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When the Ad Becomes the Story: A 14-Day Comparison of Audience Discourse on a Celebrity-Endorsed Sports Prediction Market Advertisement and an Earlier Campaign by the Same Endorser

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Abstract

Celebrity endorsement is a prominent feature of sports betting marketing, but little is known about what audiences say about gambling, risk, and responsible gambling when they respond to such advertisements in open social media settings. This study analyzed the public YouTube comments and replies posted within 14 days of the release of a sports prediction market advertisement (n = 4,425) and of an earlier apparel advertisement featuring the same endorser (n = 13,267). Comment counts and timing were computed for the full corpus. Sentiment and topical codes were independently double-coded, blind to each other's judgments, by two subject-matter experts unaffiliated with the study (a legal scholar and a scholar of economics and business) for random samples of 120 comments per campaign and for every prediction market comment flagged by a keyword screen (n = 350). In the prediction market campaign, 187 comments (4.2%; 95% CI 3.67–4.86) concerned gambling, betting, or trading; 23 (0.5%) mentioned risk or harm, and none referred to the responsible gambling legend that the video displayed. Controversy-related discourse was less frequent than in the apparel campaign (20.8% vs 48.3%), as were product references (4.2% vs 16.7%), whereas sexualization codes were equal (10.0% each). Comment volume peaked on days 5 and 6, which coincided with international press coverage and athletes' criticism. The findings describe expressed discourse, not attitudes, exposure, or behavior, and are limited by small coded samples and by the comparison design.

1 Introduction

Sports wagering has expanded rapidly in the United States since the 2018 repeal of the federal prohibition, and operators have competed for market share through intensive advertising built around well-known celebrities (Han & Saunak, 2025; Kim et al., 2026). A newer product category sits at the boundary of this market: sports event-contract platforms, often described as prediction markets, on which users buy and sell financial contracts tied to future game outcomes. Sports is now the most traded topic on the two largest such platforms (Pew Research Center, 2026), and whether these contracts constitute gambling under state law is currently contested in U.S. courts and legislatures (DLA Piper, 2026). Advertising for these products therefore raises the questions familiar from sportsbook marketing and adds definitional ones.

Research on gambling advertising suggests why celebrity endorsement attracts scrutiny. Endorsers transfer cultural meanings to the products they promote (Erdogan, 1999; McCracken, 1989), and audiences can form identity-relevant attachments to celebrities (Boon & Lomore, 2001; Horton & Wohl, 1956). In gambling marketing, studies describe celebrities, humor, and associations with sport as ways betting is made to seem ordinary (Deans et al., 2017; Lamont et al., 2016; McGee, 2020; Pitt et al., 2024; Murray et al., 2026), and content-analytic work documents how such advertisements are constructed (Binde, 2014; Killick & Griffiths, 2023; Lopez-Gonzalez et al., 2017, 2021). Exposure to gambling marketing has been associated with gambling consumption and unplanned spending (Hing et al., 2014; Wardle et al., 2022). Responsible gambling (RG) messages, meanwhile, are often overlooked or provoke reactance (Lole et al., 2019; McCullock et al., 2024), and one experiment found that an image-congruent endorser increased awareness of RG messages (Han & Saunak, 2025). From a public health perspective (Korn & Shaffer,

1999), these findings raise the question of what audiences actually say when they respond to celebrity-endorsed gambling advertisements in open social media settings.

Evidence on organic audience discourse is comparatively limited. The closest study we identified, Kim et al. (2026), analyzed 2,369 YouTube comments on 210 sportsbook advertisements. Among comments about the commercials, celebrity-related remarks were the most common topic (695 of 1,441), whereas remarks about gambling and gambling problems were much less common (51 of 1,441). That design, however, had no benchmark for how much celebrity talk any advertisement featuring the same person would attract, selected videos by keyword search rather than by campaign, and did not resolve discourse over time; the authors themselves called for longitudinal work. Two questions remain open. First, how much of the discourse around a celebrity-endorsed gambling-adjacent advertisement concerns gambling at all, relative to the same endorser's earlier controversial advertisement in another sector? Second, how does that discourse unfold in the days after release?

