

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

Research Report No. 5

Specific Drug-related Topics

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Executive Summary of Report 5

1. *Online Environment for Drug Use*

- *Introduction:* The anonymity, connectivity, and decentralisation of the internet have allowed for the proliferation of drug-related activities online, enabling users and dealers to connect and transact while remaining anonymous.
- *Online Platforms:* Online platforms were utilised for disseminating and exchanging drug-related information among cannabis users. These digital environments shaped subcultures and interactions significantly.
- *Characteristics of Drug-Related Online Platforms:* Social media and various apps became central to facilitating drug-related activities, with algorithms promoting content related to drugs, thus increasing their visibility and accessibility.
- *Usage of Drug-Related Online Platforms:* These platforms emerged as key resources for drug-related knowledge, where users shared and learned about the effects, safety, and usage techniques of various drugs.
- *Features of Online Drug Activities and Transactions* Online drug dealing methods evolved to include encrypted communications and discreet sales tactics, aimed at maintaining privacy and avoiding detection.
- *Nature of Drug-Related Online Communities:* Online communities fostered a shared space for experience and knowledge sharing about drug use, impacting social dynamics of consumption significantly.
- *Risks and Concerns:* The primary risks included legal repercussions on online activities and the threat of police infiltration, with users employing various strategies to mitigate these risks.
- *Conclusion:* The chapter underscored the transformation in drug transaction landscapes due to the development of online platforms, influencing both user behaviour and regulatory approaches.

2. **Chapter 2: Cannabis Use**

- *Introduction:* The perception of cannabis among different social groups was noted to be evolving, marking its increasing normalisation and social acceptance.
- *User Characteristics:* Cannabis users ranged widely in demographics, indicating its broad acceptance across different sections of society.
- *Normalisation and Social Acceptance:* Cannabis's increasing acceptance in society

and culture was highlighted, with discussions around its legality and benefits becoming more mainstream.

- *Categorisation and Differentiation:* The categorisation of various strains and types of cannabis by effects and user preferences indicated a sophisticated consumer knowledge base.
- *The Perceived Positive and Negative Effects of Cannabis Use:* Users reported both medicinal benefits and potential adverse impacts of cannabis use, influencing public and personal opinions.
- *Risk Management:* Cannabis users employed various strategies to manage risks associated with its use, highlighting the complexity of its integration into daily life.
- *Rare and Special Cases:* Participants reported using cannabis and LSD to manage mental health conditions like ADHD and depression. Despite legal and logistical hurdles, some cannabis users engage in local cultivation, leveraging online resources to navigate restrictions and enhance the quality of their product through the production of edibles.
- *Conclusion:* The chapter summarised shifts in perception towards cannabis, influenced by more informed public discussions.

3. Chapter 3: Hidden Drug Abuse

- *Introduction:* Hidden drug abuse in private venues was identified as a significant concern due to its secretive nature and the challenges it posed for detection and intervention.
- *Operations of Private Venues:* Details on how drug abuse is facilitated within private, often elite venues, away from public view and beyond the reach of law enforcement, were provided.
- *Nature and Patterns of Hidden Drug Use:* Various patterns and motivations of secretive drug use were described, highlighting the clandestine and often exclusive nature of these activities.
- *Reasons for Hidden Drug Abuse:* The motivations for engaging in hidden drug use were explored, encompassing desires for social acceptance, privacy, and the thrill of secrecy.
- *Conclusion:* The chapter discussed the implications of hidden drug abuse for public health and policy, suggesting a need for more focused interventions.

4. *Chapter 4: Drug Abuse and Sexual Minorities*

- *Introduction:* The unique challenges faced by sexual minorities in relation to drug abuse were introduced, with a focus on methamphetamine use.
- *Types of Drugs Used and Their Purposes:* Specific types of drugs preferred within the MSM community, and their purposes were discussed, particularly those used to enhance sexual experience.
- *Drug Use Patterns:* The social and community dynamics of drug use among sexual minorities were explored, revealing complex interpersonal dynamics.
- *Nature of Drug Parties:* The nature and appeal of drug parties within the community were described, highlighting their significance in social cohesion and identity formation
- *Impact on Physical and Mental Health:* Health impacts of drug use in sexual minorities were examined, noting both negative physical and psychological effects.
- *Social Stigma and Identity:* The interplay between drug use, social stigma, and identity within sexual minorities was discussed.
- *Conclusion:* The chapter concluded with a call for more sensitive and informed approaches to addressing drug abuse in sexual minorities, advocating for targeted support and interventions.

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Chapter 1. Online Environment for Drug Use

1.1. Introduction

The Internet has unique features of being anonymous, connective, and decentralised, allowing drug abusers to access online drug-related contexts without revealing their true identities. This environment facilitates the building of connections with other drug abusers and dealers for information exchange and even enables individuals to serve as drug distributors (e.g., by making their own drugs and distributing them) and drug-related knowledge contributors. With these distinctive features, the Internet has fostered the formation of extensive networks among drug abusers and dealers worldwide, making online drug-related activities thrive. This emerging trend is noteworthy due to its implications for drug distribution and consumption.

As noted by some participants (e.g., 069), the Internet is part of the dominant culture in the new era now (網絡是現在新世代，亦都是很主流的一樣東西). With the development and prevalence of the internet, drug-related activities and transactions are no longer necessarily confined to face-to-face contexts and existing, known social circles. Instead, it gives rise to online drug marketing and transactions. As 069 expressed, drug transactions in the past had to be conducted via phones only (我們以前買是靠電話，只可以靠電話去聯絡)。Nowadays, the Internet provides an additional platform for finding and buying drugs, thus reshaping the landscape of drug-related activities.

The increasing use of social media and apps for drug-related activities suggests that these platforms provide a convenient and relatively anonymous way for users to engage in these transactions. This convenience is further enhanced by the widespread use of these platforms among young people, making it easier for them to connect with sellers and buyers.

This chapter delves into the evolving practices and trends in online drug-related activities, examining how these digital platforms have transformed the landscape of drug transactions and community dynamics among drug abusers. Through verbatim accounts and ethnographic observations, the complex interactions and adaptations within this digital subculture are uncovered.

1.2. Online Ethnography

This ethnographic observation examines the behaviours and community dynamics of cannabis users, contrasting them with users of conventional drugs. The primary focus is on how cannabis enthusiasts utilise online platforms and social media to share information and experiences and conduct transactions related to cannabis. Unlike traditional drug abusers, cannabis consumers leverage modern digital tools, significantly shaping their subculture and social interactions. A summary of observations and some examples are shown in Table 1.1.

1. *Online Platforms and Social Media Usage*

With the rise of the Internet, there has been a noticeable shift from traditional face-to-face drug transactions to online methods. This change is driven by the increasing reliance on technology and the social restrictions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

人們開始依賴電話，以及疫情少了很多東西玩。還有現在舊的那一套「撈嘢」的方法，已經慢慢地開始被這些網上東西淘汰。但不是即時淘汰，慢慢的，這樣「撈嘢」方法慢慢消失，都是時間問題。(048)

As people become more accustomed to digital communication, traditional methods of drug dealing are gradually being replaced. This transition reflects broader societal shifts towards digital solutions for various activities, accelerated by the necessity of maintaining social distancing during the pandemic.

Cannabis users predominantly use online platforms such as Instagram (IG), Facebook, Telegram, Twitter, and Reddit to disseminate information and share experiences. Foreign websites like Weedpedia and Leafly served as major repositories of cannabis knowledge, offering detailed information on strains, effects, and user experiences. These platforms facilitated a global exchange of information, with users from various countries openly discussing their experiences and advice. This pattern was distinct from the practices of traditional drug abusers, who continued to rely on more private and consistent methods of communication and transaction, typically avoiding public social media platforms (please refer to Table 1.1).

2. *Cultural Dynamics and Subculture*

A significant trend is the growing normalisation and acceptance of cannabis use among younger generations. This cultural shift is reflected in the increasing openness of online discussions and communities centred around drug use. International trends and media have partly influenced this trend, with users often comparing drug subculture and regulations in Hong Kong with those in other countries.

因為他們越來越推廣大麻合法化，其實美國的煙稅是比大麻貴，所以很少人吸煙，比較多人偏向吸食大麻。在大麻合法的州，好像有四成多的人口都會吸食大麻。
(076)

首先是網上資訊、流行文化，音樂、電影、劇集那一些，讓你知道有這些東西存在。以前經過學校的教育便定性它們為毒品，但你在網上接觸一些外來文化、外國文化的時候，就會好像有另一套論說。(078)

The Internet facilitates the exchange and acquisition of knowledge about cannabis, such as its nature, cultivation, and drug policies in different parts of the world. This helped the drug abusers understand the nature of drugs. Online platforms (e.g., YouTube) and media outlets (e.g., Netflix) made cannabis more known to the public while knowing about the legalisation of cannabis use in Western countries through news made drug abusers develop a concept that “cannabis is not necessarily a kind of evil drugs that has to be avoided”. Together with the previous verbatim accounts that drug-related knowledge was presented as professional knowledge through academic journal articles, all these contributed to the normalisation of cannabis.

Cannabis users were engaged in daily sharing activities within online communities, which included posting videos and photos of their drug use. Various drug paraphernalia, such as bongs, grinders, joints, pipes, and vaporisers, were commonly featured. This sharing extended to discussions about different drugs, like MDMA, LSD, and mushrooms, and foreign use experiences in various countries (please refer to Table 1.1).

Memes played a significant role in the cannabis community, with users creating humorous or ironic content that reinforced their subculture. Slogans like “Weed is natural” and parodies of anti-drug campaigns normalised cannabis use among adolescents. These online

forums and social media groups were filled with discussions about drug prices, the best strains, and various drug-related tips. Additionally, users shared unrelated information, such as pet photos, travel stories, and personal life events, which strengthened community bonds and created a more inclusive environment (please refer to Table 1.1).

3. *Knowledge Sharing*

The dissemination of cannabis-related knowledge was a crucial aspect of these online communities. Users shared news articles, scientific literature, and personal anecdotes about the benefits of cannabis, such as its medicinal uses for alleviating chronic pain, anxiety, and other health issues. This open exchange of information helped demystify cannabis and promote its perceived benefits. Detailed information about various cannabis strains, including their composition, origin, flavour, and effects, was also widely shared. Users provided historical contexts and discussed the religious significance of cannabis in various cultures, contributing to a deeper understanding of its use (please refer to Table 1.1).

4. *Dealing and Promotion*

Cannabis dealing also occurred on these platforms in a more covert manner. Promotions, price lists, and product details were shared within trusted groups. Dealers promoted activities like giveaways, treasure hunts, and pop-up fairs, often advertising physical stores mainly outside Hong Kong. They provided detailed information about products, including strain names, composition, prices, origins, flavours, and effects. Sales promotions were common, with dealers offering discounts for special events and dates like 420, festivals, occasional flash sales, reward points, and coupons. Users frequently shared screenshots of favourable feedback from customers to build trust and warn about deception and fraud, maintaining a sense of safety within the community (please refer to Table 1.1).

5. *Observations and Implications*

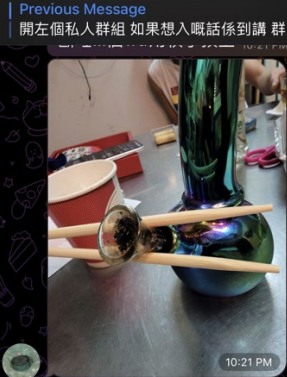

One notable observation was the openness of cannabis users in discussing their drug use when they perceived a nonjudgmental environment. This openness was fostered by the supportive and accepting nature of online communities, where users felt safe to share their experiences without fear of legal repercussions or social stigma. Such online interactions fostered a sense of community and mutual understanding among cannabis users, enhancing their collective knowledge and support networks.


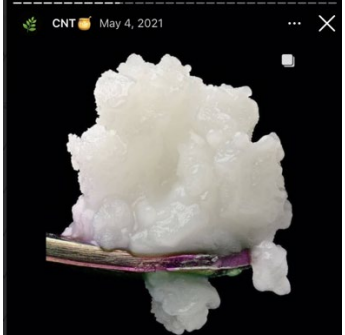
The extensive use of online platforms by cannabis users facilitated the rapid spread of information and cultural practices, significantly influencing the way cannabis was perceived and used, especially among younger demographics.

The “make-fun” culture, epitomised by memes and humorous content, trivialised the potential harms of cannabis use and contributed to its normalisation. This culture further facilitated the prevalence of cannabis use among adolescents, who were drawn to the subculture through engaging and relatable content. Additionally, the knowledge-sharing aspect helped users make informed decisions about cannabis use, understanding both its benefits and potential risks.



In conclusion, the ethnographic study of cannabis users revealed a distinct shift from traditional drug use patterns, characterised by the extensive use of online platforms for sharing, knowledge exchange, and dealing. This shift not only shaped the subculture of cannabis users but also impacted broader societal perceptions and attitudes towards cannabis. As the digital landscape continues to evolve, understanding these dynamics becomes crucial for addressing the implications of cannabis use in contemporary society.




Table 1.1 Summary of Online Ethnographic Observations


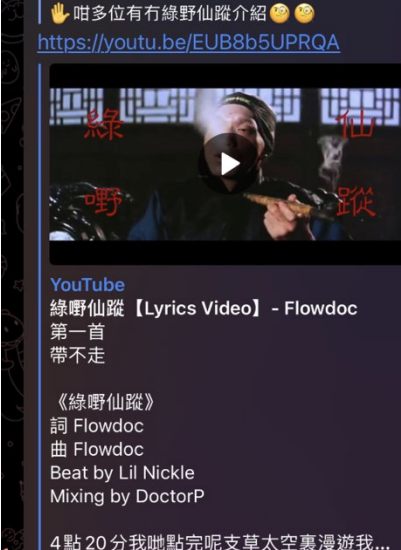
Themes	Topics in those online platforms	Summaries and examples of those online platforms	Screen shots
Drug use experience	Drug paraphernalia	Different drug paraphernalia adopted by drug abusers, including bong, grinder, joint, pipe, vape and vaporiser.	 <p>Previous Message 開左個私人群組 如果想入嘅話係到講 群入面嘅成員...</p> <p>10:21 PM</p> <p>Kit 有冇人知道到買雙頭防風火機最抵 如果你有舊 zippo 都可以換噴射胆，雙頭好似 2 舊水</p> <p>10:42 PM</p>
	Drugs	Weed, MDMA, LSD, mushrooms	 <p>stone_age852</p> <p>1/2</p>



	Cannabis edibles	Cookies, gummies, biscuits, beer, cupcake, brownies, frozen cake, rice crackers, nougat, puddings	
	Cannabis extracts	Kief, hash, wax, resin, oil	 <p data-bbox="1668 1093 1915 1157">Budder-大麻萃取物</p> <p data-bbox="1668 1173 1915 1276">過濾過程不斷攪拌 讓大麻油形成奶油狀 濃度可達60%-90%</p>

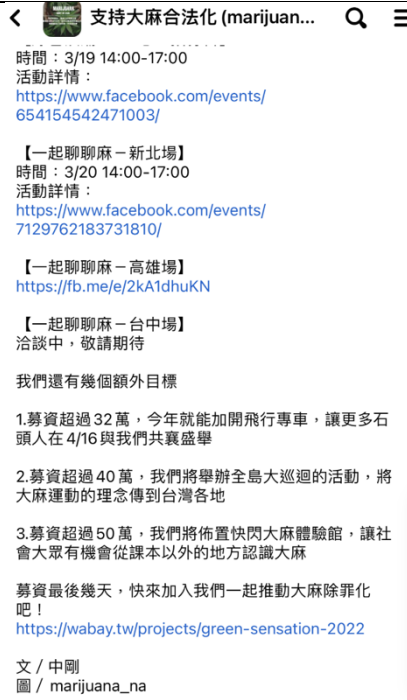
Foreign use experiences	<p>Drug abusers travel to other countries for smoking weed; and record their experience and journey as a diary/journal.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <p>Greece 「係希臘冇特登去搵 dealer，但係都去咗唯一一間草店，主要賣 gear 同 CBD 草 就試左€20/5g Strawberry Banana 心諗佢哋一定有普通草 但係冇所謂啦，要 hi 返荷蘭收成先 hi</p> <p>Visited another cannabis shop in Athens, all kinds of gears and CBD weeds, bet they must hv selling normal ones but didn't keep asking, tried Strawberry Banana this time, mind relaxing, maintaining good mood for sight seeing」</p> <p>Denmark 「...宜家正式開心 SHARE 啲草旅行團分享 再次多謝 HOMIE 既詳細分享 真心好有愛 今次帶大家去丹麥...」</p> <p>Amsterdam 「天氣不似預期 但要 smk 總要 stone」 - Grey Area Coffeeshop</p> <p>Thailand 「老闆話泰國人食草一定要 mix tobacco」 (space_daily_421, IMG_0347)</p>	
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Subcultural construction	Artwork	<p>Drug abusers share original/ forwarded spiritual artwork paintings with elements of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Weed, weed logo 2. People/characters rolling joints 3. Blue-sky thinking pattern 	 <p>dr.420hk : 有個會同你一齊 smoke 嘅另一半真係件好幸福嘅事</p>
	Cartoon & anime characters	<p>Original cartoon characters/ cartoon series related to weed.</p> <p>Derivative work of classic cartoon/anime characters with weed elements, such as The Simpsons and Rick and Morty.</p>	 <p>419_plus1</p>

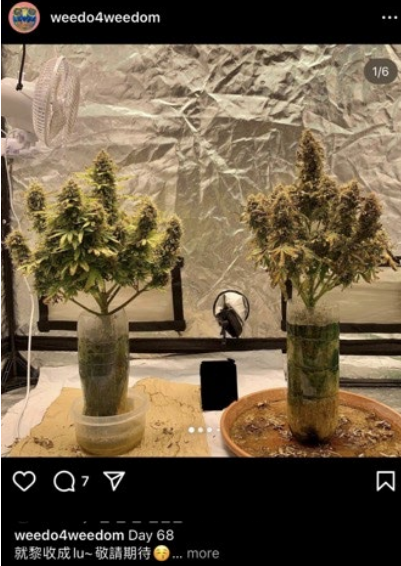
	<p>Memes</p>	<p>Drug abusers create captioned images/videos, typically humorous/ironic in nature.</p> <p>Examples: <i>Inside jokes</i> 「當你 stone 左嘅時候發現自己有能力征服宇宙」</p> <p><i>Quotes</i> “DON’T PANIC, IT’S ORGANIC.”</p> <p>“A FRIEND WITH WEED IS A FRIEND INDEED!”</p> <p> 兔子麻麻 – LINE 貼圖 LINE STORE store.line.me</p> <p><i>Sticker packs</i></p>	
	<p>Merchandise</p>	<p>Weed products</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hoodies 2. Keychain 3. PS4 console 4. T-shirt 5. Shoes 6. Cushion 7. Tote bag 8. Slippers 9. Skin protection 10. Condom 11. Spray 	


<p>Music & movies</p>	<p>Drug abusers compose original songs with lyrics related to weed.</p> <p>Examples: 「娛人節快樂～Rapper #n 拾陸派台作 skunk freestyle 話比大家知呢隻茶葉幾有 feel，原來 skunk 有個好地道嘅名...」</p> <p>「Lemon skunk review 我而家 rap 出嚟 唔係寫嚟 有乜咁出奇 我飛住 freestyle 喺度當交貨 你咪撚聽錯 有冇搞錯 我有 rap 錯 咁都得嗶 你有冇搞錯 咁撚快你又賣曬啲貨...」</p>	
	<p>Drug abusers also share different songs and movies, which are good vibes while smoking.</p> <p>Examples: 「這首非常適合抽大麻時聽 這首歌是來自發夢王大冒險 大家有興趣也可以看這套戲 是追夢熱血類 而這首歌也非常有 feel 適合用來想東西」</p>	

<p>Nails & tattoo</p>	<p>Drug abusers make weed-related tattoos on their body and nails.</p> <p>Examples: 「心很累，有無紋身 homie 大家一齊比啲意見」 「我覺得啟靈者都可以去認識下佢」、「傾下計都無所謂」、「佢好 peace」</p> <p>「剛刺好在我手腕上的大麻葉 tattoo...」</p>	 <p>StonerGirls · 追蹤 2018年11月4日 · 公</p>
<p>Numbers related to weed (420)</p>	<p>Drug abusers take pictures/ screenshots of any objects with the number related to 420, including time (4:20 p.m.), date (20/4), road number, graffiti, receipt and cash number .</p> <p>Drug abusers also celebrate the day of 20 April with other drug abusers (homies).</p> <p>Examples: 「祝各位弟兄 420 快上」、 「Happy 420」</p>	 <p>2020年4月20日 · 國 去年的今天我們走上街頭。 今年因為疫情，我們Stay Home.</p> <p>Happy 420 Chill out.</p> <p>y11.piee.pw Happy420 慶祝420週年日</p>

	<p>Promotion of activities</p>	<p>Drug abusers promote their activities on social media platforms.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <p>Parades 【大麻遊行！草民站出來！】 越多人站出來，就越有機會造成改變。 1 個人的聲音就只是造反，1 群人的聲音就是民意。</p> <p>【活動資訊】 時間：04/17(六) 12:00-20:30 地點：台北市中正區濟南路一段 1 號(立法院群賢樓旁) 遊行：16:20 開始...</p> <p>Fundraising 3. 募資超過 50 萬，我們將佈置快閃大麻體驗館，讓社會大眾有機會從課本以外的地方認識大麻 募資最後幾天，快來加入我們一起推動大麻除罪化吧！</p> <p>Talk 2022 年 3 月 12 日 星期六, 下午 2:00-下午 5:00 一起聊療麻 – 桃園場」、「草民們應該有很多問題想聊想發問吧？歡迎大家來玩」</p> <p>Pop-up fairs/parties 第一年加拿大過 420 膽粗粗搞咗個 POP UP 香港 HOMIE 420 快樂 溫哥華 HOMIE 聽日見</p>	 <p>時間：3/19 14:00-17:00 活動詳情： https://www.facebook.com/events/654154542471003/</p> <p>【一起聊聊麻 – 新北場】 時間：3/20 14:00-17:00 活動詳情： https://www.facebook.com/events/7129762183731810/</p> <p>【一起聊聊麻 – 高雄場】 https://fb.me/e/2kA1dhuKN</p> <p>【一起聊聊麻 – 台中場】 洽談中，敬請期待</p> <p>我們還有幾個額外目標</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 募資超過 32 萬，今年就能加開飛行專車，讓更多石頭人在 4/16 與我們共襄盛舉 2. 募資超過 40 萬，我們將舉辦全島大巡迴的活動，將大麻運動的理念傳到台灣各地 3. 募資超過 50 萬，我們將佈置快閃大麻體驗館，讓社會大眾有機會從課本以外的地方認識大麻 <p>募資最後幾天，快來加入我們一起推動大麻除罪化吧！ https://wabay.tw/projects/green-sensation-2022</p> <p>文 / 中剛 圖 / marijuana_na</p>
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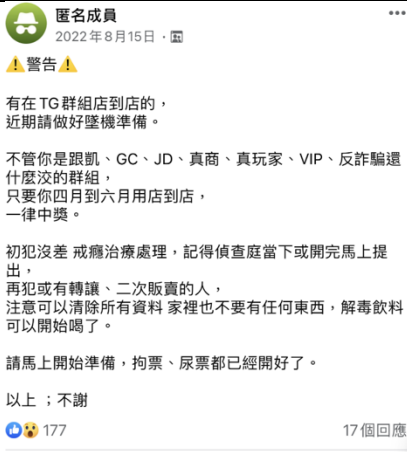
	Sex appeal	<p>The image of weed is linked to sex appeal.</p> <p>Drug abusers also share their sexual experience after consuming drugs.</p> <p>Examples: 「想問下 trip 緊個陣男性鍾唔鍾意另一半咁著 Or 女仔自己鍾唔鍾意咁著 咁 neon colourful trip 住扑野應該仲爽」</p> <p>「我會覺得自己好撻淫 好正好 shy 貼完票真係會更加想要」</p>	
Information exchange	Arguments of legalisation	<p>Drug abusers express their support/ look forward to legalising/decriminalising of marijuana.</p> <p>Examples: 「今日祈禱，明日願望成長，大麻合法化，世界和平。」</p> <p>Benefits of medical marijuana 「我爸在使用 CBD 幾個禮拜後，主動跟我說竟然睡覺睡到笑醒，平常做夢大多是惡夢的。」</p> <p>Trend of other countries</p> <p><i>Canada</i> 「加拿大擬將大麻合法化 明年 2018 年 7 月前完成立法... (大麻合法化已經成為現今社會的趨勢)...」</p> <p><i>Netherlands</i> 「...荷蘭青少年吸毒比例是全洲佔比最低的，為甚麼這麼低？因為荷蘭大麻合法化，人民呢也覺得習以為常，很普遍了 更沒有什麼誘惑力，很好呀！...」</p>	

