

# GAMBLING RESEARCH

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## Consumer Identity, Gambling, and the Rise of Influencers: A Discussion with Brady Simpson

The world of sports and entertainment is rapidly evolving, and with it, the pervasive influence of gambling. We recently spoke with Brady Simpson, a Ph.D. student (Business) at the University of Calgary, who is currently researching this fascinating and increasingly complex intersection of consumer behaviour, sports betting, and digital influence. Simpson, supervised by Dr. Scott Radford, takes a unique "consumption perspective" on this research, aiming to understand how these elements play out in the real world.

*Continued on next page >*



The primary aim of the Alberta Gambling Research Institute, a consortium of the Universities of Alberta, Calgary, and Lethbridge, is to support academic research related to gambling.

### MISSION

To facilitate evidence-based broad research that informs gambling public policy and educates Albertans and the wider audience about the effects of gambling.

## From Passion for Sport to Researching Persuasion

Simpson's journey into gambling-related research is deeply personal. A lifelong sports enthusiast, he notes that he has grown tired of the relentless barrage of gambling advertisements that now dominate televised sporting events. He views this constant exposure not just as an annoyance, but as a significant cultural shift in how fans are engaging with professional sports. In addition, his own experience as a successful Twitch<sup>1</sup> livestreamer—where he often attracted 150 concurrent viewers, placing him among the top 1% of streamers—further illuminated the issue. He recalls receiving offers of \$500-\$1000 from online casinos and cryptocurrency providers to “promote” their products on his stream—offers he consistently turned down. This firsthand exposure to the commercialization of digital content and its overlap with gambling deeply influenced his research direction.

## Sports Betting: Redefining Fan Engagement and Identity

Simpson is particularly interested in how sports betting impacts a fan's engagement with the sport itself. He observes that sports betting has “engulfed our

culture,” allowing people to bet on virtually anything, including the number of hot dogs eaten at a Toronto Blue Jays baseball game. This has led to a situation where engagement often shifts from the sport itself to the act of gambling. “Fans are now engaging in a potentially harmful activity,” Simpson emphasizes. “If, every 5 seconds, a gambling advertisement appears on a screen, it's likely only a matter of time before you'll want to try it.” He further notes the misconception that there's a high degree of skill involved, which often draws people further in.

He also delves into the psychological phenomena of BIRG'ing (Basking in Reflected Glory) and CORF'ing (Cutting Off Reflected Failure). When a fan says “we won” after their team's victory, it's a collective win. Conversely, the statement “they lost” signifies a separation from the team's failure. Simpson is investigating whether negative outcomes from sports betting might eventually alienate fans from the very games they once loved, both as participants and spectators. A poignant example of this potential alienation is the [2023 incident involving NBA player Bradley Beal](#) and a fan who reportedly confronted and blamed Beal for causing him to lose a bet. This, Simpson suggests, raises critical questions about the fairness and integrity of sport when athletes are increasingly viewed as commodities by disgruntled bettors.



## The Power of the Influencer

Another significant focus of Simpson's research is on gambling influencers—individuals who leverage their online presence to promote gambling products. He distinguishes them from traditional celebrities, noting that influencers are generally perceived as “more like a regular person than a celebrity,” which fosters a stronger sense of connection and trust with their audience.

Regardless of their audience size—whether hundreds or thousands of viewers— influencers possess the ability to transfer meaning and association to a brand. “When a consumer views someone as knowledgeable in a field,” says Simpson, “...their credibility, which is based on factors such as expertise, trustworthiness, likeability and similarity, can transfer to other areas such as gambling.” The industry actively recruits these online



“If, every 5 seconds, a gambling advertisement appears on a screen, it’s likely only a matter of time before you’ll want to try it.”

influencers to promote their products, raising concerns given the potentially harmful nature of gambling.

Simpson is also examining the persuasive power of “consensus language,” where influencers use phrasing that implies widespread agreement or success, making gambling seem like a more accepted or beneficial activity. A critical question his research aims to answer is whether there are sufficient restrictions on how influencers present gambling products, especially to young people.

## Methodology and Future Directions

A crucial question Simpson's research seeks to answer is: does involvement with influencers lead to increased participation in gambling? If the answer to this question proves to be “yes,” a next step will be to investigate specific contexts and what makes this influence powerful enough to prompt individuals to engage in a potentially harmful activity like gambling.

