



# **A Content Analysis of the UK's Gambling Operators' Websites**

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## Introduction

This analysis responds to the identified gap within the current academic research around responsible gambling (RG) communication and information displayed on operators' main sources of information - websites. Today in the UK any UK-licensed operator is required to incorporate number of RG features (RGFs) within their gaming products and ensure that information related to safeguarding support provided by the operator or other reference groups (i.e. GambleAware) is displayed on their websites. Moreover, display of age warning icons (18+) is a legal requirement for any UK-operating gambling provider. Moreover, as our previous research (Bolat et al. 2019) shows, gambling operators are putting the RG content and communication at the heart of their businesses as per thoughts and reflections reported by gambling companies' employees. However, apart from the research looking into types of RGFs used by the gambling operators (i.e. Cooney et al. 2018; Bonello and Griffiths 2019), and fragmented analysis of marketing and social media content on a subject of containing safeguarding and RG messages (Gainsbury et al. 2015; Gainsbury et al. 2016; Newall et al. 2019; Killick and Griffiths 2020), no study looked into a detailed cross-operators comparative analysis of website homepages and the RG-dedicated pages, links to which are expected to be located and found on the homepages. In this study we address this gap.

## Methodology

### *Design and sample*

A content analysis was conducted on websites of the UK-licensed gambling providers, explicitly focusing on the evaluation of responsible gambling (RG) communication and content located on the homepage of the website, a dedicated to RG page (or microsite) and the path analysis from the homepage to the RG page. Moreover, information around COVID19 communications was analysed to examine the visibility within the websites' homepages or the RG pages. Each website was separately analysed across two interfaces, desktop and mobile, meaning each case included two units of analysis (n=66). The total count of observation cases or gambling operators is 33. The four evaluators carried out the analysis over the 19/06/20 - 17/07/20 period. This is when most of the world, including the UK, was in the lockdown but with the restrictions eased at the start of July 2020. Hence, there was a possibility to observe the potential changes in the COVID19 related communication within the gambling operators' websites. An example of such change could be announcements regarding the betting shops' openings. It is also essential to specify that only publicly available content, not to registered customers, was part of the observational content analysis. Please note that despite publicly available content being assessed, ethical approval was obtained prior to data collection and analysis (Research Ethics Checklist ID 32793). Table 1 presents the list of the operators analysed.

*Table 1. Sample of the gambling operators' websites*

<b>Gamb ling Opera tor</b>	<b>The Gambling Operator Group</b>	<b>Type of gambling activity (sector, as per Gambling Act 2005)</b>	<b>URL to the homepage</b>	<b>URL to the RG page</b>	<b>Dates accessed</b>
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Betway	Betway Group	Betting and casino	<a href="https://betway.com">https://betway.com</a>	<a href="https://account.betway.com/v1">https://account.betway.com/v1</a>	17/7/2020
Party Casino	GVC Holdings PLC	Casino	<a href="https://casino.partycasino.com/en?wm=3279010">https://casino.partycasino.com/en?wm=3279010</a>	<a href="https://casino.partycasino.com/en/p/responsible-gaming">https://casino.partycasino.com/en/p/responsible-gaming</a>	26/06/20
Skybet	Flutter Entertainment	Betting	<a href="https://m.skybet.com">https://m.skybet.com</a>	<a href="https://support.skybet.com/s/article/Keeping-Gambling-Fun">https://support.skybet.com/s/article/Keeping-Gambling-Fun</a>	26/06/20
Pocketwin	In Touch Games Ltd	Casino	<a href="https://pocketwin.co.uk/">https://pocketwin.co.uk/</a>	<a href="https://pocketwin.co.uk/our-terms/responsible-gambling/">https://pocketwin.co.uk/our-terms/responsible-gambling/</a>	07/07/20
32Red	Kindred Group	Casino	<a href="https://www.32red.com/">https://www.32red.com/</a>	<a href="https://www.32red.com/responsible-gaming">https://www.32red.com/responsible-gaming</a>	07/07/20
888 Casino	888 Holdings Plc	Casino	<a href="https://www.888casino.com">https://www.888casino.com</a>	<a href="https://www.888casino.com/security-and-privacy/responsible-gaming-uk/">https://www.888casino.com/security-and-privacy/responsible-gaming-uk/</a>	26/06/20
Admiral Casino	Novomatic Group	Casino	<a href="https://www.admiralcasino.co.uk">https://www.admiralcasino.co.uk</a>	<a href="https://www.admiralcasino.co.uk/en/safer-gambling">https://www.admiralcasino.co.uk/en/safer-gambling</a>	17/7/2020
Bet365	Bet365 group	Betting, bingo, casino	<a href="https://www.bet365.com">https://www.bet365.com</a>	<a href="https://responsiblegambling.bet365.com/en">https://responsiblegambling.bet365.com/en</a>	17/7/2020
Betfred	Lightcatch Ltd	Betting, bingo, casino, lotteries	<a href="https://www.betfred.com/">https://www.betfred.com/</a>	<a href="https://www.betfred.com/terms-and-conditions/responsible-gambling">https://www.betfred.com/terms-and-conditions/responsible-gambling</a>	17/7/2020
BetUK	LeoVegas Mobile Gaming Group	Betting and casino	<a href="https://www.betuk.com">https://www.betuk.com</a>	<a href="https://www.betuk.com/safergambling">https://www.betuk.com/safergambling</a>	07/07/20
Buzz Bingo	Caledonia Investments	Bingo	<a href="https://www.buzzbingo.com">https://www.buzzbingo.com</a>	<a href="https://www.buzzbingo.com/safer-gambling">https://www.buzzbingo.com/safer-gambling</a>	25/06/20
Casimba	White Hat Gaming Ltd	Casino	<a href="https://www.casimba.com">https://www.casimba.com</a>	<a href="https://www.casimba.com/en-gb/player-protection">https://www.casimba.com/en-gb/player-protection</a>	07/07/20
Casino Superwins	Prism Marketing	Casino	<a href="https://www.casinosuperwins.com/?lang=en">https://www.casinosuperwins.com/?lang=en</a>	<a href="https://www.casinosuperwins.com/fair-gaming/?lang=en">https://www.casinosuperwins.com/fair-gaming/?lang=en</a> (fair gaming page); <a href="https://www.casinosuperwins.com">https://www.casinosuperwins.com</a>	26/06/20

				<a href="#">/responsible-gaming/?lang=en</a> (RG page)	
Coral	GVC Holdings Plc	Betting, bingo, casino	<a href="https://www.coral.co.uk/en/games">https://www.coral.co.uk/en/games</a>	<a href="https://www.coral.co.uk/en/p/responsible-gaming">https://www.coral.co.uk/en/p/responsible-gaming</a>	19/06/20
Foxy Bingo	GVC Holdings Plc	Bingo	<a href="https://www.foxybingo.com/">https://www.foxybingo.com/</a>	<a href="https://myaccount.foxybingo.com/en/p/responsible-gaming">https://myaccount.foxybingo.com/en/p/responsible-gaming</a>	10/07/20
Gala Bingo	GVC Holdings Plc	Bingo and casino	<a href="https://www.galabingo.com">https://www.galabingo.com</a>	<a href="https://www.galabingo.com/en/p/promotions/responsible-gambling">https://www.galabingo.com/en/p/promotions/responsible-gambling</a>	07/07/20
Hello Casino	White Hat Gaming Ltd	Casino	<a href="https://www.hellocasino.com/">https://www.hellocasino.com/</a>	<a href="https://www.hellocasino.com/playerprotection">https://www.hellocasino.com/playerprotection</a>	17/7/2020
Jackpot Village	White Hat Gaming Ltd	Casino	<a href="https://www.jackpotvillage.com/en-gb/">https://www.jackpotvillage.com/en-gb/</a>	<a href="https://www.jackpotvillage.com/en-gb/playerprotection">https://www.jackpotvillage.com/en-gb/playerprotection</a>	17/7/2020
Ladbrokes Games	GVC Holdings Plc	Betting, bingo, casino	<a href="https://www.ladbrokes.com/en/games">https://www.ladbrokes.com/en/games</a>	<a href="https://www.ladbrokes.com/en/p/responsible-gaming">https://www.ladbrokes.com/en/p/responsible-gaming</a>	26/06/20
Mansion Casino	Mansion Group	Casino	<a href="https://www.mansioncasino.com/uk/">https://www.mansioncasino.com/uk/</a>	<a href="https://play.mansioncasino.com/responsible-gambling-uk/">https://play.mansioncasino.com/responsible-gambling-uk/</a> (RG page); <a href="https://play.mansioncasino.com/fair-gaming/">https://play.mansioncasino.com/fair-gaming/</a> (fair gaming page)	25/06/20
Mecca Bingo	The Rank Group	Bingo and casino	<a href="https://www.meccabingo.com">https://www.meccabingo.com</a>	<a href="https://www.meccabingo.com/rg-info">https://www.meccabingo.com/rg-info</a>	25/06/20
Mr Green	William Hill	Betting and casino	<a href="https://www.mrgreen.com/en/">https://www.mrgreen.com/en/</a>	<a href="https://greengaming.com/en/">https://greengaming.com/en/</a>	19/06/20
National Lottery	Camelot UK Lotteries Ltd	Lotteries	<a href="https://www.national-lottery.co.uk">https://www.national-lottery.co.uk</a>	<a href="https://www.national-lottery.co.uk/responsible-play?icid=bsp:nat:tx">https://www.national-lottery.co.uk/responsible-play?icid=bsp:nat:tx</a>	10/07/20
Novibet	Novigroup Ltd	Betting and casino	<a href="https://www.novibet.co.uk/">https://www.novibet.co.uk/</a>	<a href="https://www.novibet.co.uk/info/responsible-gambling">https://www.novibet.co.uk/info/responsible-gambling</a>	17/7/2020
Paddy Power	Flutter Entertainment	Betting, bingo, casino, lotteries	<a href="https://www.paddypower.com/bet">https://www.paddypower.com/bet</a>	<a href="https://responsiblegaming.paddypower.com">https://responsiblegaming.paddypower.com</a>	26/06/20

Pink Casino	LeoVegas Mobile Gaming Group	Casino	<a href="https://www.pinkcasino.co.uk/">https://www.pinkcasino.co.uk/</a>	<a href="https://www.pinkcasino.co.uk/safergambling">https://www.pinkcasino.co.uk/safergambling</a>	07/07/20
Roxy Palace	Kindred Group	Casino	<a href="https://www.roxypalace.com/">https://www.roxypalace.com/</a>	<a href="https://www.roxypalace.com/responsible-gambling">https://www.roxypalace.com/responsible-gambling</a> (RG page); <a href="https://www.roxypalace.com/about-us/fair-gaming">https://www.roxypalace.com/about-us/fair-gaming</a> (fair gaming page)	17/7/2020
Sky Bingo	Flutter Entertainment	Bingo	<a href="https://www.skybingo.com">https://www.skybingo.com</a>	<a href="https://support.skybingo.com/s/article/Keeping-Gambling-Fun">https://support.skybingo.com/s/article/Keeping-Gambling-Fun</a>	07/07/20
Tombola	Tombola Ltd	Bingo	<a href="https://www.tombola.co.uk">https://www.tombola.co.uk</a>	<a href="https://www.tombola.co.uk/safeplay">https://www.tombola.co.uk/safeplay</a>	10/07/20
Unibet	Kindred Group	Betting, bingo, casino	<a href="https://www.unibet.co.uk">https://www.unibet.co.uk</a>	<a href="https://www.unibet.co.uk/general-info/whentostop">https://www.unibet.co.uk/general-info/whentostop</a>	17/7/2020
Virgin Bet	Gamesys Group Plc	Betting	<a href="https://www.virginbet.com/">https://www.virginbet.com/</a>	<a href="https://web.virginbet.com/en/vb-responsible-gaming-nl/">https://web.virginbet.com/en/vb-responsible-gaming-nl/</a>	17/7/2020
Virgin Games	Gamesys Group Plc	Bingo and casino	<a href="https://www.virgingames.com">https://www.virgingames.com</a>	<a href="https://www.virgingames.com/responsiblegaming">https://www.virgingames.com/responsiblegaming</a>	26/06/20
William Hill	William Hill	Betting, bingo, casino	<a href="https://www.williamhill.com">https://www.williamhill.com</a>	<a href="https://williamhill-lang.custhelp.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/2734">https://williamhill-lang.custhelp.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/2734</a>	19/06/20

Thirty-three operators were part of 20 larger corporate groups, with the largest sample representing GVC Holdings Plc (5 operators), White Hat Gaming Ltd (3 operators) and Flutter Entertainment (3 operators). In terms of gambling activities, one operator offers online lottery only (National Lottery); two operators - betting only; four - bingo only; twelve - casino only, with the rest of operators providing a mix of betting and casino (6 operators); bingo, betting and casino (5 operators); bingo, betting, casino and lotteries (2 operators).