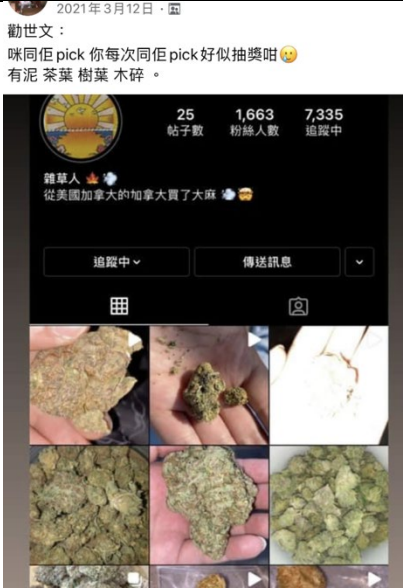

		<p><i>Conflict of interest in political, economic and cultural sectors</i></p> <p>「我以為現在的年輕人的觀念都很好 是因為老一輩的傳統思想才沒辦法朝合法化更進一步 看了留言就覺得還有好長一段路要走 心累」</p> <p>「文化爭議在中國、馬來西亞等亞洲其它大多數國家，休閒性大麻仍被作為毒品。東方文化對毒品的嚴厲的社會態度，影響著各國政府有關政策制定。...」</p>	
Cultivation		<p>Drug abusers upload the cultivation process regularly with brief introduction and review.</p> <p><u>Examples:</u></p> <p>「#1</p> <p>420 係個好日子，共啜會第一個有關種植 project 完成，首兩棵 lemon skunk 收成試飲，之後會有其他後續或新搞作，趁呢個日子以新收成做第一個階段檢討，記錄下順便講下我地玩緊咩/」</p> <p>「LEMON SKUNK REVIEW</p> <p>...介乎 Sativa and Indica 中間一個幾好嘅平衡 作為閒時 first joint 幾好 幾岩入門人士 亦幾岩配搭其他茶...相比起 Northern Light 食完好好瞓 Lemon 食完唔會即刻覺得眼瞓 唔會太迷迷到攤左響度」</p> <p>Some drug abusers provide cultivation guides and open cultivation classes for other drug abusers.</p> <p>「比返少少種值班同學進度大家睇 呢排好多人問 有興趣私聯 有成功教學 取決於心態」</p>	


	<p>Experience and information sharing</p>	<p>Drug abusers also share the experience of consuming drugs. Various of communication pattern are observed.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <p>Activities to do after smoking 「大家覺得 lsd 點樣好玩滴 通常系幾多 u 食完中意做咩 覺得扣咩最正」</p> <p>「試下睇下 d 名畫，梵高果 d 好正」、「多數睇下高達，eva 啲啲囉，等自己可以植下機械人咁囉」、「做乜都得，食完做乜都好有興趣」</p> <p>Ask for experiences and handlings 「大神 貼完吞左好想嘔又肚痾 有咩辦法解決」</p> <p>「請問，憂鬱症適合用偏向於 陰蒂卡 的草嗎？」</p> <p>「憂鬱症，請先看醫師，這邊不是第一線的治療場所。」</p> <p>Past experience (User's feelings and memorable moment)</p> <p>「...LSD 對我來說是多麼重要 雖然重要我這 19 年的人生只用過 5 次左右...到目前為止沒有想用的念頭，我的意思是祂就想是一個啟動你思想連結的門票，一旦啟動了你的思想連結，就會恍然大悟...所以有的人用一次就領悟到」</p> <p>「第一次點接觸」</p>	
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		<p>「有個朋友一向食開 有一日突然想試吓 就叫佢介紹俾我 嗰陣我連 dealer 叫 dealer 都唔知 就喺條大街上面交收咗第一次...事實上我頭幾次喺香港 smoke 都係覺得無乜料 一直都係食 brownies 同油 直到有次同朋友講起 佢話我係唔識吸入肺 但佢無教我 我自己上網 search 吸入肺之後我上到以為自己會死 先發現原來天然嘢係可以勁過人造嘢」</p> <p><i>Philosophical discussions</i> 「如果一個小朋友由細就係無靈魂嘅人 大過就做狗 係咪應該原諒佢 佢細個唔識選擇 定係歸咎係已成年嘅佢本人」、</p> <p>「其實會不會我們只是 不知明物體的微觀世界 或許我們的視角只是別人的宏觀角度...或許所謂的多重宇宙 只是 旁邊不知道哪來的細胞 然而我們都是被制度綁架的人質」</p> <p><i>Ask for preferences</i> <i>Which strain is the best?</i></p> <p>「甘多位師兄鍾意 indica 定 sativa?」</p> <p>「...暫時最中意既 strain #bluedream 用 dynavap 可以食到淡淡既果 香 感覺都好 gentle 好 soft 9/10」</p> <p>Drug abusers exchange their information and understanding of drugs, such as providing guides and tips to enhance the effects of drugs and ways of consuming drugs.</p> <p><i>Edibles' recipe</i> 「《花香曲奇食譜》</p>	
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		<p>先整左牛油先 牛油 480g 加入 10g 花隔水煮 45 分鐘其間不斷攪拌（會有好大陣香味，小心鄰居，安全至上）...」</p> <p>「先將 2 分 1 杯綠牛油放溫室(15 分鐘) 加 3 分 2 杯黑糖打發 然後加入兩茶匙雲呢拿精油和一隻蛋攪拌 再加入 1 又 3 分 1 杯面粉 4 分 1 茶匙梳打粉 4 分 1 茶匙鹽...」</p> <p><i>Guides & tips</i> 「第一次使用 MDMA 或 Ecstasy 的詳細指南 MDMA 使用的劑量是體重+50mg，比如 60 公斤（60+50 = 110mg 就是 60 公斤要吃的劑量。MDMA 還是推薦盡量拿純結晶的，M 比較軟鬆飄的感覺。...」</p> <p>「原材料同衍生品 MD=原料 MA=加工左既」</p> <p><i>Comments on news related to cannabis</i> Drug abusers share and comment on the daily news about marijuana. 「兩位係醫生定係庸醫？ 壞處就講，好處呢？ 係唔係自己冇得做研究就， 直接無視埋人地果 D? 幾時先識醒?!」</p> <p>「不如改名做弱智 01，cbd 分解成 thc? #煉金術」</p>	
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	<p>Friendly reminder of police surveillance</p>	<p>Drug abusers remind their groupmates of police surveillance online and in real life.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <p><i>Online surveillance</i></p> <p>Not to reveal their personal identity 「reddit 農友接連出事，請不要跟陌生人聊天以及點擊任何陌生人傳給你的連結。還有照片不要亂拍，裡面會有位置資訊。」</p> <p>Not to pick up/deal in public groups 「點解咁多人會覺得呢度有嘢擺？就算有都唔好信啦，香港未合法架，而且呢度唔係交易谷，各位唔好再傻豬豬開 post 問喇」、「實有 mon post 狗，不過我會盡力審查的」</p> <p><i>Interaction with suspected police officer</i></p> <p><i>Questions asked by suspected police officer</i> 「知唔知尖沙咀有條行仔，有手卷煙絲 煙斗同水煙壺賣既」、「知唔知地址？」</p> <p><i>Responses of other drug abusers</i> 「你收皮啦」、「你收皮未姐」、「全世界都知你係差佬 得你自己唔知全世界都知」、「你守邊個環 你真係唔適合當差」、「大佬阿」、「邊有當差咁戇鳩架」</p> <p><i>Real time reminders</i> 「今日出面好多 rb 各位小心」、「be safe」、「旺角朗豪坊一帶超重狗+真。緝毒犬」、「在外 homie 小心」</p>	
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<p>Reputation of dealer</p>	<p>Drug abusers comment to dealer's services and quality of drugs, mostly warning other drug abusers beware of deception and dealers with bad reputation.</p> <p>Examples: 「有無人試過喺重慶搵啲南亞佬 pick」、「南亞佬好似唔會賣靚野」、「唔係糧尾都唔好買」、「應該溝咗野既 同埋通常都好碎」</p> <p>「其實個個都貪平先出事 得佢一個賣到禁平」、「傻啦 有啲平嘅 但係不過雖然劣質咗少少 但都唔會好似佢咁」</p>	
<p>Finding buddies & dealers</p>	<p>Drug abusers find buddies to smoke together in particular location/districts (mostly near their hometown).</p> <p>Examples: 「有冇將軍澳 buddy」 「有無油塘/九龍東人閃」 「有冇 Toronto 巴打？」</p> <p>Some drug abusers find buddies to smoke together when travelling to other countries. 「台灣旅行想 smk weed 歡迎 Dm」</p> <p>Drug abusers also ask for contact of drug dealers to buy drugs.</p>	

		<p>「有冇沙田 deal?」、「有冇師兄知道台北嘅離拿可以介紹」、「有冇知道日本點擺貨」、「去旅行想 pick 少少」、「想問泰國有無 dealer 介紹 最好有埋其他野 (laughing gas/molly etc)」</p>	
<p>Drug-irrelevant conversation</p>	<p>/</p>	<p>Chitchat Food Life courses Pets Traveling & landscape</p>	 <p>The screenshot shows a WhatsApp chat with a dark theme. At the top, a contact named 'Joe J' has a profile picture of a person. A message from 'Joe J' says '係男人 保母 Smk 完次次都係咁 😊 呢隻都超得意 🐾 2:44 PM'. Below this is a photo of a black and white cat lying down. Another message from 'Joe J' says '仲有隻 J Joe edited 2:49 PM'. A third message from 'Joe J' says '點解個個都有養貓 🐾 2:49 PM'. A fourth message from 'Joe J' says '而我同我啲朋友都有 🐾 2:50 PM'. A fifth message from '係男人 保母' says '執架 2:50 PM'. The chat background has faint cat-related icons.</p>

1.3. Characteristics of Drug-Related Online Platforms

1. *Use of Social Media and Apps for Drug-Related Activities*

Following ethnographic observations, platforms such as Instagram (IG), Facebook, Telegram, forums, and even the deep web have become prevalent among new generations for drug-related activities. This trend indicates a shift in the way drugs are bought and sold. The responses reflect the common practices among young people to use online platforms rather than physical spaces to find drug sellers.

IG 也有不少。即是說打一些名字，420 Hong Kong，Facebook 也有專頁。(055)

正常這個年代的年輕人都上網的，怎會出街買大麻？都是上網。IG、Telegram 都是這些途徑去找到一些賣家。(101)

The increasing use of social media and apps for drug-related activities suggests that these platforms provide a convenient and relatively anonymous way for users to engage in these transactions. This convenience is further enhanced by the widespread use of these platforms among young people, making it easier for them to connect with sellers and buyers.

The Linkages of Pages and Posts on Social Media Through Algorithm

In social media, algorithms analyse user behaviour and recommend pages and posts of interest. This mechanism applies to online drug-related activities as well. The algorithms facilitate users' access to these pages without actively searching for them.

如果沒有大數據、演算法那些的話，我是不會特意去找的。他們會彈出一段付費的 post，或者叫你追蹤一下別人的。我便會按下去看一下。(076)

演算法算到一些奇怪的知識給我看，不是主動去找的。有時候就會彈出一些 YouTube 連結，觸發我看這些東西。(087)

The above verbatim accounts showed that the mechanism of big data and algorithms facilitated drug abusers to get access to online drug-related pages and posts. The role of big data and algorithms guided users towards drug-related content. Paid posts and recommended follow suggestions often lead to further exploration of such content. This passive discovery

mechanism significantly lowers the barrier to accessing drug-related information, making it more pervasive and harder to control.

The Covert Nature of Online Drug-Related Posts

Online drug-related information is often not overt. Instead, it is subtly integrated with innocent content, making it accessible once users follow these pages.

因為現在 IG 有很多有關大麻的專頁，他們本來純粹只是上傳搞笑的 post，大麻的相關資料。我 follow 之後就會有很多建議的跟隨者，然後就能看到很多賣大麻的專頁，一路伸延下去。比如說我 follow 這些專頁，它便會有很多相關的推薦，就去跟隨那些專頁。這樣就會越來越多這些 page。(061)

Cannabis-related pages often begin with benign content, like humorous posts (see

. Once followed, these pages start recommending more direct drug-related content. This gradual introduction makes it difficult for authorities to monitor and shut down such activities as they blend seamlessly with regular, non-offensive content.

2. *Specific Drugs Sold Online*

Marijuana and its derivatives, such as cannabis oil, are the most commonly sold drugs online, given the lighter penalties associated with them. Harder drugs like cocaine and methamphetamine are rarely sold openly due to higher legal risks.

網上是不會賣「可樂」的，K 也不會有在網上賣，都是在通訊軟件的範疇，在網上是不會賣的。通常網上賣大麻、迷姦水就會。因為犯這些罪不重，也不一定要坐牢。「可樂」及 K 就一定不會賣，因為這些風險高，真的要坐牢。大麻可能是罰錢，即使被判也不會判得重。(056)

Online platforms favour the sale of drugs with lower penalties, like cannabis and LSD. Dealers avoid drugs with severe legal consequences, preferring selling substances with lighter repercussions. The use of communication software for transactions also underscores the covert nature of these activities, keeping them hidden from public scrutiny and law enforcement.

1.4. Usage of Drug-Related Online Platforms

1. *Receiving Drug-Related Knowledge*

Some users often research extensively before trying new substances. Before purchasing drugs and making drug-related transactions, drug abusers would access online platforms for information about drugs. Online forums and discussion groups, such as Reddit and Facebook groups, were used to share information and experiences related to drug use. Discussions often included detailed reviews and experiences.

慢慢吸食多了之後，我會想再了解一下這些東西。上網都會有一些學術性的文章。娛樂用大麻、醫用大麻，到底他們的效果是怎樣？對社會有什麼影響？因為外國的網站是很詳細的，每一種不同的品種的細分、有什麼特性。或者是用家吸食完後的評論，甚至有些網站會說他們種的方法，要種多久，什麼品種合成。(091)

For instance, 092 would visit foreign websites to read detailed articles about recreational and medicinal cannabis, exploring their effects and societal impact. These sites often provide comprehensive breakdowns of different strains, user reviews, cultivation methods, and the characteristics of various cannabis types. Reddit, for example, hosts discussions where users share their experiences and knowledge about cannabis, including the political debates surrounding its use. This wealth of information allows users to understand the substance before consumption. Over time, users might become more knowledgeable about different strains of cannabis and their specific effects. These resources contributed to those users believing they made informed decisions before consumption and held reasons for their persistence.

上網做研究，食之前一定要做研究，查一查它的品種，大家會有評價的。每年網站都會票選，大家一致推選最正的品種，即那年全年最佳品種，有分數，有評價。然後又會寫有些什麼不良反應。這個網站叫 Leafy，這個網站十分好。(067)

大麻是在網上討論區認識的，有外國、有香港的。或者有一些學者會出一些文章，當然不是會看完它，有一些人會濃縮做一個摘要，在報章上的那些簡單版。(076)

大麻使用者開始慢慢認識多了東西，視自己為知識分子，他們會搜尋很多大麻有用的學術文章 (journal)，因為大麻在不同的國家，開始合法的時候，也令他們覺得「我們這裡太落後，很多學術文章 (journal) 說大麻有效。」(121)

While online platforms offer a wealth of information on drug-related topics, the unregulated nature of this information poses significant risks. The potential for misinformation, normalisation of drug use, and subjective biases necessitate a cautious approach to using these resources. It is essential for users to critically evaluate the sources and seek reliable, scientifically validated information to make informed and safe decisions regarding drug use.

2. *Providing Education and Information Sharing*

Apart from searching for drug reviews to make informed purchases, many users actively construct “educational content” for new users. They offer reviews of drug effects, legality, and usage methods, mirroring how they initially received knowledge when they started using.

會分享一些新聞出來，例如某一間大學的研究，說大麻對新冠肺炎是有多少百分比可以預防的。我一直看的新聞也說明，沒有人因食大麻而死。(069)

Users often share news articles and academic research to educate others. This indicates that drug-related educational content is taken seriously and often involves the dissemination of scientific findings. For instance, some suggest the potential benefits of cannabis in preventing COVID-19, highlighting how users rely on current information to justify or promote drug use.

Educational content extends to formal courses and certifications. As 082 stated, institutions in the US and the Netherlands offer specialised education on cannabis cultivation and use, akin to learning about brewing whisky. This formalised approach reflects the increasing professionalisation and legitimisation of cannabis-related knowledge in foreign countries, further consolidating the notion that cannabis knowledge is professional.

種植大麻這些上網就學到，現在也越來越多相關的 Youtubers，Instagram，在網上面越來越多教學去看。我知道香港有很多人正在自己種植大麻。(082)

The proliferation of educational content on platforms like YouTube and Instagram has facilitated a growing trend of self-cultivation among drug abusers in Hong Kong. This trend underscores the active role of users in both learning and teaching about drug use.

Drug abusers are not merely passive recipients of drug-related knowledge. Some users translate and actively share scientific articles and studies to inform others, demonstrating a commitment to educating the drug-user community.

那時我們開了一個 page，就是很想教育一下別人。很簡單就是，我的理念就是不想別人像我第一次那樣，完全不知道就試。我很想你試的時候，精神上有充足的準備。內容可能會有關我們的個人經驗、別人的經驗，或者怎樣去吸食。可能我會出一個帖子，會說第一次試最好找一個安全一點的地方，讓自己感覺安全一點；選擇自己吸食的方式，你喜歡吃大麻食品(edibles)也行，但要知道吃大麻食品會怎樣？我覺得這些是心態上的事情。另外，就是一些大麻上的知識，我怎樣吸食，可能我用 Vape 有甚麼分別，Vape 是怎樣的一回事。這些都是上網找的，Leafly，或者很多外國研究，我們便將它翻譯過來成中文，我們會有知識型和資訊性型，還有心態型的做法。(089)

The creation of dedicated pages for educating others shows a proactive effort to ensure new users are well-prepared. However, this also raises concerns about the facilitation and encouragement of drug use. By providing detailed guides and personal experiences, these pages might lower the threshold for experimenting with drugs, making it seem safer and more socially acceptable than it actually is. Many participants in the cannabis community have noted an increase in inexperienced and young users, raising concerns about potential brain damage in these immature individuals.

3. *Identifying Potential Drug Buyers and Dealers*

Drug abusers use the Internet to find drugs that cannot be easily purchased via existing social networks. For example, online platforms are easier to source the dealers of cannabis edibles, which might not be available through local connections. These platforms offer a wide range of products, making it relatively easy for users to find what they need. This highlights the convenience and variety that online drug markets provide, which traditional local connections cannot provide.

看看是甚麼產品。如果你說要其他產品，可能要大麻曲奇那些，那就真的要上網找。但其實也不難找的，甚麼產品也有。(085)

Dealers employed various tactics to reach potential buyers. The use of codes and ambiguous terms in online posts and advertisements allows drug dealers to discreetly locate and identify potential buyers. These tactics are effective because they ensure only those who understand the codes or symbols to engage with the content, facilitating secure and targeted

marketing. Additionally, vague language in advertisements helps in concealing the true nature of the products, making it challenging for outsiders to decipher.

我第一次知道這樣東西就是在聊天室的廣告。它會彈出一些小廣告，而廣告上所用的字眼好含糊，我初時不知道是甚麼，廣告上的「皮具清潔劑」，其實那個化學成分就是 Popper。初時不知道，接著在留言版中看到後就知了。原來皮具清潔劑是指 Popper。(019)

現在對方頗直接的，會於手機程式中打「Cfbb」、「Babcf」、「Ice？」或是打雪糕或冰山的符號。(032)

Some dealers use platforms, like HeyMandi, which was described as a text-based social app, to discreetly market their products. 091 reported that dealers in HeyMandi often used tags or even had obvious descriptions to facilitate the mutual identification of drug dealers and buyers.

Also, the dealers identified the potential drug buyers through accessing the buyers' online social networks. The social networks of Internet users, including drug buyers and dealers, were visible. Only drug buyers and dealers would have drug-related social networks. Following these online accounts would thus help reach potential drug buyers and dealers.

IG 很多賣家的，有些人會主動追蹤你，然後就會見到他有賣。整個 IG 文化是當有一個賣家去追蹤你，全部賣家都會追蹤你。(090)

1.5. Features of Online Drug Activities and Transactions

1. Preferred Platforms for Drug Transactions

Different online platforms serve various purposes in drug-related activities. Some websites and apps are primarily used for promoting drugs and sharing knowledge, while platforms offering higher privacy and anonymity are preferred for conducting drug transactions. Telegram, in particular, is frequently mentioned as a primary platform for discussing and arranging drug deals due to its encrypted and anonymous communication features, similar to the "deep web.".

通常都是去 deep web。Telegram 都算是 deep web，Telegram 或者 Instagram，在香港找的話通常都是這兩個。(097)

會在 Telegram 上面找到賣家的資訊。Telegram 是其中一個渠道，再之前就是 IG。很多都是由 IG 這個渠道去進入 Telegram 那個世界的，我覺得 Telegram 都頗像香港的 deep web。因為是匿名的，匿名的話大家就沒有甚麼禁忌了。(103)

Initially, users find and identify drug dealers through public posts and groups. Once a connection is made, transactions move to private groups or direct messages on Telegram, ensuring a more secretive and secure communication environment.

真的有放心力去找的話，就會找到有些 Instagram 帳戶不是在 Instagram 中買賣的，然後我就加入一些 Telegram group，或加了賣家的 Telegram，接著就學會怎樣買賣了。(066)

我其實沒有見過有人開群組來閒聊，主要都是買賣。(090)

In addition to Telegram, other platforms like WhatsApp and Signal are also utilised for drug transactions. WhatsApp and Signal are more likely to be used for transactions with known buyers, where periodic updates and price quotes are sent directly to them. This method is more personalised and often reserved for trusted connections due to the lower anonymity.

