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GAMES AND GAMBLING: HOW VIEWERSHIP OF FOOTBALL GAMES INFLUENCES GAMBLING BEHAVIOUR IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Scholars indicate that gambling is on the increase in Nigeria and suggest that this could be associated with several factors, including increase in the viewership of the English Premier League (EPL), but there is hardly any empirical evidence to support these claims. This study, therefore, examined the viewership of English Premier League and how it influences the gambling behaviour of Nigerians. Survey research design was triangulated with interviews and website observation. Data were analysed using simple percentages and frequencies computed with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Findings indicate that gambling is on the increase and there is a significant relationship between gambling behaviour and perceived viewership of football games as the literature suggests. However, the results also indicate that gambling advertisements in the media influence gambling behaviour. It is, therefore, recommended that access to league matches featuring sport betting and gambling advertisements should be regulated to curb the escalating incidence of gambling and its damaging effects on the social, economic, psychological and moral health of the society.

Keywords: Gambling, football viewing centres, advertising, televised European leagues

Introduction

Gambling, the staking or betting of money or something of value, with the awareness of potential risk and hope of gain, on the result of a contest, game or any other event whose outcome may be determined by chance, is becoming a big business in many countries (Glimne, 2014). Gambling has become a widespread social behaviour that has progressed from being a mere distraction to a hobby, or even an occupational pastime to which people are easily addicted. And due to globalisation, it has spread from one country to another, reaching virtually everyone, regardless of age, gender, occupation and educational status.

Football is about the world's most popular sport, one which is passionately loved and enjoyed by Nigerians, and globalization has inevitably resulted in Nigerian football fans being exposed to the activities of foreign clubs which has caused them to move their support and patronage from local clubs to European clubs (Ifeduba, 2011). Since 1992, the English Premier League (EPL) has been widely known for its staggering home and in-stadium audience, making it the most watched football league in the world, with stadium occupancy being held at 92% and a television audience well over four billion people (Wikipedia, 2015). The subsequent rise in English Premier League viewership all over the world has led to some speculation that the current gambling trend might be as a result of easier access to football matches via the Internet, (Olagunju, 2014), affordable Pay-TVbouquets with numerous sport channels, access

to viewing centres (Omonisa, 2015) gambling advertisement and promotions among other factors. The gambling industry in Nigeria has also experienced corresponding growth in terms of size and importance over the last few years. An investigation conducted by the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) revealed that about 60 million Nigerians spend N1.8 billion on gambling daily; and that gambling revenue of some betting companies increased to N20 million monthly (Vanguard, 2014).

This trend has sparked debates in which the industry has been accused of encouraging anti-social behaviour such as laziness, excessive drinking, increasing prostitution, breeding of a culture of greed, as well as contravening the tenets of both the Bible and the Quran (Omoragbon, 2015). Gambling firms, however, claim that it creates an opportunity to test the knowledge and loyalty of fans, boost tax payment, drive sport followership (Omoragbon, 2015) create job opportunities (Akpodonor, 2015), and serve as a form of investment. It is also speculated that interest in the live broadcasting of football matches is driven by the gambling market, which leaves us with the conjecture that there is a relationship between football viewership and gambling (Olagunju, 2014). However, very little of the public debate has been based on empirical evidence or scientific proof about this relationship because there have only been few studies addressing the issue. This study is, therefore, designed to add empirical evidence to the conversation.

Statement of problem

Gambling has been traditionally perceived as a vice rather than a virtue, and a source of considerable harm to gamblers and their families as well as the society in general, but recent developments suggest that it is fast becoming a major global industry and a valued source of revenue to governments and private establishments (Omoragbon, 2015). Explanations offered in literature speculate that football viewership is one of the major drivers of this gambling outbreak on the one hand. On the other hand, the proliferation of sport betting outlets has been mentioned as the reason for the gambling boom (Olagunju, 2014). Specifically, access to numerous viewing centres, affordable pay TV with numerous sport channels and promotion of gambling have been suggested as factors contributing to the upsurge in gambling (Omonisa, 2015).

