

Raising The Stakes: The Ethics of Advertising

Stake, an online casino that also hosts sports betting, has recently set forward a PR campaign to increase general traffic to their website. The casino sponsors the UFC, and has paid Drake for advertising in the past. This new method of advertising is much less traditional than prior methods. Over the past few months Stake has had employees create “meme” accounts on X.com (formerly known as twitter), and have them repost popular images and videos they find around the website, but with the addition of a banner or watermark on the post.

The icons are usually not extremely blatant but are noticeable. These posts with hidden undisclosed ads are also prone to being community noted, which bring a much higher level of engagement to the post than it ever would have received otherwise. These accounts are not receiving any form of punishment for these actions and will continue to post in this manner. This push was originally started sometime in 2023 when a popular poster “FearedBuck” posted a clip of a Kai Cenat stream with an undisclosed Stake ad. Stake is not partnered with Kai, nor had FearedBuck publicly disclosed that he had been paid by the company to begin this promotion method. This method of promotion targets individuals who spend much of their time online, specifically those who would interact with a meme or a Kai Cenat stream clip.

The question of ethics comes into question when you realize that these are ads for a gambling site, being silently thrown into the consciousness of the young audiences that would engage with general memes and clips. While not every single individual that views one of these posts may be a minor, or under 21, many are, and while there is no definitive way to know how many underage individuals are using the website, the prominence of their logo in recent internet culture cannot be understated.

Online casinos in the past have been no stranger to paying for advertising, especially advertising in more “chronically” online spaces, with youtubers ranging from TheGoblin to the Cam’ron and Ma\$e podcast being at one point sponsored by separate casinos. The issue with Stakes methods is that they are not directly paying a website or having a creator publicly disclose that they are being sponsored by the casino. They are attempting to silently raise awareness without tying themselves directly to any one individual. While writing this post drake once again posted an ad for stake on his instagram, telling people to pay not mind to it.

Gambling within a casino was once something only possible to do in person, within a somewhat controlled environment where everyone must be physically present in order to place bets. In this modern age gambling is possible to engage with anywhere, and all that is needed is adult identification. This has led to not only a rise in the prominence of gambling in popular media, but also a rise in underage gambling as the restrictions in place are not very strict and due to the medium they will not see any change in this lane. I believe it is important to be wary of the ways in which companies