起碼是認識的，才做的，要有電話，在 WhatsApp 那裡傳送過來而已。Instagram 真的不知道。太危險了。(006)

你說自己人，自己認識的賣家，他定時定候傳送 WhatsApp 過來說多少錢，報價給你，這些也有的。(050)

Telegram 現在也少了。現在都是 Signal。因為我那個賣家是我的朋友，那便沒所謂。(073)

Some users also mentioned Instagram as a platform for finding drugs, but it is used less frequently due to higher prices and lower perceived safety. The preference for cheaper and safer options makes Telegram, WhatsApp and Signal more popular for conducting transactions.

我很專一地找同一個莊家。而網路上有很多不同的銷售渠道，但網路上的賣得很貴，我有嘗試搜尋過 IG，七百元才只得三克。(064)

2. *Use of Anonymous, Private, or Fake Accounts to Address Privacy Concerns*

Privacy is a major concern for users engaging in online drug activities. To avoid detection and maintain privacy, many users prefer using private or encrypted communication methods to discuss and arrange drug purchases safely and securely. Some users create separate anonymous or private accounts specifically for drug-related activities, while others use fake accounts to browse and interact within these networks without revealing their identities, protecting themselves and ensuring safety. The fear of law enforcement and social stigma drives the need for discreet and secure transactions.

現在基本上大麻，或者是 LSD，或者新興的，全部都轉了在網上去做買賣。因為始終網絡是現在新世代，亦都是很主流的一樣東西。再加上你可以用很多身份去掩飾自己，其實某程度上好像安全。(062)

The anonymity provided by the Internet gives drug abusers a sense of safety and security, allowing them to protect themselves from being detected and stigmatised during their engagement in drug-related activities. For example, 062 maintained distinct personal and drug-related accounts on platforms like Instagram. This separation allowed her to control who could access her drug-related activities, enabling her to engage with dealers and other users while maintaining a level of privacy.

我會創立一個假賬號去做這些溝通，即是對話，或者是買賣。其實是保障自己而已。因為我不知道對方是甚麼人，你也不知道他是誰。(069)

Drug abusers made use of these features by creating multiple anonymous or fake accounts, generating identities that are irrelevant to their real-life identities, thus concealing and safeguarding their true identities.

3. *Use of Emojis and Coded Language for Secrecy against Monitoring*

Drug abusers are alert to online monitoring and surveillance. To avoid detection, they use specific terms and emojis to communicate about drugs covertly. Instead of openly discussing drugs, they employ coded language to discuss and conduct transactions.

很少真的說在網上公開地賣，因為知道現在網上多了很多人監察犯罪活動。(001)

我自己真的不會在網上分享，因為始終會害怕在網上分享會被抓。所以不會轉載或分享出去，都是自己看而已。也沒有上網認識人，你怎麼知道他是否真的用家？(075)

For instance, "ice cream" icons are used to discreetly indicate the availability and use of methamphetamine. Those who understand these icons and emojis can identify each other and conduct drug-related communications and transactions.

在網上如果你要找的話，其實很容易找到吸毒的人。他有雪糕 icon 的一個表情符號，總之就是告訴你是雪糕 [冰毒] 的意思。(024)

Public sales posts are rare because of the increased online monitoring. When transactions are discussed, coded phrases like “有香有力” for cocaine or “靚石” and “靚針” for high-quality ketamine are used to maintain secrecy, as mentioned by 001.

Codes for cannabis include "420" due to World Cannabis Day on April 20, and various other terms. These terms are understood within the community, allowing for covert communication about drug activities.

其實我看見很多人用不同的名去形容這件事，有一些用神農氏，就是嘗百草。又可能有一些英文「herb」。其實什麼也有的，接著有些人說「點嘢」、「chill」、「點葉」，主要都是這些。其實我覺得變化不大，來來去去都是那幾個，那些明白的人會明白。(096)

These data highlight the adaptability and caution of drug abusers in navigating online spaces to avoid detection while conducting their activities. By using multiple accounts, coded language, and emojis, they manage to maintain privacy and security in an environment of constant surveillance.

4. Trust and Verification

Trust plays a crucial role in online drug transactions. Users were often cautious and did not blindly trust information found online. They required verification of the product and the seller before making a purchase. This cautious approach was necessary due to the lack of familiarity and uncertainty about the quality of the drugs being offered.

我不會特意在網上去找。一來我不認識他，二來我不知道那是誰，第三我不知道那些是甚麼貨來的，即是你會講究貨源。沒有信心放入口吃。(001)

To ensure trustworthiness, users often demand photos of the product or references from other users. Verification from trusted sources was essential to alleviate doubts about the legitimacy and quality of the drugs. This need for verification reflects the users' desire to minimise risk and ensure safety in their transactions.

她要求我再與她繼續交談的過程前，要求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」。那她才放心，然後和我繼續傾談。(062)

我有試過有些賣家要追蹤我的 IG 帳號，去看一下我 IG 的內容是甚麼，追縱一些甚麼人。接著也有試過一些賣家只是做熟客生意或者做朋友介紹的客人。(096)

第一次買賣要我親自打電話去，也算是驗證過。(103)

Participants expressed scepticism about the validity of online information regarding the quality of drugs and the authenticity of user reviews and comments. This scepticism led them to seek out real user experiences and expert opinions rather than relying solely on anonymous online discussions. By verifying information through trusted sources, they could make more informed and safer decisions about their drug use.

不會去不同討論區看別人怎麼吸食大麻，因為最真實的意見還是來自用家，你上網看也不知道他是否真的有吸食，可能只是胡扯。或許有部分資訊我會上網看，但也是看文章或者專家論述，文章寫出來可信便可信，不可信便不理了。(072)

我覺得那些關注組反而不可信。因為他在一個社交平台上就很光明正大地告訴人我有食，那我不會知道這個是不是陷阱來的。即是如果他是一個陷阱，我去到，拘捕了我，我不就出事了？(085)

By verifying information through trusted sources and being sceptical of unverified online content, users can navigate the risks associated with online drug transactions more effectively. This cautious approach helps them avoid potential traps and ensures they obtain safe and genuine products.

1.6. Nature of Drug-Related Online Communities

1. *Peer Introductions*

Many individuals are introduced to drugs and online transactions through friends and social networks rather than directly seeking out dealers online. Existing social circles play a significant role in initiating and expanding drug use.

直到在 Grindr 上認識一些朋友，然後再認識到其他朋友，就發現原來其他人都會有用毒品這個習慣，間中就和他們繼續玩。(024)

從上交友網，然後開始使用 Grindr。在朋友那裡知道了 Chem Fun 這個玩法。(030)

These verbatim accounts highlight that users often get to know about drugs and engage in drug-related activities through their existing social networks or through online peers met via social networking sites like Grindr. This process underscores the importance of social connections in the dissemination and adoption of drug use practices.

2. *Support and Shared Knowledge*

As mentioned previously, online platforms (e.g., Leafly) serve as support networks where users share knowledge about drug use, including safe practices, effects, and sourcing quality drugs. Gradually, these interactions build a drug-related online community. This sense of community helps users navigate the complexities of drug use and acquisition.

我會進去 Facebook 或者是 WhatsApp 群組看人家怎樣銷售，怎樣去宣傳自己。即是我進去通常是看一下有甚麼學習，了解行情，但我就不會說話。純粹這樣。偷窺一下。因為那些群組通常都是賣家的群組，今期有甚麼貨便列出一個貨物清單。另外，我自己在 Telegram 都有一個群組，那裡的人通常會把好的「草」影了相放上去。因為吸食大麻都有很多不同的工具，可能也會聊一下買甚麼 bong (水煙壺) 好。我也看見他們聊一下 LSD、MDMA 那些。我自己就會去找大麻的藥用性，這些學術性的討論。譬如我出 IG post 會分享一個帕金森病人，是可以靠大麻幫助到他手震的情況，可以幫他鎮定。貼了這段片出來然後就會有人去短訊我，告訴我「其實我之前都是有」、「我都是」，也有「大麻都是藥，我都是靠它去醫好了抑鬱症」。他們就會分享這樣的方法。(084)

疫情時，在家中會悶。我就開了一個專頁，說一下關於大麻的東西，純粹是分享我自己日常生活，和朋友吸食的日常事。那麼自己製作一些圖畫，打一些東西在上面，即是吸食大麻那些迷因（Memes）。有一些人都會覺得我寫的東西都尚算可以、也頗有趣，可能都會做到朋友。(096)

Users and dealers discuss various drug-related topics, such as methods of using drugs and sourcing quality products. These online communities provide emotional and instrumental support by sharing experiences and knowledge about drug use. This support system helps users manage the complexities of drug use and fosters a sense of camaraderie among members. Additionally, these online peers can become part of a network that assists in sourcing drugs, thus facilitating subsequent transactions. Furthermore, such social networks also bring up the vulnerability for individuals to get involved in drug-dealing activities.

我就在那個專頁中認識到一個朋友，他自己不是賣家，但他有朋友做賣家，那就問我有沒有興趣那樣。(096)

In summary, online drug-related communities are shaped by peer introductions and supported by shared knowledge. These communities provide a platform for users to learn, share, and navigate the intricacies of drug use while maintaining safety and anonymity. These dynamics underscore the significance of social networks and online platforms in the drug subculture, offering both support and a means for discreet transactions.

1.7. Risks and Concerns

1. *Legal Risks*

Legal risks associated with online drug transactions have been a pervasive concern. Many participants expressed fear of being detected by law enforcement due to the traceable nature of online activities. Consequently, they developed various communication strategies, such as using encrypted messaging apps and anonymous accounts, to minimise these risks.

網上販賣毒品，你會被人抓的。人家會檢查到你的 IP 在哪裡，會隨時被人抓的。即使你進網吧，也有閉路電視。你無謂做一盤生意，要冒著風險去做。(027)

網上販毒就少有，Facebook 那些也有見過，但我覺得不會那麼白痴。有些用 WhatsApp 傳廣告給客人，但都是傳給一些食家。應該就不會在網上通處傳，讓警察查到。我也不知那是什麼心態，我自己就一定不會做。(039)

Ongoing police surveillance and monitoring have forced drug abusers and dealers to adopt more sophisticated methods to evade detection. Apart from using coded language on social media, they have turned to digital tools and platforms such as the deep web and encrypted messaging apps to conduct their activities securely.

In response to police infiltration and surveillance, users protect themselves by using online platforms that allow them to conceal their true identities. This strategy involves leveraging the anonymity provided by tools like Telegram, where only user names are visible, not phone numbers. This evolution highlights a growing adaptation to more secure and sophisticated means of transaction.

不過你在人面也不代表什麼。所以在群組中不會查看到我的電話號碼，例如 Telegram。不會有我電話只會有用戶名稱。(097)

While drug-related transactions do take place online, dealers are cautious not to engage in overt activities that would leave traceable records and expose them to police surveillance. Therefore, online drug activities and transactions are kept secretive and private to avoid detection by authorities.

2. *Police Infiltration*

Users are aware of the potential for police infiltration in online groups. Law enforcement agencies often disguise their surveillance efforts by posing as buyers or participants in online groups. This form of infiltration can lead to arrests and the disruption of drug networks.

以我理解，網上放毒品就九成都是「放蛇」的。(029)

我有時就覺得是騙人的，有時就覺得怕是警察，所以我不會賣給他們。(048)

可能他是警察，有見過很多警察在網上埋伏成功。所以自己的防範意識比較高，始終這個在香港仍然不合法。(075)

其實這些群組很容易進入，有很多警察在裡面。(097)

In light of police infiltration, users remain cautious and sceptical of online communities. They are aware that any online interaction could potentially be a trap set by law enforcement, leading to a heightened sense of vigilance.

In addition, some dealers exploit police infiltration as a strategy to eliminate competition. This tactic involves providing law enforcement with information about rival dealers to divert attention and resources away from themselves, thereby reducing competition in the market.

網上賣「可樂」，很容易被人玩弄，看有沒有人會打電話去報警。網上賣都是一個惡性競爭，要是你被捕了，那就少一檔。所以現在群組中有些人煽風點火去做這種事。(056)

The practice of informing on rivals is indicative of the cutthroat nature of the online drug market. This environment of "online warfare" makes the landscape highly competitive and treacherous, with dealers not only having to worry about law enforcement but also about the deceptive tactics of their peers. The fear of betrayal and the constant threat of police action add layers of complexity and danger to their operations.

3. *Scams and Frauds*

The fear of being scammed is significant among users engaged in online drug transactions. Many are wary of the authenticity of online dealers and the quality of the drugs offered, leading to hesitancy in making transactions online. The anonymous nature of the Internet can give rise to scams and frauds, making trust an essential component of drug transactions.

如果被我遇到上網放貨，我是不會理的。很荒謬吧。網絡上你遇到的人是什麼人也不知道，我自己做的話不熟我也不做。在網絡上遇到一個人，你要我買我也不會給錢買，我也不會浪費錢給一個沒見過、不認識、沒有接觸過的人去買。(021)

Dealers and users both report instances of fraud, where individuals pose as legitimate sellers but deliver fake or substandard products. For example, users might procure faked substances and resell them, collecting significant amounts of money from unsuspecting buyers.

我自己所見，有些二十多歲的學生本身沒有背景，但他知道如何取貨，取到貨後便轉售。之前我甚至見過有人賣樹葉去騙人，自稱什麼什麼，拿出一包芫茜便收了人家幾千元。那些就是詐騙。(072)

The prevalence of scams is such that users and dealers must be vigilant about the nature of transactions. Descriptions and prices are often scrutinised, and many scams are targeted at inexperienced buyers, especially young people.

會寫明什麼份量多少錢。而且上面太多騙人的，有很多騙年青人的商人。(022)

會少一點網上買，也會留意一下是甚麼來的。有很多是騙人的，或者很多古靈精怪的賣家。(078)

Some even contemplate engaging in fraud themselves, reflecting a broader distrust within the online drug community. The idea of scamming, such as requesting payment upfront and then disappearing, highlights the opportunistic and often deceptive environment of online drug transactions.

試過莊家給了我假貨，這時候我又急着要給我的客人。那我就要問其他莊家進貨，總之多貴也要買了。(004)

有一陣子我想過吸食多了的時候，我和朋友說，不如試一下騙人，叫他先過數，然後給他一個假電話，讓他找人又找不到。(048)

The anonymous nature of the Internet exacerbates the risk of scams and fraud. For drug abusers and dealers, trust is crucial in drug transactions. To protect themselves, they prefer conducting transactions with trusted persons, such as those with a past history of purchase and known individuals in real life. This approach helps mitigate the risks associated with anonymous online interactions, ensuring a safer and more reliable transaction process.

In conclusion, the online drug market is fraught with risks, particularly scams and frauds. The anonymous nature of the Internet makes it easy for fraudulent activities to flourish, which in turn necessitates a high level of trust and verification among participants. Dealers and users must navigate this complex landscape by relying on trusted networks and being vigilant against potential scams.

1.8. Conclusion

Drug abusers and dealers revealed that users and dealers utilised various online platforms to conduct drug-related activities. These activities included: 1) the promotion of drugs, 2) knowledge exchange, and 3) drug transactions. Different types of online platforms and communication channels were used for specific purposes. For instance, Facebook and Instagram pages and posts were primarily used for promoting drugs and identifying potential buyers and dealers, while more private groups and communication platforms, such as Telegram and Signal, were used for drug transactions. The Internet provided an additional, convenient channel for drug-related activities.

Legal risks and police intervention were well-understood by the drug abusers and dealers. Consequently, they developed various coping strategies, utilising the features of the Internet. For example, by making use of the anonymous feature of the Internet, users and dealers created anonymous accounts to conceal their real identities. Additionally, coded language and emojis were used on the Internet for drug-related communications and interactions. Furthermore, the mechanisms of online platforms, such as big data and algorithms, facilitated covert promotion and identification of potential buyers through sponsored posts. As online drug-related activities continued to thrive, police surveillance also shifted from offline to online, utilising anonymity to observe drug-related activities on encrypted platforms. Hence, police intervention and online drug-related activities were in a constant dynamic struggle.

Apart from utilising the benefits of the Internet, drug abusers and dealers were also aware of its drawbacks and did not solely rely on it. They recognised the prevalence of scams on the Internet and adopted a sceptical attitude, verifying information and conducting drug transactions only with trusted individuals.

Moreover, the Internet facilitated the building of social networks. It connected and matched drug abusers and dealers for drug transactions and fostered the development of online communities where interpersonal drug-related knowledge exchange occurred. Peer influence was prominent in these online communities. Coupled with the influence of mass media, such as episodes on Netflix, the normalisation of drugs like cannabis was noted. This normalisation encouraged drug-using behaviour and reinforced the demand for drugs.

To conclude, while using the Internet for drug-related activities posed certain risks, it provided a space that benefited drug promotion, knowledge exchange, and transactions. The

Internet facilitated the building of online drug communities where the demand for drugs existed and access to drug supply was possible. With the continuous advancement of the Internet, it is likely that online drug-related activities will continue to develop and become a trend.

Chapter 2. Cannabis Use

2.1. Introduction

This chapter will explore cannabis use (including LSD and MDMA) at different levels based on participants' perspectives, attitudes, and discourses. It will delve into how cannabis is categorised and perceived across different groups and cultures, examining the factors that contribute to its normalisation and the implications of these shifts. Even traditional drug abusers have noted the growing population of cannabis users, highlighting a broader cultural acceptance that transcends previous boundaries.

By examining these diverse facets of cannabis use, this chapter provides a comprehensive understanding of its evolving role in society, the shifting perceptions surrounding it, and the legal and cultural contexts that shape its use. Through this exploration, we can better appreciate the complex interplay between cannabis, culture, and the law.

1. *Rising Trends*

Cannabis use, though it existed in the past, has undeniably become more prevalent among the younger generation in recent years. This trend is observed not only through direct usage but also in changing social attitudes and perceptions. Some participants believe that cannabis use might have been common in the past, as evidenced by older users, including some of their parents.

根據我的印象，「可樂」、冰這些已經過時了，大麻已經是一種新式、年輕的一代、00 後都會接觸的東西，但是他們未必一定會接觸到其他毒品。(046)

其實已經很多年了，只不過已經地下化了，因為以前沒有網絡之類，大家要認識這種東西的渠道其實是很困難的。(063)

The previous perception of the low prevalence of cannabis use may simply result from a lack of awareness or social taboos that suppressed open discussion. Nowadays, cannabis use is indeed more normalised and less self-censored than before. People are freer to talk about it, hear about it, and even purchase its products through various means, including online platforms and retail stores in regions where it has been legalised. In addition, the legalisation of cannabis

abroad has also made it easier for users in Hong Kong to access cannabis through online platforms and international connections (which have been discussed in Report No. 4).

我都有 follow 一個 Instagram，直頭是可以買賣，上網已經這樣了。你就看他平時限時動態，就會有很多大麻相。他偶爾會說哪個品種，來自哪個國家。但我就沒有問過他買。(045)

我朋友的貨是自己從加拿大，美國買，或者是運進來。(060)

Some cannabis users first encountered it during their school years, a period marked by experimentation and social exploration. Very few participants admitted they used it at work. This can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, cannabis is not used during work hours, giving the impression that few colleagues partake. Only a small number of respondents reported using cannabis at work, with most preferring to use it after work, on weekends, and during holidays. Secondly, colleagues do not openly discuss their cannabis use at work due to its illegal status in Hong Kong and its association with social stigma. Some respondents mentioned that they tried not to reveal too much to colleagues due to the small size of their professional circles and to avoid negative judgments or repercussions. Thirdly, some respondents stated that they could perform their duties, interact with others, and even be more positive and outgoing after using cannabis, so their usage might go unnoticed by colleagues.

你也可能不知道那味道是大麻味。你覺得他是在食煙而已，所以是沒分別的。(056)

我上班不會主動和所謂比我大的長輩討論這個話題。因為比較難解釋，真的難解釋。(062)

同事之間未必會說很多工作以外的東西。但那次就是，幾個人一起在說些成長的過程，說食大麻。(086)

The normalisation of cannabis use in daily life is further complicated by its hidden nature, often overshadowed by routine activities and social interactions. Most of the time, there are no significant signs to distinguish cannabis users from ordinary people unless they reveal it, which aligns with the hidden trend seen in the use of traditional drugs.

我以前那些中學同學，他們都是很正常的人，不是古惑仔，不是一些很壞的人，但是都有吸食大麻的。我就覺得食大麻很普遍。(014)

我覺得有些不出來蒲、不出來玩也會食，因為他們覺得是減壓，很放鬆。即是可能返正行但他們都有一種方法舒緩，我見我身邊也有朋友不是出來玩、又不是黑社會背景，但他們好多都食大麻。(056)

A particularly insightful perspective comes from a cannabis-used social worker (089) who linked the state of “stone” to mindfulness. Both states, he argued, create moments for individuals to focus on themselves and the present, providing a sense of clarity and relaxation. These subjective interpretations of cannabis users challenge the traditional understanding that people with stable jobs, well education attainment, and healthy lives would not use drugs.

2.2. User Characteristics

The samples of cannabis users in this study come from diverse educational and occupational backgrounds, with over half being well-educated (N=24) and the remainder primarily engaged in blue-collar occupations. Among well-educated users, a significant number hold post-secondary qualifications, with many possessing bachelor’s degree or even master’s level education. In contrast, traditional drug abusers typically have lower educational attainment, with fewer completing post-secondary education (N=9). Notably, among the traditional drug abusers, most who pursued post-secondary education did so at institutions that offer high-diploma programs, like IVE and VTC. Only gay traditional drug abusers reported having bachelor’s and master’s qualifications (N=4).

Well-educated cannabis users often believe they possess the knowledge and discernment to make informed choices about their cannabis use. They feel capable of distinguishing right from wrong and maintaining clarity in their decisions. This confidence stems from their extensive exposure to academic literature, foreign websites, and comparative analyses with Western medical practices. Additionally, they interpret Chinese medicine texts to rationalise and justify their cannabis use. This academic approach contrasts with traditional drug abusers, who have less access to higher education and consequently less exposure to scientific evidence on drug use.

Interestingly, even among participants not majoring in art or creative fields, there is a recognition of cannabis's potential impact on creativity and design. For instance, one participant noted the enhancing effects of cannabis on creative thinking and problem-solving, aligning with broader perceptions of cannabis as a tool for artistic and intellectual enhancement (e.g., 070).

無論是平面設計，室內設計還是其他設計，其實有關於藝術的東西其實都很多人吸大麻。即是無論他成績好不好他都會吸。我們有個教授也吸。我覺得也沒什麼。(060)

The well-educated background of many cannabis users fosters stronger resistance to governmental policies against cannabis use. These individuals are more likely to challenge official narratives and policies, relying on their retrieved knowledge and research to form counterarguments. This resistance is rooted in their belief that official narratives may be influenced by outdated or biased perspectives.

1. Legal and Political Views of Cannabis Users

Many cannabis users believe that the prohibition of cannabis is driven more by political issues and the monopolisation of the cigarette industry than by the actual harm of the substance. This scepticism fuels curiosity and lowers resistance to trying cannabis. For instance, 070 noted, "I think the harm from tobacco is greater than cannabis, but society bans cannabis and not tobacco". This sentiment reflects a broader distrust of government motives, suggesting that economic and political interests, rather than public health concerns, drive the prohibition of cannabis.