It is essential to acknowledge that three out of 33 operators (Casino Superwins, Mansion Casino and Roxy Palace) have two pages dedicated to RG communication, an RG-specific page and a page related to fair gaming. In these instances, RG pages contain information related to RG features within the games, support information, and overall aim to help customers understand RG work undertaken by the operator. Fair gaming page, on the other hand, explains the principles of Random Number Generator (RNG) behind online casino products (all three operators included such information), provides insights into software used (Casino Superwins provides such information), covers GRPR nuances around data collection (Casino Superwins) or informs about the availability of play history (Roxy Palace). Interestingly, most of the operators providing online casino products have information on fair pay-out within the



websites where RNG is explained. Still, no further details related to GRPD or play history data are presented within such content.

### *Coding protocol*

A coding template was designed to evaluate transparency linked to communication and information related to RG:

1. the presence, visibility and positioning of RG links, icons, messages, age restriction warnings, links to RG-specific advising groups (i.e. Gamble Aware);
2. the types of RG content, message framing within the RG information; and
3. the website user experience with three journey points, homepage, homepage to RG page pathway and RG page.

Table 2 presents a list of features that were part of the analysis. Overall, the coding template was developed, piloted and revised by the research team through the initial analysis of the following five operators, Betfair, Ladbrokes Games, Coral, Mr Green, William Hill. The pilot sample's data record was included in the final sample due to the comprehensive evaluation carried out in the pilot stage.

Record of the evaluation and ratings were based on a mix of measures. Subjective single measure, timing (in seconds), was to evaluate the visibility features. Single measure, count, was also used to record the number of RG links, RG icons, reference to RG-specific advising groups. A rating scale (1-3) was used to assess the type of content, message framing and traffic light indication assessment.

*Table 2. Coding template*

<b>Feature</b>	<b>Feature acronym</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Coding details</b>
Visibility of RG message	VRG	Time it takes to find the first appearing RG message/icon on homepage of the website.	Timing (in seconds): how long it takes to find the first notion of RG content/message on homepage of the website
Visibility of COVID19 messaging / content	VCOV	Time it takes to find the first appearing COVID19 related message/icon on homepage of the website.	Timing (in seconds): how long it takes to find the first notion of RG content/message on homepage of the website
Number of RG links	NRGLinks	Count of number of links to the RG dedicated pages on the homepage of the website.	Number of links
Number of RG icons	NRGIcons	Count of number of RG-related icons on the homepage of the website.	Number of icons
Number of usable (link-enabled) icons	NRGLEI	Count of number of usable (link-enabled)	Number usable (link-enabled) icons

		RG-related icons on the homepage of the website.	
Type of content	TC	Purpose of the RG messages, found on the homepage and RG page(s), in terms of providing information regarding RG or educating about RG.	1-Educational; 2-Informational; 3-Mixed
Message framing	MF	The positive or negative manner in which the RG information within the RG messages, found on the homepage and RG page(s), is presented.	1-Positive (focusing on gains); 2-Negative (focusing on losses); 3-Neutral (combination of both positive and negative)
Clarity of the actual RG-dedicated page	CLARITYRG	Indication on whether the information presented within the RG-dedicated page is presented in a clear and simple way that is easy to understand.	1-Very unclear / confusing; 2-Unclear / confusing; 3-Neither; 4-Clear / understandable; 5-Very clear / understandable
Format(s) of RG content found on homepage and RG page	FRGCHP FRGCRGP	Types of media format presented within the homepage and RG page(s) (i.e. video, image, text).	1-Text; 2-Icon; 3-Text and icon; 4-Image 5-Banner 6-Text, icon and image; 7-Text, icon and banner; 8-Icon, text and link-enabled text; 9-Link; 10-Icon and link; 11-Link, text and video
Positioning of the RG message on the home webpage	POSRGM	The position of the RG notions (i.e. link to page, icons etc.) on homepage of the website (if few notions, then list the positioning for all of the RG notions.	1-Top; 2-Middle; 3-Bottom; 4-Top and middle; 5-Top and bottom; 6-Middle and bottom; 7-Top, middle and bottom
Traffic light indication on the extent of references to RG-specific advising groups (i.e.	RGREF	Count of number of links/references to RG-specific advising groups and	1-Green (high number of links/references);

inclusion of www.begambleaware.org)		assessment of whether this low, moderate or high.	2-Amber (moderate number of links/references); 3-Red (low number of links/references)
Partner RG Organisations, links to which are provided within RG page	N/A	List of RG organisations which are mentioned within the RG page.	N/A
Link quality to RG-specific advising groups/organisations	LINKQUAL	Indication on whether the link is operational or broken.	1-yes; 2-no; 3-mixed
The credibility of the link to RG-specific advising groups/organisation misleading	LINKMISLEAD	Indication on whether the link leads to the wrong RG support webpage.	1-yes; 2-no; 3-mixed
Age restriction warning	AGERW	Indication on whether the age restriction warning icon or message appears on homepage.	1-yes; 2-no
Ease of access - pathway analysis from homepage to the RG page	EARGP	Count of clicks.	Number of clicks
Other RG measures noted/mentioned RG page	N/A	List of other RG measures (i.e. self-exclusion, deposit limits, reality check, GamCare chat).	N/A
User experience heuristic evaluation, applicable to homepage	UXHP	The evaluation of the homepage usability, using Jacob Nielsen's 10 Usability Heuristics (see Table 3 for details).	1-very poor experience; 2-poor experience; 3-average experience; 4-good experience; 5-very good experience
User experience heuristic evaluation, applicable to pathway from homepage to RG page	UXP	The evaluation of the pathway from homepage to RG page usability, using Jacob Nielsen's 10 Usability Heuristics (see Table 3 for details).	0-non-existent; 1-very poor experience; 2-poor experience; 3-average experience; 4-good experience; 5-very good experience
User experience heuristic evaluation, applicable to RG page	UXRGP	The evaluation of the RG page usability, using Jacob Nielsen's 10 Usability Heuristics (see Table 3 for details).	0-non-existent; 1-very poor experience; 2-poor experience; 3-average experience; 4-good experience; 5-very good experience

COVID19 information	COV	Provision of COVID19 related information on homepage of the website.	1-yes; 2-no; 3-mixed (i.e. mentioned on RG page but not homepage)
Traffic light indication on the extent of COVID19 related information provided on homepage	COVEXT	Assessment of the extent to which COVID19 related information is provided, visible and detailed.	1-visible but limited; 2-visible and moderate; 3-visible and detailed (i.e. includes the links to NHS website)
Clarity of the actual COVID19 dedicated content	CLARITYCOV	Indication on whether the COVID19 related information presented within homepage is presented in a clear and simple way that is easy to understand.	1-Very unclear / confusing; 2-Unclear / confusing; 3-Neither; 4-Clear / understandable; 5-Very clear / understandable

The user experience (UX) heuristic evaluation was carried out to perform an individual usability assessment of the homepage (UX area 1), the pathway from the homepage to the RG page (UX area 2) and the RG page (UX area 3). Jacob Nielsen's (1994) ten established usability principles were applied (see Table 3 for the detailed overview).

Table 3. Heuristics coding template

Feature	Feature acronyms	Definition	Coding details
Heuristic 1: Visibility of system status	Level 1 - UXHP1 Level 2 - UXP1 Level 3 - UXRGP1	Content and information provided allow users to feel in control of the system, take appropriate actions to reach their goal, and ultimately trust the organisation.	1-very poor experience; 2-poor experience; 3-average experience; 4-good experience; 5-very good experience
Heuristic 2: Match between system and the real world	Level 1 - UXHP2 Level 2 - UXP2 Level 3 - UXRGP2	Information and content provided are aligned with the users' language (familiar words, phrases, and concepts), appear in a natural and logical order, demonstrate empathy and acknowledgement for users.	1-very poor experience; 2-poor experience; 3-average experience; 4-good experience; 5-very good experience
Heuristic 3: User control and freedom	Level 1 - UXHP3 Level 2 - UXP3 Level 3 - UXRGP3	Information and content provided allow users freedom to be in control of the interaction and experience, even if they make mistakes and will need a clearly marked way out of 'trouble'.	1-very poor experience; 2-poor experience; 3-average experience; 4-good experience; 5-very good experience
Heuristic 4: Consistency and standards	Level 1 - UXHP4	Based on information and content provided, users know what to	1-very poor experience; 2-poor experience; 3-average experience;

	Level 2 - UXP4 Level 3 - UXRGP4	expect and how to operate the interface.	4-good experience; 5-very good experience
Heuristic 5: Error prevention	Level 1 - UXHP5 Level 2 - UXP5 Level 3 - UXRGP5	Information and content provided prevent unconscious errors by offering suggestions, utilising constraints, and being flexible.	1-very poor experience; 2-poor experience; 3-average experience; 4-good experience; 5-very good experience
Heuristic 6: Recognition rather than recall	Level 1 - UXHP6 Level 2 - UXP6 Level 3 - UXRGP6	Objects, actions, options are visible through the content and information provided. The user should not have to remember information from one part of the dialogue to another.	1-very poor experience; 2-poor experience; 3-average experience; 4-good experience; 5-very good experience
Heuristic 7: Flexibility and efficiency of use actions	Level 1 - UXHP7 Level 2 - UXP7 Level 3 - UXRGP7	Catering to the needs of both experienced and inexperienced users.	1-very poor experience; 2-poor experience; 3-average experience; 4-good experience; 5-very good experience
Heuristic 8: Aesthetic and minimalist design	Level 1 - UXHP8 Level 2 - UXP8 Level 3 - UXRGP8	Dialogues should not contain information which is irrelevant or rarely needed. Every extra unit of information in a dialogue competes with the relevant units of information and diminishes their relative visibility.	1-very poor experience; 2-poor experience; 3-average experience; 4-good experience; 5-very good experience
Heuristic 9: Help users recognise, diagnose, and recover from errors	Level 1 - UXHP9 Level 2 - UXP9 Level 3 - UXRGP9	Error messages should be expressed in plain language (no codes), precisely indicate the problem, and constructively suggest a solution.	1-very poor experience; 2-poor experience; 3-average experience; 4-good experience; 5-very good experience
Heuristic 10: Help and documentation	Level 1 - UXHP10 Level 2 - UXP10 Level 3 - UXRGP10	Even though it is better if the system can be used without documentation, it may be necessary to provide help and documentation. Any such information should be easy to search, focused on the user's task and easy to comprehend.	1-very poor experience; 2-poor experience; 3-average experience; 4-good experience; 5-very good experience

All four researchers agreed that not all heuristics might apply to all three areas or a particular area. Hence, each researcher needed to choose the heuristics that are most relevant for each individual level. For instance, the overall analysis confirmed that heuristic 9 has not applied to any of the levels. The 5-Likert scale, with 1 indicating very poor experience and 5 - very good experience, was then applied to assess each heuristic and a related level of experience.

Quantitative measures were developed for most of the features, which are complex and subjective, to create a measurement framework for consistent analysis by multiple researchers

and establish inter-rater reliability. For instance, after the pilot analysis, the seven measures were developed to evaluate the RG message's positioning on the homepage. Traffic light indicators were used to assess the following two features, the extent of references to RG-specific advising groups and the extent of inclusion of COVID19-related information. Red, amber and green indicators were then translated into numeric form to assist with further statistical evaluations. To complement quantitative coding text-based responses for listing RG-specific advising groups, examples of RG messages, screenshots of the websites' homepages and RG pages, a list of RG measures other than age restriction and cross-reference with RG-advising groups were added to validate the quantitative coding for the related features.

### *Data analysis*

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS v26. Firstly, frequency analysis was performed to assess various features such as RG message, RG-related content, and positioning of RG-related content. Secondly, t-test analysis has been used to examine the statistical difference between a user experience with the desktop version of the gambling operators' websites and the mobile version. A one-way ANOVA test was used to determine the variation between user experiences with two different interfaces of the website (desktop or mobile) and independent variables such as the gambling operator group and type of gambling activity. Qualitative observations were captured to complement the statistical analysis and provide insights into patterns and variations identified throughout the research.

### Inter-rater reliability

Four researchers (EB, RB, RW and NS) independently completed the pilot and main coding for the entire sample (n=66; 100% of sample). Weekly group discussions took place to ensure that the coding template is used consistently and capture any issues which required modifications to the template. Moreover, weekly group discussions were used to capture qualitative observations and possible interpretation of discrepancies as well as similarities.

Intraclass correlation coefficients (ICC) was used to determine an absolute agreement between researchers (k = 4) with two-way mixed effects model being tested. Two-way mixed effect assumes that each observation and evaluation is conducted by the same pull of researchers who were not randomly selected (Perinetti 2018). Table 4 provides details into ICC<sup>1</sup> results for features listed in the Table 2. Item-total statistical analysis confirmed that there was a clear discrepancy in evaluations carried out by one of the researchers (NS). Hence, decision was made to exclude these observations from the final analysis. ICC<sup>2</sup> results are provided for evaluations by three researchers (EB, RB and RW). It is important to note that all combination of evaluations have been assessed and the ICC<sup>2</sup> combination of evaluations provides the highest reliability results. Moreover, none of the COVID19 related features were included in ICC evaluation as no such information was found by all four researchers.

