

**Research Outline Qualitative Information on  
Drug Abuse Situation in Hong Kong**

**Research Report No. 4**

**Drug Dealing and Trafficking**

Professor Tit Wing LO, City University of Hong Kong

Dr Gloria CHAN, City University of Hong Kong

Dr Gabriel LEE, City University of Hong Kong

Dr Eric SO, City University of Hong Kong

Dr Cherry TAM, City University of Hong Kong

**Funded by Beat Drug Fund**

30 June 2024

## 1. Executive Summary of Report 4

### 1. Introduction

This report examines the complex nature of drug dealing and trafficking in Hong Kong. It reveals how widespread drug dealing is driven by the economic struggles of those with limited job prospects and low incomes and how social circles often normalise and promote the trade as a lucrative venture. The chapter also highlights the adaptability of these networks and the challenges for law enforcement in managing this entrenched issue.

### 2. Reasons for Becoming a Drug Dealer:

- Economic Hardship: Economic hardship, characterised by low educational levels and limited job opportunities, pushed many individuals towards drug dealing as a more lucrative alternative to poorly paid legitimate employment.
- Influence of Social Circles and Peer Pressure: Social networks and peer influences significantly influenced individuals to start drug dealing, seeing it as a quick route to financial success and social acceptance.
- Legal Consequences and Perceived Safety: Some individuals were drawn to dealing less penalised drugs, like cannabis and LSD, perceiving them as safer options with minimal legal risks.
- Non-Paid Drug Transport and Assistance: Individuals engaged in non-paid drug transportation and assistance, driven by loyalty and the mutual benefits within close relationships, often involving shared drug use.

### 3. Refusal to Become a Drug Dealer:

- Economic and Practical Considerations: Many participants felt that the financial rewards of drug dealing did not outweigh the risks, including legal consequences and the instability of the trade. Regular employment, despite offering lower pay, provided more stability and long-term security.
- Personal Safety and Lifestyle Concerns: The constant threat of arrest and the stress associated with the illegal trade deterred individuals from drug dealing.
- Unpredictability and Unreliability: Drug dealing's inherent unpredictability and the challenges of managing unreliable customers and logistical issues contributed to its perception as a stressful and unattractive option. The hassle involved often seemed greater than the potential benefits, discouraging participation.

#### 4. Accessibility to Drug Supply and Customers:

- Exchange of Information: Access to drug supplies relied heavily on social networks where information about drug sources, quality, and prices was shared. Initial access typically came through immediate social environments, with peers playing a crucial role in introducing new users to suppliers.
- Triad Connection: Access to drug supplies often involved leveraging connections with triad societies, which enhanced the reliability and security of the supply chain.
- Accumulation of Customers: Drug dealers built their customer base through social networks and personal connections, starting within their immediate circles and expanding through word-of-mouth.
- Promotion Strategies: Dealers used modern communication tools, reputation building, and personalised interactions to promote their products. Strategies included using social media for advertisements, sending promotional messages, and employing incentive schemes to foster customer loyalty and repeat business.
- Ways of Communication: The communication between dealers and users evolved to include various platforms, balancing efficiency and privacy with security needs. Traditional methods remained popular due to the trust and security.

#### 5. Operation Modes:

- Private or Single-Dealer Operations: Small-scale dealers operated independently or with minimal partners, focusing on manageable quantities to reduce risks.
- Triad-Organised Operations: These operations were highly structured and hierarchical, involving multiple levels of operatives.
- Drug Distribution within Discos, Nightclubs, and Private Venues: These venues were hotspots for drug distribution, facilitated by trust-based networks and social interactions.

#### 6. Delivery and Distribution:

- Drug Manufactory in Hong Kong: Drug manufacturing in Hong Kong surged due to the allure of high earnings and the influence of triad societies recruiting young people. These operations were kept secretive, often located in remote areas to avoid detection.
- Dealing Preferences: Dealers in Hong Kong varied their strategies, with some focusing on a single drug for simplicity and reduced risk, while others diversified their drugs to broaden their market and increase profits.

- Delivery Strategies: Hong Kong's drug dealers employed sophisticated delivery methods that minimised risk and enhanced operational efficiency, using professional drivers and discreet drop-off points.

## **7. Relationships between Drug Dealers and Users:**

- Business Is Business: The primary relationship between dealers and users was transactional, focusing on reliability and minimal personal connection. Dealers and users often maintained a professional distance to prevent personal issues from complicating the strictly business interactions.
- Friendly Dealer: Although rare, some dealers developed close relationships with their users, extending beyond transactions to social interactions and mutual support. These deeper relationships were characterised by regular socialising, mutual aid during crises, and a sense of camaraderie, fostering a community-like bond between dealers and users.

## **8. Profits and Income for Drug Dealing:**

- Dealers' income varied based on their role and level within the hierarchy. Positions included self-operating/resale, deliverers, drivers, drug manufacturers, and commissions from clubs and private venues.

## **9. Risk Management and Safety Protocols:**

- Trust Networks: Dealers used rigorous vetting processes and maintained anonymity through a network-based approach, relying on trusted intermediaries to facilitate transactions.
- Low-Profile Deliverers: Dealers employed elderly individuals, young children, and other unassuming figures to avoid detection. These deliverers, often appearing harmless and ordinary, carried out transactions without arousing police suspicion.
- Verification of Customers: Dealers rigorously verified new customers to prevent interactions with undercover law enforcement., including checking potential customers' social media for signs of genuine drug use and requesting photos of paraphernalia.
- Avoid the Period of "Strike Hard": During heightened law enforcement crackdowns, dealers adapted by halting operations temporarily or stockpiling drugs to create scarcity and drive up prices in order to manage risks and maximise profits.

- Packing: Dealers used innovative packing methods to disguise drugs as everyday items, reducing the chance of detection, such as double layering, vacuum sealing, and using innocuous containers like food packaging or household items.

## 10. Consequences of Drug Dealing

- Arrestment and Conviction: Despite efforts to manage risks, the pervasive nature of law enforcement operations led to frequent arrests and convictions, affecting dealers more than users, highlighting the significant risks of drug dealing.
- Financial Instability: Dealers often faced substantial financial crises due to defaults, theft, and fraud, leading many to escape to mainland China. The dealers' own drug consumption exacerbated their financial problems, leading to cycles of debt and dependency.
- Betrayals: Betrayal was a significant risk in drug dealing, with participants frequently facing the threat of being sold out by their own network, often for personal disputes, financial incentives, or as a means to reduce one's own legal penalties.

## 11. Risks of Buying Drugs

- Drug fraud was a prevalent issue in drug dealing, characterised by deceptive practices, such as substituting actual drugs with non-drug substances or adulterating them with harmful chemicals, exploiting unsuspecting buyers and leading to potential health risks.

## 12. Rare and Special Cases

- South Asian Dealers: The number of South Asian dealers, particularly around Chungking Mansions, gradually increased. These dealers actively approached passersby to sell drugs and often faced scepticism about the quality of their products.
- University Hall Dealers: Drug dealing in university halls was characterised by individual dealers utilising personal networks within the student community. These dealers lacked a formal structure and focused on maintaining anonymity and low risk.
- Trafficking to Other Asian Pacific Countries: Dealers in Hong Kong extended their operations beyond local sales, trafficking drugs to other countries and often engaging in other criminal activities to maximise profits.

### **13. Conclusion**

The drug dealing landscape in Hong Kong is marked by relatively low barriers to entry and sophisticated tactics to avoid detection, making it accessible and competitive. Dealers maintain a small, trusted customer base to minimise exposure risks and utilise safer methods like employing elder couriers and using diverse packaging techniques to evade law enforcement. Despite the potential profitability, significant challenges such as betrayal and legal risks persist, demanding constant vigilance and adept management of complex social dynamics within the trade.

## Table of Contents

<b>Chapter 1. Introduction</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Chapter 2. Reasons for Becoming a Drug Dealer</b> .....	<b>5</b>
1. Economic Hardship .....	<b>5</b>
2. Influence of Social Circles and Peer Pressure .....	<b>7</b>
3. Legal Consequences and Perceived Safety.....	<b>9</b>
4. Non-Paid Drug Transport and Assistance .....	<b>9</b>
<b>Chapter 3. Refused to Become a Drug Dealer</b> .....	<b>12</b>
1. Economic and Practical Considerations .....	12
2. Personal Safety and Lifestyle Concerns .....	13
3. Unpredictability and Unreliability .....	14
<b>Chapter 4. Accessibility to Drug Supply and Customers</b> .....	<b>15</b>
1. Exchange of Information .....	15
2. Triad Connection .....	17
3. Accumulation of Customers .....	19
4. Promotion Strategies.....	21
5. Ways of Communication .....	24
<b>Chapter 5. Operation Mode</b> .....	<b>26</b>
1. Private or Single-Dealer Operations .....	28
2. Triad-Organised Operations .....	31
3. Drug Distribution within Discos, Nightclubs, and Private Venues.....	37
<b>Chapter 6. Delivery and Distribution</b> .....	<b>45</b>
1. Drug Manufactory in Hong Kong.....	45
2. Dealing Preferences .....	48
3. Delivery Strategies.....	50
<b>Chapter 7. Relationships between Drug Dealers and Users</b> .....	<b>54</b>
1. Business Is Business .....	54
2. Friendly Dealer .....	56
<b>Chapter 8. Profits and Income for Drug Dealing</b> .....	<b>58</b>
1. Self-Operating/Resale.....	58
2. Deliverers.....	60
3. Driver.....	62
4. Drug Manufacturer (Chef).....	62
5. Commission in Clubs and Private Venues.....	63

<b>Chapter 9. Risk Management and Safety Protocols</b> .....	<b>65</b>
1. Trust Network.....	65
2. Low-Profile Deliverers .....	68
3. Verification of Customers.....	70
4. Avoid the Period of “Strike Hard”.....	71
5. Packing .....	73
<b>Chapter 10. Consequences of Drug Dealing</b> .....	<b>75</b>
1. Arrestment and Conviction.....	75
2. Financial Instability .....	77
3. Betrayals .....	78
<b>Chapter 11. Risks of Buying Drugs</b> .....	<b>81</b>
<b>Chapter 12. Rare and Special Cases</b> .....	<b>84</b>
1. South Asian Dealers .....	84
2. University Hall Dealers .....	85
3. Trafficking to Other Asian Pacific Countries.....	86
4. Member Dealers.....	87
<b>Chapter 13. Conclusion</b> .....	<b>88</b>

## Chapter 1. Introduction

Drug dealing and trafficking in Hong Kong present a complex and multifaceted issue that intertwines economic hardship, social influences, and organised crime. This chapter delves into the various dimensions of drug dealing, exploring the motivations behind individuals' involvement, the operational modes of drug dealing, and the socio-economic dynamics at play.

The trend of being a drug dealer is reported to be widespread and well-known, with the current state of drug dealing flourishing significantly. Business is abundant, and customer demand is overwhelming, leaving dealers with more transactions than they can handle. Additionally, many individuals engage in drug trafficking regardless of personal use, indicating a shift in societal norms and the pervasive nature of this trade in contemporary society.

在現在這個年代，那些人反而一出來就是運毒，就算不吸毒也運毒。(003)

很多生意，數之不盡呀。很多客人，做不完的，根本不愁沒有生意。他們叫你「等吧」、「沒有空」、「很多單要接，等啦」。(007)

Economic hardship is a significant driver for many individuals who turn to drug dealing in Hong Kong. The intersection of low educational attainment, limited job prospects, and insufficient income from legal employment forms a potent combination that pushes people toward illicit activities. Many participants mentioned that their low educational backgrounds blocked their chances of securing well-paying jobs. This educational disadvantage makes it difficult for them to compete in the formal job market, where higher qualifications are increasingly necessary to secure well-paying and stable employment. Consequently, the income from traditional jobs is far from sufficient for maintaining their lifestyle, let alone supporting a family. This economic reality makes drug dealing an attractive alternative, especially when one's social circle normalises and participates in such activities. The allure of quick and substantial earnings compared to meagre wages from traditional jobs becomes a compelling reason to enter the drug market.

In addition, social circles and peer pressure play a crucial role in pushing individuals toward drug dealing. Many young people are introduced to drug dealing through friends or family members already involved in the trade. The perception of easy money is especially strong among those who have witnessed or heard about the financial success of others in drug

dealing. Seeing friends and acquaintances engage in drug dealing can create a sense of inevitability or normalcy around the activity. This normalisation within their social groups makes drug dealing a viable option for quick money. In some cases, dealing drugs is seen as a symbol of success and financial acumen, further encouraging individuals to join the trade.

The operational modes of drug dealing in Hong Kong are varied and complex. The trade is characterised by both private or single-dealer operations and more organised, hierarchical structures typically associated with triad societies. Private dealers often operate on a small scale, purchasing drugs in manageable quantities and reselling them at a markup. This method allows them to control their inventory and reduce the risk of large-scale losses if intercepted by law enforcement. Collaboration among private dealers is also common, where resources are pooled to purchase larger quantities of drugs at discounted rates, with profits shared among collaborators.

Trust networks play a critical role in underground drug dealing. Verifying the legitimacy of contacts and maintaining anonymity is essential for dealers and buyers alike. The vetting process involves assessing the tone and manner of communication to determine if individuals are genuine buyers or potential threats. Additionally, the source of contact information is scrutinised, with phone numbers typically obtained through a network of friends and acquaintances known to frequent similar social circles. This network-based approach helps verify that individuals involved have a history of engaging in such activities, reducing the likelihood of law enforcement infiltration.

The chapter also explores rare and special cases in drug dealing, such as trafficking to other Asia-Pacific countries and the involvement of high-profile investors. These cases highlight the adaptability and reach of drug networks in Hong Kong, extending their operations beyond local borders to international markets.

By understanding these dynamics, we gain insight into the resilience and complexity of drug operations and the challenges faced by law enforcement and public health officials in addressing this pervasive issue.

## Chapter 2. Reasons for Becoming a Drug Dealer

### 14. *Economic Hardship*

Economic hardship is a significant driver for many individuals who turn to drug dealing in Hong Kong. The intersection of low educational attainment, limited job prospects, and insufficient income from legal employment forms a potent combination that pushes people toward illicit activities. Many participants mentioned their low educational backgrounds block their chances to secure well-paying jobs. This educational disadvantage makes it difficult for them to compete in the formal job market, where higher qualifications are increasingly necessary to secure well-paying and stable employment. Even if they tried to work in ordinary industries, they could only make HKD10K to 20K a month.

我本身讀書讀很少，很早出來工作。那時候雖然工作休閒，但只有 10 多元一小時。在工作中知道了販賣這事情。加上朋友圈中都是這種人，就會去做這件事。我 14 歲開始有做這種生意。(056)

This income is far from sufficient for them to maintain their lifestyle or live a gorgeous life, not to mention the efforts and taking care of children. This economic reality makes drug dealing an attractive alternative, especially when one's social circle normalises and participates in such activities. The allure of quick and substantial earnings compared to the meagre wages from traditional jobs becomes a compelling reason to enter the drug market.

The need to repay debts quickly is another powerful motivator. Many individuals who enter drug dealing are already in debt, sometimes due to borrowing money to cover living expenses, gambling losses, or to support an addiction. Individuals who are financially desperate may be recruited to perform tasks such as delivering packages in exchange for quick cash. Drug dealing offers the possibility of making large sums in a short period, which is often seen as the only viable solution to their financial problems.

我那時有一段時間未找到工作，我買 K 是不斷叫別人賒數，我也賒了幾千元了。我要賺快錢去還錢，我就唯有去做這些。(004)

食到沒有錢時便和一個拆家說「不如我幫你帶貨吧，當作我吸食的費用」。他說「好啊！」，跟著便開始做。(039)

那時我自己不夠錢用，我便問他有沒有這些工作介紹，因為這些工作很好賺錢，他便幫我找了。(064)

For instance, 021 mentioned that in gambling dens (魚場), a number of individuals who cannot afford the debt were recruited to deliver drugs for the drug boss. Also, those dealing tasks were broken down into parts with immediate payments for each completed segment, making it appealing to those who need money urgently. Considering these situations, individuals were in a constant state of financial instability, while illicit activities seemed to be promising more reliable income. For some, drug dealing provides a stable source of supplemental income that can support their lifestyle without completely disrupting their regular activities.

它是一個穩定的收入來源，或是穩定的副業。它絕對不能養你吃飯，但它也不會影響到我本來的生活，即是它可以讓我自給自足。我也不是想要做賣家，只是剛好而已，地理位置很理想，理想得人們會不停找我，我才會開始考慮做這回事。(022)

總之我有這個穩定的收入，比得上那些中產，甚至高少少就夠，不需要一個月三十幾萬。(104)

In contrast, it is not surprising to see some dealers anticipating great profits. The attraction of easy money and a relatively relaxed lifestyle is attractive. The perception that drug dealing is less labour-intensive, and more lucrative than traditional jobs draw many into the trade.

因為見到他們做，好像很好賺的樣子，又不用怎樣做，只是由頭到尾坐車而已。(005)

你睡醒，打幾個電話，走去幾個地方收錢，又賺了一點錢。(017)

那時看到每個有賣毒品的人都很厲害，一日就能賺兩千多三千元。想這樣可以儲錢，很快，又不用做，只是坐的士去交貨，最多給客人鬧兩句。(045)

For many, drug dealing becomes a default option when other means of earning a living are unviable. The inflexibility of regular jobs, especially for those with familial responsibilities or health issues, makes it difficult to maintain traditional employment. Drug dealing offers a more flexible schedule, allowing individuals to earn money without the constraints of a typical work

schedule. This flexibility particularly appeals to those who need to balance work with other commitments.

### ***15. Influence of Social Circles and Peer Pressure***

Social circles and peer pressure play a crucial role in pushing individuals toward drug dealing. Many young people are introduced to drug dealing through friends or family members already involved in the trade. The perception of easy money is especially strong among those who have witnessed or heard about the financial success of others in drug dealing. Also, seeing friends and acquaintances engage in drug dealing can create a sense of inevitability or normalcy around the activity. This normalisation within their social groups makes it a viable option for quick money.

有個朋友賣毒品，就幫他做一陣子。見到別人賣毒品很有錢，就想試。(012)

那時候食冰，食冰就需要錢，所以就去幫忙賣「可樂」。因為有個朋友做這些，就一起做而已。(047)

我覺得真的要賺錢。我和我的朋友都是不安現狀的。(048)

Additionally, in some social circles, dealing drugs is seen as a symbol of success and financial acumen. Individuals who see their peers buying luxury items, such as branded clothing or accessories, feel pressured to achieve similar status. This pressure is compounded by the desire to "keep up" with their social group, which often requires financial means that legal employment cannot provide.

我十三、四歲就開始做了。有些同年的人能夠買到 LV 皮帶 Gucci 皮帶。難道我要去做麥當勞，40 元一個小時，什麼時候才買到皮帶？人有我要有。還有「溝女」也要錢的。(002)

Peer influence often encourages individuals to join the trade to fit in or meet financial expectations set by their circle. In the discourses of quickly accumulating wealth through drug dealing, individuals are attracted by the stories, making dealing a more rational choice for those in dire financial situations.

Meanwhile, drug dealing opportunities are often facilitated through social connections. Young people are frequently recruited by friends, family members, or acquaintances already involved in the trade. This recruitment is sometimes informal, where individuals suggest drug dealing as a way to make quick money.