However, there is no empirical proof to justify these speculations since researchers have not paid much attention to this area of research. For this reason, this study seeks to examine, in empirical terms, if viewership of English Premier League, access to numerous viewing centres, affordable pay TV with numerous sport channels and promotion of gambling actually contribute to the upsurge in gambling behaviour among viewers in Lagos, Nigeria. It also aims at investigating the extent of its influence and measuring the relationship between the extent of viewership and perceived increase in gambling.

Review of relevant literature

Gambling is an ancient practice which has undergone changes to bring it to the big business it is today. In the bible days, for instance, it was regarded as divination; and citations of gambling included the casting of lots for Jesus' garment. In Greece, gambling, previously regarded as a vice, received public approval when Greek government cast lots as a means of administering justice to criminals at trials whereas in other European countries, the practice was prohibited by law. Notwithstanding, large scale gambling began in the early 1500's with lotteries sanctioned by governments in several countries and promoted with a variety of advertisements (Lopez-Gonzalez; Estévez & Griffiths, 2017).

Older forms of gambling, which have roots in China and Europe include roulette, craps, keno, paigow poker, blackjack and baccarat, but the most prominent form of gambling today is sport betting. That is, the prediction of the results of sporting events while wagering on the outcome (Wikipedia, 2016). Bets can be placed on any sport ranging from football, basketball, tennis, golf, baseball, handball and pools. This has overtaken all

other forms of gambling in Nigeria. Football, which is the most popular sport in the country, is the sport that has attracted the highest betting patronage, and is perhaps the only sport Nigerians wager on. Football fans not only bet on the English Premier League, which is the focus of this paper, they also bet on other national and international football leagues like the Nigerian Premier League (NPL), UEFA Champions League, French Ligue 1, Spanish La Liga, Dutch Eredivisie, Italian Serie A, Europa League and German Bundesliga (Omonisa, 2015).

Online betting has diversified the practice, and most of the sport betting companies in the country are now online, some strictly online, making it possible for people to place bets without stepping out of their homes (Odulaja, 2014). In the same vein, physical bet shops are currently modifying their business models by giving gamblers the opportunity to watch live matches and interact with other gamblers who go into their viewing rooms. By the 2016 league season, betting companies had begun to kit football clubs by way of promotion (Ekejuba, 2014).

There are different plans and packages in sport betting: straight bet or single bet is the one commonly played by Nigerians, which is played by simply predicting the side to win or draw. When a strong team is playing against a weak one, the outcome is easy to predict, therefore the payoff is low if one is betting that the strong side will win. Points are then given to the weak side as odd, which determines the payoff if the strong side eventually wins (Omonisa, 2015). In Parley, another gambling package, a player picks more than one game and predicts the winners. The more the games ticked the higher the payoff. But all the predicted games must go accordingly for the player to win. There is also Proposition, where a player could bet that a side will score up to a specific number of goals, or that both sides will score a certain number of goals, or that home or away team will win, lose or draw. One could also bet a direct winning for the home or away team, half time draw, or full time draw. There are less frequent wins in Proposition and other similar packages than there are in straight bet and parley (Omonisa, 2015).

Pools betting, one of the oldest forms of betting in Nigeria (based on predicting the outcome of top-level EPL-only football matches taking place in the week) is now patronized by elderly men who are not accustomed to the new forms of sport gambling. Unlike sport betting, pool only has two packages: permutation and napping. Perming, which is the more common of the two, involves a player selecting possible numbers which might draw, and only wins when all the played

numbers appear among the number of draws. The payoff is determined by the quantity of played numbers and that of the selected numbers. The fewer the selected numbers the player perm from, and the higher the played numbers, the higher the payoff. The total number of draws for the week also determines the payoff. If the draws are low, it attracts higher payoff and *vice versa* (Odulaja, 2014; Omonisa, 2015).

In napping, the player selects likely numbers which might draw. He only wins when all the napped (selected) numbers draw. It is common to nap three numbers. Napping is much difficult to win, but offers higher payoff. Both perming and napping could also be played as bonanza or jackpot, where a player predicts that there will be a total of exactly ten draws for the week (Omonisa, 2015).