如果你要告訴我大麻是毒品，那麼酒，煙草都一定是毒品。那麼為甚麼不禁止？因為就是有太多的利益輸送，背後就是有太多利益存在。其實我的心態有點像以前的嬉皮士，「愛與和平」。(099)

This critique underscores a belief that government policies are shaped by economic interests rather than public health priorities. Historical discourses also significantly shape some participants' perceptions of cannabis prohibition that the stigmatisation of cannabis was influenced by political factors and social prejudices rather than evidence-based assessments of its harm.

以前是因為戰爭，一些墨西哥新移民被美國人歧視，就妖魔化了大麻。很多人不斷歧視他們，又說大麻是惡魔那樣。因為美國帶起的風潮，那就讓人覺得這樣東西是不好的。那就是以我所知。那就後期現在越來越多國家合法化，那我想都是一種文化來的。(096)

These participants argue that cannabis has been used for centuries and is part of human cultural heritage, challenging the notion that cannabis is inherently harmful and framing it instead as a misunderstood and misrepresented element of cultural practice.

2. *Advocacy for Legalisation*

Cannabis users frequently criticise the government for neglecting the potential revenue that could be generated from cannabis through taxation and tourism. They argue that legalising cannabis could provide significant economic benefits to Hong Kong. This viewpoint is further reinforced by conspiracy theories that the government prioritises the interests of the tobacco industry over public welfare.

減少了一些黑市，政府順便還可以增加稅收，多麼好。其實荷蘭就有那個稅收，所以就願意放給你，還有旅遊的賣點。(076)

很多時候都是因為一些政治的因素。那時候煙是壟斷了這個市場，真正的香煙是有禍害，但是他們就因為官商勾結。(082)

Additionally, cannabis users advocate for the legalisation of cannabis as a means to control quality and reduce fraud and victimisation, which are more prevalent in cannabis dealing compared to other traditional drugs.

因為之前聽老闆說，大麻可能被人混合了其他東西，其他毒品，所以變得不再純。(061)

我懷疑他〔賣家〕加了粉入去，一些不知是甚麼的粉末，一定是那些硬性毒品（hard drugs）的了。(097)

Legalisation is seen as a way to ensure that consumers receive safe, regulated products, thereby protecting their health and well-being. This perspective highlights a pragmatic approach to drug policy, emphasising harm reduction and consumer protection.

At the same time, a minority of participants opposed the legalisation of cannabis in Hong Kong. They argued that the paternalistic governance style of the Hong Kong government would likely result in stringent controls on cannabis use even if cannabis is legalised. They anticipated that, despite the assured quality of cannabis, legalisation would lead to fewer options, increased surveillance, and more restrictions. Instead, they expressed more support for decriminalisation, allowing cannabis culture to develop underground.

始終這些東西不是普通人可以做到的，很取決於中央的資源。而我的理解是，這些中央的資源是需要透過和政府的合作，或者某程度上局部的合作。其實政府本身的策略、態度也會影響到香港大麻圈的風氣。(087)

Besides, many participants advocated for education over legalisation. They believed that the Hong Kong cannabis community was not adequately prepared and lacked a solid ground for legalisation. They felt that most cannabis users did not possess sufficient knowledge to use the substance wisely.

如果你單看非刑事化，是很開心的。但是我想更加多人真正去認識這一件事的話，我覺得大麻合法化是有幫助，這件事更加允許在公眾的平台上面發生。我覺得是很值得開心的一件事，就是更加在減少傷害(harm reduction)的那一個取態去做，更加減少了那一種無知，減少了那一種亂來的的狀態。(089)

Thus, they saw decriminalisation or legalisation not as the ultimate solution but as a means to foster a more comprehensive and open discussion about cannabis. Through education, they hoped to disseminate accurate information, enabling people to make informed decisions and use cannabis responsibly.

2.3. Normalisation and Social Acceptance

The impacts of the legalisation of cannabis have been spread across multiple societal levels and systems. Along with frequent interactions and discussions on the Internet, social media, press, and personal conversation, the well-entrenched and intertwined influences cannot be clearly outlined separately. Despite that, the following discussion attempts to outline several key aspects related to the legalisation of cannabis in foreign countries.

1. *Perception and Attitude Changes*

First, the legalisation of cannabis use abroad has contributed to the perception change of some Hong Kong residents. Participants expressed a sustained interest in experimenting with cannabis due to its widespread acceptance in places like Canada and parts of the United States, constructing a more acceptable and less risky impression of cannabis.

一個人說〔大麻〕這樣事物對，可能那個人傻瓜；兩個人說，可能是豬朋狗友；三個我都還可以說他錯。但你想一下如果有國家合法化這樣事情，那麼如果只是一個美國的話，你可以說它美國衝動吧。如果有幾個國家都是，那麼其實是不是應該值得思考每樣東西、每個人做的每一樣事情都有原因的。(084)

A growing curiosity and openness towards cannabis use is observed, driven by an increasing number of countries that permit legal use. This shift in legal status has played a crucial role in reshaping societal attitudes towards cannabis, making it more socially acceptable. Some participants advocated for similar legalisation measures in Hong Kong, claiming cannabis was not an illegal substance.

The cultural exchange and exposure to international norms have also played a significant role in changing attitudes towards cannabis in Hong Kong. Participants noted that their experiences abroad or interactions with friends from countries where cannabis is legalised have influenced their views.

我去過加拿大讀書，那時加拿大還未合法化，但是你會見到一些朋友說起有這樣事物，會接觸外國文化。這件事〔大麻合法化〕其實未必是一件不好的事，可能是一件正常的事情。但是香港可能污名化了它，我會有這樣的想法，就是覺得其實為甚麼不試試。(089)

This Western exposure weakens the traditional stigmatisation of cannabis use, shaking the foundation for Hong Kong's definition of cannabis as something damaging. Without substantial and immediate harm perceived, participants often continued their usage after returning to Hong Kong, accelerating the normalisation and acceptance of cannabis by local people. This dynamic is also seen in personal relationships with friends who grew up abroad, bringing up the temptation for first use.

我朋友在外國長大，他一向有抽，所以我沒怎麼過問，因為在他的國家這是合法的；他回來後也有繼續抽，給我試了一兩口。(080)

This perception shift among some Hong Kong people leads them to view cannabis use as an emerging norm rather than a deviant behaviour (e.g. 067). Advocacy for similar legalisation measures in Hong Kong is emerging, with some believing that the illegal status of cannabis should be reconsidered within the local context.

你看看歐美已經是有一些大學有專門的學科教你如何去研究大麻這種植物，當然他是有其他的學科，有其他種植的東西。但是大學是會就這樣東西去修訂或成立一個學科，難道這件事情都不足以證明大麻確實是有它的好處？其實是有很多事情可以做，而不是禁止了它，「斬腳趾避沙蟲」。整件事情是很固執、很笨。(099)

The portrayal of cannabis in the media and the influence of public figures and celebrities also play crucial roles in its acceptance and popularity, especially among young people. Prominent individuals like Snoop Dogg (060) and various rappers openly endorse cannabis use, contributing to its spread within subcultures such as rap, skateboarding, and art communities.

年輕的多一點抽大麻，還有那些「MK 仔」。那些喜歡饒舌(rap)，喜歡「中國有嘻哈」那些，類似那一類。(048)

我也有聽著名樂隊，很多主音都抽大麻抽得很厲害。Mr Ava、SmithDog，或者舊一點的樂隊，例如 David Bowie 都是。(073)

我自己聽的很多隊 band 在越戰後性解放的年代都是有嘗試這些東西的。即是好像 Beatles 他們都會出了一首歌叫作 LSD : Little Shining Diamond。所以有機會的話，我一直都會想嘗試。(100)

Observations of cannabis use in both public and underground settings foster its acceptance and prevalence among young adults and students. The discourse that Steve Jobs could invent Apple products because he took LSD (082) illustrates how associating drug use with creativity and success further normalises the deviant behaviour. Such cultural milestones have historically shaped public perceptions and curiosity towards trying cannabis.

Moreover, Netflix and YouTube also contribute to the normalised image of cannabis use through series and videos related to cannabis and LSD. These media representations serve as a reference for understanding what cannabis is and justify its use, especially among younger viewers. This trend indicates a growing interest in and potential acceptance of psychedelic experiences, solidifying the normalisation of cannabis use.

在 Netflix 不斷看不同的紀錄片，或者去做不同資料搜集。(062)

Netflix 有個節目 *Have a good trip*，是專門說 LSD 的。那我想這可能是個契機令我對這回事有更大的興趣，又或者令到我決定去食。(067)

甚至乎 Netflix 都有一些劇集關於大麻，這類的影片我也會觀看。那討論區我就比較少看，主要都是看一下 YouTube 一些人介紹的影片。(096)

The normalisation of cannabis use is a multifaceted phenomenon driven by globalisation, media portrayal, celebrity endorsements, and cultural exchanges. The above-mentioned factors collectively foster an environment where cannabis use is increasingly seen as a normal and acceptable part of life, particularly among younger generations.

2. *Social Integration and Interactions*

Cannabis use is often integrated into daily life and social events in a manner akin to other recreational substances. For many participants, cannabis becomes a part of their lifestyle and identity. Most users adopted cannabis use to handle their daily tasks, inserting some sort of happiness into the cumbersome life.

因為它〔大麻〕融入了我的生活，所以我會說生活的習慣是很難戒的，而我沒有慾望或者必要性去戒。(067)

就算生活上面的創作，或者是家務、洗碗，都是可以感覺心情好地去做的。(082)

This habitual aspect of cannabis use further complicates its role, with users describing it as the “seasoning” of their life and social activities.

出去下去見個面，放一下狗，你有帶一枝，然後順便一起吸食，就是這樣。對我來說，大麻是支線，不是主線。可能打邊爐有一個人帶了一枝好酒過來，大家一起來喝一杯，類似這個概念。(070)

好像吃一頓飯那樣。大麻從來都不是那一頓飯的主菜，亦都不是那一頓飯的甜品，亦不是那一頓飯的前菜，它一樣都不是，它最多只是可以成為那頓飯的調味料而已。但如果你的人生的主食是那個調味料，你就鹹死了，一是就辣死的了，你不會得到快樂的。(089)

This analogy highlights how cannabis is increasingly seen as an enhancer of social experiences rather than the main focus of a social event, suggesting a high level of social acceptance and integration in these contexts.

Even when cannabis is not the main focus of social events, it is often inseparable from enjoyment and social activities. In some cases, participants reported that certain social activities would be difficult to perform without cannabis (e.g., 076). Incorporating cannabis into their lives has become an essential element of their daily and social routines, thus shaping their identities.

這些東西對我的經歷就是一個成長的心路歷程。或者是會最終影響、變成我的一部份，而改變了我的生命。我會覺得都是一些生活方式。你怎樣去選擇你自己的生活方式，就是你自己的身份，你是甚麼人，你願意成為甚麼人你就想如何去過一些怎樣的生活，自由意志。(087)

Under this construct, two distinct social usage patterns were observed among cannabis users. Some participants preferred to limit their cannabis use to a small and trusted circle to avoid negative judgment or preconceived notions, driven by a desire to maintain comfort and security within a familiar environment.

沒有嘗試過出去探索一下大麻的社群，還有我都不偏向這樣做。因為我覺得這是一個我自己舒服的舒適圈。(100)

On the other hand, cannabis use has significant social functions, particularly in enhancing social dynamics and fostering a sense of connectedness among users. Those who actively

sought to expand their social circles to include other cannabis users often formed immediate intimacy and mutual understanding through cannabis use.

因為可能我們是志同道合，我覺得吸食大麻並當它為一種興趣而不是濫用的人，是比較相似一點的，世界觀是比較相似的，會 Chill 一點。通常真的吸食大麻的人，就是他們都會追求工作與生活之間的平衡，都會享受生活。(082)

大家就是圍在一起沒有甚麼事做，可以認識一個朋友，大家一起「你又吸食大麻，我又吸食大麻」，其實已經有一個連繫。「大家都是兄弟，一起認識一下」，還有都會很享受那一個時刻。我覺得普遍喜歡吸食大麻，是很享受當下、此時此刻的那一種狀態比較多。(089)

Under the influence of cannabis, users often find it easier to disclose their heartfelt concerns and reflections. This openness fosters a strong sense of rapport and connectedness among users. The shared interest and experiences in cannabis often create a sense of community among users.

有時可能其中一個就會說「其實我最近很不開心」，那我們就會引導他說「為甚麼這樣」。平常就算說自己不開心也只會輕輕帶過，或者用一種很開玩笑的形式：「有你一個不開心嗎？每個人也是這樣的了」那種。但是食完大麻後就真的會認真去談甚麼引致我現在的狀況。(085)

因為讀書時候可能會和朋友分享多點，但轉到在社會上面，我就認識了很多不同背景的人，那之後就會自己也沒那麼交心、比較藏起來。本身真的沒預料會跟他人說自己家裏，或自己成長那些。但是那刻〔吸食了大麻後〕就好像可以聊聊。(086)

076 further highlighted that relationships with friends met through cannabis tend to be more genuine and sincere than those formed through other means, such as orientation camps or sports activities. They claimed to feel more peaceful and less judgmental, allowing them to interact with people from various backgrounds without much resistance.

Particularly, 067 and 085 described how cannabis use can make conversations more profound and meaningful. Cannabis turned off social norms and restrictions to make people engage in deep discussions about topics that normally wouldn't be brought up, such as how they view their current life stage or how their upbringing has influenced them. Coherently, 069

and 086 noted that cannabis helped them open up about personal matters they typically kept private. This ability to foster openness and vulnerability is a key social function of cannabis use, creating a space for more authentic and meaningful interactions.

The communal aspect of cannabis use, where experience sharing and mutual support become central themes, contrasts with the often solitary and secretive nature of traditional drug use. This dynamic can contribute to a more supportive and understanding user community, where individuals feel less isolated and more mutually understood.

3. *Perceived Normality*

Cannabis use is increasingly perceived as common and normalised within various social contexts. 070 likened cannabis use to enjoying a glass of wine during leisure time, illustrating its commonality and normalised perspective. Furthermore, participants reported that even when their cannabis use was detected by its smell, the responses were typically mild, verbal, and non-confrontational (e.g. 062). This indicates a growing social tolerance and acceptance of cannabis use.

Additionally, participants reported minimal strong criticism from partners or family members regarding their cannabis use, noting a level of understanding or tolerance within their close circles. Some even prepared evidence to counter arguments from strongly opposing family members or partners, indicating a proactive approach to justifying their choices. Also, they explained that even if their family members did not accept cannabis use, they would not have serious consequences.

On the other hand, the application of cannabis extends beyond recreational use to functional benefits, especially in foreign countries. Cannabis-infused skincare products have gained popularity for their effectiveness in treating conditions like eczema and acne.

現在市面這一護膚品都頗出名，是醫治濕疹和暗瘡。濕疹藥膏，效果很見效，有臨床實證。不會你塗在那一處皮膚就會很亢奮(high)。所以已經是很平常的。已經很科技進化到可以融入生活，可以說是更加改善生活，是社區受惠了。(088)

These products are seen as a normal part of healthcare routines, highlighting cannabis's evolving role in various daily aspects. Normality is further recognised by participants, consolidating their discourses and ideology of harmlessness of cannabis.

Furthermore, online resources play a crucial role in the normalisation of cannabis use. Cannabis users tend to have an intention to promote the cannabis culture to their friends and families.

我們都分享大麻是怎樣的，你可能會認識 THC，甚麼是 CBD(Cannabidiol)，原來有一樣叫作萜烯(terpenes)的，或者甚麼叫作大麻萜酚(CBG; Cannabigeol) 的這些事情，我就自己真的去看一些關於這方面的研究，或者有一些網站會介紹這事情。很多內容其實又未必真的很需要那個真確性，或者我是想帶出那個討論出來，為甚麼會有 CBD 的出現？為甚麼香港不讓 CBD？甚麼是 THC 和 CBD？這些都是可以有很多看法。(089)

Online platforms, such as Instagram pages, are often used to educate others about cannabis, expanding the user circle and spreading information. These resources are shared widely, contributing to the spread of cannabis culture.

Videos and music specifically tailored for enhancing the drug use experience were also prevalent on the Internet. The drug experience can be enhanced by music and other forms of entertainment. For instance, 085 described how friends who are regular cannabis users act as guides during music sessions, helping them navigate the sensory experiences induced by the drug.

Moreover, the increasing popularity of cannabis edibles is a significant indicator of this normalisation. Cannabis can be infused with oil or butter to create various culinary delights such as cupcakes, cookies, steaks, and beverages. 082 and B, who claimed to be the first sellers of cannabis edibles in Hong Kong, explained that cannabis-infused oil could be used in all recipes to replace ordinary oil. The effects of these edibles are often described as mild and long-lasting, allowing users to plan and schedule their activities around the drug's effects more accurately.

因為它來得比較慢，柔和(soft)一些，但是它慢一點的，可能隔差不多一、兩個小時才有感覺，再延續得多幾個小時。(070)

This gradual onset and prolonged effect make edibles a preferred choice for those seeking a controlled and manageable cannabis experience. The cannabis-infused oil can even be used for hotpot, further trivialising, integrating, and normalising cannabis use into daily lives.

4. *Discourses of Normalising Cannabis Use*

The discourses surrounding the normalisation of cannabis use draw on historical and cultural references to argue for its acceptance. Some young cannabis users point out that hemp seeds, which contain cannabis seeds, are not prohibited. They cite examples from regions like Yunnan in China and Japan, where hemp seeds are used in cuisine, such as in the traditional spice blend, shichimi togarashi. These references were trying to highlight the perceived inconsistency in banning cannabis while allowing the use of its seeds in other contexts.

Another typically referred example comes from the traditional Chinese encyclopaedic gathering of medicine, *The Compendium of Materia Medica* (本草綱目).

連古代神農氏嘗百草也說大麻有藥用價值。神農氏真的有提到大麻。李時珍有說過，一定有記載。只是不叫大麻，叫「麻沸散」。(072)

This argument is sophisticated and unfalsifiable for the polarising group to accept the harmless use of cannabis. Following this discourse, some participants argue that cannabis should be treated like any other herb with medicinal properties.

大麻是有合法和不合法的部份，它本身是一個草本植物，有不同的成份，某一些化學成份是會產生精神活性的效果，它就是不合法的，或者是需要受到管制的。如果沒有這些效果或反應的話，它就是普通的草本藥品或物質，是合法的。(087)

我身邊的朋友就會覺得，大麻是天然的東西，始終不是可卡因和冰那些是化學品混合出來的。它只是一個 herbs 的時候，就不會那麼抗拒它。最近已經有一些說法，吃大麻比吸煙還健康。(123)

The belief in the medicinal properties of cannabis is widespread among participants, with some viewing it as a natural remedy rather than a chemical drug. This perspective is reinforced by their understanding that cannabis has a lower addiction potential compared to cigarettes and alcohol.

我也覺得可以的，它不是些化學物。在我眼中，它是草藥。中草藥可以的。化學物就不要了，藥丸就不要了。(085)

它的成癮比香煙和啤酒少，我們可以看看它的歷史背景其實它有一大部份是因為煙草，而導致它這樣而已。(099)

Discourses on the medical uses of cannabis, particularly in traditional Chinese medicine and its potential to alleviate depression syndrome, further strengthen the participants' acceptance of cannabis use. Participants mentioned that whether it is legal to take cannabis depends on the legal framework of a nation or city, rather than the behaviour itself.

最關注的就是在一個不合法吸食大麻的國家吸食才不好的，你吸食大麻就是叫抵觸了，但是當你在一個合法吸食大麻的國家吸食就不同說法了。(082)

The integration of cannabis into daily life, its portrayal in media, and the influence of public figures all contribute to its growing acceptance. This normalisation is further supported by the increasing availability of cannabis products and the changing legal landscape in various parts of the world. This attitude can be rooted in the belief that cannabis should be treated as an herbal remedy rather than a controlled substance. In general, they believed they were clear in mind, knowledgeable and well-educated enough to make their own decision instead of blindly following the law.

2.4. Categorisation and Differentiation

All cannabis users demonstrated a certain degree of cannabis knowledge. They can differentiate between various types of cannabis products, such as cannabis flowers, oils, kief, wax, dab, and edibles. Synthetic cannabinoids are rarely mentioned, though some participants experienced them in America. Consumption methods include rolling joints, using a bong, vaping oil, and using a Dynavap to heat dry herb to vaporise it. Most participants preferred rolling joints and using a bong but noted that Dynavap requires the least amount of cannabis per serve.

This categorisation extends to the effects and perceived quality of different cannabis strains and products. Although there is deeper differentiation in strains, cannabis users reported that the strains claimed by Hong Kong dealers were messy, making it difficult to match strains with those from foreign websites. Besides, the available strains also depended on what the dealers had on hand.

其實有些甚麼你就要拿些甚麼。即是很多時候你不能選擇。因為香港始終都是犯法的東西，外面有些甚麼入香港，你就要選擇那些，所以也沒有甚麼選擇給你。
(069)

It was more about experimenting to see if you liked it before deciding whether to continue buying rather than focusing on the specific type.

1. Use Patterns

Participants often choose between Sativa, Indica, and Hybrid strains based on the desired effect. Sativa strains are preferred during the day for their uplifting and energising effects due to higher levels of THC. Indica strains are used at night for their relaxing and sedative properties, attributed to higher levels of CBD. Hybrids, which combine traits of both Sativa and Indica, are used for a balance of both effects. Therefore, Sativa tends to be used in social settings, while Indica is mainly used for self-relaxation, meditation, or as a sleep aid. Very few participants used Indica during work hours; the majority used cannabis after work, during leisure time, or on weekends.

Some participants expressed a clear preference for cannabis flowers over oils and other processed products. Cannabis oil is regarded as the least preferred due to its fast-declining effect despite its quick reaction time and ease of use. Additionally, concerns about the unknown contents of oils were also expressed.

我不試油的原因是因為我不知道它裡面是什麼。即比起原粒的話，我只是信賣家而已，但我就更加不知道油裡面是什麼。(068)

Adverse reactions to using such processed products further inhibit their prevalence. For example, 067 reported experiencing headaches while using cannabis oil. Apart from oil, ground cannabis was also refused by most participants because it could be fake, mixed with other substances, or of very poor quality. The whole cannabis flower allowed participants to preliminarily examine the quality based on its appearance and colour.

他說大麻可能被人混合了其他東西，其他毒品，可能混合了其他東西。所以會變得不再純。(061)

Most participants primarily used cannabis as their main drug habit, often accompanied by other trendy substances such as LSD, MDMA, mushrooms, and Ayahuasca. They combined this substance because participants believed that they had the same properties as cannabis but were merely different in intensity.

會一起吸食大麻和郵票，會更興奮。(064)

我自己是會混合三樣東西一起去使用的。LSD加MDMA是會加強的，叫作 Candy flipping，然後會在過程裡面吸食大麻。(087)

把可待因(codeine)和大麻混合在一起，其實是會舒服很多的。(107)

The combination of drugs has been well-documented and easily accessible on the Internet. Several participants mentioned the existence of a table that details the interactions between various substances (Figure 2.1). This table provides comprehensive information on which combinations can amplify, enhance, diminish, or have no effect on each other, as well as those that can pose significant dangers. This resource allows users to make informed decisions about their substance use to maximise their desired effects and minimise risks.

The ease of access to such detailed information represents a significant shift in how users approach substance use. Instead of relying solely on personal or second-hand experiences, users can now consult a reliable source to understand the potential interactions between different substances. This methodical approach to substance use can be seen as a form of harm reduction, enabling users to avoid dangerous combinations and tailor their experiences more safely.

