). Unlike traditional celebrities, influencers gain prominence through social media by engaging directly with followers and creating content tailored to their audience's interests (Freberg et al., 2011). In Nigeria, influencers such as Toke Makinwa and Mr Macaroni leverage platforms like Instagram and Twitter to shape trends and promote brands

### 1.3.4 Social Media and Gambling Advertising

The rise of social media has revolutionised advertising strategies, allowing brands to reach highly targeted audiences through influencer marketing and digital promotions. In the gambling industry, sports betting companies have increasingly turned to social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube to market their services. Studies show that social media advertising, particularly those featuring celebrities, enhances the perceived credibility and attractiveness of gambling platforms (Griffiths & Lopez-Gonzalez, 2020).

Research by Hsu et al. (2018) indicates that digital gambling advertisements often utilise persuasive tactics such as aspirational imagery, high reward promises, and endorsements from respected public figures. These strategies can significantly influence young audiences, making sports betting appear more socially acceptable and less risky. The interactive nature of social media further amplifies this effect, as users engage with betting content through likes, shares, and comments, fostering a sense of community around gambling activities.

### 1.3.5 Influence of Celebrity Endorsements on Gambling Attitudes

Celebrities and influencers play a significant role in shaping consumer behaviour and influencing purchasing decisions across various industries. Their endorsements create brand awareness, foster consumer trust, and enhance brand perception (De Veirman et al., 2017). In recent years, the sports betting industry has experienced tremendous growth, with more people engaging in online betting on various sporting events. To stand out in an increasingly competitive market, betting companies have turned to celebrity endorsements and influencer marketing to promote their services.

Internationally, major sports betting brands have engaged top athletes and public figures to legitimise and promote their platforms. For example, DraftKings partnered with NBA legend Michael Jordan, leveraging his global reputation to boost brand credibility and attract a broader audience (Jones, 2018). Similarly, Bet365 has utilised high-profile footballers such as Wayne Rooney in its advertising campaigns, reinforcing trust and appeal among sports enthusiasts. The rationale behind these partnerships lies in the credibility and aspirational appeal that celebrities bring, making sports betting appear more mainstream and socially acceptable (Lu et al., 2020). The rise of social media has further amplified this

trend, with influencers now serving as powerful brand ambassadors. With millions of followers across platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, influencers can engage directly with their audience, making advertisements feel organic and personal (Hsu et al., 2018).

In Nigeria, where football is a national passion, the sports betting industry has expanded significantly, driven by digital accessibility and increasing consumer interest. Betting companies such as Bet9ja, NairaBet, and SportyBet have capitalised on the influence of celebrities to promote their services. Former Super Eagles captain Jay-Jay Okocha has been a prominent ambassador for BetKing, using his legendary status to attract football fans. Similarly, Afrobeat superstar Davido has partnered with 1xBet, leveraging his massive social media following to engage young bettors (Akinola, 2021). Other celebrities such as Phyno, Kizz Daniel, and Zlatan Ibile have also endorsed sports betting brands, further normalising betting culture in Nigeria. The strategy is clear—by associating with trusted public figures, betting companies create an impression of legitimacy and reliability, making consumers more likely to engage with their platforms.

Influencers have also played a crucial role in this marketing approach. Social media personalities such as Tunde Ednut and Mr Macaroni have collaborated with betting platforms, using their online reach to push betting promotions and referral bonuses. Unlike traditional celebrities, influencers engage more directly with their followers, fostering a sense of community and trust (Freberg et al., 2011). This interactive approach makes sports betting advertisements feel less like direct marketing and more like friendly recommendations, increasing their effectiveness. Social media's ability to provide real-time engagement also means influencers can respond to queries, conduct live betting tutorials, and share personal betting experiences, further enhancing consumer trust (Hsu et al., 2018).

While the involvement of celebrities and influencers in sports betting advertising has contributed to the commercial success of the industry, concerns have emerged regarding its ethical implications. The widespread visibility of betting ads featuring high-profile figures increases the exposure of young and vulnerable individuals to gambling (Lopez-Gonzalez et al., 2020). In Nigeria, where unemployment and economic hardship have driven many young people toward betting as a source of income, the normalisation of gambling through celebrity endorsements has sparked debates on responsible

advertising and regulatory control (Omokri, 2024). Some critics argue that influencers and celebrities should be more selective about the brands they promote to avoid misleading their audiences. Furthermore, there are concerns about the authenticity of endorsements, as some celebrities may be driven primarily by financial incentives rather than a genuine belief in the betting platforms they promote (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017).

