

GLOBAL ESPORTS BETTING AND CONTINUANCE INTENTION AMONG YOUNG FOOTBALL FANS

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: *The study responds to the call for extensions of the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) model into uncharted domains, to provide preliminary insights into the adoption and continuance intention of online (electronic) sports betting among young football fans. Beyond this, we also explore a new outcome mechanism about the impact on bettors' livelihood.*

Design/Methodology/Approach: *Through a qualitative approach, insights from active online sports bettors were obtained via five Focus group discussion sessions. Using the thematic analysis technique, we identified patterns of themes across the interview transcripts.*

Findings: *This study corroborates the applicability of the UTAUT model in explaining the antecedents, motivations and continuance intention behind bettors of online sports betting. We also present a revelation of positive and negative impacts on bettors.*

Originality/Value: *The empirical findings provide valuable theoretical contributions to new knowledge as it is the first known study to employ the UTAUT to interpret online sports betting behaviour. Practical implications for the industry regarding marketing strategies for sports betting companies are also provided.*

Keywords: UTAUT, Online Sports Betting, Continuance Intention, Emerging Market, Electronic Commerce, Young Consumers.

INTRODUCTION

A growing sensation that has stemmed from sports and gambling consumption is electronic sports betting (Gonzalez et al., 2017). For over two decades, sports betting was known in games such as poker, horseracing, tennis and football. Notably, partakers of these sports bets were limited to games transpiring within communities, towns and specific geographical settings where the bettors are located. In recent times, however, given the ubiquitous nature of satellite and internet television, viewership of sports games transcends geographical borders and times (BBC Sports, 2013). As a result, bettors now have the latitude of betting on games outside their local communities and home countries to include games taking place in other locations. This has given rise to other electronic forms such as fantasy sports (Karg & McDonald, 2011; Martin & Nelson, 2014) and consumption segments such as young bettors (Kristiansen et al., 2018). Because of this, numerous electronic betting companies have also spawned across many nations, with some companies going international through subsidiaries in other foreign countries and

competing for a share of customers. Some betting companies, like Betway, even sponsor sporting outfits and other cause-related activities (Lamont et al., 2011).

Sports betting describes the commerce of wagering on the outcome and component outcome elements of sporting events, which may be local, national or international (Macpherson, 2007). Despite the apparent growing pace of betting brands across the globe, available scholarly research on the nuances of betting, from the perspective of either the betting companies or bettors, appears very scant. Existing studies abound with examples of gambling disorders and addictions (Fatseas et al., 2016; Nigro et al., 2018), sports forecasts and predictions (Baker and McHale, 2013), media attention and betting markets (Legge & Schmid, 2016) and match-fixing (Bag and Saha, 2011). Consequently, it appears academic enquiries on electronic sports betting are still relatively nascent and still in exploratory phases in the literature. From a business perspective, electronic betting brands offer competitive commercial gaming and leisure services to customers. Coussement & De Bock (2013) asserts that the industry is one of the most revenue-generating electronic commerce models of the entertainment business, resulting in fierce competition and saturated markets. Accordingly, there is a compelling reason why scholarly attention and investigations into the idiosyncrasies surrounding the young consumer and firm behaviours on this phenomenon are necessary for progressing the literature (Kristiansen et al., 2018).

The current state of the literature on the subject, however, exhibits some pertinent deficiencies, contributing to the difficulties in developing policies to encourage the use of, for example, regulated online gambling (Gainsbury et al., 2013; Hing et al., 2014). Among the notable ones are the limited (qualitative) evidence on young consumers' motivations behind online sports betting adoption and continuance intentions, and the insufficient empirical investigations from less developed economies, particularly Sub-Saharan Africa. Because of this, the current study aims at providing some preliminary insights into the adoption and continuance intention determinants of online sports betting among young football fans in an emerging market. It does so by presenting a detailed description of young consumers' considerations for indulging in digital betting, their motivations for repeat patronage, the impacts (negative and positive) on their livelihoods as well as their (dis)continuance intentions. Aside from providing some marketing implications for managers of electronic betting companies, we offer a foundation for future studies to extend the current study into more general research questions guiding future research on, perhaps, other business management perspectives on online sports betting.