This study addresses these questions descriptively, using a complete 14-day census of public comments on a sports prediction market advertisement and on an earlier apparel advertisement that featured the same endorser and also became controversial. The apparel campaign serves as a benchmark, not as a controlled counterfactual: it differs in product, release date, and news context. The study does not measure attitudes, exposure, or behavior and makes no causal claims. It addresses four research questions.

RQ1. What is the volume of comments each campaign generated, in absolute terms and relative to views?

RQ2. How do sentiment and the prevalence of celebrity reference, brand or product reference, humor, sexualization, and controversy discourse differ between the prediction market and apparel campaigns?

RQ3. How is comment volume distributed over the 14 days after release, and how does it relate to press coverage of each campaign?

RQ4. In the prediction market campaign, what proportion of comments concerns gambling, betting, or trading, and how are these comments framed, including mentions of risk and responsible gambling?

2 Method

2.1 Design and Campaigns

We used a comparative, time-resolved observational design based on public YouTube comments. Two video advertisements featuring the same endorser were compared: a sports prediction market campaign ("Novig is Just Sports," video ID bp0T184hVY0, published September 9, 2026, 12:45:14 UTC) and an apparel campaign that also became controversial ("Sydney Sweeney Has Great Jeans | American Eagle," AK8s3iqL99c, July 23, 2025, 12:00:25 UTC). A third video by the same endorser (a personal care advertisement, V16Y4wZj0fA, October 1, 2024) was also extracted but drew only 49 comments in 14 days and is not analyzed further; it appears in Table 1 for completeness. Comments were enabled on all three

videos. The prediction market platform, Novig, presents itself as a prediction market built only for sports (Novig, n.d.), and the endorser is also a strategic partner and equity holder in the company (Hollywood Reporter, 2026). The video's end card and description carry a legend restricting use to people aged 21 and over and warning that trading event contracts involves significant risk of loss. Because the classification of such products as gambling is legally contested (DLA Piper, 2026), we call it the prediction market campaign and use "gambling-related" for comments that concern betting, gambling, or trading on sports.

2.2 Data Collection

Public top-level comments and replies were retrieved through the YouTube Data API v3 on September 23, 2026, 14:00 UTC, about 75 minutes after the 14-day window of the prediction market video closed (12:45:14 UTC). A master file with every comment from release to retrieval (24,502 observations) was extracted first; the analysis file keeps the comments whose publication timestamp fell between release (T0) and T0 + 14 days. We checked that this selection reproduces the analysis file exactly (17,741 comments, no discrepancies). Retrieved comments matched the counts reported by YouTube for the apparel video (19,782 of 19,784) and the personal care video (282 of 282) and were 98.5% complete for the prediction market video (4,438 of 4,506). Because the API returns only content still visible at retrieval, comments deleted or held before that time are not observed. Like counts were not analyzed because the API returns their values at retrieval and they cannot be attributed to the 14-day window. Views and comment counts come from YouTube metadata consulted at the same time as comment extraction, September 23, 2026, 14:00 UTC.

2.3 Measures

Three kinds of measures were used. First, census measures computed from the full corpus: comment counts, elapsed time in completed days, and reply status. Second, sentiment and topical codes estimated from simple random samples of 120 comments for each campaign. Each comment received a sentiment class (positive, negative, or neutral or no stance) and five non-exclusive codes: celebrity reference (explicit mention of the endorser by name, a role, or a public persona; pronoun-only references were not counted), brand or product reference, humor or irony, sexualization or objectification (references to physical appearance, bodily attributes, or sexual content), and controversy discourse (condemnation or outrage about the campaign, boycott calls, or explicit reference to the backlash or to political or cultural conflict around it, whether attacking or defending). Third, a keyword screen for gambling-related content in the prediction market campaign.