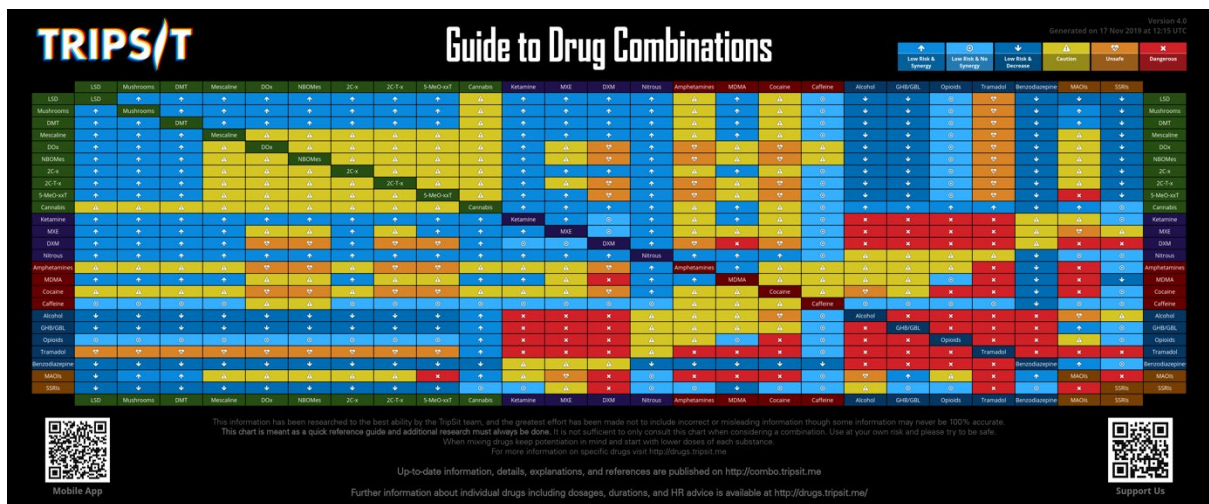


Figure 2.1. A Drug Combination Chart (Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_polysubstance_combinations#)

Interestingly, this approach to substance interaction is more prevalent among cannabis users than traditional drug abusers. Traditional drug abusers tend to rely more on personal experiences or the experiences of their friends rather than consulting an online resource. This difference highlights a cultural divide between the two groups. Cannabis users, perhaps due to their educational background and the normalisation and partial legalisation of cannabis, may feel more comfortable and proactive in seeking out information to enhance their experiences.

有聽過一些資深玩家就是，甚麼也有用的，但是那些基本上就因為他有錢。他那些甚麼都會玩，類似他自己調毒？就是混合多種毒品。(019)

The informed, communal, and sensory-enhanced experiences of cannabis users contrast with the more isolated and less informed practices of traditional drug abusers.

2. Cannabis As a Healthier Alternative

Notably, cannabis is often viewed as a healthier alternative to substances like tobacco and alcohol, citing its therapeutic potential and its role in improving mental well-being. The use of cannabis as a sleep aid and pain reliever reinforces its perception as a beneficial and preferable alternative to conventional pharmaceuticals.

我有朋友失眠，長期失眠十多年，他也是一直靠 Indica 會好睡很多。(069)

我覺得〔大麻〕這樣東西的程度可能和喝酒抽煙差不多。但是天然的，那樣其實它是比抽煙好。它又可以增加你的胰島素，幫助你減肥。(098)

大麻反而令我更舒服，例如我頭痛、月經痛，吸食大麻了之後立即不痛了，很厲害的。大麻會止痛的，始終大麻是可以製成止痛藥的，所以它會有止痛的效果。所以那時候感到很舒服。(102)

The natural properties of cannabis make it an appealing option for those seeking relief from various health issues without the side effects associated with pharmaceuticals.

Compared with tobacco and alcohol, participants noted that being “stoned” (high) on cannabis leads to less violent behaviour compared to being drunk. This contrast highlights the emotional stability that cannabis provides.

我自己也有喝醉的經驗，我不開心我會哭，我會推倒身邊的所有東西。總之好像爆炸式地發洩我的情緒。這是我喝醉了的反應。但是我怎麼吸大麻，怎麼 high 都純粹是開心。(062)

自從我規律地吸食之後，我覺得不需要喝酒，因為大家的感覺都不是差太遠，但是大麻一來感覺健康一些，二來就是不同；我吸食大麻可以控制到自己，但是我喝酒控制不了自己。(096)

上網看人家說「一群喝醉了的人是會打架的，但是一起 stone 了的人是會做到朋友的」，我很認同這句說話。喝酒之後暴力傾向高了，這是個事實；但你 stone 了之後，大家真的是說說笑、聊聊天。大家對大家的戒心低一點，便聊聊天，認識一下。(089)

This preference is not only due to the perceived health benefits but also the reduced risk of adverse behaviours associated with alcohol consumption.

Additionally, some participants, having a low tolerance for alcohol, cigarettes, and other substances, turned to cannabis as an alternative to enhance social interactions. They believed cannabis helped them fully indulge in social activities and experience greater satisfaction or pleasure.

其實對於我來說，大麻好像比煙草更健康。(060)

通常喜歡吸食大麻那些人不是太喜歡喝酒，這真的很常見。就是如果讓他們選擇大麻還是酒的話，吸食大麻那些人一定會選擇大麻，不會選擇酒。(066)

以前未接觸大麻的時候，也會追求一點醉意、放鬆一下的感覺，但是我也不想飲酒、不想吐，我也不吸煙的。那時有一段時間不開心，然後那時剛好開始接觸大麻。(102)

Many participants perceive cannabis as a natural and organic substance, making it a healthier choice compared to chemically processed drugs.

其實大麻是一種植物而已，即是它比有機菜還有機。它是一棵植物，植物種了花出來，然後曬乾它，然後可能再多等幾日，就可以拿來使用，是不需要加甚麼東西，所以一是一種很天然的東西。(084)

A participant believed in the lower addictive potential of cannabis compared to tobacco and alcohol.

我用來幫助入睡也只是藉口，其實是不抽便會睡不著。某個程度，我覺得有點上癮了。(073)

Despite the perception of cannabis as a healthier alternative to tobacco and alcohol, supported by its therapeutic potential, natural composition, and positive social effects, it is important to consider the possibility of selection and confirmation biases and group polarisation that may radicalise these perceptions.

3. Cannabis Use of Ethnic Groups in South Asia

Ethnic groups in South Asia, particularly those in Chungking Mansions, have been reported to have significant involvement in cannabis use and dealing. Some participants mentioned that these individuals sold cannabis that was extremely cheap and of poor quality, often mixed with other substances.

有一些重慶仔可能會混合一些 DMT (a hallucinogenic tryptamine drug that occurs naturally in various plants)，或者混合一些令你看到不正常的，其他硬性毒品 (hard drug) 來的。(097)

重慶大廈那裡的南亞裔賣得便宜的。以前的年代吸食的，可能別人都是合成出那些 THC 再出來灑在表面，然後就賣給你吸食，然後食後會頭痛，那些差勁的東西。或者有一些直情是連 THC 成份也少的。(101)

In contrast, 098 reported receiving fair to good quality when he had an established acquaintance with the South Asian sellers. Overall, participants tended to avoid purchasing cannabis from South Asian sellers.

Unlike local cannabis users preferring cannabis flowers, South Asian ethnic groups were reported to have a prevalence of using condensed cannabis, known as hash, wax or dab. Only three participants reported their experiences with this type of cannabis product.

我那時候和一些南亞裔一起玩，他們使用的大麻是比較像樹脂，樹那些汁液那類，比較膏的，那些好像是叫 hash，有一些泥膠，放在煙中，之後再烘乾，就像那些。(096)

重慶南亞是喜歡吸食大麻膏，就是 dab。我想外面應該很少賣。我就聽過那個亢奮的程度是到了有點像最初幾次吸食大麻的。第一下吸食大麻上腦那種亢奮，以及很香，上腦那種亢奮。就像是初戀。(097)

Wax 一是就用 bong，一是你就把它放在 vape 裡，你每次都會塗一堆上去，一下子就會衝上去超級頂峰，因為它的純度夠高。(100)

Its high potency brings a relatively high price. Participants reported that wax can cost around HKD 2500 for 2-3 grams, making it one of the more expensive cannabis products. Despite its high price, participants still believed it was worth the price due to its significantly higher concentration of cannabinoids compared to other forms.

The potency of wax can provide intense effects even in small quantities, which can be appealing to users seeking a “peak” experience. Participants describe the experience as so overwhelming that it leaves them immobile, often “lying on the bed, unable to move”. At the same time, they described rapid and highly dispersive thoughts, which cause difficulty in verbal communication. One participant explained that while trying to articulate thoughts, their mind would already be moving on to the next idea, leading to a scattered and non-linear thinking pattern. On the other hand, they claimed the rapid succession of thoughts can lead to unique

insights and creative ideas. However, the overall experience is often described as mentally exhausting and difficult to manage, especially for those not accustomed to such high levels of potency.

Given its high price and potent effects, cannabis wax is typically used sparingly, especially by those seeking relaxation. However, participants reported that South Asian ethnic groups favoured this type of cannabis over other forms. Research can further investigate into the South Asian cultural contexts of cannabis use, which is beyond the current research scope.

4. The Distinction Between Cannabis and Other Traditional Substances

Participants demonstrated a clear distinction between cannabis and conventional drugs. For most cannabis users, substances like LSD and MDMA form the bottom line, meaning they are considered acceptable, while other traditional drugs like ketamine, meth, and cocaine are generally avoided. Cannabis is often perceived separately by both cannabis and traditional drug abusers. It would, instead of being regarded as a gateway drug, be set as the benchmark against other substances.

我自己當大麻是一樣比較界線。煙、酒、大麻，接著後面那些才是你說的較嚴重的藥物，我就定大麻為中間的那個位置，所以大麻以外以上的東西我就不會接觸。(070)

While cannabis is viewed as a more natural and less harmful substance, traditional drugs are seen as chemically processed and significantly more dangerous. 064 tried cocaine once and felt discomfort with it, so the perceived harmfulness to the body drove him to persist in cannabis and consolidated his thoughts of healthier and more natural cannabis.

我聽過「可樂」，因為我有朋友吃，我聽他們說那些其實還恐怖，聽完之後，我覺得可能你吃完之後，你不會知道自己在做甚麼，即是好像比斷片還厲害。(069)

混合傳統的毒品和大麻一起使用的人都很少。其實我都很少聽過，冰那些就完全聽都沒有聽過。(078)

This separation might stem from stereotypes associated with traditional drugs, such as extreme behaviours reported in the news and hearsay from others, including hallucinations and violence.

因為這個也和新聞有關，那些甚麼吸完冰接著發瘋，就是幻覺殺了人，那些你會害怕的。(019)

因為我在朋友身上見過一些很不好的事情。有一個好像是吸食過可卡因，之後就從高空掉了下來傷了腦部。(099)

The stereotypes and perceptions surrounding traditional drugs have driven cannabis users away from these substances. This differentiation highlights a preference for cannabis as a more manageable and less risky option. Contrary to the majority, only two cannabis users in this study expressed an interest in trying traditional drugs. This distinction serves as a benchmark for participants, reinforcing the idea that cannabis is a safer, more acceptable choice compared to other illicit substances.

On the other hand, cannabis users and traditional drug abusers tend to belong to distinct social groups and seldom mingle or share social circles. Even drug dealers typically do not sell cannabis alongside traditional drugs, different kinds of which are often sold together.

我很少識人在娛樂場所食大麻，因為我是去蒲的人。或者他們有食大麻，我根本都不知。你不會在這些場所食大麻。(011)

沒什麼人在私竇或場玩〔大麻〕。感覺不對、場合不對。即是說大麻效用是很放鬆，很平靜的，但你去到那種場所的重節奏，你不會想用大麻。(055)

在娛樂場所是不會有大麻，不是那種感覺，因為在外面玩的是迷幻的，你突然拿大麻出來，都不是同一種東西。大麻對我們來說不屬於毒品。(056)

There may also be a factor on age difference. Participant 060 reported that his cannabis-using social circles were mainly composed of teenagers, while traditional drug abusers he knew tended to be older. Besides, traditional drug abusers tend to look down on cannabis, viewing it as a minor, less serious substance. Additionally, they often cannot tolerate the smell of cannabis, which reinforces their preference for other substances.

大麻這些東西小朋友玩的，你不懂才會食的東西。我覺得大麻很低級（Cheap），未見識過世面，低級用家。(040)

我以前接觸那一班就是覺得你吸食大麻就是很差勁的，就是說你「沒有用的，吸食『可樂』吧，高級這麼多」。(107)

Meanwhile, some traditional drug abusers also pointed out the less addictive nature of cannabis, which contributes to the more gorgeous lives of cannabis users. 014 described that cannabis users are less likely to become uncontrollably addicted, indecent, and troublesome compared to traditional drug abusers.

Moreover, few cannabis users held expressive hostile attitudes toward traditional users. Cannabis users see themselves as part of a different, more informed community. They acknowledge a clear boundary but generally refrain from harsh criticism of traditional drug abusers. Some believe that both groups are essentially drug abusers, differing only in their choice (e.g. 099). Even when cannabis users refrain from judging traditional drug abusers, they implicitly label them as leading more miserable lives.

你吸食得那麼 hard，你一定是人生很悲慘的，我還要批評你？我為了甚麼要批評你呢？你都這麼慘了，你都弄到自我傷害了，我還和你有甚麼好比較的？(089)

我也覺得不一樣，但就不會說看不起他們。其實我覺得他們也很慘，因為有一些也不是自己想吸食的，但我也會切割開它們。我覺得是兩樣東西來的。(096)

This perspective indicates a subtle yet significant moral high ground that cannabis users feel they occupy. 060 further pointed out that he would accept his younger brother using cannabis, but he would tie him up and report him to the police if he used traditional drugs. This illustrates the deep-seated belief in the relative safety and acceptability of cannabis compared to other substances despite any verbally non-judgmental stance toward the group of users.

Coherent with the discourses mentioned previously, cannabis users often believe they are more knowledgeable about their substance of choice, fostering a sense of superiority when discussing cannabis with others. They tend to connect their reasons for use with global and political views to justify their behaviours.

因為我覺得那是一個社會環境的結構問題，那件事是很多人沒有選擇。因為我覺得華人社會是超級不注重精神健康問題，還有家庭結構關係，傳統環境文化

很麻煩。所以那件事是導致很多人沒有足夠的教育水平去認知，政府管制的力度永遠都只會這樣家庭式教育，沒有解決過這些問題。(092)

This confidence is similar to the sense of fostered confidence reported by meth users. This perceived knowledge can create a sense of empowerment and justification among cannabis users, reinforcing their belief in the safety and benefits of their chosen substance.

2.5. The Perceived Positive and Negative Effects of Cannabis Use

Various benefits of cannabis use were reported by the participants. Although these benefits may be subjective and potentially biased, they provide insights into the motivations behind the participants' persistence in cannabis use. This information offers policymakers and service providers a basis for policy making. Concurrently, negative experiences have also been highlighted, underscoring the importance of caution and preventive measures to address cannabis use.

1. Perceived Positive Effects

As slightly mentioned previously, cannabis use is associated with relaxation and stress relief. Another notable positive effect reported by both cannabis and traditional drug abusers who tried cannabis is the enhanced enjoyment of food. Cannabis is known to heighten sensory perceptions, making flavours more intense and food more enjoyable.

他給我的感覺不是毒品，我覺得像那些保健產品。因為吃東西很好吃，聽歌又很特別。我吃完就習慣了帶耳機聽歌，聽歌就覺得很有層次，吃東西的味覺又很有層次。吃完會睡覺，和看笑片會開心，感覺不錯。(045)

因為吸完大麻之後覺得所有食物都很好吃，好像我的胃突然大了十倍。(062)

This sensory enhancement is a significant aspect of the cannabis experience and contributes to its appealing effect. It provides a tangible benefit that participants can easily appreciate and share, reinforcing social bonds within the cannabis-using community.

Cannabis is often credited with enhancing creativity and artistic performance. They seem to resonate with the music and movies and get deep meditation under the cannabis effect. The spiritual enlightenment and sense of linking to the universe are abstract. The combination of

cannabis, Ayahuasca, and LSD was believed to trigger deep spiritual awakening and better connections with Gods and spiritual dimensions. This boost in creativity is a commonly cited reason for cannabis use among artists and performers.

望上面的天空是有很多星星變成和我很近的，它們立體得很緊要。服食了這物質引起一些幻覺，對於大自然的感受很深的，所以我很喜歡做一些創作的東西。所以我覺得當我在那個狀態的時候，我有的想法，或者我接收到的資訊，好像是現在這麼清醒的狀態增強了幾倍。(082)

Cannabis is often credited with enhancing creativity and artistic performance. Participants reported resonating more deeply with music and movies and experiencing profound meditation. The sense of spiritual enlightenment and connection to the universe, though abstract, was reported as a strong feeling after using cannabis. The sense of spiritual connection and mindfulness achieved during these experiences is often described as a benefit of cannabis use.

我對於一件事本身可能有十個看法，可以有第十三、十四、十五個看法。對於可能自己生活上、精神上遇到一些不舒服的位置，你會再想多一點，你可能會想一些選擇給自己。(089)

Inspiration is frequently mentioned by cannabis users, along with laughter and sleep-aid function. Cannabis was reported to alter perceptions and provide participants with new insights, sometimes leading to a sense of spiritual awakening. This altered state of consciousness allows participants to see the world from different perspectives, which can be both enlightening and profound. For some, this means reflecting on personal history, thinking more deeply about their lives and surroundings, concentrating on the present, alleviating past traumas, and becoming less stubborn.

所以整件事是好開、好滿足，以及有一個最大感覺是，令你會覺得真的活在當下，就是每一秒都是有意識，每一秒都是正在生活，你會非常意識到你正在生存。(066)

整個人會變得更正面，我會感恩。因為我住村屋，附近很多綠色植物，我抽完後出去踏單車，會變得感激家，感恩自己看到很多綠色植物，然後會想起自己身上還是有很多美好事物。(073)

還有想到一些自己一直也想不到的思考盲點。以前不會覺得自己執着或是很不 humble，那發現原來我做這些行為時候，已經正正代表我是一個這樣的人。(077)

Many participants turn to cannabis to unwind and release built-up tension from daily pressures. 079 expressed that cannabis was a channel to relax and forget about unpleasant situations before sleep, whereas without cannabis, suppressing adverse feelings and accumulating stress were common tactics. This relief from stress and emotional burden is a key reason why many participants incorporate cannabis into their routines.

While not exclusive to cannabis, the use of other substances, like LSD and ayahuasca, can lead to deep reflection and changed perspectives. Participants reported that these experiences allow them to explore their thoughts and emotions more deeply, often leading to personal growth and a greater understanding of themselves and the world around them.

Despite these benefits, participants reported avoiding cannabis use in busy and highly focused situations, such as before assignment deadlines or during busy working periods. They noted that while cannabis might provide inspiration, it often leads to dispersive thoughts that cannot be logically or structurally concluded.

可能腦海會分叉了去其他的想法。可能無端端在想環境的，無端端分叉了去想食物的，就變了沒辦法好好地去理解這篇文章。所以變了在理解方面，好像走了線，想了第二件事情。(070)

This was further evidenced during interviews; participants could seldom name specific thoughts, learnings, or insights achieved during cannabis-induced inspiration and reflection.

有什麼深刻的想法？不記得了。也不記得有甚麼令我行為上或思想上有啟迪的想法。(071)

那時候想通了什麼，到現在也不知道，你不要問了。(074)

2. *Perceived Negative Effects*

Although the majority of cannabis users denied addiction by claiming their irregular and manageable use, some participants still admitted the risk of dependency and loss of control. Psychological addiction was reported by those who felt an occasional urge to use cannabis,

which can lead to a dependency that disrupts daily life and responsibilities. Participants noted that overuse could increase tolerance and lead to higher consumption rates.

Cannabis use can also result in physical adverse effects, such as headaches or other discomforts, particularly when using THC oils. Some participants reported experiencing overdose symptoms like blackouts and cold sweats, especially with concentrated forms like oils. These physical side effects can be unsettling and may deter participants from continuing cannabis use.

如果吸食得多的話，身體也會有一定的損傷，其實如果你是過度使用，可能一天一次，或者一天數次那樣，會傷害到腦部，記憶力會沒有那麼好。(076)

他說他們會不會好像以前那些，冰毒、「可樂」這麼大的身體影響反應，其實也不是很覺得的，反而我看到更多的是戒斷症狀，其實很多時候他們吸食都是為了睡覺而已，就是說如果他不吸食就更加睡不到，但是他們就不為意頭痛、失眠、飲食失調就是一些戒斷症狀，不過我有一個個案也有說，現在他戒了，他現在回顧過來就覺得最影響的是記憶的狀況。(117)

Additionally, frequent cannabis use can lead to respiratory issues similar to those caused by smoking tobacco, affecting the lungs, throat, and overall respiratory health. These effects highlight the need for caution and moderation, especially when using more potent forms of cannabis.

Moreover, cannabis use can also induce psychological burdens and emotional instability. Prolonged use can lead to mental health issues, such as increased anxiety, paranoia, and depressive symptoms. Some participants reported that cannabis use led to a detachment from reality, contributing to emotional instability and conflicts with family and friends.

我在醫院都遇到一個年輕人是因為大麻而進精神科。我發現很多是同屋企人吵架時，那個情緒一到就控制不到，食到情緒很暴躁，就入了醫院。(045)

我見到最真實的現象是多了用這類東西之後，會跟現實有點分離，類似思覺失調，但不是特別嚴重。(090)

Combining cannabis with other substances can enhance its effects but also increase the risks. Participants reported experiencing panic symptoms, particularly when combining cannabis with LSD. This practice can lead to more intense and sometimes dangerous experiences, underscoring the need for caution and awareness of the potential dangers.

我知道好多人就是亦都會有 bad trip。如果有些人可能看不開、放不開的，他們會很辛苦。你就會開始覺得很多東西都好黑暗，很多東西都是負面那樣，所以你會你的思維會負面，然後接著會令到你會不開心。(066)

LSD 很容易引發到一些很不開心的回憶，就會令你難受的情緒更加不舒服。(100)

Polysubstance use amplifies the psychological effects, often leading to overwhelming and distressing experiences.

Despite the high acceptance towards cannabis use, the potential harm of cannabis to developing brain was a significant concern among participants. Underage use of cannabis is particularly problematic, as it can affect cognitive development and lead to long-term negative outcomes. However, participants expressed a sense of helplessness in preventing underage use, emphasising the importance of educating young people about the risks involved.

第一我覺得「草」真的是一種天然的植物，之後就是 12 歲以下，「腦凶都未生埋」。那些人吸食就會對腦部造成一些禍害。(060)

我覺得至少二十歲才接觸大麻。因為我會覺得是等你的腦袋起碼成熟了，青少年的腦還在發展中。我會建議一定要渡過這個時期才接觸大麻。如果你太早去接觸，我會覺得反而增加了它不好的影響。(084)

Early cannabis use can impair cognitive functions, such as memory, attention, and learning abilities, potentially leading to academic and social challenges. Further, participants agreed the incautious and non-knowledgeable use of cannabis by teenagers would result in unbearable consequences to them, their families, and society. Preventive measures and education targeting adolescents to mitigate these risks were called for by these cannabis users.

