

'Take Time to Think' gambling warning found to have no impact on betting behavior

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Clearer messaging on gambling harm is needed if the industry is to help customers moderate their gambling behavior, experts have warned.

Academics have found that the widely used "Take Time to Think" slogan has no impact on people's [behavior](#) while [gambling](#), after testing its effectiveness in a virtual casino environment.

Take Time to Think is a national campaign managed by the Betting and Gaming Council, which aims to encourage safe and responsible gambling behavior. The "Take Time to Think" slogan is used in gambling advertisements both online and on television, as well as in high-street arcades, [betting](#) shops and casinos and bingo halls.

The findings come as the gambling industry anticipates the UK Government's white paper which is expected to set out new guidance for gambling regulation. Academics say that awareness messaging for gambling should be developed much like warning labels on other recreational yet potentially harmful products such as alcohol and tobacco.

"If the industry is to be successful at preventing gambling harm, awareness messaging should be strongly worded, but independently developed, tested and validated in order to better inform and educate people about gambling and its risks," says Professor Elliot Ludvig, professor of Psychology at the University of Warwick.

"There's a clear formula on alcohol labels for example, that outlines how someone can moderate their alcohol intake. On tobacco labels, the warning is very stark," he continues. "Safer gambling messages could take on a similar format. It should be obvious how gambling addiction can take hold of people. Clearer messaging would also create greater transparency around certain games, and how the wider industry works."

During the randomized online experiment, academics created an online roulette game and gave participants a real sum of £5, which they could choose to either withdraw and keep, or continue with the experiment and

gamble the money.

A total of 1,500 people took part in the roulette game experiment and were divided into three groups. One group played the [game](#) where the "Take Time to Think" slogan was displayed at all times in the background; one group where the slogan was displayed in the background but also appeared prominently as a pop-up window, and the player needed to close the window in order to keep playing; and a third group where the slogan was completely absent.

During the experiment, researchers measured people's gaming susceptibility, i.e., how much individuals would normally play casino games, as well as the number of spins, how much money each person bet at a time, and how quickly they bet.

"The messaging had little to no effect on people's gambling behavior," said Lukasz Walasek, associate professor of Psychology at the University of Warwick and co-author of the study. "The study did not reliably change the amount people bet, and it certainly didn't have the intended effect of reducing the time spent gambling. Whether or not they received the message, people spent similar amounts of time placing each bet, made similar numbers of roulette spins, and played for a similar length of time overall."

Academics at the University of Warwick previously studied the Betting and Gaming Council's [When the Fun Stops, Stop](#) awareness message, which was also found to have no credible impact on people's betting behavior and even had the opposite desired effect in some instances. During that experiment, when the message was present, it was found that people were slightly more likely to bet all their available money.

More information: "Take Time To Think" safer gambling message: a randomised, online experimental study, *Behavioural Public Policy*

(2023).

Provided by University of Warwick

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