*Table 4. Inter-rater reliability results*

<b>Feature</b>	<b>ICC<sup>1</sup> (for 4 researchers)</b>	<b>95% confidence interval (for 4 researchers)</b>	<b>ICC<sup>2</sup> (for 3 researchers)</b>	<b>95% confidence interval (for 4 researchers)</b>
VRG	0.636*	0.471 - 0.760	0.641	0.446 - 0.773
NRGLinks	0.635	0.335 - 0.793	0.828	0.713 - 0.896

NRGIcons	0.876	0.818 - 0.918	0.903	0.853 - 0.937
NRGLEI	0.909	0.867 - 0.940	0.936	0.904 - 0.959
TC	0.648	0.489 - 0.768	0.795	0.688 - 0.869
MF	0.735	0.609 - 0.827	0.827	0.740 - 0.889
CLARITYRG	0.730	0.581 - 0.830	0.775	0.617 - 0.866
FRGCHP	0.818	0.686 - 0.893	1.00	Absolute agreement
FRGCRGP	0.922	0.806 - 0.938	1.00	Absolute agreement
POSRGM	1.00	Absolute agreement	1.00	Absolute agreement
RGREF	0.870	0.811 - 0.915	0.927	0.890 - 0.953
LINKQUAL	1.00	Absolute agreement	1.00	Absolute agreement
LINKMISLEAD	1.00	Absolute agreement	1.00	Absolute agreement
AGERW	0.941	0.913 - 0.961	1.00	Absolute agreement
EARGP	0.970	0.956 - 0.980	0.966	0.948 - 0.978

\*Note: all figures, highlighted in yellow, show low inter-reliability scores which does not qualify the inclusion the concerned features within further analysis, and, hence, will not be reported on within the Findings section.

Looking through ICC<sup>1</sup> results, absolute agreement of 100% was achieved for the evaluation of positioning of the RG message on the home webpage, link quality to RG-specific advising groups/organisations and the credibility of the link to RG-specific advising groups/organisation misleading (ICC 1.00). The ICC was excellent for the evaluation of the number of RG link-enabled icons (ICC<sup>1</sup>=0.909, 0.867 - 0.940), evidence of age restriction warning (ICC<sup>1</sup>=0.941, 0.913 - 0.961) and ease of access to RG page (ICC<sup>1</sup>=0.970, 0.956 - 0.980). Good level of agreement was found for the number of RG Icons (ICC<sup>1</sup>=0.876, 0.818 - 0.918), format of RG content within RG page (ICC<sup>1</sup>=0.893, 0.806 - 0.938) and traffic light indication on the extent of references to RG-specific advising groups (ICC<sup>1</sup>=0.870, 0.811-0.915). Moderate to good level of agreement was achieved for the evaluation of message framing (ICC<sup>1</sup>=0.735, 0.609 - 0.827) and format of RG content within homepage (ICC<sup>1</sup>=0.818, 0.686 - 0.893). In terms of other features listed in Table 4, despite ICC being above 0.6, the 95% confident intervals are much wider indicating that agreement amongst researchers is from fair to moderate.

ICC<sup>2</sup> results, show slight improvements in reliability of results. For instance, absolute agreement was achieved six features with reliability for most of features improving. ICC<sup>2</sup> analysis confirmed that 14 out of 15 features listed in Table 4 can be included in the overall analysis. Evaluation of the visibility of RG content demonstrates individual differences in users' ability to capture RG content within a homepage. Moreover, it required a subjective process of each researcher calculating the duration in seconds from the point the user is accessing the homepage of the website to the point he or she sees the first sign of RG content. It is evident that more *scientific methods of inquiries* are to be conducted to understand whether visibility of the RG content is to be affected by the positioning of the content within the homepage. This can be done with the *use of eye tracking*.

Table 5 provides ICC results for the heuristics evaluation, showing that little consensus is achieved amongst researchers when evaluating user experience with the homepage, pathway from homepage to the RG page and the RG page of the selected gambling websites. Moreover, removing evaluations made by the 4<sup>th</sup> researchers (NS) does not improve the reliability

drastically. This of course highlights once again that more *scientific methods of inquiries* are to be conducted to evaluate user experience with the gambling websites and RG content.

Table 5. Inter-rater reliability results of the UX heuristics

Feature	ICC <sup>1</sup> (for 4 researchers)	95% confidence interval (for 4 researchers)	ICC <sup>2</sup> (for 3 researchers)	95% confidence interval (for 4 researchers)
UXHP1	0.442*	0.182 - 0.632	0.583	0.242 - 0.763
UXP1	0.718	0.546 - 0.826	0.624	0.307 - 0.787
UXRGP1	0.740	0.616 - 0.831	0.783	0.614 - 0.874
UXHP2	0.246	-0.90 - 0.500	0.874	0.809 - 0.919
UXP2	0.860	0.795 - 0.908	0.957	0.933 - 0.973
UXRGP2	0.882	0.825 - 0.923	0.975	0.962 - 0.984
UXHP3	0.441	0.200 - 0.627	0.514	0.274 - 0.685
UXP3	0.706	0.572 - 0.806	0.701	0.550 - 0.807
UXRGP3	0.686	0.543 - 0.793	0.750	0.625 - 0.839
UXHP4	0.447	0.197 - 0.635	0.519	0.274 - 0.690
UXP4	0.723	0.579 - 0.823	0.716	0.571 - 0.818
UXRGP4	0.729	0.605 - 0.821	0.781	0.668 - 0.859
UXHP5	-0.022	-0.22 - (-)0.471	0.582	0.373 - 0.729
UXP5	0.610	0.432 - 0.743	0.713	0.570 - 0.815
UXRGP5	0.680	0.534 - 0.789	0.683	0.523 - 0.796
UXHP6	0.405	0.158 - 0.599	0.569	0.343 - 0.724
UXP6	0.771	0.630 - 0.859	0.805	0.591 - 0.897
UXRGP6	0.837	0.763 - 0.893	0.900	0.848 - 0.936
UXHP7	0.624	0.445 - 0.754	0.754	0.623 - 0.843
UXP7	0.716	0.371 - 0.765	0.623	0.294 - 0.789
UXRGP7	0.753	0.638 - 0.838	0.754	0.628 - 0.842
UXHP8	0.571	0.371 - 0.718	0.762	0.642 - 0.847
UXP8	0.637	0.418 - 0.775	0.571	0.270 - 0.745
UXRGP8	0.669	0.508 - 0.785	0.690	0.532 - 0.801
UXHP10	0.461	0.229 - 0.640	0.483	0.219 - 0.667
UXP10	0.712	0.547 - 0.820	0.615	0.362 - 0.767
UXRGP10	0.708	0.568 - 0.809	0.710	0.552 - 0.816

\*Note: all figures, highlighted in yellow, show low inter-reliability scores which does not qualify the inclusion the concerned features within further analysis, and, hence, will not be reported on within the Findings section.

In terms of heuristics evaluation for the homepage of the websites (UX area 1), ICC<sup>1</sup> results show that agreement amongst researchers was not achieved for any of the features. However, ICC<sup>2</sup> results have improved the agreement levels for the and for the flexibility and efficiency of use actions (ICC<sup>2</sup>=0.754, 0.623 - 0.843), the match between system and the real world (ICC<sup>2</sup>=0.874, 0.809 - 0.919) and the aesthetic and minimalist design (ICC<sup>2</sup>=0.762, 0.642 - 0.847). The UX heuristic evaluation of the pathway from homepage to RG page (UX area 2) shows that agreement was achieved for the heuristic 6: recognition rather than recall and the heuristic 2: match between system and the real world. In both cases ICC<sup>1</sup> and ICC<sup>2</sup> the scores are higher than 0.6 with the moderate to strong results for the confidence intervals. However, ICC<sup>2</sup> results are much stronger. The ICC results for the last UX evaluation area (UX area 3) shows that agreement was stronger and consistent for the majority of heuristics (six out of nine used for further analysis), but once again with ICC<sup>2</sup> showing drastically improved (i.e. heuristic 2) or slightly stronger (i.e. heuristic 7) results, heuristic 1 (ICC<sup>2</sup>=0.783, 0.614 - 0.874), heuristic



2 ( $ICC^2=0.975$ , 0.962 - 0.984), heuristic 3 ( $ICC^2=0.750$ , 0.625 - 0.839), heuristic 4 ( $ICC^2=0.781$ , 0.668 - 0.859), heuristic 6 ( $ICC^2=0.900$ , 0.848 - 0.936), and heuristic 7 ( $ICC^2=0.754$ , 0.628 - 0.842).

## Findings and Discussion

### *Differences across the sample characteristics*

Overall, the analysis looked into results of the evaluations against the following sample characteristic grouping factors, interface from which the websites were accessed (mobile versus desktop), the gambling operator group (to see if there are any significant differences across the groups or within the groups) and the type of gambling activity (see 'Design and Sample' sub-section under the Methodology section).

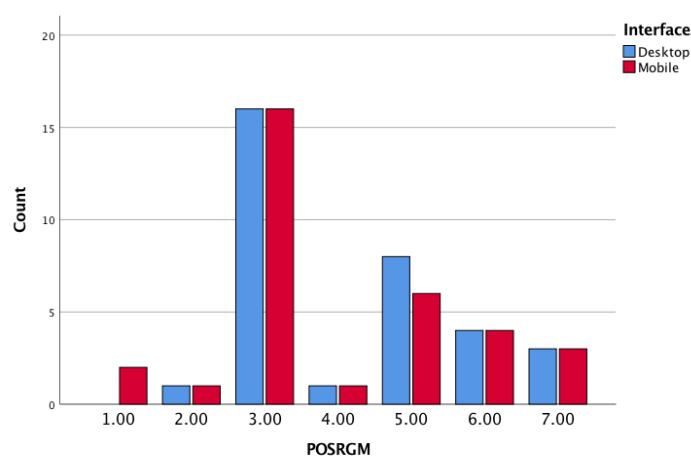
Despite initial observations by the evaluators around the difference between observations related to the interface, desktop and mobile versions of the websites, compare means and independent samples t-test analysis showed no statistically significant difference for any of the features against on the interface. It is, however, important to note that visibility of RG messages, in particular time spent to search for RG messages was much more substantial for the mobile versions of the websites. This could be due to the size of the screen and the organisation of the information on the mobile version where it is often not possible to see the full menu of tabs and pages and it takes more time to scroll through the homepage and navigate through the website. As table 6 shows across four evaluators the difference in timing for searching RG messages on desktop version versus mobile version of the websites is very minimal. Most of the desktop versions of the website use a broad and shallow navigation pattern for web design where more tabs are listed on the front homepage. Mobile versions of the gambling operators' websites are often based on the narrow and deep navigation pattern which by default requires much longer time to browse through the website and navigate to the required information - in the context of our research to the RG messages and information. For small number of operators such as Skybet, Admiral Casino and Betfred, RG information was navigated much quicker on the mobile versions of the websites. The information architecture design usage across desktop versus mobile versions of the websites we have observed within the online gambling context is a common practice in general. However, it is important to note that the narrow and deep navigation pattern quite often requires a selection of important content that use should access when browsing and accessing the website on their mobile device (Geven et al. 2006). According to Harris and Griffiths (2017), several harm-minimisation strategies including RG messaging in pop-up window form or within online content drive self-awareness and self-control. Hence, in the online gambling context we anticipate RG messaging to be qualified as an important content.

*Table 6. Independent t-test analysis results for visibility records against the interface*

	Interface	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Visibility of RG messages by Evaluator 1 (E1) – EB – in seconds	Desktop	33	9.4545	8.20096	1.42760
	Mobile	33	7.1818	4.47531	.77905
Visibility of RG messages by Evaluator 2 (E2) – RW – in seconds	Desktop	33	4.9697	2.51849	.43841
	Mobile	33	5.4242	3.38222	.58877
Visibility of RG messages by Evaluator 3 (E3) – RB – in seconds	Desktop	33	7.0000	4.02337	.70038
	Mobile	33	6.7879	3.76462	.65534
Visibility of RG messages by Evaluator 4 (E4) – NS – in seconds	Desktop	33	7.5152	5.99021	1.04276
	Mobile	33	8.0303	7.00216	1.21892

It is critical to highlight that across both types of interfaces, evaluations recorded are consistent across the sample and differences noticed i.e., positioning of RG messages. As per Figure 1, for mobile interface no RG messages are recorded to be positioned at the top of the homepage of the websites. The differences for the positioning of RG messages are found to be statistically insignificant.