Context: sports betting in Ghana

Gambling and sports betting have become booming businesses in Ghana during the past decade. Even though sports betting has been popular in Europe for centuries, the wave in African countries had not been widespread until recent times. The phenomenon is fast becoming one of the favourites and popular pastimes among young people in the country, with factors such as the prevalence of international football league matches aired by commercial satellite television stations, and the increasing internet penetration contributing to the upsurge. Apart from the over twenty local betting companies, there are more than ten international betting brands currently operating subsidiaries and branches in the country. All these firms offer betting services that are accessible in both brick-and-mortar as well as electronic formats, usually via mobile or desktop devices. The increase in internet audience in the country has primarily contributed to most bettors being predisposed to electronic betting, despite the preponderance of physical betting shops spread across the nation. The presence of international bookmakers such as Betfair,

William Hill, 1xBet, and Betvictor, among others, attests to and reinforces the gravity of betting in Ghana, making it a perfect context for the study.

THEORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is a well-recognised model used to explain the adoption of technologies and innovations (technovations). According to the TAM, adoption behaviour is determined by the intention to utilise a system, which is, in turn, mostly determined by the perceived usefulness and the perceived ease of use of the system (Davis et al., 1989). As a result, for most research that focuses on the initial adoption of a technovation, the TAM is often used as the theoretical base (Zhou, 2013). Recently, however, scholars have argued that, beyond adoption, there is the need to understand the behavioural intention of consumers toward technovations in the post-acceptance stage. Consequently, the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) by Venkatesh et al. (2003) emerged to offer explanations for the factors that influence consumers' behavioural intentions to use, and the actual use of technology. Continuance theory focuses on experienced, continuing users rather than those in the initial stages of adoption (Bhattacharjee, 2001).

The UTAUT model proposes four key factors (performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions) as direct determinants of usage intention and behaviour (Venkatesh et al., 2003). More recently, calls for studies across, particularly, new contexts have been advocated to test and unearth newer dimensions of the UTAUT (Venkatesh et al., 2016) to chart new agenda for cross-context theorising of the model (Whetten, 2009). This springs from the argument that higher-level contextual factors (such as environmental attributes, organisation attributes, and location attributes) and individual-level contextual factors (such as user attributes, technology attributes, task attributes, and events/time) confound the model. Online sports betting is considered an interactive gambling technology (Brindley, 1999) with billions in market value (BBC Sports, 2013). We, therefore, examine online sports betting behaviour and (dis)continuance intentions among bettors, from a UTAUT perspective, to progress the literature with an extended domain and new outcome mechanisms (Venkatesh et al., 2016).

Computers in Gambling and Betting

Today, advances in information technology are resulting in the explosions of revolutionary businesses. These new technologies have modified the way consumers engage in mundane activities and the patronage of services. From the old, betting had been a physical and terrestrial activity (Brown & Davis, 1990) until the emergence of internet gambling. In recent times, however, the introduction of computerisation in gambling has provided new remote modes of gambling (Canale et al., 2016; Deans et al., 2016), making electronic betting one of the fastest growing sectors of e-commerce. Currently, sports betting revenue is estimated to be worth between 700 billion and 1 trillion worldwide per annum (Brown & Reade, 2018) demonstrating the substantial sums at stake. Notably, the use of the Internet in betting has given rise to several online betting avenues (such as via desktops and mobile devices) and upshots. Consequently, betting and other gambling operators have taken advantage of this trend by using innovative advertising and marketing campaigns to move into new markets and capture customers (Gainsbury et al., 2013; Teichert et al., 2017).

Online sports betting is a non-pathological, electronically interactive leisure technology (Gordon et al., 2015) that represents a potentially profitable per capita revenue source over a longer time frame (Hing et al., 2014; Lopez-Gonzalez et al., 2017). According to Online Casino City (2018), there are over 507 different payment methods offered by Internet betting sites. Apart from credit and debit card payments being the most popular, there are other third-party digital payment processors such as bank and money transfers (for example, PayPal, Skrill, and NetTeller) which provide additional levels of security and identity protection. This has led to the speed of transaction, less labour, flexibility and more convenience for bettors to use multiple betting windows to place bets and receive winnings. The Internet also makes available to young bettors shared content in the form of tutorials, instructions and practice or even 'free play' sites that allow novice bettors to gather tips and educative information on online betting (Palomino et al., 2009; Gainsbury et al., 2012). According to Legge & Schmid (2016), bettors make most of their betting decisions using information obtained from the media.