The screen used regular expressions for betting terms (e.g., bet, sportsbook, odds, parlay, wager, gambl-, casino), trading terms (e.g., trade, market, contract, prediction, shares), risk terms (e.g., addict-, ruin, debt, bankrupt, lose, kids), responsible gambling terms (e.g., responsible, 1-800, helpline, 18+, disclaimer), and legal terms (e.g., legal, illegal, regulat-, ban), flagging 350 of 4,425 comments (7.9%). Because these terms are ambiguous ("I bet you...", "lose"), all 350 were read and judged as gambling-related or not. Gambling-related comments were assigned any of ten non-exclusive framings: neutral or descriptive mention; sports culture or entertainment; humorous or ironic; promotional or positive; critical or anti-gambling; risk, harm, addiction, or financial-loss mention; responsible gambling message or disclaimer; normalization; trading or

prediction-market vocabulary; and legality or regulation. To estimate what the screen missed, 120 unflagged comments drawn at random were read independently by the AI coder and by coder 1; both judged that none met this study's gambling-related definition (95% upper bound 3.0%, or up to about 120 of the 4,075 unflagged comments). Under a deliberately more permissive threshold counting any mention of the brand or of sports at all, coder 1 additionally flagged 7 of the 120 (5.8%); these were brand-awareness remarks and generic expressions of interest in sports, with no betting, wagering, or risk content, so they are not counted as gambling-related here. The full set of regular expressions is provided in Online Resource 1.

2.4 Coding Procedure and Agreement

The random samples and the 350 flagged comments were independently double-coded by two university professors external to this study and blind to each other's judgments: one specializing in law and one in economics and business, both applying the same written codebook (Online Resource 1). Neither coder saw any AI-generated output before coding. Coder 1 (the legal scholar) is the primary coder and is used throughout the Results; coder 2's counts are reported alongside for comparison. Agreement between the two experts was high: in the two random samples (n = 240) they agreed on sentiment in 98.3% of comments (κ = .97) and on the five topical codes with κ from .95 to 1.00; on the 350 flagged comments they agreed on whether a comment was gambling-related in 99.7% of cases (κ = .99) and on the complete set of framing labels in 98.3% of comments. Coder 2's counts differ from coder 1's by at most one comment in any cell of Table 2 and any framing in Table 4. An AI language model (Claude, Anthropic) was used separately for data extraction, the keyword screen, descriptive statistics, literature search, and drafting, as detailed in the AI-use declaration; it played no part in the sentiment or topical codes reported here.

2.5 Analysis and Data Ethics

Analyses were descriptive. Proportions from the random samples are reported with Wilson 95% confidence intervals, and the two samples were compared with Fisher's exact tests; with seven comparisons, the Bonferroni threshold is $p < .007$. Comments are nested within threads and commenters, so p values are indicative only. Comments are written in several languages and the keyword screen is English-only. The study used only public comments, involved no contact with commenters, and reproduces neither comment text nor user names, following guidance on research with public social media data (Franzke et al., 2020).

3 Results

3.1 Corpus (RQ1)

The analysis corpus contained 17,741 comments, of which 13,267 (74.78%) belonged to the apparel campaign, 4,425 (24.94%) to the prediction market campaign, and 49 (0.28%) to the personal care video (Table 1). Replies made up 45.6% of prediction market comments and 35.8% of apparel comments. Almost all prediction market comments (99.7%) fell within 14 days because the video was 15 days old at

retrieval, whereas the 14-day window contained 67.1% of the apparel comments retrieved to date. Relative to views, the prediction market video accumulated 1.88 comments per 1,000 views in 15 days and the apparel video 1.43 in about 14 months; the personal care video, 0.20 in two years. These rates reflect different exposure periods and are only descriptive.

Table 1
Corpus by campaign

Campaign	Published (UTC)	Views	Comments retrieved (all time)	Comments in 14 days	Top-level	Replies	Comments per 1,000 views
Personal care (not analyzed)	2024-10-01	1,381,838	282	49	38	11	0.20
Apparel	2025-07-23	13,821,575	19,782	13,267	8,516	4,751	1.43
Prediction market	2026-09-09	2,358,534	4,438	4,425	2,407	2,018	1.88
Total			**24,502**	**17,741**	**10,961**	**6,780**	

Note. Comments retrieved through the YouTube Data API v3, and views and comment counts through YouTube metadata, on September 23, 2026, 14:00 UTC. Comments per 1,000 views uses all retrieved comments and different exposure periods (about 2 years, 14 months, and 15 days).