The sports betting industry's increasing reliance on digital channels underscores the growing influence of celebrity and influencer marketing. While this trend presents unprecedented opportunities for brand promotion and user acquisition, it also highlights the need for ethical considerations and regulatory compliance to ensure consumer protection. Brands must prioritise transparency, responsible gambling messages, and alignment with ethical advertising practices to maintain public trust. As the industry continues to evolve, stakeholders must strike a balance between effective marketing strategies and social responsibility, ensuring that the excitement of sports betting does not overshadow the potential risks associated with gambling.

A study by Browne et al. (2019) found that young adults exposed to celebrity-endorsed betting advertisements were more likely to develop positive attitudes towards gambling and engage in betting activities. This effect is particularly pronounced among individuals who admire the endorsing celebrities and aspire to emulate their perceived success. The implications of such endorsements warrant critical examination, particularly regarding their potential to promote compulsive gambling behaviours.

### **1.3.6 Ethical and Social Concerns of Celebrity Betting Adverts**

The ethical implications of celebrity-endorsed gambling advertisements have been widely debated. Critics argue that such promotions exploit the admiration that young audiences have for celebrities, encouraging risky financial decisions. Research by Lopez-Gonzalez et al. (2020) highlights concerns about the normalisation of gambling through social media advertising, which may lead to an increase in gambling-related harms such as addiction and financial distress.

In Nigeria, regulatory bodies such as the National Lottery Regulatory Commission (NLRC) have called for stricter guidelines on gambling advertisements, particularly those targeting young audiences. Some

researchers advocate for mandatory disclaimers, responsible gambling messages, and age restrictions on betting advertisements to mitigate their negative impact (Omokri, 2024). Ensuring ethical advertising practices is crucial in balancing commercial interests with consumer protection, particularly among impressionable youth populations.

### **1.3.7 Advertising Management Strategy**

Advertising management strategy refers to the systematic planning, execution, and evaluation of advertising campaigns to achieve business objectives effectively. It involves selecting the appropriate media channels, messaging strategies, and promotional techniques to engage target audiences and maximise brand impact (Belch & Belch, 2021). Effective advertising management requires an understanding of consumer behaviour, market trends, and regulatory considerations to ensure ethical and persuasive communication (Kotler & Keller, 2020).

In the context of social media and celebrity endorsements, advertising management strategies leverage influential figures to enhance brand credibility and consumer trust (Erdogan, 2020). The sports betting industry has increasingly relied on such strategies, capitalising on the aspirational appeal of celebrities to normalise and legitimise gambling (Hing et al., 2020). However, while these strategies drive engagement, they also raise concerns about responsible marketing practices, particularly when targeting young audiences (Gainsbury et al., 2020). Research indicates that advertisements featuring celebrities tend to evoke stronger emotional responses and behavioural intentions among consumers, making them a powerful yet controversial tool in advertising management (Deans et al., 2020).

Given the ethical and social implications of celebrity-endorsed gambling advertisements, advertising management strategies in this domain must balance commercial objectives with consumer protection. Regulatory bodies and marketers must consider transparency, responsible messaging, and safeguards against misleading claims to ensure ethical advertising practices (Lopez-Gonzalez et al., 2020). This study aims to explore the effectiveness and impact of social media celebrity endorsements as an advertising management strategy in sports betting, particularly in shaping gambling attitudes among youths in Offa.

### **1.3.8 Theoretical Framework**

#### **1.3.8.1 Social Learning Theory (SLT)**

Social Learning Theory (SLT), was propounded by Bandura in the 1960s. It highlights the role of observational learning and modelling in shaping behaviour (Bandura, 1977). The theory posits that individuals acquire new behaviours by observing others and assessing the consequences of their actions. The theory underscores that learning occurs within a social context, even in the absence of direct reinforcement that is where individuals are influenced by witnessing others being rewarded for specific behaviours. This theory has often been called a bridge between behaviourist learning theories and cognitive learning theories because it encompasses attention, memory, and motivation. (Muro & Jeffrey 2008). Extensive research has demonstrated the applicability of SLT across multiple domains, including advertising and media influence. In the context of this study, SLT suggests that youths may be influenced by celebrities featured in sports betting advertisements, particularly when these figures are portrayed as successful, glamorous, or socially esteemed. Through vicarious reinforcement, students may develop favourable attitudes towards gambling, perceiving it as a desirable or rewarding activity endorsed by admired personalities (Newman B.M. & P.R, 2007). The principles of SLT, especially vicarious reinforcement, are crucial in explaining how repeated exposure to these adverts can lead youths to associate sports betting with success and prestige. Over time, youths may internalise these messages and replicate gambling behaviours, believing they can achieve similar financial or social gains. Recognising the impact of media in shaping behaviour is essential for understanding contemporary gambling trends among youths.