Online Sports Betting and Continuance Intention

Kim et al. (2010) note that, in the UTAUT, performance expectancy is the same as TAM's perceived usefulness, and describes the degree to which a consumer believes that using a system or an innovation will enable the attainment of some gains in job performance (Davis et al., 1989). Other roots underlying this construct are extrinsic motivation (Davis et al., 1992), job fit (Thompson et al., 1991), relative advantage (Moore & Benbasat, 1991) and outcome expectations (Compeau et al., 1999). With this study, performance expectancy may reflect bettors' perceptions of conditions such as favourable or competitive odds for staking, quick payments, regular availability (24/7) of games, and fair, prompt returns which may be offered by online betting. For users of most electronic systems, the performance factor may explain the ultimate reason underlying their adoption. Thus, for continuance usage, not only should online sports betting avenues enhance effectiveness in sports betting but also offer bettors some incremental economic gains for their livelihoods and productivities.

Furthermore, like the perceived ease of use in the TAM, effort expectancy refers to the degree of ease associated with the use of the system (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Effort expectancy, in this regard, reflects the perceptions held by bettors on how complicated or easy it is to engage in online sports betting. In some jurisdictions, it is exemplified by the relatively complex and cost-rational perception held by consumers (Gainsbury et al., 2012) and the minimisation of time involved in carrying out betting activities (Thompson et al., 1991; King et al., 2010). Accordingly, bettors should perceive that using the online betting system is not complicated to navigate in skill and acumen (Gordon et al., 2015), does not take too much time from their regular activities/schedules (Gainsbury et al., 2012), and does not involve excessive mechanical operations during their adoption and usage to warrant continuance.

Also, Venkatesh et al. (2003), theorise facilitating conditions to represent the degree to which an individual perceives a system to be supported by the existence of organisational and technical infrastructure (such as betting slots, favourable odds and mobile apps) capable of allowing easy control. Zhou et al. (2010) shed further elucidations on facilitating conditions also to include the user's knowledge and ability. More recently, Venkatesh et al. (2016) have also included location attributes (such as national culture, industry competition and economic development) as a higher-level contextual factor in facilitating conditions. Drawing from the gambling literature (Cotte, 1997), betting consumers should perceive that online betting offers, among others, elements of chances and many slots to win during participation. Additionally,

skills such as those required to configure and operate online betting via electronic devices (for example computers and mobile phones) are, therefore, facilitating conditions required to engage in the service continually. Gainsbury et al. (2012) add that Internet access through cheap, fast mobile and broadband connections at home, in the workplace, in libraries, at educational institutions, and in the Internet, cafes have also facilitated the growth of online gambling and betting efforts.

Moreover, social influence, akin to the subjective norm in behavioural studies (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), has been described as the degree to which individuals recognise the need to use a new system because they perceive that other people are relevant to them are also involved in its usage. Consumers are likely to exhibit a behaviour if they perceive that other people (usually of relevance to them) are also involved in a similar act (such as normative fan behaviours reported by Agha & Tyler, 2017). Vijayasathy (2004) likens this situation to normative beliefs in a study, arguing that consumers are most likely to engage in, for instance, online shopping based on the recommendations they receive from people they consider relevant in their social circle. Indeed, Gordon et al. (2015) draw on the consumer culture theory to confirm that “consciousness of kind” is a crucial marker of sports betting within consumption communities and that shared cultural values collectively manifest sociality and passion. Therefore, bettors are more likely to continue betting as long as members in their reference groups and lifestyles are perceived to be involved in the same.

From the ongoing discussions, we advance four research questions (RQs) for our enquiry on online sports betting and continuance intention among football fans within the framework of the UTAUT model and continuance theory:

RQ1: How do online sports betting start among young football fans? What are the antecedents?

RQ2: What reasons/motivations keep young online sports bettors betting regularly?

RQ3: What are their intentions regarding continuation or stoppage?

RQ4: How do online sports betting eventually impact the lives of young bettors?

METHODOLOGY

Research design, recruitment and sampling

Given the relatively nascent nature of online sports betting as well as the limited empirical research from our context, the study draws on a qualitative approach. We used focus group interviews (Calder, 1977) to explore the antecedents, motivations and continuance intention of young online sports bettors. Previous research has demonstrated their feasibility in studying betting behaviour (Agha & Tyler, 2017). According to Wilkinson (2004), focus group interviews provide researchers with elaborative perspectives on the topic under discussion with their major strength emanating from the group dynamics and interactions. Unlike individual interviews, group members are likely to challenge each other's views, argue for a change in opinions, and converge on matters that are important to them (Bryman & Bell, 2015). To provide informative responses for theory development in a relatively new research area, the efficacy and validity of the data are affected by the extent to which participants feel comfortable about openness in communicating their ideas, views, or opinions (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990).