He is currently designing his research, which will involve analyzing historical data, including the likes and dislikes on YouTube influencer videos containing gambling inducements. His research will undoubtedly shed light on how gambling—through its pervasive advertising and the persuasive power of influencers—is shaping consumer identity and engagement in ways we are only just beginning to understand.

***Brady Simpson is pursuing a Ph.D. in Business at the University of Calgary and is a recipient of an Institute-funded graduate student scholarship. He will be presenting on the topic of gambling and influencers at the AGLC's Insight Responsible Gambling Symposium in Edmonton on September 16, 2025.***

[1] Twitch is a live streaming platform, primarily known for gaming content, where users can watch, interact with, and create live video content.

## Announcement of Graduate Student Scholarship Recipients 2025/26

The Institute is pleased to announce the following fifteen Institute-funded Scholarship Award Recipients for 2025/26:



### @ University of Alberta

#### Enchan Na

*[PhD (Psychology)]*

Is more always the merrier: How slot machine availability affects betting behaviours

#### Jaron Tan

*[PhD (Psychology)]*

Examining the neurophysiological indices of reward sensitivity as transdiagnostic risk markers for eating and gambling pathology in young women

#### Hsin-wei Weng

*[PhD (Kinesiology, Sport, and Recreation)]*

A spatial analysis of gambling and crime

#### Yajing Zhang

*[PhD (Psychology)]*

Betting on goals: How winning and losing motivations shape gambling decisions

### @ University of Calgary

#### Deepika Bajaj

*[PhD (Psychology)]*

Emotion regulation, eating pathology, and gambling in men

#### Nolan Gooding

*[PhD (Psychology)]*

Developing a predictive and explanatory model of gambling-related harm

#### James Jung

*[PhD (Clinical Psychology)]*

Effects of intimate partner violence on problem gambling among new parents during the pandemic

#### Diandra Leslie

*[PhD (Psychology)]*

An examination of gambling behaviours among Canadian university students

#### Naomi Sharlin

*[Master's (Psychology)]*

Exploring HEXACO personality traits and cryptocurrency usage: A comparative study on problematic and non-problematic users

#### Katherine Silang

*[PhD (Psychology)]*

Problem gambling and postpartum mental health in new parents during COVID-19

#### Brady Simpson

*[PhD (Business)]*

Do the words influencers' use in gambling advertisements impact gambling participation?

### @ University of Lethbridge

#### Madison Gal

*[Master's (Neuroscience)]*

The influence of pace of play on gambling motivation

#### Tara Laverty

*[Master's (Neuroscience)]*

Longitudinal study of gambling addiction development using a new animal model

#### Juliana Risling

*[Master's (Psychology)]*

Association between sports-bettor characteristics, gambling play, and responsible gambling behaviors compared to Canadian casino patrons

#### Cailynne Smith

*[Master's (Psychology)]*

Motivations for sports betting among Alberta student-athletes

## Jogo do Bicho: figuras, n.d.

Jogo do Bicho figures from early 20th-century Rio de Janeiro. [National Library of Brazil](#).



Originally a marketing ploy, Brazil's popular yet illegal "animal game," Jogo do Bicho, has been a cultural fixture since 1892. It was created by Baron João Batista Viana Drummond to draw visitors to his Rio de Janeiro zoo, where admission tickets doubled as entries into a daily animal raffle.

The lottery's explosive popularity quickly eclipsed the zoo itself. Fearing the competition with state-run lotteries, the government banned the game just three years later. Despite this, Jogo do Bicho thrived underground. A network of bookies, or "bicheiros," ensured its spread across the nation, cementing its status as an enduring, if illicit, Brazilian tradition.

Despite its long-standing cultural roots, Jogo do Bicho has seen a decline in interest among younger Brazilians in recent years. This shift is particularly noticeable since the country's legalization of online gambling in 2018, which has offered new, legal avenues for betting.

### Sources:

- Ionova, A. (2025, January 12). [The Mafia's Grip on a Brazilian Lottery Seemed Invincible. Until the Apps Came.](#) *The New York Times*.
- Rogero, T. (2024, August 31). [Jogo do Bicho: Brazil's popular illegal animal lottery is losing its bite.](#) *The Guardian*.

# save the date

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Please join us  
**April 30 – May 2, 2026**  
for AGRI's 25th Annual  
Conference at the Banff  
Centre, Banff, Canada

Further Information will be made  
available on the Institute website  
in November 2025.

[https://research.ucalgary.ca/  
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\*The Institute is funded  
by the Government of Alberta.

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**Photo Credit/Images:**  
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ISSN: 1911-8724 (Online)  
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