3.2 Sentiment and Topical Codes (RQ2)

In the random samples, the two campaigns differed clearly on two dimensions (Table 2). Controversy discourse was present in 20.8% of prediction market comments and 48.3% of apparel comments ($p < .001$), and brand or product references appeared in 4.2% and 16.7% ($p = .002$). Negative sentiment was more common in the prediction market sample (22.5% vs 10.8%; $p = .023$, above the Bonferroni threshold), and humor showed a smaller, uncertain difference (21.7% vs 11.7%; $p = .056$). Sexualization codes were identical (10.0% each), and explicit celebrity references were rare in both (5.8% and 3.3%). Half of the comments in each sample expressed a neutral or no stance.

Table 2
Sentiment and topical codes: prediction market versus apparel campaign

Code	Prediction market (n = 120) n (%) [95% CI]	Apparel (n = 120) n (%) [95% CI]	Fisher p	Coder 2, n (PM; apparel)
Celebrity reference	7 (5.8) [2.9, 11.6]	4 (3.3) [1.3, 8.3]	.539	8; 4
Brand or product reference	5 (4.2) [1.8, 9.4]	20 (16.7) [11.1, 24.3]	.002	5; 20
Humor or irony	26 (21.7) [15.2, 29.9]	14 (11.7) [7.1, 18.6]	.056	25; 14
Sexualization or objectification	12 (10.0) [5.8, 16.7]	12 (10.0) [5.8, 16.7]	1.000	12; 12
Controversy discourse	25 (20.8) [14.5, 28.9]	58 (48.3) [39.6, 57.2]	< .001	25; 58
Positive sentiment	33 (27.5) [20.3, 36.1]	46 (38.3) [30.1, 47.3]	.099	33; 46
Neutral or no stance	60 (50.0) [41.2, 58.8]	61 (50.8) [42.0, 59.6]	1.000	60; 61
Negative sentiment	27 (22.5) [15.9, 30.8]	13 (10.8) [6.4, 17.7]	.023	27; 13

Note. Codes are those of coder 1 (primary; a legal scholar); the last column gives coder 2's counts (an economics and business scholar). Both coders were external to the study, applied the written codebook (Online Resource 1) independently, and were blind to each other's judgments and to any AI-generated output. Samples are simple random samples of the 14-day corpus of each campaign. Codes other than sentiment are not mutually exclusive. The Bonferroni threshold for seven comparisons is $p < .007$; p values are those for coder 1.

3.3 Temporal Distribution and Press Coverage (RQ3)

Prediction market comments rose from 169 on day 0 to a peak of 1,002 on day 5 (September 14) and 958 on day 6, then declined to 99–128 per day by days 12–13 (Table 3; Fig. 1). Days 5–6 contained 44.3% of the campaign's comments and days 4–7 contained 65.4%. Major outlets reported athletes' criticism of the advertisement on September 14 (Guy, 2026; Deadline, 2026), which falls on the peak. The apparel series was sparse at the start (233 comments, 1.8%, in days 0–3) and rose to 1,037 on day 4 (July 27, 2025), with a maximum of 2,064 on day 7 and 69.8% of comments in days 4–9. Social media criticism of the "genes" wordplay was circulating by July 26 (NPR, 2025), and the President's remarks about the campaign were reported on August 4 (ABC News, 2025), day 12, when comments rose from 837 to 1,156. These coincidences are descriptive; we did not test them.