Premier Lotto otherwise known as *Baba Ijebu*, is a lottery game founded and played in Nigeria. Like other lottery games, Lotto operates on the prediction of five winning numbers in each game, upon which winnings are based. There are currently twenty four types of games in the Premier Lotto, which are 06, Bingo, Bonanza, Club Master, Diamond, Enugu, Fair Chance, Fortune, Gold, International, Jackpot and Lucky. Others are Lucky G, Mark II, Metro, Midweek, MSP, National, Peoples, Premier King, Royal, Super, Tota, and Vag (Odulaja, 2014). It has five plans: Permutation/Perming, 2 Sure, 3 Direct, Banker and One against others. Permutation/Perming is the plan that is most commonly played. It involves the selection of numbers which the player thinks will appear among the five winning numbers. If two of the numbers in the player's chosen number appears, he/she has won. 2-Sure involves the selection of two numbers which the player thinks will appear in the five winning numbers. If they both appear, then he or she wins (Odulaja, 2014; Omonisa, 2015).

Online gambling: Growth and formats: The first online gambling sites began showing up on the web in the mid 1990's and Antigua and Barbuda became the first to legalise it by passing the first Act making it possible for the nation to grant licenses to individuals and corporate entities for online casinos. This legislation gave birth to a pivotal technology company, Microgaming, widely acknowledged as the first company to develop online gaming software. Establishment of the Kahnawake Gaming Commission in Canada became the next major breakthrough in the online gaming scene just as InterTops became the first sports betting site to appear online in 1996. By early 1997 there were over 15 online gambling sites. Later that year, the number of gambling sites had surpassed 200, with revenues from

the industry reaching over \$1 billion in just a year (Glimne, 2015).

In 2000, the owners of BetFair changed the rules of the game by introducing peer to peer wagering, that is, bets made between players with the site receiving a commission on every wager. This was the precursor of today's exchange betting, which has become popular in the industry. Live betting was introduced to the online gaming scene in 2002, allowing players to wager on sports events as they happened. Live betting proved to be very popular and is one of the most interesting sportbetting choices. Currently, the range of sporting events eligible for live betting has expanded exponentially and the coming of mobile betting has enabled players to place their bets using phones, tablets and other mobile devices (Glimne, 2015).

Planet Poker is generally recognized as being the first online site to offer poker. This began in early 1998 and immediately began attracting a large number of potential players. Unfortunately, they were plagued by a number of technical problems and other glitches. Back in these days, a large number of people were still using dial-up internet services, which created a number of speed and downloading issues (Glimne, 2015). The failure of Planet Poker led to the rise of a number of new poker sites, like Paradise Poker, launched in 1999 in Costa Rica. In 2000, Poker Spot became the first site to offer online tournaments and closed shop in 2001 due to payment processing challenges. Poker Stars followed and played a leading role in the launch of the World Championship of Online Poker (Glimne, 2015).

English premier league followership in Nigeria: Up until 1992, the most popular league in the U.K. was the Football League. However, the English Premier League (EPL) was established in that year with 22 inaugural members: Chelsea, Arsenal, Leeds United, Aston Villa, Nottingham Forest, Sheffield United, Norwich City, Ipswich Town, Crystal Palace, Blackburn Rovers, Coventry City, Liverpool, Oldham Athletic, Sheffield Wednesday, Tottenham Hotspur, Queens Park Rangers, Everton, Middlesbrough, Manchester City, Southampton, Wimbledon and Manchester United (Wikipedia, 2015). The EPL is currently at the top of the English football system and operates on a relegation and promotion format, with 380 games per season. The EPL is the most watched football league in the world, being broadcast in two hundred and twelve territories to over 600 million homes and a potential television audience of over 4 billion people (Ebner, 2013).

Football is arguably one of the most popular sports in the world, and also the most followed sport in Nigeria

(Ohaegbulam, 2015). Some of the reasons for this level of followership are **the wide broadcasting coverage** of the league, its unpredictable nature and its inclusion of African players (Ajayi & Uzebu, 2014).