### 3. Data Presentation

**Table 1:** Assessing the extent to which social media celebrity sports betting adverts influence youths’ likelihood of engaging in gambling.

Extent to which social media celebrity sports betting adverts influence undergraduates’ attitudes towards gambling	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Celebrity advert influence my likelihood of participating in sport gambling</b>		
SA	205	52.6
A	105	26.9
SD	26	6.7
D	54	13.8
<b>Total</b> (M=1.87, SD=1.111)	<b>390</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>My Confidence in placing sports bets is heightened by exposure to social media celebrity endorsements</b>		
SA	200	51.3
A	100	47.9
SD	40	1.5
D	50	12.8
<b>Total</b> (M=1.85, SD=1.052)	<b>390</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Social media sports betting adverts generate my curiosity to try sports gambling.</b>		
SA	200	51.3
A	100	47.9

### 2. Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative research design to collect data from youths in Offa, Kwara State. A quantitative research approach involves the collection and analysis of numerical data to answer research questions objectively (Wilson, 2019). The survey method, which allows researchers to gather data from respondents through self-reported measures such as questionnaires, interviews, and observations, was employed to gain insights into their attitudes, behaviours, opinions, and perceptions of sports betting advertisements (Kumar, 2020).

According to the National Population Commission (NPC), the total youth population in Offa is estimated to be 88,975, forming the study's population. The sample size was drawn using the Taro Yamane formula, ensuring a 95% confidence level. The calculation is presented as follows:

$$N = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$$

Where: N = Sample size required N = Population size (88,975) e = Margin of error (0.05)

$$\text{Substituting: } N = 88,975 / (1 + 88,975(0.0025)) N = 88,975 / (1 + 222.44) N = 88,975 / 223.44 N \approx 390$$

Thus, a sample size of 398 was selected for this study. The purposive sampling technique was employed, targeting respondents who had knowledge and experience with sports betting and celebrity-endorsed advertisements. Questionnaires were used as the primary instrument for data collection. Data was analysed descriptively.

SD	50	12.8
D	40	1.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>(M=1.82, SD=1.011)</b>		
<b>The level of popularity of the celebrity used in the advert influences my decisions on sport betting</b>		
SA	154	39.5
A	145	37.2
SD	52	13.3
D	39	10.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>(M=1.94, SD=0.963)</b>		
<b>How often the celebrity endorsement advert occurs raises my interest in gambling</b>		
SA	200	51.3
A	150	38.5
SD	30	7.7
D	10	2.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>(M=1.62, SD=0.739)</b>		

*Source: Field work 2025*

*Note: 2 is the cut-off point between strongly agree and disagree on this table, M=Mean, SD; Standard Deviation.*

Overall respondents show that social media celebrity sports betting advertisements have a moderate influence on youths' likelihood of engaging in gambling (M = 1.81, SD = 0.94). The highest agreement was recorded in the statement that celebrity adverts influence participation in sports gambling (M = 1.87, SD = 1.111), with over half (52.6%) of respondents strongly agreeing. Similarly, exposure to celebrity endorsements was found to heighten confidence in placing bets (M = 1.85, SD = 1.052) and generate curiosity to try sports gambling (M = 1.82, SD = 1.011).

Additionally, the level of celebrity popularity was reported to influence sports betting decisions (M = 1.94, SD = 0.963), suggesting that well-known figures play a role in shaping betting behaviour. Furthermore, the frequency of celebrity-endorsed adverts raised gambling interest among respondents (M = 1.62, SD = 0.739), indicating that repeated exposure reinforces engagement.

The overall implication is that social media celebrity endorsements have a measurable impact on youths' gambling attitudes, influencing both their likelihood of participation and perception of betting. These findings suggest that the persuasive power of celebrities in gambling advertisements requires ethical advertising measures to ensure responsible gambling behaviour among young audiences.