總有些年輕人要賺錢。那些小弟，比如說你是我「老表」，有些年輕人沒事做可以來幫手，又想賺錢的便會做，自然會有這種人。(056)

現在做「腳」那些，常被人收歸旗下，加入黑社會了，「過來跟我這一邊吧，一起賺錢。」通常是那些十五、六歲的年輕人，他們都不怕死的。(058)

This form of recruitment is particularly common in those who have addictions and intensive immersion in entertainment venues. They would only receive a limited salary or free drugs as compensation for their work. Their craving had been utilised to serve the illicit activities. Their exposure in these places somehow proves they are less likely to be police undercover, making them suitable targets for recruitment.

現在最多人做就是「打魚場」，有很多在上面的人就會看上這些人，叫他們幫忙。可能接個快遞或者接個郵包，就給你幾千元那些。或者完成了那一部分就有錢收，分一部分一部分地給他。(021)

有很多人玩到上班也上不到。可能每日也食，上班也不能，變了真的做場，賣貨、散貨來賺錢生活，如果不是又怎樣生活呢？所以同志圈有很多這些人存在，這些人多數也沒背景的。他可能是個體戶，幫一些有背景的人。(023)

As 023 mentioned, these individuals were not necessarily to be formal triad members. 002 further mentioned that online forums and social media platforms can serve as venues for informal job advertisements. These platforms sometimes host discussions that lead to posts offering high-paying, low-skill jobs that require no specific qualifications. These advertisements often present drug dealing as a viable job option without highlighting the associated risks, making it appear as an attractive opportunity for those in need of quick cash. These recruited individuals were less likely to be promoted to higher positions. Some might turn out as scapegoats (discussed in the later section).

## **16. *Legal Consequences and Perceived Safety***

Some individuals are drawn to specific types of drug dealing because they perceive them as less risky. For example, dealing in cannabis and LSD, which are seen as less harmful and subject to lighter legal penalties, seems more appealing.

我做過 LSD 的賣家。因為覺得不是太危險，一張紙而已，你夾在錢包內，警察也不會搜得到。朋友說他有一批「東西」，問我要不要，又說可以算我便宜一點，我便先拿了再說。(073)

因為我知道大麻是天然的，都不要說害人，基本上沒甚麼害，食煙比大麻還要差。比很多所謂毒品好很多，而且那麼多國家都合法化。香港又不是判得重，我看了法例，所以才做的。(104)

## **17. *Non-Paid Drug Transport and Assistance***

Individuals engaging in drug transportation and dealing without monetary compensation for their intimate partners and close friends is notable in the context of drug dealing in Hong Kong. The frequency and duration of these non-paid activities can vary widely. Some participants reported helping their partners or friends transport drugs multiple times per night over periods ranging from a few months to several years. This high frequency indicates significant involvement and commitment, even without direct monetary compensation.

有一個朋友會幫我，我過錢給他，他幫我拿回來，然後賣給別人。我會讓他在那裡拿來吸，他也吸的，我會當是請他吸。(021)

錢就沒有，但買毒品的錢就他出，我去幫他拿，然後一起食。(026)

One significant motivation for assisting in drug transportation without direct payment is the mutual benefit within close relationships. Female drug abusers are particularly often engaging in such activities when their partners are drug dealers. The desire to maintain a harmonious and supportive relationship can lead individuals to assist their partners without expecting monetary payment. The sense of loyalty and companionship, combined with shared drug use, reinforces these behaviours.

一開始是幫他一下，但因為我沒有上班了，我可以說花他的錢。(021)

我沒有因為自己經濟不好而特意做多一些這些，即是純粹幫他帶「冰」出街，去拿給別人。那時沒想那麼多，即是想著玩，很開心。自己做完自己吸食，之後又沒有甚麼事。總之就和男朋友開心就可以了。(024)

之後認識了我現任的男朋友，就開始同男朋友一齊做，大家一邊吸毒一邊販毒。(039)

The dynamic within these relationships typically involves sharing the drugs as a form of compensation. This arrangement creates a mutually beneficial situation where the non-monetary compensation satisfies both parties.

The perception of low risk associated with helping a partner or friend to traffic drugs also contributes to this phenomenon. Many individuals involved in these activities believe that the risks are minimal, even if the drug transportation involves travelling considerable distances.

她給我，然後她叫我幫她給她的朋友，那麼我當作過一下手而已。(013)

不過我也沒理會太多，總之就是跟著他幫手賣一些。(018)

This perception is often influenced by the belief that law enforcement will not target them, or their intimate relationship provides a layer of incentive. As a result, individuals may not fully consider the potential legal and personal consequences of their actions.

Participants often describe their involvement as helping out or doing a favour rather than being formally recruited as a trafficker. This casual framing minimises the perceived seriousness of their actions and the perceived risks. This underestimation is problematic as it exposes individuals to significant legal risks, including arrest and imprisonment, and personal consequences, such as damaged family relationships and social stigma. This phenomenon highlights the need for a nuanced understanding of the social dynamics at play in drug dealing activities.

The perception that drug dealing requires no formal education or specific skills further lowers the entry barriers. The idea that anyone can become a dealer, regardless of background, makes it an accessible option for those who feel excluded from the formal job market. This

perception is reinforced by the fact that many drug dealing tasks are straightforward, such as delivering packages or handling transactions, which do not require specialised training.

Apart from the above reasons, informal networks and the presence of mentors within the drug dealing network also enhance accessibility for newcomers to enter the drug market. Experienced dealers often mentor new entrants, teaching them the ropes and providing them with initial opportunities. This mentorship can reduce the perceived barriers to entry and make the trade seem less daunting. The support from seasoned individuals helps newcomers navigate the complexities of drug dealing, from sourcing and selling products to avoiding law enforcement. Drug dealing becomes a way to financially support themselves and their peers, often operating within a network of individuals who share similar backgrounds and challenges.

These factors collectively create an environment where drug dealing is seen as a viable and readily available option for individuals seeking quick and substantial earnings.

### Chapter 3. Refused to Become a Drug Dealer

Deciding against becoming a drug dealer involves a complex interplay of personal values, practical considerations, and perceived risks. 060 refused to engage in drug dealing due to ethical and moral concerns. The idea of selling drugs and potentially harming others crossed a personal moral line. Despite recognising the demand for drugs in the market, he could not reconcile the act of facilitating drug use with their sense of right and wrong. The notion of contributing to others' addiction and the associated societal harm serves as a strong deterrent.

#### 1. *Economic and Practical Considerations*

From a practical standpoint, many participants find that the economic benefits of drug dealing do not justify the risks involved. The potential profits are often not seen as substantial enough to compensate for the danger of legal consequences and the instability of the trade. Working a regular job, even if it pays less, offers more stability and long-term security. The short-term financial gains from drug dealing are overshadowed by the potential for significant losses if caught.

如果我真的做賣家，那我都只是賣大麻。我可以賺得多少？倒不如努力多工作兩天更好，我都賺回來了。(067)

要算一算，做這些一趟只能賺一千元，要坐幾年的牢。但幾年牢我可以賺數百萬元。(071)

沒有想過做毒品賣家。其實我覺得賺取的金錢和犯罪的比例是不成正比的。(076)

The financial rewards of drug dealing are often perceived as insufficient, especially when compared to the potential costs and risks. Participants also noted that the markup on drugs is often absorbed by multiple intermediaries, reducing the overall profit.

他們做不長的，大約只能做一年，都不繼續做。有些是賺夠了；有些可能一時不夠錢就只做一少段時間，好像兼職一樣。一個月都能賺到幾萬元的。(007)

向人拿貨，首先被中間人分，會有些損失。第二是每層買賣都會加一次價的話，成本就貴了。(101)

Additionally, the costs of obtaining and distributing drugs, including losses due to law enforcement interception, make the profit margins less appealing. While the calculation of the income from drug dealing does not justify the significant legal consequences, participants commonly state this as a rationale for the refusal to become a dealer.

## 2. *Personal Safety and Lifestyle Concerns*

The desire for a peaceful and stress-free life significantly influences the decision to avoid drug dealing. Many individuals are deterred by the constant fear of arrest and the high-pressure environment associated with illegal trade. The ever-present risk of being caught by law enforcement, along with the mental burden of living in perpetual anxiety, makes drug dealing an unattractive option.

有想過，但沒有，因為太危險了。我有想過之後不知道做什麼工作，不如做毒梟，但我不想每日都過著提心吊膽的生活。(090)

The fear of imprisonment is a powerful deterrent. For individuals with limited education and job opportunities, drug dealing might initially appear to be a lucrative option. However, many participants reported a significantly higher risk of arrest among the dealers over users, making them prefer to stay in a user role. The prospect of spending years in prison for relatively small financial gains starkly contrasts with the stability offered by legitimate employment, even if it pays less.

我那個年代，叫做「條數可以值得我搏」。其實那些東西不多，一萬幾千元的貨，但坐監的日子可能是三五七年。三五七年，我打一份「牛工」萬二元一個月也不止這樣。(002)

害怕坐牢。他們沒錢，要賺錢。讀書少，不知道靠甚麼賺錢便做這些。十個大概有五個都被抓了。(033)

那時候我還有工作，沒想過要做這些，自己抽便算了，賣什麼？幹這些遲早會出事，我不想出事。(073)

Having an ordinary job that can support their lives was stated as a main force for participants to refuse engagement in drug dealing, highlighting the broader reluctance to engage in activities that could jeopardise one's freedom and peace of mind.

### **3. *Unpredictability and Unreliability***

Drug dealing is inherently unpredictable and unreliable. Individuals often face issues such as unreliable customers, logistical challenges, and the constant threat of law enforcement. These factors contribute to a stressful and unstable lifestyle. Experiences of being stood up by buyers, dealing with demanding and impatient customers, and the long hours required to manage transactions make drug dealing a less attractive option. The perception that the trade involves more hassle than it is worth further discourages participation.

我試過拿去賣給朋友，沒有人理睬我，放我鴿子也有。我還包裝得很漂亮，用花紙當禮物包起來。到了時間他們居然不出現又不接電話。我心知不妙，我也要走了。(020)

很累，客人很煩。我食的時候也會煩別人，我自己食我知道煩，不停催。到我那麼俾人催，我不行的。還有做一日的時間很長，十幾個鐘。錢不是那麼容易賺到，表面風光而已。(045)

我又沒有那麼多朋友，足以令到我得到足夠利潤，一種可以謀生的生意。(092)

The lack of a robust network to support a profitable drug dealing operation is another reason for not to engage in drug dealing. Without sufficient connections and reliable customers, it is challenging to establish and maintain a profitable business. This lack of a customers' network makes it difficult to generate enough income to justify the risks involved.

## Chapter 4. Accessibility to Drug Supply and Customers

### 1. *Exchange of Information*

Accessing drug supply in Hong Kong often relies heavily on the exchange of information within social networks. This process involves multiple layers of communication and relationships that facilitate the connection between users and suppliers. The flow of information about drug sources, quality, and prices is integral to how individuals obtain their supplies.

The role of social circles is paramount in the initial access to drug supplies. Individuals often become aware of drug sources through their immediate social environment. As people within these circles use drugs, they share information about where and how to obtain them. This peer-to-peer transmission of knowledge ensures that new users are quickly integrated into the network of suppliers. Over time, individuals become more connected to established dealers, moving from small-scale suppliers to those capable of distributing larger quantities.

我那時是問朋友介紹，或者朋友給我賣家的電話，然後我就去找他們。(030)

因為你的圈子中其實有很多人用，於是慢慢認識了、聯絡到的就不會是年輕的。會問朋友貨源在哪。問著問著就知道了，連價格也知道，之後就自己拿來做。(056)

As users become more involved, their connections within drug dealing expand. Initially, they may only have access to small-scale dealers, but as they ask around and gain trust, they are introduced to more significant suppliers. This process often happens through acquaintances or friends who have already established relationships with these larger dealers. Users can access suppliers who handle more substantial quantities through these connections, thus scaling up their supply sources.

以往你只會接觸到一些小莊，不知道怎樣認識著認識著，就認識到那些可以分到半個骨出來的莊家。慢慢那個量就越來越大。那你慢慢又會接觸到分「半件」出來的，「半件」又「一件」。那時候我真的是不知道怎樣，是朋友的朋友這樣認識到的。(003)

Dealers themselves play a role in facilitating access to drug supplies by referring customers to other dealers. When a dealer is out of stock or unable to meet a customer's needs, they might recommend another supplier. This referral system is built on the relationships between dealers, who often know each other and cooperate to maintain business flow. For instance, if a regular dealer is temporarily out of drugs, they might suggest that the customer contact a specific alternative supplier, ensuring the customer's needs are met and maintaining their business relationship.

這個賣家會介紹另一個賣家。可能他們本身是朋友吧，可能剛好他當時沒貨，「你找某某吧。」(073)

As a result, users are able to expand their dealing networks. These accumulated connections become a significant foundation for establishing their later drug dealing business.

Certain social venues, such as discos and clubs, serve as hotspots for drug information exchange. In these environments, drug use is prevalent, and the availability of drugs is well-known among customers. Individuals frequenting these places can easily connect with suppliers, often referred to colloquially as doctors (醫生) or pharmacies (藥房). These interactions are casual yet effective in establishing new connections and expanding one's network of suppliers.

小時候去 Disco 就有了，大了出來玩就朋友介紹，那裡有醫生有藥房；做小姐及媽咪的時候，公司就有。(039)

Trust is the basis for these exchanges of information. Referrals from friends to reliable dealers or direct interaction with dealers ensure that individuals are less likely to encounter fraudulent or dangerous suppliers. This trust-based network enables new users to quickly and safely obtain their drugs. Once individuals are integrated into these networks, obtaining drugs becomes less of a challenge. Contact information is readily exchanged, and new users can swiftly navigate the landscape of drug suppliers through the guidance and recommendations of their peers, which also brings up the potential to start their drug business.

## 2. *Triad Connection*

Accessing drug supply in Hong Kong commonly involves leveraging connections with triad societies, which play a significant role. These direct or indirect connections facilitate the acquisition and distribution of drugs, providing a network that enhances the reliability and security of supply chains. Certain areas, such as Tuen Mun (022), were reported as hubs for smuggling activities and drug distribution. The presence of established triad operations in these areas makes it easier for individuals to access imported drugs. The logistics of drug supply are managed efficiently within these hubs, ensuring a steady flow of products.

The foundation of accessing drug supply through triad connections is built on relationships and networks. Trust and familiarity are crucial; individuals must be well-acquainted with key players within the triad to gain access to drug supplies. Without established relationships, it is challenging to enter this clandestine network. This trust is built over time and through shared experiences, often starting from adolescence or long-standing peer and family associations.

其實是關係最重要，網絡最重要。人脈包括客人和上面的貨源。有一個是大佬給我介紹的。有些是本身已經認識了很久的朋友，他的價錢可以賺到差價，我就找他。(017)

其實是一大班同學一起玩，毒品是由同學的親生哥哥那裡取回來的，一直有一起玩自自然然就會拿到。而我一開始就跟他做「腳」了。當然要一起玩一次、兩次、三次才這樣做的，也要熟悉、清楚你的為人才行。要能夠被信任。(037)

我的貨源有黑社會背景的。當然要熟悉才能問到這事。要是我不熟悉你，你怎會和我說這件事呢？(056)

Introductions by influential figures within the triad, such as big brothers (Dai Lo) or family connections, are pivotal. These introductions provide psychological comfort and trustworthiness to the new entrant.

爸爸那些兄弟，世叔伯那樣的。一開頭叫我去跟別人先做做。接着慢慢之後上手便開始放一放。現在我做的是私竇來的。我一個星期回去一天，負責管理。即是扣了成本、車手、人工錢、場地的租金。之後我再跟他分。(040)

Some lower-risk positions, such as pharmacies (藥房), accountants and managerial roles, were reported only to be taken by those with close relationships with the triad members. These roles often involve working part-time or on a rotational basis to oversee operations, manage finances, and ensure the smooth functioning of drug distribution channels. This hierarchical structure within the triad network allows for efficient management and reduces the risk of exposure to law enforcement. This endorsement by trusted figures is essential for gaining access to the network.

In some cases, individuals form small groups to collectively purchase large quantities of drugs. This collective buying approach not only reduces costs but also ensures a more reliable supply. Friends and acquaintances pool their resources to buy in bulk, leveraging their combined connections to secure better deals. This practice is often facilitated by a central figure, who is a triad member or has established connections within the triad.

就問那個契家姐拿。契家姐就會一包包拿回來，大概 100 克，即是 4，5 粒那樣。一袋就在那裡分的了。契家姐本身也是黑社會背景。(023)

因為我身邊的朋友都會食，他們要找人拿，還要常常拿不到，我們反而常常拿到，所以我們就索性幾個朋友夾份拿很多回來，他們有人要的話，就上來我們那邊拿。那段時間和契姐以及朋友一起賣。(025)

Even without direct affiliation to triad societies, individuals can secure drug supplies through indirect connections. These connections provide the necessary link to access the broader triad network.

那時的貨源，都是小時候認識的那些勝和朋友。我沒有社團沒有背景，但有朋友一樣都做。(106)

Accessing drug supply through triad connections in Hong Kong is deeply rooted in personal relationships, trust, and networks. The process involves leveraging ties, long-standing

friendships, and referrals. These connections provide a reliable and secure means to obtain and distribute drugs, facilitating the operation of drug dealing within the region.

### 3. *Accumulation of Customers*

Obtaining customers in drug dealing is a critical aspect of a dealer's operations, and it involves leveraging various social networks, personal connections, and strategies to build and maintain a customer base. The process is often organic and rooted deeply in social interactions, mutual introductions, and exploiting existing relationships.

The foundation of obtaining customers often starts within the dealer's immediate social circle. Dealers typically begin by selling to friends and acquaintances who already have drug use habits. This initial network provides a reliable and low-risk customer base. As these friends introduce the dealer to their networks, the customer base expands rapidly through word-of-mouth.

初頭只是做自己朋友的生意，然後開始朋友也會介紹朋友。(003)

可能我的吸毒形象太深入人心，因為我什麼也可以嘛。接着那些人經常打來問我，叫我幫他拿這樣拿那樣。令我「咦，原來我也有些客」那樣。接着不知道誰提議我不如拿回來自己做，自己食又便宜。(004)

首先會問遍身邊的朋友，那些有吸食習慣的朋友。「你要不要？」這樣。也會算他們便宜一點的。便宜五十元左右吧。然後朋友或許會再轉介朋友給我們。(073)

As mentioned, the exchange of information is prevalent among drug abusers and also in drug-using venues. Existing customers often refer friends and acquaintances to the dealers, especially if they receive good services or discounts. 056 explained that there was no concern about accessing customers because “one person tells ten, and ten tell a hundred” (一傳十、十傳百). This explanation illustrates how quickly information about a reliable dealer can spread.

Similar to the access to drug supply, individuals with triad backgrounds often have an advantage in accessing a broader and more diverse customer base. These connections facilitate the introduction and rapport development with customers by implying that they are already part of these networks and have a steady supply.

因為我容易接觸那些客比我「二叔」多。可能 A 是「二叔」的客人，但下去玩時認識了 B。B 又跟 A 同一個嗜好。A 會打電話來「我朋友拿貨，我介紹給你。」我會給二叔嗎？是介紹給我的，慢慢的我就會有自己的客。(002)

黑社會背景只是方便找客源而已。(005)

Drug dealers frequently exploit social activities and shared interests to find new customers. Places like nightclubs, gaming centres, or social gatherings where drug use is prevalent are prime locations for networking. Additionally, dealers also use dating apps and social media platforms where casual conversations can lead to discussions about drug availability. The tendency of drug abusers to be more talkative and open about their habits in such settings can lead to the introduction of new customers.