Attempts have been made to describe the followership of the EPL by Nigerians. Akindes (2011) described this phenomenon as 'football cosmopolitanism of the fans' while Donald (2009) argued that the fan rivalry, clashes and overzealous celebrations associated with their support for the EPL bordered on fanaticism and hooliganism, behaviour usually associated with English fans. He observed that any day EPL matches were played, productivity of Nigerians dropped, street were deserted because every football fan dashed to the nearest viewing centre to watch the matches. A nationwide survey conducted in August 2015 by NOI Polls estimated that 74% of Nigerian football viewers follow the EPL while 26% of Nigerians who watch football do not. Further analysis of the polls also indicated that the bulk of the followership consisted of youths aged 26 – 35 years (NOI Polls, 2015).

Accessibility of English Premier League in Nigeria: Football fans access the game by watching it at home, on pay television, online on any device that can be connected to the Internet or by visiting viewing centres or sports betting centres. The subscription-based television services are usually provided by both analogue and digital cable and satellite television (Wikipedia, 2016). Most urban Nigerian households have access to at least one pay television subscription service while some access up to three. At the time of this study, there were seven pay TV service providers in the country: DSTV, StarTimes, GoTV, MyTV, ACTV, ConSat and DaarSat.

South Africa based MultiChoice's DSTV through its 24-hour sports channel, SuperSport, holds the licence to broadcast the English Premier League and over 70 other sporting events available on the DSTV Family, DSTV Compact, DSTV Compact Plus and DSTV Premium bouquets. However, DSTV Family and DSTV Compact only contain one SuperSport channel that offers EPL content, and that is SuperSport 9. MultiChoice in an attempt to compete with other pay TV service providers established a more affordable alternative, GOTV, in 2011 and included two SuperSport channels in GOTV bouquets as an incentive for subscribers, further increasing EPL access in the country (Tade, 2014).

Viewing centres (commercial points where people watch televised events at a fee) have sprung up in almost every major residential street to match the increasing football fanaticism among fans. The regular

rituals of television spectating in viewing centres and the consequent social bonding and identification with elite European clubs have marked out these set of fans as members of a growing football subculture in the country (Omobowale, 2009; Majaro-Majesty, 2011; Omotosho, 2012). Establishing viewing centres has also become a lucrative business venture for many unemployed youths (Njoku, Agbenyo and Ojotule, 2014; Ajayi, 2012). And due to this positive side effect bars, clubs, canteens and betting outlets are increasingly providing viewing centre services to complement their services (Tade, 2014).

Fans are also increasingly acquiring mobile devices such as laptops, tablets, smartphones, and mobile televisions among others. Mobile television is accessible via 3G streaming (3G) and Digital Video Broadcast Handheld Technology (DVB-H). DVB-H is a type of broadcast technology that utilises its own network of transmitters, while 3G utilises the same infrastructure that is used by cell phones and is dependent on the Mobile Operators Network. The cost of the device ranges from ₦10,000 to ₦20,000 depending on the dealer from which the device is purchased. And all active DSTV subscribers can access the DSTV Mobile service for free on tablets and other mobile devices by downloading the DSTV Mobile application and linking it to an active DSTV account (MultiChoice, 2013).

Mass media and gambling: Onyebueke (2015) studied the interplay between transnational football broadcasting and football viewing centres in a bid to identify the spatial, economic and socio-cultural correlates of the rising electronic fandom in urban Nigeria and found that there is a phenomenal shift from local to international football due to football globalization, comparison effect, sponsorship and purchase of European club brands by Nigerian companies. He asserts that this has produced a subculture with distinct social identities framed by group affinity for European clubs.

Ifeduba (2011) conducted a study on the contents, uses and gratifications of nine football club newspapers and found that the birth of football newspapers led to an increased number of football fans shifting their support from local football clubs to foreign football clubs as a result of new media owners responding to the demand of the local need for good, professional and organized football. Londo (2006) conducted a study to understand the effects of popular poker television shows on 444 college students. The results of the research showed that student gambling is strongly correlated to

viewership of poker shows, particularly among younger students.