Figure 1. Crosstabulation analysis for the positioning of the RG messages on the homepage of the websites against the interface



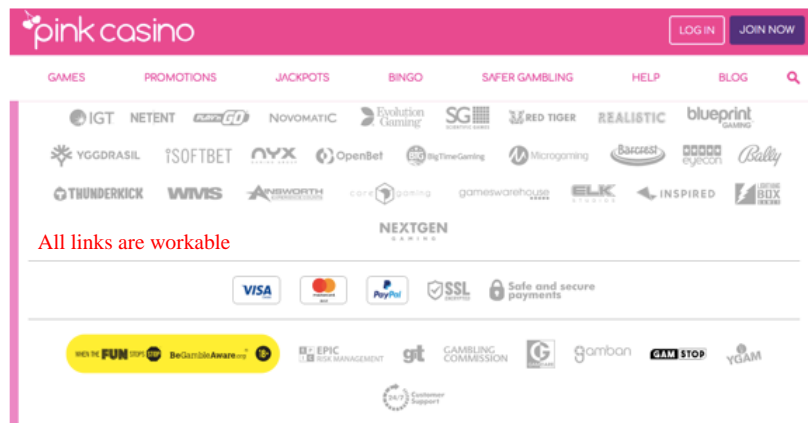
Discussion of the positioning of RG messages against the information architecture when designing the mobile and desktop versions of the website raises the question on whether RG messages could be highlighted as critical and, hence, appear at the top of the webpage for the mobile versions of the websites - in order to increase visibility of RG content and messages. Clearly, adopting such recommendation could signify the prioritisation of the responsible gambling and safeguarding of customers by an operator that is to adopt it.

We found significant difference ( $p < .001$ ) between gambling operator groups and the types of gambling activity for the following features, the ease of access from home page to RG-dedicated page and the traffic light indication on the extent of references to RG-specific advising groups (i.e. inclusion of [www.begambleaware.org](http://www.begambleaware.org)). In particular, it is evidence that for majority of the operator groups it takes one click through to go from the homepage to the RG-dedicated page, both across both interfaces. However, for some of the operators that are part of the Betway group, GVC Holding, William Hill and the Rank Group it takes from 2 to 4 clicks to access the RG-dedicated page from the homepage. Moreover, these operators are focusing on either

bingo and casino games (2 operators with 4 clicks required to access the RG-dedicated page from the website’s homepage) or betting, bingo and casino (4 operators with 2 clicks required).

In terms of extent of indicating and including links to various RG reference groups, there were only two operators, Pocketwin and Casino Superwins, who had no links or low number of links (up to three reference to such reference group as GambleAware, Gamstop, GamCare) provided - all within the casino gambling activity category. In the case of Casino Supervins the icons to the reference groups were provided but no links attached to the icons. Links to the reference groups listed were provided separately. However, operators falling into the casino gambling activity category also performed well in terms of moderate level of links provisions (5 operators) to the RG reference group (four references on average to groups such as GambleAware, GamCare, Gamstop, Gambling Therapy, IBAS, YGAM, NetNanny, BetFilter, Cybersitter, BetterInternetforKids) and of high level of links (5 operators) - (five and more links on average to groups mentioned already, plus others such as EPIC risk management, Gordon Moody, National Gambling Helpline, Gamblock, Gamblers Anonymous, Gamban, Dunlewey Centre, Multi-Operator Self Exclusion Scheme). It is important to acknowledge that across the entire sample, high level of links was provided by the six operators in total, Mr Green, Coral, William Hill, Pink Casino, Skybet and Mansion Casino (with all icons and links being up to date and operational). Figure 2 shows the example of reference group link-based icons listed at the bottom of the homepage for the desktop version of the Pink Casino website. Majority of operators, 25 in total, had a moderate level of links to RG reference groups provided with all instances of icons and links being up to date and operational - workable links. Further information and analysis on the RG reference groups is presented in the ‘RG content on gambling operator homepages’ sub-section of the current section.

Figure 2. Screenshot of the Pink Casino website's bottom of the homepage (desktop version)



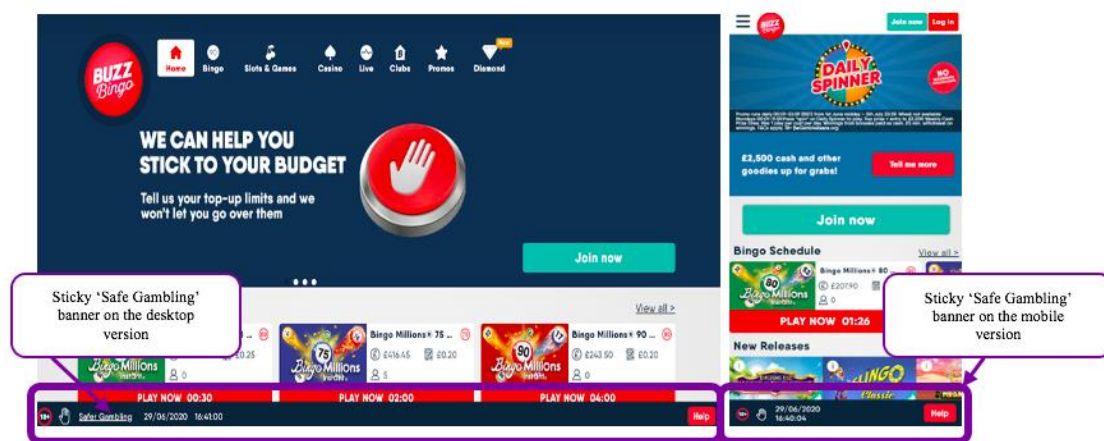
Comparison of the means across the operators’ group as a sample classification factor shows some interesting results for the following features that capture the way RG messages are presented (positioning of RG message) and the content of the RG messages (message framing, type of content and number links, icons and link-enabled icons).

Statistical analysis shows that majority of operators have multiple positioning of the RG messages, links, icons, and content across the websites’ homepages. Only one gambling operator Novibet, which is part of the Novigroup Ltd, positioned its RG messages at the top of the website’s homepage with majority of the gambling operators with no other positioning. In comparison, operators of five groups, GVC Holding, Bet 365 Group, Caledonia Investments, Prism Marketing and William Hill, have top and middle of the page positioning for RG

messages - the most popular positioning approach amongst operators included in the analyses. In addition, operators of In Touch Games and Gamesys Group opt in for the top and bottom of the page positioning of RG messages. Betway is the only operator to position RG messages in the middle of the homepage. It is evident from the analysis that middle positioning is the least frequent choice by the operators as only two gambling groups, Novomatic Group and White Hat Gaming, opted in for middle and bottom of the page positioning of the RG gambling content and references. Seven gambling groups (majority of the sample), Flutter Entertainment, Kindred Group, 888 Holdings, Lightcatch Ltd, The Rank Group, Camelot UK Lotteries and Tombola Ltd, position RG messages only at the bottom of their websites' homepages.

The above observations indicate that top and bottom positioning of the RG messages are the most frequent content display choices. Clearly top positioning may lead to the website user's immediate engagement with the RG messaging and communication if such messaging is clearly highlighted. Header of the website, top positioning, is often an important aspect of the user's journey through the website as it is the first thing the users see when they land on a website. Alternatively, bottom positioning demonstrates that the user will require to scroll through excessive amount of content before reaching the bottom of the page. So-called website footer, which is found at the bottom of the websites quite often include important information such as a disclaimer, links to relevant resources, copyright notices, contact us and about us. Footer is the last thing a user sees before leaving the website. Moreover, footer is usually used as a standardised content for important information for a consistency of information across all the pages as often the content of the footer remains the same across all the pages. However, the concern in the online gambling context is that many users might go on to several other pages concerning the games and gambling products before they reach the bottom of the page and see an important RG messaging content. Perhaps multiple positioning throughout the page with so-called sticky banners as seen in the Buzz Bingo's case (see Figure 3) could be the great solution to bring a user's attention to RG messaging throughout the website journey.

Figure 3. Screenshots of the Buzz Bingo website's RG messaging sticky banner (desktop version and mobile versions)



In terms of the content of RG message, comparative analysis of means shows statistically significant difference between types of content and message framing across the gambling operators' groups. First of all, majority of operators (across thirteen groups) present a positive focus (focus on gains) when communicating about RG:

*“Millions of customers around the world bet with us every year — they like the excitement of having a small flutter and the thrill of winning. Betting and gaming are an enjoyable, sociable and memorable way to spend time; that’s why it continues to*

*be so popular. However, unfortunately, for a small percentage of people, gambling ceases to be entertainment and can cause personal, social, financial and even health problems. It is our responsibility to help our customers gamble safely and responsibly, and reduce the risk of harm and help people who need treatment to get it. This is why we have developed a new, safer gambling strategy, 'Changing for the Better'. The guiding principle of our safer gambling campaign is to be the most trusted and enjoyable betting operator in the world. We are putting customers at the heart of our business by ensuring they are protected from harm while enjoying their regular flutter. For more information about our strategy, please see our policy page."*

[RG messages found on Landbrookes Games's website, example of positive message framing]

As opposed to such majority, operators across the following four groups, In Touch Games, Kindred Group, Caledonia Investments and William Hill, focus on losses (negative message framing) in the RG messaging:

*"William Hill is committed to supporting Responsible Gaming. Underage gambling is an offence."*

[RG messages found on William Hill's website, example of negative message framing]

Two groups, Novigroup Ltd and Tombola Ltd, combine both positive and negative message framing in their RG messages or present content in the way where it is hard to suggest whether the message is focusing on losses or winnings:

*"Safe play 'Fair Gambling' and Fair gambling explained at tombola;  
Is the game fair? How do I know it is not fixed?;  
All results on tombola are randomly generated and cannot be predetermined - we use an industry standard Random Number Generator to determine the outcome of each game. The game is of the high quality you rightly expect from tombola."*

[RG messages found on Tombola's website, example of mixed message framing]

Secondly, majority of operators (across sixteen groups) within their RG messages aim to educate their gambling customers about RG with messages either triggering a specific action (Gainsbury et al. 2018) or self-appraisal in users (Gainsbury 2015):

*"Dream big play small. National Lottery games should always be fun, playing in a way that is right for you. Using our handy toolkit you can set limits, take time out or set up reminders. National Lottery games should always be fun, playing in a way that is right for you. We know that extraordinary things happen when lots of people play a little. We're proud to say that around 60% of UK adults enjoy our games, so encouraging healthy play is at the heart of everything we do. The way we design our games and the tools we develop put you in control of your play."*

[RG messages found on National Lottery's website, example of educational RG content type]

As opposed to such majority, operators across the remaining groups, i.e. Bet365 Group, William Hill, Novigroup Ltd, The Rank Group, Tombola Ltd, prefer to combine both informational and educational messaging within RG communication:

*“Set yourself limits: It's much more fun if you play responsibly. Click here for help and information. Please visit [Begambleware.com](http://Begambleware.com) for advice.”*

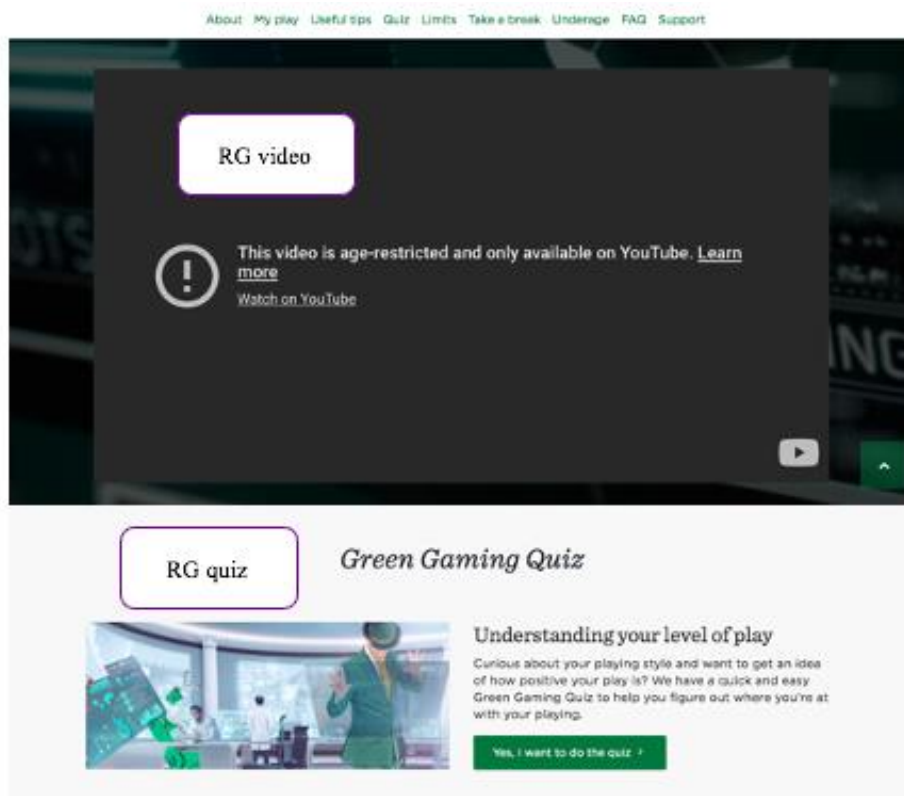
[RG message found on homepage of Mecca Bingo (The Rank Group) website, example of educational RG content encouraging a specific action]

*“How will I know if I have a problem? A good way to gauge whether your gambling is no longer fun, and may be getting out of control, is to ask yourself the following questions: Do you find yourself reliving previous gambling experiences and thinking of ways that you can get more money to gamble? Do you ever gamble for longer, or more often, than you had planned? Have you ever chased your losses by continuing to gamble when you are on a losing streak?...”*

[RG message found on RG page of Mecca Bingo (The Rank Group) website, example of educational RG content encouraging self-appraisal]

Finally, we found the statistically significant difference between various gambling operators' groups when it comes to formats of RG content on both, homepage and RG page, as well number of links, icons and link-enabled icons on the homepages. Majority of gambling operators' groups present RG content in the form of text and icons. However, some operators such as Mr Green use multiple formats such as text, icons, links and even videos and quizzes (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Screenshot of the Mr Green website's RG video and quiz content formats presented on the RG-dedicated page



Across all of the operators, average number of RG links, icons and link-enabled icons presented on the website's homepage is 5 (see Table 7).