大家聊著聊著，便會知道原來你也有在賣這些，或者你有認識人在附近賣這些，就這樣透過朋友介紹。有時你在交友軟件上，也會和其他人交流，因為吸食了這些的人就會很喜歡說話，包括很多本來自己沒有想過要說的話。你便會知道他原來有賣，也知道可以有賣得更便宜的選擇，就這樣朋友互相轉介，就認識到越來越多不同的人。(022)

The customer base for drug dealers is diverse, cutting across different socioeconomic backgrounds. Dealers report having customers ranging from wealthy individuals living in upscale neighbourhoods to students and low-income individuals from less affluent areas. This diversity necessitates a flexible approach to dealing, where the dealer must cater to varying needs and preferences. For example, some customers may prioritise discretion and quality, while others may be more price-sensitive.

有錢人又有，窮人又有，有些土瓜灣，有些住擎天半島。甚麼人都有。年輕的又有，真是除了伯伯之外，真的甚麼人都有。學生妹都有。(005)

Dealers must be adaptable, sometimes sourcing from different suppliers or adjusting their operations to maintain their business. Moreover, the fear of legal repercussions means that dealers must be cautious about who they trust and sell to, often relying heavily on established networks and referrals to mitigate risk.

#### 4. *Promotion Strategies*

A good reputation is foundational for any type of business aiming to grow its customer base. Reliable supply, consistent quality, and good customer service foster trust and loyalty among customers. Dealers who are known for being accommodating and trustworthy are more likely to attract and retain customers. For instance, a dealer's image in the community as a reliable source can significantly enhance his/her ability to maintain a steady flow of customers. Word of mouth plays a substantial role; satisfied customers often refer new customers, thus expanding the dealer's reach.

Apart from these, dealers employ various promotion strategies to attract and retain customers, leveraging modern communication tools, reputation building, and personalised customer interactions. 001 and 056 reported that these promotion strategies were not observed in the past but were prevalent in the past 5 years. Alongside the encrypted messaging apps, the use of social media and messaging apps has become increasingly common for promoting drug sales.

很多網站有賣的，WhatsApp 那些都有做宣傳。其實任何貨物都有做宣傳，不只是 K。(007)

會無故傳來廣告，「有 THC 售賣」這樣。之前和他完全沒有聯絡，不知是什麼人。(072)

TG 有一些群組是五花八門的，裡面是很多人在發送很多廣告，又說甚麼這一種是新到貨，一千元不知道多少克。(107)

會將一些新的貨去弄一個大麻的貼圖(sticker)，接著就會發送給客人說最近有新貨。假設可能他來了 Sativa 的新貨，就弄一個大麻很漂亮的樣子發送給他。(117)

Dealers join various groups where they can post advertisements for their products, often highlighting new arrivals and special deals. These platforms allow for discreet yet widespread advertising, reaching potential customers who are part of these online communities.

Direct messaging via platforms like WhatsApp and SMS to promote their products was particularly popular, as reported by participants. This strategy includes sending regular updates

about product availability, prices, and special promotions. These messages help keep the dealer's services at the forefront of the customers' minds and encourage repeat business.

「100% 仔裝」、「車錢另計」。然後「7 點半到 6 點半」，有一些會寫營業時間，「一仔幾多錢嘟嘟，二幾多嘟嘟，三幾多嘟嘟」。接著「十送一」那樣，之後寫著「大香大力」。(011)

有很多朋友定期發送那些宣傳，每天準時發送給我。「香噴噴」、「超級大殞石」、「星際殞落」、「巨香巨力」、「同心抗疫」、「全街最靚」、「颱風佳作」、「回頭率百分百」，買得多送得多。這是可卡因，三百五十元。(038)

Dealers also utilise promotional messages to foster a sense of familiarity and personal connection. These messages also serve as subtle reminders of the dealer's presence and availability. While these messages may seem like friendly check-ins, their primary goal is to prompt customers to think about purchasing drugs.

他會間中傳送一些訊息給你：「現在開工了」，即是提醒你這檔口現在營業了，或者是甚麼價錢。(001)

他間中會突然 send 一個口訊來：「愚人節快樂」、「復活節快樂」、「最近很熱的，有沒有著涼？」，但是他是不是真的噓寒問暖呢？當然不是，只是借故問一下你要不要東西。(029)

Given that some dealers would like to reestablish the drug business, these messages could also serve as a notification to the old customers that they are reopening. 014 further reported that these advertisements were purposefully sent to drug abusers rather than randomly spread.

Sending promotional messages to strangers is risky and less likely to successfully attract stranger customers. Therefore, participants also reported the exchange of customers' contact was observed among dealers to ensure that the message receivers were users.

我不認識那些店和拆家，只會找認識的，而且自己都要有保證的。完全互不認識就去見人，到時又不知道他會給你甚麼東西。又未吸食過他們的貨，你怎樣知道他會不會欺騙你呢？(007)

第一次交收是要打電話去跟他說，即是讓人知道你是真的、誠實的客源，不是「鬼」。之後已經交收了幾次，就不用說了，他直接發送廣告給你，你看到合適便落單。(065)

Personalised interactions are another critical strategy. Dealers often keep detailed records of customer preferences and purchase histories to offer tailored recommendations. For example, when a new shipment arrives, dealers might send pictures and detailed descriptions of the products, including information about the types and effects of different strains. This level of detail and customisation helps customers feel valued and understood, which can lead to increased loyalty.

有時候他拿到一些新貨，都會 WhatsApp 我，連實物圖片傳送給我。會這樣：「喂，到了新貨。」資料也是很齊全。會告訴我 Sativa 和 Indica 的百分比是多少。(100)

每一次他都會給一個清單，我自己去選擇，送的那些才是散裝的。他會給予少許的意見，少到可能說「這一款也很『爆』」、「很順喉的。」說這些。(103)

Furthermore, incentive schemes and loyalty programs were also applied to encourage repeat business. Offers such as "buy ten, get one free" or discounts for bulk purchases are common. These incentives make customers feel they are getting added value, encouraging them to continue buying from the same dealer. Additionally, some dealers are willing to negotiate and offer extra products as a bonus for frequent purchases, reinforcing the customers' loyalty.

以前有個買家，很好的，就經常請我食。我經常向他取貨，他便會請我，後來都沒有再請了。(007)

因為買十粒有送一粒。有時可以說服他，說「經常向你買，不如送多一滴」。他就會送的。(043)

However, as 045 and 049 reported, these so-called kindness or incentives were a trap to foster addiction and make people unable to get rid of the control of drugs. Hence, the dealers can continuously gain profits from users. These strategies help them maintain a steady and loyal customer base, which is essential for the sustainability of their operations in drug dealing.

## 5. *Ways of Communication*

Communication between drug dealers and users has evolved significantly, influenced by advancements in technology, social dynamics, and the need for security. Various methods are employed to facilitate these interactions, each with its own set of advantages and risks.

透過 TG group 社交通訊軟件，有心找的話你會找到很多。(079)

我覺得現在上網找賣家會比以前容易很多。我們讀書那個年代，那時候即使是 IG 都不是很多人用，你未必會知道有什麼方法，你可以上網找到賣家。通常都是身邊有些人自己有吸食，大家還是很原始的，朋友搭朋友的那種關係。(091)

現在最主要的渠道是上網購買。搜尋或者聽朋友說，問有沒有向哪個賣家買貨，然後再問朋友拿電話或渠道，然後上網。我現在最主要是用 telegram。(092)

Instagram and Telegram have become popular channels for drug dealers and users to connect. Dealers often use these platforms to advertise their products and services discreetly. It allows users to join channels and chat rooms where dealers post advertisements, and users can engage in private conversations to place orders. One-on-one interactions and telephone calls remain popular among drug abusers to maintain confidentiality. These methods provide a sense of security and familiarity, as users typically buy drugs from acquaintances or friends of friends.

不會在群組買的。只是單對單，好像買私煙那樣。(001)

One on one，都有 group 的。Group 主要是廣告，很多賣家在 group 上投廣告叫人找他。Telegram 相對上是比較安全、保密的聯絡方式。在之前會用電話，IG 都有試過。我記得早陣子 Carousell 都有，但現在基本上被掃盪了。(092)

This network-based approach minimises the risk of encountering law enforcement undercover operations, which is a significant concern for these users. Personal recommendations and established trust networks are crucial in these transactions, ensuring that both parties feel secure and confident in their dealings.

For the MSM community, 020 reported that dating apps like Grindr also served as platforms for drug transactions. Dealers used these apps to connect with potential buyers within

the community, leveraging the app's private messaging features to discuss and arrange transactions. The use of dating apps highlights the adaptability of drug dealers in finding platforms that offer both a sense of community and privacy.

Additionally, websites and online forums, like Reddit, provided another avenue for connecting buyers and dealers. Specific subforums dedicated to drug use allow users to engage in discussions and receive private messages from dealers. This method enables users to explore options and gather information before committing to a purchase.

我到 Reddit 網站，裏面有一個板塊是關於用藥，不只是大麻，我便在那裡和別人聊聊天；接著便有一個賣家接觸我，給我傳私信。(071)

However, the anonymity of online identities can be a double-edged sword, as it poses the risk of interactions with undercover police officers. Therefore, despite the rise of digital communication, traditional methods remain prevalent among traditional drug abusers, especially among long-time drug abusers who are wary of the anonymity and potential risks of online transactions. These users prefer to rely on established relationships and direct communication methods, such as phone calls and in-person meetings, to procure drugs. The familiarity and trust built through personal connections provide a sense of security that online interactions cannot offer.

真的很好笑、很低能。絕對不會在那些網上賣，這樣真是自己招來風險。我自己看 Facebook 也見到 4、5 個帖子賣「可樂」，還是不同人放上去的，說又香又大力，我心想真的很好笑。(025)

我知道你做的，你傳信息給我，我就幫你傳給客人，我知我身邊朋友誰有吸食。大家這樣的圈子一定有朋友在找毒品，就這樣搭上搭。(056)

Each communication method comes with its own set of challenges and risks. While offering an efficient, convenient and broader reach, online also carries the risk of exposure to law enforcement operations. Traditional methods, though more secure in terms of personal trust, limit the scalability and reach of drug dealing networks. Communication between drug dealers and users in Hong Kong is a complex, multifaceted process that spans various platforms and methods. The choice of communication channels often depends on the type of drug being sold, the trust level between the dealer and the user, and the need for privacy and security.

## Chapter 5. Operation Mode

Entering the drug market in Hong Kong appears relatively accessible due to several factors: competitive market dynamics, the availability of multiple suppliers, and the emphasis on customer service and marketing strategies. The intensification of the drug market does not deter people from entering this industry. Participants have observed an increase in the number of drug dealers in recent years. Typically, participants hold multiple dealers on hand so they can compare prices and receive quick responses to satisfy their cravings.

我起碼有三、四個賣家。我取決於他們的速度快還是慢，誰快就選擇誰，誰的貨好就找誰，還有誰便宜就找誰。就好像你平時買東西，有優惠的、買更多就會更加便宜，或者送貨快一些的，你就跟他買。沒有效果的也不會買。(007)

雖然我向一個賣家買，但其實我也有幾個在手，都會試試不同賣家，即衡量一下大家的貨是怎樣。(067)

Customers often experiment with different suppliers to find the best quality and price. This fluidity in customer preferences allows new dealers to enter the market and establish a customer base. The willingness of customers to switch suppliers based on service quality, punctuality, and price provides guidelines for people to effectively establish their drug business.

In the competitive drug market, numerous suppliers vie for customers, making excellent customer service crucial for maintaining and growing a customer base. Dealers must ensure they provide consistent, high-quality service to maintain a good reputation. Customers often rely on word-of-mouth recommendations and their own experiences to choose suppliers. The ability to provide prompt responses, timely deliveries, make up for shortfalls, issue refunds, allow debts, and give small gifts can set a dealer apart from the competition.

有時候還會送毒品，送小禮物那些。可能他們會製作那些 THC 蛋糕。現在很多五花八門的東西。(069)

她之前很窩心，那時我找她買大麻，順便替我的朋友取了一些 LSD，然後她給了我一張小卡，上面寫著「享受你的 LSD，賣家敬上」。那張小卡香氣四溢。(071)

他十五分鐘內一定回覆。然後他會給你送貨時間，約定某個時間交收。有些是廿四小時，但通常都是十二點前。有些是星期一至日、公眾假期也不休息。如果有假期的話他會跟你說。在假期節日時進行優惠，比如說買兩包會多送一點。他們的市場營銷很厲害，真的會大力向你推銷。(072)

Responding quickly to customer inquiries and delivering products on time are important considerations for purchases. Given the cravings of drug abusers, late deliveries significantly deviate from expectations and lead to dissatisfaction. A bad reputation and poor impressions of these dealers risk losing customers to competitors who offer more reliable service.

我就很討厭別人遲到的。那些人打給他要去拿貨，他可能很久才覆你；覆了你甚麼時間，他永世都是遲到的。(029)

比如說他們遲到，下次我就不買。還要態度不好，下次不叫了。可能對方沒有交帶，比如說我要多少，他卻不回覆，然後又突然問「你是不是要，現在開車過來給你」，掛線後等三四個小時也沒出現。出現時臉色又不好，又說很趕時間什麼的。我不會再叫貨了。(073)

都是看信譽、看品種、看價錢和看服務，即是他送不送貨，送貨可以送到哪裡，或者會否經常遲到，毒品賣家遲到是一個非常泛濫的問題，很嚴重的問題。(078)

This focus on customer satisfaction highlights the importance of service quality, which can be a decisive factor for customers choosing between different suppliers. Additionally, dealers who can quickly adjust their offerings, prices, and service levels to meet customer expectations are more likely to succeed.

我就沒有其他貨源，外邊那些並不是那麼熟悉。但我們也會看其他人的價格，要找到其實並不難。(061)

其實賣毒品這一行很大競爭的。我自己也有幾個賣家，別人也會找幾間。即是可能做著、做著就反而會沒有甚麼客人了。頭一次就可能貪新鮮找你買。始終第二、三、四次，你的客人們就會走的了。別的賣家也會有一些好的東西，或者有他們

的銷售方式的。如果你做得好，人家就會直接跟你說「試過很多間都不行，你這間可以」。(084)

A dealer who frequently disappoints customers with delays or poor service can quickly develop a negative reputation, leading to a loss of business. Conversely, a dealer who consistently meets or exceeds customer expectations will attract and retain more customers. Continuous good service and competitive pricing are crucial for maintaining a strong customer base.

In the competitive drug market in Hong Kong, drug dealing operations are observed in three major distinct patterns: 1) private or single dealer operations, 2) triad-organised operations, and 3) drug distribution within discos, nightclubs, and private venues. Each mode varies significantly in scale, hierarchical structure, and operational methods, reflecting the diverse strategies employed to navigate the illicit drug market.

### ***1. Private or Single-Dealer Operations***

The small-scale dealer operation mode in Hong Kong is characterised by various strategies and practices that enable individuals to engage in drug dealing while minimising risks and maximising profits. This mode of operation often involves working independently or with minimal trusted partners, utilising specific methods to obtain and distribute drugs.

Private dealers often operate on a small scale, purchasing drugs in manageable quantities and reselling them at a markup. This approach allows them to control their inventory and reduce the risk of large-scale losses if intercepted by law enforcement. For instance, a dealer might buy a bulk quantity of drugs at a wholesale price and then sell smaller portions at a higher price, making a profit on each transaction. This method ensures a steady income without the need for significant upfront investment.

之前我那個年代，就是吸毒的人比販毒的人多。但現在，我覺得那些人越來越層次低。現在做毒這件事，買賣而已。我拿錢回來入貨，再切開再賣給你，有誰不會？(002)

他不是真的黑社會那樣整個貨櫃賣。他自己有多餘錢，就幫人買 28 克一大包，買回來，別人賣一千，他可能加多二百元，變千二這樣。(020)

其實我拿很少貨的，不是那些大莊。我用二、三千元拿少少回來放給別人，可能都賺得千多元。(043)

In some cases, private dealers collaborate with others to share the risks and profits of drug dealing. This collaboration can involve pooling resources to purchase larger quantities of drugs at a discounted rate and then dividing the profits. By working together, dealers can reduce their individual financial burden and increase their collective buying power. For instance, a group of friends can each contribute money to buy a large quantity of drugs and then share the profits after selling them.

那時和一個朋友一起做的，一人一半。一條匙一條匙，即是逐公斤買回來。那時甚麼都有賣的，多數是做「K」，還有做可卡因(cocaine)。因為我拍擋進了監，所以才沒有再做。(027)

「我未有那麼大筆錢」，即是拿不了一個「橙」。「可不可以夾一夾，到時候再分，那邊我又有人買」這樣。(040)

最近又再和朋友一起販毒了。大家丟一筆錢出來，買一隻「橙」(28 gram)，一萬八千元的，就每人丟九千元。大家有單便出去做。乘車那些甚麼的全部記數，到結數時就扣回那些錢，扣回全部所有支出，之後賺到的錢就一人一半。(048)

Meanwhile, many private dealers engage in drug dealing as a side business. These dealers do not intend to make great profit from this business but as a side business to gain some extra income or compensation for the drug cost. For instance, 099 reported his dealer started drug dealing by purchasing drugs for personal use and then selling any surplus to cover his expenses. Some dealers performed dealing behaviours while maintaining legitimate employment. This dual role allows them to supplement their income without drawing full attention to their illegal activities.

賣這東西是他的副業而已。主業是正當生意的店舖。他喜歡做這事〔販毒〕，我跟他那麼長時間，他就一直有做。(056)

有個人說是紐西蘭過來的，他說自己有一間高檔海鮮店，那就連些吞拿魚一併送過來，每日新鮮運到。那就有很多，任君選擇那樣，不同品種。他就拿這樣來做掩飾。(077)

Additionally, some cannabis dealers were leveraging legitimate business licences to negotiate wholesale prices for importing cannabis. This practice implied that these dealers were using legitimate business operations as a facade to disguise their illegal drug dealing activities, indicating a strategic approach to minimise costs and risks.

我們通常都會聯絡外國一些有規模的大麻網店批量進口。如果能夠拿得多一點的，就會拿到批發的價格。但對方通常會要求我們提供一些我們營業的證明，我們通常都可以提供得到的。(087)

Maintaining a low profile is crucial for private dealers to avoid detection. This includes limiting their network of buyers to trusted individuals and avoiding high-volume transactions that could attract attention. Dealers often rely on word-of-mouth referrals and personal relationships to expand their customer base while keeping a low profile. They may also use coded language and discrete packaging to further reduce the risk of exposure.

純粹只是賺外快，也賺 2 到 3 萬一個月。可以工作同時當拆家。(012)

一點一點散。賺回來的都比一份，甚至兩份工還要多。我認識很多光明正大說有正職的，做地盤的，都不需要做工作了，只需要打電話，多幾萬元收入。(104)

Moreover, legitimate business provides cover for their illicit activities and reduces the likelihood of suspicion. If these dealers further employed someone to help with drug delivery, they were much more hidden behind the scenes, hardening the detection.

One of the reasons for these dealers to operate in the private or single sector is the lack of trust in others, like 048. Also, those who would like to maximise the profit would deliver the drugs on their own. While private dealers often prefer to operate independently, they may occasionally enlist trusted individuals to assist with specific tasks, such as deliveries. By delegating tasks to trusted individuals, dealers can maintain control over their operations while minimising their personal exposure to risk.