In South Africa where there are over 17000 confirmed gambling addicts, studies indicate that 76.1% of old-age grant recipients gambled to make ends meet, not necessarily influenced by football games. The National Responsible Gambling Programme, NRG, of South Africa, however, links gambling to sport only to the extent that it is also categorised as an entertainment (Ngwenya, 2016).

Theoretical framework

The study is anchored on the Uses and Gratifications Theory and the social comparison theory. The Uses and Gratifications Theory focuses on what media users use the media for and what gratifications they derive from it. The proponents argue that media users take an active part in the communication process and are goal oriented in their media use, and that they often seek out media sources that best fulfil their needs. The basic assumptions of the theory according to Folarin (1998) are aimed at answering the questions: Who uses which content and from which media? Under what conditions and for what reasons do they use the media?

In relation to this study, football fans who watch the English Premier choose whether they want to watch televised games to advance their gambling businesses or not. They freely choose whether to watch for just entertainment or for the analysis of club strengths and weakness in order to gamble on the outcome of a game. In relation to uses and gratifications, Ifeduba (2011) argued that audience need for entertainment was no longer met by watching Nigerian clubs on television or by reading about them in sports dailies and weeklies, and this partly explains their quest for English and Spanish club weeklies and the EPL matches.

The Social Comparison Theory asserts that individuals have a drive to compare their opinions and abilities to others. These comparisons have a profound effect on self-efficacy appraisals, which in turn influence the level of goal setting, affective self-evaluation, and the quality of analytic thinking (Londo, 2006). Researches carried out on modelled behaviour indicate that exposure to other people's accomplishments has a significant impact on how one views his or her own capabilities. Thus, it is assumed that people are attracted to gambling because they see in the media, amateur gamblers winning substantial amounts of money. Anytime a player wins huge sums of money, the gambling company usually holds press conferences and other marketing events announcing the player's success, and this further motivates gamblers to

continue and encourages potential gamblers to go into it. EPL viewers who watch the game in viewing centres are most susceptible to this sort of social comparison as they compare their opinions and abilities to others'.

Methodology

This study employed a survey research design as a primary method supported with content analysis of online gambling websites (Idahosa, 2007). Using a self-administered questionnaire, data were purposively collected from 285 respondents selected on the basis of their viewership of the EPL in Lagos State, Nigeria (Wimmer and Dominick, 2011). Lagos State was also selected purposively because it is the state with the largest population in Nigeria, reflecting the pluralities, diversities and the unity of the national population and hosting two of the three licensed land-based casinos in the country and a large number of the local sports betting firms.

A complete list of all the local governments in Lagos State obtained from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) was used as a sampling frame for this stage of the selection. Using simple-random sampling, three local governments in Lagos were selected for study. This was done by writing the names of all the local governments in pieces of paper, folding them and then placing them into a large bowl. Three pieces of paper were then selected randomly without replacement. The local governments selected were Lagos Island, Ikeja and Kosofe local governments. Gambling outlets in the three local governments were then selected by cluster sampling. Popular streets and districts proliferated with gambling shops were taken as clusters. A 20-item questionnaire containing one open-ended question, 10 close-ended questions and 9 Likert-scale questions was used to collect data from respondents. In the end, 285 were correctly filled by 248 (87%) males and 37 females (13%) and retrieved.

Data were presented using simple percentage, frequency tables, and pie charts, in order to show distribution of relevant variables. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to compute data and the variables were correlated using Pearson correlation coefficient. The overwhelming majority of the respondents (83%) fell between the ages of 18 and 35 whereas there was none in the 55-and-above category. In terms of occupation, students and unemployed respondents made up 57.6% whereas employed respondents made up 42.4%.

Data presentation and analysis

Research question 1: What is the evidence that gambling is on the increase in Nigeria?