Table 3
Comments per day since release, by campaign

Day	Prediction market, all comments	Prediction market, gambling-related	Gambling-related (% of day)	Apparel, all comments
0	169	5	3.0	11
1	133	6	4.5	43
2	83	2	2.4	69
3	154	4	2.6	110
4	364	17	4.7	1,037
5	1,002	50	5.0	1,200
6	958	48	5.0	1,984
7	570	15	2.6	2,064
8	287	9	3.1	1,637
9	206	16	7.8	1,332
10	155	4	2.6	998
11	117	6	5.1	837
12	99	2	2.0	1,156
13	128	3	2.3	789
Total	**4,425**	**187**	**4.2**	**13,267**

Note. Day is the number of completed days since release (day 0 = first 24 hours); day 5 of the prediction market video is September 14, 2026, and day 4 of the apparel video is July 27, 2025. Gambling-related classification is from coder 1.

3.4 Gambling-Related Discourse (RQ4)

Of the 350 comments flagged by the screen, 187 were gambling-related, which is 4.23% of the 4,425 prediction market comments (95% CI 3.67–4.86); the other 163 were false positives. Betting terms were more reliable than the other term groups: 160 of the 202 comments they flagged (79.2%) were gambling-related, compared with 23 of 51 for trading terms and 23 of 117 for risk terms. Twenty-seven gambling-related comments were flagged only by non-betting terms. Of the 187 comments, 87 (46.5%) were replies. The share of comments that were gambling-related was 3.15% in days 0–3, 4.49% in days 4–7, and 4.03% in days 8–13 (derived from Table 3).

Neutral or descriptive mentions were the most common framing (106 comments; 2.40% of the campaign), followed by critical or anti-gambling comments (33; 0.75%), humorous or ironic commentary (26; 0.59%), promotional or positive comments (24; 0.54%), risk or harm mentions (23; 0.52%), and comments using

trading vocabulary about the product (21; 0.47%; Table 4). Sports culture, normalization, and legality framings were rare (1, 1, and 5 comments). No comment referred to the responsible gambling legend or conveyed a responsible gambling message (0 of 4,425; 95% upper bound 0.08%). Framings were not exclusive: the ten labels total 240 assignments across the 187 comments.

Table 4
Framing of gambling-related comments in the prediction market campaign

Framing	n	% of gambling-related (n = 187)	% of campaign (N = 4,425)	95% CI (% of campaign)	Coder 2, n
Neutral or descriptive mention	106	56.68	2.40	1.98–2.89	106
Critical or anti-gambling	33	17.65	0.75	0.53–1.05	33
Humorous or ironic	26	13.90	0.59	0.40–0.86	25
Promotional or positive	24	12.83	0.54	0.36–0.81	25
Risk, harm, addiction, or loss mention	23	12.30	0.52	0.35–0.78	22
Trading or prediction-market vocabulary	21	11.23	0.47	0.31–0.72	21
Legality or regulation	5	2.67	0.11	0.05–0.26	5
Normalization	1	0.53	0.02	0.00–0.13	2
Sports culture or entertainment	1	0.53	0.02	0.00–0.13	1
Responsible gambling message or disclaimer	0	0.00	0.00	0.00–0.09	0
All gambling-related comments	**187**	**100.00**	**4.23**	**3.67–4.86**	**188**

Note. Framings are not mutually exclusive (240 assignments across 187 comments). A keyword screen flagged 350 comments; 163 were not gambling-related. Confidence intervals are Wilson intervals. Coder 1 (legal scholar) is primary; coder 2's (economics and business scholar) counts are shown for comparison. Both coders were blind to each other and to any AI-generated output.

4 Discussion

4.1 Principal Findings

Four features characterized the comments on the prediction market advertisement. First, gambling-related talk was a small minority (4.2%). Second, within it, most comments were neutral descriptions of the product or the ad's purpose, mentions of risk were rare (0.5%), and no comment referred to the responsible gambling legend that the video displayed. Third, compared with the apparel campaign, controversy

discourse and product references were less frequent, whereas sexualization codes were equal. Fourth, comment volume was concentrated in days 4–7 and coincided with the press coverage of athletes' criticism. These are properties of expressed discourse in a self-selected comment section; they are not measures of attitudes, exposure, or harm.