我不會接觸的，我是叫客人自己去取貨的。即使我會到，都是你取完貨我才到。我只是聽電話，接著叫伙記去做，不會要我做的。(011)

我找下線（腳），幫我去送給別人。我的角色是負責打電話，然後我負責給人工，即是我賺少了，但多了人幫我做。(056)

Additionally, dealers use various strategies to avoid detection during transactions. One common method is to use vehicles, such as taxis, to make deliveries. 058 reported that taxis were less likely to be stopped by police, providing a safer means of transportation. Besides, the locations for exchange are likely to be discrete, such as parking lots or side streets, where they can quickly complete transactions without attracting attention. This strategic use of vehicles and locations helps minimise the risk of arrest.

Some customers might become dealers for some of the reasons mentioned above, making the original dealer move backwards in the drug dealing chain. Even if the profit goes down, the position marked lower risk. The dealers are happy to do so.

自己拿一些「可樂」回來跟朋友一起做，應該算是「小拆家」。總之拿一、兩個「橙」回來，接著就派給人，和一些兄弟一起做。又不請年輕人，總之自己做的。(013)

有客人會買著買著，突然買很多貨自己做賣家，這些我都會給他供應的。如果他長期在我這裡拿貨，我也賺的。他會有一班朋友，一開始由朋友做起，拿一百、二百克來做，很少。你賣給他一萬多元，他賣出去可能賺二萬多，即刻有錢使了。(104)

## **2. *Triad-Organised Operations***

The operation mode of triad organisations in Hong Kong drug dealing is characterised by a structured and hierarchical system that maximises efficiency while minimising risks for the higher-ups. This sophisticated system involves multiple levels of operatives, each with specific roles and responsibilities, ensuring that the higher-ups remain insulated from direct involvement in illegal activities. This system involves multiple layers of participants, strategic distribution methods, and the integration of various resources and networks to maintain control and profitability.

A number of participants pointed out that there was a main supplier in the drug market because the drugs from multiple dealers had the same effect or no effect in a certain period.

其實香港很小，整個市場就只有那麼小，大家都知道大家是那一些貨。如果是他們的圈子，大家都知道是那一批貨。(033)

雖然好像有幾個賣家，但你會知道是同一班人，或者同一個團隊，因為他們每次入的貨都一樣，價錢差不多，大家的描述都差不多，你就知道都是他們那班人。(067)

在香港其實是這樣。大多數都是那些貨，因為上面有一個很大的「莊」，他會派貨給全香港所有賣家。(073)

可能都是同一個「拆家」拆來的，全世界都是同一個貨源。那一段時期全部都是那些貨，不就是這樣的原因。我覺得香港毒品拆家來來去去都是那幾家。他好像層壓式銷售的狀態而已。(089)

Despite the front line may be college students, people with clean backgrounds, and people who want to make quick money, participants believed that those controlling the drug dealing process must be triad societies, marking as the main forces in the Hong Kong drug market.

To summarise the responses, the hierarchical structure of triad-operated drug dealing is depicted in Figure 4.1. This represents a simplified version of the hierarchy. Each level can be further divided into multiple roles for specific functions to streamline operations and enhance security. For example, accountants and packers may be separated to ensure the consistency of drug quantities, preventing any individual from skimming or stealing. Sometimes, the Dai Lo or Drug boss might take on these roles to further ensure control and maximise profit.

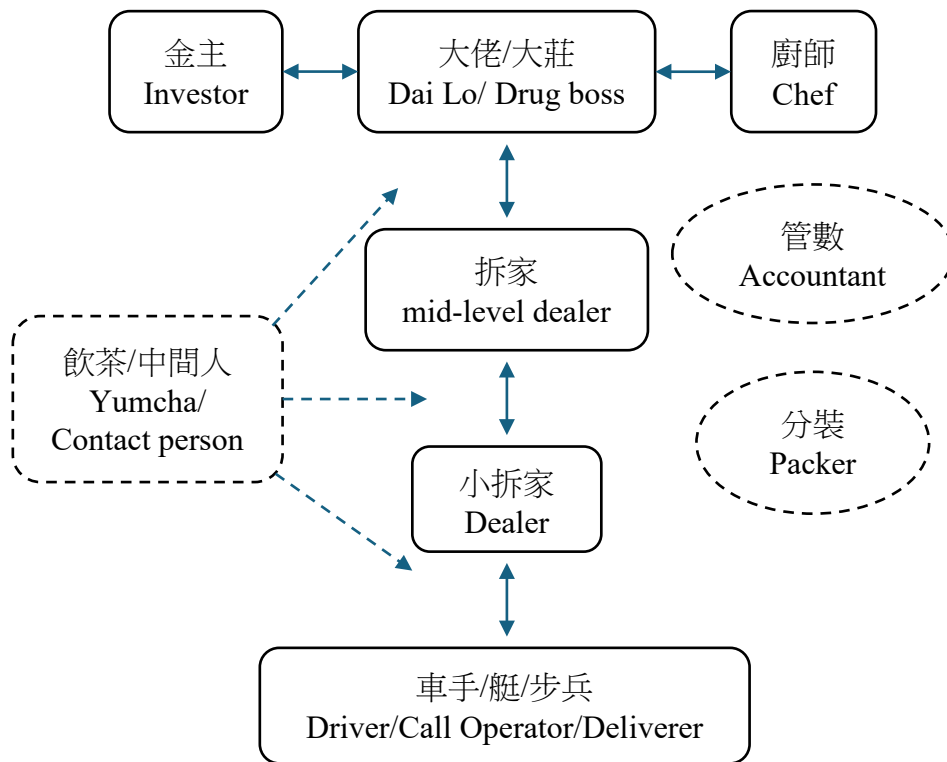


Figure 4.1. Structure of Triad-operated Drug Dealing

The contact person can be present at each level of communication to reduce the risk of exposure; however, this role can be difficult to verify and does not necessarily exist in all operations. In contrast, lower-level personnel might need to assume multiple roles. For instance, in smaller-scale operations, dealers may also handle packing and delivery tasks. Communication is restricted with the hierarchical order, which means the dealers are unlikely to have direct contact with the Dai Lo or Drug Boss.

In addition to the general distribution roles, triad operations include specialised roles to streamline the process and enhance security. These roles include:

**Drug Manufacturers:** The position is called Chef (廚師). Individuals who produce drugs, often in clandestine labs. They are provided with raw materials by Dai Lo or even by investors and are responsible for creating the final product.

譬如說金主給錢，給廚師製造，製造完就給大莊。(011)

**Packagers:** Operatives who divide large quantities of drugs into smaller, sellable units. This role is often taken by the dealers. Some participants reported that the packers might mix other powders with the original drug to produce larger quantities, generating more profits but also hazards.

**Call Operators (艇):** Responsible for coordinating deliveries, taking orders, and directing foot soldiers and drivers. They operate through secure communication channels to avoid detection.

比如說「call台」，你需要向所謂的「總台」「落call」，他便找人送貨給你。那些人我們便稱之為「步兵」或「車手」。「艇」則是替你「落call」那個。(022)

**Collectors:** Individuals tasked with collecting payments from street-level dealers and ensuring that the funds are funnelled back up the hierarchy.

我做完當天的工作後，他便對我說你今天可以有多少錢，你要交多少數這樣。我把錢交給另一個負責收錢的人。(064)

In some small-scale triad-operated drug dealing, there could be just two levels. In such a situation, Dai Lo needed to take over other roles, including chef, accountant, and packing.

一個朋友直接製造可樂，看他們煮，煮完之後有些碎的，就放入那麼高的薄樽，再在這個位置放一些鐵網絲來吸食可樂。他本身是大佬，有幾個手下幫他銷售。(008)

大佬做莊家時，整個販毒組織只有四五個人。就這樣小小的一檔，四五個人都夠。車手兩個：一個車手，一個幫車手看位。(045)

In general, the Dai Lo or drug boss (大莊) is at the top of the hierarchy to oversee the entire operation. These leaders mainly communicated with investors and drug manufacturers to ensure the money and drug supply. However, they are rarely involved in day-to-day activities but instead focus on strategic planning and maintaining high-level connections. They are responsible for securing large quantities of drugs, often through international sources, and ensuring a steady supply. The Dai Lo delegates tasks to trusted lieutenants who manage various aspects of the operation.

莊家會保管那批貨，上邊有一個我們叫大莊。他們會買貨、賣貨、進貨。他們會向不同人、不同地方取貨，他會自己作紀錄，這樣他們便可以追查到底是哪個倉出事。(022)

黑社會是那些大莊家來的。那些通常都是上了岸，他找人去做。別人再找下面的人去做。到出事的時候，除非有人指證他，但是通常都不會的。(053)

Some participants also pointed out there could be an investor (金主) who would be a clean hand on the drug business and merely contact the Dai Lo or drug boss. They solely funded the drug business or facilitated the import of drugs from foreign countries. Their identities are the top-secret, but participants speculated they were tycoons or famous billionaires in our society. However, due to their nonengagement in the drug dealing chain, they are the shadow in the hierarchy.

Below Dai Lo or drug boss, mid-level dealers play a crucial role in the distribution chain. These individuals are responsible for dividing large quantities of drugs into smaller packages and distributing them to lower-level operatives. They often maintain direct communication with Dai Lo and other mid-level managers to coordinate supply and demand across different districts.

他自己聯絡，然後分給其他細莊家。他很少做直銷，只有識的才會。他算是小批發商，他上面還有一個大批發，是他的朋友批給他，他再批給別人。他拿一磚一磚，拿回來自己分袋。人家知道他是小莊，就找他。他就放售給別人。(008)

他拿一公斤回來，然後就分拆去賣。他也算是「大莊」，然後就分給他的下屬。他們就是「小拆家」。例如一條匙分成九份。分很多地區的，會有不同人負責一個區。因為他也要交回一部分給他的大佬，也要交數上去的。其實已經算賺得小，幕後那一班才是最賺錢的。(018)

Additionally, these mid-level dealers might also employ a person to contact and deliver drugs in a district rather than direct involvement. In 064's experiences, there is a key intermediary called "Yumcha" (飲茶). This position ordinates with lower-level operatives to distribute the drugs, minimising the risk of direct contact between the upper-level leaders and lower-level

dealers. This layered approach helps protect the upper-level leaders from legal repercussions, as they remain several steps removed from the actual distribution process.

你便和「飲茶」約在某個地方，他便會把貨交給你，那些貨便是你當日要送的東西。有時可能會有餘。但我聯絡的是分裝那個。你派了兩三次貨後便要再去找「飲茶」，即是再去取貨。不管你夠不夠，你每天也得去「飲茶」那處。(064)

If the accountant is absent in the structure, these dealers handle transactions through encrypted communication channels like Telegram, providing detailed instructions on where and how to deliver the drugs. They are also responsible for managing financial transactions, ensuring that profits are collected and distributed appropriately among the various levels of the hierarchy.

The lower levels of the hierarchy often include teenagers who perform the most visible and risky tasks, such as packaging, transporting, and selling drugs. These operatives are frequently used as drivers, foot soldiers, or deliverers tasked with delivering drugs to customers. By employing young individuals, the triads exploit their vulnerabilities and reduce the risk of significant legal consequences for higher-level operatives if these recruits are caught.

黑社會會叫那些十三、十四歲的「嘍仔」「嘍妹」去包裝、取貨和出去散貨。但他們很聰明，他們不會手把手交給他們。他們會放在一個箱子裡，第二個人經手拿那個箱，然後給第三個人，第三個人再拿這個箱給第四個人。然後最後被抓的都是十三、四歲的，最上面的那些莊家一點事都沒有。(060)

她應該在很外圍的黑社會，不是核心，純粹是拿貨，可能是莊家拿貨再派貨給她，她可能是三手了。所以說她應該未必是正式黑社會那些，她只是二十歲妹妹。(062)

The process often involves multiple handoffs to obscure the trail. This method ensures that no single individual handles the drugs for an extended period, minimising the risk of detection and arrest.

Modern triad operations have evolved to be more collaborative and flexible, moving away from strictly territory-based control. Different triad factions now cooperate to run drug distribution networks, including operating drug-using entertainment venues. This collaboration

ensures a stable supply of drugs and helps mitigate disputes between factions, fostering a more stable and profitable environment.

因為現在全部都是夾份做，沒有說主要是否「和記」在控制。(104)

These cooperations further allow extensive information sharing and coordination among different factions. Sellers within the network share customer information and coordinate supply to meet demand, avoid direct competition and ensure market stability.

他們會在不同地方有不同的倉，通常是一個倉專責負責派貨到一個地區。但不同的倉會擺放不同的東西，可能這個地方沒那麼多人要冰毒，但很多人要其他東西，就會存放多點其他東西。(022)

Additionally, the triads strategically use various resources to support their operations. For instance, triads often leverage existing infrastructure and logistical networks to enhance their operations. Smuggling routes and hidden compartments in transport vehicles are used to carry drugs across borders and within the city.

留一個小位給你，或者攝在貨尾、板底、夾層。所以為甚麼那麼多黑社會背景做運輸，很多便利的。走私都很便利吧。(104)

These businesses provide a layer of legitimacy and reduce suspicion while facilitating the covert movement and sale of drugs. This integration of legitimate and illegitimate resources enhances the efficiency and security of their operations.

### **3. *Drug Distribution within Discos, Nightclubs, and Private Venues***

Drug use in discos, nightclubs, and private venues in Hong Kong operates with a different structure and hierarchy compared to street-level drug dealing. The drug distribution hierarchy is typically simpler. This streamlined structure is due to the stationary nature of these venues, which reduces the need for complex logistical arrangements.

一個一千多呎的私竇，其實需要有水吧三個人，藥房有時就兩個吧，五個人左右。(040)

This smaller, more manageable team facilitates easier coordination and lessens the risk of exposure. Specifically, drug distribution in these venues relies heavily on the role of pharmacies (藥房), implying huge profits.

因為在夜總會做「藥房」真的很搶手，賺很多，真的賺到笑。(003)

只要那個場所是那一範(黑社會)就是那一範的人做「藥房」。如果有幾範一起合作的，便幾範商討好之後叫誰去就誰去了，隨便一個也可以做的。(053)

However, this high profit comes with substantial risks. Customers generally carry only the amount of drugs they intend to consume immediately and would approach the pharmacy for additional supplies as needed. During police raids, the pharmacy staff is the most vulnerable, as they are the ones handling the drugs and, therefore, most at risk of arrest for trafficking.

那時 XXX Disco 有「藥房」的。他(藥房)就沒那麼張揚，他戴着帽、口罩。總之一查牌，他就脫掉那些，就沒有人認得他。(004)

同一間夜總會內會有幾個不同的「藥房」。不能一直只光顧同一個「藥房」，有時候要向不同的「藥房」取貨。(042)

場裡面，其實客人身上是不會有的。客人通常是吸多少就拿多少，不夠的話再問「藥房」拿的。通常被警察掃盪查牌，「藥房」就是最害怕的，因為他是販運。(058)

Despite the simpler structure, pharmacies are central to this operation, bearing the brunt of distribution duties and associated risks. Their efforts to remain inconspicuous, coupled with the high earnings potential, highlight the unique dynamics of drug distribution within these stationary venues. This system ensures efficient distribution while attempting to mitigate the risk of detection and arrest, demonstrating a balance between operational simplicity and strategic risk management.

The profitability of drug sales in discos, nightclubs, and private venues is substantial. The convenience of not needing to travel around, combined with the high demand for drugs in these environments, leads to significant earnings. Drug dealers can make considerable profits due to the high prices they charge within these venues. For instance, 004 reported a private

club could make tens of thousands of dollars in a single night from drug sales alone. This high profitability attracts many to the trade despite the risks involved.

在那個場「茄」就 450 買 0.3g，貴一半的，是賺很多差額的。Happy 水，好像七百元一包，可樂五百一下。(004)

那些 disco，通常是賺毒品錢的。在那些地方酒水通常是正常價錢，有時可能不用錢的。在場裡面，「K 仔」賣三百元 0.3-0.4 克左右。搖頭丸一粒賣三百至五百左右。「Happy 水」就可能六百至八百元左右。所以為甚麼會說吸食到一萬多、兩萬元。(014)

我一開始買毒品的時候，是問一些在會所那種地方的人。他們給我的價格相對便宜一些，大概八百元三粒「可樂」。而他們在會所內賣給其他人可能是一千元三粒。(046)

The social environment in discos and nightclubs often normalises drug use, making it appear as a routine part of the nightlife experience. Individuals who may not usually engage in drug use can be influenced by the pervasive drug subculture in these settings. Seeing friends and other customers openly using drugs can lower inhibitions and encourage experimentation. This normalisation is further facilitated by the presence of drug dealers within the venues, making access to drugs easy. The visibility of drug use in the venues further reduces the perceived risk and stigma, encouraging more people to partake.

現在就很明目張膽的，在桌上面，在酒桌上面。譬如我本身不吸毒去到那些地方，跟著朋友們上到去，見到每個人都在做這樣事情，那就會覺得是一件很平常的事。(014)

有時候在那些派對的地方，已經會有毒品賣家在那裡。(078)

Despite the ease of access to drugs in these venues, dealers use various methods to avoid detection, such as multiple layers of intermediaries and discreet handoffs. For instance, drugs are often stored in specific rooms guarded by trusted individuals and distributed in small quantities to avoid large-scale busts. The venues themselves are designed to enhance security, often located in secluded buildings with multiple entry points to prevent police access.

需要有一些熟客，或者是要認識的人幫你叫，或者只會在房裡面的人去叫的。  
(053)

毒場那些就一定要安全為主。大廈也好，工廈也好，要上去那一層一定要經過很多扇門才可以去到。專門會找一些很偏僻的大廈，紅磡、土瓜灣比較多。(104)

In some cases, these operations include sophisticated logistics. The storage facilities are strategically placed to ensure quick replenishment while minimising the amounts of drugs kept on-site at any given time, thus reducing the risk of significant losses in case of police raids.

我們派完東西便去那個倉補貨。那個倉是有一個人看著的。每一次也是補二十下。  
(005)

我們不會留很多「冰」的，因為危險。留一個「橙」而已，足夠一個。總之用完就再叫貨回來。(027)

好像警察說多於 3.5 克就控告你。所以不准多於 3.5 克。即使被警察拘捕，因為份量不多，就不會被控。(095)

The customer base in these venues varies widely, encompassing both locals and expatriates, professionals, and even high-profile individuals. For example, 009 reported that daytime customers might include CEOs, accountants, and lawyers, while nighttime sees more triad-affiliated individuals. This diverse clientele underscores the widespread appeal and accessibility of these venues for drug use.

The financial management within these operations is meticulous, ensuring all involved parties receive their share of the profits. Dealers often employ various financial strategies to maximise earnings, such as splitting profits among trusted associates.

我有在場內做「燈頭」的。即是我帶客人上去，對方會回佣給我。叫毒品也會分一份給我，叫酒也會分一份給我。我也有幫人叫女，我也是賺差價的。另外，外送毒品就做「駁落架」，即是聽電話，打電話叫人幫我送去那裡，我又再賺差價。  
(011)

Such a well-incentivized system promotes efficiency and loyalty. A sense of reciprocity develops, where each participant's role is crucial to the operation's success.

因為那是大班客人，如果沒有我，「藥房」也賣不了。我就是中間人。我要是沒有客人，他們就倒霉了。(042)

The profitability and demand in these venues have led to a competitive market where multiple dealers (藥房) operate within the same venue. This competition can lead to conflicts but also ensures a steady supply of drugs to meet the high demand from customers.