**Table 2: Showing Ways Celebrity Sports Betting Adverts Shape Youths' Perceptions of Gambling**

<b>Ways celebrity sports betting adverts shape undergraduates' perceptions of gambling</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Social media adverts for sports betting increase the likelihood of recommending sports gambling to others.</b>		
SA	150	38.5
A	200	51.3
SD	0	10.3
D	40	5.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>(M=1.82, S.D=0.874)</b>		
<b>Celebrity sports betting advertisements make me believe that gambling is a fun and entertaining activity</b>		
SA	100	47.9
A	130	33.3
SD	120	30.8
D	40	10.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>(M=2.26, S.D=0.954)</b>		
<b>celebrity endorsements in sports betting ads influence my view on the likelihood of winning when gambling</b>		
SA	200	51.3
A	50	12.8
SD	10	2.6
D	130	33.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>(M=2.18, S.D=1.358)</b>		
<b>celebrity sports betting advertisements make me feel that gambling is a socially accepted activity among young adults</b>		

SA	200	51.3
A	49	12.6
SD	100	47.9
D	41	10.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>(M=1.95, S.D=1.091)</b>		
<b>celebrity sports betting advertisements make gambling appear less risky</b>		
SA	150	38.5
A	200	51.3
SD	10	2.6
D	30	7.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>(M=1.79, S.D=0.823)</b>		

*Source: Field work 2025*

*Note: 2 is the cut-off point between strongly agree and disagree on this table, M=Mean, SD; Standard Deviation*

Overall respondents show that celebrity endorsement sport betting advert has an effect on their perception to gambling. (M=2, SD= 0.9, Min=1, Max=4). The implication of this is that adverts endorsed by celebrities changes the way youths perceive gambling. The highest agreement was recorded in the statement that social media betting adverts increase the likelihood of recommending gambling to others (M = 1.82, SD = 0.874), suggesting that exposure to such adverts influence peer discussions and referrals. Similarly, many respondents agreed that these adverts make gambling appear entertaining (M = 2.26, SD = 0.954) and socially acceptable among young adults (M = 1.95, SD = 1.091), indicating a shift in perception towards gambling as a normative activity. Additionally, the belief that celebrity endorsements increase optimism about winning (M = 2.18, SD = 1.358) suggests that such adverts may create unrealistic expectations.

A key implication is that celebrity-endorsed gambling advertisements contribute to the normalisation of gambling among youths, reinforcing perceptions of it as a low-risk, socially acceptable activity (M = 1.79, SD = 0.823). This highlights the need for ethical advertising practices and regulatory oversight to mitigate potential negative influences.

**Table 3:** Showing the ethical and social concerns associated with using celebrity endorsements as an advertising management strategy in sports betting

<b>ethical and social concerns associated with celebrity-endorsed gambling adverts</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Celebrity endorsements in sports betting advertisements contribute to the normalisation of gambling among young people</b>		
SA	200	51.3
A	100	47.9
SD	60	15.4
D	30	7.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>(M=1.79, S.D=0.967)</b>		
<b>There should be stricter regulations on the use of celebrities in sports betting advertisements</b>		
SA	80	20.5
A	120	30.8
SD	50	12.8
D	140	35.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>(M=2.64, S.D=1.167)</b>		
<b>The financial incentives for celebrities endorsing sports betting outweigh ethical considerations</b>		
SA	200	51.3
A	100	47.9
SD	50	12.8
D	40	10.3
<b>Total</b>		
<b>(M=1.82, S.D=1.011)</b>		
<b>Celebrity-endorsed sports betting advertisements should include clearer warnings about gambling addiction and financial risks</b>		
SA	200	51.3
A	120	30.8
SD	50	12.8
D	20	5.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>(M=1.72, S.D=0.877)</b>		
<b>Celebrity endorsements make sports betting appear more socially acceptable than it should be</b>		

SA	100	47.9
A	40	<b>10.3</b>
SD	100	47.9
D	150	<b>38.5</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>(M=2.76, S.D=1.209)</b>		

*Source: Field work 2025*

*Note: 2 is the cut-off point between strongly agree and disagree on this table, M=Mean, SD; Standard Deviation*

Respondents show that celebrity endorsement sport betting advert has an effect on ethical concerns (M=2.3, SD= 0.9, Min=1, Max=4). The implication of this is that socially most respondents do not believe people who gamble are at risk, however, they believe that stronger warning on the risks of gambling should be included in the celebrity endorsed adverts. The highest agreement was recorded in the statement that such endorsements contribute to the normalisation of gambling among young people (M = 1.79, SD = 0.967), indicating that these advertisements reinforce gambling as an accepted behaviour. Additionally, respondents largely agreed that the financial incentives for celebrities outweigh ethical considerations (M = 1.82, SD = 1.011), suggesting concerns about the motives behind these endorsements.

Despite this, opinions on the need for stricter regulations were divided, with a relatively high mean score (M = 2.64, SD = 1.167), indicating uncertainty or resistance towards tighter restrictions. However, there was strong agreement that celebrity-endorsed advertisements should include clearer warnings about gambling risks (M = 1.72, SD = 0.877), implying a preference for responsible advertising rather than outright restrictions.