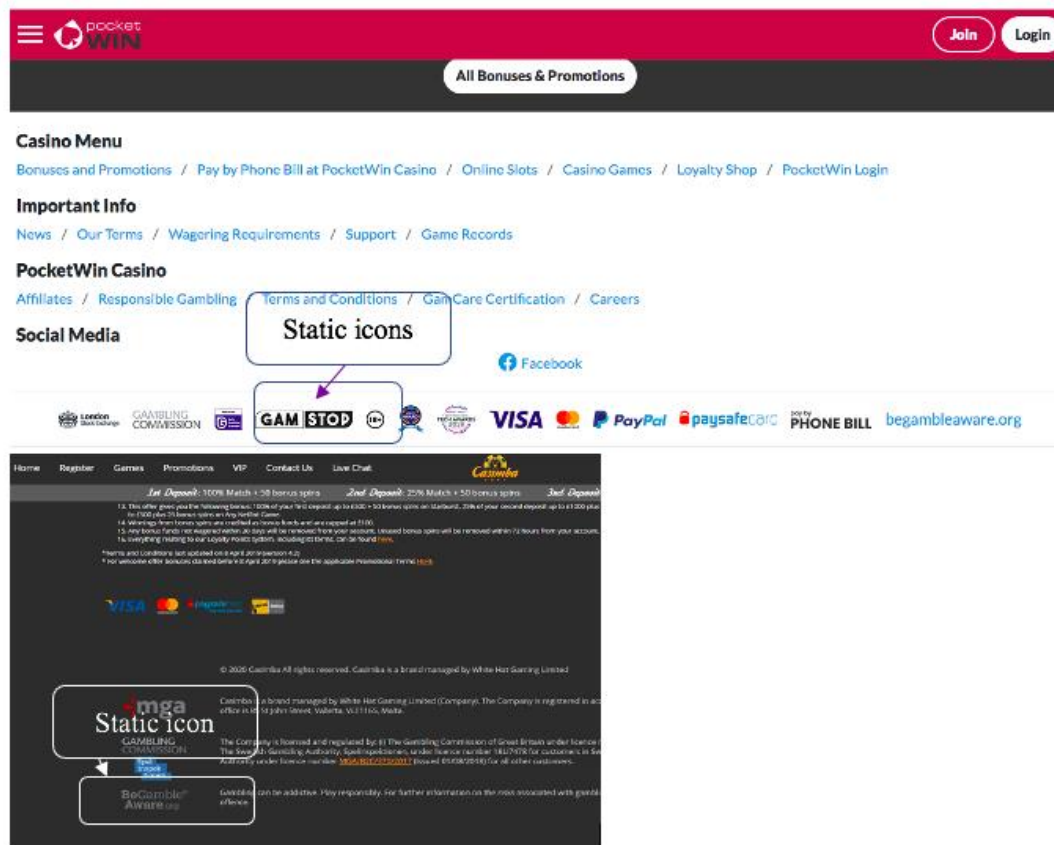


Table 7. Frequencies analysis for the number of RG-related links, icons and link-enabled icons

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
NRGLinks	66	.00	10.00	5.7273	2.50668
NRGIcons	66	.00	10.00	5.2626	1.73108
NRGLEI	66	.00	9.00	4.7828	2.04270
Valid N (listwise)	66				

However, it is important to note that the mean figure for the link-enabled icons is lower which shows that in some cases RG icons are static images (e.g. Casimba and Pocketwins, as shown in Figure 5). In some instances (e.g. Unibet) such issue occurred only in the mobile version of the homepage where RG icons are displayed but do not provide a link to the RG support external website.

Figure 5. Screenshots of the Casimba and Pocketwins RG non-link enabled icons

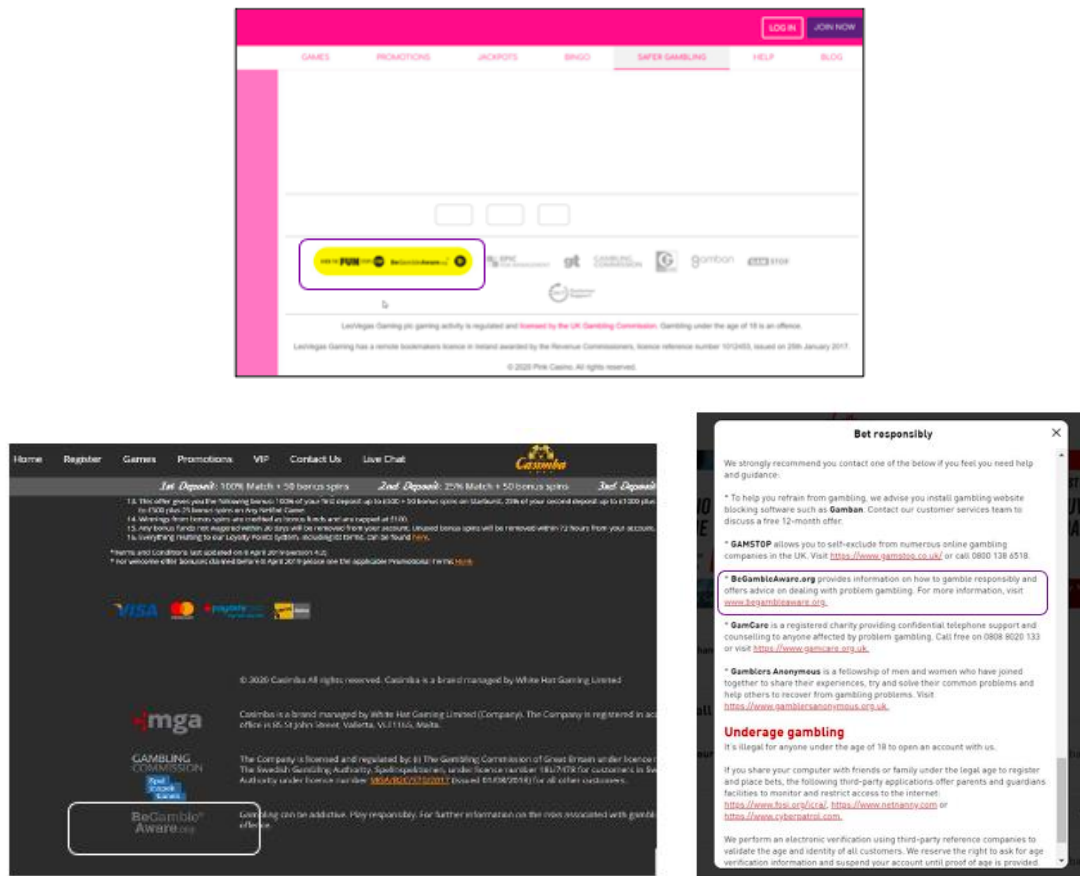


Overall, in the majority cases these images contain the links and references to the direct sources of information from the RG reference groups or lead to new content pages, RG-dedicated page in many cases, which provide further detailed guidance to customers interested in learning more about RG-related matters.

In terms of number of RG links, icons and link-enabled icons, on average, majority of the operators provide around 7 to 8 RG links, 6 icons and 6 link-enabled icons. In the cases of William Hill and LeoVegas Mobile Gaming Group, Betway Group number of links and icons is above average ranging from 7 to 10 on average. It is evident, however, that icons and link-

enabled icons are presenting information in a much more aesthetically visible manner. To provide a contextual example to this, some operators provide the BeGambleAware information using the iconic yellow and black icon (e.g. Pink Casino), whilst others provide only a written icon (e.g. Casimba) or a written link only (e.g. Virginbet), as shows in illustrative screenshots of the Figure 6.

Figure 6. Screenshots of three different approaches to present the BeGambleAware information on the homepages of the websites



## RG content on gambling operators' homepages

### Visibility, 'look and feel' of RG information

Despite the visibility of the RG content feature<sup>1</sup> is being outside of the scope of the statistical analysis due to low reliability level and, hence, consistency of the observations across the evaluators, it is important to note that timing for seeing the RG content within the homepages varied substantially from one website to another, with some evaluators finding information within 1 second of landing on a website, and others taking 40 seconds on other websites. This time difference was largely due to some operators providing information more prominently (e.g. visibility at the top of the page or bottom of the page where the page footer is visible to a user immediately within the necessity to scroll down, or including such features as sticker

<sup>1</sup> Please note that to measure this the evaluators timed themselves when landing on a webpage to track in seconds how long it took for them to allocate RG information and icons from the moment of landing on the homepages.



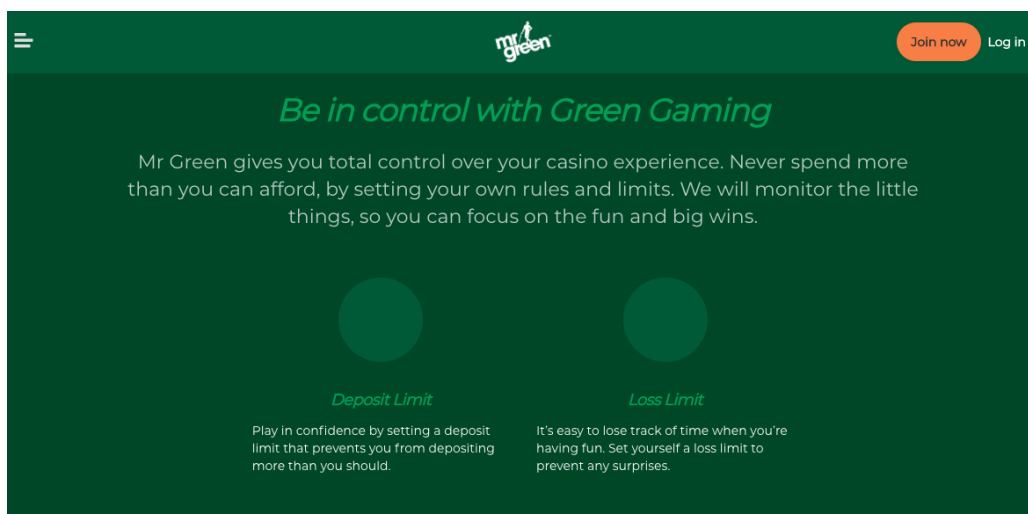
banners and pop-up windows). As discussed in the Method section of this report, although the measurement of visibility using time tracking approach allowed evaluators to provide a quantitative measure, this approach deems biased due evaluators' increasing awareness of the whereabouts of RG information with each subsequent case as well as various subjective bias that time tracking can introduce within the contexts of the individual evaluators.

It is also important to note that in the majority of the cases, operators do not provide RG links in a text size that is comparable to that of the text size within the overall website page, making the text hard to see and hidden. However, it is important to note that in a few operators' cases (e.g. National Lottery and Mr Green) where RG content was in the same size and font style as the other content on the homepage evaluators experienced some form of confusion and challenge in finding the RG content using visual cues and needed to process information cognitively (read the content properly) as the RG content blended in with the rest of the content on the homepage.

As discussed in the previous sub-section, there were few differences in what content is present across two different interfaces, mobile and desktop versions. This was also evident, although in a small number of instances (e.g. Novibet) where links to RG-dedicated pages were provided in the desktop version of the homepage but missing on the mobile version of the same website.

In addition to the observations made above and in the previous sub-section, evaluators noted the role that branding can play in RG content display and communication, in terms of presenting RG information as part of the overall experience with an operator or treating RG as an add-on content, separate and distinctive from the overall customer experience with an operator and the website. In most of the cases colour-schemes of presenting RG content are in line with the rest of the website content (e.g. Pink Casino, William Hill, National Lottery, etc.), although quite often presented as a plain standard text with critical information related to RG and RG tools. However, in some cases such as Mr Green we observed RG content and experience to be integrated within 360 view and the journey of a gambling customer. 'Green gaming' concept is well embedded within the overall look and feel of the website as well as branding (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. Screenshot of the Green Gaming feature presented on the homepage of the Mr Green's website, positioned in the middle of the homepage

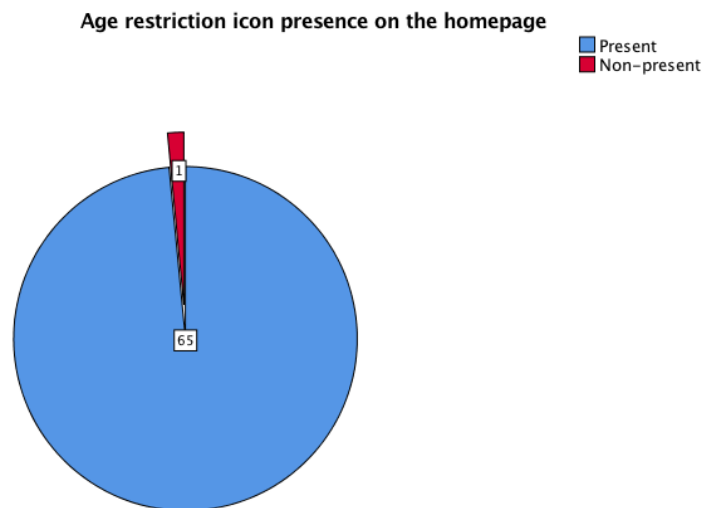


Of course, evaluators discussed that, on one hand, integration of RG content to such extent can cause confusion in a user’s mind and mislead them from treating RG as important matter; and on the other hand, positioning and embedding RG within the overall gambling experience may lead to a safer gambling experience where RG information and tools are used by the customers effectively and not seen as features that intervene with an experience. Colours and other branding properties could have an impact on overall user experience of the gambling customers; however, this area of research deserves further in-depth attention and investigation.