In addition to discos and nightclubs, there are specific venues designated for drug use in Hong Kong. Two notable types of these venues are drug dens (also named 棚仔 in Chinese) and gambling dens (漁場). These venues cater to specific user needs and contribute to the complex landscape of drug abuse in the region. Entire units or even whole floors in industrial buildings are often modified to run such illicit and secretive businesses. Participants report that these venues exist across all Hong Kong districts and frequently change locations. The lifespan of these venues can be as short as a few weeks, reflecting their transient and covert nature.

Drug dens are clandestine locations where individuals gather to consume drugs in a somewhat communal setting. These venues are often hidden within rundown, hotel-like buildings and offer a range of tools necessary for drug consumption. Regarding their short lifespan, these venues tend to be not maintained, poor-decorated, and unhygienic.

在場裡吸食是比自己叫貨貴的，因為裡面有工具。我會換飲管，但是那個樽真的要洗乾淨。環境是不好的、是骯髒的。你當成是一間賓館，每一間房間都有一些樽。是一些很霉霉爛爛的賓館。每一個房間都有一張桌子、有剪刀、有樽、鋼絲刷、防風火機。(015)

Despite the squalid conditions, the availability of tools and a secluded environment make these dens attractive for users who prefer not to take drugs at home or in public. These venues also satisfied those who would like to have the drugs immediately.

These drug dens operate as unlicensed establishments. Participants who work in these dens observe a mix of habitual and occasional drug abusers. The presence of triad members

ensures a certain degree of control and order within these dens, although regular citizens also frequent these places primarily for drug use.

它是在工廠大廈內那些無牌酒吧。又有毒、又有賭在裏面。全部也是那些古惑仔來的。好像也有些正常人，去那裏通常也是吸毒的了。(004)

The operation tends to be more linear and lacks a hierarchical structure. The staff in these dens typically need to handle various tasks like serving drinks and managing entry points, ensuring that the operation runs smoothly and securely.

Additionally, considering the location in industrial buildings, 040 further explained that the customers in these dens were unlike those in discos and nightclubs. They would prefer quiet and quick consumption of drugs over heavy music and social elements. This high turnover rate allowed the owners to earn much more. Hence, they would adopt a lower price than taking away to attract customers to use immediately in the dens.

Gambling dens, known as "漁場," are venues where drug use, particularly meth, is closely intertwined with gambling activities. These locations provide a space where individuals can engage in prolonged gambling sessions fuelled by drug use.

The operational structure of these gambling dens is streamlined, involving "keepers" who manage entry points and handle disruptions and "middle room" (中房) operatives who oversee the distribution of drugs and financial transactions. This division of labour ensures that no single role consumes all the drugs prepared for customers, maintaining a well-managed operation and maximising profits. There is no hierarchical relationship between these roles, further simplifying the structure.

Keeper 是用來頂罪的，「中房」是管毒品，又管積分，即金錢來的。因為你下班時要整理帳目，要拿錢去交數給老闆。總之要計算一次，然後核對一下現金對不對，數目不對就要自己墊付。(027)

老闆就在最頂，接著就是管事了。中房管錢，然後 Keeper 就開門，還有警察來時就阻擋。那麼就是四個人，沒有其他人了。「睇場」另計，有些「睇場」是每天五百元，有人搞事就打電話給他找兄弟上來。(095)

095 further pointed out that there are two additional positions: the person in charge (管事) and the bouncer (睇場). However, the responsibilities of these roles can often be absorbed by the boss, middle room, or keepers to reduce operational costs.

The design of these venues encourages continuous drug use and gambling, often for extended periods. The dens are set up to maximise profits by keeping customers in a state of heightened focus and energy through the effects of the drugs provided. Therefore, the primary source of profit is gambling rather than drug sales. Unlimited supplies of meth are often provided for free to encourage customers to continue gambling.

其實這兩種東西的配合是很奇妙的配合，真的會「玩死人」。(027)

租了一個地方放滿了遊戲機，即是專門打魚的。然後每一部機都有無限的冰毒提供給你。然後你邊食邊打，然後十幾小時你便會不停課金給他們。最重要是你在「雷」的話，一定不夠錢打，消費無上限。真的打足三日三夜也不覺得疲倦。(038)

The intense focus and energy provided by the drugs make these individuals ideal customers for gambling activities, as they can remain engaged for long hours without fatigue. This strategy ensures that customers remain in the arcade, continuously spending money. The synergistic relationship between drug use and gambling significantly boosts the revenue of these establishments.

Initially, customers are lured in with the promise of free meth to enhance their gambling experience. Over time, these individuals may transit from being customers to workers within the dens, like 027. This shift might seem beneficial as it allows them to gamble without needing to spend their own money. However, this cycle creates a dependency on the gambling den for both income and drug supply, trapping them in a vicious loop.

吸食完「冰」之後，不是「打魚」就是賭錢。吸食「冰」的有哪個是可以走出來衣著光鮮的，還要不是靠別人，是靠自己的。吸食「冰」的人真的是全部都是衣衫襤褸。(013)

Furthermore, the constant engagement in these activities erodes the individuals' capacity to function in a normal, healthy manner, leading to a complete breakdown of their social and

economic standing. The environment of the gambling dens, designed to maximise profits by keeping individuals in a state of heightened energy and focus, exacerbates their addiction and further isolates them from the outside world.

Triad organisations play a significant role in the operation of these gambling dens. They provide the necessary protection and manage the logistics of drug supply and gambling operations. The triads' involvement ensures a steady supply of drugs and the smooth operation of gambling activities while handling any conflicts or disruptions that may arise. Therefore, bouncers are either triad members or individuals with the resources to settle disputes.

Drug use and distribution in discos, nightclubs, and private venues in Hong Kong are characterised by a streamlined hierarchy, significant triad involvement, high profitability, social normalisation of drug use, organised distribution methods, and a diverse customer base. These venues are meticulously designed to cater to the specific needs of their clientele, providing a controlled environment for both drug consumption and gambling. This creates a unique ecosystem where drug dealing thrives, supported by structured and discreet operations that meet the high demand for illicit substances in the nightlife scene.

The integration of these elements highlights the complexity and resilience of drug operations within these entertainment venues. Triad involvement further complicates the landscape, ensuring a steady supply of drugs and maintaining order within these operations. This combination of factors poses significant challenges for law enforcement and public health officials, who must navigate the intricate and well-protected networks that sustain drug dealing in Hong Kong's nightlife.

## Chapter 6. Delivery and Distribution

### 1. *Drug Manufacturing in Hong Kong*

As reported by participants (N=8), the manufacturing of drugs in Hong Kong has seen a notable increase in recent years, with more young people becoming involved in the production process. This rise can be attributed to various factors, including the influence of organised crime, the allure of high earnings, and the relative ease of learning the necessary techniques.

很簡單的，摸一兩次就懂了，也不是技術來的。通常用一些生「可樂」，然後加梳打攪拌。燉溶它便放在冰裡再「坐」凍它，然後再量重量。(017)

Drug manufacturing operations are often tightly controlled by triad societies. Young individuals are increasingly drawn into drug manufacturing, often at the behest of organised crime leaders. These Dai Lo recruit young people to procure raw materials and oversee the production of drugs.

現在很多製毒場所，以前少一點，沒有那麼多人製毒。現在很多年輕人去製毒的，「大佬」叫他們去做的，是買一些原材料回來自己去製造出來。(053)

The recruitment is not random; it typically involves individuals with established trust within criminal networks. Individuals who have proven their loyalty and reliability, usually through existing connections within the criminal underworld. The involvement of youth in drug manufacturing reflects a broader trend of criminal organisations leveraging the vulnerabilities and ambitions of younger individuals to sustain their operations.

一定要有人介紹才可以做到廚師這個位，只是你做不做而已，但是真是很危險。其實都是要黑社會背景，不會無原無故地在街上找一個人叫他幫你做事，你也要對他有信心。「廚師」這些職位，一個月賺很多錢，都說他做了三個月，就還完幾十萬欠款。(105)

The drug manufacturer (廚師) is highly coveted and comes with substantial financial rewards, but it is also fraught with significant risks. Some individuals are enticed with lucrative offers to travel abroad to learn advanced drug manufacturing techniques, further embedding them in the criminal enterprise.

我之前有一個朋友去製毒，被人以三萬元去遊說他，去遠一點的地方學製毒，好像是馬來西亞。(058)

The operations of drug manufacturing are shrouded in secrecy to avoid detection by law enforcement, such as in remote areas, hotels or private residences, to avoid detection. Manufacturers often work in isolated locations, such as remote areas where phone signals are weak, to minimise the risk of being tracked. Even within these secluded environments, extreme measures are taken to ensure that the locations of manufacturing sites remain unknown to all, but the essential personnel involved. This level of secrecy is crucial for the safety and longevity of the operations.

監房的朋友介紹我去做「廚房」。「廚房」在錦田，那些地方真的是電話都收不到的。我處理好的時候，就會走遠少許，裝作去買東西，順便打電話：「完成了，你何時來拿？」(048)

他做「廚師」時，那個地方都是沒有人知道的，只有他自己知。金主給錢他自己處理，他自己一條龍自己處理所有事，不會說給人知那個地址。就算是金主都不會知。他們不會知地址，只會給錢。(105)

The actual process of drug manufacturing involves several stages, each requiring a certain level of technical knowledge and precision. The production of drugs like cocaine and methamphetamine involves mixing raw materials with various chemicals, heating, and refining the product to achieve the desired purity and potency. For example, manufacturing cocaine involves mixing the raw powder with baking soda, heating the mixture, and then allowing it to dry into a solid form.

他們在賓館、酒店煮。生的可卡因是生粉那樣的，接著他們加梳打和加一些水，接著用火槍燒它，然後就會沸騰，煮半個小時就可以了。等它乾一些，接著放涼了就會結成一個波的形狀。或者即時食都可以，會黏一些，就沒有那麼乾爽。接著就分裝，即是磅重及包裝。(011)

其實簡單一點來說，就是加工。買一些「生嘢」回來，之後你就以七三比例，加入三成梳打粉，之後下熱水，先炸了那些東西，然後混在一起，放在煲裡面煮。通常都用煤氣爐煮。主要攪拌成一堆東西，之後就上繩，再抹一抹。(048)

Meanwhile, manufacturers often retain a portion of their products for personal use or for close associates. This practice ensures a continuous supply for themselves and their inner circle, reducing the need to rely on external suppliers.

那時自己一天吸食半隻。因為一定有剩下的，一定會製多少許給自己的。(048)

我認識一些年輕的女孩，她們說她們的男朋友在那裡製「可樂」給她們吸食。  
(053)

Distribution is typically handled by trusted lieutenants who oversee the delivery and sale of the product, ensuring that the manufacturer remains insulated from direct interactions with buyers.

However, while the financial rewards of drug manufacturing can be substantial, the risks are equally significant. The danger of being caught and imprisoned is ever-present, and the consequences are severe. Those involved in drug manufacturing are acutely aware of the legal ramifications, including long prison sentences. Additionally, the physical danger from handling volatile chemicals and the potential for violence from rival gangs or disgruntled customers add another layer of risk.

只有你不給人跟蹤，死不到人的。有時警方知道他是做「廚師」的，金主都要交人出來。(011)

Manufacturers often categorise their products into different grades based on purity and potency. The highest-quality products command the highest prices, while lower-grade products are more affordable but less potent. This segmentation allows manufacturers to cater to a broad range of customers and maximise their profits.

有一些人會蒸純些，重新蒸純一些。重新燒融，容許處理得純度高一些。(011)

因為他們包裝時會溝的，一食就會聞到，其實是香的，但好像沒甚麼力。滴幾滴香水炒一炒，那便會香，即是我們要不斷讓他好像不夠喉不夠喉，那便不斷要吸食。如果是真貨，一下子就爆了，他便停了吸食。(040)

有些會分級數，「中上」、「原裝」、「這個多少錢」，即是真的有級數分來報給你。原裝最貴，混合的當然最平價。(056)

## 2. *Dealing Preferences*

The drug dealing landscape in Hong Kong showcases varying strategies among dealers, with some preferring to sell a single type of drug while others diversify their inventory to include multiple types. Each approach has its own set of advantages and challenges, reflecting the dealers' target market, risk tolerance, and operational logistics.

For those dealing with a single type of drug, focusing on one product can simplify operations and reduce the complexity of their business. This approach minimises the risks associated with handling and distributing multiple types of drugs, each with its own set of legal implications and market dynamics. As highlighted by 105, being caught with even a single type of illicit drug can lead to long imprisonment, making it crucial to limit exposure. As evidenced by 072, a group of people were quickly arrested when they recognised their dealing in multiple drugs. Additionally, 091 noted that his customer base exclusively used cannabis, leaving no potential customers for other traditional drugs, thereby justifying his specialisation in one product.

Moreover, certain drugs like cocaine and ketamine are preferred over others because they offer a consistent revenue stream despite their lower price point. Dealers also found that customers use ketamine in larger quantities and more frequently than drugs like ecstasy, which might be consumed less regularly due to its prolonged effects (056).

The focus on higher-profit drugs like cocaine over lower-profit ones like ketamine is also a significant factor. Cocaine users are more likely to purchase in larger amounts and with greater frequency than ketamine users, providing a steady and substantial income stream for the dealers (049). This makes high-profit drugs more attractive for those looking to maximise their earnings while minimising the effort and risk involved in dealing with a broader range of products.

現在的人通常都做「可樂」，做 K、搖頭丸那些賺不到錢，還要運送給你。「可樂」一拿就拿幾千元，還要繼續追，那麼他們就肯做了。你拿一粒搖頭丸可能要玩三、四個小時之後，才再多拿一粒，賺得不多。(058)

Considering the profits and legal risks associated with drug dealing, more dealers preferred selling cocaine over other substances. The preferences also impacted the use patterns of drug

abusers. For example, the delivery services reinforced the individuals to consume ketamine, cocaine and cannabis at home. However, very few dealers delivered ecstasy to users' homes, contributing to the fact that ecstasy can only be used in entertainment venues.

On the other hand, some dealers opt to diversify their product offerings to capture a broader customer base and maximise their profit potential. This approach involves dealing with multiple types of drugs, such as marijuana, cocaine, methamphetamine, and others. Dealers who adopt this strategy often do so to meet the varying demands of different customer segments and increase their market reach. This multi-drug approach can also be seen as a way to establish dominance in the market by being a one-stop shop for all drug needs, catering for a wide array of customer preferences and ensuring a steady stream of income from various sources (071).

我之前那個大佬，他白粉也有，花仔又有，大麻也有，可卡因也有。他就說：「反正我也賣了，又不是自己做，我又有錢，我就什麼都賣。」什麼客有需要的就賣什麼。(002)

什麼都要派的，冰和「可樂」。各式各樣你都要帶。(064)

Even if the dealers sell multiple substances, they have patterns. For example, meth is frequently sold with heroin, while cocaine dealers are often selling ketamine as well. The combinations are related to the drug effect and drug nature.

K 和「可樂」有一些會一齊賣，有一些沒有。白粉更加是另外一群人。(011).

通常「可樂」是跟 K 仔一起的，白粉是跟冰一起的，是同一種東西。(017)

Cannabis is further regarded as another stream of drug dealing activities. The perceived lower profits for cannabis dealing had further lowered the interest for traditional drug dealers to include this type of drug in their selling list. 002 analogised the selling cannabis with selling egg waffles, that the latter can be sold legally and reach more customers. It implies the low status and prevalence of cannabis use among the perception of traditional drug dealers.

However, dealing with multiple drugs comes with its own set of challenges. The logistics of handling, storing, and distributing various substances can become complex and increase the risk of mistakes, such as mixing up orders or providing incorrect quantities (011). Dealers need

to be meticulous in their operations to ensure that their business runs smoothly and that they maintain the trust of their customers. Those unable to maintain the flow of selling mass drugs or lacking manpower to handle multiple dealing activities are more likely to focus on selling one or two types of substances. This diversification helps mitigate the risk of relying on a single product and allows dealers to capitalise on trends and shifts in drug popularity.

Furthermore, the decision to sell multiple types of drugs often involves a trade-off between potential profits and operational risks. While the financial rewards can be significant, the increased complexity and higher stakes mean that dealers must be more vigilant and strategic in their approach. Some dealers manage this by focusing on high-demand drugs like cocaine and methamphetamine while still offering other substances to cater to specific customer needs (058).

### ***3. Delivery Strategies***

The delivery strategies employed in drug dealing in Hong Kong are highly sophisticated and aim to balance efficiency, security, and anonymity. Dealers have developed a variety of methods to ensure that drugs are delivered safely to customers while minimising the risk of detection by law enforcement. These strategies can be broadly categorised into several key approaches, each with its own advantages and challenges.

One common strategy involves the use of professional drivers, often referred to as "drivers" (車手), who are responsible for transporting drugs across different districts. Each district might have a designated driver to deliver drugs (007). This method allows for the quick and discreet movement of drugs, with couriers using dedicated vehicles that are often adapted for this purpose. The vehicles might contain hidden compartments to conceal drugs, further reducing the risk of detection during transportation. The strategy has been observed since 2018, but it can be traced to earlier ages (071).

The process of dealing performed by drivers can take just seconds, with drugs handed over to users from the car. However, conducting such transactions in public places can attract unwanted attention. Alternatively, the user may get into the car, drive a short distance, and complete the transaction inside the vehicle before being dropped off (e.g. 068 and 076).

In the past, the dealers tend to pre-arrange the delivery route and schedule. This strategy is often meticulously planned with pre-arranged routes and meeting points. Dealers schedule deliveries during off-peak hours to avoid attracting attention and choose locations that are less likely to be monitored by the authorities. This careful planning helps ensure that transactions are completed quickly and discreetly. The implementation requires the vehicle to contain all drugs for delivery (023). This strategy is also known as a fast food truck (快餐車) or grocery store (雜貨鋪) (021).

However, this strategy is regarded as putting all eggs in one basket. Therefore, more recent practices have changed to make one delivery per trip to displace the risk. This change is facilitated by the increased availability of drivers, such as those from Uber, who need the money (022). Additionally, some dealers prefer to carry only small amounts (10-20 units) per trip, making multiple trips if necessary, and use hidden compartments in various parts of the car to conceal the drugs (012). By employing this new strategy, the loss could be manageable, even when the drivers were arrested, and drugs confiscated.

While some dealers offer doorstep deliveries for an additional fee (ranging from 100-200), only limited participants reported using this service (e.g. 004). They do not want to expose their home addresses or phone numbers, fearing that if the courier is caught, their personal information could be discovered (067). Instead, they alternatively completed their drug deals on floors above or below their actual residence (029). Also, public places such as downstairs from home, bars or streets for exchanges are also preferred.

On the other hand, dealers might have other drugs in the car or have the risk of fine tickets for parking (056). Having the courier stay in the vehicle is safer, minimising the risk of being caught with drugs or encountering law enforcement. Entering the users' homes can also be risky for dealers because of the chance of possible traps and scams (048).

As a result, many prefer to use designated drop-off points to maintain anonymity. These drop-off points can be in parks, parking lots, or even public restrooms. The strategy involves minimal face-to-face interaction, reducing the risk of dealers being identified and traced back to their homes.

好的賣家就送貨，不好的賣家害怕有東西在身上，就叫我出去拿，去旺角之類，有很多地方的，例如公園、花槽。我第一次是花槽拿貨的。我交錢給賣家，賣家就上某個大廈拿貨，我要在樓下等，不可以跟上去的。(020)

「擺放在某處」都有的，但我自己少這樣做。人家稱之為「執垃圾」嘛，以前就較多。(048).