While some participants seek spiritual enlightenment and mindfulness through cannabis use, the psychological and spiritual effects can be a double-edged sword. The sense

of spiritual connection and altered states of consciousness can be profound, but they can also lead to unsettling experiences if not managed properly.

最終也是指向自我死亡（ego death）的方向，即是不要想太多自己的事，剔除主觀，想多一點客觀環境。其實不建議使用，因為會「撞鬼」的。(097)

These profound experiences can sometimes result in emotional distress or confusion, requiring users to approach cannabis use with mindfulness and awareness of their mental state.

2.6. Risk Management

While participants generally viewed cannabis as a relatively safe substance, they still implemented risk management strategies to avoid undesirable consequences. Cannabis may have medical uses under careful and professional diagnosis and prescription, but it is undeniably harmful when distributed carelessly and uncontrollably in the underground market.

To manage the potential risks of losing control or developing dependency, many participants reported experimenting with small quantities to check their tolerance, ensuring they do not consume excessive amounts. Some participants would never consume a large portion, not even a full joint, and would take a few days to finish one. This practice of sparing dosage was a tactic to avoid dependency.

其實我每次吸食之前都會想一想「其實我是否需要吸食？」我是一定會先問問自己這個問題。我是會視乎情況的，未必會吸食。(101)

Participants also reported their efforts at self-cessation to examine their degree of craving for cannabis. The duration of cessation varied from a few days to half a year, depending on life events and emotional status. While physical dependency was not reported, psychological dependency was implied in their responses.

With the growth of the cannabis edibles market, some participants expressed caution regarding the potential for increased consumption of edibles. 097 shared that cannabis edibles could rapidly increase tolerance, driving a significant increase in consumption amounts. Tools have been created to help participants calculate their tolerance and adjust their intake. Online dosage calculators help individuals determine their tolerance based on their height, weight, and cannabis concentration, thereby avoiding overdose.

當我計算得這麼清楚、精準的時候，我就會知道自己其實需要四十毫克的 THC 就可以了。那麼我就食一件蛋糕去等到它有作用。到我真的覺得不夠了，我再食第二件，這就是最安全、最正確的方法。(082)

Despite cognitive and rational planning, some participants admitted to impulsively using cannabis. In such cases, they would lower their consumption to avoid overuse and the risks associated with other substances like LSD, MDMA, mushrooms, and ayahuasca.

我抽大麻比較誇張，理性不了以外，其他的我都很理性。因為一旦造成傷害便回不了頭，一輩子的，是永久的，你沒理由拿自己的性命作賭注，傻的嗎？正常人有少許常識，也不會一整瓶灌下去，那些沒思考的人才會這樣做。(072)

其實你吸食得太密是沒有那麼好的感覺。不過我自己現在也是屬於吸食得比較密的，不過一時時的，有時不開心真的會想吸食。不過我自己也不算是依賴的，所以自己有時會迫自己，跟自己說：「是時候停一下了。」(102)

The situation becomes much riskier when engaging in polysubstance use. The use of LSD cannot be simply regarded as taking a pill to enhance the enjoyment of social gatherings while considering the potency and reactions. Participants reported taking extra precautions, such as ensuring a safe environment and having someone to monitor them.

我覺得需要很有心理準備，甚至需要時間，LSD 的持續性是比大麻長很多。所以我覺得需要有一整個 trip (旅程)的話，就要準備很多，無論時間、心態。(082)

是真的要預備一個場景，你要整個人都預備好，所有東西都要預備好，是一個你覺得舒服而且沒有人打擾到你的地方，有人陪同下很安全地去做這一樣事情。還有我們都會在外國買一些測試包(test kit)回來，盡量去確保那些東西對身體少一點傷害。(087)

Besides, the use of LSD requires a significant interval for detoxification due to its potent and long-lasting effects. Participants noted at least a two-week gap between LSD uses to ensure the substance is fully cleared from the body and to prevent a reduction in its efficacy. Some participants even proposed a three-month interval to ensure safety. 066 and 067 highlighted the necessity of this interval, mentioning that after each use, there needs to be a substantial break

to allow for complete detoxification, ensuring that the next experience remains effective and safe.

其實它影響精神的，絕對是會影響精神的。對於一些人來說，他的精神是比較脆弱，影響是不知的，很視乎他自己的心態，但真的會有影響。(087)

Frequent use not only diminishes the drug's effects but also increases the risk of adverse psychological status. Participants with pre-existing mental health conditions, such as depression, recognised the severe risks associated with LSD use, including the potential for exacerbating their symptoms and triggering severe emotional distress.

因為我心理質素問題，我不會試 LSD，因為我有抑鬱症。如果你有抑鬱症再去用 LSD 會加劇問題，很容易會有 bad trip。但如果你面對不了，又無法控制這情況，會被不開心的情緒和抑鬱症狀反噬，你便會有很嚴重的 bad trip，甚至會想自殺。(071)

This careful management underscores the importance of disciplined and informed use of LSD to avoid potential negative outcomes. These practices highlighted that participants were well informed about the potential risks and harmfulness of these substances, yet they continued to use them with so-called caution and awareness.

2.7. Rare and Special Cases

1. *Therapeutic Potential*

Cannabis and LSD were used by participants to manage specific mental health conditions, such as ADHD and depression, emerging as notable trends among them. Although not typically highlighted in mainstream discussions about cannabis, a few participants reported using cannabis to alleviate ADHD symptoms and experienced positive effects on their depressive emotions. 090, diagnosed with ADHD, claimed a slight therapeutic effect of cannabis on their condition.

我也有朋友是借助 LSD 治好他的抑鬱。那時她試用 LSD，在街上走到某一個位置，她覺得那裡很恐怖，好像恐怖電影裏的場景，便繞路走另一邊，坐在那裏哭。哭完後有個外國人和她聊天，問她怎麼了？他們聊了幾句，她覺得原來還

是有人會主動關心她，然後她便回家，打開了兒時照片來看，發現自己小時候也可以笑得很開心，但現在為什麼會變成這樣？她不斷想不斷哭，哭了很久，後來便睡著了，醒來後覺得是一種解脫，她再也沒有抑鬱和其他。(071).

我是在服用時改觀的，令我認為世界不只有黑暗。不過我用完之後是否痊癒，我沒有感覺，用完之後是否仍有抑鬱，我就沒有特別感覺。但有件事我能看到的是，我可以重新看到世界有些美的地方，沒有那麼多自殺傾向。(090)

087 further supplemented that even if cannabis cannot directly address the pathological causes of certain conditions, it serves as an alternative for releasing suppressed stress and emotions. Participants believed that cannabis and related substances have nuanced effects on mental health. The proclaimed therapeutic benefits under certain conditions convinced them that cannabis is harmless and has been unfairly demonised.

2. *Cannabis Cultivation*

In the context of Hong Kong, cannabis cultivation remains a rare practice due to legal and logistical challenges. However, some participants reported planting their own cannabis, particularly in walled villages, remote regions, and islands. This approach involves acquiring cultivation knowledge from books and online resources, which are readily accessible on the Internet. The local cultivation is worthy to be noted, especially how it navigates legal restrictions and environmental challenges.

The quality of locally grown cannabis was a point of contention among participants. Some praised it as fresh and effective, while others criticised it due to the unsuitable climate and soil conditions in Hong Kong.

原來香港的大麻草品質是好過英國的，香港的就是好吃一些。英國的農夫多數隨便栽種一些不太好的就出售。(066).

我也有遇過一些本地農夫。可惜的是始終香港氣候不太適合種這樣東西，品質比較差。不過他們都知道自己的品質比較差的，所以他們是做一些製成品、植物、曲奇、大麻膏、巧克力蛋糕、軟糖。(099)

To address issues related to poor-quality cannabis, local farmers turned to making cannabis edibles. This method involves infusing cannabis into oil to extract THC, allowing participants to bypass issues related to the quality of the raw plant. This strategy also highlighted the growing prevalence of cannabis edibles, which are hard to detect and easy to produce.

3. *Impacts on Life Choices*

The legal status of cannabis significantly influences major life decisions for some participants. One participant reported migrating to Canada specifically due to its legalisation of cannabis, indicating the profound impact of legal cannabis on personal choices. Other participants expressed similar motivations for migrating to countries where cannabis use is legal, such as Holland, Canada, England, and certain states in the USA. This trend reflects how deeply cannabis users value the freedom to consume cannabis legally, to the extent that they are willing to uproot their lives and move to different countries or regions.

The acceptance of cannabis has also become a criterion for selecting intimate partners among some participants, further emphasising the high priority they place on cannabis in their lives. This indicates that the legal and social acceptance of cannabis can shape both major life decisions and personal relationships. The prioritisation of cannabis acceptance in intimate relationships reveals how deeply cannabis use can be ingrained in a person's identity and lifestyle.

4. *Self-Perception*

Non-users are surprisingly common within cannabis-using social circles. Many participants acknowledged their presence, noting that interactions with non-users generally showed no significant differences. If someone expressed strong opinions about the smell or smoking behaviour, users would accommodate by smoking on the patio or in the toilet. However, positive or negative experiences shared by users may influence non-users' perceptions, potentially sparking curiosity and openness to try cannabis in the future.

091 mentioned an individual in his cannabis-use social circle who does not require cannabis to feel euphoric. This person was described as naturally high-spirited, not needing the substance to enhance enjoyment or avoid adverse feelings. Upon the interview time, 091 reported this person had never tried cannabis since they met and claimed no attraction or need

to use it. Such a strong personal character can be a significant factor in the decision against using cannabis.

Understanding the reasons behind non-use and the dynamics of interactions within these social circles can provide valuable insights into the broader social context of cannabis consumption. That could be an interesting topic for future research.

5. *Cannabis Supply*

The supply of illicit drugs in Hong Kong is often controlled by triad societies, with major triad suppliers distributing to various locations. However, the legalisation of cannabis in foreign countries has made it easier for users to purchase from online platforms and the dark web.

是朋友在暗網中買了一些回來。(066)

平常接觸的大麻圈子，我沒有見過黑社會的人賣。可能有人會有一點背景，或者向黑社會取貨，不過我遇見的賣家都是從外國直接入貨。(090)

那就跟那些外國賣家買大麻回來，寄海外快件那樣寄而已。因為我試過幾次是沒事的。(104)

009 pointed out that cannabis was primarily used for recreational purposes and was not as profitable as other drugs like cocaine and methamphetamine, which attracted those with stronger criminal backgrounds. Despite this, a few participants with triad connections acknowledged the involvement of triad societies in the deeper layers of the cannabis trading network.

那些大麻是有黑社會去分下來的。其實最大量的毒品都是由那些大莊家、「撈家」供應給不同場所的。(053)

我現在取貨那邊都是「勝和」、「水房」。他們直接運送到香港，香港有倉，在倉裡，安全。(104)

The involvement of triad societies in cannabis supply highlights the complexity of drug distribution networks in Hong Kong. While some participants obtain cannabis through foreign

sources, others remain reliant on local criminal networks, indicating a diverse and multifaceted supply chain.

6. Use Cannabis to Cease Other Drugs

Interestingly, three participants used cannabis as a means to cease the use of traditional drugs. These individuals believed that substituting cannabis could play a role in harm reduction for those looking to reduce or eliminate the use of more harmful substances. The use of cannabis as a harm reduction strategy is gaining traction among some drug abusers. Participants noted that cannabis helped them manage cravings and reduce their consumption of more harmful substances like cocaine. This substitution approach holds potential as a less harmful alternative, but it still induces dependency and other social and legal consequences.

However, cannabis is not universally suitable for all traditional drug abusers. Some participants reported adverse reactions to cannabis, such as severe discomfort, breathing difficulties, and an overwhelming sense of paralysis.

我試過一次我吸食完兩口大麻之後，整個人都呼吸不了，辛苦到整個人連動都動不了。我吸食完毒品有後遺症的，是會影響我終身的，很害怕那種感覺。(013)

我非常之不喜歡那些食完會 Stone 的，很辛苦。(043)

Many traditional drug abusers have pointed to the heavy smell of cannabis as a prohibiting factor for its subsequent use. Particularly, cocaine users preferred the smell of cocaine over cannabis (e.g., 040). These experiences highlight the variability in individual responses to cannabis and the need for careful consideration when using it as an alternative to other drugs. The variability in individual responses to cannabis is a critical consideration for this shift.

2.8. Conclusion

This chapter highlights significant differences in perceptions and behaviours between traditional drug abusers and cannabis users, underscoring the complexity and diversity within the drug-using population. The evident disdain and segregation between these two groups suggest that cannabis users are viewed distinctly within the broader context of substance use.

The study found that cannabis users tend to come from diverse educational and occupational backgrounds, with many holding higher education qualifications. This contrasts

with traditional drug abusers, who generally have lower educational attainment. The well-educated background of many cannabis users fosters a sense of confidence and discernment in their choices, often supported by extensive research and historical texts. This educated approach contributes to a stronger resistance against governmental policies against cannabis, positioning cannabis use as an informed and rational choice.

Cannabis use is increasingly normalised and integrated into the daily lives of many users, often perceived as a healthier and more natural alternative to substances like tobacco and alcohol. The legal status of cannabis abroad has significantly influenced their perception and acceptance, leading to a growing curiosity and openness towards its use. Media portrayal and celebrity endorsements further contribute to its acceptance, especially among young people.

The chapter also delves into the social functions of cannabis use, highlighting how it enhances social interactions and fosters a sense of community among users. Cannabis use is often integrated into social events, contributing to its normalisation and acceptance. The shared experiences and mutual support among cannabis users create a supportive and understanding community, contrasting with the often solitary nature of traditional drug use.

Despite the normalisation of cannabis use from many users, some acknowledge the potential risks and adverse effects associated with its use. Psychological and physical side effects, as well as the risk of dependency, are noted as significant concerns. The potential harm of cannabis use on developing brains imposes the importance of education and preventive measures to mitigate these risks. While cannabis shows promise as a harm reduction strategy to substitute traditional drugs, its dependency and application must be approached with caution.

In summary, this chapter provides a comprehensive understanding of the evolving role of cannabis in the drug-user community, the shifting perceptions surrounding its use, and the legal and cultural contexts that shape these perceptions. The insights gained from this study highlight the need to consider cannabis separately from traditional substances and to further research into the complex interplay between cannabis culture, societal norms, and legal frameworks.

Chapter 3. Hidden Drug Abuse

3.1. Introduction

Previously, drug-taking activities took place in large discos and parties as rave culture. As the Police cracked down on these venues, drug-taking became underground. This was known as hidden drug abuse, which refers to using drugs in a private, secretive, and hidden manner, and not being noticed by other people. Since the 2010s, hidden drug abuse has become an emerging drug trend. As 054 noted, hidden drug abuse was common (很普遍). Hidden drug abuse could take place in various locations, such as private venues, private public spaces, and homes. To secure the “hidden” nature of drug abuse, various security measures and hiding strategies were adopted by the private venue operators and drug abusers to hide their deviant behaviour from other people, making detection of drug abuse difficult.

In this chapter, the verbatim accounts of drug abusers and dealers will be presented to uncover the phenomenon of hidden drug abuse. The nature of hidden drug-taking behaviour, the operation of hidden drug abuse, and the reasons for engaging in hidden drug abuse will be illustrated in order to uncover how hidden drug abuse can become prevalent and sustainable.

1. *Adaptation and Evolution of Hidden Drug Abuse*

Historically, discos, bars, and karaoke establishments were the primary venues for drug use. These public spaces provide easy access to drugs and a social environment conducive to substance abuse. As 016 noted, discos were popular venues for drug use. However, with the decline of these venues due to law enforcement efforts and the pandemic, the landscape of drug use has evolved. As 060 remarked, “什麼年代還去 disco，不要這樣啦。” This shift can be attributed to intensified police actions aimed at cracking down on large-scale discos and clubs, leading to the decline of public drug-consuming venues. Consequently, drug abuse has moved into more hidden and private settings, giving rise to a new kind of drug-consuming venue known as a “private venue” (私竇).

以前在 disco、酒吧、卡啦 OK，現在沒有了，現在多數人都在家裏，去別人的家裏，一是「私竇」，現在只是轉了地方而已。(006)

以前有 D 場 (disco) 的時候是很誇張的，光明正大地開着門，自然有人放賣東西。所以你想濫藥就進去嗨。但是消失了以後，就變成了去「私竇」(084)

Private venues are typically more discreet and operated out of the public eye. They offer a level of privacy and security that public venues cannot, making them an attractive option for drug abusers looking to avoid detection. These venues can range from private homes to rented apartments or other secluded locations where users can gather without the fear of police raids or public scrutiny.

The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated the shift from public to private settings for drug use. Social distancing measures and the closure of public entertainment venues forced the participants to adapt by finding or creating safe spaces for their activities within their homes or private rented venues. This transition highlights the resilience and adaptability of drug-using communities in response to external pressures and restrictions.

因為到處都封了，又沒有了卡啦 OK，最基本的娛樂場所都沒有開了。人們便躲在家裏，或者樓上吧、「私竇」。一來是疫情影響，還有沒有了 disco，相差很遠。(050)

這一年轉成了私竇，因為這一年不能開門。(061)

The move to private venues presents new challenges for the combat of drug abuse. These settings are harder to regulate and monitor, potentially increasing the risks associated with drug use, including overdoses and the spread of infectious diseases.

3.2. Operations of Private Venues (私竇)

1. Locations of Private Venues

Private venues often serve as secluded havens for drug use and distribution, typically located in industrial buildings, commercial high-rises, or hotels. One defining feature of these venues is their emphasis on privacy, strategically situated in less prominent locations to evade detection. These venues are less likely to attract attention due to their discreet placement, often in areas with minimal foot traffic.

通常都是那些熟人，在酒店裏搞，整幢酒店都是沒有職員的，旺角很多，所以你可以在酒店肆無忌憚地做甚麼都可以。(029)

我們叫「蒲場」。在商廈上面，工廠大廈都有，大角咀便有。(048)

「私竇」有的，都有的，因為工業大廈晚上沒有人的，所以其實都沒有甚麼。
(076)

The strategic location of these venues in industrial or commercial districts underscores the level of organisation behind their operation. These areas are bustling with activity during the day but become deserted at night, offering a perfect cover for illicit activities. The anonymity provided by these environments allows users to engage in drug use without fear of immediate repercussions.

2. *Nature of Operation in Private Venues*

Some participants described that these private venues were operated by triads. While some of these venues did not have licenses, others were licensed and open to the public with reservations.

一些「私竇」是無牌酒吧來的。(014)

你在出面吸食都可以吸食很久，會吸食到一、兩天。有些「私竇」是二十四小時的。(041)

常去玩的地方有一些是沒人知道的私人地方，但亦有一些是有牌的場所，好像XXX台23樓，它是有正式牌照的。任何人都可以進去，但要預先訂枱，因為它本身有正式持牌。(056)

Participants highlighted that both licensed and unlicensed venues often had triad connections, ensuring the security and smooth operation of these establishments. This connection provided a layer of protection and operational control crucial for maintaining their covert activities.

那些「私竇」全部都有背景，沒有背景怎樣開的？可能是商人投資，但是要有一個有背景的人去經營。都是找一些「古惑仔」打理，否則有人搞你的場時，那怎麼辦。(049)

工業大廈有的，但是多是去尖沙嘴XX巷上面，因為那裏是「尖新」(尖沙咀新義安)的。(060)

These private venues not only offer a hidden space for drug use but also facilitate easy access to drugs. Users can either bring their own drugs, order them for delivery to the venue (e.g., 061) or obtain them directly on-site. For example, 023 pointed out that he could simply call the dealers in the private venues and obtain the drugs when he arrived.

Despite the risk of police raids and potential demolition, these private venues exhibited flexibility. They often reopened in different locations, maintaining their operations despite legal and logistical challenges.

那些「私竇」即使倒閉了，通常轉過頭就會重開的，只不過是在不同地點而已。
(014)

Hence, they were rarely decorated. Participants described these private venues as often having a shoddy, makeshift appearance. Due to their covert nature, minimal investment was made in decoration, anticipating potential police raids and the need for frequent relocations.

私竇那些裝潢其實可以說是很粗製濫造的。因為它預了會被人「冚」，所以是一個臨時的地方。而且香港沒有誰會那麼花錢投資。二來他們可能想賺多一點錢。我覺得是「沒有必要給你這麼好的裝潢，反正你也是會來的。(001)

Additionally, it was not necessary to use glorious decorations to attract drug abusers because their visits were mainly for the consumption of drugs and demanded privacy. Despite this, they are often equipped with necessary entertainment amenities, like music, lighting, and comfortable seating to enhance the drug-taking experience.

就是在這裏 Hea，那些人也不喜歡回家。在梳化上睡，也有張按摩椅，上面還有張被，很有渡假感覺。長期也有一兩個人在那裏睡，我也試過，舒服的。(040)

有一些「蒲場」就像酒吧，有一些就像 disco。一定有音樂，有燈光。(048)

3. *Secrecy/Security Measures Employed*

The fear of legal repercussions was a constant theme for hidden drug abuse. To avoid law enforcement and minimise legal risks, users and dealers took various precautions and enforced strict controls to avoid detection by authorities. Apart from choosing venues in

secluded locations, the venues were unmarked or had secret passages known only to regular customers.

那些門口或是那些軌，是外人按不到上去的，一定要在那裏按下來才上到去。
(029)

比如說 XX 道 7 樓之類，地牢等等，就沒有準確名字。但一說我們就知道在哪。你要認識那邊的人，然後打電話預約，然後進門時工作人員會問你「是哪一枱的？」即是說你確認了才讓你進去。(055)

Operators also relied on additional support to secure their private venues. Security guards of the buildings were highly responsive to environmental cues, making immediate notifications to those venues. This “alarm system” further prevented the exposure of these private venues.

一定要有保安，又要跟保安打好關係，會給他一千蚊去飲茶。有警車經過，他即刻通知我們，我們關音樂。正常情況警察是沒有權衝入來，那我們就扮作沒有人在裏面。(104)

Additionally, caution was also exercised regarding who was allowed in their circles. The private venues could only be accessed by regular customers through closed circles or known contacts. Undercovers might have to spend years getting acquainted to reach these venues

我認識的，或者我的朋友(friend)認識的才可以入場，總之一定認識才搭到那些人。
(048)

要不是有人帶我應該是進不去的，那些地方捉得比較嚴格。而我就是跟隨 XX 進去玩的。想進去這種地方一定要有人帶，要是你不認識人，你是進不去的。(056)

Setting passwords and utilising surveillance systems to monitor entrances were also strategic measures to ensure that only authorised individuals entered. This helped prevent law enforcement and maintain security.

有些酒店是完全沒有服務人員的，是你自己打電話去訂，然後給你一個號碼，給你一個密碼，你自己上去。(029)

現在都有閉路電視、有鐵閘，但是現在反而是寬鬆了。職員會看鏡頭，因為通常看見門口有人，就會問：「這是誰的朋友？」有人回答就會有人開門給他，如果沒有，那他就在出面傻傻的等。(048)

These venues were designed to be discreet, with efforts to avoid attracting attention. Especially for private venues that had licenses, measures included avoiding visible queues and ensuring that activities were not conspicuous to maintain a low profile.