For focus groups, the sessions are typically in a more relaxed manner, and the participants feel at ease in conversations, given the relatability of the subject under discussion (Bryman, 2004). Moreover, members feel like peers since there is something familiar (sports betting) that connects them. To create such an atmosphere, it was essential to ensure that each focus group had naturally-forming group membership, particularly, in terms of age structure. As a result, we ensured that, for each group in every session, the age difference is not more than three years between the youngest member and the oldest member. Using a purposive selection (Neuman, 2007), we visited and obtained permission from managers of twelve betting shops to place ads/flyers to solicit interview participants for the study. This was purely based on volunteering/willingness since it was meant for academic purposes only. Interested participants left their details to be contacted while some respondents also provided snowballed leads to friends on wagering forums. After one month of obtaining and confirming our participants via phone calls, we indicated the venues and times for the focus group interview sessions.

Participants and procedures

In all, there were five groups with an average of seven members for each interview session. All the participants were football fans who support teams from leagues in England, Germany, and Spain, among others. Notably, but not surprisingly, most of the volunteered participants were males; a trend observed in previous betting studies (See, for example, Gordon et al., 2015; Deans et al., 2016). The youngest participant was 18 years and 7 months while the oldest was 23 years and 2 months as of the time of data collection, fulfilling Neuman's (2007) recommendation of obtaining a diverse rather than representative sample to generate snapshots of social reality. Each focus group lasted approximately 35 to 45 minutes, and gift tokens were given to the participants as incentives to compensate for their time. In almost all the sessions, we proceeded with the same set of questions, despite taking place on different days, before other queries emanated as follow-ups under various circumstances.

To extract precise remarks attributable to specific members in the focus groups, each participant was given a unique alphabetical identity (A to AH) as a tag during the sessions. Furthermore, to maximise the reliability and trustworthiness of the data, each session was recorded (with participants' permission) and professionally transcribed verbatim. Later, we checked the transcriptions against the recordings and inspected the data obtained for (in)consistencies in the individual participant's responses (Stiles, 1993). Moreover, we employed the recycling process (Atwood & Stolorow, 1984) by ensuring that the focus group moderators (researchers) periodically reflected their understanding to the participants during the sessions to check the accuracy of interpretation. Since the main aim of this research is to explore and enhance our understanding of bettors' experiences with online sports betting, validity (trustworthiness of interpretations) is enhanced by using a range of the participants' quotes to support the interpretation of the findings. By recognising this, the results were expressed tentatively, rather than predicting or generalising.

RESULTS

Sample and betting characteristics

A total of 37 subjects participated in the study, ranging in age from 19 to 24 years. Each of the participants was a regular bettor, with an average of three sports bet placements within a week. The average weekly amount spent per punter on electronic slips was approximately \$20, an indication that the participants were active and heavy bettors. Indeed, in most cases, the minimum number of years spent on sports betting by the interviewed participants was 2 years. Hence, all the participants were within the post-acceptance stage and were thus viable candidates for assessing continuance intention (Bhattacharjee, 2001).

Generally, many of the participants alluded to convenience as the primary benefit of using online sports betting over paper-based formats. In addition to this, the reasons behind their choice of a betting company included quick payments and withdrawals, reliability and trustworthiness of the company, favourable/higher odds, availability of mobile apps, good bonuses and broader stakes (beyond 25 matches/games). It was however noted that the majority of the bettors subscribed to multiple companies because “...not all games are provided by certain companies, so I have to use different sites.” Moreover, “subscribing to multiple betting companies gives me more options and makes it more comfortable to select different games at any moment.” (Participant X)

The overarching findings, based on the results of the interviews, will be presented and discussed along four themes (research questions) – antecedents, motivations, impacts, and continuance intentions – with some random, supporting excerpts culled from the focus group discussions.

Antecedents: what starts it all?