做網上買賣也是面對面交收的，在人少的地方，很少有人經過的地方。(090)

Those deliverers who have no vehicles may employ third-party delivery services such as taxis, Uber, and GoGoVan. These services provide an additional layer of anonymity and convenience, allowing dealers to outsource the physical transportation of drugs. By blending in with regular commercial activities, these deliveries are less likely to raise suspicion.

我也有試過，找 GoGoVan 那些送貨。當然是藏在一袋東西裡，然後拿過去。(030)

我們接觸的多數只是駁腳，我認識的有「的士佬」，還有「貨 Van 佬」，貨 Van，GoGoVan 那些。(073)

之後發展到餐車例如 Gogo Van 或者的士，在的士交收最安全，或者你放在一個地方，我用一個數字，很少會面交。現在越來越小心例如說車有時不小心、不安全，可能有人跟蹤，他們會多繞幾圈看看有沒有人跟蹤才去交收，是愈來愈隱蔽。(122)

The cost of transportation is typically passed on to the buyers, with fees ranging from 100 to 200 depending on the location. This ensures that the deliverers cover their expenses and maintain reasonable profits.

坐的士，也會算上的士錢，不能還價。(020)

如果乘的士就收貴一點，收貴一百多、二百多元左右。(094)

Besides, to ensure profitability, dealers often set minimum quantities for transactions. For example, a common practice is to start with at least 14 grams of cannabis (062), as smaller

amounts would not justify the transportation costs. This practice helps maintain a viable profit margin for each transaction.

In conclusion, the delivery strategies in Hong Kong's drug dealing market are complex and multifaceted, designed to optimise efficiency while minimising risk. Dealers are able to sustain their operations in a highly regulated and monitored environment by adopting these strategies. These strategies highlight the adaptability and resourcefulness of those involved in drug dealing as they continuously evolve to counteract law enforcement efforts.

## Chapter 7. Relationships between Drug Dealers and Users

The relationships between drug dealers and users are multifaceted, ranging from purely transactional interactions to deep, trust-based friendships. These dynamics are influenced by the length of the relationship, the substance involved, and the individual personalities of the dealers and users. Regardless of the type of relationship, trust and consistency in transactions are paramount.

### 1. *Business Is Business*

The primary interaction between dealers and users is transactional. Many users and dealers do not have close personal relationships and instead view each other as a means to an end. Users seek reliable sources for their drugs, while dealers prioritise sales and minimising risk. This dynamic is evident in statements where individuals describe their interactions as purely business-related, with little to no personal connection.

其實不算認識，純粹是交易而已。(068)

其實和他們不是很熟，不過是各取所需而已，不用了解太多。(071)

Many participants describe the relationship in an indifferent manner. Given the illicit nature of drug dealing, maintaining a distance can be intentional to avoid unnecessary troubles and potential risks. This detachment helps both parties manage their own interests without becoming entangled in personal issues that could complicate their dealings.

Developing close personal relationships in the context of drug dealing can lead to various problems. Dealers who become too familiar with their customers may face requests for discounts or deferred payments, which can undermine the business. Users might exploit personal connections to obtain drugs on credit, often failing to repay, leading to financial losses for the dealers.

我不喜歡涉及太多感情，例如朋友找我取貨，我會向他說明，他要找我買東西不打緊，但我對所有人都是同一標準，是公價，沒有朋友價。別人便會覺得我個人比較一致，就會沒有所謂了。(022)

坦白說，你是不可以和這些「拆家」做朋友，因為他通常都是吸食到精神錯亂。我覺得我會很受傷的，你當我是甚麼人？我當你是朋友，你騙我的錢，拿了我的錢，沒有給貨我。(029)

即是「先欠錢，先給我一點錢，明天再過數」，然後明天就失蹤了，即是不找數。比如說我和你關係很好，你騙我感情就是為了食多點，很多這種事。所以就不做託數了，一定要給錢。(056)

This potential for exploitation is a significant concern. As 023 supplemented, the involvement of money in these interactions often strains relationships. It's easy to cross boundaries, resulting in broken relationships. Dealers often find that maintaining a professional distance helps to avoid these complications. It ensures that transactions remain straightforward, reducing the likelihood of deceit and financial loss.

In larger-scale operations, the relationship is even more detached. Dealers who hire intermediaries, drivers or deliverers to handle the physical transactions have minimal direct interaction with users. This further reduces the risk of personal conflicts and maintains a purely business-oriented approach.

純粹是交易愉快。每一次都準時交收，價錢相對相宜。找到一個你覺得價錢和品質都符合自己的需求。(092)

Users appreciate this professionalism, valuing reliability and consistency in their transactions. Finding a dealer who provides a consistent supply of high-quality drugs at a fair price fosters transactional loyalty, where the focus remains on the product and service rather than personal rapport.

By keeping interactions strictly business-oriented, both parties can protect their interests and reduce potential conflicts. This approach highlights the pragmatic and often impersonal nature of drug dealing, where maintaining a professional distance is crucial for the safety and success of both dealers and users.

## 2. *Friendly Dealer*

Friendly and close relationships between dealers and users are scarce. Participants reported that only very limited dealers have established friendships with customers, the majority of them are transactional. Once the friendship developed, the relational dynamic changed. For instance, they would use drugs together, creating a bond that extends beyond the mere exchange of goods. Such relationships are characterised by regular social interactions, mutual support, and a sense of camaraderie. Dealers who become friends with their customers often provide additional services, such as helping in times of crisis.

這個賣家是朋友來的。我進醫院他也有探望我，打個電話。我跟你有甚麼關係？你是賣家而已，我心想你賣東西給我，又不催我還錢。我進醫院叫你來探我，你也肯來探我，又買橙又買甚麼，又在醫院買飯給我吃。我關係好的賣家有兩個。(020)

視乎他和你關係好不好，有時跟他說之後才給他錢，他都會說：「不用了，那一點點錢。」有時是他倒過來給我錢。上星期，我跟他說我確診了，上不了班，他跟我說：「那我轉些錢給你，你現在買食物、買藥都需要。」(026)

有些要好到幫我換鎖。那時我的門鎖壞了，那個「莊」幫我換鎖。甚至認識了他的女朋友。我家樓下那個「莊」，我去了他家認識了他哥哥，在他家裡一起吸。那時我家裡不讓我吸，我就出門之前下去樓下，他住 11 樓，我就下去吸完再出門。(047)

Such close interactions between dealers and users often deepen the relational ties. When the relationship is established to a certain degree, dealers may join users for meals, parties, or other social gatherings, further blurring the lines between professional and personal relationships.

我們混得很熟，我們會在下單時叫她過來，那時剛巧我們在煮東西，我們會問她要不要一起吃，剛做好了一些烤焗食物，焗蠔之類的。她起初推搪，推讓後她過來了，她吃過讚好，還拿了一些水給我們。(072)

其中有一個賣家有舉辦過一次天台派對，把自己的客人都叫了過來，很有趣，透露了自己所有客人的樣子。他真的很大膽，不害怕有任何「放蛇」的。他很友好地約大家，純粹是認識，一起 chill。(082)

These interactions foster a sense of community and mutual trust, which can be beneficial to both parties. Users benefit from reliable access to drugs, while dealers gain loyal customers and a stable income.

In some instances, the relationship between dealers and users is strengthened by economic benefits and mutual support. Dealers may offer drugs at a lower price or at cost to their loyal customers, fostering a sense of loyalty and gratitude. Users, in turn, may support dealers by introducing new customers or helping with logistical tasks. This reciprocity helps build a strong bond between the parties involved.

即是好像磅糖那樣，他有一個價錢，當你夾完之後，可能你和老闆熟，那麼他就會說：「你擇多兩下啦！」。(024)

其實他是直接以成本價給我的，不賺我的錢。所以大家都會聊一下，還有會說大家的苦況，有時候都要訴苦嘛，有些客怎樣怎樣的那樣。(084)

Among cannabis users and dealers, there appears to be a stronger inclination towards building friendships. These individuals often share a common interest in promoting the cannabis subculture and may engage in discussions about its benefits and legal status (091). 097 expressed that the interactions with dealers facilitated his engagement in drug dealing because the dealer taught him how to make a successful trade and estimate the amount for selling. This shared interest can lead to more meaningful and enduring relationships.

The relationships between drug dealers and users are complex and multifaceted, shaped by trust, personal connections, financial considerations, and the nature of the substance involved. While these relationships can offer mutual support and friendship, they are also susceptible to tensions and conflicts, reflecting the inherent challenges of illegal drug dealing. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for comprehending the social fabric of drug use and distribution in Hong Kong.

## **Chapter 8. Profits and Income for Drug Dealing**

It is not surprising that dealers who can succeed typically do not consume the drugs they sell. They maintain a clear distinction between their business and personal consumption, ensuring that all profits are directed towards their financial gain rather than personal use. Those who indulge in drug use often find it challenging to sustain profitability because their consumption erodes their profits. The resources that could be reinvested into their business are instead consumed, leading to diminished financial returns.

Some dealers, even those who have managed to quit using drugs, adopt strategies to avoid personal consumption. They may rely on trusted customers to test the quality of their products, thereby avoiding the risk of addiction. This approach helps them maintain higher profit margins by ensuring that their entire inventory remains available for sale.

The financial outcomes for drug dealers also depend significantly on their ability to manage expenses and save money. Dealers face numerous uncertainties, including the risk of legal issues and personal emergencies that could interrupt their operations. Therefore, prudent dealers emphasise the importance of saving money to cushion against potential disruptions. They recognise the volatile nature of their business and the need for financial reserves to navigate unforeseen challenges.

The profitability of drug dealing also varies with market conditions. This fluctuation underscores the importance of market awareness and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances. Overall, the profits from drug dealing are closely linked to disciplined financial management, abstinence from personal drug use, strategic planning, and the ability to adapt to market dynamics. Dealers who can navigate these factors effectively are more likely to achieve sustained profitability in their illicit trade.

### ***1. Self-Operating/Resale***

In the context of drug dealing in Hong Kong, self-operating or resale involves dealers independently purchasing drugs in bulk and then selling them in smaller quantities to maximise profits. This method requires a significant initial investment but offers the potential for high returns, making it an attractive option for those willing to take the risks.

One of the primary motivations for self-operating is the high-profit margins that can be achieved. Dealers often purchase drugs at wholesale prices and resell them at a significant markup. Participants coherently reported that the profit margins often doubled the cost invested.

你取二萬元「可樂」回來，你賣出去要五萬左右。(011)

假設是白粉，一公斤的差價可以賺到一萬。冰也差不多，五千至一萬。冰會賺得多一點。因為冰的市場越來越多人用。剛好這幾個月有個朋友支持，有十幾萬一個月收入。(017)

Self-operating dealers enjoy flexibility and control over their operations. Even though selling in bulk can quickly cover costs, participants indicated that selling in smaller quantities yields higher profits. As a result, they are more inclined to take the risk of selling in smaller quantities. This small amount of dealing is also beneficial to concealing the drug, reducing the risk of being detected and maintaining a low-profile image.

當我賣冰的時候，一粒一粒拿，可以賣四、五千元。如果你一克、一克賣出去可以去到二萬八。一千元一克。如果你 28 克乘以 1000 便是二萬八。如果我整粒一次過拿，那就五千元左右。(051)

你要散裝的「可樂」，我可以賺一倍。差距其實是多的，所以利潤很吸引。(056)

Additionally, the drug business does not just have a high margin but also quick returns. The investment often gains returns within days, securing the cash flow and sustaining the continuity.

可能我拿幾十萬出來投資，每個禮拜賺兩、三萬元。(002)

我想二、三千元，最少一、二千，每一轉拿半安士那樣。如果快的話，我想一兩天就全賣了。還要自己食不用錢。(004)

每滴我也賺到幾百元。有些客拿得快，我每日也賺到一萬多元，當然不是每一天也有這麼多收入的。(039)

一個月起碼有十萬元，只是一檔生意，我們一人有十萬元。(048)

Even if the market competition has intensified in recent years, the high margins are still incompatible with other ordinary works. 056 reported that her husband ran the drug dealing as a side business. He earned HKD50K to 60K per month. 017 and 027 further confirmed that selling cocaine can earn at least HKD10K to 20K per month after considering the salaries from hiring a few deliverers.

The profitability of self-operating can vary widely depending on the type of drug, market conditions, and the dealer's network. Compared to traditional drugs, new generation drugs, like LSD and MDMA may not be able to mark a high margin due to the smaller market and relatively manageable craving.

LSD 其實沒什麼利潤的，大約只得數百元而已，反而現在賣大麻很好賺。比如說一克的來貨價可能六七十元，轉賣出去叫價百多元，差不多是翻倍了。(073)

LSD 最重要是成本低，生意好的時候，比較容易出貨。如果賣出去大約二百多三百元一張；如果貨源充足的話，來貨價五十元便有一張。每天都是這樣的話，利潤相當可觀，但不是每天都會有客。(074)

R 負責製作，我就負責推銷出去給客人。每塊大麻曲奇賣二百五十元。R 賺八十，我賺七十，成本價可能都要一百元一塊。但之後我自己接手了，那時都賺一萬多元，其實我是一個文員而已，很開心的了。(084)

The success of self-operating dealers often depends on their ability to network and establish reliable connections for both supply and distribution. For example, 104 can earn double from selling cannabis because he had several cannabis dens, dealers, and triad networks for running his business. Trusted intermediaries and a stable customer base are crucial for maintaining steady sales and avoiding detection.

## **2. Deliverers**

Drug deliverers provide a vital link between dealers and consumers. Their decision to take on this role is driven by various factors, such as economic motivation, the lack of a stable drug supply, and the challenges associated with marketing and customer service in the drug business.

Many individuals become drug deliverers due to the immediate financial benefits. Deliverers can earn substantial amounts of money in a relatively short period, making it an attractive option for those in need of quick cash. The earnings are often calculated as commissions per delivery and per amount. For instance, the commission for carrying cocaine varies from HKD50 to 100 per unit but often involves carrying 10 units per delivery, yielding HKD500 to 1,000 per delivery (N=6).

For other substances, the earnings are generally lower than for cocaine. For example, 064 engaged in the delivery of multiple drugs without specifying the type of drug and received HKD100 per delivery. Although the dealers covered his transportation costs, his maximum daily earnings were capped at HKD800.

Cannabis delivery offers different rates. 073 reported commissions ranging from HKD300 to 500 per delivery, regardless of the weight and amount. 062, with a closer relationship with her dealer, earned HKD60 per gram of cannabis, resulting in a monthly salary that could reach HKD6,000.

Even if the income from delivering these substances might not be as high as for cocaine, young people often took up these jobs to cover their drug use expenses rather than to earn a significant income (057).

In addition to financial compensation, some deliverers receive drugs as part of their payment. This arrangement allows them to support their own drug habits without spending their earnings. For example, 039 reported receiving both a salary and a portion of the drugs as compensation for his delivery work, providing both a source of income and a supply of drugs.

Only one participant reported the experience of cross-border trafficking. 048 had trafficked cocaine to Macau. He earned HKD6,000 per time and a maximum of two times per day.

The role of a drug deliverer involves significant risks, including the possibility of arrest and violent encounters. To compensate for these risks, suppliers often provide higher payments for deliveries involving larger quantities of drugs or more dangerous routes. Despite the significant risks, the financial rewards and operational flexibility make drug delivery an attractive option for many individuals within underground drug dealing.

### **3. *Driver***

Drug delivery drivers typically operate using private vehicles to transport drugs across various locations. They often follow well-planned routes to minimise the risk of detection by law enforcement. The delivery process is designed to be quick and efficient, with drivers making multiple drops within a short period. This method allows them to complete their deliveries swiftly, often in just a couple of runs per night.

The commission for delivering cocaine was reported as the lowest rate as deliverers, HKD50 per unit and often delivered 10 units per time (106). While the driver is responsible for navigating and driving, he/she is usually accompanied by a deliverer, who handles the actual drugs. This separation ensures that the driver is less likely to be caught with drugs on his/her body if stopped by the police, as the passenger is the one carrying the contraband. Hence, drivers are less risky in delivery.

Drivers typically earn a set fee per delivery, which can add up to a significant amount over the course of a night (045). Drivers are compensated primarily for their time and the use of their vehicle, while the individuals carrying the drugs earn more due to the higher risk of arrest and the physical handling of illegal substances.

### **4. *Drug Manufacturer (Chef)***

The role of a drug manufacturer, often referred to as a chef (廚師), in the drug dealing hierarchy is exceptionally lucrative. This highly secretive position reports directly to the Dai Lo or drug boss, reflecting its critical importance and inherent risks.

Initial earnings can reach HKD15,000 per day, with additional profits derived from selling leftover products (048). Typically, working in this capacity two to three times a week can yield over HKD100,000, although the frequency of such activities varies, sometimes occurring every other day or more sporadically (017). This role attracts individuals with significant debts and the necessary networks, as it offers the potential to repay substantial amounts within a short period of time (105).

## 5. *Commission in Clubs and Private Venues*

The remuneration for individuals working in clubs and private venues in Hong Kong, particularly those involved in drug dealing, is structured around commissions and salaries. These earnings vary significantly based on the role, type of drugs sold, and the volume of sales.

In these settings, many individuals earn commissions based on the quantity and type of drugs they sell. This commission structure incentivises high sales volumes and efficient distribution. Similarly, selling cocaine can yield significant commissions, with each unit sold bringing in a specific amount of profit. The commission for cocaine was HKD50 per unit (N=3). Given that each customer in these venues could consume over 30 units per night, the amount spent would be HKD1,500 per customer each night. Assuming ten customers each consume 30 units nightly, the monthly earnings from cocaine commissions alone could reach HKD 450,000.

As mentioned previously, these venues typically sell multiple types of drugs, allowing individuals to earn commissions on various substances. While commissions on other substances like meth and ketamine are lower, at HKD20 per unit, the opportunity to sell a variety of drugs can still lead to substantial earnings (003 and 011).

Coherent to the self-operating or resale mode, selling small amounts of drugs from bulk purchases yields higher profit margins. For example, 045 reported buying one ounce of cocaine for HKD1,000 and selling it in smaller quantities, earning HKD6,000 per night.

In addition to commissions, individuals in these venues also receive a base salary and tips. These salaries can be quite substantial, reflecting both the high-risk nature of the job and the lucrative nature of the drug dealing.

賣啤酒也有得拆(佣金)，毒品錢也有得拆。客人會給貼士，每枱客人一天最少也有幾百元貼士，平均三百元左右。毒品和酒水的佣金再加上貼士，一天油水最高可以有幾萬元。(004)

每月薪水可以有三到四萬，但這薪水還未計算賣毒品的佣金。毒品的佣金一日大概賺一萬多元。(042)

The combination of a steady salary and the potential for high earnings from drug sales creates a strong financial incentive for individuals working in these environments.

Different roles within the drug dealing business in these venues come with varying levels of remuneration, reflecting the responsibilities and risks associated with each position. For example, pharmacies (藥房) and middle room (中房) operatives often earn higher daily wages due to the critical nature of their work. These roles can command salaries of up to HKD2,000 per day. Additionally, accountants, who typically have close relationships with the "Dai Lo" or drug boss, earn substantial monthly salaries, averaging between HKD50,000 and 70,000 (040). This higher compensation reflects the significant trust and responsibility placed on them.

The commission and salary structures in clubs and private venues are designed to maximise profitability and incentivise high performance among those involved in drug dealing. The combination of commissions, base salaries, and tips creates a lucrative but high-risk environment. The trust network and strategic role differentiation further enhance the efficiency and profitability of these operations.