### Age restrictions warning messages and icons

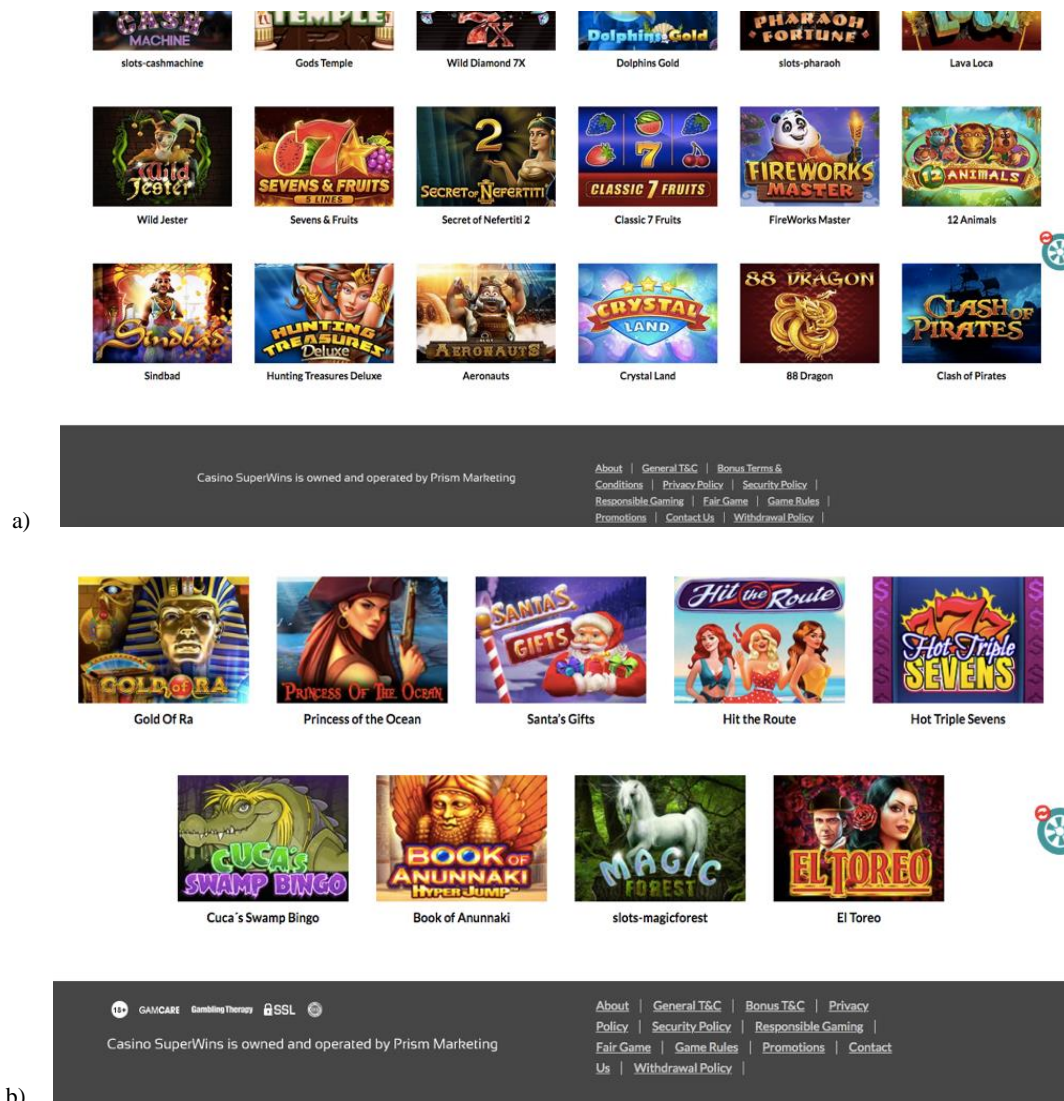
All operators excluding Casino Superwins (see Figure 8) provide users with 18+ (or 16+ in the case of the National Lottery), age restriction rating/warning across both mobile and desktop interfaces and in actual fact across both homepages and RG-dedicated pages.

Figure 8. Overall results for the age restriction message and icon presentation



Casino Superwins do not provide an 18+ age restriction rating/warning on their desktop or mobile pages (see Figure 9a). It is also surprising that such warning does not appear on any of the pages across the website. However, we have revisited the Casino Superwins website six months later from the period of the analysis [January 2021] when such warning is now included within the website’s footer (see Figure 9b).

Figure 9. Age restriction presence on the Casino Superwins website across two time periods, a) July 2020 and b) January 2021



### Other harm reduction messages and icons, pathway through to RG-dedicate page

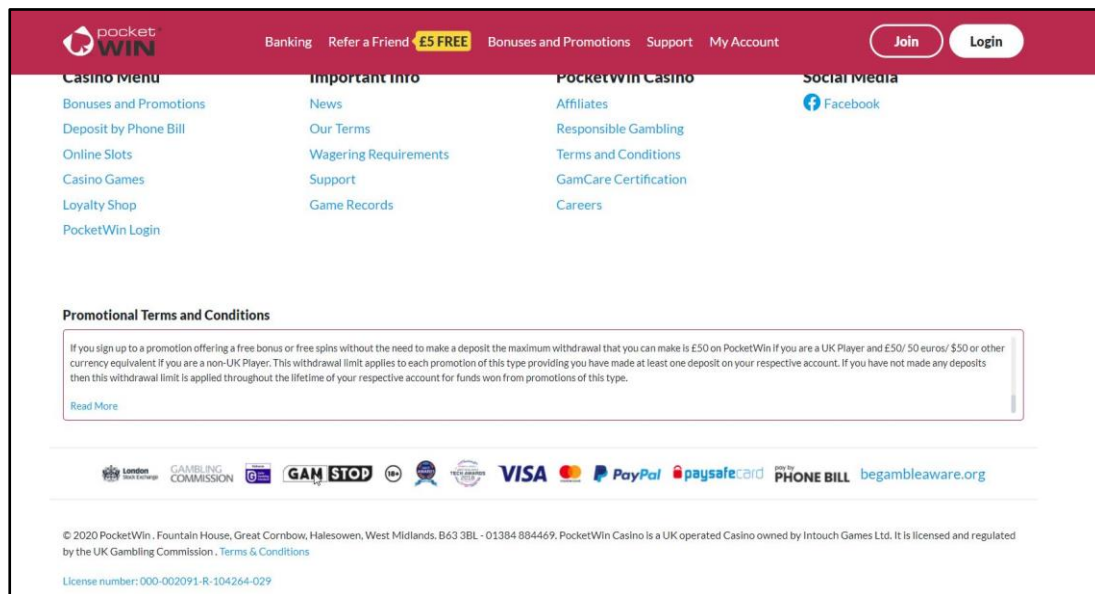
In addition to the age restriction rating/warning icon, gambling operators use various brand icons for the RG-related organisations, as discussed in the previous sub-section. Table 8 provides the list all the RG-related reference groups or organisations that evaluators have noted across the website footers. From the list is evident that three reference groups (GambleAware, GamStop and GamCare) are the most prominent across gambling operators we have analysed. Many references groups such as i.e. Gambling Commission, National Gambling Helpline are also popular across the UK-licensed gambling operators indicating the wide scope of reference groups that are focused on regulating gambling (i.e. Gambling Commission), responsible gambling features (i.e. BetFilter), gambling health and peer support (i.e. National Gambling Helpline and Gambling Therapy) and targeted gambling support (i.e. YGAM). The majority of operators provided links to external RG-related support pages that were considered to work well. The exception to this was the link provided by <https://www.virginbet.com/> which was slow to open. For those operators that provided working links to RG information, all were considered to provide information that was expected, and this information was not considered misleading in content and information.

Table 8. List of the RG-related organisation or reference groups, links, icons or linked-enabled icons to which are listed on the website pages

RG-relates organisation or reference group	Level of reference (low to high)
BeGambleAware / GambleAware	High
GamCare	High
GamStop	High
Gambling Commission	Moderate
Gambling Therapy	Moderate
IBAS (International betting integrity association)	Moderate
keepitfun.rank.com	Moderate
National Gambling Helpline	Moderate
YGAM (Young Gamers & Gamblers Education Trust)	Moderate
NetNanny	Moderate
BetFilter	Moderate
Cybersitter	Moderate
BetterInternetforKids	Low
Trustwave	Low
betblocker.org	Low
safergamblingstandard.org.uk	Low
spelinspektionen.se/en/	Low
EPIC risk management	Low
Gamblers Anonymous	Low
Gordon Moody	Low
Gamblock	Low
Gamban	Low
Dunlewey Centre	Low
Multi-Operator Self Exclusion Scheme	Low
MGA (Malta Gaming Authority)	Low

Looking through individual operators' cases it is important to highlight one example of the poor practice in displaying RG-related information on homepage is represented by Casino Superwings which at the time of the analysis did not provide any icons and links to external RG-related organisations and reference groups (see Figure 9a). Pocketwin was an operator that displayed icons to RG-related organisations and reference groups but such icons were not link-enabled preventing the users to click through and access websites for such organisations in order to find more information on available support and remit of such organisations (see Figure 10).

Figure 10. List of non-linked enabled icons on the homepage of the Pocketwin website

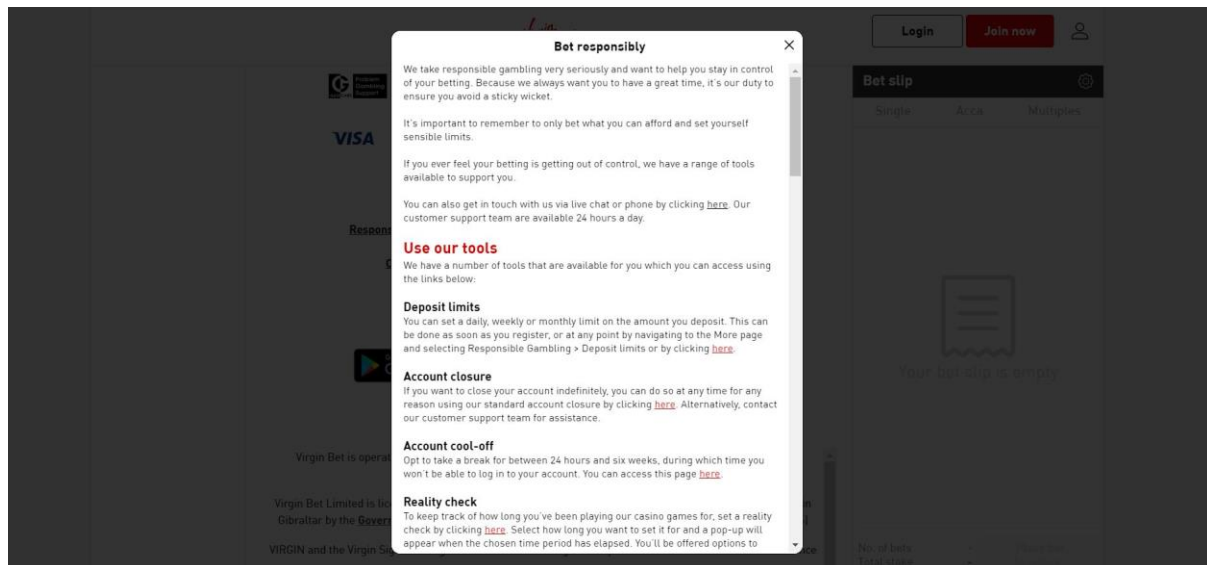


## RG-dedicated pages

### Ease of access to the RG-dedicated page

Overall, ease of access to RG-dedicated page was good for the majority of operators in terms of number of clicks: for the majority of operators RG-dedicated information can be accessed with one click through from the website's homepage usually taken via link-enabled icon or link-enabled icon. In the previous sub-section, it has been discussed that majority of the operators present online harm reduction or RG messages in a variety of ways through text, icons and link-enabled icons. In many cases the actual pathway through to the RG-dedicated page is represented by the text-enabled link which takes a user to the RG-dedicated page that opens up as a separate window. However, in the case of Virgin Bet, there is a pop-up window with further RG-related information (see Figure 11).