This theme looks at what precipitated the bettors’ first online betting experience. Based on the group discussions, more than half of the participants indicated that they were introduced to sports betting by their friends and other peers. Interestingly, others started after seeing ads and comments from previous winners on social media platforms, and were enticed:

“I did not like football betting because I didn’t want anyone to think I am gambling but I started online betting when I saw a tweet that someone (one of my followers) had won a huge amount of money from a betting company.” (Participant Q)

“[initially] I started watching football matches, and as time went on I could predict matches before they were played, so a friend introduced me...” (Participant B)

“...a good friend introduced me, and I fell for it, and I was enjoying it. So, I learned more about it [since it was not difficult to do on my phone] and started it.” (Participant K)

Motivations: what keeps bettors betting regularly?

This theme explores the motivations behind the bettors’ active engagements in online sports betting. Based on the group discussions, and in line with our underpinning theory, the table below illustrates some excerpts captured from the participants. Generally, it was evident that the tenets of the UTAUT could explain the motivations behind the bettors’ persistent use of

online sports betting. We highlight some of the responses under the theoretical sub-themes of the UTAUT. For clarity, some of the extracts have been tagged with the roots underlying the various constructs (Venkatesh et al., 2003).

UTAUT Determinant	Sample responses
Performance expectancy	<p>“...the ones I use have better odds, so you are assured of getting more value for your money invested” – (extrinsic motivation).</p> <p>“The electronic betting pays instantly and directly into my account. It is an easier way of making money, so it is a source of income for me.” – (relative advantage)</p> <p>“...easy way out from being broke, teaches you self-dependency, kills your fear for losses because you become used to them at some point.”</p> <p>“...the thought of hitting the jackpot like others have done in the past keeps me going.” – (outcome expectations)</p>
Effort expectancy	<p>“The online [betting] services allow you to bet at the convenience of your home, using mobile money.” – (ease of use)</p> <p>“Even without going to the betting centres, it is easier to check my electronic devices (mobile phone and laptop) to see all the matches to be played every day.” – (relative complexity)</p> <p>“I have won quite some bets mostly in times of urgent need of money, so it comes to me easily and does not require me leaving my home or work to do it.” – (ease of use)</p>
Social influence	<p>“[at this point] it has become a love for challenges and dares among my friends and me.” – (subjective norm)</p> <p>“[every weekend and mid-week] I see friends and followers on my timeline spreading [predictions] news on matches and some good odds.” – (social factors)</p> <p>“...when you win a soccer bet, it is the happiest feeling in the world because you won money easily while enjoying football matches with your friends.” – (social factors)</p> <p>“I know some old, rich people and ‘big guns’ who also bet on their phones, so nobody suspects them since they do not enter any [physical] betting house.” – (image)</p>
Facilitating conditions	<p>“[For instance] Betway offers a mobile app and an online presence which make betting easier. They also provide more options online and its more comfortable” – (technical infrastructure)</p> <p>“They have good customer services such as swift electronic payment as long as you win and easy withdrawal of cash.” – (organisational support)</p> <p>“There is [even] in-game betting and once I have my phone [while watching a match], I can stake that one. This is not possible if I had to run to the betting centre.” – (technical infrastructure)</p> <p>“I do not have to stake with [physical] cash. I have an electronic wallet [mobile money], so I just pay with it and accumulate into my mobile money account when I win.” – (user attribute)</p>

Continuance intentions

Finally, we examined this theme based on whether the bettors hoped to prolong their betting behaviour (continuance) or abate at any point in time (discontinuance). Feedback from the group sessions is generally skewed toward most of the bettors asserting their intentions to continue online sports betting. To this, some remarked that:

“I stake bets during my leisure hours. Since I am in school, there is little or less time to engage in betting. However, I have my mobile phone and pc always with me. So, there is no idea of stopping.” (Participant F)

“As long as my phone remains with me, I cannot stop. I am not addicted [though]; it is just fun to pick your phone and bet as you enjoy some football.” (Participant S)

“...no real plans of stopping since I am not an addict and barely ever lose any significant amounts of money.” (Participant AD)

“I do not see myself stopping betting, because no one knows when my lucky day will come, that may be when I get to win a life-changing amount...NO ONE knows!” (Participant Y)

“... I intend to open my own betting company after school. My analysis is that the betting companies can never make a loss.” (Participant H)

On the contrary, there were a few respondents who were considering discontinuance, citing some reasons. Whiles some lamented for loss of money, others hinted on online sports betting drifting them toward addiction rather than entertainment. It appears others also go on a (temporal) hiatus till some specific competitive tournaments take place.