## **Chapter 9. Risk Management and Safety Protocols**

In illicit drug dealing, risk management and safety protocols are essential to avoid detection and minimise legal risks. Dealers and buyers employ various strategies to protect themselves and maintain the continuity of their operations.

One crucial aspect of safety is the use of secure venues equipped with protective measures in those drug-using venues. These locations often have alarm systems that can be triggered in case of emergencies, allowing for a quick escape. Also, multiple doors for entering the venues gain time for people to dispose of the drugs through flushing to the toilet. These measures ensure that participants have a higher chance of evading capture during unexpected events.

These risk management and safety protocols highlight the elaborate measures taken by those involved in drug dealing to protect themselves and their operations. These strategies create a robust system of checks and balances that help maintain the clandestine nature of their activities and minimise detection and legal consequences.

### ***1. Trust Network***

In the underground drug dealing in Hong Kong, trust networks play a critical role in ensuring the security and smooth operation of illegal activities. These networks are built on a foundation of mutual trust, anonymity, and rigorous vetting processes.

Verifying the legitimacy of contacts and maintaining anonymity is critical in this underground network. Participants (e.g. 103) reported assessing the tone and manner of the person they are communicating with to determine if they are genuine buyers or potential threats. This vetting process helps ensure that they are dealing with trusted individuals. Additionally, the source of the contact information is scrutinised. Typically, phone numbers are obtained through a network of friends and acquaintances who are known to frequent similar social circles. This network-based approach helps verify that the individuals involved have a history of engaging in such activities, reducing the likelihood of law enforcement infiltration.

Furthermore, dealers and buyers often rely on trusted intermediaries to exchange contact information. These intermediaries are usually friends or acquaintances who participate in the same social and recreational activities. By sharing phone numbers within this trusted network,

participants can maintain a level of security and trust. This method helps ensure that new contacts are vetted through familiar and reliable channels, further reducing the risk of exposure.

這裡全部都是「friend 搭 friend」，即朋友給電話號碼朋友，然後又朋友給電話號碼朋友，就這樣傳出去了，才有那些聯絡方式。(066)

Even with introductions from trusted intermediaries, a level of caution is still exercised. Some dealers require the intermediary to facilitate the initial transaction, ensuring the new contact is genuine.

有一些是有人介紹也不信任的，擔心是警察「放蛇」，就要透過那個介紹人買。或者賣家說一定要見我，先看我是甚麼人。要不然很容易被捉。(020)

就是別人介紹的，也要看一下介紹人是誰才會做，如果介紹人本身也不是很能相信的，也不會要他的客。多數別人介紹來的，都是我信得過他才會做。(021)

This process includes verifying the identity and intentions of new contacts, often requiring face-to-face meetings to assess their trustworthiness. Dealers may also ask for the introducer's contact details to maintain a trail of accountability.

都要留下介紹人的電話號碼，否則他們就擔心。始終這是犯法，怕會有警察「放蛇」。(076)

我們是當場面交。有時會害怕他一次過買很多，我到了那裏他不付款；或者約了某個地點交收後，他會搶去我的貨。(079)

Communication channels are a vital component of risk management. To maintain anonymity, dealers and buyers typically use disposable or "burner" phones or encrypted messaging apps to conduct their illicit activities. These phones are frequently changed to avoid being tracked back to the users.

他們會有一些不知名的電話 send 過來的。其實他們用電話 send 過來是不要緊的，用「鬼機」而已，不是用自己的電話，他們都害怕。(058)

他們會很安全。就算有電話打來，都一定會是太空卡。(069)

A few participants pointed out that drug dealing related messages were regularly deleted to prevent any potential data from being traced back to dealers. This practice helps protect both the dealer and the buyer from law enforcement and ensures that communication remains confidential. The use of untraceable devices adds a layer of anonymity and security, reducing the risk of law enforcement intercepting their communications.

Inevitably, trust in drug dealing is not built overnight. It requires consistent and reliable interactions over time. Dealers prefer to work with long-term customers who have proven their loyalty and reliability. This loyalty is reciprocated with a sense of security and preferential treatment. Dealers often refuse to expand their customer base beyond a certain point to maintain a manageable and trustworthy network.

一定是慢慢、慢慢信任度才會這麼高。不會無端端「我信你十億，我信你二十億」，不會的。一定是這個人幫老闆處理這些事情處理了十幾年，他都很誠實規矩，沒什麼事。老闆有什麼事找他做就可以了。(002)

我介紹一個新的朋友給他，他也會問我：「你這個朋友信不信得過？」。他只做熟客，不做生客。你會感覺有保障，應該都穩妥的。(089)

040 further pointed out that some dealers would only sell drugs in those drug-using venues because it is much safer than selling outside, even if the profit is restricted. The desire for safety over profit is particularly common among those who conducted drug dealing as a side business or for an extra income. These dealers tended to maintain the customers on a small scale or even refused to expand the business.

五個客就五個客，不能介紹。那五個也是自己朋友來的，其實大家的客量都不會那麼多。(003)

我只會做熟客。因為我有一班很忠誠、很長期的買家，都是固定那班人。我假設五個客人每星期可以賺二千五百元，如果十個客人便是五千元。你不需要多，最重要的是穩定，你的客人都是長期只找你一個取貨，他們只會找你一人。(022)

When the relationship is established in a solid and unbreakable manner, the dealers can ensure a stable income, which they think is sufficient for them. In such a case, it blocks the chances for invasion and police undercover, making the dealing activities safe and riskless.

Additionally, for a larger organised operation, risk management is performed by dividing the labour into multiple levels to minimise the risk and alleviate the possible legal consequences.

與我聯絡的人與實體交貨的人，就兩個人來的。因為我第一次買，他未見過我，不知道我甚麼情況。他叫我右手按電話，左手插進褲袋。即是他應該是遠距離監視著我，看看我是不是「放蛇」。隔了一陣子，就會過來同我打招呼。(069)

Despite the trust network, there is always an inherent risk of betrayal or law enforcement infiltration. Dealers remain cautious and continually assess their relationships and transactions. This cautious approach includes regular checks on new and existing contacts and being wary of any unusual behaviour that might indicate a threat. 003 provided an example that his customer insisted on dealing with him as the only trusted person. He minimised the risk of exposure to law enforcement. This approach helps to create a secure and reliable transaction environment.

## **2. *Low-Profile Deliverers***

Employing low-profile deliverers is also described as a strategic approach used by dealers to avoid detection and reduce the risk of law enforcement intervention. These deliverers often present an inconspicuous appearance that does not arouse suspicion, allowing them to operate effectively against police surveillance.

Elderly people are often used as deliverers. Their age and appearance typically evoke a sense of harmlessness and reliability, making them less likely to be stopped or scrutinised by police. Their ordinary appearance and age are unlikely to raise suspicions, allowing them to carry out transactions discreetly.

我剛剛跟你說的那個契媽，她現在都做得風生水起。她是一個阿姐，上了年紀警察都不會查她的。很多時候她都是自己做的。(049)

交收那些人的外表都是猜不到的，我試過一個是伯伯來的。(069)

有個師奶開車載貨給我。(072)

Their typical appearance and demeanour do not fit the common profile of a drug dealer, thus lowering the risk of being checked by police.

Additionally, young children, including those wearing school uniforms, serve as another layer of low-profile deliverers. The innocent and routine appearance of a student with a backpack makes it difficult for onlookers or law enforcement to suspect their involvement in illegal activities. This group blends seamlessly into the daily environment, making it an effective cover for drug deliveries.

我有個叔叔很厲害，八歲小孩也有幫他幹過活。你沒有聽錯，八歲。坐輪椅，拿拐杖的都有。(002)

接著是個學生與他交收，還要穿著校服，背著背包。(069)

The use of such vulnerable and seemingly innocent individuals further reduces the likelihood of suspicion and interception.

For adult deliverers without advantages to lower police suspicions, the dealers also imposed professional disguises to appear legitimate.

我幫賣「可樂」的老闆工作，他要求我穿西裝。而我去派的時候，我有一個文件夾，拿著一頁頁紙全部都是關於茶葉的，甚麼鐵觀音、普洱。而我拿著的「可樂」就好像是茶葉一樣，一包一包包裝好。(009)

These disguises allowed the deliverer to blend into a business setting and avoid scrutiny.

The primary benefit of using low-profile deliverers is the significant reduction in suspicion. Elderly individuals, students, middle-aged women, and those with disabilities do not fit the stereotypical image of drug couriers, making it easier for them to move freely without attracting attention. These deliverers can adapt to the environments and situations. Whether in a busy urban area or a quiet residential neighbourhood, their appearances and behaviours are contextually appropriate, allowing them to deliver drugs without raising alarms.

Furthermore, their ability to blend in with the general populace means they can complete transactions swiftly and discreetly, ensuring the smooth operation of the drug network. The use of low-profile deliverers poses significant challenges for law enforcement. Traditional

profiling and surveillance methods may not be effective against such a diverse and inconspicuous group. Law enforcement agencies need to adopt more sophisticated and nuanced approaches to identify and intercept these low-profile couriers.

### 3. *Verification of Customers*

In online drug dealing, verifying the identity of customers is critical to maintaining security and minimising risk. Dealers employ various strategies to ensure they are dealing with genuine buyers and not police undercover. These strategies include social media vetting and visual verification of drug use tools to establish trust.

One common strategy is the use of social media to verify the identity and credibility of potential customers. For example, dealers often request to follow a customer's Instagram (IG) account and scrutinise its content to assess trustworthiness. They look for specific indicators that the account belongs to a genuine drug abuser and not a law enforcement agent.

賣家問我的 IG 帳號，去看一下我 IG 的內容是甚麼，追縱一些甚麼人。接著都有試過是只是做熟客生意或者做朋友介紹的。(036)

現在多數用社交媒體，Instagram 那些，他們(賣家)會上社交網站主動找你。他們會看你的興趣是甚麼，你會觀看甚麼影片，有那些人追蹤你，那麼他們就會找你的追蹤者確認你的身份。(076)

賣家需要確認客人的 IG。他會要求 follow 你的 IG account，然後確認你這個 IG account 是一個他覺得可以信任的，他才會跟你做交易。這個算是一個比較安全的措施。(092)

This method leverages the social proof provided by the customers' online activities. The presence of drug-related content, followers with similar interests, and specific keywords or hashtags like "420" or "vveed" can all serve as indicators of a reliable customer. By following these accounts, dealers also expand their network and gain access to more potential customers through the social media algorithm's suggestions.

Another strategy involves visual verification of the tools used by customers for drug consumption. Dealers may ask customers to send photos of the paraphernalia they use to

consume drugs, such as bongos, vaporisers, or rolling papers. Traces of use have to be observed to avoid getting the photos online. This step is intended to confirm that the customer is an active user and not an undercover operative. To further authenticate these photos, customers may be asked to include specific details, like the current time or a unique identifier within the image, to ensure the photos are not simply downloaded from the internet.

她要求我再與她繼續交談的過程前，要我拍一些我現在用什麼工具吸大麻的照片給她看，去驗證我不是「蛇」。(062)

我的賣家是會要我影一些大麻的工具相給他看。然後為免是上網隨便找的，我特地影那個時間及聊天室給他。(068)

By requiring visual evidence of drug use tools, dealers can reduce the risk of being tricked by law enforcement agents. This method adds a layer of verification that goes beyond verbal or text-based communication, providing tangible proof of the customers' involvement in drug use.

#### **4. *Avoid the Period of "Strike Hard"***

Various strategies were adopted to navigate periods of heightened law enforcement activities, commonly referred to as "strike hard" campaigns (打風). These strategies are designed to minimise risk, maintain operations, and, in some cases, exploit market conditions to their advantage.

One common strategy is to temporarily halt drug dealing activities during intense police crackdowns. Dealers recognise the increased risk of getting caught and decide to pause their operations until the situation stabilises. This approach helps to avoid direct confrontations with law enforcement and reduces the likelihood of arrests.

那段時間政府做事，那麼風聲便緊了，毒品賣家就不會出來，貨源就緊張。直接就說：「不做了，不做了，這陣子都不做了。」。(089)

Also, during periods of increased police activities, major drug suppliers often engage in stockpiling. By withholding their products from the market, they create an artificial scarcity, which drives up prices. This tactic not only protects their inventory from being seized but also allows them to sell their stock at higher prices once the crackdown subsides.

我接觸到一些高層，那些是大毒梟。可能一公斤的可卡因現在的市價是 36 萬，那個價錢太低了，他們幾個大毒梟合作：「我們不要出貨，緊張一個禮拜」，然後那些毒品就會由 36 萬慢慢上升，最高峰那時候可以賣到百幾兩百萬。這些人這樣賺錢就叫做「囤嘢」。可能警察會緊張做事的時候，他們就停、不做。(002)

那些大莊家就會留住那些東西，推高價錢，好像和股票一樣，大戶大量持有某一隻股推高價格，其實是很相似的手法。(014)

High-level drug dealers sometimes coordinate with each other to reduce the supply of drugs intentionally. By collectively agreeing to withhold their products from the market for a certain period, they can significantly inflate prices. This coordinated action turns a challenging situation into an opportunity for higher profits once the enforcement intensity decreases.

Dealers often discuss safety concerns with trusted buyers during these periods. These conversations are typically brief and to the point, focusing on the current risks and potential changes in law enforcement patterns. The customers can hence be protected as well, which also helps the dealers to secure their customers by doing these small favours. This communication ensures that all involved parties are aware of the heightened danger and can adjust their activities accordingly.

有時候會多聊兩句，但是都不是主動，或者被動的。即是可能說多兩句：「最近出面『吹大風』。」(036)

However, to offset the increased risks and costs associated with operating during a crackdown, dealers may adjust the quality and price of their products. They may mix their drugs with other substances to stretch their supply and compensate for higher acquisition costs, as mentioned by 056. This strategy helps maintain their profit margins despite the challenges posed by stricter law enforcement.

When regular suppliers become unavailable or too risky to contact during a crackdown, dealers may seek out alternative sources. These new connections are typically less reliable and familiar, adding another layer of risk. Nevertheless, this strategy ensures a continued supply, albeit at potentially higher costs and lower reliability.

打風的時候，我就要去找其他人擺貨了，那些人通常我也不是經常跟他們接觸的，所以並不熟悉他們。(004)

Drug dealers employ a variety of strategies to mitigate the risks associated with "strike hard" periods. Through these methods, they aim to maintain their business operations and maximise profits despite the increased threat of law enforcement actions.

## 5. *Packing*

Dealers employ a variety of innovative and discreet methods to disguise their products, ensuring they can transport and distribute drugs without raising suspicion. Packing has gained more attention in contemporary drug dealing. 022 expressed that he would pay extra for better packing. Despite that the packing would be thrown away anyway, it provided a kind of convenience and security.

Dealers often disguise their packaging to make it appear as everyday items, which helps escape scrutiny. By using common household items or repurposing commercial packaging, they can blend their products into typical environments. For instance, drugs may be packaged to look like candy or other innocuous items. This method not only masks the true nature of the contents but also leverages the familiar appearance to reduce suspicion.

好像別人賣盜版 CD 那樣，使用一些紙包裝起來。也可以包得像新的糖果那樣。我也不知道他怎麼弄透明包裝的，可以拆出來塞回去的。(020)

曾經有一個做得頗成功的，是以前很流行賣手機零件時會用燙印封口的袋，然後再包裝得很精美。冰或者 G 水，他都會用這個包裝。外面還貼有一個二維碼。那個真的做得像是賣手機零件。(022)

之前有試過放在檢測棒。一整盒檢測棒給他，然後他就把錢塞在檢測棒裡面給你。(107)

These unusual or unexpected containers for drugs also include placing drugs in speaker boxes, toy packaging, or even tea bags (e.g. 069). Such containers are not typically associated with drugs, which makes them less likely to attract attention during inspections.

Some dealers also use a strategy of double layering, where drugs are hidden inside larger, seemingly harmless packages. This may involve hiding drugs within layers of clothing in a suitcase and placing them inside items like instant noodle packets or M&M chocolate (e.g. 023 and 024). The outer layer distracts attention from the true contents, making detection less likely.

Vacuum sealing is a technique that helps eliminate odours and compresses the package, making it less conspicuous. This method is particularly useful for drugs like cannabis, where the strong smell could easily give away the contents (e.g. 062). Vacuum-sealed packages resemble other vacuum-packed goods, further aiding in disguise.

Cannabis edibles offer a unique advantage because they can be indistinguishable from regular food items. Their slow-acting effects provide a further layer of protection, as the presence of drugs is not immediately apparent. This makes edibles a popular choice for discreet distribution.

製作大麻曲奇賣給別人，那就好做很多。生意又賺多一點，曲奇還安全很多。警察來到你只是拿塊曲奇出來而已。你可以證明到我甚麼？(084)

Each strategy is designed to minimise the risk of discovery and ensure the smooth operation of their illegal activities. Meanwhile, the effective strategy imposes a sense of security on customers, making them willing to spend more.

## Chapter 10. Consequences of Drug Dealing

### 1. *Arrestment and Conviction*

Drug dealing carries significant risks and consequences despite efforts to manage these risks. The pervasive nature of law enforcement operations and the inherent dangers of the trade lead to frequent arrests and convictions, affecting individuals at all levels of the drug distribution network. Participants had reported that far more dealers were arrested than users, indicating the significant risks involved.

Many dealers and their associates end up incarcerated, highlighting the effectiveness of law enforcement in disrupting drug networks. The constant turnover of dealers due to arrests exemplifies the instability and danger inherent in the trade circle.

我想我十年來，都有轉了十多個「拆家」了。我很肯定十多個「拆家」中，有一半都已經去了坐牢。(029)

Additionally, severe sentences are common, with individuals receiving lengthy prison terms for their involvement in drug trafficking. This underscores the harsh legal penalties and deterrence associated with drug offences in Hong Kong.

因為這條路你走得久的話，遲早有一天要進去〔監獄〕的，對不對？你沒可能賭上自己去販毒的。(027)

前男友被抓了，他好像在機場幫別人運毒，一個行李箱的「可樂」。坐十多、二十多年的牢。(034)

Several participants were deterred by the severe penalty from starting drug dealing. Even those higher up in the hierarchy are not immune to arrest. 044 reported a mid-level dealer was arrested by the police when he was carrying drugs.

Deliverers are particularly vulnerable to arrest, which likely involves young people. Their exposure to various customers and frequent movements increases their risk of being caught. The frequency of arrests among young deliverers reflects their vulnerability and the proactive law enforcement. This trend indicates a significant impact on the younger population involved in drug trafficking, with many facing serious legal consequences early in their lives.

你做那些「腳」，派東西都很容易被人捉。因為你不知道客人是什麼人，你又想做客人的生意。那些「莊」就很少被人捉。(049)

一、兩個月就有十個、八個年輕人販賣毒品被拘捕了。現在很多的年輕人，而且很嚴重的判罰。(053)

Despite the encrypted nature, communication apps, such as WhatsApp and Telegrams, facilitate conveniences but also bring a higher risk of being traced. Law enforcement can exploit these tools, and captured customers often cooperate with the police to reduce their own sentences, leading to the exposure and arrest of dealers.

賣毒品賣得越來越少量的時候，一來那個風險越小。二來，如果我是警察，也想捉賣大量貨給我的人。警察一般是迫於無奈才會捉一個小賣家。(002)

多了 Telegram 這樣東西，你不知道是人是鬼？有時說真的，當你的客人被抓的話，他又是擺你出來，警察不會搞他的：「你拿一、兩粒，不如我放過你，你指證拿東西給你的那個人」，通常十個有十個都會這樣做（指證）的，我都會這樣做。(048)

現在的賣家不想做得大，覺得要長遠地經營，他寧願多走幾次。有些是越做越大量，不過都是以前的故事。(116)

Law enforcement employs various tactics, including undercover operations and informants, to infiltrate and dismantle drug networks. These methods increase the risk of arrest for those involved at all levels, from low-level deliverers to higher-up organisers.