最多都是爆場的情況，就是全場爆滿，就叫你不要再帶人來，但不會有排隊的情況，因為場地方也要保障自己。而且會來這種場所的，一定會有毒品之類，不能做得太張揚。現在盡量叫你不要企在門口，更不用說排隊，現在都是比較低調的。要是你的場所做得太高調被警察特意調查的話會很煩，如果本身領牌就更煩，更不用說這種場所 10 間有 10 間都是有毒品的，有些甚至有供應毒品，在那裏出售。(056)

Besides, participants also mentioned that these venues had installed soundproof equipment to ensure that drug-related activities inside would not be disturbed. Some participants further described that these private venues had multiple gates to avoid easy intervention.

一進門口是封了隔音棉，總之去那些地方可以蒲很久。(041)

那些地方都是很穩當，有幾道閘，有甚麼事情都能夠趕得及丟掉毒品。因為場裏有東西都與我們無關，主要是我們身上沒有東西就可以了。(058)

4. *Operating Private Venues as Business*

Users and dealers described that operating drug-related private venues was profitable. The responses highlighted the lucrative nature of these operations, where substantial initial investments yield significant returns quickly.

「私竇」就算花幾百萬裝修，人家已經是賺了雙倍有多了。還未計算賭博的收入。(049)

Despite the possibility of being discovered and cracked down by the authorities, the punishment (e.g., fine and sentence period) was not severe. This encouraged the individuals to operate the private venues to make money.

有些「私竇」是已經談好了要交數的，也有其他場地告發這個場，即是同一棟或者同一層有第二個場，大家不順眼，就會告發出來，但你都不知誰告發。查得來，不如算了，現在都是 599G 罰款五千元而已。那個場負責人可能只是罰錢再坐一、兩個禮拜。其實沒有甚麼影響，當破財擋災之後繼續再賺錢。現在很多事都不再深究，浪費那麼多時間，不如用這些時間賺多些錢。你蝕了一筆錢，開一日就已經賺返。都已經不用理會這些事。(104)

These responses underscore the systemic issues and the entrenched nature of the illegal operations. The substantial profits overshadow the risks, and minimal legal consequences fail to deter continued engagement in such activities.

5. *Other Venues for Hidden Drug Abuse*

Apart from private venues, hidden drug abuse also took place in more secluded public spaces like parks, stairwells, and rooftops, where people rarely passed by, especially at night. These locations were chosen for their relative privacy and the low likelihood of being disturbed. For instance, users would frequent secluded parks or the back stairwells of public housing complexes to avoid detection and interference.

XX[屋邨] 是井字型的，它的樓梯很隱閉，從來都不會有人上來。因為居民年紀很大，晚上若干時間之後，他們都不會再出來了。一大班在後樓梯吸食，他們知道何時有人，何時沒有人的。所以就變相年輕的那一班就躲在後樓梯胡作非為都沒有人理會。(013)

有時我們會在家外邊的公園吸食，夜晚就沒有人，很隱閉的公園 (061)

一群人時，在後樓梯吧，公屋的後樓梯、公園吸食。始終這事情不合法，總有一個「竇」是大家都知道的。比如說有某些天台大家都知道是用來抽大麻的。(073)

These spaces offered a level of anonymity and safety from public scrutiny, allowing users to maintain their habits without the fear of being noticed. The use of such locations underscores the safe sites for drug consumption extending from home and private venues.

Many individuals have shifted from using drugs in public venues to using them at home. This transition reflects a need for increased privacy and control over their environment. Homes and friends' houses have become preferred spots, offering a secure and familiar setting for drug use.

在朋友家吸食，我朋友家是一個「竇」，即是他自己一個住，但是成群朋友一起上去吸東西。(047)

那時整天藏在家裏食大麻，有空才會出去。(065)

This shift to home use indicates a strategic move to avoid public scrutiny and the risks associated with drug use in public places. It highlights the adaptability of drug abusers in finding safer and more discreet ways to maintain their habits. The home environment provides a controlled space where users can engage in drug use with a reduced risk of external interruptions and legal repercussions.

The insights drawn from these verbatims reveal the complexity of drug use patterns and the lengths individuals will go to secure their drug habits. The choice of secluded public spaces and the shift to home environments for drug use illustrate the adaptability and resourcefulness of users in maintaining their habits.

3.3. Nature and Patterns of Hidden Drug Use

1. *Hidden Nature*

Drug abusers went to great lengths to conceal their drug use from family members, neighbours, and law enforcement. This included using air fresheners to mask the smell and employing other tactics to avoid detection. By blowing smoke out of windows and using air fresheners, users aimed to minimise the tell-tale signs of drug use within their homes (e.g., 061). If hiding their drug abuse at home was not possible, they would choose to abuse drugs at friends' homes. The tactics adopted indicate the importance of maintaining a facade of normalcy in their immediate environment.

我只食的，玩得很精明。因為我都好驚被家人知道。所以都不會在家食毒品或做這些事，去那些莊家朋友的家中。(008)

Using drugs late at night was also a strategy to secrete private, hidden drug abuse. This level of secrecy suggests that users are highly aware of the consequences and, therefore, develop intricate methods to continue their habits undetected.

2. *Individual Drug Use or Group Use*

Hidden drug abuse could occur either alone or with other friends. Initially, drug use might start in a social setting, providing a sense of camaraderie and shared experience. However, as addiction progresses, users often find themselves using drugs alone. The progression from group use to solitary use indicates a deepening dependency and an increasing need for privacy and isolation as the addiction intensifies. This shift can also signify a deterioration in social connections as the user's life becomes increasingly centred around drug use.

大家一起吸食，維持了一段時間，吸食到變了自己在家里叫貨。(014)

我小學同學中一個也食大麻，又住我那邨，我整天都跟他兩個人食。接着後期就一班人一起食，是我其他小學同學又出來，但大家也是住同一條邨的，之後就全部在後樓梯吸食。(065)

一開始吸食時是一群人，慢慢會自己一個抽。(073)

In contrast, some participants maintained using drugs with close friends, often in familiar, discreet locations. The tendency to use drugs in groups also highlights the complex social dynamics of drug use. It also shows how drug use can create or reinforce social bonds by committing this deviant behaviour together.

3. *Types of Drugs And Locations/Context*

There appeared to be a linkage between the types of drugs used and the locations. Marijuana and other drugs (e.g., cocaine, ice) are often consumed in private homes, hotel rooms, or specific party rooms, which were seen as safer and more discreet environments. This selection of location is strategic, aiming to avoid detection and enjoy the drug experience without interruption.

如果是吸大麻，一定會在「私竇」吸。在街上吸等被抓嗎？即是被人盤問也不舒服，這種情況下一定「bad trip」。肯定是「私竇」舒舒服服吹著冷氣。通常是在我朋友家、「私竇」或者外面的那些私人 party room。(060)

Different drugs tend to be associated with different settings. For instance, clubs and discos are common places for using multiple types of drugs, like ecstasy and ketamine, where the energetic environment complements the drug effects. The vibrant and dynamic setting of clubs and discos enhances the drug experience, making them popular venues for such activities.

那些場都鋪了地板，燈閃亮著，場地又大。上去聽歌，自己開一張枱喝酒而已，在舞池裡動一下，在那些階磚上。那個場地其實是甚麼都可以拿的，搖頭丸、Happy 水、K、可樂、大麻都有。但大多沒有「豬肉」(meth)，因為「豬肉」通常都躲在家裏吸食的。現在還有搖頭丸的。基本上都是在蒲場。(048)

Cocaine and meth are also used in more private, controlled environments like homes or hotel rooms, ensuring a level of privacy and security that public spaces cannot provide.

會去專門食「可樂」的場。其實這些場和普通場沒有甚麼分別，都是一樣。有一張枱和有梳化那些，有一些有自己一間房。我喜歡是自己一間房，不想給人看到。(011)

通常「可樂」都是在家或是酒店，總之是那兩個地方。(056)

Additionally, certain drugs are used in contexts that involve sexual activities, such as saunas, which cater to specific chemsex practices. The sauna is a place for gay members to have sexual activities, but this place operates as a normal sauna. This further illustrates how the choice of venue is influenced by the type of drug and the intended activity.

Chemfun 或有一些較「輕擊」(mild) 的是使用威而鋼。威而鋼相對是「輕擊」的。也有些直接發生性行為的，那個場都是叫桑拿。(019)

都是別人家裏玩，我之後有多了在酒店玩。當然我吸毒、Chemfun 的情況多數都關於一夜情、會有性交，有性愛。(024)

Hidden drug abusers often strategically select their environments to match their specific needs and the nature of their drug use, balancing the need for privacy, security, and the desired effects of the drugs they consume. This strategic approach to drug use environments reflects the complex interplay between the types of drugs, the social context, and the individuals' personal preferences and needs.

3.4. Reasons for Hidden Drug Abuse

1. *To Avoid Being Noticed*

Participants were highly wary about being caught by the police, which significantly influenced their choice of drug use venues. The legal consequences and social stigma associated with drug use drove users to prefer private, secure environments over public places. These private venues, including home settings, provided a more controlled, private, and safer environment, thereby reducing the risk of detection and social stigma.

如果沒有了這個空間，非常難維持吸大麻這個習慣。就算是我外面認識的大麻使用者也可能一開始就有 studio，或者有「竇」。現在吸可能也吸少了，又或者不能用一些很大的器具去吸。因為吸大麻有一種叫 bong 的東西，它是一個像水煙一樣的東西，是很大的，會出很多煙。所以如果你在家而又不想被家人知道的話，是沒有可能做到的。你最多只可以是 roll，當一支煙那樣，可能在後樓梯吸。我聽到那些人又想吸，但又很不自在，我覺得這樣不如不要吸。(062)

This data illustrates the necessity of maintaining a hidden space for drug use, especially when the consumption methods involve large-size and visible equipment. The lack of such spaces often leads users to feel uneasy and reluctant to use drugs, which can act as a deterrent in itself.

2. *The Convenience of Acquiring Drugs*

The convenience of obtaining drugs has made hidden drug abuse more feasible. Users no longer need to visit public venues to meet dealers; they can simply order drugs through telephone contacts and online platforms (e.g., Line and other online messaging apps), receiving deliveries directly to their homes. This convenience has led to an increase in drug use within private settings, allowing users to just stay at home comfortably while using drugs.

我現在通常多在家裏，多了人會在家裏，因為現在拿東西太方便了。以前需要在一些場拿東西，沒有現在那麼多「莊」的。(001)

我聽說過，誇張到是懷著寶寶都會去吸食。她們不需要上街，一個電話或者一個 Line，甚麼都好，一個訊息(message)就送到上門。(029)

The ability to obtain drugs without leaving home reduces the risk and stigma of being seen purchasing drugs, thereby enabling continuous hidden use.

3. *Socialisation and Peer Influence*

Hidden drug abuse is often closely linked to social gatherings, where individuals seek the privacy of rented rooms or spaces to use drugs with friends. These gatherings offer a discreet environment that supports drug use while maintaining secrecy from outsiders. By booking private venues or hosting parties in secluded areas, the hidden drug abuse with friends is more enjoyable and less isolating.

你出去認識的人都是去那些地方玩，或者吸毒，就算你再乖也好，都很大機會會學壞的。(014)

像是 Air B&B 那樣租了屋，然後就搞派對。然後就一起食。有點類似她那個生日派對那樣，和 Party Room 類似。(086)

Peer influence and social networks were relevant to hidden drug abuse. Hidden drug use began through peer introductions and social networks. Social dynamics within these groups could influence behaviours and the likelihood of continued use. In other words, if individuals had close contact with hidden drug-taking peers, they were likely to take drugs in similar locations, like at home, hotels, or private venues.

For many participants, the preference for hidden drug use in the company of friends rather than alone stems from a desire for companionship and support. This social aspect of drug use helps individuals cope with feelings of loneliness and depression in those private settings, making drug use a shared experience rather than a solitary one.

每次吸食都是跟朋友一起吸食的，因為我覺得未需要自己一個人吸食。因為我已經很抑鬱，我不想再自己一個人。我覺得一個人吸食的話，真的要上癮，那些要追著食（上電）的人才會一個人吸食的。(015)

我從來不會一個人。我一定會有一個姐妹或者有一個朋友陪我一起吸食。我不會自己的，我是一個沒有安全感的人。(049)

The combination of social dynamics and hidden venues creates an environment where drug use is not only accepted but encouraged. The privacy of these settings shields users from external surveillance and legal repercussions, fostering a sense of security and normalising the behaviour within their social circles. This makes it particularly challenging for individuals to break the cycle of hidden drug abuse.

4. *Loss of Social Circle*

While using drugs with friends was a common pattern, some participants transitioned from social use to solitary use due to changes in personal circumstances, such as disconnection with friends or changes in living situations. This shift often led to an increased sense of isolation, prompting individuals to continue their drug use alone in private and hidden places.

以前會跟朋友 chill，現在就自己 chill。因為我的朋友全都去外國了。在我周遭的人都已經有自己的圈子，我也不想對著他們太久，因為他們很喜歡讀書。(090)

其實到現在只剩下我自己一個了。因為那個兄弟已經移民去英國，另外一位朋友就因為政見不合而分開，只剩下我自己一個。有時候我會常備一點，但是不會說自己定時定候吸食，但當我覺得有需要的話我會吸食。(099)

5. *Achieving Specific Purposes*

Not all drug abusers preferred taking drugs with friends; some found that using drugs alone provided a different experience. Unlike the social and entertainment purposes of group drug taking, solitary use often served to induce deeper thinking or achieve specific mental states.

現在主要和男朋友一起吸食大麻。朋友叫我們一起吸食大麻，我們都會拒絕。我們只會兩個人使用。因為我們吸食的原因是兩個人開心、放鬆。但一班人一起

smoke 主要為了玩、興奮一點。就真的不是我喜歡的東西，還有我吸完就暈了，玩不了。(046)

一群人吸食和自己一個吸食有不同的玩法，就是不同感覺。一群人時，就會一起聊天打電動，做一些大家一起做的活動；但是你自己一個通常是，雖然你都會做自己的事情，但是你會想東西，就是你會想多一些東西，多思考一些。(066)

The shift to solitary use was sometimes accompanied by a change in the type of drugs used, with some participants moving from recreational drugs to those that they felt provided specific benefits, such as relaxation or enhanced focus.

6. *Taking Drugs Alone Due to Psychological Comfort*

For some participants, the transition to solitary drug use was driven by the need for psychological comfort. Initially starting in social settings, these individuals gradually shifted to using drugs alone due to habitual use, easy accessibility to drugs, and the enjoyment of solitude.

不知道為甚麼開始慢慢轉了去自己在家吸食，突然間覺得好像食飯那個心態，已經慣了。(010)

我開始想吸食的原因是失戀，加上我自己一個住，就是想忘記不開心。我那時候一天二十四小時都是頹廢的，想減少傷痛的情況下，就吸食多一點。我的心得是「大麻是治癒心靈的。」(101)

Apart from the above, emotional and mental health issues, such as stress, loneliness, and depression, were also common triggers for hidden drug use. Participants described using drugs as a way to cope with negative emotions and provide psychological comfort.

我媽媽逝世那一天我就出去了，消失了三十多個小時，就開始至少三十六個小時地吸毒，然後一個星期有兩、三次消失。但是沒有人指責我，因為他們都知道我的情況，但是他們也有說「不要食得那麼誇張了。」(049)

我吸食的原因是失戀，那時候開始去朋友的家吸食，加上工作壓力整個人都比較頹廢。那時候剛巧朋友搬了出來住，變相有個地方，可以上去聊天又吸食。後來

就覺得我自己享受這種感覺，特別是工作上有很多壓力，沒有甚麼喘息的空間。我覺得有時晚上深夜自己一個人，可能未必太開心，或者是無無聊聊。我覺得大麻可以輔助一下自己，令自己的心情放鬆。(102)

For some participants, taking drugs alone became a way to deal with the negative emotions brought about by life stress and adversities (e.g., death of parents, break-up with a lover, work-related stress). Drugs provided a “chill” and “relaxing” feeling, alleviating their unhappiness and helping them cope with emotional pain.

7. *Cope With Social Stigma*

The stigma associated with drug use often leads individuals to isolate themselves to avoid judgment and maintain their social standing, fostering hidden drug abuse. The fear of being negatively perceived by others can significantly influence drug use behaviours, pushing users to seek privacy rather than risking their reputation in public settings.

我是一個很注重名聲的人，所以我在外面和在我朋友的面前，一支「可樂」也沒有吸食過。因為我覺得這樣做很噁心，真的不好看。雖然那些場是可以吸食，但你是一個女生，坐在一個男生旁邊這樣做時，人家就知道你是為了佔小便宜地吸食，感覺很不好看。我自己躲起來，也是拿自己的錢買回來自己吸食的。有時候也會有些男性朋友請我的，但是這麼多人看著你一個女生吸食，真的不好看。(049)

This account shows that some participants prefer taking drugs alone due to concerns about their appearance, image, and reputation. The fear of how others perceive them drives them to avoid drug use in front of other people, highlighting the significant role social stigma plays in their behaviour. The need for privacy helps explain why hidden drug abuse continues to exist, as individuals seek to manage their social image while continuing their drug use.

8. *Other Personal Preferences*

In addition to the above reasons, solitary drug use can be stemmed from personal preferences and specific concerns about the effects of drugs. Some users prefer the privacy of their own space due to the intense and sometimes frightening effects of drug consumption.

其實出去玩的時候，我是不食的。身邊沒有太多人知我有吸食。我只是一直躲在家裏、或者是一兩個人的時候食。但因為我食得太慢，所以就出現了問題。因為我可能要消失幾天才可食完。因為我食完之後，當下的感官令我聽不到東西、很多幻聽。我就會很慌張，我食完一定要立刻躲起來。(044)

Considering the typical sensory overload and paranoia of stimuli, the preference for solitary use is driven to manage them in a controlled, private environment. Additionally, differences in drug-using habits with other people can also lead individuals to prefer using drugs alone.

他很暴躁，他想食，他就吵，之後我就疏遠他。可能每個人食的方法不同。我會覺得我可能捏緊口鼻來吸食會好一點；他可能不喜歡捏緊，只想不停食。他可能覺得真正吸的感覺舒服一點。(044)

Conflicts or discomfort with how others consume drugs can make group use less appealing. Personal habits and the need for specific conditions to use drugs comfortably can lead to a preference for using drugs in isolation, further contributing to the existence of hidden drug abuse.

3.5. Conclusion

This chapter illustrates the phenomenon of hidden drug abuse, using the verbatim accounts of drug abusers and dealers. Since the crackdown on public, large-scale discos and parties, further instigated by the pandemic, drug abuse, either in individual or group form, was turned into “hidden” and occurred in private venues or private public spaces (e.g., hotel rooms, industrial buildings, parks), and homes. This evolution reflected users' adaptation to increasing law enforcement and societal scrutiny.

The hidden nature of drug use was a recurrent theme. Being aware of social stigma and potential legal consequences, the need for secrecy and the preference for private, hidden settings over public venues were driven among the users and dealers. For example, some narratives described heightened security measures at private venues, such as setting passwords, installing surveillance cameras, and enforcing strict access controls. Participants' familiarity with the venues and their locations was crucial for entry into the private venues, which helped maintain a secure and private environment there. It is noted that organising drug-taking private venues is profitable and can cover the costs and legal consequences of being caught. This makes

private venues continue to mushroom. Participants made various efforts to hide their drug abuse from being known by family and friends, such as using air fresheners to cover the smell of taking drugs and simply going to other drug-using peers' homes.

Participants engaging in drug abuse, regardless of individual or group format, had various benefits and intentions. It is noted that peer influence and social networks, as well as other personal reasons (e.g., disconnection with social circles, dealing with personal negative emotions in the face of adversities and life stress, and avoiding social stigma), contributed to hidden drug abuse. With an increase in the use of communication technologies for drug purchase and delivery, it can be anticipated that hidden drug abuse will become more prevalent in the future.

Chapter 4. Drug Abuse and Sexual Minorities

4.1. Introduction

The drug-using LGBTQ+ community, particularly among gay men and lesbians, displays distinctive features in their drug-use experiences and the operation of their community. This theme emerged during data collection rather than from the original research objectives, making the investigation tentative and brief. Considering the uniqueness of this group of drug abusers, the research team aims to initiate a discussion as a stepping stone for further research. Therefore, the following discussions focus on some features of drug-related activities in the MSM (men who have sex with men) community due to the small population of MSM participants.

Before delving into the discussion, it is essential to provide a brief introduction to the MSM population and their drug use patterns. MSM participants reported excessive drug use at Chem Fun parties, which are sexual events involving other MSM individuals. "Chem" refers to chemical substances, likely illicit drugs, while "fun" denotes the enjoyment of sexual intercourse. During these events, drugs are prevalent and serve to facilitate sexual activities, which is the primary purpose of Chem Fun parties. Participants noted that these events are not typically places for building social or long-term romantic relationships. However, some participants indeed formed friendships and attempted to develop long-term intimate relationships while engaging in Chem Fun parties.

MSM relationships have different roles, including top, bottom, and versatile. "Top" refers to the insertive role in anal intercourse, while "bottom" refers to the receptive role. Those who prefer both roles are termed "versatile." More participants in this study identified themselves as tops, but some also accepted versatile roles when Chem Fun parties lacked bottoms. These roles tend to be flexible during group sex.

4.2. Types of Drugs Used and Their Purposes

The most commonly mentioned drugs among MSM drug abusers in Chem Fun party include methamphetamine, GHB (referred to as “G 水”), poppers (amyl nitrite, or called rush), and Viagra. These drugs are primarily used to enhance sexual experiences and lower inhibitions, making the encounters more intense and pleasurable.

最初人們是用搖頭丸加偉哥的。後來慢慢 Chem Fun party 開始轉用冰毒。然後加 G 水。現在好像會用大麻，說大麻可以放鬆。通常是先用偉哥，然後用大麻，然後用冰，最後用迷姦水。這樣混合的效果是最好的效果，或者你可以跟搖頭丸用也行。(030)

我覺得 poppers，G 水，偉哥和冰毒，這四種藥物是比較基本的。我去那麼多次 Chem Fun 的活動，這四種藥物在活動中都有。其實這四樣已經讓那晚玩得很「毒」了。(032)

Each of these drugs serves a distinct purpose. Methamphetamine increases energy and sexual desire, allowing users to engage in prolonged sexual activities. GHB provides euphoric and relaxing effects, which help in lowering inhibitions and enhancing the overall experience. Poppers are used to relax muscles, particularly the anal sphincter, making penetration easier and heightening sexual pleasure. Additionally, these drugs can alleviate pain during intercourse, making the experience more enjoyable. Other drugs, such as ecstasy and cannabis, are sometimes taken to benefit and enhance sexual activities.

被人插入那一個是會痛的，所以一定要吸食毒品令它放鬆，和上腦的感覺。因為吸食了毒品之後與人性交是興奮很多的，所以很多男同志都有吸毒行為。很多女人都有，不一定是男人，只不過是男同志吸毒的層面相比普通的男人多很多。(029)

G 水就是迷姦水，所以會令人更加 horny 的，使人渾渾噩噩，但冰毒則是令人更加有精神，感官刺激更加敏感。所以有些人混合 G 水和冰毒一齊使用，就會令人更加 horny。有些人只吸 poppers 不會吸冰毒，因為 poppers 都可以提供興奮的感覺。(032)

The bitterness of some drugs, such as GHB, necessitates mixing them with other beverages to improve their taste. This practice reflects the adaptability and resourcefulness of users in their drug consumption habits.