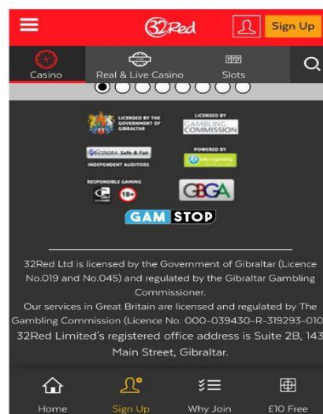
Figure 11. Screenshot of VirginBet RG-dedicated pop-up window



Evaluators had mixed feelings about such pop-up window which on one hand presents a quick and simple access to RG information, but on the other hand, this keeps the users on the homepage with the details to games and bets and prevents them from accessing external support pages. Pop-up windows are often deemed as ‘frustrating’ by the users and, therefore, they tend to be closed without being read (Bahr and Ford 2011).

In terms of individual cases of the gambling operators analysed in this study, 32Red did provide access to the RG-dedicated page on the desktop version of the website’s homepage; however, such access was not offered on the mobile version (see Figure 12). Otherwise, the desktop versions of the websites’ homepages for all 33 operators included working link-enabled icons and/or text that directed the users to the RG-dedicated pages.

Figure 12. Screenshot of the 32Red’s website’s homepage, mobile version

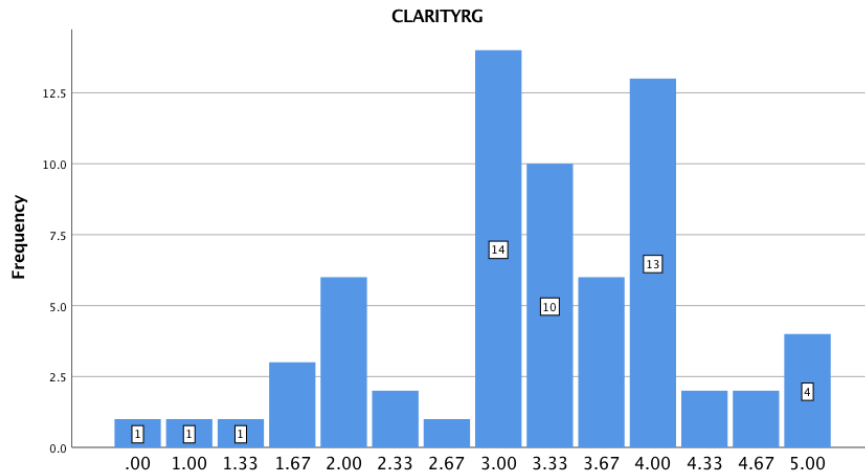


## Content and its presentation

When analysing the RG-dedicated pages the evaluation has focused on the overall clarity of the actual RG information presented using the rating scale (from 1 - content being unclear and confusing to 5 - content being very clear and understandable). As displayed in Figure 13

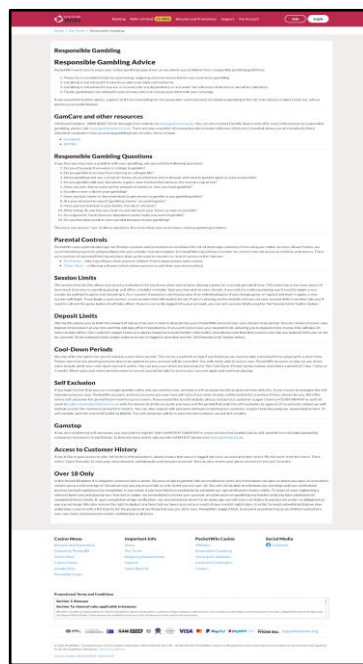
most of the operators' presented their RG related information in a more or less clear manner within the RG-dedicated pages.

Figure 13. Across evaluators' (3 evaluators) frequency distribution for the ranking of the clarity of the content across the RG-dedicated pages



Twenty-three operators were found to present their RG content in a clear or very clear way. However, ten operators (888 Casino, Casino Superwins, Foxy Bingo, Tombola, Gala Bingo, 32Red, Casimba, Pocketwin, Bet UK and Sky Bingo) were found to present the information that lacked clarity. In particular, Pocketwin, 32Red and Tombola's RG related content was found to be confusing and unclear: one evaluator ranked all of these operators at 1 (very unclear and confusing) and 2 evaluators - at 2 (unclear and confusing). In particular, Pocketwin as seen in Figure 14 presents a heavily text-based content. Some of this content lacks logical structure where the user understands the purpose of the content.

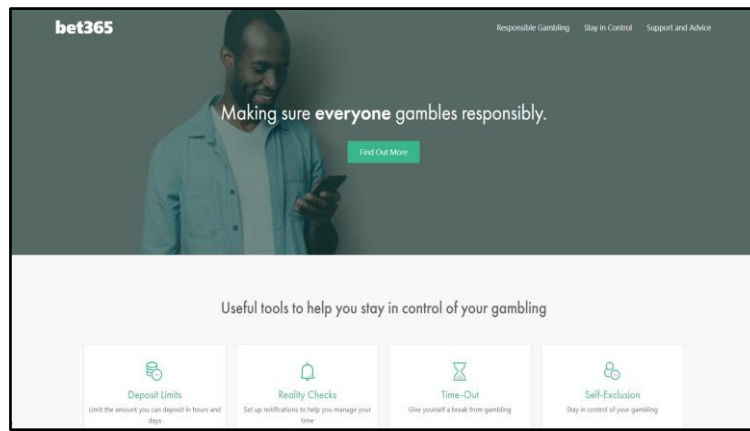
Figure 14. Screenshot of Pocketwin's RG-dedicated page





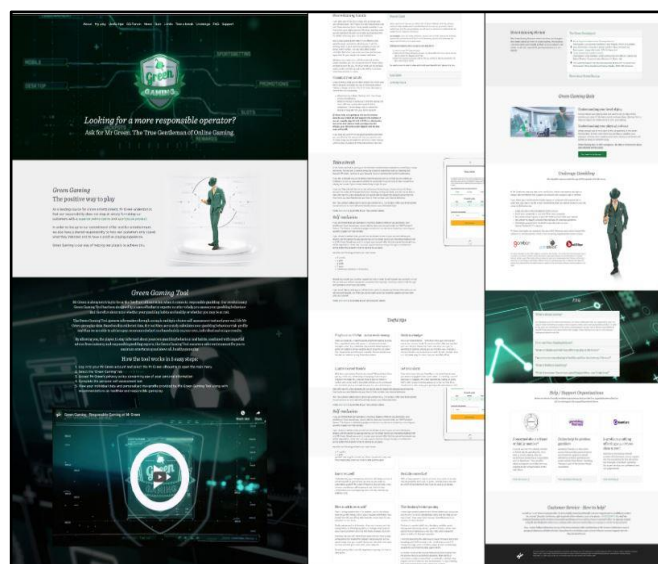
In comparison, Bet365 provides a clean and simple text that is broken-down into sections enabling the user to understand individual points (see Figure 15).

Figure 15. Screenshot of Bet365 RG-dedicated page

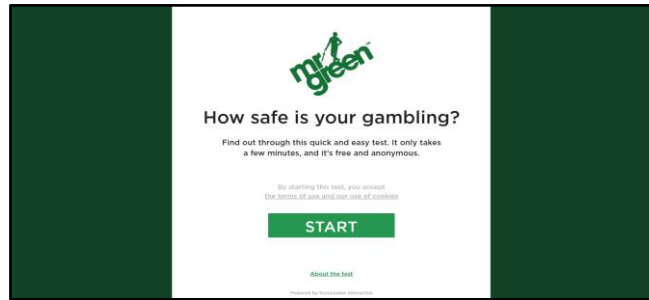


Combination of text, links, icons and images is the most prominent mix of various content formats used to communicate RG information on the RG-dedicated page. However, four operators' (Mr Green, William Hill, Paddy Power and Pink Casino), RG content of which was rated as very clear (ranked at 5), displayed a lot of information in a logical and clear manner providing content in various formats such as mix of text with images, links and even videos and quizzes as seen in the case Mr Green. Mr Green's RG-dedicated page visitors can take a quiz that enables them to understand their gambling behaviour and habits (see Figure 16). It is also evident from the Mr Green's case that variety of formats in some cases present one piece of information but communicated via various formats, showcasing that it is done to cater to users with different accessibility needs.

Figure 16. Screenshot of a multimedia content, displayed on Mr Green's RG-dedicated page







Overall, the analysis shows that the operators that provide users with clear and simple text on RG dedicated pages are focusing on making the RG content accessible, easier to engage with, comprehend and digest.

In terms of the RG measures, RG-dedicated pages often contain information around various RGFs (responsible gambling features) available to gambling customers (i.e. self-exclusion, deposit limits, reality check, GamCare chat). The majority of operators list and explain the following RGFs:

- Deposit limit
- Loss limit
- Take a break
- Budget calculator
- Reality checks
- Self-exclusion
- Self-assessment.

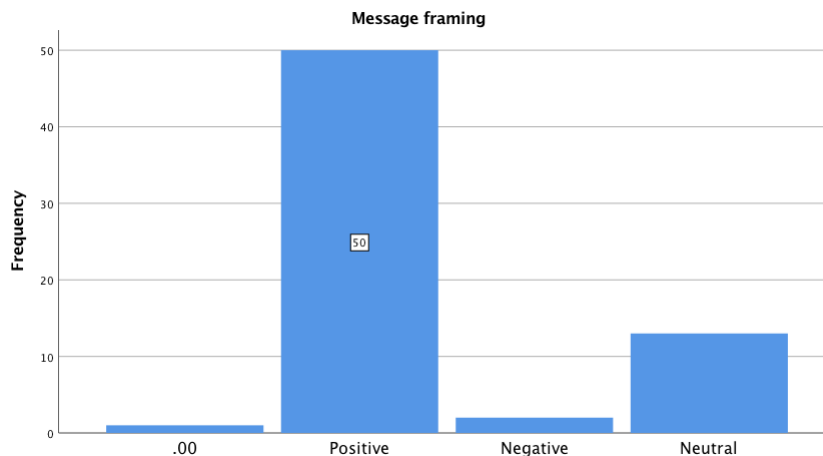
However, two operators, Casino Superwins and Pocketwin, mention limited number of RGFs to the list presented above. In the case of Casino Superwins the desktop version of the RG-dedicated page only mentions 'objectives, symptoms and prevention' information without mentioned any of the RGFs. Mobile versions of the Casino Wperwins and Pocketwin websites do not provide link to the RG-dedicated pages; hence, no information on RGFs is available to users accessing their websites from the mobile devices.

### Message framing and type of content

As explained in the methodology sections, message framing analysis was applied to the content found on the RG-dedicated pages. Message framing, which originates from the prospect theory, suggests that the response to information and messages can be different depending how the messages are framed (Tversky and Kahneman 1974). In regard to gambling and other warning message framings, there are two categories of message framing, positive message framing where the content focuses on gains, and negative message framing where the content focuses on losses (Gainsbury et al. 2018). Moreover, warning and preventative messages can contain mixed content which might have elements of gains and losses in it - mixed message framing.

Our analysis shows (see Figure 17) that in the majority of observations (50 out of 66) message framing is evaluated as being positive. Please note that .00 indicates the instance where no RG-dedicated page could be accessed via mobile devices (Casino Superwins), hence, no evaluations are provided for these observations.

Figure 17. Across evaluators' (3 evaluators) frequency distribution for message framing analysis of the content across the RG-dedicated pages



Positive messages such as ‘Have a great time’, and ‘A way to socialise, prove your powers, we're proactive, easy-to-use tools, take action to control your play’ were provided by the majority of operators. Such messages show a clear focus on benefits and positive aspects of the experience the gambling experience provides. Opposite to that is the message provided by 32Red, ‘Sometimes we find customers who have problems controlling their gambling, and we try to help them as much as we can’ - in this case content focuses on harmful consequences of gambling experience. Gainsbury et al. (2018) shows that positive message framing is a much more persuasive and effective in achieving counter-behaviour, hence, encouraging individuals to respond to such messages positively, whereas negative message framing leads to no impact or negative consequences. Based on that we can conclude that most of the operators we analysed provide RG content and information that should lead to a counter-behaviour, hence, less gambling.

