‘I’ll come across something within a minute, guaranteed’: Belgian gamblers’ experiences with gambling marketing after the imposition of strict advertising regulations

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In Belgium, most forms of gambling advertising have been banned since July 2023, although exemptions, transitional measures for sports sponsoring, and potential loopholes remain. This study explored how Belgian gamblers experience gambling marketing under this new regulatory framework, offering insights for other jurisdictions considering similar restrictions. Using semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 16 young adult Belgian gamblers and an inductive approach, we found that while participants reported seeing less gambling marketing overall, remaining communication was perceived as more targeted and centered on financial inducements. They generally viewed gambling-related sports sponsorships positively, valuing the financial benefits for sports clubs. Additionally, participants perceived the separate regulatory treatment of the public gambling operator as hypocritical. Although illegal gambling advertisements were often encountered, participants considered them unpersuasive due to limited brand recognition. This study reveals the complexities that may emerge when other jurisdictions aim to restrict gambling marketing.

Keywords: Gambling; Gambling advertising; Advertising regulations; Gambling marketing