G 水是很難喝的。要用葡萄適、寶擴力，混稀它來喝。(029)

因為 G 水是很苦的一種 chem，所以他們大多數人會準備綠茶、可口可樂、果汁和益力多。因為是糖分很高的飲料，綠茶也是很甜的那種，用來覆蓋苦味。他們知道如何調配份量，有些資深玩家會用小針筒抽不同的毫升數來混合。(032)

4.3. Drug Use Patterns: Social and Community Aspects

1. Drug Use and Social Dynamics

Drug use among these individuals, particularly during Chem Fun parties, is closely linked with social interactions and sexual activities. These gatherings serve as a social hub where participants engage in both drug use and sexual activities. The environment of these parties is highly dynamic, with a constant flow of people, much like a brothel, as participants use drugs to heighten their sexual experiences and remain energetic throughout the night.

難聽一點，其實那些 party 就和妓寨沒有分別，不斷有人進、不斷有人出。因為他們不斷吸食，吸食完毒品就很亢奮地進行性行為。(029)

There is a noted preference for settings that combine drug use with sexual experiences, enhancing both the social and intimate aspects of the gatherings. This preference underscores the strong link between drug use and sexual activities in these contexts. In summary, drugs and sex are deeply intertwined in Chem Fun parties among MSM drug abusers.

有些人會拿 poppers 進去桑拿 [同志聚集的社交場所]。如果有意性交的人都會有毒品。(019)

我想香港的同志圈都不是那麼正經的。其實天下烏鴉都是一樣黑的，譬如十個同志裡面，我想有超過七成以上都是吸毒的。因為同志的世界裡，性愛很重要；而毒品對於幫助性愛又很重要。(029)

2. Social Networks

Consistent with the drug abusers' accounts, Chem Fun parties serve as a means to socialise and form connections within the MSM community. However, these connections are often superficial and transactional, focused more on the shared drug experience rather than deep friendships. Participants rarely engage in meaningful conversations, and the primary focus is on sexual activities facilitated by drug use.

通常也不會說從事甚麼行業，因為不會聊天，通常都是做愛而已。少會聊天，或者他們不一定會說那麼多自己的事。(030)

Appearances are highly valued at these parties, reflecting a shift away from seeking meaningful connections to emphasising physical attributes. Participants often prioritise working on their bodies over other aspects of their personality, driven by a culture that prizes physical appearance and sexual prowess.

Party 裡面的人，大家都不想講求內涵，大家都知道講內涵不行的。大家乾脆沒身材的就練身材，反而不太注重樣子，樣子正常便算，所以大家不停練身材。又或者靠著自己性器官夠傲人，就是陽具崇拜。(022)

3. *Privacy and Secrecy*

MSM drug abuse often occurs in private settings such as hotel rooms, with specific locations known within the community for being MSM-friendly and discreet. These private venues provide a safe space where individuals can partake in drug use and sexual activities away from the public eye, reducing the risk of detection and social stigma.

有一群人常常在尖沙嘴那邊的酒店，佐敦、油麻地、尖沙嘴這三個站附近就最多。其實來來去去都是這群人而已。那些場主我也認識，有些很熟、有些半熟、半不熟。(020)

最流行的就是舊機場那間 XXXX 酒店。真的是環境又漂亮，又便宜，很好的地點。以前在油麻地和佐敦各有一間，現在倒閉了，兩間酒店都轉了名。所有男同志一定會去那裡搞 party 的。(029)

通常的場地是酒店，或者是別人的家。什麼酒店也有。XX、XX、XX 比較普遍，通常都會去，尖沙咀 XX 也是。(030)

Individuals involved in drug use within the MSM community take measures to ensure privacy, often coordinating gatherings in private venues to avoid detection and stigma. Introductions by trusted peers are crucial in this community, ensuring that new participants are vetted, and the gatherings remain safe and secure.

那些不認識的人就要人介紹「我有些朋友介紹給你」，「這個我跟他玩過，挺好的」，場主接受就 WhatsApp 問他來不來玩。來的話，到酒店樓下再傳訊息給你說幾樓，上來了，再傳訊息告訴你哪個門牌，要很安全的。(020)

Social media platforms (e.g., Gay Hong Kong.com) and personal introductions by experienced peers play significant roles in expanding the MSM drug-using community. These channels help newcomers learn about Chem Fun parties and integrate into the community.

EV Fun 就是最初的 Chem Fun，為了 sex 和用藥。我是透過一個叫 Gay Hong Kong.com 的網站，見到聊天室裏，很多人將個名字改做 EV Fun。一個印巴藉人士跟我說是什麼。那就去他家裏試，玩了第一次 Chem Fun。其實那時我以為是春藥或是其他會興奮點的一些東西。但不知道原來是毒品。(023)

4. Confidentiality

Trust plays a significant role in these gatherings. Participants often rely on hosts or friends within the community to ensure a safe and enjoyable environment. There is an emphasis on mutual respect and understanding, with participants often knowing each other's preferences and boundaries.

我跟你玩完，見到你跟男朋友在逛街。難道我走上來跟你說「我昨晚跟你玩完」，你也不會去破壞人吧？即是這也是規矩來的，圈內一向都是這樣的。(020)

The above verbatim accounts show an example of the mutual respect of boundaries. Participants ensure that what happens during Chem Fun parties remains confidential, helping to preserve relationships and reputations outside these gatherings. Respect for privacy and boundaries is critical to maintaining trust within the community. The mutual understanding and discretion practised within this community foster a sense of trust and safety among its members.

4.4. Nature of Drug Parties

1. Organisational Structure of The Parties

Chem Fun parties are intricately organised by hosts or a group of hosts who oversee logistics, such as venue selection, drug procurement, and guest invitations. These hosts play a

pivotal role in ensuring the seamless execution of the parties, with meticulous planning and provision of necessary resources, including drugs.

Chem fun 那當然是毒品 fun，不然去玩甚麼？主要是場主提供的。他找人來玩，他要有貨才可以叫人玩。(020)

我通常參加的 Chem Fun 搞手不止一個。通常那些 party 搞手已經預了一些毒品在那裡。(029)

The scale of these parties varies significantly, from intimate gatherings at private residences to larger events hosted in hotels. Participants expressed that the number of participants could range from two to over twenty.

Home party 可能只有四至七個人左右。我們稱為派對的最少有十幾人，甚至二十多人。(022)

我通常是一對一比較多。但是我最多試過有十個人，同一時間在酒店房間內。來我家那些，最多也只是四個。(030)

Smaller, private gatherings often involve friends or acquaintances, with arrangements made to ensure a discreet and controlled environment for drug use and social interaction. On the other hand, larger gatherings often take place in hotels, sometimes with multiple parties happening simultaneously in the same venue. This indicates a sophisticated network and high level of organisation within the MSM community, allowing participants to transition seamlessly between different parties and hosts.

現在也有很多「檔」、很多人舉辦的。你家沒有人的話，你也可以在家舉辦。我也試過在家舉辦。我接收間公屋後也舉辦過，是叫幾個朋友上來玩而已，即是私人的 Chem Fun 這樣。叫了兩三個人，就在家玩。最多 Chem Fun 就是尖沙嘴，多人一點。我玩完，同一酒店的六樓又有 party，即是同一間酒店都有幾場。可能那個人在這個場主那裡玩完，自己又去同一酒店開一個場，是不同場主的。(020)

The data demonstrate that these parties can be organised on a small scale among friends at home or on a larger scale in hotels involving more participants. This diversity highlights the adaptability and varied nature of drug-related social activities within the MSM community.

2. *Financial Arrangements and Transactions*

Participation in Chem Fun parties often involves financial transactions, with entry fees ranging from free to about HKD500. These fees typically cover the cost of drugs and venue rentals, making the parties financially accessible to most participants. The specific cost can vary depending on the host and the substances included.

很難說要給多少錢。場主有些就收兩百，有些就收三百五。沒有按甚麼來定價的。只是叫做幫忙付一些費用而已。最貴四百元也有。(020)

有時是 Host 來定要收多少錢。通常是包括冰，可能包括 G 水和偉哥。最貴的應該是四百五十元。我試過最便宜的是兩個人收取二百元。也有試過不用錢的。(030)

For small and private Chem Fun parties, the financial arrangements can be settled by sharing the costs of drugs and rentals. This contributes to the prevalence and ease of hosting these events. In one-on-one situations, participants might not exchange money directly but rather trade resources, such as one person providing the drugs while the other provides the venue.

有時候一對一的話，不需要錢。有時候是我沒錢，而他有 chem 的話，他出 chem，我就出地方這樣。就算我自己在家裡做 Host，其實也是在 Grindr 認識人，然後問別人來不來。那些參加者是之前不認識的，通常上網立刻找人。有時我約了一個人，我們就可能兩個人一起上 Grindr 找第三個、第四個。我就提供地方，有時我也會提供那些毒品，然後大家湊錢。即告訴他們收多少錢進場，然後他們同不同意，同意就過來。(030)

Most Chem Fun parties do not limit participants to using drugs exclusively, but sexual activities occupy most of the time, making the consumption of drugs a significant part of the expenditure. The remaining costs mainly cover venue rentals. As more participants pay the entry fee, the host spends less on party hosting.

我當時拿了大概七、八百元的毒品，可以足夠兩個人。後來就越來越貴，因為派對可能會有很多人，有時在這裏可能會有七八個人。我有時會收取四百五十、五百元來幫補支出。(030)

有時也會要求他們給少少錢來分擔成本（Share cost）的，否則他們會當我是冤大頭（水魚）。做事也要平衡一點的。（034）

This feature makes these parties a potentially lucrative activity for some hosts. Hosts can earn substantial amounts from frequent gatherings, sometimes even using this income to support their expenses.

Some parties are often commercialised, driven by financial incentives. The primary motivation for hosting these events can extend beyond mere social interaction, including economic benefits and resource acquisition. Building a network of participants can provide ongoing financial support.

這些派對都是很商業化，本身就是一件商業的事，交際是為了資本，為了別人的資源，人脈也是你的資源。只是這種資源不會直接變現金，而是間接地令你可以找到途徑變現。變現才是你的最終目的。最後都是要建立人際網絡。就算他好像是免費，也是為了令你增加好感，日後便會願意找他取貨。（022）

其實 Host 是可以賺錢的，因為他們會好像「流水席」那樣，不停地有人來，有人走。然後順便自己又不用上班，又有地方住，又可以玩，又可以吸食。我認識一個朋友就收一個人四百元，但可能星期一至日每一天也會有朋友找他，上去他那裡，他就不停有錢回來。（030）

By hosting frequent parties with a steady stream of participants, the financial incentive drives the regular hosting of these events. Some hosts even rely on this income to replace traditional employment, effectively making a living through the continuous flow of participants and the resources they provide.

This financial aspect highlights the intricate balance between social interaction, drug use, and economic gain within the MSM community. Hosting Chem Fun parties becomes a means of sustaining oneself financially while fostering a network of regular participants, illustrating the multifaceted motivations behind these gatherings.

3. *Free Drugs*

Some hosts provide drugs for free, especially if they know the participants well or have a favourable opinion of them. This approach helps attract participants and fosters a sense of community and mutual support, creating a more inclusive environment.

要收錢與否，每個人不一樣。例如場主跟我認識久了，知道我的情況，就說「好吧，這次你就免費吧」，或者「算了」。(020)

有些是免費的，可能是因為好朋友這些，因為收錢與否的決定權在於屋主。(032)

其實我舉辦 Chem Fun 不是賺錢的，通常也沒有收錢。除非那人真的堅持要給錢，我也會收。我當客人時會給錢，玩一晚通常會留下\$500。有些人也是不收的。我就說「\$500 你用來買飲料也好」。(033)

Newcomers to Chem Fun parties often experience an initiation phase where they might be invited for free or without knowledge of the financial aspects. This helps them become familiar with the environment and integrate into the community. Over time, as they become regular participants, the financial dynamics become more apparent.

我是玩了四五次才開始知道，原來參加這些派對是要付錢的。我覺得新人什麼都不懂，然後有人叫你一起參加，可能開始時會免費，我們稱為「導」你。(059)

This gradual introduction allows new participants to ease into the subculture of Chem Fun parties, creating a supportive network that can help reduce initial apprehension and build trust among participants.

Hosting Chem Fun parties can serve both social and economic purposes. While some hosts charge entry fees to cover costs and potentially profit from these gatherings, others might forgo these fees to foster goodwill and strengthen their social network.

4. *Negative Attitudes Towards Chem Fun*

Within the MSM community, attitudes towards drug use vary widely, from acceptance and support to judgment and criticism. Some individuals actively participate in Chem Fun parties, while others view these gatherings negatively.

參加 Chem Fun 什麼人都有，但多數都是狗屎垃圾。我曾被邀請出席一個所謂的「CF Party」。其實就是 Chem Fun。是在一座唐樓裡，那時候我對那人說「我什麼都不敢，不要」，於是他在門口和我完事就算。(022)

This account highlights the discomfort and reluctance some individuals feel towards these parties, indicating that not everyone in the community is comfortable with or supportive of drug use. Others, however, are more open and accepting, focusing on personal connections over drug involvement.

4.5. Impact on Physical and Mental Health

1. Risk of Addiction

Participants acknowledged the health risks associated with drug use. Initially, there is a potential for addiction, where prolonged use of drugs leads to an increased dosage to maintain the heightened effects, eventually developing into dependency and habit. The shift from occasional use to addiction is starkly illustrated by the transition from using less addictive drugs like ecstasy to highly addictive substances. The dependency on meth is notably more severe, leading to strong psychological cravings.

那些冰吸得多了，癮也會大了。興奮到我幾日都睡不著覺，很精神的。(020)

市場沒有了 E 仔這樣東西，就算有也會很貴，所以人們就投了去冰那裏。我也去了試冰，原來那個依賴是差很遠的，即是很嚴重，也會有個心癮。不是像 E 仔那麼容易可以戒掉。我不用大麻也可以的，但冰的心癮真的大很多很多倍。(023)

G 水的话喝了蠻多次的。會愈喝愈多，所以初階的只可以喝 0.5，而資深玩家要 1.3。可能有少許的抗藥性，而資深玩家在追求興奮的感覺，所以可能習慣後就愈喝愈多。我是 0.3 或 0.5 左右。其實我是好想增加用量。(032)

Once users start using drugs during sexual activities at parties, they often find it difficult to engage in sexual activities without them. The transition from occasional use to frequent and chronic use is a common theme, highlighting the potent addictive nature of these substances and the challenges of breaking free from their grip.

2. *Physical and Mental Health Impacts*

There are significant adverse physical and mental health impacts associated with drug use in Chem Fun parties. One issue is the impairment of sexual performance. While drugs can heighten sexual pleasure and facilitate performance, excessive use of meth can lead to problems such as erectile dysfunction, sleep deprivation, and psychological distress. Users often find themselves in a cycle where they need more drugs to achieve the same effects, which can exacerbate these health issues.

在性行為時發現自己有些障礙，所以最後也是草草了事。那時候我不知道吸食得太多，會導致無法勃起。(022)

你吸食完冰之後，你會很亢奮，但當然你亢奮完之後，你要償還的是你整個人會很抑鬱、很寂寞、很煩躁。(029)

因為吸冰毒會令人一直自慰，是興奮的但卻不能勃起。而且下體會縮小很多，就好像剛由冰水中拿出來，但一碰就會興奮，敏感度是如此高的。因為吸冰毒和喝了 G 水，會變得愈來愈慾火中燒，所以就會一直想去觸碰下體。所以他人就提議多喝水，因為吸冰毒後會令血液的粘稠而且腦部不停的運作，所以就要多喝水。(032)

These accounts demonstrate that meth use is linked to intense sexual experiences but also causes long-term physical and psychological effects. Anxiety and stress were common both as a cause for initial drug use and as a result of prolonged substance abuse, creating a cycle of dependency. Drugs were often used to manage these feelings, perpetuating their use and deepening the psychological and physical toll.

對性並不很有興趣，一般享受吧。自瀆便可以了。用藥後，我會更容易放鬆自己。你要放鬆了才能投入這回事。如果我沒用藥的話，我很容易在性愛上出現焦慮。我會想什麼時候完結，是煩厭那種。(022)

一直會用藥的原因是可以同時間滿足性的需要，同時可以放鬆自己日常的壓力，所以會一直繼續使用這個藥物。(024)

3. *Unsafe Sexual Practices*

Under the influence of drugs, users often engage in unsafe sexual practices. The primary goal of Chem Fun parties is to seek stimulation and the most intense feelings, leading to the avoidance of condoms, as they are perceived to reduce stimulation and act as a barrier to full sexual pleasure. This practice significantly increases the risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) among participants.

Chem Fun 的主要目的是追求刺激和最興奮的感覺，所以不會使用安全套，因為使用安全套的話會減輕了刺激性，變成障礙。(032)

吃了 Chem 之後的感覺會再真實一點，再不戴套去進行動作，整個人會更加興奮。(033)

Due to the impairment in sexual functioning caused by drugs, participants may engage in risky behaviours to maintain sexual pleasure and performance. This implies that users face substantial physical hazards, including the increased risk of STDs, as safety precautions are often neglected in the pursuit of heightened sensations.

4. *Safety Risks*

Participants acknowledged the possibility of loss of property due to thefts during the parties, particularly when being dazed under the influence of drugs. The environment at these gatherings can become chaotic. With individuals often not in full control of themselves under the adverse influence of drugs, the risk of theft increases.

在家裡做 Host 的時候，曾經被偷東西。其實只是看你運氣好不好，遇到這樣的人。而且自己要小心一點，不要太「爆」。不省人事的話，即使別人本來不想拿的，也會想拿。因為我又不可以報警。就算了，當作是破財擋災。我試過遺失了電話，遺失錢包，還是 LV 錢包。遺失了證件那些也麻煩。(030)

The inability to report these incidents to the authorities due to the illegal nature of the activities involved adds another layer of risk for participants. They often have to accept the losses and consider them as part of the cost of engaging in these parties. This reflects the broader issue of vulnerability and the lack of protection for individuals within these settings, further complicating their precarious situations.

4.6. Social Stigma and Identity

The privacy and secrecy of drug parties in the MSM community are driven by multiple layers of social stigma related to both their sexual orientation and drug use. This dual stigma creates a need for private and secure environments where individuals can express themselves without fear of judgment or discrimination. These gatherings often take place in discreet locations, with participants going to great lengths to avoid detection by outsiders.

沒有膽量這麼明目張膽。它不會讓你看見，以及那裡的職員其實不允許這東西。但是燈光之外的地方，說實話，他們不會看到。(019)

The use of specific symbols and codes in social apps to indicate drug use highlights the secretive nature of this community. Participants use discreet signals, such as an ice cream emoji, to identify each other and discuss drug-related activities without drawing unwanted attention.

如果你指應用程式的話，他們直接有一個項目剔選會不會用藥，或者他們會暗示。我也是後期才知道，放一個雪糕，那些人就自然會一起聊天。但是是不是聊正面的事，還是聊怎樣騙別人，我就知道了。但是我猜測都會形成一個社區，只是在於聊些甚麼而已。(019)

The drug-using MSM community is highly private and exclusive, navigating unique challenges due to the intersection of their sexual orientation and drug use. This dual stigma forces members to seek environments where they can express their true selves without societal judgment. For many, drug use during sexual activities is a way to break free from societal expectations and experience a sense of liberation.

其實某程度上，我覺得沒有這些 Chem 的話，我看不到、感受不到性愛帶來的舒服和開心，或是這種樂趣。某程度上 Chem 令我放下平日的面具、面孔。剛才我也有說我是雙面人，某程度上它令我變回平日到酒吧時的模樣，可以比較放得開。毒品可以給我空間和出口，去呈現自己的真我。(022)

Participants often describe their everyday selves as constrained by moral and societal expectations, finding it difficult to express their sexual desires openly. Drug use provides a temporary escape from these constraints, allowing them to embrace a side of themselves that is typically hidden.

平日的我已經很正經，人們都不習慣我變得咸濕的樣子，別人會覺得我很搞笑，說我的樣子像諧星。如果我到了那個時候，事情便變得合理。我也知道我有其中一面是這樣，但我很少會展現出來。平日不管如何我也表現得很淡薄，好有所謂。即是有很多枷鎖。這也沒辦法，我的人生就是這麼多枷鎖。我就是有很多道德枷鎖綁住自己的人，尤其是別人對我的期待就是這樣。所以 chem fun 不單在氛圍上，同時在慾念上有了一個出口。(022)

本身我是超級封鎖自己。之後就發現很多和人溝通的問題，之後又吸了毒再有感情的問題，才覺得使用毒品是一個處理和放鬆壓力的途徑，然後又放開了自己以前那些限制，感情上面又有一點慰藉，或者和人們建立到一個關係。所以就這幾樣事情是綁住了我，更加肯定，更加做下去，會堅持用這個習慣下去。(024)

The societal stigma and familial rejection experienced by some MSM individuals drive them to seek solace and community within the drug-using MSM network. Chem Fun provides a coping mechanism, offering both stress relief and a sense of belonging that is often missing from their everyday lives. The community formed around these activities becomes a vital support network.

我爸爸媽媽知道了我是同志之後，原來會動手動腳，所以我不想再在這處境裡和他們爭吵。因為我知道一定吵不贏他，說服不到他。他覺得一定是我錯，最壞的情況就是他動手，所以我就直接走了。我沒想好去哪裡，但我就知道可以找 Chem Fun 的朋友，然後他們會告訴我可以有甚麼選擇。(024)

The intersection of MSM identity and drug use creates unique challenges, including navigating societal perceptions and maintaining personal safety. The need for privacy often forces individuals to participate in these activities secretly, further isolating them from potential support networks and increasing their dependency on the Chem Fun community for emotional and social support. This secrecy exacerbates their isolation and the difficulties they face in seeking help or integrating with broader society.

4.7. Conclusion

The drug-using MSM community presents a unique and complex landscape shaped by their drug-using experiences and the operations of their social networks. While this research

provides an initial glimpse into this community, the findings underscore the need for further in-depth studies to fully understand the intricacies involved. The discussions herein highlight the distinctive characteristics and challenges faced by MSM drug abusers, providing a foundation for future research.

To conclude, the aforementioned verbatim accounts of drug abusers and drug dealers within the MSM community outline certain key features of this community. This community is characterised by: 1) a unique choice of drugs (e.g., Viagra, GHB) aimed at enhancing sexual experiences; 2) the organisation of drug-taking events known as Chem Fun parties, which are hosted by one or more individuals in various private and secretive locations such as homes and hotels. The social stigma imposed on their identities reinforces the secretive nature of this community.

The dual stigma of sexual orientation and drug use necessitates the creation of private and secure environments where individuals can express themselves without fear of judgment or discrimination. This need for privacy drives participants to take extensive measures to avoid detection, including using discreet symbols and codes to communicate and organise gatherings.

Chem Fun parties provide an environment where participants can temporarily escape societal constraints and experience a sense of liberation. For many, drug use during sexual activities allows them to express aspects of their identity that are typically hidden. This sense of community and mutual support becomes a vital network, offering both stress relief and a sense of belonging that is often missing in their everyday lives.

In summary, this chapter provides a foundational understanding of the MSM drug-using community, highlighting their vulnerability and the complex interplay of social, economic, and health-related factors. These findings emphasise the urgent need for targeted interventions and support systems to address the unique challenges faced by this community. Further research is essential to develop comprehensive strategies aimed at improving the health and well-being of MSM individuals involved in drug use.