There are number of operators, that include both positive and negative message framing, when communicating about RG on their RG-dedicated pages. Example of such message is:

*We want you to have fun when you're playing on tombola.co.uk and tombolaarcade.co.uk, but it is also extremely important to us that you are in control of what you're spending. With this in mind we've created a few tools to help you stay in control of your spending*

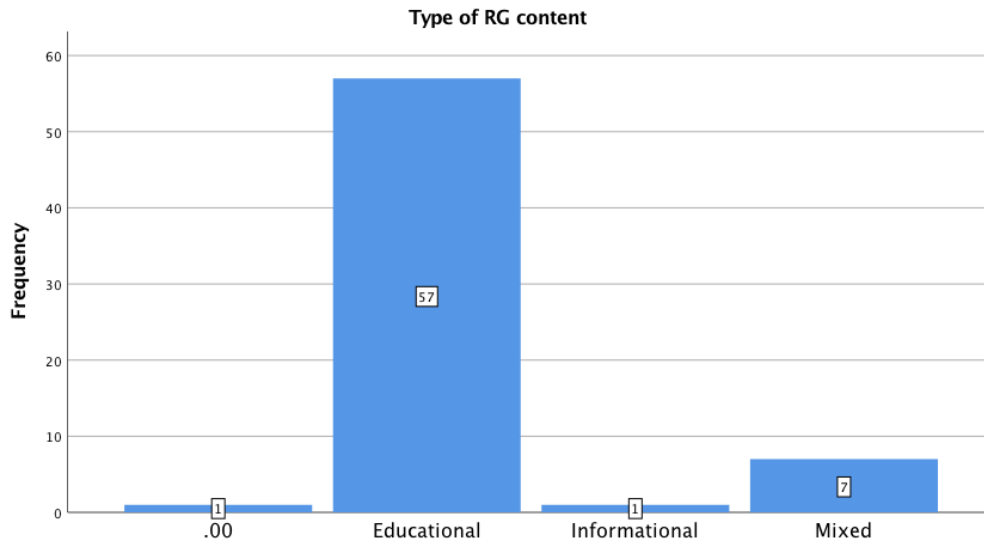
[Tombola's RG-dedicated page]

As research suggests (Gainsbury et al. 2018) it is not clear what effect mixed message framing can lead to as it can either strengthen the counter-behaviour or with the combination of two opposite message frames lead to neutral attitude and, hence, no response.

In addition to message framing, we have categorised the RG information within the RG-dedicated pages educational, informational, or mixed. As per Gainsbury (2015) warning and preventive messages may present content that aims to generate awareness and inform (informational content), whereas the educational content triggers a specific action (‘click-through’ or ‘have you checked you assessed your play?’) or self-appraisal that encourages reflection and evaluation and quite often framed as a series of questions. Our analysis shows (see Figure 18) that in the majority cases (57 observations out of 66) RG messages, displayed by operators on their RG-dedicated pages, were deemed to be educational as opposed to

informational. This shows that by large gambling operators we have analysed present RG-related content that encourages self-appraisal (questions are often integrated within the RG-related text) and action to use RGFs. Once again note that .00 in Figure 18 indicates the instance where no RG-dedicated page could be accessed via mobile devices (Casino Superwins), hence, no evaluations are provided for these observations.

Figure 18. Across evaluators' (3 evaluators) frequency distribution for RG content type analysis, across the RG-dedicated pages



### Heuristics analysis

Despite limited inter-reliability across the heuristic analysis and user experience evaluations, we have found (see Table 9).

Table 9. Descriptive statistics for the heuristic analysis results across the user interface features' evaluations, results of which are found to be reliable

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
UXRGP1	66	.00	5.00	4.4646	.74163
UXHP2	66	4.00	5.00	4.9293	.23031
UXP2	66	.00	5.00	4.8333	.65698
UXRGP2	66	.00	5.00	4.8939	.63558
UXRGP3	66	.00	5.00	4.1313	.91498
UXRGP4	66	.00	5.00	3.9596	.79639
UXP6	66	.00	5.00	4.3838	.66472
UXRGP6	66	.00	5.00	4.7626	.67118
UXHP7	66	3.00	5.00	4.2626	.57740
UXRGP7	66	.00	5.00	4.3586	.86392
UXHP8	66	2.00	5.00	4.1162	.74304
Valid N (listwise)	66				

It is evident that three evaluators found experience of accessing and using website homepages as good or very good (see means in Table 9) across the following features:

- Information and content provided on the homepage are aligned with the users' language (familiar words, phrases, and concepts), appear in a natural and logical order, demonstrate empathy and acknowledgement for users - all observation cases are aligned to this;
- Flexibility and efficiency in using homepage: catering to the needs of both experienced and inexperienced users - most operators provide this within their homepages;
- Aesthetic and minimalist design: all information is relevant and presented in a logical manner. In some instances information is presented in a logical manner and content is quite cluttered (i.e. the case of Casino Superwins and Pocketwin).

In terms of pathway experience analysis - pathway from the homepage to the RG-dedicated pages, it is evident that paths are visible through links presented on homepages.

Finally, when it comes to the RG-dedicated pages, user experience was consistently ranked as good and very good across three evaluators, whose analysis is presented in this report, across the six out of 10 heuristic features:

- Heuristic 1: Content and information provided allow users to feel in control of the system, take appropriate actions to reach their goal, and ultimately trust the organisation - *Good experience on average*;
- Heuristic 2: Information and content provided are aligned with the users' language (familiar words, phrases, and concepts), appear in a natural and logical order, demonstrate empathy and acknowledgement for users - *Very good experience on average*;
- Heuristic 3: Information and content provided allow users freedom to be in control of the interaction and experience, even if they make mistakes and will need a clearly marked way out of 'trouble' - *Good experience on average*;
- Heuristic 4: Based on information and content provided, users know what to expect and how to operate the interface - *Good experience on average*;
- Heuristic 6: Objects, actions, options are visible through the content and information provided. The user should not have to remember information from one part of the dialogue to another - *Very good experience on average*;
- Heuristic 7: Catering to the needs of both experienced and inexperienced users - *Good experience on average*.

This indicated that RG-dedicated pages are designed as a separate experience to the homepages of the websites and in general provide a great experience for the user. However, before gambling customers find and access RG-dedicated pages, they will need to locate such pages via homepage of the websites - inconsistent evaluation of the user experience related to homepages indicates that there is more work to be done on ensuring RG-content is accessible to all users experiencing gambling operators' websites.

### *COVID19 communication*

Results of the analysis related to display of COVID19 related information on websites' homepages and RG-dedicated pages were quite interesting from the lack of any information point of view. This was a surprise as at the time of conducting this analysis we have anticipated to see some brief information on the impact COVID19 had on operators' operation displayed

at least on the homepages. This was the case with companies across other sectors such as retail, tourism and hospitality and others. Of course, operators could inform their existing customers via other direct communication means such as emails, text messages and phone calls, but we expected to see such information available to any new customer who might visit the operator's website for the first time. This requires further investigation of social media posts and content as today social media are primary communication channels used by the organisation to communicate up-to-date and latest information to new and existing customers.

Despite the lack of COVID19 related information, we have observed few instances of such information provided by the following three operators, William Hill, Betway, and National Lottery. William Hill (see Figure 17) and Betway provided support information surrounding the impact of COVID19 on their users. Moreover, the RG-dedicated page of Betway contained the COVID19 statement at the top of the page (see Figure 18).

Figure 19. Screenshot of the William Hill's website's homepage and provision of COVID19 related information

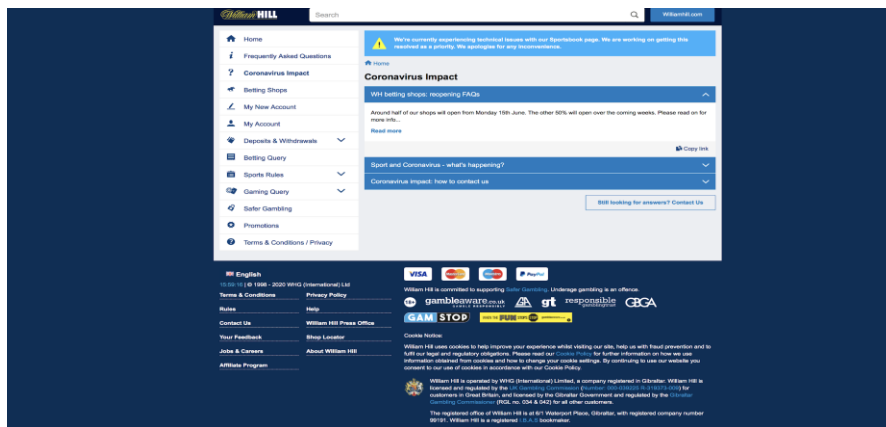
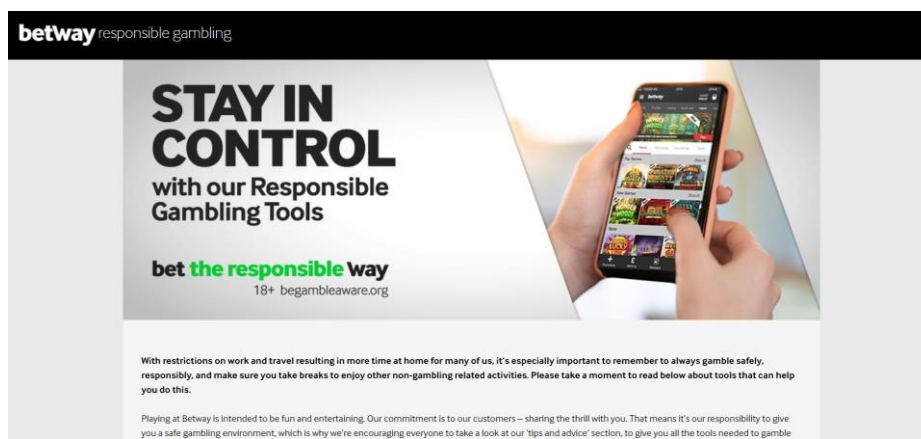
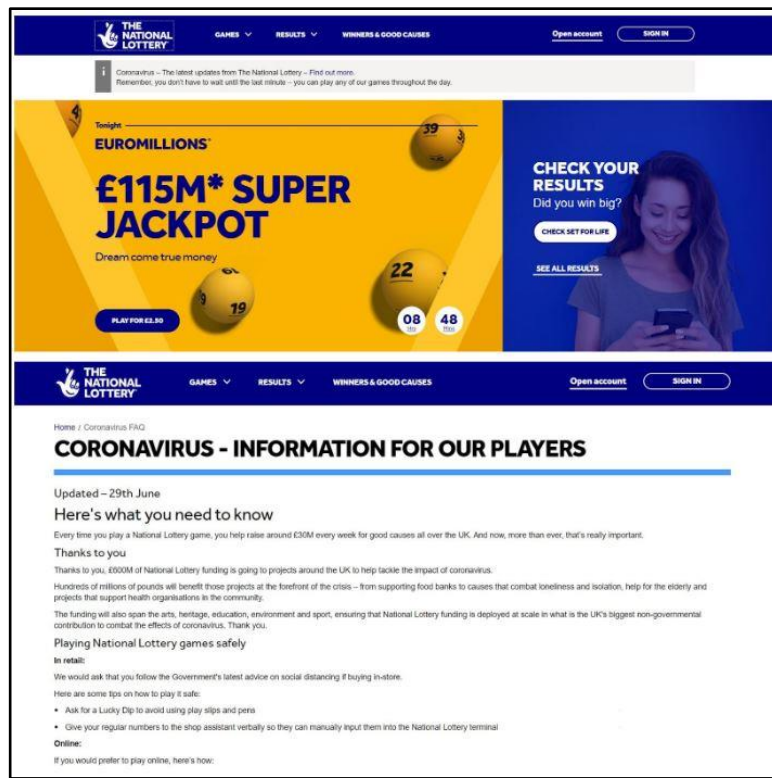


Figure 20. Screenshot of the Betway's RG-dedicated page and provision of COVID19 related statement



National Lottery, however, have not provided the COVID19 related update or support information, but information about donations being made towards COVID19 - corporate social responsibility-related update in this case (see Figure 19).

Figure 21. Screenshot of the National Lottery's COVID19 related update found on the homepage of the website



### Areas of concern

- The lack of COVID-19 related content regarding help and support due to spending more time at home and the impact this may have on RG
- With a large number of operators, RG links were not displayed visibly. Operators place RG links and icons at the bottom of the website pages. This was the case for a significant number of operators analysed.
- RG links are not being provided in a text size that is comparable to that of the text size within the overall website page, making the text hard to see and hidden. This was the case for a significant number of operators analysed.
- In some instances, RG icons are displayed but do not provide a link to the RG support external website e.g. Unibet on mobile
- In a small number of cases, RG links are not supplied for internal advice on mobile but are provided on desktop e.g. Novibet
- Age restriction icons/messages not being provided (in the case of CasinoSuperWings) or not being clearly made visible
- Providing RG information in a format that is disinteresting and/or overwhelming to users.

### Best practice solutions

These providers have been described as providing best practice solutions due to:

- Providing visibly clear and prominent RG messages and icons enabling users to see information within less than 3 seconds of landing on the homepage.

- Providing immediate, obvious and usable working links for users to follow and gain information.
- Providing users with several opportunities to click for further RG information within the webpage.
- Keeping images and messages coherent with the look and feel of the overall website as opposed to making it look less appealing in comparison to the overall website look and feel. Pink Casino does this particularly well.
- Providing a variety of external links to external RG support.

## Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the current study, we recommend to:

- Carry out the website user testing with individuals that play online games and/or with individuals who have not viewed operator websites previously
- Conduct the eye-tracking analysis of the users' experience with locating RG content on home pages and engaging with the RG-dedicated pages
- Research what RG-dedicated content and information users receive, once they are registered with an operator
- Conduct a social media content analysis on availability of any COVID19 related communication.

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