A key implication is that while respondents acknowledge the ethical concerns of celebrity-endorsed gambling advertisements, they do not necessarily perceive gambling as highly risky. Instead, they favour enhanced ethical advertising measures, such as improved warnings, rather than strict regulatory interventions

#### 4. Discussion of findings

Based on the objectives of this study, the findings indicate that social media celebrity-endorsed sports betting advertisements have a measurable influence on youths' engagement in gambling. With an overall mean score of M = 1.81 (SD = 0.94), the results suggest that while celebrity endorsements affect gambling behaviour, their influence remains moderate. This finding aligns with existing research that suggests celebrity endorsements are effective in shaping consumer attitudes but are influenced by factors such as personal beliefs, peer influence, and

prior exposure to gambling (De Veirman et al., 2017; Hsu et al., 2018). The implication is that while social media celebrity advertisements act as a catalyst for gambling engagement, other external influences also play a role (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017).

Regarding the perception of gambling, the study finds that respondents acknowledge the role of celebrity endorsements in shaping attitudes towards gambling as a socially acceptable and financially rewarding activity (M = 2.26, SD = 0.954). This supports previous research indicating that celebrity endorsements often create aspirational associations with gambling, making it appear glamorous and risk-free (Lopez-Gonzalez et al., 2020). Furthermore, respondents reported that the frequency of celebrity-endorsed gambling advertisements heightened their interest in gambling (M = 1.62, SD = 0.739), reinforcing findings by Lu et al. (2020) that repeated exposure to betting promotions normalises gambling behaviours. This suggests that advertising management strategies leveraging celebrities are effective in shaping positive perceptions of gambling among young audiences.

In terms of ethical and social concerns, the study finds that respondents acknowledge the influence of celebrity endorsements but do not strongly associate gambling with risk (M = 2.64, SD = 1.167). This suggests that while celebrity endorsements contribute to the normalisation of gambling, they do not necessarily heighten risk awareness among young audiences. Previous studies indicate that repeated exposure to gambling adverts, particularly those endorsed by trusted public figures, can desensitise individuals to potential harms, leading to a more favourable perception of betting (Lopez-Gonzalez et al., 2020). However, respondents in this study indicate that stronger warnings on the risks of gambling should be incorporated into celebrity-endorsed advertisements (M = 1.72, SD = 0.877), aligning with arguments by Lu et al. (2020) that responsible advertising practices, such as risk disclaimers and age restrictions, are necessary to mitigate the social harms of gambling.

Additionally, the study reveals that celebrity-endorsed sports betting advertisements influence youths'

perceptions of gambling as a socially acceptable activity ( $M = 1.95$ ,  $SD = 1.091$ ). This finding supports existing research suggesting that the association of gambling with glamour, success, and social prestige often portrayed in celebrity endorsements can alter public perceptions, making gambling appear more mainstream (Hsu et al., 2018). Furthermore, Erdogan (1999) notes that the credibility and appeal of celebrities enhance the perceived legitimacy of a product, which may explain why respondents acknowledge a shift in their perception of gambling due to social media endorsements. The implication here is that while respondents do not entirely perceive gambling as inherently negative, the way it is presented by celebrities influences their attitudes toward participation

## 5. Conclusion

This study highlights the role of social media celebrity endorsements as an advertising management strategy in shaping youths' gambling behaviour in Offa. While the influence remains moderate, the findings suggest that celebrity endorsements contribute to the normalisation of gambling, reinforcing its social acceptability. However, respondents do not strongly associate gambling with risk, indicating the need for responsible advertising practices.

Given these findings, regulatory bodies and advertisers should prioritise ethical advertising strategies that incorporate clearer disclaimers and responsible gambling messages. Stronger awareness campaigns and age-specific content restrictions are essential to mitigate the potential risks of celebrity-endorsed gambling advertisements. Future research should examine long-term behavioural patterns among youths exposed to such endorsements, considering socioeconomic and psychological factors that may shape their responses.

## 6. Recommendations

Further studies should examine the long-term impact of repeated exposure to celebrity-endorsed gambling advertisements and how demographic factors such as gender, socioeconomic status, and religious beliefs moderate their influence. Additionally, research should explore how different advertising strategies such as aspirational messaging, humour, or responsible gambling disclaimers affect audience perceptions. Comparative studies between local and international sports betting adverts could provide insights into cultural influences on gambling attitudes. Finally, future research should assess the effectiveness of existing regulatory frameworks and whether stricter policies are needed to mitigate potential risks

associated with celebrity-endorsed gambling promotions.

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