4.2 Attention Followed the Controversy

In both campaigns, comment volume was low at release and rose when the controversy reached wider audiences: the prediction market series peaked on the days when athletes' criticism was covered by international outlets, and the apparel series rose sharply once criticism of the "genes" wordplay was circulating. This suggests that much of the audience engaged with these advertisements as news-driven cultural events, but we have no data on referrals or recommendation exposure, so the link to press coverage remains a coincidence in time, not a demonstrated cause. The apparel series' sparse first days matched YouTube's reported count and are not a data artifact.

The comparison with Kim et al. (2026) is only qualitative. They found celebrity-related remarks in 48.2% of comments about sportsbook commercials (695 of 1,441) and gambling concerns in 3.5% (51 of 1,441), using different denominators and topic definitions. Our explicit celebrity mentions were rare (5.8%) because pronoun references were not counted, and the share mentioning risk was 0.5% of all comments and 12.3% of gambling-related comments (23 of 187). Both studies suggest that gambling harm is not what most commenters raise; neither can tell whether commenters perceive risk without mentioning it.

4.3 Differences From the Apparel Campaign

Controversy discourse was much less frequent for the prediction market than for the apparel campaign, and product references were less frequent. Fewer product references are compatible with a comment section centered on the ad's reception rather than the product. The apparel controversy also had an explicitly political dimension involving public officials (ABC News, 2025), which the prediction market controversy, centered on the sexualization of women in sport (Deadline, 2026), did not have to the same degree. Because the campaigns differ in creative content, year, and news environment, we do not attribute the difference to product category. The equal sexualization rate (10.0%) is notable because trade press described the prediction market creative as provocative (Hollywood Reporter, 2026); it may reflect the strict coding definition, and it rests on 12 comments per sample. The higher share of negative sentiment for the prediction market (22.5% vs 10.8%) did not survive correction for multiple comparisons.

4.4 Risk and Responsible Gambling

No comment among 4,425 referred to the responsible gambling legend, although the video displayed a risk warning and an age restriction in its end card and description. This is consistent with experimental evidence that RG messages attract little attention (Lole et al., 2019; McCullock et al., 2024), though our data cannot show whether commenters saw the legend, only that they did not mention it. Nor should the rarity of risk talk be read as an absence of risk perception: commenters are a self-selected minority, and online expressions tend to be polarized (Schoenmueller et al., 2020). Because the keyword screen was

built for betting vocabulary, and the product is presented in trading terms, some gambling-related comments in trading language, or in languages other than English, may have been missed.

4.5 Implications

Theoretically, the study offers a descriptive benchmark for celebrity-endorsement research: the same endorser's earlier controversial advertisement provides a reference for how much discourse concerns the product category. Methodologically, it shows that keyword screens for gambling talk have modest precision (53%), that sportsbook lexicons may not transfer to prediction markets, and that discourse volume should be read against the news cycle. For practice and policy, organic comment discourse cannot be assumed to raise risk or RG topics spontaneously, and monitoring it would require validated, multilingual coding; the data cannot show that the advertisement or the endorser changed gambling attitudes or behavior.

5 Limitations

Regarding measurement, the random samples are small (120 per campaign) and confidence intervals are wide, although agreement between the two blind expert coders was high throughout. The keyword screen is English-only and may miss gambling talk; its recall was checked on only 120 unflagged comments, confirmed by both the AI coder and a human expert, though a more permissive threshold identified a small number of brand-related mentions (see Methods). Sexualization and celebrity codes may overlap conceptually, and pronoun-only references to the endorser were not counted. Regarding design, the comparison campaign differs from the prediction market campaign in product, release year, channel, and news environment, and exposure windows differ. Regarding data, comments removed before retrieval are unobserved, extraction was 98.5% complete for the prediction market video, likes were excluded, and comments are nested and may include duplicates or automated accounts. Regarding scope, commenters are a self-selected subset of viewers with unknown demographics. The study covers one endorser, who is also an equity holder in the prediction market, and one 14-day window per video. The study is descriptive and no association reported here should be read as causal.

