
PRESS STATEMENT

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Responsible Gambling Trust publishes Demos' study of social media and gambling

The scale of the social media challenge facing gambling regulators and those working to minimise gambling-related harm is set out in a new report by leading think-tank Demos, published today by the Responsible Gambling Trust.

Demos researchers identified 877 Twitter accounts promoting gambling and noted that over 900,000 British Twitter users (around one-in-twenty) followed at least one promotional account. It was found that if a Twitter user followed just the three most prolific pro-gambling accounts they would receive a promotional message on average once every 240 seconds.

The report reveals some specific challenges to regulators and those concerned about gambling-related harm:

- The range of online products and sources which promote gambling – such as through apps operating with digital currency or online tipsters, who may be paid to promote gambling as affiliates but who are not subject to any of the licencing that covers traditional gambling.
- The very small number of highly intensive followers of online gambling accounts e.g. the 412 accounts identified as having sent more than 20 gambling-related tweets in the study period (four weeks in late September and early October 2015) whilst following more than 30 gambling-related accounts.
- The extremely limited penetration by online efforts to assist and advise those wishing to avoid problematic gambling: those who follow pro-gambling accounts are very unlikely to follow accounts dedicated to tackling gambling related harm.

Marc Etches, Chief Executive of the Responsible Gambling Trust, said: "The Responsible Gambling Trust is committed to minimising gambling-related harm, and the interaction between social media and gambling is an increasingly important consideration. There is a need to maintain a careful balance between the freedom to promote legitimate commerce and the need to protect vulnerable people. We hope that this report will be helpful to policy makers, regulators and all those working to minimise gambling-related harm."

Carl Miller, Research Director of the Centre for the Analysis of Social Media at Demos said: "This study shines important new light on the increasingly prominent digital dimension of gambling, which poses new and specific challenges for policy-makers and regulators. As we move so much

of our lives online, our research at Demos has underscored just how important it is for policies to evolve, to acknowledge the new ways in which we as a society are engaging with information. Clearly, more needs to be done to ensure that messages countering problematic gambling are able to reach people where they can best be heard and have the greatest impact.”

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Contact:

Adrian McMenamin

Bell Pottinger

Direct line: +44 (0)20 3772 2618 / +44 7812 766017

AMcMenamin@bellpottinger.com

Sophie Gaston

Demos

d 0207 367 6325 | m 074727 45678

sophie.gaston@demos.co.uk

NOTES TO EDITORS

- The Responsible Gambling Trust is the leading charity in the UK committed to minimising gambling-related harm. As an independent national charity funded by donations from the gambling industry, the Responsible Gambling Trust funds education, prevention and treatment services and commissions research to broaden public understanding of gambling-related harm. The aim is to stop people getting into problems with their gambling, and ensure that those that do develop problems receive fast and effective treatment and support.
- The Responsible Gambling Trust raises a minimum of £5million each year from the gambling industry operating in Britain within a voluntary (donation based) system and funds research, education, prevention and treatment services. Funding priorities are guided by the national strategy advised by the Responsible Gambling Strategy Board (RGSB) and endorsed by the Gambling Commission. The latest strategy was published in December 2012.
- Demos is Britain’s leading cross-party think-tank: an independent, educational charity, which produces original and innovative research. Visit: www.demos.co.uk.
- Demos’ Centre for the Analysis of Social Media (CASM) is the first think-tank unit dedicated to researching digital society by building robust social media analytic tools. It builds new ways of understanding social media as a useful and ethical instrument of policy research, and uses them to learn more about the politics, social world, beliefs, health and dangers of the digital age. CASM is a collaboration between Demos and the Text Analytics Group at the University of Sussex.