To answer this question, the respondents were asked if they believed that sport betting was on the increase in Nigeria and 98.2% said yes while 1.8% said no. Those who said no were further asked the extent they thought that sport betting had increased in recent times. Over 96% indicated that it had increased between 61 and 100% or above.

Research question 2 To what extent do the respondents watch English Premier League?

To answer this question, respondents were asked if they viewed the EPL and 100% said they did. Over 40.7% viewed often, 35.1% viewed occasionally, 16.1% viewed rarely while 8.1% viewed very often. Further analysis indicates that 157 (35.9%) viewed EPL at

home, 188 (43.0%) at viewing centres, 65 (14.9%) at sports betting centres and 27 (6.2%) online. This indicates that majority of the respondents (43.0%) view the English Premier League at viewing centres.

Research question 3: What are the types of gambling respondents engaged in?

To answer this research question, the respondents were asked to indicate the types of betting they engaged in and their responses indicate that almost 61% engaged in sport betting. Another type of betting widely practiced by the respondents is lotto, a locally designed betting business which is also based on football matches. Details are presented in Table 1:

Table 1: Types of betting Respondents engaged in

S/N	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Sports betting	285	60.7%
2.	Pools betting	17	3.6%
3.	Card games	10	2.1%
4.	Lotto	136	29.1%
5.	Casino games	14	3.0%
6.	Dice games	4	0.9%
7.	Table games	3	0.6%
	TOTAL	468	100%

Of all these types of betting, the three types, sport betting, pools betting and lotto, based on forecast of the outcome of football matches, are most patronised.

Research question 4: Role of gambling advertisements, viewing centres, affordable channels, convenient access, popularity and frequent viewing of EPL in upsurge of gambling.

Respondents were asked to indicate their levels of agreement with statements indicating that five factors

(gambling advertisements, affordable channels, convenient online access through mobile devices, viewing centres and frequency of viewing and EPL played significant roles towards the perceived upsurge in gambling. Their responses indicate that viewership of EPL games and advertisements contributed more to the perceived gambling behaviour than viewing centres, convenient access and affordable channels. The details are presented in Figure 1:

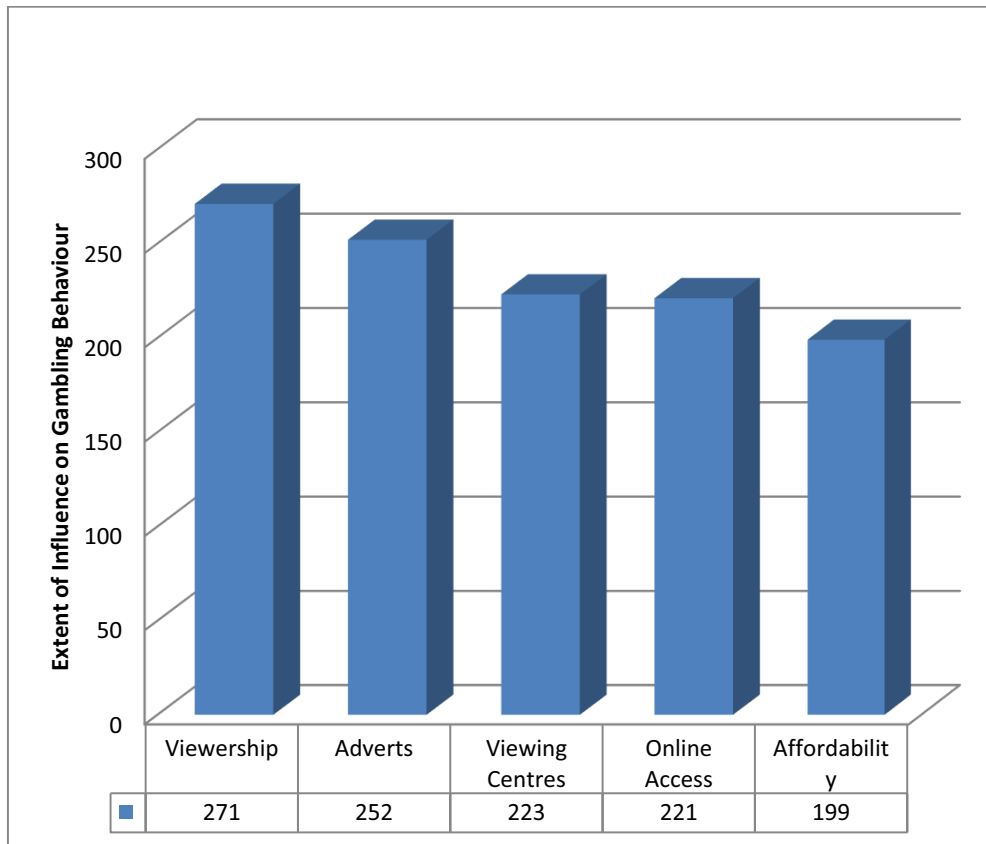


Figure 1: Factors associated with gambling behaviour

Statistical measure of relationships

Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between perceived gambling behaviour and advertisements, affordable channels, convenient access, viewing centres and frequent viewing of the

EPL. The results indicate that there is a positive statistically significant correlation between the perceived gambling behaviour and all the five variables as presented in Table 2:

Table 2: Relationship between perceived gambling behaviour and five variables

Pearson's coefficient	Gambling adverts	Affordable channels	Online access	Viewing centres	Frequent viewing
R	.195*	.183*	.297**	.146**	.313**
Sig.	.001	.002	.000	.046	.000
N	285	285	285	285	285

These findings imply that the more of gambling advertisements, affordable channels, convenient access, viewing centres and frequent viewing of the more the perceived gambling behaviour exhibited among the viewers. Conversely, the less of the occurrence of these variables the less of gambling practices in the city. The relationships are highly significant as reflected in the p< value of .000, .001, .002 and .046.

Discussion of findings

From findings indicating that over 98% of the respondents agreed that gambling is on the increase and the estimation of over 96% that the increase should be about hundred per cent and above, it could be inferred that there is a clear evidence that gambling is on the increase in Nigeria. This perception supports views and findings in the literature and explains the

existence of numerous competitively furnished betting outfits all over the city (Omonisa, 2015). Increasing traffic on some websites also affirms that online gambling is on the increase also.

It could also be deduced that viewership level of the EPL is quite high. In fact, one of the respondents estimated that over 60 million Nigerians view European leagues. In terms of frequency and consumer loyalty, the majority of fans and sympathisers watch at least one EPL match each week during the season. A fan explained it thus: "Football is my religion and the English Premier League is my denomination, so I try to be faithful by watching every match played by my team and some other great teams." This view is consistent with previous writings on the followership of the EPL in Nigeria (Ohaegbulam, 2015; Ajayi and Uzegbu, 2014).

From a list of seven, the three types of gambling (sport betting, pools betting and lotto) recorded the highest three scores indicating that football-based gambling drives the gambling industry in Nigeria. However, the primary driving force is sport betting as the findings indicate. And this is also consistent with the literature which explains further that both lotto and pools betting are currently struggling to survive, having lost many of their customers to sport betting. In other words, sport betting which is highly dependent on the EPL dominates gambling business in Lagos. Thus, it could be deduced that sport betting is main type of gambling associated with viewership of English Premier League?

Results of the statistical analysis indicate that perceived viewership level of EPL, affordable pay TV, availability of viewing centres and viewership of gambling advertisements play statistically significant roles toward the gambling behaviour of EPL viewers. This means that an increase in these facilities and situations would lead to an increase in gambling while a decrease would lead to a decrease in gambling.

Conclusion

This study shows that viewership of football matches especially the English Premier League is contributing significantly to the upsurge of gambling in Lagos, Nigeria, by extension. Three other factors associated with football viewing (convenient access, viewing centres and gambling advertisements) are also correlates of this gambling behaviour. As more of these are made available to the EPL viewers, they would tend to gamble more.

Recommendations

To curb gambling and its negative effects on the social and economic lives of Nigerians, it is recommended that government should legislate against uncontrolled

reception of televised games from abroad and regulate gambling advertisements more constructively.

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