之前那個場被警方放蛇，潛入了足足一年多，其中一個進食可卡因的人就是警察。(013)

These efforts by law enforcement agencies are crucial in combating drug dealing. Their persistent and strategic actions help dismantle drug networks, reducing the availability of illegal substances and protecting communities from the detrimental effects of drug abuse.

The frequent arrests and convictions of drug dealers highlight the effectiveness of policing strategies and the importance of ongoing vigilance in the fight against illegal drug

activities. Their work not only disrupts the operations of drug traffickers but also serves as a deterrent to others. The persistent efforts of law enforcement agencies are crucial in mitigating these risks and maintaining public safety.

## 2. *Financial Instability*

Dealers often face substantial financial losses due to various factors, creating a fragile and precarious economic situation. Some dealers default on their payments or steal the drugs they are supposed to sell, often leading to their escape to mainland China. Many dealers are cheated or defrauded by their customers in several ways, such as when customers take drugs on credit and then disappear without paying.

很多時那些利是都是假的，結果是錢收不到貨也收不到。我試過有次收到裏面寫了一句「唔好意思」，裏面什麼錢都沒有，即是一場空。(022)

我不是每個月都是賺數十萬，我有賺有蝕的。因為我都遇過一些客人不給錢，即是我賭檔我都會遇過有些客人借我錢，接著不還的。(027)

Financial fraud occurs not only between dealers and customers but also within the drug distribution hierarchy. For instance, mid-level dealers can receive counterfeit drugs from their superiors, as reported by 004. Similarly, lower-level dealers might default on their payments and disappear, leaving mid-level dealers with significant debts.

近期沒有人信得過，我要負責任的。我叫人做，人家如果有甚麼問題，拿走了貨，我要負責那筆錢的。(017)

不知為甚麼多了很多無賴不找數。早一、兩個星期，我才被人搞了一轉，又背了一萬九千元的數，沒法追的了。(048)

Additionally, the dealers' own drug consumption exacerbates their financial problems. The addictive nature of drugs like cocaine impairs their judgment and self-control, leading them to consume their own supply instead of selling it. This results in immediate financial losses and creates a cycle of debt and dependency as they struggle to repay the cost of the consumed drugs. Their inability to manage the stock received from suppliers reflects a self-destructive cycle that undermines their financial stability.

我取了一「件」，但全部自己吸食了。後來自己一個人吸食了一整包毒品，一百多顆。那便自己慢慢歸還那些款項。(042)

食可卡因的時候是不會想後果的，就算被你老大打死你，你都是這樣食。(044)

### 3. *Betrayals*

Betrayal is also one of the most significant risks in drug dealing. Participants often faced the threat of being sold out by those within their network. It is rare for someone facing serious consequences without being informed by others. Almost all arrests are based on reliable intelligence, often sourced from fellow drug abusers caught by the police. Betrayals can occur for various reasons, including personal disputes, financial incentives, or as a means to reduce one's own penalty in court.

Additionally, betrayals within the trade are common, as evidenced by individuals being informed on or used as scapegoats during transactions. This highlights the pervasive distrust and the dark, treacherous nature of the drug dealing environment.

後來有人出賣我，說我家裏有九安士貨，之後就整班警察上來。我知道是和我有爭執的那個人出賣我。(004)

「腳」是最容易被捉的。其實「大佬」是知道的，因為他找人去頂替他去死。(058)

Sometimes, the reasons for exposing dealers can be subtle. For instance, as described by 002, dealers lacking customer service skills and failing to maintain a pleasant demeanour over phone conversations can provoke customers to report them. Partnerships between dealers are also volatile. For example, 022 ran a drug business with his intimate partner, only to be betrayed when the partner stole money. This environment of mistrust can lead to severe repercussions, including arrests or violent retribution.

When arrests do occur, those apprehended frequently turn into informants, cooperating with law enforcement to reduce their sentences by providing information about their associates. If turning to become a tainted witness could avoid the legal consequences or reduce the penalties, participants confessed that they would also do so.

我老公只是在後樓梯自己拿來食，之後就被人埋伏。他被人擺（出賣），即是說被人交了出去，被人出賣。(056)

為甚麼做這麼久都不被人拘捕，就是因為還未要交人而已。我之前住 XXX 認識的一個「水魚」的人都正在做，他是警察的臥底。(058)

Dealers and buyers rely on trust to exchange contact information and verify the legitimacy of new contacts. This system is designed to protect against infiltration by law enforcement and to ensure the security of transactions. However, the inherent mistrust within these networks can lead to paranoia and further complications in operations. As a result, some dealers tended to maintain the transactional relationship and keep their distance.

當然有鬼。我那個銷售圈子越來越大，初頭是自己朋友，後來朋友搭朋友。所以其實介紹了一隻鬼來認識我，來舉報我也不奇怪。而且真的有臥底的。(003)

有一天我們整班人在後樓梯賭錢，有警察從上層及下層出現說掃毒，要我們交人。那個我們放毒品在他家的人，就是那次被人捉了。他放監出來後，也不再聯絡我們。(012)

我後來才知道，有一個人曾指證七個場出來，接著也指證過幾個自己的朋友，是拖行李箱來販賣的，都被拘捕了。(104)

Ironically, incarceration can sometimes serve as an opportunity for network expansion for drug dealers. While in prison, individuals often connect with others involved in drug dealing, learning new strategies and establishing new contacts. Upon release, these individuals may find themselves with an expanded network and improved methods for conducting their illegal business more securely and profitably.

有些朋友說入到監房之後，出返來賣就更大，更多人脈，即是更多朋友，認識更多「範數」；還有自己在監房裡面會想得很清楚，出來怎樣安全一點賣，和怎樣賺多一點。(027)

The constant threat of arrest, the need for secrecy, and the risk of betrayal strain personal relationships and lead to a lifestyle characterised by paranoia and instability. Moreover,

involvement in illegal activities can result in a loss of personal freedom and long-term imprisonment, which can have lasting impacts on families and communities. The pervasive threat of betrayal, the constant risk of arrest, and the complex dynamics of trust create a highly volatile environment for those involved in drug dealing. Understanding these consequences is crucial for developing effective strategies to combat drug trafficking and support those affected by its impacts.

## Chapter 11. Risks of Buying Drugs

Apart from the health concerns of drug use, drug fraud is another significant issue in the illicit drug market, characterised by various deceptive practices that exploit unsuspecting buyers. This experience had been frequently reported among participants regardless of whether they preferred transactional or close relationships with dealers.

One common method of fraud involves substituting actual drugs with non-drug substances. For instance, participants (N=5) reported experiencing deception from dealers that they replaced cannabis with tea leaves, cilantro, or other plant materials. Even if participants did not directly experience such a deception, they still heard similar cases. In some cases, people have been tricked into purchasing what they believe to be LSD, only to receive substances that induce hallucinations but are not the actual drug. Therefore, 067 would purchase a test kit from foreign countries to examine LSD.

Similarly, traditional drug abusers have reported encountering fake drugs during their transactions, particularly with methamphetamine. Fraudulent dealers also engage in chemical adulteration, adding substances to drugs to enhance their appearance or weight. Many external dealers viewed their operations as short-term ventures, aiming to deceive buyers once and then disappear.

我最近便經歷過一次用明礬來冒充冰毒的，自此被告知一定要放在錫紙上試貨。  
(022)

其實很難發現這些是假貨，除非你吸下去，才會發現沒有味道。你吸食後有時真的會發現那是膠或者是明礬，它們燒完後的狀態是一模一樣的。(023)

試過有個朋友買幾千元「冰」，幾次都買了一些不知名的東西，試過給了他冰糖。我試過了一包，撕開一條條，一燒下去是焦的，那麼即是吃壞人的，它根本就不  
是那些東西。(024)

Substituting drugs with non-drug substances or adulterating them with harmful chemicals may be more profitable, but users unknowingly consuming these substances may suffer from unexpected side effects or poisoning, which can lead to long-term health issues or even death.

Another prevalent tactic is selling underweight drugs. Dealers often include the weight of the packaging in the total weight of the drug, short-changing the buyer. This practice forces buyers to weigh their purchases at home to ensure they are getting the correct amount, leading to frequent disputes and mistrust.

我第一次買時也覺得被騙。說買 1g，但要計算袋的重量才有 1g。我說「你連袋才 1g，是不是佔我便宜？」，「下次補回給你」。自始我回家就找電子磅秤。熟絡的就真的會補回給你，不熟的就不補了。(020)

我真的有想過要帶著磅秤，常常覺得他們根本不足分量，連同膠袋一起秤便足磅。(071)

Under these circumstances, drug abusers find themselves in a vulnerable position, subject to exploitation and fraud by dealers. The illicit nature of drug transactions makes it impossible for users to seek help from legal authorities, friends, or family members. Users frequently fear retaliation from dealers if they complain about the quality or authenticity of the drugs. This fear stems from the power imbalance between users and dealers, where users depend on dealers for their supply. Complaining or refusing a purchase may cause a complete loss of access to the drugs they rely on, putting users in a precarious situation. As mentioned in the statement from 029, users are afraid to get on the bad side of dealers because it could mean losing their only source of supply. This fear of losing access keeps users from speaking out, even when they suspect fraud or feel cheated. Many users try to mitigate the risk of fraud by sticking to known dealers, especially those introduced by trusted friends.

你給我石頭，我都沒辦法的。都挺怕的，很多人都會怕被人騙。(024)

就是說真的，我覺得講信任。就算你要騙我，我都做不到甚麼。因為被人騙過之後，我只會相信朋友介紹的那些賣家。(036)

我現在也害怕，怕自己在吃大麻會有一些人工合成草在內。沒有方法令自己安全，只能盡量找認識的賣家。(090)

However, this dependence can still leave them vulnerable if those dealers decide to take advantage of their trust. Users often feel they have no recourse if they are defrauded because

they lack the means to ensure the quality and safety of their purchases. This reliance on known dealers highlights the fragile nature of trust in the illegal drug market.

The lack of formal avenues for recourse means that users have little to no protection against fraudulent practices. When defrauded, users often feel powerless to take any meaningful action. 023 explained that once you make a concession, they become more aggressive, especially when your access to drugs is limited. This exploitation is further compounded by the fact that even if users complain, dealers may not feel obliged to rectify the situation unless multiple complaints threaten their reputation and business. Dealers may exchange or replace fraudulent goods only when faced with significant pressure, highlighting the precarious position users are in.

貨行還是不行，有時候很難說的，客人說不行，可能我覺得可以，所以不行這些通常都不能換。我也不是很多客，做來做去也是那幾個熟客。如果幾個客都投訴，真的賣不出去，我就會跟莊說，莊就肯和我換貨。(021)

我便會投訴他，當然前提是你的投訴要合理，要有底氣。因為我已經是沒有所謂的了，就算不找他，我還是有我的方法去取貨。(022)

The prevalence of drug fraud severely erodes trust within the drug-using community. Users find themselves in a vulnerable position, often unable to challenge fraudulent practices due to the fear of losing their supply and facing retaliation. This dynamic perpetuates a cycle of exploitation and distrust. Buyers become increasingly sceptical and cautious, often refusing to deal with new sellers and sticking to a small circle of trusted contacts. This mistrust not only complicates transactions but also contributes to hidden drug use by keeping drug use within these trust circles.

## Chapter 12. Rare and Special Cases

### 1. *South Asian Dealers*

The landscape of drug dealing in Hong Kong has seen a significant shift with the increasing presence of non-local dealers, particularly those from South Asian communities. A notable example is the activity around Chungking Mansions, a well-known hub where South Asian individuals openly offer drugs such as cannabis. This area has become synonymous with drug transactions involving non-local dealers, who actively approach potential customers with offers of illicit substances. This increased visibility and willingness to engage with passersby make it easier for users to access drugs, contributing to the prevalence of non-local dealers in the market.

你在重慶大廈走一趟，看到那些南亞仔在派名片，你走過去跟他們說：「Weed?」  
「Yes, yes! You want?」他們便會走過來和你攀談，把電話號碼給你，你便可以買了。(072)

過了午夜十二時去尖沙咀，重慶大廈的人就會跟你說：「帥哥，你要不要大麻？」  
(100)

For many South Asian individuals in Hong Kong, involvement in drug dealing stems from economic necessity and the lack of viable employment opportunities. Limited job prospects and socio-economic challenges push some into drug dealing as a means of making a living. 073 indicated that extreme hardships in securing stable and fairly paid jobs in Hong Kong compel this group to engage in drug dealing. Some South Asian individuals cultivate cannabis in Chungking Mansions to further reduce costs (e.g. 072). This economic drive is a crucial factor behind the rising number of non-local dealers as they seek alternative ways to sustain themselves financially.

Despite their growing presence, non-local dealers face scepticism regarding the quality and authenticity of their products. There are rumours and reports of adulteration, where substances like regular weeds or dirt are mixed with drugs to increase volume (062). Additionally, some customers have concerns about being shortchanged or deceived by non-local dealers, making these sellers a last resort for many participants (e.g. 097 and 102). In contrast to the general discourse of poor quality, some reports indicate that drugs from Pakistani

dealers are considered good and affordable (e.g. 107). This variation in drug quality remains inconclusive and requires further evidence.

In contrast to the above information, 064 also reported a specific South Asian dealer selling drugs in the Sham Shui Po district. He said this dealer was very famous and never offered delivery options. This information indicated a substantial potential for hidden dealers in districts other than Chungking Mansions, which required further exploration of the distribution of drug dealing hotspots across different districts in Hong Kong.

## 2. *University Hall Dealers*

Drug dealing, particularly cannabis, within university student residences in Hong Kong presents a unique landscape characterised by scattered dealers, low-level risks, and minimal involvement. In university halls, drug dealing is predominantly carried out by individual dealers who build their customer base through personal networks and social interactions. There is no formal structure or centralised control over the trade within these environments. Multiple dealers were reported. Even if some participants reported a main supplier in these student halls, it had failed to be triangulated in other interviews.

「XXXX 大水喉」，好像是他們的指定供應商，學生們都會找他。過了差不多一年，有一個賣家，好像叫牛哥的人物，我看他的社交網站，全部我的 X 大朋友都在追蹤他，所有讀 X 大的朋友都是找他的。(072)

大學宿舍不會有甚麼架構的。我們真的各自各找賣家，不會找身邊的人。這些高風險的事情，相隔多幾層就會安全一點，萬一被人拘捕了也不會拘捕我。(100)

In contrast, students often find their dealers through friends or acquaintances who introduce them to reliable sources. For example, the 089 reported a preference for his own dealer due to the drug quality, despite his connection to well-known dealers within the university student community. Also, participants reported that they could often find a number of dealers in their drug-using circles, lowering the reliance on those so-called well-known figures in university halls. By keeping their dealings discreet and involving multiple layers of separation, students aim to maintain anonymity, reduce the risk of exposure and protect themselves from potential legal consequences.

In some cases, students themselves become dealers, capitalising on the demand within their university to earn extra income (018). This often starts informally, with students helping friends obtain drugs, and can develop into a more sustainable operation as they gain more contacts and customers. The accessibility of a ready market within the university environment makes it an attractive opportunity for those looking to make money with minimal investment.

Triad involvement in drug dealing in the university hall was seldom observed by the participants due to its relatively low profitability. The volume of drugs sold to students is not substantial enough to attract the attention of larger criminal organisations. Instead, smaller, independent dealers or those with minor affiliations handle the trade, viewing it as a low-risk, low-reward venture.

阿公不會看這麼少的數，因為對他們來說，很少錢。在大學裏賺不了多少錢，學生買得不多。對小賣家來說當然大，阿公平常賺幾千萬收入，這些算得上什麼。  
(104)

Even if some dealers with triad connections operated within this space, they might be more out of personal interest or as a way to pass the time rather than for significant financial gain (073). These dealers often build a rapport with their student customers, meeting them in casual settings to conduct transactions.

### **3. *Trafficking to Other Asian Pacific Countries***

One notable aspect of drug dealing in Hong Kong involves trafficking to other Asia-Pacific countries. Dealers often extend their operations beyond local sales to markets in Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam (053). This international dimension requires careful planning and the recruitment of young individuals to transport drugs across borders. These couriers often carry drugs in concealed ways, such as hidden in their clothing or body cavities. This method is not only risky but also indicative of the lengths traffickers will go to expand their market reach.

Additionally, those involved in drug trafficking often engage in other criminal activities in these Asia-Pacific countries, including robbery, credit card fraud, and various scams to maximise their profits. This diversification of criminal activities helps to spread risk and increase financial gains. The scale of the money flow behind the scenes is unimaginable.

At the highest levels of this network are the investors, who are far removed from the day-to-day risks of drug trafficking, instead orchestrating operations from a distance. 002 reported that these investors spend vast sums to reward their staff who helped them smuggle drugs and operate illegal businesses in these Asian Pacific countries.

#### **4. *Member Dealers***

A unique and specialised subset of drug dealers caters specifically to the Men who have Sex with Men (MSM) community, selling methamphetamine tailored to enhance sexual arousal and performance. According to 030, there are two types of meth: one that induces sexual arousal and another that stays awake. While ordinary dealers typically sell the latter, MSM prefers the former to enhance their sexual experiences. By understanding the connection between the drugs and their impact on sexual activities, these specialised dealers effectively distribute the most suitable type of meth for their clientele. Details of this kind of dealing are discussed in Chapter 4 “Sexual Minorities and Drug Abuse” in Research Report No. 5: Specific Drug-related Topics.

## Chapter 13. Conclusion

The drug dealing business in Hong Kong has evolved into an easy-in, easy-out operation, fostering intense market competition. A relatively small financial investment, often just a few tens of thousands or splitting the cost with a few friends, is enough for someone to start their own drug business by purchasing a kilogram of ketamine or cocaine. The main concerns for starting such a venture are securing a reliable drug supply and establishing access to customers. However, these challenges are often easily addressed through experience in clubbing scenes and connections with triad societies, whether direct or indirect.

The ability to maintain a customer base within a very small circle, typically around ten people, ensures both trust and security for the dealer. This small number of regular customers can be sufficient for a dealer to sustain their business, lowering the threshold for entry into drug dealing. This close-knit network reduces the risk of exposure and law enforcement infiltration, further supporting the viability of small-scale drug dealing operations.

The methods of drug dealing have also become increasingly sophisticated and covert. Dealers employ various tactics to avoid detection, such as using elder drug couriers, narrowing their selling circles, rigorously verifying customers' identities, and using diverse packaging techniques for drug delivery. These hidden elements reflect the adaptability of drug dealing to evade law enforcement efforts and sustain operations.

Despite the seemingly low barriers to entry and potential profitability, drug dealers must contend with significant risks beyond legal consequences. The threat of being bilked or betrayed by others in the industry is ever-present, requiring dealers to navigate a perilous and volatile market environment.

In conclusion, the drug dealing landscape in Hong Kong is characterised by its accessibility, competitive nature, and the intricate trust networks that support it. While the initial setup and operational costs are relatively low, the business demands constant vigilance and the ability to manage complex social dynamics. The evolving methods of drug dealing highlight the resilience and adaptability of the trade, posing ongoing challenges for law enforcement and public health efforts. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing effective strategies to combat drug trafficking and reduce its impact on society.