“I am considering stoppage because I have lost more than I have won.” (Participant O)

“...with stopping, not yet; but reducing the average amount I spent on them, I will have to reduce.” (Participant U)

“I think I’m going to stop someday because [since I always have internet on my phone] it is becoming addictive instead of a mere entertainment.” (Participant G)

“I have stopped until further notice because champions league has not yet started and my final year exams are fast-approaching.” (Participant K)

Outcomes beyond continuance–Impact on bettors

To better understand bettors’ continuance intentions, we examined the impacts of electronic sports betting on the bettors. We found most of the bettors averring that online sports betting offers positive outcomes to them. Predominantly, online sports betting has provided financial gains whiles improving bettors’ knowledge about the games. As affirmed:

“It enriches my knowledge about football.” (Participant A)

“I will not consider it so much negative since not much money is lost.” (Participant W)

“...it has made me self-dependent and gained some level of experience, with regards to money handling.” (Participant AB)

“It gives me more money, saves me time and has become a major source of my income.” (Participant AG)

“Due to the online betting, my phone keeps me informed about sports updates and tips.” (Participant M)

Some of the participants also raised a few concerns about some negative sides accompanying the activity. The issues ranged from time wasting and loss of money to getting frustrated, uncomfortable, heartbreaks and even going broke.

“... it can make you go from broke to broker.” (Participant E)

“I spend too much money mostly when I lose, I become frustrated and all.” (Participant Z)

“I consider some negative impacts on my life, and it can be a waste of time and cause heartbreaks.” (Participant AC)

“[Whenever I place a bet], I do not feel comfortable unless the match results are in losing a bet is one of the most painful things one can go through.” (Participant N)

Moreover, for others, it was a situation of mixed sentiments, where they recognised the negative impacts but embrace the positives as well.

“...even though I have lost a lot of money, quitting now is not an option. I have become more confident in taking risks.” (Participant AH)

“It feels good when you win but very terrible when you lose.” (Participant J)

“I’m rather controlled, and I could take a break whenever I want.” (Participant AA)

DISCUSSION

In the past, betting was typically considered a gambling disorder. In recent years, however, the gambling and lottery industries are successfully employing marketing strategies to grow more rapidly (Humphreys, 2010), attracting young consumers to punt (Kristiansen et al., 2018). As a result, new forms of products, services and platforms (such as smartphone sports betting apps and online betting accounts) are now available in the electronic marketplace (King et al., 2010). While the UTAUT model has been widely employed to examine the adoption and use of various interactive technologies, there has been no research that explicitly explores the idiosyncrasies of the model from an online sports betting perspective. Following Venkatesh et al. (2016) call for extensions of the UTAUT model, the study sought to provide some preliminary insights into the adoption and continuance intention of electronic sports betting among young football fans within a Sub-Saharan African context.

Consistent with prior research that has focused on the acceptance and use of innovations, technologies and other interactive electronic systems (e.g. Zhou et al., 2010; Shin et al., 2011; Šumak and Šorgo, 2016), we found that several aspects of online sports betting and bettors’ behavioural intentions are also explainable by the tenets of the UTAUT model. Indeed, within the frame of antecedents and motivations behind online sports bettors’ regular involvement with betting, our exploratory investigations reveal responses that are rooted in the foundations of the UTAUT model (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Secondly, our exploratory findings also corroborate with past studies on the behavioural intention feature of the model (Kim et al., 2010; Zhou 2013) as well as on the continuance theory (Bhattacharjee, 2001). Inferring from the responses from our sample, it is interesting to note that continuance intentions toward systems usage may be negative if the activity for which the system is being used is considered to pose some undesirable effects. From our study, the instances where young bettors consider online sports betting to engender addiction tendencies, frustrations, anxiety, discomfort and loss of money may trigger discontinuance.

Aside from these, we found some extended perspectives of the UTAUT model as has been exhibited by extant research (e.g. Casey and Wilson-Evered, 2012; Khalilzadeh et al., 2017). Beyond continuance, we found within the context of betting that online sports betting generates outcome mechanisms in the form of impacts on the young consumer. Results from the focus group discussions reveal that apart from the entertainment and gambling viewpoint, electronic sports betting offers knowledge enhancement, time savings, and user control. However, the impacts are not only positive but also negative and can thereby produce mixed impact outcome mechanisms relating to users' livelihoods. As hinted by Kristiansen et al. (2018), young people are being introduced to the principles and excitement of gambling without experiencing the consequences of losing money. These ongoing discussions and exploratory insights offer contributions as well as warrant implications for theory and practice.