6 Conclusion

In the 14 days after release, gambling-related talk made up 4.2% of the comments on a celebrity-endorsed sports prediction market advertisement, mentions of risk 0.5%, and references to the on-screen responsible gambling legend none. Compared with an earlier apparel advertisement by the same endorser, the prediction market comment section contained less controversy discourse and fewer product references and the same rate of sexualization codes. In both campaigns, comment volume peaked when the controversy was covered by the press rather than at release. These results describe what commenters expressed, not what viewers thought, felt, or did, but they speak directly to concerns that motivate gambling studies research on advertising and marketing.

The near-total silence around risk and responsible gambling is the finding most relevant to this journal's readers. It is not evidence that the audience is unconcerned about gambling harm, since commenters are

a self-selected minority who may simply have had nothing to say about a legend most did not mention rather than nothing to feel about it. It is, however, direct evidence that a compliance-oriented disclosure, displayed exactly as regulation requires, generated no organic uptake in the one public space where audiences volunteered their own reactions. This should temper any assumption that placing a responsible gambling message on an advertisement, however clearly worded, engages viewers with its content. It also illustrates a broader difficulty for public health surveillance of gambling marketing: passive engagement metrics such as comment counts index audience attention, not audience attention to harm-reduction content specifically, and the two should not be conflated when regulators or platforms cite engagement as evidence that safety messaging is reaching its audience.

The study also speaks to a boundary problem that is increasingly relevant for gambling studies. Sports event-contract platforms are being marketed with the same celebrity-endorsement playbook documented for sportsbooks (Han & Saunak, 2025; Killick & Griffiths, 2023; Lopez-Gonzalez et al., 2017), while their legal status as gambling remains unsettled (DLA Piper, 2026) and while at least one such platform's endorser holds an equity stake in the company she promotes (Hollywood Reporter, 2026), a financial relationship that goes beyond a conventional endorsement fee and that audiences in our data did not discuss. If prediction markets continue to grow among sports audiences (Pew Research Center, 2026), research, clinical practice, and policy that currently treat "sports betting" and "sports trading" as distinct categories may need to revisit that distinction, because the marketing techniques, the celebrity talent, and, on this evidence, the audience's own discourse do not clearly separate the two. Regulators weighing whether prediction markets should carry the advertising restrictions, disclosure requirements, or exclusion-scheme protections applied to sports betting may find that public discourse offers little natural signal either way, since so few commenters framed the product as gambling at all; this argues for regulatory clarity to precede, rather than follow, marketing scale-up.

For gambling studies more specifically, three implications follow. First, benchmarking discourse around a gambling-adjacent product against the same celebrity's advertising in an unrelated sector is a low-cost way to separate "talk about the celebrity" from "talk about the product," and could be applied prospectively as new prediction-market and sportsbook campaigns launch, before controversy or regulatory attention makes retrospective comparison harder to interpret. Second, keyword-based monitoring of gambling talk, whether by researchers, platforms, or regulators, should be validated against blind human coding before its counts are used for surveillance or compliance purposes; our screen's precision (53%) and the near-invisibility of trading vocabulary in a betting-oriented lexicon show that a plausible-looking dictionary can still misstate prevalence by a wide margin. Third, the coincidence between comment-volume peaks and press coverage in both campaigns suggests that discourse-based monitoring of gambling marketing cannot be separated from the broader media environment: a surge in public commentary about a gambling-adjacent advertisement may reflect a news cycle rather than a change in audience risk perception, and surveillance systems that treat volume alone as a warning signal risk being driven by the same media dynamics they are meant to monitor independently.

None of this licenses a claim that the advertisement, the endorser, or the platform changed anyone's gambling attitudes, exposure, or behavior; the data cannot support that inference, and we have been

careful not to make it. What the study does offer to the field is a replicable, low-cost method for describing organic audience discourse around gambling-adjacent marketing at scale, a concrete illustration of how far keyword-based measurement can misrepresent that discourse if left unvalidated, and an early empirical marker, from the launch window of one prominent campaign, that responsible gambling messaging embedded in celebrity-endorsed advertising may be going largely unnoticed by the audiences it is meant to protect. As sports prediction markets continue to expand and as the roster of celebrities endorsing them grows, we see monitoring frameworks of this kind, built on validated coding and benchmarked comparisons rather than raw engagement counts, as a necessary complement to the survey- and treatment-based evidence base that has traditionally anchored gambling studies research on advertising and public health.

