

Research highlights dangers of impulsive 'in-play' football betting

June 2 2015, by David Christie



A Responsible Gambling campaign by the Senet Group senetgroup.org.uk

"In-play" football bets may prove tantalisingly tempting, but new research from the University of Stirling has highlighted a gambling advertising pattern which proves the odds fall firmly in favour of the bookmakers.

The Stirling study of television and betting shop adverts during the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil found televised "in-play", which advertise the [odds](#) on specific bets during a football match, are cannily constructed to exploit known errors in [decision-making](#).

Betting companies spend around £150 million a year on television commercials and gambling now accounts for 4.1% of all TV advertising, this figure increasing significantly during football matches.

Public concern has been mounting over the quantity of gambling advertising and several UK bookmakers - through the Senet Group - have agreed to a ban before 9pm. However, the University of Stirling research suggests they fall far short of meeting their commitment to promote responsible gambling.

Philip Newall, a Behavioural Science PhD student in the Stirling Management School and former professional poker player, said: "Germany may have won the World Cup, but the bookmakers were the shrewdest tacticians of the lot. The pattern of advertised bets throughout the 2014 World Cup suggests the bookies have effectively reverse-engineered the last 50 years of research into biases in probability judgement.

"Bets on the right team to win the match are relatively simple, since only a few events can happen and unsurprisingly these bets were rarely advertised.

"By contrast, bets on the correct scoreline or the first goalscorer are much harder to get right, since there are so many more possibilities to estimate. These complex bets are actually priced much less-fairly to the public and they dominated gambling advertising."

Newall studied the patterns of 103 TV adverts and 334 shop window and in-shop specials from the four main UK bookmakers: Coral, Ladbrokes, William Hill and online bookmaker Bet 365. He found the same pattern across all bookmakers.

He added: "We, the customer, fail to correctly account for complexity

and the bookies have picked up on this. Customers get distracted by easily-imaginable events within a given complex bet type. Most of us could correctly guess that Iran are unlikely to win a match 3-1, but we can easily imagine Germany winning 3-1.

"And by advertising bets such as 'Thomas Muller to score the first goal and Germany to win 3-1', the betting public can be tricked into buying fool's gold."

Dr David Comerford, Stirling Economics lecturer and member of the Behavioural Science Centre added: "These in-game advertisements represent a perfect storm of threats to self-control: they exploit gut feeling; they are broadcast during emotional events; they make offers that are available for a limited period only and they advertise bets that can be made at the touch of a button without so much as having to open a wallet. This research exemplifies very starkly how our everyday environment punishes the impulsive."

More information: "How bookies make your money." *Judgment and Decision Making*, Vol. 10, No. 3, May 2015, pp. 225–231.
journal.sjdm.org/14/141026a/jdm141026a.pdf

Provided by University of Stirling

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