Contributions and research implications

Since proponents of the UTAUT model advocate the need to refine the conceptualisation of the baseline indicators for feature-level uses, our initial contribution lies in being the first study to extend and operationalise the model to the domain of electronic sports betting. Secondly, as an interactive model, scholars recommend the need to identify context effects along the lines of environment, location, organisation, and event for which the model can offer corroborative explanations (Venkatesh et al. 2016). We have, therefore, offered contributions in this area as a pioneering study to provide initial exploratory insights into online sports betting from a Sub-Sahara African setting. Arguably, the emergence of the internet in betting is progressively reinforcing sports betting as an entertainment rather than the traditionally-held association with gambling. Our contextualisation of the UTAUT model and continuance theory to explore and understand the antecedents, motivations and continuance intention of online sports betting among young football fans is considered a modest but unique contribution to business research in general and the young consumers literature in specific.

All things considered, we present 'real-life' views from a context that, to date, has limited empirical evidence in the electronic commerce research and applications literature. More specifically, this study is the first from the sub-region to provide real-life perspectives from actual active young bettors. By qualitatively presenting evidence from these young bettors who indulge in the activity as a (partial) livelihood, we break new ground with a modest attempt at resolving the scholarly calls for new outcome mechanisms as extensions to the UTAUT. The study, in this regard, contributes to research with ground facts to back anecdotal claims on online sports betting as well as progress our current understanding of young consumer and business market issues in emerging/less-developed economies. Given that consumptions in such contexts exhibit eccentricities which characteristically differ from those in developed economies the findings in this study may be comparatively variant in the latter contexts. In sum, our study contributes with empirical narratives from young consumers to the ideological roots, extensions, and contextual perspectives of the UTAUT model as well as the continuance theory.

Managerial implications

Even though our study is exploratory (with results expressed tentatively, rather than predicting or generalising), we advance some practical implications for business management decisions. Since online betting represents one of the blossoming forms of electronic commerce, some marketing

implications are drawn from our findings. First, most of the bettors considered the fact that they do not have to leave their residences to engage in electronic sports betting as a significant advantage over the terrestrial option of betting in a facility. For this matter, betting companies need to ensure that their electronic/digital platforms offer seamless services. For example, the information provided on their digital platforms should be timely and relevant, possibly via push notifications and mobile apps. Second, as a revenue-generating form of the electronic entertainment business, betting firms may also need to offer broader match options on their digital platforms for users to increase their selection. Given the nature of the technology, betting firms have readily accessible customer database information to be able to offer segmented product developments and targeted promotions to aid retention.

Third, marketing communications related to electronic sports betting could be positioned as a livelihood-enhancing entertainment, to create positive value perceptions for continuance usage. This will offer a reassuring image to prevent online sports betting from being viewed as a regular gambling activity. As an interactive electronic leisure technology, the gradual cultural acceptance of this digital commerce now presents opportunities to mitigate gambling harms and ensure safer, regulation among bettors. Fourth, managers of betting companies should also execute their marketing campaigns with a more social feel and atmosphere. Finally, in a related fashion, there is also the need to take advantage of social media to become more interactive by validating winners as a way of appealing to prospective subscribers. To the extent that online sports betting is generally not a prohibited endeavour, we believe the responses from the bettors in our research are factual and, therefore, go beyond mere perceptual narratives.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

There are recognised limitations to the current study that present opportunities for future research. First, this exploratory study addressed its research questions within the confines of a single country and among young consumers only. Consequently, country context and age differences may point (to) variations in other economic and social settings in future studies. Again, even though there are other bouquets of games provided by betting companies, the study limited itself to only bettors of football. As a result, it may be opportune to extend the study beyond a single country as well as use and compare multiple bettors of other sports. Besides, our participants were male-dominated and even though this harks back as an observed trend in past gambling studies, we recognise a potentially obscured limitation from the apparent gender differences among males and females. Therefore, future studies could investigate the nuances of our research to include another gender. Moreover, given that our research questions were examined within the UTAUT model and continuance theory, we do not assume that online sports betting behaviours are only explainable from these perspectives. As such, other theoretical perspectives may undergird future studies regarding the phenomenon.

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