Declarations

Author Contribution

R.N.S. conceptualized the study, developed the methodology, wrote the software for data extraction, curated and formally analyzed the data, created the visualizations, and wrote the original draft along with the review and editing. C.B. and B.R.A. contributed to the theoretical framework, wrote the original draft, and contributed to the review and editing of the discussion and conclusions. Content coding was performed by two independent external experts (a law scholar and an economics and business scholar), acknowledged above, who are not authors of this manuscript. All authors reviewed and approved the final manuscript.

Data Availability

Data availability. The datasets generated and analyzed during the current study (comment identifiers, coder labels, and derived counts) are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request. Comment text and user names are not shared, in line with the YouTube API Services terms and to protect commenters.Code availability. The extraction and analysis scripts are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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Figures

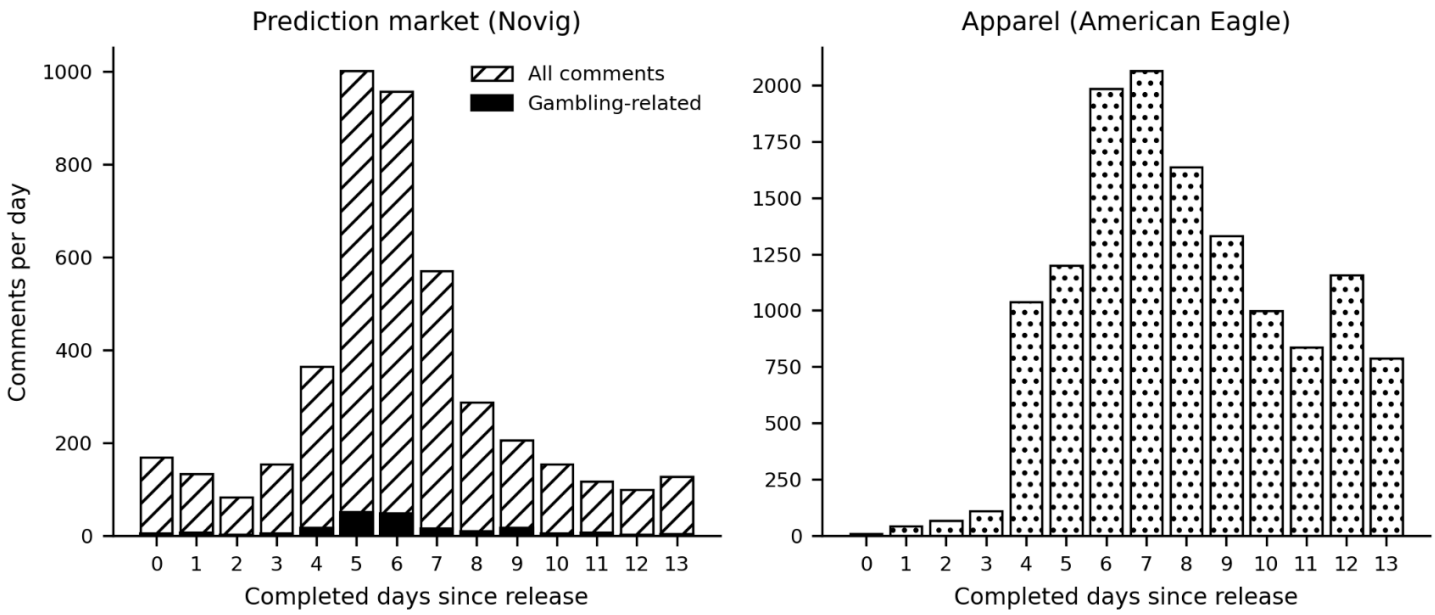


Figure 1

Comments per day since release for the prediction market campaign (left; dark bars show gambling-related comments) and the apparel campaign (right). Day 0 is the first 24 hours after release