

The impact of the “Whistle-to-Whistle” ban on the frequency and placement of gambling advertising on UK television

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Abstract

Introduction:

There are currently no legally enforced restrictions on the broadcast time of gambling advertising on UK television. In August 2019, the Industry Group for Responsible Gambling (IGRG) introduced a voluntary policy which limited advertising around live sports, creating a “safe” window of 5 minutes either side of a match, known as the “whistle-to-whistle” period. This policy intended to protect young and vulnerable people from the widespread exposure to gambling adverts on television during pre-watershed (9pm) live sports games.

Methods:

This study will employ panel data statistical models to explore the change in pre-watershed gambling advertising around live sports, and other sporting programmes, following the introduction of the “whistle-to-whistle” ban. It will explore spill-overs to post-watershed, and non-sports channels to assess the industry’s response to the policy.

Data:

Data comprises six months of advertising data obtained from Nielsen Media covering 1st September to 1st December 2018, and 2019. Data is compiled at the BARB (Broadcasters Audience Research Board) mid-category definition of gambling advertising. Analyses will compare the impact on weekdays and weekends, pre and post-watershed, for different genres of television programme.

Results & Conclusions:

Data analysis commences in November 2022 and is due to be completed in early 2023.

199 words

Statement of implications:

If such policies are effective in reducing the number of gambling adverts on television, then they might be implemented legally in the UK broadcasting codes. Identifying spread to other channels, or post-watershed television, will help to understand the potential unintended consequences of the policy.

44 words

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Bio: Ellen McGrane is a PhD student on the Wellcome trust programme in Public Health, Economics and Decision Science at the University of Sheffield. She has a background in economics and health economics, and a general interest in policy evaluation and behavioural economics. This work makes up part of her PhD thesis exploring the public health impact of gambling advertising around live televised football.

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